My Bones Do Not Taste of Crown and Silver
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Summary

Calpernia is found by the Inquisition after the events at the Temple of Mythal and prior to the defeat of Corypheus. The Inquisitor decides to spare her life as an asset only for them to become far closer than anticipated.

Title from This Is My Name, Adonis

Written for the femslash big bang March prompt: heroes and villains

The news comes late in the night, a breathless Leliana outside Morgaine's door, looking perhaps a few moments from picking the lock when Morgaine answers.

"Inquisitor," she says, sounding as composed as she can, though there's a hesitation that's quite unlike her. "We have captured Calpernia."

It's far from what Morgaine expected to hear; Corypheus at their door perhaps, for there's little else that could warrant such an awakening. "I was unaware that we were looking to capture her in the
first place," she replies, beckoning Leliana to enter. This is hardly stairwell conversation after all, not when Skyhold's walls have ears, and none of them will be going back to sleep now. Cassandra is out of bed too by the time they reach the top of the stairs, Morgaine lazily waving a hand towards the fire to stir it to life again.

"Did I hear right?" Cassandra asks, tugging on the shirt she wears beneath her armour. "You have captured Calpernia? She is here?"

Leliana inclines her head, a fleeting smile flickering across her face that might be called proud. "She was discovered by a patrol. My scouts had been tracking her for some time however in the aftermath of the Temple, when it became clear she was heading for Skyhold she was intercepted."

"So either she survived the encounter with Corypheus or she had a change of heart." Morgaine knows as she says the words that Corypheus would not have allowed Calpernia to live had she done as she intended. "Rouse Josephine and Cullen if you haven't done so already. Those who brought her here? I'd have them sequestered."

It would not do, to cause a stir before the dawn.

"As you will Inquisitor, We shall await you in the dungeons."

There is relative silence as Leliana leaves, only the fire crackling in the hearth, the wind howling outside the windows for not even thick drapes can muffle the reminder that they are so high, perched above the whole world to continue to rise or topple as fate sees fit. Fabric rustles, punctuated by the sounds of laces, buckles, straps, Cassandra dressing with the efficiency of a soldier as Morgaine brushes the tangles from sleep and earlier exertions with Cassandra from her hair, tying it back into one long braid, a rope she could strangle a person with, one that she wraps about her head like a crown, pinning it in place. She needs time to think, grateful for Cassandra not questioning but impatience eats at the other woman, something she loves and sometimes hates, something forgiven because it's Cassandra, because she has always admired and respected that passion.

"What could she possibly hope to gain in coming here?" Suspicion, hostility, but also open surprise, the late hour doesn't help with any of them either.

"The same as Vivienne I would imagine – the chance to meet her enemy-"

"A chance she took herself before the Well of Sorrows." The interruption is an almost sullen mutter, Cassandra crossing the room to stoke the fire. Morgaine sighs, crossing the room to sit before her mirror. Let Calpernia wait while the others rise, let the Nightingale hush those she must. She will not go into battle unarmed. Cassandra meets her gaze in the mirror as she lines her eyes and her lashes carefully. "You truly believe that?"

"We won't know until we question her, but it seems as reasonable a notion as any other?"

"Reasonable?" Cassandra's reflection raises its brows to her hairline, shock giving way to a sneer. "Because all his other lieutenants have shown themselves to be thus."

"Crassius Servis was less than loyal, he had an agenda all his own and shared less belief in the Venatori cause," Morgaine points out as she hides the dark circles that have dogged her eyes since Haven. Brows next to make sure her eyes cannot be missed, blush to bring out her high cheekbones, dark red for her mouth. "Calpernia has far better reasons to wish him dead than many here. This isn’t about bringing order, restoration, or reformation for her, not with regards to the south. She was
betrayed, she will want vengeance. I know many say that they wish that for the Divine, for Haven, for all those they lost to demons, the Mage-Templar war, for whatever losses they have endured but we both know what he would have done to her when she had clawed her way to something more."

A disgusted sigh is her only response until Cassandra is behind her, a calloused hand on her shoulder. Morgaine rests her own atop it, squeezing gently. It would be dull if she and the Seeker agreed on everything, but tonight she requires a united front.

"You should put on your full armour and the coat, arm yourself and see that Cullen does the same though knowing him he's been ready since Leliana went to him. Calpernia shall face the Inquisition tonight."

She turns before Cassandra can leave, pressing a kiss to the back of her hand, a mark red as blood.

Calpernia awaits Morgaine in the chill of the cells, and though the door is closed and the walls are thick stone, the roar of the waterfall swallows the sound of the brazier, drowns out even the wind, the shadows great and long, the cold sinking into the bone. The guards greet her with her title, voices little more than whispers owing to the spectacle they find themselves a part of. She can't blame them, much of the rank and file don't see them together this close, certainly not when they have the woman that stood at the side of their enemy separated from them only by iron bars and a single lock. A formidable sight are the four figures surrounding the cell; Cullen and Cassandra directly opposite the door, hands resting on their swords, both of them turning to allow Morgaine to stand between them. Next to Cassandra stands Josephine, quill poised and the flame of her candle bathing her in light that's too warm for such a place as this. Across from her to Cullen’s left is Leliana, her hood drawn low over her face; from the corner of her eye all Morgaine can see are the hollows of her cheeks, a skull that smiles. There is no bow or blade carried that can be seen but her spymaster was a bard, she will keep what she carries concealed until she has need of it, and even then it will be there and gone in the blink of an eye.

At last she gets a look at their captive, kneeling on the floor of her cell. Serene would be the word for it but serene has never applied to Calpernia, she's seen and read enough to know that. Funny almost, that she knows for certain more of this woman's life than she does many of her allies but that's the way of the world at times. There's not a mark on Calpernia that she can see, her pale skin seeming to glow against her dark robes, but her hands are shackled securely before her as Morgaine's own had been in the aftermath of the Conclave. Keen eyes flick up to meet Morgaine's, suspicious, angry, but above all else assessing.

It's easy to forget that this is only their second meeting.

"I take it you thought better of confronting your former master?" Best to cut right to the chase, to use the voice for the main hall, as if Calpernia had been brought before her in irons as so many others have.

Her captive hesitates but a moment, anger winning out to flash across her face, colouring her cheeks, lighting up her eyes. "I will not give him my life so easily," she snaps, passionate as she had been at the Temple of Mythal, "I would see the Imperium change, I would have a chance to play my part freely to lift the slaves to full citizens, to trim the rotten branches and see my home bloom once again."
Josephine looks up as she writes, eyes darting between the rest of the advisors. Cullen laughs, a soft sound of surprise but it echoes, matched by Cassandra's snarl, the Nightingale's sneer. Only Morgaine remains composed as she stares at Calpernia, replaying the memory shards, the Shrine of Dumat, standing before the Well of Sorrows.

She turns her back and walks away, not even glancing over her shoulder as she gives a command. "Meet me in the war room, we have much to discuss."

"You can't be serious!" Cullen shouts, and not for the first time though he has gone from disbelief in the beginning to frustration now, and it's a relief that the war room has several doors and a long corridor between it and the main body of Skyhold. "There is absolutely no way this can be allowed, do you have any idea how this will make us look? To Ferelden, to Orlais? To the whole world? As soon as word gets out they'll turn on you!"

"I confess that at the moment, I find myself in agreement," Josephine chimes in, face falling as if it hurts to say the words, her brows drawn together as she searches for the right way to phrase it, dancing around the word disappointment, trying to stop her protests from overstepping. "Sparing her life is one thing, as it stands that is not common knowledge, but there are so many that will be angered. The faithful. The relatives and friends of those who lost loved ones at Haven. Every soul who views Tevinter as a threat. You ensured Celene retained the throne when she was the target of an assassination attempt, Florianne in league with the enemy. And the Grey Wardens…"

Morgaine has to concede the point there, her gaze landing on each of them in turn. Cullen has a smile for Josephine, finally no longer looking disgusted at least for the moment, Cassandra radiating tension as she stands with her arms folded, lip bitten. The silence is unlike her but she had stepped back from the war room when they came to Skyhold and Morgaine's new title had been enough to confer the legitimacy of their Inquisition, no longer a fledgling but something ready to soar ever higher. Only Leliana remains inscrutable in the Nightingale's mask.

"I spared the Wardens at Adamant when so many of them had killed their own and had played a part in the death of our beloved Divine, support still came, from nations that had faced Blights, even from Orlais placed in the greatest danger, and Ferelden where they have always had a somewhat tempestuous relationship with the crown. And despite Thom Rainier's lies that came out in the end."

That annoys her still, it rankles that he could be capable of a deception like that, his selfishness putting more at risk than he realised or cared for, despite his words about following, about believing in the cause and admiring her. She hopes the Joining chokes him. "Grand Duchess Florianne's schemes were halted and I made her into something useful, Celene still rules, Briala at her side and reunited. Orlais will do what it always does but there is stability now and much that they owe us."

"There is some anger in certain corners regarding the Templars. That you went to them and not to the rebel mages granted you some favour but to disband them? That was too much for some," Josephine counters swiftly but she has a quick mind, able to keep up with Antivan princes, they all know that, it keeps Morgaine on her toes. "You being a mage still has some questioning your temerity."

"There are times when the days before she became Inquisitor feel like a lifetime ago. This is certainly one such moment. "The Templars made their beds, Ser Barris can confirm my offer as can others. The Templars had made their beds, I am not discounting that they suffer too and that theirs is more
easy to ignore but they had turned from the Chantry and thus had turned from the people of Thedas. When a new Divine sits upon the Sunburst Throne then it will be up to her to decide how they will be handled but they can begin anew now, the old Order can serve as a reminder, their service with the Inquisition restoring order and stability against a magister from Tevinter as an example for what they should strive to be. Working together with more than just the Chantry, their brothers and sisters. Given their actions and how the red lyrium has spread across so much of Thedas – including mining the bodies of the fallen – then recruiting them as full allies was out of the question, I wouldn't have us being seen to sanction their actions."

"I agree," Leliana adds, the first thing she's said since she came to inform Morgaine of the situation. "The Inquisitor has allowed others to be put to service for her, Crassius Servis, Florianne as we have already mentioned. Divine forgiveness was offered to Ser Ruth of the Grey Wardens. Mistress Poulin was ordered to rebuild Sahria as her atonement. The Templars abandoned the faithful and the mage rebellion turned to Tevinter. There were many who were glad too, to see the Templars chastened and brought to heel, to be shown that they could not do as they pleased and leave Thedas and the Chantry defenceless in their hour of need. We are hardly offering an allegiance or pardon to Calpernia but we have a chance to learn more, to understand our enemy best at the most crucial moment so that victory can be assured. We say that she will be put to death should she deceive us, fail to cooperate as we would wish, or if her assistance turns out to be less than we expect." There is no smile, Leliana has seen so much death, as has the Nightingale and though it would not be by her hand it would bother her still when it was she and Morgaine who watched the crystal and went through so many reports together. Still, they both look to gain because they know that the world is the way it is and that change has not come yet, it's why they get along so well.

"The enemy of my enemy is my friend, is that how we're to look at it?" Cullen asks, the incredulity giving way to resignation at last. She doesn't roll her eyes because that's beneath her unless there's a part to play though she would dearly like to. Most men have always had such limited perspectives in her opinion.

"Calpernia has no friends left to her unless we count the slaves that she has freed but they will still be with Corypheus. Dorian is a pariah among his people as well as here in the south yet he has proven himself invaluable, fighting for the Inquisition, and that is before we even touch the research he has conducted. He has a sharp mind and there is the desire to do good in him as well, to see Tevinter reformed." Morgaine murmurs the words, more to save her throat than for any other reason, willing this to be over so she can rest for perhaps an hour before she starts work for the day though she is almost certainly behind already.

Josephine follows their lead though, smiling at last, bright and almost delighted even through the exhaustion. "If Calpernia tries to leave, well that would surely be impossible, and she would have nowhere to turn. This is proof of the Inquisition's success if worded in the right fashion: that the Inquisitor, the Herald of Andraste, changed the heart and mind of the leader of the enemy forces, a Tevinter mage no less."

"So it's settled then?" Four nods follow and Morgaine allows herself a smile of triumph. "Very well, if you would make drafting a statement your priority Josephine I would be most grateful. Leliana and Cullen, you will brief your highest ranking scouts and soldiers prior to this but I want it made clear that they are not to divulge this or to discuss outside of informing them until I have agreed to and signed the statement. Let it also be made very clear that they will be disciplined for disobeying this order." Cullen is less happy than Leliana about all of this but he chooses to say nothing, merely shaking his head as he holds the door for Leliana and Josephine.

"I will review what information we have on her," Leliana assures, her smile more relaxed now that
the decision has been made. "It is the very least I can do."

The door closes behind her, leaving Morgaine alone with Cassandra, allowing her time to study the other woman as she braces herself against the war table, arms straight, head bowed. The silence stretches, grows and swells as the storms do over Ostwick until at last she turns to look at Morgaine, face caught in a snarl, the first lash of lightning.

At least this will be private.

She and Cassandra have strong opinions, it'd be terribly dull if they didn't, if they agreed on every matter or if one of them backed down, she's never wanted people like that in her inner circle, not even as a girl. The ones she could order about had their uses but they were never so close. It would be even worse to hear only what she wanted to hear from Cassandra's lips. It keeps her honest in a way, an honesty she can only have with Cassandra; she might have the Game but at least she's come to tolerate that it's a necessity in both their lives. Right now she watches one hand ball not a fast, the other wrapped around the hilt of her sword until her knuckles turn white. She's reminded of what had happened after Varric introduced her to the Champion, how Cassandra had swung at him with the words conniving little shit on her lips. What outburst awaits Morgaine now?

"I cannot believe," she begins, low and careful, the first distant rumble of thunder with a flush high on her cheeks. "Even you, Morgaine, to allow her to remain. To allow her to remain here! In this place that we- Have you lost your mind?"

"This coming from a woman who might have seen us with fewer allies? You wanted Dorian watched, wanted rid of Cole, thought Sera would rob the treasury-" Cassandra makes as if to interrupt but Morgaine continues, the exhaustion catching up with her, the mask falling away. "You would have had Gaspard on the throne of Orlais and allowed Celene to be assassinated."

"Oh we both know exactly why you let Celene keep her life and her throne," Cassandra snaps, drawing herself up to her full height. "So you can keep playing the Game you love so well. Because you think she will be indebted to you in a way Gaspard will not, that she will support you because you can outplay her."

"Gaspard is a brute and a tyrant, but by all means, start more wars before we even finish this one!" She's shouting now too, her throat burning, hot and desperately possessed of the urge to be as vicious as she pleases, to let her words lash at Cassandra, to let them blister against her lips and tongue as she spits them.

Cassandra's laugh is humourless, her eyes narrowed to slits. "How could I forget. It's so much prettier when you do it with clever words, making light of death and the lives trampled underfoot so it at least looks civilised, how foolish of me."

The scorn stings as if she's been slapped. "If you have something to say to me, Seeker Pentaghast, I would have you say it." It's a step too far; Cassandra's eyes go wide, her mouth falling open before her jaw snaps shut with an audible click. She's hurt, moving to push past Morgaine and out but she catches Cassandra by the wrist, putting herself between her and escape.

"Inquisitor," she growls between gritted teeth, "I would take my leave."

"I need you with me on this," Morgaine urges and she is Morgaine Trevelyan, nothing more, finding Cassandra's hands, prying her fingers loose to twine them with hers but Cassandra grabs her wrists instead, pinning them to the door. "Please," she continues, chest heaving, aware of how close they
are, how her skin is too tight, the fabric of her robes suddenly rough when it's soft cotton and fine
silk, that the argument has flushed her with heat, prickling her skin.

"Don't play games." It's a whisper this time, and she's still angry, there's no mistaking that but
Morgaine can only watch her lips, swollen and red from where she had bitten them to keep her
silence in front of the others. "Not with this. Not with me. Not with us."

"I'm not. This isn't a game. You, the Inquisition, us? They matter to me Cassandra." Rising up on her
toes isn't an option when Cassandra is holding her in place but she Seeker is leaning down, so close,
close enough that she allows her eyes to fall shut, Cassandra's forehead resting against hers. "You
know that sometimes we have to make hard choices. We need her, I-

"This is new," Cassandra kisses her, slow and deep, and Morgaine sobs into it when her thigh is there again, and
when she comes Cassandra cups her face, holding her up as her body shakes, muffling the loudest
and most desperate of her cries, bordering on wails.

Morgaine parts her folds carefully, licks from her clit to her cunt and back up, grazing her teeth
against the root of her clit. Cassandra comes with Morgaine's tongue there and nothing more, letting
her press two fingers into her as she rides out her orgasm, her thighs trembling. She pulls Morgaine
to her feet eventually, tossing the sword belt on the table to send markers scattering and the lean
against one another quietly, just breathing, Cassandra's hand on the back of Morgaine's neck,
Morgaine's forehead on her shoulder. Eventually they have to right themselves; the world won't wait
for them.

Josephine is good enough to say nothing when they walk past her and for once no one stops them en
route to their private quarters.
In truth, the statement is more a declaration, reworded in places to suit Morgaine as well as to remove any ambiguity that might be used against them. All of them are braced for the backlash, Cullen placing extra guards even though Leliana questions the wisdom of it. Josephine sends the fastest and most reliable of the their ravens with reminders, promises, even threats, carefully written so as not to cause too great an upset. Leliana as ever has more leverage than they quite know what to do with (a lie, of course, but there's no need to be gauche), her scouts positioned with care. All that remains is talking with her companions when the audience is at an end and the declaration has been posted throughout Skyhold, but those are for after the audience where she'll judge Calpernia and, Maker willing, charge her with helping the Inquisition. There's still the chance Calpernia won't go along with it but it's a risk she has to take. She dresses with care once again, paints her face to hide that she hasn't slept in what feels like days, dressing herself in robes fashioned after those of Enchanter Illana; if she is to meet Calpernia before the world she will dress accordingly.

When the companions are ushered to the war room, there are looks of confusion and questions, even from Bull and Vivienne. It helps her to smile at them as if nothing is amiss before she takes her seat upon the throne, back perfectly straight, serene as if this is any other day.

She knows Calpernia is coming before she sees her, gasps and a furious whisper that grows and swells heralding her arrival into the hall, flanked by guards. Hands bound but bearing proud, she has eyes only for Morgaine when she stands at the foot of the dais. Over her shoulder stands Leliana at Vivienne's balcony, ready and waiting, and this time she can see the bow. Cullen stands to the left of the throne with a face that could curdle milk, still not talent or patience for the Game even when their participation has become increasingly less a matter of choice the more vital it becomes. Cassandra stands a little behind Josephine to the right of the throne, ready for whatever might erupt and it's when she glances over to give her a small nod that she feels Calpernia's eyes following.

"Inquisitor Trevelyan," Josephine begins, voice ringing out clearly. "A grave matter has been brought before you this day. Before us stands Calpernia, leader of the Venatori. You are all aware of who the Venatori follow, of the damage and destruction they have left in their wake, and of what they wish to accomplish. Calpernia was captured approaching Skyhold by one of our patrols. She offered no resistance."

Sitting forward after giving the crowd gathered – the great hall has never been so packed – she begins. "As I recall, I allowed you your life at the Temple of Mythal after I revealed your master's treachery and personal betrayal." Calpernia's mouth twitches, the beginnings of a snarl, manacles clinking as she shifts her wrists irritably. "You made it plain that you desired to confront him. Since I am sure word would have reached my ears had you succeeded, I believe an explanation is in order. Unless you managed to hush all the Venatori and Red Templars, and all his other allies, which I very much doubt, in order to deliver this information personally." A wave of nervous laughter follow until she lifts a hand for silence.

Now it's time to see what Calpernia will do. They haven't rehearsed this the way they could have. She wants to see for herself what the woman will do, and there can be no risk that anyone suspects Morgaine of playing them all even as she gives them a show.

"I was deceived, as were so many others," Calpernia hisses. "I did not believe in restoring Tevinter to its former glory, my dream was of a new Imperium. No longer corrupted and decaying, collapsing upon itself as the slaves bearing the weight upon their backs as it bleeds them dry, robbing them of a chance of life. I did not wish for the hollow glories so many others hunger for. Civilisation began with us, before Orlais, before Nevarra, before the Free Marches, certainly before Ferelden. Ifreed my
"slaves, as you can attest. I treated them kindly. I would give them more."

"I am meant to take you at your word?"

"Take my head as you took that of Crestwood's mayor, exile me beyond the Sea of Ash as you did
Knight-Captain Denam or to wherever you would see fit, even Tevinter for I will find no friend
there." Her pale eyes are alight with fire. *Faith that burns like a brand*, Cole's soft voice, his words
about Cassandra and yet this is not faith in the Chantry or a person, but a case. Is that not what so
many others have with regard to Morgaine and what she has built here? "I saw a purpose for myself,
to be the change that I wished to see. I was a slave that taught myself to read, I rose higher than the
rest so that I might lift them all with me. Empress Celene makes her claims for a golden age while the
ash of Halamshiral dances still. I was at his side. Make use of me. Let me have my vengeance or
strike me down where I stand."

Triumph roars in Morgaine, a savage smile that threatens but she hasn't risen to the heights by
playing her hand.

"Very well Calpernia," she says after a lengthy pause, after the anticipation has made the hall
ravenous. "If your desires are genuine I shall have your mind and your knowledge, and indeed your
spirit, put to work for the Inquisition. Sister Nightingale will supervise. If you think to play me for a
fool, the blade will be no mercy." She rises, moving to the bottom of the dais, not imagining the
intake of breath, the way Skyhold leans in because every stone has drunk deep of magic, reaching
for a taste of power. "Come, I would begin immediately."

The guard fumbles the key, Morgaine takes it. The shackles clatter when they drop to the floor and
thus the spell is broken. Cullen moves to escort her to the rookery as discussed and from the crowd
Ser Barris pushes forward to assist. A fortunate thing, that he should be here to deliver reports and
resupply for his presence always makes the Inquisition and the fate of the Templars look good, and
she's grown terribly fond; should the Templars be reformed then they will have a fine leader with a
strong record. Cassandra's hand at her elbow draw her from her thoughts, something that could be a
smile or a grimace on her face.

"You have another audience yet, my lady, and they are not given to holding their tongues."

An Orlesian nobleman bows as they head to the war room, ear no doubt pressed up against the door
as soon as it shuts behind them, his shame and dignity abandoned. Morgaine stops Cassandra before
she can open the next door, cupping her face in her hands, thumbing the line of her scar.

"You understand why I had to make the choice? That I couldn't let her languish and rot down there
or simply take her head?" Morgaine hates how her voice sounds at times like this, the desperation
that shouldn't be there; even now there's something too much like fear when she thinks about
Cassandra, when she still finds it in herself to be annoyed that she cares this much about another at
all. There were fewer concerns of that nature in Ostwick. Studying hard to give no one a reason to
fear or doubt her, the effort paying off with praise from the Enchanters and the First Enchanter, the
Lucrosians recognising her talents and her worth to draw her into the fold. Family matters to attend
to, all of them advancing the standing and fortunes of their house, making their future more secure
with each step. Templars to keep sweet, others to be avoided entirely. She had personal stakes, of
course, she takes all work personally and pours as much of herself as she can into it, but none of
them went quite so deep as this one. She didn't care if her reasons were understood before, if she was
liked as well as respected. What did it matter, if people didn't understand the origins of her
motivations?
"You spared her life in the Temple. I hoped that would be the end of it but there is still some way to go I think," Cassandra says at last. She kisses Morgaine, soft and slow, so that they both end up breathless. "I will not leave this all to you."

Morgaine is the one to straighten their clothes, walking with Cassandra hand in hand to the war room.

In the end, her decision is understood. Mostly. She can't remember the last time Solas looked at her without scowling anyway, and with the lack of sleep she has more trouble than usual deciphering whatever Sera and Cole both say. Varric is dubious but tired, something that seems all too familiar these days, Cassandra watching him carefully and the comments she makes are more for him than the whole group gathered. Bull might be Tal-Vashoth now but he still has the face of a Ben-Hassrath. Blackwall is well aware of how little his opinion matters to her but the matter must hit close to home because the pain twisting his features is very real. Vivienne makes a few cutting remarks but Morgaine was ready for that, truth be told, she understands the investment the other woman has and that there's a need to keep face before the rest of them. Vivienne and her can speak more honestly later. Dorian is the one who has opinions, louder than the rest.

"Once again you're sparing her life? She allied with Corypheus, you do remember that? I was there – as were you, Cassandra – when we all looked up at Haven for our first glimpse of her. I barely outran them to warn you!"

"Calpernia joined with Corypheus in order to better Tevinter, a goal I believe you share."

Dorian's eyes flash; she sets her own hand over Cassandra's to lower it. "You know me, you don't get to lump me in with any of them, with her lot-"

"I'm not, Dorian," she interrupts, firm but gentle. "Calpernia was a slave, we saw the documents in Vicinius' home as well as the first crystal recording. You came with me to the Shrine of Dumat. He deceived her. She wants better for the slaves; you and I cannot know what that life is like, but you and Maevaris, you surely want better for them too."

His 'of course' is an indignation inhale but he's a little less ruffled at least, and she lays a hand on his arm. "We won't ally with one of the Magisters Sidereal in order to get it. We are better than that, as is the Inquisition."

She makes her own 'of course' an apology. Dorian is very dear to her, and she hates to argue with him properly outside of debates, but she remembers what he had said about slaves, and doesn't remind him that whatever he faced, he's still an Altus, a man of means and power. Morgaine doesn't know what it's like to be a slave either but the thought had always upset her, barbarism that belonged to a bygone age. People might be tools she uses to get what she wants, but only their loyalties have been for the buying and selling, not the person themselves. Others file out, Dorian trying not to look hurt and she steps closer, offering a smile.

"I know that you're a good man, Dorian, and I know how badly you want rid of corruption so your home can be something you love again without shame and reservation. I know confinement from the Circle, and you know how close you came to being changed completely, in some way bound to the will of another, to be something you would have hated, with all your choices gone from you. I
cannot condemn her. There is something in her heart that wishes for something I can admire in the right light."

"We'll speak more later?" He asks, but he's smiling and she nods, embracing him warmly. Maker she'll miss him when he eventually returns to Tevinter.

In the end, only Bull and Vivienne remain once Dorian has left, Cassandra with him to stand outside the door. Morgaine can't relax yet. Bull knows a face and a body too well, can spot a lie at a hundred paces if her inflection is off, and Vivienne can smell blood in the water because she is one of the greatest masters the Game has ever seen. She looks from one to other, sighing in resignation, ignoring the tendrils of pain that flicker out from her temples, how her neck and scalp ache from how tight she wears her chignon.

"Is whatever you say to me to be kept within this room?"

"Darling," Vivienne begins, a hand on her arm. "Are you entirely certain about all this? I am aware of the decision made at the Temple, that is the past and hardly relevant to call into question now, but to have her here?"

"She's cunning," Bull adds. "I read the same reports, I was at that slaver's place in Val Royeaux too. She's a Vint. Whole different kind of Vint but all that time? Commanding the Venatori?"

"I am aware, but I believe she's sincere in her desires. If you had been there to see her at the Well, both of you, then you might find it easier to believe. I haven't had your training Bull but I know betrayal when I see it." Heartbreak is on the tip of her tongue, followed by fury but she's reluctant to be accused of anything she isn't trying to do. "The enemy of my enemy is my friend, and we have made strange allies in these times. If I can appear to offer what Corypheus cannot…" "A dangerous gamble." A note of disapproval enters Vivienne's voice but that's something that can be addressed later, up on her balcony in the light and cool air. "Whatever doubters and naysayers there may be, and the malcontents that will surely come crawling, know that I am here to help. You have made such intriguing decisions and I won't have those who fail to grasp what you have snatched from the jaws of a lion drag this Inquisition down for their lack of vision."

"Thank you Vivienne, your support and friendship has always meant more to me than I can put into words."

"I trust Leliana has removed herself from my balcony by now?" At Morgaine's nod, Vivienne smiles, kissing her on either cheek as Morgaine does the same automatically. "I won't take up more of your time my dear, I'm sure you're eager to get to work and I am sure that Josephine will require some assistance with these matters, the court of Orlais will eat out of your palm at this coup if we do it correctly." With that, Vivienne is gone, leaving just Morgaine and Bull.

Hard to know which one of them is more dangerous.

"She's no Dorian," he settles on at last, those huge scarred arms folded over his huge scarred chest, breathing heavily. "Really? I hadn't noticed." She allows herself to be short, to let the sarcasm roll off her tongue.

Bull's smile isn't a smile, convincing enough for most, but it's all bared teeth; animals bare their teeth as a sign of aggression, Morgaine knows those same smiles on her own face. "As soon as she sees a
chance to stab you in the back, to turn on you, she'll take it. She's here because she wants to be here, you and Cassandra both said there was no struggle and she hasn't been howling and cursing at any of you."

"If you want to question her yourself," Morgaine offers, "I can arrange that. It was the heat of the moment last night. Still closer to this morning in all honesty, there was much to do in very little time to keep it contained. You know how bad it would have been if we hadn't managed to get out ahead of the rumours."

"You, me, and Red? That could work."

"Wish I'd been around to see it though, she really just burst in?"

"I thought she was going to pick the lock if I'm honest, thankfully neither Cassandra or I sleep in the altogether."

Bull laughs and moves so she can lean her head against him. When did they all come to mean so much? When did they become more than just companions to her? Bull is heat and spice, the solid thump of his heart beneath all those strong bones and thick muscle, someone who has taken her apart when she's asked and put her back together again without her looking differently in his eyes. "You good though?"

"It's a headache I could have done without but if this is to be my legacy, then let it be what it will. I can't turn down information, and you've got the Chargers involved in diversions and swelling our numbers, there could be information here that will help. That we can use to keep people safe. I can't imagine what it's like to be a slave, none of us can, but how long is the practice still going to continue? The Dragon Age was predicted to be one of violence and upheaval, that it has certainly delivered in spades." She steps away, setting her shoulders, straightening her robes, the Inquisitor once again, and Bull's smile is warm, proud. "I would see some good come of it."

"You know where I am if you need me, kadan, I've got your back."

"Thank you Bull."

She sags against the war table when he leaves, he and Cassandra talking because it takes time before there are quiet footsteps that come to a halt at her side, a hand on her back, something Cassandra always does after long parties or meetings, quiet reassurance.

"It never ends," Morgaine mutters. It's good to hear Cassandra laugh. 

Bull ends up being unsatisfied about being satisfied with Calpernia's questioning, stung by certain choice remarks relating to the Qun and him being Tal-Vashoth. Morgaine goes for drinks with him, slaps him on the arm when she calls him Iron-fucking-Bull. He sets a big hand on her shoulder, that big rumbling laugh of his that sets her at ease, reminding her that if she needs to let off some steam, that he's always willing to oblige. They've had good times together, she imagines they'll have more before this is through; much in the same way that Cassandra and Varric have their thing (where Cassandra will come back smiling, even laughing, uncomplicated and less messy than herself and Morgaine), sometimes Bull's help is needed. Someone not so involved in every little detail of her life. There are days she needs to surrender, to have her control taken from her, and Bull can do that for
her. There was a time or two with Barris, something that reminded her of stolen moments and the
taste of the forbidden but there's a careful distance between them now that they both understand. The
future won't grant them the same things if they aren't careful. There are thoughts she's had about
Varric because how could she not, but Cassandra has always had the greater claim to him, and it's
the part of their shared life she handles gently, keeping herself from. Cassandra deserves that. A lot
of times Cassandra deserves more than what Morgaine can give her, is willing to give her.

Not because she doesn't love her but she's never surrendered all of herself to a person. There's too
much power in that and she guards it jealously.

Now they feel close to the end, those crucial finishing touches; extracting the goods from promises,
shoring up the alliances, laying the groundwork for the future that beckons should all go according to
plan. The second Inquisition will fare better than the first, she will not allow history to plough her
into obscurity, not something she has invested her time in, a cause she has shed blood for. They all
spend more time apart than they did together with such strong Inquisition presence across Orlais and
Ferelden, training, researching, strategising. A reminder that when this ends that her companions will
have few ties to keep them here, and lives to return to with the Breach and wars no longer
interrupting them.

Until such times as they make that final push or Corypheus decides to come for them, it's her and
Calpernia, reports spread between them, ciphers that Calpernia tosses aside to translate herself
because the Inquisition only needed to understand but there are intricacies they've missed, small, but
possibly useful for the future. Calpernia's suspicion continues, seemingly very aware of how close
Morgaine comes to her at any moment, rather standoffish too. Were their situations reversed, she
knows that she wouldn't take it so well. There are those she cares for still among the ranks of the
Venatori, a legion of slaves thought freed but with a future that was never to be allowed to them, and
eventually she talks confidently, passionately, more comfortable as the days stretch on. Quick to
adjust, but a slave no doubt has to be, and even if she had her freedom with Corypheus there are
things that must surely linger that once spared her pain or worse. Relocated to a carefully guarded
room rather than the cells, permitted time in the gardens, that seems to help too. A gilded cage with a
fire and a bed is still better than one that the wind howls through with iron bars and a thin mat on a
stone floor. More than once she's spotted Morrigan speaking with Calpernia when she goes to collect
her. A few attempts are made on her life, clumsy brutish things, and each one is dealt with swiftly
and decisively. They stop. The Inquisition moves on because the only choice is to go backwards, and
she along with her advisors will never allow for that. Even Cullen comes around in light of new
information that he can send to the troops about better ways to combat Venatori tactics in the field,
fewer injuries, happier troops, more confident of a victory. Dorian has no doubt helped smooth
things over, getting under the commander's armour and getting him to drop his guard; they joke
about it, him and Cullen, her and Cassandra, the scandal of mages such as themselves with great
sprawling plans for more, for better, involved with a Templar and Seeker respectively, with the
advisors of the Inquisition. Cullen might be enough to help convince Dorian to stay longer when
Corypheus is defeated, or to at least visit on some regular sort of basis, if she promises to make all the
most sympathetic noises about his personal feelings on travel. Dorian even provides information to
be passed on via Morgaine at first, before he decides to join them at times. He and Calpernia argue
like a pair of wild animals, set to rip and tear bloody strips from the other but if they are both as
sincere in their desire for change, she'd have them together in hopes that the good points will stick
with both, that there will be a plan to ensure important points aren't forgotten when they come from
such different worlds that overlap in the worst ways.

There's much for her and Calpernia to cover between themselves though, and of course the Well of
Sorrows has to come up, Calpernia's restraint in not asking about it admirable until one afternoon
where she looks up from the translations of elven writing found in the Arbor Wilds and deeper
sections of the Temple of Mythal. Morgaine can't remember a time in her life when she wasn't being watched, starting with hazy recollections of being a girl born to a noble house where she was expected to always be on her best behaviour when she was presented and trotted out at parties before bed; the increasingly vivid memories of Templar scrutiny wherever she went in the Circle as well as that of her fellow mages when her talent and determination to hone her abilities became apparent; how some of them and other nobles or figures of import looked at her when she was granted permission to attend family parties and salons. Her whole life has been spent in preparation for a great work, for improving Thedas to the best of her ability, for the Inquisition it would seem. This time however, Calpernia's gaze is not judging or assessing as it has been since her capture, heavier and yet not at the same time.

"Morrigan took it upon herself to explain the true nature of the Well to me," she begins, resting her chin on her hands. "I had prepared for it for so long, to carry it to Corypheus." A long elegant hand becomes a fist, her teeth gritting as she forces the words out. Morgaine would have been galled to suffer a betrayal of that magnitude but Calpernia was a slave once, she cannot imagine what it would be like to truly think herself free only to realise she would be bound for the rest of her life in an even more painful fashion. It takes time for the other woman to speak again. "Yet the Well itself is a binding."

"Morrigan had little enough idea of what it would be, at first she believed Corypheus desired the eluvian located within the Temple. Knowledge begets a hunger for more, that was how she put it to me, the Well itself... you know of Uthenera?" Calpernia nods so Morgaine continues. "Before each guardian passed on into that, they passed on their knowledge into the Well, their way of life too. It is their will, Mythal's will, that is what I'm bound to." That's a future problem, to be bound to the will of a thing that had never been a factor in her life beyond history. Not her thing to call a god. Not hers to believe in. There is the Maker, there is Andraste, what the ancient elves might have believed had never mattered before and she's determined not to let it matter now. Give a thing power and it grows, and what power it has is better in her hands than Morrigan's, serving the Inquisition. "The Well still proved to be the key to the eluvian, and it told me, or the voices, whatever that was that happened after I drank, that the key to his destruction is the dragon."

"The beast has a part of his power invested within it, he will no longer be able to move from one body to another. You may have killed many dragons but the red lyrium has changed the beast, and it is more like an Archdemon for all that this is no Blight."

"It might as well be one, the devastation this maelstrom has caused is worse than the last Blight, it managed to spread far further than it too." She sags into her seat, rolling up another scroll, tying it shut neatly. "Whatever this Mythal was, even if the elves believe her to be a god, she was still slain. Corypheus seeks to be the very same and I will kill him too. A god is not a god if you can make them bleed and end their lives."

That makes Calpernia smile, the same sort of slow satisfied look that Morgaine knows from her own face. "He will be furious. Each time you put a stop to his plans he would rage, an angry child who could not believe something so small, so beneath him, so very insignificant could put a stop to his grand schemes for assaulting the heavens to claim them as his own. To restore Tevinter."

Morgaine considers the words as she looks over the map, the markers for various missions or places of importance set carefully, crawling all the way up to Tevinter with one solitary marker to denote the Sea of Ash and the exile of Knight-Captain Denam. Calpernia is not alone in her desire to see betterment; Morgaine would wash away the corruption, would pull down the Circles and disband the Templars in favour of something greater, aware that she has the means and the standing to be listened to. A human woman. A noble woman. A Marcher. Were she not a mage, they would listen closer
and with less reservation. Were she Orlesian, she might have had a greater advantage from the start.

"You are nobility," Calpernia says at long last, pulling Morgaine from her thoughts and she sets down the raven marker she'd been toying with absently. "Though that means less for a Circle mage in the south."

"I was fortunate enough that my family have always had a somewhat different view of things. They're used to making sure that each one of us does something to benefit the family. Had I been born in Nevarra even, I might have risen higher, I'm sure they would have had me become a Mortalitasi to better our lot. I have two mage cousins, Nuada and Cailleach, Nuada was in Hasmal, Cailleach in Markham. Another cousin from Starkhaven is a Templar; we're polite enough not to mention the one that went off to become a mercenary but he has his uses as well. It's expected of us to serve the Chantry in some fashion, or the Templars, to behave ourselves if we have magic in our blood; if you have the right ties though, the Templars and the Circle will allow you extra freedoms. It helps to be on first name terms with so many of the Chantry in Ostwick."

"They did not disown you entirely when you came into your magic?"

"Nuada already had, he summoned a wisp at the dinner table, it caused something of a stir. I lost my temper and burned down the drapes." The memory can still make her smile, the way the maid had run to her parents, how her mother had been angrier about the damage than the revelation.

"I burned a book, but it finally meant I would be more. More than a girl sent on errands or to fetch and carry."

"That did make me curious," Morgaine admits, leaning forward to mirror how Calpernia sits, ignoring the heat of the afternoon sun through the long narrow windows as it beats down on her dark hair. "The way we view Tevinter is somewhat…inaccurate. Dorian explained, in his own way, how wrong we were regarding how society is structured there, about the bloodlines for distilling the perfect mage, and that there are some who hope that eventually a mage will be born to them. He said nothing of what happens when a slave is found to have magic."

"Erasethenes was a man who had little time for anything but his research on Dumat; slaves with magical talent are still slaves, requiring training lest all the slave quarters have an abomination set loose among them one day, he might have sold me so as not to have a distraction when he so hated those. Or he might have used me. There are experiments, rituals, things that require blood or magic, I was in possession of both and I was his property. That was the very first moment when I became so aware that my life was a thing that could be thrown away."

"But he taught you, I know that much."

"He did. I had been a strange girl to the others, I was not wanted, perhaps it was the magic within me that made it so but when I spoke they began to listen to me. Though as soon as I had control of my magic, he returned to his studies. So I read. I devoured what I could get my hands on in his library. The Chant – the Imperial Chant, not that thing you all speak of and sing here – and the Old Gods, history; everything. He taught me enough not to be a bother but it is as you and the witch said: knowledge begets a hunger for more." Calpernia's hazel eyes are fever bright, a healthy flush to her cheeks but far from sounding mad, there's something that stirs in Morgaine at the sight, at the passion, a thing she's seen so rarely but recognises so keenly that some part of her reaches out, aching and wanting, a thing she immediately tries to stamp down but the words continue and her attention is snapped back, the way a cat is by something shiny dangling before it. "I had no direction. That is what Tevinter lacks. We are the cradle of all civilisation in Thedas, the ones that weather the
brunt of the Qunari onslaught so that the walls of Minrathous bear cracks the way a slave carries the scars of their beatings, and yet like those scars, the Magisterium ignores it. They look to themselves, their reputations, their petty squabbles. They did not pay for it as we slaves have. It is our blood, our sweat, our lives. Ancient Tevinter had great heroes but it was upon our backs that the Imperium was built and I would see us have it."

"There are times when a limb must be severed, so that the body might heal," Morgaine says carefully, unable to look away even when the words might be a spark that ignites something beyond imagining. But Calpernia smiles, leans close that she might smell the jasmine oil in her hair (Morgaine doesn't care if it's seen as a bribe, Calpernia is helping, she is allowed some comforts.)

"When Corypheus came, he sensed the power within me to become a champion. I can't explain what happened but perhaps you will understand; to feel that you are more than your body, that you are some primal force that cannot be tamed. He spoke of rebuilding, remodeling. He knew that I had learned, that there was such a potential within me. I was so hungry. He raised me up to be something more than a slave. I know now what he wanted but…"

It's a bold thing, to reach out, to feel Calpernia flinch but allow it, the fluttering pulse beneath the soft skin of her wrist, flushed all the way down to her throat where her robes cover her. "Fate and chance can often be mistaken for one another, and they are as impossible to deny as change. We either leap and hope we make the landing or we fall and scrape ourselves together. I had chances and opportunities within the Circle, so many Enchanters and peers to impress, and I was trusted to help with what family matters I could, as well as with Circle business. I was a Lucrosian, though gold meant less to me than politics and alliances, they can buy things gold cannot. Yet even here where I'm a noble, a leader of the Inquisition, Andraste's Herald, I'm still a mage, there are plenty who will always look down their noses at me."

Calpernia continues, a servant brings them tea and honey, watered wine and food, the sun moves and they talk for hours, their guards dropping and when Morgaine realises they have to part for the evening, she's reluctant. She helps Calpernia to her feet, legs numb from so many hours spent sitting, catching her when she stumbles, holding her close for a moment before they remember themselves.

She escorts her back personally, a careful measured distance between them, bidding her goodnight as the guards nod to her.

"Did Dorian tell you the word for a slave that wields magic?" When Morgaine shakes her head, she smiles savagely. "Incaensor. It means dangerous substance, useful when controlled but if broken… Once it was used to hurt, but I wonder now, what fear it would strike into the hearts of the Magisterium, if each and every slave rose up when they have never troubled themselves to look down."

Morgaine's smile must be small, her words measured, for there are guards here who will talk, and all talk travels far, this decision still one of the more perilous and dangerous ones she has made. "They might well fear you more than they fear me."

Even when the invitation comes from both Morrigan and Leliana, Morgaine always has that nagging feeling that she's interrupting something private, and today is no exception when she leaves a meeting with Josephine to ascend the steps of the rotunda, greeting them with a smile as she settles
across from them at Leliana's small table. A neat stack of papers sits between them, honeyed wine and tiny little cakes, dark purples and black with hints of gold dusted across them, reminding Morgaine of the Witch of the Wilds seated at the elbow of her spymaster, seemingly satisfied with the outcome.

"Calpernia has proven to be far more cooperative than I would have hoped," Leliana says as Morgaine finishes signing her name to a document, a small smile on her face though those often seem to come easier around Morrigan. "I believe that to be your doing Inquisitor."

"As much as I would like to take the credit for that? I think it's down to Calpernia herself." It doesn't stop Morgaine from feeling a curious lurch in her gut at hearing it though everyone know that it's true. She's been the model prisoner, providing far more aid than they ever could have hoped for very little in return in all honesty.

"Do not be so sure. You will remember where we met, how persuasive you were, that tales of you spread and grow; who you are is what has convinced Calpernia." Morrigan's voice seems softer, lower, especially against the cacophony of the rookery, the ravens screaming and beating their wings against the bars of their cages. A strange venue when there are plenty of other places for them to choose from in Skyhold but praise from Morrigan, while unnecessary, has never been unwelcome. "She speaks of you often."

"To me as well, though the subject is one that would come up more readily than your research with her Morrigan." Leliana almost seems amused. If she weren't a player of the Game, Morgaine would think that she's biting the inside of her cheek to keep from laughing.

"Well you are so often present-"

Morgaine interrupts Morrigan. "You work together?" Somehow she has the feeling that someone should have informed her of that sooner.

"We are all working together," Leliana replies, and she isn't wrong but it's not the answer Morgaine is looking for when it's something that's right under her nose. Yes, she knows that they've known each other since the Blight, and likely from passing occasions in the Imperial court but Leliana is her spymaster, Morrigan her arcane advisor. There's very little for them to actively collaborate on compared to say Leliana and Cullen or Leliana and Josephine, and as she waits for Leliana to elaborate, Morrigan smirks at her. "There are many interests we share, when we have such a long history together.

"That's certainly one way of putting it." Morrigan's mutter tries for irritation but falls short of the mark, not nearly enough heat or spite behind it. "But yes, she began with the Well, since then I believe she has wished to gain a measure of you."

"Your secrets are quite safe however, we can assure you."

She looks between them, really looks, though they both seem so beyond reproach but then Cassandra and herself are just the same. Leliana's words at the Winter Palace stick with her yet this cannot be so recent as Morrigan's arrival at Skyhold, not with Leliana who she is now, still hidden behind her chainmail, still gauntleted. Her hood is not quite so high however and it reveals a hint of a braid as she leans forward, resting her chin on her hands. They’d been discussing elven ruins, some in the reach of Corypheus that they wish to reclaim and catalogue as fully as they can, a formality really when they all know Morgaine will agree to it even if the information doesn't arrive in time because Morrigan is putting it to good use, and with so many elves working for the Inquisition it's
easily disseminated, even able to travel to the Dalish in some cases. Even after his defeat, the Venatori will not like down overnight, and that's another reason to take these from him, to take the correct steps to prevent even a hint of old Tevinter revivals while the south recovers. Despite how she feels like an interloper far more than she should, she enjoys time spent in the company of both, debates that never frustrate her, laughing even when the arguments can become vicious and personal.

It's as she goes to leave that she can't help herself, looking between them. She doesn't expect a confirmation or a denial, but she can't help herself. "How long?"

"Long enough," Leliana says, and Morrigan's hand takes hers, guiding it down to rest flat on the table.

"Yet not long enough," Morrigan adds with something a little too close to regret.

"Time is not a thing to be squandered, Inquisitor, some things can endure years, built to withstand, yet others are more fleeting." The words come from Leliana who looks to Morrigan before Morgaine, sighing gently. "The guards talk, and we all have eyes to see. It was another reason we requested you meet us."

"Are you-"

Morrigan cuts her off. "Life is bittersweet, yet one need not take them together. Enjoy the sweetness while you can, and trust that triumph will chase away whatever bitter taste may linger."

What can she say to that? Morgaine has never thought herself transparent but her face heats, and she stammers out a farewell before descending the stairs until she's out of sight, leaning against the curving stone wall. Of course it would be them to see it, to know, and her mind is already running wild with imaginings, with questions. But when she makes to return and ask them, she catches Leliana with her gloves off, stroking Morrigan's face in her hands like a wild thing that might eat her heart. As Morrigan draws down her hood to bring their faces closer, she wonders if the secret is that perhaps she already has.

In the end, it is not exactly a blessing from Cassandra; being told 'do what you must, I will not judge you' is a phrase that means Cassandra can and will forgive her in time, even if she doesn't understand, even if she doesn't particularly like it. Morgaine can live with that. Her breath is caught in her throat when she goes to the war room after summoning Calpernia, the guards waiting outside. They've been so careful (or so she thought, prior to Morrigan and Leliana's words, and she can't allow herself to think about who else might know, what they might think, what they might say) to avoid becoming too familiar, or Morgaine has always been aware of it. When Calpernia enters, Morgaine locks the door, catching and turning her so her back is to the war table. Even taking her hands, roughened from a staff and her life in Tevinter, makes her forget herself far too long. Calpernia watches her, still as a statue but she flushes from her cheeks down the long pale column of her throat, throat working as she tries to swallow.

"Morgaine," she whispers, in the quiet of the chamber, motes of dust hanging in the air, and the afternoon sun turns Calpernia's golden hair to flame. She says Morgaine's name so rarely, as if a title will keep some distance between them, or perhaps simply because she's used to such habits.
"If you don't want this, tell me." Morgaine urges, rubbing her thumbs over the backs of her knuckles, heart pounding as she speaks. This is reckless and wild, this could ruin her were word to get out yet she can't deny it, she'd be a fool to try. "Whenever you want it to stop, say the word and I will."

Calpernia's answer is to kiss her, freeing her hands to cup Morgaine's cheek in one, the other on her hip. Even through her robes the heat of it is like a brand. Her own hands settle on Calpernia's waist, fingers skimming over the thin crêpe of the gown she wears, and she only breaks the kiss when she's breathless, her head spinning. It's easy enough to walk Calpernia back until she's seated atop the war table, a wave of Morgaine's hand sending markers scattering across the map, many clattering to the floor. Calpernia kisses her again, nipping Morgaine's bottom lip to get her attention as they attack ties and fastenings on one another's clothing; the door is locked but the sky could tear itself clean in half before Morgaine could bring herself to care. She pulls away to slip off her delicate jewelled slippers but she has to bend to unlace Calpernia's boots. She hoped for this and dressed accordingly but the other woman didn't, though it's worth it, the intake of breath at the sight of Morgaine before her, and soon enough Calpernia's gown is bunched at her waist, pale breasts bared and Morgaine can't help herself, kissing down her throat and between them, her hands gentle when she cups them.

The moan is almost a sob, and she wonders how long it's been, gentling her touch as she kisses down to one nipple to take it in her mouth, rolling the other between her thumb and forefinger before she switches from one to the other, Calpernia arching her back. They gather her robes between them, pushing her smallclothes down too, Morgaine leaning in to brush her lips against hers as she instructs her to lift her hips, tugging her forward and spreading her thighs as she kneels between them.

Steadying herself with one hand on Calpernia's thigh, she cups her mound with the other, pressing gently until Calpernia rocks her hips into her hand, middle finger slipping between her folds to tease, stopping just short of her clit. She looks up to see Calpernia with her bottom lip between her teeth, waiting for her to nod before she continues, fingers tracing her outer lips lightly enough to tickle and Calpernia's breath shudders out of her in a laugh that makes Morgaine smile before she carefully parts her folds, spreading her thighs wider, kissing her way up one before she leans in to lick her clit, very gently. She wants to be gentle with Calpernia, and her mind could come up with reasons but she ignores it, listening to each and every gasp, the little stifled moans and whines when she switches to circling her clit instead, or broad slow licks to her cunt, thumb where her tongue was.

When she slips two fingers then three into her, Calpernia lets out a groan that sounds as if it's been pulled from her, lying back on the war table, a hand stretched out in the direction of the Anderfels, the other over Rivain, Tevinter beneath her. She comes with Morgaine's mouth on her clit, arching so high, her cries echoing off the walls. She wants to do it again, to fuck her right here, and up in her bed though that would be crossing a boundary she and Cassandra haven't negotiated yet, and an edge of fear only makes her wetter as she licks her fingers, resting her head on Calpernia's trembling thigh. The other woman forces herself up on her elbows, hands outstretched and Morgaine slips free of her robe, nothing beneath it, like apprentice days at Ostwick, illicit visits and liaisons in whatever quiet place you could find. As soon as Calpernia can sit again she tugs Morgaine closer, mouthing at her breasts with magic at her fingertips, a flash of frost that has her shivering, her nipples tightening, and again between her legs, Calpernia framing her clit with her index and ring finger of one hand, the middle circling and teasing, two fingers entering Morgaine easily, more insistent, letting the movement of Morgaine's hips and her breathless needy noises guide her to the spot where she curls her fingers, in counterpoint to the rhythm of her clit.

Her throat tightens, the world blurring at the edges when she comes, her head pressed tight to Calpernia's shoulder as she shudders, tears at the corners of her eyes. She's lightheaded, the way she gets after a long battle where she reaches deep within herself to cast spells and it's only once she has her breath again that she notices her hand, the green mark glowing brighter, the afterglow softening
the coming from it into an uncomfortable tingle she can't ignore.

Calpernia smiles sadly, and they right themselves in silence before Morgaine catches her, the words dying in her throat.

"I'll make him pay," she vows because what else could this be?

"Na via lerno victoria," Calpernia tells her.

Hours later and Morgaine is ready for battle, Cassandra at her side alongside Solas and Varric. There's work to be done, and she has a promise to keep as well as a victory to savour.

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