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Lyselle awoke in her dorm to the sound of birds chirping in the trees outside her window. She sat up, bleary-eyed and disoriented by her sudden return to the present. Here, in this quiet room, that desert outpost seemed like it was an entire world away.

Flecks of dust shimmered in the light streaking through the window's wooden blinds, their nature-lit dance serving as the only motion in the space that wasn't the Terran's own. On her nightstand, an alchemical clock measured the time via drifting motes of light, swirling colors dancing within a gemstone cage of Lyselle's own making. The stone reflected the sunlight up onto the ceiling in a brilliant prismatic pattern, a painting of nature's own making signaling each morning's arrival and easing Lyselle into the day.

It was early still.

The half-awake Terran looked back to the ceiling, navigating the thoughts in her mind as her eyes navigated the patterns of reflected light overhead. Her introduction to Karna had been so harrowing, but here now, in this quiet room, she felt at peace.

*Now if only I could adjust to the culture...*

Memories of the day before quickly rushed back to the front of Lyselle's mind. She'd never felt so overcome by her own restless urges as to think about another woman while doing *that*, never mind in such a public place as the baths. It was hard enough to overcome the shame to pleasure herself in the first place, and the number of times she'd done so to completion could be counted on one hand. She'd normally been too afraid of the consequences to get there.

But that hadn't stopped her this time, had it? The recollection of her own behavior instigated a fresh flushing of Lyselle's face. She felt as if she'd entirely lost control of herself, but all the same she couldn't chase away the acknowledgement that, while writhing there under the surface within the spell of her own pleasure, she'd felt... *wonderful*.

Lys had tried to quiet her racing thoughts with study and preparation, to mixed success. Learning about the flora and wildlife of the forest had done little except help the poor girl lay awake half the night wrestling with imagined scenarios involving her to-be companion

and different aspects of the wood; what to say about this plant, how to impress her talking about that creature, where best to camp with her, the routes they should walk..

Even now, sitting up in bed in the morning light, Lyselle struggled to shake off such thoughts. The prospect of spending so much time alone with a powerful and promising sorceress was in itself intimidating, but Lys found herself infatuated with other things about the half-elf. She still had no idea how to process such feelings, even if she had made due and come to terms well enough with them in the bath.

Lyselle cursed under her breath as she wiped the sleep from her eyes. Even just recalling it, her groin ached with need, panties dampening between the girl's legs in shameful excitement.

*Christ, Lyselle!* She scolded herself, trying desperately to ignore that her breath was already growing heavy. *What's gotten into you!? We just did this—!*

But the thoughts persisted, easily drowning out her shame no matter how much she tried to refute herself. Lyselle's heart pounded in her chest in an arrhythmic dance of excitement and anxiety, the urge to grant her body its desired encore swelling with each conflicted pulse. The act she'd hoped had gotten these urges out of her system seemed to have instead left her trembling in need for another round, like a roused beast starving after a long hibernation.

*It's so hot!* She hissed through her teeth, her body's needs putting every nerve on edge so intensely that even the bedsheets against her body felt like the knowing touch of an old lover. *I can't take it! I want it again! I need it!!*

Nature and desire had won out. Lyselle's hand shook as it slowly reached down across her body, a hanging finger sending her senses even further into touch-starved lust as it traced down her middle in a motion that only started as an accident. Her shoulders rolled under the influence of her own hand's graze, her eyes liling and a sharp gasp escaping her lips as she felt her own wet mound. The deep-rooted shame she felt wrestled for control inside of her, but the lustful Terran couldn't bring herself to stop, waves of heat coursing through her body from her core.

The memory of the night before was exciting to her on its own, the thrill of her sin urging her fingers to part the lips under them and

rub at her point of pleasure. Everything that had made her hesitant in the baths in hindsight seemed like an exciting adventure into the taboo. The fear of getting caught, succumbing to her urges, feeling her body meld with the hot water around her; all of the swirling emotions of that moment pressed her forward again now.

And then she recalled what had made her so amorous in the first place. The image of Talia flashed into Lyselle's mind like a bolt of lightning; her warm smile, her cheerful voice, her amaranthine eyes. Lys's own eyes drifted shut, seeing the subject of her desire clearly in her recollections; how she walked, how she spoke, how her body moved underneath her clothes.

The Terran's body cheered her on as imagination took hold. Talia was cheerful, energetic... *bouncy*. She didn't seem too interested in proper support for her chest, either, and the motions one could glimpse happening under the loose fabric over her unrestrained tits were, to Lyselle's private admission, mouthwatering.

She had to admit to herself, for now at least, that she loved and resented that fabric in equal measure. It left just enough to the imagination to encourage creative thought, and create the lustful woman did, undressing the half-elf in her mind, slowly, purposefully,. In this fantasy, Talia's cheerful smile never waned, her gemstone eyes locked onto Lys's mundane gaze as if hers were just as beautiful a treasure. That smile, that look, maintained unflinchingly as cloth gave way to skin.

Lys's body trembled in want. Her shame had been silenced entirely now as the image in the girl's mind moved to Talia's approach, her gentle touch, a delicate kiss. The thought of feeling another's skin against her own sent another shiver through the Terran, and she couldn't stop herself from imagining that lithe elven hand trailing down her body just as she'd done to herself, tracing her form, touching her where she'd never been touched by another. The imagined half-elf's hand joined Lys's own, fingers interlocking as they churned against her in lascivious unison.

Lys grunted in frustration, grabbing at her panties. *Get out of my fucking way!!* She hissed again, forcefully pulling the undergarment down to gain easier access to her dripping sex. The action felt animalistic, and she once again began to scold herself out of trained

instinct, though she'd barely thought a single reprimanding word before her fingers had resumed thrusting hungrily into her core, her range of motion as unrestrained as her dominant thoughts.

She moaned as her back arched into the mattress beneath her, her hips rising and bucking against her own hand under the bedsheets. She'd barely woken up, and already she'd caved to forbidden urges that she'd thought long since trained out of her. Worse, she *liked* it; as inexperienced as she was, she couldn't lie to herself enough to deny that whatever she was doing felt *amazing*. In reluctant submission it had been exciting, but now, lost in self-indulgent thought, free of any concern over who might see, engaging with it willfully, Lyselle realized just how much she was *enjoying* herself.

But she was still holding back, however little. That voice of shame and doubt kept shouting from the back of her mind.

*Fuck it*, she thought, aiming to silence the hindrance within her. *If we're doing this, we're not half-assing it.*

She pressed her digits as deep into herself as she could, letting out a staggered wail as her fingers pushed up into her own walls, and Lyselle's imagination ran wild. Set free by her decision to succumb to her desire, the Terran's sporadic thoughts flickered between the excitement of her public display in the baths and thoughts of being pleased by her fellow candidate. Those trains of thought ping-ponged and swirled together, mixing into a new scenario of Talia joining her in the bath, the water trailing in tantalizing rivulets over the woman's pale skin. Every stroke of Lyselle's own hand down her channel evoked a fresh coo or mewl that further buried her senses of shame and doubt under a rising swell of need.

The night before, she'd foolishly thought nobody had noticed, that she'd gotten away with her masturbatory act without consequence. She'd forgotten a key aspect of naiads. The spring's keeper was one with the very water the girl had pleased herself in and, as Lyselle attempted to creep out undetected, the being had given her a knowing smile.

In the moment, that had been devastating, but now, here in private, the thought of someone knowing what she'd done, of knowing they'd let her keep on with it after discovering her in the act, that they *liked* it even...

The Terran's breath trembled She rolled over, pushing her panties down over her knees and kicking them off entirely into the bed sheets as she burrowed her face against a pillow. Her hips rose as she worked at her dripping slit, the soft down pillow in her arm barely containing her building moans of excitement.

She'd been caught! What if Talia had been there? What would she think!?

*What if she did what I'm imagining...?*

Then, a fresh flavor of intrusion broke into her thoughts: And *what if the naiad joined?*

Lyselle bit her lip. A naiad was an elemental spirit, its form decided upon consciously, and the one minding the springs had certainly not settled for a sub-par visage. Their womanly figure was decorated by the light dancing through their body as it would any mass of water, ripples within them making patterns dance across their skin like shimmers at the bottom of a clear pool. They always appeared to be underwater, in that sense, and were constantly framed by a glistening white mane of beautiful hair.

In the Terran's mind, the naiad looked upon Lyselle and her subject of adoration with deep blue eyes. They leaned against their favorite rock, watching the girls frolic in their waters, spreading their own legs and joining in on the pair's masturbatory pleasure in a provocative display. The Talia in Lys's imagination simply looked over her shoulder and laughed it off, turning to Lyselle with a coy grin that gave way to a subtle bite of the lip.

"Let's give them a *real* show," the figment beckoned.

"Talia...!" The name escaped Lys's lips in the quiet dorm, flowing out of her like honey. She didn't want to fight it this time. She was alone in her room, an animal in heat left to its own devices and desires, and her desire was clear.

"Talia," she mewled again, a little louder than before, the imagined scene of intimacy in her mind pushing her virginal lust to the brink, the half-elf's head descending as she pushed Lyselle's legs apart.

"Talia!" She wasn't even trying to suppress her volume anymore. Lyselle's pulse crescendoed as her feet dug down against the mattress, her legs kicking and squirming in jolts as the pressure built within her.

"*T-Tal-!*"

With one last seizing breath, the Terran's body tensed and throbbed as her thighs clamped around her wrist. Lyselle's essence shot out from her as she cried out in heat, body shaking as waves of ecstasy rippled in rhythm up her spine. Her pussy clenched around her fingers, which were still gripping at her walls and rubbing, pressing, urging out more of the orgasm, more bucks and wails and ejaculatory mess, until finally, mercifully, her quivering body abated, releasing its hold of her hand and leaving the girl to catch her breath.

She'd been loud. Maybe too loud. She wondered what her neighbors would think, or if they'd heard clearly the name she'd been calling. As she rolled onto her back, looking back at the labyrinth of light on the ceiling, she wondered if that even bothered her anymore.

She glanced over to the blinds on her window, the sun's amber light streaking through them, and began trying to distract her mind with the last of her preparations.

"Alright, let's see..." Alwin began to take stock aloud of what she'd packed for the trip. "Field guides, alchemy text, notebook..."

There wasn't much point in doing this a third time. She'd been thorough, and she knew it. No matter how many times she checked her utensils, her notes, or whatever else, it was all just a distraction, a procrastination of her one final act of preparation.

Lyselle took a deep breath. There was no putting it off any longer, lest she keep Talia waiting.

*Talia...*

The name echoed through her mind, lingering and sweet. Lys bit her lip, glancing up at her headboard. She couldn't escape her thoughts, clearly. A different approach was due.

She closed her eyes, still catching her breath from her spontaneous act of exertion. Post-climax, everything felt more sensitive, more alert. The air she breathed coursed through her with weight and power, and her heart quieted its thunderous pounding as her blood returned to its regular pressure. The bedsheets and night shirt slid against her body with every movement, every breath, and she sensed every minute millimeter of displacement.

It was in that movement that she found her inspiration. Her chest heaved with every breath, its form teasing at the fabric of her shirt as it rose and fell. She thought back to her own fantasies, as well as what had

instigated them. It reminded her of a lesson she'd learned long ago, though bittersweetly.

Lyselle rolled out of bed, suddenly remembering she was bottomless as her legs broke out of the sheets and stretched to the wooden floor. She sat there for a moment, collecting herself and her resolve, and fighting as best she could to chase away the shame she felt in seeing her own naked skin in the slatted sunbeams.

She had to. It was time to figure out how to best present her body.

This was not a department with which the Terran often concerned herself. Her wardrobe was largely simple and practically decided upon, and while her would-be attire for an excursion into the woods would still hinge on that practicality, she'd concluded there was something else to consider.

Taking her glasses from the nightstand and looking towards the mirror against the far wall, Lyselle took in a deep breath and, after bracing her mind, swiftly pulled her shirt off over her head and threw it to the floor. She stood up from the bed, looking her naked reflection in the eye as she moved, and stared herself down, convinced it would somehow yield a modicum of confidence if she could just convince the thing in the mirror that they weren't as gruesome as they believed themselves to be.

To her own surprise, she actually was less bothered by her own visage than usual. She wore a slight flush behind her skin and a glisten between her legs, the blatant evidence of her pleasure decorating her body in a way that made her feel less trapped, less restricted by old thoughts and feelings. Her anxiety left her breath still heavier than usual, but the resulting movement of her breasts and shoulders made her feel, in light of how she found herself thinking about the bodies of other women, a strange and foreign sort of confidence.

As she stepped towards the mirror, Lyselle's eyes fell to the sway of her hips. Her mother had called it the devil's curse, but in this moment, posing cheekily with a hand on her hip before the mirror, the Terran found herself acknowledging - perhaps for the first time in her life - the potential appeal of her natural assets. Even her eyes seemed to sparkle with an unusual optimism and joy.

She giggled, to her own surprise, and struck a couple more poses in front of the mirror, standing tall and with confidence. She almost felt like a completely different person.

“Yeah,” she assured herself. “Yeah! We can do this!”

Lyselle wasn't sure if she entirely believed her own affirmations, but it didn't feel like a complete lie. She strode back across the room, looking over her shoulder to watch herself in the mirror and nearly running into the nightstand by the window. She turned to face the shut blinds, pausing for a moment in hesitant consideration against a sudden, impulsive inclination. With a sharp inhale, she flung the blinds open, allowing sunlight to flood the room and cascade over her naked figure.

The fresh air blew in across the girl's face, the morning's breeze dancing with its light through the room as she soaked in their touch upon her body. It was a warm morning, and quiet, the only sound outside being the rustling of the forest beyond the dorm's walls.

It was unusual for there to be such a lack of other candidates taking advantage of such weather, but Lys didn't mind one bit; the solitude gave her a moment more to assure herself that her confidence wasn't unfounded without embarrassment being a factor and, again, she found herself feeling glorious. The sun's heat against her bare chest felt proper, natural. She closed her eyes and stilled herself with a deep inhale, finally calming her breath as she listened to the rustling of the trees in the morning wind.

Finally, Lyselle turned, striding back over to the small closet beside the mirror to begin looking through her clothes. She pulled out a selection of tops and laid them over her bed, testing each one at a time in front of the mirror. Her motivations were unusual and new, but the weather was the perfect cover for it. Surely, she thought, she could present herself flatteringly without betraying her signature practicality. Nobody would ever have to know.

It was in this process, while alternating between a t-shirt and a button-up in front of the glass, that her self-doubt clawed its way back to the forefront.

“Why are you even bothering, Lys?” She heckled her reflection as she defied her own words, testing different angles and loosening the



odd button like a dare to herself. “You’re not exactly working with a beach bod here, are you?”

*Mister Everett Hector seemed to disagree*, was the thought that intruded in that moment. Lyselle huffed, pulling her clothing options up against her body defensively at the recollection of the slaver’s lecherous appraisal of her figure.

For a time, she stood there in frustration and shame. Thinking back to her time in the desert, the sun’s flooding of her living space felt suddenly less emboldening, the motes of dust fluttering through it less whimsical. She felt cornered by her own thoughts, overpowered by memories and fear.

Then, her eyes trailed back to the mirror. The shine in them was gone, the creature looking back at her instead resembling a frightened, cowering animal. It was as if the woman she’d found in the reflection just moments ago had abandoned her.

That hurt.

Lyselle felt tears welling in her eyes, and a single thought screamed through her being.

*This isn’t what she’d want.*

She straightened her back again, still holding the clothes close, shaking a bit as she fought against her instincts.

*This isn’t what she fought for!*

Lys tried to imagine what Nidrah would say if she saw her like this. Deep down, she knew; the Abyssal would be stern, not mincing words in the slightest, yet patient, sympathetic. She’d traveled with the demoness for most of a year, and seen her treat countless strangers with the same care and resolve that she’d displayed with her closest friends.

“He is not your king, *keski*.” Lys did her best to impersonate Nidrah’s energy as she spoke. “You owe that man nothing, least of all your fear.”

She wasn’t sure if the words had done much, but recalling the witch’s comforting presence did wonders in itself. Lyselle turned back to the bed, placing both options in her hands down in exchange for the next.

She turned back to the mirror, her new choice held in place against her, and gave her reflection a defiant glare.

“This isn’t for him!” She broke the morning’s silence with a rebellious shout, trying to drown her doubt out by force. “And I don’t need *your* damn approval!”

She’d shut her eyes while yelling, nearly forgetting what she was even doing. Reopening them, she looked at the garment against her body with renewed determination. She cocked her head, turning to the side with an inquisitive hum. Lyselle’s eyes widened as she turned the other way, and the Terran suddenly couldn’t help excitedly biting her lip as a blushing smile crept across her freckled face.

“I will *take* that approval though.”