



ECHOES *of Devotion*

A Baldur's Gate 3 Themed Charity Zine

ECHOES OF DEVOTION

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To our fellow Faerûnians,

Whilst the Forgotten Realms can often be quite violent and scary in nature, many of us have enjoyed the romance scenes throughout Baldur's Gate 3. Companions, Tavs and Durges have found love in unexpected ways, regardless of which direction their personal quest pulled them in, giving some much needed respite from dangerous battles and tough choices.

As a fandom, we have created so many lovely stories set during canon and beyond. Through art, writing and other creative pursuits, people from all walks of life have told these love stories and we wanted to celebrate them through our Echoes of Devotion zine. And with February being the most romantic month of all, we hope you'll enjoy the art and words within these pages this season.

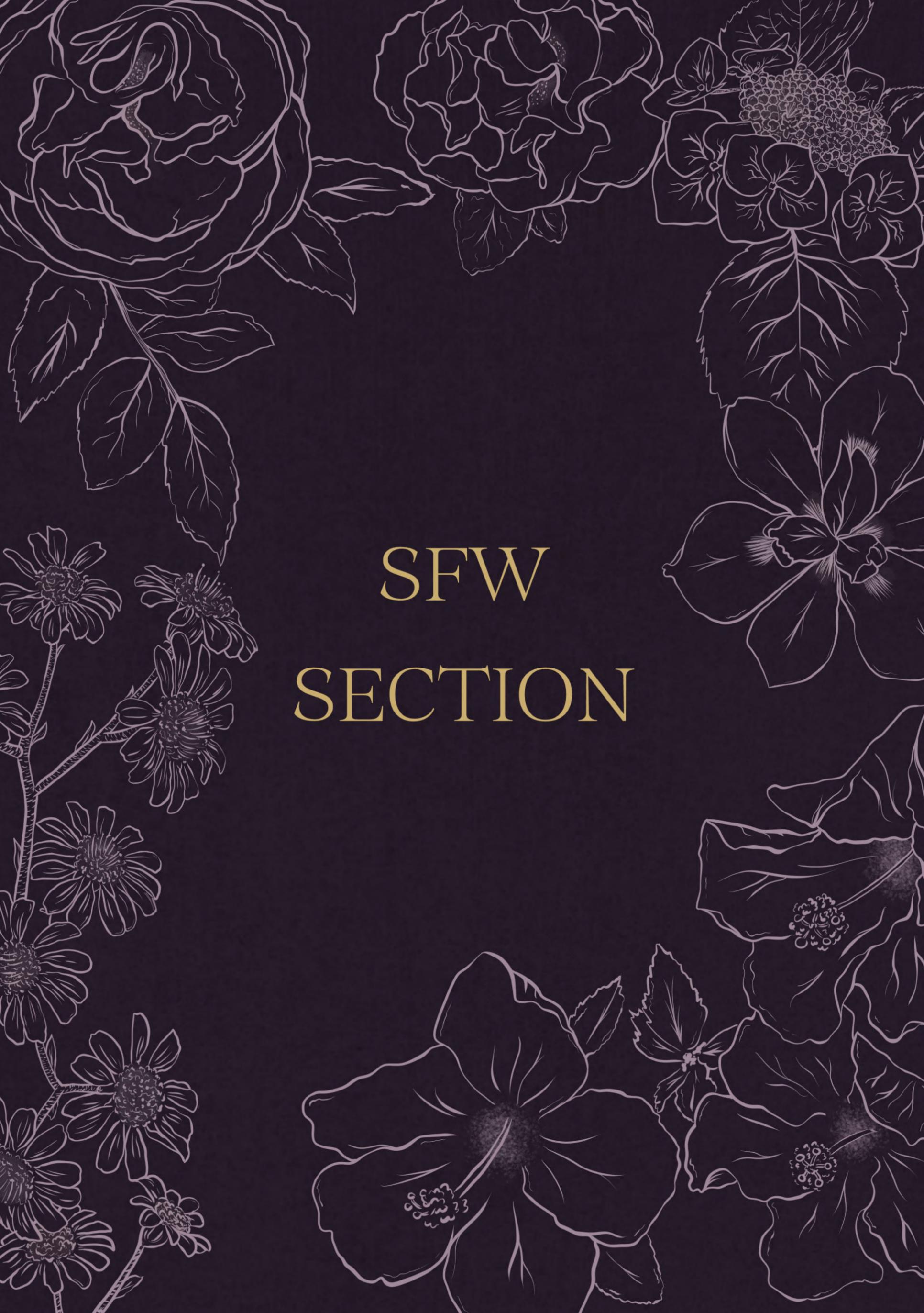
We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who supported this zine. We hope that you continue the love by supporting UNICEF USA through the GoFundMe page. Not only are you getting a packed issue full of love, you'd also be supporting a great cause along the way.

echoesofdevotion.carrd.co

Happy Valentine's Day!

The Echoes of Devotion Mod Team
Israfela, Rose, Zuzana, Sana and Bellamy



The background is a solid dark purple. It is decorated with intricate white line-art illustrations of various flowers. In the top left, there is a large, detailed rose. To its right is another large, multi-petaled flower. On the right side, there is a cluster of small flowers at the top and a large, five-petaled flower below it. Along the bottom left, there is a vertical stem with several small, daisy-like flowers. At the bottom center and right, there are more large, five-petaled flowers. The text 'SFW SECTION' is centered in the middle of the page in a gold-colored serif font.

SFW
SECTION



PETALS UPON YOUR WINGS

WRITTEN BY KAT

Tags: Astarion/Tav, Fluff, Batstarion, Pale Elf Quest Spoilers, Post Cazador Quest

“Astarion!”

“Just a moment!”

The roguish vampire looks up at the grassy cliffs nearby. They're covered in plants and flora of all colors, but there's one flower that catches his eye in particular. It sits nestled on a rocky ledge above him, much too high to try climbing without risk of a nasty fall. Besides, he wouldn't want to get his nails dirty either.

With a flourish, he spins and transforms into a white bat. The world looks a tad bit different to him in this form. His vision is sensitive and the light from the sun seems to shine even brighter, but he can still see the patch of flowers he's after.

Astarion flaps his wings and makes his way up towards the cliff's edge. He snickers as he hears Tav call his name again. He didn't exactly tell them what he was up to, but doing so would just ruin the surprise! What's romance without a little mystery anyway?

As he lands on the ledge, his tiny eyes take in the sight before him. The forest below stretches far into the distance. He notices Tav leaning up against a tree, brows furrowed with their arms crossed in front of them. He sees the smoke from their campfire just a ways to the east. He can even make out the streets of Baldur's Gate to the west of him. It's moments like this one that remind Astarion just how expansive and beautiful the Sword Coast can be.

He directs his attention back to the flowers at his little feet. Using his wings, he carefully picks one up. It has six white petals and a yellow center, the same kind of flower that Tav placed on his grave the night that he finally became free. His mind wanders to that moment. He can perfectly picture the loving look in Tav's eyes, the smile on their face, the softness in their voice... He remembers it well and he doesn't think he'll ever forget it.

Astarion looks at some of the other flowers growing here: daisies, tulips, and lilies in a variety of different colors. They all smell as sweet as they look. He scoops a few more up into his wings for good measure. It wouldn't be much of a bouquet if he only brought back one flower.

With a pleased expression on his face, he flies back down into the trees where Tav is awaiting him. They startle at his sudden appearance, then break into a wide grin at the sight of him in his bat form. "Really? This is why you disappeared on me?" It takes them a moment to notice what he has in his clutches. "Are these for me?"

Astarion nods and motions for them to take the flowers. Tav giggles as they happily accept the bouquet from him. In a flash, he switches back into his humanoid form. There's a soft smile on his face when he asks, "Do you like them?"

"Of course I do! They're lovely... especially this one." Tav points at the flower that originally caught Astarion's attention, the one that he really wanted to give to them. The others are nice, of course, but this one carries a special meaning for them both. Tav remembers that night just as well as he does, the night he decided to try living again. It was the first time Astarion told them he loved them and that he wanted it all.

Tav breathes in the smell of the fresh flowers, then presses a kiss against his cheek. "Thank you, my love."

"You're very welcome, darling." Astarion smirks before taking their hand and leading them down the forest path. "Now, where were we?"

"I believe we were having a walk together," Tav replies. "You said you had something to show me."

"I do indeed. Come now. It's not much further."

The couple walk hand in hand together, talking and laughing while they make their way through the woods. It doesn't take long for them to reach their destination. Tav realizes they've arrived before Astarion can even say a word.

"My Gods!" They exclaim. "It's beautiful."

Before them lies a wide meadow decorated with flowers and spotted with large willow trees. The afternoon sun shines down on the clearing, casting it in a warm glow. The grass is greener than the brightest of emeralds and softer than any of the pillows back at the Elfsong. It's as if Sylvanus came down and blessed this land himself.

"How did you find this place?" Tav asks.

"Stumbled upon it while I was out hunting last night," Astarion responds. "I thought you might like it."

"Like it? I love it!" Tav exclaims. Their eyes shine bright as they murmur, "I love you."

They throw their arms around Astarion and pull him into a tight embrace. He melts right into their touch, gripping their hips and crashing his mouth against theirs with an eagerness that almost surprises them. His tongue seeks entry past Tav's lips and they happily allow him in. Each kiss is just as electrifying and passionate as the last. When their lips finally part, Astarion nods his head towards a bed of grass underneath one of the willow trees. "Care to rest for a while?"

When Tav nods, he takes their hand and leads them to the spot he just picked out. They lie down together, Tav's head resting on Astarion's chest. With a smile, they whisper, "Close your eyes."

Astarion raises an eyebrow at them but complies nonetheless. Tav tucks the special flower under one of his pointy ears, admiring how it looks against his white curls. When he opens his eyes again, Tav's lips are right next to his. If his heart could still beat, it would be racing at this very moment. He kisses them softly. "I love you too."

Tav lays their head on Astarion's chest and sighs contentedly as they cuddle up against him. "Thank you for sharing this with me."

"Don't thank me," he replies. "I want to share everything with you... I want to share it all."





DAWN BEYOND DEVILS AND WOLVES

WRITTEN BY TAVYLIA SINS

Tags: Wyll x Shadowheart, Act 3 and Epilogue Spoilers, fluff, hurt/comfort, Shadowheart personal quest spoilers, Wyll personal quest spoilers, Selûnite Shadowheart, Blade of Avernus Wyll, mild alcohol

“You must think me such a fool, for believing a dark goddess could ever have my best interests in mind.” Shadowheart sat heavily on the edge of her bed, unsure where to turn her eyes other than to the dust on the floor by her feet.

“No more a fool than a man who trusted a devil,” Wyll smiled, floorboards creaking as he made his way over to the table by the window in the tavern’s upper floor rooms that had become their temporary home. Their friends had left in search of clues to his father’s whereabouts, but that was a reality he was unwilling to face – in choosing to free himself of Mizora’s contract, he’d lost the one real lead they might have had.

“You didn’t have a choice,” her voice was as straightforward as ever, almost reassuring in how blunt she could be. “Perhaps neither of us did, when we were scared, alone, running from the monsters in the dark...”

“We’re not alone any more, nor are we running—” he stopped short at her name, lips barely finding the shape of the first syllable as it fell away to silence, uncertain now the truth of it had come to light.

“Shadowheart is just fine, it’s as much my name as any other now for how long I’ve worn it. It might take a while to get used to hearing anything else.” Shadowheart’s eyes flickered to the closed door, behind it a side room in which her parents were hopefully resting again. Her gaze returned to where Wyll was now setting some candles in the centre of the table, and straightening a few fresh herbs that Halsin had left in a vase to look more like a bouquet. “Wyll, what are you doing?”

“Well, it’s... I thought since we have a little time together, we might make this a date, of sorts, if you want—”

“That much was obvious,” she stood up with a smile, casting a quick glance behind her before rummaging for a moment through Astarion’s belongings, “but we can hardly have a meal without some good wine.”

“Are you certain that’s a wise idea?” Wyll raised an eyebrow even as he continued to set the table with a pair of silver goblets from his own pack.

“Oh, he won’t miss one bottle, surely,” Shadowheart set it on the table, the cool of her fingers brushing past his for an all-too-brief moment. “Besides, I think we’ve earned this one.”

“Perhaps you’re right,” he pulled out the chair for her with a bow and a flourish. “Your seat, my lady.”

“Charming, though I am quite capable of sitting by myself.” Despite her words, Shadowheart moved to allow his help, taking a corkscrew to the wine whilst Wyll lit the candles.

“Of course you are – I’ve seen you drive your spear through beasts four times your size,” the candle light seemed to spark a deeper fire in his infernal eye as their gaze met across the table, “but you don’t have to. Perhaps, every now and then, you might allow me to spoil you.”

“So this will happen more than once? Good to know.” Her eyes sparkled with promise in ways that made his heart almost sink through the floor, the cold reality of their uncertain future trying to claw its way back into the brief moment of peace. “You know, you’re not really what I expected.”

“Oh? What is it that you expected?” Wyll’s smile turned a little more devilish as he leaned forward, elbows on the table in a way that would make his etiquette tutor grimace, chin propped up on his hands.

Shadowheart took a long sip of her wine and looked him up and down, eyes lingering perhaps a little longer than they could have. “Well, first we heard about the legendary Blade of the Frontiers—”

“Gods, don’t remind me... I fear I’ve done little to live up to the reputation I gave myself, knowing who Mizora was actually sending me after.”

“You are a hero, Wyll, just not in the way you thought you would be.” She set her glass down, sincerity crossing her expression as she sat forward a little. “Back in Shar’s Temple...”

“For a former follower of Shar, you’ve never been fond of the dark, have you?” He pointed to his infernal eye, flames flickering with the change that his patron had wrought upon him. “This has its benefits – when the spells enveloped you in darkness, I could still see you. The fear...”

“So you cast daylight on my spear when I was too afraid to do it myself.” Shadowheart leaned forward, thumb gently caressing the ridges and scars along Wyll’s cheek, her touch cool against his warm skin. “You see? A hero. I just... didn’t imagine I’d ever find myself falling for someone like you. Someone good.”

“You sound like you don’t believe you aren’t good, yourself.”

“Wyll, I did blindly follow Shar, for most of my life. The things I did in her name...”

“Were not your choice.” He slid his hand over hers, turning his cheek further into her touch, savouring the soft scent of night orchids that always seemed to linger even when she left the room. “You could have turned away the moment I was transformed, when these wretched horns...”

“I find them quite dashing,” Shadowheart leaned forward and stole a chaste kiss from lips that had fallen silent mid-sentence. “I’m sorry, really, for the pain you went through, for not doing something to stop it.”

“What could you do? What could anyone have done?” A hint of sadness coloured his smile, as he moved her hand away from his cheek, holding it carefully between his own. “And what did I do every time the pain tore through your hand, even when I knew you were trying to hide it?”

“You were there, and that was enough.” She sighed, leaning back a little again as she picked up her wine. “Sometimes that’s all we can be, just here, in the moment. So for one blissful moment, we’re not suffering alone.”

Wyll looked deeper into her eyes. Past the reflection of the candle, past the edge of hurt she still tried to bury where he wouldn’t notice, and there it was. A spark, something entirely intangible yet so precious he never wanted to let it go.

Hope.

“For all the things the world needs us to be – heroes, friends, good children to our parents – that is the one thing we never have to be again; *alone*.” He squeezed her hand gently as she put down the chalice that was in her other. “No matter what happens, where we have to go, we have each other.”

“You’re going to leave, aren’t you.” Shadowheart saw the truth, plucking it out like a weed amongst the flowers he’d planted to hide it as she so often did. “It’s alright, Wyll, you don’t have to explain. I know. Karlach needs you, and they need me too.”

Wyll looked to the door again, wondering why families couldn’t ever be so simple. “Then... will you wait for me? I don’t even know if she’ll agree to go but... I swear, I will do everything in my power to return as swiftly as I can, I have little desire to remain in Avernus but—”

“I’m not going anywhere.” This time it was Shadowheart who held his hand closer, kissing the back of his fingers softly. “I would wait a lifetime or more if I have to. But,” she smiled, that delightfully sharp edge entering her voice, “I would rather not have to. And Wyll? If you die, I will bring you back just to kill you again for having the audacity to break your promise.”

He wasn’t sure whether to laugh or to cast Blade Ward against the dagger of her glare, so he settled for returning her smile. “Then I will make it my solemn vow to you, here and now, that I will be back – alive and well – to find a future that is ours. One that isn’t dictated by family or contracts or any of the gods.”

“You’re always so serious,” she laughed softly, a sound that lifted his heart further to hear it, to dream of hearing her joy a thousand more times. “I like that about you, really. And you’re the only other one here with a wit that is truly as sharp and subtle as your blade.”

Wyll was almost certain the room got brighter, as he saw the sincerity from her. The affection that she showed to precious few in moments that he treasured more than any titles or gold. “Then allow me to leave the subtlety behind for now,” he stood and bowed, holding out one hand towards her, “would you do me the honour of this dance?”

“I thought you’d never ask.”

There was no need for music, nor ballrooms and fancy silks. All they had, and all they needed, was each other.

Wyll led with measured steps, a waltz he was familiar with and a partner who followed with graceful ease. His hand felt like the perfect fit on Shadowheart’s waist, hers delicately resting on his shoulder. The other side, their fingers laced and entwined, a soft intimacy as they danced between backpacks and bedrolls.

They both knew that their song would end, that their impromptu date would not last forever, but it didn’t matter.

The Blade of the Frontiers was no thief, but he would steal every moment he could to be by her side.

Shar’s former protege was no guard, but she would not let anyone take this joy away from her.

Beneath the eyes of vengeful deities, out of reach of malicious devils, the maiden and the monster carved a path across the makeshift dance floor, dust motes in the sunlight swirling and sparkling like magic itself surrounded them. Fate in all its wisdom had reshaped them into this, the appearance of light and darkness turned upside down as the hero took on devilish traits and the woman who tried so hard to walk a darker path almost glowed with the moon’s own light.

As they continued to hold each other close, the steps of their dance trampled on the shadows of memory, chasing out the wolves and demons that haunted them until all that remained was the warmth of two hearts that had finally found their homes.







THE HAND THAT FEEDS

WRITTEN BY LENKA

Tags: Gale x Tav, female Tav, post game, spoilers for Act 3, mentioning of Gale's orb, domestic, fluff, romance

"It's a date!"

"I can hardly wait."

Back then, on the roof of the Temple of the Open Hand, Gale had been positive that he would not live to see that date. Sacrificing himself had appeared to be the most promising course of action to defeat the Elder Brain, after all.

He could still remember the guilt clawing at his heart, making the orb in his chest roar in anticipation. Lying to Tav, fuelling her hopes for a rendezvous that would never occur, had weighed heavier on him than the certitude of his impending demise.

Tav herself had been the sole reason he had not needed to bring his plan to termination. Surpassing herself once more she had not only saved Baldur's Gate and consequently, Faerûn, but every single one of her companions' lives as well.

This alone meant a debt he could not hope to repay in a single lifetime, but she had done even more: accepting his ignominious first proposal, accompanying him to Waterdeep and turning his tower into a home for both of them.

Tav. His wonderful, stunning, marvellous fiancée. She deserved the world, and he was determined to serve it to her on a platter made of love and magic alike. Treating her to the perfect date he had promised was only a small part of it.

Strictly speaking all their evenings since settling in his tower had been dinner rendezvous to some degree, mostly with him cooking all sorts of Waterdhavian delicacies, wanting Tav to get accustomed to her new home as soon and deliciously as possible. Yet, he had not once cooked the dish he had promised her - quipper fish with hundur sauce.

Until this evening, that was. He had chosen the day carefully, watching the cosmic alignments for the past two tendays. Tonight, the stars would finally provide the ideal scenery to not only woo Tav, but to wow her. No matter how often she had told him that she did not want him to bend over backwards for her, that he was enough for her without any grand gestures, he liked to demonstrate his love for her in any way he could.

Enough reminiscing, he told himself while tying the apron that Tav had brought from one of her first visits to the infamous Waterdeep market hall. To make this night unforgettable, he needed to focus on the tasks at hand. He took the quipper fishes he had gotten from the best fishmonger down at Dock Ward and washed them.

All too soon, the kitchen became a methodical jumble of noises and movements. The application spectrum of the Mage Hand spell was diverse; using several of them in the kitchen was one of its more genius utilisations.

Underlined by a symphony of hisses and sizzles, some of his magic helpers put on a fire, oiled a pan and peeled potatoes while Gale prepared the quipper fishes. Once again he marveled that such a hostile creature possessed such delicious meat. But of course, the outer appearance did not always equal the essence of a creature.

Careful not to hurt himself, he removed the sharp teeth of the fishes and put them aside: they made for versatile potion ingredients. Then, he filleted two fish and cut the third into small pieces which he put into a small bowl. Conveniently, Tara loved quipper fish almost as much as she did pigeons. Of course he took the opportunity to indulge her, too.

Once the potatoes were peeled he tasked one of the Mage Hands to fry them while he took care of roasting the fish. Just when he was about to finish the most important measure of that meal - tasting the hundur sauce - he heard the distinctive sound of Tav's footsteps in the hallway.

Swiftly, he dismissed the Mage Hands bar two, which he instructed to plate the meal up on the balcony and keep it warm, and went into the hallway.

"Welcome home, my love." He smiled at her, already pulling her into an embrace.

Tav returned the gesture, her arms wrapping around his back while she brushed her nose against his collarbone.

"Good evening, Gale." She pulled back from the hug only to bring her fingers to the nape of his neck and pull him down into a kiss, a demand he happily obliged.

"You taste like strawberries," he whispered against her lips.

"I bought some at the market hall," she answered, a faint blush covering her cheeks. "I wanted to bring some but...they were so tasty I ate all of them."

He laughed. "How fortunate that you can always buy new ones. Tomorrow, that is," he added. "Tonight, I intend to have you all to myself if that sounds at all to your taste."

“Very much so.”

“I am glad to hear that. Would you like to freshen up before dinner?”

She tilted her head. “Should I change into something more formal?”

“No. Please wear whatever you like. You always look wonderful.”

“You are a charmer.”

“Only a humble wizard who is bound to tell the truth.”

Laughing, she pulled him down for another kiss before she walked to their bedroom.

With a few intricate movements of his hands, he changed his clothes as soon as she was out of sight. He did not need to think twice about his choice of apparel: tight leather trousers, a low-cut lilac brocade doublet embroidered in gold and an off-white shirt with brocade-adorned cuffs. After checking his hair in the big mirror in the living room, he went to the balcony to inspect the arrangement of the dinner table. He was barely done conjuring a bouquet of wildflowers to make it perfect when he heard Tav entering the living room.

When he turned around, Tav smiled at him.

“Telling me to wear whatever you like and then you change into this? You are not playing fair, Gale.”

He gave her a look of feigned innocence. “What do you mean?”

“You always look dashing, but seeing you in this,” carefully, she brushed her fingers over his belly, “is something else.”

Catching her hand halfway up to his chest, he pressed a soft kiss to her knuckles. "This compliment is one I return wholeheartedly."

Letting his gaze wander over her soft, flowing dress that showed just enough of her shoulders and neckline that it fueled his desire to explore further, he led her onto the balcony.

"Is there a reason you are spoiling me even more than usual tonight?"

"I love you, my dear. This is reason and furthermore obligation to spoil you. To answer your question," he said, leading her to her seat and pulling back the chair for her, "I am still owing you a dinner date if memory serves."

She sat down and let her eyes wander over the plates. "The famous hundur sauce?"

"With quipper fish and fried potatoes, served with Elverquisst - an excellent vintage at that. For dessert, I prepared raspberry cream topped with cherries and dark chocolate."

"Gale, you know you don't have to -"

"No, my love," he said, looking into her eyes. "But I wish to."

She looked at him and for a split second he was afraid she would dissent, but eventually, she smiled.

"Thank you. The food looks absolutely wonderful and the flowers are beautiful."

"I take it that you will indulge me, then?"

The look she gave him when she nodded was so full of love that Gale needed a moment to steady himself before he could raise his wine glass for a toast.

“To a magical evening.”

“To a magical evening.”

When Tav took the first bite of their meal, he held his breath, only to be flooded with immense relief when she smiled.

“You didn’t promise too much. This is excellent.”

“I am glad you enjoy it.”

“I enjoy everything you cook. That said, you could serve hundur sauce more often.”

“With pleasure. And now, please tell me about your day, darling. Are you slowly growing accustomed to living in Waterdeep?”

“I don’t know. It’s so loud and bustling and there are so many people. I am still worried that one day I’ll lose my way and find myself in the Undermountain.”

“You are right, the city can be quite overwhelming until you get used to its vastness - and its bustling activity.”

She shrugged. “Compared to a mindlayer invasion it is quite tame. And as long as I find my way home each day everything’s fine.”

Home.

It was quite astounding which power words held. As a wizard, he naturally knew this fact by heart, but when she said “home” it imbued him with such warmth and bliss no spell ever could, no matter how intricately cast.

“Should you ever get lost I would come to your rescue,” he eventually managed to say.

“Thank you.”

“What other adventures did you experience today? Apart from the tale of the palatable strawberries?”

She laughed. “The rest of the market hall was so crowded I didn’t stay long. I went to the Shrines of Nature and two of the walking statues nearby.”

“The Lady Dreaming and the Sahuagin Humbled?”

Tav nodded. “Tomorrow I’d like to visit the Heroes’ Garden once more. Only if you’d like to, of course.”

“Very much so.”

It was true. Teaching at Blackstaff Academy had given him a new purpose, and he loved it, but he treasured the weekends he could spend with his fiancée even more.

“Maybe we could pay the Manycats Alley a small visit on our way?”

Gale laughed. “Of course, love. Should I already prepare for the day when you will bring one of the strays there home?”

“I will inform you in due time. Besides, Tara would have to agree to it.”

“Good luck bargaining with her, she is a tough negotiator.”

“Unlike her best friend.”

“I have you know that I am only pliable when it comes to you.”

She took his hand and squeezed it. “Your secret is safe with me.”

The loving smile she gave him sent a wave of warmth straight to his heart. He couldn’t help but lean over the table and kiss her.

The sun had already set when they finished their dinner. Changing the table for the cosy bench that usually stood on his balcony he sat down waiting until Tav nestled against him.

“You truly outdid yourself, Gale.”

“Thank you, my love. Would you fancy another glass of wine?”

She shook her head. “Thank you. Is there anything I can do to return the favour of this spectacular evening?”

“Would you indulge me once more and watch the night sky with me?”

“Gladly.”

When they looked up, he let out a contented sigh. “Enthralling, is it not? This canopy of stars contains a beauty no painter will ever be truly capable of capturing.”

“That’s another thing I love about you, Gale,” Tav sighed and took his left hand, intertwining their fingers. “Your ability to find beauty everywhere. And to find such poetic words for it.”

“Of course, love.”

“Would you tell me about the constellations?”

“Nothing would give me greater pleasure.”

“Is that so?” She asked with a mischievous grin on her lips.

“Ah, painting the Northern Lights into the sky for you again might come close, as well as another thing or two.”

“Let us start with the constellations, please. They are even more fascinating when you talk about them. But before we start, I want to say something.”

“I am listening.”

“You did wow me tonight. You always do.”

When she kissed him, he smiled against her lips, marvelling at the fact that one simple touch of hers held more magic than he could ever hope to conjure. Magic he was more than willing to get lost in.







DOMESTICATION THEORY

WRITTEN BY AEVALLARE

Tags: Gale/Minthara, Mature, Post-game, Slice of Life, Getting Together, First Kiss, Odd Couple, Cultural Differences, Tara the Tressym

News of the Elder Brain's fall in Baldur's Gate spread far and wide, but in Waterdeep, Gale's return lent it more immediacy. The position at Blackstaff was something he tripped into more than earned, but it's hard to complain. Life these days – it's peaceful. During the day, he teaches. By night, he cooks, Tara by his side.

And Minthara – well. Minthara is a surprise.

Surprise is the wrong word. He invited Minthara back to Waterdeep with him – “Can hardly reclaim your birthright without a spot of rest, can you?” he'd asked.

She'd scoffed and told him he had the air of a third child about him. “A holiday does little but diminish the likelihood of my success.”

“Don't think of it as a holiday. Think of it as being my security detail. Gods know I can't take care of myself.”

And she'd come with him anyway. That he's always found her beautiful is less important than the fact that she had nowhere to go. His attraction to her played no role in his invitation.

There were growing pains, of course. Tara took to her surprisingly quickly even after the repeated poisoning incidents, especially once Minthara explained her reasoning.

“He invited me here as a security detail. Bolstering his immunity to poisoning attempts is non-negotiable. His status as a non-drow is already a disadvantage.”

Gale doesn't expect her to stay long. A tenday or two at most.

But it's as he said. Minthara is a surprise.

"Mr. Dekarios."

Tara and Minthara's relationship is the worst thing that's happened to Gale since he wound up with a tadpole in his head. He's thought long and hard about whether or not it would have been better or worse if they hadn't gotten along.

"Tara?"

Tara blinks slowly at him. Minthara's fingers are in her hair; she rarely wears it loose, but today it acquires readjustment.

"Ms. Baenre informed me that you plan to go shopping in the city. We are in agreement that she would be a poor security detail if she didn't accompany you."

Gale purses his lips. "You are both aware that that was an excuse to keep Minthara from getting herself killed moments after saving Baldur's Gate."

"Wizard." The timber of Minthara's voice alone makes Gale want to snap to attention, as if this isn't his home. "You said yourself that you are incapable of survival on your own."

"I *believe* what I said was—"

"Object all you like. The tressym and I have decided that I will escort you. I will not be swayed."

When Gale looks at Tara, she only grooms herself.

—

Gale loves Waterdeep. There's no city like it and no place in the Realms can compare. If Gale has few friends, Waterdeep is family. He loves it the same way he loves his mother or Tara.

Minthara squints, still, when she steps into the sun directly. Decades in the Underdark left her with a sensitivity that will take longer than a few months on the surface to overcome. When they step into the market and Gale peruses the first stall, Minthara lingers at the entrance. He asks the vendor, "How much for the hat?"

When he emerges with it, Minthara says, "That is not your usual style."

Gale smiles hesitantly. "That's true enough, but I thought it might be better suited on your head than mine. The light pains you; it's all you can do to keep your eyes open when we leave the tower on a sunny day."

Minthara's lips don't so much as twitch. "The discomfort is minimal."

"I've already bought it, Minthara. Please."

When Gale proffers the hat, Minthara's eyes dart between it and his face before she finally takes it. It's plain, made of straw. She eyes it warily. "It looks ridiculous."

"It suits you," Gale insists, and Minthara's frown deepens, but she doesn't argue further. Neither does she put it on. It disappears into her pack, and that alone is a victory where Gale is concerned. She could have driven it into the ground with her boot.

Only the first produce seller Gale approaches tries to haggle with him.

Minthara's methods are harsh – he should stop her, probably, or at least apologize on her behalf when she threatens to “gouge out your already almost lifeless eyes if you insult us with such extortionary prices” – but it's a kind of affection that he feels, instead. She's a creature to be reckoned with, never mind that he's using her as a pack mule for vegetables and that she's wearing casual clothing instead of armor.

Her drow effects and accent draw attention any time that they're in public, but her haughty demeanor never changes.

“You could tell them not to stare,” Gale says on the trek back to the tower, their arms and bags full with necessities and luxuries.

Minthara doesn't bother looking at him straight on, her pace never wavering. “You ought to command more respect from them, with all that you've done.”

“When I sought greatness, it brought me little but misery. I'm not Chosen any longer. And bringing down the Cult of the Absolute...” Gale shrugs.

“If they treated me as such, they would be dead in their homes before the evening was out.”

Gale exhales a laugh. “Such a way with words.”

“I am Minthara Baenre of Menzoberranzan. They are fools to allow my continued residence in their city as is. To not pay me respect would be further folly.”

“You do command admiration,” Gale says pleasantly.

“I do.” When they reach the door to the tower, it opens of its own accord. “I prefer yours, but theirs is its own pleasure.”

“My what?”

“Your adoration,” Minthara says simply. “I’ve spent my life evading assassination. If I did not notice how ill-fitting your trousers often become when we speak, I would be no Baenre at all.”

Gale’s mouth goes dry. Minthara leaves the things they’ve shopped for in the kitchen with the exception of the sunhat. “When will dinner be served?”

She speaks as if she hasn’t just turned him into a fumbling schoolboy. “Within the hour. It simmered while we were gone.”

“Very well.”

Gale dips a ladle into the stew, dragging it against the side of the pot to minimize any dripping when he brings it to his mouth. The flavors bathe his tongue, but he frowns. Gale turns to reach for the salt—

And he finds that it’s already next to him.

He thought she had left, but Minthara watches him, unflinching. “You only frown that way when you feel that your meal lacks seasoning.”

“I—” Gale blinks. “Thank you.”

“My poisons may have affected the flavor profile of the dish.”

He rubs his forehead. “We discussed this. You can’t simply—”

Minthara smirks. Gale frowns, but his heart isn’t in it.

“You were teasing me.”

“You make it too easy, wizard. It is difficult to resist. I will return shortly.”

When Minthara goes, Gale’s eyes follow her. Tara watches him watch her. “She could stay,” Tara says mildly.

“She’s *been* staying.”

“You misunderstand, Mr. Dekarios. She could stay *forever*.”

Yes. She could. Tara is fine company, but it would be a lie to say that he hasn’t enjoyed having Minthara in his home.

“She’s determined to reclaim her birthright.”

Tara huffs.

“Would you, of all people, fault someone for their ambitions? She is drow, and drow *nobility* at that. It cannot surprise you that she has these desires, and yet you pine after her regardless.”

“I do not *pine*—”

“You certainly don’t *act*.” Tara’s never been shy about stating her opinion, but there’s an almost Minthara-like quality in her voice when she admonishes him. “You’re a grown man, Mr. Dekarios,” she continues gently. “If it is a proud Baenre you wish to pursue, then pursue her.”

There’s no time to ruminate on it, though Tara is rarely wrong. He wouldn’t have invited Minthara to stay with him if he didn’t value her company, and time with her has proven more pleasurable than he expected when they don’t have the shadow of an Elder Brain looming above them. When Tara flits off, Minthara reappears in the doorway, and Gale dispenses with a greeting. Instead, he asks, “Was I so obvious?”

Minthara's smirk is easy. "You were hardly subtle. And even if you were, your tressym betrays you as easily as any mother would her daughter."

If Minthara was taller, her aura would be overwhelming. Gale is lucky she's a drow and not an orc. Still, he chooses not to argue the point of childrearing habits between cultures. There's not room to discuss it, anyway.

Minthara closes the space between them, Gale's stew still simmering behind him when she pins him between her body and the wall next to the fire. Her skin is cool against his, but it's an annoyance he'd bear a hundred times when her lips crash to his.

She's a force; she always is. Minthara's mouth gives no quarter but Gale seeks none. When her tongue parts his lips, her teeth waste no time in pulling at them. Gale's breath hitches and she smirks into his mouth.

"I would have you here, wizard, but there is no time," Minthara says, though Gale begs to differ. "I leave for the Underdark in the morning, and preparations must be made."

His heart thuds in his chest, heavy against the place where the orb once threatened to swallow the world. It's just like him to get broken up with before a relationship ever starts at all. "Surely it's not so urgent—"

She puts a finger to his lips, leaning close again, eyes narrow. "I do not do things halfway, wizard. I was unsure how agreeable this time in your tower would be. I expected to seek your death after a tenday."

Gale sets his mouth in a line. "Is this where you tell me that I have the air of a third son about me?"

Minthara hasn't stopped smirking since she cornered him.

"Quite the opposite. I've enjoyed my time here, even if you are foolish and naive. Where you lack, I am plenty. And when I reclaim my birthright in Menzoberranzan and name you my consort," Minthara says, her finger still firm against Gale's lower lip, "none will speak against you. Not your students. Not your colleagues. Not Mystra herself."

Her eyes are narrow, but Gale manages an answer. "Waterdeep is my home."

"And Menzoberranzan mine." Minthara doesn't flinch at his objection. "But you are a wizard, are you not? And a skilled one at that. I would think portals would be well within the scope of your abilities. If they are not, then you are not worth the trouble it would cause me to make you part of my house."

She leaves no room for discussion. Her lips crash to his again.

The stew burns.

—

When Minthara comes to visit, Gale goes to the market, and she joins him. She wears the sun hat with no prompting at all.





FLOWERS AND KISSES FOR A TIEFLING

WRITTEN BY FRU

Tags: Rolan/Tav, 'Subtly hinted friends to lovers, anniversary' gift exchanges, angst to fluff, post game, subtle mention of past abuse

Time had passed since the destruction of the Netherbrain, Baldur's Gate with each restored structure and patched relationship slowly returned to a comfortable state of normality. Aside from small thefts from thieves that hid amongst the shadows of the city, everything was at peace once more. City life bustled by as normal for most besides one single individual. Today was an important day for them; an anniversary.

Tav; the adventurer who had saved Faerûn from the grasp of the Netherbrain stood outside of Sorcerous Sundries. A bundle of carnations wrapped up in a silky purple bow rested in their right hand, eyes fixated on the large building. Inside nestled away was their partner; Rolan. A tiefling they had met at the Emerald Grove a year ago. A troubled closed in soul who at first wanted nothing to do with them.

The most Tav would get from Rolan was a huffy greeting and a side eye. That was until the two individuals found their lips upon the others after far too many drinks during the tiefling party. Ever since that fateful night Tav and Rolan grew closer, their conversations blossoming into more than subtle waves and smiles. A fire spread through both bodies, a fire that quickly burst into deep devotion and care after Lorroakans defeat. Tav had saved Rolan's life, helped him open his eyes and see that he was his own person. That he was capable of making his own paths in life without feeling overwhelmed or scared. A path they'd both walk down together as lovers.

Letting out a deep sigh Tav walks into Sorcerous Sundries with nervous steps, a repeating thought looping in their mind. *'Would Rolan even like these or were they too much?'*

Gnawing at their bottom lip, Tav breathed out heavily, Rolan was far too difficult to please at times. Waving to the reoccurring patrons who fired off spells on the lower floor, Tav bounces up the spiral staircase. Heart beating with each and every step they took. Reaching the stationary portal that led to the top of the tower, Tav gathers themselves, slips the flowers behind their back, and enters. Arriving in the vastly large study Tav glances around the room that now was adorned with small trinkets and decorations. The room gained its whimsically messy personality from the three siblings; Cal, Lia, and Rolan. It was so homey, warm, inviting even. Their eyes continued to scan around until they landed on Rolan.

The wizard was hunched over his desk, nose deep in a book to most likely decipher new spells. Tail twitching behind him every so often as he groans over the text. Hearing a shuffle Rolan waves a hand flippantly while keeping his gaze on the printed words.

“If you’re here to deliver scrolls you can leave them in the corner.” Rolan mutters, his attention still focused on the book of spells.

“That’s a lovely way to say hello.”

Rolan perks up from the sweet voice that fills his pointed ears, a smile curling onto his lips. He knew that voice all too well, one he’d peacefully fall asleep to some nights. Setting the old book down, Rolan turns around, tail lightly swishing. His golden eyes fixate on Tav, picking up on their subtle foot shifts and shy smile. He had been dating Tav long enough to learn their mannerisms after all. Deciding to not comment on it for now Rolan leans against the wooden desk.

“You know how busy it gets running this tower. I barely have time to breathe.” Rolan responds nonchalantly with a grin.

Tav nods, admiration in their eyes, they loved how passionate Rolan was about being a wizard and administering Sorcerous Sundries. Shifting the flowers around their hands, Tav clears their throat. 'This is it, just hand him the flowers, that's all you have to do.'

Rolan tilts his head to the side slightly, locks of brown falling over his eyes.

"Tav?"

Tav felt their heart tighten from the curious gleam in Rolan's eyes. Averting their eyes down to Rolan's pointed tail that swished as if he was a cat, Tav's nerves ease up slightly from these simple, but comforting gestures. Those golden orbs always did have a way to pull them together. Clearing their throat Tav takes a step forward, feet planting in front of the curious tiefling.

"Love." Tav starts, cheeks tinted pink, flowers bunching up in their clenching and unclenching fists.

"Today is our one year anniversary and I thought I'd drop by for this special occasion..." Tav's words began to quickly unravel from the sudden cat-like smile that spread over Rolan's features. His smile lines crease, demeanor growing more playful from Tav's adorable jumbled words.

Leaning forward slightly his brow arches, those pointed teeth of his peeking. "Uh-huh. Please go on."

Tav lets out a huff from the soft chuckle that follows after those words. He could be such a damn tease at times. Deciding to just give up on trying to put their thoughts into poetic words, Tav pushes the flowers out in front of Rolan.

Silence falls upon the study, Rolan's teasing grin vanishing from the bundle of carnations that were presented to him. Assortments of pink flowers that bled into soft whites at the base of the petals bloomed before the wizard. Natural, warm, delicate, like a warm summer's breeze. The scents surrounded his senses like a warm embrace; a velvety kiss. They were gorgeous. Swallowing the lump that gathered in his throat, Rolan turns his head away. Brows furrowing, face glowing red. Biting his bottom lip a hand comes up to cover his mouth. Closing his eyes to gather himself they pop open from Tav's soft voice.

"Do you like them?"

Blinking from how uncertain and nervous Tav sounded, Rolan sighed lovingly. Turning his gaze back to the bundle of flowers his red hands wrap around Tav's. Carefully taking the carnations from their grasp Rolan lowers his head, nose brushing against the silky petals. Inhaling the sweet scent that filled his senses, Rolan pulls the bundle closer. That earthy soft scent from earlier pulls him back in reminding him of the more delicate moments in their relationship. When he'd swing Tav around and lay in assortments of overgrown flowers in the meadow. Lowering the flowers a gentle smile is painted on his features. Without another word being spoken Rolan sets the flowers down on his untidied desk littered with books.

Tav watched their partner set down the carnations, their eyes staying on the heap of flowers. Going to repeat their question from earlier since Rolan at times could be quite moody, their eyes instead widen. Feeling a familiar appendage snake around their hips Tav gasps once Rolan pulls them forward with a tug from his tail. Chest against chest, hands upon the other Tav bashfully buries their head into their own shoulders. Closing their eyes from Rolan's tail brushing up their side, Tav embraces the wizard passionately.

Rolan bites his lips together from the cute action; heart fluttering. Pressing his plush lips upon his lover's forehead clawed hands brush through the others locks.

“You’re too sweet, Tav.” Rolan’s words roll out sweeter than honey, his eyes full of adoration.

Tav burrows their face into the tieflings chest, a smoky, but warm smell from elemental spells that were recently cast wafting off of Rolan. It was a scent they were used to, one that brought them great comfort. Bringing them back to nights where they’d lay under the stars while he casted small spells to illuminate the sky with shimmering colors. Tav at times, even if it was a traumatizing experience, was thankful that they were abducted on the nautiloid ship. If it wasn’t for that dreaded tadpole that was injected into their brain they would have never come across the Emerald Grove. They would have never met the man that was embracing them now. Rolan was tiefling with a caring heart (that was underneath stubbornness). A tiefling they were grateful for everyday.

Pulling away from Tav, Rolan smiles down at their partner, excitement gleaming in his golden honey eyes. Red lips spreading into a toothy, gleeful grin, eyes crinkling. Planting another quick kiss on top of Tav’s head, Rolan waves his hand, summoning a small gathering of water that deposits into a nearby vase. Those flowers seconds later followed suit, floating down before settling in the vase. Those flowers seconds later followed suit, floating down before settling in the vase. Directing his gaze back towards Tav he hums sweetly from the way they stare with fascination. It didn’t matter if he performed the simplest magic, they always showed such admiration. It was truly flattering for the young wizard. Crossing his arms Rolan playfully scoffs feigning annoyance.

“Love that was just a simple cantrip.” His pursed lips spread into a giddy grin, tail swishing like a joyful puppy dog’s would.

“I’ve got much more...breathtaking magic up my sleeve.”

Rolan offers an outstretched hand to his partner, brown locks falling over his shoulders as he lowers himself slightly. Tav blinks from the gentlemanly gesture, heart fluttering. Taking his red hand a joyous laugh leaves their lips once Rolan pulls them out towards the balcony. Tav watches the way the tiefling’s robes sway with each excited step as he flicks a hand to open the balcony doors with simple magic. The couple glances up towards the sky that was painted with settling hues of blues and soft pinks. The sun dipping down below the horizon line to welcome the slowly awakening moon. Rolan turns towards his partner, palms grasping the others, his thumbs rubbing soothing circles into their skin. Then the wizard gazed away, his expression suddenly growing somber as if the next words he spoke were shameful.

“I wasn’t sure what to even get you for our one year, if I’m being honest Tav I don’t deserve someone like you. You’ve done so much for me, saved me and my siblings on multiple occasions. You’re the one who showed me that I need to pursue my own path in life and not fill in peoples shoes. I barely have done anything in return for you Tav.” Rolan’s expression drops even more as he furrows his brows.

He was always so hard on himself, firmly believing he never was allowed to show an ounce of weakness for his siblings or he’d be seen as useless. Tav appreciated the aspect of him being a protective brother, but at times they wished he wasn’t so stubborn and would just breathe and see that it was okay to show vulnerability too. Rolan in their eyes was something special. A tiefling with a heart of gold, one that put those he cared for before himself. Cupping his freckled face between their hands, Tav presses their forehead against the tieflings. Their expression softened as Rolan slowly lifted his head up, some tears pooling in his shimmering eyes.

“Rolan, you’ve done more than most would ever do, you have courage—at times your hotty personality comes out, but I love that about you. If it wasn’t for you using your magic diversion those tieflings could have died. Not even that you also helped me save Faerûn. Rolan don’t ever doubt yourself for a second. Meeting you at the grove was one of the best things that’s ever happened to me. Even if you can’t see your worth, just know that your presence alone is the best gift I could have ever asked for.”

Rolan’s throat grows dry from those heartfelt touching words. Blinking away gathering tears the wizard turns his head away. A soft scoff leaving his lips as he crosses his arms, trying to suppress his tears. Tav smiles, catching onto the way his bottom lip quivers ruining his facade. Leaning forward Tav presses their lips against Rolan’s cheek. Brushing back wavy brown locks from the tieflings watery eyes, they stroke his cheek. Curled fingers catching the tears that drizzle out as he shuts his eyes and leans into their touch. His tail pulling them close, his breathing shaky.

“Tav...”

Tav embraced their lover, A man who was so harsh on himself from what he had to endure. Tav couldn’t blame him though, while Rolan did become the new owner of sorceress sundries. Sadly during the process leading up to his success he was abused by a man he had admired for so long. One that he had devoted most of his life to even. Tav was proud of Rolan for choosing his own path, even if the wounds would take time to heal they’d be there every step of the way. Looking up towards the sensitive wizard, Tav smiles expectantly trying to lighten up the conversation .

“You said you had more magic up your sleeve, correct?” Tav asks, excitement peeking through their wide, giddy grin.

Rolan blinks away some of his tears, his somber expression shifting into a lighthearted one from the curious look he was given. Nodding with a grateful laugh Rolan scoops up Tav into his arms, heels turning as the air around them starts to shift. He was so happy—no, ecstatic to have such a wonderful partner, a friend, a lover, someone to call his own. Small flurries of magic sprinkled with blue hues surrounded the couple like a warm hug. Tav's body shook with mirth from the mystical feeling, their head dipping back to observe the bundle of magic that illuminated their senses. Giggling joyously Tav wraps their arms around Rolans neck. Their eyes earnestly looked into Rolans honey colored ones. Floating off the ground as Rolan mumbled a cantation. Tav's expression grew even brighter like the sun itself. Rolan performing magic for them felt like a breath of fresh air, a kiss on a cool night. It was magical, marvelous, romantic, and they adored it.

Magic soared through the air as clouds of pink misty hearts emerged from the flurry. Getting shifted to one of his arms, Tav watches as Rolan pops off a few more small colorful spells from his free hand. Tav finds themselves getting lost in the magic surrounding them. Their bodies swung around as the two danced in harmony. Twirling through magic buds that burst into color, euphoria coursed through the lovers' veins. Tav's chest presses against Rolans, their face full of infatuation and tenderness as the hue of magic fades out.

“Happy anniversary love.”

Those words felt even more special now, Rolan loved them, and they loved Rolan. Intertwining their hands with the tieflings the two imperishable lovers lips connect. A kiss that Tav never wanted to end. Getting dipped down they hum softly into their lovers lips as the moon hangs above sorceress sundries. Passion blossoming ever so strongly in the air.









TAKING ROOT

WRITTEN BY MEIKOSAURUS

Tags: Halsin/You, Halsin/Reader, Second Person POV, Fluff, Baldur's Gate 3 post-game setting, Hurt/Comfort, Hints of Past Abuse, Canon-Compliant Violence, Soft Halsin

You run.

The giant, floating thing in the sky, whatever it is, breaches the walls of your room (your prison) and you run. The city is in chaos, a labyrinth of death, fighting, despair, but you are wily. You are clever. You know how to survive, so that's what you do. Twice, they almost get you, those terrifying tentacled monsters, but for the first time in your life, you are lucky. Others, not so much, but you can't do anything for them without risking your own safety, so you move on. You don't want any trouble.

As the explosion over Gray Harbour blinds the skies, you are already in Rivington. Word soon spreads that some sort of great evil has been defeated and people start celebrating, but you hesitate. You've had your share of evil in your life, and you are never going back.

In midst of dozens of refugee wagons, people on foot, wailing children and bleating farm animals, you make your way along the road, always keeping your head down. You don't want any trouble.

At nightfall, you hunker down with a small family. As the men come from between the trees and bushes, asking for a spot by the fire, you excuse yourself casually. You know the hungry look in their eyes too well, but you cannot afford to help, and you don't want any trouble.

As the screams start behind you, you walk faster, stuffing your fingers in your ears. It starts to rain, which is just as well - that way you don't have to wonder if you are crying.

In time, you meet fewer and fewer people. The land ahead is cursed, some say, or at least it used to be. But at your feet, you see fresh grass sprouting, and there is birdsong in the air, and the faint smell of flowers. As far as curses go, you ponder, it could be worse.

For days, you don't see a single soul. The sky is bleak and grey most of the time, but on rare occasions, sunlight streams down and it seems to you that the remnants of past horrors recoil where the light touches them, and make way for new life. At first, you live off the provisions you managed to barter for or steal on the way, but when even the stalest bread runs out, you tentatively begin to try the sparse roots and berries you can identify - and they taste like heaven.

You begin to feel kinship with the budding nature around you, and the few small animals you encounter from afar. And maybe that is what makes you do it, that is what makes you get involved at long last.

The squeal is piercing, like a newborn babe's. Instinctively, you run, and when you reach the source of the screaming, you simply don't stop, not even to think. You rush onto a small clearing, surrounded by old, gnarled dead trees, and the two poachers spin around. In a thick net, a half-grown lynx is twisting and turning helplessly, and fury is throbbing red and hot behind your eyes now.

You jump on the back of the bulky male poacher and start scratching at his face with all you have, and his screams are music where the wail of the caught lynx had been dissonance. The woman comes at you from behind, but you are ready, you twist and turn so that the hefty club she swings hits her friend instead of you. You sense a slim chance of winning, but that is when your luck changes. Electricity shoots through you and your whole self is ablaze. Magic... godsdamn, they have magic...

As your world goes dark, though, a mighty roar breaks through to your consciousness, and both poachers start screaming - is that a bear? Grim satisfaction is the last thing you feel - at least nature would get its due. At least you would die free.

~

The afterlife, you ponder, seems quite different than you'd imagined. Your head hurts - which is weird, you are dead, after all. The air smells like fresh flatbread and honey, which is also weird, but in the best way. And the only other soul around seems too busy to even notice you. He is sitting across you in the shade of a tree, a huge elf with a scarred, tattooed face. Next to him is the young lynx, and it purrs like a kitten while the elf's large hands stroke its head, ever so gently. You slowly reach the conclusion that you may be, in fact, quite alive, as the elf raises his head and looks at you. He smiles, and for the first time, you understand how a smile can be warm - it wraps around you like a blanket. And you know you should be afraid, you always have been, but you are perfectly content. The elf's voice is deep and soft, and just as warm as his smile as he introduces himself. Halsin. He says his name is Halsin.

On the first day, he does not get near you, let alone touch you. You appreciate that, even though you are still drifting in and out of consciousness.

"That was nature's wrath at work." Halsin says quietly and points at the bizarre red scarring on your arm as he hands you a bowl across the small campfire. "You can still see where the lightning touched you, but your heart is strong, too strong to give in."

You give the brew a cautious sniff and then try it. It's earthy and surprisingly sweet, and you chuckle at the sheer absurdity of the situation.

"I'm not sure how strong my heart is, to be honest." Your voice sounds rough and alien, but the herbal brew seems to help, so you down it as greedy as your good manners allow. "I mean, look where being overly courageous brought me."

Halsin pauses for a moment and then looks at you, his expression almost bemused.

"To me." He finally says, and you believe you detect a hint of wonder in his voice. "It brought you to me."

To your immense surprise, you feel that you are blushing and you quickly hide your face before you drift back into sleep.

On the second day, you wake up with a start and you know you have been screaming - your past caught up with you in a nightmare. You are scared he might ask you, but Halsin just smiles and presents you foraged berries for breakfast.

On the fifth day, you are finally back on your feet, and Halsin takes you to the river. You have talked every morning and every night before he goes into the forest to do whatever it is he does, while the lynx keeps watch over you - the beast and you have become fast friends, in fact. Halsin is a druid, so him taking care of the forest makes sense, of course, but you are not blind to the particular weirdness this forest shows in every branch and root. So, when he leads you to a shallow, silvery pond where the river pushes into the land a little, and turns around to give you space to clean yourself, you ask him about it. You learn the history of the shadow-curse, and how it was finally broken. The sadness and regret that linger in Halsin's voice wound your heart in a way you hadn't known it could be hurt anymore. Curious.

You heal fast, and on the ninth day, you already help Halsin with his work. He didn't ask and you just grin and shrug at his surprise as you begin clearing out the debris from a half-ruined house in Reithwin village.

Neither hard nor dirty work are new to you, but this is a world of difference from your old life - every shriveled root you pull out of the ground, every bucket of rubble you take away, they all feel like you are doing something profoundly good and meaningful. Like you matter. The warmth in Halsin's eyes as he glances over is not lost to you, either. Ignoring your pounding heart, you busy your hands as well as your mind.

On the sixteenth day, you playfully demand to meet the bear who saved you properly. Halsin is more hesitant than you have ever seen him first, but then he steps back a few paces, takes a deep breath and with a wondrous sound and a flash of light, he transforms into his magnificent bear form. The bear growls and shakes his thick fur, but then looks up at you almost bashfully and you throw your head back and laugh. As you hold out your hand, Halsin steps forward and bows his enormous head towards it, and as your fingers comb through his fur, it is just as soft as you imagined. You realise this is the first time you touch him, and that you are not in the least afraid - in fact, you haven't been for a long while. Without thinking, you gently press your forehead against his and whisper:

"Thank you." And as gently as ever, Halsin huffs against your chest, withdraws carefully, and turns back into his elf form, standing before you so awkwardly that you have to suppress a giggle.

"He is gorgeous." You blurt out and Halsin, for the first time since you met him, actually blushes.

"Well, I thank you, but he is just me." He deflects with a low chuckle, but you remain unfazed and smile.

"I said what I said."

He still hasn't found his speech again as you walk back inside and busy yourself with dinner preparation.

It takes you until after the second tenday to notice the child, and something tells you he has been there all along. He walks with the animals, his voice is like the wind, and his eyes the colour of leaves and grass.

“I’m Thaniel.” He says and walks with you, grinning like he knows all. “And I’m glad you are here now. He has been alone for so long, even in the company of others.”

When you turn to him, the boy is gone.

‘But I’m not staying!’ you want to shout. ‘I’m just passing through, I don’t belong here!’ But you don’t actually say it, of course. You have never been a convincing liar, after all.

The first time you kiss him is an accident. A nightmare has gripped you and he only tries to wake you - but you wanted to kiss him for so long and drowsiness washes your inhibitions away. It is sloppy and clumsy and yet everything you secretly hoped for. His reaction is as enthusiastic as it is passionate - but then, of course, he draws back and flees from the ruins you made camp in. He does not want to take advantage of you, he would never. You hear Thaniel’s soft laughter as you rise and follow him. Never before have you been brave enough to chase what you wanted - today, you will be. You catch him by the river and interrupt his apology with your eyes locked on his, your hands against his cheek and then your fierce, desperate, honest kiss. He tastes like honey and he looks like he is just as scared as you are, for both your hearts, you think.

“Are you sure this is what you...” He begins, but you don’t let him finish, a wave of bravery - of wanting - carries you like an unstoppable tide.

“Yes.” You reply simply and seal it with another kiss. “This is the first time I am sure, ever. Are you?”

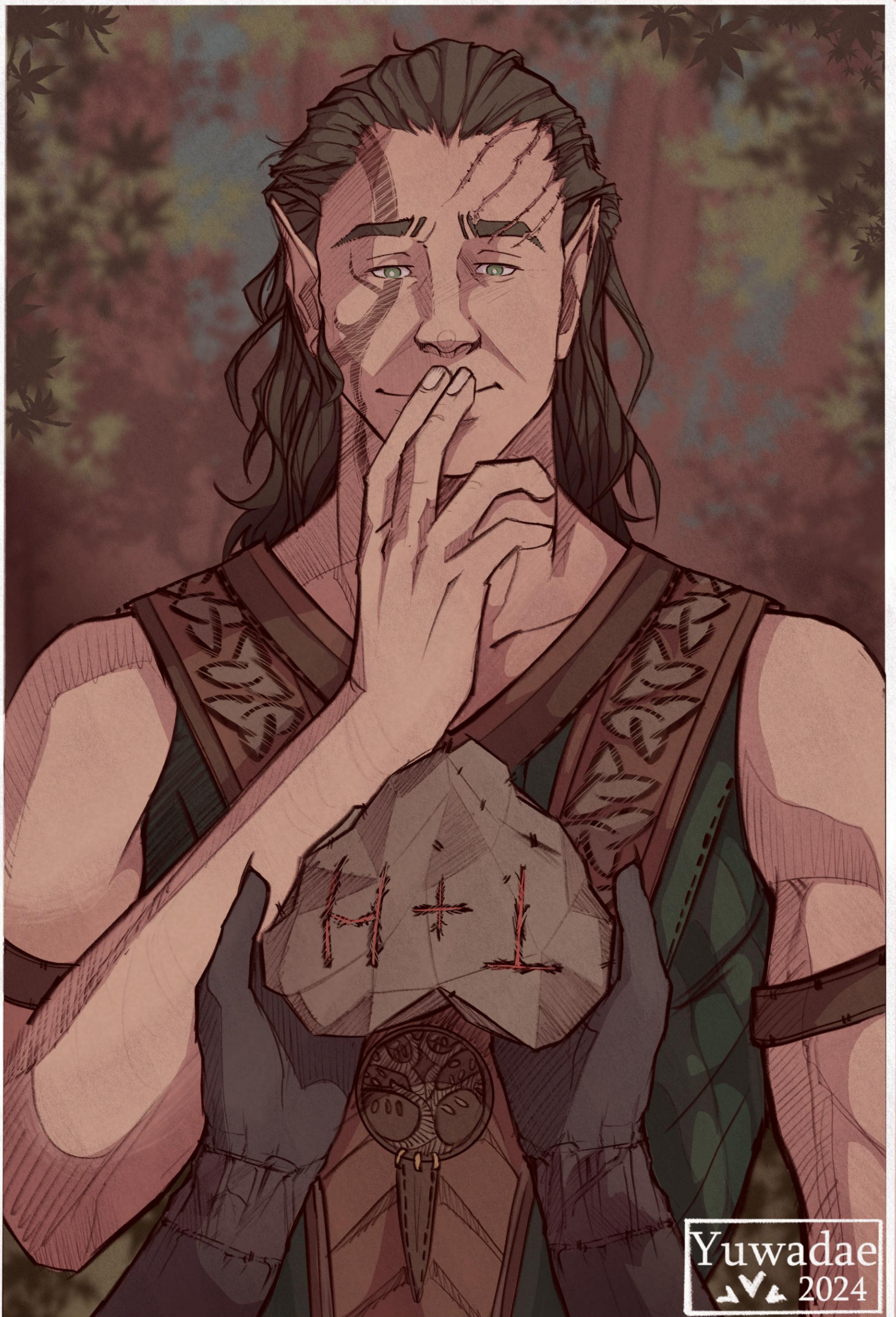
You don't talk much after that, for the rest of the night and most of the day that follows.

A whole season has come and gone, and your house has a roof now, furniture, even a stove. Your house... it is the first time you have a home, yet you know you would not lose it even if all the wood and stone suddenly disappeared. Halsin embraces you from behind and you melt against him, a reaction as natural as breathing, and you almost have to laugh because it sounds so silly, how can your home be another person? And yet, he is your home, and you are his, that will not change when you decide to roam the world for a while, or when the village fills up with life again. When you look outside, you can see the future. You imagine children laughing at play, the old taproom open again, townsfolk talking in the square. Friends coming to visit, some may stay, some may not, and stories and songs being shared among all.

You listen to Halsin's steady heartbeat and intertwine your fingers with his.

Never once have you speculated which god or good fortune led you here, the answer has always been so very clear: it is just as nature intended.









BLOOD, STAR, MUSIC

WRITTEN BY DES

Tags: Lae'zel x Tav, Longing, Developing Romance, Past-trauma Mention (Githyanki), Githyanki Expressions of Love, Mid-game, Post-Cazador quest

There is little that unsteadies your feet, even less so that moves that hardened, beaten heart of yours, dragged over the broken edges of your egg, through your creche, shaped from the hands of your varsh to sarth to creche kith'rak. But most of all your fellow clutch-kin, whittled down by blade and will, until the handful of you that were left, steel and unshakeable.

But now here you stand below, where a dragon beat, beats its wings, wind beneath almost cracking the ground, as it lands a stretch away, grand claws digging deep into mud, kicking it up at your feet—

—you feel yourself begin to unravel.

But in that way you want.

That way you feel has pushed and begged against the rusted, dislodged hinges around your heart, head, sense as you served beneath Vlaakith CLVII, swallowing down her lies until they tasted truth and letting yourself bleed until something made sense because it had to.

But then came along someone with a different answer - Prince Orpheus and his rebellion. Or well, he at least gave you a chance to choose. Something that tickled freedom at the back of your throat, oiling those unused hinges around places that you forgot made you feel.

And one of those people, one of those rebels stands beside you now, reaching out to assuage her newly bonded dragon with a touch to a bared tooth.

Then a low growl, a huff of smoke, and she dips her head, molten sun eyes fixed on you.

Lae'zel was a name that was almost a chant amongst the githyanki now - on both sides. A war cry alongside the Prince's name, Vlaakith's, titles as recognisable as Mother Gith, and for some rebels, '*m la'ghir*' in honour of the one who helped free your now Prince beside Lae'zel.

Lae'zel the Sister in Freedom; Lae'zel the Warrior of the Comet; Lae'zel the Defier of the Dead Queen. Her titles were as endless as the Astral Sea, as powerful as the silver sword she now cuts down Vlaakith loyalists with. Sometimes you hear of their fear that they might be next beneath her blade, or her dragon's jaw that you now stand before.

Pliant, and beautiful.

I've never ridden one, you confessed one night, sharing a spot by the campfire a little closer, a little more intimate even than the nights together in your tent. *My creche had a strict hierarchy and pecking order*, you'd said needlessly, all but admitting that you'd often hung off the last rung.

Lately you felt like you stood at the edge of the world, at the zenith of the Planes whenever Lae'zel looked at you, laughed with you. Touched you.

Now she gifts you the opportunity to ride her dragon. To soar the skies, the Planes, to feel burning scales beneath your skin, the deafening rush of wind against your ears, tearing through hair, and the honour of it all as you cling to her back.

Come she beckons, taking you by the wrist, pulling you closer to her dragon in impatience. Not unkindness— *anticipation*. Both dragon and rider look to you, and you feel judged, queried as you stand doing little by her dragon's jaw.

Quldinya Lae'zel had told you the dragon's name was. An old, lone dragon who had refused several a rider, ate one, and lost her last. But there had been an immediate draw to Lae'zel for her. A curiosity to one so young so powerful, with a heart she could taste on the surface. Not like stone, not like the swathe of Vlaakith's army she breeds to shape to mould to eat.

Something of worth.

Those jealous say Galdinya favours Lae'zel because she can smell the impending freedom from their pact on her. But you know not all dragons serve the githyanki, and many do so willingly, some happily. A transactional partnership, both getting just what they want. Then you see bonds such as Qudenos and once Kith'rak, now Knight of the Comet, Voss. Unyielding over millennia. Friends, mates, something moulded into what githyanki might say *family* once more.

But you have little time to think more on it as you feel Lae'zel brush past you and leap up onto Quldinya's back, an arm outstretched for you to follow.

That sunfire eye watches you with what you feel is *mirth* as you take Lae'zel's hand and follow. Steady feet and githyanki training make you infallible in your movements. Your heartbeat a little too quick, maybe. But you could be forgiven. Anticipation, honour, joy - old hinges moving with new.

How githyanki rode their dragons was no mystery to you. You'd seen it many a time as the dragon riders had come to, from your creche; as you'd been taken on your first raid, as you'd earned your honour and entry to Tu'narath, bloodied silver, ghaik head in hand as offering to your once queen.

But seeing wasn't doing.

You mimic Lae'zel's crouch, gripping tightly. She glances back with a teasing smile.

So you just wind your hands around more. Feel the muscle of her waist, and warmth of her body that's slowly, you think, becoming yours.

Quldinya waits for neither of you, stretching her mighty wings out, pushing off from the ground, claws leaving behind a deep drag to remember her. And up. Up to the sunlit sky where you say goodbye, goodbye, as Lae'zel conjures a portal before you, to a swathe of stars, colour, a familiar unending sky—

—and you fly.

Time snaps shut with the portal at your back, but that sensation from Material to Astral is comfort, a caress. Better every time since the first time you were allowed entry after your trial of worth.

But now you're not alone—

Now, you ride a dragon.

The stars seem to know as you fly past, clutching Lae'zel tight, close enough her warmth is yours, that the scent of the oil she uses in her hair is your air. And you breathe deep, laughing as Quldinya drops low drops fast.

Lae'zel's fingers wash over yours that dig into her side a little tighter.

Reassurance? Displeasure?

Whatever it is, they stay as her other hand holds tight one of Quldinya's great fins.

Where are we going, you ask. But you don't really care.

Wherever we want, Lae'zel says, dipping back her head to yours, rolling against your forehead, strands of her hair catching in your lip, your vision momentarily obscured and all you feel and smell is that night she first took you, kissed you, laughed with you.

When she leans forward, you move with her, and see that you're flying by the main rebel base. Shrouded to unfamiliar and unwanted eyes, but you both see it now from above the beating wings of a dragon. Carved into the remains of a dead planet that had fused with an ancient, massive spelljammer, the wild Astral magics that had passed over it over the millennia warped and almost grew it into something else. A city like sprawling shape, with starways to reach the shattered remains of the planet and spelljammer debris that circle around at will.

Dragons dip and dive around the base, spelljammers at docks waiting. It's home, now. Home fighting for a home you never really knew.

Lae'zel told you once she'd never stepped foot on Tu'narath. Creche to the Netherbrain Crisis, to here.

What will your home with her be when this is all over, you wonder. Something old, something new?

Another portal snaps open and you frown, about to question Lae'zel but she squeezes your hand as Quldinya snaps tight together her wings as dives through the portal—

—and a thousand Planes away you are somewhere else, unknown.

Air and water. Three suns and rain. It skims over your skin as you fly, Quldinya dipping down low to brush the tree-tops, blue and casting yellow dust over the leather of her wings.

Where— you start to ask.

I have no idea, admits Lae'zel as she turns around, a glint in her eye.

You're pretty sure she's lying. But that's okay. You encouraged her to let go more, be a little playful beneath the mantle of who she's become.

You reach out to a passing tree and pull off a leaf, the iridescent dust smothering your hands as you watch the leaf then crumble over your skin like sand.

Impulse takes you, as you trust the strength of your body, core, and lift both hands from Lae'zel to rub the iridescence over your fingers, palm, to then smear it over the exposed art of her back. Over scars and ridges of spine, to the spray of her spots, different from yours. Heavily clustered in array.

Two fingers trace the walkway of her spine, down, laughing as you hear a little *chk* carried in the wind, curled around a hidden smile.

Another portal snaps open, and Quldinya barrels through it with joy.

You grab Lae'zel just in time, not expecting a barrel roll from Plane to Plane through portal, but it catches your breath, sucked against Lae'zel's neck, pang of fangs nipping her shoulder as you beg for traction and not to fall.

Quldinya zig-zags between gargantuan structures that remind you of the anatomy of trees, texture and scope. Metal, steel, but within their foundations and framework, something organic that seems to make them breathe.

It's comforting here, despite the unknown. The strangeness of the things around you, and the materials they're composed of. Visitors to a Plane that seem to welcome you with curiosity.

Quldinya brushes the tips of her wings against the structures, and in reply, where she'd touched seems to open up like a flower. No, maw. The metal molten and malleable, speaking a reply, a hello, welcome. The closer you look as Quldinya circles, dips, weaves around a cluster of these structures, you realise you see blurry figures below watching, waving; that you see eyes within the structures, looking out between the marry of metal and organic.

It hits you then, just how little you know the Planes. Words on pages of worn books, tir'su winding around aged slates, yes. But to live them breathe them discover them on the back of a dragon that trusts, with the kin that's worth of blood—

—istik think they know love. They know but the stardust, you hold the star.

Lae'zel comments on the strangeness of this place, laughing as Quldinya roars what feels like a laugh as she opens another Portal, and before you even barrel through in yet another roll, you know this one.

But Lae'zel a little more.

She'd opened the portal far enough away that your visit had gone unnoticed, but close enough that you could make out the unmistakable outline of Baldur's Gate along the coastline. Changed, since you last remember. Albeit your visit brief, unlike Lae'zel's.

An ever changing city from its people, its purpose; its assaults and world shattering events, the last one an epicentre to your people that rippled through the Planes, giving them that last catalyst to take control and break their chains once more.

You feel Lae'zel breathe in deep, then out. Her body relaxing back against you as Quldinya dips low, down over the spanning sea, skimming over the water in a hiss.

"Still smells the same," she says, finding the clutch of your fingers around her waist. Presses them tight, holds tighter. "Even looks acceptable from here."

Up, a bat of wings, then down onto a small, desolate island off the coast. Nothing but foliage, trees. Broken crates, a smashed rowboat, rotten clothing, and some bones peeking out a patch of ground.

Quldinya shakes her head, then dips, letting you both dismount, Lae'zel first, then reaches out a hand for you that you take, near falling into her embrace, body to body, stumbling with a laugh, feeling her catch a breath the way she staggers back, clawed foot to ground, claws to you.

"Elegant landing," she says, feeling the sprays of your spots shaped like an arc on your ribcage. "Purposeful misstep one might say."

“Look what it got me,” you say and snatch a kiss from Lae’zel, veiled in a smokey glaze from Quldinya’s huff, before you pull away, eyes drawn to the city where Lae’zel became t’lak ma ghir, where she became Warrior of the Comet, and where she took the first steps on her way to find you.

She kicks aside some debris, pulls you down to the edge, near the shore where the water lips. You hear a bell ring, distant from the city. You hear a horn, signalling the arrival of ship to port. Voices carry over the sea, just noise.

You press your ear against Lae’zel’s neck, hear the beat of her heart, the murmur of her breath, a sigh.

Music.











THE
BLADE
OF
FRONTIERS

THE EMBODIMENT OF PILLARS

WRITTEN BY GABBY

Tags: Wyll/Reader, Wyll/You, Hurt and Comfort, Fluff, Ballroom Dancing, Post-Game, Wyll Duke Ending

Courage, insight, strategy, justice.

The four pillars of the Gate that seemed to pervade every waking moment of your life since the grand defeat of the Absolute- a harrowing tale for the ages that read more like a fantastical story than a trial of hardships you'd actually endured. Despite the predicament you'd found yourself in, there was one man who'd made the difficulties with a tadpole squirming behind your eye just slightly more bearable: the Blade of Frontiers.

Truly a weapon in all aspects, you'd hardly expected to fall into some fairytale romance while trekking through swamps, forests, and miles of land befallen by pure darkness, but somehow the valiant and princely young man with such strong conviction of good for the world despite his dire situation had taken quite a liking to you. It was certainly strange and new, being a centerpiece for display alongside such a prestigious man for every nosy citizen to gawk and observe. Every stitch of clothing, every gesture of a hand- it was observed and noted as though you were communicating through them, despite not knowing what you were truly doing at all. Hiccups in presentation and poise were bound to happen, but you hadn't expected there would truly be so many.

Courage? You'd hardly had the nerve to speak publicly without choking on any thoughts you'd thought to share. Insight? The questionable looks shot your way by patriars spouting questions like weeds when you answered just a bit oddly let you know you had no such thing. Strategy? Your stumbling over every piece of regal attire you were strapped into was a giveaway on that answer.

And justice. How could you possibly embody justice now? Of course you had saved the world, but that feat seemed to fall to the wayside in favor of nonsensical dinner etiquette and remembering which hand to shake with. You'd sat staring at your fingers, mumbling to yourself about what to remember for tonight in the dimly lit carriage that tottered over the cobblestone of the Upper City, hardly noticing Wyll's eyes observing your jittery preparations.

"You know we're going to a party, not the gallows." You'd jumped a little as his voice cut through the still air of the vehicle, turning to look at him wide eyed as he laughed a little. It wasn't a cruel laugh -- as he was anything but -- but more so one of familiarity. Understanding, and kindness most of all. It put you at ease just slightly, if enough to be able to take a stable breath for a moment.

"Try to relax, you've no reason to doubt yourself tonight." Wyll's hand came to rest on your shoulder, the reassurance he was sharing just barely exuding from his palm through the thick layers of ruffles near your collar. Soon enough, shining lights and quiet chatting emanated from in front of the carriage, the finely dressed nobles that lined the streets near the opulent display growing more extravagant and excessive as you rolled closer and closer to your destination. It was nothing less than a funeral march, and as your carriage finally rolled to a stop in front of the enormous estate hosting the evening's event. You can only describe it as large and imposing, a beautiful spectacle of light and warmth staunch in the cold night skyline. A building like this could embody the four pillars, and you, insignificant and small as you stepped from the carriage and onto the ornate stone that lined every corner of the Upper City. Before Wyll's feet could even begin to follow behind you a swarm of onlookers stood by with mouths agape and eyes wide to catch one glance at the famed Blade of Frontiers and his partner arrive at one of the highest profile events this side of Faerun.

It was as though the cacophony of awe induced exclamations, the shrieks and wails of avid fanatics, and the shoving of eager reporters each hollering out invasive questions swallowed your mind whole. Each tendon across your body became taught, your skin numbing under the chill of the night yet fiery hot under the heat of scrutinous eyes of many. Just as your body had reached a precipice of heat you could feel a hand, rugged yet so incredibly warm, gently take your frozen fingers into its own. The slight change broke you from your stupor, and as your head flew to the side to regard who had anchored themselves to you, you only spotted Wyll. His smile nearly sparkled like a beacon of light in the sea of distress around you, and you could suddenly feel the air between your ears cool off as your body came back to the ground from its anxieties. A cooling balm that allowed you to float forward with your lover as he parted the sea of howling and cheering masses to inch your way towards your destination.

In the madness of it all you'd caught his eye just a moment, a brief glimpse where you'd mouthed gratitude. Yet he only smiled- something soft and kind. Understanding. It seemed no matter the situation the Blade was always understanding, and as he'd begun to lead you up the steps of the estate, it was as though the two of you were alone in the world; the chatter drowned out as you could focused on him, the masses reduced to mumbling background noise as you observed his poise. How he greeted so intimately with even just a slight wave of his hand.

It was comforting, yet it still made you feel even more uncomfortable at your own lack of... whatever he had that you did not. It was so hard to place what it even was, those stupid pillars be damned, that you resigned to just deciding you had none of it.

Wyll pushed open the heavy glass panes fashioned into doors, the diamonds engraved into the structures sparkling as the revealed a grand hall, the revelry of music and the distant clink of silverware and cups hit you like a strong gust of wind that knocked you senseless. It seemed you had only taken a small step inside before a doorman swooped in to take any unwanted accessories for the outdoors from you, the swell of guests noticing both of your arrivals growing nearly instantaneously.

From that moment on there hadn't been a moment where you'd been granted a bit of respite from touchy hands and strange questions, each noble that greeted you holding just the slightest bit of poorly concealed contempt in their tone. Wyll had been finagled from your side, ushered through the room by patriars to pick his brain about legislation and schmooze for political sway. Occasionally you'd catch glimpses of him, his eyes meeting yours to pass an apologetic smile, but it wasn't enough to save you from the judgemental crowds. It was as though they strategically placed themselves around the room, making artful jabs at your dressings and manners that had no business hurting as much as they did.

Oh my, I hadn't thought that color was still in season. Good on you for trendsetting.

Isn't it half past ten? You certainly stay out late. I suppose its good the Duke has someone so free spirited.

Your plate is rather full, dear. I usually eat with my eyes-something all us of a higher class do, usually.

The pressure built and built for hours until you were left sitting to the side in a plush chair, hands gripping the armrests desperately. You wanted to go home, be away from this place and never have to do anything related to royal business again-

And just when your train of thought had begun to convince you to leave all by yourself, your eyes caught a clean pair of dress pants approaching to stand right in front of you. Just barely looking up lets you see the familiar embroidery on the edges of the man's coat, and your eyes shot up to meet Wyll's.

"Are you alright? I hadn't meant to leave you like that- nobles can be quite chatty, unfortunately for us." Wyll leaned down to whisper at the end, attempting a bit of humor that didn't quite seem to land as your expression remained uncomfortably solemn. His face contorted into a small grimace at your state, turning to look about the room for some kind of lifeline that might cheer you up. It had been his fault you were so melancholy to begin with- damn him and his willingness to please every little person that approached him. That was when his searching eyes landed on the wide dance floor, and he turned back instantly to extend a hand your way. You'd stared at it for a moment, not speaking until Wyll's words softly cut through your uncertainty. As always.

"May I have this dance?" It was simple, a plain extension of something that was familiar enough to you. It had instantly brought you back to those nights at camp you'd shared together, and before you could think your hand slotted against his to push yourself to your feet.

You'd be lying if you said walking out onto the shiny empty plot of flooring in the center of the room with the other nobility was easy, but once Wyll's hands came to rest at your hip and hold your other hand up high? You could hardly pay attention to anyone else staring at your clumsy feet. At first you'd attempted to watch your steps, trying anxiously to ensure you didn't squash the Duke's toes, but after a while the sway became easy to follow, and you began to feel a smile creep over your cheeks as Wyll twirled and spun you occasionally.

It wasn't proper, hardly so, but it made you smile, and that was what mattered most to him.

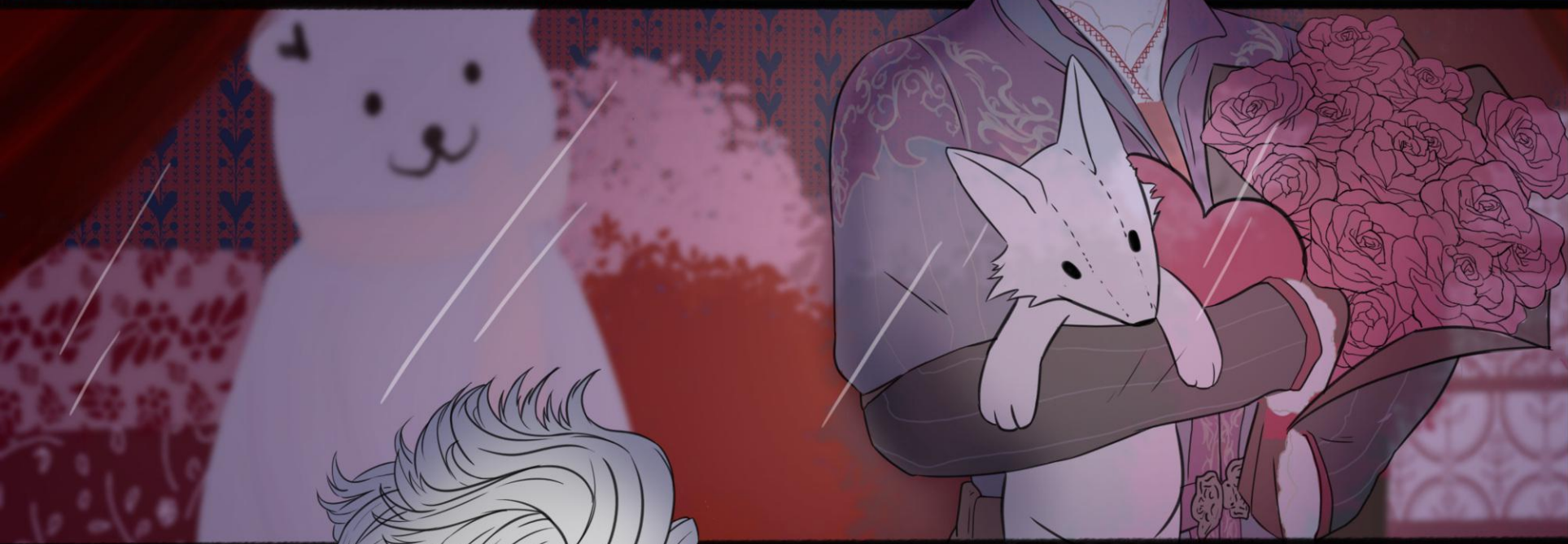
"That's it. My, I'd say you improved tenfold since we were stuck out in the wilderness." Wyll's voice held a bit of laughter as he gave you another spin, and if you were observant enough you could see the glimmer of devotion sparkle against the lights above.

"Of course I remember. This place is much better than the mud as a dance floor, no?" You were giddy from the moment, and Wyll laughed yet again, dipping you backwards to where you let out a yelp of surprise that melted into laughter. Yet again he'd caught the increasingly disapproving glance of the party guests but he hardly cared, lifting you back up to stand as he continued his undignified dance steps.

"Sometimes I feel as though I prefer the mud. Its so much more real than here. I'll never forget how you made me feel." The Blade's words had made your laughter die down, replaced with a bashful smile as you looked up to fully meet his eyes. He held no hint of dishonesty, and if anything he was completely calm considering the fool he had made of himself tonight. It hardly mattered what the world around the two of you thought, or if you embodied some silly ideals the city deemed important; your hearts were one, and that had to count for something.









WICKED GAMES

WRITTEN BY STORMFANGZ

Tags: Tav/Astarion, MLM, water phobia, intrusive thoughts, Act 1, possible spoilers for The Pale Elf and Act 1 tiefling quest

Astarion couldn't believe that Tav had asked him on a *date*.

He didn't have a need for dates or courtship, or whatever the love sick fools he saw regularly strolling in the moonlight around Baldur's Gate required. But to keep up appearances, and certainly to secure the protection he so desperately needed, he agreed to placate the adventurer and play it aloof.

Mostly aloof, anyway.

They had already spent one night under the moonlight in that clearing, and when Astarion had asked about possibly spending a second night together after rescuing the tieflings from the goblins, Tav had told the vampire perhaps another time...if he agreed to a date.

Astarion approached Tav at the river next to camp, the water slowly trickling over the rocks and downstream to the ocean. The adventurer stood with his back to Astarion, looking up at the stars and the moon, no doubt admiring the Tears as they glittered across the sky.

Astarion cleared his throat. "Quite the spot, darling."

Tav turned around and smiled, walking over to the rogue, but not standing too close. "Seems we both like the wilderness at night," he said as he held a stone in his hand.

The vampire's red eyes drifted to the rock. "Going to stone me, eh? I hate to break it to you dear, but it will take a lot more than one rock to send me to the Fugue Plane."

Tav rolled his eyes. "Is violence always the first thing on your mind?" He extended his hand, the smooth, black stone visible in his slender palm. "I thought maybe we could talk. Skip rocks. I know it's not much, but I can't exactly wine and dine you in the middle of nowhere."

Astarion took the stone, turning it over and over in his fingers before looking into Tav's eyes. "So your idea of a date is akin to a carnival game. Wonderful. I'd love to see your definition of wine and dine then."

Tav chuckled, moving toward the river bed and bending down to pick up another stone, drying it off with his shirt. "A little friendly competition makes for a good way to get to know someone. You'll see. Plus, you told me the other day that you weren't very impressed by my monk-like reflexes. Maybe if you're extra nice, I'll let you win."

Astarion smirked and walked up to the water's edge. "And maybe you'll learn to never bait me like this again once I show you what true dexterity and grace looks like."

The water was dark and Astarion found himself watching the eddies swirl on the surface as they carried a few leaves down the river.

"I imagine you haven't been to that many rivers recently," Tav said, stepping up next to the vampire.

"Erm, no. I never tested it myself in all this time, but I've heard the stories from my kind before. They say it feels like an acid bath. Not that I would know what that feels like either, but it doesn't sound very pleasant." He turned the smooth black stone in his fingers before flexing his wrist and chucking it across the water. The stone skipped a few times, then sinks into the dark water.

Astarion watched the ripples spread across the surface, the silver moonlight enhancing the effect. Fireflies began to dance in the distance, their yellow bulbs blinking and weaving through the tall grass visible across from the pair. "I don't think I've ever experienced the night quite like this."

Tav chuckled his stone across the surface, which goes a few more skips farther than Astarion's previous attempt. "You mean outdoors?"

Astarion picked up another rock and tossed it. "Cazador never had us hunting outside of the city for his...meals. Sometimes I wondered if his compulsion had a range or not." He didn't dare mention the time he ran away from his master wondering how far he could make it before the Vampire Lord found him. Turns out, not very far.

Tav was quiet for a moment before he threw another rock and found himself losing track of who was winning. "I grew up in Baldur's Gate, but my father was a fisherman so we went down by the bay all the time and skipped rocks, just like this. It didn't work on stormy days, but there were many days where it was just like this: calm and quiet."

"A fisherman, hmmm? Never cared for fish very much."

Tav gave a hearty chuckle. "Oh, I bet."

Astarion found himself chuckling as well, seemingly lost in the back and forth of their banter and the rocks skipping across the water. The sound of splashing, frogs croaking, and the gentle breeze caressing his skin was almost enough to make him forget about everything beyond this moment.

Do you really think you deserve this, boy?

Astarion shook his head as Cazador's sharp voice rang through his mind.

No. No, his old master isn't here, he thought. The parasite had proven to break every single rule that he had known to be true throughout the 200 years of his enslavement and vampirism. He could drink blood from who he wanted, walk anywhere he wanted, and the sun felt warm and comforting on his skin whenever he basked in it.

The vampire spawn cleared his throat and put down the next stone calmly despite the terror that was coursing throughout him. "I think that's enough excitement for one night," Astarion says stepping away from the bank.

Tav, unaware of Astarion's inner voice, looked at him and smiled before running his hand through his short hair. "Oh, yeah. Sorry, I didn't think of the time, but it's so easy to lose track with you." The adventurer's voice was soft in a way that tugged at Astarion's undead heart strings.

The vampire hesitated for a moment instead of leaving straight away. Something about how handsome Tav looked when he combed back his hair. The warm way he spoke to Astarion like a person and laughs at all his quips despite all his own frustrations and inner turmoil. While he was certainly affected by the rogue's charms, Tav didn't seem to be annoyed or put off by the constant complaining he knew he was capable of and felt he was entitled to.

This time Tav cleared his throat. "Before you go, I was wondering if you would indulge me a bit and then we can go straight to our bedrolls."

"Oh?" Astarion asked. "And what's that? Face painting? Twisting balloons into interesting shapes?"

Tav smirked. "Tease all you want, but I know you had fun."

"Ha! You and I have a very different definition of fun, darling."

Tav kicked off his shoes, tossing them aside before holding his hand out to Astarion and walking back to the water's edge. "Come stand with me in the river."

Astarion arched his eyebrow and huffed. "Absolutely not."

Tav smiled, his eyes dancing in delight as he sought to soften the vampire's challenging nature. "You have a mindflayer's larvae sitting in your brain and you're worried about some wet clothes? We don't know when whatever's happening to us will end. I saw how you relished the sun after our other date," he teased. "Wade through the river while you can with me. Just once."

Astarion's arms were crossed as he looked up at the moon, the celestial body he was so familiar with feeling as though he was seeing it through new eyes during recent days.

This strange, new twisted freedom. That's what he had called it after finding out there was a Gur hunter searching for him, presumably to drag him back to Cazador to face a reckoning at his Lord's hands. How long could he run before either the mindflayers or his master found him to take him back to his old existence?

"Fine. But if you start spouting some banal idiom like 'life is what you make it' or 'seize the day', I'll make sure the next beastie I sink my teeth into ends up on your bedroll."

Tav kept his arm extended, but smiled. "An animal carcass? How romantic."

Astarion accepted Tav's hand, kicking off his own shoes, and moved into the shallow water of the river before they were chest deep in the river. While the temperature of the water did nothing for him, he could hear the changes in Tav's breath as the cold soaked his clothes and chilled his skin. It was a subtle sharp intake of air followed by an increased heart rate as his body tried to adjust and keep itself warm.

The vampire focused on how the water moved and flowed downstream, the novel feeling of the current against his skin stirring something in his memory that wasn't quite solid. The past tenday had held experiences and sensations he thought were long since buried as he looked back up at Tav whose warm eyes came to meet his.

He couldn't remember who moved first, but it seemed that in an instant, he was leaning up to kiss Tav, the adventurer's arms sliding around his waist and pulling him close. Astarion groaned as his tongue met Tav's and leaned into his body. The river water moving over the rocks and the frogs croaking through the reeds served as the music to their brief, passionate encounter.

Tav's soft lips started to feel cool and his shivers were becoming more frequent as they continued the kiss.

"Darling," Astarion purred as he pulled away. "As much as I'd like to take the credit for the shivering and goose pimples, I think it's time for you to dry off and warm up back at camp. I'd hate to have to ask the skeleton to unfreeze you because you couldn't keep your hands off me."

Tav laughed and nodded, his arms now hugging his chest and rubbing his sides. "Karlach would never let me hear the end of it. And I could never look Withers in the face again."

After they walked back to camp and said their goodnights, Astarion returned to his tent and attempted to hang and dry off his clothes before laying down on the his bedroll and thinking over their date, as Tav had called it. His intentions swirled in his mind as he questioned where his facade ended and his true feelings began. Because the longer he enjoyed his freedom, the more the lines were blurring and melding.

The sun warm on his skin. The water rushing past his hips. Tav's lips pressed against his before he felt a soft whimper against his neck.

The words he heard earlier echoed in his ears, but the voice in his head was no longer Cazador's. It was his own.

Do you really think you deserve this, boy?









IT WAS A LULLABY

WRITTEN BY MESSMERLOVER

Tags: Dame Aylin/Isobel Thorm, Post-game, Fluff, Minor Angst

It was a pleasant night. The lake was quiet and water lazily lapped at the shoreline in white crescents; gracefully lit by the moon hanging high in the sky. The wind was warm and inviting, and with it came the scent of mixed flowers nearby—jasmynes and wild roses, amongst others. Isobel was fond of nighttime strolls, and the lakefront was a lovely destination; one of her favorites. She had slept one hundred long years, yet the lake remained; a heartening constant amidst the turmoil and change she had undergone. Tonight, she brought Aylin, her lover, her light, the winged beauty. All those years ago, it was love at first sight; a love that has long since prevailed.

They walked arm-in-arm along the lakeshore. There was a silence—but it was one of comfort. They did not need to speak to enjoy each other's company, although Aylin did enjoy *talking*.

“Would you fancy bathing?” Aylin asked.

“Hmm. The water would be rather cold. Can’t we lay here a while instead?” Isobel mused in response.

Aylin flexed her wings. She felt rather restless and wished to exercise her limbs—though she would like being beside Isobel far more. With a radiant light, the wings dissipated, and she held a hand out for Isobel to take.

“As you wish, my fair lady.”

Despite their intimacy, a flush would still rise to Isobel’s cheeks at Aylin’s knightly displays of affection. She laughed and put her hand in Aylin’s, whose hand was larger and rougher, and squeezed it gently.

They found a suitable spot on the sand to lay. Perhaps it would be nicer with blankets, comforters, and plush pillows—to lay in the comfort of bed and gaze upon the night sky. It made Isobel wonder if creating a bedroom with some sort of opening—perhaps a skylight—would be readily achievable... nonetheless, it was a warm enough night to go without these accommodations. The sand was not particularly soft nor hard. She scooped up a handful and watched it sift back down through her fingers.

Laying before the moon, she bathed, sucking its light in, feeling it upon her bones. It was a clean sensation—one that may quell the death riddling her body. The moon and stars could cleanse. They were both silent in contemplation for some time.

“Aylin, look at the stars,” Isobel softly spoke up.

“I am.”

She turned her head to face Aylin, who was staring back eagerly.

“Don’t be silly!” Isobel giggled, reaching to pinch her cheek. “You have the whole day to look at me. The stars are here only now.”

Aylin feigned a melancholic sigh and turned back to gaze upon the dark sky and its scattered, twinkling stars.

“It is a sight, truly. Though... nothing compares to you, my love. Your beauty is unmatched; even by the brightest, most glorious of stars.”

“You flatterer. The moon pales in comparison to you.”

Aylin laughed, softly—and what a soothing sound it was! It brought a giddy grin to Isobel's face. Their hands found each other again, Aylin's fingers tracing circles across the back of Isobel's hand. Another spell of silence fell over the two.

“Could I fly you up there, to the stars, I would.” Aylin paused. “I can! Would you like that?”

“It sounds romantic. But what if you were to drop me?”

“I would never.”

“I do not doubt you. Maybe. I'm not too fond of heights. Wouldn't you prefer my chances here, on land? I'll be quite fine watching you fly about—I enjoy it, actually.”

“Well, then, I'll put on a spectacle for you!”

“I know you will—oh, not right now, my dear. Stay.”

With some effort, Aylin leaned over and gently kissed Isobel's cheek.

“I would never dream of leaving you.”

They would never part—she spoke true. The hundred years they spent in the dark were torn from them; it was never by choice that Aylin would leave her lover's side. Some hundred years were far different to an immortal being such as Aylin, yet her despair had been bottomless; she thought Isobel dead, gone forever—a forever Aylin would have to live through. But she had been mistaken. Her Isobel had returned to her, full of life once more. And they could live contently, together, for the rest of their days.

Her revival was a conflicting ordeal to Isobel. She would, without a doubt, cherish the life she had regained; she was glad she was back, breathing, with Aylin, and yet... she had not come back the same. It had been done through something deeply wicked and unspeakable. And there was a stain on her soul—death. It lingered in her lungs. She would sometimes cough it up—a reminder. Her father had meddled—was she now forsaken? Would she ever be accepted once more under the Moonmaiden's grace? She wondered often, and she thought not; still, Selûne's very daughter remained by her side, ever passionate in their love.

Such worries melted away in Aylin's presence. She felt a wave of serenity wash over her, rolling like the water lapping at the shore. Despite it all, they had found each other once more. Once more, they were whole—she would have it no other way.

Isobel slowly rolled onto her side, reaching to brush a stray strand of blonde hair from Aylin's face. The aasimar smiled, closing her eyes and inhaling deeply.

"Mhh. It smells nice. You smell nice."

"That may just be the flora," Isobel giggled, running her fingers through Aylin's hair. It was such a soothing motion; Aylin could fall asleep right there. She felt herself drifting under Isobel's gentle touch, sighing softly.

"Careful, my love. I may end up dozing off," Aylin grinned.

"And would that be so bad?" Isobel murmured, leaning in close, "It's warm out. The sand is nice. Perhaps I'll doze off, too."

She kissed Aylin's forehead, lovingly, caressing her face with a soft hand.

"I love you," She whispered.

"I love you, too," Aylin returned.

Isobel smiled, and curled in closer, settling her head against Aylin's broad chest, feeling the rise and fall; hearing the beating of her heart.

It was a lullaby.

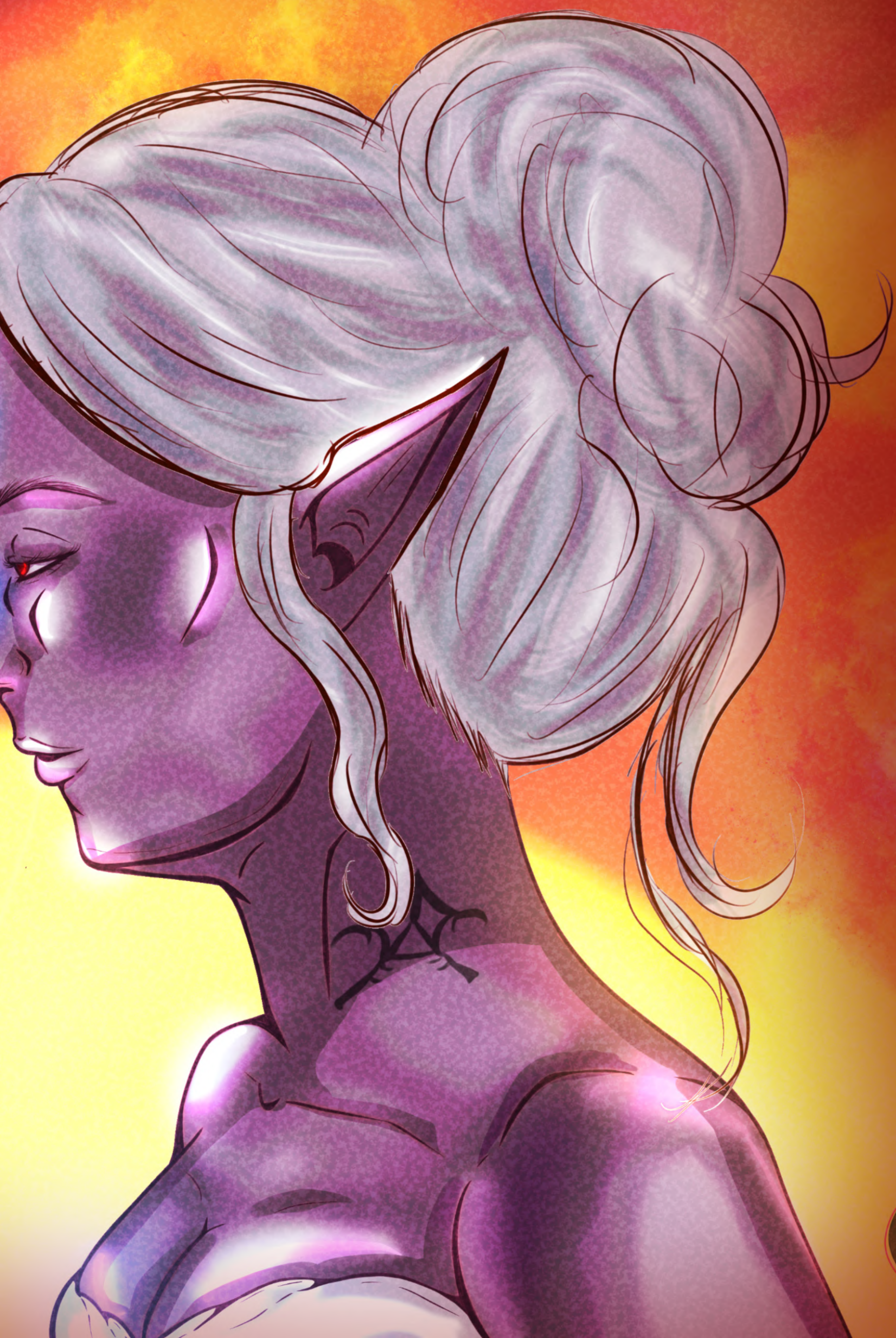




@mintharaenjoyer







MIDNIGHT SILKS

WRITTEN BY JINXIE

Tags: Mild Violence Reference, Implied Sex, Mention of War, Minthara x Tav, Spoilers

You cannot steal a heart.

Despite what the bards and poets would have you believe, a heart cannot ever be truly stolen by love. A heart can be claimed, and you can lose your heart before you even realise it... but to steal something implies a conflict, a reluctance to give your heart to another. To steal is to wound someone; and while love can be painful at times, while it can be wielded as a cruel weapon against unwitting souls, genuine love is not a wound. No one should ever have to bleed for love, though they run the risk every moment they allow themselves to open up to it. Perhaps that's why she said it was the hardest thing a person could do.

The wizard hadn't liked that much.

You glance up from the book in your hand, a smile lingering on your face at the memory. Minthara is standing in front of you, silhouetted by the moonlight streaming through the window behind her. A sliver of silvery light glances over the edges of her features and they form a regal portrait. Her distant gaze is directed to the sleeping city outside and for that moment, she looks every inch the unflinching general she had been when you first met.

But then, the light shifts, illuminating more of her face. She turns to look back at you, drawn by your soft huff of amusement, and the cold leader's face shifts. A subtle softening of her features morphs them into the woman you have come to understand over the course of this journey. She is tough, yes, and almost unbelievably strong. But there is a lighter, softer side to her that was carefully hidden from view.

Even your companions may never guess at the side of her that you have been lucky enough to enjoy intimately. You have the sense that very few people, if any, have been allowed to see this side of her, and you are just barely beginning to understand how precious a gift that is.

Certainly, your travelling companions were baffled when you insisted on rescuing her from the dungeons of Moonrise Towers. She was at that time, an enemy, one who had already tried to see you killed once before. They thought you were weak-or mad-for wanting to set Minthara free. But you had seen the look in her eyes as she was dragged into the dungeons of Moonrise. Past your group who had so carefully infiltrated this bastion of the Absolute.

She had seen, and recognised your group in that brief moment. You had seen the impending horror in her eyes. And perhaps a small part of you had wanted the vindication of seeing a foe humbled. Despite all of that, when you faced each other in that dungeon, surrounded by enemies to you both... something about Minthara had called out to you. Before you really comprehended why you were doing it, you found yourself smuggling her away from the tower. Offering shelter in your camp. You insisted that she could be trusted, demanded that the group at least give her a chance-even before you had fully convinced yourself to do the same.

And somehow, you had been able to fold her into the colourful group that you called travelling companions. And the more you had learned about this woman, the more certain you were that you had made the right choice. Behind the facade of the cold and zealous general lay a woman unlike any other you had met.

Minthara had shown you things that you had never paused to consider before. She was a woman that relished the many beautiful hues of the night sky.

She slipped treats to Scratch and the other various strays around camp when she thought no one else could see. She had a sharp, dry wit which she wielded like a deft razor. Rather than be offended by her abrasive and sometimes downright cruel comments, you found yourself charmed by them. You were privately amused and impressed by her ability to so easily plant her verbal daggers at the soft parts that people believed were hidden.

And yes, she could be cruel, and utterly merciless with it. Some of her actions had initially left you aghast, even if they had been done in your defence. Minthara was no dainty débutant. This was a tempered warrior, utterly dedicated to a vow of vengeance and absolutely lethal in battle. She was ferociously strong, driven, and calculating - but fiercely loyal to you as well. She had drawn you into her web as easily as the spider goddess her people worshipped and frankly, you wonder now why you ever tried to resist.

It is only in the quiet moments like this, when night's shadows enshroud you both, that you see all of her many facets. Her hard edges are not a mask. They are fine-honed weapons that she has wielded against brutal circumstances, which have dogged her almost her entire life. The fact that she allows those edges to soften around you, however rarely, is a precious thing and a sign of her genuine affection. To judge her for the actions driven by her experiences would be a betrayal, of sorts. Minthara has never judged you, even when it may have been deserved. She met you as an equal from the start, challenging you to think twice about your assumptions of morality, of righteousness, of the world and how it should be. She has never once coddled you, and it is a rare friend that will meet your eyes with a challenge like that. Even rarer then, to find this quality in a lover.

And now, on the precipice of a battle that could shape the future of the entire world, the idea of a future together is unfurling ahead of you both. The possibility of success seems so slim, but in the dappled silver and black of a private room, you allow your minds to wander, whispering possibilities into the darkness together. Muffled, the raucous sounds of the Elfsong Tavern echo from below. The bright, blissful ignorance of the massed people in the golden light below seemed to make everything in this room seem somehow sharper in your mind. It seizes on small details, committing them to memory, for however long you might have left in this world.

Your eyes trace down the deep inverted arrowhead of her leathers. They expose the curve of her chest, the lean iron of her muscle, hugging the deceptively slender sweep of her thighs, her calves. The dark black stands starkly against the dusty lilac of her skin. Her scarlet eyes have pinned you in place on the comfortable bed and a smile touches your lips. The white of her hair, escaping from where she had tied it, touched gold briefly as a brief flash of torchlight passes the small window in the door.

In this shadowed room, you and her gather silvery highlights as you fall back on the bed. You share secret smiles, witnessed only by the moonlight pooling around you both and you dare to imagine what might come after tomorrow. You don't talk about the impossible odds, and you both ignore the grim spectre of death hovering just beyond your private den of dusk and starlight. Instead, you write dreams on the canvas of the dark air. Dreams of a home, of revenge on those who wronged you, of a life as leaders and forging a path that belongs only to the two of you. Where you have no one else to please or appease. Where neither of you make apologies for your natures. As Minthara outlines her vision of the future, you are struck once again by the concept of stealing a heart.

After all, as the woman beside you so beautifully explains, nothing can be taken without conquest. Be it land, people, or a heart, conquest is more present in the world than most would like to acknowledge. But this woman understands. She sees the constant wars going on every day, in a hundred ways, both large and small. She sees them and accepts them with a stoicism that most see as coldness. Bafflingly, she accepts this too, without any anger against those who scorn her for it. Minthara might consider many opinions, but there are precious few that can move her.

Here, in the chiaroscuro of your shared sanctuary, there's no conquest to be had; she has already claimed your heart. Her slender fingers trace your cheek with a touch that is lighter than silk, though the fingers are calloused from countless years of wielding maces, shields, magic. Her voice fills your mind and it's not a voice that is like bells or songs - even if it is sweet music to your ears. Hers is a voice made to be heard from the heart of a battlefield and even in soft murmurs, it commands every bit of your attention. Her words have shifted from the future to now. Of what two lovers might do in the night, when the world has not promised them tomorrow. She matches words with images, flowing effortlessly into your mind where you hold no reserve against her. You encourage her, weaving your own words and images into a rich tapestry that you both set to action.

Outside of your room, beyond the walls of the tavern, the city of Baldur's Gate continues much as it has done for these past years. The undercurrents of tension and impending war lend a significance to everything, even if most are unaware of just how dire the situation might be. Promises are made, and goodbyes uttered with just a little more seriousness than before. But in a modest room, above the city's oldest and most popular tavern, you find an unexpected moment of peace.

Regardless of how others may see it, you agreed with Minthara when she declared that loving another is not soft. It is one of the hardest things a person can do, risking the most breakable parts of yourself in the hands of another. And in this moment, with all that surrounds you, Minthara is the only companion you would risk anything so precious for. She has bewitched you utterly and transported you away from the threat of any wars, save the ones you choose for yourselves. In the fortress of her arms and the soft night cradling you both, in this one breath before the storm, you find yourself a home.

After all, a heart may not be stolen. That would imply a reluctance to give your heart to another. But a heart can be freely given, and if you are very fortunate it will be treasured in return.







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A ROMANCE OF FIRE AND BLADES

WRITTEN BY ONE

Tags: Wyll x Karlach, Courting, chivalry, Timeline: vague Act 3, no quests mentioned

As they returned to the Elfsong Tavern for the evening, everyone settled into their space with their bed save for Wyll, who looked briefly at himself in a mirror to gather his courage. There was little the Blade of the Frontiers feared. Monsters and bandits fell to his sword without so much as a drop of sweat on his brow. But Karlach was something else; she had always been something else.

He straightened out his arm and turned his head to the side, ensuring his hair looked presentable. How he'd sought her doom was all too fresh in his mind, though it was nothing more than water under the bridge. Forgotten, as she had immediately stepped to his side and his defense. A friend and a shield against Mizora, who toyed with him endlessly. Karlach stood strong, but Wyll had always seem the tremor in her eye as she no doubt thought back to Zariel. Neither one of them was safe, but they had each other.

Wyll wasn't sure when he'd started clinging to that notion, nor when the idea of no longer having each other brought him such dread, but the Blade of Frontiers was never idle. When something needed to be done, he did it. Even if it had taken a week to finally find his courage.

Turning from the mirror, Wyll took two steps before he was in Karlach's space; this hadn't helped, that she'd taken up a bed so close. It was much harder to fight the nerves when the object of them was a few steps away. Karlach sat on her bed, having already set aside her battle axe and taken off her shoes. She situated Clive against her pillow before setting her bag down in front of him, but before she could rummage through her findings for the day, Wyll took her attention.

“Good evening, Karlach.”

She quirked a brow and huffed with laughter. “Evenin’, Wyll. What’s gone and crawled up your bum?”

“What—oh.” Wyll coughed weakly. “Nothing, nothing, I was just thinking of asking you something.”

Interest piqued, Karlach left her bag and turned towards Wyll with her hands on her knees. As she waited patiently for his question, Wyll’s cheeks warmed. She was taller than him and more muscular where he’d always been leaner; her horn was broken, and she was covered in scars. Then, there was the glow in her chest from the burning infernal engine, cooled only by Dammon’s expertise. Anyone else would see a monster. For awhile, Wyll did too, but now, all he saw was beauty. How gorgeous she was. How adorable, waiting there for him to find his words. A bright smile on her red lips.

“Karlach...” Wyll breathed deeply, smiled, and relaxed in an instant. “Would you do the honor of accompanying me this evening? I thought we might take some time to really enjoy the city while we have a moment.”

Karlach beamed. “Yeah? Like a little tour of the city? Not like we both don’t live here, but it has been awhile since I’ve been home.” She laughed and bounced slightly on the mattress. “Do I need to dress up? Though, I don’t really have any other clothes —”

Wyll laughed and waved his hands. “No, no, you’re fine, Karlach. Just as you are.”

He said it with such seriousness, Karlach’s breath hitched as she stared at him. Her smile fell, but the brightness in her eyes didn’t.

“Sure,” she finally said. “Just—figure we’ll wash up, yeah?”

“Of course, of course. Ladies first.”

Karlach had to force herself to blink as she agreed. She couldn’t think past ladies first. Whether it was Wyll’s politeness or that he really thought of her as a lady, she didn’t know. Both made her heart sing.

#

Wyll opened the door, and Karlach gasped with her hands to her mouth as she saw the incredible spread inside. Shoes, dresses, blouses, and bags. The building smelled of lavender, and the fire lighting everything all but glittered. As she marveled at it all, Wyll stepped in behind and marveled at her. Never had her eyes been so bright or she so speechless.

“Do you see anything you like?” Wyll asked as he came to her side.

“Do I—Wyll, could you really see me in any of this?” Karlach laughed “Me?”

“Of course. Why not?”

“Well, it’s just... It’s me.” Karlach scoffed and folded her arms. She hunched forward, self-conscious as she looked at all the beautiful clothes; she hadn’t worn much more than armor and raggedy straps since she’d been dragged into the Hells. “And I’m —”

“Beautiful?” Wyll chuckled and stepped into the boutique with his hand outstretched, waiting for her to take it. “Come on, Karlach, there’s no one I could imagine who might wear these dresses better. Or trousers, if you want them. I’ll leave that to you.”

"If I want them?" Tentatively, Karlach slipped her hand into Wyll's.

"Of course! Why else would we be here if not to shop?"

"I—with what coin?" she tried to protest, but Wyll dragged her further into the shop with a wide smile on his face

"Don't worry about that. Today's my treat, Karlach. That's what a gentleman does for a lady, after all."

That word again. Karlach pursed her lips and breathed out hard, but there was no arguing with Wyll when he got that look in his eye. One Karlach had always admired—determination, strength. To see it turned on her for something that seemed so frivolous was almost too much for her burning heart. She was thankful when a shock of black and white caught her attention.

"What about..." Karlach pointed sheepishly. A battlefield, she understood. A lady's boutique was something else entirely. She had no reason to be here, but the moment Wyll saw what she pointed out, he pulled her across the floor like they belonged.

"This would suit you wonderfully," he said.

"It would!" a new voice cried—one of the workers, who stepped up with a bright smile and her hands pressed together. A human, but the sight of two devils didn't bother her. "You've got such an eye for fashion. Would you like to try it on?"

Wyll looked at Karlach, still beaming.

"I, um—" Karlach swallowed, then smiled back. The adoration in Wyll's gaze gave her some courage. "Yes!"

The worker waved Karlach after her with the dress over her arm, and Karlach followed. She found herself looking back at Wyll as their fingers brushed apart. His smile had softened, and so did Karlach's. Her chest ached when she turned away, and again, she couldn't tell if it was Wyll or how he encouraged her to chase being a lady.

#

When they left the boutique, Karlach stepped out in a brand new black and white dress with lacing up the back and sleeves just past her elbows. Wyll held a bag with her old set of clothes inside and stepped aside as she twirled in the dying light. Sunset was an hour off, but evening was well upon them and lit the smile on Karlach's face beautifully. Wyll's chest seized, and he smiled.

"I cannot believe you bought this for me," she said. "It was so expensive!"

"And I'm about to do more than that, my lady." Wyll gave one of his signature theatrical bows and held out his hand. "Would you do me the honor of accompanying me to dinner?"

Karlach chuckled and took his hand much quicker this time. "Do you the honor," she parroted. "That is the second time you've used that phrase."

Wyll beamed as he stepped up beside her and intertwined their fingers; his cheeks warmed, but he kept his chest out and face confident. "It simply cannot be understated what honor you do me by saying yes each time."

Karlach warmed impossibly and looked away as Wyll led her through the streets.

Though they were close to their final destination restaurant, Wyll took Karlach on the long scenic route where he honored her idea of a tour, even if they had both lived in the city once, by pointing out easily identifiable landmarks. The park, statues. Karlach laughed the more ridiculous his presentation got.

“Here, you’ll see a lovely flower arrangement, taken care of by the city’s dedicated staff of landscapers.

“You’re ridiculous,” she cried and nudged Wyll in the hip.

He stumbled to the side, and Karlach was quick to grab him, interlocking their arms this time instead of their fingers.

“Sorry,” she mumbled.

“No, no, don’t be sorry. It’s that strength that’s gotten us out of more than a few scraps. I dare say I wouldn’t be here today without you.”

“Oh, you don’t mean that. You’re the Blade of the Frontiers! What do you need a lil’ol devil like me for?”

“For more than you know, Karlach.” He patted her hand and smiled. “For more than you know.”

Karlach glanced at him from the corner of her eyes and ducked her head to hide her smile. She was glad for her red skin, as it easily masked how her cheeks flushed.

#

Though Karlach had only mentioned her favorite Baldurian restaurant once—The Singing Lute—it was there Wyll chose to take her. She marveled at it much like she had the lady’s boutique and all but giggled when Wyll pulled out her chair on the terrace for her to sit down.

He poured her drink for her, took her menu when it came time to hand it back to the waiter, and hung on every word she said. Just like any gentleman would do with his lady: the one idea she could not get out of her head as their meals came and they ate, talked, and laughed together. Like the world wasn't weeks away from ending if they didn't work hard enough.

By the time they left The Singing Lute, Karlach had forgotten entirely about the Netherbrain, about Gortash and Orin, and their endless number of troubles. All she could do was laugh as she leaned into Wyll and squeezed his hand.

"I know, the look on his face when Tav upstaged him." Karlach's laughter pitched; she shook her head and wiped away welling tears.

The conversation came to a close as they reached a stone bridge. So too did their walking pace, until they reached the middle and stopped entirely. Their arms stayed hooked as they leaned over the stone rail. Out beyond the city and the docks was the water, already glistening as the sun dipped beneath the horizon. Karlach took a long, deep breath as she stared at it. Wyll stared at her.

"I never thought I'd see it again," she whispered. "I wonder how many times I'll get to see it."

Wyll squeezed her hand. "There's a way, Karlach, I'm sure of it. For both of us to be free of what they've done."

Zariel. Mizora. Karlach inhaled sharply, then looked at Wyll.

"We'll just have to make sure we watch every sunset from now on together, you hear?"

"Oh?" Wyll chuckled. "Why's that?"

“Just in case it’s the last one I’ll ever see.” Karlach cast her eyes down as Wyll’s smile softened. “I was really glad when you asked me to do this. Really would like to do it again sometime. You wouldn’t even have to spend that much coin.”

“I would be honored to accompany you, Karlach. Anywhere you would go and for however long you need me there.”

Karlach’s breath hitched in her throat. “Sounds like you’ve been planning this for a long time, then.”

“Only since we met. Perhaps I hesitated for too long, but I—”

Karlach tilted Wyll towards her and dove in for a sudden, sharp kiss. Wyll inhaled. After the shock wore off, he kissed back. His fingers curled into her hair, and she grabbed his waist as her head tilted. They kissed again and again, each chasing after the other in a desperate need to have, to taste. Only for it to end all too soon as Wyll pulled back with a smile.

“Shall we head back to camp? I’m sure we’ve big plans for tomorrow. We’ll want to be well rested.”

“Back to camp? Are you—you’re serious, aren’t you?”

Wyll beamed and slipped away. Incredulous, Karlach turned to watch him head down the bridge; not once did he look back.

“That’s it, then?” she cried. “Just a kiss and goodnight?”

“We mustn’t rush things, Karlach. You may not see yourself with a long life, but I certainly do, so I intend to do this properly.”

“Properly.” Karlach huffed like a bull and marched down the bridge after him. “You’re ridiculous! I’m not—I’m not a lady. Whatever happened to provoking the blade to feel its sting, huh?”

Wyll laughed loud enough to catch the attention of passersby. Karlach quieted her voice as she reached his side and yanked him close.

“Did I not do enough provoking?”

“You did plenty, but as I said. Properly.”

Wyll looked at her with a glint in his eye, and Karlach deflated. She knew when she’d been beat, so she hooked their arms together, intertwined their fingers, and leaned down until their horns knocked.

“I hate you, Wyll Ravengard,” she muttered. “When will you take me out again, then?”

“As soon as we’ve a spare moment, Karlach Cliffgate. That is my promise.”

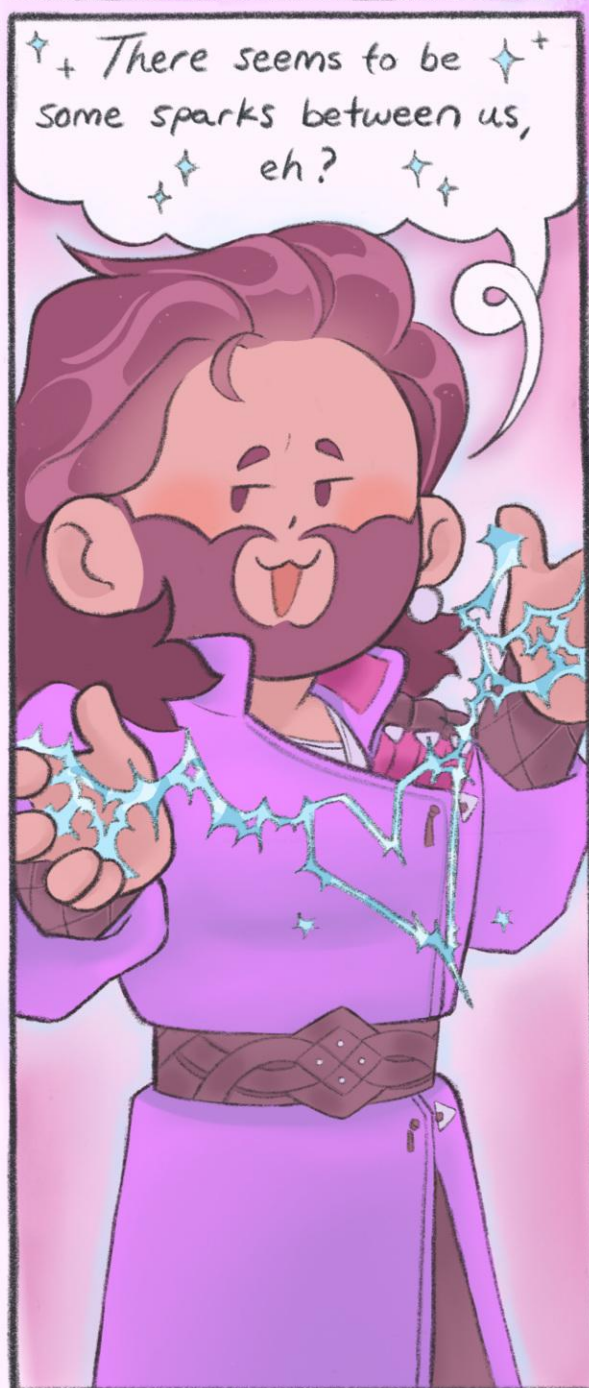
Karlach smiled to herself and nodded. Though her lips still burned from the kiss and her body stirred for more, she was content to keep it to herself out of sheer wonderment for what more Wyll would show her.



Art by Flo



art by flo
(callmesimplyflo)





MY DEAREST TAV

WRITTEN BY PYRETTA

Tags: Gale Dekarios, Fluff, Gale x Tav, post game, act 3 spoilers

My Dearest Tav,

Today, the air carries a sweetness, as if the world itself knows of the love I hold for you, as if it whispers of you with every breath I take. And how could I not think of you on a day like this, when the very earth seems to hum with the promise of love, when even the barest branch blushes with the first hint of bloom?

It is as though the universe conspires to remind me of you. I see you in every rose that dares to bloom despite the chill, in the soft curl of petals that cradle drops of dew, like the touch of your lips on a winter morning. The air is cool, but the thought of you keeps me warm, your memory like a fire that burns eternally in the depths of my heart.

This morning, as I stood by the frost-laced windows of my office, I thought of you. The rising sun spilled golden light across the stone floors, and for a moment, it felt as though I could reach through the glass, as if somewhere in the distance, you were standing in that same sunlight. My work keeps me away, as I immerse myself in the ancient texts and lessons I now pass on to eager minds. Each day brings challenges and triumphs in equal measure, yet no discovery, no spell unraveled or theory perfected, compares to the joy of being with you. I remind myself that this time apart is for something greater—for knowledge, for the future of eager young minds—but oh, how I wish I could set aside the quill and parchment, close the dusty tomes, and find myself at your side.

The students here are... spirited, to say the least. Some have the sharp minds of budding scholars, while others, I fear, are still grappling with the basics of spellcasting and rhetoric alike.

I've taken it upon myself to teach them not only magic and patience but perhaps a touch of poetry as well—though, between you and me, they are woefully lacking in the latter. I may have even caught myself quoting a line or two that reminds me of you, just to see if they'd notice. (They didn't. Truly, Tav, the youth these days lack an ear for romance.)

There is a particular student who reminds me of myself at a younger age—brash and eager, with a tendency to reach for power before truly understanding its weight. Watching him struggle reminds me of the mistakes I once made, of the hubris that nearly consumed me. I often wonder how different my path might have been had I known you then. Would your wisdom have tempered my recklessness? Or would your steadfastness have reminded me of what truly matters? Perhaps it is better this way, for the man I am now has been shaped by both my triumphs and my failures—and it is that man who fell in love with you.

When I am not lecturing or lost in research, I often find myself wandering the campus grounds. There is a small garden here, tucked away between two towers, where the snowdrops are just beginning to bloom. It is a quiet place, filled with the soft murmurs of wind and the occasional chirp of a brave winter bird. I think you would like it. I imagine us walking there together, your arm linked with mine as we talk of everything and nothing, the world around us fading into insignificance.

I picture the life we will share once this brief separation has passed. I imagine the quiet moments of simply being with you—the late-night conversations over steaming mugs of tea, the way your laughter fills the silence, the softness of your hand in mine.

Those thoughts are what sustain me, Tav, as I lecture and write, as I pour over intricate magical diagrams and answer the endless questions of my students.

Do you remember the night we spent beneath the stars, when the world seemed to hold its breath and the heavens themselves bore witness to our love? I often think of that moment, of the way the starlight danced in your eyes and how the weight of the universe felt so small compared to the weight of your hand in mine. It is memories like that which keep me grounded, which remind me that no matter how far I may wander, my heart will always belong to you.

I hope you can forgive my absence, though I know your patience is endless and your heart as steady as the stars above. You've always been my anchor, my reminder that even amidst the mysteries of the cosmos, it is the simple, human connections that matter most. You. You are what matters most.

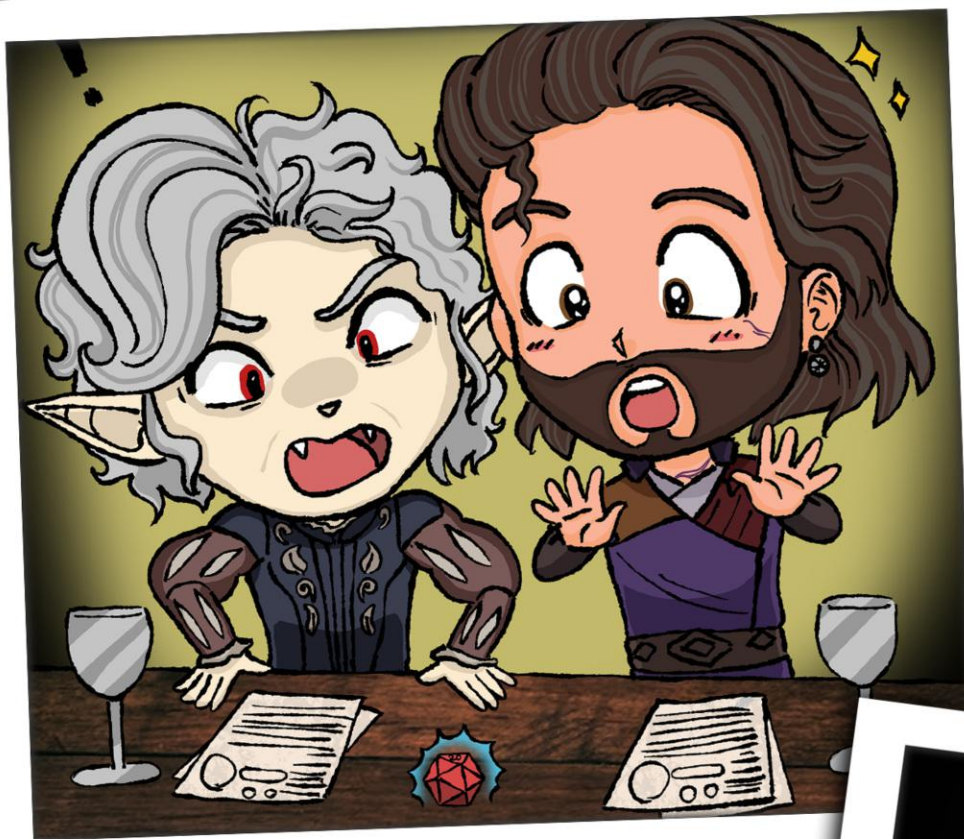
The work I do here, though important, pales in comparison to the importance of us. I promise you, my love, that I will return soon. This separation is but a momentary inconvenience, a small price to pay for the future we will build together. When I return, I will bring with me not just the stories of my time here but a renewed appreciation for the life we share, for the love that binds us. For now, I send you what I can—these words, a reflection of the depth of my feelings for you. Let them keep you company until I can be there myself, to whisper them in your ear and feel the warmth of your smile. Know that every word I write is imbued with the hope and promise of our reunion, that every stroke of the pen is a testament to the love that sustains me.

I dream of the day when I will no longer have to imagine your touch, when the space between us will be no more than the space of a breath. Until then, my heart remains with you, as constant and unyielding as the tides.

Yours always,
Gale Dekarios



game night!





A detailed white line-art illustration of various flowers and leaves, including roses, hydrangeas, and daisies, framing the central text on a dark purple background.

NSFW SECTION

18+ only



ROSES AND BATHWATER

WRITTEN BY BRABBLESBAN

Tags: Ascended Astarion x Tav, Explicit, Pale Elf Quest Spoilers, Post-Game, Oral Sex, Penis in Vagina Sex

The lord rarely prepared his own baths.

Steam wafted from the bathroom door and you paused, fingers clasped on the hem of your robe.

He awaited you, waist deep in the warm, scented water, a rose coyly held between long, slender fingers.

Fingers that knew their way around you, from the very day he first had you.

The smirk that met you as you stepped into the room was brimming with confidence, but you see more - his eyes were round and wide.

“I'd ask if you cared to join me, but seeing as you've already sauntered over...” he trailed off.

You let the robe drop from your body in response, slipping off your shoulders and back, down to the tile floor.

You had always seen further than what he was willing to show, had caught glimpses of the man before, swathed in layers of excess and luxury.

Your man. Your Astarion.

“Move aside,” you said, relishing the slightly affronted look he shot at you as his body obeyed.

Sinking into the water was delicious. It smelled of roses, of the flowers that filled the garden he had made for you.

Astarion leaned forward, tracing the flower he held over your pert nipples. The sensation made you shiver.

Glancing down, you noticed his cock, already half-hard.

“Ah-ah,” he chided, as his gaze followed yours, “not yet, love. Not until I've had my fill of you.”

“Your-”

Your words were lost as fingers grasped your knees, prying them apart, the rose forgotten. His thumb pressed against your clit, rubbing in a slow, circular motion, the firmness of his caress intoxicating.

“Sit up.”

There was no hesitation. You perched yourself on the rim of the tub, watching him approach you with a hungry gaze. Within it however still laid uncertainty, a longstanding worry of his that you knew could not be appeased so easily.

You moaned his name as he kissed your knee. He traced his way up, trailing a path of fire until he was-

“Oh, *fuck*.”

He had parted your folds, his lips wrapped around your clit, sucking softly. His free hand trailed down his chest, between his legs, and the guttural moan that escaped him as he laved you with attention made your hips thrust.

His tongue was next, flicking against your clit experimentally and then pressing against it, the warmth and heat of his mouth mingling with the friction deliciously. Your hands fisted in his curls and he grunted in approval, his hand working himself faster.

It was beautiful, really, the sight of his cockhead, wet and glistening, clearly rock hard now. He massaged it with a practiced ease, his thumb swiping across the tip to collect a bead of precum.

“Tell me you need me,” he hissed in between licks, his breathing labored. Crimson bored into you with an insistence you knew all too well.

His fear that he was no longer what you wanted, no longer what you loved, no longer the man you had sworn to free from the clutches of his wretched master.

Your fingers tightened. His tongue swirling around you had you whimpering his name.

That was rewarded by a nip on the inside of your thigh. “That’s not what I asked for, pet.”

“I need you,” you said without hesitation.

You do. Truly. In every sense of the word.

His tongue pushed inside you, hand gripping your ass, encouraging you to thrust. He stroked his cock in time with his movements, faster, harder, his eyes falling shut.

“More,” he hissed. “I want to hear you, my sweet.”

You let yourself moan, louder and harder. “I need you, oh gods...”

He hummed against you, the vibration pleasant. “Good girl.”

But his shoulders sagged, the tension ebbing, his hand moving faster, his cock throbbing in time with the frantic beating of his heart.

You saw his thrust, fucking his fist as he lapped at you, your pleasure feeding his, your words soothing his aching soul...

"Tell me you love me."

You didn't think twice. "I love you. I- *hnnnh!*"

He had your clit firmly held between his lips, tongue rubbing against it as he kept sucking. You wouldn't last. Not like this.

You gripped his shoulder, trying to warn him.

In an instant he had pulled you down to him. His cock dragged against your clit, the pressure nothing short of ecstasy - and then just as quickly he had sheathed himself deep inside you, beginning to pump hard. Astarion's eyes met yours, and for a second you see it - see *him* - the need and love and...

He crushed his lips against yours, whether to cover up his moment of vulnerability you weren't sure, but it did not matter. You tasted yourself on him, his cock slamming against your spot with every roll of his hips.

He held you close, held you flush against his body as he thrust, and as he broke the kiss you see that softness in his gaze.

He was close.

Lips parted as he panted, as if he wanted to say something - to ask for something - but couldn't.

Wouldn't allow himself to.

Fingers reached down, rubbed your clit, and you whined, nails digging into the scars on his back.

His mind reached for yours, linking, and you knew what awaited you-

I love you I love you I love you-

Repeated, again and again, words he had once used to manipulate, to seduce, laid bare in its entire truth.

I love you.

Your hands rose to cup his cheeks, to meet his gaze. Your noses touched, his movements frantic as he neared his peak.

“I love you,” you say.

His eyes widen, the irises blowing out, a soft *hah* escaping him-

And you feel him spilling into you, giving you everything, his pleasure bringing you to your own as his thumb rubs your clit.

Waves of bliss erupt from your core where you are intertwined, where he has marked you as his own. For a moment everything was the same, the pleasure, the love... Nothing had changed.

For a moment you rock against each other, savoring the sensations, dragging it out as long as possible.

Astarion leaned his head against yours, catching his breath. Then he smiled.

“Far more pleasant than a bath prepared by the servants, don't you think?”

“Mm. I don't think it's really the bath that's doing it,” you laughed, clenching around him just to make him shudder.

"I certainly wouldn't be opposed to doing this more often," you add.

"Why of course, my little love. It was no hardship to prepare. Oils, fragrances-"

"Not that."

He paused, an eyebrow arched.

You pecked his cheek and leaned in, whispering in his ear.

"I meant showing me this."

Your hand splayed against his chest, his heart, the one he had kept hidden ever since the change-

His love.

You felt him stutter, fighting for something to say, perhaps searching for a sharp retort.

He sighed.

"Of course, love. That, too."

Murmured, whispered, only for you to hear.

Only for you to know.

Only yours.





THROUGH FLAME AND FURY

WRITTEN BY JINXIE

Tags: Sex, Violence, Gore/Blood, Karlach x Tav, Hellion's Heart Spoilers, Act 3 Romance scene spoilers, Epilogue

Leaving their friends behind once again was no easier than before. After such a brief reunion, it was hard to face the fact that no one had any idea how long it would be until the companions reunited again. It was a bittersweet thing, after all they had gone through together. Everyone seemed slow in making their preparations to leave, as though they were wrestling with similar thoughts.

Karlach and her partner paused before leaving through the portal, savouring their last breaths of fresh air for a while. In Avernus, the air was hot, sulphurous and loaded with ashen debris from across the first hell. Here, at their first ever campsite, the air was clear and sweet.

The couple took a last glance at their friends, smiling slightly as the rest of the group busied themselves around the space they had claimed. The area around Emerald Enclave was peaceful, idyllic even. They had no idea when they would be afforded such a luxury again. The couple fixed the images of their friends in their minds with determination. The next time they returned to this plane, they planned to make it a permanent return. The two plunged through the portal ahead of them before the temptation to stay could interfere with their resolve to see their task done.

The portal had barely closed at their backs before the hordes of the Blood War descended on them once more. The red din of battle was almost like an embrace, albeit one riven with unholy screeching and slavering teeth. The two lovers began moving almost immediately, having learned from bitter experience that fast reflexes were essential to survival here.

“Home sweet home eh, soldier?” Karlach gave a broad grin to her partner. One of her fists went directly through an imp's skull while the other pulled a huge axe from her back. She received a laugh in reply, several other tiny hellish entities meeting a messy end around them.

“Withers could have put the portal somewhere less... busy.” The grumbled retort was equally amused, punctuated with sounds of exertion as they began the slow and arduous trek across the open expanse of volcanic rock.

They'd been deposited on one of the “plains”, sweeping expanses which initially seemed desolate, but in reality, the area swarmed with innumerable tiny demons. These made crossing the plains slow and bloody marches that demanded every step be won with blood.

The rocky ground was uneven, deeply cracked and one misstep would send an unwary traveller tumbling to become fodder for the demonic hordes hiding in every shadow here. Occasionally, fiery magma or burning rocks would pepper the area, making the place deceptively lethal, even when the demons were absent. The pair had quickly learned that the safest way across these areas was to fight hard, and run fast. In fact, they had learned that this was the best tactic for survival anywhere in the first Hell.

Karlach laughed again, axe cleaving great swathes through the crowded planes as her infernal engine roared to life under her skin. Here at least, it was safe for her to use its power, even if it threatened her on the Material Plane. Already, they were both covered in gore, ichor and gods knew what other foul substances produced by the dying demons of Avernus. Frankly, neither of them wanted to think too much about it, simply grateful that they'd exchanged their party clothes before leaving. Somehow, neither of them minded the chaos and bloodshed as much as they should. At least they were together.

“Where's the fun in that?” Karlach’s reply came over the split head of a larger fiend, sounding exhilarated. Her fiery form was magnificent, even in these surroundings. Her movements seemed effortless, with a steady pile of hellish corpses accumulating around her. Abruptly, her head snapped to one side. “On your left!”

Karlach's warning came just in time for another devious devil to meet its end - or whatever served as death for these creatures. There wasn't much time for a show of appreciation, but then, it wasn't needed. The favour was returned almost instantly, a sharp call meaning that Karlach dodged a clawed fist, removing it from the arm in a savage answering sweep. The tide of hellish bodies pressed against them relentlessly, but they carved a pathway through.

Vaguely, they both remembered a small haven of safety not too far from here, shouting over the din to one another as they navigated the way ahead. It was one of their many campsites, somewhere to rest and catch their breath between battles, but it was no luxury tavern. Merely a more defensible spot that was big enough for the duo to lie down and snatch some sleep between battles. They had found many spots like it across Avernus as they had roamed these past months. They never stayed anywhere too long, keeping ahead of the forces that sought to claim their heads. It was in one such campsite that Withers had found them for the party. And now, they were heading to yet another which lay almost under Zariel’s nose. It was dangerous, but safety was not a concept many were familiar with in Avernus. And they had business with the fallen archangel which demanded that they get close.

Even though the ale and good cheer from the reunion party was still in their veins, the lovers had already turned their minds to the trials ahead. There was no time to linger in the happy memories right now. They still had to plot a route to Zariel’s lair and make some kind of a plan to survive once they got inside.

Naturally, Zariel held the key to fixing Karlach's engine. Once they had that, they could finally start to think about finally fixing the blasted thing, and at long last go home to Baldur's Gate. Somehow, fighting a former archangel seemed even more daunting than the Netherbrain, but at least they didn't have worms in their skulls anymore. Privately, they felt it was fitting to be taking on this fight with no one else by their side.

The couple's eyes met briefly in the melee, and wild grins mirrored each other in spite of the chaotic battle around them. They had been together for such a short time, in the grand scheme of things. And despite this, they were happy to wage war against the hells themselves for the sake of a future together. In their rare moments of calm, they would often talk about their dreams for what could come next. Of the cottage, the quiet life, the minor adventures when visiting friends. A normal life, free from the hells and mindflayers as well.

There was a lull in the crush of demons and the pair took their chance, grabbing one another's arm and breaking away from the plains in a dead sprint. Howls and other unholy sounds chased them, but the two of them were able to escape without incident, winding through a crack in a nearby rock face to a campsite they'd used two, maybe three months ago. The fire was burned out, but they had waterskins, rations and more importantly, bedrolls. Bent double, they laughed in breathless relief. They'd survived another fight, and the adrenaline surge of victory tasted just as sweet as the wines they'd drunk the night before.

They fell into a now-familiar routine. Securing the camp with a splash of holy water at the cave opening, cleaning armour, sharpening weapons and taking rationed gulps of water to wash their cold rations down. Fires drew attention, but holy water would keep some of the smaller pests at bay while they rested. Keeping their armour and weapons ready was just common sense in the middle of a war.

One night of respite was all they'd had, but it was enough to create a stark contrast to their current surroundings. After a decadent feast of fresh food and free-flowing drinks of all descriptions, stale rations and lukewarm waterskins were tough to swallow.

"We should have taken some food from the party." Karlach was staring wistfully at their underwhelming meal, remembering the lavish feast that their friends had provided the night before. The brief respite at their old camp, among familiar faces, had not made it easy to return to their nomadic life. There was a soft groan of agreement as her companion leaned their head on her shoulder.

"It was good to see everyone again, though." As always, Karlach's partner sought to find the silver lining, and she couldn't help but agree.

"It really was good to see them all." Karlach grinned, "And it seems like they're all getting up to their own adventures." Something in her happy expression felt hollow, and there was a brief silence, until she felt a gentle touch on her cheek.

"We'll see them again." The gentle reassurance brought a smile to her face, a softer one this time. One that had everything to do with the remarkable person by her side.

"Of course! And we've got our own adventures in the meantime." Karlach's irrepressible good humour returned and she pulled her companion closer.

"Exactly. And before we know it, we'll be able to go back home for good." Bright eyes met hers, sparkling with mischief. "Though going back to that tavern again might be an adventure in itself after our last trip."

Karlach burst out laughing at her partner's reference to their disastrous first date. The waiter had inexplicably hated them on sight, and they had somehow managed to leave most of their meal across the table before they'd left to wreak similar destruction in the bedroom.

"Do you think old Henk will have forgiven us yet?" Karlach grinned at the memory of the dour half-orc who had brought their food.

Her companion laughed, shaking their head at the memory. "Not a chance, especially after the mess we made upstairs afterwards."

There was more laughter, softer this time as a spark of heated memory passed between them. They hadn't done all that much sleeping, but it had been a really good night in that tiny tavern room.

"Here's to living each day like it's your last." Karlach's companion raised their waterskin in a mock-toast, but as they lowered it from their lips, she captured them with her own.

"Sorry, I-" She didn't get to finish the apology before her kiss was returned, equally passionate. With smiles against her lips, Karlach allowed herself to be pulled over her partner, feeling their now-familiar touch against her skin.

Despite the furnace of the infernal engine inside her, their touch still stoked heat inside Karlach's veins. Not a scalding or hellish heat, but molten desire moving like languid lava through her body. It loosened her battle-weary muscles as she trailed kisses down their neck, and lower. After going so long without a friendly hand on her, she still found this intoxicating. But now, instead of wishing for just anyone, all of her yearnings sharpened on this one person.

And despite her immense strength, Karlach was gentle with them, hands skimming over skin, encouraged by sounds of pleasure when she brushed over the right spots, her touches returned and breathless laughter smothered by kisses and murmurs of encouragement against eager lips.

There wasn't time for a long night of enjoying each other's bodies and company but the pair took as long as they dared, teasing moans and kisses from one another as their breathing grew heavy. Murmurs of encouragement became more urgent, cries of pleasure swiftly stifled against one another's skin. They may be in Avernus, in the middle of a war, but they were also two people in love, and after so long without touch, Karlach was in no mood to deny herself someone who would wade into all of this by her side. Of all the souls on this plane, her partner understood, matching her enthusiasm and passion with their own. Karlach had gone long enough without feeling so much as a friendly smile on her skin and her partner made sure that she had plenty to smile about by the time they were done.

The couple snatched meagre rest, each watching over the other with fond and alert eyes. The Hells gave little consideration to the needs of the rare few who ventured down without nefarious intentions, and their small sanctuary would not be enough to save them if the demons or other denizens of Avernus came for them. But they each guarded the other more closely than they would guard themselves, and so the two of them continued to survive. Tomorrow would bring another fight for their survival, but for now, they had each other.







NIGHT UNDER THE TEARS OF SELUNE

WRITTEN BY CICIDIVINE

Tags: Shadowheart x Lae'zel, Enemies to lovers, Explicit NSFW, Kissing, Cunnilingus, Pussy eating, Dominance/submission, Power play, Alcohol consumption, Minor Act 1 Spoilers, Minor Act 2 spoilers, Minor Daughter of Darkness Quest Spoilers, Timeline: Act 1 and Act 2

Silence fell over the camp in fits and starts as dark figures slipped into tents or settled onto the ground in a drunken doze. A warm night breeze teased at Shadowheart's bangs from her vantage point on the rocks near the river's edge. No one else had settled down nearby, possibly due to Withers's presence earlier that evening.

Now, however, Withers had disappeared to...wherever it was that Withers disappeared to at night. She took another deep pull from one of the bottles of red the tieflings had provided and squinted at the treeline on the other side of camp. If she hadn't been staring with such single-minded focus, she never would have noticed a pale silhouette disappearing quietly into the forest.

Alone, she thought with smug satisfaction and started to turn back to the bottle in her hand when another flash of motion caught her eye in time to see a second figure headed in the same direction as the first. "Damn it," she muttered in disgust and resolutely downed the remainder of the wine in one go. Luckily, the tieflings' gratitude had come with a generous number of wine bottles.

With her attention focused on struggling with the cork on her... third?...bottle of wine, Shadowheart barely managed to suppress her reaction when yellowish-green, calloused hands slid roughly over hers and easily popped the cork.

"Chk, I think you've had enough to drink if you're having this much trouble opening one bottle." Lae'zel boosted herself onto the rock next to Shadowheart with admirable ease and settled beside her.

“Oh, let me drown my sorrows in peace,” Shadowheart frowned and started to lift the bottle towards her lips then paused. “Or I could share,” she found herself offering. “They say misery loves company.”

Lae’zel accepted the bottle solemnly and took a long swallow. “What are these sorrows and why do they require drowning in mediocre alcohol?” she eyed Shadowheart with mild curiosity.

She gives so little away, Shadowheart thought enviously. She reached for the bottle and took a swig before answering. “Our fearless leader went stumbling into the woods, *chasing*,” she sneered the word, “after the vampire.”

“I saw that as well,” Lae’zel said calmly. “It seems the druid has made their choice. I, too, foolishly wanted them to choose differently. But that is *their* loss.” Lae’zel held out her hand for the wine bottle and drank deeply before setting it down on the side furthest from Shadowheart, who scowled in response. Lae’zel’s lips twitched. *Was that almost a smile?* the cleric wondered and then scowled harder.

She started to reach around the githyanki warrior but Lae’zel stopped her short with a hand on her arm. Shadowheart froze. The last time they’d been this close, she’d been crouched over Lae’zel’s quiescent form and holding a knife to her throat.

Shadowheart felt a flash of heat in her belly at the memory. She swallowed, realizing they’d both been staring while she was lost in thought. “Wh—what?” she stammered, mentally kicking herself over the lapse in control.

“There’s no need for this night to be a complete waste.” Lae’zel glanced toward the river. “I have long been curious about the practice called ‘swimming.’ I was taught the movement, of course, but we do not have rivers such as this at Crèche K’liir.”

“I—” She followed Lae’zel’s gaze to the moon-dappled water. “I don’t know how to swim,” she admitted quietly.

“K’chakhi! You live on a plane comprised mostly of water, but you don’t know how to swim?” Lae’zel sounded incredulous.

“The opportunity never presented itself.” Shadowheart heard the defensiveness in her voice and silently cursed. She stood up, swaying slightly. “But I needn’t ruin your fun. If you’ll excuse me—”

“Wait.” For the third time that evening, rough fingers grazed her skin as Lae’zel grabbed at Shadowheart’s wrist. Her thumb drew a circle over Shadowheart’s pulse. The cleric shivered in the warm night air.

“We could give them reason to regret their choice.” Lae’zel nodded toward the woods. “Besides, you have proven yourself to be more than adequate in battle.”

“Gee, thanks,” Shadowheart scoffed.

Lae’zel continued as though she hadn’t been interrupted. “You’ve even caught me at a disadvantage, although your method was less than honorable. But even so, I can think of no one else who has done so and survived.” Ochre eyes met green as silence filled the air. Lae’zel stood up slowly and leaned forward until their lips were a breath apart.

“Where?” Shadowheart breathed, her mouth suddenly dry. “The camp is so crowded, there’ll be no priv—”

“Follow me.” Lae’zel released her hold on Shadowheart’s wrist and gracefully leaped to the ground. She began to briskly walk past the campfire, heading toward a small ruined structure not far outside what had become the boundary of their camp.

“Lady of Sorrows, guide me.” Shadowheart hopped off the rock, then paused to catch her balance. She breathed in deeply as the sudden movement helped sober her up. She gave herself a shake and then started jogging after Lae’zel, her head rapidly clearing.

Do I want this? she asked herself, slowing down as she reached the log crossing over a small creek at the edge of camp. *Am I only doing this out of spite, or do I want this? Her?*

She caught a flash of movement in the doorway of the old ruin and felt a frisson of excitement. Yes, she decided and walked through the archway. Expecting to see a bare stone floor in a dark chamber, she stopped short as she took in the bedroll spread out in the center of the room and the scattering of candles providing a dim light. And this time when the githyanki suddenly appeared at her side, Shadowheart couldn’t hide her slight jump in surprise.

“What you said earlier about dishonorable methods,” she blurted suddenly. “It wasn’t my fault that you felt comfortable —” Shadowheart felt Lae’zel step behind her and sensed her breath on the back of her neck. “—enough to let your guard down,” she finished lamely.

A sharp inhale near her neck and then Lae’zel stepped in front of her. In the dim light, the warrior’s eyes were fathomless dark pools. “Enough talk. Tonight you are mine. Submit.” Lae’zel paused, clearly waiting for a response.

Shadowheart licked her lips. “Only for one night.”

Satisfaction gleamed brightly in Lae’zel’s eyes. “That will do for a start.” The gith woman leaned in, breathing in once again. “This scent you wear in a futile attempt to cover your own musk. What is it?”

Shadowheart wrinkled her nose. *Musk?* “It’s perfume.”

Lae’zel snorted. “I know it’s perfume, *istik*. What is it made of?”

Shadowheart fought a blush. “Night Orchids. They’re my favorite flower.”

“The scent suits you,” Lae’zel circled behind Shadowheart. “But enough talk. Undress.” Shadowheart slowly disrobed, but hearing Lae’zel do the same behind her made her quicken her pace just as it sent her pulse racing.

“Lie down,” Lae’zel breathed into her ear and Shadowheart didn’t try to hide her shiver. She crossed to the bedroll and laid down, staring up at the moon since the ruin’s ceiling had long crumbled away.

Candlelight flickered as Lae’zel knelt beside her. Her warrior’s body was wiry and lean, crisscrossed with scars. “Taste.” Lae’zel’s hand wrapped itself in Shadowheart’s braid, pulling her roughly upward into a harsh, unforgiving kiss.

As Lae’zel’s tongue snaked into her mouth, Shadowheart’s senses were flooded with a sharp, smoky bitterness that carried a hint of metal. A harder tug on her braid left her gasping as Lae’zel abruptly abandoned her lips to throw her leg across Shadowheart’s hips, straddling her. Shadowheart let her head fall back against the bedroll.

“My turn.” Lae’zel bent down and ran her tongue from tip to lobe against Shadowheart’s ear then began nipping her way down her neck, causing Shadowheart’s toes to curl. Lae’zel shifted her weight to lie atop Shadowheart so that, for a moment, they were pressed together belly to belly. Then she shifted lower, kissing across Shadowheart’s collarbone to the valley between her breasts, pausing to suck sharply on each nipple.

Shadowheart drew in a sharp breath, her belly tensing in anticipation, as Lae'zel settled herself between Shadowheart's legs. Shadowheart felt a warm breath of air against her clit. She gripped the bedroll with both hands and waited. And waited.

"Didn't you say something about tast— Oh!" Shadowheart cried as Lae'zel's tongue swiped firmly across her clit, then circled it lazily before pulling the bud into her mouth to suck. Deft fingers parted Shadowheart's slick folds and the cleric's cheeks burned at the evidence of her own arousal.

"You taste sweeter than I expected after the tartness of your tongue," Lae'zel murmured, sending vibrations through Shadowheart's clit with each word. Before she could open her mouth to respond, Lae'zel worked a finger inside her, hooking it slightly, then eased in a second. Shadowheart gasped up at the moon as Lae'zel resumed sucking on her clit in sync with the leisurely thrusting of her fingers.

Shadowheart's hands tugged and twisted at the bedroll beneath her. The pulsing heat between her legs was building and she began to raise her hips in time with Lae'zel's tongue, chasing the pleasure that was starting to build. "Dark Lady," she cried out when a third finger joined the first two. "Don't—ah—stop..."

She bared her teeth at the moon and bucked her hips harder, silently urging Lae'zel to increase her tempo, and smiled triumphantly when the warrior obliged. She panted in ragged breaths as her climax built and she could faintly hear Lae'zel murmuring in Gith against her clit between licks.

The warrior's hands felt like bands of steel around her thighs and Shadowheart knew with a bewildering certainty that she'd be bruised come morning. Good, she thought, surprising herself slightly.

Before she could chase that thought further, Lae'zel thrust her fingers to the third knuckle and *twisted*, finding a spot deep inside Shadowheart that caused her eyes to roll back and her legs to tremble as waves of pleasure rolled through her. She bit her lip hard enough to bleed and finally let go of the bedroll to grasp at Lae'zel's hair in a desperate attempt to hold her in place while Shadowheart tried to grind her clit against Lae'zel's mouth, eager for every moment of gratification.

As Shadowheart's vision slowly came back into focus, she felt Lae'zel settle on top of her once more and found herself staring into eyes black with desire. Before Shadowheart could say a word, she was tumbled over with Lae'zel stretched beneath her.

"Your turn. Taste," the githyanki woman commanded. Shadowheart obediently bent her head and slid her tongue between Lae'zel's parted lips. If this tasting became a regular occurrence, perhaps their little adventure wouldn't be so dreary after all...

~Many Tendays Later~

Shadowheart stood alone just beyond the edge of camp, gazing out into the gloom. The shadow curse pressed all around her, but she could only feel the Dark Lady's cool embrace. She rubbed her hands briskly against her arms—her lady Shar could never be described as "warm"—then startled as Lae'zel silently appeared beside her, holding a...flower?

Shadowheart furrowed her brow, torn between irritation, curiosity, and the now-familiar confused spool of arousal she felt in the warrior's presence. "Must you sneak up on me every *time* you wish to speak to me?" She folded her arms across her chest; irritation had won for the moment.

The gith regarded her impassively for a heartbeat, then thrust her clenched fist towards Shadowheart's chest. When the cleric didn't move, she snorted and shook her fist. "Chk. This is for you. You said it was your favorite."

Shadowheart sighed and glanced down reluctantly, only to let out a small gasp. "A Night Orchid? You remembered," she said faintly, reaching for the flower.

"Do not sound so astonished. There's never been anything wrong with my memory." Shadowheart tore her eyes away from the Night Orchid to see a slight smile playing around Lae'zel's lips. "The flower suits you, Shadowheart," she said quietly then turned away and headed back into camp.

Shadowheart's stomach flipped as she brought the Night Orchid to her nose, breathing in deeply as she watched Lae'zel walk away. *I should go to her tonight.* The thought had just crossed her mind when a searing pain bit into her right hand, nearly causing her to drop the flower. But she kept her grip and followed after Lae'zel, feeling more determined with each step. Yes, I should, she decided and ignored the wound.







Gods...



Bumps and prongs... hm.

Mmpf... Sensitive...

Roll

Let's check...



A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

WRITTEN BY PHIN

Tags: Wyll x Karlach, First Time Together, Explicit NSFW, Early Act 3

Karlach had spent her life dreaming of romance and love. Ten years in Avernus with no chance to share even a meaningful glance with anyone had left her beyond pent up and near enough ready to jump at the first thing she could - assuming her engine wasn't running too hot. That in and of itself was a form of slow and steady torture, unable to even reach out and hold hands with the oh so charming blade of frontiers. Karlach and Wyll had a slightly rocky start, if one could call a fervid intent for murder 'rocky'.

Karlach was content to let bygones be bygones however, and soon enough the two had grown closer and closer and damn near inseparable. She felt like she was going stir crazy. Like she was teetering on the edge of catching cabin fever being held captive in Wyll's kind eyes. There were many things she wished to do with him, do to him, but yearning alone was not enough to cool down the painfully hot engine whirring away beneath the skin of her chest.

When Dammon had worked his magic and found a way to temporarily cool her off a little, the very first thing she did was to scoop Wyll up in the biggest, tightest hug she could manage. He had very few complaints, even when he was left winded and gasping for air otherwise, for finally being able to find himself in Karlach's arms was something he'd never forget. Something he never wanted to forget. They both learnt very quickly that Karlach's love language was physical touch, her hand was never far from his, she'd drape her arm across his shoulders and waist, she curled her tail up and around his leg, and may the gods take pity on anyone or anything that tried to force them apart.

It was a quiet night when Wyll woke her up. The clouds had parted and the stars and moon had nosed their way out of the darkness to shine down onto the small clearing they called camp. With a finger pressed against her lips, Wyll took Karlach by the hand and led her down and out of the camp. A fond smile played across his lips as he watched her try her very best to tiptoe around without waking anyone up - she never had been the quietest bless her. He stayed quiet, and Karlach's imagination ran wild thinking of all the things Wyll could have thought up for her, but none of them compared to what waited for her in a small patch of trees on the moonlight kissed grass. A spot carved out just for the two of them, a blanket laid out carefully on the ground and scattered with rose petals, and a bottle of wine with two glasses laying oh so alluringly amidst it all. Karlach wanted to cry, happy tears, and she felt her should-be heart swell up in her chest as Wyll looked up at her, a sheepish smile tugging at his mouth.

"I remember you mentioned never having been on a date before," he said, eyes focusing anywhere other than the woman before him, "I was hoping you'd give me the honour to be the first." He scratched the back of his neck, and Karlach had to take a long, deep breath to stop herself from saying a million things at once.

"Are you kidding me? Wyll, this is... Gods, this is perfect!" she said a little too loudly, "Of course I'll go on a date with you!" she added on, in that little whisper shouty voice that Wyll found far too endearing. He smiled, took her hand and led her to the blanket, sitting down and cracking open the bottle to pour into the two glasses.

"The best I could find out here," he said, gently passing one of the glasses to Karlach, "once we reach the city I'll treat you to the best bottle in the Elfsong Tavern," he smiled. She beamed back at him, and Wyll's heart caught in his chest.

"A toast," he proposed, "to us, and to many more nights spent together," and he gently clinked their glasses together before taking a sip. It was dry and bitter, but neither of them seemed to mind, more than happy to take in the sweeter sights of each other. The moonlight bounced off of Karlach's skin, giving her an almost ethereal glow and leaving Wyll speechless. He hadn't meant to stare, but it was impossible not to when she seemed so carefree.

Happy. Safe. There were no battles to be fought, and they didn't have to be looking over their shoulders every two seconds either. Wyll was positively enamoured by Karlach and the way she smiled, the way she moved her hair off her shoulder, the way she did... Anything. He hadn't realised he was staring until she pointed it out.

"You alright, soldier?" she asked, "You seem a little distracted. I haven't got something in my teeth do I?"

"You just look so beautiful in the moonlight," he said, shyly, "it's impossible to take my eyes off of you,"

Karlach froze now, and she looked up at Wyll with a mouthful of wine. A quick swallow and her engine was buzzing away under her skin and a pulsing wave of heat came rolling off of her. She had never looked more beautiful in all the time Wyll had known her.

Perhaps that was what led them here, with Wyll diligently laid out on his stomach with his head buried between her thighs. He ate her out like a man starved, and each lap of his tongue over her clit had Karlach gasping for air. Her hand came to rest on the back of his head, gently encouraging him as her hips rolled against his face. She tasted like the finest ambrosia, and each taste of her he got had him desperate for more. He revelled in the way his name sounded from her lips, breathy and whiny, and took great pleasure in teasing her.

He ran his tongue in small circles, not quite tending to the ball of nerves Karlach all but needed him to caress once again, and her small grunts of frustration ran straight to his groin. His pants were tight now, and he snaked a hand down his front to grip his cock through the fabric, gently rutting into it to quell the ache. He carefully traced a finger around her opening, and met no resistance when he slipped it in. Karlach immediately started canting her hips down, bumping against the base of his knuckle as he doubled down his efforts to please her, slipping another finger in as he went. Karlach's cunt was warm, tight and wet, and even just touching her like this was enough to have him near spending in his pants. One of Karlach's hands came down to grip around Wyll's horn, and what else was he to do except lie there and take it? From his position between her thighs, he had a full view of how Karlach had curled her other hand around her breast, twisting and tugging on her nipple as she tilted her head back in ecstasy. It would have been all too easy for her to cum like this, her cunt pressed into Wyll's diligent mouth, but she had been dreaming of that cock for far too long.

She gently pried Wyll's face away from her, forcing back a groan as he tried to make his way back to her once again. As he sat up, Karlach's eyes fell upon his cock. It was hard, the tip of it weeping precum, and she wasted no time in leaning down to take the head of it in her mouth. Like this, Wyll's cock felt thicker, felt bigger, felt harder. Her tongue flitted over his slit, and the watery, salty taste of his precum was nothing if not the most potent aphrodisiac. She wished to be able to take him all the way to the hilt, but it had been far too long since her last sexual encounter, so she resigned herself to using her hands. They curled around his length, and the heat pulsing off of them made Wyll's hips stutter. His hand came down to rest atop her head, and he didn't pull her hair at all, no, instead he ran his hands through her hair. Even now he was still being nothing but gentle, nothing but loving.

Karlach blinked up at him and the sight of Wyll's face reddened and flushed with his eyes half open and his teeth pulling on his bottom lip filled her with not only the resolve to continue sucking him off harder, but something else. Something warm and fuzzy, in a different way to her engine. She didn't feel painfully hot, she didn't feel as though she were about to combust. She felt all the flitting butterflies of love pooling in her stomach and beating their rapid wings against her skin.

"Karlach, wait-" Wyll groaned out, "I don't want to finish, not like this," he had said, slowly sliding her off of his length. It didn't take much time at all for Karlach to crawl her way on top of him, staring down at him with a smile so wide it was impossible to look away from. Her hand trailed down Wyll's chest, and lined his cock with her entrance. Slowly, gently, she pressed him inside of her with a full body shudder and a long and low moan. Wyll wasn't faring much better, head tilting back as he groaned out, forcing his hips to stay still so as not to hurt Karlach.

They stayed like this for a while, Karlach adjusting to the stretch, and Wyll to the warmth. When she moved, it was slowly, tenderly. Her head hung down in the space between Wyll's neck and shoulder, and his hands came up to hold her close to him. He thrust himself up into her, and with each moan, each gasp, each sound that left her, he held her infinitely tighter. When they moved faster, it was by Karlach's lead. She was leant over Wyll's chest and rocking her hips back onto his faster, his hand had come to rest against her ass, rocking her up and back down onto him. Despite their attempts to stay quiet, Karlach had never been known for her subtlety, and for fear of anyone overhearing them, Wyll brought her head down to his, capturing her lips in a kiss and swallowing down each of her moans. Her tail coiled around his leg, squeezing onto him as she panted into his mouth. With each thrust up into her tight, wet heat, Wyll was brought dangerously close to his edge.

“Fuck-” he stuttered out, “Karlach, I’m going to-”

“Inside,” she said, “please,”

With her permission, Wyll tightened his arms around her, hips forcing themselves upwards faster now as he neared his climax. Her name left his lips repeatedly, as if he were praying to her, and he may as well have been, Wyll worshipped the ground Karlach walked on. With one final groan, he held Karlach down against him and came. He saw white, hips twitching against her as he emptied himself. Karlach slowly ground herself against him, clenching so as to draw everything she could from him.

Wyll, however spent he may be, was not content to leave it here though, and after a few moments to catch his breath he guided Karlach’s hips to his face. She looked down at him with love in her eyes and that infectious smile as she lowered her hips onto his face. It didn’t take long for her to cum like this, with Wyll’s tongue working against her so feverishly. When she came, it was with his name falling from her lips and her hands around his horns.

They stayed there for the rest of the night, cuddled into one another and silently wishing tomorrow didn’t have to come and force them away from the slice of heaven they’d found themselves in.





AT THE READY

WRITTEN BY PURSUITS ETERNAL

Tags: Ascended Astarion x Female Tav, NSFW, Knife Play, Blood Kink, Blood Play, Vaginal Sex, Post Game

There was little of the Rogue he had been of late. Now he was Lord Astarion. All the arousals and appetite of man. Parts of him were vastly different.

Not in his humor or temperament. No.... In his efforts. His strength. His dexterity. Too many days presiding over Baldur's Gate from the shadows, from that chair he didn't call a throne.

Not openly at least.

Tav scanned him over, where he lounged in his chaise in the middle of the garden, bathed in the light of the sun. His silk shirt was parted, the deep cut of the clothing almost hanging off one side. He looked so feline... not predacious. But like an actual cat. Smiling, curled and sprawled in lazy, selfish fashion.

"Oh, my love," Tav taunted as she approached, a familiar object in her hand.... Even if he had grown to forget about it. She twirled the engraved hilt of Rhapsody in her palm, spinning it in the way that he'd had taught her years ago on the road to Baldur's Gate.

Sprawled as he was on the long wooden lounge, it was too easy. She crept up behind him, leaning over his warm, sunbathed body to stab the dagger point in the small gap between his thighs.

A bit close for comfort, he yelped and shot her an irritated glance upside from the headrest. "Little love..." he growled in warning. "Just what do you think you're doing?"

He took the bait, and Tav grinned as she watched him pull the dagger and its strange entwined blades from the wood. She held her ground, even as he moved the metal to kiss the side of her neck.

Not unlike how they first met.

“My Consort. Do you have a plan, or is this all merely impromptu to get my attention and ruin a perfectly good nap?”

Tav gave a breathy laugh, “My love, I am always the one with the plan, if you recall... more than my Lord Point-At-The-Back-And-I’ll-Stab.” She leaned into the blade, letting it nick her flesh. A thin stream of her crimson snuck down from her pulse point.

Astarion’s nostrils flared at the scent of her sweet blood, his pink tongue instantly wetting his lips. “Darling, you play with fire so prettily, and you’re about to get burned.”

“I don’t think I will,” she taunted back, taking a finger to gather blood and suck it, savoring the taste of herself. “I’m confident that you’ve let your skills go soft with all your politicking and manipulating and string-pulling from the shadows.”

She leaned in, taking her still bloody finger to trace it over his rakish smirk, his warm breath so close, she could taste it on her tongue.

“All your feasting and decadence has stolen your edge. Want me to sharpen you back up?” She hissed, letting her lips move over his.

Before Astarion could reply, she pulled her own blade from her skirts, prodding its tip just beneath his ribs. “If you feel like playing, that is, my love...”

Astarion launched from the lounge chair, his shadow covering Tav as he loomed over her, that fanged grin shoved in her conceitedly leering face.

“Oh, you more than anyone in Faerûn, in all of Toril, should know just how much I love to play,” he purred, hand fisting into the back of her head, strands of hair entangled in the same hand he gripped Rhapsody. “And, what is more, my treasure, I know *you*... I know your body, know your mind.”

Tav smirked, closing the distance between their lips as she pulled him in for a quick kiss of fangs and lips. Then she fired her reply, “And I know yours, my love, I adore it, adore you. I’m devoted enough to whet you and your... appetite for fighting.”

Astarion pulled away, licking his lips to savor the brief taste of her. “Mmmm, the Danse Macabre.... Don’t think I won’t go for the throat.” He gave a breathy chuckle, spinning Rhapsody in his palm, twirling it expertly as he withdrew a step to square off. “First blood wins?” he crooned, haughty and proud with one final toss and catch of the blade in his dexterous and roguish fingers.

Tav took a few steps back into the open grassy space of the garden. Her keen eyes darted around, every detail here perhaps mundane, but this was a battlefield like their old adventures. And by the hells if he wasn’t going to be the one pinned to the ground, a knife at his throat this time, she laughed to herself at the fond memory.

The moment she first fell in love.

Now, holding blades, his roguish smirk on his full and arrogant lips, she felt that echo of the past. And it made her take the first plunge.

Quick feet, quick stab... quicker smirking feint in reply, Astarion barely reacted as he sidestepped her attack. "Perhaps you should rethink..." he rounded on her, arm around her waist, "...which one of us..." he spun her around a few times, "...has grown soft?"

Tav hummed, delighted at the cool kiss of steel on her neck. "A repeat performance? Knife to my neck?" she tutted her tongue. "How original," came her petulant taunt. An elbow into his ribs, a kick at his knee and she dipped out of his hold.

She could feel the air sing above her head, a wild swipe of his dagger barely missing her...

Probably on purpose. She laughed, undead heart still pounding in her ribcage. Rounding once more, she went on the attack, a series of quick thrusts, and she had pushed him back towards that sunning spot he favored. His calves braced against the wood siding, and she caught his wrists, reaching them above their heads in her grip, blades crossed and unmoving.

Tav, startled by his warm, damp breath on her face, felt her belly drop to her knees, lost in those crimson depths of his eyes.

"Astar—" she whispered, only to be silenced by his kiss. All consuming, mind-muddling, but not so much that she didn't perceive her advantage.

Just a tipping of their bodies, and Astarion fell to his back. The wood creaked and groaned, the velvet cushion adding little comfort, even as she rose to straddle his hips. Both blades in hand, she crossed them over his pale neck, her mouth grinning and feral. "Shhh, not a sound," she purred, almost laughing, "not unless you wish to risk that darling... neck... of yours."

She tossed the daggers both aside, metal whizzing through the air, before she gripped his hair and returned his kiss with another. Equally demanding. Equally violent.

Her fangs sank into his lip, pulling them roughly as blood oozed from the gaping wounds. The hint of his pained hiss, the pleasure of having him captive, it sent bolts of desire right down her spine, pooling hot in her undead body for her sire, her true love. She bucked her hips over the fabric of his trousers, grinning like a fool to feel that familiar pressure of his waist beneath hers.

That age-old thrill, feeling him harden between her thighs, she never tired of it. Not when it made her mouth water and her core flood with heat like this.

“Oh, my dear,” Tav purred, mimicking the dulcet tones of her lover, “think you can get out of this so easily? Hmmm, I’d like to see you try...” She grinded on his lap, thumb dragging into the blood she drew from his lips. “First blood... is mine...” she gloated, bringing her crimson thumb to suck as she smirked.

“You’re rather cocky when you think you’ve won, you know that, my treasure?” he half-groaned, half-whined as he tried to pull himself out from her hold.

But her grip was too firm.

“Ah ah,” Tav smirked down at him, her hand freeing his cock and stroking it, fingers still slick with her spit and his blood. “None of that, you’re going to be wonderfully obedient, aren’t you, my lord? If you want to share my prize you need to hold very... very... still...”

She lifted her skirts, pushing aside her underthings, and teasing him through her abundant slick.

His crimson eyes gazed up at her, half-lidded and almost glowing with pride, with his unquenched desire. He stilled instantly under her, his length pulsing and twitching as she stroked him slowly. Those plush lips parted, baring his fangs the moment her wet tightness swallowed him between her thighs, a whimper, a growl singing from his pale throat.

“You’re such a tease, pet...”

“Mmm,” she leaned down, lips on his still covered in the winning blood she drew, “and you’re such a sweet, generous thing.” She leaned forward, starting to ride him with fervor now, her own fanged mouth covering his, sliding her tongue in to tangle with his own. “Your own consolation prize, the taste of me... after I’ve tasted you...”

“My love,” his voice was thick and rasping in his throat, his kiss all fangs and tongue deep down her throat. Hands gripped at her hips, holding her, guiding her as he started to match her bounces with his own perfect rolls of his hips.

A thrust to her cervix with each slide down, wet and slapping and unbridled. A hint of bloodlust between them, her copper-tasting kisses turned to pants, her whispered words of devotion devolving into primal grunts of feral need.

Tav lifted her head, locking her stare with his wide, crimson eyes, scanning to his blood red lips. She watched him so close to his climax, her mouth hanging slack, as sighs tumbled like prayers of devotion from her.

“My love... my lord... Astarion...”

His thrusts grew rough and sloppy, his hands grasped open and closed on her hips harder and harder.

“I will never tire... of the sight of me buried in you, the feeling of your cunt wrapped around me, nor the way your eyes grow dark when you have a blade pressed to my throat...” he huffed, voice thick with his lust and breathy with effort. “It’s what I first craved about you... that day on the beach... argh!” his voice broke into a whimper, his eyes screwed shut, lips pulled back in a fanged snarl.

The light shining on his glistening teeth, it sent her over the edge. Fire in her belly burst, blood thrumming in her ears and between her thighs as she came, clenching as he snapped his hips up into her depths.

“Hells... Tav!” He whimpered, tongue out to taste the blood she drew in their duel, crimson eyes shut tight as he filled her, a snarling smile on his lips. Slowly, one by one, his eyes opened to see her smiling proudly down, devotion and love in her own red eyes... eyes remade like his.

“Well... my love?” she lowered her mouth to grant him a slow and languid caress, lip to lip and fang to fang. “I deem you still fit for action, not quite as... soft... as I thought you might be.” She giggled, his still erect cock dragging inside her as she rolled her hips once more.

“Well, you know me,” he gave a breathy giggle, hands reaching up to cradle her soft, cold skin of her cheeks, “at the ready for you forever... until the world falls down.”







ALL HESITATION GONE

WRITTEN BY ONE

Tags: Wyll x Karlach, Post-Game, Minor In Avernus Spoilers, Minor Wyll's Quest Spoilers, Blade of Avernus Wyll, Dirty Talk, Oral Sex, Outdoor Sex

The dock and all their friends vanished, revealing the burning expanse of Avernus and all too familiar heat. Karlach inhaled slowly as she looked over the rugged wasteland. For the first time in months, her engine felt manageable. She'd live. She was alive. The only cost was her home. Cursed to a life in the flame forever, even if she wasn't alone.

Wyll took her by the arm and whirled her around. Her brows arched, and her jaw dropped to voice surprise as Wyll's hand cupped along her jaw. His eyes sparkled in the surrounding flames, and from his flitting gaze poured raw fear, as he searched for any sign of the same agony Karlach had been mere moments before.

"Wyll—"

"You almost died," he whispered. "We—I almost lost you, Karlach."

She swallowed. In the distance, they could hear the warning cries of fiends honing in like moths to a flame.

"Almost think I should have. I don't know if I can do this again."

"You can. I'm with you."

Wyll yanked her into a kiss hotter than the hells. Karlach gripped Wyll's waist as he curled his arms around her neck and pulled her against him. Her head tilted, and their tongues tangled as they each gasped. The crying imps were all that pulled Karlach back, but she panted with the new warmth rushing through her. Nothing in Avernus could compare.

“They’ll find us,” she said. “We have to be ready.”

“They can wait for the rest of time, for all I care.”

Karlach’s eyes widened, but again, she had no time to protest before Wyll grabbed her by the hand and dragged her towards nearby rocky crags. This was a side of Wyll she’d never seen before; Karlach found she couldn’t take her eyes away as he led onward. He traversed the terrain as though he’d known it all his life, dodging sharp rocks and hot points in the ground, until they came out the other side. He glanced left, then right, then smiled as he settled on a shallow cave embedded into the side of a cliff.

“Come,” he said, and Karlach decided she would have followed him anywhere with how eagerly he pulled at her. The Blade of Avernus met everything with passion, but never as much as when he looked at her.

Wyll dragged Karlach to the very end of the cave, where they wouldn’t be safe, but out of immediate sight. Wyll smiled as he took Karlach’s hands, and she leaned in closer. Their gazes flitted back and forth as they drank each other in.

“I know this isn’t what you wanted,” Wyll whispered, “but I’ve never been a selfish man before. Just once, I want to think of myself, and means I will never let you give up. Maybe it means keeping you for myself.”

Karlach sucked in a deep breath and held it.

“This isn’t how I’d hoped things would go, but...”

Wyll released Karlach’s hand to reveal a small acorn from his hip pouch. Karlach bit her bottom lip. Her eyes ached as Wyll dropped to one knee.

"I would have taken you to the Wilden Oak." Wyll laughed. "Tell you that my mother always said the Wilden Oak's acorns held a touch of wishing magic, and if that be so, then let my greatest wish come true today, that you, Karlach Cliffgate, would marry me."

Karlach let out a breathless laugh and rolled her eyes. "With no ring?"

Wyll beamed. "Didn't have time, I'm afraid. Part of me feared we wouldn't survive the battle, but the part of me that hoped we would..." He eyed the acorn.

"Get up here, you big lug." Karlach yanked Wyll to his feet and grasped his hand with the acorn. She pressed it against her burning chest and laughed again. "Of course, I'll marry you. Proper or not. I think we got plenty through that courting business to call it."

Wyll laughed. Karlach took the acorn and slipped it into her pocket before they moved. The distance was gone in an instant. Their lips pressed together.

Wyll wrapped his arms around Karlach's middle as she draped hers over his shoulders. Titling her head, she deepened the kiss with a searing swipe of her tongue, and Wyll reciprocated quickly. Slowly, languidly, until Karlach cupped his head, and he gripped her waist. Then her hip.

She moaned softly and pushed into him, only to feel his cock twitching in response. As Wyll licked into her mouth, Karlach chuckled and dropped a hand to his middle. Then his hip, to pull him flush against her. He rumbled in response and dug his nails into her skin.

"Kar—" another kiss, another moan. "Karlach, hold on—"

“What?” She was breathless as they pulled apart. “Trying to stay all noble on me? We just—”

“Not anymore. Zariel herself could not stop me from having you.”

Karlach flushed. Wyll pulled away his cape and draped it on the rocky ground.

“It’s not much, but...”

“Well, gods. What happened to the prim and proper Wyll who took me out on dates? Have I finally provoked the blade?”

Karlach giggled. Wyll beamed as he pulled her down with him. His back hit the rocks first, and Karlach slotted their hips together as their lips met again. Deeper, this time, as they each clawed at the others clothing.

Armor clanked to the ground, weapons clattered, and threadbare fabric ripped in their haste. Once they were down to their smalls, Wyll flipped their positions and straddled Karlach’s thighs.

“I love you,” he said.

Karlach cupped his cheeks with a soft, longing smile, and said, “I love you, too.”

Their teeth knocked as they kissed and kissed and kissed. Wyll braced himself around Karlach’s head, and she clung to his middle as his fevered pace moved along her lips, then to her jaw.

“I want you,” he said in a rasped whisper, then kissed Karlach’s neck. “Forever.”

Karlach hummed as his teeth scraped at her skin. She lulled her head to the side and spread her legs, allowing Wyll to move between them and rut against her hips. His cock throbbed against his smalls, not fully hard but so close, she could already imagine what it would feel like.

“Who woulda thought you’d be the devil caught.” Karlach laughed weakly.

Wyll let out a breathless sound as he knocked against her collarbone. They both laughed before Wyll kissed her again. Through this one, he moved to her makeshift bra and slipped his hands beneath. Karlach arched and moaned as he reached her nipples. Her bra popped up, allowing Wyll the space to cup her tits before moving to trace the ridges along her sides.

Karlach let out a breathy gasp as Wyll followed his own touch, leaving open mouth kisses along her collarbone, then down over her chest. He mouthed at her left tit, then encircled her nipple with his tongue. She groaned and moved her hands to his shoulders, pushing impatiently for him to hurry. They were hidden, but not for long.

Still, Wyll persisted, lavishing attention over Karlach’s nipple until she shivered. All the while, his hands ghosted over her skin, working lower and lower until Wyll had no choice but to move. He kissed down Karlach’s heaving stomach, then moved to her hips where all that remained was her underwear. She spread her legs wider and bent her left knee, allowing Wyll to see the burning wet spot already forming.

“You’re such a romantic,” she huffed out, incredulous.

Wyll smiled against the jut of her hip bone before kissing. “If only you knew, Karlach.”

Without the looming threat of attack, Wyll would have spent the entire evening just as they were, but he sat back on his calves and hooked his fingers into her panties. She raised her hips to help them slip down and groaned as a string of slick snapped back against her. Wyll breathed hard at the sight but focused on pulling her panties down. He kissed along her leg, her knee, then set the offending article aside.

Wyll hurried out of his own smalls while Karlach did away with her bra. She laid back, got comfortable, and welcomed Wyll against her with a searing kiss.

Desperation finally caught them. Wyll shoved his knees between Karlach's thighs, hiking and spreading them wider. His cock pressed between her swollen lips, and Karlach groaned into their kiss.

She bucked her hips as she dropped back and hit her head on the rock. Wyll buried against her neck with a sudden gasp as her warmth spread through him. He was fully hard and dripping, rutting uselessly with her as she reached between them.

"Fuck," she gasped. "Wyll."

"Karlach," whispered like a prayer into her neck as she took hold of his cock.

She moved him to the right angle, and he did the rest, rutting forward and dragging his cock head through her slick folds. With a soft moan, she grabbed onto his hip for purchase while her other arm folded around his shoulders. His lips moved against her neck. His teeth. His horns.

"Wish we had time." Wyll grunted and pushed himself against her. His cock throbbed, and he could feel the slick leaking from Karlach's hole. "The things I'd do to you?"

“Yeah?” Karlach already felt dazed, eyes closed and a smile on her lips. “Tell me.”

When Wyll finally pushed inside, Karlach threw back her head and cried out. His cock was long and curved, the perfect size to fill her and press against a burning spot inside of her as he buried himself. Their hips were flush, and she trembled as she wrapped one leg around his hips. His name fell off her tongue in gasp after gasp as he started to move.

“Taste you,” he rasped.

Karlach rocked with each frenzied thrust, groaning softly as Wyll moved along her jaw, to her ear to dig his teeth into her lobe.

“Spend—hours between your thighs. Open you on my fingers. My tongue.”

“Fuck. Yes,” she groaned back. “H-harder, Wyll. I won’t break. You—”

He responded immediately with a thrust hard enough to jolt them on the rocks. Karlach scrambled for him, gasping as his cock throbbed inside of her. His ridges tugged at her insides, and the curve battered against that spot inside her. Her toes curled, and her hips bucked uselessly against him.

“Wyll,” she cried. “Wyll—Wyll.”

“Karlach—dear gods, you are hot. You are—” he thrust again and faltered, groaning as her body seized around his. It was all he could do to reach between them, to press his fingers between her thighs and relish how she moaned for him. “—everything. Everything, Karlach, I—I love you.”

All Karlach could do was nod as her thighs trembled uncontrollably. She squeezed them around Wyll's body. Her voice pitched with ragged, gasping breaths, and her back arched as Wyll fucked into her. Ceaselessly, he worked around her clit, rubbing and squeezing until she could hold back no longer. Another cry left her throat, sharper this time as Wyll kept moving, grinding against her as her body spasmed around him and more slick dripped around his cock.

"Fuck—" she gasped. "Fuck. Fuck, Wyll. Keep going. Don't stop, I—I love you, too—"

Wyll cried out as he shuddered against her. He planted his palms around Karlach's head and breathed hard enough to heave his entire body. She kept her arm around his shoulders. Their eyes locked. She rubbed circles at his side as his hips jerked with his orgasm, moving on their own until the sharp white wave washed over him and let him collapse. Karlach wrapped him in a tight embrace and grinned when he kissed her chest.

"I know this isn't what you wanted," he repeated, still panting, "but I'll make sure you don't regret this. I won't leave you down here alone, Karlach. I'm with you."

"I know, silly." Her grip tightened, and she pressed a kiss to his head. "What you don't know is this is exactly what I wanted."

Wyll's chest swelled. The lingering cries in the distance brought them back to the present, but neither regretted whatever was left unsaid as they untangled and reached for their clothes. Their eyes met, and in each other's gazes they found they had forever to say anything they needed.







PATCHWORK

WRITTEN BY AEVALLARE

Tags: Shadowheart/Nocturne Explicit Post-game Spoilers, Daughter of Darkness Quest Spoilers Biting, Trans Woman, F/F, Smut, Religious Trauma, Vaginal Sex, Rough Sex

When Shadowheart renounced Shar, she vowed never to give up anything she didn't want to again. It was a naive hope. Loss is inevitable, and without it, she wouldn't be who she is. But she keeps what she can, now. She nurtures plants that are more trouble than they're worth and patches up clothes that she might be better off throwing away, and when she thinks of the cloister, it barely hurts at all.

What hurts isn't the cloister. It isn't the time she wasted there.

It's the memory of Nocturne.

She's the only thing that Shadowheart misses from that life. They were each other's protectors for years; when the others called Nocturne a name she no longer claimed, it was Shadowheart who held her. And when Shadowheart's skin was red with welts from whips, Nocturne helped her forget.

Shadowheart knows now that it was love when they chose one another's embrace over darkness', but neither she nor Nocturne had the bravery to name it.

It was easier to lose themselves in the sweat of one another, the rhythmic rocking of Nocturne's hips meeting hers, the ecstasy of being full with Nocturne's cock—

When Shadowheart renounced Shar, recognizing the safety she found in Nocturne's arms as love was simple.

Telling her is harder.

Even after everything, Shadowheart would never ask Nocturne to stop being Sharran. It's a choice she can only make for herself. What she can do is send a letter. What she can do is tell Nocturne how much she misses her.

She can ask an old friend to visit her now that she's finally settled into this cottage off the beaten path.

It takes an eternity for Nocturne's answer to arrive, and there's little that makes Shadowheart nervous, but her fingers tremble as she unfolds the paper.

I'll see you soon.

Shadowheart clutches the letter to her chest.

"So, what do I call you now? Jenevelle?"

Shadowheart wraps her arms around herself. "Shadowheart is fine. I was always Shadowheart with you. Jenevelle is someone I was before."

Nocturne looks like she always did, though her cheeks are a little fuller than they used to be and her hair is longer. Shadowheart's, on the other hand—

"Your hair—" Nocturne threads her fingers through Shadowheart's bangs before pulling away as if she isn't sure that the intimacy is welcome, but Shadowheart leans into the touch.

"It's different. I know." Shadowheart's eyes take Nocturne in; she hasn't changed a bit since they last saw one another in the cloister. She licks her lips. "Do you like it?"

When Nocturne laughs, one of her fangs peeks out from between her lips. “You know I’d think you were beautiful no matter what you did to your hair.”

With little more than a sentence and the light touch of her fingers in Shadowheart’s hair, Nocturne stokes the coals of desire in Shadowheart’s abdomen in that way that only she can.

Shadowheart bites her lip. She won’t mention Shar if Nocturne doesn’t, but already, she never wants Nocturne to leave. She leans into the touch, but Nocturne’s hand retreats anyway.

Her gaze drifts lazily to take in their surroundings. “I never pictured you for the cottage kind of life.”

“You never pictured me in an apron, either,” Shadowheart snorts, gesturing at herself.

Nocturne’s fangs are sharp. They’ve pierced Shadowheart’s shoulder, her breast, her hip, and they’ve dragged along her clit. Each memory flashes through Shadowheart’s mind when Nocturne grins. “I wasn’t usually picturing you with clothing at all.”

It could be like this forever.

Shadowheart might say that if she wasn’t knelt between Nocturne’s legs with her mouth full of cock, both of them fully naked. Nocturne lies back among cushions on Shadowheart’s bed; “My horns will ruin your bedding—” she’d started, and Shadowheart had pushed her backward, tugging her leggings down over her hips until her cock sprang free.

Infernal ridges decorate Nocturne's member. They drag along Shadowheart's tongue, and the heat in her core throbs. "Shit," Nocturne mumbles, her cock pressing against the back of Shadowheart's throat. "You always were good at that."

Shadowheart's hips rut against the mattress, seeking any kind of pressure, but what she finds is lacking. As good as Nocturne's cock feels pushing down her throat, it will feel even better once she's riding it.

The sloppy wet sounds that fill the room are punctuated by birdsong outside. The windows are open; if Shadowheart had neighbors, they'd hear every desperate, needy whimper that her ministrations tug from Nocturne's lips.

Nocturne keens, and Shadowheart's body reacts, her cunt slick. She parts her lips, letting her tongue drag up the underside of Nocturne's cock. A rope of saliva and pre-cum connects them as Shadowheart pulls away enough to speak. "As tempting it is to let you come down my throat—" Nocturne's hips buck, seeking Shadowheart's mouth again, but she smirks, pulling away. "—I'd prefer if it was my cunt full of your cum."

It's always been like this for them; when Shadowheart vied for what little control she could wrap her fists around in the cloister, Nocturne gave it.

"I missed this."

When Nocturne speaks, though, Shadowheart's reminded of how different *this* is. Nocturne will return to the cloister. Shadowheart will never return to that life again.

If she was braver, she'd vocalize it. She'd tell Nocturne that she doesn't have to miss her ever again and that this bed is big enough for two every night.

“Me, too,” she says, and she pours her courage into a kiss instead.

Nocturne makes a sound of surprise when Shadowheart closes the distance between their mouths, but the feeling of Shadowheart’s folds rubbing along her cock silences any objection she might have made.

Sex was one of the few pleasures the cloister allowed, but affection was something else entirely. Kisses between acolytes were forbidden, stolen things, and that, at least, was a line that Shadowheart and Nocturne never crossed, no matter how they might have ached for it. Nocturne hesitates long enough that Shadowheart almost thinks it was a mistake.

And then she returns the kiss tenfold.

Nocturne’s fangs tear at Shadowheart’s lips with undisguised desperation; if their mouths are busy this way, their bodies can speak for themselves. Shadowheart slips onto her cock with no resistance, and it’s only then that they break apart, Shadowheart’s head tilting back toward the ceiling with a wordless moan.

“First time for everything, I suppose.” Nocturne might sound nervous if not for the layers of lust and desire coloring her voice. Shadowheart’s hips rise and fall, the fullness and friction divine, and Nocturne’s teeth latch onto her breast without restraint.

The pain and pleasure intermingling send Shadowheart’s body writhing. The ridges of her tongue along Shadowheart’s nipple are only amplified by the ribs of her cock rubbing against her.

“I almost forgot how good you feel.”

Shadowheart could bounce on her cock like this forever, her hand on Nocturne's chest and Nocturne's hand pressing against her lower abdomen, teasing every place but her clit. Her other hand cups Shadowheart's ass, pressure crescendoing.

"If you almost forgot," Nocturne says, "then I'll make sure that this time is unforgettable."

Nocturne pulls Shadowheart downward, pinning their chests together. "Oh—" Shadowheart manages, but the thought doesn't last. Nocturne's cock slams up into her, the slap of skin on skin erasing any meaningful words that she might string together.

Each time her cock thrusts in and out of Shadowheart's dripping cunt, ridges drag along her clit, and Nocturne's tongue slides along the shell of Shadowheart's ear. "You wouldn't let me take you back to the cloister and fuck you until you wouldn't even *need* your memory wiped, would you?"

It's almost tempting. "You could stay here and do the same."

But negotiating is difficult when the only things on Shadowheart's mind are the next stroke of Nocturne's cock against her walls and the claws digging into her ass. Wetness trickles between her legs; she's not sure if it's arousal or if Nocturne's broken skin with how tightly she's gripping Shadowheart close.

But she doesn't have to be Sharran to find pleasure in pain. Sex is always a give and take, and Shadowheart would gladly give herself over to Nocturne in far more places than just in bed.

"What would your goddess have to say about you coming apart on my cock?"

Shadowheart's worship of Selûne is different than Nocturne can comprehend. It's not all-consuming; it's a choice. It's not like devotion to Shar was. She loves Selûne like she loves Nocturne.

She wants to.

"Make me come," Shadowheart breathes, "and we'll find out."

Nocturne's fangs are sharp as her hips snap again and again to find the depths of Shadowheart's core, and maybe she hasn't told Nocturne that she loves her, but she can't stop the adoration that pours from her as every thrust brings her closer to ecstasy.

The edge is right there. Shadowheart's every gasp begs for it. The lavender of Nocturne's eyes is as hypnotic as the rocking of her cock in Shadowheart's cunt. And it's Nocturne who kisses Shadowheart, this time. It's reverent, a kind of worship if ever Shadowheart's experienced it. Nocturne's tongue parts the seam of her mouth, and that last bit of warmth inside her sends Shadowheart over the precipice.

She shatters.

Again and again, Nocturne buries her cock fully inside Shadowheart, her walls clenching as if it will kill her when they're parted, and if Shadowheart was full before, Nocturne's climax leaves her overflowing. Ropes of spend are Shadowheart's reward, and Nocturne grinds away at her cunt, unwilling to waste any cum outside Shadowheart's body.

When they break away from the kiss, Shadowheart's lips are swollen and Nocturne's short of breath, but there's something skittish behind Nocturne's eyes. Shadowheart can't fix it; she tries to kiss it away anyway, a brief, too-chaste kiss for the way she can still feel Nocturne's cock pulsing inside her. "I've got you. You've got me," she says after.

“Having you means losing you.”

“You don’t have to lose me,” Shadowheart says. Nocturne’s chest heaves against her, her ribbed cock not quite soft yet. “You could keep me. And I could keep you.”

“The Dark Lady does love her secrets.” Nocturne’s claws trace a trail down the curve of Shadowheart’s breast, and again, her hips buck reflexively. “You’d make for a beautiful one.”

It’s a start.

Shadowheart isn’t patient, but for Nocturne, she’ll try.

“Stay a while longer?” Shadowheart folds her hands on Nocturne’s chest and rests her head on them. Nocturne pushes sweat-slicked hair from Shadowheart’s forehead.

“Convince me.”





Zuzana Mavana 2015

ANNIVERSARY WITH THE WIZARD

WRITTEN BY ROSE

Tags: Gale/Tav, Post-Game, No Spoilers, Established Relationship, Anniversary Sex

Gale found it hard to believe how quickly the past year had gone. A whirlwind in the best possible way, the wizard had found true happiness in mortal love and he seldom stopped thinking about it. His lover was on his mind a lot of the time, he would see them in all things. Whenever he embarked on his morning commute to Blackstaff Academy, he would see things that reminded him of them. Their favourite flowers or baked goods sold by local vendors, jewellery in a shop window he knew they'd be drawn to the way a magpie fetched shiny trinkets to adorn its nest. He'd had a spring in his step ever since their marriage and everyone noticed it; the once absent wizard holed away in his tower was free at long last, and happier than he'd been in quite some time.

Their first wedding anniversary was a joyous occasion and Gale wasted no time in preparing for it. He had been busy the past tenday, choosing a suitable gift for their first year of marriage. Tav liked to be organised, so he purchased a leather bound journal embroidered with their initials, not only was it fitting but it was also traditional considering paper was a customary gift to celebrate a first wedding anniversary.

His beloved did not like excess and though he did love to spoil them, he figured it was best to adopt a less is more approach. A traditional gift, a well-cooked meal, his favourite bottle of wine and a few risqué surprises was more than enough to mark the special day when they tied the knot. Tav's birthday on the other hand, well, perhaps he'd be more indulgent then. After all, it did celebrate the day his true love was brought into the realms. On that most special of days, he would spare no expense making them feel as cherished as they deserved to be.

He had taken his time preparing *himself* too, knowing he could hardly greet his dear spouse looking like a husk of a man. So he bathed, using the finest soaps scented with wildflowers, he trimmed his beard and dressed well, opting for a smart, loose fitting shirt and slacks. He imagined they would not stay on his body for particularly long, knowing Tav's appetite for more than just his cooking, but it was the thought that counted. Everything needed to be perfect, because they were. When Gale was devoted to someone, he did not do things by halves and so all this preparation was more than worth it. He would do absolutely anything in the world for Tav, and everyone around him knew it.

Gale was content as he prepared dinner. It would take a little while to simmer but he and Tav were more than capable of entertaining themselves. With plenty to talk about even a whole year into marriage, he never found himself bored around his spouse. They were perfectly aligned, his love did not mind his verbosity and in turn Gale found himself hanging on every word they said. He smiled as a familiar set of arms wrapped around his middle, and he chuckled softly.

"Hello there," The wizard said. "Are you missing my delightful company already? I only left you in the living room a few moments ago, my love."

"I always miss you." Tav replied, squeezing his frame as they embraced him. "I was enjoying breaking in my lovely new journal, using my best handwriting of course but, I found myself craving a little apéritif."

"Is that so?" Gale smirked, putting down his knife and turning his head to face them. "Forgive me, but, do I detect a little euphemism there? Or are you merely asking for another drink?"

"I think we *both* know the answer to that."

“Mm.” He chuckled, spinning around and capturing their lips in a passionate kiss. How lucky he was that the fire still burned so brightly in their relationship and that it would not dissipate any time soon.

“Oh, my love, I never tire of you.” Gale breathed as he gently guided them towards the kitchen table, smirking at their eagerness to strip the lower half of their garments. “How terribly ungentlemanly of me. About to fuck my spouse on the table before our anniversary dinner. Whatever will the neighbours think, hm?”

“You know, I don’t think I care.” Tav giggled as Gale hoisted them up, spreading their legs and positioning them so they were spread out beneath him, his hands keeping them in place. They moaned against his lips as they were met with another fierce kiss.

“Nor do I,” Gale purred, groans of his own vibrating against Tav’s lips as he freed himself, smirking against their lips as they began to pump his cock. “Gods, love, like that. You’re so good to me.”

Tav shuddered as a mage hand found its way between their legs. When Gale’s hands were otherwise occupied, in this case holding them against the table, the wizard enjoyed using magic for rather unsavoury means. It had become a useful spell in recent months and as Tav moaned while the hand pleased them, he realised he much preferred doing this instead of using the damn thing during combat. No more tadpoles or quests, just domestic bliss. It was a gift he would not soon tire of.

“Are you ready for me?” Gale asked, his lips pressing soft kisses against Tav’s neck, his breath warm against their perfect skin. “Because I am *certainly* ready for you.”

“Yes,” They confirmed, nodding. “Take me.”

"You never have to ask twice." The wizard grinned, positioning himself at their entrance and groaning as he pushed inside. He felt their legs hook around his waist instinctively, a familiar dance of pure intimacy.

"You're lovely," Gale praised as he thrust into them, his chest pressed against theirs and his arms wrapped tightly around their body, as if he feared they might float away. "Always so lovely for me, Tav, *ah*, how did I get so lucky?"

It was a question he asked himself often. What a surreal meeting theirs was, not your average meetcute found in the pages of a romance novel or a standard tavern encounter, no, Tav had pulled Gale out of a *rock*. Then they went on to fight an unspeakable evil, why, it was rather ridiculous whenever he thought about it. But he was grateful, every single day.

Gale knew the kitchen should be filled with the sounds of boiling water and cooking meat right about now, not the salacious moans of his lover while they impaled themselves upon his cock, but they were working up an appetite. If this is how Tav wished to celebrate their anniversary, he found he did not mind.

Tav's nails dug into the loose material of his shirt as they climaxed, clenching around him. It was a sensation that filled him with pride, knowing he could satisfy the love of his life and make them lose themselves, well, it was the best feeling in the world. Seeing them so blissed out was something he took great pride in. Often, he found it difficult to hold himself back, they were so tempting that sometimes he wanted to finish immediately, but he would be a *terrible* lover if he did not let them climax first.

"I love you," Tav gasped against Gale's lips, their heart thundering in their chest. "So, so much."

“I love you more than anything in the realms,” He affirmed, his voice full of affection. “You are a gift, a wonder, oh *Tav darling*.”

Gale moaned, feeling himself getting closer to the edge with every rhythmic movement of his hips. Sweat formed at his brow, across his chest, and he smirked to himself thinking about how that bath was a waste of bloody time. Hopefully Tav would not mind his natural scent. Right now, they really had no choice in the matter because things were hotting up in the kitchen in a way he had not originally intended.

After a few more thrusts, Gale spilled inside his lover with a groan, relishing in the way he felt inside them. Buried deep in his beloved, them chest to chest, it was a pleasure he had not felt in some time. While chasing godly ambition and something more, he had forgotten how nice love could be when it was raw, mortal, real. No barriers, just two people on the material plane who loved each other more than anything.

“Happy anniversary, my love.” Gale breathed as he came down from his eyes, stars far greater than the ones in Elysium dancing in his eyes.

Tav had an equally as blissed out expression on their face. They looked up at their wizard and smiled, the depths of their devotion abundantly clear. “Happy anniversary. Here’s to many more.”

Gale smiled down at them, his heart so full it was about ready to burst. If every anniversary was this, he was the luckiest wizard in all the realms. Nothing could possibly compare.







calpurnia

MENZOBERRANZAN PASSION

WRITTEN BY SASHA

Tags: Minthara x Female Tav, WLW, Dom/Sub, Fear of the Dark, Explicit, Post-Game, Post-Game Spoilers, Bondage, BDSM, Facesitting, Body Worship, 69, Cunnilingus, Name Calling.

Menzoberranzan's streets were alive with the bustle of shops, people travelling, and the soft clicking of a black pair of heels.
click click

Eyes followed the sound, red eyes shrouded by all kinds of cloth, masks, anything that the ill-fated poor of the city could find. Their eyes followed the clicking heels, for something unusual was occurring in their little section of subterranean purgatory. A young drow man, a hungry look in his eyes, grabbed his silver blade, keeping it yet hidden by a bundle of black fabric that had sufficed as clothing.

The young man followed the heels and the shadowy black figure, their robes shrouding her identity, but the young man knew one thing about this.. unusual guest. With heels like that, they had to have money, money that would feed him, and he had no qualms about how he would gain that coin. The figure stops, the two having come to the same, dingy, shadowy alleyway. "Time's up, I know ya got some coin on ya, ya fancy fuck. Pay up or lolth can watch your pretty blood spill on this pavement."

"Impudent boy." The figure speaks, their whisper low and dangerous, bright red eyes piercing through the boy. The figure lets out a low chuckle, as they remove their robes, revealing the drow matriarch that lay beneath.

"How dare you..a male, deign yourself a threat to a child of house Baenre." Minthara stalks her prey, he drops his knife, and in his pitiful escape attempt, falls onto his back. "Pathetic." Minthara muses, as she stomps her heel down, her toe finding the contents of the young man's trousers.

The young drow held her leg, as he writhed and kicked, "You're.. please, you're gonna break them!" Minthara looked down, a sadistic smile on her face, "I came here.. to this sickening part of my city, to find a gift for my beloved. You, a filthy male, have interrupted my work, and it would be within my rights to take these!" She presses down, as the drow man screams, clutching her leg.

"I won't, because you are going to be a good boy, a helpful boy." She lets up the pressure. "Kneel dog." The boy quickly complies, kneeling before Minthara. "I'm searching for a.. vendor, one of ill repute, who sells the most scintillating, and sexy outfits that would shape my body, and accentuate my goddess like form."

The young male nods his head quickly. "You'll want the lily pad.. it's just down this street and to your left, am.. am I free to go, I'm so sorry, miss.." Minthara laughs, "Free? You're never free male, you exist to serve superior women. Open your mouth." The drow opens wide, his whole body trembling, would this matriarch kill him? Remove his tongue? His answer came quickly as Minthara spit in his open mouth, chuckling as she said, "You looked thirsty."

The strange store was not the usual place Minthara would purchase anything, let alone clothing for herself. This was a special occasion, however, for she had heard about both the eccentric owner and the quality of the lingerie that was sold here. She stalked the aisles of the store, bright green and pink lights were an odd choice in the underdark, but they were just as odd as the owner of the small store.

"Hey dere, you shopping for some fun stuff?" The small blue girl stepped forward, her head coming to Minthara's chest. In her small hands were an assortment of phallic instruments, of all shapes, sizes and colors. "That's quite a lot for such a small girl.. but no, my dear, I was in the market for something.. more wearable on the skin, instead of my insides."

The odd blue girl ran off, disappearing behind the tall desk at the front of the store. "I gotchu, I need to measure you, though." Minthara sighed, annoyed but understanding, her mood was much lighter, as it often was, humiliating males was such good stress relief.

The blue girl measured everywhere, and she was very thorough, including an exceptionally long breast measuring. "They so big!" She still exclaimed on her way back to her desk, Minthara noted the shabby workplace, with drinks and food littered all around the desk. Including what appeared to be several half-eaten plates of noodles with some sort of red sauce. "Don't touch my noods" The blue girl squeaked, watching Minthara carefully.

"I'll send horny clothes to your house, I'll get homegirl to bring them by later." Minthara nodded, unaware that soon a githyanki on a red dragon would be dropping a package off at her manor. "Thank you.. little blue one, I don't often see your kind in the underdark, but I appreciate the assistance, gith, I shall procure the alcoholic beverages, and await a night of indulgence!" Minthara chuckles as she leaves the store. "Eww, why didn't she just say they gonna bump uglies?"

Tav arrived home later that evening, to the manor of house Baenre, now ruled by her domineering, but loving wife Minthara. Tav noticed the note left on the dining table and the darkness of the manor.

In the dim light they read, "My love, my life, I shall await you, and tonight we make even the gods weep with our beauty." Tav had grown accustomed to both the quizzical and overindulgent musings of her wife. They travelled up the staircase, following the trail of purple petals.. Nightshade.

The trail ended at the precipice of the master bedroom. Tav stepped in and In front of them laying on the bed was the most majestic sight they had ever seen. Piercing red eyes bore into them, as Minthara awaited her lover. Her purple nightgown does little to hide the curves and splendor of her body, "Come, and partake in what is yours." She hisses, her words barely above a whisper. "For we have an eternity to enjoy what was earned, our love, our freedom." Her dark purple lips curl into a smile, "Show me your power."

She left little to the imagination as the nightgown slipped down her shoulders, falling away to reveal every curve, and precious inch of skin that wasn't covered by the spider silk lingerie. Her nipples stood erect and exposed, the lingerie covering very little of the drow. Tav noticed the bottles of wine on ice, and the nightshade gathered around the room, the dim purple light making Minthara appear even more sultry and seductive than usual.

Tav was stunned for a moment, as they often were when faced with such a breathtaking sight. Minthara lay back on the bed, letting her white hair down, out of her usual bun, letting it cascade down her body, covering her dark nipples. She lifted one foot into the air, it was covered by the dark fishnet tights.

Tav instinctively crawled onto the bed, placing perfect little kisses upon Minthara's uplifted leg. her teeth grasped the end of the fishnet stocking, pulling it down, inch by inch and exposing the naked flesh beneath. Tav moved to the other leg and did the same, before being presented with an even more enticing sight.

Tav's hot breath fell on the throbbing desire that was hidden away, kept away by the thinnest of panties. Minthara moaned, feeling herself throbbing already, a heat almost ready to overtake the drow and send her into an animalistic frenzy.

Tonight, she remained composed, this was a night of tenderness and worship, not one of Minthara's usual brand of domination, at least not yet. Tav's eyes locked with Minthara's piercing gaze, she smiled as Tav's teeth locked around the panties, gently pulling them lower and lower, as the drow's womanhood, a sight reserved only for the most worthy, was unveiled.

"I tire of this, this is a night of love, yes, but also a night of pleasure, so I order you.. show me the depths of your love." Minthara wrapped her thighs around Tav's neck and pulled. Pulling Tav into her body, her most private of areas. Tav felt lost in a garden of arousal and excitement, eagerly lapping up the sweet nectar that her flower gave them.

Minthara squeezed tight, Tav holding onto the thick thighs as they pleased the drow matriarch. "Does my taste intoxicate you lover? I have been told by many that it does. I pick my lovers carefully, it is not my mere coincidence that you have been given the luxury of tasting me so often. I cherish your service, your dedication, and.. oh fuck it! I cherish that mouth, please don't stop my beloved!"

Minthara's legs tighten, threatening Tav's air flow, but the drow is lost. She was so often deadly serious, an almost frightening figure. Tonight though, she was none of those things, as she held her breasts, gently squeezing them.

Tonight Minthara was at the mercy of an unrelenting tongue, and no one would recognize the squealing girl, curling her toes as she covered her lover's face in all the glorious squirt that erupted from within. "Praise the abso... praise your tongue.. I mean." Minthara let out an uncharacteristic chuckle as she relaxed, a sweaty mess on the bed.

Tav woke up some time later, her last memories had been of her mouth on Minthara's eager pussy. "Wake up, my sweet." Minthara chuckles, as Tav opens her eyes, seeing the leash in front of them. They traced the leash with her fingers finding it connected to a collar, firmly latched around her neck. "I had more pleasure, to deliver to my eager partner. You may have enjoyed my taste, but I enjoyed your submission. Feeling you go limp in between my thighs awakened me, made me feel alive!"

Minthara pulls on the leash, as Tav follows, her eyes glued to the pale backside in front of them, as it jiggles with every tantalizing step. "Lay down, it's my turn to be on top." Minthara chuckles once again, as she steps onto the bed, standing over Tav. "You worship me.. yes?" Tav nods, "You need me, every waking moment, yes?" Tav nods again, as Minthara kneels, her privates closing in on Tav's face, as they stretch, eager to taste again. "No, not that end, I have a better treat for my willing devotee." Minthara spreads her pale cheeks, as her bottom lands on Tav's face.

Tav struggles to breathe underneath the weight of Minthara's rear, the situation was truly intoxicating, for both of them. "If you want air, I suggest you do a good job." Minthara teases, wiggling her bottom, grinding against Tav's face. She had never expected the eagerness of what happened next, the drow moaning out loud as a tongue slipped inside of her backdoor. "Wait!" She mutters, as Tav adds a finger into the mix, Minthara's oft-neglected rear receiving the attention it deserved.

"I was.. I was supposed to be teasing you!" She chokes out, Tav giggles, slowing the anal attack. Minthara purrs, "Much better, now, this poor thing has been so neglected hasn't it? She croons, hot breaths pouring onto the twitching womanhood of Tav. "Truly a remarkable specimen, deserving of worship, of momentary bliss."

Minthara lets her tongue slide between Tav's legs, a hot sticky line of wetness stays on her tongue, she sucks it into her mouth, letting her lover's taste intoxicate her senses. "Divine nectar, truly. To feel your body quiver in anticipation of my every touch, that is my drug, my obsession. You are mine, now and always."

Tav screams as Minthara's practiced tongue enters the warm, wet, slit. The hot breath on her clitoris was nearly enough to send the poor girl over the edge. Minthara's pleasure was intensified as well, she shuddered as Tav moaned into her awaiting bottom. "Your moans give me such life, fill me with your screams my sweet!" Minthara redoubles her efforts, quickly putting Tav once again on the edge of a sorely needed release, of course they would go without any pleasure, just to see Minthara smile every night.

Tonight, was not such a night, as a torrent of squirt exploded from the overstimulated adventurer, the sheets soaked with womanly delight. She smiled, a pair of soft red eyes looking into hers, as she drifts away.

A new day approached in the underdark, as Tav's eyes opened to an abnormal sight, on a normal morning Minthara would still be asleep, waiting for her breakfast to be delivered.

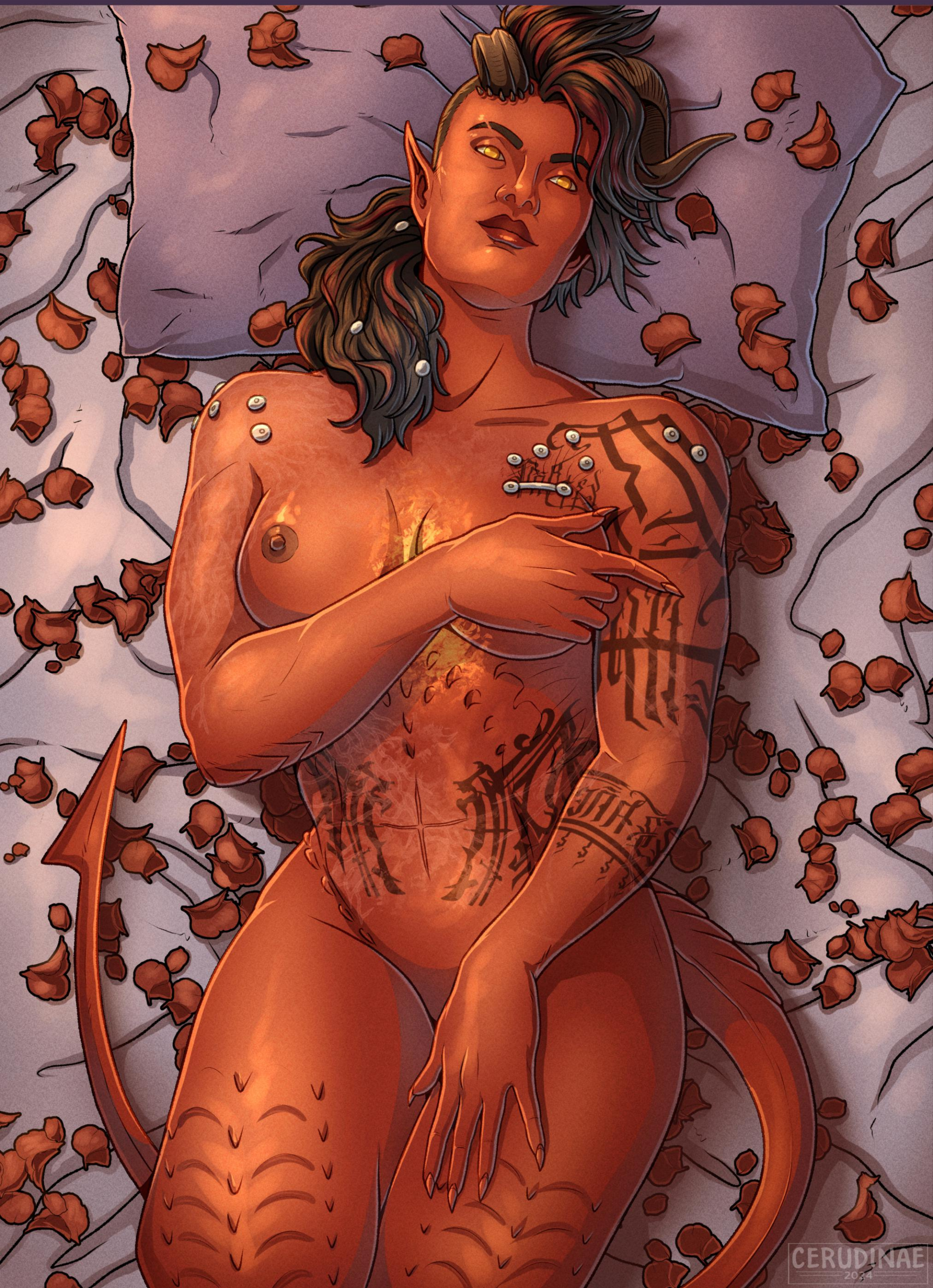
Today though, she was wide awake, her red eyes looking sadly into Tav's. "Last night was meant to be a celebration of our union, I never intended.." She looks down, her hand resting against Tav's thigh. "I meant to let the depths of pleasure fill you as well, fill you so completely." The image of Minthara with a strap-on dildo entered Tav's mind, but it was quickly replaced with the tongue penetrating her mouth.

The wet sloppy kisses were punctuated by the pale hand at the back of tav's head, pulling them in deeper, it was desperate, frantic. Minthara's years of solitude, the lack of real connection, had made the drow sensitive. "I can't lose you my love, I'm sorry our day was ruined because of my.. urges, I will make this up to you, for you are the most beautiful thing in my life. All my life I spent searching for a god, someone to show me the path to glory. When the real creature to worship is here, laying in my bed. I love you."

Tav succumbs to probing hands, as Minthara earns her forgiveness, "Be still, my love. Let mistress make you feel good."







NOTHING SWEETER

WRITTEN BY CHARMANDA

Tags: Halsin x Reader, Post-Game, Epilogue Spoilers, Established Relationship, Food Play, Explicit

You're elbow-deep in flour, rushing to get your famous strawberry shortcake in the oven so it has enough time to cool before you need to frost it and bring it to the reunion. The missive from Withers has been pinned to the corkboard in the kitchen ever since it arrived. In part because you're so excited to see everyone, but also as a reminder to make the cake. Shadowheart might never forgive you if you forget.

You move over to stirring the strawberries on the stove just as you hear the telltale sign of lumbering feet behind you. Sure enough, you're quickly enveloped by two large arms, and Halsin drops his chin on the top of your head, inhaling deeply. A shiver runs up your spine at the feeling of his warm body pressed against yours.

"My heart, it smells delicious," he says in a low voice that rumbles through your back. You melt into his touch, his words caressing you like a warm blanket. You relent for a moment, before shaking your head to focus.

"Love, you know I'd never turn away your affection unless it was really important, and it's really important that I don't mess this up," you tell him, just a hint of snippiness coloring your voice. He pulls away and surveys the kitchen.

"Then perhaps instead of my affection, I can offer my help?" he says jovially, and you try to hide your wince. Halsin is a complete genius when it comes to cooking, but he's a bit of an oaf in terms of baking. He doesn't fully appreciate how much of an exact science it is, and he spends far too much time improvising. But you're running behind, and you're in no position to decline help.

“Alright, fine. Open the ice box and grab the heavy cream. Pour it into the bowl that’s been chilling beside it and add a third cup of sugar and a teaspoon of vanilla. You’re going to want to put in more, but it’ll change the consistency, so don’t.” You give him your instructions while keeping your eyes fixated on the sauce.

“I do so love when Mama Bear is commanding,” he hums, and your knees buckle at the use of the nickname he typically reserves for sex. You recover just enough to shoot him a dirty look over your shoulder.

“Halsin, behave yourself,” you warn, but there’s no denying the fire he’s already stoking in your core. Satisfied with the progress of the sauce, you rummage in a cabinet to grab a whisk. You tap it against Halsin’s back and he turns to you.

“Now put those big muscles to use and whip that until it forms stiff peaks.” You turn your attention back to your dry ingredients before you start combining the wet ingredients.

You watch Halsin carefully out of the corner of your eye, at first just to check his form. But it’s not long before you start to see the thin sheen of sweat collecting on his brow, or notice the way his breathing is jagged from the effort of whipping the cream.

You pull your focus back to your task — notably, it takes you longer this time than it did before. You’re in the middle of greasing the cake tins when Halsin lets out a sharp yelp. You turn back only to see him splattered with whipped cream, and you groan.

“Not to worry, my dear, no one’s been hurt by a little splattered cream,” he says, seemingly completely unaware of the innuendo. Then again, he can be so hard to read, and sometimes he knows far more than he lets on.

He peels off his shirt and tosses it on a kitchen chair. You quickly return to your greased tins so he doesn't see how red your face is getting. No matter how long the two of you have been married, he still manages to make you blush like a schoolgirl.

You finally pour the batter in the tins and pop them into the oven with a sigh of relief. You take the strawberries off the heat and set the egg timer on your counter to 25 minutes. You look back at Halsin, and once again the sight of him shirtless and covered in just a little bit of whipped cream sends you reeling. You stand on your tiptoes in front of him and wipe off the dollop of white on his nose.

"You got whipped cream on your face," you say, your words muffled by your finger in your mouth. He looks at you playfully, swipes his finger through the cream in the bowl and boops it onto your nose. You grab his wrist before he can pull it away and take his forefinger into your mouth, sucking off the whipped cream suggestively.

"How long did you say it needed to bake?" he asks, his voice husky.

You pull off his finger with a wet pop and say, "About 23 minutes."

"Good," he growls and immediately pulls you off your feet into a kiss. You kiss him back hungrily, giving him the taste of the cream on your tongue. He turns and pushes you up against the ice box, lowering your cunt directly onto his knee. You whine loudly the moment your lips make contact through the fabric of your pants.

"No matter how sweet your baking is," he rasps into your ear, "It's not half so sweet as you." He drops to his knees and you nearly double over from the sudden lack of support.

He lifts up your skirts, his nose skimming the wet gusset of your smallclothes.

“Fuck, Halsin, please,” you whine, your hips rutting towards his mouth in desperation. He doesn’t waste time in yanking them off and swiping his tongue along your slit. You groan in unison at the pleasure you find in each other, the rumble in the back of your throat harmonizing with the desperate slurps of his tongue against you. You tangle your fingers into his hair, in part to control him, but in larger part to keep you steady. He teases your folds with the tip of his tongue, finding every crevice to taste you fully.

“Please, my love, I need to feel you inside me,” you beg again, and he flicks his honey brown eyes up to meet yours, slowly inserting one finger into you. You push down on him, desperate to feel more, for him to stretch you out with his fingers so he can fill you with his cock.

“Patient, my heart,” he coos, and you practically groan with frustration. “I don’t want to hurt you.” Despite his gentle admonishing, he slips a second finger into you, his tongue swirling around your clit.

You rock yourself onto his fingers, draping your leg over his shoulder and pulling him in deeper. He scissors his fingers inside you, wrapping his lips around your clit and suckling it in the way he knows drives you over the edge.

“Yes, Halsin, fuck, please don’t stop,” you pant wantonly, pushing back against the ice box and hearing bottles rattle within. He curls his fingers exactly right and you come with a cry, your walls squeezing around him with every wave of your orgasm as it settles. He slurps up your spend as it leaks out around his fingers.

“As I suspected,” he hums, and he stands to reveal the bulge in his leathers. You pull him into you by his waistband, and he chuckles at your desperation despite your recent release. The laugh dies in his throat as you rip off his pants and his cock springs forth, bobbing almost comically. You reach between your legs and rub your slick on his length, staring up at him through heavy lidded eyes. He unlaces your overdress with deft fingers, letting it slide off your shoulders as he picks you up by the waist and braces you against the ice box again, slotting his tip right at your entrance. He keeps you suspended above his cock as he checks in with you, and it takes all your wanton energy to nod enthusiastically before he lowers you down onto his shaft, pulling off your chemise in tandem.

Your head falls back against the top of the ice box, your back arching into him as he begins to thrust into you. He’s quick to grab your nipple in his mouth, rolling the other between his thumb and forefinger. You moan at the feeling, then are struck with a dizzying thought.

“Halsin, the— grab the whipped cream. Lick it off me, please,” you stammer, your desire scrambling your brain.

He grunts as he bounces you on his cock, looking into your eyes with concern. “Are you certain, my heart? For your cake?”

“Fuck, please!” you whine, desperate to feel the soft sticky cream between your skin and his tongue. “I’ll— I’ll make more, it’s fine.”

You don’t need to ask again, as he takes a scoop of the cream and slaps it between your breasts before eagerly lapping it up. He fucks into you, your back pressing into the ice box as he lathes his tongue across your chest. He spends extra care around your nipple, flicking it with the tip before leaving a sloppy wet trail to the other, giving it the same treatment.

You pant heavily, feeling him still hard inside you, and tilt your head in a silent question. You need no more answer than Halsin's bearish smirk as he spins you around on his cock and presses you face down into the counter. You groan into the smooth wooden surface, the sound of your moans echoing back to you. He pounds into you mercilessly, and you push yourself up on your toes to meet him. Your legs are shaking, and soon you don't need to support yourself at all as he grabs your ass, pistoning his hips into you.

"Sylvanus save me, I won't last long," he grunts, and you whine loudly at the sound of him coming undone. Your hands scramble at the floury surface of the counter, attempting to rock your hips back into him, but he's fully in control.

"Halsin, please," you pant, getting dangerously close to your third orgasm in less than a half hour. "Don't hold back, my love, give into the beast."

He groans loudly, breathing heavily with the force of his thrusts. "Are you certain, my heart?"

The noise that spills out of your mouth is embarrassingly pathetic. "Please, Papa Bear!"

Halsin lets out a roar as he fucks into you even faster, pinning you down by your neck and making the jars on the wall clank together. You can feel the base of his cock swelling as he gets close, and before you know it, you're both screaming as he spills thick hot ropes of his seed deep within you. The knot at the base of his cock stuffs it inside you, making sure not a single drop leaks onto the floor. He drops over your back, panting heavily as you both come down from your collective high.

Ding!

It takes every single working muscle in your body to lift your head and look over at the egg timer.

Halsin gives you a breathy chuckle. “I believe your cake is done, Mama Bear.” He pulls out of you and you can feel his seed gushing out of your stretched out cunt. You attempt to lift yourself up but every bone in your body has mysteriously turned to jelly.

Luckily Halsin has more of his wits about him, and he grabs an oven mitt to pull the cake tins out of the oven and set them atop the stove. He pulls you into his arms and you drop your head onto his chest.

“And those need to cool for how long?” he asks as you look up at him with a mischievous glint in your eye and an impish grin playing on your lips

“Just long enough for us to *clean up* in the shower.”





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Thank you
for reading,
darlings!



LAST LIGHT INN

This zine was run and curated as part of Last Light Inn's ongoing charity projects

Last Light Inn is a community bg3 discord server and social media account dedicated to providing a safe place to discuss all things related to bg3 and helping spread positive energy throughout the fandom with events, prompts and more.

What's in the server?

Calendars of BG3 events, place to discuss your Tavs/Durges, discussions on mods, strats, honour modes or the companions, place to share art and fan fiction, and more!

How do I join the discord?

Please send a direct message to Last Light Inn's bsky or twitter account for invite.

What does Last Light Inn do?

We run charity events, help spread the word about bg3 events or giveaways run by others, run social media prompts on bsky like #bg3tuesvp, #bg3uplift and others, and overall try to help grow and maintain a positive energy throughout the fandom.

About Our Events

All events will be charity fundraisers as part of LLI ongoing charity efforts. Israfela will always use Gofundme and never touch the money. It is sent to the charity directly, as is the case with this zine.

lastlightinn.carrrd.co

