

THE DUKE AND THE THIEF - PART 5

BY TROGDOR297

The morning following Bryn's return to the keep, rumours would spread amongst the soldiers camped in the courtyard. Whispers travelled from one cooking fire to the next, the huddled soldiers confirming their fears that they too had heard it.

The rumours were not about how a trio of invaders had managed to pierce the castle's defences; no one but the group who stood in Fenrod's chambers the night before knew of the raid. No, what the rank and file of the resistance army spoke about was the horrible wailing that had rang through the night, echoing from the Duke's tower. The soldier's suspected that perhaps the mage's keep was haunted, or perhaps he kept some frightful creature captive to experiment on. None would guess correctly that the source of the heart-wrenching cry was simply a broken human.

Bryn sat on the floor of the Duke's bedroom weeping uncontrollably throughout the night, knees held to her chest, the great waves of her hair falling like a blanket around her. She felt like her entire being was coming undone, like a wood cabin going up in flames. Her tears didn't stop flowing until the light of morning shone through the open window of the tower, but the feeling within her didn't stop, it simply became focused. She was no longer the cabin; she was the fire.

Pushing herself to her feet, she took a deep breath before she walked back out to the main room of the Duke's quarters. Her mouth was a thin line as she lifted her hands and began to work them through the air. All at once her body changed. Her massive breasts, which each still reached her hips were pulled back, into round firm orbs only slightly smaller than her head. Her ass and hips, each cheek the size of a pillow, was narrowed. Her luxurious red hair, which fell in waves to her ankles, floated up as if she was in a windstorm. The long strands began to bind and weave amongst each other, until she was left with a large, braided bun tied snugly to the back of her head, the locks of her hair spiralling around each other in an intricate pattern.

Lastly, she pointed to her clothes, her 'Raven' attire that she'd left in a heap on the floor the previous night. With a flick of a finger they rose into the air, like puppets on a string. Crooking one finger she summoned her clothing one at a time. She reached out to grab her pants as they whizzed toward her, willing them to slow. Instead, they sped up, flying past her and hitting the far wall. The rest of her clothing came shortly after careening into her before carrying on across the room.

When they hit the far wall, they stuck in place, plastered against the stone, still trying to surge in the direction her phantom force had compelled them. With a frustrated frown she commanded them to stop. It took several attempts, and various hand gestures before they eventually obeyed her commands.

She sighed as she walked over to the now lifeless pile of cloth. One night of passion with her paramour did not make her an expert in magic. She still had a lot to learn...and had no one to teach her.

Wishing to waste no more time she stepped into the pants, the leather stretching tight as with some difficulty she pulled them over her still impressive hind-end. Her laced shirt came next, but she didn't bother trying to do it up. The top would never fit her bust as is, and she had no intention of shrinking herself further. Tossing her jacket over her shoulders she prepared to leave with her breasts almost fully on display, the edge of her clothing just barely keeping her decent.

The last thing she put on before heading down to find the others were Fenrod's black glasses that lay discarded on his desk. As she held them in her hand, she felt a lump form in her throat. Pushing her sadness down, she slid the glasses on and left the room.

Lord Angus and Lord Jentu stood over a table in the main hall, where a map of the country had been laid out. The ballroom had been turned into a war room, where officers bustled this way and that, planning supply routes, formations, and other necessities when combining multiple armies into one.

With a loud bang the ironclad double doors of the hall slammed fully open and through them marched Bryn. All around the room, men flinched in shock from the noise.

"Quite an entrance, My Lady" Lord Jentu said, not looking up from the table as she approached.

"I told you, she's a firecracker" Lord Angus said with a grin. "Did you...sleep...well, My Lady?" He asked, unsubtly, wagging his eyebrows suggestively.

Bryn said nothing as she stared at the map on the table. Littered across it were little figures representing troops. The men who camped in the courtyard appeared to be just a small fraction of their force, though it paled against the mass of figures that sat clumped in the South; The Royal Army.

It still all meant nothing against the might of two mages.

"My Lady?" Angus asked again, disturbed by Bryn's silence.

"Fenrod is gone" she said, voice quiet and cold.

"I beg your pardon?" Jentu said, finally turning to look at her.

"He's gone. Hemfort took him in the night" she said again, doing her best to keep the emotion out of her voice.

"That's impossible?!" Angus blurted out. "Fenrod's defences are impenetrable! From what he told us, Hemfort would need to be twice as strong to break-"

Bryn reached up and removed the Duke's glasses, revealing the golden glow of her flaming eyes.

Angus's jaw dropped open, and the previously unflappable Jentu now looked truly shocked.

"He gave me half of his power" Bryn said bitterly. "The stupid fool..."

"You shouldn't speak of your groom to be so harshly" A soft, measured voice said from her right. The Lady Ophene, still looking as incredibly gravid as the day before walked up beside her. She wore a dress of bright teal silk, no doubt custom made to fit her massive mid-section that projected multiple feet from underneath her bust.

Bryn grit her teeth in anger. "If he hadn't-"

"He would still be here, yes" Ophene said, cutting her off. "But you can't fault the generous actions of a man in love. Do not lay the blame on him, when there's a much worthier target to focus on"

Bryn looked at the blonde ready to protest but instead let out a tired sigh nodding in agreement. "You're right. Sorry" Ophene smiled as she gave her friend an understanding nod. Bryn turned back to the two lords who stood across from her. "Hemfort. What do we know?"

The two lords snapped into focus. Though Bryn was not of noble birth, nor was her relationship with Fenrod any more than a set of briefly exchanged verbal promises...she was still now a mage, and that meant she had authority.

"He has the King's ear" Jentu said, gesturing to the royal city at the southern tip of the continent with an open-handed gesture.

"More like he's got the King's balls" Angus snickered. "Ow!" He swore as a sharp finger flicked his ear. The culprit, his own wife, Lady Heronia, stepped up beside him, several large rolled-up scrolls held under her arm.

"This is no time for gibes, dear" she said sharply, though there was a hint of a smirk on her face. The brunette turned to look at Bryn, her eyebrows lifting slightly as she beheld her flaming gold eyes. "That's a good look for you, darling"

Bryn gave her a small smile, before looking back at Lord Jentu. "His intention isn't to work with the King, he's planning to *depose* the king. Can you tell me anything I don't know?"

Jentu opened his mouth, then shut it, drawing it to a thin line. Bryn looked around the table, hoping for answers, and receiving none.

At her side, Ophene took her hand. "When did you last see him?"

"A few days ago" Bryn said.

Ophene sighed "That's the first time anyone has seen him outside of the castle in months. We've been tracking the killings, but there doesn't seem to be a pattern or a motive. You speak of him planning to depose the King; this is news to us. It would seem you're more informed on the sorcerer than any of us are"

Bryn quietly groaned. "Shit. I'd hoped...I don't know. I guess I'd hoped that one of you would know what to do now"

"It seems like you've just given us a plan, darling" Heronia said from across the table, her painted ruby lips smiling.

"What do you mean?" Bryn said.

"We turn the King on him"

"Devilishly clever, my little peach!" Lord Angus said, wrapping an arm around her.

"Who're you calling little?" She said looking over at him with a grin. Angus's arm moved and she let out a little squeak. Though she hadn't seen it, Bryn assumed he'd just taken a rather firm grip on his wife's overly developed posterior, each cheek as wide as her waist.

"That could work" Jentu said, rubbing his chin. "Our problem right now is that Hemfort won't face us in the open, and if we wanted to root him out of whatever blasted hidey hole he's in, we'd have to march on the capital which would be seen as an act of treason. This is why we've been biding our time up here, planning and training. But if we get the King on our side, then he'll have nowhere to hide."

"Except we have no proof!" Bryn exclaimed.

"We won't need it" Ophene said, squeezing Bryn's hand. "A word of a sorcerer...a newly made sorcerer should be enough to convince him. Or at least make him think. Make him withdraw his patronage."

Jentu continued "We know nothing of Hemfort, but we know plenty of the King. The killing of nobles across the country has put the royal court on edge, and the King is desperate to stop them. If you bring him the answer...he'll have to at least consider it."

Bryn slowly nodded, considering what they'd both said. Bryn had always had a deep respect for Ophene, as she'd been the most level-headed and by far the most intelligent of the Duke's former consorts. It seems she'd found an adequate match in Lord Jentu; the tall gargoyle of a man clearly possessed a fierce intellect.

"Even if the King does believe me...he has Fenrod" Bryn murmured. Even saying it sent an icy pang of loss through her.

“Aye, he does, but he won’t own him yet” Angus said, leaning forward with both hands on the edge of the table. The bearded blonde man’s normally jovial voice was as hard as steel. “Trust me on this, from someone who’s been there. It’s no easy feat to dominate a man’s mind the way Hemfort did. It took him a full week of uninterrupted focus for him to completely control me. A solid week of torture...” Beside him Heronia placed a hand on his shoulder, massaging his broad back reassuringly.

Angus sighed before he continued “It took him a week and it must be said, though I hate to admit it, Fenrod is far more resilient than I. We’ll have some time before we’ll be forced to face our old friend. The time to act is now”

Bryn looked around the war table, all eyes on her. Taking a deep breath, to calm herself, she looked down at the map, at the capital.

“Alright, then. It’s settled. I’ll go to the capital to persuade the King to abandon Hemfort. What will you do?”

“We’ll prepare to march South” Jentu said solemnly. “Our best hope is if the King turns Hemfort over to us. If not...then we’ll have to take the city and find him before he can claim Fenrod’s mind.”

Angus nodded, a grim smile on his face “Finally. I’ve had enough of us sitting on our asses. No offense dear” He looked over to his wife, or more accurately, he looked down at her enormous rear-end.

Heronia smiled, giving him a soft chuckle. “None taken, my love.”

Bryn frowned “The Royal army outnumbers your forces two to one! How will you take the city!”

Jentu snorted, a grim smile making his leather face wrinkle slightly “The Royal army is made up of two kinds of men: simpering nobles looking for glory or beggar recruits. Most of them have never seen battle. Our hesitation before now to march South wasn’t out of fear, but out of mercy. We’d rather not have to slaughter innocents to defeat Hemfort...but if circumstances force our hand...we will do what we must”

Ophene let go of Bryn’s hand, turning away from the table. “Come Husband, we must inform the officers and ensure the supply lines are ready.”

Jentu nodded, stepping over to join his wife, letting her loop her arm in his. Together they disappeared through a pair of side doors that Bryn knew led to the courtyard.

Bryn let out a quiet sigh before she turned away from the table. It was only Heronia’s voice calling to her that made her stop.

“Bryn...I know you’ve lived in the capital, so you know it’s dangerous. But still...be careful”

Bryn smiled at the former consort “Don’t worry. I won’t be alone”

The castle was in chaos as the combined forces of multiple armies prepared to lay siege on the most heavily fortified place on the continent. There was so much going on, the air filled with the cacophony of dozens of people yelling, as months of preparation and planning suddenly became action, that no one noticed three young women on horses slip out the main gate.

Bryn sat low in her saddle as she urged her mount onward. She had to focus on her task, on what needed to be done. Keep feeding fuel to that flame that she'd become lest she burn up into cinders.

"Bryn!" A faint voice yelled behind her. Bryn slowed her horse to a trot, as she turned around. She hadn't meant to, but she'd almost left her companions behind.

It took several moments for Vantica and Sashy to catch up on their own black mares. The two maids hadn't hesitated when Bryn had asked them to join her, despite her warnings to the dangers that they may face.

"Sorry, we're not as fast as you" Vantica said as her horse clopped up beside Bryn's. "I can't remember the last time I rode a horse"

On her other side, Sashy the blonde huffed "Don't apologize, V! Bryn, don't be stupid, racing off like that. You're going to ruin the charade!"

"Sashy! Don't call her stupid!" Vantica said aghast.

Bryn sighed "No, she's right. We have a plan, and I need to stick to it. Sorry"

Vantica reached across and gripped Bryn's hand squeezing it tightly. Sashy just nodded, her frown turning to an understanding smile.

"It's alright, Bryn. I know you're just tense" Sashy said.

Bryn shrugged "I am, but that doesn't mean we don't have a job to do. Come on, let's go"

They set off together once more, Bryn in the lead, with the other two flanking her just behind. They were travelling as a noble woman and her two handmaidens, hoping to avoid drawing attention to themselves. Lord Angus had given them a writ of passage from his court, which they intended to use to get themselves into the city.

They rode in silence through the great pine trees of the eastern coastline. It was a few days ride to the capital, and it had already been midday when they'd left the Duke's keep. Bryn wanted to get to the King's City as fast as possible...but she also couldn't leave these two behind, and so they continued on at a frustratingly slow pace.

The stillness was broken by a despondent sigh. Bryn looked over her left shoulder at Vantica, who sat slumped in her saddle staring off at the trees. "What is it, V?"

"Nothing..."

Bryn stared her down "It's not nothing, this is the third time you've sighed like that in the past hour"

"She misses her breasts" Sashy said teasingly.

"And you don't!" Vantica cried.

"Oh, I definitely do, but at least I'm not moping about it"

Part of travelling as an unassuming noblewoman, meant her servants had to be equally unassuming, meaning... no impossibly large breasts. Of course, that was the one part that her two friends had expressed hesitation at. They loved their breasts, so massive, warm, pillowy. Still, they'd relented when Bryn had put her foot down.

They were still busty, each of them with full chests, visible against their slate grey servant's dresses, a full handful each of them, but quite a difference from what they'd bore this morning.

"I'm sorry, girls, but it's for our safety. Even I'm making sacrifices" Bryn said, facing forward once again.

Sashy laughed "Oh yeah? Then why're you bigger than us?"

Bryn was glad that she was facing away from them so they couldn't see her blush. She'd intended to reduce her curves more...but she couldn't. Secretly she was holding out hope that if she found the Duke...the sight of her...her enticingly round bust, her plump delicious ass...they would bring him back to her. It was foolish, but it was something for her to hold on to, to prevent herself from falling apart.

"Because...I'm the noblewoman." Bryn said curtly. "That's that"

Sashy rolled her eyes, but didn't push Bryn on it. She could tell that the redhead was still in a volatile state of being.

As they spent the rest of the day riding through wilderness, the three women idly chatted, though it was mostly Vantica and Sashy, with Bryn remaining morosely silent for long periods.

It was only when the sun finally dipped below the horizon did they stop to make camp. As the two maids set up the tents, Bryn struggled to make a fire.

She'd made fire the conventional way hundreds of times, but she was a mage now, the conventional way of things was supposed to be behind her.

Kneeling beside the small pile of twigs and dry grass, she closed her eyes and focused, trying to imagine flame. Nothing much, just a little orb of fire, to bring them light and warmth in the night. But after five minutes of silently willing something to happen and producing no results she opened her eyes and groaned.

“What’s wrong, Bryn?” Vantica asked from where she stood beside the tent she was setting up.

“I don’t know what the fuck I’m doing” she said sullenly.

“That doesn’t sound like you, you’ve always been so adept at things!” Vantica said with a sweet smile. Her long brown hair was tied back into a braid down her back.

“Well, not this. I just...I don’t understand the difference. Like, changing bodies...I can do effortlessly” To prove her point Bryn twisted and pushed her hand towards Vantica. With a yelp of shock and joy Vantica’s hands clutched her breasts that rapidly swelled underneath her dress.

“Oh yes! My girls! Thank you Bryn!” She cried exuberantly. Bryn stopped the growth with another twist of her hand, just before Vantica’s bust would’ve started to destroy her clothing. She was left with huge full breasts, each one the size of a pumpkin that stretched the loose drab grey dress she wore to its limit.

“Hey!” Sashy yelled “You’re supposed to be helping me set up camp! And what gives, Bryn? What happened to no tits?!”

“That’s just for the day time” Bryn said as she stared at the shadowed pile of sticks. “No one’s going to see us at night, so you can have your breasts back after dark” She extended a hand toward Sashy and began to motion when the blonde cut her off.

“That’s alright, Bryn. I’m good” she said, walking over toward her.

Bryn frowned as she tilted her head to look up at Sashy as she approached. “Oh...are you sure?”

Sashy nodded as she crouched down beside Bryn. Across from them Vantica still stood, hands pawing at her regrown assets, squealing with delight in the darkness.

“Bryn...talk to me” Sashy said.

“I’m fine” Bryn said tersely “I just can’t figure out how to summon fucking fire! I could turn you into a dragon quick as you please, but I can’t even create a little puff of flame!” Her hands shook angrily as she tried and tried to force power into the air, with nothing but her own frustration as a result.

Sashy reached out and grabbed Bryn’s trembling hands, holding them still. “Ok, well, let’s put a pin in turning me into a dragon...”

Bryn nodded "Of course, sorry, I'm just-"

"Bryn, it's ok. You've had a very emotional few days, and then on top of that you're tasked with saving us all? All the while you've got a new skill that you don't know how to control. It's ok to be frustrated and angry"

Bryn nodded "It's just...it's my fault"

Sashy reached forward and lifted Bryn's chin with one hand. "Bryn. This is not your fault. None of this is."

"But Fenrod-"

"Bryn!" Sashy said more loudly "It's not your fault! So please, stop blaming yourself! Fenrod wouldn't want you to put this on yourself"

Bryn nodded "Ok. Thank you. ...I miss him"

Sashy nodded "I know you do." The blonde looked down at the pile of sticks barely visible as the last vestiges of daylight slowly vanished. "How did the Duke teach you to change bodies?"

"He told me it helps to picture it in my mind," Bryn said. "Which, I've done. I've been picturing fire in my mind for the past ten minutes!"

"Hmm...Maybe you should try picturing something else"

Bryn sighed but nodded. Closing her eyes she thought of the little ball of flame, picturing it in her mind. But no, that hadn't gotten her anywhere. She needed something different, something personal, something powerful...

The flames shifted and then split, becoming twin circles. Circles of softly crackling fire, their colour an unnatural pink. She furrowed her brow as she forced herself to maintain that image, though she felt tears begin to well up.

It was his eyes. The Duke's eyes. The colour they became when he'd looked at her with love. The moment she knew he was hers and she was his.

FWOOMP

Sashy shrieked as she scampered back from the sudden bonfire that had erupted before them. Bryn opened her eyes, gasping for air, tears streaming down her cheeks.

"You did it!" Sashy said with a grin.

"Woo! Way to go Bryn!" Vantica said as she walked over, their food for the evening in hand ready to be cooked.

Bryn shook her head “I...I don't know how...”

Sashy moved over and sat down beside her, wrapping an arm around her shoulder “It's ok. We'll figure it out”

Hours later the three of them sat together around the fire. Vantica and Sashy had both fallen asleep, leaning against Bryn who rested against her pack. At some point she'd have to wake them to move into their tents but...not yet. She was enjoying the fire and the warmth of her two friends.

She couldn't sleep herself, despite how exhausted she was. Not even the comforting presence of the maids by her side, Vantica's breasts pressing into Bryn and spilling on to her lap, was enough to bring her peace. Rest would elude her as long as her mind continued to raced from one thing to the next.

At the centre of it all was the Duke. She worried for him, for what he was currently enduring. Angus had mentioned that Hemfort had tortured him for an entire week to take control of his mind...she feared that was what was happening to her beloved at this very moment.

Closing her eyes she thought of the gentle pink flames that she'd envisioned when she'd somehow summoned fire. Nothing came now, despite how hard she tried to focus. She didn't understand why it had worked then and then not again since.

She took in a sharp breath as she tried to hold back tears. In one day she'd gone from the happiest moment of her life to the absolute worst. Now it felt like nothing was right. Fenrod was gone, and likely being twisted to hate her. She possessed untold power, but without the knowledge to wield it. And on top of it all she was expected to convince a King to turn against his oldest and most trusted advisor.

She was glad that Vantica and Sashy were here with her, because without them she knew she would've simply broken down on the side of the road shortly after leaving the keep. With their warmth and kindness, she could keep going. Their friendship gave her the strength to persevere.

Beside her Vantica mumbled something in her sleep, before stilling once more. Bryn wiped her eyes as she smiled. Yes, with her friends by her side, she would be ok. Closing her lids, her mind finally began to calm, her body relaxing against the warmth of the two women pressed against her. Sleep would hopefully come soon.

A loud snap in the darkness broke the silence. Bryn's eyes shot open. There was someone out there, she knew it. Her eyes scanned the darkness before her, but with the blazing bonfire filling her vision she couldn't make out anything beyond it. She quickly lifted herself up, getting her feet under her, as her hands gripped her friends by their shoulders and shook them.

“Wh...wha...what’s going on?” Vantica asked sleepily.

“Someone’s out there” Bryn whispered.

“What?! Who?!” Vantica cried.

“Not friends, I assume” Sashy hissed.

Bryn nodded, crouching down to retrieve two knives from her pack.

There was a loud bellow that rent the night air, followed by the crash of bodies moving through the brush. Whomever was stalking them had realized that they were awake now; stealth was no longer necessary.

“Here they come” Bryn said, gritting her teeth. Vantica shied away, curling up into a ball of terror, clutching herself. Sashy at least got to her feet, though she had nothing to defend herself with.

Out of the darkness two men dressed in ragged leather clothes rushed forward, weapons drawn. With a yell Bryn threw both daggers, one after the other, each one lodging into the chest of the first men to breach their clearing.

They fell immediately, swift deaths rendered upon them by Bryn’s blades. She grinned with grim satisfaction, as they fell. Unfortunately, the party that had decided to attack them comprised of more than just those two men, as more thugs emerged from the night.

Cursing at her foolhardiness, Bryn lunged to the left, dodging around the fire trying to get to the bodies that she’d felled. She wore a long heavy dress, part of her noblewoman disguise. It was fashionable and comfortable, but certainly not designed for combat.

She successfully feinted around the first man who lunged for her, then attempted to spin around the second, putting her close to recovering her knives. But the man who lunged was able to grab on to the train of her dress, and when she spun around the second, she got tangled up. Together the three of them fell into a mess of bodies. Bryn was the first to recover, scampering across the ground to where her weapons waited.

A high-pitched shriek filled the night air. Bryn looked over her shoulder fearing the worst. Luckily it hadn’t happened yet. Men advanced on Sashy and Vantica, but so far her friends were unharmed.

Bryn’s hand closed around the hilt of one of her daggers, when a hand on her leg jerked her back; one of the men that she’d gotten entangled with. Spinning around she doubled over, swinging her arm in a wide arc, the tip of her dagger finding its home in the neck of the man who held her.

The other man reached for her, but an errant kick from her kept him at bay. Another shriek drew her attention. Vantica had finally moved, retreating inside her tent. A short-sighted move driven by panic; there was no escape from in there. Sashy remained out in the open,

light on her feet, moving back and forth trying to evade them, but as more men appeared from out of the darkness, her time was almost up.

Unless Bryn could do something.

As she kicked at the man trying to grapple with her, she closed her eyes willing herself to focus. It was too hard, there was too much going on, and another shriek, one of Vantica being cornered in her tent, made it impossible to focus.

How the hell did Fenrod do this? That was a question for another time. Right now, she needed to save her friends. But how was she going to do that? All she could do was change their bodies...

A hand clamped around her ankle. Bryn tried to kick him off again, but he held firm this time, now dragging her toward him. Gritting her teeth, Bryn looked across the fire at Sashy and willed a surge of magic toward her, before she returned her focus to the man who held her by the leg.

Sashy stood surrounded, cold fear filling her. She didn't know how to fight, how to defend herself. Bryn at the very least was holding her own, but that was little comfort as the roughians closed in around them.

Suddenly she felt a strange energy flow through her. It felt similar to magic that Bryn used to grow their breasts, but it filled her entire body. She felt invigorated, strong, alive.

Wait a minute...were those men...getting shorter?

No, not shorter, she was getting taller! That wasn't all that was changing, she realized as she felt her dress begin to constrict her body, though for a very different reason than why it constricted Vantica's.

Underneath the drab grey fabric, her body bulged, rapidly growing muscles layering on top of each other, filling out her form. She held out an arm in front of her, marvelling at the change. Her hand was still small and delicate, but below her wrist her forearms sloped out dramatically, veins rigid against the surface of her skin. Her biceps were even more massive, muscles the size of grapefruits beginning to split the seams of her dress.

She'd grown several inches taller, now standing at least half a foot above any of the men who were now slowly backing away from her, eyes wide with shock. She tried to move but found herself too constricted. With a throaty grunt she squeezed her arms forward, arching her back as she flexed. The dress gave way, stitches breaking as she burst free of it. Grabbing onto the tatters of the collar she pulled and the fabric let go fully.

She let out a satisfied sigh as she stepped forward, no longer constrained. Her arms were massive, her shoulders rippled with strength. Her legs bulged with taut cords of muscles, each one thicker than a man's torso. Her abs were like cobblestones on her midsection. Her breasts had grown slightly but were overshadowed by her broad muscular pecs beneath.

One brave man wielding a cudgel, stepped forth and swung at her, undeterred by her transformation into a behemoth of a woman. Sashy didn't try to avoid the blow, she didn't even try to catch it. She just held up one arm, her forearm covered in muscles like thick bunches of rope. The cudgel struck her arm and shattered. The man's mouth dropped open in shock as he stumbled back. He was too distracted staring at the remains of his weapon to notice Sashy's haymaker that laid him out. His neck snapped back from the force of her punch, killing him instantly.

The rest of the men turned and fled into the night, none of them wanting to try a round with Sashy and her new hulking, seven-foot-tall body. Across the fire Bryn finished off the final man she'd been wrestling with, finally getting him into a lock and slitting his throat. Her eyes widened with surprise when she looked over at Sashy. The blonde just grinned back at her.

From inside the tents, Vantica screeched. In one step, Sashy was there, and had the flap open. Reaching inside, she grabbed the shirt of the man standing over Vantica, who'd fallen to the floor. With an angry yell, she pulled back, her massive muscles flexing as she whipped her arm out behind her, throwing him. The man flew across the clearing, tossed like a chicken bone at the end of a meal, crashing headfirst into a tree. His body slumped to the ground, the impact obviously fatal.

Ducking low to fit inside the tent, Sashy helped Vantica to her feet, leading her back outside into the light of the fire.

"Everyone ok?" Bryn asked, as she picked herself up.

"I'm...yes..." Vantica said letting out a trembling breath. "He didn't touch me. I'm ok"

"Sashy?" Bryn asked.

Sashy stood tall, inspecting her muscles, curling her right arm up and flexing, watching as her already massive bicep popped, thick veins pulsing on the surface. "Never better, Bryn"

Vantica gaped in awe at her friend, only now noticing the changes that had happened to her. "Oh my god, Sashy! You're...you're huge!"

"I know, right?" Sashy said with a grin. Bending down she picked up one of the weapons the men had dropped, a simple wooden axe. Gripping the shaft she grunted, her lats spreading, her traps tensing as she heaved on the wood. After only a few seconds of effort, the handle snapped, broken to splinters by Sashy's brute force. "It feels incredible!"

"Amazing!" Vantica cooed.

"But also very noticeable," Sashy sighed. "We won't be able to travel incognito with me like this. You can change me back whenever you're ready Bryn; I don't want to get used to feeling like this"

Bryn walked around the fire, looking up at her friend, who now towered over her. "I'll do no such thing"

"Wait, what?" Sashy said, eyebrows lifting with surprise.

Bryn looked to the fire, then across it to the men that lay dead by their hand. "Ever since last night I've felt afraid, and impotent. Fenrod sacrificed his magic for me, and I can barely use it."

"Right, so what changed?" Vantica asked.

"Fighting off those men...it reminded me that I'm still me. I still have all of my skills, my strengths. I've been focusing so much on what I can't do, that I've forgotten about what I can. I'll learn to use my magic eventually, but for now...I'm done being afraid. Done hiding. I'm not going to sneak into the capital, I'm going to enter proudly as Lady Brynnifer, mage and betrothed to Duke Fenrod"

Sashy smiled, nodding enthusiastically "There's our Bryn."

Bryn smiled back. "So, since we're done pretending. How would you like to look? I'm sure you'd like to be bigger, V?"

Vantica blushed, hands reaching out to rest upon the immense globes upon her chest, each one projecting a foot off her body and reaching her waist. "I would...but I shouldn't. I don't want to be too heavy for the horse!"

Sashy laughed "Too late for me. But don't worry, I can walk. With these legs I feel like I could run all the way to the capital! Though... if we're taking requests, I'd like a little more up top, if that's not too much to ask?"

Bryn nodded, extending a hand and letting her magic flow through the air across to her friend. Sashy let out a soft moan, as upon her already broad, hulking chest, her breasts expanded, swelling out to almost the same size as Vantica's, though on her much larger body they didn't look quite as big. Sashy reached out and squeezed them, hefting them up to feel their weight. "Perfect. Thanks Bryn"

"What about you, Bryn?" Vantica asked.

Bryn nodded "Oh, I'm definitely going to make a few changes" A swish of fingers and her hourglass figure was restored to her, breasts surging out underneath her dress, hips visibly widening beneath her skirt.

"Ahh...much better" Looking across at her two smiling friends, Bryn finally felt a moment of peace, which was quickly followed by intense fatigue. She hadn't slept in two days, and as she started to put her stress and fears behind her, her tiredness caught up with her.

Together the three of them crowded into one of the tents, not wanting to be alone that night. Sashy laid in the middle, her broad body taking up much of the space on their bedrolls, while Vantica and Bryn curled up beside her, draping their curves across the blonde's vast muscular body.

Then at last, nestled into the warmth of her friends, sleep came to Bryn. Quiet, restful, uninterrupted sleep.

The three women stopped at the top of a hill, looking down the road before them. A few miles away the King's city stretched before them, the most populous, dangerous place in the entire land. A week ago, it had been Bryn's home, now she entered it as an enemy.

"Ready?" Bryn said, looking back and forth to her friends. Vantica nodded, though there was hesitation in her face. Sashy on the other hand was grinning, as she clenched her fists, tensing and flexing the enormous muscles in her arms.

"After now, there's no going back" Bryn said, kicking her horse into motion. "Let's go" Together they set off down the road, ready to face whatever the city had to offer them.

After the bandit attack on the first night, the rest of their journey had been uneventful. How much of that was luck, and how much of that was potential trouble-doers purposefully avoiding them because of Sashy...well only the Gods knew.

Gone was their previously understated attire. Bryn had meant what she said; she would hide no longer. The next morning she'd changed out of that dress and back into her leather pants and shirt, stretched taut across her curves. Vantica had no other dress, but using one of Bryn's knives they'd cut the one she had to make the fit much more daring as was her preference. Now her neckline dipped low into a deep V, showing off over a foot of cleavage. They'd also added cuts up the skirt, showing off her legs.

Sashy had provided more of a conundrum. Her dress was in tatters, and Bryn still didn't have the mastery to conjure clothing like the Duke could. They'd settled on cannibalizing one of their tents. The three of them enjoyed sleeping in the same tent, so they could spare it.

They'd cut the canvas into two long rectangular strips that Sashy had then draped over each shoulder. Tucking her breasts into each of them, she tied the cloth tight at her waist, letting each piece fall between her legs. It was far from perfect; it left all of her arms and legs exposed, the cloth just barely covering her naughty bits...but Sashy didn't mind at all.

She said she liked the freedom of movement it gave her, her arm and leg muscles not constricted when they bulged and flexed with her movements.

As they approached the city walls, Bryn could see from atop her horse that there were several guards at the gate to the city, inspecting and interrogating those who wished to enter.

As they neared the main gate, the road became crowded, with common folk looking to make their way in. Some were farmers, bearing carts pulled by donkeys loaded with food. Others were travelling merchants, looking to peddle their wares. Most were just destitute refugees. Hemfort's spree of murders had thrown the countryside into chaos, many noble houses closing their doors to outsiders as well as expelling their serving staff. With nowhere left to go more and more people flocked towards this last bastion of order.

The crowd parted as the three women approached. They drew many stares as they passed, which was understandable. Not only were each of them incredibly provocative in their proportions, but they also came with three horses. That meant they must be noble, or at least noble adjacent.

Ahead of them they could see the guards being rough with some women trying to enter the city. Angry shouting could be heard as one of them shoved one of the women away, sending her to the ground.

Sashy grit her teeth, able to see everything that was happening as she stood a foot taller than anyone else in the crowd. "Those bastards... That's not right"

Bryn shook her head "No, it's not"

"We should help them!" Vantica hissed.

Bryn sighed, as she looked sadly at Vantica "We shouldn't... The best way for us to help is to take care of Hemfort. We can't do that if we get arrested at the gate for making trouble. Come on, let's go" Vantica nodded her understanding, though her face still showed signs of distress.

Murmurs spread through the crowd as they got closer and closer to the front. Finally, they emerged in front, mere feet from the entryway to the city. The guard in front, wearing the gold painted armour of the Royal Army, looked up at them. To his credit, he only looked mildly shocked at the sight of the three women before him.

"What's your business in the King's City?" He said, voice firm.

Sashy stepped forward, peering down over her breasts at the squat guard who barely reached her nipples "This is Lady Brynnifer, betrothed to Duke Fenrod, lord of the Eastern lands. She's here to see the King"

The man said nothing for a moment, choosing his next words carefully. He furtively looked back and forth at his comrades, all of whom had abandoned what they were doing to watch this interaction with keen interest.

"Duke...ahem, Duke Fenrod has been pronounced a traitor to the crown" The man said, his voice becoming shaky.

"On what charges!" Vantica demanded.

The guard looked over to her atop her horse and gulped. Though she was not as intimidating a figure as Sashy, Vantica was still an impressive sight, with her enormous bust, and faux imperious demeanour. Nearby the other men sensed trouble and put their hands on their swords, ready to free them from their sheathes.

“As of this morning, The King’s herald proclaimed that the Duke is responsible for the mass killings across the land, and therefore his majesty has stripped him of his land and titles”

Sashy frowned, as she leaned over the man. “Lies”

“The King’s word is law, my... lady.” The guard replied, voice recovering some of its firmness. “You’re lucky that we don’t arrest the three of you here right now just out of association with that traitor”

Sashy smirked. Then quick as a viper she lunged out, grabbing the man by his collar. Effortlessly she hauled him off his feet, her muscles bulging as she lifted him into the air, dangling several feet off the ground.

“I’d like to see you try” Sashy scoffed as she held him aloft with ease. The guard’s eyes widened with fear, as his hands clawed at Sashy’s hand that gripped him. Angry shouts rose up from the men guarding the gate, eager swords pulled free and levelled at the women.

Sashy looked over at them, sneering. Though they had blades that were lethally sharp, they visibly trembled in the air, their fear evident.

“Let the captain go!” One of them yelled.

Sashy smiled “Why would I do that? He was threatening me, a lady! That’s not very becoming of a man of the Royal Army!”

The captain held aloft flailed his legs, kicking wildly. Sashy’s arms were long enough to keep him out of reach of her.

“Neither was his treatment of those poor women” Sashy continued, voice cross. “Perhaps I ought to teach him a lesson in proper chivalry”

“Last warning!” Another guard yelled “Release him now and you’ll only get a single night in jail!”

Sashy’s fingers tightened her hold on the Captain, as she looked him in the eye, lips twisted into a rage filled snarl. She desperately wanted to hurt this man, for what he’d done to those women. For what all men did to women they thought they had power over. It was only Bryn’s voice that stopped her from doing something that in the end she’d ultimately regret.

“That’s enough” Bryn’s voice cut through the commotion.

Sashy looked over her shoulder at Bryn. The redhead met her stare and nodded. Sashy sighed, then released the man, dropping him to the dirt road. He hit the ground hard, collapsing in a heap.

“You’ll let us pass” Bryn said, getting off her horse and approaching the guards.

“Why the bloody hell would we do that!” Another one of the guards yelled, as his comrades helped to bring the captain back to his feet. “You just attacked us!”

Bryn reached up with one hand and grabbed the arm of the dark circular glasses she wore. Fenrod’s glasses. Gently she tugged on them, pulling them down her nose, revealing just the upper half of her eyes, tongues of golden flames rising from her sockets.

“You *will* let us pass” she said again.

Many of the guards immediately bolted in fear, recognizing Bryn for what she was, for what she could do. Only a handful remained, but they immediately sheathed swords and bowed their heads, not wishing to meet her eye. They quickly moved to step aside, clearing the way for them.

Only the captain remained, as he stared her down. Bryn stepped forward to within a few inches of him. “Move” she said.

The captain scowled, not moving. He opened his mouth to speak, when a hand reached over Bryn’s shoulder. Sashy grabbed the man by his shoulder pauldron, and with a single jerk, pulled him out of their way, sending him stumbling into the arms of his men, who caught him.

With the final obstacle removed, the women continued on into the city. Bryn didn’t look back as they passed through the gate, remounting her horse and leading Vantica who rode on behind her. Sashy stood and watched them go, before she turned back towards the guards and stared them down, before she turned to follow, catching up with her friend in a few easy steps.

“Well...if Hemfort didn’t know we were here before...” Bryn muttered as Sashy caught up with her. Even with Bryn atop the horse, Sashy was eye level with her as she walked beside them.

“Sorry” Sashy said, though her voice held no remorse.

“Oh, I’m not upset” Bryn said with a chuckle. “The old prick was going to find out eventually, and it was satisfying seeing you make those guards piss themselves with terror”

Sashy smiled as she walked beside them through the busy streets of the King’s City. On their right Vantica gaped at everything they passed. “This place is incredible...so many people!”

Bryn nodded "Yes. Be careful. More people, just means more crowds for an assassin to hide amongst. Remember I've lived here"

Fear came over Vantica's face, as she looked in terror at the throngs of people around them. "Assassins?!"

Sashy reached over and placed a reassuring hand on Vantica's back. "Don't worry, V. No one's coming to kill us"

"No one's coming to kill *you*." Bryn said idly "Hemfort probably has someone coming for me though..."

Vantica let out a moan of fear, as Sashy shot Bryn a glare. Bryn caught her look and shrugged. Sashy just shook her head, as she rubbed Vantica's back, comforting her.

The ride through the city was long and meandering, the King's castle located at the very southern tip of the peninsula that the city was built upon. The closer they got, the sparser the crowds became, with the inverse happening with the guards.

The last jaunt of the road was a long stone bridge, flanked with a dozen guards on each side wielding long pikes. Nodding to her two companions, Bryn led the way onto the bridge, Vantica and Sashy falling in behind.

Head held high they crossed from the city into the King's castle. Bryn removed her glasses, tucking them into a pocket, letting her golden eyes shine. No guards moved to stop them as they passed, not even when they passed under the gate into the royal courtyard.

The large open area was paved with large marble slabs, smooth and level. It was big enough to fit a hundred carriages, but it was empty at this moment, save for the three of them who'd just entered. The only exit was a large pair of wood double doors, inlaid with gold filigree directly ahead of them. As they crossed the courtyard, the doors opened, and a single man exited.

Bryn looked to Sashy and Vantica in turn, who both shrugged at her. For obvious reasons Bryn had been expecting...well, *more* when she'd arrived at the King's keep.

"Greetings" She called "My name is Lady Br-"

The man raised his hands, gesturing for her to stop. "I know who you are, Lady Brynnifer. I've been expecting you"

Bryn frowned but nodded her understanding. Swinging her legs off her horse, she approached, hips and ass swaying with each step. "And you are?"

"Count Richter" He said bowing "Warden of the South"

"There's a Warden of the South?" Vantica said, sounding surprised.

Sashy nodded "I thought the South didn't need a Warden because...well because the King is here!"

He sighed "Yes, his majesty's presence does often overshadow my own, but it is I who oversees the administration and care of these lands, not the King."

He was short, and wiry, his hair silvery and long, pulled back into a tail at the nape of his neck. He was clean shaven, his skin wrinkled and worn. He looked like a man who'd seen a lot of stress in his life.

"Why were you expecting me?" Bryn asked.

"Because Hemfort told us you'd come"

Immediately Bryn's hand went to the knives on her belt, whipping them free in a flash and holding them to the Warden's throat. Sashy lunged forward to back her up, eyes peeled for the potential of guards to pour out of secret entryways in the courtyard walls. No one came, nor did the Warden look surprised.

Slowly he lifted his hands and placed them against Bryn's blades. "I understand your fear"

"I'm not afraid" Bryn said with gritted teeth.

"If you say so" The Warden said sceptically. "Regardless, we are on the same side. Hemfort is no ally of mine"

Bryn studied him for a moment before she nodded, lowering her weapons. Tucking them back into her belt, she stepped back giving the man some space.

"You're as beautiful as the Duke said you were. And such a body." The Warden said, looking her up and down. Bryn rolled her eyes as the man leered at her, her wide hips and fat ass, wrapped tightly in leather, her breasts, each the size of her head, resting perkily within her shirt.

"I didn't come here for you to ogle me" She snapped.

"Right you are. Though I must admit, why you *are* here is a mystery to me. Come, we'll talk inside"

Tying up the horses, Sashy helped Vantica dismount before they all followed the Warden in through the double doors. The grey stone hallway inside glowed orange from the lighted torches that lined the walls. Their voices echoed as they spoke, no one else in sight ahead of them.

"I thought you were expecting me?" Bryn said as the doors closed behind them. "Why is my presence a mystery?"

The Warden chuckled “Hemfort told me you’d be coming, not why you’d be coming. The sorcerer is fond of holding back details”

Bryn nodded, before she spoke “I’m here to speak with the king”

Count Richter hummed “Trying to persuade him to forgive your betrothed of his crimes?”

Bryn shook her head “Fenrod isn’t behind those killings. Hemfort is”

“Ah, I see. Well, no offense my lady, but you’ll probably have better luck trying to convince the King that he himself is responsible! Hemfort has his claws in Gryphon, and it’ll take more than you to get them free”

“I have to try” Bryn said.

Count Richter shrugged “Of course, of course. I’ll take you there now. I’m just warning you that the King won’t listen”

“Why are you Hemfort’s enemy?” She asked as they walked along the seemingly endless stone hall.

The Count smiled “I didn’t say I was. Just that I’m not his ally. Hemfort...is a schemer. He’s plotting something, and I don’t trust him. Never have.”

“He’s plotting to depose the king” Bryn said.

“Is that all?” The count said, pursing his lips. “That’s frankly a little disappointing...I’d expected more”

“He told me that’s what he wanted” Bryn said.

“I spend more time with Hemfort than most” The Count said. “Hemfort’s always hiding something. If he told you that’s what he wants, there’s more to it than that”

They walked along in silence for a bit, their footsteps echoing in the barren hallway. At the end they reached a staircase that spiralled up and around. Gesturing with a hand, Richter led them up it.

“I’m surprised it’s you here, and not the Duke himself, but I guess he’s too busy leading planning that little rebellion he’s cooked up” The Count said.

“The Duke was-” Vantica began, but a sharp glare from Bryn stopped her from talking.

“The Duke is preoccupied” Bryn said. “Do you speak with him often?”

The Count shrugged “We exchange letters, now and then. It’s been a while since I’ve heard from him, but that’s not surprising with the way the country is right now”

At the top of the stairs was a hall that stretched out perpendicular from the direction they walked, while a large door painted gold laid before them. The Count gestured toward the door. "He's in there. Good luck"

Bryn paused before entering, turning to look at the Count. "Couldn't you say something to him? Help plead our case?"

He shook his head. "I'm just a bureaucrat, my lady. I hold no sway here. Besides...how do I know that what you've said is true? Maybe Fenrod *is* behind the murders?"

"He's not!" Bryn cried "You have to believe me!"

The Count shrugged, a magnanimous smile on his face. "I do believe you. But I hope you have more than that to try and convince the King..."

Bryn opened her mouth, but no words came out, suddenly feeling very exposed.

"It was a pleasure to meet you, but I've got a thousand things to do, so I'll have to bid you farewell. I wish you good fortune" The Count said, bowing to each of them in turn before he about faced and left, striding down the right hallway in a hurried manner.

"What do you think?" Bryn said to her two companions after the Count disappeared through a side door.

"We *have* to try" Vantica said, biting her lip nervously.

Sashy crossed her beefy arms over her ample chest, nodding. "This is why we came here"

Bryn sighed, then nodded "Agreed. Do...do either of you know what the King...you know...likes?"

Sashy snorted, while Vantica gasped. "Bryn!"

"What? The Duke himself did it when we went to visit Angus! He made my ass twice as big as this to win him over" Bryn reached behind and patted the round curve of her behind, covered in taut black leather.

"Yeah, and how did that work out?" Sashy said.

Bryn rolled her eyes "That...had nothing to do with the plan. Whatever, let me just..." With a twist of her wrist, magic flowed into her, plumping herself up just a bit, making her hips and ass really strain against her pants, her breasts just on the edge of bursting out of her top. "Alright, let's go"

Sashy led the way, easily pushing open the enormous golden doors for them. The throne room was a large hall lined with stained glass windows portraying various scenes of heroic acts. The throne itself was an enormous plush seat, sitting on a raised dais at the far end of the room. It was also currently empty.

The sound of a voice cursing drew their attention. The three of them looked over to see a man in a gold cloak sitting at a small table nestled in an alcove, across from a hooded figure. An ornate crown rested upon the head of the gold cloaked man, his curly brown hair cradling it. King Gryphon.

“Your Majesty” Bryn said as she began to walk toward him. “Your Majesty, I must speak with you!”

The King didn’t turn, instead extending an arm out behind him waving her away. “Not now, I’m in the middle of something. Damnation, how did you trap me!”

Bryn pressed on, determined. “This cannot wait, Your Majesty. Every moment is critical, I need to speak to you about-”

Bryn stepped up beside the table, where evidently the King was playing chess, and losing rather badly. He was a man in his early forties, his face soft and pudgy, covered with a patchy beard. His nose was bulbous, his eyes beady. His lips were thin, his skin tone pallid. This was the King? Him?

The King sighed, not looking at her “What. What do you want?”

Bryn took a deep breath, before she spoke. “Your Majesty. I need to speak to you about-”

It was then he finally looked over at her. His eyes traced past her body without barely a hint of surprise, seemingly uncaring of her incredibly curvy proportions. But he did notice her eyes. As he peered into the golden flames of her eyes, he turned in his seat to study her.

“Wait...” He said holding up a hand to stop her from talking. “Who *are* you?”

“My name is Lady Brynnifer” She said “And I need-”

“Why do I recognize that name” The King said, rubbing his weak chin as he continued to appraise her.

“She was one of Fenrod’s your majesty” Came the dusty ragged voice across from him.

Bryn turned to look at the King’s opponent and nearly choked. Underneath the hood of his cloak shone two flaming grey eyes. Hemfort.

“That’s right!” The King said, snapping his fingers. “Thank you Hemfort, I knew you’d mentioned that name before”

“You!” Bryn hissed, eyes wide with fury, her golden flames taking on a hint of red.

“Good day, my lady.” The sorcerer said with a wheeze. “So, kind of you to journey all this way to see me. Have you decided what you want for your reward?”

“The only thing I want is your head on a platter!” She snarled. “Where is he?!”

The King frowned “Oh goodness, she’s unpleasant is she not? And what’s this about a reward? I thought you said she was working with the enemy!”

“She is” Hemfort said, reaching forward and moving his rook, taking one of the King’s bishops and putting him in check. “But before that she worked for me”

“Son of a-” The King cursed at Hemfort’s move. “Why didn’t I see that!”

Bryn leaned forward, slamming her hands on the table, making the chess pieces jump “Where is he! Where is Fenrod!?”

The King gasped as he frantically attempted to restore the board to its previous state. “Careful you bitch! My patience for you is wearing awfully thin!”

Hemfort pulled back his hood revealing his wizened face, white tufts of hair crowning his head. He smiled beatifically at Bryn, as he remained silent.

Bryn scowled at Hemfort, realizing she was wasting her time. She turned to the King. “Your Majesty, I’m here to talk to you about the wave of nobles murders that’s turned the country on its head”

The King studied the board, hand tentatively reaching out to move a knight in the way of the rook’s path, protecting his king. “The murders your Duke has been perpetrating? I’m well aware of them. Are you here to plead clemency? Perhaps try to woo me, by throwing yourself at me with that ludicrous body of yours?”

Bryn spluttered “I...what...I am not ludicrous?!”

The King snorted “Your ill-fitting clothes tell a different tale. Can you even fit through a doorway with those hips?”

Bryn’s face went red, as she suddenly realized a tactical error she’d made. The King was clearly not taken with curvy women like she’d hoped he would be. “Your Majesty” She said, unwilling to give up “Fenrod is *not* the one behind those killings”

“Bastard!” The King yelled, as Hemfort’s Queen swooped in to fork his king and his rook. He put his head in his hands as he studied the board. After a few seconds of groaning, he accepted his loss, moving his king and letting his rook be sacrificed. “Dammit, you’re distracting me woman! Please, be so kind as to tell me who you think *is* behind them then?”

Bryn pointed across the table at the charming face of Hemfort, who smiled calmly as he lightly tapped King Gryphon’s rook over with his queen. “Him!”

The King looked at her and then at Hemfort, before he burst out laughing. "Oh, this is too rich! You think my oldest most trusted advisor is the one sowing the seeds of dissension? That's too cute, especially coming from the betrothed of the one who actually *is* behind them. Do you have any actual proof, anything to sway me beyond your overly fat tits?"

Bryn fumed, face going a deeper shade of colour. "Your Majesty, you *must* listen to me! Hemfort is planning to depose you, to take your Kingdom for himself! Please you must listen!" She reached forward and grabbed onto his sleeve tugging at him so he'd face her. Her eyes flashed brightly as the tongues of flame danced.

The King looked at her with a dangerous frown. "Unhand me. Now."

Bryn gritted her teeth but didn't let go. Her eyes burned brighter, threateningly.

"Don't waste your time mage" The King spat. He wiggled the fingers in his free hand toward her. It was then Bryn noticed the multiple jewelled adornments the King wore. Several rings, a large pendant around his neck, even his crown featured sparkling dark violet gems...all of them Dimeritium. The King was a walking anti-magic field.

Bryn let go, stepping away, realizing too late, just like the King in his game, she'd failed.

Across the table Hemfort chuckled "Don't be so hard on her Gryphon. She's just young and fired up. Love does that to some; makes them blind. She's just desperate to earn her paramour's innocence and so she came up with this hare-brained theory, and just hoped you'd take the bait" From across the board Hemfort moved his white bishop in a surgical line slicing through the king's delicate line of pawns.

"Checkmate" The sorcerer said with an easy smile, as he turned to look at Bryn.

Bryn stared back at him, before she turned and hurried away, desperate to get away before things went even worse.

"See you soon, Lady Brynnifer" Hemfort called after her. "Do try and think of what you want for your reward?"

King Gryphon looked down at the board flabbergasted. The last thing they heard of him as the trio of women left the hall was the King asking: "Best 4 out of 7?"

"I can't believe that fat idiot is our King" Sashy muttered as she sipped at her flagon of ale. Beneath her the wooden bench that she sat upon creaked as she shifted, her gigantic body far heavier than it was used to.

"I'm sorry Bryn. I really thought he'd listen" Vantica said, reaching out to grip her friend's hand. Her own drink sat untouched on the table before her. She sat upright, prim and proper, back straight as she glanced around nervously. With her other hand she held the collar of her dress closed, trying to hide her cleavage from peering eyes. The effort was, of course, a waste. Her breasts were so large, that they were visible from behind her, spreading out to either side of her body, snugly contained in the dress that used to be loose on her.

Bryn shook her head, as she set down her own empty flagon. "It was foolish to be optimistic. Everyone warned us he was Hemfort's through and through." Turning around she waved at the waitress to bring her another round. The buxom server arrived moments later with a fresh mug brimming with ale, and a sharp disdainful glare at each of them.

Sashy stuck her tongue out at her as she walked away, while Vantica looked over at Bryn concerned. "Did we offend that woman? Why did she look at us like that?"

Bryn chugged down half of her drink before she replied. "She works off of tips. Usually, she's the bustiest wench in here, and so the tips flow easy, as the men try to impress her. I'm guessing she's mad at us for ruining that plan by being...well, just a bit more curvaceous"

Sashy chuckled while Vantica's eyebrows lifted with surprise. When the brunette turned to look out around the room, at least a dozen men were noticeably staring at them with lust in their eyes.

"Oh my god, I think you're right!" Vantica whispered.

Bryn shrugged "At least I'm right about one thing today"

Sashy sighed "Bryn, don't beat yourself up about the King being a fool. We just need to move forward now"

Vantica nodded "Sashy's right! We just need to figure out what to do next"

Bryn said nothing for a few moments, staring at her drink, before she nodded. "Yeah, you're right. Thanks, you two"

Across the room a group of men playing cards let out rowdy cheers, as one of their companions groaned at his costly defeat. Bryn finished her second drink, setting down the empty mug once more.

"We need to find Fenrod" she said after a moment of contemplation.

"We do?" Vantica said. "I mean, of course we do, but is that what we should be doing first?"

Sashy nodded "I think so, yes. Remember what Bryn told us? It'll take time for Hemfort to take control of his mind. If he's playing chess with the King, then he's not working on the Duke."

“Exactly” Bryn said “We need to rescue him before he can be turned...I just.. ugh...I don't know where to start looking”

Some men nearby were not so subtly eyeing Vantica, intrigued by the delicate maiden with breasts larger than her torso, who fidgeted innocently in her seat. They quickly changed their minds when they noticed the massive form of Sashy staring them down, her enormous rippling arms crossed angrily over her chest.

“If Hemfort is here, then so is the Duke” Sashy said, returning her attention to her friends. “This city isn't that big, how many places could there be to hold a noble hostage without anyone knowing?”

Bryn sighed “More than you'd think. During my few months as The Raven I broke into dozens off strongholds in the capital, many of them unknown to me before I got the job. If I had to hazard a guess I'd say that was only half of what this city is hiding...”

“Oh dear” Vantica said with a sad frown.

Sashy nodded understandingly “I see...that does make things quite a bit more complicated”

“Yup” Bryn said with a grimace. “I guess we'll just have to start looking and hope we get lucky?”

“Well find him, I know we will” Vantica said smiling.

Bryn returned the smile, though it was half hearted. “Thanks for the vote of confidence, V. Maybe you're right. You gonna finish that?” She pointed at Vantica's untouched mug of ale.

The brunette shook her head “No. Help yourself”

Bryn reaches over and grabbed the drink, pulling it across to her before she lifted it to her lips. She'd frequented this tavern a few times during her time living in the Kings City. The ale had been and still was merely passable.

“Excuse me miss?” A slurred voice said from behind her.

Bryn twisted in her seat to see who'd spoken. One of the drunken fools had finally built up the courage to come over and talk to them.

“Can I help you?” She said letting her obvious annoyance taint her tone.

“Not you ma'am. Your friend!” The man was in his early forties and was overall unpleasant. His clothing was dirty, his face covered in sores. He held out a gnarled finger pointed at Vantica.

Bryn could tell that his finger, and a few others on his hand, had previously been broken, and had been set poorly. Punishment for petty thieving in the King's City was often left to the store owners judgment. Breaking one or two fingers was a common choice.

"Me?" Vantica said immediately, blushing as she shied away from the repulsive patron.

"Yes miss. My name is Hardick, pleasure to make your...Urp...accq..accqua...it's nice to meet you!"

"Oh good God," Bryn muttered.

"Hardick? More like limp dick" Sashy whispered, making Bryn snicker.

The boozehound didn't hear them and continued to attempt to woo Vantica "I just wanted to come over and tell you that you have the most beautiful-" A drunken hiccup interrupted his train of thought.

"Eyes?" Bryn suggested as an end to his sentence.

"Hair?" Sashy offered.

"Pair of Tits!" He finally got out, a slovenly grin on his face.

"Of course," Bryn said with a disappointed shake of her head.

"Oh..." Vantica said with an uncomfortable frown, both hands wrapping around herself trying to cover her chest, a sadly impossible task for the beautiful maiden.

"Won't you give us a kiss, love! I'll buy you a drink!" He said, as he tottered in place, struggling to maintain his balance despite the fact that he was standing still.

"No, thank you" Vantica said, eyes down on the table, as she very much wished for this interaction to be over.

He moved around the table toward her, stumbling. "Oh, come on, don't be that way, kitten!" Vantica cringed as he reached out a twisted hand toward her. Before it could get any closer that hand was caught by the wrist, and jerked far away from where it could do any harm.

Sashy stood up, her arm outstretched gripping the man tightly. With ease she lifted him off his feet, dangling in the air as he hung by just one arm.

"She said 'No' you fucking pig" Sashy snarled.

"Ow, ow, ow! Let me go! That bloody hurts, it does!" The drunk wailed as he felt his shoulder start to separate, his body not used to having his entire weight pulling on the joint.

With a flick of her wrist, she sent the man careening away, landing on the next table over before bowling past and landing on the floor on the far side. The men drinking there had been paying attention and had the good sense to lift their drinks as he flew past, setting them back down again after the commotion was over.

The man wasn't hurt too badly, as he popped up moments later. "Can't a man give a woman a compliment anymore! You do have nice tits! Much nicer than that odd green woman..." He flipped them off, before stumbling off into the crowd. Bryn returned the gesture twofold.

"Hey, V, you ok?" Sashy asked.

Vantica nodded, though she was trembling. Sashy slid over on her bench, then gestured for Vantica to join her. The brunette quickly slid over to the far side of the table, nestling up beside the hulking blonde.

"Thank you Sashy" She whispered.

"No problem, V. I'll always be looking out for you"

Vantica rested a hand on one of Sashy's legs, her thighs the size of tree trunks. "I like you like this..." She murmured, as she began to gently rub her hand up and down her taut rippling flesh.

Sashy smiled "Oh yeah? Mmm...that feels nice... you massaging my muscles. You're looking pretty nice yourself right now..." Gently she wrapped an arm around Vantica's neck pulling her against her, as her hand slipped down the brunette's dress to get a feel of her massive pillowy breasts.

Vantica leaned into Sashy, pressing her face against the side of her muscular torso, where Sashy's equally large breasts met her pecs. The brunette moaned as Sashy continued to touch her, uncaring of the public setting they were in.

Bryn turned around to face the other way, giving her friends some privacy as she finished her drink. As she sipped her ale, she pondered what had happened and what she was going to do next. There was something bothering her, something about that interaction with Hardick was off. Something he'd said.

He'd mentioned an odd green woman...one with breasts almost as nice as Vantica's. He talked about her as if he'd just met her recently. Who could that have been...the waitress? No, they were all wearing red and black. Then who?

Bryn scanned the room, looking for green. Most of the peasant clothing were drab brown or beige, cheap fabrics stained with dirt. Green was a colour for druids or nobles. Why would someone like that be in here?

Whoever they were, they weren't here anymore. They must have-Wait! There, by the bar! Someone was wearing a forest green cloak made of velvet. Bryn couldn't tell if she was a woman, as their hood was up, but they're the only person in here who's wearing...

The person stood and turned, and Bryn's suspicions are confirmed. She was definitely a woman. Though her cloak and hood hid her face, there was no hiding the enormous pair of breasts that rested upon her chest, wrapped in olive green linen. She's almost as...no she was bigger than Bryn was right now!

Bryn stood up with a start, watching the woman cross the room. She moved gracefully, elegantly, as if her massive bust was barely a burden. There's no way those were natural, they must've come by magic. And there's only one person she knows who would use magic to enhance a woman like that.

"I think I have a lead to Fenrod!" Bryn said excitedly as she turned back to face her friends. Immediately she realized they won't be any help to her.

Vantica no longer sat beside Sashy, she sat upon her lap now, her head resting in between the blonde's cleavage. Vantica's breasts had both been pulled out of her dress, as Sashy groped and massaged them vigorously with her hands, drawing craven moans from Vantica.

Such acts weren't exactly illegal in public, but they weren't considered decent either. That being said, it appeared the other patrons of the bar were more than willing to let it slide, if they got a chance to watch.

"I'll...I'll fetch you two later" Bryn said with a smile, before she took off toward the exit that the woman in green had passed through.

As Bryn exited the tavern, she looked both ways, spotting a splash of colour moving away from her to her left. Immediately she took off at a sprint, pulling a knife from her belt as she weaved through the crowd.

She needed to know who that was. Something still wasn't adding up. Fenrod was a prisoner, why would he be given a servant to change to his whims? Maybe Hemfort was trying to bribe him to join his side? Surely it would take more than one, albeit impressively busty, wench to win him over!

The woman in green ducked down an alley, which made Bryn grin. Perfect. Somewhere secluded where she could get the answers she needed. She dashed into the alley; steps light and quiet. The woman was walking at a leisurely pace, and didn't hear Bryn coming until she was on top of her.

Rushing up behind her, Bryn put the knife to her throat then pushed her up against the wall of the alley. The woman shrieked with fear, as she felt the sharp blade at her throat.

"Oh Goddess, please, don't hurt me!" She whimpered.

"I won't hurt you if you answer my questions" Bryn hissed as she leaned against her, her own breasts pressing into the back of the cloaked figure.

The woman's body relaxed at Bryn's words and at her touch. "Oh. Of course, my lady"

“Where is he?” Bryn demanded.

“Where’s who?”

“Don’t play dumb! The Duke!” Bryn hissed, leaning harder against the woman.

“I don’t know any Dukes!” The woman pleaded.

“The man who gave you those breasts!” Bryn said forcefully.

“Oh...my lady, I’m sorry. I know you told me to stay away from the men, but I couldn’t help myself!”

Bryn furrowed her brow with confusion. What the hell was this woman talking about?

“Where is he!” She repeated. “Where is the Duke!”

“Please, don’t hurt him, my lady. I didn’t know he was a Duke. He told me he was just a stable boy, but he was quite handsome, and very strong...”

“What...” Bryn said, completely nonplussed. “What did the man who give you those breasts look like?”

“Oh, he was young, clean shaven, with shaggy blonde hair, and such lovely green eyes”

That...was not the Duke. Whatever had happened to this woman, she’d definitely never met Fenrod. Bryn whirled the woman around, to face her, lowering her knife. “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to scare you. I thought you were...never mind”

“It’s...oh! You’re not my lady!” The woman said, sounding shocked. “Oh goodness, look at you! I didn’t know human women had learned how to harness the Great Goddess’ gift!”

“The Great Goddess...wait” Bryn said, eyebrows lifting with shock “Did you just say Human?”

The woman reached up and pulled her hood back, revealing her face. She was beautiful, though in an unnatural way. Her face was round, her features sharp, her eyes slightly too large for her head, each one an earthy brown. Her dark red hair was tied back into multiple braids that weaved across her skull and then down her back. From underneath her hair, her ears emerged, long and pointed, each one pierced with several golden rings.

“Yes, you are Human, correct? Not Elfkind?” The elf said with a simple smile.

Bryn nodded “Uh...yeah, I’m human. You’re...you’re an elf! I thought the Elves were extinct!”

The woman smiled, shaking her head. “Quite the opposite. My name is Ellewen. I’m a maiden of the Great Holy Forest, and here as part of my princess’s retinue”

"I'm Brynnifer, but you can just call me Bryn. Did you say princess?"

"Yes. We're here on the command of our Queen; she had a vision that something dangerous is happening in these lands."

Bryn nodded "Yeah, that's not inaccurate. A vision...so your Queen can use magic?"

Ellewen nodded with a smile. "Oh yes, most maidens can, though none are as gifted as our Queen. Though our Princess is quite talented herself"

Bryn ran a hand through her hair. This was a lot to take in. Elves were alive, and here in the city. Elves that could use magic. Maybe...maybe they could teach her?

"Take me to them" Bryn demanded.

Ellewen bowed her head "It would be my pleasure, Lady Brynnifer"

Without hesitating the Elf turned and walked off down the alley, not waiting for Bryn. She caught up easily enough, matching the Elf maiden's stride.

"You must tell me, how long have Humans been able to use the gift?" Ellewen asked eagerly.

"I'm sorry, I don't know what that means," Bryn said with a shrug.

Ellewen reached across with her hand, and placed it upon Bryn's chest, fingers sinking into her flesh. "Your body is ripe with her magic!"

Bryn blushed at the unexpected groping she received from the delicate hands of the Elf maiden. "Uh...a goddess didn't give me those. I grew them myself with my own magic"

Ellewen pulled her hand back, frowning "Your own magic?"

Bryn removed her black glasses, revealing the flaming glow of her golden eyes. Ellewen gasped, stepping back. "By the Great Goddess! The Princess must know of this!"

Bryn nodded "Fine by me. Lead the way"

Ellewen continued on once more, though her pace was far more hurried now, and she asked no more questions, her face pinched with concern.

Together they walked towards the East end of town, close to the fishing docks. The roads grew empty as night closed in around them. Only the faint light of torches hung from poles placed every few yards in the centre of the lanes kept the darkness away.

Ellewen led them at last to a rather poor looking inn. The paint on the wood was scratched and worn, the words on the sign illegible.

“You made your Princess stay in this dump?” Bryn asked as she pushed open the door.

“She wished to be discrete” Ellewen said following her in. “We’re staying in the room in the back.

“Anything I should know?” Bryn asked as they crossed the small lobby of the hotel, on the left a counter currently unmanned, on the right a small hearth whose fire was now only soft embers.

“My Princess is kind, gracious, and altogether wonderful” Ellewen said with a contented sigh.

“Well, that’s good?” Bryn said.

“Her husband is human... and a little less trusting” Ellewen added.

Bryn nodded “Yeah, we can be like that sometimes. Alright, I’ll be careful not to piss him off”

Steeling herself, she pushed open the door that Ellewen indicated. Immediately she heard the whoosh of steel rushing through the air, and by instinct alone she ducked. If she was a few inches taller or a few milliseconds slower, she’d have suffered a fatal blow, as a longsword, its blade glowing a soft blue-yellow, sunk into the wooden door frame.

Bryn rolled forward, and leapt up, hands out to her side. “Easy!” She yelled “I come in peace!”

“It’s true, she does come in peace” Ellewen said casually, entering the room behind her, ducking underneath the sword.

Before Bryn stood a man...a surprisingly handsome man. He was tall, probably taller than the Duke, and broader, his chest and shoulders stretching his leather jerkin. His hair was brown like an oak, and shaggy, covering his head and face in a thick beard that suited him quite well.

With a grunt, he heaved on his sword, freeing it from the wood. In an easy practiced motion, he slid it over his head back into the sheath slung over his back. “My apologies, I don’t like unexpected guests. Why are you here?”

Bryn held her hands up defensively as she spoke. “My name is Bryn, and I’m here because I need your help...or at least I need the Princess’s help. You’re her husband?”

The man nodded. “I am.” He stepped forward and extended a hand in greeting. Tentatively Bryn took it, then shook firmly.

“Welcome, Lady Bryn.” The man said as he held her gaze. “My name...is Edward Brightblade, First Ranger of King Harmon III...”

END OF PART 5

AUTHOR'S NOTE: SO OBVIOUSLY THIS ISN'T THE END. AS PROBABLY MY MOST POPULAR SERIES I STRUGGLED A LOT WITH HOW TO CONTINUE. WHEN I BEGAN ESSENCE OF LIFE I DIDN'T FULLY INTEND FOR IT TO BE A POTENTIAL CROSSOVER IN THE FUTURE...BUT I DID HINT AT IT (ONE OF EDWARD'S LISTED FEATS IN PART 3 IS THE NEGOTIATOR OF THE "FENROD PEACE ACCORD").

I STILL NEED TIME TO WORK OUT THE DIRECTION OF PART 6, BUT IT PROBABLY WON'T TAKE AS LONG AS THE GAP BETWEEN 4 AND 5....PROBABLY

ALSO PLEASE DON'T SPOIL THE CROSSOVER TWIST IN COMMENTS/REVIEWS. IF YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT JUST MESSAGE ME.

LOVE YOU GUYS

TROGDOR297