

Outside the tower, Mikhail and Ritten had taken to a game of tiddlywinks a few minutes after Forto's departure. To speak truthfully, neither of them had really liked Ustrik or Forto; the latter was too brusque to hold a conversation, and the former was too sanctimonious to hold a conversation worth having. If the brute and the brain wanted to charge on ahead, citing valor or duty, that was fine with them. After all, it wasn't as if there was a strict time limit on the trial being passed or not, was there? No. So Mikhail and Ritten intended to take their sweet time about it.

Of course, taking one's sweet time carried a few caveats, one of which being that time tended to pass. As the sun crept below the horizon, Mikhail set about starting a campfire. The wood around was a bit sparse, but he'd managed to find a few good branches. The alternative was just sitting around in the dark. Even if there weren't demons about, there were beasts to worry about. A fire was a necessity to ward them off.

Ritten did his part by watching.

"You ever have a meal in the bush?" Mikhail looked over his shoulder at the thief, raising a knife and offering a smile.

Ritten had not.

"Ah, well, you're in for a treat. Not saying it's fit for a king, but." He turned his attention to the ground. He found a stick, picked it up, and discarded it. Too soggy to burn. "Well. Hunger's the best seasoning."

Ritten's stomach grumbled.

"I don't know how you want to do this, but what I was thinking," Mikhail continued, "was to get some shut eye, maybe take a piss, and head in. Dunno how long a trial could take, so. Figure it's best to be well-rested."

Ritten agreed.

Mikhail clicked his tongue, looking over his shoulder at Ritten as he walked. "You don't talk much, do you."

Ritten didn't.

"Suits me just fine," Mikhail finally admitted, smiling at Ritten. Flat ground meant he didn't really need to watch where he was going...

...except when he stumbled headlong into the tower's entrance. Ritten had reached out and mumbled something unintelligible, going so far as to start to stand up, but it hadn't been quick enough for Mikhail to stop. With a yelp of shock, Mikhail fell into inky blackness.

Ritten sat down again.

For all its intricacies, the portal was apparently not so complex as to safeguard his dignity. Mikhail never found his balance in the flash between the swamp and...wherever he was. He landed flat on his face with a grunt, arms splayed out in front of him. Self-righting, it seemed, was not a priority of the portal's creators.

But that wasn't important. What was important was figuring out where he was. A ranger, first and foremost, knew his battlefield. Mikhail scrambled to his feet, knife pulled from its sheathe. Ground was soft, softer than stone or metal. No grass, but the roots -- and, higher still, the tree trunks -- made one thing very clear: he was in a forest.

That being said, it was unlike any forest he'd seen before. The trees climbed high enough to render their tops little more than swaying pinpricks in the distance. Still, their leaves -- which came in shades of blue, green, and purple -- flitted down from the heavens to cover the ground.

What was strangest, though, wasn't the flora. It was the fauna. More accurately, its apparent absence. Silence was the most dangerous thing one could possibly hear in the woods, Mikhail considered grimly. Animals weren't stupid. They didn't dawdle when deadlier beasts were afoot, and if the forest was silent, then-

"Gah!"

His attentions turned elsewhere, Mikhail didn't notice...whatever it was that had bitten him! His ankle burned with sudden, stinging pain. No blood -- barely a trickle, at least -- but the two pinpricks left behind by his apparent assailant worried him. A quick measurement with his knuckle confirmed his suspicion.

This was a snakebite. More than a snakebite, this was a venomous snakebite. That tingling numbness wasn't going away, and he sure as Hell hadn't felt it before. Mikhail looked around. A glimpse of the serpent would offer a clue as to how he would set about treating the bite, but...there was nothing.

Nothing except for the demon hovering in front of him.

Eyes wide in shock, hand clapped over her mouth, she was the picture of cultivated shock. And apparently wet dreams, given that her proportions seemed to be plucked from the idle fantasies of lonely teenage boys.

Breasts straining against her top and hips similarly testing the fabric trying to contain them, she

was openly, obviously, unabashedly a succubus. Normally he heard of succubi attempting to conceal their demonic nature, but she wasn't lifting so much as a finger to hide her horns. Or her wings. Or her purple skin.

"Ohmigosh!" She chirped in a voice sweeter than a songbird's. "You're hurt! You've gotta! A!" She clicked her tongue, crossing her arms under her bust and rolling her eyes. "A watchamacallit. Ah!" Her expression lit with the realization. "A bite! On your thingy! Your ankle!"

He'd barely opened his mouth to respond before she had swooped down behind him to the backs of his feet, bent over and wiggling her ass in the air. "Awh, heck! Lookit that!" She clicked her tongue and shook her head. "Snakebite, huh? Well!"

"Well, what?" Mikhail scowled down at her, jerking his foot away and turning to face her. "Beg your fucking pardon, but I'm not fool enough to let a succubus lay her lips on me!" Knife raised menacingly, he spat on the ground. "Think I don't know about your venom? For all I know, you're the one who did this to me!"

The succubus floated up to eye level once more, though hers held no glimmer of amusement. Half-lidded with the scowl to match, she just kind of stared at him for a moment. Before scoffing. "Wow. Lookit you. Did your homework and everything. Well, unfortunately for both of us..." Bringing her hands up to pull the corners of her mouth apart, she stretched her jaw wide -- though it was within the realm of normality, he had to admit -- and showed off her teeth.

Not a fang in sight, hollow or otherwise.

"Not exactly," she continued with a snap of her teeth, "a standard succubus. So, you know, thanks for that. I thought I had heard the last of that kind of crap from the other succubi, but apparently!" She threw her hands in the air suddenly enough to startle him. "Humans know enough about the 'normal' ones to make fun of me, too!"

Mikhail blinked at her. Could this be. A test? Each lesson his mentor had imparted to him had been true thus far, and he distinctly remembered that a succubus was possessed of three cardinal traits: her glamour, her venom, and her mesmer.

He had to be looking at her glamour. Demons were almost never that curvaceous naturally. Her mesmer, he was on guard for. She hadn't revealed it yet, but there wasn't a chance in Hell that she wasn't going to use it on him at some point. And her venom...was apparently. Nonexistent.

He watched her carefully. There had to be a catch. Some trap she was yet to spring upon him. Who's to say that her glamour wasn't disguising her fangs? Or perhaps she'd ensorcelled him with her mesmer the instant she'd set her eyes on him! She wasn't so unique as to lack one of

the three sinister weapons of the succubus! She-

And his leg went limp under him.

Cursing, Mikhail crumpled to the ground, knife knocked from his grip by the fall and dignity similarly lost once more.

"Ooh, I toldja!" The succubus lowered to his level, shaking her head. "Didn't I? I said- Well, I didn't say, but I was about to say. You need someone to suck the poison out!"

Mikhail didn't know where to begin, so he opted to first sputter with indignation. "Suck the-" He repeated, hobbling to one leg. "Suck the poison out of it! That isn't- You can't suck venom out of a wound! That's not how it works!"

"Listen," she continued, rolling her eyes. "One of us has a snake bite buzzing away in their foot. No judgements! But I don't think that negative thinking is going to get you to where you need to be." She pressed her palms together and pointed her hands at Mikhail. "We have an idea. Right now isn't the time to say 'no.'"

"But that isn't-" Mikhail hissed through gritted teeth. Numbness had given way to a sort of pinprick-stinging in his ankle, and he would be lying if he said it wasn't worrying him. If only he'd caught a glimpse of what it was that had bitten him! Without that crucial key, there was no telling if his serums would help...or guide him to an early grave.

The succubus snapped her fingers in Mikhail's face, and it jolted him out of his panic. "Listen! Just give it a chance! Either way, you're fucked, right? So at least let's see if it works!"

"It's not-!" Gods below, but he couldn't think with her crowing at him! "Fine, fine!" He waved a hand in her face. "Go ahead!" At least he'd have some time to think if she was occupied with whatever nonsense she was talking about. Sucking the poison out! Peh!

That being said, she lit up at the permission. Hearts practically bloomed in her pupils as she kicked a foot back. "Ooh, you won't regret it! Here, lemme give it a try."

Curiously, though, she didn't seem to move. She stared into his eyes, that innocent smile upon her lips. Was she going to-

And then there was a little kiss upon his ankle, just this hint of pressure. Like a pair of plump, pillowy lips nipping at his heel. They seemed to probe the now-exposed skin for the wound, and then...they sucked.

The pain seemed to vanish almost instantly. The numbness, too. Relief had never been this fast, even with his mentor's antivenoms. But it shouldn't have worked at all, should it?! Sucking the venom from a wound, that was impossible! And yet here she had- Wait, how was she doing

this, anyway?

A glance away from her face -- smile turned irritatingly smug -- showed that the supposed panacea was...the spaded tip of her tail.

At least, it had been spaded before. Now it had split down the middle to reveal a slippery, drooling maw. Toothless, it flexed and sucked, slurping out the venom and leaving Mikhail more or less cured. But the hydra of his wound had split in two at the revelation behind the supposed "cure," and, stumbling back, he pointed his knife at her.

"Devil! She-beast!" He snarled. The sudden jerk back wrenched his foot from the tail-mouth, though he was left staggering from its separation. "What kind of devilry is this?! Answer me!" Such a fool, trusting a succubus brazen enough to approach him without a glamour. No, this whole thing was a trap of her sinister device, one designed to leave him ensorcelled!

"Yeah, this is kind of what I figured." She spoke simply, vaguely disappointed. "Turncoat viper. Here." She snapped her fingers and plucked a handmirror from the air, showing Mikhail his reflection. For the most part, it was the one he'd seen a thousand times before. His eyes, though, were bloodshot. More than bloodshot, the whites of his eyes were nearly pure crimson.

He gawked at the sight, fury turning to shock before another snap sent the mirror vanishing into smoke. "Didn't quite get to it in time. See, the pain's more to distract you from the real point of it. When a turncoat's gotcha?" She shook her head with a sigh. "Everyone's out to get you. At least, that's how it seems to you." She clicked her tongue and planted her hands on her hips, looking angrily to the side. "Shoulda known when you started acting all grumpy!"

"Whuh-" He mumbled. Turncoat viper? He'd never heard of that before. But then, this was a forest unlike any he'd seen in his life, and- No, she was lying! She had to be! He pressed a palm to his forehead, suddenly dizzy. His ankle didn't hurt, but now his head ached. No, more than ached, it throbbed with a war-drum's maddening pound. Every heartbeat brought a spike of pain. It was impossible to think, much less-

She hugged him, and the pain seemed to fade. "Wow, you're looking to be in dire straits there, buddy." Her voice wasn't as shrill as before. Had it been shrill before? It was difficult to think between the flashes of skull-rattling pain. "Uhm. OK." She sounded concerned, actually. A nervous sort of tremor in her voice.

"There's not a lot I can actually do for you right now. Like, normally I'd just -- slurp! -- suck out the poison before it can get bad, but you were...Well." She sighed, drumming her fingers idly on his shoulderblade. Chin rested on his shoulder, the succubus paused in thought. "Not really your fault. Turncoat viper and all."

It was getting to be too much. Eyes screwed shut,

STAB

Mikhail grit his teeth. Sweat beaded on

STAB

his brow, and his skin flushed painful red.

STAB

"Stop...Stop...!" Why wouldn't it stop?!

"Here." Her tone had a certain nervous urgency to it now, and though he didn't see it, he felt her pull away. Hands on his shoulders, the succubus sucked in a breath as Mikhail shook with pain. "I can help you, but. I need your permission first. OK?"

"Fine!" He blurted it out without thinking, without even realizing what he could've just agreed to. It was just that miserable ache, right behind his eyes, and-

And it was gone. Just like that.

He blinked. Stared at her. For the most part, she looked more worried than anything else. Though as soon as his shoulder slumped -- since when had he been tensing them? -- hers did, too.

The succubus gave a sigh of relief and an airy sort of laugh to go with it. "Ho! Gosh, I was worried for a second there! I don't really see a lot of guys come back from a turncoat's venom without going absolutely bonkers, so. Good thing I got to you before you started foaming at the mouth, huh?" She smiled at him, wide and pure, and canted her head to the side. "Feel better?"

Mikhail looked down. He did feel better. Almost entirely better. Even the little aches and pains in his back were gone, replaced by blooming warmth. He stretched experimentally, and the pleasure it brought his muscles coaxed a happy hum from his lips. His eyes shut once more, and she giggled in response.

"Thought so. Had to do some quick thinking, but I guess it got the job done, huh?" She hugged him once more, and his body exulted in her presence. He'd been a little too occupied to really notice how her body felt against his when she'd hugged him before, but now...Ooh, now he could feel just how soft she was.

"What'd you do?" He asked, voice sounding relaxed to the point that his speech nearly slurred. "I feel incredible." His muscles seemed to go slack of their own accord. If she weren't there to

catch him, Mikhail likely would've slumped to the ground.

"Oop! Hey, easy there, tough guy!" She giggled, and the most incredible thing happened to him. Before, there had been agonizing pain, invasive, stabbing his thoughts away. Now.

Now there was the opposite. A pleasant, disorienting throb of pleasure every few seconds. It did just as much to hinder his thoughts as

throb

the pain did, but there was an undeniable

throb

an undeniable sort of pleasure to it, and soon Mikhail w

throb

was having trouble remembering what

throb

he felt good

throb

real good

She smiled at him, and if Mikhail had been able to piece it together, he'd detect a note of...smugness to her grin. "See, I can't do much," she began, her voice all but lost to the pleasure-drunk ranger, "but I have a real particular glamour and a real particular mesmer. See my tail?"

The maw of her tail raised up once more, lips smacking and drool dribbling from its ravenous mouth. It swayed from side to side, just in front of Mikhail's vacant eyes, and puckered for a kiss. A glob of spit flecked his cheek, but given that the wetness turned to rapturous golden heat a moment later, he hardly minded. She leaned her head on Mikhail's shoulder, watching the tip of her tail with an amused smirk.

"Looks pretty, doesn't it? Well." She clicked her tongue -- the one in her head -- and narrowed her eyes at it. "Maybe not pretty, but I bet you wouldn't mind having that wrapped around your cock, mm? Except..."

The wet smack of its lips turned to a sinister, sibilant hiss, and in the blink of an eye, the mouth of her tail turned to the snapping jaw of a serpent. Mikhail tried to pull back, but his body refused to obey, too drowned in lethargic pleasure to budge. Scarcely a hand's length from his

face, the serpent bared its dripping fangs. Right in his ear, though, the succubus tittered.

"Not so pretty anymore, huh. That's the thing! I can't change how I look. But!" The snake-head gave a little wiggle in front of him. "I can change how this li'l guy looks! I dunno what happened, but somehow all the bog-standard stuff that a succubus usually gets ended up with this guy instead. Glamour..." The snake turned once more to a simple mouth, glossy, black lips puckering at nothing. "Venom..." Another glob of spit landed on Mikhail, this time on his neck. His head lolled back almost instantly, muscles gone limp.

"And. Mesmer." A pair of lips pressed to the nape of his neck -- hers or her tail's, he couldn't tell -- and his eyes rolled back.

It was exquisite, like pure liquid pleasure pumped into his body. Tongue lolling out, Mikhail felt his dick stiffen in his pants almost immediately, and it only twitched harder with each moment that passed. Oh, he didn't know what she was doing, but whatever it was, he was prepared to beg, grovel, and plead to make sure she didn't stop. He couldn't manage words, true, but the way he bucked his hips up hopefully got the point across.

Apparently so, given how the succubus giggled in his ear. "See, right now, you're, uh." She traced a single fingernail in circles on his chest. "You're in a whole heap of pain. But thanks to a little kiss my buddy here gave you, you think this is one-hundred-per-cent pleasure. Its venom actually just kind of causes horrible pain. But!" She nuzzled against his side as Mikhail humped the air. "Turn that around, and you're in heaven. Ain't that right, babe?"

He nodded.

"Exactly. So. I see you're having a little bit of a, uh." She gave his crotch a pat as her tail pumped him full of its venom. "A little bit of a situation down here."

Her tone dropped to a sultry purr, right in the shell of his ear.

"Want me to help you with that, darling?"

Insensate or not, Mikhail managed a nod at that. He was almost disappointed when the mouth popped off of his neck, but the smacking of wet, sloppy lips trailed lower, lower, lower. Snaked under the belt of his trousers, and then-

oh

oh

oh, that felt. good.

As far as he could tell -- and his perception was more or less compromised by the aching stiff-dick pleasure flooding his mind -- there wasn't any venom involved in the wet, slippery suction



around his cock. Hardly mattered, though, given he was practically pickled in it already. He was swimming in pleasure, and the mouth suckling at the tip of his cock only gave a focus to that maddening ecstasy.

"See? Isn't that amazing?" She hissed in his ear, breasts mashed up against his arm. "C'mon, baby, just cum nice and hard. You know you want to. Who needs to make babies when you can fuck this whenever you want? Here." She reached down, grabbed him by the balls with one silk-smooth hand kneaded them gently.

"Ooh, you're nice and heavy for me, aren'tcha, babe?" She giggled to him once more, and the slurping heat on his cock only sucked that much harder. "Saving up for the big wedding day? That's sweet. But you're way too pent up!"

Eyes rolling back, Mikhail barely heard her. Her tone turned more than a little teasing at his slack-jawed delight, and soon the succubus was churning his swollen ballsack. "I can practically feel how long you've waited for this. How's it go lately? One month without ejaculation before you're sent into the tower?"

She gave him a peck on the forehead -- with her "real" lips -- and clicked her tongue. "Poor baby. One whole month without getting to stroke that big, thick stiffy at all! You must be aching to empty those big, bloated balls into me!" She hugged his side and nuzzled her face into the crook of his neck. Mikhail was all but limp now, the only movement he was capable of being the desperate thrust of his hips upwards.

"You wanna cum, babe? You wanna cum real hard for me?"

The tail had taken him to his root, and even if there wasn't the steady bob of it up and down on his length, now there was an exquisite pressure rolling up in waves, milking his entire length. His chin twitched downwards in something approaching a nod. His cock felt like it was about to burst. How he hadn't finished already was beyond him, but there was something about that insistent, ravenous suction that kept him creeping higher and higher.

"You're cute," she purred, giving his balls a little clench. "And I feel bad that you've been saving up for so long, so. Tell you what." She suddenly shifted positions, straddling his belly and staring down at him. Devilish smirk tugging at her lips, the succubus fixed her gaze on his. Blearily, Mikhail did the same.

"Give up. Just stay here and let me milk this big, fat cock of yours whenever I want." She leaned in, and the suction around his cock made his eyes cross. Wet, lewd smacking sounds rang in his ears, and the milking suction worked each aching inch of his cock. He'd touched himself before, of course, but his hand couldn't possibly compare to the insatiable maw sucking at his cock. What kind of idiot would turn away the chance to fuck a hole like this whenever they wanted?

Dumbly, Mikhail grinned to himself. He'd get to cum whenever he wanted! He'd get to fuck her tail every chance he got! Who needed a wife when he could have her tail? His tongue was heavy in his mouth, but apparently the succubus understood his intent when he mumbled some non-answer.

She winked down at him with a purr. "I was hoping for a 'yes, mistress,' but I think that was close enough. Cum!" She pinned his shoulders down with her hands, but all Mikhail could focus on was her relentless tail. Too much. It was all too much, and the overwhelming pleasure finally crested. He bucked his hips up, more involuntary than not, and spurted the first shot of his pent-up seed into her tail.

Apparently the insistent suction hadn't been reward enough. The instant he pumped his first shot of semen up into her tail, the slurping maw savoring his cock lavished it with affection. Before, it had almost been mechanical, designed to extract an orgasm from him as quickly as possible. Rigorously efficient, enough to drive him to the brink in minutes. But now...

Now it was sweet, soft, almost gentle -- but not a bit less enthusiastic. It pulled back, suckling at the very tip of his cock, focusing its attention on the sensitive crown. Each splurt almost seemed to carry a second layer of pleasure to it, because whenever Mikhail shot another wad of his seed up into her tail, it bobbed down a few inches, ensconcing just a little bit more of his cock in sticky, heavenly wetness.

"Aw, you have more than that for me, don't you?" The succubus teased, having taken to lounging beside him once more. She hardly needed to coax him, though, given that her tail was training his cock already. Mikhail had never cum this hard in his life. He was broken in one mind-shattering climax, and the last thought to pop into his nearly-empty head...

...was that he'd never go a day without this ever again.

Ritten, for the most part, didn't have much to do once the other three had stepped or stumbled into the tower themselves.

He considered waiting a bit longer before heading in, but what good would that do? He felt fine. He certainly didn't feel ill. Maybe some stretches to get a little bit more limber before beginning the trial?

Honestly, the only things he could think of doing to prepare were little more than killing time before he took the plunge.

Ritten organized his pack, double-checked his knives, and, having prepared as best he could,

stepped into the tower.

Though he didn't know it, his was the only trial that took the form of what the setting implied. Though it was perhaps a bit sinister thanks to the dark granite used in its construction, the foyer of the tower was nothing if not regal. Banners hung from the ceiling, depicting the crest of the demon queen and her six fell vassals. Torches burned between them, casting their eerie, wavering light upon the polished floor, but...

...there was really no avoiding the woman in the center of the room. Honestly, no matter where he looked, Ritten couldn't help but glance to her after more than a few seconds. It wasn't for some unnatural lust. She was attractive, sure, but more than anything else, she was. Incongruous.

Clad in gleaming golden armor -- and wielding a similarly gilded spear and shield -- loomed the tallest fallen angel Ritten had ever seen in his life. Her eyes shone like beacons, and though the air in the room was still, her honey-blond hair swept about wildly, as if she were in the midst of a maelstrom. Scowling, her stoic attentions were focused squarely on him.

She didn't seem to be doing much, though.

At least, not much besides turning to face him as he circled her. Ritten wasn't much for direct confrontation. A thief never was, as his training had revealed, but even a cursory examination revealed that she was on perpetual guard. Sort of hard not to be when the room seemed all but empty besides the two of them.

She didn't seem altogether hostile, though. A bit prickly, certainly, but. Maybe she could be communicated with? There was no rule saying that they couldn't talk. He'd just be careful to try and avoid the wiles she may or may not have.

Ritten called out, perhaps a bit hesitantly, and asked if she was to be his opponent.

She answered with a haughty scoff. "Of course," she bellowed, her voice like thunder. "This is to be your trial, the means by which your worth is assessed by the powers above and below!" Her posture -- already impressively formal -- straightened further, and she raised her shield and spear to the heavens. "Though my dignity's tarnished and my virtue stained indelibly black, I'll not betray the station I've been thusly assigned! A fallen angel I may be, but I'm an angel nonetheless!"

"And you," she continued, leveling her spear-point at Ritten with a sneer, "are a thief." The fires of her eyes narrowed to seething slits, and Ritten took a cautious step backwards. "The kind of

vile rat who's better suited to skulking amidst shadows than meeting the honest blade of one such as myself."

But she had a spear, not a sword.

"I know that!" She boomed, shaking the room with her fervor. "To constrain one's self to the literal is folly, and it shall serve you, foul thief, poorest of all! For you shall only unlock the secrets of the priesthood of the church by passing my sacred trial!"

For the first time since he'd laid eyes upon her, the fallen angel smiled at Ritten. It was one utterly devoid of warmth, one that dripped with smug self-satisfaction. She raised her spear and shield into the air, whereupon they vanished in sparkles.

"You, poor, sorry thief, must steal something from me if you're to become a priest," she snickered. Arms crossed beneath what promised to be an impressive bust, the fallen angel regarded him coolly. "Something precious, indeed."

Well. Ritten couldn't possibly guess what it was. He was, after all, a thief, not a scholar. Not one very good at riddles, either.

Arms suddenly spread, the fallen angel stepped forward. Teeth bared as a wolf's fangs in a predatory smile, she continued. "You must steal...my heart!"

Her heart?

"My heart! For it is not enough that a thief's fingers be nimble! If he is to succeed as a priest, he must exhibit the cunning guile necessary to bed a demon...for his might's scant enough to do so!" She cocked her head to the side and jutted her chin outwards, prideful to a fault. The smile, of course, never left her lips. "To that end, Thief Ritten, self-proclaimed 'champion' of the downtrodden, raper of pursestrings!"

Her nostrils flared, and Ritten was not five steps from pissing himself as she shouted at him.

"Seduce me!"

This was where he died. Struck dead by a fallen angel for his fumbling tongue. The closest he'd come to wooing a girl was stealing a pair of undergarments when he was on the cusp of manhood. That hadn't really done much for his relationship with her, nascent or otherwise.

Well. He took a deep breath. Where to begin? He'd heard a few snippets of some old sonnets, ones with which poets pledged their love eternal unto maidens fair. Maybe that'd tickle her heartstrings. If not, he had about a half-body's distance on her before she ran him through with whatever weapon she decided to pluck from the aether.

Her eyes. Her eyes were as twin suns, casting their nourishing light upon his frail, chilly form.

Yet ignorant to that to which men swear service true and loyal, his eyes were in turn opened to the balmy world of love.

He went to one knee, one hand outstretched. Her body, he opined, crafted by the gods, yet brought low not out of petty spite, but such that he could be edified by its sight! She was a monument, a testament to the will of the gods, their wisdom, their unerring craft and care in the distillation of virtue! For as loyalty begets loyalty, so too does beauty beget beauty! To that end, how could he do anything but love her? And such love far outgrew the crass confines of physicality, for even if she were to spur his advances -- how could she do anything but, being so peerless in both beauty and adherence to her duty that all others proved themselves unworthy -- he would be forever changed. Indelibly, even, altered by merely witnessing a bastion of purity unmatched.

Eyes shut, Ritten didn't really have a metric to gauge her response. He hoped that her silence was pleasantly stunned, but he honestly wouldn't have put it past her to just be retching with disgust. Or some other appropriately pious reaction, to be fair.

When he cracked an eye open, though, the sight that met him was...surprising.

Her eyes had dimmed to white with golden centers. Her cheeks glowed with sunset-crimson heat, and her lips finally lost that sanctimonious smile in favor of slack-jawed shock. Hand brought up to her mouth in girlish shyness, the fallen angel looked nothing short of smitten.

When she spoke -- after an apparently embarrassing pause -- it was only after a flustered first attempt. She recovered after a tongue-tied mumble and voiced her response. "I, ah. I. I didn't know that the heart of a poet-" She looked to the side, then to the other, and giggled. "Th-The heart of a poet beat within thy breast, noble thief Ritten."

She giggled once more, looked to the side, and clapped a hand to her cheek. "I-I didn't- I wasn't-" She brought her other hand up to her face and shut her eyes tight. "R-Ritten..."

Suddenly, her hands went to her breastplate, and in one desperate motion, they came apart once more, scattering her gilded armor! Her body bared before Ritten's shocked eyes, the fallen angel squealed with something between delight and burning need. "Take me! Oh, take me; I'm yours!"

Her size went at once from intimidating to...intimidating but of a different stripe. Her arms wrapped around his body and pulled his now-flushed face between her heaving breasts. "Ooh, that I knew before how sweet your honeyed barbs stung! I would've given myself unto you in an instant just to spare myself this swooning intoxication! I do, I do, I do! A threefold acceptance of your proposal of love! Let us pledge a love eternal and be wed in the name of the Holy Church!"

She was warm. Soft, too. And big. He'd been too concerned with the threat of death to consider it before, but damn, was she gorgeous. Statuesque, more accurately. And hugging his face between her generous bust.

Ritten wriggled in her grip and poked his face out of her cleavage, squeaking that he'd like that, yes. He didn't have- Pardon, he needed a moment to bring his hands up. You know, to take the lead and grab her by the hips as a man ought to do. He was the one in charge here, wasn't he?

No, he was not, and as she sent the air sputtering from his lungs with a back-popping hug, the fallen angel proved her control over the situation. Thank gods below that she was smitten. "Oh, Silver-Tongue Ritten, I'd never think to usurp your dominion over me, your blushing bride! Darling mine, let's consummate this joyous union as soon as possible! Only."

Only...?

"Only," she continued, her flush turning shyly hopeful, "I would ask a favor of you. Fallen angel though I may be, I am an angel nonetheless, and." She released Ritten, sending him slumping to the ground. She turned away, kicking a foot up behind her girlishly. Swooning, she wiggled her impressive hips and spoke. "I would have our marriage be a proper one with a proper ceremony! Ah-"

She turned back to Ritten, otherwise occupied catching his breath and trying to manage the erection he'd gotten hugged far too tightly to her sumptuous body. "You don't know what a proper marriage ceremony is for my people, do you!"

No. No, he did not. Coughing, he told her as such, and the fallen angel knelt down beside him. Gods below, she even dwarfed him kneeling!

"A thousand pardons, I've not even told you my name. Your bride," she said with a beatific smile, "is named Aurelia. And!" Aurelia hopped to her feet. Hooking her hands under his armpits, she brought Ritten up with her. "The ceremony can be conducted with alacrity, so never fear! You'll be." She blushed deeper still, giggling and utterly failing to meet his eyes. "R-Root deep in your bride before you know it!"

"But first!" She tossed him over her shoulder, carrying him not unlike a bag of flour, and tromped off to gods-knew-where. He couldn't exactly see draped over her bare shoulder -- nor was he inclined to look around, given that the sway of her rear captured his attention quite soundly. Apparently, though, there was a door or a portal or something, because soon the two of them were in what looked to be a bedroom.

"How fortunate, my love, that you've found an ordained priestess of the threefold goddess and her six ardent disciples!" She chirped happily, tossing Ritten down on the bed. Splayed out before her -- nude, apparently, as his clothes dissolved at a snap of her fingers -- he couldn't do

much but gawk at her body. He'd seen it before, certainly, but with her looming over him, hip cocked to the side and chest pushed out...

His face was red. Hers was redder. Wavering and frail, the expression on her face didn't match her body's confident posture in the least. "I-I've heard, betrothed, that men fancy a woman confident in her allure. A-A-And!" She tossed her hair over one shoulder. "You'll naught find a maiden as sure of her beauty as I! Therefore!"

She raised one lissome leg up, pinning her foot beside him on the bed with a degree of -- in his mind -- menacing inevitability. "It's come time to consummate our marriage."

Ritten gulped. He was at once terrified and exhilarated. When she brought the other one up and stood on the bed proper, excitement gave way to wide-eyed confusion. That in turn gave way to Ritten's eyes bulging out of their sockets when she planted her derriere square on his belly.

"First, my love." Aurelia gulped, grinding her hips down against him. She was gentle enough that he didn't have to struggle for breath, but that was the least of his concerns. No, far more pressing was the wet heat smearing against his skin. "I must anoint you with my, ah... 'Essence.'"

Oh, thank goodness she was keen on being his wife, because there was no way he'd be able to turn her away if she were this willing already. His cock twitched, and the tip of it bumped against the swell of her rear. She jolted at that, though the look of shock turned quickly to a grin.

"Easy, dear," she purred, hands planted on his wrists, pinning them to the bed. "There's no dearth of time for us to spend together. And really, I do want this to be a traditional ceremony, so I must insist that you allow me to perform the rites." She rolled her hips forward, coating his stomach with her sex's slickness. "Don't worry! It won't be long now. And-"

She gulped again. Ritten brought his hands up to settle on her hips. "I'm certain that a partial christening will suffice, given the expedience with which we must consummate our vows! And, you know, really it's just the christening with my essence and the vows! We're halfway there, my darling!"

Giddy, Aurelia squealed with wordless delight. When she focused her eyes on Ritten's, her enthusiasm dovetailed with his hazy delight. The kiss she pressed to his lips not a moment later coaxed a languid murmur from his, and soon.

Soon Aurelia abandoned her attempt to smear her arousal against Ritten's body in favor of grinding her rear back against his cock. "N-Now, my darling Ritten," she hummed, "come the vows! And please, answer honestly! Bound inextricably before the threefold goddess, blessed

be her name, unfit for my thrice-sullied tongue, and her six ardent disciples!"

Aurelia raised her hips up once more and carefully, carefully brought them down again, this time pinning Ritten's length to his now-slick belly and teasing it with the folds of her sex. The gates to heaven were hot, wet, and slippery, and even grinding down against his length, he was content to enjoy it. After all, all he had to do was swear to uphold the vows of their marriage.

"Do you, thief Ritten of the Holy Church, swear to be loyal unto me, Fallen Angel Aurelia of the Threefold Goddess? To follow me no matter where I roam, to be my aegis from misfortune and misery?"

He did, Ritten affirmed between panting.

Aurelia smiled, pressed a kiss to his lips, and touched her forehead to his. "And I shall do the same. Do you, thief Ritten of the Holy Church, swear to warm my bed, to take me into your arms and guide me to gasping, shuddering ecstasy whenever I so desire?"

She ground her hips down with each word, and though he had yet to so much as enter her, Ritten was already near delirious at the aching desire bubbling up inside of him. He did, he affirmed once more, rutting his hips up to meet hers. He tried somehow to push inside of her, but with Aurelia's cunt-lips so snug against his shaft, his tip, his root, rolling up and down with every lazy wiggle of her rear.

"And I shall do the same." She purred in his ear. He was so close. So close to heaven, so close to having a bride of his own, one to fuck and rut and empty himself into whenever he needed to. Wanted to. Whenever he-

"Do you," she sighed, her voice's languor betraying the way she moved faster and faster, "thief Ritten of the Holy Church, swear to love, honor, and -- above all else -- obey my every whim, my every desire, my every lust, longing, and order?" Her hands went to his, sliding his ravenous grip to the swell of her rear, encouraging him to grope as much of her supple derriere as he could. Fuck, but her body was luscious. Every inch of it Amazonian perfection. He was so close, he just had to get through the vows, just had to-

"Oh, darling, don't keep me waiting!" Aurelia moaned, halfway to her own climax, and that, ooh, that sent a shiver down Ritten's spine.

He did! He did, he swore to love, honor, and obey! Everything, everything she asked of him, he'd do with a smile on his intoxicated lips!

She rumbled with pleasure, eyes shut, lips barely parted in a satisfied, lovestruck smile. "And I-

He came.



She blinked.

He spurted his seed onto his belly, painting a white flag of surrender to her exquisite ministrations all over his cunt-polished abdomen. Aurelia raised off of him, surprise turning to shock turning to panic.

"Ritten!" She squeaked, kneeling beside him on the bed as he absent-mindedly took his cock in his hand to stroke himself to emptiness. "Gah! Ritten, no, stop that at once!" She reached down to swat at his hand, but no sooner had the words left her lips than he pulled away.

Her eyes went wide.

"Oh, no! No, no, no!" She whimpered, hands clapped to her cheeks. "Ritten, oh, darling Ritten! You lovely ninny! You went and consummated our marriage on your own, and I didn't even manage to finish the vows!" She hugged him close, eyes shut, lip quivering.

But Ritten was to be her aegis against misfortune and misery. So he craned his neck up to kiss the nape of her neck. With a confused murmur, Aurelia's eyes fluttered open. "Ah-! I, ah." Cheeks flushed once more, Aurelia's grip loosened, if only just so.

"This is a bit of a quandry," she sighed, rocking with him in her arms. "For the vows taken before the threefold goddess are irrevocable!" Aurelia nodded to herself, and Ritten nodded with her. "Unbreakable! Impervious to the whims of mere mortals!"

She clicked her tongue and looked to the ceiling. "Only ours are a bit lop-sided, aren't they." She reached down to palm his cock, kneading his balls with the butt of her palm as her fingertips trailed over his shaft. "You swore to obey me. And." She clicked her tongue again, this time with a laborious sigh. "I didn't."

She sighed again.

"And you came outside of my sex." She sounded more resigned than anything else now, pumping his cock. "It's likely, then, that you're uninterested in having me bear your children now, mm?" She glanced down to his slack, satisfied face, and rolled his eyes when Ritten nodded.

"As I surmised."

Ritten swooned upwards, pressing another kiss to her lips. Her lips, so like rose-petals in their beauty, begging at once to be kissed and to be admired by the eye. Folly, he claimed, to think that it would take anything less than a lifetime to appreciate her body as it deserved. The barest dusting of red upon her cheeks called to mind the flush of a lover's skin after a night spent together in ecstasy, and-

Aurelia gave his chest a smack, giggling. "Ritten, you boob! You can't compare something to what it actually is!" She sighed once more, though this time it was more colored with longing. She hugged his cheek to her breasts once more, and he trilled with happiness. "Oh, that I married a man with a tongue lacking your penchant for poetry. Then I could just set him to work as my love-slave and have that be that."

She worked his cock harder still, hand like a piston pumping at his shaft. Shivering with glee, Ritten groaned against her body. His eyes rolled back, but Aurelia was too busy staring longingly at nothing in particular to notice.

"But the one who stole my heart did so with such surety, such cunning guile that I cannot help but love him as a wife loves a husband. And to that end, I- Ritten, did you finish again?!"

He couldn't so much as nod, so deliriously happy at her silk-soft touch. Mumbling his answer into her cleavage, Ritten bucked his hips up and fucked her hand.

Aurelia shook her head with a grin.

"My husband's more than a poet, it seems." She paused for a moment...before grinning wickedly. With a single push, Ritten was sent once more onto his back. This time, though, he wasn't so inclined to worry or feel or even think, really. So when Aurelia walked on her knees up over his face. When she bared her cunt to him, glistening, dripping, mesmerizing.

He did what any good husband would do.

He opened his mouth wide, let his tongue loll out, and dragged it across her slit.

Aurelia shuddered, clamped her thighs against his cheeks, and ground her sex down against his face. "Ooh, let's see what else that tongue can do, husband."

And thus it is with four shuddering orgasms that the fate of four deacons of the Holy Church met their respective demises. Lust, Pride, Folly, and Love, each felling one of the once-noble acolytes until their minds glazed pink with pleasure and lost all other desires. The world moved on. The Holy Church sent more to the tower in the blighted swamp. Some passed. Most failed.

And all lived happily ever after.