The Fanalis Witch

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Summary

A stolen child gifted to a certain pair is finally finding her way home. The journey she's now on will be one with many twists and turns as she starts to realize just who she is and where her destiny lays. Set before the start of Magi.

Notes

I do not own the Magi Franchise or the Harry Potter one. I am working through the anime and manga at a slow pace.
Chapter 1

It was a bitterly hot summer night in England and one of the hottest in current memory. It was even hotter within a rather dull looking house that seemed to be a clone of every other house on the street known as Private Drive. Inside the smallest bedroom on the second floor, a crimson haired teenage girl was laid out the floor panting softly as she struggled to ignore the heat. The bright emerald green orbs the fifteen year old called eyes were half-way closed as she stared up at the ceiling. She was rather short with a lithe figure that brought to mind a waif. On her left ear, a pair of silver hoops engraved with a roaring lion sat on the lobe which had once belonged to her mother. Her name is Hawthorn 'Thorn' Lily Potter also known as the 'Girl-who-lived'. And on this rather droll night, the secrets long since hidden by her parents finally came to light

Hawthorn opened them fully when she heard a knocking sound on her window and looked over to see a rather regal looking eagle owl sitting there. Pushing herself up with a small groan, she walked over to the window and pulled it open allowing the owl inside alongside a slight breeze that helped cool her down a bit. The owl landed on the rickety desk in the corner of her room and she walked over to it. The owl eyed her before holding out its leg and she took the letter from it causing the owl to take off into the night. Frowning a bit, she wondered if Sirius or someone had finally decided to answer her letters.

Hawthorn broke the fancy looking seal on the letter and opened it:

Dear Heir Hawthorn Potter,

Due to reasons that we, the goblins of Gringotts, are unaware of at this current time, we have not been able to deliver the small inheritance left to you by your mother, Lily Potter nee Evans. As you have not answered any other missives sent by us, we have decided to take matters into our own hands. At midnight tonight, you shall be portkeyed to the bank. It is heavily advised that you do not attempt to miss it.

Goldenclaw, Master of inheritances.

Hawthorn looked at the letter for a few moments then at Hedwig before muttering, "Well, it looks like I'm going to the bank."

Checking the beat up watch she'd managed to steal from Dudley, Hawthorn saw that she only had ten minutes. With that in mind, she sent Hedwig out to hunt and told her faithful owl to stay away from the house until she got back. She tried to clean herself up before the portkey set off and managed to somewhat tame her rather wild red hair. All too soon, she felt a tugging in her navel and was gone. When she let go of the portkey, she barely managed to keep from falling on her face.

Hawthorn took in her surroundings once the world stopped spinning. She was in some kind of entrance hall though it was nothing like the entrance to the bank. It reminded her of the room she'd been sent into after the champion selection last year. The air was pleasantly cool against her overheated skin which helped her relax a bit despite being in an unfamiliar area. She turned towards the door when it began to open and found a goblin dressed in a suit enter, "Heir Hawthorn Potter?"

"I am Hawthorn Potter though the whole Heir business is not something I'm aware of," Hawthorn looked at him with a frown.
The goblin matched her frown, "I see. Come with me."

Hawthorn was hesitant to follow, but knew she couldn't stay in the room. Wasting a goblins time was a very bad idea when they were the ones to reach out to you, she'd read enough horror stories in her history book to know that. Following the goblin out of the room, she was led through a twisting maze of halls into a rather large office filled with filing cabinets. A second goblin was sitting at the large desk in the center of the room and looked up, "Ah, Heir Potter. I am glad that you've decided to come."

"Like I told my guide to your office, Master Goldenclaw, I am unsure as to what you mean by the whole heir business," Hawthorn watched the goblin's eyebrow twitch a bit, "I am Hawthorn Potter though,"

"I see," Goldenclaw looked at the other goblin and barked out something in a guttural language that had the other goblin running off after closing the door, "Sit down please, it seems we have much to go over seeing as your magical guardian has failed in his duty towards you,"

"Magical guardian?" Hawthorn vaguely remembered the term though had no idea what it actually meant.

Hawthorn took the offered seat as the goblin said, "Like I said, we have much to talk about."

By the time Hawthorn left the bank, it was well into the next day and she'd found out quite a bit. She was the heir to not one, but two noble houses that had been around since Camelot. She was able to be emancipated due to being the last member of the Potter family alive and the whole tournament stuff last year. She had also inherited a lot of properties, artifacts, books, and money. Dumbledore was apparently her Magical Guardian illegally and had kept her in the dark for reasons that were known only to him. And lastly, she received the inheritance her mother left behind though it was little more than a few journals and a very long letter.

Hawthorn returned to the Dursleys long enough to grab all of her things and inform them that she would never be returning. As Petunia was the only one home, she'd be the one to deliver the news to anyone asking about her. She used the Night Bus to return to London and went to stay in a muggle hotel knowing that none of the magicals would think of it. After getting her stuff settled, she finally read the letter her mother left behind.

Dear Hawthorn,

First of all, your father and I love you so much. We have loved you since the first time we saw you. I don't exactly know how to put this and your father is of no help since he doesn't want to consider that we might be betrayed by Peter. We were going to tell you this once you were old enough to understand, but I have a feeling that we're not going to be around long enough to tell you. To put it plainly, you're adopted.

Dumbledore came to your father and I after our original child ended up being stillborn. With how deep in our grief we were, we didn't question where the child came from or who he got it from. We accepted you into our home and hearts. We adopted you via magic and blood which means you're our daughter as well as your original parents'. It was wrong of us not to question it and for that, I am sorry. With the war going on, we still would've taken you in even if our original child hadn't been dead. With how it was going, you probably would've died if we hadn't have done what we did.

Hawthorn reread the entire letter over and over again. It detailed everything that had happened since Dumbledore brought her to Lily and James Potter. Apparently, she'd once had crimson eyes,
but they ended up turning green upon her adoption. They had sealed away her strength which Lily had called 'inhuman' due to the fact she had actually broken James' hand once by accident when he was trying to tease her. To keep her from injuring herself or others, her strength had been sealed away until such a time as she would be able to handle it without harming anyone.

Hawthorn laid the letter on the table as Hedwig hooted in concern, "Lily and James Potter...They aren't my parents. The most damning fact is that Dumbledore knew, yet he put me in that hellhole."

Hawthorn wanted to destroy something, but pushed that urge down. She did not need to draw anymore attention to herself than she already had. Taking a deep breath as she forced herself to calm down, she began to make a plan. First stop would be to get an inheritance test, the goblin had offered it, but she'd declined at the time due to not wanting to deal with anything else being piled onto her. She would also see about removing the seal keeping her strength down and work on getting used to it. After that, she'd look into whatever family she may actually have and see about meeting them.

If there was one thing Hawthorn was going to do, it was getting the hell out of England. She didn't care about Voldemort or the wizarding world anymore. She was done with all the bullshit. She glanced at the sky and decided to wait until tomorrow. She would need to have a clear head for this.

The goblin looked a bit annoyed, "And you want to take the test now?"

"Yes," Hawthorn didn't back down, "I apologize for wasting your valuable time, but at the time you'd first made your offer, I did not have certain information,"

"Very well," The goblin took out a knife and a piece of parchment, "Four drops of blood onto the parchment,"

Hawthorn cut the pad of her ring finger and let the blood drop onto the parchment. When four drops had hit it, the wound sealed and the goblin took away the dagger. Writing appeared on the parchment until it was full and the goblin pushed it to her, she looked it over and stared at the information in confusion:

**Current Name:** Hawthorn Lily Potter  **Birth Name:** Mahsa Alexius

**Father:** James Potter (Adoptive Blood adoption/Dead), Laius Alexius (Birth/Dead)

**Mother:** Lily Potter nee Evans (Adoptive Blood adoption/dead), Myst (Birth/Dead)

**Siblings:** Muu Alexius (Elder Brother/Alive), Myron Alexius (Elder/Sister/Alive)

**God Parents:** Sirius Black (Alive/Falsely incarcerated), Alice Longbottom nee Burrows (Alive/Insane)

**Sex:** Female

**Date of Birth:** July 31

**Species:** Human (Half), Fanalis (Half)

The test went on to explain everything the goblin had told her yesterday. She looked at the goblin, "What is a Fanalis?"
The goblin looked startled by her question and snatched the test back. He swore then barked out something in the goblin language. A few goblins rushed into the room and she watched them pass around the results while snapping at one another. One of the goblins broke off and moved towards her, "Heir Potter, follow me."

Hawthorn, or should she call herself Mahsa now?, followed him after a moment of hesitation. She was led to a stark waiting room and told to sit down. Doing as asked, she sat down on one of the wooden chairs and stared at her hands. She reviewed what had happened after getting the test results. First, her name wasn't Hawthorn Lily Potter, but Mahsa Alexius. That actually made her feel a bit better, she could start anew as Mahsa Alexius and forget about being Hawthorn Potter. But she couldn't really forget, could she? The life she lived up until this point would always affect her as it shaped her into who she was now. But that didn't mean she couldn't start anew, she may not call herself Hawthorn Potter anymore, but that didn't change who she had been before.

Deciding to call herself by her birth name, Mahsa thought about her parents. She had two sets of parents and both of them died. She would never get to know either set as she should. The difference between them lied in her knowledge of them. She knew nothing of her birth parents whereas she knew some stuff about her adoptive through Remus and Sirius which left a bitter taste in her mouth. Had her birth parents searched for her? Had they loved her? Could they do magic? What were their favorite subjects? How had they died? She had so many questions now, but she'd likely never get the answer especially if she couldn't find her way back to where she'd come from. And it hurt, she didn't know if she'd ever actually find her way back to where she came from.

Mahsa pushed down the feeling of despair that rose up in her and thought about her siblings. She had two elder siblings which was more than she could ever have hoped for and they were alive. She had an elder brother named Muu which was a weird name since it kind of sounded like moo. She had an elder sister named Myron which was a weird name too. But then again, Mahsa was a weird name as well. She briefly wondered if her mother or father had been high on something when they'd named their children before quashing that thought. While their names were weird, she had siblings which was all that counted.

Mahsa frowned as she wondered about them. Did they know about her? How young had they been when she'd been taken? Would they even remember they had a sibling if their parents didn't say anything? If they did remember her, had they tried to help find her? Did they think she was dead? Dear Merlin, she had so many more questions that she'd had back when Hagrid had first introduced her to the wizarding world.

Mahsa's eyes narrowed at that. Did Hagrid know what Dumbledore had done? No, he would have let something slip since he was pretty bad at keeping secrets especially important ones once he got flustered. Dumbledore, why had he done it? What possessed him to take her away from her true family? More over, why had he shoved her off at the Dursleys? If she had more family and wasn't even related to the cunt suckers, why make her live with them? She found herself unsettled as more questions swirled around in her mind especially since she wouldn't be getting them until she could confront the old man.

The biggest question on Mahsa's mind was simple to her, what is a Fanalis? It was a seperate species what with the whole half human thing on the test. But what was it? Why had it caused the goblins to react that way? Why hadn't she heard of it before? Was it a bad thing?

Mahsa didn't know how long she spent in the stark waiting room before the goblins finally retrieved her. It must've been a few hours since she was hungry, thirsty, and really needed to go pee. The goblin led her into another, but far larger/less-crowded office with a goblin that looked
absolutely ancient. The goblin peered at her from his desk before speaking, "Axe, please get refreshments for Miss Alexius. Miss Alexius, you may take care of your business in that door," The goblin gestured to a door on the right hand wall that she hadn't noticed before, "Once you do, we will speak, so please be quick."

"Thank you," Mahsa told him before quickly going to take care of her business.

When Mahsa returned while wondering why the aged goblin didn't act like they usually did around humans, she found a plate of fruits, meats, and a pitcher of water waiting for her. She sat down at the offered chair as the goblin gestured for her to do so and carefully poured the goblin a glass of water before getting one for herself. The goblin smiled a bit as she offered the first glass to him, "Thank you, Miss Alexius. Would you prefer me to call you by Miss Potter or Miss Alexius?"

"Alexius is fine as I hope to put things as Hawthorn Potter behind me," Mahsa answered truthfully earning a nod, "May I ask your name? And not to be rude or ungrateful, but why are you acting so...Unlike other goblins when it comes to a human?"

"Miss Alexius," The goblin sighed deeply as she took a drink of water and began to eat some of the meat since it was rare she actually managed to get some outside of Hogwarts, "My name is Ragnarok and I am the leader of this branch of Gringotts. I am acting like this because you are not fully human or a normal magical. You are not only an Alexius, but a Fanalis as well,"

"What is a Fanalis?" Mahsa asked with a frown, "I've never heard about them before,"

"Fanalis are superhuman beings descended from the red lions that once in what was known as Alma Torran," Ragnarok explained earning a confused look, "When Alma Torran fell, they came to this world along with others in hopes of survival. When they arrived, they took on the form of humans with red hair and eyes that hold great strength. You are half-Fanalis,"

"What does it mean to be a Fanalis? What does it mean for me to be half?" Mahsa asked as she decided to wait to ask why she hadn't heard about Fanalis before.

"Fanalis are superhuman as I've said and considered one of the strongest species out there," Ragnarok patiently explained, "Their physical strength and senses are beyond that of a normal human, it is why some consider them the strongest species in the world. They can jump to extraordinary heights and even break metal. Their kicks are like lightning and they can even take down the mighty king of beasts in one blow. Fanalis can perform a loud battle cry or echolocation to map their locations," Mahsa gaped a bit at that and began to understand why her strength had to be sealed, "As a result of their great physical strength and abilities, a pureblood Fanalis could never become a witch/wizard. As you are half, you can use magic,"

Mahsa nodded feeling a bit better now that Ragnarok had cleared that up. It made a lot of sense that the goblin were treating her like this since she was a member of a warrior race and they were a warrior race as well, "Lily, my adoptive mother, sealed up my strength and likely a majority of the abilities from my Fanalis half. Is there a way to unseal it?"

"Yes which ties into one of the things I wish to speak to you about," Ragnarok took a drink from his cup of water as Mahsa finished off the meat selection and began to work on the fruit, "As there is no telling what kind of wards or spell currently on you, I wish for you to allow us to cleanse you,"

Mahsa thought about it before nodding, "Yes, I believe that would be for the best. Why have I not heard of Fanalis before?"
"Because they exist across the veil and rarely do any on that side cross it," Ragnarok answered and chuckled at her confused look, "Not even a hundred years after this world came into existence, a fight brewed between two sects of magical. One on side, the Magicians led by the Magi. On the other side, witches and wizards led by the Archmage. They debated and fought over the true way to use magic as their abilities greatly differed. Magicians lack the magical core of a witch/wizard and are forced to use what magoi their life force grants them. Witches/wizards lack the proper magical pathways to allow for the use of Magoi, but are able to use the magical core inside their bodies which filters in magic from around them,"

"But both die if they use too much magic regardless of how their magic works," Mahsa guessed earning a nod from Ragnarok, "Pride among other things must have been the reason for the whole fight."

"Indeed as both Magicians and witches/wizards are capable of monumental feats of magic," Ragnarok drank some more of his his water before continuing, "Many battles and wars occurred before finally the eldest of the Magi at the time decided that it was enough as the world was slowly being torn apart. It was decided to seperate the two halves and their allies via a veil that couldn't be passed by anyone. Eventually, one of the younger magi made it so the veil could be passed, but by that time, very few wished to,"

"So there hasn't been a Fanalis on this side of the veil in a long time?" Mahsa asked earning a nod, "Then how do you know all this?"

"Members of the goblin clans travel through the veil every few years to trade and take stock of everything on both sides," Ragnarok explained as Mahsa began to eat an apple feeling pleasantly full for the first time since she'd left Hogwarts, "One of the nations we have ties to is known as Reim which is where you're from,"

"Does that mean you can help me get there and find my family?" Mahsa felt hope burning in her chest for the first time in a long time.

Ragnarok nodded as he set down his cup, "Yes, but it will be a month before we can do so as there are many rules and regulations that must be followed."

Mahsa frowned a bit, "I don't think I can stay in a hotel that long."

"Quarters will be made up for you here at the bank," Ragnarok offered her what seemed to be a reassuring smile, "Please allow us to assist you,"

Mahsa thought about it carefully, "No one will know I'm here?"

"No one save for us goblins and the few humans we trust will know of your presence," Ragnarok sounded a bit happy to say it, "Albus Dumbledore and his herd will know nothing of your presence. All the basic amenities such as food, water, bathing, and the like will be provided,"

A thought occurred to Mahsa, "If I ask for it, would I be taught the basics of fighting? With the reputation of the Fanalis and the fact I'm a witch, I'll probably end up in a few fights whether I wish to or not. It will likely also help me get used to my new abilities once I'm unsealed."

"Of course, we would be happy to," Ragnarok definitely sounded pleased.

"So long as you take any payments needed from my account, I will happily take you up on your offer," Mahsa decided earning a grin from Ragnarok, "I assume there is going to be a basic contract of some sort?"
As soon as arrangements had been made, Mahsa gathered her things from the hotel and returned to the bank with Hedwig on her shoulder. She was taken to a rather sparse, but nice room where she quickly got everything settled. Hedwig was sent to the Gringotts owlery where she would be looked over and given all the enhancements needed to survive in the lands beyond the veil that Mahsa's magic was incapable of providing. She met up with Ragnarok who introduced her to the goblins she'd likely be spending a lot of time with for the next month once the ritual was done with. Daggerbane, the goblin that trained many of the curse-breakers that worked for Gringotts, he was a stocky goblin that was missing an eye and half an ear. Wintersparrow, the goblin healer that healed any injured human curse-breakers that needed it, she was a stern looking goblin covered in what looked like tattooed runes. Fallowspinner, a scholarly goblin that understood more about how witches and wizard's magic worked than they did, he was a rather cheerful goblin that didn't get out a lot. Lionclaw, one of the goblins that regularly traveled to the world beyond the veil, he was covered in scars and had a coarse looking beard that didn't exactly look right on a goblin. With their help, she would be ready to go to her homeland once everything was said and done.

The cleansing ritual occurred two days after Mahsa had her inheritance test done. It basically involved her laying in a pool of potions that she didn't really want to think about what went into them while a group of goblin priests chanted over her. The ritual took over four hours during which it felt like her nerves were simultaneously on fire and being frozen solid. By the time it was over, she was absolutely exhausted. Once it was clear that the ritual had worked, she ended up spending two days with a high fever and overly sensitive senses as her body tried to get used to the fact it wasn't bound by anything anymore.

Despite the malnutrition and other problems caused by growing up the way she had, she was as strong if not a tiny bit stronger than the average human male. She began to work with Daggerbane and Wintersparrow to strengthen her body to where it should be at her age as well as correct what had been done to her. Fallowspinner and Lionclaw worked with her after the days training/healing was done with. Before any training began, Wintersparrow had her take a potion that corrected her sight meaning she no longer needed glasses. As most would probably be able to guess, she spent almost her entire month under the care of the goblins in an almost constant state of exhaustion.

On the days she was given to rest both mind and body, Mahsa spent time exploring Gringotts and buying things for herself under a potion that changed her features enough to make it impossible to figure out it was her especially since the scar on her forehead had begun to heal properly. She bought many interesting books including one on the animagus form and how to obtain it as she was curious to see if she'd end up becoming a red lion. She bought herself new clothes like dresses and skirts which she hadn't been able to do before save for when it came to getting school supplies. She made sure all of them were made of durable materials that were resistant to the elements. And, she explored the parts of Diagon Alley that she hadn't been able to before.

On days that she had off from training and didn't feel like exploring, Mahsa wrote down everything that had happened to her since her first clear memory. She was surprised that she could remember somethings from before Dumbledore took her. Muu and Myron interacted with her far more than Mother though that wasn't to say that their mother didn't interact with her. Muu was often the one to take care of her when night fell while Myron did the same during the day when their parents were busy. Father was busy most of the time, but often took the time to just hold her when he could after a long day. Unlike the rest of them, Father had blonde hair and bluish-green eyes which meant showed that he wasn't a Fanalis.

A week after she'd left the Dursleys for the last time saw Mahsa receiving letters from her friends, Molly, and Sirius. To sum it up, Hermione and Molly pretty much ordered her to go back to the Dursleys. Ron thought it was wicked and hoped she was safe. Sirius praised her on pulling this
kind of 'prank' before asking if she was safe and where she was staying so he could come stay with her. She sent letters back that basically told them she was fine and somewhere safe with little in the way of differentiation via an owl from the post office. Out of all of them, the only letter that had much difference was the one to Sirius asking if he knew the truth about her parentage.

Mahsa was sent more letter after that with most of them having portkeys, tracking spells, potions, etc. on them. The goblin torched the letters after writing down their contents and kept her from receiving the howlers Molly sent after her. Sirius sent her a letter explaining that yes he knew the truth, apologized for not saying anything sooner, and asked where she was again. She sent a howler of her own to Molly explaining just why her behavior wasn't wanted or needed with a few mentions of the ginger haired woman not being her mother. She sent Sirius a letter accepting his apology, but stating that she wouldn't be telling him where she was other than that she would be going home soon enough. As the goblins were the only ones aware of where the actual veil was, she didn't have to worry about anyone outside of Dumbledore managing to find her.

It was during this time that the goblins made her aware of the smear campaign against her and the fact she had a prophecy over her head. Lawyers were contacted and put to work making the smear campaign against her a thing of the past. A set of memories were sent to the DMLE along with a pointed letter asking why Sirius Black hadn't been given a trial. The Prophecy was a vague thing that didn't even mention a girl meaning it didn't actually pertain to her. Even if Voldemort had marked her as his equal and turned her into a Horcrux, the prophecy didn't actually mean her. While she felt violated and ill at the fact she had been a horcrux, she felt better since it had been destroyed via the cleansing ritual which is why she'd had that intense fever since her magic was repairing the damage done by it.

Despite the horcrux being removed, Mahsa still retained her status as a parselmouth which was a good thing since one of the curse-breakers ended up accidentally bringing what seemed to be an immature wyvern back with him from Egypt. The little sand colored creature ended up causing quite a bit of havoc before she found him and found out what happened. It was after he relaxed that the little creature turned into what seemed like a gray lion cub with scaled back legs, a scaly tail, and a crest of scales along his brow. The little creature's tawny eyes changed to a softer bluish color when in his lion cub form though they retained the slit pupil of his snake-form. The ones chasing the creature appeared and attempted to kill him only for her to protect him as something inside of her loathed to see the little one killed. Once everyone had calmed down and Ragnarok stopped laughing, she was made aware of the fact that the little cub was a subspecies of chimera that could switch between two forms.

The little cub ended up becoming her second familiar and was called Darius after the famous wizarding explorer who had discovered a village of Druids that could only be found once every fifty years. The reason she named him Darius was due to the fact that the famous wizard had fallen asleep in a tree close to the village of Druids and ended up falling out of the tree when it moved to form the gateway to the village. Darius had decided to fall asleep in the curse-breakers bag to stave off the cold chill of night after getting separated from his pride and ended up being dragged along when the curse-breaker returned to England the next day before the cub had woken up. Needless to say, the curse-breaker was in trouble for not checking his bags before leaving.

Darius was quickly given the same treatment as Hedwig though he spent his time either with Mahsa or in her rooms. The cub tended to sleep quite a bit which while a bit worrying was explained that the chill of the bank was making him sleepy due to his serpentine side. To ensure he didn't get sick, she always took him to the warmest place in the bank which was the forge where they created all the metal objects within the bank. The goblins inside didn't mind so long as they didn't bother them and she ended up learning a bit about metal craft when inside the forge.
After the month had passed, Mahsa packed up her things which now included a pair of goblin-made daggers that could be considered short swords by some and a new wand. Due to the cleansing ritual, she couldn't use her old phoenix and holly wand anymore as her magic had grown far too wild for it. She had the goblins turn her old wand into a bracelet that she wore on her right wrist. The new wand she had contained the hind claw of some kind great feline with some of the venom Darius produces while the wood was a mix of holly and blackthorn. The goblins that had been with her when the wand was made muttered that it was perfect. Given that blackthorn wands tended to go to warriors, she supposed it was what with the Fanalis being a race of warriors.

To ensure she couldn't be pulled back for some bogus reason, Mahsa closed down the Potter accounts after moving everything to a new account under her real name. She had the goblins gather all the important objects belonging to the Potter family and had them moved into a vault before selling all the properties save for a few that would be there if she ever desired to return. She had them sealed up until such a time as she returned. And then, she wrote a letter explaining why she was leaving and sent it to the Daily Prophet. A majority of it explained that she was tired of how two faced the public was. Of course, she also made her true heritage known though she kept the whole detail about being a Fanalis back since there was no telling what the magicals of England would do. Only after she left for the Veil would the letter be published, she was somewhat sad she wouldn't get to see the results of her words.

Darius and Hedwig were placed in carriers much to their annoyance with the cub attempting to escape. They were taken via portkey with a small team of goblins led by Ragnarok to the veil. Once the usual symptoms of using a portkey had subsided, Mahsa was given her first true look at the veil. Two massive pillars of stone covered in what looked like runes and a language she didn't really understand stood towards the north, the area between the stone pillars rippled slightly as a soft breeze wafted through it. The immediate area around the pillars was composed of barren soil while the rest of the area was covered in enough greenery that it reminded her of the forbidden forest. A small village of goblins, humans, and a few other kinds of creatures bustled around them. Ragnarok spoke as she took in everything, "Welcome to the Veil, Mahsa Alexius.'

Despite arriving when the sun was still high in the sky, they had to wait until tomorrow near dawn to be able to cross the veil. From what Mahsa heard, it sounded like the group of people from Reim they were supposed to be meeting weren't set to arrive until tomorrow which meant they had to wait on this side of the veil. Since the other side didn't have a settlement like this, they couldn't just go through and wait as the area on the other side was uninhabitable. The closest village/port was about a day away which meant waiting was for the best. While she didn't exactly like it now that she was so close to going home for the first time since Dumbledore took her, she understood that patience was needed.

To bide her time, Mahsa spent time sparring with one of the younger members of the settlement. She was a half-Fanalis that had chosen to live on this side of the veil rather than on the one she came from due to the fact a majority of the Fanalis were enslaved. It horrified the younger witch, but she wasn't going to let that stop her from going home. The other half-Fanalis couldn't blame her since family was a big thing for their kind, but warned her to stay close to the Fanalis corps. They would keep her from being enslaved.

Darius was a hit with the members of the settlement once they understood he wasn't a danger to them due to his bond with Mahsa and the fact he was young. He was thoroughly spoiled via treats and cuddles make her wonder if he'd end up fat by the time they left. He was happy enough to curl up in bed with her when night came and it was time to rest. Hedwig settled on the headboard of the bed and peered down at her. She stared out at the moon on her stomach while Darius lay curled up against her side. She spoke softly as Hedwig fluttered her wings, "I can't believe I'm finally going
home. I keep thinking that Dumbledore will snatch me away before we can meet my family or the other Fanalis. I...I'm going to miss Hermione, Ron, and everyone else despite what happened. But," She took a deep breath and smiled, "This is what I wanted. This is a new chance to become someone more than the 'girl-who-lived', I can't just give that up. I'm going to be meeting my family and despite the fact they may not like me, I can't wait," She looked at the full-moon and hoped that Remus was doing alright, "Maybe one day, we'll come back and see how everyone is doing."

That is if Voldemort didn't kill everyone, the bitter thought made Mahsa grimace before she shook it off. No, she wouldn't let him keep her here much like she wouldn't let Dumbledore keep her from going. Voldemort knew nothing of the Veil or where it was meaning she didn't have to worry about him finding his way into the other world anytime soon. Considering the fact he hadn't been doing much despite being returned to life, she doubted that he would even be thinking about ways to get her. If anything, he'd probably be working on gaining more followers or getting everything ready to get more followers. She wondered over whether her Fanalis blood would do anything to him before shaking that thought away. Despite what she'd thought before, the blood cells that came from her would've died by now or were in the process of dying. Considering the fact that bones were what created blood cells or something like that, it meant that any blood he'd taken from her would be flushed out of his body by the ones created by the bone he took from that grave or Pettigrew as the case probably was.

The only one Mahsa had to worry about stopping her was Dumbledore especially since she didn't know how he'd kidnapped her. Perhaps it had something to do with Fawkes? She knew that was probably what happened, but why? If Phoenix's were beings of goodness then why would Fawkes help Dumbledore kidnap her? She inwardly groaned and carefully rolled onto her side while wrapping an arm around Darius as the cub made a soft sound of annoyance. She felt her irritation ease as she rubbed his between his ears. Why did Dumbledore kidnap her? How did he find her? Those were the questions that she would ask Dumbledore if he ever found her again, she hoped he wouldn't until she was able to force him to answer her questions.

Pushing those thoughts from her mind as she listened to Darius purr, Mahsa decided that she needed to sleep. They were leaving a little bit after dawn meaning that she needed to fall asleep now otherwise she wouldn't get more than a couple of hours. It might be only one more hour, but that hour counted in the scheme of things. Closing her eyes, she murmured a goodnight to Hedwig and concentrated on the sounds of the night which slowly lulled her to sleep.

A endless plain filled with plentiful prey...Crimson haired people with red eyes that held out their hands to her as they called for her to join them...the feeling of warmth and knowing that she was finally home...People happy to see her...a pride of crimson furred lions...golden birds fluttering around...

Mahsa woke up to Darius mewling at her for food while his nails dug into her chest. Hissing a bit from the pain, she got him to let go and went about getting him some food before getting ready for the day. A glance towards the sky showed that dawn had come meaning she only had a little bit of time before they left. She grabbed some food of her own after getting dressed and began packing up what little she'd unpacked. By the time she was done, a knock sounded on the door and she opened it to find Lionclaw standing there, "We're getting ready to leave, Mahsa."

Mahsa smiled as she nodded, "I've got everything. Darius just has to finish eating."

"If things don't work out with your family, you're welcome to join our caravan for as long as you may wish to," Lionclaw looked away from her.

Mahsa's smile widened a bit at the show of affection. Goblins didn't show affection as humans or
most races did as they could be as stony as the stone they lived within. Offers such as the one Lionclaw gave her were their way of showing affection, it said a lot about how close she'd come to at least one of her teachers during her month with them. Instead of calling the gruff goblin on it, she said, "I'll take you up on that offer for a little while if it doesn't work out."

Lionclaw grunted and stood by the door as Mahsa got her bags ready. Darius finished his food and she put his bowls away before putting the cub back in his carrier much to the cubs annoyance. She did the same to Hedwig before joining Darius at the door with her things in hand. Lionclaw took Hedwig's carrier from her and freed her up to calm the cub down. They joined the other's that were heading through the veil and Ragnarok smiled a bit, "Did you sleep well?"

Mahsa's dream flickered through her minds eye and she nodded, "Yes."

Carts were loaded up and Mahsa placed Darius' carrier onto one with Lionclaw doing the same with Hedwig. The carriers were strapped down as the trip through the veil could be bumpy according to Lionclaw. Once that was done, she was pushed to get onto the cart with Lionclaw following her. Ragnarok joined them moments later and the cart jolted forward. Ragnarok spoke as they approached the veil, "It has been awhile since I've had the chance to get out of the bank and go across the veil."

"What's the most interesting place you've been to outside of Reim?" Mahsa's stomach was filled with butterfly's as the carts began to travel through the veil.

"Sindria. It was just starting out, but I truly liked it especially the leader," Ragnarok replied earning a curious look, "Sinbad, the king of Sindria, he is a very powerful man and someone that I definitely think you would benefit from meeting. He managed to gather quite the group which then formed Sindria through a series of adventures that began when he was 14,"

"Quite a few of the stories about his adventures were written down," Lionclaw commented as their cart reached the veil.

"I'll have to read them sometime," Mahsa said just as the cart passed through the veil.

Wind slammed into all sides of the cart, the feeling of an intense pressure pressing down on her left Mahsa a bit breathless. The world around her was vibrating as multicolored lights surrounded the cart. It felt like her heart had turned into that of a humming bird. When it all died down, she slumped forward struggling to catch her breath. Once she was able to, she calmed down Hedwig and Darius as Ragnarok grunted, "Definitely just how I remember it."

"Bumpy, huh?" Mahsa shot a glare towards Lionclaw.

Lionclaw merely smirked at her before getting off the cart. The cart continued to move for a few feet before settling beside the others and Ragnarok said, "You may let them out now."

Hedwig immediately took flight while glaring at the veil while Darius sought shelter in her arms. Mahsa worked on calming the cub down while getting off of the cart with her bag. She settled down by the cart wheel and leaned against it as the cub began to calm. She did her best to calm down too since the ride through the veil definitely left her unsettled. Once both of them had calmed down, she coaxed Darius into his snake form and had him settle around her neck. She stood up and began to look around the area. It was completely barren of any life save for those that had come through the veil. She frowned a bit as Darius hissed, "I do not like thiss place, Sssa."

"I know, Dariusss," Mahsa went to find Ragnarok, "I do not either. There should be othersss here,"

"I know, Dariusss," Mahsa went to find Ragnarok, "I do not either. There should be othersss here,"
Ragnarok looked up from the map he was looking over, "Yes, Mahsa?"

"Where are those that were supposed to meet us?" Mahsa cut straight to the point.

"They are over the hill," Ragnarok pointed towards one of the large hills that surrounded the veil, "They should be here within the hour," He looked at her closely, "May I ask what is wrong?"

"Just unsettled," Mahsa shook her head lightly, "I'm going to practice my magic if that's alright,"

"Do as you wish, but do not venture far," Ragnarok warned her earning a nod.

Mahsa headed back to the cart and pulled out her wand from the bag she'd put it in. While she could use the wand holster wrapped around her left arm, she didn't want to chance losing it if the charms preventing it from going more than five feet from her ended up failing especially in this new world. She worked on conjuring and transfiguring the rocks around them. Darius ended up transforming back and chasing some of the rabbits she ended up transfiguring. It was amusing and really passed the time. When she heard the shout of people approaching, she called Darius back to her knowing that Hedwig would return soon.

Darius returned to his grayish yellow sand colored serpentine form and curled around her neck with his small wings pressed into her neck. She rubbed his scales soothingly as Hedwig settled on her shoulder next to the young serpent earning a low hiss of acknowledgement from Darius. She returned her wand into the bag and left it on the cart knowing that everyone would be traveling to Reim more specifically Remano, the capital. She joined Ragnarok as a group of riders approached and took them in. They were dressed in what looked like armor much like the ancient Romans only in bright gold with a crimson plume from their helmets. Two of the riders differed from the others. One a man with long crimson locks and crimson colored eyes. The other man was older than the first with light wavy hair, she couldn't quite describe the color, and dark eyes that focused on the goblins. Even with the light haired man's long nose, she was drawn to the Fanalis and felt her heart beat quicken.

Darius must've felt her pulse jump as he tightened his coils around her neck and hissed, "What iss wrong, Sssa?"

"That Fanaliiss in front...I think he'sss my big brother," Mahsa hissed in reply as the Fanalis focused on her.

A breeze kicked up as the riders came closer causing Mahsa's hair to cover her eyes for a few seconds. She mentally scolded herself for not braiding it this morning as she pulled it out of her eyes. The riders reached them and dismounted from their horses though only the two helmet-less men approached. Ragnarok greeted the two males with a slight smile, "Ignatius Alexius, Muu Alexius, I wasn't expecting both of you to greet us."

Mahsa couldn't help the sharp intake of breath as she stared at the Fanalis that had just been confirmed to be her brother. The Fanalis stared at her with a somewhat intense look as Ignatius Alexius, she wondered if they were related and how, said, "Lady Scheherazade decided it would be prudent to send both of us especially given the circumstances," She jolted a bit as he addressed her, "You are the one this is about, correct?"

"Yes, Sir," Mahsa said after taking a moment to find her voice.

"If you'll consent to a second inheritance test alongside Muu, we can move on," Ignatius said making her frown in confusion, "We need to ensure that you're in fact Mahsa Alexius. While we do not doubt the goblins abilities, it is best to make certain,"
"Of course, I have no problem doing so especially with family on line," Mahsa understood their caution and didn't even feel bothered by it seeing as she would probably do the same.

The goblin quickly set up two inheritance tests showing that they had anticipated such a thing and blood was drawn. The results of her test from before were laid out before everyone's eyes though they went back further than she expected. She looked at Ragnarok for answers. Ragnarok spoke as the tests continued to write out information, "We felt it best to do a comprehensive test rather than the regular one to ensure that there are no mistakes. Given the situation, we had to do so."

"Please take the cost from my accounts," Mahsa said earning a few surprised looks.

When the tests were finished, Muu pulled Mahsa into a bone crushing bear hug. She stiffened a bit before relaxing as a scent she barely remembered entered her nose bringing tears to her eyes as she hugged him back. Muu spoke for the first time, "Mahsa, I finally found you. After so long, you're finally back."

"Muu," Mahsa pressed her face as best she could into Muu's armored chest.

After everything that had happened in her life, Mahsa was finally going home.
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

The adventure has begun and a certain someone gets some screen time.

The newly reunited siblings were given some time alone while the goblins and Ignatius worked out their travel arrangements. The soldiers that comprised the mounted escort wandered among the humans and goblins while shooting looks towards the siblings though most were settled on the younger of the two. Mahsa ended up settling against the side of a cart while Muu settled across from her. Muu spoke after they'd gotten settled, "What do you remember of what happened?"

Mahsa shook her head lightly as she rubbed Darius' scales, "Nothing really. The only memories I have from before I turned three are fragments for the most part. I remember bits about Father and Mother. The only memories that are truly clear are the ones of Myron and you. Even then, I can't remember much," She looked at her older brother curiously, "What exactly happened? All I got from the letter Lily Potter left me was that Dumbledore, my old Headmaster, showed up one night after her original child died and convinced them to take me in. It wasn't that hard since they were grieving and given that it was a time of war, they were likely looking for anyway to ease their pain."

Muu frowned a bit, "I see. Father was in the capital doing his job as an administrator. Mother was doing laundry. I had the day off from training, so I was home spending time with Myron and you. It was a little bit after lunch when an old man with a bird that I'd never seen before approached us. Myron broke away from us to get a closer look at the bird while I followed slowly behind her not wanting to get close. I warned her not to get close as the old man wasn't someone I was familiar with and at the time, it was best to be cautious as an assassin was on the loose," Muu's eyes darkened, "He did something that made Myron fall unconscious causing me to shout and set you down in order to rush at him when he did the same to me. The last thing I remember was the old man saying he was sorry and that there was no other choice."

Mahsa growled a little at Dumbledore's audacity, "Did he knock Myron and you out with a red light?"

Muu thought about it and nodded, "Yes, it came from a stick and he said something that I can't quite remember what."

"He stunned you," Muu gifted her with a confused look, "On the other side of the veil, the witches and wizards have a spell that can stun people. Depending on the strength of the spell, it could knock someone out for a few hours up to a few days,"

"Can you use it?" Muu asked earning a nod, "What's it like using that kind of magic?"

"I can't really describe it as anything other than feeling warm when casting some kind of spell," Mahsa smiled a bit at how eager Muu looked, "What happened when you woke up?"

"Mother was screaming and crying about someone kidnapping you," Muu's eyes were dark and his lips were peeled back a bit in a snarl, "A few of those that had been nearby at the time saw the man disappearing with you in a flash of fire,"
"Dumbledore has a phoenix familiar which can teleport itself and anything touching it via a ball of fire," That answered quite a few questions, "I don't understand why Fawkes would do something like that. Phoenix's aren't supposed to kidnap people much less children,"

The question bugged her quite a bit, but Mahsa doubted she'd get an answer anytime soon. Muu changed the topic, "Perhaps we should speak of something else? What's your favorite food?"

By the time they set off, Mahsa had found out quite a bit about her brother and Fanalis in general that she hadn't known before. Muu had spent the last few years gathering up the Fanalis in the world that he could find and bringing them to Reim. A majority of them served as members of the Fanalis Corps which Muu was the leader of. He had done it both to free their people and to hopefully find her. Muu was also a Dungeon Capturer which meant he wielded one of the Djinn. His Djinn was known as Barbatos, the Djinn of Hunting and Nobility which came from the 8th dungeon.

Mahsa had a bit of a laugh when Darius decided that he wanted to get to know her big brother and surprised Muu by transforming into his cub form. Muu freaked out a bit before relaxing when Darius just mewled at him and didn't attack. From there, she explained how Darius came to be in her care and his position as one of her familiars. Hedwig returned as they were getting ready to leave and nearly beaned Muu in the head when she swooped down. Muu wasn't angry and looked at the owl in interest as did many of the soldiers. Hedwig eyed Muu for a little while before deciding that he wasn't a threat and went to take a nap. Muu looked from the owl to Mahsa she placed Hedwig into the cart, "I feel like she was judging me."

"She was," Mahsa confirmed before snickering at Muu's surprised expression, "Hedwig's as smart as a human thanks to being born, raised, and surrounded by magic. Sometimes, I think she's smarter than most humans if I go off some of the people I knew in England," She rubbed Hedwig's breast feathers, "I've had her since I was eleven and learned about my magic. She was a birthday present from the first magical person I met and is very protective of me due to everything that has happened in my life,"

"Will you tell me about it? Your life after the Potters died?" Muu asked with a concerned frown.

Mahsa had avoided the subject as much as she could during their talks. It wasn't that she was ashamed of her upbringing or what happened to her. She just didn't really want to talk about it. Inwardly sighing, she said, "I don't really like talking about it and would prefer to avoid doing it more than once. Once we're in Remano with Myron and relatively alone, I'll share everything."

Muu looked like he wanted to argue, but held his tongue. Instead, he nodded, "Of course," He looked towards the horses as the goblins began setting everything up, "Would you like to ride with me?"

"I've never ridden a horse before. I did ride a Hippogryph which is an animal with the front of some kind of bird and the rear of a horse before," Muu offered her a curious look, "The first time was part of a class and the second involves an event that would take quite a bit of time to explain,"

Muu eyed her, "I won't like it, will I?"

"Probably not," Mahsa smiled sheepishly, "Anyway, I don't think now is the time to try since we do have to travel for awhile today, don't we?"

"I will show you how tonight and we'll ride together tomorrow," Muu offered and she agreed causing him to beam at her, "Good. Now you should get settled, we are on the verge of leaving
"Yes, Brother," Mahsa said as she began to pull herself onto the cart.

Muu stopped her with a hug and murmur of, "I'm so glad you're back, Mahsa."

"I am too," Mahsa murmured in reply before she was released.

Traveling via cart was a bit boring and felt slow. After they stopped for Lunch, Mahsa asked if she could ride her broom much to the confusion of the Reim soldiers. To clarify what she meant, she took out her broom and did a small demonstration. She didn't touch on some of the things she could do since it was doubtful they'd take it well. After being assured it was safe, she was given permission and spent most of her time in the air after that though she did decide to fly close to Muu when Darius wanted to stretch his wings.

The cub wasn't the strongest flyer and tired fairly quickly showing that he really was just a youngling that had left the nest a bit too soon when he ended up with her. Mahsa didn't mind giving him the chance to fly so long as he stayed close to her. Ignatius spoke as Darius returned to her, "How far did you get into your studies before leaving, Miss Mahsa."

Mahsa looked at him as Darius curled himself around her neck, "Only to my fourth year at Hogwarts though I believe that I'm further in most of my studies after my month with the goblins. If I were to go back to Hogwarts, I would have three more years left of study before I could leave," She shook her head, "Though from what I've seen thanks to the goblins, I highly doubt that Hogwarts is the best school if only because the standards in some subjects have fallen quite a lot since the blood war that occurred."

"Which subjects do you have a firm grasp on?" Ignatius asked as Mahsa flew a bit closer.

"My best are Transfiguration, Charms, and Defense though the last has been mostly self-study due to poor teachers," Mahsa tried not to think about her last Defense professor, "I am somewhat good at Herbology, Care for magical creatures, and Astrology. My Divination, Potions, and History are not very good. I do not have the gift of sight nor any real skill that could make up for it meaning that Divination was a waste of time. Potions isn't good because my teachers was a very bitter man that believed me to be the child of his most hated enemy and took it out on me. Even if he weren't so bitter, he is not meant to teach anyone or, at the very least, those just starting to take the subject. History of magic was taught by a ghost which droned on and one in a voice that literally put all save for the most determined to sleep. I often either skipped the class or used it to take naps,"

Muu frowned as he said, "Why have two incompetent teachers or a class that should only be taken by those with a talent for it?"

"I have no idea why Snape's a teacher. No one could get rid of the ghost professor though I don't think they really tried," Mahsa shrugged lightly earning a hiss of displeasure from Darius, "I don't really know why they don't have limits on who can take Divination though the teachers is a bit off. I only took the class in hopes for an easy grade alongside one of my friends. I wish I'd taken ancient runes though even if it's mostly theoretical. It would have been more worth my time,"

"Did they not teach you about combat or tactics? Math, languages, science?" Ignatius asked looking aghast.

Mahsa shook her head, "Combat and tactics for it are generally considered barbaric though it probably would've helped in their Blood War. Math was a subject you could take in your third year
if you so wished. Languages and science were non-existent. Languages were supposed to be taught at home while science was considered a 'muggle' or non-magical thing that wasn't needed."

"So who's been teaching you to fight?" Muu gestured to the daggers on her waist.

"The goblins, though more specifically Daggerbane, taught me the basics. I hope that I can learn more since it's actually really fun," Mahsa had developed a rather intense love for fighting which most of the goblins blamed on her Fanalis side.

Muu grinned at her comment, "You'll fit right in with the other Fanalis. I'll see about who I can find that can continue teaching you though you'll likely end up spending time picking up the style that most Fanalis use."

Mahsa grinned a bit as well, "I can't wait."

"Though any of that will have to wait until after you speak with Lady Scheherazade," Ignatius cut through the conversation and Mahsa looked at him in confusion, "As a member of the Alexius family and the sister of two members of our military, she wishes to ensure that your intentions match your words. The few magicals outside of those that come with the goblins aren't the best people,"

Mahsa could understand though a small part of her was annoyed by the amount of caution being showed, "I understand. She is looking after Reim's safety. Mr. Ignatius, may I ask how we're related as your last is Alexius as well."

"Your father was one of my cousins on my mothers side," Ignatius answered with a light smile, "Just call me Ignatius,"

"Call me Mahsa, then," Mahsa replied earning a laugh.

Mahsa asked more about her birth parents from Muu and Ignatius. Father had died a few years after she'd been kidnapped via an assassin that had been aiming to kill someone else. Mother had died of sickness not even a year after her kidnapping due to the stress being put on her body and knowing that her youngest child was missing. Even Fanalis who's bodies were far above that of normal humans would succumb to illness, it showed them to be as mortal as anyone else.

Just as he'd promised, Muu showed Mahsa how to ride his horse after Dinner. She didn't exactly like it, but didn't hate it either. It wasn't until Muu got onto the horse behind her and coaxed it into a run that she began to like it. The feeling of wind flowing through her hair as the horse sped up left her breathless as she laughed with glee. It was almost as fun as riding a broom or flying. She was a bit disappointed when they slowed, but understood that the horse needed to be at its best for tomorrow. Muu guided them back to the camp being set up, "Do you like it?"

"The running part," Mahsa said earning a laugh from her older brother, "Thank you for this,"

"It's no problem," Muu hugged her lightly, "I've got to make up for the years we've been apart after all,"

Warmth filled her chest at those words, Mahsa smiled as she leaned back against Muu. For one, she had family that actually wanted her. No matter what, she wouldn't let anyone take this from her now that she'd gotten a taste of it. She absolutely refused to allow that to happen.

After returning to the camp and getting ready for bed, Mahsa was ready to fall asleep the moment
her head hit the pillow. But after what felt like hours during which her mind wouldn't shut up, she
got out of the comfortable bed in her magical tent leaving Darius and Hedwig to sleep in their
room. She left her tent only to pause as she heard, "Mahsa? What are you doing awake?"

Turning her head, Mahsa spotted Muu standing nearby. She sighed softly, "I couldn't fall asleep.
My mind would shut up despite the fact I've had a tiring day," She eyed him noting his lack of
armor, "What about you?"

"I couldn't sleep either," Muu offered her a sheepish smile, "Knowing that after so long that I've
finally found you, it makes me afraid that I'll wake up and it'll all be a dream,"

"Same," Mahsa dropped onto the grassy plains they were currently camped on and looked towards
the sky, "It's funny how scared I am that all this is going to be a dream and I'll wake up back in that
hellhole of a house,"

"What do you mean by that?" Muu walked over and sat down beside her.

Mahsa bit her bottom lip before deciding that repeating this part wouldn't be too bad especially
since she wasn't going to go into detail until everything was settled with Lady Scheherazade. She
didn't take her eyes off the moon and stars which looked so similar to the ones back in England, but
much clearer to her, "After Lily and James died, I was sent to live with Lily's sister, her husband,
and their son. It wouldn't be a bad thing normally if proper procedures had been followed, but it
was a bad thing. Not only was I dumped on them with no word of warning, Petunia and her
husband Vernon hated magic. Petunia was filled with bitterness caused by jealousy as Lily had
been born with the ability to use magic whereas she was not. The jealousy festered and turned into
bitterness over the years. Vernon hated anything abnormal and magic is the definition of abnormal
to him since magic is pretty much a fairy-tail to all save for the magical communities," She looked
at Muu, "They instilled that hate in their son. Rather than treat me as a member of the family, they
treated me as little more than indentured servant. If my magic showed itself, I was punished for it
despite being unable to control it. It could have been worse, but nothing they did to me was right
especially since I didn't know my name, my adoptive one, until they were forced to put me in
school due to the laws of the England."

Muu's eyes darkened and a low growl rumbled from his throat, "They...I'll kill them."

Mahsa shook her head, "Don't. While what they did to me the definition of not right, they'll be
getting what they deserved. Crimes will be paid for," Muu frowned at her, "The law enforcement of
the magical community will be receiving information from the goblins and an anonymous tip soon
enough. Dumbledore and many others will have to answer some very difficult questions," She
smiled weakly at Muu, "I don't want anyone to die unless there isn't another way."

Muu shook his head, "I don't like it, but I suppose I'll have to deal with it."

"Especially when you don't know everything," Mahsa said earning a sharp look, "Only when
Myron is with us will I share it,"

"That doesn't make me feel better, I have a feeling that Myron and I will be hard pressed to keep
from rushing for the nearest veil," Muu stated dryly before shaking his head, "But regardless, I
suppose it is best to wait as it will give me time to calm down and hopefully be able to keep Myron
from doing anything rash,"

"Hopefully," Mahsa looked back at the stars, "It's different here. Almost the same, but not,"

"The sky?" Muu asked looking upward as well.
Mahsa hummed as she waved a hand at it, "Everything is so much clearer and the air is a lot sweeter. This side of the veil...It seems to have barely any pollution."

Muu was quiet for a moment before saying, "I'm not very well-versed in reading the stars, but I know some."

"Oh?" Mahsa looked at him.

"Let's see which are the same and different," Muu offered as he looked back to her, "Just until we're tired and ready to fall asleep,"

The trip to the port city took another day due to the slow movement of the carts, but no one was too annoyed by that. When they arrived, Mahsa was given the ability to wander around the market place for a few hours and did so with Darius curled around her neck. Hedwig ended up staying with Muu while her brother helped make arrangements on the ship they were taking. She used some of the money that the goblin converted into the money usually used for trading to buy lunch for herself and Darius after a little while. Moving to one of the benches set up by the fountain in the middle of the market place, she sat down and fed Darius some meat from the kebabs she'd bought. Eating some herself, she observed the passers by with a bit of curiosity as she wondered over the odd things she was seeing.

Some of them had some odd hair colors like green, blue, or even pink in some cases. Mahsa hadn't seen so many different hair or eye colors before. She was watching a few children that were playing around when a voice said, "Is that seat taken?"

Mahsa looked towards the sound and found a violet haired man around Muu's age if not a bit older standing there. He had pretty golden eyes that paired well with his hair color. He gestured to the seat next to her and she nodded, "No, you can sit down if you wish."

"Thank you," The man sat down with a sigh, "My name is Sin, yours?"

"Mahsa," Mahsa replied as she took off a piece of meat and handed it Darius.

Sin's eyes widened a bit as he watched Darius rip into the meat, "I've never seen a creature like that before."

"Darius is my companion. He's a wyvern," Mahsa rubbed Darius' head earning a hiss of pleasure, "He's still fairly young. I've only had him for a couple of weeks,"

"And he's so well behaved?" Sin looked at Darius with interest, "That's amazing,"

Mahsa snorted softly, "Not if you do what I do."

"And what do you do?" Sin asked earning a snort, "You're not going to tell me?"

"I don't know you and giving up my secrets to a complete stranger would be stupid," Mahsa took a bite of her kebab.

"So you'd tell me if we weren't complete strangers?" Sin asked with a light grin.

Mahsa chewed the bite in her mouth before saying, "Perhaps, but I'm leaving soon which means we can't really get to know each other," Mahsa handed Darius the last piece of meat and ate the last bit of vegetable before standing it, "If you'll excuse me, I have some exploring to do."
Sin stood up as well, "Allow me to accompany you for a little while, I can't in good conscience let a beautiful lady such as yourself go unescorted."

"Seeing as I can take care of myself well enough that my big brother doesn't mind me going off on my own, I do not need an escort," Mahsa rolled her eyes as she tossed the kebab sticks into the trash, "Thanks for the offer though, Sin,"

"If you don't need an escort, perhaps we could wander around together until you need to leave and get to know one another," Sin offered as he moved in front of her, "Please, Mahsa,"

Mahsa eyed him before sighing, "As you wish."

Sin was an interesting man and Mahsa found that she enjoyed his company somewhat. He flirted far too much for her to fully enjoy his company. He was a good companion though and a good story teller. Sin was telling her a story about one of his friends, a Fanalis, wrestling with a lion for fun when she spotted Hedwig flying over head. She cut Sin off, "Sin, it looks like I need to go."

"Oh, I was hoping we could spend a bit more time together," Sin actually looked sad too.

Mahsa smiled lightly, "It was a nice few hours. Thank you for accompanying me, I probably would've gotten bored if you hadn't," A thought occurred to her and she decided that telling just one person wouldn't really matter, "Since we've gotten to know one another better, I suppose telling you my secret to training Darius wouldn't be a bad idea," Sin looked at her eagerly, "I can talk to him in his own language."

Sin looked a bit startled and disbelieving, "Seriously?"

Mahsa nodded as she hissed out, "Darius, fly around Sin's head two times before returning to my neck."

Darius followed her order much to Sin's surprise. Darius settled around her neck again, "Hedwig's over head."

"I know," Mahsa rubbed his scaled head before telling a shocked Sinbad, "Bye Sin, I hope we encounter one another again."

With that, Mahsa headed in the direction of the port. Once she was there, Hedwig would show her the which ship was theirs. When they finally reached the ship, Muu looked at the cloth bags she carried with interest, "What did you grab?"

"Just a few clothes that got my interest and a keepsake," Mahsa answered before fishing through the bags to find it.

The keepsake was an eagle carved from stone that had been fished out of the ocean by the carver himself. Despite the obvious defects, it was a beautiful piece that showed just how much care the carver put into it. Muu took the carving and smiled as he turned it over in his hand, "It's nice."

"I figured it might be a nice reminder of the trip so far," Mahsa offered as an explanation, "They didn't have a lion otherwise I would've gotten on instead since that would be more fitting,"

Muu handed it back to her, "Let's get on the ship, your things have already been loaded up. We'll be sharing a room."

"I don't mind," It wouldn't be the first time she shared a room, "I've shared a dorm room with a few
other girls, so I really don't mind," She looked at the ship, "I've never been on a ship like this one. Two boats, yes, but not a ship that size,"

"It'll take some getting used to," Muu led her onto the ship as Hedwig settled on her shoulder.

Take some getting used to indeed, Mahsa swore as the rolling of the waves caused her stomach to rebel again and curled into a tighter ball as she struggled to avoid puking her guts up. Even with the potion to soothe seasickness, she was suffering as badly as Darius. Neither of them were built for the sea, they loathed the ever rolling waves. Even with the hammock that helped minimize the feeling of the waves, she was having trouble keeping her stomach calm. A warm hand rubbed her back, "We'll be in Remano soon enough."

"Why did I agree to this?" Mahsa whined before regretting it as the contents of her stomach threatened to leave her.

Mahsa hissed in displeasure as she was promptly picked up before settling against her brother as he hushed her, "Relax, I think you'll enjoy this enough to forget about your seasickness,"

Mahsa burrowed her face in his neck as she murmured, "Never again."

Muu just chuckled as he continued to walk until they were on the desk. The feeling of warm sunlight beating down on the earth and a soft breeze made her relax a bit. Muu stopped after a few moments and she pushed away to look around only to stare at the glittering expanse of water that surrounded the ship. Muu spoke as she watched some dolphin like creatures swim past the ship, "The sea is beautiful, isn't it?"

"Mhmm," Mahsa looked felt some of the sea spray hit her cheek.

Mahsa rubbed her cheek as Muu placed her onto her feet. Muu smiled as she looked at him, "Don't you feel better?"

"Yeah," Mahsa didn't feel as sick now though the feeling was still there.

Turns out the best way to help Mahsa get her 'sea legs' was to spar with her brother, Muu decided to see just how good she was with her daggers. It took some getting used to fighting on a boat, but eventually she managed it. Muu was a lot better than her, but he'd been fighting since he could walk properly as was the Fanalis way when it came to training as it ensure their young could control their strength. Muu ended up spending the remainder of their trip teaching her the basics of Fanalis combat under the watchful eyes of the goblins and the other members of the Reim soldiers.

Mahsa landed on her back after a harsh hit caused by Muu and decided that it was enough for the moment. Muu spoke as she continued to lay on the deck, "You're techniques are choppy and definitely need work. Though considering the fact you only began learning how to fight roughly a month ago, you're not that bad."

"Not up to standards though," Mahsa pushed away the small amount of bitterness that coiled through her as she said that.

"No, but you'll get there," Muu took a seat next to her and handed over some water.

Sitting up, Mahsa took a drink, "So we'll be in Remano soon, right?"
"In an hour's time give or take a bit," Muu grinned a bit, "I can't wait to introduce you to everyone,"

"Are you sure they'll like me?" Mahsa didn't want to doubt her big brother, but she knew people.

They didn't just automatically like someone whether they were of the same race or not. It had happened to her before. Look at the magical world and the muggle one back on the other side of the veil, no one was fully accepted by anyone save for children. Even then, children didn't fully accept just anyone especially if they were raised by bigots. Even with Muu around, Mahsa knew she'd have to fight for acceptance. After all, she was a wand wielder that came from another side of the veil despite being born on this side.

Muu's grin dropped at her question as he admitted, "Not all of them will at first, most if not everyone save for Myron, Mother, you, and I were slaves at one point."

"It wouldn't be the first time I'll have to work to get people to like the real me, but it'll definitely be better than what I had to deal with before," Mahsa smiled at her brother, "They're probably going to be confused because of the eye color though."

"Probably," Muu agreed with a laugh, "There's never been a green eyed Fanalis before much less a witch that can speak to snakes," Mahsa frowned a bit causing him to pause, "Something wrong?"

"Because of everything with Voldemort, people have viewed my ability to speak to snakes as a bad thing," Mahsa saw understanding fill her brother's eyes, "The goblins and the curse breakers don't really mind. I just..."

"You're afraid to be looked upon with fear or disgust because of it," Muu finished earning a nod, "Some people won't like it since an ability like that hasn't been seen before. Even the people of Heliohapt who are very fond of snakes and raise them cannot speak to them, you won't find many who'll dismiss a talent like that," Muu gained a considering look on his face, "It is very likely that once it gets out that you can speak to snakes, people will ask for you to assist them in matters concerning the serpents,"

"Do you think I might be able to help people with it?" Mahsa asked earning a nod, "Then that's what I'll do with the ability. Whereas Voldemort hurt people with it, I'll help them,"

Muu grinned at her, "Lady Scheherazade will probably help you with that."

"What's she like? Lady Scheherazade, I mean," Mahsa asked wanting to find out more about the Magi that would be deciding her fate.

"Lady Scheherazade is very kind and cares greatly for the Reim Empire," Muu replied as she began to drink more of her water.

Mahsa listened to her big brother speak about the Magi and came to a decision from what she heard. Muu respected Lady Scheherazade which worked in the magi's favor. Unlike Dumbledore, Lady Scheherazade wasn't a pacifist and would do whatever it took to protect those she cared for. She didn't hide behind a facade and half-truths like the old man. Though she wouldn't truly respect or even like the woman until after they met, Lady Scheherazade was definitely onto a good start.

Mahsa rode with her brother, the soldiers, and a few goblins towards the palace in Remano. Remano was an interesting city that reminded her of the pictures she'd seen of Rome with the only difference being that the Colosseum was in fantastic shape. Much like back when she'd first entered Diagon Alley, she wished to have thousands of eyes to take in the sights. The scents of the place were almost overwhelming alongside the sounds. Muu steadied her when she almost tipped
over, "Easy, Mahsa. You'll be able to get a better look at the city later."

Mahsa flushed as those around them chuckled, "Sorry. I've just never seen a city like this before. I definitely like it better than London."

The lack of cars and pollution made sure of that. When they reached the palace, Muu got off the horse and helped her dismount. She looked around the curiously as Hedwig settled on her shoulder and Darius stayed coiled around her neck. Both of them were looking around as well, Hedwig was gauging the dangers while Darius was curious about this place. Mahsa jolted a bit as she heard, "Captain!"

"Ah, Razol," Muu smiled warmly as a female Fanalis jogged up.

Razol is a petite young adult. She has red eyes and long red hair tied into two low ponytails. She had a scar that crosses her face diagonally and a piercing on her bottom lip much like Muu. She has two more scars from what Mahsa could see one that crosses her chest and one on her left arm. She wears a metal breast plate, a metal skirt, a metal arm guard that covers the outside of her right arm while her left arm only has a much smaller protector, and metal shin guards. She paused a bit as her eyes fell on Mahsa before looking at Muu, "Captain, is this the one that caused the big stir?"

"Yes," Muu placed a hand on the shoulder that didn't contain Hedwig, "Mahsa, this is Razol. She is one of those Fanalis under my command and a trusted comrade. Razol, this is Mahsa. She is Myron and I's little sister that had been kidnapped years ago. Thanks to the goblins, we've managed to find one another again,"

Razol offered Mahsa a light smile, "It's nice to see that you've managed to find your family again, Mahsa. As Captain said, I'm Razol. If you need anything and can't find your siblings, you can come to me," Razol looked towards Muu, "Captain, should I alert the others to the situation?"

"Yes, but please inform them that we're meeting with Lady Scheherazade and not to interrupt until we're done," Muu ordered earning a nod, "Please inform Myron that I will be very disappointed if she interrupts us,"

"Yes, Captain," Razol glanced at Mahsa one last time before taking off back the way she came.

Mahsa looked at Muu, "Myron wouldn't really interrupt us, would she?"

"Usually no, but she is very protective of our family," Muu looked down at her, "She regrets not being able to protect you back then as I am. It is highly likely that the fact we have you back will make her act a bit rashly, so we should hurry to our meeting with Lady Scheherazade,"

Nodding as a trickle of unease ran through her, Mahsa said, "Of course."

Lady Scheherazade saw them almost immediately after they arrived at the Palace. The magi of the Reim Empire resembled a young girl despite nearly over two hundred years old. She was a petite thing with long wavy blonde hair with two braids in the back that reached down to her ankles with a laurel wreath of grapes and vines around both sides of her head. Her attire consists of a long white robe that looks similar to a stola, with loose short sleeves over her shoulders that are secured by a round fibula, and a long red ribbon tied under her bust. Scheherazade has a wand that appears similar to a trident, it is longer than her body in height, and is in the shape of a crescent moon pointing upwards, a spherical red gem center, and a pointed tip that extends through the gem. When they entered, her eyes were closed, but they opened when Muu said, "Lady Scheherazade, we've returned."
Lady Scheherazade has the biggest bright blue eyes that Mahsa had seen before. They were a nice
clear blue that reminded the witch of clear endless blue skies only bluer. The magi smiled softly,
"Welcome back, Muu, Ignatius. Lord Ragnarok, it is a pleasure to see once more especially during
time like this," She turned her gaze towards Mahsa, "Mahsa, it has been a far too long since I last
laid eyes on you. Do you prefer Mahsa Alexius or Hawthorn Potter?"

"Mahsa Alexius, My Lady," Mahsa bowed lightly, "I would prefer to put my past as Hawthorn
Potter behind me as much as possible. While the past cannot be erased, I wish to move on as much
as possible,"

A small hand pushed Mahsa's chin up and she saw that it belonged to Lady Scheherazade. The
magi smiled softly at the Fanalis, "Please do not bow, Mahsa. Not now that we've been reunited."

Mahsa nodded feeling a bit confused, "We know one another?"

"Your father was a dear friend of mine as your big brother is now," Lady Scheherazade explained
as she removed her hand from Mahsa's chin, "I was there when you were born. The unique
movements of the Rukh ensured that I would be there," Lady Scheherazade closed her eyes, "It has
been awhile since a witch has been born on this side of veil much less one that caused such a stir
with the Rukh. I wished to watch you grow and spent much time with your family," The magi
sighed and frowned, "I have wondered over why someone would take you away, but couldn't
figure it out. Seeing your Rukh now and feeling your magic, I can somewhat understand though it
still puzzles me. Please, share your story with me,"

"I..." Mahsa looked towards Muu for help.

Mahsa did not want to share her story without Myron there. Muu blinked before saying, "My lady,
Myron should be here to hear it as well."

"Of course," Lady Scheherazade turned to address one of the guards, "Please have the Fanalis
corps join us, I feel that they too should hear the story,"

Mahsa hadn't expected that and wasn't too sure how it would all go over. She felt a hand on her
shoulder and looked to see Muu offering her an encouraging smile, "Everything should be fine. It'll
save a lot of time in the long run."

"I suppose," Mahsa sighed a bit, "I was hoping for something a bit more private especially since
some parts will be difficult to speak of."

"Then perhaps we can be of service," Ragnarok said drawing the siblings and Lady Scheherazade's
attention.

The goblins' idea was a modified pensive that acted much like a movie screen. It would play any
memories placed inside on a large screen. It was something that the international confederation of
wizards used when reviewing international incidents and evidence. Mahsa liked it better than
actually having to talk about everything that had happened especially since it would mean she
wouldn't have to be the center of attention for the most part. Due to the amount of memories
needed to be shared, Lady Scheherazade had them move into a large amphitheater-like room. It
would allow them to be comfortable while watching the memories.

Muu had disappeared with the guard to speak with the Fanalis corps for a few moments before they
arrived. Mahsa didn't have much time to wonder why until the last of her memories sank into the
pensive. It was the memory of the conversation she shared with Ragnarok before she began staying
at the bank. Pressing a hand to her temples, she muttered, "I have a headache."

"Considering how many memories needed to be copied over, it isn't surprising," Ragnarok offered her a sympathetic look, "I apologize for not warning you,"

"It's fine," Mahsa heard the door open and the sound of people entering the room.

"Are you alright?" Muu asked as he jogged up.

"I'm fine. Just a slight headache," Mahsa waved off his concern as Ragnarok held out a potion.  

"It's headache reducer," Ragnarok explained as Mahsa took the vile tasting thing from him and downed it after pulling out the cork.

Mahsa gagged a bit as she handed the empty vial back and shuddered, "I will never get used to taking those."

"Do you have to take them often?" Muu asked as the door creaked closed.

Mahsa nodded with a somewhat sheepish smile, "During my month with the goblins, I had to take those after some rather intense study session. The goblins are damn good at what they do, but they do not do easy. I did have some breaks, but most of them were after getting my ass kicked by Daggerbane."

"Your vocabulary was rather colorful from what I heard," Ragnarok smirked a bit and she rolled her eyes.

"And that's a bad thing?" Mahsa could curse out a goblin in their own language after spending so much time in the forges.

You had to be creative to swear at them in any language, but they only respected you when their own language was used. Muu gifted her with a somewhat amused look, "And you didn't use any on me?"

"You don't taunt me anytime I fail at doing something or piss me off to the point it wouldn't look weird if I started frothing at the mouth before kicking my ass into the ground again when I rushed at you," Mahsa had begun to learn how to temper her more volatile and passionate emotions as well as temper them in stressful situations, "You start doing that and, big brother or not, I won't hesitate to curse you out as creatively as possible. I just won't try to kill you when I get that angry," 

"Though it would be interesting to see how you fare against him," Ragnarok offered Muu and Mahsa a considering look, "You're a fast little shit when you get angry,"

"Get motivated," Mahsa corrected earning a curious look from Muu, "My memories will explain it. It isn't the happiest story,"

"Then I believe we should begin," Lady Scheherazade cut in with a smile.

Mahsa flushed a bit from the attention she found being placed on her. Muu let out a laugh, "Of course," He looked out at the gathered Fanalis, "Everyone, this is Mahsa Alexius. You all know that Myron and I lost our little sister to a successful kidnapping attempt. Thanks to the goblins and Mahsa's efforts, she has returned to us," Muu looked at her, "Mahsa, this is the Fanalis corps."

Mahsa looked out at the sea of crimson haired and eyed people with a flush to her cheeks, "Hi."
One of the female Fanalis pushed to the front and walked towards her. She was a tall young woman with tanned skin. She wore her long red hair in a little ponytail. She had thin eyebrows and a piercing on her bottom lip much like Muu. She wears a necklace with the Fanalis symbol around her neck that Muu had shown Mahsa during their time on the ship. She wore a metal breast plate over a tunic that extends over her metal skirt, a metal arm guard that covered the outside of her right arm while her left arm only has a piece of the tunic covering her shoulder, and metal shin guards. She paused a bit away and eyed Mahsa. Eventually a wide smile pulled across her lips, she said, "Hello, Little sister."

"Myron," Mahsa murmured as the Fanalis' scent reached her nose and felt tears burn her eyes.

Myron quickly closed the distance and pulled Mahsa into a hug though she was careful to keep from hurting the younger Fanalis. Mahsa hugged her big sister feeling relieved that she'd finally gotten to see her. Myron pulled away after a few moments and looked at the younger woman with careful eyes, "You definitely need to eat more. I don't know what they were feeding you wherever you were, but it was obviously not enough."

Mahsa's smile turned strained, "Yeah."

Myron frowned a bit, but was prevented from saying anything when Muu placed a hand on both their shoulders, "Let's go sit down, we do have quite a few memories to watch after all."

Muu pushed them to sit with Lady Scheherazade. Mahsa was settled between Myron and Lady Scheherazade with Muu behind her. Hedwig was currently settled in the rafters with Darius since there was no telling how the Fanalis corps would react to the two. The goblins started up the projector as Mahsa murmured, "This isn't going to be fun."

Myron shot her a look as Lady Scheherazade took one of Mahsa's hands in her own and squeezed lightly while Muu squeezed her shoulder. Despite feeling a bit comforted by the touches, she couldn't help, but feel uneasy. The memories of her life so far would be on view for a group of people she only just met and even then, she hadn't really met them all. If anyone could feel completely calm at a moment like this, they were probably a psychopath or something.
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Mahsa's story is told and quite a lot happens in this chapter. It could've been longer, but I feel that I've enough across. You'll notice differences, but this is an AU after all.

The first memories were of her birth family and Lady Scheherazade though the magi didn't show up more than a small handful of times. When the memory of Dumbledore kidnapping her appeared, Mahsa heard more than a few growls and snarls though it quieted down after Dumbledore picked her up and disappeared in a burst of flames that came from Fawkes. When the flames died down, Dumbledore had appeared in a wooded area. Fawkes let out a mournful trill and peered down at her baby form. Dumbledore sighed deeply, "I like this about as much as you, old friend, but such sacrifices are needed. She is the only child powerful enough to fit the prophecy. If only Lily and James' original child had lived, I wouldn't have been forced to take her, but it is not to be. Perhaps if she manages to survive this, I can make amends and return her to her true family."

Dumbledore moved through the wooded area into a small village. He passed by a sign proudly proclaiming it to be 'Godric's Hallow'. Soon enough, he reached a comfortable looking cottage and knocked on the door which was opened by a man she recognized to be James Potter. The events of the memories after that followed Lily Potter's level to a T. Life after she was adopted by the Potter's wasn't bad even when her magic acted up. For the first few weeks, Mahsa hadn't behaved very well as she knew instinctively that this wasn't right. It wasn't until after Lily sealed away her Fanalis heritage that she calmed down. Sounds of disgust echoed through the room as they watched Lily do the deed, the idea of anyone stripping away any part of their heritage horrifying.

The night Voldemort attacked the Potter's saw Mahsa being manhandled by her siblings. She was sad to watch Lily Potter die despite everything that had happened. After all, she was willing to sacrifice herself for a child that wasn't even her own. She swore her heart stopped a bit when Voldemort pointed his wand at her and sent an Avada Kedavra at her. She could feel her bones creak in protest from the tight grip her siblings had on her. The curse slammed into an almost invisible wall coated in runes with the focal point being a rather familiar looking mark on her forehead. Cracks began to form on the wall before seemingly healing over and sending the curse back to Voldemort causing his body to go up in smoke, she watched as the shade of Voldemort rose up from the falling cloak and ran from the room as the familiar mark on her forehead burned red-hot causing her to cry.

A smaller wraith formed and slithered through the air to her scar where it sank inside. Lady Scheherazade tightened her grip, "Your scar..."

"It was taken care of through a cleansing ritual alongside any other spells or potions on me," Mahsa watched in no small amount of shock and disgust as Severus Snape entered the room.

So Severus Snape had loved Lily Potter, why on earth would he hate the woman's supposed daughter? If she ever saw Severus Snape again, she would definitely be demanding answers.

The memories continued to be played and Mahsa watched as her life with the Dursleys played out from an outsiders point of view. Thanks to the enchantments and runes on the pensive, the
memories were crystal clear despite how much pain she may have been in. Every beatings, night spent outside, punishments, and the like for either her magic showing itself or some imagined slight. With each painful memory that passed, Myron and Muu slowly grew still while their grip on her grew tighter. She could feel their rage growing with each moment and yet, they were somehow staying still with a facade of calm indifference. And that state of calmness broke when the memory of her eighth birthday played out.

The day had started as it normally would with Petunia shrieking at Mahsa to get up and Dudley stomping on the stairs. It was only after she had started to make breakfast that things changed. It began with Dudley shoving her into the stove causing her arm to burn as the food in the hot pan she was moving to another burner went flying. A true scream left her as she pulled her burned and bleeding arm from the stove while slipping to the ground. Petunia screamed as Dudley raced from the room with wide eyes. Vernon entered the room after that, took in the situation, and proceeded to beat her almost to death before throwing her into the cupboard under the stairs. As the memory cut out from her losing the battle to stay conscious, she heard the sound of multiple cracks before pain blared through her loud and clear from where Myron was gripping her hand.

Muu let out a low growl that sounded more like it came from a beast than a humanoid being. At the very least, he didn't crush her bones though he did pull her tightly to him. The goblins paused the memory as Mahsa struggled to keep conscious from the fact her hand was literally being crushed by her elder sister. She spoke as Myron let out a growl that matched their older brother's, "Myron, while I'm glad that you're taking exception to my treatment by the walrus, could you let go of my hand before you hurt me further?"

Myron looked at her with rage filled eyes before glancing down at their hands and paling. She released her bone crushing grip with a quickness that one normally only used when releasing a burning object. Mahsa fought the urge to clench her hand and just grabbed her wrist in a ginger grip as Myron said, "Mahsa, I didn't-"

"I know," Mahsa hissed out through clenched teeth, "But can someone heal my hand, please? I'm have a very hard time not losing consciousness at the moment,"

While Mahsa's hand was seen to, the Fanalis corps took the time to work off the aggression that had built up since the beginning of her memories. With much reluctance, Muu pulled Myron to follow them on Lady Scheherazade's orders. Lady Scheherazade spoke as Mahsa downed a foul tasting potion that would keep her from going into shock while the healer worked on repairing the damage done to her hand, "You almost died, didn't you?"

Mahsa nodded while the healer began to set the bones in her hand while also getting rid of the teeny tiny little fragments that wouldn't be able to fit back into her bones, "Yes, if it weren't for my magic, I would've died. I was in and out of consciousness for two weeks. Petunia was forced to take me to the nearest hospital after one of the neighbors asked some pointed questions about me. I spent the rest of that summer in the hospital and the animals were forced to lessen their attempts to beat the magic out of me otherwise the authorities would find out what they were doing. The lie that they came up with to explain my injuries was flimsy enough that people were becoming suspicious."

"I'm sorry that I am making you relive this portion of your life," Lady Scheherazade looked very sad and apologetic.

Mahsa shook her head lightly, "Don't be. In the long run, I will likely thank you it as it helps lessen the pain these cause me."
The healer finished with her hand and handed her a dose of a rather familiar potion that she hated greatly, "Drink this, it'll ensure that your hand is repaired fully by tomorrow. I've made your hand immobile to ensure everything heals properly."

"Thank you," Mahsa downed the potion and handed back the vial it had come in.

"It is no trouble," The healer shook his head, "Just try to avoid having something like that happen for a little while,"

"I'll try," Mahsa rested her heavily bandaged hand on her lap.

The healer bowed lightly before leaving the room. Lady Scheherazade looked a bit confused, "He didn't give you a painkiller?"

"It would cause an adverse reaction with the potion he gave me to heal my bones," Mahsa remembered Madam Pomfrey's rather descriptive explanation and shuddered a bit, "Let's just say it involves melting flesh and leave it at that,"

"Are you able to eat?" Lady Scheherazade asked earning a nod, "As it is definitely time for lunch, how about we get something to eat while the others work out their aggression enough to join us?"

"That sounds good," Mahsa agreed with a small wince as the potion began to work, "I'm just glad that this time, I won't be regrowing all the bones in my arm and hand,"

Lady Scheherazade gifted Mahsa with a raised eyebrow as they got up, "That has happened before?"

"When I was twelve and going to magic school," Mahsa shook her head, "It will definitely be one of the moments Myron and Muu will definitely not like,"

Mahsa had the distinct feeling that her siblings would be killing Lockhart, missing memories or not, if he somehow managed to come anywhere near her. She didn't envy the fraud in the least.

Lunch was delicious mix of meats, soups, side dishes, and a rather nice tasting juice. Halfway through saw the Fanalis corps joining the magi, witch, and goblins, Myron apologized rather heavily though Mahsa waved off the apology stating, "You didn't do any repairable damage, so it doesn't really matter too much. Try not to do it again otherwise I'm very likely to break your nose. Sister or not, I've broken people's noses for less."

Everyone was a little speechless before someone asked, "Who's nose did you break and why?"

"I broke the nose of a boy named Draco Malfoy, wizards have a shitty naming sense from what I've seen, multiple times," Mahsa picked up a grape while rolling her eyes at the reminder, "The stupidest reason I broke his nose was for cutting some of my hair with a curse of some type or was it because he called me a bitch?" Mahsa had to pause before deciding it didn't matter, "Whichever it was, I've had a lot of stress relief from that though you wouldn't be able to tell I broke his nose since he always managed to make it to the infirmary before the damage could become irreversible. The ferret has a very punch able face,"

"So you always go for the nose?" Myron asked pushing away her remorseful feelings.

Mahsa snorted softly, "No, it was just the most fun place to hit him. When the boys around me hit puberty, I started aiming a lot lower especially since some of them didn't take the hint that I wanted absolutely nothing to do with them," She popped the grape into her mouth and chewed it before
saying, "I'd rather date my own gender than an Englishmen. Even then, I'd probably turn into a nun before someone tried to partner up with me."

"So what you're saying is that you've never had a relationship?" Someone asked sounding a bit surprised, "That's fucking insane!"

"Nope," Mahsa shook her head, "The only ones I've even ever thought of as relationship material were either old enough to only see me as a kid or in a relationship already,"

Charlie Weasley and Cedric Diggory were both very pleasant males. Charlie only saw her as Ron's friend and a perspective sister. Cedric was dating Cho Chang and very much dead. The only male in her age bracket that she'd consider dating was Blaise Zabini and he wasn't the type to go near a Gryffindor. Of the females she'd consider dating, Fleur, Daphne Greengrass, and Susan Bones were the only ones she'd actually consider. Fleur was French and very much not interested. Daphne wasn't interested since she was a Gryffindor and looked up to Dumbledore far too much until the tournament last year. Susan disliked her for 'stealing' Hufflepuff's glory. Yeah, her dating pool wasn't exactly the biggest since she didn't want to be with a sheep.

Myron patted her shoulder, "Well, I can tell you that you'll probably have better luck among us than anywhere else."

"Probably not," Mahsa shook her head earning a confused look from Myron, "I'm only fifteen and to be honest, I'd rather find out who I really am and where my place in this world is before I add a relationship into the mix,"

"Good," Muu hugged her tightly and she realized that any person she ended up dating would have to go through an older brother who was likely going to be very protective of her from now on.

And yet, Mahsa was okay with that prospect. She'd probably get tired of it eventually, but for now, she'd enjoy the protection her big brother was offering her.

Once Lunch was eaten, they resumed watching her memories. The memories before the zoo incident passed by fairly quickly as they weren't very important or hold any things of note. The zoo incident and the onslaught of letters brought quite a bit of laughter due to Vernon's paranoia. Mahsa's first visit to Diagon Alley garner a bit of interest as it was different in some ways to the markets found on this side of the veil. The goblins grinned when she commented that it would be a very stupid thing to attempt to steal from them. Many muttered about arrogant brats when she met Draco, no one really liked him at all. When it came to Ollivanders, everyone had one comment or another on the process of finding her wand.

Muu spoke when Ollivander explained about her holly and phoenix feather wand, "That sounds very ominous."

"It does," Mahsa glanced down at the bracelet around her wrist, "I can no longer use it. After my full power was unsealed, it became harder and harder for me to use it until I couldn't get a spark from it,"

The memories moved on rather quickly from there. It glossed over the rest of her summer and even bits about the train ride outside of meeting her two former best friends. Mahsa surprised everyone, including herself, when she began growling at Ron's rat. The only thing she said when asked what the problem was that they would find out before the end. The memory of her sorting was one viewed with a fondness though she did wonder just what would've happened if she'd been sorted into Slytherin rather than Gryffindor. Again, the memories passed by rather quickly as it glossed
over the various unimportant memories of her first year.

The important memories such as her first flight, the Three headed dog, Halloween Night, Her first Quidditch match, Christmas, the dragon hatching, the forbidden forest, and Quirrellmort were the only ones that didn't pass quickly. Myron quickly extracted the promise to take her flying at some point when watching her fly for the first time. The three headed dog was given a few amused looks while Muu looked aghast at the fact something like that had been in school. Everyone agreed that Draco was a coward when he didn't show up and were offended over the fact Ron accepted the duel instead of her. The troll incident saw Muu and Myron getting pissed off again though no bones were broken while her older brother scolded Mahsa for rushing in without an actual plan. The Quidditch Match was fun for everyone until she almost ended up falling from the sky due to her broom. Christmas, the cloak, and mirror saw her being hugged by her siblings and given sympathetic looks, she had broken down in front of the mirror more than once.

"Do you still have the cloak?" Lady Scheherazade asked earning a nod, "Will you allow me to look it over?"

"Of course," Mahsa had known she'd probably have to part with the cloak if she wanted a place here in Reim.

The dragon hatching was viewed with much interest and amusement especially when Hagrid's beard ended up getting burned. Mahsa's inability to actually understand the dragon was viewed with some confusion by all parties as wyvern's weren't that different though it was quickly put down to the seal on her abilities. McGonagall's actions and the forbidden forest detention were sneered at. Mahsa didn't doubt that McGonagall would receive a very cold reception alongside Dumbledore if she ever found her way to Reim. She felt the familiar sense of awed horror at the unicorn's dead body. Muu against scolded her when the events of the race against time to protect the Philosopher's stone were viewed. This time, she interrupted her brother and told him that she very much regretted the whole event since it had led to her inadvertently killing someone.

One didn't watch someone die at their hands whether because of their own actions or because of another's without being affected. She still had nightmares of the event though it was getting easier to calm herself down when it did pop up.

Dobby's antics during her summer second year were gifted with many grumbles and growls since it cut off her rather relaxed summer. The rest of the summer save for the twins and Ron saving her alongside the bookshop in Diagon after her rather embarrassing mix up with the floo were glossed over as unimportant. The events at the bookstore was heavily scrutinized and many scoffed at the fact Lockhart was to be her teacher. Dobby's attempts to 'protect her' during the events of her second year would find the house elf in hot water should he ever come to Reim. She wondered if he would answer should she call up him before deciding not to try until she was alone and could ensure he wouldn't try anything. After all, she did like the little bugger even if he had gotten her hurt quite a bit during her second year.

Missing the train due to Dobby fucking with the barrier into riding in Mr. Weasley's flying car with Ron was more amusing though Muu scolded her for not owling a teacher. She winced at the sight of the car crashing into the Whomping Willow and rubbed at her side where she'd hit it during the crash. Unlike Ron, she hadn't been lucky enough to come out of it without injuries and ended up with a few cracked ribs which had seen her ingesting that foul Skele-Gro potion. Myron winced as Madame Pomfrey mentioned her cracked ribs, "You have a high pain tolerance."

Mahsa hummed lightly, "Had to. Tears and screaming would give those animals satisfaction, I decided a long time ago that they wouldn't get it from me if they refused to show me even the
smallest amount of kindness."

The memories once again blurred until her first lessons with Lockhart and many chuckled over her answers to the quiz he gave them about himself. Lockhart was her least favorite Professor of the bunch especially after the events in the chamber passageway. The death day party was given a few interested looks especially when she chose to listen to some of the more bloody stories that the ghosts chose to tell. She scowled along with her memory-self when Malfoy said those despicable things before smirking as she put the blonde into his place. Mrs. Norris may have been an annoying cat, but she didn't deserve being petrified for doing her job. Murmurs of discontent ran through the crowd of Fanalis as Dumbledore revealed that the cat had been petrified rather than killed, Muu asked, "What did it?"

"You'll see," Mahsa was not looking forward to reliving one of her worst nightmares.

The events of dueling club and the revelation of her being a parselmouth were given a few interested murmurs. It looked like she'd be showing off her ability once everything was said and done. Brewing Polyjuice, using it to spy on Malfoy, gaining the journal, and her rather lackluster Quidditch match caused by Dobby were given quite a bit of interest. The Polyjuice potion and spying on Malfoy were given the most interest. The goblins promised to procure the book containing the potion at Lady Scheherazade's request though they warned that it might not work on anyone from this side of the veil. Given the fact she'd fallen horribly ill after the effects wore off, Mahsa understood why they gave that kind of warning. The journal was given multiple distrustful looks as was the young Tom Riddle. Growls sounded as the events of her disastrous Quidditch match occurred, Myron hissed, "That blonde idiot shouldn't even be near children if he's incompetent enough not to realize his own failings!"

"He get's what he deserves. You'll see," Mahsa watched Dobby appear and winced as Muu hissed out.

"He think he's protecting you?" Muu sounded more than a little pissed off.

"Yes, but I got him to promise that he wouldn't do it again," Mahsa looked back at her brother, "Muu, he's fucking crazy, but that doesn't make him a bad person just misguided,"

"How on earth can you forgive him for that?" Muu waved his hand at the frozen screen.

"You'll just have to wait and see," Mahsa replied earning a glare from Muu.

Lady Scheherazade spoke as a few snickers rang out, "I think we should move forward. I assume there are more interesting memories to be seen?"

Mahsa nodded and the viewing resumed. Much of her memories of that year were blurred past as they weren't very important, the only important ones were Hagrid's arrest, the Forbidden forest, Hermione figuring out what the creature was, and the Chamber incident. Hagrid's arrest and the knowledge of his past made many shake their heads. The Forbidden forest saw Muu scolding her again for jumping into that kind of situation while cursing the fact she hadn't had her full strength. Hermione's petrification and the subsequent realization of what the creature was saw her grimacing. One of her greatest regrets from that year was not ensuring that Hermione didn't go off alone. The events of the Chamber and her near death via poisonous bite saw her being held in a death grip as she watched with a pale face. Seeing them again was a thing of nightmares, she greatly wished that she'd been able to fight back then or had access to more violent spells.

Muu and Myron held her to them in a death grip as her older brother whispered, "You could have died."
"Nearly did," Mahsa remembered the icy feeling of the venom clawing its way up her arm as it chewed through the veins it passed through, "Would have if it weren't for the very phoenix that helped kidnap me,"

Fawkes crying on the basilisk bite hurt as badly as the venom. The two substances had fought for dominance within her veins before reaching a rather painful standstill. She had grown used to the pain both caused and barely felt it save for times when the two substances warred again. Lady Scheherazade whispered, "The tears didn't get rid of the venom, did they?"

Mahsa looked at the blonde magi in surprise before shaking her head, "No nor did they neutralize each other."

"The constant battle between them must hurt," Lady Scheherazade shook her head in sympathy as Muu and Myron gripped her tighter.

Mahsa shrugged as best she could, "I've grown used to the pain their standstill cause though sometimes they war once again."

"Shouldn't the cleansing ritual have gotten rid of them?" Muu asked with a distressed expression on his face.

Ragnarok shook his head as the goblins paused the memories again, "Unfortunately, the substances have been within her body for years now and have become a part of her thus they couldn't have been cleansed by the ritual we used."

"Is there a way to get rid of them?" Myron asked while looking at Mahsa in concern.

"A purging potion could work, but it will take time to modify it to the point it would be useful," Ragnarok looked at Mahsa, "About a year if not a bit longer, we will need some of your blood in order to do this,"

"Of course," Mahsa wanted to know what it was like to not be in constant pain.

"After the memories have all been viewed, we'll take the blood and get started," Ragnarok decided as Muu and Myron hugged Mahsa tightly.

The memories of her summer during third year were amusing despite the threat of a mass-murder hunting her. Out of all her school years, Mahsa enjoyed her third year the most even if she hadn't been able to go to Hogsmeade without having to hide herself. Running around Diagon Alley without anyone telling her what to do had been the most fun she'd had in years, she wished that she'd spoken to the goblins back then, but then again, she was glad that she hadn't. Who knows what would've happened if she had.

Third year started off just as badly as the year before if not worse due to the Dementors. The soul sucking demons were given looks of disgust and horror once it was explained just what they could do. Looking at this part of her memory, Mahsa was surprised to actually hear more than Lily Potter screaming her adoptive name. She heard her mother screaming her true name as well. A small smile graced her features as she realized that even if she'd forgotten about it, some part of her remember her real past. Maybe she might've remembered sooner if she'd paid more attention? Shaking it off as she watched the memories progressed, she wondered if that was the only time something like that had happened.

Most of her third year was glossed over as it didn't contain much interesting information, it was Mahsa's most peaceful year at Hogwarts after all. The parts that weren't glossed over were the parts
with the dementors, Trelawney, Care, punching Malfoy, learning the patronus charm, getting the
map, learning about Sirius' position as her godfather, and the whole thing with finding out Sirius' innocence/running away from a werewolf.

Almost dying due to the dementors and losing her first broom were still a sore spot to her, Mahsa wished that the patronus charm could actually do damage to the damn things. Trelawney's vague prophesies were annoying alongside how useless her classes had been. Care was fun to remember especially when it came to Malfoy getting his ass kicked by Buckbeak even if it had nearly gotten the beautiful creature killed. Punching Malfoy for calling her a whorish bitch left her amused alongside Muu's low growls, Malfoy was going to get his ass kicked if he ever came to Reim. She wondered if her patronus had changed and vowed to find out. The map was given quite a bit of interest with Myron asking, "Can you make one?"

"No, but if Remus or Sirius every come here, you could ask them since they never told me how to make my own," Myron wasn't the only one to look disappointed, "I do know it involves ancient runes which aren't a subject I studied. I wish that I had,"

Sirius' position as her godfather and his 'betrayal' was greeted with sounds of discontent. No one liked a traitor especially when they were supposed to be your best friend. Muu frowned as he said, "Why would you trust Sirius if he is a traitor?"

"It'll be explained later, but he isn't the actual traitor. Just watch and keep an eye out from the rat," Mahsa wasn't going to say anything else about it.

Listening to Buckbeak being killed again left her heart aching even if she knew the great beast hadn't died, Mahsa liked the prideful creature quite a bit even before he hurt Malfoy. Watching as Sirius' innocence was revealed and the rat being found out, she growled darkly before focusing on Muu as he asked, "Can you do that?"

"I'm planning on learning," Mahsa answered with a slight grin, "I'm really interested in seeing what kind of animal I'm going to turn into,"

Watching herself being chased by a werewolf was almost as terrifying as actually being chased, Mahsa happily took the offered comfort from her siblings. Almost dying because of the dementors again was not fun, she kind of wanted to slap herself for believing that Lily Potter had actually been there when the woman had been dead since that horrible Halloween. Being sent on a wild goose-chase by Dumbledore made her growl a bit alongside her siblings, the old man was far too manipulative for his own good. Saving Buckbeak and Sirius was nice, she could have done without being chased by a werewolf. At the very least, Remus was very sorry for forgetting his potion.

As the memories of the final moments of her third year passed, Myron commented, "It sucks that the rat got away."

"I really wish we had caught him," Voldemort's resurrection might have been prevented if Pettigrew had been caught.

The summer before fourth year was almost as nice as third year's if it weren't for the World Cup. Threatening the Dursley's with Sirius had been nice, she wished it had worked so well this year. Mahsa still thought that the twin's were genius' since their pranks were really on the next level compared to the ones created by Zonko's. She would need to ensure that some of her money was invested in their products with the goblins help since she knew they'd go far. Meeting Charlie and Bill was still pleasant, she still thought that the brother that tamed dragons was far better. The Quidditch World cup was a lot of fun until those Death Eaters got involved. As always, she hated
how weak she'd been and how easy it had been for her wand to be stolen.

The important parts of her fourth year involved the announcement of the tournament, fake-Moody's classes, the other schools arriving, the champions being chosen, the weighing of the wands, finding out about the dragons, the first task, the lead up to the yule ball, the ball itself, the second task, the third task, and everything that had happened after the portkey activated. Mahsa loathed this year the most especially as it had convinced her that the magical world deserved to stew in it's own shit. Isolation and bullying left for a bitter 'savior', she wouldn't be saving them after what happened.

Muu spoke as Dumbledore finished announcing the tournament, "Please tell me that you didn't get involved in that."

"Not by choice," A bitter smile crossed Mahsa's lips, "But then again, when did I ever get a gods be damned choice?"

Muu hugged her tightly as Myron wrapped an around around her waist. Mahsa had never been able to choose for herself before the whole visit to the bank that set off everything. The memories continued to be shown as everyone decided to stay quiet and not bring attention to the moment. Fake-Moody's classes were given quite a bit of interest especially when the three Unforgivable's were shown. Myron whistled softly, "Those curses are intense."

"If the wizards ever come here and use them, you'll know what they look like. I can't cast them," Mahsa refused to actually cast any of them despite knowing how.

The other schools arrivals and introductions were given a lot of attention. Mahsa understood since they were rather exciting and well done. She thought that Dumbledore should have had Hogwarts do something other than the school song to match them, but then again, England wasn't very impressive when it came to magic from what she saw. The choosing of the champions and being dragged into the tournament saw her being hugged her tighter. She'd stepped up to the plate, but that didn't mean she liked being forced into that kind of situation. Ron's betrayal was met with growls of anger and disgust especially when he didn't believe her when she said that she hadn't entered. The weighing of the wands was given a lot of interest and Muu asked, "What kind of wand do you use now?"

"A wand made of holly and blackthorn that had been blended together," Mahsa answered as she took out the wand, "The core is a claw of some kind of great feline with some venom from Darius,"

"Who's Darius?" Myron asked her.

Mahsa smiled lightly, "You'll meet him later along with Hedwig. Let's just say he's a bit surprising."

The articles Skeeter put out about her were glanced over since Mahsa didn't give a shit about them though it was very likely the illegal animagus would be in hot shit if she came to Reim. Finding out about the dragons saw her being hugged hard once more, Muu hissed, "You're never going back."

"Never want to," Mahsa replied with a small glare at the screen.

Watching herself face the Horntail and out fly it, Mahsa felt her heart beat in excitement despite how dangerous it had been. The scar that the Horntail left on her shoulder was a testament to the fact she'd survived. Myron frowned when Ron tried to act like everything was okay, "You actually forgave him?"

"Forgive, yes. Forget, hell no," Mahsa shook her head, "I will never trust him as I once had. He lost
that chance after what happened,"

The lead up to the ball was annoying since she kept getting asked to it. Eventually, she ended up going with Dean Thomas. The boy wasn't that bad though she would never consider actually dating him. Ron had been pissed at both Hermione and her for not going to the ball with him despite the fact he hadn't asked them until the last minute. Listening to Ron rant about it, Muu growled softly, "That boy doesn't deserve your friendship."

Mahsa said nothing since Muu was right. Ron didn't deserve her friendship despite the fact they'd been through so much together. Perhaps if he grew up and actually apologized to her, she would accept him as her friend once more, but that wasn't likely to happen. Myron spoke up, "That boy, Dean, he seems like a decent boy."

"He's one of the nicer Gryffindor boys and the only one other than Neville that hasn't done something to piss me off," Seamus was one of the pushiest boys that had tried to get her to go out with him, "It was either Neville or him. Neville's a bit too timid for my liking and we honestly don't have much in common. Dean agreed to go with me strictly as friends. It helps that he doesn't like girls as more than friends,"

Neville was a sweet boy who didn't speak up as much as the others. He allowed his voice to be drowned out due to how timid he was. He was a good listener though and was a good tutor when it came to Herbology. The second task wasn't a fun memory especially since she'd gotten hurt by the Grindylows. Saving Dean and Fleur's younger sister was nerve-wreaking just watching it, she had nightmares of drowning after that since she still didn't know how to swim. Myron said, "That wasn't fun, was it?"

"No especially since I didn't know how to swim. I still don't know how to swim," Mahsa said earning a shocked look, "Vernon and Petunia would've rather allowed me to drown than teach me how to swim,"

"I'm going to teach you," Myron decided with a frown, "No knowing how to swim is very bad considering how often you need to travel by the sea and how easy it is to get knocked into the water during storms/battles,"

"I'll try my best," Mahsa said before they focused back on the memories.

The third task approached and Muu commented, "That's actually like a Dungeon only tamer."

"Really?" Mahsa asked earning a nod, "Tell me about how you conquered your dungeon later,"

Muu agreed with a grin that disappeared when the portkey activated. Seeing Cedric die again left her flinching as a low whine sounded from her throat, the older teen had been a good guy and someone she generally liked. Myron and Muu offered her what comfort they could even as the memory shifted to the ritual. She remembered every detail in stark clarity from the smells of the graveyard to the pain in her arm as Pettigrew took her blood. She remembered the duel and seeing the Potters appear as the dome created by an invisible phoenix formed. The race to the goblet and Cedric's body followed by the pull of the portkey filled her mind. She remembered feeling the bite of rough ground as she landed back in the Quidditch pitch with Cedric's body clutched in her arms. Everything after that was a blur of pain and movement as shouting echoed through her ears save for fake-Moody revealing who he really was. Muu and Myron clutched her tightly as she watched everything with a pale face. Muu muttered, "He planned it from the beginning."

"I hate myself sometimes for not seeing it soon or not just grabbing the portkey alone," Mahsa
closed her eyes, "I know that it wasn't my fault, but I feel that way. I never want to end up in a position like that again,"

"We'll make sure it doesn't happen," Myron promised as Muu nodded along.

The memories after that were mostly a blur since she was working to get over her grief about Cedric's death which had joined her nightmares. It was a miracle that she hadn't had any since she'd read her mother's letter. Then again, she'd either been training too hard to actually dream or worked herself to exhaustion via studying. After meeting Muu, she'd been spending time with her brother and just absorbing the fact she had family that cared for her. The memories ended with the letter Lily had left her. The goblins shut off the projector and Ragnarok gathered up the memories as whispers broke out. Lady Scheherazade spoke as everyone digested what they'd seen, "After seeing your memories, I have made my decision," Everyone quieted down as the magi stood up and looked at Mahsa with a warm smile, "Mahsa Alexius, I have seen your memories and know that your intentions are true. So long as you wish it, Reim shall welcome you as one of its children until such a time as you decide to leave. Welcome home, Mahsa."

Relief rushed through her as tears began to gather in her eyes, Mahsa could only grin as her siblings cheered. She was finally home.
Chapter Summary

A few siblings moments and getting to know a few more Fanalis.

Ragnarok returned the memories and Mahsa shivered as they sank back into her mind, "That felt weird, a lot weirder than copying them," She shook her head slightly as the memories resettled, "Though not getting a headache is a nice touch."

"So Mahsa, who exactly is Darius?" Myron asked once the last memory had been returned, "I didn't see him in your memories,"

"Darius is my second familiar that I gained during my time with the goblins," Mahsa raised her head and whistled sharply prompting Hedwig to fly down with Darius beside her, "The wyvern is Darius. He's special,"

"Special how?" Hedwig landed on Mahsa's shoulder as Darius did the same.

Mahsa coaxed Darius into her arms while being careful of her hand before hissing, "Shift into your cub form, it'sss besssst for them to know about it now."

Darius did as she asked earning gasps and looks of astonishment from the crowd of Fanalis. Mahsa quickly adjusted her grip to prevent Darius' weight from hurting her hand. Lady Scheherazade smiled at the change, "A young chimera. It's been a long time since I've seen one."

Myron shook away the shock to coo at Darius, "He's adorable. How old is he?"

"We don't really know though he's still pretty young," Darius peered at Myron curiously, "Do you want to pet him?"

"Can I?" Myron asked as she got closer.

"Dariusss, will you allow my ssister to pet you?" Mahsa asked earning a nod from the cub.

Myron took that as a yes and reached out to scratch under Darius' chin resulting in the cub becoming a purring pile of satisfied chimera, "He feels so soft. I was expecting his fur to be a bit rough seeing as he is a lion."

"It'll likely turn rough once he gets old," Mahsa watched a few more of the female Fanalis draw closer, "You can pet him too. He absolutely loves it so long as you're not too rough,"

Once Darius had been cooed over by all the female Fanalis and Mahsa had been introduced to each member of the Fanalis corps, the healer that had taken care of her hand drew three vials worth of blood from her. She was then led to what would be her room inside the palace. It was inside what was known as the Fanalis wing since a majority of the Fanalis corps. lived in the palace. Those that didn't live in the palace had homes somewhere close by, Muu and Myron promised to show her them during a tour of the city. It would likely be a few days for such a tour occurred both because she needed to be shown around the palace and the fact her siblings had duties to attend to. She
didn't really mind the wait since it would give her time to get used to the palace and get to know everyone a bit better.

Myron walked into the bare room, "While I was tempted to fix this room up, I wasn't sure what you liked so I kept it simple."

The room was about just a bit bigger than her room back at the Dursleys and fairly plain. There was a bed, a wardrobe, a set of shelves, a desk, and a chair, Mahsa liked it immensely since the window was more than big enough to allow Hedwig and Darius out if they wanted to fly. It looked out at a rather pretty looking garden with what looked like an apple tree in the center of it. She walked further into the room as Darius hoped out of her arms to explore and Hedwig flew to the desk, "I like it."

"Not too small?" Myron asked as she looked at Mahsa.

"It's a bit bigger than the room I had back at the Dursleys," Mahsa said as she walked over to the bed and sat down on it only to lay back, "It's a lot better than what I got there. Nothing is broken, the bed is an actual bed, and it's not considered a catch all for junk," She raised her head to smile at her sister, "The only thing that could make this better is a bathroom all for myself, but its not like I haven't shared one before. At least this time, I won't have to worry about my roommates making fun of me for my scars,"

"Would they really have done that?" Myron asked as she walked over to sit next to Mahsa.

Mahsa nodded as she laid back fully with her hands settled on her stomach, "Especially once they started puberty, they turned into vapid vipers that were constantly attempting to get the attention of 'date-able' guys. They would've tried using my scars as a way to destroy my confidence especially in Fourth year when I was getting asked out constantly. I shudder at the thought of what they would've done this year if I ever planned on going back."

Myron frowned at that, "That teacher of yours, the one that can turn into a cat was a liar. If your house was really your family, they would've have turned on you like that or would've done something like what you were talking about."

"You aren't wrong," Mahsa sighed and closed her eyes.

Only to open them moments later when Muu asked, "Who isn't wrong?"

Muu was carrying her bag, trunk, and the carriers for her familiars into the room. Myron answered him as Mahsa reluctantly sat up, "I was calling her teacher, the one that can turn into a cat, a liar."

"Definitely not wrong then," Muu said as he placed the things down, "Dinner will be in an hour," He looked at Mahsa in concern, "Are you alright?"

Mahsa wasn't really sure what he was asking about, but nodded with a light smile, "I will be."

"Do you want some help setting everything up?" Myron asked as Darius hoped onto the bed.

Mahsa contemplated doing alone before remembering her hand and nodding, "That would be a good idea, I probably would fuck something up if I tried sorting things with my hand like this."

Myron winced at the reminder, "I'm really sorry about that."

"I know," Mahsa looked at Muu, "Are you going to stay with us or..."
Muu offered her an apologetic smile, "Lady Scheherazade has called for her council to listen to Ignatius' and I's report about our trip. Sorry."

"It's fine," Mahsa was disappointed, but understood that Muu had things he needed to do, "See you at dinner?"

Muu nodded as he walked over to hug her, "Of course."

Mahsa hugged him back after a few moments and watched him leave. Myron nudged her lightly, "Let's get everything set up."

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*Mahsa ran through the damp and dark maze of stone that made up the Chamber of Secrets with her limbs feeling like lead. The basilisk was gaining on her even though she was trying her best to escape it. She tripped over one of the pieces large pieces of rock that ended up being knocked loose by the snake. She heard the snake come up behind her as she barely managed to roll onto her back and stared into its poison coated mouth filled with fangs.*

Mahsa shot up with a choked scream as panic slowly overcame her. A voice she knew that she should recognize, but couldn't due to the panic spoke in a calm voice that she couldn't really understand. It wasn't the voice that calmed her, but the rumbling sound that she instinctively recognized as comforting. Slowly, the panic and fear caused by her nightmare slowly withdrew allowing her to hear the voice, "-Hat's it, Mahsa. It was just a dream, Little Sister. I've got you."

Soon, Mahsa registered the fact she was began rocked and turned her head to find Muu to be the one holding her. Rather than feel embarrassed about the situation, she only curled up closer to her big brother, "Brother, what are you doing here?"

Mahsa inwardly cursed at how shaky her voice was. Muu answered as she calmed down, "I was on my way back to my room after a bath when Hedwig flew up to me. She insisted that I follow her and when she led me to your room, I thought someone had attacked you only to find you in the throws of a nightmare. When I realized that, I immediately woke you up and began calming you down."

"I'm sorry," Mahsa murmured feeling a bit of shame and embarrassment about this.

"Don't be," Muu hugged her tighter against his chest, "It's my job as a big brother to look after you. Comforting you after a nightmare is one of the things that I'm supposed to do,"

Mahsa felt less shame and embarrassment at his statement, "I just..."

"You've never had anyone to comfort you after a bad dream," Muu finished when she trailed off, "I'm going to make up for that as best I can,"

"So am I," Muu and Mahsa's head turned to the doorway where Myron stood with her arms crossed.

"Myron," Mahsa looked at her in confusion, "What are you doing here?"

Myron walked into the room before closing the door and walked over, "I was going to bed when I heard someone head into your room and got worried so I came to find out what was going on," She gave a pointed look to Muu, "Move over."

Muu did as Myron bid and Mahsa found herself settled in between her siblings, "What's going on?"
"We're sharing a bed just like we used to after one of us had a nightmare," Myron answered as she wrapped an arm around Mahsa's waist with her hand settling on Muu's side.

While Mahsa was heavily tempted to argue out of embarrassment and the fact she didn't know her siblings very well, the comfort they were offering her after a bad nightmare and the fact that neither seemed inclined to move kept the argument from leaving her lips. Instead, she got comfortable, "Okay."

Muu wrapped an arm around both his siblings and Mahsa fell asleep feeling safe for the first time in a very long time.

Mahsa woke up to Myron snarling at a male Fanalis, Lo'lo she believed his name was, to leave them alone. She yawned softly and sat up feel an arm around her waist. The arm tightened as a low growl sounded from behind her. Myron jolted and looked at Mahsa in shock along with the male as the sound rang out, "Mahsa, did I wake you?"

"Mhmm," Mahsa looked behind her to find Muu, "What the hell?"

"You had a nightmare last night," Myron explained while eyeing Mahsa in concern, "Muu and I decided to sleep with you rather than leave since neither of us was comfortable leaving you alone after seeing how panicked you were,"

Mahsa's memory from last night came back and she shivered at the memory, "Oh, yeah."

"Lo'lo, go tell the others that we will be joining them shortly," Muu said from behind her as he sat up, "And do not antagonize Myron so early in the morning."

So she was right that his name is Lo'lo, it wouldn't be hard to remember since he had that scar on his face. Lo'lo smirked, "But it's fun."

"Go," Muu ordered and Lo'lo left soon after, "Myron, did you have to shout at him so early in the morning?"

"He shouldn't have come into Mahsa's room," Myron replied with a frown, "Especially when she's asleep,"

"Lo'lo wouldn't have done anything," Muu replied before shaking his head, "We need to get up. It's almost time for breakfast and morning training,"

Myron let out a gusty sigh, "Fine, I'll let it go just this once," She looked at Mahsa, "I know that you're hand is probably not going to be fully healed yet or the healer won't let you fight with it even if it is, but it doesn't mean you can't watch us practice. Get on some clothes you don't mind getting dirty though since a lot of dust and dirt tends to fly around while we do."

"Okay..." Mahsa nodded slowly feeling a bit thrown by how quickly her sister could go from snarling at someone to smiling.

Myron grinned and hugged Mahsa before getting out of bed, "Good! I'll be back in ten minutes to take you to the dinning hall."

Mahsa watched her go feeling a bit lost and jolted when Muu placed a hand on her shoulder, "Myron's really eager to spend time with you. If you want to stay in your room to rest or something, I'll talk to her since we did just get back yesterday and things have been pretty much nonstop since then."
Mahsa shook her head, "It's fine. I'm actually really curious to see how everyone trains."

"Are you sure?" Muu offered her a searching look, "You don't have to force yourself just because you want our approval or anything."

Mahsa shook her head, "I know," It was one of the things that the Weasleys had taught her, "I want to do this."

Muu eyed her for a little while longer before nodding with a smile, "Alright," Muu hugged her tightly before moving to get out of bed, "I would suggest you get ready. Myron can be impatient sometimes."

Mahsa watched him leave with the door shutting behind him. She stared at the door for a few moments before focusing on Darius as the cub hissed, "Issss sssomething wrong, Sssa?"

Mahsa shook her head, "No, I've just never had a morning like thissss before."

Getting up, Mahsa walked over to the wardrobe and looked over her clothes before deciding on the ones she usually used for training. She took off her clothes and changed into her clean ones with some difficulty due to her immobile hand though it was easier than trying to get dressed with only one arm. That had been difficult, she resolved to never break her arm or anything like that again if she had a choice. A knock sounded on her door once she started tying her shoe laces, "Mahsa, you ready?"

"Almost," Mahsa called out and the door opened to reveal Myron, "I just need to tie my shoe laces and brush my hair."

Myron nodded as she walked into the room, "You're pretty good at doing things one handed."

"I've had plenty of practice," Mahsa finished with one shoe and moved to the other, "I'm looking forward to watching everyone practice since Muu talked about how exciting it was,"

"It can be," Myron walked over and looked around before spotting the brush, "Do you mind if I..."

Mahsa contemplated it before nodding, "Sure."

Myron grabbed the brush before getting behind Mahsa and beginning to brush the younger Fanalis' hair. Mahsa was stiff at first, but slowly relaxed at the strangely soothing feeling. Myron spoke as the witch focused on getting her second shoe tied, "Maybe after training is done for the day, you could show us some of your magic."

"How long is morning training?" Mahsa asked her curiously.

"Morning training is usually until noon after which we take our daily bathes then eat lunch together," Myron carefully tugged the brush through some rather stubborn knots, "After that, we do whatever duties we have, train some more, or do whatever we want if its our day off. Every couple of days, we have a training day where everyone save for a few of us train all day long. That's usually when we go out to drink, it's a lot of fun."

"You all drink?" Mahsa asked earning a nod.

"Yes," Myron paused and tugged Mahsa to look at her, "Have you ever drank before?"

Mahsa shook her head, "No. There were times during the Gryffindor parties that there was alcohol, I never drank it since they avoided giving any to anyone under the age of 15. The only alcoholic
thing I've ever drank is butterbeer and that only has trace amount of it."

Myron resumed brushing Mahsa's hair as the young Fanalis resumed tying her shoes, "Well, you'll definitely going to get your first taste of it soon."

"Why?" Mahsa finished tying her shoes and glanced back at Myron.

"Since you're fifteen, you're legally allowed to drink in Reim though no more than one or two cups at any meal," Myron answered earning a surprised look from Mahsa, "You didn't know?"

Mahsa shook her head slightly, "I wasn't really focusing on drinking laws and stuff while I was studying under the goblins. I was focused on getting general information about this world and about our people."

"Well, we'll definitely take you out for a drink after your first all day training session," Myron tugged the brush through some stubborn tangles, "It's a tradition after all,"

They joined the other Fanalis in the dinning hall where breakfast was being served. The goblins and humans that had traveled with Mahsa were there as well. The goblins were grinning and seemed to be in a really good mood which was explained by Myron commenting, "The goblins are going to be joining us for morning training."

"That would explain it," Goblin were warriors before they were anything else after all and the promise of a good fight was definitely something to be happy about.

"Ah, Mahsa," The healer walked up with a smile, "Let's check over your hand,"

"How long until my hand fully heals?" Mahsa asked as she was led to an open seat and the healer began checking over her hand with his wand.

The healer quickly undid the bandages around her hand which looked as if it hadn't been broken, "It is healed at the moment, but the bones will be fairly brittle for a few days as the magic settles completely," He took off the splint, "You don't have to wear that anymore," Mahsa carefully flexed her fingers and clenched her hand into a fist, "No pain?"

"No," Mahsa grinned at the healer, "Thank you for healing me,"

"It's no problem," The healer waved off her apology, "It is my job after all," He vanished the splint and bandages before standing up, "Drink at least a glass of milk at every meal and a nutrition potion every evening for the next few days, your hand will be completely fine and you can spar as much as you wish," He patted her arm, "Now if you'll excuse me, I'm going to get something to eat before I head to the Infirmary and talk with the other healers,"

The healer headed off to the small line of people getting their breakfast was set up. Razol, the female Fanalis that Mahsa had met yesterday in the entrance hall, smiled at her, "I'm glad that your hand is healed though it is disappointing that we'll have to wait a few days to see just how well you fight."

"I don't exactly mind since I'm actually interested in seeing just how different you guys train compared to the goblins," Mahsa shrugged lightly as her stomach let out a growl causing her to blush.

Myron and Razol let out laughs as her sister grabbed her arm, "Let's get food,"
Myron pulled Mahsa up and tugged the flushed witch towards the line.

Morning training was held in some training fields behind the palace unless it was a training day. On the training day, everyone went to the Colosseum and trained there as a way to remind the people of the city that the Fanalis corps. were working to improve themselves in order to better protect the empire. Mahsa ended up settling beneath one of the large trees by one end of the training field to watch the Fanalis corps. train with the goblins and humans that decided to participate. Darius laid one a rock in his cub form soaking up the warm sunlight while Hedwig had settled within the tree above her and proceeded to take a nap. Most of the Fanalis fought using hand-to-hand, they didn't really require weapons to be deadly seeing as they seemed to easily shatter the ground when they wanted to. Despite that, they all spent some time working with a weapon whether it be a sword, dagger, whip, or something of the sort.

After almost an hour, the sparring matches began. It was a mix of weapons and bare handed fighting. Mahsa was able to get a better understanding of how the Fanalis differed from humans or even goblins. Instinct played a large part in how a Fanalis fought whether bare handed or with a weapon, they used all their senses during a fight and reacted to things at a far quicker speed than most humans were able to. She took her eyes off Muu sparring with Lo'lo when she heard, "Enjoying yourself, Mahsa?"

"Lady Scheherazade," Mahsa quickly stood up to bow, "How are you this morning?"

"I'm well," Lady Scheherazade smiled as Mahsa straightened, "And you?"

"I'm good," Mahsa glanced back at her brother's fight, "My hand is healed enough that I can use it without any pain. I should be fully healed in a couple of days,"

"Which means you'll be joining them soon enough," Lady Scheherazade commented as she sat down under the tree prompting Mahsa to do the same, "And are you enjoying yourself? Mahsa nodded after a moment of thought, "It's really interesting to see just how different Fanalis fight from the other beings I've met."

"I suppose so," Lady Scheherazade said as she focused on Muu's fight with Lo'lo as well, "I'm not exactly a fan of violence though I understand that it is needed sometimes," Mahsa didn't really have a reply for that kind of statement and the magi seemed to know that, "You still keep your old wand with you,"

Mahsa nodded as she took off the bracelet that had once been her old wand, "It has been with me through a lot and I couldn't bare to just abandon it. Maybe one day, I'll be able to use it again or a child that I may end up having," Lady Scheherazade took the bracelet from her and looked it over, "It deserves better than to be left abandoned after it has served me so well. It's also a reminder of who I used to be that will hopefully give me some kind of strength or resolve if I feel like I'm losing sight of who I really am."

Lady Scheherazade smiled as she handed it back, "It is a good memento. May I ask why it stopped working for you?"

"When my full powers were released, the harmony between my magic and the innate magic of my wand was disrupted," Mahsa ran her fingers over the bracelet feeling faint sparks of warmth run through her skin. "During the period of time where my full power was settling, it still worked for me, but the results became increasingly erratic as time went on. Eventually, I could barely get a spark out of the wand and had to get a new one," She smiled sadly as looked up at Lady
Scheherazade, "The warmth from my wand went from a warm cup of hot chocolate on a bitterly cold winters night to just a faint spark. We have many theories about why this happened, but no one can quite agree on one or the other. The main theory that most tend to accept was the wand had been made by a human with the intent to be bonded with a human,"

"And you're only half," Lady Scheherazade finished earning a nod, "And what is your theory?"

"The phoenix feather is the reason why," Mahsa thought about the explanation about wand cores that the goblin making her wand had said, "Wands with phoenix feathers as the core are very picky about their users almost as much as the phoenix they come from when it comes to binding themselves to someone as a familiar. When my powers were unsealed, the feather must've found something inside of me that made it believe I was unworthy of it or something along those lines," She put the bracelet back on, "As I said, one day it might one more accept me as its master, but then again, it might not,"

"That sounds like a Djinn," Lady Scheherazade commented earning a curious look from Mahsa, "Djinn are very picky about who becomes their master which means we Magi have to be very picky when it comes to our Kings candidates and what Djinns we introduce them to. It makes me wonder what would happen if you were able to use a Djinn,"

"I would prefer not to think about it to be honest," Mahsa shook her head lightly, "Djinns are powerful beings and that power isn't something that should be used lightly," She looked at her brother, "Even if you offered me to become one and I was able to become one, I'd have to say no. That kind of power isn't something I think would be safe in my hands,"

"Oh, why do you say that?" Lady Scheherazade looked at her in interest.

Mahsa watched as Muu began sparring with Myron, "Depending on the power that the Djinn holds, I would be tempted to do a lot of things with it and not all of them good. Despite what I want to think, I might end up going back to my former home country and go after those that have wronged me. I would go after the monster that murdered my adoptive parents. I would go after Dumbledore. I would even go after the Dursleys. I would go after the Ministry of Magic both because they refused to believe me when I said that the snake was back and because they refused to give Sirius a chance to show his innocence," She smiled at seeing their excited faces and looked forward to the day she could join them, "Even if I didn't, I would always have that temptation and that's something I don't want. I don't want to get anymore blood on my hands until I absolutely have to."

A hand settled on Mahsa's arm drawing her attention to Lady Scheherazade who was smiling warmly at Mahsa, "You have a good heart, Mahsa. I hope that you continue to hold that mindset as time passes on," The smile dropped and the magi gained a faintly distressed expression, "Though there may be a day when I will have to ask for you to stain your hands with blood. Would you?"

Mahsa looked back at her siblings who were play fighting rather than seriously sparring and nodded, "For my siblings and those that I will likely come to view as siblings as well, I will stain my hands with blood if it means protecting them."

"I hope it will be a long time before that day, Mahsa," Lady Scheherazade stood up, "If you'll excuse me, Mahsa. I have things that I must do, but would you like to join me for a few hours tomorrow? I would like to see just where you're at in your magical studies,"

"Of course," Mahsa nodded as she stood up, "It was nice talking with you,"

"That it was," Lady Scheherazade surprised Mahsa with a hug that the witch was a bit slow to return, "I am so very glad you're home, Mahsa,"
"I am too," Mahsa murmured as the magi released her.

Lady Scheherazade took her leave as Myron walked up carrying a cup of water, "What did Lady Scheherazade want?"

"At first it was to see if I was enjoying myself," Mahsa answered as she dropped back onto the ground, "Then it was to talk about my former wand which ended up turning into a conversation about Djinns, it somehow ended up with me explaining why I wouldn't want to become a Dungeon Capturer like Muu even if she asked,"

"Seriously?" Myron asked with a raised eyebrow, "You wouldn't want to?"

Mahsa shook her head, "No, I would never agree to become one regardless of who asked since I wouldn't be able to trust myself with power like that. Besides," She smiled at her sister, "I have enough power as it is."

Myron sat down beside her and took a drink from her cup, "What makes you think you wouldn't be able to trust yourself?"

"With everything that happened to me in the past, I'd be tempted to go back to my old home country to get revenge," Mahsa reached out to pick up Darius and pulled him into her lap causing the cub to grumble a bit before he settled down, "I don't want to turn into some revenge driven person especially not when I finally have a family that wants me for me. I don't want to needless stain my hands with blood for such a stupid reason. Making sure I don't lose you guys now that we've found each other, I'll willingly kill people if it comes down to it, but I don't want to kill people just for revenge,"

"You know we wouldn't let that happen, right?" Myron asked as she bumped her shoulder against Mahsa's, "We're your older siblings and supposed to keep you from doing dumb stuff like that,"

"I know, but there will probably be times when we're not together meaning you won't be able to stop me from doing something dumb," Mahsa pointed out as she scratched behind Darius' ears.

"True, but we'll try to beat some common sense into you before then," Myron wrapped an arm around Mahsa's shoulders, "Anyway, was that all she wanted?"

"She wants to see where I am in my magical studies tomorrow," Mahsa answered as she leaned into Myron while ignoring the sweat on the older Fanalis' skin, "It'll take a few hours apparently. I'm actually looking forward to what she has to say. Despite not being able to use magic like me, she still probably knows a lot about my kind of magic if only for knowledge's sake,"

"True," Myron drank some more of her water, "So what do you think about all this?"

"It's interesting and I'm really excited to see where I stand among you," Mahsa answered earning a grin, "I especially can't wait to spar with someone other than Muu or the goblins. I mean I sparred against another half-Fanalis at the settlement, but I don't think she was a member of the Fanalis Corps. since she didn't have one of those piercings," She pointed to her bottom lip, "Why do you guys have labrets anyway?"

"It's our mark as warriors who've gone through a combat trial," Myron answered with a slight grin, "You've earned yours without us having to organize something like that though,"

"I have? How?" Mahsa's head turned to look at Muu as he spoke while approaching them.

"You protect that stone in your first year of school despite knowing you weren't as strong as your
enemy," Muu smiled at her as he carried two cups of water with one being held out to her once he reached her. "You killed that snake almost completely by yourself and that weird diary in an attempt to protect someone. You saved Sirius Black despite the threat of losing your life or being mauled by an out of control beast. You competed in a death tournament and won it despite the odds stacked against you. Anyone one of those things could be used as your combat trial which means no one can argue that you don't deserve it,"Mahsa took the cup and drank some of the water to get rid of the sudden dryness in her mouth, "Most have to fight one of the Colosseum beasts in order to receive theirs. All things considered, I am actually somewhat glad that I don't have to force you into one of those fights,"

"When should we do it?" Myron asked as Muu dropped down to sit on her other side.

"After her first all day training session," Muu answered after drinking some of his water, "Of course, that would be if you agree to it,"

Mahsa nodded after a moment of thought. It would be nice to have something physical to show that she wasn't alone anymore. Myron grinned as she tightened her arm around Mahsa's shoulder, "Great! I can't wait since that'll just give us another reason to celebrate."

Myron finished off her water and rejoined the other Fanalis for spars. Mahsa looked at Muu, "Why do I get the feeling you guys try to find multiple reasons to drink a lot?"

"I try to limit it," Muu replied as he reached over to scratch behind Darius' ears, "Mahsa, can I ask you something?"

"What's up?" Mahsa looked at him curiously.

"What exactly do you want to do?" Muu asked her with a slightly serious expression on his face, "Do you want to join the Fanalis Corps? Do you want to join the scholars? Do you want to become a healer?"

Mahsa sighed softly, "I don't know, Muu. I didn't know what I wanted to do before I found out everything either. When I was a little kid, I wanted to become a member of the local Law Enforcement in hopes that I could help kids that were like me, but that changed when the thing with Sirius happened," She looked out at the Fanalis Corps, "I've thought about becoming a healer to keep those around me healthy, but I don't think I'd want to do it full time. I also kind of want to explore the world too," She drank some more of her water, "I want to see the amazing things out there and experience the different cultures in person."

"You really want to explore, huh?" Muu asked as he leaned back against the tree.

Mahsa nodded with a small flush, "I've always wanted to explore the world and see what else there was. You saw Private Drive and how uniform it was. When I first went to Diagon Alley, it was a major culture shock since I'd never been to the city outside of that time in the hospital. It kind of...cemented my want to explore," She looked at Muu feeling a bit guilty, "Not that I'm planning on leaving anytime soon-"

"It's alright," Muu soothed as he reached out to tug Mahsa to his side earning an annoyed growl from Darius as the cub was jostled, "All of us have wanted to travel. I got my wish when Lady Scheherazade and the Emperor allowed me to travel around the world finding and freeing all the Fanalis I could. If you want to travel, no one will stop you though please wait until your stronger before then,"

"You won't be mad if I leave?" Mahsa asked as she slowly leaned into her brother.
"Nope though I will admit that I'm likely going to be worried and miss you terribly until your return," Muu grinned down at her, "But none of us will stop you from leaving if you want to. No Fanalis deserves to be caged especially when they've gotten their freedom back,"

Warmth filled her heart and Mahsa turned to hug her brother, "Thank you."

Muu hugged her back after setting his cup down, "No problem though please wait a year or two before going on any adventures."

"I can do that," Mahsa grinned as she absorbed the comforting warmth her brother was offering.

Muu left Mahsa shortly after finishing off his water only to be replaced by Lo'lo. Lo'lo dropped down across from her, "I hope you don't expect me to cuddle up to you like those two."

Mahsa shook her head, "No, I don't...Lo'lo, right?"

Lo'lo grinned a bit, "Sure am, you seem to have a good memory."

"Sometimes," Mahsa looked at him curiously, "So why are you over here?"

"Everyone wants to get to know the newbie especially since you're a big part of why we're all here," Lo'lo replied with a shrug, "So long as you don't turn out to be a brat, I might actually end up liking you."

"Thanks, I guess," Mahsa reached up to brush her hair back as Darius shifted into his wyvern form.

"How big is he going to get anyway?" Lo'lo asked as Darius took the air.

"No one is really sure since his kind aren't actually seen very often due to how well they blend into their surroundings," Darius began running through the strengthening lessons that Hedwig had given him, "At the very least, he'll be the size of a horse in that form and about the size of a African lion back home which are usually 4 feet tall so just a head smaller than Lady Scheherazade."

"Makes me wonder how strong he'll be," Lo'lo grinned a bit, "How long until he grows up fully?"

"If we go off regular lions, he'll be fully grown in around 3 years, but since he is magical, we can't be sure since magic does make a difference," Mahsa watched Darius as he began doing slow loops, "I'm kind of hoping he grows to be the size of a horse in his lion form since riding on the back of a lion sounds really cool,"

Lo'lo let out a booming laugh, "You'd scare the crap out of our enemies if you came charging out on the back of a lion."

"That too," Mahsa was startled when Lo'lo ruffled her hair.

"Keep thinking like that and I really will like you," Lo'lo said after downing the rest of his water, "I can't wait to see if you're like your brother or your sister when it comes to drinking,"

With that, Lo'lo got up and left her. A few other members of the Fanalis corps took his place which were followed by another group when they returned to training. By the time morning training ended, Mahsa had gotten to know a bit about each member of the Fanalis Corps and began to feel like this really was where she belonged. Myron looked at Mahsa as they headed inside to grab a change of clothes, "Did you enjoy yourself, Mahsa?"
"Yeah, I really think I'm going to like it here, Myron," Mahsa admitted earning a grin from her older sister.

"Good! Now let's go get a change of clothes, we've got to get to the bath house and bath before lunch," Myron wrapped an arm around Mahsa's shoulders which were unoccupied as Darius was currently being carried by her in his cub form, "He going to be okay?"

"Yeah, he just exhausted himself with his flight training exercises," Mahsa assured her, "He'll be full of energy by the time we finish eating lunch,"

The tubs inside the bath house were gigantic pools of hot water that gave off scented fog. The scents coming off the fog were from the oil used in the bath water. Myron led Mahsa over to one of the tubs that smelt like vanilla, cherries, and something else that she couldn't name, but liked quite a bit. Myron shed her clothes quickly and jumped inside. Mahsa was slow to follow since she wasn't used to bathing with anyone much less letting anyone see her naked. Myron noticed her hesitance, "You okay, Mahsa?"

"Just never bathed with anyone before," Mahsa finished taking off her clothes and moved to get into the tub, "Or having anyone see me naked,"

"It's nothing we haven't seen before," One of the other female Fanalis, Col, commented, "Though the scars are a bit unique,"

"We've all got our own scars," Razol commented as Mahsa finally got into the pool.

"Feels nice, doesn't it?" Myron asked as Mahsa let out a low groan feeling the heat sink into her muscles and relax them.

Mahsa nodded as her eyes went half lidded, "Yeah. I don't think the perfects bath would have felt so nice if I'd been able to actually enjoy them."

"You can soak up the warmth for a little while if you want," Myron told Mahsa as the witch settled on one of the steps within the pool, "We have forty minutes before lunch,"

Mahsa nodded again as she leaned back. A few giggles sounded, but she ignored them. This was heavenly, she wondered if all bathes were meant to feel this good. Myron eventually coaxed her into doing what they came here to do. Razol noticed the scar on her left shoulder, "That's from that dragon, right?"

"Yeah. I didn't really feel it until I got into the medical tent and Madame Pomfrey pointed it out to me," Mahsa grimaced as the scar twinged a bit, "Thankfully, Hungarian Horntails are a breed of dragon that don't have poison otherwise I would've been screwed. I was still kind of screwed since I'd lost a lot of blood,"

"What about those?" Myron asked as she gestured to the somewhat jagged puncture wounds dotting both her arms and sides.

"You know that trip through the forest in my second year? I got bit by some of the Acromantula," Mahsa grimaced a bit as she looked them over, "None of them were poisonous enough to kill or actually do much harm. Ron and I were lucky none of the really big ones managed to bite either of us,"

Col grimaced a bit, "I'm surprised you're not scared of spiders."
"Fire spells are your friend," Mahsa grimaced as she added, "Darius loves eating them,"

"Ew," Was the only reply she got.
After a nice lunch, Mahsa grabbed her wand and followed Myron back to the Fanalis training grounds where those that hadn't trained that morning were hard at work. Those not currently on duty joined them out of curiosity, the ones currently training were curious as well and decided to take a minor break. Despite the nervousness blooming in her stomach at the amount of attention she was being given, she was excited to show off her skills. Myron turned to her with a worried expression, "Is this alright?"

"It's fine," Mahsa waved off her worries, "I'm just a bit nervous and that'll go away once I can focus. Is there anything specific you want to see?"

Myron nodded as Muu jogged up, "That Patronus charm we saw in your memories, if it won't be too much trouble."

"Good choice," Mahsa closed her eyes, "Give me a moment okay, I need to focus on my happiest memories to create it,"

"Sure," Myron replied and Mahsa heard a few steps being taken away from her.

Mahsa focused on what memory to use before deciding that there were quite a few she could use. She focused on the comforting warmth Muu and Myron offered her without prompting. The joy she felt when they accepted her for what she was. The warm smiles they'd given her and the concern they showed for her. The knowledge that they actually wanted her. Muu showing her how to ride a horse. Myron brushing her hair that morning. Lady Scheherazade welcoming her home. Muu and Myron comforting her after that nightmare. Lo'lo ruffling her hair. The other Fanalis wanting to get to know her. All of it made her want to grin and she used it to fuel her Patronus, "Expecto Patronum!"

Gasps rang out through the training field, Mahsa opened her eyes to find a large silvery lion roaring silently at everyone. A part of her mourned the fact her patronus had turned into a lion, but the rest of her welcomed the change. It was another reminder that she was no longer Hawthorn Potter. She smiled as it finished roaring and began walking around to observe its surroundings. One of the young Fanalis, a girl that couldn't have been older than ten, walked towards the lion with awe on her face. The lion patronus eyed the girl before stepping forward and passing through her earning a giggling gasp, "It's so warm! Like a hug without actually being hugged."

Mahsa's patronus regally walked around for a few moments before inclining its head to her and vanishing. Myron looked at her in surprise, "I thought it was supposed to be a stag."

"A patronus will change as the magical producing it goes through a life-changing event," Mahsa grinned at Myron, "I think it's safe to say finding out who I really was which lead to me finally come home and finding my family counts as life-changing. Don't you think?"

Lo'lo let out a bark of laughter, "Hell yeah."

"So anyone else have any spells that want to see?" Mahsa asked and was immediately peppered with requests.

Eventually, Muu had them disperse to do their duties if they had any and for Mahsa to get some rest from casting. The witch headed back to her room and went through her books deciding to read
about the animagus transformation. She knew that the goblins would get her the potion required for it if requested. They had an improved version that skipped some of the steps, but that didn't mean she should skip out on researching the process if only for the sake of having that knowledge base. She laid down on her stomach and began reading the book when she found it.

Mahsa jolted awake when someone shook her shoulder and almost went for a knife until she smelt Lo'lo's scent, "Lo'lo what are you doing here?"

"I came to get you for dinner since your sister and the Captain are on duty," Lo'lo answered as she sat up, "Fell asleep?"

"Reading about animagus forms and how to find your own inner animal," Mahsa answered with a yawn as the man backed up a bit.

"Must be boring if you fell asleep reading that shit," Lo'lo snorted as she stood up.

"Only because the one that wrote the damn thing made it as dry as the desert," Mahsa wiped at her mouth to make sure she didn't drool, "Thank you for getting me,"

"No problem, we can't have you starve on us," Lo'lo grinned at her as they left the room, "You're a fucking twig and would probably disappear if you missed a few meals,"

Mahsa rolled her eyes at the comment, "Not my goddamn fault those jackasses I was stuck with starved me."

"You curse a lot more when you're sleepy," Lo'lo commented earning a shrug.

"So fucking what?" Mahsa's sleep addled brain didn't see a reason not to unless Lady Scheherazade was around.

Lo'lo patting her back nearly sent her flying forward, "You'll fit right in with us, Brat. I'm really starting to like you."

"Goodie fucking gumdrops," Mahsa straightened herself as they reached the dinning hall, "Does that mean I get a trophy or something?"

Lo'lo let out a roar of laughter when they reached the cafeteria. Razol shouted at him, "What the hell are you laughing at, Lo'lo?"

"The Brat is sarcastic when she's fucking sleepy!" Lo'lo shouted back as Mahsa headed to get some food.

Mahsa grabbed her food and thanked the person serving it up before going to find a seat. Razol waved her over and the witch sat down beside her, "Hey, Mahsa. Why are you sleepy?"

"Oh you know, reading a book so dry it makes a desert jealous is a pretty good bedtime story," Mahsa replied earning a snort.

Mahsa began eating her dinner and waking up a bit more. She felt a bit lost without Muu and Myron there since she'd had one of them with her since coming through the veil. A hand touched her arm and she looked to the side to find one of the male Fanalis, a man by the name of Yaqut if she remembered right, "Feeling a bit lost, kid?" Mahsa hesitated for a moment before nodding earning a sympathetic smile, "We've all felt that way, so none of us will really feel bothered if you voice your thoughts about it."
"It must be weird," Razol commented earning a look of confusion from Mahsa, "Coming from the other-side of the veil and seeing all this,"

"Kind of, but this side is a lot better. People aren't expecting me to be some perfect hero that's happy all the fucking time," Mahsa took a deep breath to push away her anger and resentment at how the wizarding world saw her, "If I wasn't that, they expected me to be some kind of demon child capable of slaughtering everyone around me if I got pissed off,"

"Technically, some people do view of demons capable of slaughtering anything that comes at us," Razol commented with a slight smirk, "But that's usually the people who don't actually matter,"

"Is there anything you'll miss from back across the veil?" Yaqut asked her curiously.

Mahsa thought carefully about that before shrugging, "Maybe some of the people I knew, I don't think there's much I'll miss and if I really needed to go back, I technically could," She shook her head, "Not that it'll happen any time in the near future."

After breakfast the next day, Mahsa was taken to Lady Scheherazade by a maid. She was surprised to find herself led to the blonde Magi's set of rooms. Lady Scheherazade offered Mahsa a warm smile and gestured for her to sit down at a table that had clearly been set up for tea, "Please take a seat, I need to finish a bit of paperwork."

Mahsa nodded slowly and moved towards the table, "Okay."

Mahsa paused before sitting down when she noticed the view of Remano outside and couldn't stop herself from moving closer. The city seemed to sprawl out beneath the uncovered window with people and animals going about their days. She could see the Colosseum and wondered what it'd be like inside. She jumped a bit when Lady Scheherazade spoke from beside her, "A beautiful view isn't it?"

"Yes," Mahsa flushed a bit, "Sorry for not doing as you asked,"

"It's fine, the view is always startling for those seeing it for the first time," Lady Scheherazade replied before tugging Mahsa to sit down, "Are you eager to explore the city?"

"Somewhat, I mostly want to get used to the palace first," Mahsa sat down and Lady Scheherazade moved to sit down in the seat across from her after leaning her staff against the wall, "I'm probably going to get lost quite often considering just how big this place is,"

Lady Scheherazade laughed softly, "I wouldn't be surprised. Muu and Myron got lost in the palace quite a bit during the first few months after they came to live here."

"Really?" Mahsa asked earning a nod, "I didn't know that,"

Mahsa's mood dimmed a bit at the reminder that she barely knew anything about her family. A comforting hand settled on her arm and she looked up at Lady Scheherazade as the magi murmured, "We know barely anything about you too, Mahsa. We only know of your past and what Muu was able to discover during your trip here. This all new to us as well."

"I know," Mahsa's cheeks flushed slightly as she realized that Lady Scheherazade probably had better things to do other than comfort her, "I'm sorry. You're taking time out of your busy schedule and I'm ruining your da-"

"Not at all," Lady Scheherazade interrupted her, "I wanted to take the time to get to know you
properly on top of what you're skills are,"

Mahsa's blush increased at those words, "Right."

Lady Scheherazade smiled lightly before asking, "Shall we drink some tea? I'm not quite sure what you like, but I decided on Earl Grey tea would be the safest bet,"

"It's fine," Mahsa hesitated before remembering that Lady Scheherazade wanted to get to know her saying, "Despite growing up in Britain, I've never actually been a fan of tea for the most part. I've always preferred to just drink water or juice of some kind. Then again, I've never really had many types of tea before save for during fourth year,"

"Oh? Did you find a type you liked?" Lady Scheherazade asked as they prepared their tea.

"It's one a fellow champion introduced to me, Fleur Delacour. It's something called jasmine tea," Mahsa explained as she finished preparing her tea, "I mostly like it because of its scent and the fact it has a sweetness to it,"

Mahsa spent until they'd finished their tea learning about her siblings while also telling Lady Scheherazade about herself. She learned that Muu didn't like really sweet things while Myron absolutely adored them. She imparted the knowledge that it depended on her mood and that sweet things were mostly avoided unless she craved them. Muu was a really good swordsmen while Myron preferred smaller blades like daggers if she used any weapons at all. She imparted that she liked daggers mostly because she wouldn't be able to accidentally behead herself with one unlike a sword. Muu used to sneak out at night to explore the city which was where he learned more about the Fanalis people were actually treated. Myron loved to fight, but did her best to act like a lady mostly to avoid bringing shame to their brother. And she told Lady Scheherazade about her own guilty pleasure, she used to sneak out at night during Hogwarts and spend the night outside when things were a bit too noisy for her.

"And outside was better?" Lady Scheherazade asked her curiously.

"It's easier to deal with the noises outside since I grew up around them and the night sky was better than any nightlight," Mahsa flushed a bit as she admitted that, "Some part of me seemed to relax whenever I was outside on that little observation platform. I guess that it was my Fanalis instincts,"

"Even buried, they still managed to come through," Lady Scheherazade murmured with a light smile, "I have to wonder when else they've shown through,"

Mahsa shrugged lightly before finishing the last of her tea, "So are we going to do those tests that you wanted to do?"

Lady Scheherazade nodded and stood up prompting Mahsa to follow her, "Let's head down to the area I had prepared."

The area that Lady Scheherazade showed Mahsa looked like it had been through hell and back. Scenting the air, the witch could smell Muu's scent rather heavily in here alongside Myron's and Lo'lo's. All of them smelt of musk much like every other Fanalis she'd met which she was able to figure out was their base scent though Muu and Myron had less of the musk added to their scent which showed the human side of their biology. Muu's scent was of cedar and sword polish mixed with something that she could only call static. Myron's scent was of rose and pomegranate mixed with a lighter version of the static that clung to Muu's scent. Lo'lo's scent was of freshly cut grass and pine mixed with a lighter version of the static that clung to Muu's scent. As Muu had revealed
that Myron and Lo'lo were his house hold vassals, she was able to figure out that the scent of static came from Muu's Djinn, Barbatos.

With their scents practically clinging to the walls, Mahsa figured out quite quickly that this was where her siblings and Lo'lo practiced using the abilities Barbatos granted them.

By the end of her tests, Mahsa was thoroughly exhausted, but quite proud of herself. The spell that had been difficult for her back at Hogwarts were easier to do after her training with the goblins. The spells that she'd learned thanks to the goblins weren't exactly easy, but she managed to pull them off. She was a bit surprised by just how well she remembered the healing spells that had been used on her. The amount she knew about potions was shocking too especially since she managed to brew most of them perfectly. Everything else was pretty average, Lady Scheherazade sent her off to go bathe and join the Fanalis corps for lunch while her test results were looked over.

Myron waved Mahsa over when she entered the bath house and the youngest Alexius sibling quietly joined her elder sister. Myron looked at Mahsa in concern, "Are you okay, Mahsa?"

"I'm fine. Just very tired," Mahsa closed her eyes when she sank into the water and sighed softly, "Lady Scheherazade was really thorough,"

"How do you think you did?" Myron asked her curiously.

Mahsa shrugged a bit, "Decently. I did surprise myself with the amount of healing spells that I know of and the amount of potions I know. I brewed most of them perfectly too."

"Considering how often you were in that school infirmary, it isn't too surprising that you know healing spells," Razol pointed out as Mahsa began washing her hair.

"It's something I'm going to look into a lot further," Mahsa told them, "I want to be able to heal people."

"It'll be pretty damn useful considering how often we do end up getting hurt for whatever reason," Razol smiled brightly at Mahsa, "You'll have a lot of willing patients to help you work on them,"

Mahsa nodded slowly before ducking underneath the water to start rinsing out her hair. When she came back up, Myron asked her, "Where did she test you?"

"Based on the scent of the room we were in, I'm fairly sure its where Muu, Lo'lo, and you practice using the powers Barbatus grants you," Mahsa replied reached for the soap, "Considering the fact some of the spells I know can be destructive, it was probably a good idea,"

"You already know our scents?" Myron looked a bit surprised at that.

Mahsa nodded with a slight flush to her cheeks, "Some part of me never forgot Muu or your scents, they've changed a bit over the years, but remained mostly the same. Lo'lo's isn't that hard to memorize because he smells like freshly cut grass and pine."

"You think Lo'lo smells nice?" Razol asked with a slightly crooked grin.

Mahsa felt wary of the female Fanalis as she had the same look in her eyes as the twins when they decided to tease someone, "The combination is nice, but that's about it."

Razol opened her mouth only to shut it as Myron growled, "Razol, do not make any insinuations about my little sister."
"I'm not making any insinuations," Razol defended herself.

Col cut in, "So Mahsa, how do you like it here so far?"

"It's interesting though I haven't seen much to be honest," Mahsa was a bit relieved that Col had changed the subject because it looked like a fight might've happened, "I think it might take awhile for me to get used to everything especially when I'm probably going to get lost. The palace is really big."

Lady Scheherazade smiled at Mahsa as the Fanalis witch entered her room with Darius curled around her neck and Hedwig settled on her shoulder, "I take it a bath and lunch was just what you needed?"

"Yes," Mahsa reached up to run her fingers over Darius' scales.

Lady Scheherazade gestured to one of the seats sitting by her desk, "Take a seat, we'll begin once Muu and Myron join us."

Mahsa jolted a bit in surprise, "Oh?"

"I felt it might be best for them to know where you stand in your magical studies," Lady Scheherazade said as Mahsa moved to sit down, "I also felt it best for us to create a schedule together for your lessons. After all, you are going to be learning magic, regular things you should have been learning, and things that all Fanalis should known,"

"Oh," The increasingly familiar feeling of being lost hit her.

Lady Scheherazade offered her a sympathetic look, "It sounds like a lot, doesn't it?"

"Y-yeah," Mahsa reached up to run her fingers over Darius' scales when his body tightened around her neck just a bit, "I mostly feel lost though,"

"Lost?" Lady Scheherazade asked as the door opened to admit her siblings.

"Lady Scheherazade," Muu and Myron greeted the magi while looking a bit confused.

"Who's lost?" Myron asked as the two moved to sit down after Lady Scheherazade gestured for them to do so.

Mahsa swallowed heavily as she murmured, "I am."

Both her siblings immediately looked at her in concern, Mahsa gently tugged Darius to settle in her lap. Muu frowned slightly, "What do you mean by lost?"

"I just feel lost," Mahsa looked down at Darius as he turned into his cub form.

Lady Scheherazade spoke as Mahsa hugged Darius lightly, "That isn't surprising considering the fact that everything you've ever known has been put into question, you've barely had any time to really think about what happened. Combined with the fact you're no longer bound by the expectations of those back in England and the knowledge that you are truly free, you are probably feeling adrift without anything to guide you."

Mahsa looked up at the magi with quite a bit surprise at the fact she'd guessed that, "Y-yeah that sounds about right."
"You'll likely feel that way for awhile until you've managed to find a new normal," Lady Scheherazade set down the pen she was holding and offered the Fanalis witch a warm smile, "Which is why we're going to set up a schedule that will hopefully help you find that new normal,"

"We'll help too," Muu dropped into the seat beside Mahsa with Myron taking the other one, "It's our job as your older siblings and family after all,"

Mahsa smiled lightly as the lost feeling faded into the background again, "I know. So Lady Scheherazade, the test results?"

"Right," Lady Scheherazade picked up a folder and opened it, "The highest score is your Defense practical which isn't surprising given your memories and what the goblins have said. The lowest score is your runes/arithmetic, but that's most due to the fact you didn't take those classes. With the non-magical subjects, you have a good base for everything, but none of it is as strong as your magical scores save for writing. In fact," Lady Scheherazade looked at her with a bright smile, "That's your best subject,"

Mahsa flushed a bit as she said, "Mostly because I like writing a lot and one of my teachers before going to Hogwarts mentioned that people go further when they're good at writing, I spent a lot of the time when I wasn't doing anything with my friends or going to classes writing even if it wasn't for homework," She looked down at Darius with a small smile, "I used to write stories a lot mostly about far off places to keep my mind occupied when things were less than pleasant."

"Really?" Muu asked with a raised eyebrow, "Like what?"

Mahsa's flush eased away as she thought about it, "Most of them came from these dreams I sometimes had, it was easy to write about them because they were so vivid," She thought about the one dream that always seemed to appear even more often than the one involving that flying motorcycle, "One of them was about this gigantic sunlit plain with a scent that I could never quite name and great beasts that traveled across it."

"A great sunlit plain?" Muu murmured softly, "What kind of beasts traveled through it?"

"Zebra, elephants, lions, and a lot of other ones," Mahsa looked at him, "There's this really big continent on the other side of the veil called Africa, a lot of the animals I see in that dream live there."

"It almost sounds like the Dark Continent," Lady Scheherazade commented earning a confused look from Mahsa, "The Dark Continent is also known as Cathargo. It's where the Fanalis people come from,"

"It is?" Mahsa looked at her in surprise, "But how did I dream about it?"

"I'm not quite sure, but it could be an ancestral memory that you've managed to somehow access," Lady Scheherazade shrugged lightly, "Whatever it means, it isn't a necessarily bad thing for you to dream about," Mahsa hoped she'd be able to travel to Cathargo at some point in the future, "I think you should keep writing as it will probably help you settle down,"

Mahsa nodded in agreement, "I will."

"I'd like to hear some of the stories you come up with," Lady Scheherazade continued earning a surprised look from Mahsa since people rarely wanted to hear her stories if they even learned she wrote them in the first place.

It was an exciting thought especially since Mahsa really wanted to know what people thought
about them, "Alright!" She looked at Myron and Muu, "W-would you two like to hear them as well."

"Sure," Myron grinned at her, "It'll be interesting,"

"Yeah," Muu nodded in agreement.

Mahsa smiled brightly hoping that they'd enjoy the stories she came up with. Lady Scheherazade commented, "If you become good enough of a story teller, you might actually be able to use that as a way to gain money when you eventually decide to travel," Mahsa liked that idea as much as she did becoming a healer, "But that's in the future, for now we should come up with a schedule."

The schedule ended up being pretty basic for the most part. The mornings before breakfast would be spent training with the Fanalis Corps. After a bath and breakfast, Mahsa would have lessons in non-magical subjects until lunch. After lunch, she'd have magical subjects. After dinner, she would have free-time unless the sky was clear enough for astronomy. On days when the Fanalis Corps trained all day, she would have a break from her studies. The schedule would change if Lady Scheherazade had time or her siblings had the day off. It depended on the person teaching her what exactly she learned that day. If she got sick or injured, the schedule would change even more.

When Mahsa was cleared by the healer that treated her arm, she started her training with the Fanalis Corps. Muu set her up against Myron once she'd gone through her stretches, "First, we'll see about your hand-to-hand skills which Fanalis as a whole are known for. Do your best."

Myron smiled at Mahsa as they got ready to fight, "Don't worry about hurting me, I've got a lot more experience then you."

"Right," Mahsa settled into a loose stance and tried to let her mind fade into the background.

Mahsa had always been better at fighting when she didn't let her mind think too much. Muu raised a hand, "Ready?" They both nodded with Mahsa take a deep breath, "Then go."

Mahsa didn't automatically lash out at Myron and instead began to circle her allowing instinct to guide her. Myron followed her example looking a little amused. When she struck, the Fanalis witch worked on feeling out how her opponent fought. Myron mostly worked on blocking her hits or dodging them. She narrowed her eyes while breaking off when Myron sent a punch towards her. Myron was as quick as her which wasn't something the witch had faced before. It was interesting and made her heart beat just a bit faster at the thought of fighting someone that could keep up with her. Lowering her body a bit, she spotted an opening that was probably left like that for a reason. While it wouldn't do her much good, she didn't have many options.

Racing forward, she struck outward towards the opening with a high kick. Myron grabbed her ankle as she shifted away and tossed the teen away from her. Twisting her body in the air, Mahsa slid on the landing and her hands met the ground. Pushing on the ground, she lept forward once she'd stopped skidding backward. Myron dodged and evaded her attempts to hit the older woman. Instead of growing frustrated by the lack of actually being able to cause damage, a low roar filled her ears as the blood running through her body heated in ways it hadn't since the first task when she'd faced the Horntail. It was almost unnoticeable by her that she was becoming faster and her punches stronger making it harder for Myron to dodge. Myron grabbed her by the wrist and ankle when she went to kick the older Fanalis in attempt to get free, "Y-you're getting faster, Little Sister."
Mahsa panted as she struggled against Myron, "I've never faced anyone that could match me and make me work during a fight."

"You're blood is singing," Myron replied as she tossed Mahsa away, "That's what it means to be a Fanalis."

"I-I really like it," Mahsa grinned as she once again righted herself and slid across the ground.

"Good," Myron grinned back at her, "Now show me what you can really do,"

The spar ended ten minutes later when Myron finally decided to pin her down. Mahsa looked at Muu when he clapped his hands, "That was fairly good despite not having much training."

"Was it?" Mahsa looked at him in surprise as Muu helped her up once Myron got up, "I wasn't really thinking much,"

"You weren't?" Muu asked with a raised eyebrow and a small amount of shock.

Mahsa nodded with a slight embarrassed smile, "Yeah, I always fight better when I don't really think."

"Then you're halfway to becoming a great fighter," Muu smiled lightly, "A big part of fighting revolves around muscle memory. Even without much formal training, you're fairly decent a fighter," Mahsa grinned at that, "But we'll have a lot of work cut out for us if we're going to train you out of those bad habits,"

"I'm willing to learn," Mahsa told him earnestly, "Most of what I know is either things that I've found worked for me or I learned by watching others whenever I wasn't around the Dursleys,"

"Good," Muu smiled lightly, "Now take a small break, we'll be doing a full assessment on your weapon skills next,"

Mahsa nodded and moved out of the way with Myron.

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Fight against Muu using her twin daggers without being on a boat was a lot easier, Mahsa found herself enjoying it a lot more as well. She blocked Muu's sword and began sliding backward as he pressed downward. Dropping backwards, she aimed a kick towards his side and tossed one of her daggers towards him. Muu blocked the kick and dodged the dagger, "Throwing away one of your weapons, Sister?"

Instead of answering, Mahsa tugged on the almost completely invisible 'thread' connected to the hilt of her dagger causing it to fly backwards. Muu's instincts were good enough to keep him from getting more than a scratch on his arm. She spoke while catching the dagger by it's hilt thanks to her seeker skills, "I've got some tricks up my sleeve that I haven't shown you, Big Brother. After all, I wouldn't want to permanently lose the weapons that I was given by the goblins after all."

Muu chuckled as she switched her hold on the daggers to have the blades going along her forearms, "Well, don't hold back now, we aren't on the sea after all."

Grinning at him, Mahsa nodded as she flexed her fingers, "Sure thing."

Mahsa rushed forward and began the next clash. After a few minutes, Muu's strikes faltered a bit and he gained a perplexed expression on his face when his next strike missed and she managed to score another cut on his other arm, "What's going on?"
"Since I've never really been able to rely on strength when fighting, I learned how to fight smart," Mahsa backed up rather than pressing her advantage.

"Smart?" Muu's eyes narrowed before widening, "Poison?"

"A small one that disorientates my opponent," Mahsa answered as she and Muu began to circle one another, "It doesn't last long, but that's just fine since it might just give me the advantage I need to win,

"Or get away if you're in a tight spot and your magic isn't able to help you," Muu added with a light grin, "Not a bad idea especially since most wouldn't expect a Fanalis to use poison,"

"Pity for them," Mahsa commented as she grinned back at him.

Even under the influence of the poison Mahsa used, Muu was able to disarm her. Before she could pull her weapons back, Muu had his sword point pressed to her neck, "Dead."

While a bit disappointed to lose, Mahsa had known she wouldn't win from the beginning. Raising her hands in surrender, she asked, "How did I do?"

"I stand by what I've said before," Muu told her as he withdrew his sword and sheathed it, "But I will say those little tricks you have are really cool,"

Mahsa pulled her weapons back as Myron asked, "How did you do that? Magic?"

"Nope," Mahsa held up the 'thread' making sure that the sunlight caught it, "Goblin steel wire bound to my magic and these," She showed them the hilts of her daggers where the thread came from a cleverly disguised ring that she put her ring fingers through, "Using these, I can call my weapons back without much worry since very little can cut through goblin steel,"

"Wow," Myron took a closer look at her weapons, "How did you come up with this?"

"There are these picture books called Manga on the other side of the veil, one of them gave me the idea though the character I got them from used knives instead of daggers," Mahsa answered as she sheathed her own weapons after removing her fingers from the rings, "While I do hope to one day learn how to use knives and wires with his skill, I decided to settle with this since it's a lot less complicated and won't cause me to accidentally cut off limbs because of razor sharp wires,"

"That sounds like something an assassin would use," Muu commented with a raised eyebrow.

Mahsa let out a low laugh and flushed, "The character using it is an assassin that isn't very sane. He's part of an elite group of assassins too."

Belphegor was an interesting character despite his quirks much like the rest of the Varia save for Levi-a-Than. Muu looked a bit surprised, "Seriously?"

"Yeah," Mahsa nodded as she reached into her pocket and pulled out a potion vial with a light blue almost white potion inside, "Here this is the antidote for the poison coating my weapons, the poison might not last long, but it can be pretty troublesome waiting for the effects to wear off,"

Muu took the potion from her and downed it after uncorking the vial, "That tasted..."

"Like shit?" Mahsa offered earning a surprised look from Muu, "Potions aren't meant to taste nice unless they're the really bad kind. Medical potions taste absolutely horrible even if the effects are amazing," She took the vial back and placed it into her pocket, "Give it a few minutes to work
"Speaking from experience?" Myron asked her curiously.

Mahsa nodded as they moved out of the sparring circle, "Yeah, I'm building up a resistance to it along with others that I plan on using. While the basilisk venom and phoenix tears may give me some immunity to poisons as well as keeping me from dying by them, I've got to build up a resistance to poison if I want to keep from being affected by them during a fight or because someone decided to use poison to get rid of me," She raised her arm to look at the scar left by the basilisk, "It takes time for the basilisk venom and phoenix tears to actually work after all."

Mahsa found herself being dragged by Myron on a tour of the palace which was bigger than Hogwarts even if you added both the Black Lake and the Forbidden Forest after breakfast seeing as her actual schedule wouldn't start for a week since they needed to get her teachers straightened out. Myron proved to be a good tour guide and gave some interesting commentary about the various places they went to. She found the most interesting places to be the library, research area, and this area where people from all over this side of the veil conversed about various things. Myron looked more than a little amused when she had to drag the younger girl away with the promise to help her come back at some later point in time. When they headed back for lunch, Muu joined them and listened to her talk about the places Myron had taken her to.

"I take it your favorite place was the conversation hall?" Muu summarized from the excited explanation she'd given him.

Mahsa nodded with a light grin, "Yeah! It was so interesting to hear all about the various opinions people had even when it came to the boring subjects like fruit prices or taxes. My favorite part of it all was about the debate about different plays and which country has the most interesting ones. I really want to visit Sindria at some point."

"Sindria?" Muu blinked in surprise, "Why?"

"Well at first I wanted to visit it because Ragnarok mentioned he'd been there around when it was first formed," Mahsa explained as she picked up her cup of water, "One of the people talking in the conversation hall spoke about it and the various things you could do there. I really want to go around the time that festival they're known for, Mahrajan or something like that, because it sounds like a once in a life time experience." She remembered something else, "One of the king's house hold vessel users is a Fanalis too which is really interesting too."

"Oh yeah, I think I remember hearing that before," Myron murmured with a small hum, "I think he might have been a gladiator at one point as well."

"So Sindria will be one of the countries you'll end up visiting when you decide to travel?" Muu inquired as Mahsa ate some of her lunch which was some type of grilled fish that tasted really good.

Mahsa nodded as she chewed carefully before swallowing, "Yes though I kind of hope not to meet the king since he's apparently a womanizer. Despite the fact he probably knows a lot of interesting stories, I don't really want to deal with that kind of person."

"Good idea," Muu looked pleased at the idea. "By the way, would you like to watch us practice with our metal and house hold vessels later on?"

Mahsa looked at him in surprise before nodding with a bright smile, "That sounds cool, I'm really
interested in seeing what you all can do."

Muu using Barbatos was amazing especially when he Djinn equipped. Mahsa was shocked to see him change so much though it was understandable as to why when Muu explained what exactly a Djinn equip was. Muu's hair became a long silver mane with two metal hair clips holding two bangs at the front and his eyes turn from red to turquoise. His skin turned darker and became pointed ears. Muu gains feline-like feet covered in a silver armor over the lower half of his body, with white wings at his ankle. He also gets a pair of wristbands connected to a pair of armbands by chains. In this form his legs became similar to a cheetah before running, the muscles in his legs acted like a spring to increase his speed and power making him capable of crossing massive distances in an instant. She could see just why many of the Fanalis referred to him being like a sword in this form. Though due to Fanalis having lower quantities of magoi, he could only stay in this form for a minute.

"So it's basically a last resort," Mahsa realized as Muu returned to normal.

"Yes," Muu dropped down to sit beside her looking worn out, "We're doing our best to extend the time I use it, but it'll likely only ever be a last resort,"

Mahsa frowned softly as a thought ran through her mind, "What if Fanalis don't have low quantities of magoi? What if our magoi is thicker than that of a human?"

"Thicker?" Muu muttered with a frown.

Mahsa nodded as she thought about it, "It makes more sense than having lower quantities of magoi otherwise no pureblood could ever actually become a house hold vessel much less a king candidate. Hell, it would explain why I'm a witch too. I can't figure out a way to really explain it, but doesn't it make more sense?"

"I suppose," Muu hummed lightly, "It's definitely something to talk to Lady Scheherazade about at some point," They both looked up as Myron and Lo'lo began arguing making Muu sigh, "Those two can't go a day without arguing, can they?"

"It almost reminds me of Hermione and Ron only more violent," Mahsa smiled lightly, "I'm glad,"

"Glad?" Muu looked at her oddly, "About Myron and Lo'lo arguing?"

"No, I'm glad about how despite how different things are that some stuff stays the same," Mahsa looked at her brother feeling a bit more settled then when she spoke with Lady Scheherazade yesterday, "It makes it a lot easier to deal with things,"

Muu beamed at her, "I'm glad to hear it, Mahsa."
Mahsa's first training day left the teenager as exhausted and put through the ringer as she had been back when during the beginning of her training with the goblins. In someways, it was even more brutal than when the goblins trained her mostly because the people training with her were Fanalis and actually able to teach her without having to hold back. In other ways, it was easier especially since the day was spent training without weapons and basically dedicated to honing the basic skills their people were known for. She got closer to her siblings especially Myron since they knew just what being a half-blood meant. With their preference in similar fighting styles, Myron was able to show her quite a few tricks with the help of some other Fanalis with similar body-types to them.

When the training session ended and they'd all gotten cleaned up, Muu had them gather together in their dinning hall and looked at everyone with a smile, "Now, I believe that you all know why I've called you here, but just in case, I'll say it anyway," He looked at Mahsa and gestured for her to stand beside him, "Mahsa, come here," Myron actually had to push the startled halfling out of her seat and over to their brother earning a few snickers, "As you all know, our people have a long standing tradition for the warriors within the tribe that has survived for generations despite us being scattered. I ask if any among you doubt Mahsa Alexius' place among us warriors?" No one said anything making Muu's smile widen, "Then it is time to bestow the warriors mark onto her."

Mahsa was pushed to sit in a seat as cheers sounded. She flushed a bit and held stock still despite the jolt of pain when they pierced her bottom lip. When it was over, she was given a potion to speed up the healing before they began eating dinner.

Mahsa quickly discovered that she didn't really like the taste of alcohol mostly because of the burning sensation it caused going down her throat or the taste of it. Myron handed her a cup of wine that was a lot more palatable though she still didn't exactly like it. Rather than drink it quickly, she sipped the wine and ate some bread that had been ordered alongside the alcohol. Muu noticed her choice and offered her an approving smile before he went to break up the minor fight that had started up between some of the more hot-headed members. She stayed at the table watching and listening to everything going on around her mostly because being in this place was making her a bit nervous. It was louder and had a lot of different scents compared to the Gryffindor Common room when there was a party going on. She didn't exactly not like it, but didn't like it all the same. A hand tapped her shoulder and she looked up to find Yaqut standing there, "Yaqut?"

"Want to get out of here?" Yaqut asked her curiously as he gestured to the door.

Mahsa hesitated for a moment looking around for Myron and Muu who had disappeared before nodding when she didn't spot them, "Yeah."

Standing up, Mahsa left her still somewhat full glass of wine on the table while Yaqut showed her outside. Immediately she found herself feeling a lot more comfortable as much of the heat that had gone unnoticed slipped away, she took a deep breath of fresh air and sighed softly. Yaqut smiled a bit, "Feel a bit better?"

"Yeah," Mahsa hesitated for a moment before admitting, "I was getting a bit nervous in there,"

"Not surprising especially given it was your first time in an actual bar," Yaqut moved towards one of the nearby benches and patted the smooth surface prompting Mahsa to take the seat he was offering, "I'm surprised Captain and Myron left you alone,"
"It's fine," Mahsa looked back towards the bar feeling a bit bad, "They don't have to force themselves to do things just because I showed up."

Yaqt snorted softly, "I'm pretty sure they'll be pissed at each other for not noticing that you were alone."

Mahsa frowned lightly at that, "But why? It's not like I'm really alone."

"Even with the Fanalis Corps around, some idiot would have tried something if they noticed you were alone especially when alcohol is involved," Yaqt replied as he cast a meaningful look towards a group of rather rough looking men walking into the bar, "Even in Remano, the slave traders will do their best to catch an unaware Fanalis since quite a few people would pay top dollar for one,"

Mahsa scowled at that, "That's sick."

"No one will argue with you especially among us," Yaqt looked at her with a sigh, "Look, Captain and Myron are extremely happy that you're here, Mahsa. Neither of them is really uprooting their lives to make room for you, they deal with new Fanalis all the time, so making sure you're comfortable isn't a hardship for them,"

"But I'm still doing that," Mahsa looked away from Yaqt feeling a bit bitter as she admitted one of the things that had been on her mind since she came to Reim, "I don't want to accidentally ruin something just by being here. Muu and Myron have lives to live without me fucking something up just by being present,"

"You aren't fucking anything up though," Yaqt pointed out.

Mahsa snorted with a bitter self-deprecating smile as the words of Vernon and Petunia Dursley rang through her mind. Even if she didn't fully believe them, it didn't mean they weren't exactly right, "Not yet. I always manage to fuck something up and cause trouble. There's no telling how long it'll be until either of them realize just how bad an idea being around me is and ditch me," She stood up feeling the need to move, "I think I'm going to head back to the palace."

"Mahsa," A hand settled on her shoulder, "There you are-"

"I'm going back to the palace," Mahsa shook off Muu's hand not really noticing the hurt look being directed towards her and started walking in the direction of it, "I'm tired,"

Mahsa found herself thrown over someones shoulder, "I'll take her back, Captain."

"You sure, Lo'lo?" Mahsa struggled against Lo'lo's hold.

"I'm sure," Lo'lo jerked her lightly making Mahsa squeal a bit and hit his back, "Stop struggling, Kid,"

"If you're sure," Muu looked at Mahsa with concern, "I'll see you later, Mahsa,"

Mahsa just grunted at him while attempting to free herself from Lo'lo's grip feeling pissed about being carried like this. Lo'lo walked away and eventually she realized it wasn't worth the effort to fight against him. She laid on his shoulder trying to fight the tears that were gathering in her eyes. Lo'lo spoke as she rubbed at her eyes, "You really need to stop thinking like that."

"Like what?" Mahsa grumbled at him.
"That you're only trouble," Lo'lo replied as he walked through the streets of Remano heading towards the palace.

Mahsa felt a flash of irritation and anger towards the scarred man carrying her, "What the fuck would you know? I am trouble and soon enough everyone's going to be dropping me like a fucking diseased rat when they figure it out. You saw my memories with everyone else."

"Yeah and what I saw tells me that you're worth any trouble that comes your way," Lo'lo told her causing the halfling to freeze a bit in surprise, "You're not a bad kid and have a set of big bronze ones that any Fanalis can appreciate. Look, Kid," Lo'lo let out an aggravated sigh as he stopped walking and set her down, "I'm not good with words or comforting people. I don't give enough of a shit about anyone other than the Corps and your siblings to be good at it," He scowled down at her, "You think you're trouble? We're Fanalis, Kid. Trouble is in our blood because of our instincts and the fact that the world seems pretty intent on turning us into slaves. You may end up causing trouble, but that ain't going to do anything other than prove you're a Fanalis,"

Mahsa looked at him in surprise before shaking her head, "But-

"No buts," Lo'lo wrapped an arm around her shoulders and began pulling her towards the palace again, "For a Fanalis, family is everything whether by blood or by bond. Even if that family causes a shit-ton of trouble, a Fanalis won't give a shit unless that person decides to be a kin-slayer or turn into a traitor. So long as you don't plan on doing anything like that, none of us is going to care about the trouble following you around," Lo'lo reached up to tap her new piercing making Mahsa hiss and swat at his hand since it hurt, "This means you're one of us, Kid,

Mahsa scowled at him before smiling a bit as those whispered words from Petunia and Vernon slowly began to be drowned out by Lo'lo's words.

"Until the alcohol loosened it up and someone triggered those thoughts," Muu commented from nearby earning a shame filled nod from Mahsa, "We shouldn't really be surprised that something like last night happened," She flinched a bit earning a sad sigh from Muu, "Mahsa, it isn't your fault. With all the new things going on, you haven't really been given a chance to just slow down and deal with everything. You've never really had a chance to heal from the damage they did either,"

Myron hugged Mahsa the moment that the younger girl walked out of her room, "Why didn't you tell Muu or I that you were feeling like that?"

Mahsa looked at her in confusion until she realized that either Lo'lo or Yaqut had informed her siblings about their conversation. Probably both, she looked at Myron and winced at the glimmer of tears feeling shame run through her, "Myron, I..." She tried to find the words to say, "I...I'm sorry. I just," She closed her eyes, "Didn't really think about it all. Those people I grew up with, they said so many things to me over and over again that some just stuck. I didn't even notice that I was feeling those things until..."

"Mahsa, we're going to do our best to help you, okay?" Muu told his youngest sister noticing the way she almost seemed to crumble against Myron, "Just tell us if you need something or try to show us if talking about it is too hard,"

"I-i'll try," Mahsa swallowed heavily, "I...I just..."
"No one has tried to heal you, but we will," Muu smiled at her as he walked closer, "I promise-
"
"Don't use that word," Mahsa cut him off earning a frown as she pressed closer to Myron, "Please don't use that word,"

"I'll try not to, but may I know why?" Muu asked as Myron looked at their younger sister in concern as she began to shake a bit.

Mahsa took a deep breath using Myron's scent to comfort her as she said, "That word is a lie," She looked at Muu with a gaze filled with so much hurt that it broke his heart, "Everyone's who used that word when trying to help me became a liar that couldn't keep their promise. Don't use that word."

"I'll try not to," Muu promised as Myron nodded in agreement.

Mahsa's stomach growled breaking up the tension in the air and Myron suggested, "Let's go get something to eat."

Lady Scheherazade sat Mahsa down a few days after her tutors arrived and the halfling had begun to learn how to navigate around the large palace. The magi smiled as they sat together with some tea and snacks, "How has everything been lately, Mahsa?"

"Interesting, I guess," Mahsa prepared her tea, "The tutors are being patient with me,"

"That's good," Lady Scheherazade picked up one of the pastries that had been served, "And your time with the Fanalis Corps?"

"Interesting," Mahsa smiled a bit, "Really interesting, I'm learning a lot from everyone even if it's just by watching,"

"Oh?" Lady Scheherazade pressed.

Mahsa nodded before drinking some of her tea and reaching over to grab an apple, "Yaqut is very sneaky and knows how to make himself move silently which is really cool. When Razol was being really loud while we were doing some laps, Yaqut managed to trip her up and get away before she realized he did it. She ended up getting angry with Lo'lo and shouted at him," She thought about it with a small grin, "They ended up fighting and Muu ended up having them do this really weird exercise where they had to stand quietly while holding these buckets full of pebbled, sand, and water for four hours with their arms stretched out," She frowned slightly as a thought ran through her head, "Though there was this weird thing I noticed,"

"What kind of weird thing?" Lady Scheherazade asked after swallowing a bite of pastry.

"Well you know how Lo'lo and Myron fight a lot, right?" Mahsa asked earning a nod, "Lo'lo fighting with Razol was different though. It lacked something though I can't really put my finger on it. Like there was a spark or something missing,"

Lady Scheherazade looked amused leading Mahsa to believe that the magi probably knew what was missing, "I see. I'll mention it to Muu. Speaking of you brother, he mentioned that something happened when you all went to the bar."

"Oh?" Mahsa's mouth went dry.

"Mahsa, do you want to know why I'm having you meet with me at least once a month if not one a
week?" Lady Scheherazade asked earning a confused look from Mahsa who was wondering why the magi wasn't scolding her for causing trouble, "I've found that talking helps with the healing process even if you're not talking about what's caused the hurt,"

"Oh," Mahsa looked at her tea.

Lady Scheherazade reached out and set her hand on Mahsa's, "Mahsa, I won't make promises since Muu has told me what you think of them, but can you promise me something?" Mahsa looked at the magi in surprise and nodded hesitantly, "Will you try to let us in and help you?"

"I...I'll try," Mahsa promised almost hesitantly.

"Good," Lady Scheherazade squeezed Mahsa's hand.

Time passed rather quickly with the goblin caravans leaving a few weeks after they'd arrived in Remano, Mahsa bid them a sad farewell and safe journeys ahead. She was sad to see them go, but knew that she'd get to see them again before the other side of the veil. Soon enough, it was the day she would've been getting on the Hogwarts Express for her fifth year at the magical school. Myron decided to take her mind off of it alongside with some of the other female Fanalis by dragging her to a 'girl's day' which was mostly spent getting pampered at one of the spas near the outskirts of the city and buying whatever caught their eye. She ended getting a lion carved from some rather pretty red stone to mark the occasion. When she showed it to Myron, the elder halfling asked, "Why'd you get that?"

"To mark the occasion," Mahsa answered as she ran her fingers over the dark red stone, "I decided that I'm going to celebrate important events and stuff with a carving of some kind made of stone,"

Myron looked at her with a raised eyebrow making Mahsa flush. The older woman looked at the carved stone before smiling, "Not a bad idea, Mahsa. It's better than you choosing to buy jewelry or something."

"That's wasteful," Mahsa didn't see a point in getting a lot of jewelry other than what she could and would wear somewhat consistently.

"Yeah," Myron nodded with a small smile before asking, "Want to get any new clothes while we're out?"

Mahsa was about to say no when she remembered that her bras were getting a bit tight. Flushing a bit, she murmured, "I think I'm going to need to get more bras since mine are getting a bit tight."

"You might want to look into chest wrappings," Myron suggested earning a confused look from Mahsa, "Bras aren't common and the ones currently being sold are ridiculously expensive not to mention uncomfortable. Not to mention, it'll probably be a good idea to show you how to bind your chest for when you decide to travel,"

Mahsa was tempted to protest, but admitted it was probably a really good safety precaution considering the fact slavers existed. Nodding lightly, she said, "Alright."

Chest wrappings were a bit bulkier than Mahsa was used to, they were actually a lot more comfortable for the halfling especially once Myron showed her how to adjust them for when they trained. She didn't like binding her chest and mentally decided that she'd only do it if there was a real reason to. If need be, she could use a glamour or something on her chest to make it seem she was a feminine male. Muu and Myron decided to introduce her to their family with a majority of
them not really interested in her outside of the current head who had made all three of them legitimate members of the Alexius family. Gladious was the son of their father's eldest brother and had been the one of the few to support the relationship between their parents. Of course there had been a bit of awkwardness near the end of the meeting, one of the past heads still alive, Lord Victorian, had made some comments about increased marriage prospects despite being of 'dirty' blood thanks to her eye-color.

Neither of her siblings had been happy about that comment and if it weren't for the fact they shared blood, Mahsa doubted that Lord Victorian would be alive at the moment. Gladious had sent Victorian from the room after proclaiming that the three siblings could marry whoever the hell they wanted and to butt out since the only one with any authority on marriages in the family was the head. Gladious had apologized to the three siblings for the upset and promised to keep an eye on Victorian. After they got back to the palace, Muu and Myron promptly took the to training fields in order to cool off leaving her to explain what had happened. Needless to say, Lord Victorian wouldn't be greeted with any warmth if he were to approach the Fanalis Corps.

Darius was growing larger with each day and flying stronger every time he flew. Mahsa tended to ride her broom and fly over Remano with Hedwig and Darius on days when she wasn't too busy. Sometimes, she brought along Myron or one of the other Fanalis Corp members that showed some interest. When she was alone, the halfling put her flying skill to use and showed off to the awe of those watching from below. Between the talks she had with Lady Scheherazade and training with the Fanalis Corps, flying was the only true time she had to herself where she didn't need to pay attention to anyone. It helped settle her down especially after a really long and trying day. Even if they were leery about her more dangerous moves, Muu and Myron were willing to overlook it because they could see just how much it was helping her adjust.

It was during a meeting with Lady Scheherazade to discuss where Mahsa currently stood academically that Dumbledore made an attempt towards her. The old man appeared with Sirius, Remus, Snape, Moody, and a few others that seemed like they had some form of combat training. Thankfully her tutors were there alongside Lady Scheherazade's guards including some Fanalis Corp members, they were able to knock out everyone with Lady Scheherazade capturing Fawkes using some kind of magical cage that kept him from doing anything. All the wands belonging to wizards were confiscated with her taking custody of the wands belonged to Sirius and Remus. The wizards were stripped of anything other than the clothes on their backs to make sure there weren't any surprises before being thrown into the dungeons where they would be kept until questioning could begin. Muu and the rest of the Fanalis Corps were alerted about what had happened with many asking if she was okay. Only once he'd been assured that she hadn't come to any harm did Muu address the threat, Fawkes the phoenix.

"Lady Scheherazade, what are we going to do with it?" Muu asked while giving the mythical creature a glare.

"We will have it answer questions," Lady Scheherazade looked at Mahsa, "Mahsa, Darius has shown an ability to understand other animals, has he not?"

Mahsa nodded slowly as she reached up to rub Darius' scales, "Yes though sometimes things get lost in translation or they're very difficult to understand."

"You will act as the translator," Lady Scheherazade decided before doing something to the cage, "Phoenix, please answer the questions truthfully as I do not wish to cause pain to such a handsome creature,"

Fawkes trilled softly and Darius translated it for Mahsa, "As you wish, Great Magi."
Lady Scheherazade smiled slightly at the title before asking, "What was Dumbledore planning?"

"He planned to knock out anyone around the little halfling," Fawkes replied as his head bowed lightly, "And steal her away once more. Questions are being asked about his actions and he is unable to answer them without causing great anger. He decided to bring her back and make it seem like she'd been in an accident while removing the memories of everything that had happened after the goblins interfered."

"That bastard," Myron snarled in anger, "He isn't going to take her away again! We'll kill him before he does;"

"Myron, be calm," Muu ordered despite agreeing with their sister, "Phoenix, why is Mahsa?"

Fawkes shifted a bit letting out an uneasy trill and eyeing the occupants of the room before answering, "Because the little halfling is a true Seer."

Mahsa frowned at that, "But I don't have any talent in divination."

"Divination is but a tool mortals blessed with the sight may use to gain some visage of the truth," Fawkes looked at Mahsa with some amusement, "True Seers do not see while awake, but during the time when their minds and soul are free to travel within the Rukh,"

"They have visions while sleeping," Lady Scheherazade looked at Mahsa with a small smile, "No wonder your Rukh drew me to you,"

"But that would mean..." Mahsa trailed off with a wide eyed expression on her face.

"Those vivid dreams of yours are visions," Lady Scheherazade finished as Mahsa dropped to sit down on one of the chairs in the room feeling a bit weak kneed.

Mahsa looked at the magi with a frown, "Why me?"

"For the same reason I'm a magi, the rukh have blessed us for reasons that we may never find out," Lady Scheherazade soothed as she moved to place a hand on Mahsa's shoulder.

Mahsa felt a burst of irritation, "What even is a True Seer?"

"They see what the Rukh show them within dreams," Lady Scheherazade explained, "When trained, they are able to see where fate is intended to flow. They can assist those around them to follow the best possible path in their lives,"

"Trained?" Mahsa looked at Lady Scheherazade, "How am I supposed to be trained when I'm asleep?"

"Meditation will allow you more control of your dreams," Lady Scheherazade murmured with a small hum, "It looks like we'll be working on that aspect,"

Mahsa had the distinct feeling that she was going to be dreading sleep soon enough. Deciding to move thing on since she really didn't want to focus on the next curve ball that life decided to throw at her, she asked Fawkes, "What does me being a...true Seer have anything to do with him kidnapping me?"

"You are the only one with a large enough pool of magic to be able to fight against Voldemort with enough training," Fawkes explained while giving a meaningful look towards the daggers on her sides, "Albus is too old to fight against the monster as he once had been able to,"
"Training? That damn goat didn't train me!" Mahsa lept up from her seat feeling anger course through her, "He just dumped me into that hell-hole each summer. What training?!

Fawkes let out a soothing trill that did little more than piss her off. Muu pulled her to sit down with him and worked on calming her down enough to listen to Fawkes' reply, "You were being trained each year by going up against a problem-"

"Fuck him!" Mahsa hissed loudly, "Fuck everything. I'm going to kill that fucking bastard,"

Muu prevented her from moving though he clearly wanted to go kill the old goat right now as well. Lady Scheherazade decided it was time for everyone to cool down and Mahsa joined her siblings in almost completely destroying the training grounds due to how much rage she was feeling. By time she was done rearranging the landscape and revealing a rather large preference for throwing shatter-able things when angry, she was started crying. She cried for the fact she'd never had a chance to be innocent. She cried over all the horrible things she'd been put through because of one manipulative old goat deciding to use her. She cried all the tears and negative emotions she'd kept locked inside of herself for years. And while she cried herself out, Myron and Muu comforted her without needing to be asked.

Even when Mahsa had passed out, the tears still fell and her siblings stayed with her after moving them inside to a private room.

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Mahsa woke up curled up between her siblings feeling like a weight had fallen off her shoulders and chest. Myron looked over when she moved and smiled a bit, "Hey."

"Hey," Mahsa hoarsely whispered disliking the tightness in her throat and the fact her head felt like someone had stuffed it with cotton through her nose.

"How are you feeling?" Myron asked as Muu got up from the bed they were on and poured her some water from the jug that had been set on a table by the door.

"My head feels like someone stuffed it with cotton through my nose and my throat feels really tight," Mahsa took the offered cup of water and drank it greedily after pushing herself into a sitting position, "But..." She tried to figure out how to put what she was feeling into words, "I feel lighter? Like there was this really heavy weight on my chest and shoulders that suddenly got ripped off,"

Muu sat down beside Mahsa and wrapped an arm around her shoulders, "That makes sense since you've been given answers to a lot of questions thanks to Fawkes."

Mahsa nodded slightly feeling that he was right though there was something missing. When Myron pressed against her side, she realized what else had made her feel so light, "I...Yesterday when you two stayed with me even when I was throwing things and my magic was reacting to my anger, you stayed with me after that and comforted me. You two were angry and sad for me too. I..." The tiny voice of Petunia Dursley hissing that she wasn't worth family love made her throat tighten a bit, "I realized..."

Myron squeezed her arm, "Take your time."

Mahsa took a deep breath and finished her water before answering, "I realized that I could trust you two not to abandon me...That I didn't have to fear that you'd toss me aside," She looked at both her sibling with a small smile, "You've seen me at my worst and still accept me for who I am. I...I..." She let the cup fall from her hands in order to hug Myron, "I love you two."

Myron stiffened in surprise at the fact Mahsa had initiated such a contact before hugging her little
sister tightly as the words registered in her mind. Muu quickly joined the hug with a bright grin on his face. Mahsa's heart swelled with warmth as they murmured, "We love you two, Mahsa."

While Mahsa wasn't even close to being healed from what had happened in her life, she was finally beginning to heal properly.

Lady Scheherazade decided to give Mahsa a break from questioning Fawkes and had the wizards questioned instead. Some of them had no idea what was really going on, they'd assumed that someone had kidnapped Mahsa and made her write those things that the Daily Profit had printed. Snape and Moody knew why they were really in Reim though the old Auror hadn't fully been sold on the plan. Sirius and Remus had gone along because they wanted to make sure Mahsa was okay as well as apologize to her. They hadn't known what Dumbledore really planned to happen. Dumbledore was questioned though the old man proved to be a difficult nut to crack leaving the magi a bit irritated. After Mahsa finished questioning Fawkes, they'd focus on Dumbledore.

Fawkes bowed his head when Mahsa next saw him and apologized, "I know it will not make anything better, but I am truly sorry for the part I played, Little Halfling."

Mahsa inclined her head while voicing what Fawkes had said. Muu started the new round of questioning off, "Why did you help kidnap Mahsa?"

"The bond between Albus and I forced my compliance after he invoked one of his three favors," Fawkes answered earning a few confused look and he answered the unasked question without any prompting, "When a phoenix bonds with someone, they are granted three favors with which they may have anything they wish so long as we have the power to grant it and it will not force the flow of fate to reverse itself."

"So it's like the bond is like a Genie with three wishes?" Mahsa clarified earning a nod from Fawkes.

"Indeed," Fawkes let out a low laughing trill, "He only has a single favor left though he cannot force me to kidnap you again. Your fate resides on this side of the veil."

"How do you know?" Myron demanded from beside Mahsa.

"Those beings of pure magic such as phoenixes can see the flow of fate, "Fawkes explained as he shifted a bit in the cage Lady Scheherazade had crafted, "We can feel when one strays from the path of fate so we may push them back onto it." He focused on Mahsa, "You were meant to be on the other side of the veil though your path deviated quite a bit thanks to Albus, but you weren't meant to stay or die on that side."

"May I ask how?" Mahsa requested earning a nod.

"During your kitten years, you were supposed to expose your magic to the goblins during a treaty signing. When you turned eleven, you were to go to school at Hogwarts and meet those that were to be your future household members," Fawkes explained earning looks of confusion and surprise, "You were to bring them onto this side of the veil after Hogwarts where you would then enter a dungeon though which I do not know. After that, everything grows murky as your path separated quite a bit especially when involving a blue haired child."

"But that isn't my fate anymore, is it?" Mahsa asked as Fawkes finished.

Fawkes shook his head, "Not quite. Certain events will stay as they are while others have changed quite a bit, Little Halfling Queen."
"Queen?" Mahsa jolted a bit as she realized what he meant, "I'm going to conquer a dungeon?"

"Perhaps. Perhaps not," Fawkes trilled in amusement before looking towards Lady Scheherazade.

Lady Scheherazade spoke with a small smile, "Fawkes, will Dumbledore likely try this again?"

"Yes, but you will have time before he does," Fawkes let out a tired sigh, "Albus is stuck in his ways, Lady Magi. He will do his best to have things work out as he plans them. I will do my best to avoid bringing him here, but eventually he will force the issue using his last favor. At which point, the little halfling must be ready to kill the snake."

"But it isn't my prophecy!" Mahsa felt sick at the thought of killing anyone despite wanting to do damage to the snake bastard.

"The snake will stop at nothing to kill you and those dear to your heart, Little Halfling," Fawkes gave her a sorrowful look, "Even without a prophecy in play, you defeated and defied him at every turn."

Mahsa leaned into Myron as the older woman pulled her into a hug. Lady Scheherazade asked, "Is there a timeline?"

"No, but it is at least a year away," Fawkes let out another sigh, "Even to I, the future is a fickle thing when it comes to anything save for the things set in stone."

Muu placed a comforting hand on her shoulder, "We won't let you go through this alone, Mahsa."

Mahsa smiled weakly as she placed a hand on his and squeezed, "I know, Big Brother."

Fawkes didn't have much more relevant information than that, but he did have news on Mahsa's old friends. Hermione had apparently started losing a lot of respect for Dumbledore when he hadn't denied the accusations and she was currently trying to figure out what to do next. Ron had pretty much withdrawn into himself and seemed to be seriously thinking things over. The Weasley twins had decided they didn't want anything to do with Dumbledore or his apparent vigilante group unless the old man stepped down. Ginny seemed to be following Ron's example. Everyone else was pretty much either buying Dumbledore's cover story, neutral to it, or outright against it.

Mahsa insisted that she get to speak with Dumbledore after Lady Scheherazade once again wasn't able to get answers from the old man. Muu and Myron would be in the room alongside Lo'lo so long as all three agreed to not attack the old man. The talk occurred in a room near the dungeons that overlooked one of the streets within Remano. When she entered it, she was surprised to find Dumbledore looking like someone had beaten him rather thoroughly while breaking his nose again, but she knew the shock was from the fact he still managed to act serene despite the situation he was in. She took a seat across from him, "Headmaster Dumbledore."

"Hawtho-" Dumbledore began only to be silence by her raising a hand.

"My name is Mahsa Alexius and I would prefer you use it, Headmaster," Mahsa forced down her temper.

"Mahsa then," Dumbledore looked at her with a sad expression that made the halfling want to rip her head off, "My dear-"

"I am not your anything," Mahsa cut him off again, "Headmaster, I asked for this talk to happen so that I would get some answers outside of what Fawkes has provided us," She was surprised by how
steady her voice was, "Answer them for me,"

Dumbledore frowned revealing some rather heavily cracked teeth, "Mahsa how did Fawkes answer your questions?"

"My second familiar and I are able to converse," Mahsa didn't see the harm in say that, "He is able to understand Fawkes and I was able to act as a translator," She frowned at him, "Headmaster, why did you take me?"

"I didn't have much of a choice-" Dumbledore began only to be cut off by Myron.

"Bullshit! You had a hell of a lot of choices, but you chose to kidnap my little sister!" Myron shouted looking like she wanted to rip Dumbledore's head from his shoulders, "Answer the fucking question without any bullshit,"

Muu had a hand on Myron's shoulder keeping their sister from throwing herself at the old man if she tried. Dumbledore looked at Muu and Myron in realization before looking back at Mahsa. He looked back and forth between the three siblings for a long moment before slumping a bit. He couldn't do much other than that thanks to the chains holding him down. When he spoke, she could hear the slightest tremor in his voice, "It wasn't the best choice or my only one. I will admit that I probably should have left her alone, but there wasn't much time with the war going on. I became desperate and chose the easiest option," He looked at Mahsa with a grave expression on his face, "I truly meant to bring you back once all was said and done. I promise you that, but things changed the night your family was attacked."

"Because of Voldemort accidentally leaving a piece of his soul inside my scar," Mahsa's voice turned a bit dead.

Dumbledore looked surprised, "You know of it?"

"It's gone thanks to the goblins using a cleansing ritual on me," Mahsa reached up to part her bangs and allow him to see the healed scar that was slowly beginning to disappear.

"I see. Good," Dumbledore muttered in shock, "I wasn't aware they could do that,"

"Seeing as they deal with cursed objects all the time, it isn't surprising that they'd be aware of horcrux," Mahsa lowered her hand, "Why did you leave me with the Dursleys? And don't say its because they're 'family'. Family doesn't treat someone as a slave or beat them within an inch of their life,"

Dumbledore flinched at that, "With the soul piece present, you needed to be molded into someone willing to give up their life for the sake of others."

"You wanted to make me in a martyr," Mahsa felt sick to her stomach, "The needs of the many outweigh the few,"

"I am so-" Dumbledore began only for Mahsa to cut him off.

"I don't need or want any apologies from you," Mahsa stood up and glared down at Dumbledore, "It won't make your actions any less shameful or painful. You made it so I never got to know my actual parents. I almost didn't get to know about my siblings or who I truly am," She clenched her fists feeling disgusted looking at the old man who seemed to age with every accusation she laid at his feet, "Even if you weren't the one to almost break me, you put me into that position. You put me into a position that makes me question everything given to me. You put me into a position that makes it almost impossible to believe I'm worthy of being loved. You put me into a position that
makes it so I'm having trouble trusting that my siblings actually love me and won't throw me away. You pushed me into a position that nearly left me broken. You put me into a position that left me so damaged that I doubt that I'll actually be able to fully heal because of how deep it was,"

Muu placed a hand on Mahsa's shoulder making her jolt a bit and realize that she was having trouble breathing, "Mahsa, breath," She nodded thankful that he wasn't going to make her stop. "Just take your time," He turned to Dumbledore with narrowed eyes, "You took one of my little sisters away. You took away one of the ones that I was supposed to protect. You took her away and then placed her into hell hoping to break her."

Mahsa calmed her racing heart and the faint shivers wracking her body. Myron wrapped her arms around the younger halfling. She glared at Dumbledore, "You are not taking her away again. We will kill anyone that tries."

When Mahsa was calm enough, she resumed speaking, "Despite not being there, you were the reason I was starved. You were the reason I was left outside to face the elements no matter the season. You were the reason I was beaten for every little problem. You were the reason I was locked inside a boot cupboard for weeks at a time for every imagined slight. You were the reason I never got a chance to make any friends as a child. You were the reason I was isolated. You were the reason I nearly died as a child," Dumbledore's eyes widened at that and she felt a sense of dark satisfaction as he paled, "You are the reason I have to fight against flinching whenever someone is being physically affectionate. You are the reason I can barely speak up when something is bothering me. You are the reason I wonder if anyone I'm interacting will hurt me for no other reason than their own sick amusement. You are the reason I can barely keep myself from curling into a ball whenever someone is shouting near me. You are the reason I can't trust myself with power for fear of going after those that have wronged me. You are the reason for all that and more," She watched him shrink into himself under her gaze, "You are just as much a monster as the ones that you forced me to call kin, but you're worse than them. You want to know why?" She spoke just a bit softer, "You hide behind a mask and the words 'For the greater good'. They didn't hide that from me."

"I..." Dumbledore attempted to speak before closing his mouth.

"I hate you," Mahsa told him, "I hate you more than I've ever hated anyone before. I want to kill you, but I won't. Not because of some kind of 'I'm a better person than Voldemort' or whatever the hell you'd probably like to believe, I've realized that killing you isn't a punishment," She smiled coldly at him, "Letting you live is so much better, you'll spend the rest of your life with the knowledge that because of you, an innocent child was put through hell for no actual reason other than the fact you were too blind and lazy to look for another way,"

With that, Mahsa turned and began walking towards the door. Myron, Muu, and Lo'lo followed after her. When she'd walked far enough from the room and the door had closed, she placed her back against the wall and slid onto the floor. Pulling her legs against her chest, she wrapped her arms around them. Myron sat down beside her, "You okay?"

Mahsa shrugged as she looked at the wall on the opposite side of the hallway, "I...I don't know. In some ways, it feels amazing finally being able to rant at him like that. In other ways, I just feel sick to my stomach knowing that everything could have been avoided if he hadn't been so blind," She looked at Muu as he bent down in front of her and reached out to grab one of his hands earning a small smile from him, "I just don't know."

"That's okay," Muu squeezed her hand lightly, "You should just be glad that you've finally gotten to confront him,"
"There's so many more things that I wanted to say not to mention questions that I really want him to answer," Mahsa sighed softly.

"You'll have time to do it," Muu assured her, "The goblins that will be deporting the wizards aren't going to arrive for a few weeks, so you'll have time to ask them,"

Mahsa felt a bit better at that. Lo'lo spoke up with a grin, "That last bit was pretty vicious of you, Kid."

"It's true though," Mahsa pointed out.

"Yeah, but I never thought words could be so vicious," Lo'lo continued to grin at her, "Nice job, Kid,"
Chapter Summary

Time skips ahead

Mahsa decided that she didn't want to see Dumbledore again after her little rant. Lady Scheherazade agreed while commenting that Dumbledore had been a lot more forthcoming when questioned. While happy that she'd somehow been able to help, she didn't believe that he was doing it for any other reason than feel better about himself. She did get to see Sirius and Remus a day later when Lady Scheherazade allowed for the meeting thanks to both men's good behavior as well as their willingness to answer any question given to them.

Mahsa looked up from the healing text that she'd been assigned by the tutor that was helping her become a healer when the door to the room opened to admit Remus and Sirius. Muu walked in first with a light smile on his face, "How's studying?"

"A bit dry, but much easier to get through than that book on animagus I've been trying to read through," Mahsa smiled up at him as she marked her page in the book, "It hasn't put me to sleep yet,"

"Good," Muu squeezed her shoulder lightly once he'd walked over, "I'll be right here if you need me,"

"I know," Mahsa murmured earning a bright smile and another squeeze to her shoulder before Muu moved to sit down by the window.

Sirius and Remus were led into the room with both men wearing magic canceling shackles. Sirius brightened when he caught sight of her, "Pup! You're alright."

"Of course I'm alright," Mahsa gestured for both men to sit at the table across from her, "I'm finally where I belong,"

Sirius' expression faltered a bit though Mahsa wasn't sure if it was about her words or because she didn't get up to hug him. Remus had a pained look on his face while glancing towards Muu with what seemed to be fear in his eyes. Perhaps he could sense Barbados somehow thanks to being a werewolf, it was something to think about. The two men sat down with Myron moving to lean against the door after it closed. Remus spoke with a slightly nervous glance towards Muu, "So you were able to find your family?"

"Mhmm. My elder brother and sister," Mahsa closed her book and moved to place it into her satchel, "I unfortunately didn't get to meet my birth parents as they died," She saw Remus and Sirius wince out of the corner of her eyes, "Can you two answer some questions truthfully? Please,"

"Of course, Pup," Sirius agreed with an almost desperate look in his eye.

"Don't call me that, Sirius," Mahsa told the man earning a hurt look, "With everything that I found out, I don't see us as family right now,"
Sirius swallowed heavily, "As you wish...Hawthorn."

"It's Mahsa actually. My real name is Mahsa Alexius," Mahsa corrected in a soft tone earning two nods, "How much did either of you know about how I came to be with the Potters?"

"As much as Lily and James did," Remus answered while placing a shackled hand close to Sirius', "We didn't know where Dumbledore got you or if you had any family left. Just like Lily and James planned, we were going to try and find your birth family once the war was done,"

Mahsa had guessed as much, but it was nice knowing that she was right, "But you were too consumed by grief caused by their deaths and Sirius' supposed betrayal to do so," Remus nodded with a solemn look on his face, "Did you know that Lily Potter sealed away my true heritage?"

Remus and Sirius looked at her in shock as they chorused, "What?!"

Well that just made Mahsa feel a bit better towards the two. She nodded with a frown, "Lily Potter admitted it and the fact I was adopted in a letter to me. The goblins took the seal off of me using a cleansing ritual which also cleared up a lot of things that I'm not going to talk about right now. During that month where everyone seemed to be trying to get me to come back, the goblins helped me gain control of myself as well as move forward in my studies."

"We didn't know and would've stopped her if we had," Sirius assured her with a dark look on his face, "Lily should have known better than to pull something like that,"

Mahsa felt a sense of happiness knowing that Sirius hadn't helped and didn't agree with sealing her, "I'm glad to hear that. Sirius, why were you so insistent on coming to see me during my month away? Especially since you and everyone else seemed intent on ignoring me."

"Part of it was me hoping we'd finally be able to live together as a family," Sirius had a guilty look on his face, "I was scared that you weren't somewhere safe,"

"Like the Dursleys were ever actually safe. Safe from outside harm perhaps, but not inside," Mahsa snorted softly, "You agreed with Dumbledore,"

"Only that you needed to be somewhere safe," Sirius protested with a frown, "If I'd know what was truly going on there, I never would've left you there,"

"Don't be surprised if I don't believe you," Mahsa leaned back against her seat and reached up to scratch Darius' chin earning surprised looks from the two men, "Darius is my second familiar. Say anything bad about him and I'll kick your asses,"

Sirius let out a bark of laughter, "Sounds like this place has been good for you, Mahsa."

Mahsa smiled a bit, "How have things been since I left?"

"Everyone's been in an uproar," Sirius grinned brightly, "Dumbledore's been getting a lot of questions especially since you never showed up at Hogwarts. Molly seems torn between being angry at you and hoping that you're safe. Arthur is much more worried about how safe you are and hopes you're happy. Everyone else is pretty much a toss up between thinking you're a liar, how safe you are, if you're going to help with Voldemort, and everything in between though no one save for a few are wondering if you're happy,"

"Well, you can tell that I'm not helping with Voldemort unless he outright tries something against me or my family," Mahsa said earning a shocked look from Remus while Sirius gave her a look of understanding.
"You'd really leave everyone to fight him?" Remus asked in a soft voice.

"Why should I have to fight?" Mahsa threw back at him as Darius hissed likely being able to feeling her rising anger, "They left me to rot in hell on the words of some old man past his prime. No one bothered to check on me or make sure I was actually alright. When I finally appeared, they didn't question why I was so small or why I acted as I did. All they did was push expectation onto my shoulders and act they actually deserved to have a say in everything I did. When I didn't meet those expectations, they turned on me so quick that I'm surprised it didn't give me whiplash!" She shoved down the urge to throw something at Remus, "All I ever got from those bastards was expectations and hate when I didn't meet them. They saw me as some kind untouchable figure or something less than the dirt beneath their feet. Do you honestly expect me to fight for them? Do you honestly expect me to fight and die for those that have treated me as little more than object they can place onto a shelf when they're done with it?" She planted her hands on the table causing cracks to form as the sound echoed through the room, "I will never fight for them again! I refuse to be used by anyone again! The only ones I plan to fight for are my family, my friends, and myself. That is it," She felt her magic rise up and begin to crackle against the air as it responded to her emotions, "If that makes me selfish, so fucking be it,"

"Mahsa," Muu placed a hand on Mahsa's shoulder making the younger halfling jolt a bit not expecting such a touch especially since she hadn't notice him moving, "Take a deep breath and calm down, Little Sister," She took a deep breath and forced herself to calm down allowing her magic to settle once again, "Mister Lupin, my sister has been put through enough by your people. We will not allow you to force her into a fight that wasn't even hers to being with. Instead of setting a burden like that on the shoulders of a child, you should act like adults and deal with the problem in the first place. Adults are supposed to protect the next generation not throw them towards danger just because they're too weak or scared to face it,"

Remus flinched back at Muu's words while Sirius began to eye Muu with interest. He looked between the two halflings for a moment before grinning, "You're her older brother."

"That I am," Muu stared at Sirius with a cold expression, "I will not allow my little sister to be hurt again by your people,"

"I'm glad to hear it," Sirius smiled rather than look put off by Muu's coldness, "Even if Mahsa isn't actually my goddaughter, I do love her as if she was my own. To hear that she has family that'll be looking out for her, I know that she's in a far better place than anything back where we're from," He looked at Mahsa with a sad smile, "I'm happy to know that you found a home for yourself even if it doesn't include me,"

"Thank you, Sirius," Mahsa's magic finally calmed down as Sirius said that.

"Though would it be possible if I could stay here?" Sirius asked earning a surprised then calculating look from Muu.

"Why?" Muu asked as Mahsa looked at Myron who looked just as surprised as she felt.

Sirius nodded towards Mahsa, "I've got a lot to make up for, Mister Alexius, especially when it comes to Mahsa. I want to earn any forgiveness she's willing to give me and maybe one day actually be considered family. I also want to help make her safe," He looked at Muu, "I have nothing back in England since they consider me a criminal and there doesn't seem to be any hope of freedom for me."

"You do realize that you'd find even less freedom here since no one actually trusts you, right?" Muu asked earning a nod.
"I'd be willing to earn that trust especially if it means helping Mahsa protect those she loves," Sirius replied with a determined look in his eye.

"Sirius!" Remus hissed seemingly regaining his voice, "Do you have any idea what you're saying?"

"Of course I do," Sirius looked at Remus with a frown, "Moony, I'm going crazy in that house. If I stay there any longer, I'm going to go insane."

Muu spoke with a serious expression on his face, "I do not have the authority to grant such a request. You will need to speak with Lady Scheherazade."

"Done," Sirius smiled brightly.

"If she doesn't allow for it, you will be sent back to where you came from along with every other wizard that came to kidnap my sister," Muu continued earning a nod from Sirius and he looked at Mahsa, "Do you have anything you wish to say or ask either of them?"

"No," Mahsa shook her head lightly earning a nod.

"Then the visit is over," Muu gestured towards the door.

Mahsa wasn't surprised when Lady Scheherazade called for her nor was she surprised when the magi asked for her thoughts on Sirius. She stood before Lady Scheherazade's throne and spoke truthfully, "Lady Scheherazade, Sirius has not seen anyone about the damage done to his mind or body during his time in Azkaban. He hasn't properly grieved for the deaths of his friends or the betrayal from someone he viewed as a loyal friend. My interactions with him have been infrequent at best and mostly thorough letters rather than in person. I do not believe that I am the best person to speak to on this matter."

Lady Scheherazade smiled slightly, "You're trying to avoid letting your emotions influence anything."

Mahsa nodded slowly, "Yes, Lady Scheherazade."

"What is your actual opinion?" Lady Scheherazade requested in a stern tone that brokered no argument.

Taking a deep breath, Mahsa told the Magi honestly, "Up until I learned about everything, I desperately wanted to believe that Sirius would somehow become free and keep his promise to let me come live with him. Sure, he was broken, but so was I. Here was a man offering up everything that I'd ever wanted and seemingly without any strings attached, I wasn't going to focus on just how damaged he was," She closed her eyes, "He was the person that I'd been waiting to rescue me. He was that family member who'd finally take me away from my personal hell. Now though," She opened her eyes to look at the magi with a sad smile, "Sirius is a man that never truly grew up. He's lost everything on that side of veil and will do whatever it takes to keep what's left of the Potter even if I'm not really their daughter. He is broken, but unlike me, he doesn't really have anyone helping him piece himself back together," She reached up to touch her labret earning a light smile from Lady Scheherazade, "While I do think Sirius would probably benefit from being away from England, I don't think we should be around one another if only for the hope that he'd have an actual chance to heal."

"I see," Lady Scheherazade offered Mahsa a measured look, "And where do you think he should go?"
"The goblins," Mahsa answered almost automatically, "They helped start the healing process somewhat by helping me get over Cedric's death as well as Quirrell's."

Lady Scheherazade nodded lightly, "Thank you for your assistance in this matter, Mahsa."

"It's no problem, Lady Scheherazade," Mahsa replied before hesitating for a few moments, "Lady Scheherazade? Would it be too much trouble to inform me about Sirius' fate?"

"Not at all," Lady Scheherazade offered her a comforting smile, "I was planning to do so anyway as he was an important figure in your life and probably still has some importance,"

"Thank you, Lady Scheherazade," Mahsa told the Magi earnestly.

It took two weeks for Lady Scheherazade to make a decision about Sirius and had decided on Mahsa's suggestion after conferring with the goblins via communication mirrors. When a small portion of the caravan came back in order to return to the other-side of the veil, they took all the magicals with them after they'd been sedated with the Draught of Living Death. Though this was only after Severus Snape was beaten within an inch of his life a few times by certain Fanalis who were fairly pissed at how he'd treated Mahsa, she even got the chance to break the greasy haired bastard's nose and jaw as well as kick him in the balls. The goblins just smirked when they loaded the wizards while the magicals not stupid enough to try and kidnap her just shook their heads muttering about bloodthirsty people. After that, everything settled down again though her training was adjusted to allow for meditation which would not only help her gain control of the abilities she had as a true Seer, but help her discover what animagus form she had.

Fawkes was allowed to leave after Lady Scheherazade managed to secure an agreement to not transport Dumbledore inside of the palace again. Mahsa still had quite a few questions for the phoenix though she doubted any of them would ever be answered or if there was an actual desire to learn the answers. After all, life would be boring and perhaps a bit more scary if she knew her fate.

After six months, Muu deemed Mahsa ready to fight in the Colosseum if she so wished. Rather than jump right in, she thought carefully about her choices and spent a lot of time studying about just what the Colosseum had to offer for prospective opponents. Eventually, she ended up choosing to try her hand at it and Muu arranged the fight for her. She wasn't allowed to use magic in the fight, but that was alright since this was to test her physical abilities. She was led to the waiting area and directed to take a seat. She looked up when Lo'lo entered the waiting area, "Lo'lo?"

"You aren't the only one fighting today," Lo'lo explained as he took a seat on the bench across from her, "A few of the others are as well. They've got fights a bit later on today, so they aren't here yet,"

"So this is one of the usual days you guys come here to fight?" Mahsa asked earning a nod, "Do you have an idea of what I'm going to be facing?"

"Since it's your first time, they'll probably pit you against one of the gladiatorial beasts that haven't been here long," Lo'lo answered after a moment of thought, "Not sure what since they get new beasts every time we fight in order to spice things up," He eyed her with a slight smirk, "Scared?"

Mahsa shook her head, "Nervous and excited actually."

"Good. Fear will only cripple you in the ring," Lo'lo leaned back against the wall and closed his eyes, "You'll be up soon,"

Mahsa muttered a thanks and began to meditate a bit since it would help with her nerves. She let
the world around her slowly fade away and concentrated on the movement of the magic within her veins. She came out of her meditation when someone approached her. Looking at the guard, she offered him a light smile as she stood up, "It's time?"

"Yes, L-Lady Alexius," The guard answered earning a low bark of laughter from Lo'lo.

"Lead on then," Mahsa looked at Lo'lo curiously earning a chuckle from the scarred man, "See you later, Lo'lo,"

"Break some bones and spill some blood, Kid!" Lo'lo barked after her.

Mahsa followed the guard as she fiddled with her daggers making sure everything was in working order yet again. Stepping out into the Colosseum ring, she was surprised to see the large amount of people, but supposed it was due to how much they enjoyed seeing Fanalis fight. She moved forward as her heart began beating rapidly at the amount of people watching her making the halfling nervous. She calmed herself as the gate across from the one she'd walked out of opened and a large snarling wolf-like creature entered the ring. She could see its powerful muscles bulging beneath the scraggly slate colored fur coating a majority of its body. Its slavering maw opened as it howled and barked in anger at the chains holding it down revealing yellowing razor sharp fangs. Two pairs of yellow eyes glared at her, the beast panted heavily sending the scent of rotten meat towards her with each breath it took.

The match began with the guards releasing the wolf-like creatures chains allowing it to race towards her. Mahsa took out her daggers and moved out of the way extending one as the creature ran past earning a yelp of pain as warm blood splattered against her skin. The wolf turned around with a snarl as it slid to a stop not far from her and lunged as blood trickled to the ground from the wound she'd caused. Moving to the side, she stuck out the blade again scoring another long slice on the creature. When it slid to a stop, the beast turned towards her again only it didn't start attacking immediately. It bared its teeth with a snarl and she got into a stance as someone muttered above her that a Fanalis using a weapon outside of Muu didn't seem right. Inwardly snorting at that, she focused on the fight as her opponent leapt forward.

This time when it lunged at her, the wolf creature turned it's head forcing Mahsa to move quickly in order to avoid getting bit. She jumped backwards to get some distance while reevaluating the beast. Clearly, it had some form of intelligence which made sense if it was like a regular wolf. While she could continue this game of cat and mouse allowing the creature to bleed out, it would be crueler than just putting the beast out of its misery. With that in mind, she threw her dagger towards the beast as it lunged towards her again scoring another hit though this time the blade managed to pierce the beasts skull via the mouth when it opened its maw in preparation to bite her. Immediately upon it slamming into the ground and not getting up, the crowd began to roar in joy at her victory.

Mahsa retrieved her dagger from the wolf-creature's carcass with a sickeningly wet sound as she pulled the blade free. She let the ring feeling sick to her stomach and quickly puked once she was out of eyesight. Someone pulled back her hair as she painted the ground with what she’d eaten for breakfast. When she finished dry heaving, they handed her a handkerchief and she wiped her mouth. She murmured, "Thank you."

"You okay, Mahsa?" Myron asked her earning a small grimace.

"Not right now, but I will be," Mahsa began cleaning off her daggers with the handkerchief.

Myron began leading her out of the Colosseum to get cleaned up, "It's hard the first few times."
"It's different from before," Mahsa murmured as they slipped through the hallways, "This time I actually went into a situation intending to fight and kill something."

It was different from killing the basilisk or Quirrell. In this situation, Mahsa had not only been prepared, but she'd intended to kill something since her opponent hadn't been able to yield against her. She had intentionally gotten into this situation. Granted, it was with the intention of ensuring she didn't break down if forced to kill someone during her future travels. It still left a bad taste in her mouth that didn't come from the bile she'd brought up. She made a decision to not fight in the Colosseum for awhile.

When Mahsa had learned everything she could about healing in theory, she was granted leave to put it into practice by helping out in the infirmary. She learned non-magical healing as well since magical healing wouldn't always be an option especially if her magic became low. Her first real patient ended up being Lo'lo who needed stitches due to one of the Colosseum beasts managing to score a rather deep slash with its claws on his chest. It actually made her feel better and less nervous. She cleaned up his injury before beginning to dab it with one of the potions she'd made. Lo'lo grunted a bit at the sting, "How come you aren't just using your magic?"

"Because I need to know how to do it the non-magical way too and this will help me learn how to heal with my magic," Mahsa poured a bit of the potion onto the cut making Lo'lo jerk a bit, "Sorry,"

"It's fine," Lo'lo grumbled a bit as she continued to work, "Are you going to be fighting soon?"

Mahsa shook her head, "Not for awhile."

"That fight left a bad taste in your mouth, huh?" Lo'lo asked earning a nod as she finished with the potion and got out the supplies needed to stitch the wound closed, "Not surprising given where you grew up,

"Going to mock me or something?" Mahsa asked in a slightly soft voice.

"Nah," Lo'lo shook his head with a grimace as she began to stitch the wound closed, "So long as you don't give up fighting, I don't see a reason to mock you,"

"I'm not going to give up fighting," Mahsa didn't think she could ever do that.

"Good," Lo'lo looked down at her hands as she worked, "You're actually pretty gentle."

"Causing intentional pain when it isn't needed is sickening," Mahsa finished up the stitches which were a bit rough given that this was the first actual time she'd done so without anyone supervising her.

Once Mahsa checked everything over, she finished up with Lo'lo and sent him off with a request to return to the infirmary tomorrow unless he broke the stitches somehow.

Before Mahsa realized it, her birthday had arrived signaling that she'd been in Remano for almost a full year. Thankfully for her sanity, no one made a big deal of her birthday outside of Myron attempting to bake a cake only to almost burn down the kitchens. She ended up showing Myron and quite a few others how to bake a cake as well as make homemade frosting. While she wasn't usually one for sweets or making them, she didn't mind doing so for those that would truly appreciate them and actually show their appreciation. For her and Muu, she made a spiced carrot cake and coated it in a light layer of cream cheese frosting. While still just a bit sweet, it wasn't too
sweet. Muu actually enjoyed it and asked if she wouldn't mind making it for his next birthday. With a grin, she agreed to that as well as making a strawberry shortcake for Myron's birthday after her older sister requested it.

Mahsa was given a cleaning kit for her weapons from Muu. Myron took her on a spa-day with a few other female Fanalis. Lady Scheherazade gifted her some texts of herbal remedies that actually worked. Lo'lo gifted her with a second lion statue though this one was made of white stone. Everyone else either gave her a flower or merely wished her a happy birthday. Sirius sent her two gifts. The first was a potions ingredient kit that could hold up to a two hundred different ingredients under preservation charms. The second was a journal on the animagus transformation written by James Potter and Sirius Black. Needless to say, she said thank you to everyone and sent a letter thanking Sirius for the gift.

In celebration of her birthday, Mahsa was taken out drinking and ended up drinking quite a bit leading her to getting drunk. She didn't remember much of that night, but apparently she was a huge flirt and fairly physical while drunk though thankfully it seemed to be limited to those she was comfortable with. She was happy that there hadn't been any sign of her actually wanting to have sex with anyone since that would've been embarrassing. She did have a laugh at the fact neither Yaqut or Razol could look her in the eye without blushing a bit. Apparently they'd been her favorite targets while drunk, she was proudest of embarrassing Razol considering that the scarred female didn't seem to have any sense of shame. Of course this led to Razol doing her best to fluster the halfling in return, she quickly learned how to let things like that roll of her back and fire back at the elder female Fanalis.

Which resulted in Razol and Mahsa flirting back and forth so much that some of the others wondered if they were actually attracted to one another. It got questioned enough that Muu ended up pulling them into his office and asking, "Are you two together?"

"No!" Both of them looked at Muu like he'd gone insane.

"Why would you think that?" Razol asked with wide eyes, "No offense to Green-eyes, but she ain't the right gender for me,"

"I'm not even sure if I like males or female," Mahsa pointed out with a faint flush to her cheeks since both were attractive to her.

Muu offered them a sheepish smile, "I thought it best to ask since everyone has begun to wonder with how much you two have been flirting."

"I flirt with everyone," Razol pointed out with a snort, "Doesn't mean I'm attracted to anyone,"

"It's fun and making people blush is entertaining," Mahsa admitted with a sheepish smile.

Muu gave Mahsa an amused look, "I wasn't expecting that," Mahsa shrugged a bit since she hadn't been either, "I won't ask you two to stop since it isn't actually doing any harm, but please try not to say anything too explicit around the nobles or any children."

"Got it Captain," Razol gave Muu a mock salute.

"No problem," Mahsa agreed rather easily.

"Then I see no reason to keep you both here," Muu said as he sat down at his desk, "Though Mahsa please stay back for a moment,"
Razol looked between the two siblings curiously before shrugging and saying, "See you later, Green-eyes."

"See ya," Mahsa replied as Razol left and closed the door behind her, "So what's up?"

"Have you made a decision on whether you're going to stay in Reim this year or begin traveling?" Muu asked her as he began doing paperwork.

Mahsa looked at him in surprise for the question before shaking her head, "Not yet. I still have a lot that I need to learn, but most of it requires practical knowledge that can't be easily gained in Reim."

"So you're torn between the two?" Muu asked earning a nod as she took a seat across from him, "Well, I for one would prefer it if you stay in Reim for another year especially since Lady Scheherazade is beginning to receive requests about you ability to speak to snakes,"

Mahsa was a little surprised to hear that it had taken over a year, but also wasn't so surprised since it took information a lot longer to get around on this side of the veil. She reached up to rub the scales of Darius' chin feeling the tip of his tail twitch against her stomach. The young wyvern had grown quite a bit in both forms though more so in his lion form which was very likely going to become big enough for her to ride by the time he finished growing. She looked her brother, "To be honest, my biggest argument to stay is gaining some form of a reputation before I actually leave Reim. If I have a reputation, people won't be quite as ready to attack me or cause trouble," She paused for a moment before adding, "I also might be willing to take Lady Scheherazade up on her offer to become a Dungeon Capturer."

Muu's head shot up at her words as he breathed out, "Truly?"

Mahsa nodded slowly, "Not right now, but I'm growing more comfortable with the idea especially since it will give me another way to protect myself while on the road," She closed her eyes for a few moments, "There is also what Fawkes told us, I was meant to be one and I've seen myself as one though what Djinn I end up with is never really clear. With the threat of the snake eventually coming after me, I'll need what power I can get if only to ensure that he won't kill me."

"Maha," Muu's voice was soft, "Are you sure?"

"Yes, but I'm not ready for it right now," Mahsa opened her eyes to look at Muu, "I doubt that I'll ever really be ready until it happens," She swallowed heavily, "Will you...Promise to help me keep from letting the power get to my head when it happens,"

"I promise," Muu whispered with wide eyes.

Likely, Muu was realizing just how much of her trust she was placing on him. Mahsa smiled weakly at him, "Thank you, Big Brother. Was there anything else you needed to speak about?"

"Not at the moment," Muu shook his head.

"Then may I leave? I want to go meditate," Mahsa requested earning a nod.

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Swirling black birds forming around a group of shadowed figures...An eastern looking palace engulfed in flames...an army marching forward spreading the black birds...two figures lay burning while a small boy rushed from the flames coated in blood...shouts and cheers echoing in the distance...
Mahsa sat within a spacious garden filled with a few cherry blossom trees in bloom and a koi pond. She was resting beneath one of the trees with a book in her lap. She jolted as a slight deep baritone voice spoke from nearby, "What are you reading, Mahsa?"

Mahsa turned her head to see a man walking towards her. He is a tall and well-built man. He has narrow red eyes and long crimson red hair that is tied back into a topknot. One of his most notable features is his goatee which actually suited the man. He has thin eyebrows and wears some eyeliner around his eyes. On his head, he wears a small Chinese headdress with a yellow gem in its center. He wore traditional clothes that are mainly red, white and black in color along with a black flowing cape. The man wasn’t a Fanalis since his eyes were an off color red with slight pink tints and his hair had a sheen to it that wasn’t normally present in Fanalis unless some form of oil was used. She offered the man a slight smile, "A book on Norse healing magic, Kouen."

"Norse healing magic?" Kouen looked at her curiously as he approached, "There are different variants?"

"Quiet a few, the branch this book covers is interesting since it’s used in conjunction with runes and certain weather patterns rather than potions like a majority of Healing magics," Mahsa shifted on the blanket she sat on and Kouen sat down beside her, "The diversity between different healing magics due to differing points of origin can be absolutely fascinating especially since most are still able to be use to this day. The fact that the Norse variety is so different compared to most of the other Healing magics is amazing since it shows just how different the growth of magic in those areas differed thanks to the Viking culture especially when you consider how heavily their gods are featured in the spells..." She trailed off with a flush realizing that she was rambling, "Of course, it probably isn't as interesting to you as the various battle tactics."

Kouen shook his head with a low chuckle that made almost liquid heat slid down her spine, "Not at all, I actually like learning various things about the cultures you know of."

"Oh," Mahsa pushed down her flush, "Was there something specific you wished to speak of, Kouen? You don't usually come to the garden from what I've been led to believe,"

"I wished to speak with you," Kouen answered as Mahsa marked her page in the book, "You are going home soon,"

Mahsa nodded as she put her book into the satchel beside her, "Yes, I've been in the Kou Empire for over seven months after all which is the longest I've stayed in a single country outside of certain exceptions," She looked back at Kouen, "It's been almost a year since I've seen my siblings in person not to mention everyone else back home. Why do you ask?"

"I was hoping you would join me for dinner tonight," Kouen answered as he stood up and held out a hand to help her up.

Mahsa took it feeling the callouses on his hand against her skin, "I don't see why not. It'll get me out of having to deal with Kouha attempting to drink me under the table again," Kouen smirked a bit as he pulled her up, "You would think after the all the hangovers he's had to deal with since the first time he challenged me that he'd be less enthusiastic."

"Kouha doesn't enjoy being beaten by anyone outside of Koumei and I," Kouen replied as he tugged her a bit closer, "Though one would think you'd enjoy winning those contests,"

Mahsa looked up at Kouen as he pulled her close to his chest, "I would if it weren't for the hangovers and the fact Judar keeps trying to manipulate me into going dungeon diving with him," She shivered a bit as their chests touched, "Kouen, mind letting go? This is a bit-"
Kouen's mouth pressed against Mahsa's cutting off whatever else she was going to say.

Mahsa woke up from the vision thanks to Myron and Lo'lo usual morning argument starting up. Groaning softly at the shouts, she wondered why Muu had to have their rooms so close together. Sitting up, she touched her lips feeling them tingle faintly. Kouen's lips were definitely softer and fuller than she ever expected from a guy. She wondered just who the hell Kouen was and why she was having a vision of them kissing. Obviously, they were probably close if the guy was kissing her and asking her to eat dinner with him. She knew that they were in the Kou Empire and someone named Judar was trying to get her to go Dungeon Diving which means he might be a magi. Deciding to ask Lady Scheherazade about the Kou Empire later on when they met for their almost weekly talks, she got out of bed knowing that it wouldn't be long before Myron pulled her for morning training or she'd be called to the infirmary because someone managed to get hurt again.

It was a testament to how much being in Reim has changed Mahsa considering how easily she ignored someone kissing her. Now if the vision had included a sex scene, she'd probably end up blushing up a storm and her mind would probably resemble a computer blue screening considering the fact she was very much a virgin despite being a chronic flirt while drunk that happens to be fairly handsy. She could thank Muu and Lo'lo for that since neither of them liked the idea of her having sex with anyone even if said partner was a girl.

Lady Scheherazade frowned as Mahsa finished explaining her vision while leaving out the whole kiss portion of it, "The name Kouen doesn't ring a bell, but the name Judar does."

"He's the other magi beside Yunan and you, right?" Mahsa asked as she shifted a bit in her chair.

"Yes," Lady Scheherazade looked serious which scared Mahsa a bit, "Unlike Yunan and I, he is chaos and has summoned quite a few dungeons in recent years which would actually explain why Kou has been expanding so much if he truly has settled with them," The magi gazed at Mahsa silently for a few moments before saying, "And your future self gave no indication of accepting his offer?"

"None," Mahsa found it easier to consider the future version of herself to be someone else, "Given the fact he was trying to manipulate her into it, I doubt she took him up on it,"

"While one would call it foolish especially as it would give Reim the power of another metal vessel, I am glad," Lady Scheherazade's eyes held a slightly possessive tint to them, "We magi can be fairly possessive of our king candidates," Mahsa decided that she'd decline Judar no matter what since she had no wish to witness the magi's displeasure, "Mahsa, I will not tell you to stay away from the Kou Empire, but be careful while there given what occurred before the full vision,"

"Of course," Mahsa wondered over who those cloaked people surrounded by the black Rukh were.

"Now," Lady Scheherazade looked at Mahsa with a stern expression, "Mahsa Alexius, will you accept my offer to become a King?"

Mahsa swallowed heavily before nodding, "Yes, Lady Scheherazade."

"Then in two days time, we shall go conquer a Dungeon," Lady Scheherazade smiled lightly, "I would advise you to inform Muu and begin setting your affairs in order," Mahsa nodded and stood from her chair, "Mahsa, I truly believe you are ready,"

"I hope I am," Mahsa murmured as she left the room.
Even with the knowledge that she was meant to become a Dungeon Capturer and Queen Candidate, Mahsa couldn't squash the fear that she would misuse the power being granted to her by Lady Scheherazade and whatever Djinn lay within the Dungeon she'd be conquering. While there was always a chance that the Djinn would choose someone else, she knew that she'd be the most likely candidate to be chosen. Given her luck, it was going to happen no matter what.
Mahsa fiddled with the straps of her backpack as she followed Muu to where Lady Scheherazade was waiting for her so they could travel to the Dungeon that the magi had summoned. Muu paused before the door and pulled her into a hug just like Myron had. Both of her siblings would be staying behind, Muu wouldn't be going along since he couldn't chance taking on another Djinn considering just how much of a toll using Barbatos took on him. Myron wasn't coming along because she'd gotten a concussion due to a rather intense sparring session that left Lo'lo with a broken arm. None of the participants had been very forthcoming about what happened, Muu wasn't pleased with any of them. She hugged her brother tightly breathing in his scent and further embedding it into her mind. Muu pulled back after a moment, "Do your best no matter what and watch after each other."

Darius hissed in agreement from around her neck. He was the only one of her familiars going into the dungeon mostly due to Hedwig not having much combat ability and she was currently pregnant which meant the snowy owl wouldn't have been going regardless of any combat ability. Mahsa nodded as forced herself to stay calm, "We will."

Muu pressed a kiss to her forehead and smiled down at her, "I'm really proud of you, Mahsa. Myron and I both are."

Mahsa's heart felt like it was going to burst at those words and a sense of true calm blanketed her snuffing out the panic, "Big Brother..."

"Come home so we can celebrate, Little Sister," Muu told her as he moved to open the door.

"I will," Mahsa promised as determination filled her.

Mahsa was going to come back home no matter what since she had people waiting for her. Lady Scheherazade smiled when they entered the room, "Ready to go, Mahsa?"

"Yes, Lady Scheherazade," Mahsa replied standing up straighter.

Lady Scheherazade waved her over and Mahsa joined her on the transportation circle set up. She spoke to Muu and the others currently standing within the room, "Keep guard of Reim while we're gone, I leave it within your hands."

"We will, My Lady," They all chorused in a somewhat solemn unity.

With that, Lady Scheherazade activated the circle and they were off to the Dungeon.

The Dungeon that Lady Scheherazade had summoned was oddly beautiful if a bit off putting. It resembled a crystallize forest filled with odd little cat-like creatures that disappeared and reappeared every few seconds. The creatures were coated in a mixture of smoky grays, blacks, and off-white colors. A light mist flowed around their feet though Mahsa couldn't smell any water. In fact, she couldn't smell anything beside Lady Scheherazade leaving the Fanalis quite nervous. She looked at Lady Scheherazade as they walked down one of the many paths, "Lady Scheherazade, do you know anything of this particular, Djinn?"

A shiver ran down Mahsa's spine at the distorted echo caused by her voice. Lady Scheherazade hummed softly making the halfling flinch a bit at the mournful echo it caused, "Not much, Alastor isn't one that I'm very familiar with."
"I see," Mahsa looked around them, "So is there supposed to be some form of test with this?"

Lady Scheherazade was about to speak when a low chuckle echoed through the air. Mahsa grabbed her daggers as a voice she hadn't heard since her last year at Hogwarts called out, "And here I thought you didn't like tests, Potter."

"Malfoy," Mahsa frowned as she spotted the blonde.

What was Malfoy doing in the Dungeon? Mahsa mentally shook her head knowing that it couldn't be Draco Malfoy. For all that the blonde before her resembled and even spoke like the ferret, it wasn't him. The crystalline edges to his feature and the washed out look about him told her that. If that wasn't enough, she couldn't smell anything coming from him or even hear the sound of another person breathing besides Lady Scheherazade. Tightening her grip on the daggers, she looked at the doppelganger warily as he chuckled, "Come now, Potter. No insults?"

"Why insult someone that isn't here?" Mahsa retorted making the doppelganger raise an eyebrow, "For all that you may look and speak like the ferret, you don't carry a scent and look quite washed out. I assume you're part of the Djinn's test?"

The doppelganger chuckled again and Mahsa noticed that it didn't let off an echo, "Smart girl."

"Then let's get down to it," Mahsa began unsheathing her daggers.

"Nope!" The doppelganger shook his head at her, "No fighting!" He smiled in a way that Mahsa had never seen Malfoy do, "You need to answer a question. Depending on how you answer, you'll either move towards the treasure room or run away from it,"

Mahsa eyed him before sheathing her daggers, "Very well."

"The power of kings is something that sets an individual apart from the cattle," The doppelganger mused with that disturbing smile, "It brings with it riches, power beyond imagine, and the ability to rule. Which statement is wrong?"

Mahsa barely had to think about it, "The whole statement is wrong save for the part it sets someone apart from everyone else."

The doppelganger's eyebrow rose up, "Why do you say that?"

Mahsa shook her head, "Ah ah, I already answered one question. You said I only needed to give you an answer to one question."

The doppelganger's smile widened and he let out delighted laugh, "Oh, you'll be a fun one."

With that, the doppelganger disappeared and they were able to move forward again. Mahsa looked at Lady Scheherazade as they walked, "Do you think Alastor is only going to ask questions?"

"Perhaps," Lady Scheherazade smiled lightly, "That was an interesting way to deal with it,"

Mahsa shrugged lightly, "Doesn't make it wrong."

With the next doppelganger, Mahsa ended up having to fight one of the cat creatures who'd taken on the form of the wolf-like creature she'd faced in the Colosseum because it didn't like the answer to her question. Each doppelganger took on a different form belonging to someone from her memories including those from after traveling through the veil. Some attacked when displeased
with her answer and others disappeared if pleased. The questions slowly grew more and more personal as they made their way through the Dungeon. Eventually, she found herself faced with a doppelganger of herself. She was curious as to what kind of question this one would ask and just how close they were to the treasure room if this was what she'd be facing. The doppelganger was leading against the largest tree in the forest, "Mahsa Alexius."

"Mirror," Mahsa replied as she gazed her doppelganger who didn't look like she'd been in quite a few fights, "It kind of isn't fair that you're supposed to be my mirror when you're not mirroring me exactly,"

"Life isn't fair," The mirror retorted with a smirk, "Now there is a change in plans mostly because you're getting close to the end,"

"I figured considering the fact that this place differed from everywhere else in this place," Mahsa replied wondering what the change would be, "Am I going to fight you?"

"Maybe," Mirror tapped her fingers against the crystal bark of the tree, "Answer my questions and we'll see,"

"How many questions are you going to ask?" Mahsa inquired as she stepped further into the clearing.

"Enough," Mirror pushed off the tree, "Are you Mahsa Alexius or Hawthorn Potter?"

"I am both," Mahsa answered immediately.

"Why?" Mirror asked as she began circling Mahsa, "The Potters aren't your family nor were you meant to be theirs. Why are you both?"

"Because whether the Potters were my family or not, they still adopted me when Dumbledore kidnapped me," Mahsa replied with a small frown, "Until I got that letter from Lily Potter, I was Hawthorn Potter for over 14 almost 15 years. She is my past while Mahsa Alexius is my future,"

"Why claim her at? You could forget her and be done with everything from back then," Mirror demanded as Mahsa shifted to keep the copy in front of her.

"What good would that do me?" Mahsa questioned in reply, "For all the pain that I went through, I came out stronger,"

"Stronger?" Mirror chuckled with a dark smile, "You mean broken,"

"I am not broken," Mahsa stated in a firm tone with a glare.

"Not broken?" Mirror giggled softly, "You are damaged-

"Damaged doesn't mean broken," Mahsa cut in with a low growl.

"Damaged means you're able to heal," Mirror pointed out, "You know that you'll never fully heal from what happened back then. Even if you don't actively think about it, you know it's true,"

Mahsa's eyes narrowed at Mirror, "So what if I'm not going to fully heal from what happened?"

"What use is a broken king?" Mirror threw back at her.

"A king will always be a king even if broken," Mahsa replied wondering where the hell this is going, "Besides, I'm not doing this because I want to become a king,"
Mirror looked at her curiously, "Then why do it? Because of destiny? Fate? What good are those things when they've only brought you pain?" Mahsa froze as those words rang through her head, "It may not have been your original fate, but you were used and abused because of fate. You didn't grow up with your siblings. You never got a chance to know your parents," Mirror drew close to Mahsa, "Do you really want to let fate and destiny take the lead again? Who knows what'll happen. It might even take your siblings, the Fanalis Corps, Lady Scheherazade, and everyone else from you!"

"So what?!" Mahsa shouted back causing Mirror to back up in shock, "Dumbledore changed my fate, but so what? It happened and the past cannot be changed no matter how much I may wish it," Tears burned in her eyes, "I hate knowing that I'll never get to know my birth parents. I hate not being able to grow up alongside my siblings. I hate knowing that I lost out on so much," She shook her head and pushed back the tears, "But Fate and Destiny are merely just paths we take. We walk them whether we realize it or not. They change and grow as we do. I may lose my siblings, the Fanalis Corps, Lady Scheherazade, and everyone else one day. I know that damn it, but not moving forward won't stop that," She focused on the Mirror as her fists clenched, "The flow of fate and destiny cannot be stopped. To try and stop it means to fall. I won't let the past dictate my future when it hasn't even happened yet."

Mirror smiled softly, "Good answer."

A low cracking sound echoed through the air and Mahsa turned her head to find a door forming on the tree. When she looked back at Mirror, she saw the copy slowly dissolving into smoke which was just a little bit disturbing, "That's it?"

"Why bother with anything more?" Mirror asked with a slight shrug.

With that, Mirror disappeared fully and Mahsa looked at Lady Scheherazade, "That was a bit disturbing."

Lady Scheherazade let out a soft giggle, "I suppose seeing yourself dissolve into smoke would do that. Shall we go forth?"

"Might as well," Mahsa walked over to the door that had formed on the three.

When Alastor appeared, Mahsa had to admit that he looked kind of cute. While still far larger than anyone she'd met, the Djinn was smaller than Muu had described Barbatos being. He had a long billowing mane of smoky hair that disappeared into the mist that made up his legs. A mixture dark and light stripes of very fine fur all over covered the visible parts of his body. He looked down at her with large dark almost black grey eyes with a slitted pupil. A pair of furry ears that looked like a mix between a fox and a cat's tipped with a tuft of fur perched on the top of his head. A long silky tail flowed out behind him and his lips peeled back to reveal a mouth full of fangs. He wore little besides vest of the same colored fur as his stripes. Alastor boomed out, "Who shall be King?"

"Me," Mahsa answered as she stepped forward drawing Alastor's eyes away from Lady Scheherazade.

"A true Seer?" Alastor rumbled softly as he peered down at her, "I knew there was something interesting about you, Little Halfling. More so than your answers to the questions or the way you fought," He leaned forward to look at her closely, "Your memories spoke of such, but I wasn't quite sure,"

Mahsa stiffened at his words and couldn't keep the bite out of her words, "How exactly did you get
"The crystals and smoke of my Dungeon are unique, Little Halfling," Alastor offered her an apologetic smile, "Unlike my brethren, I judge my king vessels via their memories and how they answer my questions. I will not be used by one who will fall into depravity,"

Mahsa remembered the term from one of her many talks with Lady Scheherazade and paled a bit, "And what is your decision?"

Alastor smiled brightly at her, "You are one who will not willingly fall into depravity, Little Halfling. The fear you feel towards misusing power and causing unneeded hurt ensures that. I, Alastor Djinn of crystal illusions and Daydreams, shall grant Lady Mahsa Alexius my power."

Alastor reached out and touched the bracelet that Myron had gifted Mahsa during one of their excursions around Reim. It had been to celebrate her passing the tests to become an official healer. Granted, she still needed a lot more experience, but she was competent enough to be called a Healer. The silver bracelet glowed brightly before the eight pointed star mark appeared. She looked at Alastor as he drew back with a proud grin, "I'll do my best to ensure you don't regret this, Alastor."

"I know you, My little queen," Alastor replied before waving a hand at the treasure, "Take everything for it is yours, you'll need it for the journey you're planning."

Rather than end up back in Reim, Mahsa and Lady Scheherazade ended up within the Great Rift. More specifically, they ended up near Yunan the Wandering Magi's house was. Yunan looked more than a little surprised to see them, but welcomed the two into his home. She decided to let the two magi's talk and merely sat on the porch looking down at her new metal vessel in no small amount of awe. Some small part of her had expected to desire revenge upon gaining such a power, but instead she felt nothing. She looked up and out into the darkness remembering what Muu had told her about his own time in the Great Rift. While she didn't plan to go running towards it, a part of her wondered just what would happen if she went. She heard footsteps approaching and smelt Yunan's scent, "Yunan."

"Do you wish to go?" Yunan asked her in a soft voice, "With all the pain you've gone through, it wouldn't be surprising."

Mahsa shook her head, "No. While the idea sounds interesting, I can't go. I've still got a lot to do on this side and leaving my siblings permanently after finding them again..." She looked at Yunan, "I can't put them through it even if they and everyone else would probably understand why. I'm also pretty sure my second familiar would probably try and murder me if I did. Mostly for trying to leave her behind, Hedwig can be pretty possessive and protective of me."

Yunan looked at her in bewilderment before letting out a laugh and shaking his head, "You're an interesting one, Mahsa."

"And you're not the first one to tell me that," Mahsa replied before glancing back into the house, "Is Lady Scheherazade okay?"

"She needs to rest a bit before taking both of you back to Reim," Yunan took a seat beside her, "Mahsa, what exactly do you plan to do? You've got a metal vessel now,"

"Travel and heal people," Mahsa answered as she watched Darius flying around chasing one of the fairy lights she'd conjured, "Help people and maybe figure out what exactly I'm supposed to do,"

"And you're not the first one to tell me that," Mahsa replied before glancing back into the house, "Is Lady Scheherazade okay?"

"She needs to rest a bit before taking both of you back to Reim," Yunan took a seat beside her, "Mahsa, what exactly do you plan to do? You've got a metal vessel now,"

"Travel and heal people," Mahsa answered as she watched Darius flying around chasing one of the fairy lights she'd conjured, "Help people and maybe figure out what exactly I'm supposed to do,"
She thought about that vision she'd had of Kouen kissing her and admitted, "Maybe find someone that I'll end up marrying."

"That's a bit vague," Yunan pointed out earning a shrug.

"I'm only sixteen though I'll be seventeen in two months," Mahsa replied as she drew the fairy light towards them, "Most on the other side of the veil have no idea what they want to do in life, I only know that I like healing others and I want to see the world,"

"So why gain a metal vessel?" Yunan asked her.

"I could give quite a few answers to that," Mahsa looked at Yunan, "But none of them will hold much weight save for one. I gained a metal vessel was because I was meant to,"

Yunan didn't laugh at Mahsa's statement or look at her like she'd grown three heads. Instead, he nodded with an understanding look, "Those visions of yours must be difficult at times."

"Sometimes," Mahsa wasn't surprised that Yunan knew she was a true Seer, "Mostly the ones involving war and black Rukh,"

Mahsa might not mind killing as much anymore, but seeing wholesale slaughter brought on by black Rukh left her sickened. She often spent those mornings puking up bile much to the worry of her siblings. Yunan winced at her words, "They're terrible."

"Yunan, I have a feeling you aren't talking to me to make conversation while Lady Scheherazade rests," Mahsa decided to move onto a more important subject, "What is it that you desire to say?"

"Be careful around Sinbad when you meet him," Yunan replied earning a confused look, "Between his brightness and pull, you'll find it difficult to avoid being caught up in him,"

Mahsa nodded slowly with a small frown, "I'll try, but why would you make him a King Vessel if he makes you wary?"

"Because he is too close to the ideal King," Yunan stood up, "Now, would you like some tea?"

Mahsa shook her head while watching Yunan retreat inside. She looked at Darius as he landed beside her, "Something wrong, Ssa?"

"Yunan isss an odd human even for a Magi," Mahsa murmured as she reached out to stroke the scales on top of his head, "He isssn't a bad one, but odd all the sssame,"

Darius moved to settle on her lap and cuddle against her front, "Humansss are all odd though."

Mahsa snickered at that, "That they are."

Mahsa would put Yunan's words from her mind for now especially since it was unlikely that she'd meet Sinbad anytime soon.

Upon the return of their return, the Reim Empire threw a party to celebrate the newest Dungeon Conqueror. Mahsa was suddenly a lot more interesting to the Alexius family as a whole not to mention quite a few other noble families who were quick to push any unmarried members of their families towards her. She quickly made her escape the moment it wouldn't be too impolite. Moving through the palace, she quickly found herself in the training grounds the Fanalis Corps trains in. Dropping down, she laid back on the scarred earth not caring that the expensive clothes she'd been
stuffed into were being dirtied. She spoke as Muu's scent floated into her nose, "Please don't scold me for bolting."

"I won't," Muu dropped down beside her with a small smile, "I felt the exact same way back when I had my own party,"

"What the hell was that all even about?" Mahsa asked with a frown, "Everyone seems to want a piece of me now,"

"You're a members of Pernadius Alexius' bloodline and a Dungeon Capturer," Muu told her, "That immediately makes them overlook our Fanalis blood,"

Mahsa rolled her eyes in disgust, "Fuck each and everyone of those uppity nobles."

Muu snorted at her words, "You're technically a noble."

"And? I'm not an uppity and air-headed bitch like most of the female ones," Mahsa pushed herself into a sitting position and looked at Muu, "Muu, did Lady Scheherazade tell you where we ended up landing?"

Muu nodded with a small sigh, "Yeah. I'm actually a little surprised that you didn't take the chance."

Mahsa snorted as she moved closer to Muu and hugged him, "Why would I do that when my family is on this side? Meeting our people and experiencing our true-selves is an amazing thought, I just couldn't do that when Myron and you are back on this side," Muu hugged her back tightly radiating relief, "I already lost you both once. I cannot do so again."

"I'm glad to hear it," Muu murmured softly.

"No matter how far I travel or for how long, I will always come back," Mahsa promised as she released him, "So long as you and Myron want me, I'll always come back no matter what,"

"While I'm glad to hear it, you shouldn't be talking about heavy stuff when you're supposed to be celebrating," Myron said as she walked out carrying a tray alongside every other member of the Fanalis Corps.

"What are you guys doing out here?" Mahsa asked as Myron walked over.

"Why stay at some boring party when the one we're supposed to be celebrating isn't there?" Myron handed Mahsa a plate of food from the tray before doing the same for Muu.

"Besides, who wants to be stuck with a bunch of stuffy nobles?" Razol asked as she handed Mahsa a glass of wine from the tray she was carrying.

Everyone settled down with food and drinks. Mahsa smiled as she looked over them and felt her heart warm as a weight seemed to lift off her shoulders. What good is the other-side of the Great Rift when her family is here? No matter what, she'd always choose this over joining their people.

As Mahsa began learning how to use Alastor, she learned that the Djinn could converse with her if he so chose. Muu confirmed that Barbatos could do the same, but rarely chose to unless he wished to weigh in on a conversation. It was through her conversations with Alastor that she learned that he could use Life magic. More specifically, creating things using a mixture of smoke and crystal formed from a crystal mirror about the size of a dinner plate. The only catch was that she needed to
know as many details of the thing she was creating as possible to increase the durability of her creations. Limited details equaled easily destroyed creation, she also learned that he used her magoi rather than her magic. While he could use her magic, it would only be possible if she used almost all of her magoi and was in dire need. The only time it wouldn’t rely on her nearly dying due to being low on Magoi was if she used his extreme magic. Considering how rare there was an actual need for that, she doubted it would occur anytime soon.

For a year, Mahsa worked on mastering Alastor's Weapon Equip and beginning to work on his Full Body equip. She wouldn't use it very often since it did tire her out quite a bit. She spent time learning how to increase the amount of detail she could remember which wasn't that hard since she'd already needed such a skill for Transfiguration. She learned that smaller things were easier to create while larger things took more out of her. Whenever she wasn't training or working on lessons, she spent her time burning things into her memory.

It was during her training that the first request for Mahsa's aid in dealing with serpents outside of Reim came. It wasn't just anyone that came bearing the request, but the king himself, Armakan Amun-Ra. She was called into the main meeting room Lady Scheherazade used to greet such guests after one of the guards came to get her from the Infirmary. She entered the room and walked towards Lady Scheherazade, "You called, Lady Scheherazade?"

"Thank you for arriving so quickly, Mahsa," Lady Scheherazade told Mahsa as the halfling reached her side with Darius curled around her shoulders.

"It is no trouble," Mahsa replied as Darius raised his head to peer at those that had come for the meeting, "I was merely finishing doing inventory on our potions," She looked at those that had come from Heliohapt curiously, "May I ask what you require of me?"

Lady Scheherazade looked towards the leader of the group, "King Armakan Amun-Ra, this is Mahsa Alexius of the Alexius family. Mahsa, this is Armakan Amun-Ra, the king of Heliohapt. He has asked for your assistance concern some snakes."

Mahsa looked towards the king and inclined her head, "King Armakan, I bid you welcome to Reim. I hope that I may be able to assist you."

Armakan opened his eyes revealing a rather stunning jade color. He eyed her for a moment before turning his head, "Donkor, Femi, bring forth the container," The Heliohapt male looked back at her, "I am doubtful of your skills, but word has reached us of your ability. Prove yourself."

Mahsa did her best not to stiffen at his tone while Darius reared slightly with a loud hiss raising his head from her shoulder. The frill on either side of his head extended outward revealing the startling green membrane on the inside. While most of those from Heliohapt were surprised by his appearance, they bristled and reached from weapons at the show of aggression towards their king. She soothed Darius, "Eassy, Dari."

"He inssssultss you, Sssa!" Darius hissed back at her turning his head to glare at her.

"He knoowsss knowing, Dari," Mahsa replied rubbing the scales beneath his chin soothingly, "Ressspect mussst be earned, Dari. If he continuesss to be disssressrespectfull, you may show your dissspleasssure, but do not attack. He issss a King and that would usss into trouble that issssn't easy to get out of,"

"Very well," Darius turned his head to hiss wordlessly at Armakan before returning to his former position.
Mahsa offered the heliohaptian King an apologetic smile, "I must apologize for my familiar. He dislikes it when someone insults me in some way."

The King's eyes narrow at her, "I see," He seemed to decide to move on while many of the Heliohapt natives looked at Darius and her with awe burning in their eyes, "The test is simple. The two containers hold within them two items. Have the snakes inform you of what is within them without looking inside."

Two considerably sized straw baskets were sat down by the two servants. They looked at Mahsa for a moment before removing the lids. A cobra with obsidian colored scales immediately rose from one of the baskets while a cobra with milky white scales rose from the other. As the two began to hiss at one another, Mahsa was able to figure out that the obsidian one was male while the white one was female. She spoke to them, "Sserpents."

"Sssspeaker!" The two snakes hissed in surprise and awe.

Obsidian hissed softly, "What are you doing on thisss ssside of the veil?"

"It is a long ssstory that I do not have the time to tell," Mahsa replied earning sad hisses from the two snakes, "I have a few quessstionsss. Will you anssswer them?"

"My mate and I would be honored, Lady Ssspeaker," White replied with a bow of her head, "What are the quessstionsss?"

"Your caretakersss massster hasss a tessst to prove my abilitiesss," Mahsa explained in a soft tone as the Heliohapt natives listened with no small amount of awe, "What liesss within your travel nessstsss?" Both replied after ducking back inside for a moment and Mahsa looked back at Armakan, "The obsidian cobra tells me that he has a jar filled with some kind of black liquid that feels chilly against his scales and a grey rock with raised edges that feels particularly nice against his scales," Armakan's eyes slid towards the second basket, "The white cobra tells me that she has what I believe is a pyramid based on her description and a scroll made of something that tastes horribly dry. The two cobras are mated and the female requests a bit more sunlight since the rat she'd eaten on the trip isn't sitting well."

Armakan looked at the two servants who nodded to him, "It would seem the rumors are true," Darius raised his head to glare at the king, "I apologize for any disrespect that I have shown you."

"It's quite alright seeing as my ability isn't something you've seen before," Mahsa said as the two cobras slid out of their baskets and moved across the floor towards her, "Oh?" She bent down as they came closer, "Thank you both for your help."

"It isss an honor to asssit you, Lady Ssspeaker," Obsidian murmured as the two serpents reached her.

Darius hissed at the two as he rose up from her neck, "Come no clossser."

"We mean no offenssse, Cousssin." White murmured as the two cobras stilled and everyone in the room became silent, "We merely wish to gain a clossser look."

"Look, but do not touch," Darius growled at the two.

Mahsa couldn't stop the giggle that rose from her throat cutting through the tension that had formed. Lady Scheherazade was the only one brave enough to ask, "What is so funny?"

"Darius is being possessive," Mahsa turned her head to look at Lady Scheherazade, "It's absolutely
adorable,"

Darius gave a sulky hiss as the two cobras let out hisses of laughter. Lady Scheherazade covered her mouth with a soft giggle, "Oh my."

Mahsa looked back at the two cobras, "Isss there ssomething you require?"

"Pleassse inform our caretakersss that we’d prefer a nessst together," Obsidian told her, "Being ssseperated ssso close to the ssseassson isss aggravating,"

"Do you promissse not to ssstrike at them or try to caussse harm if they mussst deal with you?" Mahsa asked earning two nods and she turned to the two caretakers, "The two wish to share a nest. According to the male, they're getting a bit agitated by being apart. They have promised not to attack if you need to deal with them in exchange,"

"We will make note of it," The large of the two men promised.

The two cobras were returned to one of the baskets after the objects within were removed. Armakan cleared his throat as Darius settled more firmly around her neck, "Lady Mahsa, I would like it if you could assist me in a matter concerning my snake."

Mahsa looked at him curiously, "Sure. What exactly seems to be the problem?"

For the next week while the Heliohapt natives stayed within Remano, Mahsa spent time solving issues with their snakes as well as helping them improve on how they cared for the serpents. She didn't need to do much to improve things which showed just how much Heliohapt loved the scales creatures. She used that time to gain an increased understanding of snakes in order to create some with Alastor. Alastor revealed that he disliked serpents and refused to say why. When she told Muu after on attempt to gain that knowledge, Barbatos informed her brother that it was due to a prank by Zepar.

Mahsa looked between Lady Scheherazade and King Armakan for a few moments as what they'd told her sank in. When it did, she felt the need to clarify, "You created a contract where I will spend six month in Heliohapt where I will stay at the palace in three months once I manage to become somewhat passable at my full-body equip?"

Armakan inclined his head, "Yes, you will be treated as an honored guest, so long as you're able to assist in helping with any problems my people are having with their serpents."

"Reim is being given first pick in trading deals during that time?" Mahsa looked back at Lady Scheherazade.

"And being lent a few of their better healers to increase the skill of our own," Lady Scheherazade answered with a small frown.

Mahsa reached up to rub at Darius' scales, "What about Hedwig? She won't do well in the heat even with all the enchantments and stuff that the goblins placed on her not to mention she has owlets to look after."

"She will stay here," Lady Scheherazade replied making the halfling sigh deeply having known that was likely the answer.

"Do I get a say in this?" Mahsa asked earning a nod.
"Of course," Lady Scheherazade assured her.

Mahsa thought about it all carefully before asking, "May I add a stipulation?" The two rulers nodded after a moment, "Heliohapt has some of the best dagger and knife users. I would like to learn under them while I am there."

Armakan nodded after a few moments, "I will see about getting you a teacher."

"Other than that, I only ask that I be given time to get used to the heat once I arrive," Mahsa knew that Heliohapt was a lot hotter than Reim, "And the ability to learn from your own healers as well as offer my assistance in such matters seeing as I'm a healer."

"I have no problem with that," Armakan looked mildly surprised by that.

Mahsa could have asked for more, but she didn't require much. She finally nodded her head, "I will agree to the contract then." She looked at Lady Scheherazade, "You'll be the one to tell my brother and his men about what's going on."

Mahsa was not going to be stuck informing any of her family about the sudden time-limit they now had. Lady Scheherazade nodded with a smile that would look normal to outsiders, but to anyone that spent time with the magi would see the sudden strain. Clearly, Lady Scheherazade hadn't exactly thought this particular bit through. Did she feel a bad that Lady Scheherazade would have to deal with her somewhat overprotective family/friends? Yes, but not enough to be the one explaining what was going to happen.

Razol pouted at Mahsa as the halfling began rifling through James Potter's journal for the potion he'd used with Sirius and the rat to begin the process of becoming animagi. Technically, she had already done so by keeping a mandrake leaf in her mouth for an entire month which hadn't been much fun. The potion would give her a vision of the animal she'd be transforming into as well as a look at things from its point-of-view. From there, she'd begin the painstaking process of learning how to transform. Needless to say, it wasn't going to be an easy process and she was only doing it now because of her lessened schedule as she began to prepare for the time she'd be in Heliohapt.

When Razol let out an exaggerated sigh and nearly knocked over a case of potions that she'd be bringing to the infirmary, Mahsa finally gave the scarred female the attention she so desired, "Yes, Razol? Please move away from the case of potions before it gets broken which will get my ass into trouble with the matron."

The matron in charge of the infirmary was a bitch plain and simple. Knowing that she'd be losing Mahsa to Heliohapt for six months, the woman was more than a little foul tempered. Mostly because it would mean she couldn't shove the halfling into taking care of the various Fanalis coming in and out of the infirmary, she didn't like them at all. Razol did as the halfling asked, "Mahsa, do you really have to go?"

"I'm not leaving for another month and a half," Mahsa looked up from the book after finding the page she needed, "Which means you really shouldn't be asking this until around then."

Razol groaned dramatically, "C'mon, Green-eyes! Don't you love me? What about all the times we shared? Are you really going to leave me alone and heartbroken?"

"I do love you, Darling," Mahsa rolled her eyes at the older female, "I'll suffer every moment we're apart until we may be granted leave to meet once more, but we've both got to move on," She moved towards her potions kit and began going through all the ingredients to find what she'd need,
"I've got an offer to die for and you should find someone that's able to commit to you with their entire heart."

Razol let out a soft sniffle, "I suppose so, but I'll miss you so much."

"And I'll miss you," Mahsa replied as she glanced at the book and began picking out her ingredients, "But our time has past,"

A snort left Razol and she dropped the act with a laugh, "I'll miss you, Green-eyes. It won't be as much fun to make people's head's spin without you."

"You'll cope," Mahsa shook her head lightly, "I think Big Brother might actually be relieved that I won't be helping you cause any trouble,"

"Has he said anything to you about this yet?" Razol asked in a slightly softer than usual voice.

For all that he supported her decision to travel, Muu hadn't been happy to know that Mahsa would be leaving so soon. He had taken to ignoring all talk of Heliohapt since Lady Scheherazade had informed everyone about what was going on. Myron had been supportive after a minor blow-up at Lady Scheherazade for sending her away. Mahsa shook her head lightly with a low sigh feeling a bit of hurt curl up in her chest, "No, he clams up pretty quick and tends to leave the room unless the subject gets dropped."

Mahsa flinched when the empty vial she'd been handling shattered in her hand causing small pieces of glass to stab into her hand. She hadn't noticed she'd been holding one or just how tightly she'd been holding it. Moving away from her kit before she could get blood on it, she looked at Razol as the scarred girl gasped, "Mahsa!"

"Mind grabbing my healers kit?" Mahsa asked earning a nod.

Razol quickly grab the bag and dug through it to find the tweezers. She began removing the pieces of glass stuck in Mahsa's hand since the halfling couldn't use magic to remove them without risking quite a bit of damage to herself. Razol spoke as she deftly picked out pieces of glass which showed just how much time she'd spent with the halfling, "Captain'll come around eventually."

"I know," Mahsa stayed still wincing a bit as stubborn pieces of glass needed to be dug out.

It didn't change the fact that knowing Muu wasn't happy about Mahsa's decision to agree to go hurt the youngest Alexius sibling. Razol stayed quiet likely able to tell that her friend didn't want to talk about the subject any further. Once the glass was taken care of, Razol cleaned out the cuts with a potion that would dissolve any pieces of glass too tiny to remove with tweezers before dabbing them with a herbal solution that worked the best for healing cuts like this. When she finished, Razol wrapped up the halfling's hand, "There we go."

"Thanks, Razol," Mahsa murmured as she vanished the glass and cleaned the tweezers before sanitizing them with a spell, "I'll miss having you helping me out,"

Razol snorted softly, "You'll probably be happy you won't have to work on us for awhile."

Mahsa shook her head as she cleaned everything up, "You guys are my favorite patients and I'll miss you all a lot when I leave."

Leaving her family after a little over three years was actually a disturbing thought, Mahsa knew she'd be able to come back no matter what, but the thought of leaving for the first time outside of that small trip to Yunan's after the Dungeon wasn't one that she actually felt right about.
Finally the night of her departure arrived, Mahsa would be leaving the palace not long after dawn in order to arrive at the nearest port. For the sixteenth time, she checked over her things to make sure nothing was missing. She heard a knock on the door, "Come in."

Muu walked inside and looked quite surprised to see everything laid out on her bed, "I thought you'd finished packing."

"I was trying to make sure I'm not forgetting anything," Mahsa began putting things back into her pack, "What are you doing here?"

Mahsa inwardly winced at the slightly sharp tone she'd used and how she had phrased the question. Muu gave a low sigh and ran a hand through his hair, "Mahsa, I know that I haven't exactly been supportive of you going to Heliohapt, but it isn't because I don't trust your decision," She paused in the middle of putting her books away and looked at him in surprise earning a regretful smile, "I trust your decision, Mahsa. I'm sorry if I never made that clear."

Mahsa felt the hurt inside of her ease at that, but she had to ask, "Then why did you act so distant?"

"Because the thought of you leaving even if it's because you want to scares me," Muu answered as his eyes turned downcast, "I know you're not being kidnapped this time, but..."

"It still scares you because I might not come back," Mahsa murmured feeling stupid for not realizing what was really bothering Muu, "I'm sorry, Big Brother. I didn't mean to scare you. If you want, I ca-"

"No!" Muu shook his head at her, "I don't want you to cancel your plans just because I'm scared," Mahsa closed her mouth, "Mahsa, I don't want the fear I feel hold you back especially since I don't let it hold Myron back when she goes out with half the Corps on a campaign,"

Mahsa put down the book in her hand and turned to Muu, "You're scared of losing Myron like me?"

"You're my little sisters after all and I'm supposed to protect you," Muu smiled at her before taking a breath, "But that doesn't mean I'm supposed to keep you from going where your hearts lead you," He reached out and laid a hand on her shoulder, "Mahsa, promise me that you'll come back,"

Mahsa smiled at him and hugged her older brother, "Muu, I already promised that I would come back. Remember the party after Lady Scheherazade and I came back from Alastor's Dungeon? I made you a promise that I'd come back no matter what."

"I know, but promise me again," Muu hugged her tightly.

"I promise I'll come back no matter what," Mahsa repeated the promise.

Muu's hug tightened briefly, "Good. I'm going to miss you, Little Sister."

"I'm going to miss you too, Big Brother," Mahsa murmured softly in reply as Muu took in a deep breath of her scent.

Mahsa did the same before they released each other. Muu looked at the things scattered across every available surface in her room, "Let's get you packed up, I thought Myron was the only one that did stuff like this."

"Not my fault I'm so nervous about leaving tomorrow that it makes me do shit like that," Mahsa
muttered under her breath earning a snort from Muu as they both began putting her things back into order.
Heliohapt was hot and Mahsa practically boiled within her clothes despite copious amounts of cooling charms not to mention the fact that Fanalis were built to survive in all temperatures. While she was normally fairly good with the heat, the dryness of the heliohaptian deserts was so different from the moist heat of England during the summer. She rolled onto back as Darius hissed out, "C'mon, Sssa! Thiss place isss amazing!"

"Too hot," Mahsa groaned in English unable to get her tongue wet enough to hiss at Darius.

Darius shifted into his lion form which had become large enough that Mahsa could ride without any trouble. He padded over to her and plopped down lay his head on her stomach, "But the heat isss nice."

"For you," Mahsa didn't have the strength to shove Darius off of her, "I feel like I'm boiling alive," "Then maybe you should try out thossse garmentss that the maidsss brought," Darius advised as he lifted his head to push her off the rug.

Mahsa groaned, but eventually pulled herself up with Darius' help. Pulling off her sweat soaked clothes, she did a few minor charms to clean herself up before pulling on a set of the clothes that the maids Armakan had assigned her brought. She flushed at the fact her breasts were bared and quickly went about adjusting the outfit to have it covered. She made sure her navel was covered as well as per Armakan's request. She looked at the white clothes she now wore, "I guess it isn't so bad."

"Let'ss explore then!" Darius suggested excitedly as he shifted back into his wyvern form and moved to settle around her shoulders.

"How about no?" Mahsa moved towards the table and poured herself a cup of juice.

Darius groaned at her, but didn't leave the position he'd settled. She greedily drank the juice enjoying that was still somewhat cool. A knock sounded on the door and Mahsa bid whoever it was to enter. One of Armakan's attendants entered, "Lady Alexius, King Armakan wishes for you to join him for lunch."

"That actually sounds pretty nice right about now," Mahsa said after finishing the cup of juice.

The attendant inclined his head, "Then shall we?"

Mahsa nodded and they left her rather nice rooms. She looked around the palace fascinated by how much like those manga depicting ancient Egypt that Dean had lent her it was. She was led into a small garden pavilion with food laid out on the table and Armakan sitting in one of the chairs. She offered the King a warm smile and dipped her head, "King Armakan, I thank you for your offer to dine with you."

"Please sit, Lady Mahsa," Armakan bid as he gestured to the seat across from him.

Mahsa nodded and moved to sit down, "I must say your palace is very nice. It's definitely different from what I'm used to."
"Thank you," Armakan waved a hand and two servants poured them both cups of wine, "I will admit to some surprise that you've adorned the clothing that I had the maids bring you."

"The heat was getting to me and Darius advised that I try them," Mahsa reached up to rub along Darius' head, "While not a style I normally wear, it has helped quite a bit."

Armakan nodded as they began to eat their lunch, "Will you be able to begin assisting us soon?"

Mahsa nodded lightly, "I should be able to tomorrow though I do have a small request for a jug of water or something to be on hand as I have trouble using my ability without proper hydration."

Talk after that was somewhat stilted, Armakan seemed quite unsure what to think about her not that Mahsa could blame him. She was a witch and a half-Fanalis not to mention a Dungeon Capturer with the ability to speak with snakes. Under normal circumstances, they would never interact, but given her status as a parslemouth, he needed to deal with her since she had a priceless skill that would ensure Heliohapt would continue to care for their various serpents without much trouble. She finished her lunch as a scaled nose bumped into her leg and she lifted the table cloth to see Armakan's serpent, Cleo, peering up at her. She smiled gently down at the large cobra that had to have some form of magic within his blood considering how large he was, "Hello, Cleo."

"Lady Mahsssa," Cleo hissed in reply rising from the ground to wrap around the chair and touch his nose to her cheek after doing the same to Darius, "It issss pleassssing to sssee you once again. Were your travelssss tiring."

"A bit," Mahsa gently scratched underneath the large cobra's chin, "Are you doing better now?"

"Yesss. I mussst thank you for your help with my king," Cleo lapped at her cheek, "He hasss been anxiousss about your arrival,"

"Oh?" Mahsa looked past Cleo to look at Armakan and saw him speaking in low tones with one of his attendants, "I wasss not aware of that,"

Cleo nodded with a snakes version of a snicker, "He wasss. I believe he issss interesssted in you."

Darius hissed in protest while Mahsa coughed lightly as a light blush coated her cheeks, "I sssee."

"My dear queen, I do believe that serpent has lost all sense," Alastor growled from within her mind. "You should mate with him."

Cleo nodded as Mahsa's cheeks slowly turned a deeper red while wondering what the actual hell was going on, "Yesss! He'd be a perfect mate for your mistress. He knowssss how to treat usss serpentssss after all and issss ressspectful. Granted the firssst meetingg could have gone better, I wish that I could actually ssscold him for forgetting hisss mannersss, but he apologized."

Darius actually seemed to consider it, "True and we'd be sssomewhere ssso delightfully warm."

"Not to mention fed ssso many deliciousss prey," Cleo tacked on, "The ssserventssss alwayssss find the mossst deliciouss morsssselssss,"

Darius promptly turned towards her and demanded, "Mahsssa mate Cleo'sss king."
Alastor began screeching in protest and shouting that Darius had lost his mind. Mahsa was so startled that she stopped speaking in parseltongue and slipped into English as she shouted, "NO! It doesn't work like that with humans."

Mahsa's blush deepened as Armakan unhelpfully reminded her that the serpent, wyvern form chimera, and the halfling weren't alone, "Lady Mahsa, is something the matter?"

"Nothing you need to worry about," Mahsa was heavily tempted to strangle the two currently using her as a chair or hide under a rock for the rest of her life.

Armakan and those currently in the pavilion looked dubious, "Are you sure?"

"Quite sure, though I should probably return to my rooms as I've grown quite tired," Mahsa pushed Cleo off her lap gently despite wanting to throttle the cobra, "If that's okay?"

"Of course," Armakan eyed her before turning his head, "Jori, please lead Lady Mahsa back to her rooms,"

"Of course, My King," The same attendant from earlier stepped forward, "If you would follow me, Lady Alexius,"

When she'd returned to her rooms, Mahsa took Darius off her neck and placed him on the bed, "Dari, why on earth would you sssay sssomething like that?"

"Becaussse you should mate him," Darius told her as he settled in a more comfortable position on the bed, "He issss sssstrong, a king, and livesss in a perfectly good nessst,"

"Humanss don't mate with each other jusssst becaussse of that," Mahsa pointed out with a low groan, "Love playsss a part and I barely know Armakan. Would you really want me to mate ssssomeone who I do not actually care for,"

"No," Darius gave her a sulky look, "But thisss place issss nice,"

"Nice it may be, but it issssn't our nessst, Dari," Mahsa laid down on the bed and pulled Darius to her, "Don't you want Hedwig with usss?"

"Yesss," Darius sighed deeply.

"Besssidesss you may find out that thisss place issssn't ssso great," Mahsa pointed out in a gentle tone, "We only arrived lasssst night after all,"

Mahsa made a few discoveries quite quickly during her time in Heliohapt other than the heat being horrible during the day and the chilly night being the best time to do any physical activity with her newest fighting instructor. First, Heliohaptian's didn't care about the gender of their partners and quite a few of both genders seemed to find her quite attractive. Second, Heliohaptian healers were skilled and knew how to safely use snake venom while healing someone which was something she found quite fascinating. Third, Everyone seemed to go gaga over her when it was revealed that she could really speak to serpents leading to so interesting moments where someone decided to propose to her quite randomly. Fourth, Heliohapt carried a variety of herbs that when smoked could act in similar ways to certain potions she could make. And finally, one of the female healers that she tended to work with apparently had a crush on her.

Mahsa didn't exactly mind the first or last one because someone's gender had never really mattered to her. The third one would probably get someone killed should Muu ever hear about it. The fourth
was something that would probably have someone back in Reim try to strangle her mostly because she'd taken up smoking some of the herbs. Thanks to her magic, it wouldn't actually weaken her lungs or cause any real problems like cancer. She had mostly started because one of the healers had offered her to try it after a rather long day of dealing with some seasonal sickness that had struck the palace. Given that Alastor had decided to have a running commentary about just why snakes were so disgusting or how the people of this country were insane, she was allowed to try and find a way to release stress.

The female healer had managed to work up her courage and asked Mahsa out on a date during one of the halflings stints in the infirmary. Slightly startled by the request, she didn't answer immediately which led to the female healer starting to ramble and panic about ruining the friendship that had begun to develop between them. She managed to calm the woman down and agreed to the date after making it known that she wasn't looking for anything permanent. While disappointed, the female healer was happy that they'd be able to go on a date. The date while not horrible wasn't much fun and both of them could agree that they didn't have much in common outside of loving to heal people. While the crush was still in place, the female healer understood that they weren't right for one another.

Mahsa heard a knock on her door while she was reading some Heliohaptian healing texts that one of her fellow healers had suggested, "Come in."

Jori entered with a light smile on his face, "Lady Mahsa, King Armakan wishes for you to join him for lunch."

"Oh?" Mahsa glanced towards the sun noting that it was almost noon, "I see," She marked her place, "Darius, are you coming?"

Darius raised his head slowly from where he was basking on the balcony in his lion form, "No, I already ate and I'm comfortable."

Mahsa shrugged as she stood up, "Try not to fall asleep then, you'll get sunburn if you do."

Darius snorted at her and went back to enjoying the warm sunlight. Mahsa joined Jori and they left her room. The attendant had become a fairly good friend once he'd gotten over her noble status, "How are you today, Lady Mahsa?"

"I am well," Mahsa had taken the day off in order to recharge her magic and rest a bit, "And you, Jori?"

"I'm well," Jori led the way towards the garden, "The King is in a good mood today,"

"Oh?" Mahsa looked at the attendant in interest, "Did something good happen?"

"King Sinbad moved his visit to next week," Jori answered as his lips twitched into a smirk.

While Heliohapt might be part of the Seven Seas Alliance, Armakan didn't exactly like Sinbad mostly because of the man's rather lackadaisical attitude towards his royal duties mostly when it involved women. Mahsa had learned that Armakan preferred to be professional while ruling and disliked those that didn't do the same. She would admit to preferring Armakan's ruling style to Sinbad even if both seemed to work as Heliohapt and Sindria were prosperous countries. When it came to a ruler, she saw more value in someone who took it seriously than seemingly leaving it up to his council of generals. Though if one was able to find a happy medium between the two, she would probably respect them greatly. Mahsa hummed softly, "Oh right, he was supposed to visit
tomorrow. I wonder what happened to make him reschedule."

"I'm not sure," Jori glanced at her, "What do you think of King Sinbad, Mahsa?"

"I do not have an actual opinion on him seeing as I've never met the man," Mahsa answered as they reached the gardens, "I prefer to form my opinions of others after meeting them," She greeted Armakan who actually looked somewhat cheerful today, "King Armakan, it is a pleasure to dine with you again,"

"Please sit, Lady Mahsa," Armakan gestured for her to sit, "I must apologize for not being able to do so sooner than this,"

Mahsa had barely seen the king during the two months she'd been in Heliohapt. She offered him a light smile as she sat down in the offered seat, "It's alright, King Armakan. I am aware that you have duties that must be seen to as a ruler. Given the seasonal sicknesses going around, you are somewhat short staffed and cannot offer a guest of your country as much attention as you would normally," She thanked the attendant for pouring her a glass of wine, "You're also preparing for the arrival of an ally which only furthers my understanding," She took a sip of the bitter sweet wine that she had come to favor, "As your people have been more than welcoming and ensure that I've been enjoying my time here, I cannot find it in myself to be displeased."

Armakan opened his eyes revealing those stunning jade orbs that fit him quite well and looked at her in honest surprise before inclining his head with a slight smile, "I am happy to hear that you're enjoying yourself."

Conversation after that actually flowed rather easily as Armakan questioned Mahsa about the various things she's done since her arrival, the King offered up various comments about certain activities and even asked for more information when it came to others. Armakan showed a lot of interest in the various snake related problems that she had assisted with and even what she'd done to help with the season sickness'. By the end of lunch, she had come to understand Armakan just a bit better and the man seemed to find great enjoyment in her presence.

Unbidden were the thoughts of Cleo and Darius' conversation about her mating Armakan as she returned to her rooms, Mahsa's cheeks warmed as images swirled through her mind. It wasn't hard to see how attractive the man was after all. The white hair of his went well with his tanned skin and his tattoos were interesting. She really liked his eyes which were a stunning shade of jade she'd never seen before. He had a nice voice too and was a good king. Inwardly groaning, she flopped onto her bed and pressed her face into the soft silks covering the bed. Darius spoke in a concerned voice, "Sssa, isss sssomething wrong? Did that king do sssomething?"

Mahsa groaned into the bedspread before raising her head, "No, Armakan didn't do anything. Cleo and you did."

Darius looked at her in confusion, "What did we do?"

"You made me think about taking him asss a mate and noticing how attractive he isss," Mahsa complained in parseltongue as Darius blinked in surprise, "Not to mention how nice hisss voice isss and how good of a king he isss."

"Oh that," Darius padded over to the bed, "Are you going to mate him now?"

"No," Mahsa didn't want to think about mating or marrying anyone no matter how attractive they were.
Especially when Mahsa really wanted to meet Kouen, she'd had a couple more visions of the Kou Empire mostly consisting of him or those that she had learned were his siblings plus the magi that Lady Scheherazade had told her to avoid going dungeon diving with. If she even thought about being with Armakan for any reason, it would mean staying in Heliohapt or making trips to the sandy country that would make a trip to Kou difficult. There was also the fact she was becoming fond of the crimson haired man, she really wanted to meet him. Alastor grumbled softly at her, "Don't even think about staying in this stupid serpent ridden country longer than we need to."

'Alastor, Heliohapt isn't that bad if you ignore the snakes,' Mahsa pointed out feeling tired.

"There is too much sand," Alastor grumbled at her, "Not to mention the heat,"

'The heat isn't so bad once you're used to it,' Mahsa shifted to lay on the bed properly.

Alastor continued to grumble as Mahsa fell into a nap that quickly shifted into a vision...

Golden Rukh swirling around...Heliohapt crying in joy...serpents hissing out congratulations in joyful chorus...

Mahsa walked along a hallway until she reached a door guarded by two of Armakan's top soldiers. They bowed lightly to her as soft murmurs fell from their lips, "My Queen."

"At ease," Mahsa replied as she opened the door and walked inside to find Armakan working on paperwork.

Moonlight slipped into the room through the windows as the moon rose higher within the sky. The Heliohaptian king's pearly white locks were glinting in the light of the torches set up around the room. Walking towards the king, she paused by chaise being used by his cobra and bent down to gently run her fingers across Cleo's scaled head in greeting. She continued her walk as Armakan asked, "Why are you still awake, Mahsa?"

"My husband is not there and I find sleeping alone in such a big bed distasteful," Mahsa walked around the desk when she reached it.

"I need to finish my paperwork," Armakan replied as Mahsa paddled over to his side and he looked up at her with tired jade eyes.

"Paperwork that can be finished in the morning?" Mahsa inquired as she reached out to cup his chin, "Kan, come to bed with me please. I dislike seeing you so tired,"

Armakan sighed deeply and shifted to pull her into his lap, "I know, but Sinbad is making it difficult to rest."

"Sinbad is not here," Mahsa stated firmly as she wrapped her arms around his neck, "And our people deserve a healthy king able to make decision rather than a sleep-deprived one that'll get sick if he doesn't sleep properly soon,"

Armakan's eyes glittered in amusement, "How would I get sick when my darling wife is the best healer in all of Heliohapt?"

"Because you won't take a moment to actually sleep," Mahsa leaned forward to kiss him lightly on both his cheeks, "And because I cannot sleep without you in our bed for another night,"

Armakan kissed her gently as his arms curled around her, "I suppose some sleep might be a good idea."
"Good because your son won't settle when you're not sleeping beside me," Mahsa said drawing Armakan's eyes to her pregnant stomach.

Mahsa's stomach was distended to the point it was impossible to doubt her pregnancy. He moved one his arms to settle a hand on her stomach, "I suppose we cannot deny him especially if he can't settle down for his poor mother."

"Not even born yet and he's a daddy's boy," Mahsa muttered as the kicking child in her belly settled down after hitting Armakan's hand.

Armakan kissed her again with far more heat leaving Mahsa breathless and wanting...

Mahsa woke up with a snort and flush darkening her cheeks. Why did those vision of hers have to show her that? Despite finding him attractive and a good king, she hadn't been able to see him a perspective partner, but that seemed to be changing if the vision she'd seen meant anything. It was no secret that she wanted to have children and the idea of having a child with Armakan was somewhat appealing. But she wasn't going to make any decisions right now, she was still young and wanted to travel the world after all. Not to mention, she might be somewhat fond of Armakan there was no telling if she'd actually end up loving him. Sitting up, she decided to push the vision from her mind.

Sinbad arrived with two of his generals though Mahsa was busy with the palace healers trying to help some of the guardsmen that had ended up getting hurt during a brawl in the market earlier on in the day. Two of them required some rather heavy surgery, it was lucky that the halfling had access to magic from beyond the veil otherwise one of the men wouldn't be alive right now. When everything was said and done, she got cleaned up and ate something before crashing in her room since it had taken a lot out of her to keep the guardsmen alive as well as ensure he wouldn't end up a cripple.

Mahsa got to meet Sinbad and his generals the next night when Armakan asked for her to join them for dinner. Darius joined her out of curiosity and the fact he'd been promised that there'd be interesting prey to eat by Cleo when the two had seen one another earlier on in the day. As it was night time, she chose to wear one of the more formal dresses that Myron had insisted she pack. Darius settled around her shoulders once she'd gotten dressed and they followed Jori to the dinning hall that had mostly gone unused. Jori had a strained expression on his face which was abnormal given that the man was usually somewhat cheerful, "Is something wrong, Jori?"

"Nothing," Jori told her rather quickly.

Narrowing her eyes at the attendant, Mahsa tried to figure out what was bothering him until she came to the realization that it was likely due to Sinbad, "You worry that King Sinbad will try to seduce me and I will fall for it?" Jori flinched and flushed a bit as he nodded, "Jori, you needn't worry. I have no interest in men like King Sinbad is rumored to be. If anything, your own king would be much more my type."

"R-really?" Jori looked at her in surprise.

Mahsa nodded with a light smile, "Yes, but I am still young and do not intend to take on a partner right now."

"I-i see," Jori relaxed as they continued to walk.

No doubt Armakan would hear about what Mahsa had said soon enough seeing as there had been
servants around and Jori was duty bound to tell his King what his guests were thinking about him. She didn't exactly mind it though the halfling hoped that Armakan wouldn't try to pursue her right now. She would prefer it if they could get to know one another before such a thing happened. She entered the dinning room as one of the other attendants announced, "Lady Mahsa Alexius has arrived with her companion Darius."

Mahsa strode into the dinning room and greeted Armakan first, "King Armakan, I thank you for inviting me to dine with you this fine evening."

"Lady Mahsa, it is my pleasure," Armakan replied with a light smile on his face, "Please allow me to introduce you to King Sinbad of Sindria and his generals,"

Mahsa focused on the other occupants and barely managed to keep her eyes from widening at the sight of Sin sitting at the table dressed in finery. Though given what she'd heard through rumors, she really shouldn't be surprised that he'd hidden who he really was from her. Beside him was a white haired man with freckles and grey eyes, he wore green robes over a yellow and white outfit that definitely was a brave choice given how hot Heliohapt was during the day. A Fanalis dressed in golden armor sat beside the second man and peered at her curiously. Sinbad's eyes widened as he caught sight of her, "Mahsa?! This is a surprise."

"King Sinbad, you know Lady Mahsa already?" Armakan's voice took on a strained tone as both the men with Sinbad began eyeing her.

"We met in a port town where I was exploring while my brother ensured our ship to Reim was ready," Mahsa answered guessing that Armakan was wondering if Sinbad had seduced her, "He decided to escort me around the town after we met while I was enjoying lunch with Darius," She offered Armakan a small shrug, "I didn't truly care for the escort,"

Sinbad actually pouted at her, "That's so mean, I thought we had developed a connection."

Mahsa bit back a grimace at his actions before turning to Armakan, "I do not know his companions though."

Mahsa was introduced to Ja'far and Masrur who were also members of Sinbad's house hold which explained their positions as generals. Dinner began after that with Darius moving from her shoulders to eat with Cleo. Sinbad commented, "Darius has grown since we last saw one another."

"Seeing as a few years past, it isn't very surprising," Mahsa replied while cut up the steak that had been placed before her.

"Lady Mahsa, what exactly are you doing in Heliohapt?" Ja'far asked her curiously, "I didn't think the Alexius family leave Reim very often,"

Mahsa was somewhat surprised to hear that tidbit given Muu's trip around the world freeing their kin not to mention the military work that men of the Alexius family did. She answered after taking a drink of her wine, "I am here on contract."

"Armakan, you dog, you didn't tell me you were getting married," Sinbad cut in before Mahsa could continue.

Mahsa almost choked at the blunt statement while Armakan's jaw clenched. Armakan spoke in a somewhat strained tone, "It is not that type of contract, Sinbad."

"Oh?" Sinbad looked confused.
"Given my special gifts, I am assisting with various serpent related problems in exchange for learning under the healers here within Heliohapt," Mahsa answered while narrowing her eyes at Sinbad.

"What special gift are you talking about?" Ja'far asked her curiously.

"In the country I grew up in, I am what's known as a Parselmouth," Mahsa explained as she speared a piece of meat, "It means that I am able to speak the tongue of serpents and understand them,"

Sinbad stared at her in shock, "I thought that was just a trick."

Mahsa took a bite of the flavorful and perfectly cooked meat that the cooks had prepared.

Sinbad stayed in Heliohapt for over a month apparently going over various trading deals with Armakan. Likely, he had been confused over suddenly not getting the first pick of trade and wanted to find out what was going on. Mahsa managed to avoid the purple haired king for the most part mostly due to the fact she spent much of her time either in the infirmary or visiting various towns in Heliohapt solving problems with various snakes. The first time he managed to find her was luck and the fact she was taking the day off. Deciding to enjoy the fact that there was a nice breeze and it wasn't as hot as usual, she decided to spend some time in the gardens. She bent down to take a closer look at one of the flowers when she heard, "Mahsa!"

"King Sinbad," Mahsa greeted him while standing up fully.

"Call me Sinbad or Sin," Sinbad waved off her greeting, "I was hoping to speak with you,"

"Oh?" Mahsa wondered what he wanted, "What do you wish to speak about?"

Sinbad grinned at her, "I was hoping I'd be able to convince you to join me for lunch actually."

"I'm sorry, but I have already eaten lunch," Mahsa had eaten with Armakan during one of the breaks that the king had managed to get.

Sinbad faltered a bit, "Oh," He shook himself as she continued her walk, "So you're part of the Alexius noble family?"

"Yes on my father's side," Mahsa heard Alastor growl lowly in her mind, 'Alastor?'

"He has Zepar," Alastor growled darkly.

No wonder he was irritated, Mahsa would increase her efforts to avoid Sinbad then if only to avoid having to deal with a pissed off Djinn. Sinbad walked beside her, "I see. I wasn't aware they were Fanalis."

Mahsa wondered if Masrur had pointed that out to Sinbad before deciding it didn't matter, "The Alexius noble family is not made of Fanalis. My siblings and I are only half due to our mother being a Fanalis."

"So did you get your ability to speak with snakes from her or your father?" Sinbad asked her curiously.

Mahsa stiffened a bit as she bit out, "Neither, I gained it through some rather odd events that occurred after being kidnapped while very young."

Sinbad's steps faltered a bit, "Kidnapped?"
"Yes," Mahsa moved away from the man, "When we first met, my brother and I had just been reunited. We were returning home to Reim so that I would be able to meet our sister,"

"Oh, so your parents are gone," Sinbad's voice became a bit soft.

Mahsa nodded while speeding up, "Yes. If you'll excuse me, I must return to the infirmary."

For some reason, Mahsa's talk with Sinbad in the gardens had increased his interest in her and he kept flirting with her every time they saw one another. If it weren't for the man being a king, she would've slapped him by now mostly because he had begun to touch her whenever they were in close proximity of each other. She had taken to staying in her room or the library when not doing anything if only to avoid being touched by him. She was heavily tempted to break his nose and quite glad when the month was up meaning Sinbad would be leaving soon.

Mahsa agreed to a sparring match with Masrur mostly because she'd become increasingly homesick as time passed on and fighting a fellow Fanalis would probably ease it. The training grounds had been cleared for the spar mostly because everyone was interested in seeing two Fanalis fight each other not caring about the fact she was only a half-blood. Standing across from Masrur, she felt excitement bubble up in her stomach. Masrur's lips twitched into a faint smirk, "Excited?"

Mahsa hummed lightly, "Can you blame me? Fighting a fellow Fanalis and not needing to be as careful to prevent killing your opponent by accident, it's something I haven't been able to do since leaving Reim."

Masrur inclined his head a bit, "It has been a long time."

"So let's enjoy it, okay?" Mahsa asked with an excited grin.

The fight began almost immediately after that with Mahsa making the first move by kicking at him. They tested one another trying to gauge the others abilities while ensuring that the other didn't score a debilitating blow before they could really begin. Slowly a grin spread across her face, she could feel her Fanalis blood begin to heat up. Masrur wouldn't be as easily broken as the humans she'd been stuck sparring with. Finally, the two separated for a moment and she looked into Masrur's eyes noting that the bestial side that all Fanalis carried was pushing forward at the prospect of a good fight.

When they clashed again, it was brutal and fast paced to the point that most could only see blurs of their limbs until they struck flesh. Masrur's pureblood strength was difficult to fight against, but she'd gone up against Lo'lo not to mention many other pureblood Fanalis back in Reim. Speed and flexibility would be her friends in this fight, she had learned that thanks to Myron.

The fight ended when Masrur pinned Mahsa to the ground with one hand curled around her throat and the other slamming into her stomach hard enough to knock all the air from her body. The two Fanalis panted heavily as cheers began to sound and she took in the crowd that had gathered during the fight. Armakan hadn't joined the crowd, but given that he'd been quite busy since Sinbad had arrived, she wasn't that surprised. He would probably speak with her later about the fight once word reached his ears. Once she had regained her breath and could stand up, she became aware of just how much her body hurt. She had definitely strained something during that fight, but it was worth it considering how much of her stress was gone. Sinbad grinned as he jogged up, "That was amazing you two! Especially you, Mahsa."
"Thank you, Sinbad," Mahsa took a few steps back as Sinbad reached them.

Mahsa's leg decided that it didn't want to support her anymore and she began to fall. Masrur reacted faster than Sinbad and caught her around the waist before she could fall completely, "You okay?"

"My leg doesn't want to support my weight," Mahsa answered looking at Masrur, "Mind helping me to the Infirmary?"

"I can do tha-" Sinbad began only for Darius to dive down and almost hit him in the face with a wing.

Darius shifted into his lion form making Sinbad blanch and back away as Masrur tightened his grip on her waist which was the only sign of his surprise, "I will take you to the infirmary, Sssa."

"Okay, Dari," Mahsa pushed away from Masrur, "Darius will be taking me to the infirmary. Masrur, would you like to join us? I've left my own marks on you after all and it would be terrible if I've made it difficult to protect your king"

Masrur nodded as Mahsa began to put her weight against Darius and they started making their way towards the infirmary. Masrur glanced at Darius for a few moments before finally asking, "How did he do that?"

"Darius is known as a chimera," Mahsa explained while feeling somewhat glad that the infirmary was close to the training grounds, "His breed is able to switch between two forms;"

Masrur looked at her with a small frown, "How did he end up with you?"

"Back before I began my return to Reim with help of the goblins, one of the humans working under them accidentally brought him along when he'd hidden among the man's things," Mahsa explained while shifting to pull herself onto Darius' back, "He had been separated from his pride and planned to look for them in the morning once things got warmer. We've been together since then,"

Mahsa was looking over some more interesting scrolls in the library when she heard, "Lady Mahsa, may I speak with you?"

"Ja'far, right?" Mahsa asked not having spent much time with Sinbad's white haired general seeing as he spent most of his time with Armakan.

Ja'far nodded as she looked up from the scroll she'd been looking over, "Yes, I am. I was hoping we could speak on a few matters."

"I don't see why not," Mahsa rolled up the scroll and placed it into the small pile she'd put together, "What do you wish to speak about?"

"You do not seem to like Sinbad," Ja'far began with a slight frown, "I was wondering what my king has done to earn your ire,"

Mahsa blinked and thought over her interactions with Sinbad during his time in Heliohapt before concluding that Ja'far was telling the truth. Inwardly wincing, she said, "It's not that I do not like Sinbad. I actually somewhat enjoy being around him, but his reputation makes me somewhat wary."

"Wary?" Ja'far looked at her in realization, "Oh, I see,"
"The fact that he seems to constantly attempt to touch me whenever we encounter one another doesn't help him," Mahsa moved onto the next scroll and looked it over, "I do not know what he wishes from me,"

Ja'far froze a bit before growling, "He's tried to touch you?"

"Has touched me though not anywhere too intimate," Mahsa would've broken his nose if he had, "Though I do not think my brother or sister would really care about that, they'd just kick his ass for touching me without my permission," She rolled up the scroll and put it in the pile she wasn't going to read before picking out another scroll, "Was there another topic you'd like to discuss, Ja'far?"

"Did you grow up beyond the veil?" Ja'far asked making Mahsa still for a moment before nodding.

"Yes," Mahsa looked at the white haired adviser attempting to figure out why he was asking or how he'd figured it out, "Why do you ask?"

"Curiosity and the fact it answers a few questions that I've had," Ja'far answered as she rolled up the scroll on the table and moved to pick up the scrolls she planned on reading a bit more thoroughly, "What do you plan to do after leaving Heliohapt?"

"Return home," Mahsa answered as she picked up her scrolls and sent the others back with a wave of her wand, "If you'll excuse me, I have scrolls that I wish to read,"

"Of course," Ja'far nodded while watching the floating scrolls return to their places within the library in some shock.

Mahsa hesitated before saying, "Please inform Sinbad that I apologize for giving him the wrong impression as well as the fact that I'd prefer it if he didn't attempt to touch me again as it makes me uncomfortable."

With that said, Mahsa left the library intending to read the scrolls she'd taken.

A feast was thrown in Sinbad's honor on the night of his departure. Mahsa joined in for a short while before taking her leave as such large gathering of people still made her a bit nervous especially given the amount of alcohol flowing. While she would normally not hesitate to drink, the Fanalis Corps weren't around and there was no one stopping anyone from taking advantage of her when she was drunk. She settled down on one of the balconies that looked out over the desert city. She jolted a bit and reflexively went for a dagger when she heard, "Heliohapt is beautiful at night, isn't it?"

"Sinbad," Mahsa greeted the man wondering why he wasn't with Armakan.

Sinbad's eyes went to her hands and he let out a small laugh, "I apologize for startling you. It wasn't my intention."

Mahsa removed her hands from the daggers on her waist and shrugged, "It's fine. I wasn't expecting anyone to join me least of all you," She turned back to the view while making sure to keep an ear on Sinbad, "Shouldn't you be with King Armakan?"

"I've decided to take a break," Sinbad said as he came up beside her, "What about you?"

"Large gatherings of people are not my cup of tea," Mahsa shifted away from him, "Had my family and friends been around, I would probably enjoy it a bit more,"
Sinbad noted the distance she'd put between them and let out a sigh, "I am sorry for making you uncomfortable, Mahsa. It wasn't my intention."

"What was your intention then?" Mahsa asked looking at him with a frown.

"I was hoping to put you at ease and perhaps become closer," Sinbad answered with his golden eyes darkening a bit.

Mahsa's frown deepened, "I would prefer if we didn't."

"May I ask why?" Sinbad asked as his voice turned a bit husky.

Mahsa wondered if he was going to try and seduce her, "Because man-whores are not attractive to me in the least."

Sinbad's eyes widened as he murmured, "Man-whore?"

Mahsa hummed lightly as she pushed away from the balcony deciding to grab a jug of wine and head to her room, "Experience might be nice, but I'd prefer not to sleep with someone who's probably bedded every willing woman he's come across."

Grabbing a jug from a passing servant, Mahsa found Jori near the entrance to the room. Jori looked at her in surprise, "Mahsa?"

"Please inform Armakan that I've retired to my room for the night," Mahsa asked him earning a nod, "Such a large gathering isn't something I enjoy,"

"I see," Jori glanced at the jug, "Wine?"

"Let's just say getting drunk around so many people without my family around isn't a very good idea given that someone might attempt to take advantage of me," Mahsa answered earning a wide eyed look, "I'm an unrepentant flirt while drunk,"

Mahsa helped the healers that hadn't joined a majority of the palace in binge drinking administer some hangover relief. Most took them rather reluctantly as the taste was particularly foul, none of the healers weren't particularly inclined to giving them ones that actually tasted nice especially given how stupid some of those that had gotten drunk ended up being. She took one of the ones that actually tasted nice and brought it to Armakan when one of the servants put in his request for it. She entered the Heliohaptian rulers bed chambers where Armakan was sitting in a chair looking particularly worn out. She spoke in a soft tone, "King Armakan, I've brought the hangover relief you requested."

"Please bring it over here," Armakan requested and Mahsa quickly did as he asked, "Lady Mahsa, how exactly are you not..."

"I've built up a high tolerance for it and know how much will end up causing a hangover," Mahsa answered as Armakan took the potion she'd given him, "As the Fanalis Corps tends to drink at least one a week, it is not a difficult thing to figure out," She took the vial back once he'd finished the potion, "Was there anything else you needed?"

"What exactly did you say to Sinbad?" Armakan asked earning a confused look, "He was rather sulky when he'd returned from speaking with you,"

Mahsa snorted softly, "I merely informed him that a man who beds every willing woman he comes
across is not someone I ever intend on falling into bed with."

Armakan let out a low chuckle, "I see," He eyed her for a moment, "Lady Mahsa, may I ask what type of partner you would actually prefer?"

Somewhat surprised by the question, Mahsa had to take a few moments to answer, "As I have not actually engaged in such acts, I cannot truly say other than what I've relayed to Sinbad. May I ask why you wish to know?"

"Curiosity and some rumors I've heard," Armakan answered as he reached out to scratch the scales near the base of Cleo's head when the cobra slithered over, "You may return to assisting the healers,"

"Have a pleasant day, King Armakan, Cleo," Mahsa offered as she began leaving the King's chambers.

"Mahsa," Armakan said catching the halfling off guard at the lack of Lady attached to her name, "I would not mind it if you just called me by my name,"

Mahsa smiled lightly, "I would be happy to."

Chapter End Notes

So I might have a small crush on Armakan at the moment. While he isn't the one I am planning for Mahsa to end up with, would anyone want to see the two sleep together during the last few months of Mahsa's stay in Heliohapt?
Mahsa looked at the almost golden colored snake statue and promptly decided to buy it as a way to celebrate her time in Heliohapt so far. Jori looked at her rather startled by the seemingly impulsive act, "Mahsa, why did you want to buy that?"

"As a keepsake for my time in Heliohapt," Mahsa forked over the money for the statue, "A snake is fitting, right?"

"Yes, but why a statue?" Jori asked as the statue was bagged and handed over to Mahsa.

Mahsa thanked the stand owner before returning to her walk around the local market, "Because I wanted a statue and I get one for every important event in my life since I came home," She looked back at the long haired man who still looked confused, "Jori, stone isn't easily broken like glass and will last far longer than wood."

Mahsa dodged underneath the blade of one assassin and sliced through the throat of another. Not even two weeks after Sinbad had left saw assassins trying their luck, she wasn't sure if they were just gunning for her or for Armakan considering that they'd been talking when the attack begun. She ignored the hot blood splattering against her skin while kicking out at the assassin coming towards her from behind. The assassin let out a choked scream of pain as her foot slammed into their ribs and sent them flying into one of the nearby walls with a loud series of cracks. She took out another assassin that had been attempting to sneak up on Armakan and quickly moved to guard his back, "Where are the guards?"

"I do not know," Armakan glanced at her, "Are you alright?"

"Can't tell with all the adrenaline pumping through my body, I should be fine though," Mahsa looked him over, "You?"

"I'm fine," Armakan said as she quickly forced the nearest assassin into the wall with a burst of magic, "How many are left?"

"Shouldn't be too many more," Mahsa bound that assassin in heavy chains as Darius ripped out the throat of another while Cleo sank his fangs into another while strangling them.

Once the assassins were dealt with, Mahsa was ushered off to get cleaned up and have her wounds seen to. Thankfully, she merely had a few cuts that were easily dealt with and a bezoar took care of the poison that had been coating the blades. Alastor was growling at the fact she hadn't used him, but she'd merely told him that the fact she was a Dungeon Capturer wasn't exactly well known right now. The only one in Heliohapt that knew of her status was Armakan and the man's trusted house-hold members. Alastor had quieted after that though she knew it wouldn't be the last time he'd bring it up. Given that she still couldn't use his Djinn Equip for longer than two minutes, it wouldn't have been useful during the fight.

Armakan called for Mahsa a few days later after the assassins that had been captured began talking. She looked over the Heliohaptian king with a critical eye attempting to figure out if any of the injuries he'd sustained during the fight were bothering him. She couldn't see any sign he was in pain or strain which was a relief. Armakan looked at her as she walked closer to his throne, "The healers say that you sustained some injuries."
"A few poisoned cuts, but a bezoar took care of the poison," Mahsa answered as she stopped before him, "My cuts are almost fully healed seeing as they weren't very deep. And you?"

"I am well," Armakan eyed her for a moment, "The assassins that were captured have been interrogated,"

"And who was the target?" Mahsa asked him curiously.

"We both were," Armakan answered earning a confused look, "The assassins were hired by a few parties under the assumption that we were supposedly in a relationship. Some parties didn't wish for my line to be blessed with your gift while others were angered at the idea of an outsider becoming Queen,"

"But we are not in a relationship," Mahsa wondered just what kind of rumors were floating around if this had happened, "What exactly have we done to have rumors of a relationship between us floating around?"

"I believe that someone heard Sinbad's comment and took it the wrong way," Armakan replied with a shake of his head, "However, it might be best for us to end your contract early and for you to return to Reim,"

Mahsa looked at him in shock, "What? Why?"

"There is no telling if another will attempt the same thing," Armakan replied with a small grimace, "I would prefer not to risk another attempt on your life especially given that it would likely result in a war with Reim,"

Mahsa frowned deeply at that feeling offended at the slight towards her skills and ability to stay alive, "But I do not wish to leave the contract uncompleted."

"Given that you've helped many of those within my country, you have done more than enough to complete your side of the contract," Armakan waved off her protests, "Please, Mahsa. Do not argue with me,"

Mahsa noticed the look in his eyes and grimaced realizing that arguing with him wouldn't do anything more than lead to both of them being angry. Taking a deep breath to push down her feelings, she asked, "When do you wish for me to leave?"

"As soon as possible," Armakan answered earning a curt nod.

"I will write home then and relay what has happened," Mahsa replied with a hard swallow, "If I may go?"

"Of course," Armakan said.

With that, Mahsa turned on her heel and left the room without another word.

Jori entered her room as Mahsa finished writing her letters home, "Mahsa, King Armakan wishes for you to join him for dinner."

"Please inform him that I am a bit busy and do not feel hungry at the moment," Mahsa answered as she sealed the last letter.

"Oh," Jori shifted a bit with a frown on his face.
Mahsa looked at Jori with a small frown, "Is something wrong, Jori?"

"I will miss you, Mahsa," Jori answered as his frown deepened and the dark almost black green of his eyes became a bit shiny.

"I will miss you as well, Jori," Mahsa smiled sadly at the man, "But King Armakan has made his decision and I cannot argue with him." She stood up from her desk and held out the letters to him, "Would you do me a favor and have that sent off,"

"Of course," Jori took the letters with slightly shaking hands.

Mahsa laid a hand on his shoulder, "Thank for your help, Jori. I hope that we will be able to see one another when I return to Heliohapt again."

"You'll come back?" Jori asked with wide eyes.

Mahsa nodded with a light grin, "Of course, Heliohapt is a nice place even with the assassination attempt. Granted, I probably won't be back for a while, but I will come back."

Jori grinned back at her as his hands stilled, "I am glad to hear it."

With that, Mahsa sent Jori off and laid down on the bed with a low sigh. Darius landed on the bed and laid down beside her, "Are we really leaving, Sssa?"

"Armakan wisheesss for usss to leave," Mahsa answered as she rolled onto her side to look at Darius, "I cannot argue with him ass he isss the king here. Muu and Myron not to mention everyone elssse back home will be calling for our return the moment newssss of the attack reachesss them,"

Darius licked her cheek and nuzzle it, "Humansss are annoying, Sssa."

"Yeah," Mahsa murmured in agreement.

A knock sounded on Mahsa's door not long after she'd gotten dressed for bed. She didn't think it was Jori since he'd stopped by a few minutes ago to drop off a jug of wine. Wondering who it was, Mahsa reached for her wand calling out, "Who is it?"

"It's me," Armakan called out from the other side of the door making Mahsa let go of her wand in shock, "May I come in?"

Mahsa debated saying no for a childish moment before pushing that urge down, "Come in."

Armakan entered her room carrying a basket filled with pastries that made Mahsa's nose twitch and her mouth water. She gifted him with a confused look and he explained, "You didn't eat dinner and I wished to apologize for angering you earlier with my decision."

"I wasn't angry," Mahsa took the basket from him when he offered it, "I was more offended than anything else,"

"Offended?" Armakan murmured softly

Mahsa was confused for a moment until she noticed where his eyes were. They were on her nightclothes or what she considered nightclothes. She wore a tunic that she'd stolen from Lo'lo at some point over the years. It was fairly worn and draped just past her knees with a ragged edge. She only wore a pair of underwear underneath it since adding anymore clothes would cause her to overheat. She set the basket onto one of the tables, "Offended," Armakan quickly looked back at
her face and actually flushed a bit to her surprise, "I'm a Fanalis, Armakan. Half-blood perhaps, but still a Fanalis not to mention a metal vessel user in my own right, I am a warrior despite being a healer which actually makes me quite effective since taking apart the body would be easier than putting it back together."

"I see," Armakan seemed to shake himself as she took a pastry from the basket, "I must apologize for offending you then,"

"It's alright," Mahsa shook her head lightly before taking a bite of the pastry which seemed to be filled with some kind of strawberry filling, "I've realized that staying would probably lead to more assassination attempts not to mention the fact my family would likely come here to drag me back to Reim whether I liked it or not," She sat down on a chair and crossed her legs, "It is best to make a retreat and return at some later point once everything dies down,"

"You plan to return?" Armakan asked in surprise.

Mahsa finished off the pastry and grabbed another one after summoning the jug of wine Jori had brought her alongside both cups. Now that she thought about it, Jori had probably known Armakan would be paying her a visit. Inwardly smiling, she poured both of them a cup of wine, "Of course, I've greatly enjoyed my time here in Heliohapt greatly and avoiding a country just because of an assassination attempt would be stupid. Though it'll likely be awhile before I return, the parties responsible for the assassination attempt will likely try something again if I return too soon."

Armakan shook his head as he took the seat across from from her and picked up the cup she'd poured him, "You are not a regular woman, Mahsa."

"So?" Mahsa washed down the first pastry, "Regular women can be pretty boring especially if they're noble women,"

Armakan snorted softly, "You aren't exactly wrong."

Mahsa grinned at him before taking a bite of the second pastry and almost moaning at the taste of cherries hit her tongue. While she might not be a big fan of sweets, she would admit to being quite partial to cherries. She hummed softly, "I definitely need to get your cooks recipe for this."

"May I ask why?" Armakan asked with a raised eyebrow.

"I might not exactly enjoy sweets, but cherries aren't something I'll argue against," Mahsa answered eagerly devouring the treat before attempting to sniff out the other cherry filled pastries.

"I see," Armakan smiled lightly.

Mahsa found another one and ate it slowly savoring the taste of it. When she finished it, she pointed out, "You do realize that you coming to see me at this time of night without anyone else in the room will probably lead to more rumors spreading about a possible relationship between us, right?"

"Less than having you come to my quarters," Armakan replied reaching into the basket to pull out a pastry of his own, "Mahsa, I really am sorry for offending you earlier,"

"It's alright," Mahsa waved off his apology, "You were think of how to ensure my safety alongside keeping Reim from becoming angry and getting rid of a key reason as to why the whole event occurred in the first place," She drank some more wine, "You were thinking of your people just as any good king would. I respect you even more for your decision," She paused before admitting, "I am actually somewhat glad that I'll be going home soon,"
Armakan looked at her in surprise with some hurt filling his eyes, "Really?"

Mahsa nodded as she looked down at her cup, "I miss my family a lot and am very homesick. For all that I've greatly enjoyed my time in Heliohapt, I truly miss my home."

Unlike with Sinbad departing, Armakan didn't throw a feast mostly due to the fact Mahsa had asked him not to. Instead, they shared one final meal together before she retired for the night. A knock sounded on the door while she was packing up the last of her things, "Come in!"

"Mahsa," Jori said as he entered the room and took in the things on her bed, "I thought you were almost finished packing,"

"I am," Mahsa looked at the rather large amount of stuff still on the bed with a slight flush to her cheeks, "This is the last bit,"

"Is it going to fit?" Jori asked with concern as he glanced towards her bags sitting on the floor.

Mahsa nodded as she put the scrolls that Armakan had gifted her into one of the bags, "Expansion charms are wonderful things, Jori," She looked at him curiously, "What brings you here?"

"I have made a request to King Armakan and have been granted it on the off chance you agree to it," Jori answered earning a confused look from Mahsa, "I would like to join you, Mahsa,"

Mahsa almost dropped the books she was putting away and looked at Jori in shock, "You want to join me? But you're an attendant to King Armakan-"

"That is true," Jori cut her off with a determined look in his eyes, "I am thankful for the job that King Armakan gave me, but since you've arrived in Heliohapt, I've grown fond of you, Mahsa,"

"Fond?" Mahsa wondered if he was confessing to her, "Jori, you're a handsome man and I'm flattered really, bu-"

Jori's cheeks flared and he shook his head violently making his serpentine earrings clank against his necklace, "Not like that, Mahsa! I've grown fond of you as a friend or little sister!"

"Oh," Mahsa felt a bit bad, "Sorry, Jori. I've just..." She decided to stop that train of conversation, "You want to come with me?"

Jori nodded looking a bit relieved, "Yes, I wish to travel with you and it's not like we'd never return to Heliohapt."

"But it will be awhile before I do," Mahsa warned him earning a slight shrug.

"True enough, but I do not wish for you to travel alone with only Darius for companionship," Jori explained with a frown, "I also wish to see more of the world, Mahsa. And it's not like I have much left here, my parents are gone and my siblings barely speak to one another,"

Mahsa stared at him for a few moments before asking, "You do realize how dangerous it would be, right? I won't be able to guarantee your safety despite my magic, Fanalis abilities, and the fact I'm a metal vessel users."

"I understand and am willing to take the risk," Jori smiled at her, "I've been trained to fight as per my father's orders,"

"My brother and his men will probably put you through hell in order to ensure you'd be able to
protect me if needed," Mahsa warned him.

Jori gave her a determined grin, "I understand that and will accept it, Mahsa. Please allow me to journey with you."

Mahsa contemplated saying no before realizing that she didn't want to deny him. She wanted him to journey with her. Alastor let out a low grumble, "Tell the man to come with us, you obviously feel a connection to him and he does potential to become one of your house hold members."

'Really?' Mahsa asked earning a low grunt.

"Unfortunately," Alastor muttered softly, "Stupid snake worshipers,"

Inwardly shaking her head at him, Mahsa focused on Jori, "Alright. If Armakan agrees to it, I see no reason why you cannot join me. If for any reason you no longer wish to travel with me, I will see that you're able to return home as quickly and safely as possible."

"Thank you, Mahsa," Jori released a loud sigh of relief.

"Now, go get packed up. We do leave early in the morning after all," Mahsa told him earning a nod.

"Right!" Jori quickly left her room.

Mahsa smiled softly and shook her head while turning back to the items she still needed to pack.

"Oh sweet land, how I've missed you!" Jori nearly shouted as he practically kissed the docks after an admittedly rough voyage.

Mahsa shook her head as Darius snorted at Jori's antics. They had both been fine despite the storm that had occurred and a southern sea beast deciding to attack. The Captain of the ship looked at her with a concerned expression, "Will he be alright?"

"He'll be fine. I'm fairly sure it was his first time sailing for so long," Mahsa walked down the gang-plank, "Thank you for the ride,"

"It was my pleasure, Lady Mahsa," The Captain replied as she joined Mahsa.

Mahsa walked up to Jori after making sure everything had been loaded into the carriage they'd be riding to Remano, "Come on, Jori. We're burning daylight."

"Ships are evil," Jori practically whined, "Far too much devil water and demonic beasts,"

"It was a single southern sea beast and I took care of it," Mahsa shook her head wondering where the normally calm and collected man that had decided to join her was, "C'mon, Jori. Get up or I'll make you," Jori promptly got up and they made their way to the carriage, "It wasn't that bad of a trip, Jori. I have no idea how you'll deal with us traveling since we'll be on a ship until we're traveling using land routes,"

"If there aren't so many storms, I won't have as much trouble," Jori muttered softly as they got into the carriage which set off towards Remano soon after.

Mahsa shook her head as she shifted to lay down on the bench for a much needed nap with Darius climbing up to peer out the window.
Thankfully, they arrived in Remano while the Fanalis Corps were having their training day. Lady Scheherazade saw them immediately upon their arrival. Mahsa greeted the magi with a tired smile, "Lady Scheherazade, it is wonderful to be home once again."

"I am glad to here it," Lady Scheherazade looked at Jori, "And this must be the one you wrote about. Jori, was it?"

Jori jolted at being addressed by the blonde magi and nodded quickly, "Yes, Lady Scheherazade. I am Jori Hamdan,"

"It is a pleasure to meet you, Jori," Lady Scheherazade offered the man a small smile before looking at Mahsa, "How was your trip?"

"There was a severe storm and a southern sea beast attack, we haven't had much trouble other than that," Mahsa replied trying to keep just how tired she was from leaking into her voice.

Lady Scheherazade seemed to hear it despite her efforts, "Perhaps we should save talking for later, you two must be exhausted. I will have someone lead you to your new quarters both of you."

Mahsa jolted at that, "Lady Scheherazade, what do you-"

"Mahsa, I will explain later," Lady Scheherazade cut her off.

Mahsa wanted to argue at being moved away from her siblings, but held her tongue knowing that the magi had a good reason for her decision.

Mahsa's new quarters were across from the Fanalis Corps rooms being that they shared the same gardens. They were larger than her old room which would allow for more storage space. She relaxed at the knowledge that her siblings were still close. After unpacking her belongings making note that someone had move the things she hadn't brought with her to Heliohapt into the room, Mahsa dropped onto the bed with a low sigh. A knock sounded on her door. Rather than get up, she called out, "Come in," Jori opened the door and she smiled at him, "You okay, Jori?"

"I'm fine," Jori looked a little embarrassed, "I was wondering where we go to bathe,"

"The bathhouse," Mahsa answered making Jori flush a bit, "Is something wrong?"

"Those are public, yes?" Jori asked as his flush deepened.

Mahsa wondered what the problem was before realizing what the problem was. She knew that Heliohapt wasn't as big about public bathhouses of any sort. Most countries didn't have public bathhouses, it wasn't very popular. She felt a bit bad for not realizing what the problem was before and quickly told him, "Yes, but there are private tubs. You need only to request one."

Jori looked relieved at her words, "Oh, good."

"If you ask one of the servants, they can take you to one of the palace bathhouses," Mahsa told him earning a nod, "Just bring a change of clothes with you and any bathing supplies you might have, the ones they have available will probably not be to your taste,"

"Do I need to bring money with me?" Jori asked her curiously.

Mahsa shook her head, "No, the bathhouses don't require money unless you're paying for one of the special baths."
Jori turned and began leaving before pausing long enough to say, "Thank you, Mahsa."

"No problem," Mahsa replied and Jori left shutting the door behind him.

Mahsa contemplated going for a bath of her own before deciding not to. She could take one later on. Darius entered her room through the window that she'd opened earlier on, "Hedwig isss happy we're back and hopesss you'll come sssee her sssoon."

"Later once I'm not ssso tired," Mahsa replied with a yawn.

"You need to ssstay awake, Sssa," Darius told her as he plopped down on the bed beside her head, "Sssleeping now will mean not being able to sssleep later."

"But I'm tired," Mahsa yawned out, "A little nap won't be ssso bad..."

Mahsa woke up when her door was slammed open and a heavy weight landed on her, "Mahsa! You're home!"

Inwardly groaning, Mahsa wondered why Myron had to shout so loudly when she was right here. Jolting when she realizing that Myron was sweaty as hell, Mahsa pushed her elder sister away, "Myron, get off! Why didn't you go take a bath before coming to see me?"

"I want to see my baby sister," Myron pulled Mahsa with her which ended up with both of them on the floor, "I missed you,"

Giving her sister a glare that wavered in moments, Mahsa smiled lightly and hugged Myron, "Missed you too, Myron."

Myron hugged her tightly before allowing both of them to get up. Myron scowled suddenly and jabbed Mahsa in the chest, "Why didn't you come see us the moment Lady Scheherazade released you?"

"I wanted to get unpacked and accidentally took a very long nap," Mahsa still felt tired despite having pretty much napped the day away, "Sorry,"

Myron shook her head, "It's fine since we'll have more time together."

Mahsa was surprised that only Myron had come to see her, "Where is everyone?"

"I managed to convince them to stay back until dinner," Myron eyed her, "Have you bathed today?"

Mahsa shook her head, "No. I was going to until I finished packing and well..."

Myron grinned brightly, "Get your stuff ready, it'll give us time to have a little talk about the guy you brought back from Heliohapt."

"He's just a friend!" Mahsa protested as Myron took off through the door and shook her head lightly before looking at Darius, "Dari, they don't think Jori is my lover or anything, right?"

Darius gave her a look, "He'sss a human male that'sss apparently attractive by human ssstandardsss, what do you think?"

Mahsa felt bad for Jori since Muu and the others were likely planning on kicking Jori's ass sometime soon. Muttering under her breath, she went about gathering her bathing supplies, "Dear
Merlin, I feel so bad for Jori.”

All the female Fanalis promptly pounced on Mahsa the moment Myron dragged her into the bathhouse and barely waited for the younger halfling to get undressed. Razol hugged her, "Green-eyes, I missed you."

"Missed you too, Razzy," Mahsa replied trying not to lose her balance.

Razol pulled back after a moment, "So who's the handsome prick that managed to steal you away from me?"

"Jori might be attractive, but he isn't my type and only sees me as a friend," Mahsa said as she sat down in the hot water beside Myron, "You'd probably have a chance with him though he's probably more interested in Heliohapt women,"

Razol gained a contemplative look on her face. Myron frowned a bit looking a little disappointed, "So you didn't find anyone in Heliohapt?"

Mahsa's cheeks flushed at the question and she began bathing like they were supposed to be doing. What kind of question was that? She couldn't believe Myron had asked her that. Razol grinned at the blush on her cheeks and crowed, "You did! You totally did!"

"No, I didn't," Mahsa shook her head at Razol, "I wasn't looking for a relationship. Granted, I did go on a date-"

"You did find som-" Razol was stopped by a sponge being shoved into her mouth.

Myron turned to Mahsa with a light smile, "You were saying, Mahsa."

Mahsa looked between Myron and Razol for a few moments before deciding she didn't want to know what the scarred beauty had done to earn her big sister's ire, "I went on a single date with one of the female healers working in the palace infirmary. She had a crush on me and since I didn't want to hurt her feelings, I agreed to go on a single date with her. It wasn't much fun and ended with us deciding to just stay friends."

Razol took the sponge out of her mouth, "Well, I guess that's better than nothing. It sucks you didn't find anyone worth your time."

Mahsa had a feeling she'd regret saying this, but decided it might be best to say it now rather than have it accidentally slip out while she was drunk, "I didn't say that. I just said that I didn't get into a relationship with anyone while in Heliohapt."

"So you did find someone," Razol grinned at her, "Details!"

Mahsa shook her head lightly, "There aren't any details seeing as a relationship between us isn't actually going to be happening any time soon."

"He or she doesn't like you?" Col asked speaking up for the first time since greeting Mahsa.

"No, it's not that..." Mahsa trailed off softly for a moment wondering if Armakan did actually like her or the vision she had of them together was messing with her, "Well, maybe. Anyway, he," Razol made a sound, "Yes, a he. He's definitely attractive and well in the realms of someone that I'd consider settling down with. But I want to travel and the whole reason I came home early is because someone wasn't happy with the idea of us together,"
Myron made a small choking sound looking at Mahsa in shock, "You mean Armakan, King Armakan of Heliohapt, is the guy you're talking about?!

Mahsa winced a bit and nodded as looks of shock were sent towards her, "Yes, King Armakan Amun-Ra of Heliohapt."

"Why?" Myron asked with a frown.

"He's really attractive," Mahsa answered as she finished bathing, "I've never seen that shade of jade on a human before and they really fit him. He has a really nice scent and voice. He treats snakes with proper respect and Darius likes him. He's a good king that looks after his people and rules them fairly," She flushed a bit as the memory of her vision rose up, "I might've had a vision of us being married at some point in the future and really liked what I saw."

Razol's mind immediately went down the gutter and into the sewer as she gained a perverted smile on her face, "Liked what you saw, huh? How nice was his body and how good was the sex?"

"What is it with you and sex?" Mahsa asked as a rosy blush coated her cheeks, "No, we weren't having sex or even naked,"

"Sex is awesome and that right there tells me you're still a virgin," Razol grinned at her flushed cheeks, "What the hell did you see if it wasn't sex?"

Mahsa got out of the tub and began drying off, "I saw us having a child together."

Col made a sound of confusion, "A kid? What's so great about kids?"

"Mahsa wants kids," Razol answered while giving Mahsa a measuring look, "So you'd really consider getting together with him?"

"Maybe, I don't really know or want to think about it right now since I'm still young. Maybe in a few years if I haven't found anyone, I'll think about it," Mahsa finished drying off as Myron joined her after rinsing off, "I still want to travel and marrying a king would pretty much mean staying put. Besides, I didn't get to spend as much time with Armakan as I could have since Sinbad decided to come for a visit,"

"You met Sinbad?" Myron asked earning a soft snort as Mahsa began to get dressed, "You don't like him?"

"He's not bad. I just don't like him much since he's far too flirty not to mention kept making comments about us climbing into bed together," Mahsa shook her head lightly.

Razol made a noise of confusion, "Isn't he like really fucking hot? Why would you say no to him?"

"He isn't very attractive to me," Mahsa pulled on a tunic, "As for why I said no, why in the world would I get into bed with someone who's been with every willing women that he's come across? Man-whores are not attractive at all. I'd probably feel dirty if I actually ended up sleeping with him,"

Myron let out a laugh, "I'm fairly sure Brother will be quite happy to hear you say that."

Muu pulled Mahsa into a hug the moment she entered the dinning hall, "Mahsa!"

"Big Brother," Mahsa hugged him back tightly and murmured against his shoulder, "Missed you,"

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"Big Brother," Mahsa hugged him back tightly and murmured against his shoulder, "Missed you,"
"Missed you too," Muu pulled away though he kept a grip on her shoulders and looked her over, "You've been taking care of yourself, right? No nights without sleep? No missed meals? No new bad habits?"

"Can't really answer those without lying," Mahsa wasn't going to lie to her brother especially since Jori would probably make both of them known.

Muu's eyes narrowed at that, "I figured the first one was a given, but the other two?"

"Heliohapt has these seasonal sicknesses that can be pretty bad sometimes which led to all three of those things happening," Mahsa offered him a sheepish grin, "I did my best to eat at least twice a day if not more and the servants made sure everyone ate something every few hours,"

"And the new bad habit?" Muu asked with a frown.

"I took up smoking," Mahsa answered while wincing as Muu's frown deepened, "I only do it when I'm really stressed out. Because of my magic, it won't damage my lungs or my health really," She tried not to shrink back, "I know it isn't a good habit, but it's better than some of the others out there-"

"I am not happy about it, but I suppose it isn't the worst possible thing that could have happened," Muu gave her a stern look, "Do you promise not to smoke anything that would do damage to you or kill you?"

"Promise," Mahsa relaxed as Muu nodded.

"Then I won't argue against it," Muu released her with a small frown, "Who exactly is Jori?"

Mahsa launched into the explanation of her friend and relayed what Alastor had told her.

Lady Scheherazade explained why she'd placed Mahsa into new quarters the next morning after breakfast when she called for the halfling to join her. It was done for a few reasons. She was a metal vessel users and likely going to gather a household of her own that would likely not want to separate from her. She was planning to travel quite a bit and would likely gathered together quite a few keepsakes that would take up room. The Fanalis Corps would keep getting new members which meant she'd eventually need to move rooms if she wasn't planning on joining up. Other than that, Lady Scheherazade though she would likely appreciate having her rooms away from everyone in the event she ended up finding a lover and wanted some actual privacy. The last reason had the halfling blushing cherry red and muttering under her breath why everyone was so interested in her sex-life.

It was easy to fall into old habits though finding a way for Jori to fit into everything took a little while. Eventually, he began working as her assistant while training with the Fanalis Corps under Muu's orders to ensure he'd be able to watch Mahsa's back once they began traveling. He looked through the various maps and law books for the various countries in the library wanting to get an understanding of the world outside of Heliohapt. Whenever he hit stumbling blocks, she helped him out or brought up the subject to someone else if she wasn't able to.

Razol made a suggestion that left Mahsa choking on the smoke she'd been inhaling. After almost coughing up a lung, she wheezed out, "You want me to what?!"

"Go to a pleasure house with me," Razol answered with a grin, "It'd be fun,"
"Why would I go to a whoresonse?" Mahsa couldn't believe what Razol was even trying to suggest.

"You're almost nineteen and still a virgin, Green-eyes," Razol sat on Mahsa's bed while the halfling sat on her windowsill.

"Being a virgin isn't a bad thing," Mahsa grumbled at Razol before taking a deep breath of the spicy smoke she'd grown to prefer when smoking, "And why would I got to a whoresonse to lose my virginity?"

Razol rolled her eyes, "I said pleasure house not whoresonse as they're too diffrent things," Mahsa gave Razol a look, "The pleasure house is discreet, clean, and makes sure none of the workers/patrons are diseased. Every worker takes contraceptives, they honestly like working there too. Besides, you don't need to go for a guy or anything. You can get a female partner."

Mahsa blew out a ring of smoke, "Still not hearing the why."

"You've never experienced sex before and you have to admit that you're curious," Razol gave her a pointed look as she said that.

Mahsa flushed a bit, "I suppose you're right, but-"

"Pleasure house workers will ensure your first time ever having sex is amazing and even teach you how to pleasure your partner if you want to," Razol offered with a grin, "Besides, you have to admit that you're feeling pretty stressed out lately and aren't able to get rid of it easily anymore,"

Mahsa chewed on the wood of her pipe while admitting that Razol wasn't exactly wrong. She still wasn't sure about it, "I don't know..."

"I'll only ask this once, Mahsa, and stop commenting about your sex-life if you agree to come with me," Razol promised with her.

Mahsa snorted softly, "You're lying about the not commenting part and don't try to say you aren't."

Razol shrugged lightly with a bright grin, "Yeah, but I meant the first one."

Mahsa thought about it before deciding that it wouldn't be that bad of an idea, "I can leave anytime I want?"

"Yup and I'll even pay for it," Razol assured, "So you coming?"

Mahsa took in another lungful of smoke and released it slowly after a few moments, "Fine."

The whole thing had been quite awkward in the beginning for Mahsa, but the woman that Razol had set her up with ensured it didn't stay that way for long. By the end of it all, she could understand why people liked sex though didn't plan to do it with random people just for the satisfaction. It wasn't a bad experience and probably more than what most could hope for in a first experience. Of course, it unfortunately led to her visions gaining another facet that always managed to leave her flushed and wanting when she woke up.

"You're up late, Mahsa," Kouen's voice sounded from behind Mahsa as she peered out at the sky.

Mahsa nearly jumped out of her skin at the unexpected sound of his voice coming from behind her,
"Kouen!"

Kouen looked at her with amusement flickering through his eyes as he reached her side, "My apologies for startling you," Mahsa snorted softly and went back to leaning against the windowsill, "I'm surprised you're still awake at this hour considering the fact you left the library a few hours ago."

"Sleep can be difficult for some of us to obtain when our minds do not let us rest," Mahsa raised her pipe up and inhaled some of the almost sweet tasting herb that was most frequently used in Kou. "And you, Kouen? I would've thought you'd head straight back to your rooms at this hour or stay in the library all night,"

"I was on my way towards my rooms when I spotted you." Kouen answered startling Mahsa into almost dropping her pipe.

Mahsa hadn't known that Kouen's rooms were in this part of the palace. Hell, she didn't even know where exactly in the palace she currently was until now. She flushed a bit, "Oh."

Kouen eyed her for a moment with his lips quirking into a barely there smile, "You have no idea where you currently are, do you?"

Mahsa flushed a bit, "I've been wandering around for over an hour without really paying attention."  "I see," Kouen moved back a bit before hold out his arm to her, "Would you like to join me for some sake?"

Mahsa contemplated refusing before deciding it couldn't hurt given that she still didn't feel very sleepy. If anything, the sake would make probably help her find sleep easier. Nodding slowly, she put out her pipe and took Kouen's offered arm. He led her to his rooms and directed her to sit down on one of the pillows by a low table. She sank into the soft material as Kouen grabbed a large bottle of sake and two of the odd saucers people in Kou used to drink it. Kouen sat down on the pillow across from her after setting everything down on the table. She had to comment, "Do you drink in your rooms often, Kouen?"

"Only on nights when rest doesn't find me easily," Kouen replied pouring them both a saucer and pushing it towards her, "This is a bit stronger than what Kouha and Judar drink," Mahsa took the offered saucer and downed the sake. She sighed softly as the liquor burned its way down her throat. Kouen gave her an amused look and she narrowed her eyes at him as he drank his own saucer, "What?"

"You enjoy the burn," Kouen answered as he poured them both some more, "Most women don't," Mahsa shrugged as she picked up her refilled saucer, "I'm not most women."  "I'm thankful for that," Kouen answered as Mahsa downed the saucer after a few moments, "Most women tend to throw themselves at me, it is refreshing that you don't despite being attracted to me," Mahsa looked at Kouen in amusement let out a soft bark of laughter, "Why would I throw myself at someone? That would make me a whore or something," She poured herself another saucer full of sake before refilling Kouen's when he finished his own, "Tell me something, Kouen. Why ask me to come drink with you? You never come with Kouha, Judar, and I when we go drink even if one of them asks you to join us."
Kouen was quiet for a few moments as Mahsa drank her next saucer of sake taking the time to savor it. When he spoke, she was beginning to feel the alcohol warm her up, "Privacy."

A teasing grin stretched across Mahsa's face, "Privacy? Are you hoping to get lucky or something with me?"

"And if I was?" Kouen asked as she placed down her saucer, "Would you say no?"

Mahsa pushed her saucer away causing a slight screeching sound as the pale china slid across the varnished table top, "I don't throw myself at people despite how much I flirt while drunk, En. You'd have to be pretty damn special to get that kind of action from me."

"And I'm not?" Kouen put down his own saucer and and peered at her with darkened pinkish red eyes.

Mahsa hummed leaning forward over the table, "Depends. Why do you want to sleep with me? To get to my brother? Have a way into Reim?"

"Admittedly, I've contemplated that when I first realized your attraction to me, but you're not some dull minded twit that wouldn't notice me attempting such things," Kouen's lips twitched in amusement as he leaned forward as well, "You're unlike any other woman I've met here in Kou save for my step-mother and step-sister. The power you hold within you, you're thirst for knowledge, the passion you have for healing others, that fire to protect those under your care, and the beast within you capable of destroying your enemies whenever they dare show their faces. Each of them draw me to you like a moth towards flame," Mahsa slowly began to lean forward until his breath hit her lips, "I want you, Sa. I want to make you mine,"

"Big words, En," Mahsa knew she should probably back away and run to her rooms, "For a Prince from a rival empire that seeks to one day take over mine," She knew that this needed to end right here and now, "Making claims," But she couldn't bring herself to leave right now, "Speaking of wanting me," She wanted to see how this ends, "Speaking such big words," Leaving now was the furthest thing from her mind, "Why should I let you?"

"Let me?" Kouen's eyes glowed with amusement, "I'm a man that always gets what I want in the end," He leaned forward just a bit more allowing their lips to touch as he continued speak, "I want you, Mahsa Alexius,"

Mahsa pulled back and stood up from her seat relishing in the shock filling his eyes, "A man who always gets what he wants in the end will never know how to appreciate that which he gains to the fullest extent," She headed towards the door, "I may want you as well, Kouen Ren, but I will not end up a plaything for you."

An arm wrapped around Mahsa's waist and pulled her against a firm chest. Warmth radiated through the clothes covering both their bodies, a trickle of warmth curled through her stomach. She laid a hand on the arm as Kouen's mouth brushed against her ear, "Who said anything about a plaything, Sa?" A shiver ran down Mahsa's spine at the huskiness of his voice and the warmth of his breath puffing against her ear, "You would never be a plaything for me."

Mahsa gripped the sleeve of his robe as his arm tightened around her waist, "That's all I could ever be to you, En. As the First Prince of Kou, you'll become Emperor one day and have to marry some noble woman in order to have heirs to your throne," She closed her eyes, "I will not be in a relationship with someone who is married to another nor will I be second to another woman," She opened her eyes as her fingers released Kouen's sleeve and she turned around in his arms to look up at him, "While I may want you, En, you are not mine to have."
Kouen pulled her flush against him, "The only wife I would consider taking is the woman currently in my arms," Mahsa's eyes widened at his words, "You're of a noble bloodline, a metal vessel user with quite a bit of power, a cunning mind, and so much more. Why would I want some empty headed bitch that would only be useful for popping out heirs that will probably end up as intelligent as the twit that birthed them?"

Mahsa's heart was beating fast enough that she wondered if Kouen with his purely human senses could hear it pounding away in her chest. Swallowing at the heated and determined look in his eyes, she pointed out, "No one will accept what many consider a half-breed as the wife of their First Prince no matter what noble blood or power I might hold."

Kouen scoffed softly, "I do not care what others think save for my siblings. Once I take over, no one will care about blood," He gripped her chin in his hand and leaned down until their lips were just barely brushing, "Become mine, Sa."

Mahsa stared into his pinkish red eyes as she whispered against his lips, "I-"

Kouen pressed their lips together without letting her finish speaking. The move was just so Kouen it made Mahsa want to huff and she would have had it not been for the dizzying feeling of his mouth on hers. She slowly kissed him back tasting the sake on his tongue when their mouths opened to deepen the kiss. Curling her arms around his neck, she pressed closer to him feeling heat pool within her stomach.
Staring out at the expanse of ocean as snow fluttered slowly down from the clouds hanging overhead, Mahsa turned her head as Jori spoke from behind her, "Mahsa, you should come inside. It’s getting colder."

"Soon, Jori," Mahsa turned her head to smile at the shivering man, "Go on ahead, I want to watch Hedwig and her family for a little while longer," She shook her head lightly at him, "If you don't go in now, you'll get a cold and that'll keep you from joining us when we land in Imuchakk,"

"Very well," Jori headed inside after throwing a distrustful look at the water.

Letting out a soft laugh, Mahsa turned back to the water with a small smile. Three months after her return to Reim, she had begun to get a bit anxious and unsettled for reasons that she wasn't too sure about. A further two months past with the feeling growing worse until Muu had brought it up and she'd told him about her feelings. They ended up bringing it up to Lady Scheherazade who had told them that she was likely feeling the urge to travel once again. After another month, she planned her trip with Lady Scheherazade asking her to deliver a message to the Chief of Imuchakk, Rametoto. She turned her head as someone spoke up from near her, "Lady Mahsa, I'm surprised you aren't joining him."

"I'm used to the cold due to a school that I went to back during my younger years," Mahsa turned her head to find the Captain of the ship standing nearby, "How long until we arrive in Imuchakk,"

"Another few days," The old man answered as he lit his pipe and looked upwards where Hedwig was flying with her three children, "That snowy owl of yours is absolutely gorgeous,"

"She is," Mahsa followed Hedwig flight.

Chief Rametoto granted Mahsa and those with her leave to explore Imuchakk after receiving the message that Lady Scheherazade had bid her to deliver. Jori and Darius both stayed inside due to sharing a mutual dislike of the cold. This left her with only Hedwig as company, the snowy owl's children having decided to explore Imuchakk and perhaps nest there according to Darius. Hedwig sat on her shoulder as they explored the large village surrounding the home of Rametoto and his family. Alastor spoke as she walked along the various stalls set up trying to find anything interesting to buy, "This place is better than the last, it's too cold though."

'Are you going to complain about every place we travel to?' Mahsa asked as she spotted a stand selling pieces of what looked like carved bone.

"If you travel from one extreme to the next, yes," Alastor grumbled at her earning a mental eye-roll.

Mahsa decided to ignore Alastor for the moment and bought a few of the more interesting pieces that she thought someone back home would probably like. She picked up some hair ornaments that she'd be giving Myron since her sister tended to join their brother at the noble parties more often than not.

Somehow, Mahsa ended up finding her way into an area where a building had collapsed. When she saw the amount of injured, she'd sent Hedwig off for her healers kit and immediately offered her services. No one was quite willing to allow her to assist, but given how many people had been injured they couldn't deny her. When she revealed her ability to use magic and the healing
knowledge she possessed by healing one of the lesser injured without any sign of trouble, they accepted her help with more ease than before. The hours passed unnoticed by her as they tended to when she was in healer mode as Razol had coined the term. When everything was done and none of the injured still required healing outside of needing a good-nights sleep, she was surprised to note that night had long since fallen and that Rametoto had arranged a guard to guide her back to his home.

The minute Mahsa had gotten bathed and eaten something saw her passing out the moment she could. When she woke up and Jori had gotten her to eat, Chief Rametoto called for her to meet with him. Chief Rametoto eyed her with more interest than he had when they'd arrived and she'd given him Lady Scheherazade's letter, "I thank you for assisting my people."

"There is no need to thank me," Mahsa offered the large man a kind smile, "As a healer, I am duty bound to heal those in need so long as they are not my enemies,"

The man grinned at her, "And if they're your enemies?"

Mahsa's smile turned dark and sharp, "They'll die."

Chief Rametoto drew his head back and let out a roar of laughter. Mahsa bit back a wince as the sound slammed into her sensitive hearing. When he finished, the large man grinned at her, "I like you, Mahsa Alexius."

"I'm glad to hear it," Mahsa replied as her smile returned to the kind one from earlier, "If I may make a request?"

Chief Rametoto looked at her in interest, "A request?"

"Your healers used techniques that I did not recognize and they would probably say the same," Mahsa said as Jori and a majority of those in the room looked at her in shock, "I propose an exchange in knowledge in healing. Not all the healing knowledge I have lies with my magic meaning I have knowledge that they can learn,"

Chief Rametoto let out another bark of laughter before nodding, "Very well, I shall grant your request."

"Thank you, Chief Rametoto," Mahsa smiled brightly at the man, "I would also like to spar with some of your warriors at some point as well. It wouldn't do to let my skills fall to the wayside,"

Chief Rametoto grinned at her, "Perhaps you should come stay in Imuchakk, Mahsa. I'm sure one of our warriors would love to have you as his wife."

Thanks to her time in Heliohapt, Mahsa was able to act unfazed by the suggestion, "I must decline the offer, Chief Rametoto. My home is in Reim and I have no intention of taking on a significant other at the moment."

Mahsa ended up staying in Imuchakk for two months before returning to Reim where she stayed for three months before traveling again. One of the women visiting from Artemyra had mentioned something about healing techniques there leading to a rather intense conversation between them. When it ended, the woman suggested that the halfling come to Artemyra if she wished to learn more. A few letters were exchanged with her sending a letter to the queen of Artemyra and eventually an invitation was sent. Jori accompanied her after receiving permission from Queen Mira Dianus Artemina.
Queen Mira smiled at Mahsa as they sat together at the dining table, "Lady Mahsa, may I ask a question?"

"Of course," Mahsa offered a polite smile at her fellow Dungeon Capturer, "What is that you wish to ask?"

"You're a witch from the other side of the veil, Correct?" Queen Mira asked causing Mahsa to pause in the middle of bringing the goblet of wine she'd been given to her lips.

"I was raised on the other side of the veil, Queen Mira," Mahsa admitted as she lowered the goblet, "But I was born on this side and have been living here since a few weeks after my fifteenth birthday. I do not hold the opinion of the majority of the magicals living there,"

Queen Mira's smile turned a bit softer, "A good thing to here. May I ask made you wish to heal others?"

Mahsa was a little surprised by the question, but answered it after taking a sip of her wine, "In the beginning it was a wish to help others and make a better image for those that are able to speak the tongue of serpents, Parselmouths. After I started to learn, I realized just what healing others is what I wish to do in life. Saving someone's life for the first time just cemented it, I can't see myself doing anything else."

"You're a warrior though," Queen Mira pointed out.

Mahsa shrugged lightly, "I am a Fanalis, Queen Mira. Battle is in our blood, I couldn't deny being a warrior even if I wanted to. The rush I get when fighting and the enjoyment I feel each time I learn a new way to fight. Though I do not fight for the simple pleasure of it, I fight to ensure that those I care for are safe," She looked at the Queen with a small smile, "It is the same for you, is it not, Queen Mira?"

"It is," Queen Mira's smile brightened and she relaxed against her chair, "Lady Mahsa, I believe we're going to be good friends,

The birds of Artemyra were absolutely beautiful and Mahsa enjoyed seeing if she could out fly them on her broom. She flew on their backs with some of the many Artemyra women that took care of the birds. It was so different from flying on a hippogriff, but also the same. She enjoyed it greatly especially when they started performing some of the tricks she did on her broom much to the shock and enjoyment of their handlers. Whenever she wasn't working with the healers or making sure Jori didn't get in over his head, she was with the birds which were a great help when she finally managed to find out what her animagus form was. A gryffin specifically a spotted black tailed gryphon that were native to Andes Mountains back on the other side of the veil. Out of all the creatures she could end up with as an animagus form, a gryffin wasn't something she expected though having wings was awesome.

Darius attempted to help Mahsa learn how to fly when she finally managed the transformation, but that ended in failure seeing as he was a scaly reptile while she was a fluffy-feathery mammal. The birds of Artemyra were a big help once Darius stopped pouting and actually decided to help translate for her. Flying with wings of her own was a lot more difficult than she'd ever thought it would be, the burn of her muscles and the broken bones caused by crashing/falling said that. She ended up staying in Artemyra for five months to get a basic grasp of flying and continue learning how to heal as the healers in Artemyra did.
"It's a shame you can't stay any longer, Mahsa," Queen Mira said as she reached across the table to pick a strawberry from the bowl by Mahsa's arm.

The Artemyrian queen had decided to throw a party in honor of Mahsa's leaving. It wasn't a gigantic one, but it was more than Mahsa had been expecting. Looking away from the rather skilled dancers that were a mixture of male and females, she said, "While I love Artemyra and will definitely come back at some point soon, I really should go home and spend sometime with my family."

"And after that?" Queen Mira asked Mahsa as she held out a bowl of cherries for the halfling.

Mahsa picked a few from the bowl, "When I feel the need to travel again, I'll probably travel to Balbadd."

"Not Sindria?" Queen Mira looked at Mahsa with a raised eyebrow.

Mahsa chewed on the cherry in her mouth thoughtfully. Why did Queen Mira bring of Sindria? Granted, she'd toyed with the idea, but eventually decided against it. Looking at the blonde curiously, she spoke truthfully, "While I have thought about it, Sindria doesn't really have much interest to me save for their Mahrajan festival though that's mostly curious to see what's so interesting about it. May I ask why you brought it up?"

"According to what I've heard, you've been to Heliohapt and Imuchakk alongside Artemyra," Queen Mira picked up another strawberry, "I would've thought you'd head to Kina, Sasan, or Sindria next since you seem to be traveling to the various countries part of the Seven Seas Alliance," Mahsa shook her head lightly, "It's merely by happenstance that I've traveled to three of them one after another."

Queen Mira let out a soft laugh, "So it doesn't have to do with the fact you don't like Sinbad."

"Who told you that?" Mahsa asked with a raised eyebrow, "It isn't that I don't like the man. I respect that he's managed to create his own Kingdom and form the Seven Seas Alliance," She shook her head lightly, "What I do not like is the fact he expected me to fall in bed with him. If I were to fall in bed with someone, it would not be with a known man-whore who has probably had every willing woman he's come across sleep with him,"

Queen Mira let out a soft laugh and shook her head, "I see. By the way Sinbad spoke of his last meeting with you, I assumed you disliked him."

"Sinbad has spoken of me?" Mahsa asked in surprise.

Queen Mira nodded with a light smirk, "Yes, you've made quite the impression with him, Mahsa. It was part of the reason why I accepted your request to come stay in Artemyra."

"Curiosity?" Mahsa questioned as she reached to grab her goblet of wine.

"Of course, a Fanalis of the Alexius bloodline with the ability to use magic from beyond the veil and can speak to snakes is quite interesting," Queen Mira replied picking up her own goblet, "A woman that is not only a warrior, but a healer. Is it any surprise that I am more than a little interested in meeting you?"

"And what have you gained from our meeting?" Mahsa inquired before drinking some of the almost sweet bitter wine.
Queen Mira surprised Mahsa by leaning over the gap between their chairs and kissing the halfling on the lips. A small gasp of surprise left her lips allowing the blonde queen to deepen the kiss. When Queen Mira pulled away, the blonde told her, "I'd enjoy it if you join me in my bed tonight, Mahsa. If you do, please call me Mira."

With that, Queen Mira stood up and move to speak with one of her daughters. Mahsa stared after the blonde with crimson cheeks and found her eyes settling on the Artemyrian queen's ass which swayed as the woman walked. Swallowing, she turned her head as Jori walked up with a grin on his face, "Mahsa!" He paused and frowned as he noticed her blush, "Is something wrong?"

"No," Mahsa was surprised that she was able to speak in such a steady tone after being offered a night with Queen Mira Dianus Artemina, "I'm just feeling a bit warm is all. I think I'm going to step out for a few moments or maybe go to bed."

"Do you want me to join you?" Jori asked with concern written all over his face.

Mahsa shook her head as she offered him a light smile, "I'll be fine, Jori. Please enjoy yourself, we are leaving soon enough after all."

"If you're sure," Jori murmured as she set down her goblet of wine and stood up, "Have a goodnight's rest if we do not see each other until tomorrow morning, Mahsa,"

"You too, Jori," Mahsa said before slipping out of the large dinning hall.

Dear Merlin, Mahsa couldn't believe that she'd just been offered a night in bed with Queen Mira Dianus Artemina. A part of her knew the best thing to do was just not take the blonde up on her offer. The rest of the halfling wanted to take the queen up on her offer. Queen Mira was attractive and during the few times they'd sparred together, quite fit. It wasn't just physical attraction that made her want to take the woman up on her offer. Queen Mira was intelligent, cared about her people, loved her family, and was a really good ruler. It probably wasn't often that the Artemyrian queen took anyone into her bed which only made the offer even more appealing to the Fanalis. Making a decision, she headed towards the baths set up deciding to bathe before going to find Queen Mira.

A knock echoed on the door as Mahsa looked over her world map. She called over her shoulder, "Come in."

"Hey, Mah-" Muu began only to pause for a moment before asking, "You're leaving again?"

"Not for another few months," Mahsa looked away from her map and turned to Muu, "But planning a route is for the best especially since Jori and I'll be traveling over land," She saw the tired look in his eyes, "What's wrong, Muu?"

"Nothing," Muu offered her a light smile that didn't reach his eyes, "Do yo-"

"Bullshit," Mahsa cut him off with a frown and walked over to where he was standing by her door already beginning to scan him with her magic, "Don't lie to me,"

Muu gained a guilty look on his face as she pulled him to sit down on one of the chairs in her room. She found several low priority wounds like scratches and bruising hidden by his clothes. Healing the scratches, she soothed the bruising and began sending out gentle pulses of her magic into his muscles massaging them. Once that was done, she walked over to her healers kit and got out two potions. She held them out to him with a pointed look. Muu took them and downed the potions with a slight grimace. She took the empty vials back and placed them onto her desk to be washed.
later. Muu finally spoke as she poured him a glass of water from the jug she'd refilled earlier, "Thank you, Mahsa."

"What's wrong, Muu?" Mahsa asked as she handed him the glass of water.

Muu drank the water she'd given him before speaking, "Things are just a bit rough at the moment, the Fanalis Corps might be going on a campaign soon enough."

Mahsa sucked in a sharp breath at that. While she knew the Fanalis Corps were part of Reim's military, they only got deployed on campaigns when things got too difficult for the regular soldiers. In the time almost 5 years she'd been on this side of the veil, they had only gone on one campaign and only a small group had gone. With the way Muu spoke, the entire Corps were getting deployed. Understanding at least part of what was wrong, she asked in a soft tone, "Everyone?"

"Those that are battle ready," Muu sighed deeply, "But that wasn't what I wanted to speak with you about."

Mahsa let the subject get changed without any protest as she went to sit down on her bed, "What's up?"

"A small group of magicals asked for sanctuary in Reim through the goblins," Muu explained as she sat down, "From England."

Mahsa's eyes widened at that, "England? Do you know who's on the list?"

Muu pulled out a piece of paper and held it out to her. Reaching over, she grabbed it and began looking over the list carefully. Out of the four names on the list, she recognized two of them. The first was Blaise Zabini and the second Luna Lovegood though the latter was only recognized due to Ginny mentioning the girl a few times. She looked at Muu as he asked, "Do you know any of them?"

"Vaguely, Blaise was a Slytherin in my year while Luna was a Ravenclaw in the one below mine," Mahsa looked back at the list, "I know a bit more about Blaise, but only because we shared some classes and bumped into each other a few times in the library. I know very little about Luna and most of it could be considered gossip since I've never actually met her,"

"What can you tell me about Zabini?" Muu asked her with a small frown.

Mahsa drummed up her memories about Blaise, "He was polite and quieter than Malfoy for one. He always hung out in the same group as Daphne Greengrass and Tracy Davis. Pureblood wizard, I'm not sure if the Zabini's are a noble house back in England," She remembered the dark skinned boy's dark blue almost purple eyes that always seemed to look at Malfoy with contempt, "He kept away from the Gryffindors and mostly seemed to watch everyone. I don't think I can ever remember him actually interacting with anyone outside of those two girls."

"Do you think he could be a threat?" Muu looked serious.

Mahsa thought about it carefully. Thanks to her time here beyond the veil, she could look at her past without carrying the same misconceptions as before. The boy who always seemed to be watching everyone and everything as if calculating their worth. Always firmly in the middle of the class, he never seemed to stand out and naturally faded into the background. No obviously threatening, but that didn't mean he couldn't be a threat. Alastor spoke when she directed the question to him, "The boy is one of those that judge the situation thoroughly before making a decision. I believe he'd be considered a neutral party. Not an active threat, I'd watch him carefully
as he could quickly turn into one or disappear at a moments notice if things turn bad."

Mahsa relayed what Alastor had said before adding in her two cents, "He could be a threat, but he wouldn't ask for sanctuary through the goblins without a good reason."

"And Luna Lovegood?" Muu prompted her.

"I can't say anything without any more information since what I do know is heavily biased by Ginny Wealsey," Mahsa looked at her brother with a frown, "Will Lady Scheherazade grant them sanctuary?"

"I am unsure, but it's very likely so long as the goblins vet them properly," Muu stood up and offered her a soft smile, "Thank you for the help, Mahsa,"

"No problem," Mahsa stood up and gave him back the list before hugging her brother, "I'll make some potions for everyone to take along with them on the campaign,"

Muu hugged her back, "Thank you, Mahsa."

"No problem, Big Brother," Mahsa pulled away with a grin, "Can't have any of you dying when I can't be there to save your asses,"

Muu snorted and reached up to ruffle her hair earning a scowl as she swatted his hand away. Muu left her room with laugh and she shook her head with a small smile glad that she'd been able to help him out.

Mahsa quickly realized that Ginny hadn't been entirely been wrong about Luna Lovegood being odd. The blonde with cornflower blue eyes and wispy hair that fell around thin shoulders was definitely odd. Not in a way that most could appreciate, the short blonde spoke of things that didn't seem to exist. Unlike most, she actually tried to figure out why the blonde spoke of such things and got her answer from Luna's father. Luna held onto the creatures that only she seemed to see as a coping method after her mother's death. The blonde was far more observant than most would probably realize and the creatures she spoke of followed those observations. Rather than recoil from the blonde as most did, she ended up offering the younger woman a kind smile and tried to get to know her.

Due to this, the Fanalis Corps spent quite a bit of time around Luna which proved to be hilarious when the blonde got most of them riled up by making seemingly innocent comments. Razol quickly followed Mahsa's example once she realized what had happened and bonded with the blond. Jori was unsure about Luna, but was assured that the blonde wasn't outwardly dangerous. He got along with her once Luna took an interest in learning some of the things that Jori knew how to do. After walking in on the two talking about mixing poisons, Mahsa had quickly told them that anything lethal was to be kept for instances that actually warranted it.

Mahsa bonded with Luna over talking about magical creatures and various animals. Thanks to the blonde, she was able to increase her repertoire of what she'd be able to make using Alastor. Surprisingly enough, Alastor took well to the blonde and announced her as another prospective house hold member. This prompted her to speak with Luna's father, the man was more than a little relieved that his daughter actually had a place in this strange part of the world he'd never actually dreamed of existing. Luna was promptly put into classes to learn more about this world and how to fight. To the surprise of everyone save for the blonde, Luna ended up taking to the lessons like a fish to water.
Yawning softly, Mahsa tried to listen to the conversation Jori and Luna were having as they headed out of the palace to begin getting supplies ready for their travels. Normally, she would listen in if only to have some idea of what new poison the two were planning on creating since it tended to be somewhat interesting if only from a healers point of view, but she'd been up rather late night going through the newest supply of texts that the goblins shipped to her. Most were healing texts from various parts of the world back on the other-side of the veil, the rest were a mix between interesting magical texts and books on animals from both sides of the population. Given that they'd sent over two hundred and fifty-six books, she was allowed to be tired.

Mahsa focused completely and began looking around as her companions fell silent. She realized why when her eyes landed on Blaise Zabini striding towards them down the corridor they were walking. Seeing his eyes on her, she had a feeling he wished to speak to her though couldn't drum up why exactly that was. She was wary of him since Alastor had been whispering warnings about the man ever since he'd arrived with his mother. Reached up, she ran her fingers down Darius' scaled neck as Blaise called out, "Lady Alexius, do you have a few moments?"

"I suppose we could spare a few moments," Mahsa decided after a moment.

Blaise grimaced faintly, "Alone."

Jori and Luna looked at Mahsa for answers. She looked at Blaise for a moment before inclining her head, "Jori, why don't you take Luna ahead? I'll catch up in a few moments and we can get going."

"Of course," Jori shot a distrustful look at Blaise before turning to Luna, "Shall we go, Luna?"

"Be quick, Mahsa," Luna told her before leaving with Jori.

More than likely, they'd be sticking close enough to eavesdrop without Blaise knowing if only to ensure he couldn't cause any trouble. Blaise looked at Darius for a moment before shaking his head when Mahsa asked, "What is it that you wish to speak to me about, Mister Zabini?"

"I was hoping that you might consider going out to dinner with me, Lady Alexius," Blaise replied earning a startled look from Mahsa and a hiss of protest from Darius as he tightened his coils around her neck, "To catch up on what happened since you left England,"

"I see," Mahsa frowned at him, "I wasn't aware that you were allowed to move freely outside the palace just yet without a guard,"

The muscles in Blaise's jaw jumped a bit, "I was hoping that if you were with me that I wouldn't need one."

"As I am not truly apart of the Fanalis Corps or a member of Reim's Military, I cannot act as one unless Lady Scheherazade asks me to," Mahsa replied as she ran her fingers soothingly over Darius' coils getting him to loosen up before he made it difficult to breath, "Even if it were the opposite, I would have to turn you down. As I am beginning the preparations for my next journey, I'm much to busy especially if I wish to enjoy what time I have with my family,"

"I see," Blaise frowned slightly, "That's a shame, I was hoping we could catch up,"

Mahsa looked at him in confusion, "May I ask why? We were never close during my time at Hogwarts. In fact, you never seemed to reach out to anyone other than Greengrass and Davis."

"You didn't reach out to anyone outside of Gryffindor," Blaise pointed out.

"I will admit that it was a bit shortsighted of me, but perhaps it was for the best seeing as I did
leave," Mahsa frowned at Blaise, "May I ask what you want?"

A flash of surprise crossed Blaise's face before vanishing as a slight smirk formed on his lips, "I wished to gain an understanding of you, Lady Alexius. You've shown yourself to be different from the girl that went to Hogwarts with me. You don't fall into any of the categories that I've created in my mind. In truth, you rarely ever did especially for someone that was supposed to be a member of house Potter," Mahsa snorted softly at that, "There's also the fact you're quite attractive, I never guessed that you'd end up looking like this and to be quite honest, I like it."

Mahsa could tell he was surprised when his compliment didn't garner a blush, "Thank you for the compliment, Mister Zabini, but I'm afraid if you're looking for someone to engage in bed-sports with, you are barking up the wrong tree."

"Oh?" Blaise's eyes narrow, "Why do you say that?"

"You're not my type for either gender," Mahsa answered while inwardly laughing at the startled look on his face at that, "Had you been female, I wouldn't have exactly minded, but given that you're a male, I don't see any reason to give it a passing thought," She started to walk past him, "If you'll excuse me, I have things that I need to do,"

Darius let out a hiss of laughter, "He looksss so confusssed!"

"Which isss why I sssaid no to him," Mahsa replied with a slight smirk, "Jussst by that, I can tell no one hasss sssaid no to him outssside of a few,"

Luna giggled as Mahsa turned the corner to find the blonde standing with Jori. Jori looked somewhat apologetic for spying though it was ruined by the smirk on his face. Mahsa looked at the two with a raised eyebrow and Luna giggled out, "He didn't expect you to say no to him."

"There are only two men that I'd consider bedding and he is neither," Mahsa replied with a slight shrug.

Jori looked at her in surprise, "I thought King Armakan was the only one."

"That I've actually met," Mahsa replied earning a confused look, "Though I don't think it'll be too much longer before I meet the second,"

Given that she'd found that book on runes from that first vision she had about Kouen, Mahsa didn't doubt that their meeting would be sometime soon. And while she wasn't too sure how their meeting would go, she was very interested in meeting the man that seemed to be quite prominent in her visions.

"So Balbadd first then we'll meet up with one of the caravans that'll be traveling to the Kou Empire?" Jori clarified as he looked over his copy of the map she was holding.

Luna corrected him rather lazily from her seat on Mahsa's bed, "Goblin Caravan, Jori. There will be some humans, but it isn't a normal caravan."

"But won't that take like a year?" Jori asked with a frown.

"The goblins have these specially bred animals that can pretty much fly across the desert meaning we'd only be traveling with the goblins for around a month or two," Mahsa marked down which books she planned on bringing, "But with how big the Kou Empire has become, we'll probably be traveling around it for at least six months just to figure out where everything is," She looked at Jori
after marking down another book, "Do you want us to take a trip to Heliohapt after we get back?"

Jori had a mildly guilty expression on his face, "You don't have to do that."

"I want to," Mahsa replied with a slight grin, "I want to see if anyone needs help with their snakes and see how Armakan is doing."

Besides, the trouble should have died down during the almost two years it would be since Mahsa had last been in Heliohapt. If it wasn't, she'd deal with anyone that came after her and make it quite clear that trying it again would be met with failure no matter what. If it meant killing a few people, she would do it without mercy. Pushing away her thoughts of bloodshed, she looked up as the door opened to reveal Muu. Muu looked them all over for a moment before focusing on her, "How goes planning?"

"We're done with the main part. Right now, we're trying to figure out what each of us are planning to bring along," Mahsa answered as she put down her pen after capping it, "Jori's looking over his map. Luna is supposed to be trying to figure out what all she wants to bring along. I'm trying to figure out which books to bring along."

"I see," Muu looked more than a little amused at her answer, "Would you two mind leaving us?"

"Sure," Luna yawned out as she rolled onto her stomach and pushed herself up, "C'mon, Jori. We should go convince Daddy that he doesn't need to come with us."

"Right," Jori stood up from his chair.

With that, the two left and Mahsa looked up at her brother as he walked further into her room after shutting the door behind them. She spoke after a few minutes as Muu looked around her room with a slight smile on his lips, "Big Brother, the Fanalis Corps are being deployed, aren't they?"

Muu looked away from the figurines she'd gathered so far and nodded, "Yes. They managed to put it off for a month, but things are getting to a boiling point. They need us if we're going to keep the enemy from getting into Reim."

"I guess that you guys might not be here to see us off," Mahsa murmured as she stood up and moved around her desk to walk over to him.

Muu pulled her into a tight hug and laid his head on hers, "No. We're leaving in a week."

"We're leaving two days after that," Mahsa muttered after doing a mental communication, "Damn," Mahsa's gut twisted at the thought even though she'd checked the future and hadn't seen the Fanalis Corps taking any life threatening damage after giving her brother those potions. Muu pulled back after a moment, "Mahsa, I came in here to ask some questions not talk about the Fanalis Corps going on a Campaign."

Mahsa looked at him in surprise and confusion, "Did I do something?"

Muu shook his head with a frown on his lips, "No, you didn't. What I want to ask pertains to something you're planning on doing in the future."

"And what's that?" Mahsa asked.

To her surprise, Muu gained a pink tint to his cheeks and seemed unable to look at her for a few moments. What on earth is making her brother embarrassed? Muu spoke after a few moments,
"You're planning to get married at some point, right?"

Is this Muu's way of asking about her sex life? Because that was the only reason she could understand why he'd be blushing. Inwardly shaking her head, Mahsa said, "Yes, Muu. I eventually plan on getting married and having kids at some point though it likely won't be for a few years. I'm only going to be turning twenty in a month after all," She eyed him, "Why are you blushing? Please tell me it isn't because you're interested in my sex-life. I already have to deal with Myron and the other girls-"

"No!" Muu shouted as his blush increased, "I don't really care about your sex life so long as you're happy,"

Mahsa felt relief run through her, "Then why the hell are you blushing?"

Muu dropped onto her bed in a slump, "Because having to talk to you about marriage is somewhat embarrassing."

"How?" Mahsa sat down next to him, "And why do we need to talk about it now?"

"Because talking about you marrying some bastard is uncomfortable," Muu answered her first question, "We need to talk about this now since you're almost old enough to marry someone in both the Fanalis culture and Reim's laws. Considering the fact it might be a year before we see one another again, I would prefer to get this done now just in case you somehow end up marrying someone,"

Mahsa understood somewhat though she did have to point out, "Who said I'll end up marrying a man? I do like both genders after all."

Muu look simultaneously happy and horrified as he choked out, "Mahsa, please let me get this over with without having to think about your prospective partners."

Taking pity on him, Mahsa said, "Sure thing. So what do you need to tell me?"

"You don't need to worry about a bride price since father left a small inheritance to you and you have quite a bit of money left from conquering Alastor's dungeon," Muu began with a small frown, "By Fanalis tradition, your partner will need to meet each of your family members and spend time with them while you do the same with theirs if they have any at some point before the marriage. By our traditions, you would give them a trinket of some form to signify your intention to court them. They have to at least keep up with you in a spar for around five minutes if not best you during one,"

"That sounds easy enough," Mahsa wondered if there were more rules for the spar and planned on speaking to someone later on who knew more.

Muu nodded slowly, "Pretty much."

"Anything else?" Mahsa asked him.

Muu shook his head, "Not that I know of."

"Want to go get lunch together?" Mahsa asked him with a bright grin, "There's a nice new restaurant in the square by the gates with a statue of Lady Scheherazade in it, Myron and I found it a few days ago before our all-day training session,"

"Let's go grab Myron and make a day of it," Muu decided as he stood up and she followed after
him, "We haven't been able to spend much time all together since you got back from Artemyra,"

Before the Fanalis Corps left for their next campaign, they got together to celebrate Mahsa's birthday early and to give them all a proper send off. Mahsa still didn't like crowds, but the Fanalis Corps were an exception to that. She didn't get into the various drinking/strength contests, but she greatly enjoyed the general atmosphere within the bar they tended to drink at during times like this. She also enjoyed the fact that Alastor rarely said anything during these times and when he did speak, it was mostly recounting something that had happened before he became a Djinn. Cheering for Lo'lo when he won against one of the Gladiators that tended to go to the same bars as the Fanalis Corps, she smiled softly know that this was why she'd never journey to the homeland of their people.
Upon arriving in Balbadd, Mahsa, Jori, Luna, and Darius headed towards the palace to deliver a letter for Lady Scheherazade. Luna looked around them with an awed expression, "It's so different from Remano, Mahsa."

"Almost reminds me of Heliohapt," Mahsa commented as they walked through the streets, "With more of a wet heat than a dry one. Don't you think so, Jori?"

"Yes though the clothing is quite a bit different as well," Jori flushed when they passed the entrance to the red-light district and a few women were walking around with their navels bared, "Mahsa, where are we meeting the goblins?"

"In the palace, they're doing business with the current King," Mahsa answered as Darius shifted on her shoulders, "I'm not sure what though I think it might have to do with inheritance or something," Jori frowned a bit, "Why would they be discussing inheritance?"

"Well from what Lady Scheherazade told me before we left, the king has become ill," Mahsa reached up to rub Darius' scales, "Since he hasn't named a true heir despite having two legitimate children and a rumored bastard son, I believe they're discussing ways to make the third son his heir despite how the laws are set up. I'm not certain though,"

"I wonder what's wrong with the two legitimate children if they're being looked over in favor of their bastard brother," Jori murmured with a frown on his face, "It can't be anything good,"

"Or it might just be that neither of the two legitimate children have any talent for ruling," Luna offered up as they reached the road that was pretty much a straight shot to the palace, "Has the bastard son been legitimized?"

Mahsa shrugged lightly, "I'm not too sure. He probably has been or will be if King Rashid is planning to make him his heir."

It took an hour before King Rashid allowed them to come see him. Mahsa could smell the sickness in the air the moment she entered the room. She quickly cast a spell to ensure no one with her could catch the sickness currently harming the king. Looking him over, she could see the signs of sickness immediately. The sweat visibly coating his body, the almost deathly pallor of his skin, the premature graying of his hair, and the slightest trembling that untrained eyes wouldn't normally see. Clamping down the urge to start trying to heal him, she bowed lightly to the ailing king, "King Rashid, my name is Mahsa Alexius. Lady Scheherazade sends her greetings and well wishes."

"What brings you here, Lady Mahsa?" King Rashid requested eyeing her curiously.

"Lady Scheherazade asked of me to deliver a letter to you," Mahsa explained as she pulled out the letter and held it out to the king, "As my companions and I were planning to travel this way in order to join up with the goblin caravan, she entrusted the missive to us," One of the servants approached and took the letter from her before handing it to the king, "It is an honor to meet you, King Rashid,"

King Rashid took the letter from the servant and placed it beside himself, "It is a pleasure to meet you, Lady Mahsa. King Sinbad has spoken of you."
"Nothing bad, I hope," Mahsa offered the king a light smile while wondering what Sinbad had been saying about her.

"Only that you spurned his advances," King Rashid replied with a chuckle, "Sinbad does not often get rejected,"

"I'm not most women, King Rashid," Mahsa replied as she reached up to rub Darius' scales as he tightened his grip on her neck, "I do not intend to bed a man-whore that has likely slept with every willing woman he's come across,"

King Rashid let out a low laugh, "Sinbad is a determined man, Lady Mahsa. You've gained his interest."

"Perhaps, but gaining someone's interest doesn't mean I have to fall into their hands," Mahsa replied deciding that she liked the ailing king, "King Rashid, if Sinbad has spoken of me, are you aware that I am a healer?"

King Rashid nodded lightly, "I am. I suppose you wish to try and help me."

"Yes," Mahsa met the king's eyes, "Though I will not push you to allow it. My instincts as a healer demand that I help, but I know that not everyone desires to be healed or see any reason to,"

"Had I been younger, I would have asked you to heal me if you could," King Rashid replied as he settled a bit more heavily in his chair, "But my time is coming."

"I see," Mahsa bowed her head, "Then may I at least make what time you have left easier?"

As they were joining up with the goblin caravan, Mahsa and her companions were granted rooms in the palace until the caravan departed. After getting her things settled, she had someone show her to an area where she'd be able to brew some potions. As the health scan she'd preformed on King Rashid, she had been able to discover that his illness was a mix between a rather horrible cold and some-type of cancer in the man's lungs. No matter what she did, he wouldn't survive the cancer due to no potion being created to fight it as wizards and witches couldn't develop cancer due to their magic. She could make it easier for him to breath and lessen the pain he was currently in. Despite knowing that the king would die regardless of what she did, a part of her felt horrible that she couldn't really do anything especially given the man's advancing age.

Once Mahsa had finished her potions and administered them, she informed King Rashid about what her medical scan had found. The King didn't look very surprised, "How long do you think I have left?"

"A year maybe a bit less with the help of potions," Mahsa felt bad for the King, "But that's the best-case scenario,"

"But I should have enough time to settle my affairs," King Rashid nodded slowly, "Thank you for informing me."

"It's my duty as a healer," Mahsa replied with a slight grimace.

A knock sounded on the door and a servant stuck their head inside the room, "My King, Lord Alibaba is here as you requested."

Mahsa took her leave and passed by blonde haired boy with amber eyes. She felt a sense of something rush through her as they passed one another. She could almost taste the drive of destiny
sleeping beneath his skin waiting for the day it would start moving. It was the same drive she'd felt from Muu, Sinbad, and the other Dungeon Capturers she'd met. Glancing behind her towards the blonde boy who was looking at her in shock, a small smile graced her features. It would seem that the boy was likely a future king vessel though which magi and Djinn would be his? How would he change the destiny of this world?

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Mahsa met Alibaba Saluja for the first time a day after they passed each other in the halls. She was walking through the palace gardens having grown annoyed with the eldest of Rashid's children who was attempting to curry her favor for some odd reason. She bent down to examine one of the flowers a bit more closely when she heard, "Excuse me, Miss?"

Raising her head, Mahsa turned and found the blonde boy from yesterday walking towards her, "Yes?"

"My name is Alibaba Saluja," Alibaba answered with a slight grin, "You're traveling with the goblins right?"

"Just across the desert," Mahsa wondered why he was grinning, "Why do you ask?"

"That means you're a traveler right, have you been to interesting places before?" Alibaba asked her curiously.

Mahsa nodded as she bent down to look closer at the flowers, "Yes, I've traveled to Heliohapt, Imuchakk, Artemyra, and my own country of Reim. Why do you ask?"

"What's it like traveling to those places?" Alibaba walked a bit closer to her, "I've only ever been in Balbadd, so hearing about people's travels are interesting especially when they're like Sinbad's,"

"Traveling by sea can be boring when you're going to far away places," Mahsa moved onto a different batch of flowers, "If you get sea sick, you're pretty screw. Nothing really interesting happened, I mostly travel to learn different healing techniques, see the world, and heal people,"

"Oh," Alibaba sounded a bit putout.

Mahsa stood up fully as she heard Jori calling for her, "Not all journeys will be interesting nor will they be easy. The journeys that are interesting tend to be filled with conflict and struggle," She looked at the blonde boy with a slight smile, "You'll find that out for yourself one day, Alibaba. The only question is will you finish the journey and reap the rewards? or will you fail and fall into despair?"

With that, Mahsa walked away from the boy who had caused her to see quite a few visions of what might happen. While it wasn't all clear, she knew he would be at the center of a few very important events in the future especially one event dealing with a gigantic monster that visibly radiated black rukh. Jori looked at her curiously as she reached his side, "Who was that boy?"

"Someone interesting, Jori," Mahsa answered earning a look of surprise, "Alibaba Saluja will one day change this world's destiny. How he will do it, I am not quite sure, but it'll definitely be interesting to watch,"

Jori shot a look back at Alibaba who was staring after Mahsa in shock, "Are you sure, Mahsa?"

Mahsa hummed lightly, "I've seen it."

"How will this change our plans?" Jori asked her curiously.
"It won't," Mahsa knew that Alibaba had some growing to do before the fifteen year old boy would be ready to become a King, "Now, we should go gather our things. Onixclaw will be annoyed if we're not ready to leave by sunset,"

Mahsa was glad that she had brought along her clothes from Heliohapt and had some made for Luna though the blonde's covered more skin than her own. Luna burned easily even with magic and potions to help protect her from the sun. She felt bad for the teenager, but there wasn't anything she could do as it would take the blonde time in order to build up a defense against getting sunburn. She spent much of her time in the air with Darius and those with brooms looking for those that would attack them as well as if there were any towns around. The dry desert heat wasn't comfortable to her animagus form mostly because the specific breed of gryffin was meant for wet-heat and mountains. Despite that fact, she enjoyed her time in the sky and perfecting her flying ability even further.

It was during a time when Mahsa wasn't flying around that they were attacked by bandits with a few magic users that had managed to stay undetected.

Ducking underneath the sloppy strike of a bandit, Mahsa slashed open the idiot's throat with a dagger. Dropping back as she grabbed Alastor's bracelet, she weapon equipped and called out, "Crystal Gryphon's Screech!"

Mahsa's hands became paws covered in smoky black and white stripped gray fur as her bracelet became a mirror the size of a large dining platter. The mirror was made of some kind of crystal that seemed to lighten and darken each moment. The surface of the crystal rippled as a trio of Gryphons that looked a lot like her animagus form lept out of the crystal. The gryphons were about the size of a male African lion made of a mixture of flickering smoke and crystal. The screeches they let out reminded her of someone crushing broken glass beneath their feet mixed with a fork scrapping across a plate. With a small thought, she directed them to attack those that were about to overwhelm the caravan guards.

Mahsa lept onto the top of a wagon and got a better view of the situation. She created a few more gryphons to help fight of the bandits while inwardly growling at the fact she hadn't figured out a way to create more than one type of creature at a time or pushed past her current limit of ten outside of her full-body Djinn equip. Granted that number increased the smaller her creations were, it became more difficult to control so many creations past ten though unless she wanted to make them weaker. Even in her full-body Djinn equip, she could only create a single Hungarian Horntail that would only last for a full minute after which her full-body Djinn equip would weaken and destabilize as it transitioned over to her magic where she'd only have less than thirty seconds to do anything. Despite all the training she's done, it was frustrating to find herself so limited even if some small part of her was glad for it.

Mahsa's concentration slipped a bit when she heard Alastor growl, "Looks like that damn snake worshiper managed to become one of your household for real, why couldn't he choose something less distasteful."

Mahsa turned her head when she heard a strange hissing sound and saw a pair of king cobras wrapping around a group of bandits. The snakes were even larger than Armakan's Cleo and were more shadow than crystal. She was dragged back into the battle when one of her gryphons shattered and dispersed into was only when the fighting began to wind down that she was able to focus on Jori. Seeing how tired he was, she quickly made her way over to Jori and caught him around the waist when the Heliohapt man's cobras dissolved. He was breathing roughly and looked
about ready to pass out. She began scanning him with her magic, "Jori, how do you feel?"

"Tired. So much more tired than I've ever been before," Jori looked around them in shock, "D-did I really...?"

"Welcome to my household, Jori," Mahsa told him with a laugh.

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Much of the trip after that when they weren't helping the caravan out with odd jobs and healing was spent helping Jori get used to his new household vessel, Jori's vessel ended up being his earrings which had been given to him by his mother. Jori learned pretty fast, but his ability to use the household vessel 'Twin cobra' was heavily limited as he didn't have experience using magoi. In fact, it was his biggest problem since he was pretty good at keeping up a mental connection with his cobras and summoning them. Despite the fact she was somewhat jealous that he was having an easier time than her, she understood that it was due to her being a Fanalis.

Alastor bitched about Jori's household vessel and how much he disliked it simply due to the snakes often enough that Mahsa had an almost constant headache. She ended up screaming at Alastor to shut up and deal with it because Jori couldn't change how his household vessel worked. She also pointed out that his hatred of snakes was only letting Zepar 'win' and he should get over it if the Djinn wanted to beat the asshole that started it. Alastor went quiet for awhile after that and she spent until the Djinn spoke again wondering if she'd gone a bit too far. When he finally spoke, Alastor grudgingly admitted that she was right and that he'd try to not hate snakes so much.

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After finally crossing into Kou, Mahsa happily went back to her regular clothing as did Luna while Jori changed into the same outfit he wore in Reim rather sulkily. They broke off from the goblins after reaching the first town. The Kou Empire was large enough that travel between towns only took a few days depending on the area and if there was farm land. Most of the travel around the borders involved rural areas and newly conquered areas of Kou, she ended up healing quite a few people in those places. When it came to accepting payment, she mostly took food or a place to stay for them all. Luna and Jori spent their time either gathering ingredients for her to use or doing odd jobs around the villages. Jori learned quite a bit about farm work, hunting, and fishing. Luna learned how to patch up clothes and the best ways to watch kids. Not all the villages they traveled to accepted them in the beginning of their travels, they made those visits short unless Mahsa managed to gain them acceptance by healing someone.

Word traveled fast around the Kou Empire, Mahsa had her first encounter with those working for the empire a month and a half after they arrived.

"What's this one, Miss Mahsa?" One of the village girls that had been helping her gather herbs asked.

"Feverfew," Mahsa answered as she looked at the flower carefully, "It has quite a few uses like helping with fevers, migraine headaches, rheumatoid arthritis, stomach aches, toothaches, insect bites, and infertility. It's also useful if you're having problems with menstruation and labor during childbirth,"

"Wow," The girls looked at the flower in awe.

"Show me where you found that and I'll show you how to harvest it," Mahsa asked earning a nod.

Once that was harvested, Mahsa judged that they'd gathered enough and filtered some of her magic
into the plants to help them recover what had been taken by her. She led everyone back to the village before making her way to the headman's house where they were staying for the duration of their time in this village which would be another few days. She entered the house and found the headman's wife folding laundry, "I'm back. Where are Jori and Luna?"

"Luna is playing with the children and Jori is helping in the fields," Chise, the headman's wife, answered as she looked at Mahsa with a small smile, "Did you manage to find everything you needed?"

"Mostly, you don't have a very good stock of mint, but I found some half-way decent replacements," Mahsa headed towards the room she shared with Luna, "Has anyone come by looking for healing?"

"Not at the moment, Mahsa," Chise shook her head lightly, "May I ask you a question?"

"Sure thing, Miss Chise," Mahsa put her case down in the room and rejoined the headman's wife moving to help her fold the laundry after cleaning her hands with a spell, "What did you want to ask?"

"Where exactly do you plan to travel next?" Chise asked her with a small frown, "Winter is going to begin soon,"

"Deeper into Kou, I suppose," Mahsa shrugged lightly, "We never really made an exact plan since I can heal anyon-"

The sound of hooves on the ground and shouting cut her off. Mahsa focused on the sound as Chise asked, "Is something wrong?"

"I hear horses and people shouting," Mahsa answered as she moved towards the door, "Men shouting actually,"

Mahsa left the headman's house and followed the noise to find a group of Kou empire soldiers. A man dressed in rather fine looking robes rode on a rather beautiful white stallion. He held a scroll in his hand and shouted, "Where is the supposed Crimson Healer?! We were informed that they were coming this way."

Hearing the name she'd gained for herself, Mahsa spoke up as she stepped through the crowd that had gathered, "That would be me."

"A woman is the so called 'Crimson Healer'?" One of the soldiers snorted, "Preposterous,"

Mahsa ignored him and focused on the finely dressed man, "And who exactly is searching for me?"

"I am Cho Abe," The man led his stallion towards her with a frown, "The Magistrate of this province, Reo Saito, demands that you come to his home within the week," He held out the scroll towards her and she took it, "He lives in the next town over."

"To the west, north, east, or south?" Mahsa asked as she opened the scroll to find that it was indeed a summons.

"West," Cho Abe answered as she looked up at him, "Do you require a guide?"

"Yes as my companions and myself are not familiar with the Kou Empire just yet," Mahsa answered as she closed the summons, "My name is Mahsa Alexius,"
"A-Alexius?" Cho Abe looked at her in surprise and had a slight pale tint to his skin, "As in the Alexius noble family of Reim?"

"Yes," Mahsa eyed him wondering if this summons was a trap of some kind, "My companions and I will need at least a day to get everything in order;"

Cho Abe seemed to shake off his surprise, "Your guide will arrive within a day's time."

Jori paced the length of their room as Mahsa looked over the summons in more detail than before. Underneath the pretty speak, she could definitely tell that the Magistrate was demanding that they come before him and promised a punishment of some kind if they didn't appear. She put down the scroll as Jori's muttering grew louder, "What if this is a trap?"

"Even if it is, we have nothing to fear as these people know nothing of what we can truly do," Mahsa scratched behind Darius' ears as the large lion-formed chimera laid across the floor beside her bed, "We cannot ignore this summons;"

"Why not?" Luna asked her curiously.

Mahsa looked at the blonde with a slight smirk, "Because I've seen some interesting people I really wish to meet and they might just be there. Even if they aren't, we will likely meet them soon afterward."

Jori let out a groan, "Have I mentioned how much I hate it when you don't give us all the information?"

"How can I when I'm not given all the information myself?" Mahsa asked as Luna stole the scroll from her, "For now, we should get some rest and make sure everything is packed up. It wouldn't do to keep the Magistrate waiting for too long;"

The Magistrate was a short and portly man with thinning dark brown hair. He had beady pale green eyes that roved over her body and based on the arousal she could scent in the air, he was mentally undressing her. Biting back her grimace, Mahsa inclined her head to the man, "Lord Magistrate, I am Mahsa Alexius and I'm the one they've been calling the Crimson Healer. My companions are Luna Lovegood and Jori Hamdan."

"It is a pleasure to meet you, Lady Mahsa," The Magistrate's voice was nasally and high pitched leaving making Mahsa really want to grimace, "I am Reo Saito the Magistrate of this province;" Mahsa nodded as Darius curled tighter around her neck letting out a low hiss of displeasure earning the Magistrate's attention and causing him to pale, "What is that?!"

"My familiar Darius," Mahsa answered doing her best not to grin at the look of fear on the Magistrate's face, "Lord Magistrate, I do not mean to be impolite, but could we get down to why you've summoned us. As far as I'm aware, we've broken no laws;"

The Magistrate couldn't take his eyes off of Darius which made the scent of arousal drop away allowing her to breath almost freely, "I-is it necessary for you to travel with that thing?"

"As he is my familiar, yes," Mahsa heard a soft giggle from Luna, "Lord Magistrate, my companions and I entered the Kou Empire alongside the goblin caravan a month and a half ago;"

The Magistrate cleared his throat as he finally managed to look away from Darius, "Lady Mahsa, you have not broken any laws. I summoned you-"
"Because word travels fast and you've gained the interest of quite a few people in the capital," A voice she recognized to belong to Kouha Ren rang out from the doorway beside the Magistrate little throne.

"M-my prince," The Magistrate scrambled off his chair to bow before the boy as he walked inside the room, "I-I was going to explain t-

"You were taking too long," Kouha replied as he eyed Mahsa and her companions with his eyes settling on Darius, "What on earth is that?"

"He is a wyvern," Mahsa answered biting back the urge to smile at the boy, "His name is Darius, he's my familiar. Who are you, Mister Prince?"

Kouha let out a soft laugh and grinned at her, "I am Kouha Ren. The Third Prince of the Kou Empire."

"I am Mahsa Alexius," Mahsa offered up with a light smile, "With me are my traveling companions Luna Lovegood and Jori Hamdan," She watched as his three servants enter the room behind him while he took a seat in the Magistrate's 'throne', "I know that word travels fast, but I wasn't aware that a traveling healer would gain much interest regardless of their abilities,"

"Normally, they wouldn't except for the fact you're using unique magic and a few rumors have gone around about you being able to turn into some kind of bird-lion hybrid," Kouha offered her a lazy grin, "Adding on to the fact you can apparently talk to snakes and fight, you've got quite a few people interested in you,"

"I see," Mahsa replied making Kouha's eyes narrow.

"You aren't going to try and deny any of it?" Kouha asked her with a frown.

Mahsa shook her head well aware of Jori's expression of pained resignation and Luna's soft giggles, "I don't see any reason to deny any of that especially since you haven't given me a reason to. Why bother lying to anyone much less a prince who's country we're currently traveling?"

Kouha laid his head on a hand, "And what do you plan to do while in the Kou Empire?"

"Heal those I come across and simply travel while learning any new healing techniques I come across," Mahsa answered with a slight shrug, "Other than that, sight-see I suppose,"

"That's all you want to do?" Kouha asked.

Mahsa nodded lightly, "Pretty much."

Kouha stood up, "Then come to Rakushou with me as my guest, you're an interesting person."

Jori let out a shocked gasp while Luna stopped giggling to stare at Kouha. Darius stayed silent looking Kouha not knowing what to say. Alastor said nothing already knowing what she'd seen. Mahsa eyed Kouha for a few moments before asking, "You wish for me to be your guest despite not knowing anything about me?"

"Pretty much," Kouha grinned at her, "If need be, I can kill you and your companions,"

Darius tightened his grip on her neck while Jori and Luna stiffened at the threat. Alastor growled softly at the boy. Mahsa smiled making Kouha's grin falter, "Alright then, I see no reason to say no. All I ask is that my companions are treated well."
"Not yourself?" Kouha asked with a raised eyebrow.

"I can take care of myself," Mahsa replied as she reached up to rub Darius' scales, "Though I would think a Prince of any country would treat a lady well,"

Mahsa rode in a horse drawn carriage with Kouha. Jori, Luna, Jun-jun, Rei-rei, and Jin-jin rode in a separate one. Jori and the three attendants of Kouha protested this quite a bit before eventually being forced to give up when they finally left the Magistrate's home. Luna had protested a little before giving up likely knowing this wasn't a fight she could win and acknowledging that the Fanalis could take care of herself. Kouha looked at Mahsa curiously as she rubbed Darius' scales, "I've never seen anything like him."

"I'd be surprised if you had seeing as his kind come from beyond the veil and even then aren't seen very often," Mahsa watched Kouha's eyes widen as he heard that, "It was luck that we even got to meet, but I'm happy we did even if he didn't get to spend much time with his family before our meeting."

"Beyond the veil?" Kouha whispered in awe, "Have you been there?"

"I grew up there until I found about my family when I was 14 almost 15," Mahsa answered as she reached into her bag to pull out a set of playing cards, "Kouha would you like to play some games to pass the time?"

Kouha nodded and Mahsa made use of the table set up in the carriage. They played a few rounds of various games that she could think of that didn't need more than two people. Kouha asked her about the world beyond the veil and she managed to answer most of them. She mentioned that Luna knew more about it mostly because the blonde had traveled around the world quite a bit. Eventually, Kouha began answering questions about the Kou Empire filling up any silences that fell over them. By the time they got to Rakushou, Mahsa had even told Kouha about being a Fanalis.

Mahsa didn't end up meeting any of Kouha's siblings save for Kougyoku for a week since they were all out doing things around the empire. Well, she did meet his other sisters though none of them were very interesting. She ended up meeting Judar while sparring with Kouha mostly because the prince was curious to see how he fared against a Fanalis. Judar burst out laughing as Mahsa pinned Kouha to the ground after disarming him for the third time, "Holy shit, Kouha! No wonder you can't get a normal woman if a girl can beat you in a fight."

Mahsa got off of Kouha and moved back as he glared at Judar while pushing himself up, "Go fuck yourself, Judar. I can get a woman if I want. Besides, Mahsa is a Fanalis and no where even close to a normal girl."

Mahsa frowned at Kouha for that comment since female Fanalis could be normal girls if they chose to be. Judar snorted as he walked over, "She has green eyes, Kouha. She can't be a Fanalis."

"I'm half Fanalis," Mahsa added as Alastor muttered under his breath about impolite magi's, "Who are you?"

"I'm Judar the Oracle here in Kou," Judar answered as he finally seemed to focus on her only to pause and gap at her, "What the actual fuck is going on with the Rukh around you,"

"Huh?" Kouha looked between them in confusion, "What do you mean?"
"The flow of Rukh around her is odd," Judar frowned at her with narrowed eyes, "Who the hell are you?"

"Mahsa Alexius of Reim," Mahsa answered while eyeing the magi carefully.

Judar suddenly got in her face and Mahsa stumbled back at the unexpected action. He grabbed her wrist where Alastor's bracelet sat likely to stop her from moving only to pause and let it slip from his fingers as the metal touched his skin. He grinned brightly at her, "You're a fucking Dungeon Capturer. Who's your magi?"

"Wait! What?!" Kouha looked at Judar then at Mahsa who'd moved away from the Magi, "Mahsa, you're a Dungeon Capturer?"

Mahsa nodded watching as Kouha began to frown at her with hurt shining in his eyes, "Yes. I conquered the 10th Dungeon, Alastor."

"Why didn't you tell me?" Kouha asked her.

"You didn't ask," Mahsa replied with a small shrug, "I also do not use Alastor very often mostly because there isn't a reason to. There's also the fact we're not exactly close to home and I have no idea what being labeled a Dungeon Capturer here in Kou would do, I already have enough attention due to my magic," She looked at Judar with a minor glare, "If the fact that I'm from Reim hasn't tipped you off, Lady Scheherazade has named me one of her King Candidates,"

Judar snorted at her glare which increased when he said, "Oh that old hag, I'm surprised she's still raising dungeons."

This led to Mahsa meeting Kouen and Koumei for the first time, it was only the fact she was Kouha's guest that kept her from being chained. She looked at Kouen with a steady gaze suppressing the blush that wanted to coat her cheeks at finally seeing him in real-life. Holy Merlin, the guy was even hotter than she had seen in her visions. Kouen eyed her with a slight smirk on his face, "I am Kouen Ren, the first prince of the Kou Empire."

"I am Mahsa Alexius of Reim," Mahsa replied earning a few scowls and growls.

Mahsa heard someone hiss, "Show some respect to our Lord!"

"He's not my lord nor has he done anything to deserve my respect," Mahsa said with an eye-roll and a shake of her head, "May I ask why you wished to meet me? As far as I'm aware, I haven't broken any laws and there isn't a law saying that Dungeon Capturer has to present themselves as such,"

"You would be correct," Kouen's smirk had grown a bit, "However, it does cause some alarm seeing as you're a Dungeon Capturer belonging to another country. While not one at war with the Kou Empire, Reim doesn't have the strongest ties with us,"

"It's for the same reason I didn't present myself as such," Mahsa replied with a small shrug, "Seeing as I'm in Kou simply to travel and heal those I come across alongside learning some new healing techniques, I'm not exactly understand what the problem is,"

Hissed whispers radiated from those in the room with them, Mahsa ignored them as she stared straight at Kouen. Kouen met her gaze with amusement in his eyes, "You are a guest of my brother, but didn't mention it."
"So?" Mahsa frowned at him, "Kouha didn't ask and I didn't see a reason to bring it up. Technically I didn't lie," She wondered where exactly this was going, "So are you asking me to leave or what?"

Kouen's eyebrows rose at her question, "Pardon me?"

"Seeing as I haven't broken any laws nor am I apparently welcome here, I'm guessing you want me to leave," Mahsa shrugged lightly, "I won't argue and will leave with my companions seeing as there isn't a reason to stay in Kou despite the fact there are a lot of healing techniques here to learn," She offered Kouen a light smile, "I'd rather not deal with people attempting to kill me if I can avoid it."

"You're a pacifist, aren't you?" Kouen asked causing Mahsa to laugh.

Mahsa couldn't believe he'd say something like that and had to laugh at the sheer absurdity of her ever being a pacifist, "Me? A pacifist? No way in hell would I ever be a pacifist. I've fought in Reim's Colosseum for Merlin's sake," She shook her head with a giggle, "Kouen, I'm a Fanalis. We don't do pacifism. Our blood runs too hot when we fight for such a thing to be possible even in a half-blood like me," She grinned brightly at Kouen showing him all her somewhat sharp teeth, "I love fighting just as much as I like healing people. What I meant by my earlier comment is rather simple, I prefer not to cause a war with the Kou Empire and end up causing innocents to die in the resulting clashes. To be quiet honest, I kind of want to fight you since Kouha mentioned that you're a really good fighter and testing myself against strong people is fun. I'd just prefer it to not be in a situation that would lead to us trying to actually kill each other."

Gasp sound around them, Kouen's eyes widened before narrowing at her, "You wish to fight me?"

"In a spar if only to see if Kouha's claims are true," Mahsa kept her grin up, "I prefer finding things out myself than going off rumors."

Kouen surprised her and the other people in the room with them by chuckling, "You're not a normal woman by any standards, are you?"

"If you want to get technical, I am since I've got a bust and the reproductive organs to go with it," Mahsa could almost hear Jori choking and swearing at the fact she'd said something like that to Kouen alongside everything else she had said so far, "But if you mean by being an empty headed bimbo that spreads her legs for anyone that can give them a comfortable life or a little mouse that hates conflict of any kind as well as panics when there's blood involved, no. I'm as far from that as possible,"

Mahsa heard someone choke and vaguely wondered if someone had let Jori into the room. She had a feeling that he might pass out once she'd told him about this little conversation. She ignored Alastor's mutters of 'why couldn't my queen not be insane?' mostly on the principle that he was being over-dramatic. She was sane if with a looser grip on sanity than most would be comfortable with. Kouen snorted as he gave her an amused look, "You do realize you're talking to a Prince, right?"

"So? Just because you're a Prince doesn't mean you aren't a human being," Mahsa heard Alastor groan at her, "Why bother making myself into another brown-nosing sycophant? I mean you're pretty much surrounded by them after all," She heard a few growls and knew that most of them were probably glaring at her right about now, "Besides, why should I treat you any differently than I treat Kouha? Like I told him not long after we met, you aren't my ruler nor do I actually respect you at the current moment. If you do something that I'd actually respect you for, I would respect you, but not before then,"
Shouts echoed through the room, Mahsa could pick out quite a few death threats and decided that she would probably try to avoid those people if Kouen didn't decide to kill her for 'disrespect'. Alastor grumbled at her, "How in Solomon's name do you get into situations like this?"

'Fuck if I know,' Mahsa replied with a mental shrug, 'My luck being weird can't even be blamed on the Potters,'

Kouen silenced the room by standing up from the throne that he'd been sitting in since she'd entered the room and walking towards her. She stayed still watching him carefully while keeping her body loose just in case he tried anything. Kouen stood in front of her and she got her first taste of his scent. He smelt like red-wood and ground cardamom with a heavy mix of other scents that likely belonged to the Djinn Alastor had told her about. Holy mother of Merlin did he smell good, she hadn't thought such a combination could smell so good. Stamping down the urge to shiver, she focused on Kouen when he spoke, "You do realize that I could kill if I really wanted to."

"And?" Mahsa looked into his pinkish crimson eyes, "Most people can do that, they don't do it mostly because the risk to themselves isn't worth it," She allowed her grin to drop away into a frown, "The real question is if it'd actually be worth it for you to try? Sure, you'd probably kill me what with your three Djinns as well as those soldiers under your command, but you would also suffer what injuries I'd create which would probably be very difficult to heal if I decided to use my knowledge of magic against you. You'd end up crippled in more ways than one to be quiet honest alongside any soldiers that tried to help you and didn't end up dying. You would also likely start a war with Reim simply because Lady Scheherazade would be angry that one of her King Vessels had been killed and my siblings wouldn't hesitate to come after the one who killed me. They've lost me once already and aren't willing to lose me again,"

"Yet they allowed you to travel to a place one somewhat shaky ground with your country," Kouen commented as his lips pulled into a smirk.

"They know I can take care of myself," Mahsa replied barely noticing the tension filling the air or how quickly her heart was beginning to beat, "So my question? Would it truly be worth it to try and kill me?"

Kouen stared down at her for a few more moments before saying, "I think having you alive will be far more interesting, Mahsa Alexius," He turned on his heel and walked back to the throne, "Koumei, see to it that Mahsa and her friends are known as my guests as well as Kouha's."

When Mahsa got back to the guest room Kouha had given her, she shut the door and laid her back against it as the realization of what happened hit her. She could have fucked that up very badly and ended up sentencing not only herself by everyone with her to death if not worse. Holy hell, Muu would probably murder her alongside everyone else if they ever heard about what had just transpired. Forcing herself to calm down, she focused on the world around her when Darius padded up to her in his lion form, "Sssa? Isss everything alright?"

Jori voiced his own question, "Do we have to leave now?"

"Everything is alright though I almost ended up screwing us over and had it been anyone other than Kouen I'd have probably been killed," Mahsa didn't see a reason to lie to them.

"What?!" Jori shouted as Darius jerked back in surprise and Luna paled, "How?"

"My mouth kind of got away from me," Mahsa offered with a sheepish smile as she pushed away from the door, "As well as the fact I'm starting to have trouble separating the future Mahsa from
myself, Kouen thankfully seemed more inclined to keep me alive for now,"

"Mahsa, I..." Jori gained a look of pained frustration on his face, "Sometimes you make me want to pull my hair out, you know?"

"I'm sorry, Jori," Mahsa offered him an apologetic look, "I'm really sorry, everyone," She pushed off the door and walked towards her bed, "I honestly wasn't think about much at the moment other than Kouen," Mahsa sat down, "I didn't really think about what I was saying,"

"Kouen just gets to you, huh?" Luna asked as she came over to sit down next to Mahsa, "Something draws you to him,"

"Pretty much," Mahsa reached out and began scratching underneath Darius' chin when he padded over to sit down in front of her, "Mostly because of just how many visions I've had, the Rens take so much space and it's difficult to remember that none of it has actually happened just yet,"

Mahsa hadn't come across a situation like this before and it left her unsettled in a way almost similar to finding out she'd been adopted/kidnapped. While she wouldn't flounder, it was difficult to separate what she knew was going to happen from what actually happened. Luna pulled her into a hug, "You'll figure things out, Mahsa. It'll just take time."

The biggest question was how Mahsa was going to survive the next few months that they'd be in Kou without tipping anyone off about her visions? This was why there were rumors about seers being insane, she would bet every bit of gold in her vaults that this was the reason.
Despite being pissed at her for not saying anything about being a Dungeon Capturer, Kouha decided that he would only ignore Mahsa for a few days. He was more relieved that she'd survived meeting Kouen and pissing off everyone save for his older brothers in the process. Judar decided that since Kouha was ignoring her and that she'd managed to survive her meeting with Kouen that she would be spending time with him. Mostly it was him trying to force her into using Alastor, she reacted by using her magic causing the black haired magi to spend quite a bit of time in conjured bonds of some form usually robe or some kind of ribbon. During the time it took him to free himself, she tended to either see if anyone needed healing or spend time with Kougyoku if the princess wasn't busy.

When Kouha stopped ignoring her, Mahsa found herself dragged into the city outside the palace in order to go shopping. In Kouha's words, she didn't have anything among the stuff she'd brought along for this little trip that were worthy of being worn by his guest. Which was a bit true if rather rude, the clothes she had brought along were getting worn, but he didn't need to say something like that. He also thought she needed a make-over which led to her sitting in a chair while Kouha and one of the assistants in the shop tried to find make-up that suited her. The only reason she wasn't protesting was due to Kouha saying he'd forgive her for not telling him about being a Dungeon Capturer if she did this for him. Well that and the fact she admitted that make-up wasn't her strong suit, she could apply it without making anyone look like a circus clown, but had no idea what looked good on her.

"What about this?" Kougyoku held up some ribbons, "Which do you like, Mahsa?"

Mahsa looked at the ribbons, "The dark green, light purple, and white look nice."

"How about a navy blue one embroidered with white?" Luna asked as she looked over the ribbons, "That would definitely look good on her,"

"Find a few different shades," Kouha told one of the slaves that worked within the shop they'd come to, "Blue with white embroidered as well as some green with black,"

The slave headed off as Mahsa fought the urge to grimace. She didn't like the practice of slavery at all, but admitted that the Kou Empire's stance wasn't so bad even if she thought that a child spending five years as a slave sickening. The attendant next to Kouha commented, "Maybe some dark purple or Kohl?"

Kouha studied her face before nodding, "Let's try the purple first. The kohl will definitely work since I've seen her use it a few times," Kouha picked up a small brush, "Mahsa, where did you get those jars from anyway?"

"Heliohapt," Mahsa answered trying not to move her face too much, "Can't say when exactly, it was during a shopping trip,"

"You definitely have to wear some tonight," Kouha told her, "Since En wants you to have dinner with us,"

Mahsa blinked at that, "He does?"
"Yup!" Kougyoku grinned brightly, "You'll get to meet everyone properly too,"

"Everyone's finally back from what they've been doing lately," Kouha explained with a small shrug as he dipped his brush into some red liquid that seemed pretty chunky, "Purse your lips," Mahsa did as he asked trying not to jerk back as the cold paint on the brush was smeared across her lips, "It'll be fun."

Mahsa spoke when Kouha finished, "But if it's the first time in awhile that you're all together, shouldn't it just be a strictly family thing?"

"Eh, we'll have time for family dinner things later on," Kouha dabbed at her lips with a piece of cloth before smiling, "Take a look at yourself, you look amazing,"

The attendant practically shoved a handheld mirror in her face and Mahsa took a look at herself in the mirror almost not recognizing the girl in the mirror. Kouha and the attendant had made the green in her eyes pop out more than usual. The red stain on her lips was just a shade away from the color of fresh blood. The blush on her cheeks was light and they'd done something to bring out her cheek-bones. She had to admit that it did look nice, "It looks really nice."

"Now just think of us doing your hair and getting you into something suitable," Kouha grinned as he took the mirror from the attendant.

Mahsa was thankful that Kouha and Kougyoku had ensured that the rather nice hanfu they'd gotten her wasn't too tight as well as allowed for easy movement. The color was a light sky blue with darker navy blue accents. It had the same long-sleeves as Kougyoku normally wore, but the princess had shown her how to deal with them. She was wearing sandals mostly because Kouha threw a fit when she mentioned going barefoot. Kouha had decided that instead of braiding her hair they'd leave it loose and curl it a bit mostly because she usually braided her hair. Looking at herself in the mirror one more time, she walked towards the door to her room and opened it just as Kouha was about to knock. He mock pouted at her, "I was going to knock."

"I smelt your scent and heard you coming towards the door," Mahsa replied with a small shrug, "So I guess it's time to go?"

"Yup," Kouha grinned as he gave her a once over, "I definitely did good with you. You're looking like a proper guest,"

"Don't expect me to do something like this often," Mahsa said as she stepped out of her room feeling a bit bare without Darius or her daggers on hand, "Was it really necessary for me to not bring Darius along?"

"Yes," Kouha started leading her down the hall once she'd closed the door, "I still have no idea why you don't have your hair down more often since you're a lot prettier with it down,"

"I'm healer and a fighter, Kouha," Mahsa explained for the seventh time with a mental sigh, "I don't need my hair getting in the way while healing someone or let anyone get a good grip on it during a fight,"

Kouha shook his head, "You should let it down more often while with us since you're not going to get into a fight every single day, you know."

"I'm used to wearing it up," Mahsa felt weird with her hair down.

They stopped soon after in front of a pair of double doors. A pair of soldiers sat on either side of
the doorway and bowed before opening the rather heavy looking doors. Kouha strode into the room with Mahsa following him. She was somewhat surprised to find all of Kouha's Dungeon Capturing siblings including Hakuei and Hakuryuu inside the room. She wondered if Kouen and Hakuei had threatened their younger brothers into attending since Koumei disliked going to dinners like this while Hakuryuu disliked being around his adoptive siblings for the most part. Pushing that aside, she focused on the current situation as everyone looked at her. Kouha grinned at everyone and waved a hand at her, "Did I do good or what? Mahsa definitely looks like a proper guest now."

Mahsa narrowed her eyes at Kouha, "My regular clothes are fine."

"Keep telling yourself that, they're almost rags," Kouha retorted with a snort.

"They're a bit worn, but no where close to rags," Mahsa frowned at him.

"How about you two sit down?" Kouen suggested before the almost regular argument could continue, "It is time for dinner after all."

Mahsa was pushed to sit down between Kouha and Kougyoku. The table was longer than she thought was actually needed, but didn't voice her opinion mostly since she doubted they'd actually care. A somewhat uncomfortable silence fell over the room as dinner began and didn't break until the second course was served. Hakuei spoke up with a light smile, "So Mahsa, was it?"

"Mahsa Alexius of Reim, Hakuei," Mahsa answered making Hakuryuu jerk a bit while Hakuei barely even twitched.

Both of them were probably surprised by the lack of Princess being tacted onto Hakuei's name. Hakuei pushed past her surprise rather quickly, "You are a Fanalis, yes?"

"Half on my mother's side," Mahsa took one of the nearby rolls and tore a piece off to dip into her soup.

"I've never met a Fanalis before much less with green eyes," Hakuei commented as she looked at Mahsa curiously.

The curiosity was shared by everyone else at the table save for Kouha mostly because she'd discussed some of her past before with him. Mahsa smiled lightly, "You will probably never meet another with green eyes. I was born with our people's crimson eyes, but due an event in my past, they changed to the color they are now."

"What kind of event?" Koumei asked with a slight frown, "I've never heard of something like that happening before."

"I was kidnapped while very young," Mahsa explained earning wide-eyed looks from everyone save for Kouha. "Due to this, I ended up on the other side of the veil and was placed into the hands of a pair of wizards. The wizards had recently lost their own child and took me in. Using an adoption ritual, I became their child by magic and my eyes ended up changing color for reasons I've never really figure out."

"That's horrible," Kougyoku blurted out with wide eyes.

Mahsa shrugged lightly, "Perhaps, but that isn't the worst thing that happened in my life. Seeing as we're eating and I don't exactly feel like spilling my 'tragic' past, I think we should probably move onto a different topic of conversation."

Kouha frowned at that, "But what if we want to hear about it."
"I'm not drunk enough to talk about it," Mahsa retorted before stuffing the soggy half of a roll into her mouth.

Kougyoku looked at everyone for a moment before asking Mahsa, "Mahsa, why is your bottom lip pierced?"

"It's a tradition among the Fanalis people," Mahsa explained after chewing and swallowing her food, "It marks us as warriors who have gone through a combat trial. From my understanding, you have to fight against some great beast without dying or becoming crippled,"

"How did you get yours?" Kouha asked looking at her labret in interest.

Mahsa flushed a bit, "I don't actually know what they ended up choosing as my combat trial."

"What do you mean?" Kouha frowned at her, "How can you not know?"

"Because they decided that I'd completed the trial after seeing my memories," Mahsa answered as her blush died down, "According to my brother and everyone else back home, I've earned my warrior's mark multiple times over," She saw the confusion in Kouha's eyes and sighed, "I lived a pretty shit life before finding out about my siblings and coming to live on this side of the veil. While it wasn't as bad as some people have had it, it's still pretty bad,"

"How so?" Kouen spoke up.

Mahsa looked at Kouen and smiled darkly, "Try almost dying multiple times over the course of four years on top of being the punching bag of people who were supposed to be considered family, I was only treated as an actual human being by a select few people on the other side of the veil. Everyone else was pretty much torn between putting me on a pedestal, using me a scapegoat, or seeing me as a monster for things that weren't actually my fault."

An almost suffocating silence fell over the room and no one seemed to have the courage to actually break it.

When dinner ended, Mahsa went to her room without waiting for Kouha or Kougyoku. She changed her clothes into something more comfortable and cleaned off her face. Flopping onto the bed, she barely twitched when the door opened and said nothing as Luna sat down beside her. Darius jumped up on her other side and practically curled around her. Jori spoke as he closed the door slowly behind him, "Are you alright, Mahsa?"

"I think I'm going to play sick tomorrow," Mahsa said as she shifted to curl up against Darius, "Have I ever mentioned how much I hate it when my life before coming to this side of the veil is brought up?"

"Want to get drunk?" Luna asked her.

Mahsa considered it before shaking her head, "Not really."

"Do you want me to sleep with you?" Luna asked her.

Mahsa nodded after a few moments of thought. Thinking about her past always managed to make the Fanalis seek out comfort in some form, Myron and Muu had gotten used to just holding her when she was in a mood like this. She missed her siblings right about now mostly Muu since he gave the best hugs and tended to purr whenever he was trying to comfort her. Darius began purring as if sensing her train of thought and she slowly fell asleep curled between her familiar and Luna.
Jori laid down on a part of the far too large bed that wasn't too close to them mostly because it was a somewhat warmer than usual night and he still didn't like sleeping with a woman that wasn't his bed-partner/wife.

"Hey, Mahsa," Mahsa looked up from her book to find Kouha standing in front of her, "I'm really sorry about what happened the other night,"

Mahsa frowned a bit, "What do you mean? You didn't do anything wrong."

"But you were uncomfortable with the subject and we ended up pushing for answers anyway," Kouha dropped down onto the blanket she had set up in one of the palace gardens, "So I'm apologizing for putting you through that,"

Mahsa shook her head, "Kouha, it's okay. You were eventually going to want answers about my past and giving you the general overview of it now means you won't ask as much," She marked her page knowing that it would be futile to try and read anymore with Kouha around, "Just if you really want to know something, I meant my comment the other night about needing to be drunk. My past isn't pretty despite not being as bad as some people's. Just try to make the instances where you want to know something fairly spread apart, I always get pretty mopey or in the mood to destroy a training ground depending on what I talk about," Kouha nodded while still giving her a guilty look, "Think of it as us getting even with one another for me not telling you about the whole Dungeon Capturer thing if it bothers you that much."

Kouha nodded slowly, "I can do that."

Mahsa wondered how Kouha had managed to con her into finally giving into Judar's desire to see Alastor and do a little demonstration for his siblings. Granted she wasn't too displeased with the situation, Kouen had decided to spar with her and they'd move onto Djinn Equip once they'd gotten properly warmed up. Alastor was torn between being pleased that he was going to be used and worried about how she'd do in the spar. So far she'd only ever sparred against Muu while Djinn Equip which never lasted long. Kouen didn't have any reason not to murder her outside of not starting a war with Reim. Considering the fact he was the first prince of Kou, he could easily arrange it to look like an accident.

Stretching and getting warmed up, Mahsa looked at Jori as he paced nearby with Luna sitting on a rock. Darius was sitting beside the blonde ready to intervene if his master got into any real trouble. She let out a soft chuckle, "Jori," He looked at her with panic written on his face, "Calm down, it's just a spar. If need be, I can easily use my magic to get out of trouble, so calm down."

"I'll be calm once this bit of stupidity is done with," Jori stated with a frown.

Mahsa was a little surprised by that comment, but supposed it was a sign of her influence over him. Getting Jori to lose some of his stuffiness was a big deal, she was proud that Luna and her had managed it. She heard a throat clearing and turned to find Kouen looking at her with a raised eyebrow, "Are you ready?"

"Yup," Mahsa straightened up and eyed the prince as she turned around fully, "Are you sure you'll be okay to fight? Those clothes look a bit restrictive,"

"I'll be fine," Kouen eyed her while giving the clothes she was wearing a pointed look, "Aren't you wearing a bit too little?"
Mahsa looked down at her clothes which consisted of a white chest wrapping and some loose white gi-pants. She snorted softly looking up at Kouen, "Compared to some of those in the Fanalis Corps back home, I'm actually covered up. But we're not here to discuss fashion, we are here to fight, right?"

Kouen smirked as he took out his sword and she replied by drawing her daggers, "Correct."

Their fight began with Mahsa rushing at him, Kouen blocked her twin dagger strike with his sword and managed to hold out against her strength for a few moments. She grinned at him already feeling her blood start to heat up and started putting more strength into her dagger thrust earning a surprised look from Kouen. Kouen pushed back with more strength as well keeping them pretty much dead-locked until she struck out at him with her right leg. He jumped back and she rushed right after him keeping the prince on the defense. She could tell it frustrated him greatly and had to grin at the prince, "Something wrong, Lord Kouen?"

Mahsa's question paired with adding a title to Kouen's name shocked him enough that she was able to score two scratches on the prince. One on his cheek and the other on his right side. Kouen's eyes narrowed and suddenly upped his game making it difficult to keep him defensive. Her grin grew with each clash of their blades, Kouha wasn't lying about his brother being a good fighter. With a blade in his hand, it wasn't any wonder the man had become a general. He could compare to Muu though she had to wonder just how long he'd last against her brother. Perhaps one day she'd be able to see it, she knew Muu got bored fighting against the same opponents multiple times.

Mahsa disengaged from Kouen not too long later once the Prince had managed to score a decent hit on her side. She pressed a hand to the skin and sealed it with one of the few wandless healing spells she knew. Kouen looked at her with a smirk, "How about we get down to why we're actually sparring?"

"Fine, but I definitely want to spar with you again without bringing Djinn into it," Mahsa said as she got ready to Djinn Equip, "You're a fun opponent and far more skilled than most of the people I've gone against while traveling,"

"Astaroth," Kouen said as he Djinn Equipped.

"Alastor," Mahsa retorted as her entire body seemed to pulse.

In Alastor's Full-body Djinn Equip, Mahsa shrunk to until she was about 4ft tall and her haired grew out until it reached her knees while darkening into a sooty gray color. Her skin paled quite a bit, she gained the dark and light stripes of very fine fur that Alastor had on his body while her eyes just became slitted and somewhat larger than normal. She gained the same vest as Alastor that easily covered her not very large bust and skirt made of the same material as the vest. Other than her hands and feet turning into paws, she gained the fox/cat-like ears of Alastor and a long silky tail. When she opened her mouth, it revealed a set of razor sharp fangs that glinted in the light.

Mahsa's ears twitched when she heard, "Holy fuck! Mahsa, you're adorable!"

The only sign of Mahsa's annoyance was the twitch of her tail. She was very glad that Myron wasn't here since her sister had a tendency to crush the younger Fanalis to her chest. She looked at Kouen who eyed her, "Something wrong, Kouen?"

"What is your weapon?" Kouen asked as he looked her over.

Mahsa held up her mirror, "This." She saw the confusion in his eyes and grinned at him, "Did I forget to mention that Alastor isn't a Djinn that does direct confrontations? No? Oops!" She held up
her mirror and shouted, "Crystal Gryphon's Screech!"

A trio of gryphons appeared and began attacking Kouen as Mahsa rose into the air. She watched as Kouen fought against her creations carefully calculating what exactly to show off and how to beat the man before her. Due to his pure-human heritage, he had more magoi to spare which meant that a fight through endurance wasn't possible. She wouldn't pull out anything too big mostly because wide-scale destruction and killing Kou's First prince would be a bad idea that would get her murdered. She created more gryphons once Kouen had destroyed the first three. Overwhelming him with sheer numbers could work, it would at least give her time to set something else up.

Nodding to herself, Mahsa created a large amount of butterflies. They weren't normal butterflies though. Luna had helped her find a species of carnivorous butterflies with razor sharp teeth and barbed feet that latched into their prey's skin. The species was almost completely extinct, but she admitted that perhaps it was for the best considering how easy it was for them to kill their prey. She directed these to avoid Kouen's face before moving to set things up. Keeping a close eye on her reserves, she created two copies of herself that would be able to create a small number of creations before covering them with a glamour that made them look like her. When Kouen managed to free himself from the butterflies, he spotted the two extras currently flying with her, "Three of you?"

"Two of us are copies," Mahsa answered as she gestured to the copies on either side of her after spelling her voice to have an echoey quality that mimicked that of her copies, "Figure out which one is real Mahsa and you'll win,"

"Win? What do I get if I win?" Kouen asked as his eyes lost the irritated glint in them.

Mahsa puppeteered the copy on her right to say, "What do you mean?"

"Generally if someone wins something, they get a prize," Kouen looked amused, "So what do I get if I win?"

All three copies of Mahsa frowned and looked at one another before the one on the left asked, "What do you want?"

"If I win, I want to hear about your time before coming to this side of the veil," Kouen answered making Mahsa stiffen alongside her copies, "Granted, I'll offer sake since you apparently won't talk without drinking."

Mahsa frowned at him as her eyes narrowed barely remembering to have her copies do the same, "No deal. Pick something else."

"I don't want anything else," Kouen replied earning a snort.

"Not going to happen then," Mahsa and her copies raised their crystals.

With that, they created large clouds of those same butterflies as before mixed with bees and hornets. Mahsa floated away from the training grounds towards her room leaving the copies to deal with Kouen. When they were destroyed halfway to her rooms, she released her Djinn Equip and continued on her way earning looks from the various staff she passed. Entering her room, Mahsa closed the door feeling heavily annoyed and angry with Kouen despite the fact she shouldn't be. Damn did he really piss her off sometimes, she'd forgotten how pushy he could be. Taking a deep breath to avoid any accidents with her magic, she cleaned herself up with a few spells and shifted things around in the room before settling down to meditate.
Luna, Jori, and Darius had the decency to not interrupt her meditation when they came back from the training grounds. Mahsa was able to fully calm down though she vowed to avoid Kouen for a little while and have as little to do with him as possible for the next while. She took a proper bath while Luna told her about what happened after she'd left. She was a little surprised to hear that Kouha had gone off at Kouen. Kouha never went off on Kouen for any reason, so the fact he'd done it over her was kind of distressing if touching. Despite being angry at Kouen, she didn't want to cause discord between Kouen and Kouha, "He did?"

Luna nodded with a light smile, "Yes. I really think Kouha loves having a friend outside of his family that doesn't give a shit about him being a prince."

Mahsa finished bathing and laid back in the tub letting the heat of the water relax her body, "I get it, but I don't want to cause any real friction between them. The bond they have is really special."

"They'll get over it once Kouen apologizes to you," Luna offered earning a snort from Mahsa.

"Kouen Ren doesn't apologize to anyone," Kouen was the most unapologetic bastard she knew outside of Judar.

Mahsa ignored Kouen's summons and went out drinking with Kouha. Judar tagged along while dragging Kougyoku much to Ka Koubun's distress. She felt a bit bad for the guy, but ignored it as they ordered sake. She had to admit that the flavor and burn were actually pleasant. Judar grinned as he wrapped an arm around Mahsa's shoulders, "So Kitty-Cat, how about you becoming one of my Dungeon Capturer's?"

"Lady Scheherazade would kill me," Mahsa shoved Judar away earning a frown from Judar, "Besides, I don't need another Djinn. Alastor's enough,"

"What was your Dungeon like anyway, Mahsa?" Kougyoku asked her curiously.

Mahsa drank a bit more sake as she thought about it, "It was pretty weird. A crystallized forest filled with these weird cats made of different colored smoke. Alastor took people out of my memories and had them ask me questions," She shook her head lightly, "Some of them were really weird, but they ended up becoming really personal by the end of it all. If the answer I gave wasn't to the questioner's liking, they turned into a cat-like creature that changed into some kind of beast and attacked me. If the answer was to their liking, I went forward."

"That's pretty weird, but better than solving riddles," Kouha commented as he poured himself another cup.

"Alastor ended up going through my memories while in the dungeon," Mahsa told him earning a group of surprised looks, "Fucking bastard didn't ask, but had a good reason," She drank some more sake, "He doesn't want to be used by someone who'll fall,"

"But falling is fun," Judar grinned at her.

Mahsa shook her head, "I'd prefer not to lose what grip I currently have on sanity."

By the time they stumbled back to the palace, Mahsa was warm and wanted to cuddle with someone. Unfortunately, the only options were Kouha, Kougyoku, Judar, Ka Koubun, and Kouha's attendants. Seeing as she wanted to cuddle with someone taller than her, she had a small problem since Jori wasn't anywhere in sight. She was currently keeping Kouha from tripping over his own feet, "Kouha?"
"What?" Kouha was almost slumping against her.

"I hate not being surrounded by tall people," Mahsa told him earning a confused look.

"Wha? Why?" Kouha asked as they walked through the gates of the palace, "Tall people suck,"

"Tall people are perfect to cuddle with," Mahsa insisted as she tried to keep Kouha from falling to
the ground while not collapsing herself.

Mahsa ended up losing that battle a few minutes later after they got into the palace. She stared at
the wooden floors and had to wonder how they managed to keep them free of dust. Pushing herself
up, she manged to get to her feet and began pulling Kouha up as well. Kouha waved her off,
"Leave me alone, Mahsa."

"No, you'll get trampled laying on the floor or sick since it's covered in germs," Mahsa tried to pull
him up again and got irritated enough to yank him up.

Unfortunately due to the rather large amount of alcohol she had ingested, Mahsa wasn't able to stay
steady on her feet. So while Kouha was now on his feet, she lost her balance and ended up falling
backwards. Thankfully, someone ended up catching her before she could hit the ground.
Unfortunately by sober Mahsa's standards, Kouen was the one that had caught her. Since she had
blown off his request to meet, he wasn't exactly happy with her at the moment. But due to the fact
she was drunk, the halfling didn't register anything other than Kouen catching her, "Heya, Kouen!
Thanks for catching me."

"You're drunk," Kouen commented as someone grabbed Kouha before the third prince could fall
back down which ended up being Koumei.

"And you're far too attractive for your own good," Mahsa retorted with a grin.

Mahsa heard someone choke, but didn't pay them any mind. Kouen's eyebrow rose as a smirk
appeared on his lips, "You find me attractive

Mahsa gave Kouen a weird look, "Well duh! I'm not blind or lesbian. Granted, I do like girls, but I
like guys too which means I'm bi-sexual. I think that's what I am, but I could be wrong."

"You ramble when your drunk," Kouen commented with a snort.

"Nah, I flirt with people when I drunk and cuddle with them too," Mahsa retorted with a laugh.

Kouen looked over her head which was rude because they were supposed to be talking, "I'll take
Mahsa to her rooms. Please see to it that everyone else makes it to their own."

Kouen started walking and practically forced her to walk with him. Mahsa scowled a bit, "You're
pretty bossy, you know."

"I'm a Prince," Kouen said earning a snort.

"Prince's are supposed to be commanding not bossy," Mahsa retorted as she worked to keep up
with Kouen's longer strides, "Then again, it's hard to tell with you which is annoying."

"How so?" Kouen glanced at her as his steps slowed a bit.

"You being so bossy makes me less motivated to spend time around you," Mahsa explained as she
focused on not falling over now that Kouen had slowed down enough for her to keep up, "Which is
"Because you find me attractive?" Kouen asked earning a snort.

"Nope," Mahsa shook her head, "I want to get to know you. I want to know why you're so interested in conquering the world. I want to get to know the man that was chosen by three Djinns," She offered him a grin, "Though the fact you're attractive definitely helps."

"You want to get to know me?" Kouen muttered with surprise in his eyes.

Mahsa nodded slowly doing her best not to unbalance herself anymore than the alcohol had already done, "Mhmm. I wanna know what makes you, Kouen Ren. All three sides of you, the man, the prince, and the Dungeon Capturer."

"Who says that there are three sides of me rather than just one?" Kouen asked with an unreadable look in his eyes.

Mahsa frowned at him, "Because there are. While the Prince and the Dungeon Capturer might mix heavily, the man is hidden beneath the two. Probably has been since you became the First Prince, it's understandable though."

Kouen was stiff, but Mahsa couldn't really figure out why. He bit out, "And how would you know that?"

Mahsa must've touched a nerve if he was speaking in a tone like that. She offered him a smile that didn't quite reach her eyes, "Because I was there too and still am. To protect ourselves, we create masks for the people around us in order to prevent them from breaking us. Funny thing is, the Djinns see through our masks simply because of how closely they bind themselves to us. That three of them chose you, it's nothing short of amazing."

Kouen was silent and Mahsa left him to his thoughts. As they walked, she got a little bit bored and began humming softly. She wasn't a good singer, but humming was actually pretty easy. She jolted a bit when Kouen stopped them from walking and noticed that her room was right there. Turning to him, she opened her mouth to say thank you when he spoke, "What were your masks, Mahsa?"

Mahsa sobered up a bit at the question and offered Kouen a dark grin, "The fool that danced to the piper's tune in order to fit in, the naive hero that rushed into dangerous situations, and the loudmouthed brat that preferred playing around to studying. All of them to hide the broken little slave girl that only wanted to be loved and cherished as she'd seen the bloated whale she called cousin," She lost the dark tint to her grin, "Goodnight, Kouen! Thank you for helping me back to my room."

With that, Mahsa left Kouen standing in the hallway and practically collapsed onto her bed in a drunken slumber after stripping herself once the door had closed behind her.

After drinking a hangover relief potion and eating some breakfast once she'd stopped berating herself for last night, Mahsa delivered the same potion to those that had drank with her last night. She then headed to the library not having spent much time there and found Kouen looking through some scrolls. She paused at the door for a moment wondering if she should come inside before pushing down the nervousness running through her. She shut the door behind her and began looking through the shelves. She found a book on herbal lore and moved to sit down by one of the windows choosing to ignore Kouen for the moment. About halfway through the first chapter, she heard, "Mahsa."
"Kouen," Mahsa greeted him as she looked up from her book to find him standing next to the table, "Was there something you needed?"

"You didn't come to see me after I summoned you," Kouen answered as he stared down at her.

"I'm not one of your soldiers nor did I wish to see you at that current moment. Seeing as Kouha and Judar wished for me to drink with them, I chose to accept their offer seeing as Kouha was the person that invited my companions and I to stay here as his guests first," Mahsa looked up at him as she set down her book, "Despite naming my companions and I as your guests as well, Kouha takes precedence seeing as he made us his guests first,"

Kouen's eyes narrowed at her, "I am the First Prince."

"So?" Mahsa retorted with a raised eyebrow, "What does that have anything to do with this?"

"My requests come first," Kouen informed her.

Mahsa snorted softly, "Yeah, not going to happen. Friends come first when it comes to me, Kouen. As Kouha is my friend, he comes first regardless of his status."

Irritation flicked through his eyes as Kouen's lips pulled into a thin line, Mahsa realized that she was actually pissing him off at the moment though couldn't figure out why. She wasn't acting any different than normal outside of being a bit more snappish than normal. That was mostly due to the left over pain caused by her hangover, the hangover relief only suppressed the pain enough for it to be bearable. She frowned at Kouen when he suddenly smirked, "You find my younger brother more attractive."

Mahsa was a bit thrown by that comment, "No. Kouha is a bit too young for me and girly. Out of your male siblings, you're the most attractive though I will admit Koumei is pretty hot as well in a different way," How the hell did Kouen get attractiveness from what she'd just said, "Why does it matter anyway?"

"Why did you not come when I summoned you?" Kouen requested in a firm tone.

"Other than what I already told you?" Mahsa marked her page in the book and closed it before standing up, "Simple, I'm still annoyed with you from our spar and don't feel like dealing with you,"

"How did I annoy you?" Kouen's eyes shown with confusion.

Mahsa frowned at him, "Because you're trying to push for answers. I don't feel like talking about my past with the amount of detail you seem to want especially not with someone that I barely even know."

Beginning to walk away from him, Mahsa was a little surprised when Kouen asked, "And if we got to know one another?"

"I'd tell you though there would definitely need to be sake present," Mahsa kept walking towards the doors deciding to read the book in the garden beside her room, "I prefer to not keep secrets from my friends,"

A knock sounded on the door as Mahsa brewed a few potions. Jori answered it for her while she focused on completing the next steps for the various potions currently being brewed. Jori spoke as she ground up some mole toes and tail bones, "Mahsa," She blinked at how startled he sounded,
"Prince Kouen has requested that you join him for lunch."

"Just him or his siblings?" Mahsa asked as she added the ground up bones to two of her potions while moving one of the other potions off the fire.

"Just him," Jori answered as she stirred the two potions for a few moments before moving to the forth potion she had brewing.

Mahsa hummed lightly as she thought about the request, "When is lunch?"

"In an hour, I believe," Jori answered after a moment of hesitation, "Are you going to go?"

Mahsa nodded as she stirred the potion currently solidifying, "Yes mostly because it'll just be lunch and turning down a meal without a real reason would be rude."

Once Mahsa finished brewing her potions and bottling them, she had thirty minutes to get cleaned up and changed into something a bit more presentable than the stained clothes she currently wore. A quick bath filled with some oils to get rid of the scents clinging to her and a potion to get the chemicals out of her hair did the trick. She changed into her regular outfit minus her daggers before calling Darius to her. He curled around her shoulders in his wyvern form with his tail dipping down to curl loosely around her waist. A servant showed her to one of the many garden pavilions that strategically decorate the palace gardens. Looking at the table laden with finger foods and a variety of fruits, she was somewhat surprised by how much meat was currently sitting on the table given that winter was beginning to grip Kou.

Mahsa sat down across from Kouen as he commented, "I'm surprised you came."

"It's rude to turn down a meal without any real reason and I hadn't eaten lunch yet," Mahsa began piling food onto her plate making sure to snag one of the bowls of cherries, "Besides, you didn't try to summon me like some dog which won you some points," She picked up a cherry, "Why did you want to eat lunch with me?"

"You wished for us to get to know one another," Kouen replied as she popped the cherry into her mouth, "As that requires us to spend time together, I decided that lunch would be a good idea. My siblings are usually busy at this time as is Judar meaning that there wouldn't be any reason for you to say no,"

"Technically, I could have said no even if they were all busy," Mahsa informed him, "Since Kouha is busy and Judar is apparently bugging Hakuryuu, I decided to brew more potions to top off my current stock. Many of those potions can take hours and even days to brew depending on the potion, I was actually brewing some when your message arrived, but they were some of my more quick to finish potions,"

Kouen picked up his tea cup, "Do you enjoy brewing potions?"

Mahsa nodded as she chewed the food currently in her mouth and swallowed it, "Surprisingly yes."

"Oh?" Kouen's right eyebrow rose, "May I ask why it is surprising?"

"Back before coming to this side of the veil, I went to a school to learn magic for four years," Mahsa explained deciding she'd give him a small reward for being less pushy, "One of the subjects was Potions. The teacher that taught at the school is a horrible man that hated my guts for reason that I do not feel like explaining. He shouldn't have been a teacher despite being a potions master. He would've been better suited working in a research lab," She shook her head lightly, "Due to his rather crappy teaching style which pretty much threw us head first into the subject, I wasn't very
good at potions and disliked it greatly. I could muddle my way through and manage to get a good grade if the bastard didn't decide to be a dick," She drank some of her tea grimacing a bit at the strong and watery flavor, "It wasn't until I ended up with the goblins that I actually learned to like it,"

"Not love it?" Kouen asked as he set up cup down.

Mahsa shook her head, "Healing and fighting comes first in my heart, I could be content brewing potions for the rest of my life, but not happy," She looked at him curiously despite knowing the answer to her question, "What's your favorite subject, Kouen?"

"History," Kouen answered with a slight smirk, "I enjoy it greatly,"

Chapter End Notes

What all would you guys like to see in the next chapter?
Laying on her side, Mahsa supported her head with a hand and smoked with the other. She was currently inside one of the many sitting rooms within the palace playing chess with Kouen mostly because there was too much snow outside for them to do much of anything else. They had been planning a spar, but all the indoor training grounds were taken what with the almost blizzard going on outside. While she may have learned a lot from the goblins, she hadn't taken to warding and couldn't set up something decent enough to last even a short spar. She set down her pipe as Kouen finally took his turn and scanned the board while mentally grimacing. She had gotten better at chess since Muu enjoyed playing it and actually took the time to teach her; however, chess wasn't her favorite activity. Picking up one of her few remaining pieces, she took Kouen's Castle with her rook.

Kouen had her in checkmate moments later commenting, "You're bad at this game."

"You should play my big brother," Mahsa suggested with a soft snort as she picked up her pipe again, "Chess is more his game,"

"And what games do you like to play?" Kouen asked as he set up the board for another game.

Mahsa took a deep drag of smoke and let it rest within her lungs for a few moments before exhaling slowly, "Card games like poker, a game called exploding snap, and black jack. Drinking games are fun. Hunter and Prey. And a few others that aren't exactly intended for polite company."

Kouen's eyebrow rose at that last one and Mahsa had a feeling he'd be asking what they were soon enough. She did kind of want to play them with Kouen at some point mostly to see how he'd react. Kouen eyed her for a moment before asking, "What is Hunter and Prey?"

"Hunter and Prey is basically like hide and seek," Mahsa explained with a slight grin, "Only there can be multiple hunters at one time and a single person acting as prey depending on who's playing. The prey must hide from the hunters for an a previously agreed amount of time. If they manage it, they become a hunter and one of the acting hunters is made into prey. How that's decided is up to the hunters," She paused to let the information sink in while sitting up fully, "If the prey is caught, they get a penalty of some kind and are stuck as the prey for another round,"

"What's the penalty?" Kouen asked with an interested gleam in his eyes.

Mahsa should have known Kouen would like this game, "Anything so long as it isn't illegal or too demeaning. The penalty should be fairly light just to ensure everyone keeps having fun. Back in Reim when the Fanalis Corps played it, the prey usually gets stuck with an extra shift or has to act as another members servant for a few hours so long as it doesn't interfere with their duties. The penalty is usually discussed at the beginning of the game," She waited for Kouen to nod, "Now the prey is allowed to do anything to escape same with the hunter trying to catch the prey. Any limiters in place are discussed at the beginning of the game. Nothing lethal is allowed because this is a game after all. Other than that, the rules are pretty much up to the players."

"How many people are allowed to play at a time?" Kouen asked with his eyes narrowed.

Clearly Kouen wanted to give the game a try and Mahsa was quite eager to see what happened. She answered him after taking a drink from her cooling tea, "At least two people, we never really set a limit, but definitely not a whole city worth of people. Generally there is one prey to three hunters, the prey and hunters need to have something to identify them as such. Back home, the prey
usually have some kind of ribbon tied to their body while the hunters wore a piece of cloth around their neck. To show that the prey has been caught, the hunter needs to take the ribbon off of them."

"Can it be played inside or does it need to be done outside?" Kouen was definitely planning something.

"It can be played anywhere so long as there is space and places to hide," Mahsa grinned at Kouen, "So want to play, Kouen?"

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Mahsa heard Judar curse loudly as he slipped on one of her slime traps and grinned in her hiding place within the rafters just over a door that led into the hall. The game was set for two hours and she had been declared the prey. Kouen had managed to drag Kouha and Judar into the game without much trouble. If she was caught by any of the trio, she'd be stuck doing one of two things. Kouen's and Judar's shared penalty was acting as one of their servant for a day. Kouha's penalty was her acting as a dress up doll for him and basically letting him do whatever he wanted to her. Needless to say, she wasn't very interested in getting caught by any of the trio though if she was caught, she'd be fine with Kouen being the winner. Mostly because Kouha would probably try to dress her up as a geisha or dancer, she wasn't interested in letting that happen.

Mahsa was currently using her invisibility cloak which Lady Scheherazade had returned before her trip to Artemyra and promptly forgotten about until now. She had silenced herself and was now sitting pretty waiting out the two hour time limit. At the current moment, she only had ten minutes left. She heard the door open below her and spotted Kouen walking into the room. She listened carefully and kept herself from moving around as Kouen began searching the room. She shifted a bit when Kouen moved to a different part of the room and froze when the rafter underneath her creaked a bit. Kouen's head snapped up and he looked right at her. Before he could say anything, the door slammed open and Judar stormed inside covered in the grape-jelly flavored slime. Before the door could close, Mahsa slipped out and booked it for another part of the palace.

Mahsa put away her invisibility cloak after she'd gotten into one of the more deserted parts of the palace and began investigating the place. She found Hakuei and Hakuryuu in one of the rooms. Both of the black haired Rens looked at her in surprise, Hakuei asked, "Mahsa, what are you doing here?"

"I'm playing a game with Kouen, Judar, and Kouha," Mahsa explained with a light smile, "They have to catch me and take this," She pointed to the purple ribbon tied around her neck, "If they win, I have to either act as their servant or in Kouha's case, his dress-up doll. Between the three of them, Kouen's the better one to be caught by especially since he's managed to avoid the traps I've set up," She noted the tea set currently between the two, "I'm interrupting. Sorry, have a nice day you two!"

Mahsa left the room and quickly began searching for a good hiding spot. She found a storage closet that hadn't been used in awhile and made her way through the shelves. Clearing it of spiders and every other nasty thing, she settled down against a wall that was shielded from view by some nearby shelves. The door opened a few moments later and she heard two female voices. One of them scoffed, "That dirty beast is causing chaos, I don't see why the royal family is letting her and those two foreigners stay here."

"Don't let the Princes and Princess' hear you say that, Rumi," The other hissed at her companion, "They are their guests,"

Mahsa had to roll her eyes as 'Rumi' complained about the Fanalis stealing the attention of their beloved princes. When the two left, she relaxed against the wall a bit more easily only to stiffen...
when the door opened. She scented the air as the footsteps came closer and inwardly cursed at the fact Kouen was in here. She wondered how he had managed to find her four times so far. Kouen rounded the shelves and smirked when he found her, "Found you, Mahsa."

With shelves on either side of her and pressed against a wall, Mahsa was trapped and knew it showed on her face when Kouen's smirk deepened. Any way that could have let her escape would cause damage and they had all agreed on not causing each other physical injury. She swore softly, "Damn it."

"Looks like you're going to be my s-" Kouen was cut off by a chime sounding from both their pockets.

Mahsa took out the timer she'd stuffed into her pocket and smirked at Kouen, "Looks like I win, Mister Hunter. Better luck next time, Kouen."

Kouen scowled down at the timer in his hand as Mahsa shoved hers back into her pocket.

When the snow had stopped falling and they could walk outside again, Mahsa shifted into her gryffin form and took the air with Darius flying beside her. He had gotten a lot better at dealing with the cold, so they could fly around together for a short while. When she landed, Kouha rushed up to her and grinned, "Hey, Mahsa. Can you support someone's weight?"

Mahsa shifted back, "Yes though nothing more than 200 pounds," She eyed him for a moment, "You want to go for a flight, don't you?"

"Yeah!" Kouha nodded as his grin grew wider, "What do you say?"

Mahsa thought about it before shrugging, "Sure, but you need to get on something warmer."

Once Kouha had done so, Mahsa transformed again and Luna helped get Kouha into position after helping her into the harness they made for when she needed to carry someone. Since she was about the size of Buckbeak if a bit larger, Kouha could ride on her back like he would a horse just without a saddle. Luna strapped him on and made sure he knew how to grip her feathers without ripping any off. As soon as Luna believed them ready, she took off into the air. She did a few laps around the palace and some of her more tame aerial stunts before landing when her wings began to get tired. Kouen and Koumei were waiting in the courtyard for them. Luna helped Kouha off of her back and undid the harness as the youngest of the red haired Rens stumbled over to his brother with a grin on his face as he shouted about how much fun that had been. Free from the harness, she shifted back and grimaced at the pulling sensation coming from her shoulders.

Luna spoke softly, "Are you okay?"

"My shoulder muscles are pulling," Mahsa answered with a low sigh, "I definitely over did it a bit with that last stunt,"

"Hey, Mahsa!" Kouha called for her.

Mahsa walked over to the trio, "Yes, Kouha?"

"Can we do that again?" Kouha asked with a grin, "It was really fun. You should take En and Mei up too,"

"Maybe another time," Mahsa offered the three princes a tired smile.
Kouha pouted at her, "Bu-

"Kouha, Mahsa isn't a toy besides isn't it time for your tutors?" Koumei cut in.

Kouha groaned, "Can't I not do that today?"

"You skipped yesterday and the day before that," Koumei retorted with a frown, "You need to go today."

Mahsa bit back a hiss when a hand settled on her shoulder. The hand was quickly removed as Kouen said, "Mahsa, please join me for a small walk."

Despite being tempted to say no, Mahsa realized that Kouha would likely try to sight her not being busy and needing his attention to skip out on his studies again. Seeing as she just wanted to go to her room and lay down with Luna rubbing some of her muscle relaxing potions into her sore shoulders, she agreed to the walk, "Sure thing."

Kouen led her away from his bickering siblings and they entered the warm palace. He spoke as they began walking through a part of the palace she hadn't been to before, "How did you hurt yourself?"

Mahsa was tempted to deny it, but doubted Kouen would let her get away with it. He had probably seen her wince and felt it when he'd touched her shoulder. He would call bullshit in a moment, so she told him, "When I go for long amounts of time between transforming into my animagus form, my wings get cramped and I have to work up to longer flights. Since I haven't transformed since Kouha brought me here, my wings were more cramped than usual. Since I played around while flying with somewhat cramped wings, the muscles in my shoulders suffered for it. I'm going to be sore for a week even with potions."

"I see," Kouen paused before a door and opened it.

Mahsa followed him inside and found herself in Kouen's rooms. She looked around curiously trying to figure out if there was anything different from about it from the visions she's had of it before, "Where are we?"

"My rooms," Kouen answered as he walked deeper into his rooms.

"Why did you bring me here of all places?" Mahsa asked him deciding to stay by the door.

"Kouha will likely be attempting to find you in order to slack off," Kouen explained as he disappeared from view, "He won't expect me to bring you to my room or that you'd come here willingly despite our improving relationship."

Which knowing Kouha would probably happen, Mahsa was actually somewhat glad since it saved her from having Kouha possibly rushing into her room while she was undressed. She looked around them as she said, "How long do you think it'll take until they manage to wrangle him into his lessons?"

"Thirty minutes," Kouen answered as he returned carrying a box.

"What's that?" Mahsa eyed the box curiously.

It was rather simple compared to everything else in the palace and lacked the symbol of the Kou Empire which was pretty much engraved in some way on every available surface. Kouen held out the box to her, "I noticed from our last game that you've been smoking more lately."
"Helping the palace healers keep everyone from getting sick can be tough especially with so many people coming down with the flu," Mahsa was lucky that she'd been able to go flying today, "It can be pretty stressful," She opened the box and found small bags of herbs, "Thank you, Kouen,"

Mahsa picked up one of the bags and sniffed it. While the scent was a bit sweeter than she normally went for, it would do though she'd need to smoke some before deciding if she liked it or not. She shut the box as Kouen nodded, "You're welcome."

Kouen directed Mahsa to sit down on one of the couches in his room and she did so after setting Kouen's gift onto a table. She took a seat carefully making sure not to move her shoulders too much though the mild bolts of pain running from her muscles meant she'd failed. Wincing a bit, she took out her wand and cast a numbing spell on the pulled muscles. She saw Kouen's curious look and explained, "I have difficulties with certain aspects of self-healing and pulled muscles are among those."

"How does it work?" Kouen asked earning a confused look, "Using a wand?"

Mahsa made an aborted shrug, "I'm not exactly sure, but I suppose it's like how a Magician is able to use their staves. If you're asking how a wand works, the user sends their magic into the wand. I can't exactly go into a more thorough explanation since only wand makers really know how it all works."

Kouen frowned at that, "Aren't you curious?"

"A bit, but not enough to learn more than the basic stuff," Mahsa put her wand away, "I've always been more interested in the practical applications of magic though when it comes to healing and fighting, I don't mind the theory too much," She settled into a more comfortable sitting position, "Though if I were to try and learn more than the basics, I'd have to become an apprentice underneath a wand maker which isn't something I was willing to do. I wouldn't have gone too far anyway since you have to be sensitive to magic in a way that I'm not,"

"Because you're a Fanalis?" Kouen asked as knock echoed on the door.

Mahsa snorted softly, "No, it has nothing to do with being a Fanalis," The door opened to allow in a maid carrying a tea tray who Kouen directed to set down on a nearby table and she waited until the door closed behind the woman to continue, "It's pretty rare that someone is sensitive to magic in the way wand-makers need to be. There are maybe one in every hundred magicals from what I've heard, I've only ever met two wand-makers and only one of them had an apprentice. Given that there are as many magicals as there are non-magical humans, I'm probably lucky to have met both of them in the same country."

Kouen handed Mahsa one of the cups of tea after preparing them and she sipped the pipping hot liquid. Kouen sat down beside her on the couch, "How many countries are there on the other side of the veil?"

"I'm not exactly sure. You'd be better off asking Luna," Mahsa drank some more of her tea feeling the warmth of it seep into her body and banish the lingering chill from being outside, "Or one of the goblins, you'd probably be better off asking a goblin since they'd know whether there were any new countries or not. They keep track both the non-magical and magical side of things mostly to not make embarrassing mistakes."

Mahsa smiled as she carried Kouen's gift into her room. Luna looked up from her book, "Where did Kouen take you? Kouha was looking for you a few hours ago."
"He took me to his rooms, so Kouha wouldn't use me as an excuse to skip his lessons," Mahsa answered as she set the box down on a table, "It was the only place Kouha wouldn't look for me. He also wanted to give me this. It's full of smoking herbs,"

"And that took a few hours?" Luna asked as she stood up and went to grab Mahsa's healers kit.

Mahsa took off her coat and tunic before undoing her chest wraps, "No, we spent that time talking and drinking tea. Neither of us really noticed the time passing until Seishuu came to find him for a meeting," She laid down on her bed and moved her hair out of the way as Luna came over, "It was pretty surprising."

"I'll bet," Luna showed her the potion she'd picked out, "You and Kouen seem to be getting along a lot better now,"

"It helps that he hasn't tried to order me around like a dog," Mahsa shivered as a cool oily substance hit her back, "And we've been sparring together when we have a chance which really helps smooth things out too,"

"When they aren't making you horny," Luna said as she began to massage the potion into Mahsa's muscles.

Mahsa blushed, but didn't deny it because she couldn't. Sparring with Kouen for long periods of time often left her aroused mostly because he tended to ditch his top when they really got going, he had a damn good body and being pressed against him at different points during their spars just emphasized it. She shivered again not from the cold this time, but from the flash of warmth that went through her as she thought of the last time they sparred. Kouen had managed to pin her down and press his sword to her neck in order to win. Pushing that thought from her mind, she asked, "Can you blame me?"

"Not really," Luna giggled as she finished massaging the potion into Mahsa's skin and moved away to go wash her hands, "Yeah, I-"

The door slammed open allowing Kouha and Judar to rush in before the slammed the door shut. Kouha grinned as he said, "I think w-Mahsa!"

"Kouha," Mahsa said wishing that she'd stayed with Kouen, "Do get out of my room please,"

Neither Kouha or Judar spoke, Mahsa saw their eyes on her back specifically where Vernon had taken great pleasure whipping her with a belt back in second year. They could probably see the scars from where some of the grindylow back in the second task had managed to claw her. She bit her bottom lip knowing that they'd be able to see where Dudley had once stabbed her in the back with a pocket knife to see what happened. Due to unskilled hands and the fact she'd been trashing around, the scar was a ragged and rough knot of scar tissue. It was luck that the blade hadn't hit her kidney or nick anything important. Kouha spoke with wide eyes and a soft voice, "M-mahsa?"


Kouha made a few sounds of protest, but left with Judar. Luna spoke after the door had closed, "Mahsa, are you alright?"

"Not really," Mahsa looked at the wall across from her bed where she could look out the windows, "But that's mostly because there will be questions about things I don't feel like talking about,"

Mahsa paused when she noticed Koumei in the library so late at night. He looked surprised to see
her so late as well. Koumei spoke after a few moments, "I'm surprised that you're up this later, Mahsa."

"My mind wouldn't let me rest, Koumei," Mahsa replied as she walked a bit closer, "I decided to read in the library. And you, Koumei?"

"I'm reading about the laws of some other countries." Koumei answered as he gestured to the books surrounding him, "Would you like to join me?"

"If you wouldn't mind," Mahsa sat down on a nearby chaise with the book she'd taken from one of the shelves, "Do you often stay up late like this?"

"To help my brother and king," Koumei replied as he returned to the book he'd been reading when she stumbled across him.

Mahsa opened her own book as she said, "You should sleep a bit more often. If you wish to truly assist Kouen, you'd sleep a bit more if only to be fully coherent when he needs you."

Koumei said nothing in reply to her words and Mahsa settled down to read her book. After all, he'd probably heard it a million times before and probably blocked out the words once someone started up.

Waking up in the library with a crick in her neck was an experience Mahsa was familiar with mostly when she'd been studying to become a healer, she wasn't used to it though mostly because it had been awhile since she'd done something like this. Sitting up, she was surprised to find a blanket draped over her and the book she'd been reading set aside with bookmark in it. She looked at the table and found it barren of any sign that Koumei had been there. Yawning softly, she soothed the crick in her neck and folded the blanket before sniffing it. Find that Koumei's scent was on it, she resolved to return it later.

Jori looked relieved when she entered her rooms, "Mahsa! There you are, I was worried that something had happened to you."

"Sorry to worry you, I ended up falling asleep in the library," Mahsa offered him a sheepish smile, "I couldn't sleep last night and wanted to read something new, I went to the library,"

"Did you sleep well?" Jori asked as he looked her over.

Mahsa nodded, "Yeah though I really should avoid sleeping in a position like that. My neck aches," She walked over to her bed and set the blanket down alongside her book from last night, "I'm going to go wash my face. Did I miss breakfast?"

"Yes, but I'm sure we can get something from the servants," Jori said as his eyes went to the blanket, "Where did you get that blanket?"

"Koumei. He was in the library too. I guess he laid it over me at some point which was really nice of him," Mahsa smiled lightly, "I'll have to thank him when I return it."

"What's wrong, Kouha?" Mahsa frowned at Kouha as he scowled, "Normally you put up a better fight than this,"

"It's nothing," Kouha grunted at her, "Let's just stop sparring today,"
Mahsa's frown deepened at that since they usually sparred for an hour at least even with Kouha losing every time. Something was wrong and she had a feeling it had to do with her scars, she stepped back, "This is about my scars, isn't it?"

Kouha froze for a second before snorting, "No, it isn't about that."

"Bullshit," Mahsa reeled in her daggers and sheathed them, "Normally we spar for an hour no matter how many times you lose. You froze when I mentioned my scars and I can smell when you're lying,"

Kouha's scowl deepened for a second before it faltered and he whispered, "Who did that to you?"

Mahsa sighed deeply, "You know how I said my time before coming across the veil was bad?" Kouha nodded as she decided how much to tell him, "After being kidnapped, my adoptive parents died though I'm not quite clear on how soon after they got me. I was placed with my adoptive mother's sister, the woman's husband, and their son since my adoptive father didn't have any close family," She swallowed as Alastor sent encouragement to her, "Thing is, the family was full of magic haters. The woman was filled with bitterness born out of jealousy over her little sister having magic when she didn't and hate from losing said sister to the magic users. The man hated anything abnormal. They taught their son to fear and hate magic just like them," She saw Kouha's widen as comprehension filled them, "Vernon whipped me with his belt making sure the buckle hit my skin and tore into it with each strike a week before I turned twelve due to a magical creature causing trouble. Dudley, the son, had his friends hold me down while he stabbed me in the back with a pocket sized knife to see what would happen when we were ten. In my last year of magical school, I nearly drowned during a death tournament that I'd been forced to participate in. In that task, a few creatures called grindylow managed to claw me. There's a lot more to it than that, I don't really want to talk about it all right now though."

"Damn," Kouha's eyes were filled with respect and a desire to kill something, "H-how are you...?"

How the hell hadn't she fallen? Mahsa chuckled at the question that was running through his mind, "Mostly because of hope, I hoped that something would change," She pressed a hand to Alastor's bracelet, "Well that and the fact I wanted to prove them wrong, I didn't want to become like them or become a broken little doll like they'd wanted. Once I came through the veil and met my family, I got help and was able to heal for the most part."

"For the most part?" Kouen's voice sounded behind her making the Fanalis jump not having heard him approach.

Mahsa turned around and found Kouen standing there with Koumei. Judar was nearby with Hakuryuu and Kougyoku. All of them were staring at her with wide eyes save for Kouen. She shrugged lightly not exactly happy or unhappy about the fact that they'd all heard what she'd said, "The mental and emotional scars from my younger years will always be present if diminished. Thanks to my family back home and the new memories that I've made since coming to this side of the veil, I am able to push those scars of mine to the deepest depths of my mind."

"Mahsa," Kouha's voice had a strange tone to it, "Are they dead?"

"The family that was forced to take me in?" Mahsa clarified earning a jerky nod, "Not sure though I wouldn't be surprised if Vernon was dead, the walrus was heading for a heart attack or stroke from what I remember about the last time I saw him. The horse and their son I can't be too sure. I did make sure they paid for what they did by exposing it and ruining their reputations before I jumped ship," Kouha frowned at her, "I haven't really focused on the other side of the veil since leaving. I could ask a goblin since they're the ones that worked everything out for me,"
"You don't care?" Kouha looked at her strangely.

Mahsa shook her head, "Not really, I have better things to worry about."

"But don't you want revenge?" Kouha asked with confusion shining in his eyes.

"I got my revenge already, but you mean do I want to kill them, don't you?" Mahsa smiled at Kouha. "Why bother? Killing them will probably bring me satisfaction for all of a few moments before I regret it, I'd be proving them right about how much of a monster I was when they're the monsters," Alastor sent her a wave of comfort, "Now unless you want to keep sparring, I'm going to go see if they need any help in the Infirmary."

Mahsa stared at Kouen trying to figure out if he was joking or not. Given that this was Kouen, she knew he wasn't joking, but part of her hoped he was. She frowned at him as her fingers clenched around her pipe, "Kouen, you want me to what?"

Kouen frowned at her, but repeated himself, "Join Koumei and I tomorrow, we're making sure our most recent conquests have made it through the worst of the winter."

Mahsa's frown deepened, "Why do you want me to come along? I'm not a member of your army or the Kou Empire."

What kind of game is Kouen playing with this request? Mahsa hadn't expected Kouen to bring her anywhere near the newly conquered countries even with their improving relationship. So what exactly is he planning? Kouen turned to pull open a drawer of his desk, "Because you're a healer. You wish to heal, Correct?"

"Yes, but what does that have to-" Mahsa cut herself off as she realized what Kouen wanted, "You want me to make sure everyone is in decent health?"

"Yes," Kouen pulled out a scroll and tossed it to her, "Despite what most would believe, we do try to ensure that the countries we conquer do not suffer too many casualties,"

Mahsa opened the scroll curiously after putting her pipe down, "And this?"

"So long as you carry that and Reim does not become an enemy of the Kou Empire, you may heal anyone within our borders," Kouen explained as she gaped at the scroll, "This will also ensure that yourself and your companions will be able to find shelter in any officials homes as well as have food provided for you in exchange for healing any who need it,"

Mahsa looked up from the scroll, "But why give me something like this?"

It was pretty much an unofficial citizenship document for the Kou Empire. Kouen smiled lightly making heat gather in Mahsa's stomach because he never actually smiled at anyone. He pretty much only smirked at them, "Because you are a great healer and haven't given me any real reason to think you'd misuse it."

Mahsa looked back at the scroll feeling a strange sense of warmth fill her at the trust Kouen was giving her. She rolled up the scroll and nodded, "Thank you, Kouen. I will ensure that you don't regret it."

"I know I won't," Kouen closed the drawer of his desk and turned towards her fully, "Will you join Koumei and I?"
Mahsa was tempted to say no, but the thought of people dying when she could have helped them kept her from doing so. Instead, she nodded, "I will so long as Jori and Luna may join me. They've both become quite skilled at assisting me when it comes to healing others."

"We will be gone from the palace for a week," Kouen picked up a quill, "Pack warmly, I would suggest informing your companions of this,"

"I will," Mahsa stood up after picking up her pipe and moved towards the door before hesitating a moment, "Kouen?"

"Yes?" Kouen looked up from his papers.

"What exactly is your goal for conquering the world?" Mahsa asked looking at him over her shoulder.

"To unite the world and ensure that there will be no more wars," Kouen answered as he turned back to his paperwork.

"And you believe that you're the person that can do that?" Mahsa could feel the rukh stirring.

Kouen chuckled softly, "Seeing as no one else seems interested in doing so, I will ensure that it is done no matter the cost."

"And what if it can't be done in your life time?" Mahsa swallowed heavily.

Kouen looked up from his paperwork, "If King Sinbad can create a country and the seven seas alliance within his life-time, how is it an impossible for me to unite the world?"

Mahsa shook her head lightly, "You may manage to unite this side of the world, but beyond the veil it would be impossible. War will always follow no matter how much you may try to stop it, Kouen. Peace, true peace, doesn't exist outside of the thoughts and dreams of those that seek it," She looked him in the eyes, "Your united world would break apart within the first few generations of being forced together even with someone erasing all knowledge of something different being in place before. There will always be someone or many people that see things a different way, they will try to change the world to suit their needs for whatever reason," She smiled at him, "I would love to see a world like what you wish to create, Kouen. I think it'd be something special."

With that, Mahsa left Kouen's office and headed towards where she knew her companions would be.

Mahsa rode on a dapple grey mare with Luna riding on a chestnut one next to her. Jori was riding in one of the wagons since he had trouble riding a horse mostly because he didn't like them at all. The only time he would ride one was if there wasn't any other way to travel save for her broom which he hated with every fiber of his being. It was actually really funny and she tended to tease the Heliohaptian every chance she got alongside Luna. The blonde too great pleasure in doing so. Seeing Luna coax her horse into walking beside the wagon, She headed up to the front where Kouen and Koumei rode with their house holds. Koumei looked at Mahsa as she rode up beside him, "Hello, Mahsa."

"Hi, Koumei," Mahsa greeted him as she set her pace to match his, "How long until we reach the closest settlement?"

They had traveled to the closest outpost via flying carpet a few hours ago and were now traveling by horse. Koumei looked at his map, "Another two miles. Where is Luna?"
"Teasing Jori most likely," Mahsa giggled as she glanced back towards where she could see Luna riding her chestnut mare, "I would join her, but I've already teased him enough today."

"You have an interesting relationship with them," Seishuu commented from a few feet away.

"How so?" Mahsa looked at him with a raised eyebrow.

"They do not treat you as servants would treat their lords," Kokuton replied earning a shrug from Mahsa.

"They're my friends first before anything else," Mahsa looked forward as she spotted Darius flying overhead. "I prefer them treating me as a friend and calling me on my bullshit when I do something stupid,"

"Do you do stupid things often?" Kin asked from his horse, "Like insulting all of us during your first meeting with our king."

Mahsa made a face at the pig-like man, "I will admit to running my mouth and making some comments that weren't exactly smart. But I do not see what I did as stupid, I would probably do it all again regardless. I don't do stupid things often, but when I do, they call me on it."

"Mahsa, have you ever been to Sindria?" Koumei cut in.

Mahsa shook her head, "No, I haven't. There isn't much of a draw outside of their festivals."

"Not even if you'd be able to meet King Sinbad?" Mahsa was given odd looks when she snorted.

Mahsa explained quickly, "I've met him before and can honestly say that I don't see why people are so fascinated with him."

"Really?" Kouen looked at her curiously.

Mahsa shook her head, "He's definitely powerful and I can respect that he has done a lot of amazing things in his life. Admittedly, he is attractive, but he's definitely not someone I'd end up in bed with willingly."

"Why not?" Kouen directed his horse to walk beside hers, "Is he not attractive enough?"

"Attractiveness isn't the only reason I'd sleep with someone," Mahsa rolled her eyes at Kouen, "The main reason I wouldn't sleep with him is the fact he's slept with practically every willing woman he's come across. A man with some experience is nice, but not to man-whore levels like Sinbad," She sighed lightly, "Of course, I won't be going to Sindria anytime soon and will be doing my best to avoid Sinbad for awhile," She saw the look in Kouen's eyes and quickly defended herself, "I didn't do anything to him except for reject the man. According to the queen of Artemyra, he's interested in me because I rejected him which is really weird,"

"Where did you meet King Sinbad?" Koumei asked her.

"I met him not long after crossing over from the veil," Mahsa answered as Darius winged his way back towards them, "I was heading to Reim. While my brother and our traveling companions got our ship settled at the port, I was exploring the town and ended up meeting Sinbad. At the time, he was just some flirty guy that decided to talk to me. It wasn't until I was in Heliohapt learning under the local healers and assisting with their snakes that I actually found out who he really was," Darius landed on the saddle in front of her and quickly got into his usual position on her, "It was actually a little funny considering the fact we recognized each other from our first meeting despite the years
between it. Of course, I'm still annoyed that everyone that was in the room with us actually thought we'd slept together. I was just barely 15 years old when we first met and he's like thirty or something,"

"Do you not like those older than you?" Kouen asked earning a snort.

"I wouldn't have slept with Queen Mira if I actually cared about age differences," Mahsa snickered at the look of shock on the faces of those around her, "The problem I have is that I wasn't even close to figuring out what I liked at that age and that people automatically assumed I'd slept with him,"

"You slept with the queen of Artemyra?" Kouen looked at her in disbelief.

Mahsa nodded with a grin, "Yeah, I do not regret taking her up on that offer even if I was tired when we were leaving in the morning."

Especially since Mira decided to have a repeat performance of the night before, Mahsa had been tempted to take the blonde queen up on her second offer to stay while they cuddled together enjoying the post-coital bliss in that gigantic bed. Though she had still chosen to leave, Mira had said that if she was still single by the time they saw one another again, the blonde would definitely be willing to go for another tumble in the sheets. Apparently the blonde really liked some of the things she was able to do with her tongue thanks to being a parselmouth, she flushed at the memory.

Healing the people of the village left a somewhat bad taste in her mouth, Mahsa could tell that they hadn't had proper healing outside of what the apprentice healer could provide after the man's master died sometime before due to an infected wound that hadn't been tended to until it was too late. Thankfully, the man wasn't unskilled and she was able to fill in some of the gaps in his knowledge. She left the healers hut after cleaning her hands and went to find Kouen. Kouen was standing with Koumei discussing something in low tones though they stopped when she approached them. Kouen looked at her with a raised eyebrow, "Is something wrong, Mahsa?"

"You need to station a healer or two here," Mahsa answered as she reached them, "They only have an apprentice healer since his master died sometime after you conquered this village. They don't even have a proper midwife here either,"

Koumei frowned at that, "Are you sure?"

"Considering the fact that I've been dealing with the apprentice healer, yes," Mahsa ran a hand over Darius' scaled head, "The guy isn't unskilled and is eager to learn. I've filled in some gaps, but there's a lot he doesn't know,"

"I'll make sure that someone is sent to teach him," Koumei asked as he moved towards the nearby table to write it down, "How much knowledge is he missing?"

"He's got the basics down and some minor understanding of how to set bones correctly," Mahsa answered with a grimace, "He needs a severe overhaul in herbal knowledge and medicines. He knows the basics of stitching a wound, but doesn't really know how to judge when it's actually needed. Everything else he knows is pretty random and not quite helpful,"

"How many healers would you recommend we send?" Koumei asked as he reached the table.

Mahsa thought about it carefully as she looked over the village, "At least one, two would be enough. They definitely need a midwife since three of the women are pregnant. I've already
assisted one woman already."

"You're a midwife?" Kouen asked with a surprised look in his eyes.

Mahsa nodded as she looked at him, "It's one of the many things I've learned. I may not know
everything there is about midwifery, but I do know more than most generalized healers."

"You're a generalized healer?" Kouen looked a bit uncertain about the title.

"Yes though I will admit to knowing a bit more than most would about many topics," Mahsa
grinned brightly, "Then again, Parselmouths have a high aptitude towards healing magics," She
turned upon hearing feet rushing towards her and turned to find Jori, "Jor-" She paused at the sight
of blood covering his normally pristine white tunic, "What happened? Why are you covered in
blood?"

Jori explained between gasping breaths, "Bear. Hunters mauled. Can't stop the bleeding."

Cursing under her breath, Mahsa rushed towards the healers hut and quickly got to work after
cleansing her hands.

By the time Mahsa had finished healing the men save for one who was too far gone by the time
she'd arrived in the healers hut, she was absolutely exhausted, but forced herself to push away her
exhaustion to deal with any other injuries that had popped up. Jori helped her out of the healers hut
towards chieftains home. She leaned heavily against Jori as they entered the home and barely
managed to focus on anything as voices sounded around her. She vaguely recognized Kouen's
voice, but couldn't focus enough to understand what was being said. She was helped to a stone bath
where Luna helped her get cleaned up. She was barely able to stay conscious enough to eat
something before crashing the moment her head hit a pillow.

"Where is everyone?" Mahsa asked as she walked into the great room of the chieftains home.

"They finish up everything we came here to do," Koumei answered as she walked over rubbing at
her eyes, "Are you alright?"

"Really tired and starving," Mahsa took a seat on one of the large pillows on the ground, "But that's
normal after healing so many people like yesterday,"

"Do you do things like this often?" Koumei inquired as he handed her a bowl of some kind of stew
and a wooden cup full of water.

Mahsa shook her head, "Not normally, no. It's only in places like this where there aren't any real
healers that I have to do things like this or there is a really big event with too many people getting
hurt that the healers in that place can't really keep up with," She took the bowl from him and the
water cup, "Thing is, I actually really like doing things like this even if it makes me so tired. It
makes me feel really happy knowing that I can help people."

Mahsa dug into her food and Koumei focused on his work. She ate another three bowls before
finally feeling full which earned a raised eyebrow from Koumei, "You don't normally eat that
much."

"I don't normally expend so much energy at a time," Mahsa replied as she placed her dishes with
the other dirty ones, "It also helps that the stew had a lot of meat in it,"
Mahsa headed for the door only to pause when Koumei asked, "Where are you going?"

"To see if there's anything I can do and check on my patients," Mahsa answered as she looked over her shoulder at him, "Why?"

"Don't you just want to rest today?" Koumei asked with a frown on his face and concern in his eyes.

Mahsa shook her head, "Can't do that, I need to go check on my patients," She grinned at Koumei over her shoulder, "Don't worry too much about me, Koumei. It'll take more than yesterday to bring me down. A good nights rest and some good food set me right."
"Thank you for healing me, Lady Mahsa," One of the men from yesterday told her earnestly.

It was lucky that the bears claws hadn't managed to take his eye and the fact she'd gotten to the wound soon enough. Granted he'd probably go blind at some point, the eye was a delicate thing and healing magic could only do so much. Mahsa offered the man a warm smile, "It's no problem. I am a healer after all. I am sorry about not being able to save your friend though."

"Miki was an idiot and goaded the bear," One of the other man grunted, "Damn idiot deserved it,"

The man found himself slapped upside the head by one of the women that had been pulled in to help, "Don't speak ill of the dead especially when poor Alik will be all alone now. First his mother and now his father."

Mahsa felt her heart ache at that information, "What happened to his mother?"

"She died of an infection when Alik was six," The same woman shook her head, "Old man Jeris caught it too late to do any good. At the very least, Alik has his grandfather who's been raising him since his mother died,"

After she finished checking over the last person in the hut, Mahsa left to go get some lunch and take a break to enjoy the good weather. She almost ran into Kouen after leaving and greeted him with a warm smile, "Hello, Kouen."

"Mahsa," Kouen greeted her as his eyes scanned over the Fanalis.

Mahsa was a little surprised to see concern in his eyes, but pushed that back as she asked, "Have you had lunch yet?"

"No," Kouen shook his head as his eyes settled on her face.

"Then how about we eat together," Mahsa offered earning a nod and they headed towards the chieftains hut, "Why were you heading to the healers hunt?"

"I heard from Koumei you went back after eating breakfast and wished to find out if you were alright," Kouen answered as they passed through the middle of the village where many of the villagers were gathered getting supplies, "I'm surprised that you decided to go back despite the state you were in last night,"

"A good night's sleep and some food were all I needed to recover," Mahsa paused to picked up a ball that had knocked into her feet and tossed it towards the children that had been running after it earning shouts of thanks as they ran off, "It'll take a lot more than what happened yesterday to bring me down. Besides, I didn't need to use my magic outside of a few diagnosis charms and some scans which helps," She turned her head to look at him, "You really don't need to worry too much about me,"

"As you're under my care for this trip, it is my job to worry about you," Kouen told her with a frown.

"And it's my job as a healer to ensure my patients are healing," Mahsa replied as they both paused to let a cart pass, "You brought me along for this reason after all,"
Kouen's frown deepened, but he didn't say anything as they reached the chieftains hut. Mahsa glanced at him, but said nothing since she wasn't sure what was wrong.

"Hey, Mahsa?" Luna asked as they rode together towards the next settlement.

"Yeah, Luna?" Mahsa directed her horse around some rough rocks.

"Did something happen between Kouen and you?" Luna asked with a frown.

Mahsa shook her head, "No, I don't think so. I haven't really talked to him since we came back for lunch at the chieftains hut yesterday," She looked at Kouen who was riding at the front of the group with Koumei and their house hold members, "I might've said something wrong, but can't figure out what."

Luna gave her a look of confusion, "What exactly were you talking about?"

"Just about me going back to check on my patients," Mahsa answered with a frown, "The last thing he said to me was 'As you're under my care for this trip, it is my job to worry about you'. I replied with, 'And it's my job as a healer to ensure my patients are healing. You brought me along for this reason after all,'" She shook her head, "That whole last bit of our conversation stated because I told him 'you really don't need to worry too much about me',"

"Maybe he's offended?" Luna offered with an unsure frown on her face.

"Maybe, but why would he be offended?" Mahsa asked with a confused frown.

"Let's ask Jori, he's a guy and was raised on this side of the veil, so he probably knows the answer," Luna suggested and they directed their horses to the wagon Jori was riding in.

Jori greeted them with a smile that dropped when he noticed their expressions, "What's wrong?"

Mahsa explained the situation and Jori frowned, "Well, I don't think you offended him, but I can't exactly say that for sure. Your best bet would be to talk to him the next time you're able to get him alone and just ask."

It wasn't until late at night after they arrived at the next village that Mahsa got her chance. Kouen frowned as she entered his room, "Is something wrong, Mahsa?"

"I wanted to ask if I did something wrong," Mahsa answered as the door shut behind her, "You seem to be in a bad mood since our last conversation. So if I did or said something to offend you, I need you to tell me so I can apologize,"

Kouen's eyes widened a little at her words, "You don't need to apologize."

"I do," Mahsa retorted with a frown, "I don't want to ruin our friendship now that we've improved our relationship just because I said something that made you angry," She curled her fingers around the edge of her tunic, "I like having you as a friend, Kouen. More than I actually thought I would, I like spending time with you," She released her grip on the edge of her tunic, "So please tell me what I did wrong, I need to apologize,"

Kouen surprised Mahsa by letting out a chuckle. He shook his head, "You don't need to apologize because there's nothing to apologize for. You didn't do anything wrong."

Mahsa looked at him in confusion, "But your bad mood..."
"Was caused by some of the soldiers and has nothing to do with you," Kouen said making Mahsa relax.

"Oh good, I actually thought I did something wrong," Mahsa sighed in relief, "That's a relief though what on earth did the soldiers do to put you in a bad mood for so long?"

"They just made some comments and did things I didn't approve of as well as defied a few orders," Kouen replied earning a nod of understanding from Mahsa since that would put him in a bad mood, "Was that all you wished to speak about, Mahsa?"

Mahsa shook her head, "I was wondering if you could arrange some soldiers to come with myself and some of the villagers tomorrow. The healer and her apprentice are out of some herbs that they need. I need to restock my stores since the last village pretty much killed the stock that I brought along."

"I can do that," Kouen nodded to her, "Though may I ask why?"

"Just a feeling and the fact there have been some animal attacks lately," Mahsa answered remembering that some of the villagers had claw wounds that needed tending to.

"I'll see about sending a few with you," Kouen answered as he turned to his paperwork.

"I'll leave you to your work. Goodnight, Kouen," Mahsa told him and began to leave his room.

"Goodnight, Mahsa," Kouen replied as she reached his door, "Oh, and Mahsa," She paused and looked over her shoulder, "You may call me En, if you wish since we are friends as you've said," Mahsa's eyes widened before she nodded, "Call me Sa than."

It was as they were returning from gathering herbs that Mahsa's vague feeling that something was wrong proved to be right. Men from the village that hadn't seemed happy about the presence of the Kou royals or their soldiers appeared after a bear attacked, the attack began with a hail of arrows. Mahsa was able to shield them with some spells from the worst of it though that didn't mean they came out unscathed as she had an arrow lodged in her shoulder. Pulling it out, she closed the wound with a simple spell after casting a cleansing spell to get rid of anything inside the wound. She struck back just as harshly with the intent to kill though quite a few ended up only maimed if only to be questioned later on. She cursed when a new wave of men, this time bandits, rushed into the fray. When she was able to get some breathing room, she sent off her patronus, "Kouen, we're being attacked by villagers and bandits a mile out in the forest. Back up would be nice."

The lion shot off earning shouts of surprise as it took off towards where Kouen was. This gave Mahsa time to push the attackers back and set up some protections, she weapon equipped Alastor and sent out her gryffins. She created more when they were needed and dodged the attempts to attack her when the enemies realized just what was going on, "It's a metal vessel user! Kill the bitch!"

With the attention all falling on her, the soldiers with Mahsa were able to fight against better odds, but she found it increasingly difficult to deal with her opponents the longer the fight went on thanks to Alastor limiting what spells she could cast while he was weapon equipped. Finally, she called out, "Alastor!"

Flying above the fighting, Mahsa created something that could do a bit more damage than her gryffins. Swarms of flesh eating butterflies made of crystal and shadows caused the men to stumble back in shock, it quickly turned into pain as the butterflies began feeding on them and the
sharp crystals of the butterflies cut into their skin allowing the insects to burrow inside. She had the butterflies go for the eyes and mouths feeling more than a little pissed off that these guys had attacked them. Kouen entered the battlefield not too long later and they quickly got things taken care of. When it was all said and done, she landed and unequipped only to hiss in pain as the arrow wound on her shoulder ripped back open.

Kouen looked at her in concern, "Mahsa?"

"Took an arrow to my shoulder earlier," Mahsa grimaced as she covered the wound with her hand, "Managed to pull the arrow out and cleanse it earlier, unequipping ripped it open."

"Move your hand," Kouen ordered as he took out his sword.

Mahsa hesitated as he walked over, but removed her hand, "Why?"

"One of my Djinn, Phenex, is a healing Djinn," Kouen answered as he called on Phenex's power.

Mahsa was surprised by how much Phenex reminded her of a phoenix. The soothing warmth and gentle brush of feathers against her wounded shoulder were nice. She heard Alastor sigh softly in the back of her mind, but the Djinn didn't offer up any comments. When Kouen removed his sword, the wound on her shoulder was fully healer without any sign something had happened outside of the hole in her clothes. She offered Kouen a thankful look, "Thank you, En."

Kouen nodded while giving the carnage around them a look, "I didn't know your butterflies could do that."

"Only against my enemies and people who piss me off," Mahsa answered while ignoring the flailing of a village man who was dying from the wounds caused by her creations.

Fuck him and the other assholes, Mahsa wasn't going to heal them anytime soon. The look of amused surprise Kouen gave her as she moved through the dead, dying, and maimed men that had attacked her was ignored. She had to heal the soldiers that had gotten involved because of her.

Returning the the palace was a relief, Mahsa was glad for the chance to relax which was ruined by Kouha and Judar pouncing on her to get details of the fight that had happened. She didn't mind it much though since the two were a very avid listeners, but she was very glad when they left her to get settled in. After a nice bath, she penned a letter home talking about what had happened since she last wrote and sent it off using a letter box that she'd purchased from the goblins. Any letter inside would be sent to the nearest goblin outpost which would then send it off to the receiver via either a courier or a messenger animal of some form. The box had limits being that it couldn't deliver packages which meant taking said package to the nearest goblin outpost by yourself, but letters only took up to five days to be delivered rather than the weeks that it sometimes took the regular post between countries. Which meant she could send letters while traveling if she so wished, it would just take longer depending on where she was traveling.

Picking up her pipe, Mahsa made sure it was ready to be smoked and lit it before sitting down on one of the couches in her room. A knock sounded on the door and she called out, "Enter."

The door entered to reveal Kougyoku and Ka Koubun following after the princess. Kougyoku smiled at Mahsa, "Mahsa, I'm so happy to hear that you're alright despite the attack."

"There is a reason why I do not use my metal vessel very often and it's mostly for cases like that where the surprise can turn the tide," Mahsa replied as she gestured for the Princess to take a seat, "I do hope that you aren't here to ask for details about the battle though, Yoku,"
Mahsa had started calling Kougyoku that a week before leaving with Kouen and Koumei on their trip. The Princess still didn't call her by anything other than her name, but she was fine with that. Kougyoku shook her head as she took a seat on the love-seat across from the Fanalis, "Not at all, I'll leave such things to Kouha and Judar. I came to check on you."

"I'm fine, Yoku," Mahsa promised with a warm smile, "A bit tired, but that'll be cured with some proper rest,"

Kougyoku smiled as Ka Koubun moved to stand behind her, "I'm glad to hear it," The Princess hesitated for a moment before saying, "Mahsa, I...I am going to become a Dungeon Capturer. Judar has said that he'd take me to capture a Dungeon soon."

Mahsa's eyes widened though she couldn't find it in herself to be surprised. Kougyoku gave off the feeling all the Dungeon Capturers and future Dungeon Capturers she's met did. She just hadn't expected Judar to choose to make her a queen so soon, but reading the black magi wasn't something she was particularly skilled at doing. Offering Kougyoku an encouraging smile, she said, "That's great, Yoku! You'll be a great metal vessel user."

Kougyoku smiled with relief in her eyes, "You think so?"

"I know so," Mahsa grinned at her, "So long as Judar does it within the next two months, I'll be here to help you."

Kougyoku's smile dropped while Ka Koubun stiffened behind the princess, "W-what do you mean by that, Mahsa?"

"Two months from now, Luna, Jori, and I will be leaving the Kou Empire to travel home to Reim," Mahsa answered with a sad smile, "We've been here for almost five months now after all. I miss my family greatly and I know Luna does too. Jori also wants to visit his own homeland too," Kougyoku's face fell, "Yoku, you didn't think we'd stay here forever, did you?"

"No, but I didn't think you'd be leaving so soon," Kougyoku looked down at her hands.

Mahsa took in a deep breath of sweet smoke and held it in her lungs for a few moments before saying, "But we aren't leaving soon, we'll still be here for two months and a bit of time after that preparing for our departure. And it's not like I'll never come back to Kou," She grinned at Kougyoku who looked at her in surprise, "Your brothers, you, and Judar are my friends after all. I'd hate to never see you again. I'm not sure when we'd be seeing each other again, but I will definitely come back to see you all,"

Kougyoku smiled with relief in her eyes, "I'm glad to hear it, Mahsa."

"Good though I haven't exactly told anyone else save for Jori and Luna." Mahsa offered Kougyoku a sheepish smile, "I don't mind if you tell them, but try to keep Kouha from finding out for a little okay? Judar too. You know how they're going to react,"

"I'll try," Kougyoku giggled softly, "You're going to be spending some time hiding from them,"

"Probably," Mahsa would probably spend a lot of time hiding out in Kouen's office or Koumei's.

A yawn left Mahsa and Kougyoku stood up, "You must be tired, so I'll leave you be."

"Kougyoku," Mahsa said as Kougyoku started to leave.

"Yes, Mahsa," Kougyoku looked at her with a confused expression.
Mahsa smiled at the princess, "When it comes to our metal vessels, the best thing you can do is meditate and try to listen to your Djinn. They know themselves better than anyone after all."

Kougyoku looked somewhat surprised, but nodded as she considered the information Mahsa had imparted, "I'll keep that in mind."

When Kougyoku and Ka Koubun had left, Alastor spoke once the door had shut, "The winds of destiny are beginning to flow."

'They already were,' Mahsa thought back to the letter that the goblins had sent about King Rashid's death and Alibaba's disappearance not even a day ago, 'It won't be for a little while longer that they truly start to move. Alastor, we will need to be ready for that event I saw,'

The gigantic monster made of black Rukh and destruction it had caused. Alastor radiated comfort as unease ran through her, "We will be, My Darling Queen."

Mahsa woke up hearing loud banging coming from her door and stumbled out of bed as Darius let out a rumble of protest. She opened the door, "Yes-En?!"

"Let me in," Kouen said and she sleepily move aside allowing the prince into her room.

Mahsa shut the door behind Kouen while rubbing at her eyes, "En, what are you doing here so late?"

"My father is entertaining the nobles of a country we'll be conquering within the next couple of months," Kouen answered as he moved to sit down on one of the couches in her room while she went about lighting some candles, "Unfortunately that means I have to deal with the Princess of the country and she unfortunately has decided to make me the target of her affections,"

It took Mahsa longer than usual to figure out what he meant due to her sleepy mind, but when it clicked she snorted, "Let me guess, she came to your room in an attempt to seduce you?" Kouen's grimace said it all, "Why come here rather than spend the night in your study or something?"

"Because she would likely try there and I do not feel like dealing with anyone else at the moment," Kouen answered with a look of frustration on his face.

Mahsa realized that Kouen probably hated having his 'territory' invaded by anyone save for those he invited in. She could understand that better than most thanks to her Gryffin animagus form's instincts. She yawned softly, "Do you want a book or something to read until you're good to leave?"

Kouen nodded with some surprise in his eyes, "Yes."

Mahsa pulled out some of her non-healing texts and set them on the table in front of the couch, "I don't have too many non-healing books, but I do have some," Kouen looked over the books on the table, "I'll go grab one of the extra blankets I have and one of the pillows just in case you want to sleep. The couch is pretty comfortable."

Once Mahsa had everything settled and gave Kouen some fairy lights that wouldn't disturb her rest, she got back into bed and laid down with Darius letting out a low grumble as he curled up around her. She looked at Kouen when he said, "Thank you, Sa."

"No problem, En," Mahsa gave him a sleepy smile.
Mahsa was surprised to find Kouen sleeping on the couch in the morning when she got up, but due to the fact the sun was just starting to rise, she didn't immediately wake him up. She adjusted the blankets before doing her morning meditations and exercises. After a bath, she woke him up, "En, wake up. It's morning."

Kouen woke up rather quickly and jolted into a sitting position, "Sa?"

"It's morning. Just two hours after sunrise, I thought you might like to get up now and get some breakfast with me before everyone awake," Mahsa said earning a nod from Kouen who looked somewhat sleepy, "Do you want one of my energy potions? I'll help wake you up and make sure you don't suffer too badly from the late night,"

Kouen nodded and Mahsa went to get the potion while he woke up fully. Handing him the potion, she watched Kouen drink it and made sure he didn't spit it out due to the rather harsh and bitter taste before taking the empty vial back from him. They went to get breakfast after Kouen washed his face and spent breakfast in silence just enjoying the early morning where there weren't many people around. Kouen spoke after they'd eaten, "Thank you for last night, Sa."

"It's no problem, En," Mahsa offered him a light smile, "Helping out my friends is important and I know what it's like to have to deal with pushy suitors that you don't like,"

Kouen looked a little surprised, "You do?"

Mahsa nodded as she thought back to her third and fourth years, "During my third and fourth year at Hogwarts, the boys around my age and above really started to notice that I was a girl. It was worse in fourth year when a ball was scheduled to happen in honor of the tournament. Despite spending the time until it was announced accusing me of being a cheater among other things due to my being forced into the tournament, they jumped at the chance to become my significant other for no reason other than my so-called 'fame', good looks, or money." She drank some of her tea, "So trust me when I say that I'm more than a little sympathetic. I had the same problem back home after conquering Alastor's Dungeon, but that thankfully passed for the most part."

"I'm a little surprised though," Kouen said earning a confused look, "You didn't assume I wanted to sleep with you or try to get me into your bed,"

"Why would I?" Mahsa didn't understand why anyone would do that, "You were already dealing with some air-headed bitch trying to seduce and invading your space. Why add into the stress and frustration you were feeling? I can tell when someone doesn't want to fuck around and last night you definitely didn't want any part in it," She shook her head lightly, "Besides while I do find you attractive, I'm not about to jump you just for the sake of it especially when I've never been with a man before,"

"You're a virgin?" Kouen looked surprised and Mahsa frowned at him.

"Technically yes," Mahsa narrowed her eyes at him, "Why is it surprising?"

"With the way you act while drunk and the fact that you don't act like a blushing virgin," Kouen answered as he eyed her with a contemplative look in his eyes, "Is it really so hard to believe you've never been with a man?"

Mahsa rolled her eyes, "Just because I've never been with a man doesn't mean I'm going to act like a damn blushing virgin, it's not like I've never seen a guy naked before," Kouen's eye-brows rose and she explained, "The Fanalis Corps can get really rowdy especially when alcohol is introduced which sometimes ends with clothing coming off. I've also been to Heliohapt and sometimes the
men there don't care about propriety when it comes to their partners. I'm also a healer and sometimes people have injuries in very awkward places."

"And the way you act while drunk?" Kouen asked as Mahsa sipped her tea.

"I've always been like that. Flirting with people when I'm drunk is just something I do," Mahsa shrugged lightly. "I always make sure to be around other people who either won't take advantage of me or won't let anyone take advantage of me especially back home. My big brother about killed the last guy that tried anything."

It was only due to the teen being a new member of the Fanalis Corps and the fact that nothing actually happened that kept Muu from killing the kid. Pushing the memories from her mind, she looked out across the grounds as Kouen commented, "Your old brother seems to be very protective of you."

"He's lost me once already and I'm the youngest of our siblings," Mahsa smiled lightly, "I don't mind it too much since it's a way to show that Muu cares and it's a way for him to make up for not being able to protect me back when I got taken."

A companionable silence fell over them as they finished their tea. Kouen spoke as one of the maids came to clear everything away, "You're really going to leave in two months?"

"Not exactly, but yeah," Mahsa stood up from the low table they were sitting at, "I miss my siblings and everyone back home. I don't doubt that they miss me too. Luna wants to see her father too. I'll definitely miss being here once we leave though," She smiled at Kouen, "Kou's definitely got a special place in my heart after all."

"Is it Kou that has a special place in your heart or Kouen?" Alastor asked her.

Mahsa ignored Alastor, "If you'll excuse me, I should go see if Kouha is up."

Kouen nodded his head and Mahsa began to leave him only to pause when the Prince asked, "Mahsa, what will you do if Reim and Kou go to war?"

Mahsa froze mid-step with wide eyes and her heart hurt at the question. She hadn't been expecting him to ask that, but in hindsight, she probably should've. She swallowed heavily clenching her hands into fists, "Kouen, what kind of question is that?"

"An important one," Kouen answered as she heard the rustle of clothes behind her, "You know my goal."

"And you know my family is important," Mahsa refused to look at Kouen as she began walking away, "If Reim and Kou were to go to war, I would side with my family even if I really don't want to fight with my friends. For all that I...care for you, your siblings, and Judar, my brother and sister will do whatever it takes to keep Reim safe. To protect them and ensure they live, I would fight against the Kou Empire if war were to occur."

"I see," Kouen's voice was blank of any emotion.

Mahsa's heart ached for reasons she wasn't quite willing to acknowledge, "Kouen, I would prefer it if peace between Reim and Kou could be found. A united world founded only on bloodshed and fabricated histories would never truly know peace."

Leaving Kouen behind, Mahsa headed not for Kouha's rooms to check to see if he was awake as she'd originally planned, but her own rooms. As soon as the door closed behind her, she pressed her
back against it and took several deep breaths to calm herself. Alastor tried to soothe her as Darius got off the bed and padded over to her with concern radiating off of him, "Sssa? What isss wrong?"

"Humansss fucking sssuck, Dari," Mahsa closed her eyes tightly, "Emotionsss fucking sssuck,"

Darius pressed against Mahsa and let out a soothing rumble in an attempt to comfort her despite not knowing exactly what was wrong. She leaned into him and let the chimera help her away from the door. She finally understood why the siblings and Judar showed up so often despite the prospective future she'd seen with Armakan. Inwardly growling at herself, she pushed those thoughts away and just focused on calming herself down enough to deal with everything she needed to today.

If the fact Mahsa and Kouen spent the next few days avoiding each other was noticed, no one said anything though the concerned glances thrown at the two said that the avoidance had been noticed. When they did have to interact, they were scarily polite to each other and she tended to call Kouen by his title which definitely showed that something was wrong since she never did it. It wasn't long until Kouen left to conquer another country for the Kou Empire and she slowly began to relax again. It was during this absence that she met the Empress Gyokuen Ren.

"So you're the little half-breed that Kouha brought into the palace," Someone said from behind Mahsa as she walked towards the training fields where Kouha was waiting for her.

Mahsa stiffened as a feeling of foreboding struck her and she slowly turned to see Empress Gyokuen standing there with some of those weird priests that follow around Judar sometimes. She offered the Empress a strained smile, "Empress Gyokuen, it is nice to meet you. I'm heading to meet with Kouha now actually."

Gyokuen's eyes narrowed at Mahsa before widening, "A true-seer. A half-breed true-seer."

Mahsa's eyes widened at the comment as Alastor hissed at her, "Get out of here, Mahsa! I don't recognize her, but the black rukh radiating from the bitch and her followers is more than enough to say she's bad news."

"I hadn't thought it was possible for a Fanalis of all beings to have such a great gift," Gyokuen's smile widened as whispers sounded from the priests.

Mahsa took a step back and another, "I am unsure as to what you mean."

Gyokuen chuckled softly, "I suppose you would be. Trained true-seers are rare, I haven't come across one in a very long time," The woman eyed her, "But then again, you're likely lying. Well that won't matter soon enough, we can't have you mess up our plans and trying to force you into falling would probably be an exercise in futility."

Alastor growled at Gyokuen, "Mahsa, we need to get out of here now."

'I know,' Mahsa got her magic ready, "What are you saying?"

"I'm going to kill you," Gyokuen smiled nastily at Mahsa as the priests around her began to move.

Mahsa shot off a spell blasting the walls and floor to create a smokescreen that would let her get away. Running towards the training field, she stumbled not long into her rush to get away when the floor in front of her exploded. She barely managed to keep on her feet and shield herself from any attack. She muttered under her breath, "Damn it."
"It's no use running, Little Fanalis," Gyokuen called out from behind her as Mahsa jumped into the garden below and began running towards the opposite side of the garden, "Just stay still and I'll make it quick,"

"Bullshit," Mahsa growled as she reached the opposite wall and began climbing up towards the roof only to be blasted off by a bolt of black energy.

Mahsa's arms hurt like a bitch and she could tell pieces of the building had gotten lodged in them, she swore under her breath while casting a shielding charm as she used her magic to pull out the debris before cleansing and sealing the cuts. Dodging the next bolt of energy, she sent a multitude of curses towards the Empress and the priests with her. Explosions sounded as a majority of the curses were reflected by the Borgs of the Priests and the Empress, the Priests let out cries of shock as some of the curses slid through that killed them leaving behind odd dolls. On instinct, she sent cutting curses towards the dolls which shattered like glass when they were cut. Gyokuen's eyes narrowed in anger and she was suddenly launching spells that a rate that the Fanalis couldn't quite keep up with.

Being sent flying through a wall hurt like hell, Mahsa's head cracked painfully against the next wall. With her head swimming, she couldn't react very quickly to Gyokuen following her into the room she'd been blasted into. She moved just in time to make the next spear of black energy sent towards her hit a non-lethal area just underneath her heart. It still hurt like a bitch, but gave her enough time to weapon equip Alastor. She sent a trio of gryffins towards Gyokuen who snarled with a look of irritation on her face. She focused on slowing the bleeding while keeping something in between her enemy and herself. Footsteps rushed towards the room she'd been sent into as black gathered at the edges of her vision, she heard shouting as Gyokuen growled, "Damn it. I'll have to deal with you at a later point."

"G-go fuck yourself," Mahsa spat at the bitch.

Gyokuen sneered at her and sent a final blast of black energy before disappearing. Mahsa's gryffins were destroyed in the blast protecting her from damage, she let Alastor's weapon equip fade away unable to concentrate on keeping it active. She must've blacked out for a few moments because the next second saw Kouha staring at her. He was saying, "You'll be okay, Mahsa. Just hold on while we get the healers, you need to stay awake."

Mahsa opened her mouth attempting to say something only to cough up blood. She inwardly winced knowing that Gyokuen's attack must've hit one of her lungs somehow or one of her ribs had pierced one. Neither of which were good, the first would be easier to heal if only because of the smaller wound.

Thankfully for Mahsa's sake, the healers of the Kou Empire were skilled and able to heal the damage Gyokuen's attack had done to her lung. She wouldn't be allowed to smoke for at least two weeks while recovering, but that was a small price to pay for surviving the attack. She didn't mention who attacked her, but most assumed it was an enemy magician that had somehow gotten into the palace undetected. Kouha and Judar had apparently decided that she couldn't be left alone since someone might try to attack her again. The magi was tossing furious looks towards the odd priests and spent quite a bit of time pranking the hell out of them. Jori and Luna both hated leaving her alone with the blonde actually deciding to sleep with the Fanalis just to offer some extra protection. Darius had to be forced to leave her in order to hunt, keep up his flying skills, and go to the bathroom. While touching, it quickly got old and the moment she was able to move around saw her hiding from everyone save for Koumei who wasn't being overbearing. Even Kougyoku was being overbearing, the princess actually tried to spend the night with her as often as Luna did.
Koumei looked at Mahsa when she left her hiding place behind one of the bookcases when he'd managed to convince the latest group of searchers that she wasn't there, "You do realize that they're not going to stop, right?"

"I know, but I need some time away from them all," Mahsa laid down on the rather comfortable fainting couch in Koumei's office wondering if he'd slept on it before, "For all that I'm touched by it, I do not need to be coddled. I'm just glad you're not acting like them,"

"I'd prefer not to add to your obvious stress," Koumei answered as she closed her eyes, "And you're quiet which allows me to do my work in peace save for when they try to find you."

Mahsa let out a soft hum, "Thank you, Mei."

With that, Mahsa took a much needed nap that went uninterrupted thanks to Koumei showing off a surprisingly scary side of himself that reminded everyone that he was a king vessel too even if he preferred to let Kouen lead.

Waking up to find that Kouen had fallen asleep in her room after the feast to celebrate his conquering of another country was surprising, Mahsa was mostly surprised to wake up with Kouen's face inches away from her own considering the fact they were still technically fighting. She stared at him for a few moments trying to figure out why the hell he'd come to her room of all places before realizing that he had likely been attempting to avoid the numerous women that would be attempting to seduce the conqueror. After that, she rolled onto her other side only to stiffen at the fact Kouen's arm was around her waist. Taking a few measured breaths, she removed his arm and began getting out of bed only for a hand to grab the back of her shirt. With a single tug, she was laying on her back and Kouen was pinning her in that position moment's later.

Mahsa stared at him smelling the sake on his breath as he stared down at her, "Lord Ko-"

"En," Kouen's eyes narrowed into a glare, "I told you to call me En, Sa,"

Mahsa frowned at Kouen, but felt too tired to argue with him right now, "What are you doing in my bed?"

"I didn't want to deal with any of the women trying to seduce me," Kouen answered as she registered the warmth radiating off of his body.

Mahsa ignored the fact that Kouen pinning her against the bed, "I figured that out, but why my bed? The couch is perfectly comfortable."

"I did not wish to sleep alone," Kouen's body pressed against hers was becoming distracting mostly because he was suffering from what most referred to as 'morning wood'.

"I did not wish to sleep alone," Kouen's body pressed against hers was becoming distracting mostly because he was suffering from what most referred to as 'morning wood'.

"Why me?" Mahsa stubbornly kept her eyes on his.

Somewhere in the back of her mind, Alastor was laughing up a storm and she really wished, not for the first time, he was able to appear in the physical world without her wasting too much magoi if only to slap him upside the head. She ignored Alastor as Kouen said, "Because dealing with my siblings at a time like this is exhausting, you're the less bothersome option."

"Goodie," Mahsa pushed against his chest, "Get off, I need to go to the bathroom," And away from the far too attractive Prince in her bed that was making it hard to think, "Please,"

"I don't want to," Kouen said as his body settled more heavily on hers.
Unfortunately for Mahsa, the pressure on her injured chest and not being able to get as much air hurt. She pushed against him, "Get off me, Kouen. Now."

Kouen refused and Mahsa used her magic to get her off of him. Pressing a hand to her wound, she numbed the pain a bit as Kouen growled, "What the he-What's wrong?" Kouen's eyes went to where her hand was settled, "Are you injured?"

"Your bitch of a step-mother tried to kill me with her cronies. What the hell do you think?" Mahsa snapped at him as she tugged off her tunic and saw the bandages on her chest beginning to redden, "Fuck,"

"She what?!" Kouen's eyes narrowed and fury radiated off of him.

Ignoring the furious prince, Mahsa summoned her med-kit to her and began undoing the bandages. She cleaned away the blood and began rummaging through her medkit once the bandages were off. Before she could pull anything out, Kouen appeared in front of her with his sword. Before she could say anything, Kouen healed her injury with Phenex. When he removed Phenex, she scanned herself and nodded upon finding no damage from that wound. She pulled her tunic back on, "Thank you, En."

"Why on earth would Gyokuen try to kill you?" Kouen demanded as he set down his sword and frowned when she didn't say anything, "Sa, why did she try to kill you?"

The lies she could tell him formed in Mahsa's head, but couldn't be forced past her mouth. The idea of lying to Kouen left a bad taste in her mouth. She swallowed heavily as she said, "I..."

Why couldn't she lie to him? Why did the very idea of lying to him leave a bad taste in her mouth? Mahsa looked down at her hands as Kouen asked, "Sa?"

Swallowing heavily, Mahsa realized that she wanted to tell Kouen about her ability. She wanted to see how he'd react and if he would accept it. She spoke softly, "It's because of an ability I have."

"What ability?" Alastor radiated assurance and strength allowing her to answer.

Mahsa looked at Kouen, "I'm a true-seer. It means I can see the various paths that destiny can take while I'm asleep," Kouen's eyes widened and she plowed on, "Gyokuen somehow knows that and wants to kill me because trying to make me fall would be too difficult according to her. She doesn't want me to interfere with any plans she has, but I've never even seen her before in my visions. I've never seen those odd priests either save for some small flashes."

Kouen was quiet for a few moments before asking, "Did you see us? My siblings, Judar, and I?"

"Yes," Mahsa looked at Kouen feeling fear grip her heart, "Not everything though. Bits and pieces, I knew we'd all meet at some point, but not how. I knew we'd all be close somehow, but didn't know just how it would happen. I don't know everything since my ability doesn't work like that. The only things that are unchanging are the ones that have been set in stone,"

"How long..." Kouen trailed off.

"A few years," Mahsa looked down at her hands, "I'm sorry for not telling you, but you've got to understand that if anyone I can't trust found out about it, people would be coming after me. I'd be hunted down even worse than I am now thanks to be a Fanalis or a metal vessel user," She clenched her hands into fists, "If this means that you don't want anything to do with me," It hurt to say this even if she needed to, "Then tell me, I'll have everything set up so Luna, Jori, and I can leave at the soonest possible moment especially since you healed me,"
A hand gripped her chin and Mahsa's head was forced up to look at Kouen. He stared at her with an unreadable look in eyes that scared the Fanalis a bit. She said nothing as he stared at her for a long moment before his eyes softened. "You don't have to leave unless you're worried that Gyokuen will attempt something again."

Mahsa's eyes widened as a tight feeling in her chest that she hadn't noticed eased. "Y-you don't want me to leave despite not telling you?"

"No," Kouen's lips twitched into a slight smile, "You had every reason to be wary about us even with apparently knowing us,"

"Technically I didn't know you, the future me did," Mahsa corrected him, "I don't think of my future self as me because it's headache inducing and maddening," She shook her head, "So you're not mad?"

Kouen snorted, "I pissed off, but understand why you didn't say anything. This is the last secret you have, right?"

"Not quite, but it's the second to last serious one," Mahsa answered earning a raised eyebrow, "Eventually the jackasses back on the other-side of the veil are going to come after me for various reasons, I'll deal with it when that happens. Other than that, I don't have any major important secrets." She grinned at him, "Any other secrets are little ones that everyone has,"

"I suppose I can accept that," Kouen moved towards the door only to pause, "And Sa?"

"Yeah?" Mahsa looked at him curiously.

"Have you ever seen the future that I want to create? The united world?" Kouen asked as he reached out to open the door.

Mahsa shook her head, "No, but like I said, I don't see everything. If it is possible for a united world like you plan to exist, it'll happen at some point though it likely won't occur in our lifetime."

Kouen nodded as he opened the door and left without another word. Mahsa pressed a hand to where her injury had been as Alastor murmured, "He'll have to get past quite a bit if he truly wishes to create that world."

'But if there is someone who could do, I think that Kouen might be able to or at least, he'll start things off,' Mahsa smiled softly knowing that Kouen and her were probably not fighting anymore.

"It would be interesting to see it again," Alastor murmured softly.

'See what, Alastor?' Mahsa asked as her smile dimmed.

"Nothing, My dearest queen," Alastor replied, "You should probably go through your morning routine before any of the others get up,"

Mahsa nodded and got out of the bed without saying anything. Alastor wouldn't answer unless he wished to after all and she had a feeling that she'd find out what he meant eventually.
"Lady Mahsa," Mahsa heard from behind her.

Turning her head, Mahsa found Hakuryuu walking up behind her with a serious expression on his face. She looked at him curiously since he rarely deigned to interact with her, "Hakuryuu, this is a surprise, did you need something?"

"I was hoping to speak with you," Hakuryuu answered as Mahsa paused to let him catch up.

"Oh?" Mahsa hadn't been expecting that and wondered if this might have to do with the visions of him she'd had, "Sure though we'll have to do so while walking. I'm heading to meet with En for some tea in the west gardens,"

Hakuryuu looked a bit surprised as he nodded and they began walking together. He commented, "I didn't know that Lord Kouen and you were getting along again."

"Kouen and I spoke after he returned," Mahsa pressed a hand to where the wound Gyokuen had left on her had been leaving only a small nearly invisible scar, "We managed to reach a compromise of sorts,"

Hakuryuu's eyes followed her hand and he grimaced, "Lady Mahsa, may I be frank with you?"

Mahsa gave him an amused look as she lowered her hand, "Do you really need to ask that given how I've spoken to everyone since arriving?"

Any amusement that could have been gotten from that statement didn't appear on Hakuryuu's face. Mahsa's eyes narrowed a bit as Hakuryuu said, "I know that my mother was the one to attack you along with her pet priests."

Mahsa's eyes widened at that before narrowing, "I see."

Given that the official story was that an enemy magician/assassin had attacked Mahsa due to how close she was getting to the royals, the accusation that Gyokuen had attacked her was a surprise though given what she'd seen in her visions that surrounded the scarred prince, it wasn't too surprising. Hakuryuu took her words as a sign to continue, "Unlike everyone else, I know just what my mother is capable of."

"And what exactly is that?" Mahsa asked with a frown.

"The great fire that killed my father and brothers was because of her," Hakuryuu answered as his frown deepened and old emotional wounds appeared in his eyes.

The memory of seeing a palace engulfed in flames and black Rukh seared through Mahsa's mind. The vision that had started off the ones she'd had of the Kou Empire. A heavy feeling settled in the depths of her stomach when she realized just what had been shown to her by the rukh. She couldn't believe he was actually having this conversation with her of all people, "What exactly do you want from me, Hakuryuu? Why bring it up?"

"I wish to take my mother down, but I'm no where near ready to do so. I hope that once I am that you'll stand behind me," Hakuryuu answered with a determined look in his eyes, "After all she attacked you, she's planning on killing you,"
Mahsa stared at him for a long while as they both stopped walking before asking, "Hakuryuu, what exactly are you planning?"

"My mother needs to die," Hakuryuu answered with fire in his eyes, "The organization needs to go down. Even if it means tearing the Kou Empire apart, I will do it,"

Mahsa's frown deepened, "'Tear the Kou Empire apart'? Hakuryuu, do you realize what you're saying?" She shook her head at him and raised a hand when he went to open his mouth, "While you aren't wrong about taking down those odd priests and your mother, you need to think very carefully about what just came out of your mouth," Hakuryuu's jaw clenched, "Are you truly willing to sentence innocent people to death just for the sake of revenge? Are you really willing to tear your family apart? Have you ever even thought about asking your siblings for help? No?" She snorted softly, "Kouen, Koumei, Kouha, Kougyoku, and all their other siblings are yours, Hakuryuu. They love and care for you even if most only see you as their cousin. Maybe if you actually talked to them and explained what's going through your mind, you might find help a whole lot closer to the situation," She resumed walking, "I won't give you an answer to your request until that happens."

With that, Mahsa left Hakuryuu alone in the hallway they'd been walking through. Darius shifted reminding her that he was there and spoke softly, "Sssa, will you really get involved?"

"Yesss, but only because I'm fairly certain the 'Organization' is responsible for the vision of that monster I saw," Mahsa entered the garden and walked towards where Kouen was sitting, "There is still time before that happens though,"

Kouen was speaking to Seishuu when Mahsa arrived and she waited until he waved off his house hold member to approach. She offered Kouen's snake-like house-hold member a light smile, "Good afternoon, Seishuu."

"Mahsa," Seishuu nodded to her and headed off.

Mahsa took her seat across from Kouen as he commented, "You're a bit late."

"Koumei and I got into a really interesting conversation over a book on strategy that I lent him," Mahsa explained as they prepared their tea, "And Hakuryuu caught me on the way here,"

"Oh?" Kouen's eyebrow rose at that.

Mahsa nodded as she picked up one of the pastries on the table, "He wanted to talk about the attack. He knows that Gyokuen attacked me."

Kouen's hand froze midway to bringing his tea cup to his mouth, "Does he?"

Mahsa nodded as she thought about what to say, "Yes. He also outright stated that she was behind the fire that took his father and brothers."

Kouen's eyes narrowed at that, "I see. I might need to speak to him."

"It would be a good idea," Mahsa hoped that Hakuryuu would actually give her idea some thought, "I think you'd be interested in the book I lent Mei,"

Rather than say anything about the not subtle change in conversation, Kouen looked at her curiously likely planning ways to get information out of Hakuryuu, "Oh?"

Mahsa couldn't bring herself to feel sorry for setting Kouen on Hakuryuu.
"But Mahsa, don't you like it here in Kou?" Kouha pouted at Mahsa from across the table.

Kouha had found out that Mahsa planned to leave sometime next month not even an hour ago and had been bugging the Fanalis since. Picking up her sake dish feeling a bit glad that she'd be able to drink when dealing with the sometimes over-dramatic prince, she told him, "It isn't that I don't like it here in Kou, Ko-ko. I like it here especially because of your siblings and you."

"Is it because of whoever attacked you?" Kouha asked as Mahsa drank the sake in her dish, "Are you scared they're going to attack again if you stay?"

Mahsa internally snorted since Gyokuen was likely going to send people to kill her regardless of whether she was still in Kou or not. She glanced at Judar as the priest snorted, "I doubt she's scared. No one I'm interested in as a King would ever be scared," The black magi grinned at her, "We could go capture a Dungeon together which would definitely scare off whoever attacked you."

Mahsa rolled her eyes as Kouha made a noise of agreement, "Not going to happen, Jujube," Judar scowled at her while Kouha snickered at the nickname, "Alastor is enough and even if I wanted another Djinn, I doubted that I'd actually be able to use them. Half-Fanalis remember."

"You won't be able to find out until you try," Judar pointed out, "And stop calling me that," "I will when you stop trying to con me into going Dungeon diving with you," Mahsa poured herself more sake, "Shouldn't you be doing that with Yoku?"

"I will eventually," Judar waved her off, "But you'd definitely be a perfect Queen for me. You're not a prissy little bitch,"

Mahsa snorted softly, "I do not need Scheherazade on my ass just because you're being picky," She leaned back against the pillows set up against the wall, "By the way, any idea why Yoku didn't come along?"

"Lessons or something," Kouha grimaced as he poured himself some more sake, "I swear she'll be as much of a bookworm as Mei when she's older," Mahsa shook her head, "I doubt that. Yoku's just trying to get her studies out of the way like you should. If you did, you'd be able to have more fun."

"But that means work," Kouha groaned as Mahsa finished off her sake dish and put it down before snagging one of the jars on the table, "Hey, what are you doing?"

"Drinking wish a sake dish isn't going to let the alcohol hit my system any faster," Mahsa shrugged her shoulders as she uncorked the jar and took a swig straight from the bottle.

Mahsa hummed softly having grown to love the burn of alcohol going down her throat if only to make drinking with Judar and Kouha more bearable. Kouha scowled at her, "That was for all of us."

"There are three other jars on the table," Mahsa pointed out, "Then again, I'll probably end up drinking most of them since you've got a shitty alcohol tolerance," "No I don't!" Kouha growled at her.

Mahsa offered him a raised eyebrow while Judar just snickered and watched the show, "Oh really? Then why did you stop at a jar last time."
Kouha flushed at the reminder, "Because I was being polite. Out drinking a girl isn't something a Prince does."

"Pansy Prince," Mahsa accused as she shot him a challenging grin, "Why don't you just cut the crap and admit you've got a shitty alcohol tolerance?"

"The fuck I do," Kouha hissed at her, "I bet I can drink more than you no problem!"

"Yeah right," Mahsa snorted as she took another swig of sake.

"How about a contest then," Judar pipped up with a grin, "Whoever drinks more without passing out or puking wins,"

"Sure," Kouha grinned at her, "If I win, you have to let me style your hair however I want,"

"If I win, you have to actually go to your lessons like a good little prince for three days," Mahsa replied making Kouha grimace.

"Deal," Kouha narrowed his eyes at her.

"Deal," Mahsa offered her hand and they shook on it, "Judar, you staying out of this?"

"Of course, someone has to if only to make sure things stay fair," Judar said earning a snort from both Kouha and Mahsa making the black magi glare at them.

Mahsa had won the drinking contest, but suffered one of her worst hangovers yet. That wasn't as big a problem as the fact she'd apparently slept in Kouen's bed with the Prince, they didn't actually do anything other than sleep together mostly because she'd passed out pretty quickly and Kouen respected her enough not to try anything. The main problem came from the fact everyone believed they'd slept together which ended up causing quite a few of them women trying to get into Kouen's bed and even some men to get angry with her. Rumors were flying around the palace though she didn't pay them much mind at first, she did have to pay attention to them when Kougyoku asked, "Mahsa, are you really going to marry Brother Kouen?"

Mahsa choked on her tea at those words. Hakuei patted her on the back as she struggled to clear her windpipe. Once she could breath properly, she gasped out, "What?! What the actual fuck, Yoku?"

Kougyoku flushed at her language while Ka Koubun scowled at Mahsa, "Such vulgar language shouldn't be spoken in polite company."

Mahsa ignored Ka Koubun to stare at Kougyoku, "Yoku, what gave you that idea?"

"There are rumors going around that you and Prince Kouen are in a relationship," Hakuei told Mahsa as Kougyoku nodded slowly, "Given how close you two have become since his return and the fact you two apparently...slept together," The black haired princess' cheeks turned a light pink, "Many are wondering if Kouen has decided to take you as his bride,"

Mahsa's jaw dropped at that as she struggled to form thoughts. Alastor burst out laughing in the back of her mind cackling like a hyena rather than the fox-cat-hybrid thing he was. What Kougyoku added on only made the situation worse, the pinkish red haired princess said, "Many think you're going home in order to get your family to create a betrothal contract with Brother Kouen or are going home because you're pregnant."

Taking a deep breath as she reigned in her thoughts, Mahsa said the first thing that came to mind,
"Fuck the rumor mill. Fuck it and every single person feeding into it."

Kougyoku let out a scandalized gasp while Hakuei covered her mouth with a soft giggle. Ka Koubun's glare increased and Mahsa had a feeling he no longer felt any good feelings towards her at the current moment. She stood up earning looks of surprise. Kougyoku burst out, "Where are you going, Mahsa?"

"To speak with Kouen and get him to do something about those stupid rumors," Mahsa answered as she walked towards the door, "All of them are lies especially since I'm very much a virgin and for all that I do find Kouen attractive, I'm nowhere close to wanting to get married or have kids."

The moment Mahsa entered the room saw Koumei and most of the other males in the room paling at the stormy look on her face. They quickly beat a hasty retreat while dragging out those that didn't realize the danger of an angry Fanalis woman as she said, "Kouen, we need to speak. Alone. Now."

Kouen looked up from the map he'd been going over with Koumei and everyone else in the room left the room in a hurry. He looked a little surprised at how empty the room was before focusing on her. Immediately his surprise turned to understanding and confusion, he frowned at Mahsa, "Is something wrong, Sa?"

"Have you been listening to the stupid rumors floating around?" Mahsa hissed at him, "Because I sure as hell haven't until now. Do you have any idea what Kougyoku asked me when I was drinking tea with Hakuei and her? Hell do you have any idea what Hakuei told me?"

Kouen shook his head, "No, why would I care about the rumors?"

"Because apparently we're getting married," Mahsa deadpanned and felt some form of pleasure at seeing Kouen's eyes widen.

"What?" Kouen might not have stuttered despite being surprised, but couldn't keep the surprise from his voice.

Scowling at him, Mahsa said, "Your sister asked me, 'Mahsa, are you really going to marry Brother Kouen?'; She walked towards the table where he was standing, "Hakuei then told me that according to the rumors we're in a relationship. Apparently the only reason I'm going home to Reim sometime next month is due to either because we're trying to get my family to make a betrothal contract or I'm pregnant with our love child," She planted her hands on the table, "Did you know?"

"No, but that would explain quite a few things," Kouen scowled darkly as Mahsa relaxed a bit at the fact he hadn't known about any of this, "I'll deal with it immediately,"

"Thank you," Mahsa relaxed while repairing the damage she'd done to the table when she slammed her hands on it, "I fucking hate rumor mills,"

Kouen's lips twitched a bit at that, "And the rumors?"

Mahsa snorted softly, "As attractive as you are, En. I'm not anywhere close to being ready to marry and not even your stupidly handsome face could get me to change my mind. I am also no where near ready to have kids and took a potion before leaving home for the first time that prevent conception. It won't wear off for another two years unless I take the counter potion though I'm probably going to take it again once it wears off since I don't plan to settle down with anyone for awhile."
"Stupidly handsome face?" Kouen asked with a raised eyebrow.

Mahsa shrugged at him, "I'm not wrong," She glanced towards the door, "How much do you want to bet they think I'm going to murder you?"

"No bet, you looked pretty pissed earlier," Kouen shook his head, "Though if you don't mind the rumors, why were you so angry?"

"I hate rumors and rumor mills quite a bit thanks to my time across the veil," Mahsa explained as she took a seat on one of the abandoned chairs in the war room, "Other than that, I thought you might've known about the rumors and did nothing about them. It pissed me off quite a bit mostly because some of those across the veil spread rumors about being in a relationship with them and sleeping with some of them after the ball. While I don't actually think you'd do something like that, the chance of something like that happening wouldn't leave me especially given what happened in Heliohapt,"

Kouen's eyes narrowed, "What happened in Heliohapt?"

"Sinbad made a comment about King Armakan and I being in a relationship," Mahsa explained seeing displeasure and what looked like jealousy in his eyes though she quickly pushed that thought from her mind, "We weren't, but someone apparently took it as a fact. After Sinbad left, someone tried to assassinate Armakan and myself despite there being no actual proof other than us being close due to the friendship that had formed," She snorted softly, "The assassins were easily taken care of though Armakan forced me to return home in order to prevent another incident despite my contract not being up,"

"What contract?" Kouen's voice had a bit of bite to it.

Mahsa wondered why as she said, "Didn't I tell you about why I went to Heliohapt in the first place?" Kouen shook his head and she quickly explained, "A contract between Reim and Heliohapt was created after Armakan verified my ability to speak with snakes. In exchange for assisting with any problems involving their serpents, I would be allowed to learn healing techniques and a new fighting style. It was for six months, but ended up being cut off due to the assassination attempt. I was willing to deal with the risk since ending a contract prematurely leaves a bad taste in my mouth, but Armakan wasn't willing to risk it," She grimaced at the memory, "I could have easily dealt with anything else thrown at me."

A knocked sounded on the door followed by Seishuu sticking his head into the room. The Gorgon-like house-hold member looked at the two sitting in the room rather warily, "Is everything okay in here?"

"Everything is fine," Mahsa stood up, "I should get to the training grounds since I'm supposed to be sparring with Kouha again," She looked at Kouen as Seishuu opened up the door fully and everyone began walking inside, "Sorry about the whole anger thing earlier,"

"It's fine," Mahsa wondered at why Kouen sounded annoyed, "I will deal with the matter we discussed,"

"Thank you," Mahsa turned and began leaving the room, "See you later, En,"

"So any idea what put Kouen in a bad mood?" Judar asked from his perch on a nearby table.

"No idea," Mahsa shook her head as she chopped up some peaches after getting rid of their seeds.
Seeing as Mahsa actually wanted something sweet and wanted to cook, she'd gotten someone to take her to the kitchens to bake. Judar had found out and demanded that she make something with peaches and decided to watch. Judar frowned at her, "Really? According to what I’ve heard, he's been in a bad mood since you burst into a strategy meeting."

"It must be about the rumors," Mahsa realized as she got everything ready to make peach cobbler, "That's why I 'burst' into the strategy meeting,"

Judar snorted, "That wouldn't be it, Kouen crushed that rumors already."

"Hey, Judar! Did you find-" Kouha walked into the kitchens only to pause before rushing over to look at what Mahsa was doing, "What are you making?"

"Peach cobbler," Mahsa answered while sending a stinging hex towards Judar to keep him away from the chopped up peaches earning a glare from the black magi, "I'm also making some cookies and tarts since I'm craving something sweet. If you want some, the cookies will be done pretty soon while the tarts will take some more time,"

"Cool," Kouha grinned at her before turning to Judar, "Did you find out why Kouen's in a shitty mood yet?"

"No," Judar shook his head.

Mahsa thought back to her talk with Kouen and frowned slightly, "The only other thing we talked about wouldn't have put him a bad mood."

"What did you talk about?" Kouha asked as he shared a look with Judar.

Mahsa finished up with the peach cobblers and put them into the oven while checking on the tarts. She removed the cookies as she said, "Just about why I hate rumors and rumor mills," She placed them on the cooling rack before using a cooling charm on them, "I really don't like them especially since they led to me leaving Heliohapt before the contract I had at the time was done."

Mahsa began washing everything she'd used as Kouha took a cookie from the tray, "Because of that assassination attempt, right?" Mahsa nodded as she began washing a bowl, "What was the assassination attempt for anyway?"

Mahsa scrubbed at the bowl she was currently cleaning with a small scowl, "Thanks to Sinbad making a comment about Armakan and I being in a relationship, a few parties assumed we were in one and decided to assassination attempts were the way to go. Armakan cut off my contract early to prevent me from being killed despite the fact I could have easily dealt with anymore assassins," She snorted softly, "Honestly, they assumed just because Armakan and I were friends that we were in a relationship," She shook her head, "I don't think that would put Kouen in a bad mood though."

"Right," Kouha glanced at Judar who looked at Mahsa with a look of disbelief on his face, "Mahsa, do you like En?"

Mahsa looked at Kouha with a confused frown, "What do you mean? Of course, I like En. He's my friend."

"Not as a friend, Mahsa," Kouha shook his head, "I mean as a lover,"

Mahsa's cheeks heated up a bit as she turned back to her self-appointed task, "Does it really matter?"
"Considering the fact it involves my big brother and one of my close friends, yes," Kouha grinned at her, "So do you want En as your lover or what?"

"Doesn't really matter if I want him as my lover or not," Mahsa forced the blush down, "After all, I'm leaving Kou within the next few weeks once we've gotten everything we need together and have a route back to Reim planned,"

"So you're coming back at some point," Kouha pointed out.

Mahsa paused as she was cleaning another bowl before continuing as she shook her head, "Still doesn't mean we'd end up as lovers. Not only does En probably not feel that way towards me, I can't feasibly get into a relationship with him outside of the friendship we share," She looked at the bowl while scrubbing it, "En will eventually end up taking a wife, someone to be his Empress once he takes the throne after your father kicks the bucket, I can't be that person. I'm half-Fanalisis and from a country that has almost non-existent ties to Kou," She finished the bowl and cleaned off her hands while setting the rest of the used dishes to clean themselves, "Seeing as I refuse to be second to anyone when it comes to whoever I'll end up being with, it doesn't actually matter if I want him as my lover or not."

"But you're a metal vessel user, Kitty-Cat," Judar pointed out with an eye-roll, "You pretty much trump any of the dumb bitches currently trying to get into Kouen's pants,"

Mahsa shook her head as she took out the tarts which were finally done, "It doesn't work like that, Jujube," Judar scowled at her as he took a cookie from the tray, "I won't be with someone when there isn't love involved for one. For another, I'm a Fanalis. Half-blood perhaps, but still a Fanalis. No one would accept one as Kouen's wife no matter what kind of abilities they hold," Mahsa picked up a cookie and bit into it letting out a soft moan as the chocolate chips practically melted in her mouth, "Though it wouldn't matter as much had we been in Heliohapt, my ability to speak to serpents and the prospect of my children being able to do so as well would make everything else pretty much ignore-able."

Mahsa noticed the look Judar and Kouha shared with a raised eyebrow. Kouha spoke up with a frown while she took out the peach cobbler after checking to make sure it was ready, "Why would being in Heliohapt matter?"

Mahsa hesitated before admitting, "In one of my visions, I saw myself married to Armakan and pregnant with out child. Needless to say, the fact I actually married him is pretty telling."

After telling Kouen about her visions, Mahsa had told the other Ren siblings and Judar save for Hakuryuu after swearing them into secrecy. Kouha's jaw dropped while Judar choked on his cookie. She cleared Judar's wind-pipe with a spell while closing Kouha's mouth with her hand. Finishing her cookie, she cooled down the peach cobbler enough to eat and cut it into equal portions. Placing a piece onto a plate alongside some cookies and a cherry tart, she headed for the door as Kouha burst out, "You might marry the King of Heliohapt?!

Mahsa heard a crash from outside the door and Seishuu plus some servants standing around some broken tea sets. Placing down her plate with a mournful sigh, she began helping everyone clean up and make sure no one ended up injured. Seishuu quickly headed off with a rushed excuse about needing to check on his little brother.

Mahsa noticed that Kouen was avoiding her for reasons she wasn't too sure about, but supposed he was probably busy with working on figuring out how to take the next country on the chopping block so to speak. The same could be said for his birth siblings, Judar, and Hakuryuu though the
last wasn't too surprising since he had been quite annoyed with her about talking to Kouen. Hakuei had no answers about what was going on save for the fact Judar was planning to take Kougyoku out Dungeon diving soon enough. Rather than let herself feel put out about it, she began focusing on getting everything ready for her departure.

Hakuei proved to be a big help making it easier to get the supplies they needed. Mahsa ended up picking up a rather lovely jade dragon statue clutching the symbol of the Kou Empire in it's talons during a trip to the local market with the black haired princess. She grabbed some souvenirs for those back home that would actually appreciate them. Luna picked up some stuff that she thought her father might like while Jori chose to pick up a few things for himself. One of the things that she ended up getting for people back home was a rather large order of sake that would be shared with the Fanalis Corps mostly to get their opinions on it. Which would also likely get everyone drunk, she had a mischievous grin on her face while telling Hakuei that.

Mahsa looked over her book on Norse Healing magic in the same garden from her first vision of Kouen. A small sense of anxiety ran through her at the thought especially given that the vision involved him kissing her. She pushed that thought from her mind while pushing down a small blush at the thought of kissing Kouen and focused on the book. Almost immediately she ended up absorbed within the healing spells and knowledge trapped within its pages. She got so lost that hearing Kouen's voice sounded from nearby caused her to jolt, "What are you reading, Sa?" Mahsa looked up to find him walking towards her with amusement burning within his eyes, "Normally you'd hear me approaching."

Mahsa's cheeks turned a light pink from the fact she'd gotten so caught up in her book, "Norse Healing Magic. It's really interesting."

"There are different branches of healing magic?" Kouen asked as he reached her.

Mahsa nodded while moving over when Kouen motioned her to do so, "Just like every other branch of magic that exists," Kouen sat down beside her, "Healing magics actually have the most variants within various branches of itself alongside runes especially since they tend to go together depending on which branch the magic comes from," She grinned slightly, "The diversity between different branches of healing magic and the variants within them is absolutely fascinating especially when you add in not only the point of origin where the magics came from, but also the person who developed the magic itself. Well that and the fact that most of them are still used today despite the fall of the places they came from," She held up the book in her hands, "Norse Healing Magics are some of the most interesting ones I've encountered because of how different it is compared to any other healing magics I've come across. It shows just how different magic from those areas are from the rest especially when you consider just how much influence the vikings gods and the weather patterns they dealt with had on the people," She flushed a bit realizing she was rambling, "Of course, you'd probably be more interested in the more battle oriented magics that came from that area or the tactics."

Kouen chuckled shaking his head a bit, "Not at all, I enjoy hearing about the different magics from beyond the veil. It's really surprising just how different things are."

"Well, it's mostly due to how people have adapted especially given that the magic on the other-side is a bit more varied," Mahsa marked her page and closed her book, "Uh, En? Was there something you wanted to talk to me about? You've been pretty busy lately along with everyone else and you seeking me out like this is a bit random."

"I apologize for neglecting you and I'm sure Kouha will as well when he realizes it," Mahsa was shocked to hear any form of an apology come out of Kouen's mouth.
Mahsa couldn't stop herself from blurting out, "Who are you and what did you do with Kouen Ren?" Kouen's eyebrow rose and she quickly explained, "You never apologize, so you can't blame me for saying something like that. Sorry," She shook her head as Kouen snorted a bit, "So what did you want to talk to me about?"

"I wanted you to eat dinner with me tonight seeing as you're leaving within the next few days," Kouen answered as he stood up and held out a hand for her, "Just you and I, Kouha is likely planning a big send off dinner,"

Mahsa took his hand, "I hope not. Crowds aren't something I'm a fan of," Kouen pulled her up, "But sure, I'd be happy to eat with you since it'll get me out of Kouha and Judar dragging me out to drink with them. While it can be fun, I'd prefer to avoid a hangover right before I leave," She looked at him curiously while releasing his hand noticing that he didn't do the same, "Though I do have to wonder why you didn't send a messenger like usual."

"I have my reasons," Kouen tugged Mahsa close using his grip on her hand.

Despite expecting it, Mahsa was too startled by the action to keep him from being able to do that. Chest pressed against his, she looked up at Kouen, "En, what ar-"

Kouen's mouth pressed to Mahsa's cutting off her question. An arm curled around her waist pulling the Fanalis even closer to Kouen as his hand let go of hers. She placed her hands on his chest, but didn't push him away from her despite the logical side of her saying to. Instead, she gripped the front of his robes and kissed him back as a hand curled around the back of her neck pressing her closer. Pushing away her logical side for the moment, she opened her mouth and slid her tongue across Kouen's bottom lip to deepen the kiss shuddering as the taste of him hit her tongue. They pulled away from one another when a whistle sounded from behind Kouen and she quickly took a few steps back pressing a hand to her lips. Kouen turned around and pinned Judar with a dark glare.

Rather than staying to see what happened, she grabbed her book and left the garden.

Luna looked up from the map they were marking the path they'd be using when she entered the room, "I thought you were going to be reading in the gardens."

"I was," Mahsa licked her tingling and slightly bruised lips, "Kouen is probably going to kill Judar,"

"Why?" Jori asked as he eyed her.

"Because Judar interrupted Kouen kissing me," Mahsa's face flushed a bit, "Holy shit, Kouen kissed me and I kissed back,"

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Despite the slight urge to not join Kouen for dinner, Mahsa did so anyway mostly due to Kouha showing up to dress her up which she allowed despite some protests. Kouha ignored her protests and forced her into some simple, yet still expensive clothes that she normally avoided wearing. The moment he finished saw him dragging her to one of the smaller dinning rooms in the family wing where Kouen was waiting. He pushed her inside and shouted, "Have a nice night you two!"

Mahsa shot a glare towards the boy as the door closed before turning to Kouen. Pushing down the urge to flush, she walked over to the table and sat down at the place set up for her. Kouen eyed her with an amused look, "Were you going to avoid joining me for dinner?"

"No," Mahsa shook her head, "I wasn't planning to get dressed up," She grimaced at his chuckle, "What is with your little brother and turning me into his personal dress-up doll?"
"He does that to everyone he likes," Kouen said as a servant poured them their drinks and he dismissed them, "Place that on the table,"

The servant placed the jug of wine he'd been pouring onto the middle of the small table and bowed before leaving the room through a door she hadn't noticed before. Mahsa was torn between cursing at the fact she'd been left alone with Kouen and pleased at there being no one else in the room. She picked up her cup, "So what have you been so busy doing lately? I figured it was probably something to do with the next country you guys have your eyes set on or Judar taking Yoku out to capture a Dungeon."

"Both actually," Kouen served himself as she took a sip of the wine which was just a little sweet and not quite sour, "Kougyoku insisted that none of us go with her save for Judar and some soldiers,"

"I wish her the best of luck," Mahsa said as she set down her cup to serve herself, "I just wish Judar had done it earlier if only so I could help her out once she's gotten the Djinn," She smiled lightly, "But she has you, Koumei, Kouha, and Hakuei to help her out which makes me pretty unneeded. Doubly so when you consider how likely it is that Judar of all people would summon a Dungeon with a Djinn like Alastor. She'll probably get something like Astaroth,"

"You've always known that she'd become a Dungeon Capturer," Kouen commented earning a nod as she speared some of the beef chunks she'd gotten from the bowl, "Do you have any idea which Djinn she might end up with?"

Mahsa shook her head, "Not really, I've always gotten the feeling of water from her which makes me think her Djinn will likely dabble in that magic."

Dinner passed at a rather relaxed and enjoyable pace with Mahsa slowly forgetting the nervousness that had formed after Kouen kissed her. Dinner was cleared away and dessert was placed on the table. She giggled while explaining something that had happened back during her first years in Reim while Kouen chuckled, "And we ended up panicking since someone was coming towards the room we were in especially since Razol was still carrying the damn watermelon. The room only had one window and we forgot about my magic while panicking. So rather than have me transform it into anything else, Razol went and chucked the rotted watermelon out the window before pressing me against the wall while kissing me when the door opened. My big brother ended up entering the room and since he knew for a fact we weren't together, he knew we were responsible for the riot in the soldiers bathhouse. He was about ready to start in on us when one of the soldiers that were watching Prince Nerva exclaimed that the watermelon had hit the prince and exploded in a shower of gooey stuff," She grinned brightly, "Rather than tell anyone that it was us since Nerva was on a war-path and likely to order some insane punishment due to us being Fanalis, Muu had us pretend to be searching for the culprits with him."

"So you didn't get into trouble?" Kouen asked earning a snort.

"Not even close, Muu had us cleaning everyone's armor and a whole bunch of other chores as revenge," Mahsa pouted a bit, "Which sucks since Muu actually found it really funny and probably wouldn't have punished us if we hadn't caused such a mess,"

Mahsa finished her dessert and shook her head when Kouen asked, "Do you want to drink with me?"

"Not tonight, I should probably get back and help with the last few details were trying to work out about our travel plans," Mahsa stood up with a smile, "If it weren't for that, I'd probably agree if only to keep this going. It's really fun to talk to you like this,"
"You could stay in Kou," Kouen suggested as he stood up as well.

Mahsa shook her head, "Sorry, En, but that's not something I can do. It's already been a year since I've seen my siblings," She sighed softly, "It's been the longest amount of time we've been away from one another since we found one another," She headed towards the door, "Though we'll definitely be back at some point since I've really enjoyed my time here despite certain events."

"I'm glad to hear it," Kouen said as he followed after her.

Mahsa pushed open the door and began walking towards her room with Kouen, "Next time I'm in Kou or we end up meeting, we should definitely drink together."

"I'd like that," Kouen replied with a slight smirk, "Perhaps you'll share more information about before you crossed the veil then,"

Mahsa nodded having already decided as much, "Sounds like a plan though you'll have to bring out something a bit stronger than what Ha and Jujube usually drink," She grinned at Kouen, "Mostly because I think you'd be able to hold your liquor better than those two."

"How would you know? We've never drank together," Kouen pointed before pausing, "Your visions?"

Mahsa shook her head, "Nope. I just have a feeling about it. And when it comes to my gut instinct, I'm usually right."

"And what is your gut instinct telling you right now?" Kouen asked as his lips tugged into a smirk.

Mahsa gave him an confused look, "About what?"

"About what I'm going to do when we reach your room?" Kouen asked as his voice gained a slight huskiness to it.

Mahsa's cheeks flushed a bit, "En, I really don't think you should do what you're planning on doing."

"Why?" Kouen looked at her in amusement.

"Because," Mahsa took a deep breath as she steeled herself, "While I may find you attractive and like a lot more than I should, I won't let you put me into a position where I'll be a plaything for you," She stopped when Kouen froze mid-step, "That's all I'll ever be to you besides a friend and I won't be in that position, En. If it means that I can't be with you and will only ever be a friend, I'd be content," She looked into Kouen's slightly wide eyes and smiled sadly, "If you truly care about me, En, you wouldn't put me in a position like that. Especially not when what you feel towards me is merely a passing affection brought on by attraction that will fade as soon as we fall into bed together, " She resumed walking, "Let's just stay friends, En. It'll be easier that way. Goodnight, En."

With that Mahsa left Kouen standing in the hallway, she swallowed heavily carefully putting together cheerful mask. When she reached her room, she opened the door and closed it behind her before pressing a hand to her face. She looked at Luna and Jori when the blonde asked, "How did it go, Mahsa?"

"It was fun," Mahsa's smile dropped as her eyes burned a bit.

"Did Kouen kiss you again?" Jori asked looking a bit furious, "If he's-"

"Then why do you look so sad?" Luna asked her.

Mahsa took a deep breath to center herself as she moved towards the dressing screen still set up from earlier, "Because I told Kouen why no matter how much I may like him, we would never end up together. Not in the way I want," Alastor sent feelings of comfort to her, "Not with the world like it is and especially not when the Kou Empire will end up going to war with Reim at some point."

Luna hugged Mahsa tightly, "Mahsa..."

"It's good that we're leaving Kou so soon," Mahsa told Luna as she carefully extracted herself from the blonde's hold and began undressing once she was behind the screen, "After all, Kouen will likely be unwilling to see the truth until some distance is put between us,"

It was funny how often heartbreak was spoken of yet rarely was self-done heartbreak even acknowledged. Then again, Mahsa knew that most people in her situation would damn the consequences, but she wasn't willing to do that. Not to herself or to Kouen, it was better that they stayed friends if only to prevent so much pain once Kou being to set it's eyes across the sea to Reim.

Thankfully for Mahsa, Emperor Koutoku decided that he required the attention of his eldest child allowing her to leave without seeing Kouen again. Kouha hugged her tightly, "You could push your trip back, Sa."

"Sorry, Ha," Mahsa hugged the prince back, "Can't do that, the goblins have a strict schedule and get pissy to the point of being unreasonable if something fucks with it," She pulled away and grinned at him, "Get stronger so next time we see one another, you might be able to actually beat me,"

"I will," Kouha grinned back at her, "Be careful,"

"You too," Mahsa took a step back, "Tell Jujube and Yoku that I'll miss them, okay?"

"I will. Send some letters though, Judar'll get pissed and sulk if you don't," Kouha gave her a mock-stern look, "You better send us all some letters,"

"Of course," Mahsa promised before turning to Koumei, "Mei, I expect those books I lent you to be in perfect condition when we come back,"

Koumei smiled at her, "They will be. Safe travels, Sa."

Hakuei offered Mahsa a light smile, "It's been fun getting to know you, Mahsa. I hope we can see one another again."

"I do too," Mahsa grinned slightly before losing it as she turned to Hakuryuu, "I hope that the next time we see one another you have a better plan than before, Hakuryuu,"

Hakuryuu stiffened a bit, "Goodbye, Lady Mahsa."

With that, Mahsa got onto the horse she'd be riding with Jori and Luna following with their own mounts. With a wave and called out goodbyes, they headed off to meet up with the goblins. She glanced back for a moment catching sight of Kouen walking with his father and shook her head as
she turned back. It was time to move on.
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Mahsa entered Lady Scheherazade's room dodging around a servant that was hurrying away. Lady Scheherazade looked up from her desk, "You arrived quickly, Mahsa."

"I was already on my way to find you," Mahsa replied with a slight shrug as she walked towards the magi's desk, "A messenger hawk from the goblin's delivered this," She reached the desk and held out the letter, "Alongside the letters from my friends in Kou," It was letter sealed with the official seal of Gringotts and unbroken, "I haven't read it yet, but I have a feeling this is going to be news that we've been waiting for,"

Lady Scheherazade held up her own letter from Gringotts though the seal was broken, "I received one as well. I have already called for Muu, Ignatius, and Nerva. Please wait to read it until they arrive."

Mahsa nodded as she moved to sit down, "Of course, has Dumbledore sent anything along?"

"No, but I do not doubt he will soon enough," Lady Scheherazade gave Mahsa a searching look, "What do you wish to happen, Mahsa?"

Mahsa looked at the letter in her hands dearly wishing she could just destroy it and move on, "I just want it to stop, Lady Scheherazade. That side of the veil has no hold on me any longer, it hasn't since I arrived here, but I highly doubt the snake will allow such a thing to go on once he realizes where I am."

The door opened and the three that had been requested joined them. Lady Scheherazade greeted them, "I'm glad you three made it. Mahsa, open the letter and read it."

Mahsa cracked the seal and unfurled the letter before reading aloud:

Dear Lady Mahsa Alexius of Reim,

We, the Goblins of Gringotts, must inform you that the parasite known as Lord Voldemort, formally Thomas Marvolo Riddle, has taken the Ministry of Magic and England. At the current moment, we have managed to find and destroy two soul pieces outside of the one that had latched onto you; however, we have been led to believe by Albus Dumbledore that there are more though there is little evidence beside the parasite's continued existence. As he has not deigned to give us the answers we require, we will be attempting to search through alternate means. It is with great reluctance that we must inform you that the parasite has been able to get information about the veil. Thankfully, it has no idea where the closest one is and no knowledge of how to puncture the veil though it will not be long until it's eyes turn to us. We will do our best to ensure that the parasite and his forces find it difficult to discover your location.

Albus Dumbledore has requested that those under his care be granted sanctuary. We have informed the High Priestess of Reim and the Emperor. We will be awaiting their reply.

May the blood of your enemies stain the ground,
Lord Goldenaxe, Branch Leader of the English Gringotts.

Mahsa looked at Lady Scheherazade with a grimace as Nerva growled under his breath, "More
wizards. This is your fault," The man snarled at her as he rounded on the Fanalis, "Y-

"Nerva, calm yourself," Lady Scheherazade halted any further comment as Mahsa glared at the blonde man while Muu's hand settled on Barbatos with a scowl on his face, "It is not Mahsa's fault, but Dumbledore's that we have to deal with this,

"My Lady, what is our plan?" Ignatius asked as Mahsa looked away from Nerva to focus on the magi.

Lady Scheherazade looked at Mahsa, "Mahsa, have you seen anything?"

Mahsa nodded slowly thinking about her visions of Reim and focused on the ones involving the magicals, "There will be some difficulties if you should choose to allow them sanctuary, they must be watched closed as culture shock and high emotions will end up causing problems especially among those with experience in the mundane world," Lady Scheherazade waved her on, "But they would also assist in Reim's development allowing it to become far more than it currently is," She swallowed as her mind went to if the magicals weren't granted safety, "Death awaits many of those following Dumbledore should sanctuary not be given. Chief among them muggleborns both children and adults."

Mahsa closed her eyes as Alastor radiated comfort. She pushed the images from her mind as Lady Scheherazade said, "We will be attack regardless by the snake, correct?"

"Yes though it would take longer if those under Dumbledore are granted sanctuary," Mahsa answered as she opened her eyes to look at the magi, "Those left on the other side of the veil will fight that much harder if those they care for a safe,"

"Then I will grant them sanctuary," Lady Scheherazade looked at her four King Vessels, "Mahsa, I want you to create as many healing potions as possible as it's quite likely that those coming to us will be in bad shape. Muu, I want you to speak with Gladious Alexius about this matter and finding housing for those that will be under our care. I will send a letter to him as well as many of the other noble families about finding room for them. Ignatius, you will be organizing a guard for the magicals coming this way. Nerva," She pinned the man with a minor glare, "We will be speaking with the Emperor and having the senate gather in order to speak on this matter,"

"Yes, Lady Scheherazade," Was murmured by all of them.

"Now go, Mahsa stay," Lady Scheherazade said as she took out a blank piece of paper and a pen. Everyone else left with Mahsa frowning a little, "Lady Scheherazade?"

Lady Scheherazade began writing as Mahsa shifted in her seat a bit, "Mahsa, I want you to travel to Balbadd," Mahsa kept her mouth closed despite wanting to say something, "It will be after the magicals are settled and you're able to provide healing. Recently all trade with Balbadd has been cut off, it hasn't caused many problems just yet, but it will eventually. I have been receiving some rather odd reports before then since the former King of Balbadd's health began to decline, but had thought it was due to an inexperienced ruler. The cut off in trade however caused me quite a bit of alarm."

Mahsa's eyes widened as she realized what this meant, "I see. What do you wish for me to do when I arrive and get a grasp of the situation?"

"I wish to be informed of what happens via mirror. Other than that, you're free to do as you wish," Lady Scheherazade offered Mahsa a light smile, "After all, you've shown to be quite adept at
keeping your head in situations like this,"

"And if the situation fixes itself?" Mahsa asked thinking about the events she'd glimpsed.

"You should travel for awhile," Lady Scheherazade replied as she turned back to her letter, "It is an unfortunate fact that the magicals will likely blame you for their situation and to hopefully keep from worsening the trouble they cause, you'd be better off traveling,"

Mahsa had thought as much, "I see. Perhaps it's time for a return trip to Heliohapt and maybe a small trip to Sindria as well."

"I will leave that up to you," Lady Scheherazade said as Mahsa stood up, "I would suggest you get to work on those potions. It is likely we'll be needing quite a few,"

"Yes, Lady Scheherazade," Mahsa murmured in agreement and quickly left the room.

As soon as the wizarding refugees began pouring into Remano, Mahsa got to work on healing any that needed it with all the other healers currently in the capital. She wasn't quite so surprised to discover that very few people recognized her even those that had gone to Hogwarts with her. The few that did recognize her seemed intent on ignoring the Fanalis either due to being angry at her or understanding why acknowledging her presence was a bad idea. Many of those that didn't recognize her recognized Luna or Blaise who had been helping where they could, the reception for the two wasn't too warm though many were thankful for the help.

Mahsa thankfully had a day off to recover from the sheer amount of work healing over a hundred and fifty people required even with the help of the other healers. The magical healers from beyond the veil were helpful to a degree though many agreed that they needed quite a bit of work and would be putting the group through some rather intensive training sooner or later. She didn't want to stay inside seeing as she'd spent the last week or so stuck in an infirmary or brewing potions. She wasn't allowed to train due to how low her energy was. So she took to the palace gardens, she laid down with Darius acting as her pillow and dozed underneath the warm sun after reading her latest letter from Kouha that was mostly filled with complaining about his father being a dick to Kougyoku and treating her like all the other female siblings save for Hakuei.

Mahsa jolted into wakefulness as she heard a Razol shout, "Green-eyes, you here?"

"Over here," Mahsa wondered what Razol wanted since the elder Fanalis was on duty, "Aren't you on duty?"

"Yup," Razol came into view with two people that Mahsa could barely recognize, "These two wanted to see you."

Ronald Weasley and Hermione Granger stared at Mahsa in shock as the Fanalis did the same. She broke the silence after a few moments while eyeing the two worn down adults that had replaced her teenage friends, "It's been a long time, Hermione. Ron."

Razol cleared her throat, "I'll go wait by that bench back there. Green-eyes, call me if you need help or whatever."

"Will do, Darling," Mahsa replied as the elder Fanalis nodded and headed off.

Mahsa looked at her two former friends unsure what to say. Hermione spoke first, "Hawthor-"
"Mahsa. My real name is Mahsa Alexius," Mahsa corrected Hermione, "Please use it,"
Hermione nodded with a barely audible swallow, "Mahsa then. You're looking well."

"Not being abused by the Dursleys and training to fight really helped," Mahsa answered with an
awkward smile, "You two look tired,"

"Yeah," Hermione shifted a bit awkwardly.
Ron spoke up, "So this is where you actually came from, huh?"

"Not the palace itself, but yeah," Mahsa nodded lightly.

"Cool," Ron scratched the back of his neck.
Mahsa felt Darius shift behind her and said, "I want you two to meet my second familiar, Darius.
Dari, this is Hermione Granger and Ronald 'Ron' Weasley," Darius raised his head making the two
magicals whiten a bit, "Dari's harmless unless you try to harm me."

"I-i see," Hermione muttered unable to take her eyes off of him.
Mahsa giggled a bit before turning to Darius, "Dari, why don't you go for a flight and find
Hedwig? I'm sure she'd be interested in knowing what's going on. I should be just fine here."

Darius nodded as Mahsa shifted away from him and the chimera quickly shifted forms before
taking off after nuzzling his master lightly. Hermione burst out, "A chimera? Your second familiar
is a chimera?"

"Yeah. Got him during my time with the goblins before coming here," Mahsa smiled as she
watched Darius fly out of view, "He's a real softy unless something pisses him off which usually
happens when they threaten me," She looked at the two, "So I guess we've got a lot to talk about,
huh?"

"Yeah," Ron shook his head, "I can't believe you're a healer, Mahsa," He plopped onto the ground
across from her with Hermione following his lead, "I mean you were a pretty physical person back
when we were younger,"

"I'm still a physical person," Mahsa smiled lightly, "Just mainly a healer because I love doing that,
I love fighting too and train quite a bit," She eyed the two noticing that both carried some of the
other's scent, "So when did you two get together?" Both began to splutter and she reached up to tap
her nose, "Half-Fanalis, my nose is pretty sensitive and you both carry some of the other's scent in a
way that doesn't say casual fling. I honestly thought you'd end up with different people to be quite
honest,"

"Had things turned out differently, we might have, but the fighting back in England forced us to
realize just how childish our spats were and that they were causing unneeded stress," Hermione
answered with a mournful smile, "I guess we have you to thank for that, Mahsa,"
Mahsa stamped down on the small amount of shame that well up, "I'm glad you two are happy
even if the circumstance isn't the best."

"Are you?" Ron asked her.

Mahsa nodded lightly, "I'm really happy. No one expects anything of me save for what I'm willing
to give and they treat me as a real human being," She played with Alastor's bracelet, "My family is
here and I've got to meet so many different people that I can count as my friends," She smiled softly, "I finally know what it's like to have an actual home. Sure things haven't been easy in the least especially with my issues and some of the stuff I've had to deal with, it's still better than when I was in England."

"Do you have anyone, Mahsa?" Hermione gestured between Ron and herself.

Mahsa shook her head with a sad smile, "No. I don't have anyone in the romantic sense," She ignored the image of Kouen as it popped up in my mind, "I'm still young though and prefer traveling to looking for love."

Ron grinned while Hermione frowned at Mahsa, "Traveling? You finally got to live your dream of seeing the world?"

"Yup. I've been to quite a few places actually. I travel as a healer helping people as I go along," Mahsa answered with a light grin, "It's so different from what I've dreamed of, but definitely worth it especially when it comes to the people I've met. I'm actually going to be traveling again soon,"

"Really?" Ron looked a bit surprised, "Why?"

"Lady Scheherazade wants me to look into some stuff and it's probably better if I'm not here," Mahsa gestured to them, "Your people aren't exactly happy with me after all,"

"'Your people'?" Ron looked at her in confusion, "Mahsa, what do you mean?"

Mahsa gave him a look, "I meant what I said. Those that you arrived with are your people, mine are the Fanalis and the residence of Reim. I might have magic like you guys, but I'm not an Englishmen."

Hermione placed a hand on Ron's arm silencing him before he could protest and the formerly bushy haired witch gave Mahsa an understanding look before asking, "So where are you planning to go?"

"Balbadd, but after that, I'm not too sure. Probably go to visit Jori's home country and check on my friends there," Mahsa shrugged lightly, "Or Sindria, I haven't really decided though both are on my mind,"

They continued to talk for a little while with Hermione telling Mahsa about what happened after she left. 5th year at Hogwarts saw a Toad in the Defense position that had a reign of terror over the school until she ended up going missing for awhile towards the end of the year when a rebellion of the students happened due to an 'illegal' Defense club formed by Ron and Hermione. Everything after that mostly dealt in Dumbledore trying to cover up her absence and deal with the fallout of Voldemort being active again. For over two years, the snake bide its time before attacking the Hogsmeade and the Hogwarts Express at graduation. After that, the Ministry finally got off its ass trying to protect their people as well as trying to find a way to drag her back. Many of those that had been in her year at Hogwarts actively joined the war effort on Dumbledore's side, they had realized just how bad being sheep was.

By the end of it, Mahsa was torn between two feelings. One the one hand, she hated that the innocence of those beyond the veil had been tainted and torn away so quickly. On the other hand, she was happy to know that there was an actual fire and will to fight within them. She shook her head at the two, "It sounds like it's been pretty rough on everyone, but perhaps it's for the best. You've all grown and become better for it even if the scars will likely haunt you," She smiled at the two, "I'm proud of you both for fighting and becoming who you're meant to be," She held up a
hand to stall any comments, "That being said, I won't actually get involved until that parasite attacks my family or I. I meant my words to Remus."

Ron's hands clenched into fists while Hermione gave her a sad look. Ron stood up and stalked off with a low snarl. Mahsa watched him go before looking at Hermione. Hermione sighed deeply, "I'm not going to say anything. You have every right to decide that."

"I'm glad to hear that you're still the voice of reason," Mahsa joked earning a soft laugh from the brunette and turned serious, "I meant what I said back then Hermione," She looked at the witch, "I'm not a hero nor do I want to be. Heroes always end up losing the most."

"It's time for us to be our own heroes," Hermione said as she stood up with Mahsa following her, "Mahsa, do you really have no one?"

Mahsa stiffened a bit before shaking her head, "I'm not romantically involved with anyone, Hermione."

"But that doesn't mean you don't want to be," Hermione said earning a narrowed eyed look from Mahsa. "You're pretty good at hiding it, Mahsa. If it hadn't been for the fact I've been able to see through your masks, I probably wouldn't have seen it. I probably shouldn't be able to see it given how much time has passed, but I guess that means I'm lucky,"

"Hermione..." Mahsa trailed off with a frown.

"Why can't you be with that person, Mahsa?" Hermione asked with a sad look, "Please Mahsa, tell me,"

Mahsa hesitated knowing that Razol was listening, but decided that she needed to get this off her chest. Even a year since leaving Kou, it still hurt like hell to talk about it, "Because of his position, Hermione. Because in the end, the pain will be so much worse than us just being friends. I can never be more than a side woman to him. Even if that weren't true, a time will come and we'd be at war due to his ideals. I don't want to fight the person I want to be with, Hermione. But I'll have to eventually because I refuse to lose my family or my home," She swallowed heavily, "Besides, I doubt he actually feels anything save for a passing attraction towards me. I can't put myself through that even if it hurts like hell to not go for it," She looked at Hermione who was eyes were filled with shock, "I can't say those words. I can't acknowledge it out loud. Not when it'll make it real, I can't do that to myself."

"Oh, Mahsa," Hermione whispered reaching out as if to touch the Fanalis before pausing.

"One day, I end up with someone and hopefully I'll love them enough to make this stop hurting," Mahsa pushed back the tears that wanted to fall.

Mahsa leaned against the balcony looking out at Remano as it stretched out below. She spoke as footsteps approached her, "Razol told you, didn't she?"

The footsteps faltered for a moment before continuing. Myron spoke as Mahsa kept her eyes trained on those walking around the city, "Why didn't you say anything?" Myron reached her side, "We're here for you. If you're not comfortable talking to brother, you can always talk to me."

"I know, Myr. It's not that I didn't want to tell you," Mahsa looked at her sister, "It's just really hard to think about and talking just makes it seem worse. I just..."

Mahsa let out a frustrated sigh and felt tears burn at her eyes. Myron hugged her, "Take your time,
Mahsa. I'm here."

Mahsa leaned into her sister, "Myr, it hurts so much. I want him badly, but he isn't mine. He can't be mine especially with his dream being what it is," A tear ran down her cheek followed by another, "I want to see his dream, but I don't want to lose anyone. I don't want to lose Muu or you. I don't want to lose the friends that I made over there, but to not lose you two again, I'd fight against them," She bit back a sob, "I've tried to look for other alternatives, but I can't especially when everything else is so fucking muddled it makes my head hurt. What use is this stupid power if I can't use it to find a way to keep things from happening."

Myron hugged her even tighter as Mahsa began to sob. Myron settled them on the ground hugging her little sister tightly as the younger Fanalis broke down. When the sobs and tears slowed, Myron murmured, "Things will work out as they're meant to, you told me that awhile back remember and I still think it's true. If that man is truly meant for you, you'll end up together and it'll be worth whatever pain comes your way."

Mahsa shook her head, "I don't want it, Myr. I don't want to love him especially if it means losing Muu and you."

"Love fucking sucks, Little Sister," Myron murmured with a low sigh, "But it can be amazing,"

"Muu would probably disagree," Mahsa muttered earning a snort.

"Muu's our big brother and is pretty much duty bound to disagree with his little sisters falling in love with anyone," Myron replied making Mahsa give a wet giggle and she smiled at the younger halfling, "Mahsa, I promise to support you no matter what though I have to ask, who exactly is it?"

"En," Mahsa answered with a slight flush as she sat up properly and began wiping away her tears, "Kouen, I just can't explain everything about why I..." She choked a bit and decided to switch words, "Like him so much," Myron gave her an encouraging look, "Something about him, it draws me to him and makes my filter pretty much turn off. I love spending time with him especially when he's not being a fucking pushy and arrogant bastard. He's really serious most of the time and I kind of want to smash his stupidly attractive face in sometimes just to make him react somehow. He can fight really well and I love sparring against him especially since he's able to adapt which actually makes winning a challenge," She didn't notice her lips pulling into a smile or her eyes brightening, "He doesn't even pretend to be one of those stupid prince's from those idiotic fairy-tales back beyond the veil. He's an asshole, but he cares about his people even the ones that are newly conquered," She looked at her sister and shrugged, "I don't know what else to say,"

"Sounds like how I feel towards Lo'lo," Myron answered before pulling a face as Mahsa giggled, "Hey! It's not funny,"

"You two fight like a pair of cats and dogs though, Myr," Mahsa grinned at her sister feeling a lot better, "No wonder seeing either of you fight with someone else feels like something's missing,"

Myron scowled at Mahsa for a moment before gaining a concerned look on her face, "Hey, Mahsa. What did you mean by your visions becoming muddled?"

Mahsa frowned as she tried to form words, "Just a lot of the visions I've been having are oddly broken up and spotty sometimes. It mostly involves this weird kid that I see with that blonde prince I told you about, Alibaba Saluja. It involves those odd priests too sometimes and black Rukh. I talked about it with Lady Scheherazade, but she doesn't have any idea either."

"That doesn't sound very good," Myron murmured with a frown.
Mahsa shrugged lightly, "It might be good when it involves that odd kid though. That odd kid, I always get a good feeling whenever I see him," She stood up rubbing at her eyes as Myron did the same, "Myr, thanks for this."

"It's my job as your older sister," Myron hugged her gently before pulling the younger Fanalis into a headlock and burrowing her knuckles into the witch's head, "This is for laughing at me,"

When Muu came to find them later, he found Mahsa and Myron curled up together fast asleep with heavily mussed clothing as well as multiple scrapes. Rather than comment, he shook his head and easily picked both of them up noting that Mahsa was a bit lighter than she should be meaning they'd need to stuff her full more often while she was here. Rather than take them to their own rooms, he got them settled in his and joined them for the night after finishing his duties. The moment he laid down saw Mahsa sprawling across his chest and pushing her head beneath his chin while Myron just threw an arm over their younger sister. Smiling slightly, he closed his eyes and went to sleep knowing that both his sister were alright.

Mahsa packed her things making sure to add extra potions and ingredients since there was a big chance she'd have a lot of healing to do. She also made sure to carry a few different types of currency as well since there was no telling if shops in Balbadd were taking the same currency as before. She had both Luna and Jori back quite a few extra supplies knowing that food might be short. There was no question in her mind that Balbadd would be in a rather bad state, the visions she had of it lately were the guiding force behind her current thoughts on the situation.

Once she had everything packed and made sure everything had been checked off her list, Mahsa left her room knowing that it would probably be awhile before she saw it again. She had spent the last few days whenever not preparing for the trip with everyone making sure to spend the night with her siblings. She met Jori and Luna outside by the carriage they'd be taking to the port where they'd get on a ship to Balbadd. Placing her things into the carriage, she listened as Luna said goodbye to her father and Jori gave his goodbyes to the friends that he'd made since coming to Reim with her. Mahsa turned back to the palace as she heard, "M-Mahsa!"

"Hermione?" Mahsa found Hermione rushing towards her with Ron and a few others, "What's going on?"

"I..." Hermione slid to a stop before her, "Mahsa, I know that we're the reason you're leaving and I'm sorry about that,"

"It's not fully your fault since I was getting a bit antsy staying in one place, Hermione," Mahsa offered the formerly bushy haired brunette a warm smile, "So don't worry about this. But that wouldn't make you run to see me off, so what's up? I haven't seen you since our talk in the gardens,"

Hermione flushed a bit as Mahsa noticed most of those around them fell silent to see what happened, "Well, we were kind of wondering if you'd take us with you."

"Take you with me?" Mahsa gave her an odd look and shook her head, "Absolutely not,"

"Bu-" Hermione began only to be silenced by Mahsa raising her hand.

"Hermione, I'll be blunt since I have a feeling that's the only way you'll accept my answer," Mahsa frowned at the woman, "Not only do I not trust anyone among you," Hermione's eyes filled with hurt, "We're going into a potentially dangerous situation. I cannot put you into danger especially
after you've just escaped a war-zone. I trust Jori and Luna to watch my back. I know they can do that and won't become dead weight," She felt Darius settled around her shoulders like he usually did and reached up to rub his scales, "I have no idea what your current abilities are and, to quote my least favorite professor, any foolish wand waving will likely get you killed out there. None of you have any experience using weapons beside your wands and I doubt most of you aim to kill if attacked by anyone," She shook her head, "So no, you will not be coming along with me. None of you,"

"Y-you don't trust us?" Hermione murmured softly.

Mahsa shook her head, "We haven't been around each other in years and have barely seen each other since your arrival on this side. You know absolutely nothing about me beside what I've told you or you've found out. The same could be said for me. Seeing as I'm not stupid nor naive, I don't trust you at all," She smiled sadly, "I'm really sorry, Hermione. I truly am, but trust is something that needs to be earned and you've got a long way to go before I give it to you again," She gestured at the group, "You guys need to take the time and heal not to mention actually get an understanding of the world around you. Throwing you straight into the fire by coming with me would probably get you killed, I don't want that on my conscience."

Ron spoke up with a frown, "We're not useless, you know."

"I doubt you are if you've survived this long," Mahsa replied giving her former friend a small smile, "If you were ever truly my friend, you'd understand and accept what I'm doing even if it's a hard potion to swallow,"

"Mahsa," Myron walked up carrying a package in her arms, "Everything okay?"

"Is it?" Mahsa looked at her former friends and saw them reluctantly nod, "Myr, I want you to meet some of my former friends. The ginger haired man is Ronald Weasley and the brunette with the cinnamon eyes is Hermione Granger. Guys, this is my big sister Myron Alexius,"

Myron nodded to them with a slight frown, "Nice to meet you both," She turned to Mahsa, "Here."

Mahsa took the package from Myron noticing the slight weight to it, "Myr, what is this?"

"Just some stuff you might need and a reminder to come home at some point," Myron smiled at her, "And some snacks too,"

"Thanks, Myr," Mahsa put it into the carriage before hugging her sister, "Stay safe,"

"I should be telling you that," Myron hugged her back tightly, "Come back to us, Mahsa. Even if it's just for a little while,"

"I will," Mahsa promised as she took in Myron's scent one last time, "I promise you that I'll be back no matter what,"

Myron beamed at her before stepping back. Muu stepped up and pulled her into a tight hug, "Be safe, Little Sister. Don't pick up anymore bad habits and try to eat more often, you're too light."

"Yes, Mother," Mahsa took in his scent as she hugged him back, "Don't get too caught up in work, you need to have fun sometimes even if it's just enjoying a cup of wine by the fire. Stay strong, I want to spar with you when I'm back and I'd prefer actually having to work at kicking your ass,"

"Good luck with that, you're a few years too young for that, Mahsa," Muu pulled away, "Be careful, Mahsa. We have no true idea what's going on there,"
"I always am," Mahsa offered him a bright smile, "I'll come back in one piece, Muu,"

"Good," Muu ruffled her hair earning a shout of protest as she swatted at her hair, "Love you, Mahsa,"

"Love you too, Muu," Mahsa fixed her hair once he removed his hand.

A few other goodbyes were said before Mahsa, Jori, and Luna got into the carriage.

Looking out at the ocean as night fell, Mahsa heard Alastor murmur, "And so fate starts to run it's course."

'We'll be ready for it,' Mahsa promised as stars filled the sky and Luna laid down to sleep, 'We have to be,'

There wasn't anymore time, they may only have a number of weeks before things truly began to kick off and that blue haired kid appeared. She remembered seeing flashes of Sinbad, Ja'far, and Masrur. She couldn't figure out what they were doing in Balbadd, but it probably had to do with the trade problem. Though why Sinbad was going himself, she couldn't be sure since Ja'far or one of the other generals could do so just as easily. She wasn't quite looking forward to seeing the purple haired king, but supposed it might be interesting. She laid a hand on Darius' head as the image of Judar passed through her mind's eye. What was Judar doing there? She doubted it was good since the black magi would likely want to cause trouble, but it would be nice to see him. Maybe they'd get the chance to talk, she hoped that he wouldn't try to con her into Dungeon Diving again.

Balbadd looked like shit was the first thought that ran through Mahsa's head. Granted there weren't any dead bodies laying in the street or any overt sign of fighting going on, she could see the thinness of the people and the despair in their eyes though it wasn't too bad near the docks. She bit back a grimace as they passed a few children begging on the streets. Luna whispered softly, "This is bad, Mahsa."

"I know," Mahsa looked at the two, "For now, we'll find some place to stay and get an understanding of what the hell happened. None of us are going near the palace right now, I'd prefer to keep anyone bearing a bad feelings towards the current rulers from seeing us," She caught sight of one of the goblins and an idea came to her, "Let's go speak to the goblins first, they have an outpost here. They'll be able to tell us a lot."

"Wouldn't it make sense to send a message to the palace about us being here?" Jori asked as Mahsa led the way towards the outpost.

Mahsa shook her head, "No, we need them to be unaware of us especially since we're not here in any official capacity," Mahsa glanced back at Jori with a light smile, "After all, Lady Scheherazade doesn't want them giving us bullshit and trying to hide what's going on."

"Right," Jori looked at her head specifically the wrap around it, "That's why you had us all wear these head wraps,"

"For the moment," Mahsa nodded as she looked forward, "While I'm unsure if the current rulers remember our past visit, I would prefer to lay low which is why we will not be using Alastor unless it is night time. We'll be waiting until Lady Scheherazade asks us to approach the royals,"

The leader of the goblin outpost met with Mahsa and her companions not too long after they
arrived at the outpost. The female goblin, Venomfang, gestured for them to take a seat, "Lady Alexius, merry meet."

"Merry Meet, Venomfang," Mahsa replied with a light smile, "Thank you for meeting with us, I'll try to avoid taking too much of your time,"

Venomfang nodded with a soft grunt, "I assume the Lady Magi wishes to know what's going on?"

Mahsa nodded as a servant entered the room and gave them all some water, "Yes, Lady Scheherazade is deeply concerned about the pause in trade. While it won't cause many problems for a time, the continued freeze will eventually harm Reim quite a bit. I have my assumptions about why this is, but would prefer not to voice them until more information has been given."

Venomfang gave her an approving look, "As the old King's illness grew, the princes, the first and second, took over ruling though mostly the first as Lord Alibaba had not been named legitimate until not even a few days before King Rashid took his last breath. The new king is, Ahbmad, and the Deputy king is Sahbmad though you will rarely find Lord Sahbmad interfering with his brother's rule."

"I assume that neither is a proper ruler?" Mahsa asked as she picked up her cup of water and took a drink from it.

Venomfang grimaced, "No, they may share the blood of royalty, but proper rulers they are not. Ahbmad is a spoiled and greedy pig ready to drain his people dry of if it means filling his stomach and that of the nobles. Sahbmad has is a weak and fear-filled mouse that barely squeaks in the presence of others." Basically the very kind of people the goblins absolutely despise, "Neither knows of war or bloodshed, Ahbmad will bleed this kingdom dry without any thought of his people's suffering until he begins to suffer too."

"Sahbmad?" Mahsa requested with a frown.

"Admittedly, he is trying to save the Kingdom," Venomfang looked rather annoyed to say that, "The mouse uses someone to pass information on to the rebel forces, the Fog Troupe. It doesn't help much as the rebels lack the ability to do real damage,"

Mahsa scowled slightly, "But how did the pig manage to put things into such a bad situation?"

"The Banker," Venomfang looked ready to spill blood, "That creature lulled the pig and his nobles into a false sense of security. Lending out money and making it seem endless, the Banker had them flood the market with this," Venomfang held up a familiar bit of currency that Mahsa hadn't seen since leaving Kou, "I assume you're familiar with this,"

Mahsa nodded suddenly connecting the dots between Kouha's recent letters filled with complaints and what was occurring in Balbadd, "Now the banker is tightening the purse strings so to speak, he's pushing them to join the Kou Empire in someway."

"I have heard along the grapevine that a betrothal is in the works," Venomfang answered as Mahsa felt a burst of anger that she barely kept from showing, "One of the Princess', Princess Kougyoku, is likely to be snagged with it,"

Mahsa growled softly, "I see."

Venomfang eyed her, "You are friends with her, correct?"

"Yes," Mahsa took a deep breath, "Venomfang, Lady Scheherazade has not asked us to act in an
official capacity, but we will be attempting to work on the situation in someway. Would you know of a place we may stay? Something long term,

An arrangement was worked out between Mahsa and the goblins. Mahsa, Luna, Jori, and Darius would be able to stay in one of the goblin owned properties within the city limits. The goblins would provide them with food stuffs and water. For a set amount of time during the week, they would assist the goblins in someway on a rotation allowing at least two of them time in the city doing what they came here to do. Darius took his turn with Mahsa mostly donating some venom or helping to translate for the goblins. During one specific day of the week, they would relax and restock any supplies they needed.

Mahsa picked out a schedule for them all after a week within Balbadd. Every two days, a pair would get food at a discounted price from the goblins alongside any water and other supplies needed. They would go into the slums and hand out supplies making sure to give a bit of extra to certain ones that needed it like mother's with little children. The day after would see Mahsa going into the slums and providing those that needed it with healing. The rest of the time would be spent gathering information about the Fog Troupe and what the people were actually feeling. While doing that, the two not working for the goblins would doing anything they chose to around the city. Jori tended to help out with any physical work. Luna played with the children. Mahsa told stories or taught those that wanted to learn how to do some basic healing. When Luna and Mahsa wanted to change things up, they performed magic tricks and brought some simple joy to the people.

On random days, Mahsa and Darius flying out to sea so long as the weather was decent. Luna would join them on Mahsa's broom. Mahsa and Darius would go fishing bringing their freshly caught fish to the slums. Any rotted fish was dumped onto Ahbmad's head much to the amusement of the people.

"Well, well, well what do we have here," A voice Mahsa had been hearing in her visions of Balbadd lately called out, "Food and supplies being handed out,"

Mahsa looked at Cassim feeling a mix of emotions though she hid it with a warm smile, "Is that a problem..."

"Cassim," Cassim introduced himself as he stepped through the crowd with a few other members of the Fog Troupe, "It's not a problem, but I find it odd that a foreigner like you would hand out supplies like this. Every single week,"

"We are travelers, Cassim," Mahsa answered as she turned to give a woman with a little boy clutching her dress a basket of food stuff, "Helping those in need where we go, I dislike seeing people suffer needlessly just because their ruler and the nobility are greedy pigs," Cassim's eyes brightened a bit, "Oh? And how are you getting all this stuff?"

"The goblins pay well," Mahsa answered as Luna handed out another basket, "Discounts and the like. It helps that they don't like the pig."

Luna spoke up as the last basket was handed out, "We're out, Mahsa."

Mahsa nodded and focused on the group of people around them, "Everyone, I am sorry to say that we're out of supplies to give out," A few murmurs and groans sounded, "For those of you that didn't get any supplies today, I want you to give us your names, so you can get yours first next time around. Those of you that can, I ask that you give a bit to those that didn't get anything."
Luna packed up the cart and got onto it. Mahsa followed her example as Cassim asked, "Who are you exactly?"

"My name is Mahsa," Mahsa answered as she looked at the teen, "Mahsa Alexius. I'm a healer and traveler,"

"Luna Lovegood. Traveler," Luna called out of her shoulder as Mahsa shifted the reigns about and the cart began to move.

"Nice meeting you, Cassim. I wish you and your troupe well," Mahsa called out over her shoulder, "We won't be joining up, but we aren't going to stop you either. Just avoid hitting the goblins, they'll slaughter you in seconds if you try anything,"

Darius sped up and soon they were rushing towards their temporary home. Luna looked at Mahsa as they moved through the streets, "Mahsa, was he important?"

"He's got a sad story, Luna," Mahsa murmured as she looked forward, "One that doesn't have a happy ending if things don't change somehow,"

Chapter End Notes

Balbadd arc here we come!
"M-Mahsa Alexius," Mahsa heard from behind her.

"One moment," Mahsa was a little surprised by how unchanged Alibaba's voice was.

Mahsa sealed the cut on her patient's arm. The little girl looked at the skin in awe before looking up at Mahsa. The girl's mother gave the healer a thankful smile, "Thank you so much, Mahsa."

"It's no trouble at all," Mahsa offered the woman a light smile, "The cut should be fully healed by tomorrow. If it breaks open or anything seems wrong, you should send word immediately and I'll come as soon as possible." She ruffled the little girl's hair, "Try to be a bit more careful, Kid. For your mother,"

"Yes, Big Sis Mahsa," The girl promised with a determined nod.

Mahsa picked up her bag of supplies and handed the girl's mother a small package of herbs, "Here, these should help with your son's cough. Brew two leaves every few hours. Once before each meal, he should be better in a few days. If not, please alert me."

"I will," The woman nodded as she took the herbs, "Is there nothing we can give you?"

Mahsa shook her head, "Nothing save for trying to stay as healthy as possible to ensure your children don't lose anyone so young."

With that, Mahsa turned and left the small temporary housing that the little family had set up. Alibaba quickly caught up with her, "Mahsa, what exactly are you doing here?"

"Healing and helping the people of Balbadd," Mahsa answered as Darius landed on her shoulders and assumed his usual position, "It isn't right for the people to suffer just because your half-brothers are being idiots,"

Alibaba grimaced as he walked beside her earning a few odd looks from the people, "But this isn't-

"I'm a healer, Alibaba. Healing those that need it save for my enemies is what I'm supposed to do," Mahsa cut him off with a snort and waved off those that looked ready to intervene if Alibaba tried anything, "They might not be my people, but no one deserves to suffer just because their King is a greedy pig with delusions of grandeur," She waved to a few of the children that called out to them and the adults that did the same, "Reminding them that not all are like your half-brothers helps,"

"I..." Alibaba gained a look of guilt on his face, "This is all my fault,"

"It's not," Mahsa shook her head, "Admittedly, you could have stayed and tried to change things for the better. There is no telling if it would have actually helped." She led subconsciously led them to the canal, "Your father was going to die regardless, King Rashid had an incurable disease that took the form of a cancer in his lungs which was slowly beginning to spread across his body. He knew that and the goblins did too. I did my best to ease his pain and help with the symptoms while in Balbadd,"

"Oh," Alibaba looked at the water as they reached the canal and Mahsa took a seat on the ledge. "That was one of the things that were meant to happen," Mahsa let her feet dangle, "Just as you were supposed to gain that Djinn of yours,"
"How do you know about Amon?" Alibaba demanded only to yelp as she pulled him to sit down beside her.

"Easy on the shouting, Blondie," Mahsa lifted her wrist allowing Alastor's bracelet to show, "I have one too. Alastor. He's different from your Amon in quite a few ways," Alastor muttered under his breath about showing the boy where he was, "I bet he doesn't speak to you,"

"Speak to me?" Alibaba looked at her in confusion, "How?"

Mahsa tapped her head, "In here, they can speak telepathically to their users due to how they're bound to us. Some are talkative, it depends on the Djinn really," She dropped her hand, "But that wasn't how I knew, I've always known you'd have one of them just like anyone else currently with one or destined to gain the power of kings. I've seen it."

"You're a seer?" Alibaba's eyes were wide.

Mahsa nodded with a light grin, "Yup, I'm a true-seer alongside being a Fanalis, Metal Vessel user, and Witch. I see possible outcomes, but only events set in stone will happen no matter what," She lost her grin, "It isn't fun seeing everything. It can be a pain in the ass especially when bad things are supposed to happen and there isn't much I can actually do about them."

"So when the king died, it was always going to happen like that?" Alibaba murmured with a frown.

Mahsa shook her head, "Not quite, it was going to happen, but how it happened wasn't determined until the moment it did," She reached out and tapped the sword on his waist, "I never knew which Djinn you would end up with just like how I never knew which one I'd get either. Somethings influence stuff like that, you were always meant to get something fiery while another metal vessel user I know was always meant to get a Djinn dealing with water."

Alibaba looked surprised before understanding hit him, "I was always going to leave, wasn't I?"

"That was the most probable outcome," Mahsa answered with a grin, "Your journey has only just begun,"

Alibaba's expressions cycled through quite a few emotions before settling on hesitant curiosity, "Mahsa, do you know about my fr-

"The blue haired kid is not someone I can see clearly, but I do know he is fine," Mahsa leaned back on her hands looking towards the water, "He's trying to find you and will though when that meeting will be is up in the air," She did know it would somehow involve Sinbad which meant she'd have to deal with him at some point, "He really cares about you," She made a decision that was likely going to cause ripples and might not even effect the outcome of how things happened no matter how she tried, "Alibaba, would you do anything for Cassim? Because he's basically your brother?"

Alibaba jumped at the question snapping out of his thoughts of the blue haired kid, "Wha-Yes, of course. Why?"

"Seeing the things I have," Mahsa shook her head with a sigh, "Alibaba, you need to talk to him. Not just listen to him speak, but actually talk to him. Have a 'heart to heart' kind of talk before it's too late," She got up and began walking away, "You'll know it's too late when the black sun comes and a monster is forged out of black hatred as a soul decides to push back against what it believes is it's fate,"

Mahsa paused as Alibaba shouted after her, "But what does that mean?"
"Let's hope you never have to find out, Alibaba. I dearly hope that one soul's sad story will be changed before it's fully written," Mahsa left Alibaba staring after her.

Darius nuzzled her as he murmured, "Let'sss hope that workss, Sssa."

"Agreed, Dari," Mahsa doubted she would find out until the end of it all though.

For the sake of Cassim, Mahsa hoped Alibaba got through to the teen.

"Mahsa," Luna knocked on the door to their potions lab, "Alibaba is here,"

"Can you finish this up?" Mahsa asked gesturing to the potion, "It's in the last stages. You need to take it off the flame in a minute and add the powdered bi-corn horn. Stir it clockwise for a minute then let it sit, it should turn sky blue which means it's done,"

"Right," Luna nodded and they switched places.

Mahsa washed her hands before leaving the room and found Alibaba waiting in the living area looking nervous. Darius was laying sprawled on the floor in his lion form which probably wasn't helping the blonde's nerves. Offering Alibaba a warm smile, she said, "Good afternoon, Alibaba. What brings you here?"

"I..." Alibaba flinched as Darius shifted.

Mahsa rolled her eyes, "Darius won't bite if you're not trying to attack me."

Alibaba's eyes widened as they darted to Darius, "That's Darius?!

"He's a shape-shifting chimera from beyond the veil," Mahsa snickered as Darius peered at Alibaba for a moment before dismissing the blonde in boredom, "So what do you want, Alibaba? Please just ask the question and don't bullshit around, I would prefer enjoying my day of rest,"

Alibaba swallowed as he drew himself up and forced his eyes to settle on her rather than the overly large lion, "I want you to train me."

Mahsa's head tilted slightly at that as she felt a small sense of disbelief, "Train you? Blondie, I'm shit at using a sword despite my big brother and a few others trying to teach me."

"Teach me to use Amon properly," Alibaba corrected her with a light flush, "I know there's more to it and I don't want Amon to regret giving me his power,"

Awe, the blond was actually kind of cute in a dorky and clumsy puppyish kind of way. Actually a kittenish, the boy wasn't very dog like though she supposed he could be a mix between the two. Mahsa mentally shook her head as Alastor muttered, "Are you really having those thoughts when the boy is asking you to teach him?"

'Do you blame me?' Mahsa focused back on Alibaba as she said, "I can't do too much. Our Djinn are really different besides which types of magic they use, so you'll be working on a lot of stuff alone,"

"So that's a no?" Alibaba wilted making her giggle a bit.

Mahsa shook her head, "Not a no, I won't be able to do much, I can kind of help you. Do you want to start right away?"
Alibaba perked up and nodded rapidly, "Yes!"

"Good, you'll need that enthusiasm," Mahsa led him outside, "I want you to meet me here every morning no matter how tired you are. If you fail to show up, I'll send Dari after you because I don't waste time on slackers. Got it?" Alibaba nodded nervously, "For now, you need to show me what you've got so far,"

Mahsa watched him run through the attacks he knew how to use and had to grimace. This was pathetic, she had gotten more when first using Alastor than the blond before her and she was a Fanalis. Shaking her head, she stopped Alibaba as Alastor muttered, "This kid is pathetic, I can't believe he's supposed to turn into that guy you saw."

'Me neither. It must be something Sinbad did or something he went through,' Mahsa took Amon from Alibaba when the blond reached her earning a squawk of protest only to wilt as she deadpanned, 'You're utterly pathetic at using Amon that it isn't even funny. The amount of magoi you're wasting alone for some flashy tricks is mind boggling. How you haven't killed yourself due to the amount you end up draining with those parlor tricks, I'll never understand.'

"Magoi?" Alibaba looked at her in confusion.

"Magoi. It's basically the life energy within your body. The only ones that don't have a finite amount are the Magi, but that doesn't matter right now," Mahsa looked over the sword noting it's cheap make which wouldn't cut it once the kid got into a true battle, "First things first, we're increasing your pool of magoi as soon as possible and getting you some understanding of it,"

"So wha-Ah!" Alibaba dodged sword, "What was that for?"

"First step, endurance," Mahsa grinned at him, "You start running. When you slow down, I'll throw something at you. Get moving,"

Jori looked at Alibaba as the boy limped away from their home after Mahsa had stuffed him full of dinner after feeding him some potions, "That was a bit mean."

"I suppose, but he'll never improve without a reason to," Mahsa didn't bother to look up from the book in her hand, "This will help him, he's not bad if you disregard the appalling lack of control,"

"You're building him up before you actually teach him anything, aren't you?" Jori asked with a raised eyebrow before shaking his head, "Don't kill him,"

"I would never," Mahsa gave Jori a look of mock-hurt before her expression fell into a small grimace, "I hope to hell that what I'm doing will be enough until Sinbad can get to him,"

"Sinbad will teach him how to use Amon, won't he?" Jori noticed her grimace deepen, "Does that annoy you?"

"A bit," Mahsa didn't enjoy the thought of sharing even if Sinbad was always meant to be one of Alibaba's teachers, "Jori, I need you to be on the lookout for any ships coming in from Sindria. I want some warning of when he'll appear,"

"Of course," Jori looked at her in concern, "Mahsa, are you okay?"

"No and I doubt I will truly be okay for a while," Mahsa book marked her page before closing the book and setting it aside, "Sometimes, it doesn't pay to know what might happen," She looked at the man with a pleading expression, "If I become too reliant on it or let it start to get to my head,
please do something," "I will. Luna and I will watch over you," Jori promised her. "You are our Queen and friend," Mahsa smiled weakly at him, "Thank you, Jori."

Mahsa noticed Sinbad's distinct hair walking towards along the canal with a certain blue haired kid and a Fanalis. She knew it would be less headache inducing to keep Sinbad from finding out about her being in Balbadd, but on the other hand, she had to tease the man. She called out, "You know, Sin. I knew you were a pervert, but wearing clothes for a child is definitely a low point especially when they do not suit you at all."

All three heads shot up with Sinbad's eyes widening and his expression filling with shock, "M-Mahsa?!"

"Yo," Mahsa waved to him and jumped down, "I have to say seeing you wander around in a child's clothing is definitely not something I'd ever thought I'd see you doing," She tilted her head as she looked up at him, "That does not make your reputation any less unappealing."

Sinbad's eyes narrowed a bit before he put on a goofy grin, "It's not my fault though. I got robbed by some bandits while resting on my way here and Aladdin here was kind enough to lend me some clothes."

"I see," Mahsa shook her head.

"The Rukh around you are really weird, Miss," The blue haired kid, Aladdin based on the clothes he was wearing, commented.

Sinbad looked a bit confused while Mahsa let out a soft laugh, "Yeah, I've been told that before. My name is Mahsa Alexius. You're Aladdin based on what the pervert here said," Sinbad pouted at her, "And you, miss?"

"Morgiana," The younger Fanalis looked a bit confused likely from Mahsa's scent.

"It's always a pleasure to meet another Fanalis, Morgiana," Mahsa decided to help the girl out earning a wide eyed look from both the kids, "Granted I'm only half, but still a Fanalis,"

"Wow, you're a Fanalis too," Aladdin turned to Morgiana with wide eyes, "Hey, Morg! We found one of your people,"

"Y-yeah," Morgiana looked at her with wide eyes likely not really believing her luck.

Mahsa looked at Sinbad as he said, "We're going to the place I usually stay. Why don't you join us, Mahsa?"

Mahsa thought about it before shrugging not really having much to do at the moment, "Sure, I can spare some time."

With that, they started walking in the direction of that hotel that Mahsa disliked quite a bit though that was mostly due to how gaudy it was. Aladdin looked at her curiously, "Miss Mahsa, how do you know Uncle Sin?"

"We met not long after I crossed into this world from beyond the veil," Mahsa answered earning a wide-eyed look from both the children, "You see while I was born on this side, I ended up on other
due to being kidnapped. Thanks to the goblins, I found my way home. We've only really had contact with one another once, but I'd recognize the pervert anywhere,"

Sinbad twitched a bit at the comment as Aladdin asked, "Really? What's it like on the other side?"

Mahsa shrugged lightly, "I wouldn't be able to tell you since I haven't been back since leaving and I didn't exactly explore the world before then. It's definitely different than this side especially when you considered that only witches and wizards are on that side."

"Those are the other magic users, right?" Aladdin asked earning a nod, "What are they like?"

"It depends on the individual," Mahsa answered as they moved onto the proper streets.

"You've already met one. Mahsa's a witch," Sinbad offered with a grin.

"Really?" Mahsa nodded at Aladdin who grinned, "What kind of magic can you use?"

"A lot of different types, but I mostly use healing magic since I'm a healer," Mahsa smiled at the boy already liking this particular magi, "I can also speak to snakes, but that's a magical talent that not many people have. I can turn into a Gryffin, but that's just me. It really depends on the individual what kind of magic they use just like with Magicians. Some are good at one type of magic and other's are good at another,"

"So why did you come to Balbadd, Mahsa?" Sinbad cut off the questions, "I haven't seen you since we were in Heliohapt,"

Mahsa glanced at him, "Just traveling with my companions, we decided to stay when I noticed what was going on here. As a healer, I'm duty bound to help all save for my enemies."

"Companions?" Sinbad looked a bit shocked, "You're traveling with people?"

"Jori Hamdan and Luna Lovegood," Mahsa replied with a light smile, "They along with Darius have been traveling with me," She looked at Aladdin, "Luna is a witch as well,"

Mahsa noticed Darius flying over head which meant the goblins were done putting together the potions supplies she needed. Sinbad noticed her eyes going upward and spotted Darius pretty quickly, "Darius."

"I've got to go," Mahsa turned to the two kids, "It was nice to meet you both. Miss Morgiana, I would be quite happy to speak with you while you're within the city about our people," Morgiana nodded with a determined look on her face, "Aladdin, a certain blonde with golden eyes we both know is definitely within the city. I'll pass along your presence if I see him before you do,"

Aladdin looked at her in shock, "Sin, I have a feeling that you'll be wanting to talk with me soon enough. See the goblins and mention me, they'll direct you to where my companions and I are staying. Bring Ja'far and Masrur along too, it would be nice to see them both again,"

Mahsa began heading off only to pause when Aladdin asked, "How do you know I'm looking for Alibaba?"

Mahsa tossed a grin over her shoulder, "I'll tell you when we meet up again."

With that, Mahsa took off through the streets feeling both happy and uncertain. Happy because she finally met the blue haired kid that had always left her wondering and uncertain because everything was about to take off.
Mahsa looked at Sinbad, Ja'far, and Masrur with a small frown as Darius laid in front of her eyeing the three. Jori stood behind her seat on the couch while Luna sat beside the Fanalis. She broke the silence, "Ja'far, Masrur, I am quite happy to see you both again."

"You as well, Lady Mahsa," Ja'far's lips twitched into a slight smile as Masrur nodded, "Darius is rather large now."

"Yup. He finished growing last year in this form and most of his growth in the other one has completely stopped," Mahsa scratched behind Darius' ears, "So I assume you three want to know why I'm here in Balbadd?"

Sinbad nodded with a frown as he sat forward with his hands steepled, "You'd be correct. Not that I'm unhappy to see you, Mahsa, I'm very glad that we were able to meet again even if more years has passed since our last meeting."

"That seems to be the way our meetings seem to go," Mahsa laid her hand flat on Darius' head, "Though it seems I've made a lasting impression on you going off what Queen Mira has said, you've spoken about me to the other members of your alliance," "What can I say? You're an interesting person, Mahsa," Sinbad offered her a light smile.

Mahsa looked at Ja'far as he asked, "So what are you doing in Balbadd exactly? It can't be just chance that you've come here."

"You'd be correct," Mahsa looked back at Sinbad, "Based on your presence here, you are aware that King Ahbmad has stopped all trade coming from Balbadd. As I enjoy traveling and needed to get out of Reim, Lady Scheherazade asked me to get an understanding of the situation," She grimaced, "While the pause in trade isn't going to do much damage to Reim at the current moment, it will in the long run,"

"It's because of those thieves, the Fog Troupe," Ja'far said earning a soft snort, "What's so funny?"

"You do not understand the full problem only what the greedy pig and his nobles choose to tell you," Mahsa nodded to Luna who took out a Kou bill and slid it across the table to Sinbad who picked it up, "The Kou empire seeks to take over Balbadd and is using someone known as the Banker. The Banker flooded the markets with those rather freely. The pig and his nobles didn't even notice it when he began to tighten his purse strings until now. Balbadd is in debt to the Kou Empire and it isn't one that they can pay thanks to the idiots ruling this place,"

"Paper money?" Sinbad muttered softly, "But how does that work?"

"It doesn't at least not in this situations as Balbadd is not a part of Kou," Mahsa left out the 'at the moment', "The value of Kou's paper money fluctuates depending on the government and the region where it is being distributed. The idea isn't bad, but it doesn't work in a place like Balbadd,"

"Which is why the situation is so bad," Ja'far frowned as he took the money from Sinbad. "It was worse when we got here," Mahsa retorted with a shake of her head, "Lady Scheherazade gave me leave to do as I wish until it's time to return to Reim. I've chosen to stay in Balbadd to help with the situation and hopefully keep certain events from transpiring,"

"Certain events..." Sinbad gained a concentrated look on his face, "What do you mean by that?"

"I'd prefer not to say especially when I do not trust you, Sinbad," Mahsa answered earning a frown from the man, "For now, I believe we should work together in some fashion though I don't truly
wish to get involved just yet. You need to see through the fog that Ahbmad has in place. Once you do, we will speak,"

"What do you mean?" Ja'far asked as his frown deepened and he looked away from the money.

"Simple, you three should leave now," Mahsa answered as she stood up, "If you're going to find the truth of the situation for yourselves and meet Aladdin's Alibaba, you must go now and plan out how to deal with the Fog Troupe,"

Sinbad looked ready to protest as did Ja'far, but neither could really say anything. Mahsa was right since they still needed to figure out a plan to deal with the Fog Troupe. Eventually, Sinbad stood from his seat, "Very well, Mahsa."

"See you soon, Sin," Mahsa grinned at his confused look.

With that, the three were sent off with Masrur glancing at her. Mahsa smiled at the elder Fanalis and earned a slight half-smile in return. Jori looked at her as she closed the door, "Mahsa, what happens now?"

"We go to the hideout of the Fog Troupe in a few hours," Mahsa answered as she began walking towards her room, "There will be people who require healing and a certain Self-Exiled prince I call a student to speak with,"

Sinbad, Ja'far, Alibaba, and quite a few members of the Fog Troupe looked shocked when Mahsa jumped down from the perch she had taken, "About time you all got back."

"Miss Mahsa!" Aladdin grinned at her, "What are you doing here?"

"Waiting for you guys to arrive," Mahsa answered as she strolled up, "I want those of you with injuries to go to the usual area where I treat you. Those without injuries go do whatever,"

Mahsa got down to work with Luna and Jori assisting her alongside some of those that had been taking lessons from her. She got to Sinbad who's hand was injured and began treating it. Sinbad spoke as he sat before her with Ja'far and Masrur watching her every move, "You knew what was going to happen."

"Have for awhile," Mahsa answered as she cleaned the cuts, "You're lucky Ja'far takes such great care of his weapons otherwise you'd probably get an infection,"

"How?" Sinbad asked with narrowed eyes.

Mahsa hummed lightly as she thought about how to answer it. On the one hand, Sinbad being the manipulative king he was might try something though him not having any metal vessels hindered that. On the other hand, it would probably keep some problems from happening. Eventually, she decided on telling him the truth, "I'm what's known as a true-seer. I see the potential paths that destiny might take which is ever changing until it happens. The only time that isn't true deals with events set in stone such as you becoming a metal-vessel user or founding Sindria."

"A seer?" Sinbad looked at her with wide eyes.

Mahsa nodded as she began applying a potion that would heal the cuts by tomorrow morning, "Mhmm. I didn't find out until awhile after our first meeting and didn't have the strongest grasp by our second."
"I've never heard of a true-seer," Ja'far commented earning a soft giggle from Mahsa.

"I'd be surprised if you had. We're a rare breed from what I've heard," Mahsa finished applying the potion and bandaged Sinbad's hands, "Though given all the facts, it's probably for the best. Those who can see the paths that fate and destiny might take don't see just the pleasant things,"

"You have the potential to change the very destiny of the world," Sinbad commented earning a bark of laughter from her.

"Any Dungeon Capturer has that ability, Sinbad," Mahsa grinned at him as she finished bandaging his hands and moved away from the man to pack up her supplies, "They are captains of the ships that flow through destiny's oceans and use the winds of fate to change the world. I do not usually do so unless there is a true need for it," She finished up, "That will heal up by tomorrow, I'd advise against doing anything with that hand until then,"

"What happens now?" Sinbad asked with a frown.

"You deal with the fallout of today and I see to any other patients before getting some rest," Mahsa turned and began leaving the purple haired man's new quarters, "Sinbad, I have only one warning. Try to manipulate me and you'll find out just why no one sane fucks with a healer especially one that is a Fanalis witch,"

Darius climbed off Luna's shoulder when she passed the blonde and settled in his usual position, "He'll sssttill try, won't he?"

"He isss a manipulative sssun that only hasss the desssire to protect hiss people," Mahsa replied with a low sigh, "I have alassso gained hisss attention. What do you think?"

Darius let out a low hiss of displeasure, "I prefer Kouen to Sssinbad. At leassst he isss clear about hisss own goal and isss not quite ssso manipulative."

"You and me both, Dari," Mahsa muttered softly

Mahsa watched Judar walk through the crowd of people in her Gryffin form with Luna on her back. Luna tapped her back lightly just above the saddle, "Judar's here," Mahsa let out a soft trill to show she knew, "It's really starting then."

Mahsa nodded and took off into the air once Judar had passed through the gates. She gave a shrill shriek to catch his attention once she was over him and inwardly grinned at seeing his eyes widen. Luna waved down at him and dropped the small basket that they'd prepared last night before going to the Fog Troupe's hideout. Judar caught it as he shouted, "What the hell are you guys doing here?"

"Mahsa told me to tell you, 'That's for us to know and you to find out, Jujube! Missed you.'" Luna giggled as Judar's eyes narrowed at both the comment and nickname, "See you, Judar!"

With that, Mahsa tore through the sky avoiding the arrows that were shot at her by the palace guards on Ahbmad's orders. She'd be quite glad when Alibaba got said orders rescinded.

Mahsa stepped out of the shadows after Judar had spoken to Sinbad and the black magi focused on her, "Kitty-Cat! What the hell are you doing here in Balbadd?"

"My job, Jujube," Mahsa answered as Sinbad's eyes widened at her words, "Do you really expect
me not to heal people when they're clearly suffering?"

"You're too nice, Kitty-Cat," Judar scoffed at her.

Mahsa snorted softly, "Healing others and helping them isn't about being nice, Jujube."

"Stop calling me that," Judar growled at her.

Mahsa grinned at him, "Make me, Jujube."

"You two know each other, Mahsa?" Sinbad asked with a frown.

Mahsa glanced at him as Judar grinned, "Yup! Kitty-Cat is the other person I've been trying to make into a King Vessel of mine, but she won't agree to it. I honestly don't know why you won't, we could have so much more fun together than what the old hag is letting you do."

"I'm not saying yes, Jujube," Mahsa shook her head, "Alastor is enough for me,"

"You're a metal vessel user, Mahsa?" Aladdin burst out in shock.

Mahsa nodded lightly as she looked at the blue haired magi, "My Djinn is Alastor."

Juder focused on Aladdin, "What's with your Rukh? It's weird. Not as weird as Mahsa's, but still weird."

Mahsa observed the events that followed carefully avoiding doing anything save for limiting the amount of injuries she'd have to deal with later. She had to admit that Ugo was kind of cool though Alastor was a lot better in her mind. When Kougyoku appeared and got rid of Ugo before turning to do the same to Aladdin when he spoke, she jumped in, "Yoku."

"M-Mahsa?!" Kougyoku's eyes widened before happiness filled them while Ka Koubun stared at them in shock, "What are you doing here?"

"Healing and helping people as I usually am, Yoku," Mahsa answered as she smiled at the princess, "Good job on becoming a King Vessel. Vinea suits you,"

Kougyoku's cheeks flushed at the praise, "I'm happy to hear that, Mahsa."

"We'll have to talk later, but for now, Judar seems to need some healing as do the people here," Mahsa said as she gestured to the destruction.

Mahsa grimaced as Sinbad proceeded to manipulate Kougyoku into leaving and barely managed to keep from growling at the man. Kougyoku looked at Mahsa, "Mahsa..."

"I'll be by later," Mahsa promised earning a relieved look, "We'll talk then,"

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Mahsa wasn't surprised when Sinbad requested they talk after she had seen to the most serious and life threatening injuries. She sat down in the room he had pretty much claimed as his own, "Yes, Sinbad?"

"You knew this would happen," Sinbad stated rather bluntly.

"It was the most likely outcome especially given how Judar is," Mahsa smiled a bit, "But you already knew that,"
Sinbad didn't smile at her, "Why did you warn us?"

"Because I didn't know it would happen that way and certain things needed to happen if destiny was to progress," Mahsa answered as she settled her hands on the table, "But these aren't the questions you actually want answered and I'd prefer it if you didn't waste my time, Sinbad. I've got people to heal and friends to see,"

Sinbad stiffened as did Ja'far and Masrur. The purple haired king asked in a strained voice with an odd tone to his voice, "How do you know them?"

Mahsa didn't recognize the tone, but she disliked it quite a bit. Darius stiffened at the tone and hissed at Sinbad as he tightened his grip on her. She reached up to soothe him, "I spent several months in Kou and met the youngest prince two months in after rumors of what I could do reached the ears of those inside the capital city. Kouha decided that he liked me leading to my companions and I coming to the palace as his guests. Overtime, I met his other siblings and Judar," She gave Sinbad a calm look, "I consider three of the princes my friends and two of the princess' as well as Judar."

"Do you have any idea what they're doing?" Sinbad's eyes narrowed at her looking a bit angry, "They're causing war-"

"I am well aware, King Sinbad," Mahsa cut him off with a glare though she managed to keep her voice level despite the burst of anger she felt towards the purple haired king, "I know of what they're doing. I've faced the fallout of their thirst to conquer," Sinbad's eyes widened as tension filled the room, "Kouen decided to bring my companions and I along to check on some of their newest conquests. The first village accepted my help as a healer. The second had men attack me when I separated from the group to get more supplies," She took a deep breath, "They thought that I would be an easy target being a woman, but quickly found that to be wrong. Do not assume that I am not aware of what they do,"

"I see," Sinbad frowned at her, "But if you know why would you consider them friends?"

"Because they are and until they betray me, I will always consider them such," Mahsa replied lowering her hand to press it where the scar from Gyokuen's attack sat, "As you've found thanks to Masrur, we Fanalis are loyal when it comes to those who earn our trust,"

"So you would support them doing something like this?" Sinbad waved a hand at the area around them and she knew that he meant Balbadd's situation.

Mahsa shook her head, "I do not, but I will not fight them over something like this especially when it was a long-time coming." She held up a hand to stop any comments, "King Ahbmad is a greedy pig happily draining his subjects dry while he sits on that throne. If it wasn't Kou, it would be another greedy country looking to take over. While I find things like this happening to be distasteful, it is better than some other country rushing in to take the country through violence."

"They will turn this countries people into slaves!" Sinbad's voice rose a bit.

"I'm aware," Mahsa saw him falter a bit, "I've spent time in the Kou empire remember," She shook her head as she stood up, "I do not agree with slavery. I despise it with every part of my being, but at least in Kou, the slaves are only such for 5 years," She moved away from her seat towards the door deciding that she should get a move on, "But that's only if Alibaba doesn't manage to stop it somehow, you should have some faith in Blondie,"

Mahsa opened the door as Sinbad demanded, "Get back here, we aren't done."
"Yes, we are. You are unlikely to actually listen to me at this point in time and to be honest, you're annoying me," Mahsa turned her head to look at Sinbad, "I'm not one of yours, Sinbad, so do not try to order me around. I've got patients to go deal with,"

Mahsa had Darius scent out Kougyoku and the others while she flew on her broom around the palace. Knocking on the window, she watched those inside the room jump a bit with Ka Koubun's magic faltering. The window was thrown open and she entered it, "Sorry it took m-"

"Mahsa," Kougyoku surprised Mahsa with a hug.

Mahsa hugged her back, "Missed you too, Yoku," She pulled back while setting her broom against the wall while Darius nuzzled Kougyoku when he settled around the princess' shoulders, "We'll talk while I see the damage that Ugo did to Judar and set about healing it."

"What was that thing?" Ka Koubun asked as she took out her wand to scan Judar rather intensively.

"A Djinn," Mahsa answered earning a startled looks from the two, "Aladdin is a magi just as Sinbad told Judar, but definitely not a regular one."

"But I thought Magicians can't use Metal Vessels," Kougyoku looked at her in confusion.

"That's because Ugo doesn't belong to Aladdin which is why we saw that blue giant," Mahsa still didn't understand how it worked, "But that's all I can really figure out even with my abilities since things around Aladdin are muddled save for certain instances,"

Mahsa grimaced at the internal damage done to Judar though thankfully Ugo hadn't managed to rupture any organs or poke holes in them with bones. Judar thankfully didn't have any spinal damage either, but she supposed that had to be due to his borg being so strong. Reaching into her bag, she began taking out potions prompting Kougyoku to ask, "How is he?"

"Internal damage and some cracked bones though thankfully that's about it," Mahsa shook her head lightly, "Juju is a lucky bastard. If it had been someone else, they'd have ruptured organs, spinal damage, or bone pieces putting holes in his organs. That being said, I'm going to need help. Ka Koubun, please administer the potions I give you. Just get Judar to swallow them, I'll tell you which one to give him based on the color. If you aren't sure, you need to show them to me, okay?"

"For how long?" Kougyoku asked with a frown.

"Until it's safe for me to return to Reim," Mahsa didn't look away from her task, "You know those problems I talked about with the magicals back on the other-side of the veil?"

"Yes," Kougyoku looked at her in concern, "Did they come after you?"
"Not my enemies, no, but it won't be too long once they find a way to get onto this side without the goblins assisting them," Mahsa was not looking forward to that even if it meant ending everything once and for all, "The leader of the side, Albus Dumbledore who's the man that kidnapped me, begged for his people to be given sanctuary in Reim. After a big debate, they were given leave to do so though it's mostly either those who don't fight or those who need to recover from the fighting. Innocents like children and expecting mothers, they were brought to Reim by the goblins. I spent quite a bit of time healing many of those that came,"

"But why wo-" Kougyoku cut herself off and gained a look of comprehension.

Mahsa nodded with a grim smile as she moved onto Judar's organs after making sure the potions were doing their work, "Many of them believe me to be a coward for not fighting. It can and will turn violent which meant I needed to be out of Reim in order to let things settle down before that happens,"

"But that isn't right, Mahsa," Kougyoku's eyes were filled with horror, "It isn't your fight,"

"It was never my fight, but no one really gives a fuck about what I think," Mahsa felt that bitter anger she had kept buried after leaving England rise up and quickly quelled it knowing that she needed to focus on Judar, "How have things been since I left?"

Kougyoku seemed to understand why and launched into an explanation of what she'd been doing since getting back from her Dungeon.

Mahsa gratefully ate the food that Kougyoku had gotten for her and was happy to see that the princess had gotten meat as well which would really help boost her energy after losing so much that night. Kougyoku looked back at Judar's body on the bed, "So Judar will be fine?"

"Yes though he'll probably stay unconscious for a while since it isn't just his body that needs to rest," Mahsa knew just how much it hurt a magician to have their borg destroyed and this was probably one of the first time Judar had experienced such a thing, "He'll probably be down for a few days even when he wakes up, but he will definitely recover just fine. I bet he'll be back to his usual chaos soon enough,"

"Thank you, Mahsa. I know that you're not exactly happy with us right now," Kougyoku looked a bit guilty.

Mahsa shook her head, "Don't be guilty, it wasn't you that decided on this course of action. My anger lies with that idiotic king, his nobles, and that stupid banker," She cored an apple and skinned it, "Yoku, how on earth did you get chosen? I'd think they'd put Hakuei in this position given the fact she's the first princess."

"She's acting as a general and I'm the only one of my half-sisters to be a metal vessel user," Kougyoku answered with a frown, "You do not like him?"

Mahsa snorted at the question, "Yoku, your prospective husband is a greedy little pig that doesn't care for his people."

"Oh," Kougyoku looked disappointed.

Mahsa felt bad for the princess, "Yoku, you could say no," She held up a hand to stop the princess' protests, "I know all about your royal duties, but this is still your marriage. You should be able to decide to go through with it or not," She noticed Kougyoku shifting uncomfortably and knew it was time to change the conversation, "Anyway, how are Kouha and the others?"
"Doing well," Kougyoku perked up and peered at her curiously, "Hey, Mahsa. What exactly did you say to Brother Kouen the last time you saw him? He's been a bit out of sorts. Kouha said he was frustrated, but couldn't say why. The only thing we could agree on was that it started after your dinner with him," Mahsa looked at her in surprise and confusion, "We assumed he just missed you, but he always seemed more frustrated after getting a letter from you which just made it even odder,"

Mahsa couldn't believe her ears, "He's frustrated?"

Kougyoku nodded as she reached out to pick up her cup of tea, "Yeah. Well Judar and Kouha said some other stuff too though I'm not sure about if it's true."

Mahsa forced herself to avoid thinking that maybe Kouen actually felt something more than a passing attraction towards her. She shook her head, "I don't think it has anything to do with what I said. He's probably frustrated from the fact we can't spar together. I did make things challenging especially since he couldn't really figure out what I was going to do."

"Maybe," Kougyoku didn't look convinced, "Though are you sure it wasn't something you said?"

"I'm sure," Mahsa ate her apple.
Mahsa returned to the Fog Troupe base after she checked on Judar on last time and rushed to go check on Aladdin the moment she heard about his collapse. She didn't know why he'd collapsed so long after that battle with Judar, but would find out why once she'd helped him. She found Ja'far in the room along with Morgiana, Alibaba, and Jori. She looked between them while moving over to Aladdin as Darius jumped off her shoulder to settle down on one of the tables to watch the proceedings, "What the hell happened?"

"He kept pushing his magoi into Ugo's flute," Jori answered picking up Aladdin's flute and showed her that the eight pointed star was missing which only fueled added gave evidence to her theory about Aladdin not being Ugo's master, "Only the star is gone and I do not believe Ugo resides in the flute anymore,"

"It wouldn't surprise me. Aladdin wasn't his actual master," Mahsa moved towards Aladdin and began checking him over noticing some oddities in the flow of his magoi, "I'll see what I can do. Jori, get some of those energy replenishing potions as well as a fever reducer, it'll help,"

Jori nodded and quickly left the room after putting down Aladdin's flute. Alibaba burst out, "What do you mean Aladdin wasn't Ugo's master?!"

Mahsa glanced up at Alibaba, "What did I say about shouting in enclosed spaces?" Alibaba flinched a bit and muttered an apology, "I'll forgive you just this once since your friend is ill and you're worried. I won't do so again," She warned the blonde, "As for what I said, it's quite simple. Aladdin is not Ugo's master. He never has been otherwise he'd be using whatever metal vessel Ugo did."

"That actually makes sense," Ja'far commented with a look of consideration on his face, "Metal Vessel users always use their Djinn's chosen weapon while house hold users can use a weapon of their choice so long as the Djinn is able to place their power into it."

"But what about Ugo's body?" Morgiana asked with a frown.

"Aladdin is a magi," Mahsa stated as she worked on increasing the airflow into Aladdin's lungs noticing his shallow breathing, "They're the only ones with enough magoi to summon a Djinn's real body into existence for more than a few seconds outside of a dungeon. Someone like Sinbad could manage thirty seconds or a bit more simply because the man has more magoi than most humans ever end up having. Even then Magicians regardless of their powers cannot become Dungeon Capturers,"

"What about you?" Ja'far asked with a curious expression on his face.

"Barely even a few seconds," Mahsa cleaned the sweat away from Aladdin's body, "I'm a Fanalis after all and Alastor takes from my magoi rather than my magic,"

"What do you mean? Are they separate?" Alibaba asked with a frown on his face.

Mahsa nodded lightly, "It's the difference between Magicians and Witches/Wizards. Witches/Wizards are able to use the magic from the very core of our beings, but cannot access our Magoi. Magicians can used Magoi, but cannot access their magical core. Adding on, witches/wizards aren't able to see the Rukh or hear from them as Magicians can, we can instead gain energy from the world around us via the natural magic flowing into our cores."
"That makes Witches and Wizards more powerful than Magicians," Alibaba said before yelping when she sent a stinging hex at him, "Mahsa!"

"Don't make assumptions remember," Mahsa shook her head at him, "Magicians and Witches/Wizards are equally powerful just in different ways. After all, they can see and hear the rukh to guide their powers while we do not. We are more versatile being not limited to just a few branches of magic, but the magic that Magicians can use can be quite a bit more powerful than ours," The door opened with Jori entering and Sinbad following after him, "Jori administer the potions,"

"So what exactly is wrong with Aladdin? If Ugo wasn't his Djinn how did he use Aladdin's magoi?" Alibaba asked with a worried frown.

"I don't know how he was able to, but it's probably due to his unique status," Mahsa focused on the odd flow of Aladdin's magoi that was leaving his body, "What on ear-"

The minute her magic touched that flow saw Mahsa collapsing much to the alarm of those around her.

Upon opening her eyes again, Mahsa tensed at the change in location and the fact her magic didn't seem to be responding. Alastor's connection was there, but faint making her frown as she began look around warily. She was in a library that looked more suited for someone like a Djinn. She heard a voice, "Oh there you are, I was wondering when I'd be able to pull you here, Mahsa."

"Who the-A head?" Mahsa spun around only to stare at the disembodied head being held up by what looked like white blobs.

"To allow Aladdin the ability to use me, he needed my body to appear and it'll likely be a little while before it returns to me," The blue being that was likely a Djinn said.

Mahsa's eyes widened before narrowing, "You're Ugo."

"Yup," Ugo grinned at her, "It's so nice to meet you, Mahsa. Thank you for helping Aladdin and his friends,"

"It's no problem, but what the hell is going on?" Mahsa frowned at Ugo feeling just a little weirded out, "How the hell did I end up here and why? For that matter, where is Aladdin?"

Ugo smiled sadly, "He is getting the power that is his right."

"His right?" Mahsa muttered with a frown before shaking her head, "I'll focus on that later. How did I end up here?"

"I pulled you here," Ugo answered as his cheeks flushed, "I would have asked, but seeing as I'm not exactly in that world, it wasn't possible,"

Mahsa's frown deepened, "Why did you bring me here?"

Ugo sighed deeply, "You've noticed that Aladdin's presence muddles your visions unless they're specific ones."

Mahsa nodded as she moved closer to the head before plopping down, "I've assumed it deals with unique status as the fourth magi."
Ugo did a little motion that was probably meant to be a nod, "You'd be correct. I cannot say what exactly his status is, but he's important to this world's destiny."

"Much like Alibaba," Mahsa murmured earning a surprised look, "I'm not an idiot, Ugo. Even if the Rens are in my visions quite often, they aren't going to be the main ones to change this world's destiny," She gave the Djinn a look, "Don't try to give me the run around, I'd prefer not to scare the shit out of my companions especially when everyone's got better things to worry about. Why did you bring me here?"

Ugo was silent for a moment before murmuring, "You've been changing this world's destiny."

"I'm a King Vessel," Mahsa replied with narrowed eyes, "I'm also a true-seer. Changing this world's destiny is what I'm supposed to do,"

"It will have consequences," Ugo warned her with a frown.

"Considering just how fucked up my life has been because Dumbledore decided to choose the easy way out, I'm aware," Mahsa scowled at Ugo, "I'm only trying to make it so those I care about aren't completely screwed over,"

"Even if it may one day cost you your life?" Ugo asked earning a snort.

"Is that even a real question?" Mahsa gave Ugo a fanged grin, "I'm a Fanalis. When it comes to our precious people, we're willing to die if it means they're alright,"

Ugo surprised her by smiling, "I'm glad to hear it."

"Why?" Mahsa felt suspicious about the Djinn's words.

"Because it means that Aladdin won't have as much work to do," Ugo's smile was bright and happy, "I'm so glad to know that,"

"His work? What do you mean by that? Hell, what do you mean by 'his right'?" Mahsa frowned at him.

"It will become clear in time just as your visions containing him will be," Ugo gave her a gentle look, "For now, I think it's time you returned to the real world. Though if I may, would you please watch over Aladdin when you're able and keep him safe?"

"I can try, but I have a feeling that Aladdin doesn't really need me to watch over him," Mahsa stood up having a feeling that things were about to change, "Ugo, you really care about him, huh?"

"Quite a bit," Ugo grinned a little, "Now let's send you back. Aladdin should wake up soon after you do, so be ready to act,"

Mahsa nodded knowing that she'd likely need to rush over to the palace if only to see if Cassim's sad story had changed, "Right."

"Be careful, I would rather not see you here for awhile yet," Ugo told her earning a snort.

"I'm a healer. Being careful is what I do," Mahsa grinned at him, "Bye Ugo,"

For someone rude enough to drag her into a place like this, Ugo wasn't a bad guy. Then again anyone that had raised the sweet blue haired magi she'd met couldn't be a bad guy, Mahsa mused as her world became dark again.
Waking up again, Mahsa opened her eyes and sat up feeling a sense of vertigo slam into her. She laid back with a soft groan reaching up to press a hand to her head, "Fuck."

"Mahsa, you're awake!" Jori shouted from somewhere close by.

"What did I say about shouting?" Mahsa groaned as she closed her eyes.

"Sorry," Jori murmured at a more reasonable level.

Mahsa felt a hand touch her forehead and Luna say from next to her right ear, "No fever. Does your head hurt?"

"No, but I feel really dizzy like the world is spinning," Mahsa kept her eyes clamped shut, "How long have I been out?"

"No more than a day," Jori answered as Darius' familiar weight settled on her chest, "What happened, Mahsa? Why did you collapse like that?"

"Aladdin's Djinn, Ugo, called me to him," Mahsa told them as a series of clinking sounds echoed through the room, "He needed to talk to me for reasons that I'm still not clear on and asked me to keep an eye on Aladdin when I could," She sighed softly reaching up to rub her fingers over Darius' head, "Aladdin should be waking up soon,"

"How do you know that?" Luna asked from close by, "Here, I got a potion that should help."

After drinking the foul tasting potion, Mahsa explained, "Ugo told me. Listen, I'm going to head for the palace and help where I can. You two need to focus on getting people out of trouble."

When Aladdin woke up, Mahsa joined him on going to the palace while Luna and Jori went to go help people though they'd both protested it. Darius joined Aladdin and her though it was mostly to ease her friends worries. She grinned at Alibaba as he murmured, "Aladdin? Mahsa?"

"Hey, Blondie," Mahsa greeted him, "Sorry we're late, but a certain Djinn wanted to be chatty." She turned to Judar who stood on the top of the black Djinn that was Cassim, "Jujube, I'm glad to see you're alright."

Judad nodded while glaring at Aladdin, "What the hell are you doing with that Midget?"

Was that jealousy Mahsa could see in Judar's eyes? She supposed it wasn't too surprising given his personality, but this just made things a bit more dangerous for Aladdin. Inwardly frowning, she shrugged, "Hitched a ride, I'm mostly here to make sure not too many people die, but given the amount of blood I smell, it looks like I'm a bit too late for that."

"Stay out of this then," Judar told her with a frown.

"Sure," Mahsa looked at Alibaba and Aladdin, "I'll let you two do whatever,"

Aladdin nodded to her with a light smile while Alibaba gave her a look of horror, "We'll be fine, Mahsa."

"Alibaba, if you hurry up and do what you need to, I might be able to save Cassim," Mahsa told him before heading off to start stabilizing those that were on the brink of death.

Darius guarded Mahsa as she went to work. Sinbad frowned at her as she began working on a nearby soldier, "You're not interfering."
"Trust those two, I'll only interfere if need be," Mahsa didn't bother looking at the king, "Morgiana," The younger Fanalis looked at her, "Take the purple haired idiot, there are some people that Aladdin and I passed on the way here that need to see him,"

"Okay," Morgiana looked back at the two, "Will they..."

"They'll be fine," Mahsa promised as she flashed Morgiana a smile, "I'll make sure of it,"

Mahsa focused back on the battle as she heard Judar shout, "He just got swallowed by the Djinn!"

A pang went through Mahsa when she saw Aladdin sent Judar to his knees with what she guessed was 'his right'. Solomon's Wisdom, but what exactly did that mean? She quickly dodged out of the way as a masked figure with green hair she hadn't noticed before tried to attack her. She bared her teeth at him and sent a cutting curse towards the bastard who dodged, "Who the fuck are you?"

"Ithnan, Lady Seer," The masked man offered her a mocking smile, "To think that a Fanalis, a half-blood at that would wield that power,"

Judar let out a low snarl and sent out a wave of icicle all over the place, "Don't touch her! She's mine. I won't let any of you touch her."

"Jujube," Mahsa murmured with a worried frown.

Mahsa focused on the Djinn was its body began cracking and dispersing into black rukh. Aladdin grinned brightly, "Alibaba did it. Alibaba!"

Ithnan disappeared with Judar's body making her snarl in anger, but Mahsa quickly focused as Alibaba appeared holding Cassim. She darted over and quickly got down to work. Aladdin rushed over, "Mahsa?"

"This is bad," Mahsa muttered as she sent a spell to keep Cassim's heart beating, "I've never seen anything like this before,"

Mahsa had seen magical burns, but this wasn't like that at all. She managed to start reversing the damage as Alibaba asked, "C-can you-

"I'm trying. Don't interrupt," Mahsa felt Alastor stir within her.

"And the moon has joined us," Alastor murmured sounding pleased.

Mahsa felt a little happy about that, but quickly focused on the task at hand, 'Alastor?'

"See if Solomon's Wisdom might help him," Alastor suggested after a moment, "If anything, it will give you more time,"

Nodding lightly, Mahsa turned her head to Aladdin, "Aladdin, can you use that Solomon's Wisdom thing again? It might help me save Cassim."

Aladdin hesitated before nodding, "I think so," Aladdin focused on Cassim as that glowing eight pointed star once again appeared on his forehead, "Solomon's Wisdom!"

Mahsa noticed Aladdin stiffen and began to sway, "Darius!"

Darius quickly shifted into his lion form and braced against Aladdin allowing the magi to lay against him. With almost painful slowness, the damage to Cassim caused by the black rukh began to reverse. She grimaced noting that there would be lingering damage and it was unlikely she'd be
able to heal that. The only thing that could possibly do that was Phenex or phoenix tears. Kouen wasn't here and she doubted he'd help Cassim. Fawkes was unlikely to answer her call, but she had to try if only for Alibaba's sake. Taking a deep breath, she called out, "Fawkes!"

To Mahsa's surprise, Fawkes appeared earning startled exclamations. Darius translated, "Greetings, Little Halfling."

"I know this is not something I should ask especially since we aren't exactly close, but please, I need you to save this one," Mahsa gestured to Cassim, "Please, Fawkes. I do not know how to heal this and while I'm making some progress especially with Aladdin's help, I don't think it will be enough."

Fawkes was quiet as he fluttered over and settled on her shoulder to peer down at Cassim. He trilled after a moment, "The damage is bad, Little Halfling. Even with my abilities, it's unlikely he'll survive."

Mahsa grimaced as her heart gave a painful ache, but said, "Please just try, Fawkes. We have to."

"Very well, Little Halfling," Fawkes jumped from her shoulder to settle beside Cassim's head. After forcing Cassim's mouth open and instructing Alibaba to help him swallow, Mahsa and Fawkes worked hard. Damage slowly reversed as Cassim's skin and hair returned to normal, she felt some relief, but didn't stop knowing that even a moment of hesitation could render their work moot. Aladdin came out of the strange trance he'd fallen into and the damage reversed at a far quicker rate. When it was almost all gone save for the damage where Cassim had driven his blade, she felt her magic start to splutter in protest. Fawkes stopped providing tears as she fell back breathing hard. Alibaba burst out, "Is he-"

"I-I..." Mahsa shook her head, "I don't have the strength to heal where everything originated,"

With everything going on, Mahsa hadn't had the chance to truly rest. Add in the fact this type of healing wasn't something she was familiar with, she just wasn't able to do this at the moment. Alibaba had tears running down his cheeks and clutched his friend harder, "No. Cassim..."

"I-it'll be okay, A-Alibaba," Cassim spoke in a hoarse voice as he offered the blonde a weak smile. "But we were supposed to change things here," Alibaba looked at Cassim with horror and sorrow, "I can't lose you, Cassim. I need you."

"No, you don't. You have that blue haired kid, that weird red haired girl, and Mahsa," Cassim coughed up crimson red blood, "You can save Balbadd, Alibaba. You're the one who can."

Mahsa bowed her head, but said nothing letting the two give their goodbyes. When Cassim breathed his last, she let her tears fall as she murmured, "May you be embraced in the great flow, Cassim, and find the peace you desire."

Looking at the approaching ships of the Kou Empire, Mahsa smiled a bit knowing that Kouen had done it for two reasons. One, he wasn't going to take any chances. Two, he wanted to be there just in case his little sister actually got married if only to show her some support. She felt a mixture of eagerness and unease at the thought of seeing Kouen who probably brought along Koumei if only to make sure everything got set up properly. On the one hand, she couldn't wait to see Kouen, Koumei, and their household members since it had been a long time. On the other hand, she wasn't sure how she'd be received by Kouen given their last conversation.
Mahsa tore her eyes off the ships to look at Sinbad as he approached, "You should leave pretty soon, Sinbad. They're not going to be happy that you're here."

"You should come with me," Sinbad stated as he reached her side, "If you really are friends with some of Kou's royalty, they'll listen to you,"

"I'm an outsider to many and the only ones I may hold some form of sway over are coming here," Mahsa shook her head as she moved away from the man, "Sinbad, I have no intention of traveling with you any time soon especially when I have work to do," She reached up to run her fingers across Darius' scales, "Why do you want me to travel with you, Sinbad. Be honest,"

"Simple, I want to convince you that I'm worth looking at," Sinbad answered earning a hiss from Darius while Mahsa snorted.

"You're not my type, Sinbad," Mahsa stated rather bluntly.

Darius tightened his grip on her neck, "Sssa, I don't want to leave you with him."

"I'm going back to the goblins, Dari," Mahsa said as she rubbed Darius' scales soothingly before taking out a rolled up piece of parchment that Darius took from her hand, "Now get going," Darius hesitated before doing as she asked heading towards the approaching ships carrying the letter for Kouen, "Sinbad, it hasn't be fun seeing you and to be honest, I would prefer it if we didn't encounter one another too often in the future," She decided being blunt was the best course of action, "I admire that you're willing to go through quite a bit of trouble for your people, but that doesn't mean I'll let you use me. I've been there, done that, and got more scars than a prefer to talk about because of it," She gave him a stern glare noticing the widening of his eyes, "Leave me the hell alone, I'd prefer not to cause a war with Sindria just because I made their king into an eunuch,"

With that, Mahsa left Sinbad behind though she caught him saying, "Mahsa Alexius, you may say that now, but you'll be changing your mind soon enough."

"Not going to happen," Mahsa shouted over her shoulder.

Alastor growled softly, "Work on your mental defenses, he wields Zepar and I have no doubt he'll try to use him to his advantage."

'I'll do it, but I do not think Sinbad would stoop so slow,' Mahsa quickly made her way to the area where the goblin's territory lay which was the only part of the city to not bare any sign of fighting save for blood in certain places that had yet to be cleaned away, 'Having me work for him perhaps and become more susceptible to his suggestions, I do not think he is the type of man to take any woman by force. I think he takes more pride in have them beg for him,,'

"You're right otherwise his other Djinn would not work for him," Alastor murmured softly though there was doubt in his tone, "But be wary regardless,"

'I'll see about making a potion to block the effects of Zepar. Surely there exists a creature that can do something like him,' Mahsa murmured thoughtfully while waving and offering encouraging smiles to those she passed.

Despite the arrival of the Kou Empire's forces, Mahsa and her companions were left alone for the most part as various people came to get healed. Once those with life threatening and severe injuries had been healed, she was pushed to rest properly for the first time since the whole mess began after taking care of her other needs. She slept deeply not stirring for longer than it took to take care of natures call and sooth her parched throat. With the amount of stress she'd placed on her body and
magic by healing everyone she could, it wasn't surprising that a few days passed without her truly waking up.

After truly waking up and dealing with natures call, Mahsa ate some food with Luna filling her in on everything that had happened since she slept. After securing the city properly, the Kou Empire soldiers got everything into order under the command of Kouen. Supplies, repairs, housing, and everything else that came with taking care of a city that had just been pretty much torn apart was set into order. Any dissenters were dealt with though none save for a few had been killed unless they attacked the soldiers. Luna and Jori's presence as well as the fact Darius had been seen with the Kou royals had seemed to provide some sense of uneasy peace. Mahsa spoke as she considered the last bit of information, "The people are looking to us. We've been helping them for months and without anyone else they'd once viewed as leaders, they're looking to us to figure out how to react."

"Koumei thought as much," Luna said with a small smile, "And is being pretty open to our suggestions as is Kouen,"

"That's good," Mahsa took her last bite of fish on the plate.

"No one save for the soldiers were surprised about our presence," Luna commented as she picked up empty plate and replaced it with a bowl of stew, "Darius only left Kouen's side after you went to sleep and has been checking on everyone when he isn't playing guard lion."

"I'll have to get him some really good boar then," Mahsa knew he'd appreciate it.

Mahsa ate the stew as Luna went over the injures they'd come across and how they were dealt with. Kouen had apparently brought along a small squad of healers which had really helped out and lessened the amount they needed to deal with. She finished the stew and a loaf of bread before deeming herself full though she'd likely be snacking quite a bit over the course of the next few days as her body recovered. She looked at Luna as the blonde said, "Kouen has a pair of soldiers guarding the house. One of them will probably act as a messenger."

Mahsa nodded lightly and moved towards the door. She opened it and found the two soldiers Luna had told her about. One was a middle aged man while the other was a wiry teen that looked to be around 16. She offered them both a smile as the two looked at her in surprise, "Hello to you both."

"L-Lady Alexius," The teen stuttered out.

"Lady Alexius," The elder of the two gave his partner a scornful look before turning to smile at her, "You are feeling better, correct?"

"Much better, I was hoping one of you would deliver a message to Kouen informing him that I'm awake and alright to meet with him if he'd be willing to come here," Mahsa said with a light smile, "I'm not exactly eager to travel far given that I'm not at my best,"

"I'll do it," The teen offered.

"Thank you," Mahsa told the boy with a warm smile.

The teen rushed off quickly and the older soldier asked, "Will you be going anywhere, Lady Alexius?"

"Just a small walk around to make sure everyone can spread that I'm in good health," Mahsa told him earning a nod, "Will you be walking with me?"

The soldier dipped his head, "Yes, Lady Alexius. Prince Kouen requested that we guard you."
Mahsa wasn't as surprised as she probably should be, "Then let me grab Luna and we'll go."

The walk let Mahsa stretch her legs and gave her the ability to speak with some of those that they passed. They reached the house that had been 'home' to her and the others for their time in Balbadd. Luna started tea while she snacked on some fruit pieces and settled in the 'backyard' area to get some sun. She ended up dozing until Darius settled on her chest exclaiming, "You're alright right, Sssa."

"Of coursse I'm alright, it'sss me, Dari," Mahsa pushed him off her chest as she sat up and Darius transformed into his lion form distantly noting that someone was nearby, "Silly, Dari. I just finally obeyed my bodies wish to rest,"

Darius butted his head against her chest, "I wasss worried."

"I know and am really sorry," Mahsa shifted to hug his neck and nuzzled into his fur, "But I'm better now. Promise,"

"Are you sssure? You've never ssslept for ssso long," Darius' worry was quite clear.

"I've never used so much energy before without proper rest and sustenance," Mahsa told him as Kouen's scent drifted towards her on the light breeze flowing through Balbadd at the moment, "Healing Cassim as much as I did took a lot out of me especially since I've never encountered anything like that, I'd be in worse shape without Fawkes' help," She released him, "I promise that I'll be fine, Dari,"

Darius eyed Mahsa for a few moments studying her intently before nodding to himself, "Alright, but promissse me you'll try to ressst ass much ass posssible while you're regaining your ssstength."

"I promise, you big ol' worrywart," Mahsa rolled her eyes, "You don't even need to ask," She looked at him curiously, "Where have you been?"

"With me," Kouen said dragging her attention to the door of the house where he stood, "He has surprisingly been a big help in keeping things from spinning out of control,"

Mahsa smiled at that, "Good. Balbadd has suffered enough and the people do not need any more fighting going on," She stood up, "It's been awhile, En."

"Over a year," Kouen eyed her with a mixture of emotions swirling through his gaze, "Are you alright?"

"Extremely tired would be the best way to describe it, but I'm not about to spend days asleep," Mahsa walked over with Darius padding beside her, "How about we head inside to talk about what's happened since we last saw one another? I'm getting hungry again and could use something to drink. You probably need a drink as well,"

"I'd like to focus mainly on your point of view about what happened since your arrival in Balbadd first," Kouen said as he turned to open the door.

"So you can apparently call on the same phoenix that kidnapped you?" Koumei asked with a surprised look on his face.

Mahsa shrugged lightly, "I'm not sure. It might've been a one time thing or something. Seeing as
I've had other things to do, I couldn't really test out that theory just yet."

After coming inside, Mahsa had found that Koumei as well as some of the house hold vessels had come with Kouen which suited her just fine. She wasn't sure about being alone with Kouen so soon after waking up. Since entering the house, she had been explaining everything that happened in Balbadd since she'd arrived with her companions in as much detail as possible on Kouen's request. Kouen frowned as he asked, "Are you sure that blue haired kid is a magi?"

"I'm sure. The fact he could call on a Djinn's true body pretty much testifies that," Mahsa frowned softly, "Though I have no idea where exactly he came form. Ugo never said and I never really got a chance to ask Aladdin,"

"To think a fourth magi actually exists," Koumei mused with a surprised expression on his face, "Much less one that doesn't seem to know any magic and appeared out of no where."

"But it doesn't really matter at the moment seeing as he's in the hands of Sindria along with that exiled prince and the Fanalis," Kouen frowned as he eyed Mahsa, "And Sinbad is heading to Kou?"

Mahsa nodded with a grimace, "Yes, he also wanted me to come along if only to 'sway' your father into allowing Balbadd it's freedom. I said no for a few reason other than the fact I don't know your father very well. I had things to do here and being around Sinbad for any longer would not have ended well for the man."

"How come?" Koumei asked with a confused look.

"Sinbad's been trying to convince her that being friends with you guys is a bad idea or attempting to get her to accept him as a suitor," Luna set down a small platter of snacks and a new tea pot, "She's about ready to castrate him if he doesn't leave her alone,"

"Or break his jaw. I'm getting to the point where violence is starting to look like the only way to get him to leave me alone," Mahsa poured herself some more tea before taking a sip, "I probably won't actually castrate him if only to avoid his various admirers coming after me,"

"Anyway, Luna mentioned that you weren't supposed to be in Reim for awhile because of people from the other side of the veil. What exactly is the problem?"

"They're angry and feeling 'betrayed' by me," Mahsa answered with a grimace as she set down her cup to avoid accidentally shattering it due to anger, "Despite the fact I'm not actually their 'savior', they believe my abandoning them has led to everything that happened be it losing their loved ones, getting injured in some way, or losing the only home they've ever known. It's very likely due to the high emotions rolling around that they'd tried to attack me for 'revenge' or something along those lines," She shook her head, "To keep that from happening, I needed to leave Reim and Lady Scheherazade provided the perfect out. Until she calls us back, we'll be traveling around once Balbadd no longer needs our help,"

"That's so stupid," Seishuu grimaced with a frown.

"No one said English magicals were smart as a whole," Mahsa muttered softly.

"Do you have any plans on where to go next?" Koumei asked with a frown.

Mahsa shrugged lightly, "Heliohapt is pretty much the only place I can think of seeing as Jori wants to see his home and I've been wanting to go back for awhile now. If Sinbad stays in Kou long enough, we'll head to Sindria for a short period of time to check on things there. Other than
that, I'm not exactly sure where we'd go until it's time to head back to Reim."

"You could come to Kou," Koumei suggested as Mahsa picked up her cup of tea, "Kouha would probably be really happy to see you as would Judar,"

That would put her back in range for Gyokuen, Mahsa knew that the bitch was probably planning something since she hadn't done anything just yet. But not seeing her friends just because of Gyokuen wasn't something she could do, it was something she wouldn't do. If anything, she might be able to figure out what Gyokuen had planned for her and find ways to deal with it. Smiling as a plan formed in her mind, she nodded, "I suppose that would be a good idea. It'll be nice to spend time with Kouha, Kougyoku, Judar, and Hakuei again."

"Actually Lady Hakuei is with the Western Subjugation Army as a general," Koumei replied earning a surprised look.

"Really? Well, I'll have send her a letter of congratulations then and hope we can see one another again soon," Mahsa liked the black haired first princess, "But spending time with Kouha, Kougyoku, and Judar will be fun regardless,"

Everyone left after a nice dinner which Mahsa and Luna prepared after Jori returned with some supplies. Jori had surprised her with a tight hug as he exclaimed how glad he was that she wasn't unconscious anymore. Koumei smiled warmly at Mahsa as thanks were given, "You're a really good cook, Mahsa. It was really good."

"I had help, but I'm really glad you liked it. I'm glad that you all did," Mahsa directed to everyone, "If we had access to better ingredients and more time, I'd probably make something even better,"

"I hope not. You'd probably ruin us for anyone else cooking," Seishuu grinned at Mahsa.

"I don't know about that since there will always be someone better," Mahsa giggled lightly, "See you guys later," They all started leaving the house though Kouen paused to look at her, "Something wrong, En?"

Silence fell over everyone as her words registered, they focused on Kouen who had an unreadable look on his face. He shook his head slowly, "No. Would you mind coming to speak with me tomorrow?"

Mahsa hesitated for a moment as her unease spiked, but she pushed it down with a nod, "Sure. You'll be at the palace, correct?"

"Yes," Kouen replied with his lips twitching into a light smirk, "After dinner will be the best time to arrive,"

"I'll be there," Mahsa promised as Kouen turned away, "Goodnight, Everyone,"

"Goodnight," Was tossed back at her as they took their leave.

Mahsa closed the door as Jori said, "That was a bit sudden."

"Not really," Mahsa shook her head, "I knew he wanted to have a private talk. I've known that since I heard that Kouen had ships coming,"

"Any idea what he wants to talk about?" Luna asked with a concerned look on her face, "Do you think it's about the last time you two actually interacted? What you told him?"
Mahsa nodded slowly feeling a small amount of dread and anticipation form in her stomach, "Yeah," She headed towards her room, "I'm going to get some rest. Luna, do you want to show me your house hold vessel tomorrow?"

"Yeah," Luna nodded with a tense smile.

Mahsa smiled back at her, "Night, you two. Don't stay up too late, we have an early day tomorrow."

After breakfast, Mahsa and Luna headed out into the 'backyard'. Alastor was shivering with excitement clearly pleased about Luna having become one of theirs. She also picked out some dread from him, but wasn't sure why. Luna took out the raven pendant that Mahsa had gotten for her last birthday and channeled power into it, "Crystal Swarm!"

A swarm of insects made entirely out of crystals appeared though some seemed to be made of a less glittery crystal than the others. Mahsa noted that most were in the shape of small beetles or butterflies. She spotted the stingers each boasted, "What are the stingers for?"

"I'm going to figure out how to have them take on poison," Luna answered with a calm smile as the swarm of insects buzzed around them, "So we may have assassins of our own. While you and Jori may attack from close up, I will attack from a distance and inside the shadows."

Mahsa once again felt grateful that Luna had chosen to become her friend if only to avoid sharing the same fate as their future enemies. No wonder Alastor was feeling dread since this was rather creepy, "Good though how on earth did these little guys help you during the fighting?"

"When closely packed together, they can form walls or platforms that people can't go through," Luna answered as some of the swarm parted to reveal larger forms of the bugs, "I'm going to play around with their shapes and sizes once I can get them to become poisonous."

"Well, this wasn't something I expected, but I'm really glad to have you as one of my household, Luna," Mahsa smiled at the blonde as the younger witch forced her insects to dissipate, "Maybe teach Jori to do the same or find some other extra trick."

"Of course," Luna agreed with a bright smile and pleasure in her eyes.

Mahsa walked around Balbadd checking on everyone she knew either personally or in passing especially among the Fog Troupe who were still reeling from the events that happened. She avoided using her magic as much as possible given that she'd only awakened yesterday. Everyone was more than a little relieved to see her in good health. They asked about Alibaba with a few wondering if he'd abandoned them. She told them that he would return when he'd gotten stronger and help deal with the Kou Empires forces. They just needed to get stronger and recover so he didn't come back to a smoking wasteland. While it didn't exactly soothe them, they took her words to heart and seemed to be focusing more on helping Balbadd to recover.

Mahsa spent time with the various children of the city either playing with them or telling stories depending on how tired she was. Eventually, she got settled in the closest thing Balbadd had to a public park and told stories to those who listened. The parents of various children were happy to leave the group with her while they went about their days. Luna joined her and entertained the group by showing them illusions to go along with the story. People stopped to listen around lunch time with Jori delivering food for the two and stepping up to tell some stories of his own while the two girls ate. A sense of peace seemed to come over everyone as if they realized that this meant
everything would one day be better. Despite the large crowd, the soldiers didn't try to scatter the group likely under someone's orders.

After the sun began it's slow decent beneath the sky line, Mahsa and Luna headed home to eat dinner with Jori before the Fanalis headed to the palace where Kouen awaited her. The pit of dread and anticipation had grown unnoticed by her until she stepped into the palace proper. Darius had come with her, but lept off her shoulder, "Dari?"

"I will give Kouen and you sssome privacy, Sssa," Darius told her, "$Jussst call for me when you're done,"

Mahsa went to protest, but Darius disappeared leaving her staring after him. The servant leading her asked, "Where is he going?"

Mahsa shrugged lightly, "Probably went to see Koumei."

The servant looked a bit nonplussed probably at the fact a creature he wasn't quite sure about the intelligence of would be spending time around a prince while his owner would be speaking to the elder of the two prince's. Eventually, the servants training kicked in and he began leading Mahsa to Kouen, "This way, Prince Kouen has asked me to take you to his temporary rooms."

Mahsa was a bit surprised, but supposed that would guarantee the privacy Kouen wanted for their talk. Of course, it would also likely bring back the rumors they were together which would be annoying to deal with, but Kouen would probably deal with it at some point.
The servant paused outside of Kouen's temporary rooms where a pair of soldiers were standing. Both the soldiers looked at Mahsa in surprise and suspicion, she could tell neither of them were sure what to make of her. The servant cleared his throat when the two hadn't said anything, "Lady Alexius is here to see Prince Kouen."

The two seemed to jolt a bit as their eyes widened showing that they hadn't been sure who she was. The soldier on the right quickly got himself back under control and nodded while reaching for the door handle. Before he could do more than grasp it, the door opened and Seishuu walked out. Seishuu paused in surprise for a moment before smiling at Mahsa, "Hello, Mahsa."

"Evening, Seishuu," Mahsa greeted the snake-like household member with a warm smile, "How is En this evening?"

"Not to bad," Seishuu said as his eyes flickered around looking for something or someone that he didn't seem to find, "Where is Darius? I would've thought he'd be sticking with you,"

"He went to go see Mei," Mahsa shrugged at his questioning look, "I don't exactly know why other than apparently wanting me to see En alone,"

Seishuu looked a bit surprised before a slow smirk formed on his face, "I see. Well, don't let me get in the way." He turned his head, "Lord Kouen, Mahsa is here," He moved away from the door and Mahsa stepped towards it, "See you later, Mahsa."

"See you later, Seishuu," Mahsa said feeling a bit nervous as she stepped through the door.

Mahsa recognized the room to have been Rashid's mostly due to her visiting the man to deliver potions while in Balbadd the last time. There were gaudy little bits and pieces all over the place, she knew that Ahbmad had been using this as his room after Rashid's death once it'd been cleaned. The fading scent of the room's former owner wasn't totally unpleasant, but that was likely due to it fading without being replenished. She noted that the desk in the room was currently occupied by Kouen who was looking over paperwork that Koumei had probably sent to have him sign off on. Rather than speak as the door closed behind her, she merely walked further into the room pushing down her jumbled feelings.

Eventually, Mahsa's feet led her to one of the windows which sat open to allow in the cool night breeze. She breathed in the scents coming on the wind and was pleased to note that the heavy scent of blood clouding the city was beginning to die down. It would take months before the scent became unnoticeable even if they completely rebuilt it from the ground up. She jolted a bit as Kouen said, "The city is recovering nicely. It isn't as bad as I thought it would be."

"It would have been worse, but the work we did before the shitstorm hit helped keep some things from happening," Mahsa looked out over the damaged city, "Are you planning to tear things down and change them?"

"That is the plan, yes," Kouen answered as a chair scraped against the ground, "It's for the best. With how damaged the city is despite the work you did, it is best to start fresh,"

"Best do it gradually then, they'll accept it better than everything changing all at once," Mahsa
looked away from the city to find Kouen pouring two cups of wine, "I wasn't actually expecting something like this,"

"It was an experiment that my father was convinced to try by his wife," Kouen answered as he set down the bottle and picked up the cups, "Koumei perfected it,"

Mahsa walked over to him and took the cup that he held out for her, "I figured he'd had a hand in it some how with how put together and gradual it was. He's really good at his job. Scarily good."

Kouen smirked a bit as Mahsa took a drink from her cup, "I know."

Mahsa spoke before her nerves could get the better of her, "So what exactly did you want to talk about?"

"A few things though mostly what you said the last time we actually physically talked to one another," Kouen answered as his smirk faded, "You didn't let me talk,"

"Because I needed to say my piece without you interrupting," Mahsa set her cup of wine down as Kouen's eyes narrowed at her, "You needed to know where I stood especially when I..." She trailed off as her nerves kicked in a bit and decided to move on, "En, the important thing is that any relationship we have save for friendship is doomed to fail. Even then, the moment Kou and Reim begin fighting I'll be sticking with my siblings. No matter how much I may like you, I'll always choose my family in the end. I'm a Fanalis. For us, family is everything."

Kouen was quiet for a moment and Mahsa picked up her cup of wine again. She walked towards the window wanting to feel the breeze against her skin and put some distance between them. Kouen spoke as she drank some more wine, "Will you let me speak? Without interrupting?"

Mahsa hesitated for a moment before nodding, "Yeah. It's only fair."

"I've thought long and hard during the time we've been apart," Kouen told her as he moved a bit closer, "Whenever I had a spare moment to think, I rarely thought of anything save for you and our last conversation," Mahsa's eyes widened at that, "The words you said and the expression on your face during our talk invaded my mind more often than I care to acknowledge. At first, it irritated the hell out of me that you'd been able to pretty much invade my thoughts and mind without even being there. I thought for sure some spell had been cast, but none of those I went to were able to find anything,"

Mahsa's eyes widened further before narrowing as a sharp bolt of anger burned through her. How dare he accuse her of such a thing? She bared her teeth while snarling, "You thought I'd used my magic on you? Cast a spe-"

"You know the reputation of magicals on this side of the veil, Sa. Though I didn't truly believe it, I still needed to find out the truth," Kouen said as she drew back a bit with a grudging nod while not daring to hope that perhaps she'd be wrong about his actual feelings, "I asked that you not interrupt,"

"I apologize, but it's offensive that you'd think such a thing about me," Mahsa's lips lifted over her teeth as her anger surged up a bit, "I was taught better than that and would never use such a thing on anyone much less someone I actually give a damn about,"

Kouen nodded with a barely visible wince, "I apologize for thinking such a thing though given all the facts, you cannot blame me."

"I suppose not," Mahsa forced her anger to drop knowing that the women attempting to get into
Kouen's bed would have probably tried it if they were able to, "Though in the future, I ask that you refrain from thinking such a thing about me. To even think about doing something of that nature is sickening."

Kouen moved to sit down and gestured for her to do the same. Mahsa slowly did as he silently bid despite the wish to keep her full distance away from him. Kouen began speaking once more when she'd sat down on the love seat across from him, "My irritation slowly began to fade away and I seriously thought about what you'd said. I was confused over why you'd said certain things, but realized why after some thought. You do not wish to sleep around with anyone unless they're female."

Mahsa shook her head, "Even then, I do not want to sleep with just anyone. With Queen Mira, it was mostly due to the fact she was attractive, interested in me, and I'd grown close to her during my time in Artemyra. I have not slept with anyone since that time."

Kouen looked a little surprised, but it disappeared after a few moments, "I suppose it shouldn't be surprising though may I ask why?"

"I didn't have the desire to do so," It was rather simple especially since the only one to make feel something was the man across from her, "Without any real bond in place, I saw no reason to try even if sex can be enjoyable."

"So you haven't been with Luna?" Kouen asked earning a soft snort.

"Luna has no desire for women," Mahsa hadn't really thought about it, "And Luna isn't my type when it comes to a partner," Kouen looked at her curiously as she took a drink of wine, "With my partners, I prefer someone strong with a commanding presence and passion. I also prefer those taller than me and they need to be able to fight. I want to have to either work for my victor, lose to them, or draw with them. They have to be at least somewhat intelligent and care about those around them. Razol said that my type would be considered a 'king' or dominant though it doesn't mean I'll let them walk right over me. I guess my ideal would have to be a metal vessel user though definitely not a certain one since he is definitely not king material." She wondered how the hell Nerva had managed to get Lady Scheherazade to choose him as a candidate, "I'd also prefer them to be somewhat attractive,"

"I see," Kouen's lips quirked into a smirk and she knew that he'd probably realized that he fit into the kind of person her preferred partner was, "May I continue?" Mahsa nodded as she took a drink of her wine noting that the cup was almost empty and summoned to bottle to refill it, "You said that you'd only be a plaything to me, but I had trouble figuring out why until Kouha mentioned something during one of the dinners I had with him," She set down the bottle of wine, "You believe that I wouldn't be able to take you as a wife. Because you're half-Fanalis, a witch, and come from Reim. Does that sound familiar?"

"Yes," Mahsa gave him a measured look while mentally promising to prank the hell out of Kouha the next time they saw one another, "You're the first prince of Kou, En. You'll eventually become Emperor and have to take a wife of suitable blood likely a princess from another country. I'd never interfere in a relationship no matter how much I may want to," The wine must be somewhat strong if she was actually saying this stuff, "No one in Kou save for Koumei, Kouha, Yoku, and possibly Judar would support any kind of relationship like that between us,"

"And you want to be my wife?" Kouen asked with a gleam in his eye.

"Well yeah, I've realized that you're the one that I want despite how much I've tried to deny it. You'd definitely be the kind of man I'd take as my husband especially since you'd pass the Fanalis
courting traditions," The wine was definitely strong if Mahsa had actually said that, "When it comes to being in a relationship with someone, I don't exactly want a short-term thing. I want a long-term one though marriage isn't exactly something I really want to do right this moment. Seeing the world and traveling are what I want to do right now, I guess in a few years I'd probably be ready to somewhat settle down," She sighed softly as she looked at the cup in her hand, "But it's not something that will happen, I've pretty much accepted that despite the fact I really don't want to. On the off chance that we're able to actually get married, we still have the problem of Kou and Reim eventually clashing,"

"And if we could find a way for our countries to come together without fighting?" Kouen asked earning a surprised look.

Mahsa hesitated as a small amount of warm hope began to form in her stomach, "I supposed I'd have less to protest, but the fact is that no one in Kou would accept a relationship like that between us outside of those I named. No one would accept a half-blood to be the wife of their first prince and future emperor. No matter my blood-line and power, they won't accept it."

"And if they learn to accept it?" Kouen asked as he stood up.

"Then I would have even less to protest about," Mahsa placed down her cup of wine as Kouen set his down on the table between them.

Mahsa belatedly stood up and found Kouen standing before her. He reached out to cup her chin and she let it happen despite a voice inside her shouting to move away from him. Kouen's calloused fingers slid across her skin as he cupped her chin and forced her to look up at him. He spoke as his eyes swirled with a mix of emotions that she didn't want to acknowledge, "What makes you believe that I could never feel more than a passing affection towards you?"

"Why would you want me?" Mahsa hated the old insecurities caused by the Dursleys and her time before crossing the veil rose up, "I'm a scarred former slave in all but name. I have no idea what the hell I'm doing most of the time even with my visions. I have more issues than I'd care to talk about. Why would you want me, En?"

"Because you're better than any empty headed bitch that has tried to get into my bed," Kouen answered as his darkened pinkish red eyes stared down into her emerald greens, "You're far more intelligent and cunning than any of the women I've encountered. You have a thirst for knowledge that rivals my own and can actually keep up with me when I find some new information. You have more passion than any woman I encountered whether it be healing others, taking care of them, protecting your own, or just about anything you truly have your mind set on. You're defiant to a fault and don't let what's considered socially acceptable get in your way," Kouen's lips twitched into a slight smile that sent heat rushing through her veins, "You can be gentle when it comes to those under your care, but just as quickly smash someone's head in if they prove to be a threat. You're a warrior capable of tearing any enemies apart should they show themselves."

"En..." Mahsa trailed off finding her resolve to not let things change between crumble into dust with each word.

"You treat me as a regular human being rather than royalty," Kouen continued on clearly unwilling to let her interrupt, "You're an infuriating puzzle that gets more complex each time I think I've solved it. You force me to reconsider things and think of different ways to get what I want. You force me to fight harder and harder each time we clash no matter the setting," Mahsa slowly moved closer to Kouen as he tugged her close using the hand not cupping her chin, "You chose to treat me as a friend rather than let your attraction and desire take over. You treat my siblings as cherished friends on their own merit rather than their status," She placed her hands on his chest unable to
figure out if they were to push him away or pull him closer, "In the beginning, I did want to simply fuck you, but then I got to know you. What I see in you, Mahsa Alexius, is a scarred warrior who's fought through hell and will do it again for those she desires to protect. I see a queen who will be able to stand beside me as an equal without hesitation and watch my back when no one else can. I see the woman that I'd be a fool to let slip away. I want you, Sa. You're the only one I will have as my wife,"

Mahsa's breath caught in her throat at that admittance. She stared up at Kouen feeling a sense of disbelief as the voice in the back of her mind began falling silent. Almost all of her resolve crumbled as Kouen's last words rang through the Fanalis' ears, a single piece still lay and she had to ask the question that burned with her mind. Whatever Kouen's answer was, it would decide whether her resolve crumbled completely to dust making her follow Myron'd advice to just go with the flow or she forced away Kouen despite the pain it'd cause. She slowly reached up to touch his face, "En," She was surprised by how unshaken her voice was, "What do you feel towards me?"

Kouen's eyes widened before softening as he said, "I'm fairly sure I am falling in love with you, Sa. Kouha and the others believe I already have though."

Mahsa's resolve crumbled completely as she heard those words. A slow smile formed on her lips as she nodded, "I love you, En. I have for a long time."

Admitting it pulled a weight from Mahsa's shoulders and heart as she watched Kouen's eyes widen. The sight of his lips pulling into one of those scarcely seen true smiles sent warmth coiling through her heart and stomach knowing she was the cause of it. The kiss that followed sent her blood aflame and her mind pleasantly cloudy. Wrapping her arms around his neck, she pressed closer to him as an arm wound around her waist and the hand cupping her chin moved to grasp the back of her neck. Opening her mouth when Kouen's tongue slipped against her lips, she almost moaned as his unique taste hit her tongue for the first time since that kiss they'd shared in the gardens back in Kou. Muddled as it was by the wine they'd been drinking, Kouen's unique flavor caused the warmth in her stomach to blaze up alongside her blood.

Kouen pulled back leaving Mahsa to chase after his mouth for another taste. The almost inaudible groan that left Kouen's throat only further ignited the blaze in her stomach. She wanted to hear it again and felt a bit annoyed when Kouen pulled back again. She frowned at him when he pulled away from her. She was about to ask why when a knock sounded on the door causing irritation to flash through her. She looked at the door as it opened to reveal Kokuton Shuu. He gave the two a searching look for a moment before focusing on his king, "Lord Kouen, a messenger from Reim has arrived."

"Lady Scheherazade is probably hoping to open trade negotiations," Mahsa said as Kouen glanced at her.

"I see," Kouen looked at Kokuton, "I will see this messenger in the meeting room in five minutes,"

Kokuton nodded, "I will relay your orders."

Kokuton took his leave rather quickly closing the door behind him. Mahsa felt a small amount of annoyance towards the chimera-like household vessel for interrupting even if it shouldn't be so surprising something like this happened. Kouen was in charge and had duties to attend to which meant privacy was somewhat scarce. She decided to just let it go for now as she asked, "Did one of your Djinn warn you he was approaching?"

"Yes," Kouen looked at her radiating a bit of irritation and annoyance, "It would seem our meeting has to be cut short,"
"We'll just have to meet again some other time," Mahsa replied with a shrug trying to act nonchalant, "It's probably for the best considering the fact I am still really tired. I'll go grab Darius,"

Kouen pulled Mahsa into another kiss before she could move towards the door. It was a heavy burning kiss that threatened to take away her sense of everything save for the man currently kissing her. When he pulled away, he told her, "You could stay here for the night."

And wasn't that a tempting offer, Mahsa actually wanted to take him up on it. But caution and the fact she needed to have easy access to those that needed healing prevented that from happening, she shook her head, "Maybe another time when things are a bit more settled, people would probably assume the worst if I wasn't at my temporary home come morning."

Kouen grimaced and probably would've kept her there regardless had it not been for common sense, "The matter isn't settled."

"Course not," Mahsa moved towards the door with Kouen following after her.

Luna pounced on Mahsa the moment she entered the house, "Mahsa! What happened?"

"Kouen and I talked," Mahsa answered with a slight grin.

Luna's cheeks puffed up a bit, "That's not what I meant and you know it."

Mahsa rolled her eyes knowing that Luna's mind had probably been in the gutter since she'd left, "We did talk."

"About what?" Jori asked from his place on the couch.

Mahsa noticed the pile of weapons he was cleaning and sharpening that belonged to all three of them. He had likely chosen to do that rather than pace like Luna while she was gone. She focused on him as he sharpened her daggers, "About the last time we actually physically talked."

"And?" Luna was practically vibrating, "What happened?"

"We had an adult conversation," Mahsa grinned and laughed at Luna's growl of annoyance, "Alright, I'll tell you what happened." She shook her head while moving to sit down with Darius dropping from her shoulder to shift into his lion form, "Kouen told me about his side of things and what happened since we last talked. Apparently I was on his mind a lot, he actually thought I'd put a spell on him despite knowing I wouldn't. I won't go into detail about the conversation we had after that, but in the end, we both admitted our feelings for one another,"

Luna let out a loud squeal and pounced on Mahsa to shout, "That's amazing! You'll get together and then we'll have crimson haired babies running aroun-"

"Luna!" Mahsa's cheeks flushed at the thought of Kouen and her's future kids, "Aren't you looking at things too far in the future? I'm still going to be traveling and stuff for awhile. Any children will wait especially given what's going to happen in the future,"

"So you're together with him?" Jori asked as he placed down his sword and the wet stone he was using to sharpen it.

Mahsa shrugged which let her dislodge Luna, "I don't know. We didn't talk about that." She pushed Luna away from her with Darius helpfully grabbing the blonde's shirt and tugging the other witch
away, "I mean we talked about him wanting me as his wife, but that was before we admitted our feelings. After that, we ended up kissing, but things didn't go any further since a messenger from home arrived to speak with En."

Before Luna could latch onto Mahsa's words, Jori put in his two cents, "A messenger for Reim? I know we sent a report of what happened, but for one to arrive so soon..."

"Lady Scheherazade probably sent them along before everything really took off," Mahsa answered not really sure if she was right or not, "It's likely to open negotiations on trade with whoever's in charge," She stood up feeling the tiredness she'd been keeping at bay rise up, "I'm going to bed,

Mahsa offered them both a tired smile before taking her leave. Darius followed after her and waited until she'd gotten ready for bed to ask, "What happens now, Sssa?"

"I don't know, Dari," Mahsa admitted as she laid down on her bed with Darius jumping up to lay down beside her, "Kouen actually feelsss the sssame towardsss me or isss getting there. All the worriesss I've carried with me are sssoeverwhat easssed, I've actually convinced myssself to try thingssss with En. But I don't know what exactly we're going to do now. We've got a lot of time before everything ssstarrtssss up,"

"Ssso we'll ussse that time to figure thingssss out, right?" Darius asked as he laid his head on her chest, "Like we usssually do, Sssa. We'll train hard with Jori and Luna. You'll figure thingssss out with Kouen. We'll change thingss for the better when we're able to,"

Mahsa felt a ball of tension that she hadn't noticed before ease. She hugged Darius' head, "Yeah, we'll do that. You're really ssssmart, Dari. Definitely not the little cub that accidentally found hisss way to me anymore."

Darius nuzzled her with a low purring sound, "Love you, Sssa."

"I love you too, Dari," Mahsa kissed his forehead before laying down properly.

Mahsa flew towards the palace feeling glad that Kouen had ensured that no one would try to shoot her down anymore. She landed in the open courtyard after circling for a few moments and shifted back in one smooth movement. Darius landed beside her as he shifted into his lion form and they headed inside greeting those that they passed. They soon stopped in the great library that Koumei had claimed as his and walked inside once the guards opened the door. Koumei looked up from the books spread out on the table before him, "Hello, Mahsa."

"Hey, Mei," Mahsa greeted prince with a bright smile, "Looking over the laws of Balbadd?"

"For the most part, I'm also looking through the history," Koumei replied as he put down the book in his hand, "What brings you here, Mahsa?"

"I wanted to see if you needed any help," Mahsa answered with a sheepish smile, "Luna and the others are pretty much making sure there isn't much for me to do,"

"Not going to see my brother?" Koumei asked as he gestured for her to sit down.

Mahsa snagged a book from the pile and sat down, "Seeing as he's likely busy with things that I'm not exactly able to help with, I figured it would be best not to bother him especially since I really want to spar with someone. I want a proper workout with someone that won't go easy on me."

"Well he should be taking a break at some point soon," Koumei offered as Mahsa opened the
book, "So until then, I see no reason not to accept any help. I've actually been hoping that you'd come see me at some point soon. While Luna and Jori have been helpful, I'd really like to have your own insight on everything,"

Mahsa grinned at him, "Good thing I'm here to help then."

"Sa," Mahsa looked away from the paper that Koumei was showing her.

"Hey, En," Mahsa greeted Kouen from her place beside Koumei.

"What exactly are you doing?" Kouen asked as his eyes drifted between Koumei and Mahsa.

Koumei answered with a light smile, "She's been helping me while waiting for you to take a break from your duties. It's actually been really helpful since I've gotten another unique point of view about Balbadd."

Kouen looked at Mahsa, "You were waiting for me?"

"I wanted to see if you'd spar with me," Mahsa answered with a sheepish smile, "But I realized on the way here that you'd probably be busy with something, so I came to help Koumei while waiting for an opportunity to speak with you," She handed the paper back to Koumei, "I figured he might need a helping hand."

"I see," Kouen had a little confusion in his eyes though masked it quickly as he asked, "Would you like to spar now?"

"If you have the time, I'd love a spar though not with our Djinn considering the fact I am still technically recovering," Mahsa said as she stood up.

"I have time," Kouen assured her.

Mahsa hugged Koumei gently earning a surprised look from the prince, "Thanks for being patient with me, Mei."

"It's no problem, Mahsa," Koumei hugged her back rather slowly, "You were definitely helpful. If you have time again, I'd love it if you'd come help me again."

"Sounds like a blast," Mahsa let go knowing that she was making him uncomfortable, "See you later,"

"See you later," Koumei replied with a light smile.

Mahsa left the library with Kouen who commented, "Working in a library doesn't seem physically engaging."

"I just needed something to do," Mahsa admitted with a soft laugh, "Jori and Luna have pretty much made it so there isn't anything I can really do which has given me extra time. If I was back home, I'd spar with someone or do something to stay busy. Here, I don't exactly have many interesting options."

"You could have interrupted," Kouen told her as they moved towards the training grounds that Mahsa vaguely recalled seeing the last time she'd been in Balbadd, "I wouldn't have minded as the nobles here are-"

"Long winded assholes who like hearing themselves talk when they're not stuffing their faces?"
Mahsa offered earning a soft snort and amused glance, "I'm not wrong."

"I suppose not," Kouen shook his head slightly with a smirk, "We have many of them back in Kou,"

"And in Reim though some of the nobles are actually somewhat decent," Mahsa grinned a bit, "Cousin Gladius for example. He's the head of the Alexius family and someone I actually like. The previous head is a major asshole,"

"Do you get along with most of the Alexius family?" Kouen asked looking somewhat curious.

"Not really, they mostly ignore my siblings and I unless they need something from us," Mahsa's grin faded into a warm smile, "Now the Fanalis Corps on the other hand, we're pretty much a big family for the most part. I don't think any of us are really related outside of my siblings mostly because no one mentioned it,"

"Did you enjoy your time home?" Kouen asked as they entered the training ground.

Mahsa nodded with a bright grin, "Yeah, it was amazing to see everyone and meet any of the newcomers. I spent a lot of time with my siblings and fought in the Colosseum a few more times."

They reached one of the open training grounds and Mahsa began stripping down to the clothes she always wore when training. She heard a few choked sounds and glanced curiously towards the source which ended up being a few of the men currently occupying the other training grounds. She snorted softly while folding her clothes up and placing them into the 'saddlebag' Darius was carrying alongside her boots. She took out her daggers as Kouen asked, "When did you get that?"

"The saddlebag?" Mahsa asked as she turned to the prince, "I ordered it for Darius. I have one as well though it doesn't see as much use as Darius'. They're basically somewhat bottomless bags that change size to suit the carrier,"

"Useful," Kouen commented as Mahsa began to stretch out.

Once they'd both gotten ready, the two began their spar deciding that it would end once one of them was in a kill position. It didn't take long for them to fall into the somewhat familiar rhythm that had developed during their spars. The only difference was that the sexual tension always hovering in the background wasn't quite as easily ignored as before especially once they got going. Mahsa's head started going a bit fuzzy around the edges as everything save for Kouen seemed to vanish. When her daggers scratched his cheek, she felt an odd desire to lick away the blood leaking from the cut. The desire increased as another cut formed this time followed by a stinging sensation along her right side. Using the pain to focus on the spar rather than the bizarre desire, she managed to disarm Kouen and pin him to ground somewhat quicker than she usually did.

Mahsa held him there with one of her daggers pressed against his throat and the tip of her other pressed to the skin under his chin ready to be thrust upward in his skull. The only sounds were their heavy breathing and the heavy beat of her heart. She finally spoke after a moment, "Yield?"

"I yield," Kouen answered after trying to get free.

Mahsa sheathed her daggers before getting off of Kouen allowing him to stand up. She healed them both before asking, "Want to go again, En?"

Kouen nodded as he moved to take his sword from a soldier that had decided to watch the bout. Others had gathered as well, Mahsa found that she didn't like these strangers watching them, but forced herself not to say anything. She willingly allowed herself to fall into that fuzzy haze that
made everything vanish save for Kouen. Kouen managed to disarm her, but she reminded him that Fanalis didn't always rely on weapons nor did her magic always find use in situations like this. She forced Kouen to drop his sword and fight her without a weapon. This felt more intimate than their usual spars, she dimly noticed in the back of her mind while ducking underneath a punch and caught the follow up kick.

Using his awkward balance, Mahsa knocked him to the ground and pinned him there. Her knee was in the center of his shoulders, she gripped his arms in a position that definitely caused a bit of pain. She leaned down a bit, "Yield?"

Kouen chuckled a bit, "Not yet."

Mahsa's eyes narrowed only to widen as Kouen's head came back slamming into her nose. The crunch and burst of pain alongside her surprise stunned the Fanalis long enough for Kouen to reverse their positions. She narrowed her watering eyes and tried to get free. Had it been before she'd thoroughly exhausted herself, she would have gotten free without a problem. When she discovered that there wasn't a way for her to win this without magic, she stopped moving, "I yield."

Kouen got off of her and held out a hand. Mahsa took it and pressed a hand to her nose wincing at the pain the action caused. Kouen's eyes held an apology in them, "Will you be alright?"

"Yeah," Mahsa walked over to Darius and pulled out one of the thick leather straps meant to replace portions of her saddle, "Give me a moment,"

Mahsa proceeded to fix her nose after biting down on the leather earning multiple sympathetic winces. She made sure everything was aligned right and there weren't any out of place pieces before fixing the damage with a spell. She cleaned up the blood and unblocked her nose after blinking away some tears. Removing the leather strap, she spit out the blood and mucus tainted spit that had gathered in her mouth onto the ground. She put the leather strap back and pulled out a water bottle before rinsing out the taste in her mouth. Darius looked at her in concern, "Are you alright, Sssa?"

"I'm fine, Dari," Mahsa rubbed at her tender nose, "Though I think that's enough sparring for the moment," She looked at Kouen with a slight grin, "Not bad, En. Most wouldn't think to use a move like that on a woman. Granted, you've fucked up my sense of smell for the next few hours, but still nice shot,"

"You aren't mad?" Someone from the crowd of soldiers burst out.

Mahsa summoned her daggers with a soft snort, "Why would I be? I'm a Fanalis and a warrior. I also know that you've got to play dirty when facing an opponent with a higher skill level than you. While En has a good chance to beat me with a weapon, he doesn't have the hand-to-hand skills needed to face a Fanalis on even ground. No one does outside of a few special exceptions," She turned back to En, "That was a lot of fun, we have to do that a few more times while I'm still here."

"I wouldn't mind it," Kouen replied with a soft chuckle and slight smile causing the soldiers around them to jump a bit looking startled.

Mahsa heard a chime coming from Darius' saddlebag and checked it to find the timer she'd set up going off, "Normally I wouldn't run after a good spar like that, but I've got to get going if I want to make it back 'home' in time to bathe and eat dinner before my meeting with the goblins," She looked at Kouen with a sheepish expression, "Any chance you might have some extra time tomorrow?"
"After sunset," Kouen said earning a bright grin in response, "What are you meeting with the goblins for?"

"Information exchange and to make adjustments to our current agreement," Mahsa answered as she put her daggers into Darius' saddlebag and began to redress, "Nothing too important, but not a meeting I want to miss,"

Mahsa finished dressing and secured Darius' saddlebag before turning to Kouen. She gave into the urge she'd had since first seeing him and kissed the prince briefly. She pulled away with a bright grin as Darius snorted with laughter. Kouen reached out towards her as someone muttered, "D-did she just kiss Prince Kouen?"

"I'll see ya tomorrow, En," Mahsa bounced backward, "Have a nice evening,"

With that, Mahsa shifted into her gryfon form and took out with Darius following after her. They headed to their 'home' with Darius commenting, "I thought you didn't want anything to do with rumors?"

"I normally do not, but ssseeing asss En isss basssically mine, I'd prefer to make it known," Mahsa answered glad that Darius understood other creatures for the most part.

"It was somewhat foolish," Alastor commented as she caught a warm updraft and began to glide.

'Perhaps,' Mahsa knew it would likely cause some backlash, 'But after denying things for so long, I am somewhat unwilling to hide what I feel,' She shifted to avoid some approaching birds, 'What's wrong, Alastor? Normally you aren't so quiet,'

The Djinn usually said a few comments during the day, but had been silent for the most part leading her to be a bit worried. Alastor was silent until she'd landed and bathed, "I've been thinking."

Mahsa paused in the middle of drying off, 'Oh? About what?'

"About why I chose you as my queen," Alastor answered making Mahsa frown as a bit of worry hit her, "I do not regret it, Mahsa. But I think perhaps you might need another Djinn."

'What?' Mahsa shook her head as she resumed drying off, 'Why on earth would you think something like that, Alastor?'

"I am not the most useful Djinn, Mahsa. You rarely find any true need to use me," Alastor murmured softly, "I just think that if one of my kin were to choose you as well, you'd be better of-

'Not going to happen,' Mahsa cut him off not wanting to listen anymore, 'Alastor, I will admit that a more physically inclined Djinn would be useful, but I don't need it. My natural abilities are enough for just about any situation I come across. When that doesn't work, you pick up the slack without any problem. I'm happy with you, Alastor. I need nor want another Djinn,'

"Mahsa..." Alastor trailed off in a soft voice.

'You're just as much mine as I am yours, Alastor,' Mahsa smiled softly as she began to dress, 'Do not doubt your worth, I will need you in the future when shit hits the fan. You ground me, my friend. You're a voice of reason that's always with me. I do not wish to ever have another drown out your voice nor do I wish to share my mind with someone else,' She tapped her skull, 'I'd actually go insane if another was added,"
Alastor was quiet for a moment before he began to laugh and swamp Mahsa with so many warm feelings that she actually ended up on her knees purring softly. Alastor murmured, "My queen. My darling little hybrid queen."

'I love you too, Alastor,' Mahsa murmured with a lazy grin.

Chapter End Notes

Wanted to write smut...Having a new puppy that doesn't like sleep pretty much ended that dream. Will try to add some to the next chapter though
The same servant as last time led Mahsa to Kouen's temporary rooms though this time the man wasn't in them when she arrived. Darius had ditched her after they'd arrived again. This time sighting that he didn't feel like watching someone he saw as an older sister/mother figure court someone, she had rolled her eyes with a snort. She looked at the servant as he said, "Lord Kouen has said you may do as you wish while waiting for him to arrive. Refreshments will be brought along soon."

Mahsa nodded as she walked into the room, "Thank you."

The servant bowed and left the room closing the door behind him. Mahsa walked over to one of the windows and lit her pipe. Alastor spoke as she leaned against the windowsill, "Do you really want to smoke right now?"

'I do need something to do and didn't think to bring any books,' Mahsa answered as she looked out over the city, 'And I'd rather not piss En off by rummaging around his room,'

Leaning against the windowsill, Mahsa fell into a slight meditative state almost lazily looking over her metal shield that she hadn't messed with since the goblins had finished teaching her occlumency. The most she used it for was to keep the worst of her visions locked away until needed. As Legilimency wasn't an often used skill for the most part and almost never used on this side of the veil, she hadn't touched up her defenses or increased them beyond some basic defenses. Given that there was a real chance Sinbad would use Zepar on her and the wizarding world deciding to come after her, she had a reason to do so now. She only stirred when the door opened revealing a servant carrying a tea tray into the room. A second servant followed carrying some pastries and fruits. The two set them down with the one carrying the tea tray asked, "Do you require anything else, Lady Alexius?"

"What type of tea is that?" Mahsa asked as she released some of the smoke she'd inhaled.

"Jasmine tea, My lady," The servant answered.

Mahsa smiled slightly feeling just a bit surprised that Kouen had remembered she liked jasmine tea, "I don't require anything else. Thank you for asking though."

The servant looked a bit startled before bowing and taking her leave alongside the other one. Mahsa walked over and prepared a cup of tea for herself. She sat down on one of the couches. Removing her pipe for a moment, she exhaled all the smoke in her lungs before taking a sip of the tea humming softly at the taste. She set the cup down before picking her pipe back up. Kouen arrived a few moments later with a scowl on his face that disappeared when he spotted her. She offered him a concerned look, "Something wrong?"

"Some of the more irritating nobles around here apparently have some unwed daughters," Kouen answered as his scowl returned.

Mahsa gave him a sympathetic look, "At least you don't have to deal with them anymore tonight."

Kouen smirked as his scowl faded clearly pleased about the idea. He noticed the cup of tea in front of her, "You do like jasmine tea, right?"

"I do. I'm surprised you remembered," Mahsa said as he took off his outer-robies and dropped them rather carelessly onto one of the nearby chairs, "I barely remembering telling you,"
"I almost didn't," Kouen admitted as he took a seat across from her to prepare his own tea, "I thought it was sakura tea,"

"I do enjoy that one as well though jasmine is more to my taste," Mahsa looked at his outer-robes, "How in the world do you survive the heat with so many clothes?"

"Practice," Kouen gave her an amused look, "Not everyone can run around half-naked when they so wish,"

Mahsa rolled her eyes at him, "Better half-naked than sweating my ass off," Kouen snorted at her earning a slight grin from the Fanalis, "How are things going anyway? Other than the whole greedy nobles trying to play their games?"

"Fairly well especially with the help you and yours have been giving us," Kouen answered as she drank some more tea, "Definitely quicker than what we expected, Koumei believes that we should have Balbadd somewhat functional within the year. How are all the injured?"

"That's good, it'll definitely help the people be more accepting once things gain some form of normality," Mahsa set down her cup and returned to her pipe, "Based on my own calculations, we should have all those that actually need us to help recover healed up within the next three months though it might be a bit longer depending on any injuries that develop," She noted that her pipe needed to be refilled when no entered her mouth, "Those that I've spent time teaching are actually a big help in that regard, they're quick learners without too many bad habits to contend with. So far, only thirteen of those that we've been healing became crippled from the shitstorm that occurred, a few of them are already working to overcome their new limits," She vanished the ash and put her pipe away, "No deaths have occurred lately though a few patients might end up dying soon due lingering damage that went unhealed for too long. We're doing our best to prevent it, but we can't save everyone," She picked up her cup again, "Do you want me to send information to Koumei or someone?"

"Have it sent to Koumei, he'll get it placed where it needs to be," Kouen answered after a moment, "You surprised me yesterday,"

Mahsa tilted her head slightly confused, "How so?"

"You didn't get mad at me for breaking your nose," Kouen stated earning a soft snort.

"You aren't the first person to do so nor will you be the last," Mahsa replied as she leaned back against the couch, "It happened during a spar and we never went over any rules against it. All we agreed on was not causing lasting harm or killing each other. The moment you try something like that when we're not sparring will land you on your ass with some broken bones," She offered Kouen a lazy grin making sure to show her teeth earning a smirk from the prince, "After all, I'm no pushover and while we may be together, I won't take any shit from you,"

"I expect nothing less," Kouen said as he placed down his cup, "Though that wasn't the only thing that surprised me. You kissed me in front of those soldiers,"

"You didn't say to keep, whatever the name of our relationship is, a secret and I wanted to do that all day," Mahsa watched him stand up, "If you didn't want me to do something like that, you should've said something,"

"You do realize that this will spread rumors about us again," Kouen walked around the table and Mahsa was slightly amused to find that the man was carrying himself like a predator.
"If it means that people know you're mine, I don't exactly mind it," Mahsa stayed in her position wondering what he was going to do, "A few rumors about a relationship between us aren't that bad especially when they're true,"

Kouen stopped in front of Mahsa and reached out with his hand to grab her chin. She looked up at him as his thumb brushed against her lips. She open her mouth allowing her tongue to dart out and brush against the pad of his thumb. Kouen's eyes followed the movement of her tongue as they darkened slowly. She slowly reached out grab the front of his robe as he said, "Bit hypocritical of you."

"Perhaps," Mahsa tightened her grip on the front of his robe, "But you can't say that the idea of people knowing I'm yours isn't pleasing," She tugged lightly noting the straining of the fabric and wondered if Kouen knew just how easily his robes could be torn apart, "But it isn't the rumors that bother you," Kouen's lips twitched a bit, "It's that I left you without any way to react, isn't it? The whole not being able to control the situation,"

"Perhaps," Kouen leaned down tugging her chin upwards.

Rather than kiss her like Mahsa expected, Kouen moved to kiss along her jaw and cheeks surprising the Fanalis into staying still for a moment. Anytime she moved her head, Kouen pulled away to kiss along her neck. She frowned at him, "En."

"Sa," Kouen pulled back to smirk at her, "Problem?"

"Kiss me properly," Mahsa told him.

"Why should I?" Kouen asked as his smirk deepened.

"Because if you don't, I won't play nice," Mahsa replied earning a raised eyebrow from the man.

Kouen's eyes were filled with amusement and curiosity, "Playing nice? Who said I wanted you to play nice?"

"Don't blame me if you're not happy with what I do next," Mahsa warned him before taking control of the situation.

Mahsa used her grip on Kouen's clothes to tug him forward while easily pulling away from his grip on her chin. She pushed him onto the couch beside her. Kouen pushed himself up as she got off the couch. He turned towards her and she pushed him to sit down on the couch before plopping into his lap. Pinning his hands to the couch, she pressed her mouth to his. Nipping harsh enough at his bottom lip to draw blood prompted the prince to open his mouth in surprise at the sudden pain, she pressed her tongue into his mouth. Kouen began fighting her for dominance during the kiss while attempting to free his hands from her grip. She pulled away after a few moments wordlessly healing his bleeding lip before moving to mark up his neck. Only when she was satisfied with leaving a few marks that would likely take at least a week to heal, she released Kouen's hands after moving back to his mouth.

Kouen broke the kiss as his hands wrapped around her wrists, "You bit me."

"Nipped you," Mahsa replied with a slight smirk, "Biting you would be a lot different. Do you want me to show you?"

Because Mahsa wouldn't mind leaving a decent mark like that on Kouen's skin, she planned on doing that at some point once she'd found a good place for it. Or more than a few, she bet there'd be more than just one good place to mark Kouen like that. Kouen's eyes narrowed at her, "You
'nipped' me hard enough to draw blood."

"You didn't want me to play nice," Mahsa pointed out, "Though you don't seem to mind it too much,"

To emphasize her words, Mahsa shifted on his lap earning a slight hiss from Kouen as her ass pressed against a certain part of his anatomy. Releasing her wrists, Kouen pushed her off his lap. She winced as her side caught the table as she fell towards the floor. The table's legs screeched as it was pushed across the floor by her body weight. Giving Kouen a glare from her new place on the floor, she healed the slight damage to her side as Kouen said, "I do not appreciate you biting me."

"I didn't bite you," Mahsa rolled her eyes at him as she got up, "I nipped you," She wondered how many times she'd have to correct him, "If you didn't want to get nipped hard enough to draw blood, you should have kissed me properly," She shook her head at him, "I did you warn. You didn't want me to play nice now you're not happy with what I did,"

Kouen's lips pulled into a slight scowl, "I didn't expect you to do that."

"So?" Mahsa turned to the table feeling a bit hungry and picked up the bowl of cherries settled there, "If I did things you expected me to do, it'd be boring,"

Mahsa plucked a cherry from the bowl and ate it. Kouen's scowl faded at that, "Don't do it again."

"I'll try not to," Mahsa ate another cherry as she walked back over to the couch to sit down beside Kouen, "No promises though," Kouen frowned at her, "En, have you seen my teeth," She opened her mouth and gestured to her teeth, "They're not exactly like a normal humans. A bit too sharp to be," She ate another cherry, "But I'll try to avoid drawing blood,"

Kouen didn't look totally satisfied with her answer, but seemed to accept it, "Very well."

Mahsa offered him a cheery, "Cherry?"

Kouen took the cherry from her and Mahsa ate another one, "Why do you like cherries so much?"

Mahsa shrugged as she ate another one, "I just like them. Not enough to eat them everyday, but near enough. I doubt I'd ever get sick of them."

Kouen took another cheery and Mahsa leaned into his side making sure to keep the bowl between them. Soon enough there was only one last cherry and Kouen ended up taking it from the bowl, she tried to steal it from him earning a soft chuckle as he moved it away from her. She clambered onto his lap to steal the cherry ignoring the arm that came to curl around her waist. She finally managed to get the cherry from him and ate it with a smug smile. She opened her mouth to gloat when Kouen pulled her into searing kiss that left the Fanalis' head pleasantly hazy. Fingers slid underneath her tunic to press against the soft skin beneath, she felt warmth blaze through her from where Kouen's fingers connected to her skin.

Mahsa broke the kiss as Kouen stopped massaging her sides to pull the tunic off of her. She helped him get it off and dropped it onto the ground beside the couch. The chest wrapping she wore beneath it followed the tunic and Kouen's eyes ran down her bared chest. Fingers followed the path of his eyes, She flushed both at the intense stare and the fingers running across her skin. Kouen's fingers stopped just beneath the swell of her left breast where a knot of scar tissue rested. He looked away from the scar with slightly wide eyes, "Where did you get this?"

"A potioned arrow," Mahsa answered as the urge to cover herself appeared, "During our trip back home to Reim, we were passing through the desert with the goblins. Bandits attacked, one
managed a lucky shot and if it hadn't been for Luna, I would've bled out before a healer could get to me," She could still remember the cold chill of fear that had gripped her heart when the wound wouldn't close no matter what she tried, "Where they got a potion to keep someone's wounds from closing, I've never really figured out,"

Kouen's fingers dug into Mahsa's skin allowing her to focus on the present, "You nearly died after leaving Kou."

"More than once," Mahsa admitted feeling Kouen's fingers dig into her skin that much harder as the words registered, "I'm alive though which counts,"

"You should've stayed longer," Kouen muttered as his lips pulled into a deep frown.

"Maybe. Maybe not," Mahsa pressed a kiss to his lips as her arms curled around his neck, "But should've, would've, could've doesn't matter since the events passed by." She felt his fingers start to run up and down her sides again, "All that truly matters right now is the present,"

Kouen's lips twitched into a faint smile, "Not the future?"

"The future can wait until tomorrow," Mahsa grinned at him, "Right now, I'd prefer to enjoy the present since there are a lot more pleasant things to think about. Or not think about, I'm okay with not thinking about anything at all,"

Mahsa kissed Kouen deeply tangling their tongues together as she pressed against him. Kouen wrapped an arm around her and pulled her close as his other hand trailed down to her ass. She pulled back to nibble at his bottom lip as Kouen jerked his hips upwards as the hand on her ass pushed the Fanalis forward. She broke the kiss wanting to feel skin against skin. She began tugging at Kouen's robes heavily tempted to just rip them away, but refraining from doing so given that getting Kouen pissy again would likely mean going home without finally getting a good taste of him. Kouen pushed off her hands as he said, "Get on the bed."

"Get those clothes off," Mahsa told him as she got off of his lap.

Mahsa stripped off the last of her clothing before getting onto the bed as Kouen had asked. She promptly sank into the soft material making the Fanalis grimace a bit. While she didn't mind a soft bed, she preferred a somewhat firm mattress. She settled against the pillows while looking at Kouen who had shed his inner robe and undergarment. Kouen joined her on the bed as her eyes took in the rather nice cock he boasted. While not as big as some of the male Fanalis she'd seen, he was on the large side for a pure human. She felt a faint sense of nervousness rush over her, but pushed it back as Kouen sat down beside her. Pushing herself into a proper sitting position, she pulled Kouen into another kiss.

Kouen broke the kiss after too short a moment in Mahsa's mind, "You're still technically a virgin, right?"

"Yes," Mahsa narrowed her eyes at him, "Why?"

"So I know how rough I can be," Kouen pushed her lay back against the pillows, "And to ensure you'll be able to enjoy it,"

Mahsa shifted to get a bit more comfortable only to freeze as Kouen's hand settled on her stomach. Kouen seemed to ignore the way she stiffened as he leaned over to brush his lips against her neck. She slowly began to relax as Kouen's hand stayed completely still on her stomach. She felt a faint sense of nervousness rush over her, but pushed it back as Kouen sat down beside her. Pushing herself into a proper sitting position, she pulled Kouen into another kiss.

Kouen broke the kiss after too short a moment in Mahsa's mind, "You're still technically a virgin, right?"

"Yes," Mahsa narrowed her eyes at him, "Why?"

"So I know how rough I can be," Kouen pushed her lay back against the pillows, "And to ensure you'll be able to enjoy it,"

Mahsa shifted to get a bit more comfortable only to freeze as Kouen's hand settled on her stomach. Kouen seemed to ignore the way she stiffened as he leaned over to brush his lips against her neck. She slowly began to relax as Kouen's hand stayed completely still on her stomach. Kouen found one of her sweet spots just above her left clavicle and attacked it. She felt the need to close her
eyes, but the fact Kouen's hand was still on her stomach only allowed for them to go half-mast. 
Kouen moved on from her neck after leaving a few decent hickies that he likely thought would be 
there for a week. Kouen cupped her breasts in his hands allowing the Fanalis to focus completely 
on what he was actually doing.

Kouen tugged and rolled her nipples as soft sighs slowly slipped from Mahsa's lips. The feeling of 
his hands on her breasts was so different from those that had touched her before. The rough 
calloused hands were bigger than the ones belonging to a female Fanalis she'd rolled around with 
one during her time back in Reim after leaving Artemyra. She closed her eyes as Kouen's mouth 
closed over one of them once it'd pebbled. She threaded her fingers through his hair and tugged his 
head closer as pleasure slowly began to burn through her body. She gasped when he gently nipped 
at the bud in his mouth in time with one of his hands pinching the other. Tugging his head from her 
breast, she pulled him into a wet kiss tangling their tongues together.

A hand running across her stomach caused Mahsa to break the kiss. Kouen's hand slid down to the 
nest of curls between her legs and a finger pushed past her labia. She flushed as Kouen's finger slid 
into her as he commented, "Already so wet and we've barely begun."

"I haven't been with anyone in awhile and there's been a limited amount of personal time with 
everything going on," Mahsa replied as he slid another finger into her.

Mahsa's hips jerked when he pressed his thumb against her clit and a choked moan left her. Kouen 
rubbed at her walls as he slid his fingers in and out of her. Thrusting her hips against his hand, she 
felt a familiar sensation building up within her. She bit back a whine when Kouen removed his 
hand. He pulled her to straddle him and she shifted until his cock pressed against her ass. Kouen 
guided her to settle above his cock as she set her hands on his shoulders. She gasped as the head of 
his cock pressed against her slicked labia. Kouen spoke as he helped her slowly begin to lower 
 herself on him, "We'll go at your pace."

Mahsa felt only discomfort and a little burning sensation as Kouen's cock slowly slid into her. She 
noticed the confusion in Kouen's eyes like from the lack of resistance, "Training."

"I see," Kouen hissed as she finished impaling herself on his cock.

Mahsa kissed Kouen as she got used to the feeling of him being inside of her. Experimentally 
rolling her hips, she moaned at the feeling of his cock brushing against her walls. She slowly began 
to rise up and down his length using her grip on Kouen's shoulders to keep her balance. She sped 
up as her head fell back due to the pleasure building within her body. She felt her breasts begin to 
bounce and one of Kouen's hands came up cup one of them. She dug her fingers into his shoulders 
as she ground down against him feeling a need for more friction, "En, I need..."

"Need what?" Kouen just had to be a smart ass, didn't he?

"More please," Mahsa yelped as an arm wrapped around her waist and pulled her down as Kouen 
thrust his hips.

Moans and gasps slipped past her lips as Kouen took over, Mahsa felt a faint amount of amusement 
at the fact Kouen decided her pace wasn't good enough. She felt the pleasure coiling through her 
tightened with each thrust. She let out a low growl as Kouen pushed her off his lap causing him to 
slide out of her, "En, what the he-Ah!"

Back meeting the cool fabric of the bed spread, Mahsa barely had time to get any words out before 
Kouen slammed into her as his body pressed hers into the bed. Kouen's thrusts became harsher and 
she saw stars when one of them managed to hit her g-spot. Kouen seemed to target that spot as she
wrapped her legs around his waist as he slammed into her over and over. Edging ever closer to the edge, she bucked against him as her nails clawed at his back and Kouen's mouth found her neck. She reached that pleasurable high as Kouen's blunt teeth dug into her skin causing her to cry out.

Kouen barely slowed down as Mahsa came down. She panted heavily as he kept thrusting into her. She found herself quickly moving towards a second one as Kouen's thrusts grew even harsher and more sporadic as his own end came. Kouen reached between them and Mahsa just about howled when his fingers pressed into her clit as he hissed, "Come."

Mahsa's second orgasm felt more powerful than the first. Kouen's head was resting against her shoulder when she came down from the high. She noticed the scent of blood and looked at his back to find that her nails had gotten him good. Healing the scratches enough to ensure they wouldn't get infected or bleed everywhere, she pushed at Kouen's shoulder and he pulled away from her. He laid down beside her and she shifted to lay on her side practically curling up against him. Neither of them spoke for a long while as they regained their breath, she eventually vanished the mess on the sheets and between her legs grimacing at the sticky feeling that remained. She would need to take a bath in order to not feel sticky anymore. But that would come later, she decided while vanishing the mess covering Kouen's cock earning a soft grunt of surprise. Kouen turned his head to look at her and she explained, "I vanished the mess. It'll take a bath to truly get clean, but not more mess."

Kouen nodded as Mahsa closed her eyes feeling somewhat tired. He spoke after a few moments, "Stay the night with me."

While normally she wouldn't agree, Mahsa felt tired and content in a way she hadn't felt since that night with Queen Mira. She hummed lightly, "Sure. Just need to send a message to Luna telling her I'm not coming back."

Mahsa wordlessly summoned her wand and sent off a patronus message.

Waking up beside Kouen was interesting, Mahsa mused as she peered at the sleeping Prince's face. The sense of contentment and warmth that raced through her made the Fanalis stay still as she looked at him. He didn't look innocent only peaceful and stress free. She hadn't realized just how stressed Kouen must've been until all the almost unseen stress lines were gone. Knowing that she was at least partially responsible caused the sense of warm contentment to increase, she liked that he could find some form of peace with her. Shifting slightly, she laid her head on Kouen's chest and listened to his heartbeat.

An arm curling around her shoulders almost made Mahsa jump and jerk away from Kouen. Kouen's voice was heavy and husky with sleep sending heat pooling between her legs, "You stayed the entire night."

"You asked me to stay, so I did," Mahsa didn't bother moving, "Did I wake you?"

The almost absentminded hum that left Kouen was a sound that Mahsa hadn't heard before and eagerly added it to the list of sounds she loved coming from the Kou prince. Kouen's other arm came around her waist and pulled the Fanalis closer, "I think you did. I don't recall ever hearing anyone purr before."

Mahsa's cheeks flushed at that, "It's a Fanalis thing. We purr when we're content and happy. Though mostly when we're around people we care about."

A soft chuckle left Kouen, "So you care about me?"
Mahsa raised her head to give Kouen a small glare, "Of course, I care about you. I love you, En."

Kouen stole her breath away with a heated kiss leaving Mahsa's head pleasantly foggy and her irritation at him for asking a dumb question like that slipped away. Kouen broke the kiss as a knock sounded at the door. He gave the door a glare before looking at her, "Stay here."

"Okay," Mahsa shook her head to clear away the fog as Kouen got out of bed.

Sitting up, Mahsa winced a bit noticing the sore feeling between her legs. She watched as Kouen pulled on a robe and loosely tied it around his waist before opening the door. Seishuu was standing at the door and opened his mouth to speak only to freeze. His eyes darted past Kouen to find her, she watched as his cheeks turned a rather interesting shade of light purple. He focused on Kouen who asked, "What is it, Seishuu?"

"Your meeting with Lord Liam is in thirty minutes," Seishuu answered looking like he dearly wanted to get away from the room.

"Have him shown to a meeting room and served some refreshments when he arrives," Kouen ordered earning a nod.

"As you wish, My King," Seishuu said with a slight bow.

Kouen dismissed Seishuu and closed the door with an almost inaudible sound of frustration that Mahsa wouldn't have been able to hear without being a Fanalis. Kouen turned towards the bed as she commented, "I should probably get going anyway. I have patients to see to."

Not to mention an interrogation via her blonde household member, Mahsa barely kept herself from shuddering at the thought. At the very least, it would prepare her for the eventual interrogation by her sister and those back home. Kouen grimaced a little, "I had wished to spend more time with you."

"I could come back tonight," Mahsa offered with a slight smile as she moved towards the edge of the bed.

"As much as I want to agree, I have important paperwork to do on top of multiple meetings today," Kouen grimaced slightly, "Perhaps another night,"

Mahsa nodded pushing away her disappointment, "That's fine with me, we'll figure something out."

The next few weeks were rather stressful as Kouen and Mahsa found themselves buried beneath quite a bit of work which barely allowed for much contact between the two. Kouen's meeting and paperwork. Mahsa's patients and potions that needed to be brewed. Any moments they did have together were usually brief conversations over a cup of tea or on a walk to a different part of Balbadd. It left both of them in a foul mood which eventually caused one to snap at the other. While they did apologize to each other, it was quite obvious that the lack of time together was straining their new found relationship.

Mahsa sat on top of the house in Balbadd that she shared with Jori, Luna, and Darius looking up at the nearly full moon. She heard someone climb up beside her and Jori's scent floated into her nose. She spoke without tearing her eyes away from the steadily swelling moon, "You should be resting."

"You should be too," Jori settled beside her, "You're starting to feel the strain aren't you?"
Mahsa grimaced as she asked, "Is it that obvious?"

"No, but we've been around each other for years now," Jori looked up at the moon, "While it's obvious you're stressed, no one's really noticing that you're hurting. You're fairly good at hiding it,"

Mahsa's grimace turned into a frown as she looked down at the ground, "I'm scared."

"That's understandable," Jori murmured in a soothing tone that made her want to hit him and lean into the Heliohaptian, "You've finally stopped denying yourself and it looks like everything's going to crumble around you. If not being able to contact one another for very long is causing this much strain between you, what will happen when you're traveling and not able to see each other every day,"

Mahsa clenched her fist fighting against the urge to just hit something, "It's going to fall apart."

"Not if you don't let it," Jori told her earning a scowl and he held up a hand to forestall any angry words, "Mahsa, I know you're trying hard, but you need to find a work around. Something that helps take the edge off of the strain until you're able to spend more time together,"

Mahsa's anger slowly disappeared as she thought over Jori's words. Eventually, she came to the conclusion he was right and grinned a bit, "Thanks, Jori. I think I've got it now."

"Good, now let's both get to sleep. We've got a lot of potions to brew tomorrow," Jori told her.

"Goodbye my sense of smell," Mahsa groaned as she jumped off the roof while Jori scaled down the wall.

Jori snorted at her words, "Just be glad this is the last bit of potions we need to make for a little while."

"I'm still trying to figure out how you managed to negotiate with the goblins for potions," Mahsa said as they headed inside where Luna was waiting for them.

"We all have to be good at something and I'm the best negotiator among the three of us," Jori pointed out with a shrug, "You're the best healer and our leader. Luna is our best information gatherer. I'm our best negotiator,"

"Makes me wonder if we'll pick up someone else," Luna commented as Mahsa headed towards her bedroom.

"It'd be interesting if a bit odd to add someone else into the mix," Mahsa said as she reached her bedroom, "But not something I'd protest,"

The only question was who in the world would become her next household member. Another English magical or someone from this side of the veil? If so, who would it be? What kind of background would they have?

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Mahsa's way of following Jori's advice started simply. She had Darius deliver a small pouch of headache relief vials alongside a note explaining what they were for. From there, she sent little presents and notes at seemingly at random. Sometimes, she sent a flower that she'd found or a colorful shell one of the little children ended up giving her. At other times, she sent some homemade snacks or a book she'd found while looking through the local market. Whenever she actually saw Kouen, she kissed him on the cheek if she could reach it or on one of his wrists murmuring that she loved him.
The strain between them began to ease as Kouen began sending little presents as well utilizing a very willing Darius. He refrained from sending any notes along simply giving Darius any messages. Kouen wasn't big on physical affection in public though he didn't mind her kissing his cheek randomly as it gave him the chance to touch her in some way. It helped a lot and Mahsa knew that if they worked hard their relationship would survive.

During the first day that she actually had nothing to do outside of a little work in the morning, Mahsa ended up wandering through Balbadd speaking to those that wished to converse, but mostly just enjoying the freedom at her feet. She would have gone to see Kouen, but he had to meet with those in charge of Balbadd's merchant guild which included the goblins thanks to their caravans. She came across a group of kids playing what seemed to be a game somewhat like soccer and joined in much to the enjoyment of the children. When they got too tired to continue their game, she told them stories until their parents came to pick them up.

After the last child left with her parents, Mahsa got up from the ground and dusted off her skirt. She paused hearing, "Is this normally what you do on your days off?"

"Sometimes," Mahsa turned her head to smile at Seishuu, "It depends on the day and what I feel like doing."

"And today you decided to play around?" Seishuu asked as Mahsa walked over to him.

Mahsa shrugged lightly, "Not really. I was wandering around and came across those kids. They needed an extra player and since I didn't have anything better to do, I decided to join them," She looked at the man curiously, "What brings you around here, Seishuu?"

"I'm mostly exploring since Lord Kouen doesn't need me right now," Seishuu replied as she reached him.

"Are you hungry?" Mahsa asked earning a small nod, "I know a place that has these really delicious meat bun things. Why don't you join me?"

Seishuu looked like he was going to say no for a few moments before smiling a bit, "Sure, that sounds good."

Mahsa began leading the way, "I came across this small shop during my second time in Balbadd while Jori was negotiating with one of the ships heading towards Reim."

"Why weren't you negotiating?" Seishuu asked earning a sheepish smile.

Mahsa flushed a bit in embarrassment as she admitted, "I'm not very good at negotiating with most people. Jori on the other hand is the best negotiator in our little group."

"But you negotiate with the goblins all the time," Seishuu pointed out with a look of shock on his face.

Mahsa snorted softly, "If by negotiate you mean discuss bloody battles and how to fuck people over, yes, I negotiate with them all the time. I can get things set up, but it takes Jori's way with words and dealing with people in a non-violent way to put things in our favor," She gave Seishuu a sheepish grin, "To be honest, I prefer fighting people or healing them. It's a lot more straightforward and I can hit something if I get pissed off."

"I never would have guessed," Seishuu chuckled a bit though he gained a look of confusion, "But weren't you taught that kind of stuff?"
"Yes, but only my siblings actually seem to enjoy that kind of crap. I wasn't raised with it and never really had a need for that kind of stuff until I started traveling," Mahsa mostly meant Muu since he seemed to have an infinite amount of patience which came with running herd over quite a few Fanalis that didn't have the best tempers, "Mostly my big brother though,"

They reached the shop and Mahsa purchased some food for them. They found a place to sit down together and ate in silence. Seishuu spoke up after a little while, "Mahsa, can I ask you a question?"

"Sure, what's up?" Mahsa looked at him curiously.

"Why do you like Lord Kouen?" Seishuu asked before hurriedly adding, "I mean he's great, but you two don't exactly seem like you'd get along,"

"Because there's just something about him that draws me in and I always end up letting my guard down around him," Mahsa explained as she tore open her next bun, "You probably feel the same being one of his Household,"

Seishuu nodded with a slight grin, "Yeah," He looked at her for a moment before looking away with a blush coating his chin, "Mahsa, I'm glad that you're with Lord Kouen."

Mahsa looked at Seishuu in amusement since his mind was probably going back to that morning she'd woken up in Kouen's bed. Rather than say anything, she finished off her lunch and stood up, "Well, I'm going to get back to my wandering."

"Hey, Mahsa," Seishuu said as he lost his blush, "Lord Kouen hoped that I'd end up encountering you while I was out,"

"Oh?" Mahsa looked at the gorgon-like man curiously, "Does he need something?"

"He was hoping you come to the palace tonight for dinner. After sunset," Seishuu told her.

Mahsa smiled lightly, "That sounds good, I'll be there."
Mahsa looked around the dinning room she'd been brought to. It was one of the smaller rooms in the palace normally used by the royal family when there were few members. Based on the lingering scent of dust and mold, it had gone into disuse since Ahbmad had taken over. She focused on Kouen as the Prince stood from his place at the head of the small table, "Sa."

"En," Mahsa headed over to the Prince and hugged him, "I've missed you the last few days," Kouen slowly hugged her back, "I've missed you as well, Sa. Shall we sit down and eat?"

"Sounds good," Mahsa let go of Kouen and he led her to the place set up to the right of his seat, "How are you today?"

"Surprisingly well, the goblins weren't as difficult as they usually are when my father deals with them," Kouen answered as he gestured for her to sit down before pushing her chair in once she'd settled.

Mahsa let out a soft snicker, "That's because they like you, they must admire your warrior spirit or find the fact that you don't shy away from war appealing," Kouen sat down in his seat and a servant approached to pour them wine, "It's seen as a mark of honor among those that interact with them. Just be wary and don't try to kill them at any point unless the goblin in question deserved it."

"Speaking from experience?" Kouen asked as a second servant set down plates of food in front of them.

Mahsa nodded as she picked up her glass, "Not from personal experience, I've seen some things while with the goblins. You'd be surprised how often wizards actually tried to harm a goblin in the middle of their banks just because the one in question wasn't doing what they wanted."

"That actually lines up with what both Luna and yourself have said about them," Kouen looked slightly amused, "How are you today?"

"Really good," Mahsa grinned at him, "Today has been a pretty great day off. I rarely get to play around like I did today and seeing you just completes my perfect day today," "I'm glad to hear it," Kouen smiled lightly at her.

Mahsa's chest warms at the sight as it usually does whenever Kouen smiled at her.

After dinner, they went on a walk through the garden with Mahsa creating some floating fairy lights to be their light source as the torches were a bit harsh on her eyes and took away from the beauty of the garden. She walked arm in arm with Kouen just enjoying the fact they were able to have this time together. Kouen spoke as they paused to let her look over some of the plants that hadn't been in the garden when she last saw it, "I never did thank you for sending those potions."

"Don't worry about it," Mahsa smiled at him, "I figured part of the reason you weren't in a good mood had to be due to headaches. Though you really should be thanking Jori, he's the one that suggested I find a work around for when we're not able to see each other often."

"He did?" Kouen looked a bit surprised.
"Mhmm," Mahsa really needed to get the man a present or something, "I actually wanted to slap myself for not thinking of it before,"

"It is a good idea though something like this will be a bit hard once you leave Balbadd," Kouen said earning a slight shrug.

"I'll figure something out. I already have an idea, but I'm not quite sure if it'll work," Mahsa's plan involved the goblins and utilizing their ability to get things specifically a set of two-way mirrors or blood-locked paired journals, "But so long as we both try out best, we'll be able to make this thing between us work,"

"'Thing'?” Kouen asked with a slight chuckle as they resumed walking.

Mahsa gave him a look, "Do you have any idea what to call our relationship? We aren't engaged, married, or contracted. I would say boyfriend/girlfriend, but that's a bit childish to me."

"The word you're looking for is lover," Kouen said with an amused look on his face.

Mahsa liked the word though a part of her felt the term to be a bit weak for reasons she couldn't quite explain. She would have to think deeper on it later. She smiled at Kouen, "Lovers, I like that. I like it a lot," She noticed a flash of light speeding towards them, "And it looks like our night's over."

"What do you mean?" Kouen asked as Luna's patronus bounded in front of them.

Luna's voice came from the silvery hare's throat, "Mahsa, a building caught on fire in a building by the water way currently being used by those without an actual home and is currently spreading. As much as I regret to tear you away from Kouen, your skills are need."

Mahsa took in a deep breath scenting the air and could smell something other than the faint scent of torches. Muttering a curse under her breath, she looked at Kouen, "Like I said, it looks like our night's over."

"Be careful," Kouen's displeasure was audible.

"I will be," Mahsa began to turn away.

Kouen's hand on her arm caused Mahsa to turn back towards him and he pulled her into a searing kiss that left the Fanalis wanting. He pulled her close to him digging his fingers into her long hair as she pressed against him. When Kouen finally released her, he said, "After your done, come to the palace."

"If I'm not totally exhausted," Mahsa replied earning a slight glare, "En, I probably won't have the energy to come here after I finish healing those people."

The scent of burned human flesh was not too dissimilar to pork. The scent coupled with smoke and the things being burned left Mahsa feeling a bit sick to her stomach. She hurried to help put out fires in between healing those thrust into her care though it would prove to be too late for some. A jagged piece of something pierced her chest when the child she was working on, one of the ones she'd played with today, died unable to breath properly with burns clawing across his skin. The wail of a toddler covered in burns forced her to push away the grief and negative thoughts in order to do the job she was here for. Each life she managed to save eased some of the pain, but each knew death left a deeper gouge on her heart.
By the end of it all, Mahsa was too drained emotionally, physically, and magically to do as Kouen requested. After thoroughly washing her body and using some of her more powerful smelling soaps to take away the scents clinging to her, she changed into a tunic that still smelt like Muu and collapsed on her bed. She didn't immediately fall asleep even when Darius curled up beside her. She stayed awake adding the face of each patient she'd been unable to save to the group that had been formed after she'd failed to heal someone for the first time. When sleep finally claimed her, the dreams and visions that followed blurred together into a horrifyingly vile mixture that saw her rushing to the window when she woke up.

When nothing was left beside stomach acid and she'd finished heaving, Mahsa pushed away from the window and dropped to the floor where she curled up into a ball. For the first time in a long time, she felt like the scared little girl that had laid dying in that stupidly small cupboard and wished desperately to be home in Reim where her siblings were. After Darius curled up around her, she slowly fell into a troubled sleep filled with blurred images and shattered pieces of visions.

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Mahsa was surprised to wake up in her bed when she knew she'd fallen asleep with Darius curled around her though given the fact that Jori or Luna would have checked on her made it a bit unsurprising. She did a slightly slow mental check on herself and decided that moving too much would be a very bad idea. Scenting the air, she was shocked to smell Kouen in her room. Turning her head, she found Kouen sitting in a chair beside her bed reading what looked to be one of the romance novels the goblins had tossed into the most recent batch of books they'd gotten for her which made the Fanalis wonder if this was a dream though the fact she felt like shit pretty much meant this was real life. As if feeling her eyes on him or seen her moving around, Kouen looked up from the book and found her staring at him. Kouen closed the book as he stood up, "How are you feeling?"

"Like shit," Mahsa grimaced at the lingering taste of bile and acid in her mouth, "What are you doing here?"

"Luna told me you weren't well and I wished to check on you," Kouen answered as he eyed her carefully with worry clear in his eyes, "She mentioned something about backlash, but I'm not exactly sure what that meant,"

Mahsa flinched at his words and felt the need to vomit rise up again as the memories of that screwed up bit of fuckery she'd dreamed of rose up again. Pressing a hand to her mouth as she curled up into a ball, she struggled against releasing what was probably going to be the lining of her stomach. It wasn't until someone used a spell she dimly recognized to be one that prevented the patient from vomiting the Fanalis was able to push the memories back behind a steel wall to be gone over probably never. A stomach soother was forced down her throat after she'd straightened out and her hand removed from it's place clamped over her mouth. The water she was able to drink next was infused with a mixture of herbs to help soothe her damaged throat. Opening her eyes, she found Luna pushing her to lay back on the bed, "Luna."

"How are you feeling?" Luna asked as Kouen stood by the door with what looked like Seishuu and a few others peaking inside the room.

Mahsa grimaced a bit, "Like shit. My head feels like that one time Razol managed to convince me to drink a whole barrel full of that really bad tasting rum and Lo'lo decided to use my head for tap-dancing practice. My body aches, but not as badly as my head. I still feel like puking despite the potions."

"So basically what normally happens when you go through backlash," Luna nodded to herself as she reached into one of the healers kits Mahsa kept on hand just in case, "Let's get the potions into
your system,"

After drinking an array of potions that left Mahsa really wishing she could make them taste better, 
Luna shoved a smoothie in her hands and watched until the Fanalis had drank every drop. The 
same thing happened with the small bowl of meat and broth. Luna gave her another potion and a 
glass of water before leaving the room. Kouen returned to his former seat while Seishuu wandered 
into the room through the open door way. The gorgon-like man asked, "Why did it look like she 
was making sure you ate all that stuff?"

"Because if she did, I wouldn't have touched any of it," Mahsa settled down feeling somewhat 
better if a bit drained.

Seishuu and Kouen both looked shocked at her words, the Prince's eyes were actually wide and his 
mouth parted slightly. Seeing as Mahsa always ate when she had the chance, it was no wonder they 
were shocked. Kouen's eyes narrowed as his mouth shut and lips pulling into a frown, "Why?"

"When I go through backlash, the idea of eating or drinking anything makes me feel ill to the point 
I can't even look at them without wanting to puke," Mahsa explained as Darius slipped into the 
room and settled on her side in his wyvern form, "It'll be a few days until I feel up to eating or 
drinking anything,"

"What caused this?" Kouen looked incredibly displeased and worry swirled through his eyes.

Mahsa grimaced a bit, "My ability to see can be a bitch and a half though you've already figured 
that out. During times of heavy distress when my magic and body are tired, my ability takes a 
terrible toll on my body. This time, it was due to knowing some of those that had died because of 
the fire despite my efforts. Adding onto the horrible visions that came upon me, the nightmares 
that were already in play were twisted together with the visions. My body reacted negatively and 
this is the result," She waved a hand at herself, "As it is rare that I go through backlash, I am able 
to travel freely."

"Will you be alright?" Seishuu looked visibly worried.

"I will be in a few days," Mahsa offered both males in her room a strained smile, "I always am," 

"Seishuu, go inform the others of Mahsa's condition and close the door on your way out," Kouen 
told Seishuu, "I will join you soon enough,"

Seishuu looked between them before nodding, "Sure thing, Lord Kouen," He looked at Mahsa, "I 
hope you feel better soon, Mahsa."

"Thanks, Seishuu," Mahsa murmured softly.

The man slipped through the doorway and the close the door behind him with a soft click. Darius 
shifted a bit before settling when Mahsa's hand settled on his head. Looking at Kouen, she finally 
noticed how tired and worn he looked. Kouen reached out and gripped the hand closest to him 
somewhat tightly, "You worried me."

"I'm sorry," Mahsa apologized despite knowing there was nothing she could have done to prevent 
it, "Backlash hits without warning and I can't really do anything about it,"

"Couldn't those dreamless sleep potions help?" Kouen asked as his lips pulled into a frown.

Mahsa shook her head slowly, "They won't work on me. My magic dissolves the potion before it 
can get into my system due to the whole True-Seer bullshit."
"How often has this happened?" Kouen thumb began to run across the back of her hand.

Mahsa smiled at what was probably an unconscious action meant to give her some form of comfort, "In the time I've been aware of this ability, it's happened three before. The first occurred a few months before I gained Alastor. The second sometime after returning from Heliohapt. The third after I returned home from Kou."

Kouen's frown deepened, "After you returned home from Kou?"

Mahsa realized how that might've sounded, "It wasn't the fault of anyone from Kou. About two months after I returned home, my brother and his men were sent out for some reason I can't quite remember. Since they needed an extra healer, I went along. I ended up seeing a lot of things including some of the Fanalis that I knew from back when I came home for the first time dying despite my attempts to save them." She grimaced as their faces flashed through her mind, "That was the first real time I couldn't save those that were supposed to be my family since crossing through the veil."

Kouen's grip on her hand tightened as a slightly lost look appeared in his eyes. He asked her, "Is there anything I can do to help?"

Mahsa shook her head, "Not really," She smiled softly at him, "I'm really glad that you came to check on me. It's actually kind of sweet."

"Sweet?" Kouen's eyebrow rose, "You think I'm sweet?"

"Not usually no," Mahsa bit back a yawn, "But you coming to check on me is. Makes me feel warm,"

Kouen looked a little surprised, "Warm?"

Mahsa nodded as she shifted to lay more comfortably on the bed, "Mhmm. You make me feel warm whenever you smile at me too or seem happy because I did something. It makes me really happy," She yawned softly squeezing Kouen's hand, "I'm sorry I couldn't come see you after all was said and done."

"It's fine," Kouen eyed her with his lips quirking into a slight smile, "Are you falling asleep?"

Mahsa hummed softly as her eyes began to close, "Can't stay awake much longer."

"Just go to sleep then," Kouen told her.

"Stay until I do?" Mahsa asked forcing her eyes to stay open long enough to look at him, "Please, En."

Kouen nodded to Mahsa and her eyes slid closed.

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Being bedridden wasn't fun, Mahsa was practically clawing at the walls of her room to get out and do something after the second day. She was pretty sure Luna and Jori were considering dosing her with sleeping potions to get some form of peace without their Fanalis Queen attempting to escape. Jori, being the one currently watching her, decided to take her into the 'backyard' in hopes it would soothe her. She promptly curled up with Darius and took a nap as soon as they found a decent sunny spot much to Jori's exasperation. When she woke up, Koumei had arrived to see her.

Koumei looked at her with amusement on his face as she yawned and rubbed at her eyes. He
commented, "Judar isn't wrong about you being like a cat."

"I'm a Fanalis," Mahsa pointed out as she sat up properly with Darius shifting to settle firmly behind her, "We're like lions in human form,"

More so than the prince or Judar actually knew, Mahsa would have to say something at some point to Kouen though when was up in the air. Koumei chuckled as he took a seat on a blanket that had been set up near her. He poured them both some tea, "How are you feeling, Mahsa?"

"Less like shit than when I first woke up," Mahsa took the cup meant for her and grimaced a bit when Koumei pushed a bowl of cherries towards her.

"Luna threatened bodily harm if we didn't make sure you ate something when around us," Koumei told her with a slight smile as Mahsa begrudgingly took the bowl of cherries, "Along with cursing us in someway,"

Grumbling at the blonde's antics, Mahsa picked up a cherry and popped it into her mouth. The almost ghostly feeling of needing to puke rose up, but she managed to ignore it for the moment. She looked at Koumei curiously, "What brings you to see me today, Mei?"

"En wanted me to check on you since he couldn't," Koumei smiled a bit before rolling his eyes as he added, "He also said I needed more sun,"

"No offense to you, Mei, but your far too pale even for a non-Fanalis redhead," Mahsa stated rather bluntly earning a soft snort from the prince, "You could definitely use a bit of sun,"

Koumei shook his head, "I'd prefer not to get burned, thank you."

Mahsa winced at the phrase earning a grimace from the prince. Rather than focus on it, she asked, "You came to see me just because of En?"

"I also wanted to check on you since we are friends and likely going to become siblings if you're going to marry my brother," Koumei smiled at Mahsa's wide eyes look, "En is having me help find ways to ensure you can be his wife with as little pain on any parties as possible,"

"I should've known," Mahsa grinned a bit as the shock wore off, "So I take it you're happy about it?"

"Of course, you're the least offensive woman my brother could marry and not related to us in any way," Koumei answered as Mahsa drank some of the tea and ate some more cherries, "I also enjoy your company and believe that if anyone can rule alongside my brother, it would be you,"

Mahsa wasn't sure about the whole ruling part, but didn't comment since it'd be awhile before anything like that happened. She focused on everything else Koumei had said, "I'm glad to hear you like me so much, Mei."

"Kouha and Kougyoku will approve as well. While I am somewhat unsure, I believe that Hakuei will approve since she seems to like you," Koumei replied as he picked up his tea cup, "So long as we can find some way to convince Father, you two should be able to get engaged and marry at some point soon,"

"Not too soon, right?" Mahsa asked earning a frown from Koumei, "Mei, I love Kouen and do want to marry him. I just don't want to do it for at least a year or two. My heart is set on traveling and exploring the world as I have for now,"
Koumei's frown deepened a bit, "May I ask why?"

"Because I was a caged bird for a majority of my life, Mei," Mahsa answered with a low sigh, "Trapped within a cage with invisible walls perhaps, I was still trapped within a cage unable to spread my wings and venture wherever I wish. Now that I am free, I'm not quite ready to let myself settle in one place beside the one I call home. In time, I will be, but for now, I need to wander. I need to..."

Mahsa trailed off as bits and pieces of visions filled her mind. There was much she needed to do before marrying Kouen could happen, a lot of which depended on her mobility and ability to travel around unmolested. A traveling healer didn't bring as much attention as a traveling member of royalty especially when they were married to the first prince of Kou. Admittedly a small part of her was hesitant to marry Kouen due to fear, she knew that Kouen wouldn't take away her freedom, but it was difficult to shake that fear thanks to her past. When the time came, she wouldn't let it stop the marriage from occurring because Kouen was the one she'd fallen for, but for now that fear spoke too strongly for her to ignore.

"Need to do what?" Koumei speaking shook away the visions running through her mind.

"I have much I need to do, Mei, that requires me to be mobile and able to travel around unmolested," Mahsa answered as she leaned a bit more firmly against Darius, "If I were to marry En right now, I'd lose the ability to travel around almost unnoticed by most. Most don't pay attention to me outside of the fact I can heal and am a Fanalis," Koumei's eyes were widening as he began to understand part of her hesitance, "The minute word gets out that Kouen Ren, First Prince of the Kou Empire and Future Emperor, is marrying a Fanalis with green eyes and the ability to heal, I lose the ability to fly below the radar so to speak,"

"I see," Koumei muttered softly.

"An engagement is easier to deal with especially since they tend to fall through frequently unless it's an arranged marriage," Mahsa continued not exactly minding the idea of being engaged to Kouen, "But a marriage? It's too high profile," She went to grab another cherry only to find the bowl empty save for stems which meant she'd eaten all the cherries without noticing, "In a year or two, I'll be able to marry Kouen without a problem outside of ensuring he's gone through the courting trials,"

"Courting trials?" Koumei asked with a small frown.

"Fanalis tradition involving courtship and marriage," Mahsa explained feeling a little awkward though she was somewhat happy to not have to explain this to Kouen, "By our traditions, Kouen and I will have to do a few things. I still need to gift him a trinket to signify that I'm courting him. We both need to meet each other's family members at some point before the marriage and basically spend time with them. Kouen needs to either keep up with me for at least five minutes during a spar or best me. Seeing as I haven't given En a trinket, we aren't exactly courting just yet by Fanalis standards, but I'm in the process of fixing that," Which was difficult since she couldn't really get around without help right now, "Granted there are a few rules about this, I learned that from my sister since our brother got really embarrassed about it,"

"What are the rules?" Koumei looked at her curiously probably mentally noting everything down to tell Kouen later.

"For the whole meeting family members thing, it only qualify for those family members close to you both by blood and by bond," Mahsa explained patiently remembering what Myron had told her, "You have to spend at least an hour with each family member or a whole day with all the
family members doing whatever getting to know one another. The spar must happen in a public place with at least ten different witnesses with at least one being a Fanalis other than the one the spar is against. The spar can only include up to two weapons and no magic whatsoever. At least one family member from both parties if they have them must be present, the spar will end if one party is incapacitated or pinned for a minimum of ten seconds."

"And the trinket?" Koumei asked noting that she hadn't mention anything about it.

"It must be either a hunting trophy from one of your kills or something you make yourself," Mahsa answered after draining her tea cup dry, "I'm making my trinket for Kouen though it isn't exactly easy given the fact I'm currently unable to do much without someone helping me. I will be presenting it to him sometime before we leave Balbadd probably along with a gift to ease the strain of us being apart." She gave Koumei a look, "Don't tell him about the second part, I want it to be a surprise,"

"Brother doesn't really like surprises," Koumei's lips twitched into a slight grin.

Mahsa grinned at him, "He'll like this one."

"If you're sure, I suppose I can keep it a secret," Koumei poured himself another cup and did the same for Mahsa when she held out hers.

Once Mahsa was better, she started to work on her courting trinket for Kouen. Despite not having much of a talent for crafting things outside of potions, she did have an eye for detail and her magic willing to respond to whatever she needed it to do. Traditionally the courting gift is usually a weapon or hair accessory, Lo'lo had made a rather pretty hair ornament for her sister which also carried some of Mahsa's feathers from her gryffin form. Given that Kouen didn't need any hair ornaments and she could make a weapon, she made him a chess set complete with board and matching pieces.

Through the goblins, Mahsa obtained the needed materials to make the chess set alongside some books on how to enchant it. Rather than use the material that the goblins had given her straight away, she practiced every step of the process using stone that had been part of the rubble. The caution she'd taken was rewarded quite a few times during her learning process due to multiple explosions and shrapnel. She found that using one of her own feathers reinforced with magic were the best way to ensure everything was stable and less likely to back fire. When she was finally ready, she made her gift to Kouen.

It still took a few tries before everything held, but by the end of it all, Mahsa was quite pleased with her courting gift for Kouen. Rather than a normal chess-set, she had the various pieces changed to look like something else. The queens were gryffins. The kings were dragons. The rooks were red lions. The bishops wyverns. The knights were king cobras. The pawns resembled owls with a wand clutched in their wings. Rather than do the classic colors for the pieces, she had done a red/black/gold color scheme with just a hint of cream mixed in. At the bottom of the board, she carved both their names and a little message.

To En,
May this chess-set serve as a reminder, we may not always see one another nor get along. The future might try to drive us apart, but at least we're willing to try. I hope in the end of things our relationship stands the test of time and whims of fate. This is my way of saying no matter what happens, I'm willing to try a relationship between us and will love you as long as the stone that makes up this chessboard exists. You're mine, En. You're the one I want.
Mahsa Alexius.
After the chess-set was completed, Mahsa had a case made for it. The goblins produced both the case and two sets of communication methods for long distance. A set of communication mirrors and a pair of journals.

"You're visiting me rather late, Sa," Kouen said without looking up from his paperwork.

"And you're working rather late," Mahsa retorted as the door closed behind her and she walked towards his desk, "Besides I figured you wouldn't mind too much, we haven't seen much of each other lately,"

"And who's fault is that?" Kouen replied with a slightly icy tone.

Mahsa winced a bit, "I was busy doing something. Did Koumei tell you about our conversation when he came to see me when I was recovering?"

Kouen finally looked up at her, "About the Fanalis' traditions? Yes. Why?"

"Seeing as I didn't exactly plan on getting into a relationship with you, I never made a courting gift and didn't have time until recently," Mahsa walked towards his desk and set the case containing the chess-set down in front of him, "This is what I've spent all my free time doing. I'm sorry for not explaining, but this pretty much took up my entire focus because I wanted it to be perfect for you since it's such an important part of my people's tradition,"

"What is it?" Kouen asked as he put down his pen.

Mahsa explained as she gestured at the case, "I know that you like to play chess, so I made you a personal board. It has enchantments to ensure the pieces won't wear down or break easily. The same could be said for the board. It's also temperature resistance, theft resistant, and a few others that I'm a bit too tired to think of right now,"

Kouen reached out and opened the case to peer at her gift to him, "Is this a normal gift?"

Mahsa shook her head, "No. My people usually gift the one they're courting a weapon or hair ornament. Seeing as I can't make weapons and you don't really need a hair ornament, I decided to make you something unique."

Kouen picked up one of the dragon pieces, "You made them to resemble us?"

"The dragons are you," Mahsa answered with a slight grin, "Gryffins are me,"

"You think I'm a dragon?" Kouen's lips twitched into a light smile as he looked up at her.

Mahsa hummed lightly as she reached into her bag to grab Kouen's half of the communication devices, "Yup. Am I wrong?" Kouen snorted softly, "Anyway, I have something else for you. These aren't part of my courting gift, they're just as important," She pulled out the packages and placed them down beside the case in front of Kouen, "One is a journal and the other is a mirror. I have their linked pairs. With the journal, we can write to each other leaving little letters whenever we want and the message will appear within five minutes. With the mirror, we can talk to each other and see one another no matter the distance," Kouen put down the pieces he'd grabbed and closed the case before opening the packages, "It isn't as good as being able to physically interact with each other and be able to actually see one another in person. But it should be enough to make being separated easier to bear."

Kouen looked over the mirror he'd taken out of the package, "How does it work?"
"Say my name and it'll call me," Mahsa smiled at seeing the approval in Kouen's eyes, "I may not answer right away, but it'll warm up and chime softly. All you need to do is say answer if I call you and we'll be able to talk. If I don't answer and you want to say something, you can leave a message. Just say message and whatever it is you want to tell me, it'll leave a message on my mirror. To check for messages, you just need to say messages and it'll go through any that have been sent. If you want to keep a message, just say keep after it finishes playing,"

"The journals?" Kouen opened the next package after putting down his mirror.

"Any ink will work for it. It'll take up to five minutes for the message to appear once written," Mahsa walked around Kouen's desk, "If there's a reply from me, the ink will glow." She opened the cover of the journal revealing the pale blue ink shining on the first page, "See," The glow faded into black ink. "The journal has a thousand pieces of paper and if we need more, I'll just contact the goblins," She shut the journal, "Now," She looked at Kouen, "You need to say that you've accepted the courting gift,"

"If I deny it?" Kouen asked as he set the journal down.

Mahsa grimaced a bit, "If you deny it, we will not be allowed to court for a period of six months. Afterward, I would need to make another courting gift and present it to you," She really didn't want to do that, "If you deny it again, I may try twice more. Should I be denied then, I will no longer be able to try and court you. Any relationship between us would strictly be that of friends, enemies, or kin depending on the circumstances. Had you been a Fanalis, I would be allowed to challenge you for the right to court and be given a period of six months to prove I'm worthy of you should I win the fight. After six months, you would be given the choice of allowing the courtship to continue or end it. If you ended it, the matter would be dropped and I would not be able to do anything about it."

"That sounds a bit ridiculous," Kouen commented as he shifted slightly on his chair and gestured for her to take a seat in his lap.

Mahsa sat down with her back against his chest, "A bit, but we Fanalis are determined when it comes to those our hearts decide are ours."

"And you decided on me?" Kouen asked as he shifted things around on his desk.

"Kind of couldn't choose anyone else, you've got them beat," Mahsa turned her head to look at him, "So do you accept my courtship, Kouen Ren?"

"I accept your courtship, Mahsa Alexius," Kouen intoned as he wrapped an arm around her waist.

Mahsa kissed his cheek, "Do you want me to stay the night with you?"

"Yes," Kouen turned his head to catch her mouth, "Can you?"

Mahsa hummed lightly in agreement, "Wouldn't have asked if I couldn't, I just need to be back after lunch to meet with some patients."

"Go lay down on my bed, I'll join you once I've done enough," Kouen told her as his arm left her waist.

Mahsa kissed him lightly before moving to do as he wish. At the end of the bed, she dropped her bag and kicked off her sandals before undoing her chest wrappings. Letting it drop to the bed, she undid her belt letting it fall to the floor to join the small pile of her things forming and let her hair out of the braids she'd placed it in that day before jumping onto the bed. She climbed across the
covers and slipped beneath the covers after getting to the pillows. She figured out where Kouen had been sleeping and quickly curled up digging her face into the pillows. A soft purr rumbled from her chest as she breathed in his scent and began to doze. Even through layers of cloth, the feeling of a hand on her stomach sent the Fanalis jolting awake.

It was only the fact Mahsa hadn't been fully asleep and Kouen's scent perfuming the air that kept the Prince from a broken arm. It did not save him from her nails digging into his arm drawing blood or the bruising grip where she held it. She let go of him and healed the damage with a soft murmur of, "Sorry."

"Why did you do that?" Kouen asked her with a frown, "You've tensed up every time I touch your stomach,"

"I don't like my stomach being touched by hands," Mahsa vanished the blood drawn by her nails.

"Why?" Kouen asked as he moved closer to her slowly as if she was a skittish kitten.

"Because the only time someone's touched my stomach before it's always been in violence," Mahsa answered as Kouen wrapped his arms around her, "Ever since I can remember, they've only touched me there to cause to hurt,"

"Instinct," Kouen summarized as Mahsa shifted to lean into him, "It's become instinctive to protect your stomach and not something you can control,"

"If I'm distracted, it's easy to forget someone's touching my stomach," Mahsa slipped her fingers beneath Kouen's robe and smiled at the warmth radiating from the skin beneath her finger tips, "And if I can watch, it isn't so bad"

"We'll have to work on it so you don't feel that way when I'm the one touching your stomach," Kouen decided as he shifted to slip a hand beneath her trousers and undergarment to curl around her hip.

Mahsa turned her head and pressed a kiss to his chin, "That'll take a lot of work."

"It'll be worth it," Kouen dipped his head to catch her mouth, "I'd rather not have my future wife tense whenever I touch her stomach,"

Humming softly, Mahsa kissed him back looking forward to that day.
Mahsa jerked awake with a choked scream clawing at her neck trying to get rid of the invisible hands choking her. Hands grabbed her wrists and forced her clawing hands onto the soft pillows on either side of her head, Kouen's voice cutting through the snarling confusion of her mind, "Mahsa! Stop!"

It took awhile for Mahsa to calm down and recognize that she was in the palace of Balbadd. Kouen carefully held her in a way that limited the movement of her hands while also allowing the Fanalis some form of freedom. Instinct quickly ensured that she didn't break free of Kouen's hold or otherwise harm him, the fact he was attempting to comfort her while also ensuring no harm was done allowed the visage of her vision to fade into the background for the moment. Breathing harshly as her heart's frantic pounding began to slow down to normal, she leaned back against Kouen trying to take in as much air as possible. Despite it being a vision, the feeling of ghostly hands on her throat and the phantom feeling of suffocating made the Fanalis frantically breath in and out. She closed her eyes feeling some tears slip down her face once the feeling of being suffocated faded murmuring, "S-sorry."

"What happened?" Kouen did nothing to hide the concern and alarm from his voice.

"V-vision. R-really bad one," Mahsa swallowed heavily as the memories ran through her mind and almost broke free of Kouen's hold to touch her neck, "Need to avoid Gyokuen and her followers as much as possible,"

Kouen stiffened at her words, "What did they do?"

"Ambushed me somewhere," Mahsa tried to put together the disjointed vision loathing just how unclear they always were when Gyokuen and those freaky priests were involved, "Don't know where. A village maybe," She felt a headache form on top of the phantom pain playing merry hell, "Lots of blood and smoke," She tugged to get Kouen to release one of her hands and pressed it to her neck wincing at the wetness and sharp pains from cuts she'd given herself, "Ended up being choked towards the end,"

"Is that why..?" Kouen trailed off, "Why wasn't it clear?"

"The bitch and her cronies always make my visions fuzzy in a bad way on the off chance I actually see them," Mahsa healed the damage and cleared away the blood with a grimace, "I hate it a lot since it makes it harder to recognize it's a vision rather than a dream or really happening."

"It's happened often then?" Kouen sounded quite pissed off.

Mahsa nodded as she oped her eyes, "Yeah. It's like they're not supposed to be part of the flow or are so disconnected from it that it's not even funny. Judar isn't like that despite being a magi with black rukh," She shifted when Kouen released her other arm now that she's calmer and looked at him seeing how tired he was, "Sorry for waking you."

"It's fine," Kouen frowned at her, "How often does this happen?"

"Waking up like that, visions like that, or bad visions in general?" Mahsa asked feeling even more tired than when she'd fallen asleep.

"All of it," Kouen answered as his frown deepened.
"Visions like that happen maybe twice a month though sometimes more," Mahsa settled a bit more heavily against him, "Waking up like that, it only really happens with visions like that. Bad visions happen a lot, I don't know how often anymore. I've gotten used to it," Kouen wrapped an arm around her shoulders, "I used to wake up screaming after a bad one or sick to my stomach," She had managed to either stop it or keep up a silencing charm while sleeping if only to keep everyone back in Reim from worrying too much though someone had probably figured her out, "My siblings and the others back home worried over me a lot when the bad ones started hitting. I started using spells to keep people from finding out, so it's been awhile since anyone's been around me when I wake up. Thank you, En,"

Kouen looked a bit lost for words at her statement. Eventually, he asked, "Do you need anything?"

"Just hold me, physical contact helps ground me," Mahsa shifted to lay her head on his chest, "I'm really sorry about this, En. It's been awhile since I've had one bad enough to jar me awake like that,"

"It's fine," Kouen's heart beat was steady and strong beneath her ear, "I'm just glad I kept you from hurting yourself,"

Mahsa could feel sleep calling her, but didn't want to give in just yet. She'd likely fall into another bad vision with how worked up she was, "En, what was it like growing up? Something happy please."

Kouen was quiet for a moment before answering, "My cousin, Hakuyuu, taught me a lot when I first started learning to fight. One time during a training session when I was learning how to fight with a sword..."

Mahsa slowly relaxed as Kouen's words filled her ears.

Life slowly became somewhat normal after Mahsa presented Kouen with her courtship gift and he accepted it, she made a point to see him at least once a day and slept in bed with him at least twice a week if not more though not all of those nights were spent simply sleeping. She sparred with him on a fairly often basis as well ensuring that he'd be ready when the time came for their courtship spar as well as just to ensure both their skills were kept from rusting. Ducking into the palace at random points in the day when she had a chance, the Fanalis ambushed the prince with a kiss or a simple hug. Whether she stayed after that depended on their schedules that day, she found herself increasingly free as Balbadd began to truly stabilize.

It was four and a half months after the Kou Empire forces arrived that Mahsa actually felt like they weren't actually needed anymore. She spoke to Luna and Jori about the matter before deciding that their time in this war-torn country was at an end for the moment. They began their preparations with her going to speak with Kouen while Jori went to settle things with the goblins and Luna began to get their things ready to travel. It would take all of two weeks for them to be fully prepared and another to organize passage on a ship to Heliohapt.

"You could use the door," Kouen said as Mahsa entered the office he'd claimed as his.

"I could, but that isn't as fun," Mahsa set her broom against the wall and padded over to his desk.

Kouen eyed her for a moment before frowning, "It's time, isn't it?" Mahsa gave him a startled look not having expected him to know why she'd come to see him, "I've been expecting it for a week now when I realized just how much free time you seem to have nowadays."
Mahsa nodded with a low sigh, "Yeah, it's time for us to leave. Balbad doesn't need us anymore thanks to everything we've done since arriving." She waited until Kouen inclined his head to approach his side of the desk, "Jori is eager to leave. Luna wishes to see Heliohapt and experience it for herself."

"And you?" Kouen asked as he shifted enough to let her sit in his lap while allowing the man to do his paperwork.

Mahsa sat down in his lap carefully shifting to get comfortable before leaning against him, "I am going a bit stir crazy and really wish to go to Heliohapt. I want to start tying up loose ends on my part and ensure that when the time comes, I'll be able to marry you without any true worries." She turned her head to the side, "Are you okay with this?"

"Not really, no," Kouen admitted as he put his pen down and hugged her, "But I suppose it'll give me time to tie up my own loose ends and find what we need to ensure our marriage cannot be contested,"

"I'll mirror call every day and probably spend half of the ship ride to Heliohapt writing to you," Mahsa told him.

"I'd like that," Kouen turned his head to kiss her, "Stay in the palace and sleep with me until you're to depart,"

"Okay," Mahsa smiled lightly, "I can do that,"

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Mahsa woke up on the day they were to depart with Kouen holding her tightly to him in his sleep and their legs tangled together. She stayed still simply taking in their combined scents knowing it would be a long while before she'd be able to smell it again. Yesterday had been spent majorly with him once all the last minute things had been accomplished, Kouen had indulged her need for physical contact between them and had even initiated a few hugs which he'd never really done before. She even got to take a nap with him in the gardens which had been fantastic. Letting out a pleased sigh at the memory of yesterday, she eventually shifted in Kouen's hold until their legs untangled and her chest pressed against his. Kissing him slowly, she smiled into it when Kouen began to respond and deepened the kiss to explore his mouth. When she broke the kiss, Kouen gave her a sleepy look of surprise, "What was that for?"

"You wanted me to wake you up before I had to leave," Mahsa reminded him, "I thought kissing you awake would be a good option,"

The sleepy look in Kouen's eyes vanished, "I see."

Mahsa glanced outside before saying, "We have an hour before I actually have to be up and start getting ready for the day."

Kouen rolled them, "Good. Maybe this time I'll be able to leave a lasting mark."

Mahsa grinned at him, "We'll see."

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Luna grinned rather perversely while Jori shook his head when Mahsa walked up with a slight limp radiating an air of smugness. Luna asked, "Have fun this morning, Mahsa?"

"And last night," Mahsa offered the blonde a lazy smirk too pleased with how her morning had gone, "I got to leave quite a few marks on En."
"Looks like he did the same to you," Luna commented as she eyed the Fanalis' neck which was covered in hickies left by the Kou Prince.

"Mine will last longer," Mahsa knew it would take at least two weeks for the darkest of the marks she'd left to fade if not a bit longer for certain ones since she'd been a bit less careful with not biting Kouen this morning.

Despite his dislike of her biting him, Kouen hadn't complained all that much outside of huffing a bit and some empty threats. She grinned slightly remembering the bite marks she'd left behind and the fact Kouen knew what it felt like when she bit him. Seeing her marks on Kouen was even more pleasing than watching the prince's face twist in pleasure and hearing him moan, she couldn't wait to see him again if only to hear those sounds. Jori cut in before the conversation could continue making a face that showed his discomfort to the world, "Let's get on the ship."

While they could tease the man about his discomfort, Mahsa decided against it given that they did have to get things settled on the ship within the hour. Nodding as Luna let out a small groan of disappointment at not being allowed to partake in one of her favorite pastimes, the Fanalis led them over to the ship after making sure they'd all packed their things and hadn't left anything behind. Many of those that had come to love the trio came to say their goodbyes and wish them well. The children among the group were crying and some of them tried to stop the trio from getting onto the ship having grown attached to them all. Getting on the ship and setting their things down in the rooms provided for them, she left the room she'd be sharing with Luna to stand on the deck of the ship.

Kouen rode up with Koumei and their household alongside a few soldiers. While Mahsa had already given her goodbyes before leaving this morning, they still wanted to ensure that the people of Balbadd knew that the Kou Empire held the trio's favor. It wouldn't due to have a rebellion start due to the people believing that Kou had driven Mahsa, Luna, and Jori away. Walking off the ship, she met Kouen as he dismounted, "Looks like this is it, En."

"For the moment," Kouen smirked at her, "Try not to get into too much trouble,"

"I'm a Fanalis, we're attracted to trouble like cats to catnip," Mahsa replied with a grin, "With my luck, we'll end up getting into loads of trouble at some point,"

Koumei rolled his eyes at them while their household members either snorted or chuckled at the by-play. With the sexual tension between them being relieved and their relationship stable, the two had gotten close enough to talk like they had before their last dinner together in Kou. Koumei spoke up likely knowing that they'd keep going and probably miss the ship, "Mahsa, we all wish you safe travels and hope that our next meeting is not quite so trouble filled."

"Thank you all," Mahsa directed to the group itself before looking at Koumei, "I wish you well in your endeavors, Mei. Perhaps next time we may actually be able to talk more, I am a bit sad that we couldn't finish our debate on certain laws,"

Kouen kept the conversation from going any further by pulling Mahsa into a kiss. Given that the crowd had only grown since she'd arrived, everyone in Balbadd would know that Kouen had kissed her by night fall if not sooner. Clearly the prince wanted to stake his claim on her, she would have grinned or teased the man had he not been making her mind go fuzzy. Kouen pulled back after a long moment, "Next time we meet, you'll accept my proposal, Sa."

Gasps sounded from not only the citizens of Balbadd but the soldiers of Kou as well, it would seem most hadn't put much stock into the rumor of Mahsa's relationship with Kouen. Offering the prince a teasing grin, she told him, "You still need to complete the combat portion of our courtship before
that, En."

"I will," Kouen smirked at her, "Just you wait."

Mahsa kissed him this time pulling Kouen down and forcing her tongue into his mouth. Had it not been for the very public setting and the fact she was leaving, they probably would've gone for another round. The kiss only broke when someone from the ship called out, "We're departing!"

"I love you, En," Mahsa told the prince in a slightly breathless voice.

"Love you too, Sa," Kouen murmured causing chest to warm and the breath to leave her.

The beaming grin Mahsa gave Kouen in response to just how happy hearing those words made her earned a wide eyed look from the prince. She kissed him again before getting onto the ship.

"So Heliohapt is first?" Luna asked as Mahsa did one handed push-ups on the lower deck of the ship with the blonde sitting on her back as added weight.

"Yup," Mahsa noted that the blonde needed to eat more as she was too light for the Fanalis' tastes, "Then Sindria which will hopefully have one of their famous festivals. We'll spend around three weeks to a month in Heliohapt. Our time in Sindria will either lessen or lengthen depending on everything going on there,"

Luna's voice took on a slightly worried tone, "Do you think they're alright?"

Mahsa was quiet for a few moments as she gathered her thoughts. She switched hands while considering the trio of kids, "Alibaba is likely going through a crisis right now, Luna. He's lost his home for a second time thanks to Sinbad's high-handedness. He lost Cassim along with it though being able to say his goodbyes likely helped a lot. He'll probably be stuck in a rut feeling a bit sorry for himself especially since Amon will probably not work for him until he finds another suitable metal vessel."

"You're going to beat his ass, aren't you?" Luna asked with a soft giggle.

"Of course, I'm allowing him time to wallow while we travel and maybe a day after we arrive back in Sindria," Mahsa grinned a bit, "Once I get a judge on his emotional state, I'm going to put him through his paces Fanalis-style,"

"Poor boy," Luna shook a bit with her laughter, "Aladdin?"

"Aladdin is likely going through a similar crisis to Alibaba," Mahsa answered as her grin dropped away, "He lost Ugo and will likely not see him again during our lifetime. He'll be grieving for the loss of his eldest friend/father figure. He'll be as lost as Alibaba right about now. I'll put him through his paces as well since a Magi not knowing any magic is pretty damn bad considering those weird priests following Jujube around are probably going to be gunning for him alongside the bitch at some point," She growled a bit, "We'll need to ensure he can survive what's to come,"

"And Morgiana?" Luna prompted as she got off of Mahsa's back allowing the Fanalis to stand up and go through the rest of her morning routine.

"She'll stick with them until the time comes when she thinks they'll be okay without her," Mahsa began a slow run around the deck, "She will eventually go to the rift in search of our people. Whether she chooses to take the plunge never to return or come back before she reaches the point of no-return is up in the air,"
"Do you think she'll go?" Luna's voice softened.

"It all depends on her bond with those two boys and anyone else she becomes attached," Mahsa smiled a bit sadly, "I wouldn't blame her if she took the plunge after everything she's experienced in this world. During our time in Sindria, I will teach her about our people alongside Masrur,"

Luna spoke causing Mahsa to stop moving, "Why didn't you pass through the rift? Given everything that happened, you had every reason to leave this behind."

Mahsa let out a low chuckle and shook her head as she began running again, "You aren't the first person to ask me that. Muu did after Scheherazade and I returned from conquering Alastor's dungeon," She smiled a bit, "Everyone I've met since passing through the veil. My siblings and Lady Scheherazade chief among them. They've accepted everything that I am without expecting anything of me. I didn't want to leave them so completely especially since Muu and Myron just got me back. Seeing the future, I knew that they'd need me there and that I could do something to ensure they didn't die too," She thought back to that day, "There are things that I needed to do back then, I still need to do those things before such a thing would even possibly be an actual option. But," She shook her head, "I don't think it's going to be an actual option anymore. Not until close to the very end or I lose everything," She looked towards Luna, "I'd prefer the first one. If I ended up with the second one, I didn't do my job correctly and I'd die before allowing it to happen."

"Let's hope it never comes to that," Luna commented Mahsa picked up her pace again.

Rather than impose on Armakan's hospitality, Mahsa got rooms in one of the local inns. Once they'd gotten settled, Jori went to go check on his family and basically catch up on everything that had happened since he'd left Heliohapt. Mahsa wrote a letter to Armakan and sent it off with Darius letting the king know that she'd returned for a few weeks before heading off to the local market while Luna tried to adjust to the heat. Some of those in the market remembered her from the months she'd spent in Heliohapt before and quickly approached. By the time she returned from the market after getting supplies that she needed, the sun had set and the bar of the inn was lively.

Luna was feeling a lot better thanks to the cold night and jumped into enjoying herself. Darius returned as Mahsa was watching the blonde dance with some of the other women. She took the letter from him and pushed a small bowl of meat she'd gotten for him towards the chimera. Darius dug in with gusto as she opened the letter and looked inside. She looked up when Luna stumbled back towards the table, "Having fun?"

"Yeah! This place is so much fun!" Luna beamed at her, "What's with the letter?"

"Armakan requests that you, Jori, and I come to the palace tomorrow," Mahsa answered as she rolled the scroll letter up and stashed it within the waist of her trousers, "We will be going there after lunch, but please try not to drink enough to get hungover."

Luna pouted at her, "Mean."

Mahsa gave her a look, "Considering the fact I like Armakan, I'd rather not cause him unneeded stress and anger due to you deciding to be bi-polar little shit."

"Fine, but only because he's your friend," Luna plopped down beside Mahsa, "Did you talk to Kouen today?"

"Before I came down," Mahsa picked up her tankard of wine, "Everything seems to be going well in Balbadd,"
"That's good," Luna seemed to see something, "Jori's back! I'll go tell him the news,"

Without waiting for a reply, Luna darted off leaving Mahsa to shake her head in exasperation. Who knew Luna could become hyper from drinking just a bit of alcohol? It was an interesting fact to find out about the blonde even if it meant she couldn't drink as much if only to keep Luna from indulging in every whim that passed through her mind. Darius snorted softly when she shuddered, "You're thinking about the last time you didn't watch over her, aren't you?"

"Isss it really ssssurprising?" Mahsa avoided thinking about the pink monstrosity that Luna had conjured up not long after they'd returned from Kou, "How issss everyone?"

"Cleo issss eager to sssee you alongssside hisss human," Darius answered with a serpentine smile radiating happiness, "He wasss a little disssapointed that you've chosssen a diffrent mate from hisss human, but issss ssupportive."

"Aren't you being a little gosssip," Mahsa teased Darius earning small glare, "Did you warn him about why we've come outssside of vissssiting for pleasssure?"

Darius dipped his head in a nod, "Yesss, he isss not happy to learn of the infessstation, but isss willing to call on hisss kin here to ensssure we're able to finisssh it."

"Good," Mahsa looked up as Luna dragged a rather flustered looking Jori through the crowd. Seeing Jori's eyes trail to Luna's bared chest only to snap upwards with a rather furious flush coating his cheeks every few moments, Mahsa had to snicker a bit, but she refrained from teasing the man. While she was tempted to play match-maker, she wouldn't interfere with her household members' relationship no matter how hard it was the ignore the urge. Luna let go of Jori's hand with a bright grin, "Got him!"

"Good going, Luna," Mahsa raised her tankard earning a grin from the drunken blonde, "Why don't you take Darius outside? He could use some fresh air,"

Darius gave her a look of betrayal as Luna scooped him up, "Okay!"

Luna scampered off into the crowd and Jori slumped into the seat beside Mahsa. He took the drink she pushed towards him with a grateful look on his face, "Thank you."

"No problem," Mahsa eyed him noting the slight tears in his clothing and the faint scent of blood emanating off of him, "Rough day?"

"Let's just say one of my brothers didn't exactly approve of my leaving Heliohapt or my choice in companions," Jori answered with a small grimace, "With any hope, I will not need to deal with him for a couple of days."

Mahsa scented the air carefully and found trace amounts of certain poisons she usually kept well-stocked whenever traveling. Rather than call Jori out on using the poisons since they couldn't kill anyone, she merely informed him, "Armakan has requested our presence at the palace tomorrow after lunch."

Jori sat up from his slumped position, "Does he know why we're here?"

"Not yet, but he will tomorrow," Mahsa hadn't wanted to put something like that in a letter even if Darius wouldn't let anyone take it from him, "I also didn't tell him about your abilities," Jori gave her a wide-eyed look and she offered him a small smirk, "I figured you'd appreciate the chance to show off especially since Armakan is likely going to have us meet him in the large audience
Jori nodded slowly as Mahsa took a drink from her tankard, "Thank you."

Armakan looked as attractive as he had the last time they saw one another, but Mahsa didn't feel any of the desire that had begun to form before she'd left Heliohapt. She was just a little surprised by that fact, but wasn't unhappy about it since Kouen was the only one she could really see herself with now. She offered the Heliohaptian King a warm smile, "Armakan, it's good to see you again."

"Mahsa," Armakan smiled slightly in return, "It is good to see you as well. You've been well?"

"As well as I can be. You?" Mahsa asked as Cleo slithered around his human's throne to greet her, "Hello, Cleo,"

"Welcome back, Mahsaa," Cleo replied as he reached her.

Mahsa bent down to stroke his golden scales as Armakan said, "I have been well. Though may I ask why you didn't contact me before returning to Heliohapt?"

"To keep things as quiet as possible," Mahsa answered making Armakan's smile drop, "Normally, I would send a letter and I'd been planning to do so originally,"

"But that changed?" Armakan asked with narrowed eyes, "Did you see something?"

Mahsa nodded as she stood up properly allowing Cleo to return to his human's side, "Multiple somethings actually. I assume Sinbad has told you about what he refers to as the 'abnormalities of the world'? Al-Thamen?"

Armakan stiffened as his eyes darkened in anger, "You believe them to be here?"

"I know they are," Mahsa replied with a slight grimace, "To ensure there was no chance of them being aware of our presence ahead of time and set up any traps for us, I did not send a letter,"

"You made yourself a target as Sinbad has," Armakan guessed with a small frown.

"Not intentionally, my ability drew their attention since they were somehow able to sense it," Mahsa reached up to scratch beneath Darius' chin to calm him down when he tensed, "One of their members attempted to kill me and would have succeeded had someone not heard us fighting." She barely kept herself from touching the scar Gyokuen's attack had left, "In her words, 'trying to force you into falling would probably be an exercise in futility.' though I'm still not sure why other than it having to do with my ability to see,"

"You're here to root them out," Armakan realized earning a nod from Mahsa, "How will you do that?"

"Each of those part of Al-Thamen save for one carry a taint to their scent that can't be hidden," Mahsa explained while reaching up to tap her nose, "Tracking them down will be my biggest priority though they'll likely figure out something is going on fairly soon and try to fight back,"

"Will you keep me apprised?" Armakan asked earning another nod from Mahsa, "Then I will allow it, I only ask that my people do not get involved until the threat actively shows itself,"

Mahsa smiled lightly, "Of course, I hope to avoid having your people involved in this at all if I can help it. The people of Heliohapt deserve any peace they can get," Armakan looked pleased by her
words, "However, I also wanted to thank you for allowing Jori to join me. Jori, why not show Armakan what you've gained since coming along with me?"

Jori stepped forward with a nervous air about him. Armakan and those in the throne room looked curiously at the man. Mahsa reached out and squeezed his shoulder lightly in a show of support. Jori flashed her a light smile before turning to Armakan with a determined look on his face, "King Armakan, I have journeyed to many places with Lady Mahsa and came across many things that were quite bizarre. At her side, I learned many things and gained quite a few. But what I have to show you is perhaps the greatest," Jori took a deep breath as he straightened his back, "Crystal Twin Cobra!"

Many in the room gasped as the two cobras appeared. Someone gasped out, "A Household vessel?!"

Jori ignored them as he looked up at King Armakan, "King Armakan, our agreement about my leaving with Lady Mahsa was that upon my return to Heliohapt I would return to your service unless given a reason not to. As a member of Mahsa's household, I cannot leave her side and return to your service. Not when she is my queen and friend," Luna looked at Jori in surprise and went to speak only to be stopped by Mahsa who shook her head, "Lady Mahsa has given me the option of returning if I so wish, but to be quite honest, I've grown to enjoy our travels for all the troubles that occurred. I wish to stay with Lady Mahsa and Luna for as long as I possibly can even if it means never being able to return to your service," Mutters exploded as Jori bowed to Armakan, "Please understand that I mean you no disrespect and have been truly thankful for my position in your service, I have simply found another path for myself,"

Jori finished speaking as a hush fell over the room and everyone looked at Armakan for his reaction. Armakan eyed Jori silently assessing him as Cleo rose up to hiss at her household member though the golden cobra didn't say anything. Armakan spoke with approval shining in his eyes, "I see. I had thought this would be the case given how insistent you were to travel with her. Heliohapt will always be waiting should you decide to leave her service."

Jori rose up with a thankful smile, "I will keep that in mind, King Armakan."

Armakan turned his attention to Mahsa, "As you are assisting my country, I ask that you and your household become my guests until you're to depart."

"We would be thankful for it," Mahsa inclined her head with a light smile, "I will also be offering my help with any problems of the serpentine kind as well as healing if only to give our presence here a cover,"

Hunting down the odd priests of Al-Thamen was both exciting and infuriating, Mahsa relished in the clashing feelings just as any Fanalis would. Fighting the priests could be a bit difficult, they always worked in pairs and were annoying to actually kill especially when she had to back up her household members. Rooting them out could be difficult, the ability to teleport made tracking them down difficult even with various serpents offering their help. She learned how to be more sneaky and improved on using her spells more creatively. Seeing the odd dolls left behind by the priests get destroyed always left a bright smile on her face, she enjoyed destroying the dolls in various ways.

Injuries that occurred during the fights could be somewhat annoying, the priests almost always managed to get in a good hit that left the injured party down for a few minutes. Mahsa tried to ensure that if anyone got injured it was her if only because she could take more than her companions. Thankfully no life threatening injuries had occurred, Jori and Luna were both
improving their skills rather rapidly since the priests were more skilled than the bandits they normally faced while traveling.

Mahsa winced as her side twinged when she bent down to pick up a new tunic. She gingerly pressed a hand to her bandaged side. Numbing the pain just a bit, she grabbed the tunic that she'd dropped and carefully put it on as her mirror began to chime. She grabbed the mirror and connected the call, "Hey, En."

"Sa," Kouen eyed her with his eyes going to the scratches littering the left side of her face, "Are you okay?"

"Not exactly, but I'll heal," Mahsa walked over to her bed and sat down carefully, "Those weird priests are annoying cockroaches, we keep killing them and more show up. That teleporting trick of theirs just makes it all harder than it needs to be," She smiled a bit, "Though killing them just keeps getting more and more satisfying."

Kouen chuckled at her statement, "I'm glad that you're enjoying yourself. How is Heliohapt other than dealing with the priests?"

"Not bad especially since Armakan doesn't mind me raiding his library for interesting books to read during my downtime," Mahsa grinned a bit, "Luna has been having a field since she's been able to talk poisons with the various specialists here. I'm actually fearing for my enemies if only because some of them are especially brutal. Jori is enjoying himself as well since he's been showing Luna around," She looked at him curiously, "How are things in Balbadd?"

"They're fine for the most part. We've run into some trouble that we managed to avoid thanks to you and your household members," Kouen answered as his lips pulled into a thin line, "I am somewhat surprised it isn't worse."

Mahsa snorted softly earning a small glare from Kouen, "En, my household and I are well loved in Balbadd, remember? Each of us helped the people stay strong while everything went to shit and helped them stabilize after everything happened. Knowing that you're favored by us, by me, has ensured that they're less willing to cause problems if only to keep from spitting on what we've done for them," She sighed a bit, "Of course, it won't last long especially if something properly aggravates them and a leader decides to step forward. But that's the risk that you face with every country you've conquered, we just made it take a bit longer to happen and the people less willing to follow along," She offered him a light smile, "Aren't you happy it isn't so difficult?"

"Somewhat," Kouen leaned back in his chair, "But it is a bit unsettling."

"Understandable," Mahsa's eyes landed on the letter Kouha had sent her, "Hey, En. Does Kouha or Kougyoku know about us being together yet?"

"No, I haven't informed them as of yet. I feel it would be better to discuss it in person if only to avoid either making a scene," Kouen smirked a bit, "After all, allowing the bitch to realize what I've planned and finds a way to stop it would be disappointing."

Mahsa grinned a bit, "I'm actually looking forward to seeing the look on her face when it comes out. Have you and Mei made any progress?"

"Some..." Kouen explained what they'd been doing so far.

Mahsa sat down for lunch with Armakan three weeks after arriving in Heliohapt. The Heliohaptian
king looked at her with a slightly narrowed gaze, "Mahsa, may I ask you a question?"

"Of course," Mahsa put down her glass.

"Are you marrying the first prince of Kou, Kouen Ren?" Armakan asked startling Mahsa a bit.

Mahsa wondered where that question had come from as she nodded her head, "Yes though not for awhile. I've got quite a few things to do before then not to mention we need to complete the Fanalis courting ritual before anything actually happens," She frowned at him, "Why do you ask?"

"Because certain rumors have been coming from Balbadd and I wished to know if they were true," Armakan grimaced a bit while Mahsa felt a bit vindicated that Balbadd was once again resuming it's trade, "I had actually hoped to pursue you when you'd returned,"

Well that was unexpected even if Mahsa should've guessed thanks to the vision she'd had of being married to Armakan, she would need to think about that later. Inwardly shaking her head, she told Armakan, "Had I not gone to Kou or fallen for Kouen, I would've agreed to try a relationship with you."

"You love him?" Armakan looked a little shocked at her words.

Mahsa nodded with a slight smile, "I have for a long while," She frowned a bit, "I hope that this won't change how you view me, Armakan."

Armakan shook his head, "It will not though I will admit it is disappointing. You're the most tolerable woman I've dealt with," He frowned a little, "You truly would've considered a relationship with me?"

"Yes since I know that even if I didn't love you in the beginning, I would grow to love you," Mahsa didn't see any harm in admitting it, "You're exactly the type of man I could see myself falling in love with and being happy standing beside,"

Armakan looked a bit happy at her answer, "What makes us different? Kouen Ren and I?"

Mahsa wasn't quite sure if she really wanted to answer it, "Something about him just draws me in, Kouen just calls to something deep inside my very being and makes it pay attention to him."

"I see," Armakan frowned a bit.

"I can't really explain it, Armakan. It's just something that is," Mahsa lifted up her glass, "I'm sorry if it doesn't really make sense,"

"So Armakan actually wanted to be with you?" Luna looked at Mahsa in surprise, "That makes what three monarchs plus Kouen to show an interest in you?"

"Pretty much," Mahsa shook her head lightly, "I'd only consider two of them if I did have Kouen,"

Luna giggled with a slight grin, "Sinbad would be so disappointed."

Mahsa rolled her eyes as she put down the brush she'd been using to groom Darius much to the chimera's annoyance, "Fuck him and his man-whore ways, I honestly can't see myself ever getting into a relationship with him since there's no telling if he'd stay loyal. Not to mention the fact that I'm fairly sure he's fucking his adviser," Luna gave her the 'Details. Now' look, "You can't smell like each other on such a deep level unless you're fucking on a fairly frequent basis. I'm just glad I
never came across them doing that," She shuddered a bit, "I got enough of accidentally coming across Myron and Lo'lo. Did not need to see that shit."

Luna burst out laugh while Mahsa rolled her eyes at the blonde.
Staying in Heliohapt an extra month was the price of being as thorough as possible when it came to getting rid of the weird priests, Mahsa was actually fine with the delay since she'd picked up even more healing techniques and perfected the ones she had learned before. Jori had greatly enjoyed his time back in his homeland even with the trouble he'd been having with some of his siblings and his former co-workers. Luna had learned and perfected more poisons as well as picked up a familiar for herself. Luna's familiar was a child of Armakan's snake companion, Cleo, and bore the golden scales of her father though she was much smaller seeing as she'd only been born a two weeks ago. Due to the familiar bond between them, Luna would likely get a rather simplistic understanding of the serpentine tongue though that wouldn't allow her to speak it.

"Sindria, here we come," Luna chirped as the ship set sail.

Sasha, Luna's snake, hissed softly in confusion, "What isss Ssindria?"

"It isss a country much like Heliohapt is only diffrent. We've never been there," Mahsa answered before relaying Sasha's question to Luna.

Luna perked up and began explaining things to her little familiar. Darius gave Heliohapt a sulky look already missing the desert sands and the intense heat. Running her fingers over the top of his head, she told him, "We'll come back eventually, Dari."

"I know, but I will misssss it," Darius murmured as he looked away from the country they were leaving, "Ssindria isss sssuposssedly warm, right?"

"Not as warm as Heliohapt, but it is a tropical island," Mahsa looked at Jori as he walked up, "Everything alright?"

Jori had been below deck getting their cabins settled mostly due to volunteering to do the job. He nodded with a faintly sad look on his face as he glanced past her towards Heliohapt, "Yeah. I got everything settled."

Mahsa set a hand on his shoulder, "Jori, if you want to go back, you still can."

Jori shook his head, "No, I want to keep traveling with you, Mahsa. I'm just a little homesick is all."

"We'll be back eventually," Mahsa promised not knowing exactly what to say.

"Before or after you marry Kouen?" Jori asked earning a small shrug, "Have they figured anything out yet?"

Mahsa nodded slowly, "Yeah, it'll be about six months before everything will be ready. About a month after that, we'll need to meet up with Kouen and travel to Kou specifically Rakushou. We'll get things settled there and I'll be engaged to Kouen. We'll end up marrying somewhere between two months to a year after that which means needing to complete the Fanalis Courting rituals before then. I've got about seven months if a little less to get everything I need done."

"So what are we doing after Sindria?" Jori asked with a slight frown.

"Artemyra to speak with Queen Mira," Mahsa smiled a little, "After all, I need to let her know that I'm going to be marrying someone."
"What about Reim? Specifically your siblings and the Fanalis Corps?" Jori asked making Mahsa pale a bit, "You haven't thought about it?"

Mahsa shook her head as Darius snickered, "No, I have thought about it. I just haven't really told them about the whole Kouen thing just yet..."

Mostly because only Myron would likely not overreact and that wasn't even guaranteed, Mahsa wasn't quite willing to deal with that just yet. Of course, she needed to tell them before her seven months were up or Kouen needed to do the final part of the courting ritual. She realized that and would tell them at some point soon. Just not now, she had things to do after all. She grimaced a bit knowing that she's stalling and decided that she'd send a letter to Myron later on.

Mahsa, Jori, and Luna arrived in Sindria relatively unscathed. Two southern sea beast attacks were a little annoying to deal with, she would have no problem actually creating one with Alastor's magic thanks to the attacks which was the only really good thing that came from them. Masrur was waiting at the docks for them as Sinbad had apparently named them guests, so they'd be staying at the palace for the duration of their visit. They got into the carriage that was waiting for them as Luna commented, "Sinbad isn't going to give up on getting into Mahsa's pants, huh?"

Masrur shook his head with a soft chuckle, "No."

Mahsa snorted softly, "He doesn't stand a chance."

"Especially since Mahsa's in a relationship with someone," Luna giggled softly.

Masrur looked at Mahsa curiously, "Really?"

Mahsa nodded with a pleased grin, "Mhmm. We're in the process of going through the courting trials."

Masrur's eyes widened before another chuckle left him, "Sin is going to be disappointed, but won't stop."

Rolling her eyes, Mahsa told the older Fanalis, "He won't get anywhere with me. There is only one person I'm interested in, Sinbad will never be that man. After all, manipulative kings that sleep around with any pretty face that crosses his path aren't those that I'd welcome into my bed."

"There is also a distinct lack of red hair," Luna added rather cheerfully, "And red eyes,"

Giving Luna a look, Mahsa frowned at the blonde. Luna just smiled at her and said nothing else about the subject. She wondered over why Luna had said that, but supposed the blonde was attempting to stir up trouble for some reason. Or trying to see what Sinbad would do, it didn't make sense though. Though Luna could probably want to add into the rumors currently being spread, she narrowed her eyes at the blonde deciding to speak later once they'd been given rooms.

"Miss Mahsa!" Aladdin cried as he rushed towards her.

Mahsa stared at the formerly skinny magi in shock. She knew that the body could gain a lot of weight especially during the time frame that they'd separated, but seeing how fat Aladdin had gotten, it was something that filled her with disbelief. None of the magi she'd met had ever been fat, they'd all been skinny. She supposed it had to do with Aladdin not knowing any magic other than that fire spell, but still he shouldn't be that fat. She shook her head, "Hi, Aladdin."
Soon enough, Mahsa was sitting with Jori and Luna on one side of a table with the three kids they hadn't seen since the three left Balbadd. Alibaba was just as fat as Aladdin which left the Fanalis' eye twitching. Sure, she understood that people coped with food, but this was a bit much even for that. She looked at Morgiana in askance and the younger Fanalis explained, "Food makes them feel better."

"I see," Mahsa looked at Aladdin, "Aladdin, have you been practicing that fire spell?"

Aladdin shook his head and swallowed a mouthful of watermelon, "No."

"I see," Mahsa turned her attention to Alibaba who'd stiffened and paled when he noticed her attention on him, "Alibaba, have you trained at all since arriving?" Alibaba shook his head with a slightly panicked look, "Why not?"

"I've been grieving," Alibaba actually squeaked making Mahsa smiled widely revealing her sharp teeth, "And just taking in Sindria, ya know,"

"I do know," Mahsa leaned forward, "Sindria is a rather pretty place. A nice prosperous country," She watched as Alibaba leaned backward while Aladdin and Morgiana looked at her in confusion alongside the servants that were standing around, "Alibaba, have you thought of Balbadd at all?"

"Of course I have!" Alibaba jumped up a bit looking furious.

"Oh really," Mahsa snagged the front of his shirt and pulled him forward, "Then why the hell have you just been sitting around and eating? Lazing around gaining weight while your people struggled to rebuild?" She glared at the blonde boy as a soft growl rumbled out of her chest, "How could you not be working your ass off to better yourself when you're aware of what they've been going through?" The blonde boy froze, "Alibaba, y-"

"Mahsa!" Ja'far stormed up, "That is enough,"

"The fuck it is," Mahsa didn't take her eyes off of Alibaba, "Every single person in Balbadd is holding onto the hope that you'll change things. That the Kou empire won't take over, they're holding onto the hope that you'll be there to rule them on day. Yet here you are, a fat bastard even larger than that fucking pig that was bleeding the country dry. How the fuck are you any better than him?"

"Mah-" Ja'far began only to be cut off by Luna.

"Where is the king that Amon chose? That Aladdin chose?" Mahsa pulled Alibaba closer as she hissed at him, "Where is the boy that came to me begging to be trained? To become better than he was in order to help his country?" She glared into Alibaba's eyes, "You're no longer a prince, Alibaba, yet you sit here acting like a spoiled brat while your kingdom toils beneath the hand of an empire that seeks to take over the world. They may end up thriving, but eventually, you'll be all but forgotten alongside the rest of your bloodline save for the fact you abandoned them,"

"But I didn't," Alibaba protested.

"Haven't you?" Mahsa released Alibaba and shoved him back, "Because the boy I see before me is nothing more than a fat little leech perfectly happy to live without trying to save his country. I don't see the boy I agreed to train or the one I knew could save Balbadd," Alibaba stared at her with wide eyes and she sneered at him, "I don't see the boy Cassim believed in. I don't see the boy that the Fog Troupe claimed as their leader. I don't see the boy that inspired a burning desire to save Balbadd into the hearts of its slowly dying citizens," Alibaba flinched with each word she said and
looked at the ground, "Seeing you now, I'm disgusted by what you've become," She stood up and turned away, "Useless sack of shits like you are worthless,"

With that said, Mahsa left the balcony where they were supposed to eat lunch and headed towards her rooms. Jori and Luna joined her a couple minutes later with the blonde saying, "That was a bit unlike you, Mahsa."

Mahsa grimaced, "Seeing him like that, it was disgusting especially knowing that the people of Balbadd are looking to him. It turns my stomach."

"What happens now?" Jori asked as Mahsa opened the door to her room and they walked inside.

"The waiting game," Luna said as the blonde dropped onto a chair.

Mahsa began going through her things for one of the money pouches she kept, "I've laid down the groundwork, so now we must wait for Alibaba to come to me. By forcing him to acknowledge the reality of his situation, he'll do one of two things. Fall into a despair filled slump that makes him little more than a husk or forge onward to become the man I've seen," She pulled out a money pouch and looked inside to find the currency she was looking for, "First thing we need to do, Lunch. I smelt some pretty interesting things yesterday on the carriage ride to the palace."

Alastor chuckled softly as Mahsa left her room with Luna and Jori following after her, "Brute force, My little queen?"

'We don't have the time to wait, Alastor,' Mahsa replied with an internal grimace, 'The winds of destiny and fate are flowing. If we wait until Sinbad comes back, Alibaba and the others might not be able to face what comes next. I don't want to see any of them dead or worse,'

"Even if it means they hate you?" Alastor's voice was soft.

Mahsa's lips pulled into a sardonic smile, 'Hate or love, what does it matter which one they choose to feel towards me if it means they're able to survive? Better to be hated with those needed surviving than to be loved only to lose everyone at the end,' She closed her eyes for the briefest moment, 'Alastor, I will not allow those I care for to die and those three...They're precious even if our time together hasn't been especially long. I will not see their fates turn in such a way especially if it means the death of those I love,' She opened her eyes, 'Am I not allowed to be selfish? To do my damnedest ensuring that things work out in a way where those I care for survive and are able to be happy?'

"Oh Mahsa," Alastor sent waves of comfort and his magoi wrapped around her in a 'hug', "My little queen who sees and gives too much."

And wasn't that the truth? Mahsa would give everything in order to see those she cared for survive and find happiness even if it meant death awaited her.

Everyone was furious with Mahsa even after she explained why she'd done it. To the surprise of most, she didn't try to change their opinions even if it meant being the target for insults and pranks by those that had grown attached to the blonde boy since his arrival. She simply went about her day even as Darius, Luna, and Jori became infuriated by it all. It wasn't until Alibaba asked her for training that it all changed.

Mahsa looked at Alibaba as the boy got on his knees and bowed his head to her in one of the crowded rooms of the palace with Ja'far, Masrur, Aladdin, Morgiana, and many of those that had
become furious with her. She said nothing simply staring at the boy waiting for him to speak. Alibaba spoke as Aladdin murmured, "Alibaba?"

"Mahsa, no," Alibaba shook his head, "That isn't right. Lady Alexius," Mahsa felt a little jolt of surprise go through her at the title, "I have done wrong by you. You took me on as a student after I'd begged and pleaded for the help. You worked with me and helped the country that I abandoned after what happened. You had every right to refuse, but you didn't," He curled one of his hands into a fist, "I wronged you. I took your teachings and left them to waste away when my grief was too great. When it began to ease, I did nothing to make use of those teachings. You were right about me being a worthless useless sack of shit,"

"Alibaba!" Aladdin burst out as murmurs filled the room, "You'r-"

"Aladdin, stop," Alibaba turned his head to smile sadly at his friend, "Lady Alexius was right about everything. Even with how much grief I felt, I abandoned Balbadd once again," He had tears gathering in his eyes, "Only this time, it was much worse. Not only did I leave, I broke my promise to Cassim and the people of Balbadd. I left it to rot underneath the Kou Empire thumb," He let out a hollow laugh, "What good is having a Djinn if I can't even keep a promise?" He shook his head and looked back at Mahsa, "You were right. I'm worse than Ahbmad,"

"I see. And what is this about?" Mahsa waved a hand at him, "Why come to me?"

"Because in the end, I need your help to become more than this," Alibaba looked at her in determination, "I don't deserve your help, Lady Alexius. Not when I've dishonored your teachings, I know that you're probably ready to just laugh in my face and toss me away. I've realized that, but I still need to try," Fire filled those eyes again and Mahsa inwardly smiled at the sight, "Train me again, I need to keep my promise to Cassim and the people of Balbadd no matter,"

"Why?" Mahsa kept her face blank, "Why should I train you?"

"I need to get stronger," Alibaba answered with a grimace, "With my current state, I'm useless to anyone. Not only that, I need as much help as I can possibly get if I'm going to be able to help Balbadd. If I want to keep my promises, I need to become stronger,"

"And if Balbadd doesn't want your help?" Mahsa asked making Alibaba bow his head.

"I acknowledge that and accept it," Alibaba looked back up with determination, "But until I know that for a fact, I'm going to do my best to help it,"

"Any training I may give you will be far worse than before," Mahsa looked down at him as her lips twitched into a faint smirk, "You're going to be facing pain worse than anything you've ever encountered and your body with be broken even as I build you up." She heard a few murmurs as Luna's faint giggle reached her ears, "Every single day will be complete hell,"

Alibaba looked a bit pale, but determined, "I accept that, Lady Alexius."

"Even if it may mean you'll die?" Mahsa had trouble keeping herself from grinning, "You are not a Fanalis after all. You're completely human and not all humans can deal with the punishment a Fanalis can,"

"Even if it means I may die," Alibaba looked at her with enough resolve that she could finally see the man he'd eventually become.

Mahsa was quiet for a few moments as if in thought before turning on her heel. Alibaba stayed where he was as a soft groan left him and already the scent of depression began to form. She spoke
"Dawn," Mahsa told him, "Be up or Darius will drag you out of bed."

With that, Mahsa left the room grinning brightly as Alibaba let out a cheer behind her. Darius let out a low hiss of laughter, "The boy iss going to regret thisss."

"Perhaps, but he wanted it," Mahsa ran her fingers down Darius neck.

Mahsa sent Alibaba, Aladdin, and Morgiana running around the training field as she heard footsteps approaching. Aladdin and Morgiana had decided to join Alibaba not wanting him to go through this training alone which suited her just fine. Out of the two of them, Aladdin needed a lot of work since magi had such weak bodies and he had a very tough destiny in front of him. Morgiana would just benefit from it simply because Fanalis needed a tough workout in order to become stronger. She caught Ja'far's rather subdued scent of alder-wood and oranges with a slight acidic scent that came from working with poisons alongside Baal's powerful ozone scent. She spoke as he reached her side, "Ja'far."

"Mahsa, this is why you said those things, wasn't it?" Ja'far asked with a slight frown.

"These three have a large destiny ahead of them, one that isn't going to wait for them," Mahsa looked at the former assassin, "Waiting for Sinbad to kick Alibaba into gear would've taken too long and might've caused problem, I didn't want that,"

Ja'far's frown deepened, "You were being impatient."

"Perhaps," Mahsa acknowledged with a nod, "But we can't take chances. Not with what's coming."

"What is coming?" Ja'far demanded earning a slight grimace.

"War of a kind that this world has yet to see especially with the metal vessels currently being active," Mahsa answered in a soft voice, "Darkness threatening to swallow the light and life," Ja'far's breath hitched at her words, "They're going to take center stage,"

"Damn it," Ja'far cursed softly, "Why the hell are these kids involved?"

"Same reason Sinbad ended up a King vessel. That you became a member of Sinbad's household," Mahsa looked at the three kids that she was going to put through hell, "Destiny and fate care for no mortals, they flow no matter what. Those three, the moment they met sealed their destiny. The choices they make from now will effect things of course, but destiny has a funny way of ensuring it's winds are never truly diverted,"

Ja'far was quiet as he began mulling over Mahsa's words as she focused once again on those three kids.

Sinbad returned a month and a half after Mahsa and co. arrived in Sindria which also came with a southern sea beast attack. Mahrajan was a fun festival filled with good food and a lot of fun. She walked through the streets with only Darius for company as Jori and Luna had disappeared though mostly due to the blonde wanting to have a lot of fun. With Jori watching of Luna, she was able to enjoy herself as well though she'd avoid drinking too much. She paused at a stall to grab some fried fish and found Masrur walking towards her. Offering the older man a light smile, she said, "Hey, Masrur."
"Mahsa," Masrur greeted her, "Sinbad wants you to join us," He gestured to the area where Sinbad and his generals usually sat when observing the festival, "To meet everyone. Luna and Jori are already there,"

Mahsa nodded, "Sounds like a plan."

It took about ten minutes to get to where Sinbad and the other generals were waiting. Aladdin spotted her and grinned, "Mahsa!"

While it had taken time, Aladdin and Morgiana had forgiven her for what she'd said to Alibaba mostly because the blonde had spoken to them. Mahsa waved as she walked up beside Masrur, "Hey," She eyed Sinbad making him puff up a bit and smirked, "Sinbad, you're not dressed in a little boy's clothes or missing your metal vessels. Better than our last meeting."

Snorts and giggles sounded from those gathered on the dais, Mahsa grinned lightly as Sinbad pouted at her, "Mahsa, that wasn't very nice."

"Your point?" Mahsa replied with a raised eyebrow, "Not listening to me when I say no isn't very nice either,"

"I like her," A blond girl that smelt a bit like Queen Mira said with a grin, "My names Pisti,"

"Mahsa Alexius," Mahsa grinned back at her, "You're Queen Mira's daughter, right?" She nodded, "You smell a bit like her,"

Pisti looked a bit surprised, "I do."

Mahsa nodded with a soft hum. Luna giggled as she said, "And Mahsa would know."

"How?" The man that must be Armakan's little brother, Sharrkan, asked.

"We slept together twice," Mahsa enjoyed the wide eyed looks she was being given, "And had I accepted her offer, I would probably still be sleeping with her."

Sinbad choked on the wine he was drinking, "Seriously?! How?"

"How?" Mahsa looked at him in confusion, "What do you mean how?"

"Simple, Sin hasn't managed to convince her to bed him," Ja'far answered earning a snort.

"And suddenly I like the woman even more," Mahsa grinned a bit as she went to take a seat beside Luna, "Maybe I should've taken her offer,"

Luna giggled as Jori snorted softly and Mahsa picked up a goblet from the table. Sniffing it, she found it to be water and took a drink as Sinbad asked, "What offer?"

"She wanted me to become her lover/court witch," Mahsa shrugged lightly, "I was pretty tempted to agree, but travel was more important especially since there were people I needed to meet," She didn't regret not taking Queen Mira up on her offer if only because of how things had gone since then, "It still is fairly important,"

"That actually reminds me," Ja'far said earning curious looks, "Why are you currently traveling? From what Masrur said, you're completing the Fanalis Courting trials, right? Shouldn't you be with the one you're courting?"

Mahsa lowered her goblet with a shake of her head, "We both have things that need to be done
though mainly me. I have a little less than five and a half months left to get everything I need to done before meeting up with him." She set her goblet down, "One of those things was coming here and checking on you three," She gestured to the trio of kids who looked a little surprised to hear that, "It will probably be another month before we leave Sindria."

"Where will you be headed afterward?" Sinbad asked looking slightly annoyed.

"Artemyra, I need to speak with Queen Mira on some matters and tie up some loose ends," Mahsa got herself some more food, "After that, I'm not quite sure where exactly we'll be traveling especially as Lady Scheherazade hasn't indicated that it would be safe to return home," It wouldn't be too much longer though from how her visions were playing out, "Once she does though, we will be returning to Reim with my lover and some others in order to complete the courting trials. It's going to be a fairly busy time at that point,"

"It's a shame that you'll only be here for another month," Sinbad stared at Mahsa with darkening golden eyes, "Especially since I've only just returned," Mahsa shrugged lightly, "Being on a tight schedule can do that."

"So Mahsa," Pisti grinned at her, "Do you drink?"

"Only around my family and friends," Mahsa replied eyeing the blonde carefully, "Why?"

Waking up to all the symptoms of a major hangover wasn't fun at all, it was something Mahsa had dealt with though normally it only happened when she was in Reim which made the morning odd. What made it odder was the arm wrapped around her waist, the only reason she didn't scramble to get away from whoever it was, was due to the fact panicking would lead to her getting sick which wasn't something she wanted to deal with right now. So she applied a few charms that would ensure whoever her bed partner was would stay asleep for a little while and something to numb her hangover until the potion she planned to take kicked in, she slowly extracted herself from their hold and summoned a vial of hangover relief potion.

The potion kicked in rather quickly and Mahsa finally opened her eyes to see a lavish room. More lavish than her guest room, she felt a bolt of dread coil through her as Sinbad's scent filled her nose. She looked down at herself and calmed down a bit at the sight of her clothes. She cast a detection charm and came up with nothing meaning that she hadn't fucked around with Sinbad last night. Looking backward, she found Sinbad sleeping behind her as Alastor spoke, "Finally awake."

'What the actual fuck happened last night, Alastor?' Mahsa asked as she rubbed at her eyes.

"Queen Mira's daughter plus Armakan's brother got you drunk," Alastor explained with a slight sigh, "Once everyone else started to get drunk, Sinbad began trying to take advantage of that fact and kept giving you more to drink when you weren't very receptive. He brought you back here, but you fell asleep. Thankfully, he does have some morals and simply slept with you rather than forced himself on you,"

Mahsa felt a bit of relief, 'Good.'

"Will you tell Kouen?" Alastor asked in a soft voice.

'I have to,' Mahsa didn't plan on keeping anything from Kouen and would make sure he had all the fact, 'I won't keep something like this from him. I refuse to,'
As soon as Mahsa snuck into her guest room, she contacted Kouen and told him everything. He was pissed off though only a little bit of that anger was directed towards her. The majority of his anger was directed towards Sinbad who'd very likely find himself in deep shit when he eventually met Kouen. Kouen extracted a promise to be more careful from Mahsa before relaying the news of what had happened during Sinbad's visit to Kou. Knowing that Kougyoku and Hakuryuu would be coming to Sindria left Mahsa a bit jittery, it meant that destiny was truly beginning to flow forward once more though hopefully she'd done enough to change certain facts.

Mahsa grabbed Kougyoku and held on tightly to keep the princess from assaulting Sinbad even as anger boiled through her. While she knew Sinbad hadn't assaulted Kougyoku, the thought of it even happening left her filled with rage. Kougyoku fought against her hold, "Mahsa, let go."

"Yoku, calm down," Mahsa cut her off even as the eight generals began bashing Sinbad, "I can solve this matter quite easily."

"How?" Aladdin asked with a confused frown.

"With a spell all witch and wizard healers are taught," Mahsa answered as Kougyoku froze in her hold, "Granted, I despise the reason this spell was created, but it serves a purpose for this specific situation." She let go of Kougyoku knowing that the princess wouldn't continue, "There are two facets of this spell, the first is to check to see if the subject is a virgin. The second is to check for any signs of rape."

Yamraiha grinned as she said, "Oh, I know that spell. It's an interesting piece of magic developed by a group of nobles to ensure their daughters were unsullied before creating any marriage contracts."

"Correct," Mahsa nodded to the genius Magician who was her favorite general outside of Masrur, "I believe Yamraiha has her own way to check,"

"Indeed," Yamraiha nodded.

The two cast their spell with Yamraiha going first then Mahsa. Casting her spell, she watched as Kougyoku was surrounded by a white aura for a few moments. She looked at Kougyoku and smiled softly at her friend, "You're still a virgin, Yoku. Had you not been, the spell would've turned red then gained a black tint if you had been touched against your will."

Kougyoku slumped a bit and began to apologize to Sinbad. Mahsa glared at Ka Koubun and waited until they began to return to the palace to hiss, "Despicable. Yoku counts on having you in her corner and you do this. Greedy son of a bitch, you're lucky that she cares about you otherwise I'd kill you. Of course, Kouen and her other brother's will be hearing about this," Ka Koubun paled and she grinned revealing all her shiny teeth, "Good luck surviving that."

Mahsa was going to prank Ka Koubun within an inch of his life for what he's done to Kougyoku.

Once Kougyoku had gotten settled, Mahsa told the princess about her relationship and future marriage to Kouen. Kougyoku had squealed loudly and hugged the Fanalis exclaiming that she was so happy for them. After catching up with the princess, she left to find Hakuryuu and found Sinbad walking away from him. She spoke, "Hakuryuu."

"Lady Mahsa," Hakuryuu jumped a bit looking surprised, "What are you doing here?"

Sinbad stopped walking and turned to look at them though Mahsa chose to ignore him for the
moment, "In Sindria? To check on a certain three that I met during that situation in Balbadd."

"You were in Balbadd?" Hakuryuu looked a bit surprised, "Why?"

"Lady Scheherazade made a request and I needed to get away from Reim for awhile," Mahsa eyed him carefully, "Have you thought of my words from before?"

Hakuryuu's face darkened a bit, "I have."

"And?" Mahsa asked as Darius shifted on her shoulders to peer at the boy as well.

Hakuryuu looked a little uncomfortable, "You were...right."

Mahsa smiled at him, "I'm glad to hear it. With that in mind, I will happily assist you when the time comes, but should your mind change, I will not," She gave him a serious look, "Kouen, Koumei, Kouha, Kougyoku, and Hakuei not to mention their households are dear to me, Hakuryuu. I will not allow them to be harmed senselessly for stupid reasons and won't hesitate to use my magic to ensure you're unable to do so should something happen."

Hakuryuu paled a bit, "I understand."

"Good," Mahsa smiled warmly at him, "You should meet the trio I met in Balbadd. I think they'll do you a world of good,"

Hakuryuu nodded slowly, "Sinbad said much the same thing."

Mahsa inclined her head, "Come, I'll show you to them."

"Actually, Mahsa, I was hoping we could speak," Sinbad spoke up with a light smile on his face.

Hakuryuu looked between them, "I should be able to find them on my own, Lady Mahsa, if you're busy with King Sinbad."

Mahsa frowned at Sinbad, "Dari, please show Hakuryuu to where Alibaba and the other two are."

Darius protested, "Sssa don't make me leave you alone with him!"

"I will be fine, Dari," Mahsa hissed rather firmly.

Darius attempted to protest a bit more before nodding and jumping off her shoulders. Hakuryuu looked at her for a moment before inclining his head, "Thank you, Lady Mahsa."

Once the two had left, Mahsa looked at Sinbad with a glare, "Listening in isn't polite."

"So I've been told," Sinbad replied with a small frown, "Hakuryuu has spoken of this matter to you before?"

"Yes," Mahsa frowned at him, "What do you want, Sinbad?"

"To know your exact relationship with the Kou royals," Sinbad looked serious which was a bit startling, "Just how close are you to them? For Hakuryuu to speak to you about it, you've got to be close,"

"To Hakuryuu, not at all," Mahsa reflectively placed a hand over the scar on her chest, "I was attacked by the very person that ensured his family save for his sister died during the palace fire," She saw Sinbad's eyes widened, "Had I not been quite so resilient or quick, that person would've
killed me. I've been a target since that day by the odd priests," She lowered her hand, "As for the
others, they are close friends that hold my loyalty and will have it for as long as I'm not betrayed,"
She smirked a bit, "Though you're probably already aware of it thanks to Masrur owing his loyalty
to you,"

"You Fanalis are loyal," Sinbad agreed as he began walking towards her, "But you're closer than
friends to one of them,"

"What makes you think that?" Mahsa asked as Alastor began to rumble in her mind, 'Alastor?'

"He isn't doing anything, but do not let him come close," Alastor growled softly, "There is no
telling what he can do with Zepar,"

Mahsa inwardly nodded in acknowledgement as Sinbad said, "You talk when you're drunk and
quite happy to answer questions," She inwardly paled and cursed, "Granted nothing that I really
wanted to know was spoken of, you refused to answer those questions. If you did, the answer was
vague especially when it concerned your visions."

"Seers are vague, Sinbad. Too much change is a bad thing and telling someone their future only
ensures things take a turn for the worst," Mahsa replied glad that she'd been able to keep her mouth
shut.

"But I know one of the royals is your lover," Sinbad told her looking a bit annoyed, "You wouldn't
say which one, but your answers clearly meant one of them was it. So who is it?"

"Why does it matter?" Mahsa asked as she quickly brought up her occlumency shields not wanting
to be influenced by the man at all.

Alastor bolstered them with some of his magic though it wouldn't last long. Sinbad frowned at her,
"Because I want to stand a chance with you."

"It isn't going to happen, Sinbad," Mahsa growled at him feeling irritated that he wouldn't give up,
"I do not want you as a lover. The only thing I could really see us being are friends which is
quickly becoming a distant dream since you just won't stop," She glared up at him and took a step
back to give herself some space, "My romantic love is for one man alone and you will never be
him. Not with how manipulative you are,"

"Even if I could give you the world?" Sinbad asked as his eyes darkened, "You'd never have to do
anything again if you didn't want to,"

"Even then," Mahsa bit back the urge to sneer at him, "Sinbad, I will never be with you. Especially
not when you're fucking Ja'far," Sinbad drew back with a look of surprise on his face, "My nose is
sensitive, Sinbad, it isn't hard to smell it. Hell, I've seen you two together often. Don't even try to
deny it," She shook her head, "I could never enter a relationship with anyone who's with someone
else. I never want to be second to anyone or put someone else in that position," She took a deep
breath to settle herself, "Think about your actual lover, Sinbad, before you make a mistake you're
not able to take back,"

Sinbad paled a bit, "Did I..."

"You don't need to be a seer to see it coming, Sinbad," Mahsa gave him a serious look, "Ja'far
doesn't deserve the bullshit you're putting him through. Not with how loyal he is to you, he does
his best to ensure you're able to keep Sindria the prosperous kingdom it is and you repay him with
shit like this. He'd follow you anywhere no matter what. So actually think about him for once,
Sinbad, before he decides to leave you. Even someone like him will eventually leave you if it becomes bad enough," She turned away, "I'm going to make sure things are going alright with the kids. Come back to me when you've actually thought about it,"
"Sending them Dungeon diving with Alibaba cursed was stupid," Mahsa glared at Sinbad as she changed the bandages on his body less than happily, "Less than allowing yourself to be hit by a curse, but still stupid," She finished changing the bandages and burned the soiled ones within a bubble to ensure any lingering effects wouldn't pass onto anyone else, "Especially when you know nothing about said Djinn,"

"I wanted to motivate them," Sinbad defended himself, "Besides, no one knows what Zagan can do. It's very likely he's a healing Djinn,"

Mahsa snorted softly, "No, Zagan is a Djinn able to manipulate plant-life," She watched Sinbad's eyes widened at the implications, "Alibaba nor Morgiana would fit Zagan very well. Alibaba less so especially given that Zagan and Amon do not like each other. Adding in the fact trying to use a metal vessel that's opposite of your current Djinn's magic path is like pulling teeth, Alibaba at his current level is no where near ready to undertake such a thing as you well know," She wound the bandages around Sinbad carefully glad that mixture had dried properly, "Morgiana is to become a house-hold member only. No pure-blood Fanalis could become a Metal-Vessel User."

Mahsa tied off the bandages once she finished as Sinbad inclined his head in understanding. He frowned slightly as she moved away to wash her hands, "How do you know what type of Djinn Zagan is? Your visions?"

Shaking her head, Mahsa scrubbed her hands clean, "My visions aren't clear when Djinn are involved unless they're bound to a user though even then it depends," She didn't voice her problems with seeing Aladdin since Sinbad didn't need to know, "My information comes from Alastor."

"He speaks with you?" Sinbad murmured sounding slightly shocked and jealous.

"Quite often depending on the situation," Mahsa finished washing her hands and purified them with a potion before drying them off, "Yours do not speak often anymore, do they? Not since you were cursed," She saw Sinbad stiffen and shook her head, "I've had my suspicions, but it wasn't until we arrived in Sindria that I was able to see. Truly see it," She offered the man a sad look, "Even with all the light that shines through both its people and from you, Sindria cannot hide the dark scars lingering," She set down the towel she'd dried her hands with, "When everyone returns safely, my group and I will be leaving Sindria. We've stayed long enough,"

Though Mahsa planned to see if she could change Dunya Musta'sim's fate, she didn't speak of it to Sinbad knowing he would try to make excuses for her to stay longer. Staying longer than that would mean rushing their visit in Artemyra, Mahsa wanted to enjoy what time she'd have in Artemyra before going to meet up with Kouen in Balbadd for the journey to Kou.
Judar looked at Mahsa in shock at her presence before grinning like the Cheshire cat, "Mahsa! I wanted to thank you for healing me back in Balbadd."

Mahsa bit back the urge to frown noting that Judar was thinner than he had been when she'd healed him and the almost manic look in his eye that made her want to growl. Those priests had done something, she wasn't sure what, but she'd definitely be finding out especially if Kouen would be willing to help keep Judar in Balbadd since the magi was likely going there after fucking with Sinbad. She was going to slaughter every single one of those bastards if it was the last thing she did as no one touched someone she cared about, "Jujube, you don't need to thank me. I help those I care for."

Judar's manic grin slipped away and for a moment Mahsa could see something vulnerable in his eyes. Had it just been them, she was sure that Judar would've told her what the priests had done. But due to Sinbad appearing, Judar said nothing about that and went to taunting Sinbad. When Judar left, their eyes met and she offered him a look that said they'd be talking. She walked over to Kougyoku who looked terrified, "Mahsa, what do we do?"

"Do you like it in Sindria, Kougyoku?" Mahsa asked earning a nod, "Then we help keep Sindria safe," She would need to go check on Yamraiha due to the Magician being connected to her barrier in someway, "Go speak with Sinbad on the matter, I need to go check on Yamraiha. I will check on Ja'far as well, but that will be at a later moment."

"Right," Kougyoku gained a determined look on her face, "Sounds good." She began to move before pausing, "Mahsa, would Brother go to war with Sindria?"

"Not now, but he will," Mahsa gave Kougyoku a look, "You know as well as I do that En is determined to unite the world under one ruler. Unless Sinbad is willing to step down without fighting, Kouen will likely wage war on it unless something big happens." She set a hand on Kougyoku's shoulder, "Focus on the present and worry about things like that later when it'll be more likely to happen, okay, Yoku? We've got shit to do."

"Losing a limb especially an arm is bad," Mahsa said as she looked over Hakuryuu's stump after he'd had Zagan dismiss that odd prosthetic the Djinn had created, "But what Zagan managed to do is amazing, it's like you barely even lost your arm. Unlike most in your situation, I can actually begin the process of regrowing your arm right now."

"Most in my situation?" Hakuryuu looked a little confused.

"Injuries created by magic or magical weaponry," Mahsa waved a hand at Hakuryuu's arm casting a ward to prevent to injury from degrading, "Are difficult to heal, the difficulty increases as time passes on after the injury is gained. If you add in intent, it further complicates things. The magic floods every inch of the injury steadily tainting it. Zagan managed to protect you from that thanks to his quick actions," Hakuryuu nodded slowly, "Those under Kouen have the same benefit if he can use Phenex on them in enough time though there would likely always be some form of scar left behind."

"I see," Hakuryuu frowned a bit, "And if I wanted to wait,"

Mahsa frowned back at Hakuryuu, "It is your choice, but why?"

"Zagan's magic is keeping my arm in it's current condition, correct?" Hakuryuu inquired and Mahsa nodded, "Then I wish to wait. From what I'm understanding, the process of regrowing my arm will take time. On top of that, I will need to strengthen it. Until mother dies, I cannot risk
taking the time to do, Mahsa,”

Mahsa's frown deepened. On the one hand, she understood where Hakuryuu was coming from. On the other hand, the healer in her was decrying it as sheer stupidity. She took a deep breath to steady herself, "Hakuryuu, it is very likely that even Zagan will not be able to stop it from degrading. What will happen if that happens?"

"I will search you out," Hakuryuu told her.

"And if you cannot reach me in time?" Mahsa stared at him with a steady gaze, "If your arm degrades too much before you reach me, your arm will be forever lost to you, Hakuryuu. Magical prosthetics are somewhat advanced, but not even they can match a real flesh and blood arm,"

Hakuryuu grimaced a little looking a bit green, "I understand and am willing to take the risk."

Mahsa sighed deeply at the determined look on his face, "Very well, I'd advise having Zagan remake your prosthesis."

Mahsa didn't speak as she worked on Dunya patiently waiting for the former princess to speak first. The damage was bad. In many ways, it was worse than Cassim had ever been with years of scar-tissue build up where Dunya's dark metal vessel had obviously been used in it's lesser state. It was better as the damage had specific paths for the most part and she wasn't totally exhausted as she'd been when trying to save Cassim. Still didn't mean Dunya's fate would be changed though, she had to work quickly and have Aladdin use Solomon's Wisdom on Dunya at the soonest possible moment. She glanced at Dunya as the former princess spoke, "Miss Alexius-"

"Mahsa, Dunya," Mahsa told the former princess, "We're both friends of Aladdin after all,"

"I see," Dunya's lips quirked slightly, "He's a really kind boy,"

"He is. Too kind at times," Mahsa murmured in agreement.

"Ithnan, he told me about you. About your ability," Dunya frowned deeply, "They're going to come after you,"

"I'm aware, Dunya," Mahsa told the former princess with a light smile, "But I do not fear them. You wish to know why?" Dunya nodded as Mahsa turned to grab a potion, "Fear is something that I have felt quite a bit over the course of my life, I've had someone trying to kill me for years. The organization is nothing new, so I'm not going to fear them. I'm going to fight and kill every single one those bastards since they're a threat to all I hold to dear," She handed Dunya the potion, "Drink this, it's a strengthening solution that will help your body fight off the damage caused by all this,"

Dunya drank the potion and almost immediately tried to spit it out. Mahsa covered her mouth and nose forcing the former princess to swallow it before handing over a glass of water earning a small glare, "That tasted horrible!"

"Potions tend to," Mahsa offered with a far too cheerful smile, "Should've warned you,"

Jori entered the room and took one look at the glare Dunya was giving Mahsa before stating, "Mahsa didn't warn you about the potions, did she?"

"No, she didn't," Dunya huffed softly.

Jori shook his head and giving Mahsa a flat stare, "Really?"
"It's funny," Mahsa told him with a grin, "I have to have my fun somehow,"

Jori shook his head, "My apologies, Miss Dunya. Mahsa's sense of humor tends to be bit odd at first," Mahsa pouted at him before turning serious when he asked, "Mahsa, how is she?"

"The damage is bad. Worse than Cassim which is saying something," Jori visibly winced having been given the vivid details, "But thankfully it seems to be mostly limited to set paths," Mahsa turned to Dunya and stated, "To put it bluntly Miss Musta'sim, I am very unsure if I'll be able to save you. You've got years worth of scar-tissue caused by the damage your dark metal vessel created. I will do my best both for yourself and Aladdin. It isn't my first time trying to heal this type of damage, but I failed the last time," She set a hand on Dunya's hands, "You may still die, Dunya. I will do my best to ensure that won't happen,"

"I..." Dunya stared at Mahsa for a few moments before nodding with slightly lost look on her face, "I understand,"

Mahsa recognized that look in a moment and smiled softly, "Jori, could you go tell Aladdin the news?"

"Sure," Jori nodded quickly recognizing that she wanted a moment alone with Dunya, "I'm sure you'll be just fine, Dunya,"

Jori departed as Dunya watched him go with a small frown on her face. Mahsa stood up moving to grab some potions, "Feeling a bit lost, huh?"

Dunya's head shot up looking startled, "H-how did you...?"

"Know?" Mahsa offered as she looked through the potions she'd brought into the room, "I've been in your place. Back when I first came onto this side of the veil after finding out about being kidnapped and coming home, I didn't know what the hell I was doing, what my place was, or where I was going," She glanced back at Dunya with a slight half-smile, "Lost adrift in a sea of everything with no raft or sign of shore, right?"

Dunya looked down, "Y-yeah."

"You've held onto the past for so long. The hatred you've felt toward Magnostadt," Mahsa told Dunya in a soft tone, "The loss of everything you'd ever known. The need for revenge. It's what's driven you for so long. It's left a hole within you. One that seems like it can't be filled, right?"

Dunya nodded as the princess seemed to curl into herself, "That's the problem with revenge, it leaves you hollow in the end," She shook her head, "Dunya, I'm going to give you an offer. If we're able to heal you, I'd like for you to come with me and my companions. Experience the world through new eyes and find enjoyment, "

"Come with you," Dunya stared at her in shock.

Mahsa couldn't blame her since the offer was somewhat shocking to her as well though she didn't regret offering it either, "You've only seen pain and misery in the world, Dunya. You'll see much more than that if you come with us," She grabbed her potions and walked back over, "You don't have to answer now. Wait until you've been healed."

"So Dunya?" Luna began after Mahsa had filled her two household in on the conversation she'd had with the former princess, "Is that smart?"

"Perhaps not, but I feel a connection to her," Mahsa didn't think it would mean the former princess
becoming one of her household though she could be wrong, "But nothing will come of it unless we're able to heal her, I'll be calling on the phoenix soon enough. Hopefully he'll answer me,"

"I'll tell Lady Scheherazade," Jori ran a hand through his hair, "And see how everyone reacted to you finally informing them about your courting trials,"

Mahsa had sent a group letter home alongside quite a few individualized ones basically informing them that she had finally found someone worthy of courting. Granted only a select few knew Kouen was the one she was courting, the Fanalis Corps were protective over her and the thought of anyone much less the prince, future emperor non-withstanding, of a non-allied country being the one she was courting wouldn't exactly go over well. It was best to leave them wondering for now. Though she also hadn't actually contacted anyone outside of a select few back home, she didn't want anyone trying to get answers out of her. Rolling her eyes at him, she dropped onto her bed, "Go for it, I'm going to take a small nap and regain some energy before I summon Fawkes to see if he'll help out."

Jori grabbed her mirror connected to Lady Scheherazade's while Luna patted her shoulder and the two slipped out. She placed a few low-level protective spells before settling down comfortably. She fell into a mixture of visions with half showing Dunya among those traveling with her and half showing a lack of the former princess. Dunya's destiny was in flux and able to go either way, the knowledge that a knew path might be forming for Dunya gave her hope and the strengthened her resolve to summon Fawkes when she awoke.

Since Luna and Jori weren't ones to sit around wasting time, they got the ball rolling while Mahsa napped. While Jori played messenger homeward, Luna spoke with Ja'far and Sinbad about what they planned on doing for Dunya. She ensured they knew what Fawkes would be doing in Sindria should he answer her summons and that he'd be under their watch while in the country at this point in time. She answered any questions they had about the mythical bird and even about his history with Mahsa while ensuring that Sinbad's specific questions about her Queen's history went unanswered. So by the time Mahsa awoke, an area to summon Fawkes had been provided and some more healing supplies that would assist with Dunya's condition.

When asked about it, Luna smiled at her slightly baffled hybrid queen and told her, "If Dunya is to be one of us, I want to give her the best chance and we look after each other. You and everyone back home in Reim taught me that," She reached out and squeezed Mahsa's shoulder, "Now go summon Fawkes, we've got a former princess to save."

Mahsa nodded and reached up to curl her hand around Luna's wrist, "We'll save her with or without Fawkes even if it means I'll have to stay in Sindria so long I won't be going to Artemyra. She's supposed to be one us."

The visions she'd seen only affirmed that connection Mahsa had felt since properly meeting the former princess and she wasn't about to let Dunya die on her. Not when she'd just found her. Entering the room, she grimaced slightly at Sinbad's presence as well as his household though should've expected it. It wasn't his whole household since that would've been a bit much, but Pishi, Sharrkan, Ja'far, and Masrur were still a b it much. Yamraiha spoke up as she fully entered the room with Darius on her shoulder, "Will this room be alright?"

"It doesn't really matter so long as the room isn't enclosed and since there are a lot of windows its fine," Mahsa would've preferred doing this in the courtyard but bit her tongue, "Must you all really be here?"

"I much prefer since you are summoning a mythical being in my kingdom," Sinbad answered with
a light smile, "While I trust that you won't harm anyone here, the being you summon might not do the same,"

Mahsa bit back the urge to grimace, "Very well, but be quiet and do not interrupt if Fawkes does answer my summoning. My concern is healing Dunya and that is the only one I have at the moment. Anything else can wait. If you interrupt, I will be very angry and will ensure you're unable to speak until we're done."

Sinbad began to frown and opened his mouth only to shut it as Ja'far said, "We understand, Mahsa. Please go on with your summoning."

"Thank you," Mahsa closed her eyes briefly as she turned away from them, "Please hear me and answer me again, Fawkes!"

There was complete silence for a little while and Mahsa began to think that Fawkes wouldn't answer her summons when a ball of fire erupted in front of her earning cries of alarm, a musical trill echoed through the air with Darius hissing, "Once again, I greet you, Mahsa Alexius only this time it is not during a battle."

"Once again we meet, Fawkes, and once again, I am need of your assistance," Mahsa replied with a slight bow, "Forgive me for not calling on you sooner and for only asking for favors. This time the case I need assistance with is not so hopeless or time-sensitive,"

"Nor is your magic quite so drained," Fawkes flared his wings and carefully winged his way over to her, "I will need to meet your patient first and judge her before such a decision may be made, but you sense a connection to this one, do you not?"

"I do, but how do you know?" Mahsa asked as Fawkes settled carefully onto her shoulder and she was surprised to find that he didn't weigh much more than Hedwig.

Fawkes let out a trilling laugh as his warm feathers brushed her cheek, "For the same reason I came to you that day in the chamber, it was no loyalty to Albus that called to me that day, Little Hybrid Queen. Though lessened through the years and the changes that have occurred, we do still carry a connection though not the same that your share with your familiars or your household. There is no name for our connection, it is one that has existed between phoenix and true seer since the beginning. When the Origin Dragons still lived, they too shared this connection with us. We will always find and help one another often acting as guides to those younger than us. Or guardians in certain cases such as the chamber incident, I will stay with you a bit longer once we're done with Dunya if she proves to be worthy and try to explain more to you."

"So has he agreed?" Sinbad asked rather impatiently.

"He needs to meet Dunya first to see if she's worthy of being healed," Mahsa explained with an eye roll, "Phoenix's are selective when it comes to people they heal. The only reason he helped me heal Cassim was due to judging him worthy,"

"The boy was worthy," Fawkes told her as Mahsa started walking out of the room leaving Sinbad and everyone else staring after her in shock though they quickly scrambled to follow after her, "Had he not fallen, I believe he would have made a difference in this world,"

"That's what I want to change with Dunya, I want to show her that there are things in this world worth saving even if it doesn't seem like it at first and help her find a new place in it," Mahsa knew that place was with her though what exactly it would be she wasn't quite sure, "It'll be difficult, but I know she'll be able to do it if she gets a chance,"
Fawkes gave a soothing trill and laid his head on hers, "Even without my help, your determination alone will ensure her healing will happen, Mahsa."

Mahsa knocked on the door when she reached it before opening the door. Dunya and Aladdin both looked at her with the magi positively beaming when he spotted Fawkes, "Mahsa, is that Fawkes?!"

"Yup," Mahsa nodded with a soft hum while Dunya gave Fawkes a look of confusion.

Fawkes took off from Mahsa's shoulder and made his way over to Dunya earning an alarmed look. Aladdin began explaining Fawkes to Dunya as the phoenix began trilling softly under his breath. Aladdin looked at Mahsa with a bright grin, "Does this mean Fawkes is going to help you heal Dunya?"

"I don't know," Mahsa said earning a confused look, "It's up to Fawkes. You see phoenixes aren't like human healers who try to heal whoever they come across. They try to heal only those who aren't going to go against the flow of things,"

Dunya gained a look of understanding and Aladdin's face fell, "Oh, I guess that means he won't help heal Dunya."

"That isn't exactly true," Mahsa grinned at Aladdin, "They look for those who are worthy and so long as Fawkes believes she is worthy, Dunya will be getting his help. Even if he doesn't try to help, I'll be doing my best. Even if it means I won't be going to Artemyra before I need to head back to Balbadd to meet up with some people, I don't care because ensuring you're healed is more important to me, Dunya."

Dunya looked at Mahsa in shock, "B-but why? We barely know each other."

"Because I've decided that I like you and I want to help you see that there is so much more to this world than what you've known all your life," Mahsa smiled warmly at her and held out a hand, "The offer I gave to you will always stand, Dunya, even if you say no to it. I want to show you everything you've been denied because of what happened and show you everything I possibly can,"

Dunya stared at her hand for a moment then at Mahsa's face before slowly extending her hand. She held Dunya's hand in a steady grip as Dunya murmured, "I-i want to come with you, Mahsa. O-once I'm better, I want to come with you."

"Then from today onward, you're one of mine. I promise that I'll heal you Dunya and show you that this world is so much more than what you've been told, Dunya," Mahsa vowed to the princess.

Dunya's eyes began to tear up before she started to cry and Mahsa hugged the princess as Aladdin cheered for them.

With Fawkes assistance, Dunya Musta'sim's fate was rewritten though both of them spent a week on bed-rest in order to regain the energy they lost healing the ailing princess. Dunya needed an extra two weeks on bed-rest and take it easy for months afterwards to recover though all agreed it was better than the fate that otherwise awaited her. They would be traveling to Artemyra and spend two weeks in the country rather than the month that Mahsa originally planned though it was a small price to pay given what had been gained.

"Enter," Mahsa called out as she looked up from her bags and found Kougyoku entering her room, "Yoku, this is a pleasant surprise, I thought you'd be getting ready for the festival they're
"I'm going to be getting ready fairly soon, but wanted to talk with you first," Kougyoku smiled a bit weakly, "You're not coming out tonight, are you?"

"I will for a bit, but not for too long," Mahsa shook her head lightly, "I need to keep my head clear for tomorrow." She saw the troubled look on Kougyoku's face, "What's up, Yoku? Is what Jujube said still bothering you?"

"A bit," Kougyoku replied as she walked further into Mahsa's room, "I just don't want us to go to war with Sindria. Not after..."

Mahsa paused in putting away her books with a slight smile, "Not after walking among them and spending time with some of those here, you cannot bare the thought of seeing this beautiful country torn by the flames of war," She looked at Kougyoku, "You now know some of why I had so much trouble accepting what I felt for your brother and why I truly believed that a relationship between us was impossible," Kougyoku looked at her in shock, "Reim is where my family is, Yoku. For all that I may love your brother and your family, I could never abandon my family. If En had made me choose between my family and him, I'd choose them even if it meant my heart would never recover. I'd lose regardless because I would be fighting against people I loved eventually," She resumed packing, "Thanks to Mei and En's work, we've managed to find a way that should allow us to actually make this relationship work and allow our countries to have peace."

"But En wants to unite the world under one banner," Kougyoku reminded Mahsa earning a soft sigh.

"I know, Yoku," Mahsa told her, "And we'll figure something out when the time comes. But that's not something we're focusing on just yet."

Kougyoku looked like she wanted to argue, but held her tongue for the moment which Mahsa was thankful for. She really didn't want to think about her future arguments with Kouen about Reim and Kou just yet especially when there was a lot of confusing visions involving both. Kougyoku asked her, "Mahsa, what are you going to do in Artemyra?"

"See my friends that are there and tie up some loose ends that are lingering there," Mahsa explained as she finished her packing which hadn't been hard seeing as she hadn't removed much from her bags, "I don't have many, so spending two weeks there should be more than enough to tie up all of them. I mostly wanted the month to do things at a slow pace to enjoy my time there. I really liked Artemyra and was actually contemplating spending my life there."

"Really?" Kougyoku looked at her in shock.

Mahsa nodded with a light grin as she took a seat on the bed, "Yup. Queen Mira even offered me a position as her Court Witch there and I seriously contemplated taking her up on it. Might've done so if things had played out differently and I hadn't felt such a deep calling to visit Kou, we probably wouldn't have met until a lot later."

And on different sides of a battlefield, Mahsa's mind whispered in a soft tone though she quickly pushed it away. Kougyoku looked aghast at the thought, "I can't even imagine it."

Mahsa let out a soft laugh, "I think we both prefer this though I'll admit Arteymra would've been a nice place to live."
"I wouldn't know," Kougyoku replied with a shake of her head, "I've only really been to Balbadd and here."

"We'll get that changed soon enough," Mahsa grinned at her, "After all, a girl needs a good road trip."

Mahsa looked out over Sindria with a small smile on her face watching the festival go on below her. She heard footsteps and caught wind of Sinbad, "I think I'll miss Sindria's habit of throwing festivals when we leave in the morning."

"You could stay a bit longer," Sinbad suggested as she knew her would, "Sindria could use a healer with such skilled hands and we've never had a seer before."

"Sindria isn't the only place that needs a healer like me and my abilities are not for your use, Sinbad," Mahsa replied bringing up her mental defenses as Alastor reared up a bit, "What do you want, Sinbad? Is it one last ditch attempt to convince me to stay? If so, you're failing rather badly."

Sinbad made a small sound in the back of his throat before saying, "I just wished to speak with you before tomorrow. You're taking Miss Musta'sim with you. Are you not?"

"Yes," Mahsa had already gotten the approval of Queen Mira's stay in her country, "Queen Mira has already approved it. What of it?"

"No need to sound defensive," Sinbad raised his hands, "I merely wanted to ask if it was safe for her to travel given her condition."

Mahsa gave him the most scathing look she could muster, "King Sinbad, I'll have you know I'm perfectly capable of caring for Dunya while traveling aboard a ship without any trouble. I've done so before. Perhaps not with a condition like this, I will admit that, but I am perfectly capable of giving someone medical care while traveling at sea. Now unless you have something that isn't absolutely insulting to myself or my skills, I have better things to do then talk with some poor excuse of a king."

With that, Mahsa turned and began stalking off only to freeze when Sinbad asked, "Am I that poor a king that he leaves me?"

Mahsa snorted softly, "Asking me that, Sinbad, after attempting to manipulate Aladdin and doing the same to Yoku." She shook her head at the shamelessness of the man, "How such a loyal man could love a man like you, I will never know."

A small portion of Mahsa's mind whispered to her that she was in much the same position as Ja'far only Kouen was far crueler compared to Sinbad. She sometimes still wondered how Kouen could be the one that held her heart when he carried such cruelty, but then she saw the lighter parts to him. She saw the man that would do anything to protect his brothers and men. The one who liked to sit in the library and read about history in the library. And so much more, it didn't completely balance out the bad parts, but every good thing helped to make her fall deeper for him.

Alibaba rubbed the back of his neck, "I guess this is goodbye for now."

"It is," Mahsa confirmed with a nod, "But that doesn't mean you're going to slack on your training again. Keep moving forward so that next time we meet up, you'll actually be worth fighting during a spar, alright?"
"Right," Alibaba nodded with a determined look on his face, "I'll make sure that I'm worth it. I refuse to take another step backward. Not if it means letting down Balbadd again."

Mahsa grinned as she reached out and ruffled his hair playfully earning a surprised look from the blonde, "Good to hear it. I hope the next time we meet is in Reim. It'll let me introduce you to my family and the Corps as my student."

"Hey stop that!" Alibaba swatted at her hand and Mahsa let it drop after a few moments.

Aladdin spoke up, "Mahsa, thank you for healing Dunya and sorry again for everything that happened after you arrived in Sindria."

"It's no problem and like I said before, it's fine, Aladdin," Mahsa smiled at him, "After all, Alibaba is your precious friend and you're looking after him. You had every right to do so though I do hope that in the future you'll ask questions first before taking actions,"

"Of course," Aladdin nodded his head rapidly earning a light smile from Mahsa.

Alibaba wandered off to speak with Jori while Morgiana was doing the same with Luna allowing Mahsa to speak alone with Aladdin. She spoke softly, "So you're going to Magnostadt?"

Aladdin jolted at her question and looked at her in shock, "How did you know...?"

Mahsa tapped her head, "Saw it last night and overheard you talking to Dunya this morning about it, so you're going?"

Aladdin nodded with a determined look on his face, "I need to find out what's going on there. If they really hurt Dunya so badly and nearly made what happened to Cassim, happen to her..."

"I understand, but be careful there, Aladdin," Mahsa warned him, "Magnostadt is no joke. It's very likely going to go to war with Reim at some point and probably Kou as well though I'm not sure about it. There's a lot of uncertainty floating about, you don't know much magic besides what Yamraiha has taught you and what I've helped with,"

"Which is another reason I need to go," Aladdin told her, "I need to learn more magic and Magnostadt is the place to go for it,"

"It is," Mahsa agreed, "Be careful while you're there, Dunya, myself, and everyone would be crushed if something were to happen," She took out the package she'd prepared, "Here," Aladdin took it, "Don't open this until after you're on the way to Magnostadt with a redhead who travels with three women and carries a sword which grows. You'll understand after the water benders attack and the sea witch dies by the plant prince's hand,"

Aladdin gave her a look of confusion, "None of that made sense."

A soft laugh left her, "It will once you begin your travels. You will not be the only one traveling after all."
Walking through Artemyra once more was like a dream, it was brought back many memories for both Jori and Mahsa from the days they'd spent among the people there. They stopped occasionally so Mahsa and Jori could greet those that remembered them from their previous visit. Luna was pushing Dunya in the magically modified wheel-chair that the goblins had procured for their use and the two were mystified over this strange new place that they'd been brought to. Luna caught up to Mahsa who had Darius in wyvern form on her shoulder, "So the men are at work all day right?"

"Normally, yes, but so are the women," Mahsa replied as they passed a group of warriors heading towards the outer training grounds, "Artemyra is one of the strangest places in the world being that the gender rolls are reversed here compared to everywhere else," She turned her head towards them to give Dunya a sheepish grin, "This is probably not the best place to start when it comes to giving you a normal place to start off right, but Artemyra is very dear to me,"

"It's fine," Dunya smiled weakly back with slightly flushed cheeks, "It's very beautiful here,"

"I'm glad you think so and I hope you tell Queen Mira when we see her," Mahsa turned to look forward, "We'll be arriving at the palace fairly soon and Queen Mira will likely meet with us not long after if she isn't too busy today,"

True to Mahsa prediction, they were brought before Queen Mira not long after arriving. Queen Mira smiled warmly at Mahsa, "Mahsa, it's wonderful to see you again."

"And you as well, Queen Mira," Mahsa greeted the blonde warmly, "It's been too long though that has mostly been my fault as my travels have carried me quite far. I've got quite a few stories to tell though as a result,"

"Including the fact you're getting married?" Queen Mira replied with a raised eyebrow.

"Yes and given that I was planning on informing you in person, I assume Sinbad decided to inform you when he found out?" Mahsa asked feeling a spike of anger rush through her and planned on hexing that purple haired idiot the next time she saw him.

"Your assumption is correct," Queen Mira inclined her head, "You wished to inform me in person?"

"I did. Unlike some people, I actually have some form of tact and care," Mahsa shook her head lightly, "Queen Mira, Mira, during the time that I spent on Artemyra during my previous visit and through the letters we shared during the time that followed I truly believed that we'd become close enough to call one another friends since something stronger couldn't be formed," She said the last part in an apologetic tone and gave the queen a look that said she was truly sorry for it, "Had I not met the one that I did during my time away, I truly would've accepted your past offer here in Artemyra...If it had still be on the table of course. In honor of that and the fact that informing anyone that I actually know via letter about my future marriage via letter sickens me, I was always going to come to Artemyra to talk with you," She gifted Queen Mira with a bright grin, "There's also the fact that I greatly enjoyed my past visit and I've been wanting to visit again ever since. I just haven't had a chance to until now. Giving a not quite excuse to tie up loose ends just fulfills that desire, I just can't stay as long as I originally planned."

Queen Mira's lips pulled into a light smile, "As much as it saddens me that I am not going to have
you as my court witch, I understand that the heart desires what it will. I hope that you might consider Artemyra should things not work out with whoever you end up marrying. Now introductions, I know Jori, but the two girls with you are completely new to me."

"It's a shame that we will not be able to enjoy ourselves like we did last time," Queen Mira commented as she handed Mahsa a goblet of wine earning a soft giggle from the red head, "I really was disappointed to hear that you were getting married though I won't begrudge your happiness even if I can't see myself doing something like that,"

"Truly?" Mahsa asked with a raised eyebrow as she took the wine goblet, "Even if you loved someone?"

"Perhaps, but I can't say that I've truly felt that attached to someone other than my children," Queen Mira replied as she settled next to Mahsa against the railing where they were watching some of the girls introduce Luna and Dunya to the giant birds, "Do you love them?"

"I do even if I tried to deny it," Mahsa took a sip of wine and let the flavor roll over her tongue, "Everything in my head was saying no to him, I knew I shouldn't, but no matter what my heart wouldn't let me. I ended up falling even before I actually met him,"

Queen Mira let out a low sound sigh, "I lost before I even knew I wanted you. Who is he?"

"Kouen Ren. First Prince of the Kou Empire," Queen Mira made a soft sound and Mahsa let out a low chuckle, "I know. It's bad which is why I tried to stop anything from happening. Bastard's a good fighter and agreed to do the Fanalis courting trials. No man would ever do that if he was just going to leave me high and dry,"

"If this actually works out, you'll be the Empress once the Emperor dies and Kouen becomes the next one," Queen Mira pointed out earning a low groan.

"I know and really don't want to think about that shit," Mahsa really didn't want to think about that, "Though it's very likely I won't have to do much. En will likely have his House Hold Members in charge of things or Mei will. He knows I don't know how to run a house hold or any of that shit,"

"That's going to make things complicated," Queen Mira commented with a shake of her head, "Onto other topics, how is he?"

Mahsa's cheeks flushed and she looked away from the blond who looked more like a cat than the hybrid did, "Really?"

Dunya gripped onto Mahsa as she took some very shaky steps, "I-is th-this a-alright?"

"It's fine," Mahsa smiled warmly at the former princess easily barring the still recovering girls weight noting that they needed to fatten her up even more, "You're not heavy at all. I've got you,"

Dunya's recovery was coming along nicely and if they planned it well enough, the girl would be able to walk by the time they left Artemyra. Once Dunya needed a break, they took a seat with the former princess taking a potion and eating something. Mahsa brought up a topic that needed to be spoken of before they began the next portion of their journey, "Dunya, you've heard us speaking of our journey. You know where we're going next and why. I do not want to endanger you which is why I'm prepared to offer you a place somewhere that's a lot safer than where we'll be traveling."

"Mahsa?" Dunya looked at her with a conflicted expression, "Is this because I'm too weak?"
Mahsa shook her head as a stab of pain hit her heart, "Not at all, it's just you can't defend yourself at this point, Dunya. I'd rather you not get hurt because we're all too distracted or far away to protect you. If anything, you're doing far better than anyone else in your position could ever have considered doing given the circumstances," She smiled while reaching out and gripped Dunya's hand, "Dunya, you're strong. Amazingly so for you to have survived for so long especially after what happened, I could never call you weak and anyone doing so is the one who is weak. We're heading to Kou which seems to be the strong hold of the strange priests which you used to be apart of alongside those other black metal vessel users. More than likely, they'd tried to attack you or do something else the moment our backs are turned because you technically betrayed them."

"Right," Dunya gained a look of realization.

"You'll be taken to Reim specifically to Remano where my family lives," Mahsa explained in a soft tone, "Lady Scheherazade and my family have promised to look after you. You'll be seen as part of my household just like Jori and Luna. My brother and sister along with the Fanalis Corps will make sure you'll well taken care of. They'll make sure you're able to see the better parts of life, not just the dark parts. Especially since the Corps save for my siblings all come from that dark part of life, they'll be the best people to help you see the lighter things. Just don't go drinking with them, they'll probably end up killing your liver or getting you drunk enough you'll spend days suffering like poor Jori,"

Mahsa stopped when she realized she'd been babbling and flushed lightly. She gave Dunya a sheepish look and rubbed the back of her neck. Dunya giggled softly which was one of the first unrestrained sounds that she'd really heard from the former princess. Dunya spoke once the small giggle fit had stopped, "Okay, I think I'll take you up on your offer."

"I'm glad to hear it. Once you're better, you can train with the Fanalis Corps if you'd like. They know how to use weapons even if we Fanalis are stronger than humans," Mahsa told Dunya earning a nod, "I'll write a letter for my brother and make some arrangements."

"The goblins must have really developed a liking for Kouen if they've allowed him to know about this type of ship," Luna commented as the goblin trading vessel they were traveling on cut through the water, "Hell, they must really like us if they let us know about it,"

"From what Goldtrident told me, the ship is more of a recent development by their mages," Mahsa said as she looked away from the steadily approaching landmass that was Balbadd, "But yes, we've both gained quite the reputation with the goblins,"

"It isn't surprising given Kouen's attitude and the fact you were a student of the goblins for a long time," Jori said as he walked up, "We should be reaching land in an hour. Did you inform Kouen that we'd be arriving today?"

"I did," Mahsa couldn't wait to see him and everyone else that was in Balbadd, "He was a bit surprised that we'd be arriving so soon, but will likely have someone set up to greet us,"

"Good," Jori looked past her towards the slowly growing country, "To think we'd be returning so soon even if the visit will be brief, I am hesitant to think of what we will find,"

"A recovering country, My friend," Mahsa told him, "One that longs for its rightful ruler to return even as it slowly tries to forget what has occurred," She felt a bit of mischief well up, "But I have an idea, one that will no doubt cause some irritation even if it will cause some hope, even if it will not last for long, to bolster within the peoples hearts,"
Jori let out a snort as Luna giggled and Darius let out a low hissing laugh while Alastor groaned softly. Alastor muttered, "Let's hope Kouen kept up that no arrow rule then."

Mahsa heard shouts of joy as she flew over Balbadd once more in her gryffin form with Darius. It was steadily changing from the Balbadd she'd once knew, but there was no fully changing the people that lived there no matter what clothes they wore. Shouts of her name or the titles she'd gained during the time since crossing the veil echoed through the air, she shrieked in return carefully flying down low in some cases to get close to them before flying high once more. She did a few laps around the changing city before going to the palace. Seishuu was waiting in the inner courtyard where she landed and grinned at her, "Having fun, Mahsa?"

"Just wanted to say hello to everyone and ensure they knew we were back for a bit," Mahsa told him with a bright grin in return, "Didn't keep you guys waiting for too long, did I?"

"Not really, no," Seishuu shook his head with a soft chuckle, "Merely an extra hour, Kouen's actually in a meeting, so it isn't bad timing at all."

"He'll still be annoyed though since I kept him waiting despite having other things to do," Mahsa shook her head lightly as they headed inside, "So where are Luna and Jori?"

"Settling in to their rooms, I can take you to yours if you'd like," Seishuu offered with a light smile, "You're set closer to Kouen, but not so far away from them that you're not able to be considered close."

"I'm actually more interested in getting something to eat," Mahsa laid a hand on her stomach, "Just something light to hold me over until dinner, we burnt a lot of energy flying like that."

"That was some fancy flying," Seishuu led the way towards the kitchens, "I didn't know that you and Darius could pull off something like that."

"It takes a lot of practice and some of those moves aren't something we could do in combat situations when we need to dodge projectiles," Mahsa reached up to rub Darius' tired head, "We ended up picking up some of it during our recent visit to Artemyra. Flying with the giant birds again when I wasn't so new to flying really opened a lot of doors and allowed for some really interesting competitions to open up," She barely refrained from touching the soft red feather that had been added to her braids even as the image of Queen Mira bearing one of her gryffin feathers flashed across her minds eye, "It was a rather fun visit."

"Too bad it only lasted two weeks," Seishuu commented as they made their way down the hallway. Mahsa carefully shrugged, "Eh, it isn't too bad considering the fact my newest companion survived what happened to them. I prefer that to them dying any day."

Seishuu looked at her curiously, "New companion? I didn't see anyone with Jori and Luna."

"They're in Reim. The journey to Kou is a bit too dangerous given their bad health," Mahsa explained with a light smile, "I'd prefer that they not risk it especially with how dangerous the heat could be."

"Understandable," Seishuu nodded as they reached the kitchens and headed inside, "Well, I can't wait to see who you ended picking up, Mahsa. It isn't often that you pick up someone new from what I've seen."

"No, it isn't," Mahsa murmured in agreement with a light smile, "I tend to only do so when I feel a
true connection to my companions and only a few have really stood out,"

"Kitty-Cat!" Judar hugged Mahsa tightly, "You didn't say much to me in Sindria,"

"Because that manipulative purple haired idiot was around," Mahsa replied as she hugged Judar back, "Jujube, what did those bastards do to you?"

Judar stiffened against her causing Mahsa to tighten her hold just a bit, "Kitty-cat, they didn't do sh-

"Bull-shit, Judar," Mahsa hissed in his ear feeling furious especially since she could feel his ribs, "Don't lie to me and try to feed me that bunch of bullshit like everyone else, I can see unlike everyone else. Please Judar, what did those bastards do to you?"

Judar growled and tried to jerk out of her hold like some feral cat. It was almost cute, but he had to remember she was a member of the Fanalis thus far stronger than him especially since he was a Magi. The struggles faded and he slumped against her. He let out a tired laugh that sounded half broken to her ears and part way to tears. He spoke softly, "Beat and healed me, they made me do magic barely feeding me enough to get by."

The furious growl that ripped out of her throat made Judar stiffen slightly and she broke it off. She spoke in a soft tone, "Judar, I'm going to hunt down each of those bastards down one by one and kill them until they're all gone. I'm going to make them pay for doing what they did."

Judar let out a low sound, "Why? Why do you care?"

"Because I care about you, Jujube," Mahsa told him, "You can be a selfish, self-center little prick that irritates the hell out of me a lot of the time, but you're also one of my friends. I care about you," She pulled away to look him over, "First things first, we're going to fatten you up because feeling your ribs is definitely not good. I'm going to be putting you on a potions regime among other things. Unless you have an argument?"

Judar stared at her with wide crimson eyes before shaking his head with a snort and looking away, "No, but can you not make them taste so nasty this time?"

"Can't do that, I'm not a potion master," Mahsa replied with a grin, "Maybe I should get one as my next companion,"

Mahsa walked into the dinning room with Judar not long before dinner was due to begin. Koumei looked away from Luna and smiled warmly, "Ah, Mahsa. Welcome back to Balbadd. How was your flight over the city?"

"It went very well. The people were very glad to see both Darius and I," Mahsa replied with a warm smile in return as Judar slipped off to what she assumed was his seat and Koumei quickly directed her to a seat, "It's good to see you, Mei. I've missed you and our talks quite a bit,"

"And I as well," Koumei replied as she sat down and noticed her glance around the room, "Brother will be joining us in a moment. He-

The doors opened to allow Kouen entrance into the room and Mahsa's nose immediately caught more than the faint traces of his scent that lingered throughout the palace. She looked at Kouen and felt her heart speed up at seeing him in person for the first time in months. The ache to touch him in more than appropriate ways slowly began form though she quickly pushed them behind a barrier.
Slowly standing up, she smiled at him, "En."

"Sa," Kouen replied with his lips pulling into a light smile earning more than a few startled looks that they both ignored, "Finally come down from the sky?"

"Excuse me if I actually wanted to avoid any unnecessary attempts to see us if people heard rumors and wanted to confirm them," Mahsa moved to around the table and reached Kouen within a few moments, "I also wanted a good look at all the changes. You've done a pretty good job at rebuilding this place,"

Kouen surprised her when he reached out to grip her chin and actually bent down to kiss her. While not their first, it was the first one he'd initiated in a public setting like this. She didn't let it surprise her for long and kissed him back. Kouen broke the kiss after a few moments as he murmured softly, "I missed you, Sa. Welcome back."

Warmth filled her at those words, Mahsa grinned at him, "I missed you too."

They headed to the table and Mahsa found out she was sitting next to Kouen which wasn't actually that surprising once she thought about it. Koumei broke the silence that had fallen over the room, "So, Mahsa, how was Artemyra?"

Dinner had been fun, Mahsa enjoyed being around everyone even if the lack of Kougyoku and Kouha's presence left a hole in the in the atmosphere to her. She steadily grew more hyper aware of Kouen's presence and felt an increasing need to touch the man beside her in an non-innocent manner. She managed to burrow it behind her mental shields thankful that Alastor had convinced her to practice them even if it hadn't been for that purpose. The Djinn muttered under his breath about horny hybrids to which she reminded him that it was better than having to deal with Sinbad which shut up the entity fairly quickly. She'd apologize later on once Kouen wasn't distracting her so much. Breathing in through her mouth as dinner ended, she focused on Judar as he said, "Kitty-cat, you owe me a drink."

Mahsa blinked a bit, "How so?"

"You left Kou before we could drink together again," Judar told her with a slight smirk, "Which means you owe me a drink,"

"Tomorrow," Mahsa told him earning a frown, "I did only just arrive and ended up flying around Balbadd for awhile today. It's been a long day," She offered him a warm smile, "Besides, I haven't spent much time with En,"

"But I want to drink with you tonight," Judar drew himself up and began to set himself up for all the signs pointing towards a tantrum, "It's been too long."

"Jujube," Mahsa tried to figure out a way to say no without setting off Judar.

Kouen spoke up, "Drink with Judar, I have paperwork to do."

Mahsa looked at him and went to protest when she noticed the look on his face. She realized that he wanted to ensure that Judar wouldn't interrupt their time together. She nodded lightly deciding it wouldn't be too bad especially since she had missed drinking with Judar, "Fine," She turned to the grinning Magi, "But, no trying to convince me to become one of your king vessels. Alastor is enough."

Judas pouted at Mahsa, "Mean."
"Judar, either agree or no drinking together," Mahsa told the Magi.

"Fine," Judar grumbled rather sulkily, "Let's get going then, I found a really good bar here."

"Seishuu, Kokuton, go with them," Kouen ordered earning a nod of agreement from his two household members while Mahsa was a little surprised that Kouen wasn't sending Kin, "Make sure no one causes trouble and ensure they get back alright."

Mahsa stood up alongside Judar and looked at her own household members, "You two coming?"

"Of course," Luna grinned as she stood up causing Jori to grimace a bit revealing that he'd been planning to stay back, "I wouldn't miss it. It'll be nice to see if anyone we know will be out and about."

Mahsa was the most sober of the group that had gone to the bar save for Seishuu and Kokuton. Kokuton chuckled softly as he carried Jori over his shoulder while Mahsa did the same with Luna and Seishuu worried over Judar, "How on earth did you not end up among this group?"

"High alcohol tolerance," Mahsa answered with a light grin and pleasant buzz going on, "That and switching to water every couple of cups. I ensure that I'm able to keep up a pleasant buzz, but also have a semi-clear head."

"Smart," Seishuu looked at Jori, "I thought he wasn't going to drink."

"Jori usually doesn't, but Luna's gotten into the habit of getting him to drink whenever she can," Mahsa shook her head, "Those two are still dancing around each other, I'm holding off on trying to help things along, but if it goes into another year I might actually give into temptation."

"Be glad that Kouha is not in Kou then," Kokuton told her as they reached the palace and headed inside, "He wouldn't give them time."

Mahsa rolled her eyes, "Koko doesn't understand what it means to not rush things," She shook her head, "Anyway, we should get them to their rooms. I don't know about you two, but their dead weight is getting a bit annoying to deal with. My balance might be better then it would be if I was drunk, but carrying Luna is still pushing it."

"You're finally back," Koumei called out as they entered the Palace entrance hall, "Are they all asleep?"

"Passed out," Mahsa corrected, "Unlike me, they didn't exactly pace themselves once they got started. They're going to be in a lot of pain tomorrow."

"Oh dear," Koumei shook his head, "Well it's good to see that you kept your senses about you. Brother wants you to come see him. He's in his room."

"I'll head there once I drop Luna off," Mahsa told Koumei as she shifted Luna into a more comfortable position, "And set up some potions for tomorrow."

"Of course," Koumei smiled lightly as Seishuu headed off to put Judar to bed while Kokuton where Luna and Jori were settled since she couldn't exactly remember at the moment, "You normally drank a lot more."

"Had Kouha been with us and we'd been in Kou, I probably would have," Mahsa admitted not surprised that Koumei would catch onto the underlying reasoning, "This place for all that it may
seem calm, it holds quite a bit of resentment towards the Kou empire and hate. They won’t rebel due to the work Luna, Jori, and I have done. But even if they try to hide it, I can sense the unrest within them and it makes me hold back." She smiled thinking of the lighter reason of why, "I also want to keep a semi clear head since this is the first time I get to see everyone since leaving Balbadd all those months back. I want to be able to enjoy my time with En," 

After putting Luna to bed and getting the potions ready which Koumei took since he'd be able to ensure they'd get to where they needed to go fairly easily, Mahsa headed to see Kouen. She found him reading through a scroll that definitely wasn't paperwork, "Finished your paperwork for the night?"

"Enough so that we'll be able to spend some time together tomorrow," Kouen replied looking up from his scroll and he quirked an eyebrow, "You didn't drink enough to get drunk?"

"The people of Balbadd are still in a state of unrest and we're not in Kou," Mahsa shook her head lightly before giving him a light grin, "Not to mention, I wanted to have a semi-clear head since I want to spend time with you. I'm still buzzed," she made her way over to where Kouen was sitting on the couch, "So, you wanted me to come see you? Is it to talk about the trip to Kou, what we'll be doing before the trip, or what?"

"I simply wanted you to come to me without having to deal with Judar," Kouen replied as she reached him and he placed the scroll down on the table allowing her to sit down on his lap.

"No need to worry about that," Mahsa wrapped her arms around his neck, "Only Seishuu and Kokuton didn't drink enough to pass out, they didn't even drink anything. I really hadn't been planning to drink anything for a little while. Sindria and Artemyra wiped me out when it came to booze,"

"My apologies, but Judar throwing a fit wasn't something any of us really wanted to deal with," Kouen told her with a chuckle earning an eye-roll.

"You owe me one," Mahsa told him, "Jujube can be a real handful when he starts getting really drunk,"

Kouen wrapped an arm around her waist and pulled her closer, "I wasn't expecting Jori to get drunk."

"Luna helped him along," Mahsa kissed him lightly, "She really wanted to celebrate us coming back to Balbadd and probably would've done the same to me had she not known how I intended to spend the night,"

"And how do you intend to spend the night?" Kouen asked with a teasing smile.

Mahsa hummed lightly and decided to play a bit, "Well," She kissed him again longer this time feeling his arm around her waist loosen and took the opportunity to slip out of his grip, "The days been pretty tiring, so I think I'm going to go lie down."

Mahsa had to grin at his slightly wide eyed look and the surprise in his eyes. It was absolutely adorable and definitely something she'd be keeping locked in her memories for as long as possible. Moving towards the door, she wasn't surprised when Kouen easily caught her around the waist, "Where do you think you're going?"

"Since you hadn't invited me to stay, I was going to my bed," Mahsa told him as she leaned back against him, "But I'm guessing you wanted me to stay,"
"Is there really any question of what I want?" Kouen asked her earning a soft giggle.

"Quite a few actually," Mahsa promptly hissed when Kouen surprised her with a nip to the ear.

"You're staying the night," Kouen told her as his tongue lapped lazily at the bite for a moment before he pressed a kiss to the sensitive skin behind her ear, "No more questions or conversations about anything else,"

"You sure?" Mahsa asked as Kouen pushed her towards the bed.

Kouen nipped her ear again earning a soft hiss, "No more questions."

They reached the bed and Kouen tugged at her clothes, "Get them off."

"Move back a bit then and get your own off," Mahsa told him.

Mahsa got another nip to her ear before Kouen pulled away and she began stripping. First to come off was the black vest with golden designs including some lions that Luna had made while they were traveling. The next was her off-white long-sleeved crop-top that she'd gotten in Artemyra, the silky fabric was followed by her chest wrapping. The next was her tan cargo pants which would be switched out for her favored skirts when in cities. She removed the feather from her hair alongside the other things that had been added to her braids with ease. She placed them on the empty bedside table as Kouen's arms wrapped around her waist. He spoke as she carefully added Alastor's bracelet to the pile as well as another, "That bracelet is new."

"I picked it up in Heliohapt," Mahsa felt Kouen's half-hard erection against her, "While in Artemyra this time, I managed to earn one of their Feathers. Queen Mira has one of mine," She swallowed heavily feeling need burn through her and this time didn't slam down her mental shields on it, "En,"

"Hmm?" Kouen hummed lowly in his throat as the sound practically reverberated through her entire body.

Heat rushed through her, Mahsa turned in his arms and looked up at him, "No games, En. I don't want to play any games tonight. Any other night would be fine, we've just been away from each other for too long."

Kouen's eyes softened slightly and he bent his head, "Alright."

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