A tall, blonde woman steps into the tavern, her icy blue eyes glistening in the torchlight. She is clad from head to toe in heavy armor, and a massive sword hangs from her back. She looks around the room and heads over to the barkeep and tosses him a large pouch of coins. “I need a room for the night,” she says bluntly. “Several nights actually.” Her voice, while definitely feminine, was rough and carried a slight growl to it.

The barkeep rolls his eyes. “Great. Another lass wearing her da’s armor tryin’ ta prove she’s ev’ry bit o’ the man he is,” he mutters. He opens the pouch and his eyes to wide. “What’s yer definition of ‘sev’ral, Lass? Ye’ve got enough gold here for a month.”

She shrugs. “If I need to leave before it’s spent, I’ll be back,” she says nonchalantly. Now.” She plops her slender frame on the nearest stool and undoes the harness that holds the sword to her back, then set’s both aside. “Which room is mine?” she asks with the same level of disinterest she’d shown up until this point.

The barkeep puts the heavy pouch in a safebox under the counter and rummages for a key. “Here. I’m sure this room’ll suit ye jest fine.”

The woman takes the key and hefts up her sword, resting the edge of the blade on her armored shoulder. “Thanks.” She looks at the number ‘13’etched into the side of the key, and this time it is she that rolls her eyes. She walks away, trying not to let the man’s sexist attitude towards her get under her skin. She had enough problems with people teasing her for her appearance. She didn’t need other things for others to bash her about. She heads to the room she had essentially bought and settles in. She sets the sword in the corner and begins undoing the fastenings and the straps for her armor and slowly pulls it off, showing off her rather unfeminine form. She was taller than most women, her slender frame towering at six and a half feet. Her body was willowy and thin, but it was tough and strong despite her malnourished appearance. Blonde draped down over her shoulders and her eyes were the same color as the morning sky on a crisp winter’s day. Aside from this however, she had little that was womanly about her. Her hips had never widened, and her rearend and her breasts were almost as flat as her stomach.

She fingers the locket around her neck, the last thing her father had given her. “Be strong like a bear and cunning like a fox, as swift as the eagle and as graceful as the wolf making short work of its pray, Kaldra,” she echoes, recalling the last words her father had told her. She had lived up to them words, making a name for herself in her hometown and the surrounding villages killing creatures nobody else dared approach as well as criminals of a similar reputation. Her sister was one of the victims of her last mark. She had been beautiful; a diamond amongst the other stones of their village. They were total opposites and nobody was ever able to tell that they were of the same family. Her sister had been shorter, but whereas Kaldra was a pole, her sister was an hourglass; wide hips, large breasts that seemed to just keep growing. Just as she would finally have worn in her clothing to be comfortable, it would be time to get something larger to contain her increasing assets. “I wish I was more like her,” she says quietly before kissing it a second time.

She looks to the locket. It was little more than a small chunk of gold that wished to be a heart shape, but the fox carved into it was unmistakable. She holds it to her lips and kisses it, her own good luck charm and ritual. She felt warm for some reason, and she looks around for what it might be. She notices the window was open and the curtain was pulled back slightly. The sun was shining on her naked body, and she sighs. “I should have known,” she mutters. She stands and walks over to shut the window and goes to fall onto the bed. It was soft and comforting, and it was heaven for her tired body. She falls asleep almost instantly, barely moving except to roll over every so often.

She sits up in her bed and looks around, but it is dark and things are hazy. She assumes the haziness is caused by her having just woken up and rubs her eyes. She feels a bit of weight on the foot of the bed and looks over, half expecting to see a person sitting on the edge of the bed. What she sees intrigues her though; a fox, and it was looking her straight in the eyes. “Wish granted,” it says. Its voice is strange, like it wasn’t really there. It leaps at her and slams into her chest, melting into the skin and vanishing. It hurt having a creature jump into her chest, and she loses consciousness again.

She snaps up in her bed, holding the covers to her chest. She looks around scanning the bed for any sign of the fox, but it simply wasn’t there. No stray furs, no random muddy pawprints, nothing. “Must have been a dream,” she says. Her voice startles her, for it was smoother than normal. Less rugged. She climbs out of bed placing her feet on the cold floor and heading towards the tub on the other side of the room. She smiles at the mirror and waves at her reflection. “Hello, Kaldra. Looking good this morning,” she jokes. “Why, thank you, Kaldra. You… look…” she pauses, staring at herself. “Too good,” she finishes. Something was wrong with what she saw, but she wasn’t sure what it was. She had no new scars, and her fairly tanned skin was only a slight shade lighter than normal, but that was to be expected with all the night jobs she had been pulling lately. “Something…” she says softly, pondering what it was that made her think things weren’t right. “It… might be the mirror,” she says confidently. “That must be it. The mirror is playing tricks on my eyes.”

She starts donning her armor, first putting on the padding. “It’s tighter than usual,” she notes. She traces a line across the padding where her bust is. “Here…” she comments thoughtfully. “What was that dream last night?” she asks, trying to take her mind off overthinking why her clothes were snug in areas they shouldn’t have been. She tries to remember, but it doesn’t work. “It was… orange?” she asks grasping at straws. She shakes her head and goes back to putting on her armor. She straps her breastplate on, though she couldn’t tell if it was tighter or not because of the padding. The rest of her armor is put on, and her sword reclaims its spot on her back. She sets out for the bounty board and collects a few of the posters. One particularly elusive thief and a few monsters that were straying too close to town. She sets out for the monsters first, wanting a challenge first. She kills the first monster with ease, but it struck her as odd. It was something that most farmers could have taken out with only a little more difficulty, but if somebody wanted to pay somebody else to kill it, then that was fine by her. Especially if that somebody was her.

She moves on to the second monster and is becoming aware that it is getting difficult to breathe. ‘What’s going on?’ she wonders. She rarely got sick, so if this was some device of the second monster, she didn’t know what to expect. She enters a nondescript cave, careful to keep an ear out for anything in the failing light. As she approached the darkest parts, she comes across a fox. “Well, hello there,” she coos gently to the small canine. It was larger than a normal fox, but it was still just a fox. It looks up at her and cocks a head to one side, taking in her features. “Sister always was better with animals. They liked her better for some reason. Maybe it’s because she looked so beautiful,” she ponders out loud. Again the wish she made the night before sprung to mind. “I wish I looked more like her. Her looks seemed to get her anything.”

The fox stands and runs over to her then leaps at her landing on her chest and forcing her to the ground. It looks into her eyes and it smiles. Not just looks happy, but actually smiles a human smile. “Another wish granted,” it says softly. Its voice is masculine and deep, but at the same time smooth and subtle. It pushes its head against her breastplate and melts into it, and Kaldra’s body seems to burn as though on fire. After a few minutes of excruciating pain, the fox vanishes into her, and Kaldra lets out a gasp of relief that the pain had stopped. She takes another deep breath, but finds her breathing to be constricted and shallow. She wouldn’t die from it or pass out, but she wouldn’t be able to go after the thief in this condition. She looks around and there was the creature she was to kill, lying dead to one side of the cave. She walks over and examines the body and finds it to be covered in small scratches and bite marks.

“The fox…?” she questions. There was no way to confirm it now, but the monster was dead and she may as well collect the bounty on it. She walks back out of the cavern carrying one of the claws of the creature as a trophy and as proof she killed it and returns to town. She cashes in on the bounties, but finds her breathing to become shallower and more difficult with each passing minute. “I need to get back to the tavern,” she says between struggling breaths. She staggers her way to the tavern, woozy from not enough air and gets back to the rented room without too much incident. Outside of the barkeep calling her ‘Lady’ rather than ‘Lass’, nothing was unusual. She gets to the bed and begins shedding her armor and simply lets it fall to the floor. Finally stripped of the padded shirt she could breathe again, and looked to take stock of herself in the mirror.

Scars were fainter, and her tan was more even which was odd, and most of the scars on her face had vanished save for a deep one that ran under her left eye. Finally something explained why her breathing was so labored. “Their huge…” she says looking at the two fleshy orbs that hung from her chest. “Where did these come from?” she asks taking a few prodding pokes at her improved bustline to make sure they were real. They were at least two cup sizes larger than they had been two days ago, and she wasn’t sure what caused this sudden spurt of womanhood. “I’ll need some clothes,” she says looking at her armor.

*…To Be Continued…*