

## FUTILE FANTASY CREATIONS PRESENT...

### **SHE SEEKS SANCTUARY**

#### *Prologue - An Axion to grind.*

The medieval republic of Anoseta was a quirky place to say the least. Their laws and traditions were unlike those of any other nation on the planet. For any visitor it was hard to know what was legal and what wasn't. Half the laws made no sense whatsoever and were clearly not based on any known logic. The only thing any visitor could ever be certain of was that Anoseta was not a very woman friendly place. Women could be arrested for public indecency if they yawned and it was illegal for them to run due west. Any woman hurrying in that direction would have to zigzag her way there. Women were also forbidden from sitting in armchairs and leaving their houses on Wednesday afternoons. Nobody knew why these laws existed and yet they were still enforced to the letter.

In this most peculiar nation, the tax system was unfathomable and the judicial system was so confusing, law courts made things up as they went along. Despite working within guidelines that made no sense, however, the taxmen and the judges were at least consistent. Woman *always* got a very raw deal.

Even the nation's education system was nonsensical. For example, from the age of ten, *all* children were taught the *basics* of hand to hand combat in school. Although this was a good idea in theory, when combined with the nation's other laws, it again made no sense. Children of *both* genders, providing they were good enough, could go on to *master* the hand to hand combat disciplines. The more adept boys would then go on to graduate and use those skills when enlisted into the army. Girls, on the other hand, weren't allowed in the army and were forbidden by law from using any kind of violence, even in self defence. If a woman's husband were to hit her, unless she let him do it, she'd be arrested and tried for crimes against femininity. Why girls were made to take the classes in the first place was anybody's guess. Anoseta was indeed a bizarre nation.

#### *City of Tempalua, Anoseta...*

In Tempalua, the nation's capital city, wedding bells echoed through every street. On this day, the city's most influential man was to be wed. Twice. According to the law of the land, all men were entitled to a maximum of five wives. Today, the former president's eldest son, Lord Axion, would be taking his first two. The ceremonies themselves would be small affairs. Despite the groom's status he'd only announced the weddings forty eight hours before they were due to take place, leaving little time for preparation. Normally with such short notice given, attempting to get everything ready in time would have caused pandemonium. The brides especially would have been rushed off their feet, trying to bring perfection to their special day. The bakers, the tailors, the seamstresses and the caterers would have had to work around the clock to get everything done and heart attacks would have been a real concern. On this occasion however, there was no rush whatsoever. The church was booked and little else had even been arranged. The reason for this lack of action being that these were no ordinary weddings. Axion wasn't marrying for love; these weddings were very much for his own convenience.

Upon his father's death, some seven years earlier when he was aged twenty two, Axion had been horrified to find out that his inheritance had been placed in a trust fund. He'd been looking forward to receiving all the money in one giant lump sum and was left devastated by the news. His father, Moulin, a revered public figure, had always been somewhat ashamed of him. He'd worked hard to earn his fortune and Axion had never lifted a single, bone idle finger to help him. Instead he'd opted to live a playboy lifestyle at his father's expense. Determined to make him change his ways, upon his death bed Moulin had changed his will. He'd handed the thriving family business over to his son but placed his sizeable personal fortune in a trust fund with orders not to release any of the money until Axion was both thirty years of age and married. He was left with no allowance whatsoever, completely cut off from any kind of unearned income. If he wanted to eat, he'd now have to go and work for the family business. It was Moulin's belief that if he had to work for eight years, his son would at last grow up a little. He also felt confident that the love of a good woman would finally quell his desire to party all the time.

Confident he'd found a way around his father's determination to make him work for a living, as soon as he acquired the thriving family business, Axion attempted to sell it the highest bidder. In one transaction, he could have become the richest man in the entire country. Infuriatingly for him, however, one of the conditions of the will was that he couldn't sell the company until he was, again, both thirty years old and married. Moulin knew all too well he'd tried to sell it and had specifically amended a section of his will to stop him doing so.

Bitter and frustrated, Axion had no choice but to start work. Had his father been able to see this moment, he would have been overjoyed. At last, his son was off to earn a living rather than borrow one. Had he been able to see his son a few months later, however, he'd have spun in his grave. Upon starting work, Axion had discovered something he loved almost as much as money. Power. Being in charge was an exhilarating experience and he was loving every second of it. In his mind, his staff were his minions and he was their god. To say power went to his head would be quite the understatement.

Within a year of acquiring the business, he'd surrounded himself with yes men and employed a squad of heartless thugs. Not about to argue with the little people of the world, he used the thugs to settle pay disputes and discipline his staff for any mistakes they made. The gang of rowdy bullies also came in handy should any of their customers decide to take their business elsewhere. One visit from his heavy mob and they'd immediately come back.

This was a golden time in Axion's life. He felt invincible. Every day there'd be someone begging at his feet. Whether it was a staff member looking for mercy or a customer pleading for more time to pay their bill, someone was always bowing down before him. With the fate of so many people at his fingertips, it wasn't long before the power crazed Axion actually started to believe he might well be a deity.

He had it all, power, a brilliant salary, looks and even his health. The only thing that was missing was his father's millions. Without his vast inheritance, he didn't quite feel complete. It was as if he was merely a demigod rather than an all powerful one. This feeling that he was missing something tortured Axion very much. Every day it would play on his mind. How he longed to be thirty. Knowing there was little he could do about that particular condition of the will, however, he focussed all his efforts on the other one instead. Finding a wife.

Being a man of considerable power and influence, wooing the fair sex had never been a problem for Axion. Had he been the sort who put a notch in his headboard for every successful conquest, he'd have whittled the headboard down to a matchstick by now. Women tended to fall at his feet and there was barely a single woman in the city who wouldn't sell her soul to become his wife. Axion, however, was very particular about who would be his bride. He wasn't searching for an overnight sensation he could kick out of bed in the morning, he could get a thousand of those. The woman he was going to marry had to have one defining quality. She had to be the best looking woman in the entire country. He didn't care if she was kind or could carry a conversation; he was looking for a trophy. The thought of strolling down the road with his wife only to be passed by someone with a better looking one terrified him greatly. Believing himself to be the ultimate man, he needed the ultimate woman on his arm.

When Axion was twenty nine, only a few months from receiving his inheritance, it seemed that his choice had been made. He'd been spending a lot of time with a ravishing beauty named Cheyenne. The fact he'd seen her more than once had been enough to start suggestions among his closest aides that she might well be the one. She was, however, not the first woman they thought he'd eventually marry. In the last two years he'd got close to five other women, only to toss them aside once he'd spotted a better looking one. Sadly for Cheyenne, she was to suffer exactly the same fate. Having taken Axion with her to her younger sibling's school sport's day, she soon found herself out on her ear. Among the performers that day was a sixteen year old gymnast called Kyrie. Upon sighting the dark haired, large breasted beauty, Axion's tongue had fallen out of his head. Lost in lust, he could only drool as she did the splits, placed her leg behind her head then cartwheeled out of the gym and away down the school corridor. As she returned to the gym apologetically to restart her routine where the judges could actually see it, Axion turned to Cheyenne and told her she was fired. As if she was a mere employee, he then dismissed her from his presence. Later that day, Axion returned when school was over to introduce himself to the overenthusiastic gymnast. Upon sighting her, however, he was immediately hit with a giant dilemma. She was walking from the school building side by side with a miniature version of herself, clearly her little sister. Axion was stuck for what to do. This was indeed something of a nightmare. Kyrie was by far the most beautiful woman he'd ever set eyes on and he most definitely wanted to marry her, but what if her little sister grew up to be even prettier? Should that happen, in the event of the little sister marrying someone, his own brother-in-law would have a better looking wife than him.

Tortured by the dilemma, Axion returned to his office without even bothering to introduce himself to her. He desperately wanted to make Kyrie his bride but was terrified by the prospect of her little sister growing up to outshine her in the beauty department. He had to marry the best looking woman in the country and he couldn't even guarantee she was going to be the best looking woman in her family. Running things over and over in his head, he then realised that their looks weren't the only concern. They might end up equally good looking but the younger one might develop larger breasts than her already generously proportioned sister. In his mind, if they were equally good looking, the one with the larger breasts would most definitely be the pick of the pair. This new worry then opened the door to several more. What if the little sister grew up to have a firmer backside, nicer hair or a sexier voice? For hours on end he tortured himself, trying to think how he'd solve the dilemma. His closest aides were of little help. One had suggested killing the little sister and none of the others had even contributed. At first Axion was tempted to go with the murder idea when suddenly his face lit up. He'd had a masterstroke. A moment of genius. It seemed so obvious now he'd

thought of it. The answer was simple. If one of these two girls was going to be the most beautiful in all Anoseta, he should simply marry them both.

And so, everything was arranged in full accordance with Anoseta's wonderfully sexist laws. Axion didn't even have to go through the formality of meeting the two girls. With them both being under the age of eighteen, he simply introduced himself to their guardian, their grandfather, and handed him a large pile of money. In return he left with a legally binding agreement stating that the girls would marry him on a specified date. The two brides wouldn't even be asked their opinion on the matter. At the ceremony, Axion would say "I do" and then say "she does" on their behalf. Axion's hunt for a bride was now over.

---

On the morning of the ceremonies, a delighted Axion gathered his closest allies and henchmen together for something of a miniature stag party in his study. With his thirtieth birthday only a few days away and marriage imminent, he could barely contain his glee. His inheritance would soon be in his grasp. Having made sure all his guests had a drink in their hands; he climbed up onto his desk and banged his glass with a pen. At once, a rowdy cry of "speech" rose up all around the room then faded to nothing as Axion cleared his throat.

AXION: Gentlemen, thank you all for coming...

(Everyone cheered.)

AXION: There's many others I'd like to thank for *not* coming, but of course they're not here.

(As an audible chuckle filled the room, Axion clapped his hands together and rubbed them excitedly.)

AXION: So, here we are, my wedding day...

(He paused while everyone in the room made suggestive comments and rude noises.)

AXION: Yeah, yeah, settle down. It's not like that, you animals, one of the brides is only ten years old.

(He rolled his eyes then continued.)

AXION: Anyway, this is a momentous occasion, as I'm sure you'll all agree. In a few days, I'll finally get my hands on my rightful inheritance. The money my father stupidly stashed away in a trust fund will soon be mine.

(He smiled.)

AXION: With this in mind, I'd like you to all raise your glasses.

(As everyone obliged, Axion exhaled merrily.)

AXION: To wealth and prosperity.

ALL: Wealth and prosperity.

(As Axion started to climb down, one of his closest aides looked to him in bewilderment.)

RICO: Mention the weddings, Axion.

(Axion looked to him emptily for a moment then frowned.)

AXION: Oh, yeah.

(He stood tall again and resumed his speech.)

AXION: So, yeah... brides. Well, there's Kyrie, a sixteen year old gymnast... fit, massive tits, perfect arse... so, looking forward to that...

(He looked to Rico and shrugged.)

AXION: And the little one... Cayley...she's some sort of child prodigy, a genius apparently...

(He rolled his eyes.)

AXION: Fuck it, I don't care about *them*. Apparently, Kyrie's good at hand to hand combat... and Cayley's a good pianist. So what? Who gives a crap? It's not about them, it's all about money!

(Looking overjoyed, he thrust his glass into the air and yelled.)

AXION: Money!!!

(As everyone cheered, Axion continued his speech enthusiastically.)

AXION: Right now, there are two girls in town somewhere getting ready for the best day of their lives. These two lucky ladies will have the honour of marrying *me*. Some of my men are waiting at their house right now, ready to bring them to my mansion. A few hours later, we'll be wed. The deed will be done. Meaning that, in a few days, I'll be married, thirty and therefore disgustingly rich.

(He beamed.)

AXION: And you know what... I'm happy about that.

(He winked then climbed down from the table.)

AXION: You can clap if you like.

(At once they all applauded his speech. Looking overjoyed, Axion stepped up next to Rico and exhaled happily.)

AXION: What a perfect day.

(He looked to him enquiringly then bit his lip.)

AXION: Everything's in place, right?

RICO: Yeah, it's all sorted out. Just waiting for the girls to arrive and time to pass.

AXION: Perfect.

(They knocked their glasses together and took a satisfied swig. Today marked the end of their lengthy hunt for a suitable bride to release Axion's inheritance and they were both convinced that everything would go without a hitch.)

---

Across town at this time, just as Axion had suggested in his speech, his men were indeed at Kyrie and Cayley's house. One was posted outside their bedroom door, another was outside their bedroom window and four more were out the front of the house. Unfortunately for Axion, however, none of them were conscious and Kyrie and Cayley were nowhere to be seen.

Axion had overlooked one tiny flaw in his so-called perfect plan. The two girls he'd picked as his brides, really didn't want to marry him. Having been made to feel more like prisoners than brides, they'd put their dresses and adornments on then looked to one another in sorrow. Despite looking beautiful in their traditional Anoseta wedding attire, neither of them could even begin to force a smile. In that moment, they hated their lives, they hated their granddad for selling them but most of all they hated Axion. It was at this point that Kyrie had snapped. Unable to bear the pathetic pout on her little sister's face, she'd flapped furiously then gone on the rampage. When Axion had told everyone that Kyrie was good at hand to hand combat, he hadn't quite done her skills justice. She was the best unarmed combatant the school had ever known. With incredible agility and a deceptive amount of strength in her slender frame, she'd made short work of Axion's heavy mob and had dragged her sister out of the house, straight past their sleeping grandfather. As far as she was concerned, there was no way either of them were getting married today. And so, while Axion enjoyed his party under the illusion that everything was in place for both his weddings that afternoon, the two brides were fleeing towards the edge of the city in a desperate bid for freedom.

Determined to get as far away as possible, Kyrie dragged her bewildered younger sibling to the side of a broken down building at the end of their street then looked to her with the utmost urgency.

KYRIE: Cayley, I've got an almighty wedgie!  
(She thrust her hand up the bottom of her dress to adjust her underwear then exhaled.)  
KYRIE: There, that's better. Now let's get out of here.  
(Having been given time to gather her composure, Cayley looked to her and replied through trembling lips.)  
CAYLEY: Wait!!! We can't run away. What if we get caught? I've heard Axion is a horrible, horrible man, he'll punish us really badly if he catches us.  
(She started to cry.)  
CAYLEY: I'm scared. I don't want to get into trouble.  
(Kyrie rolled her eyes.)  
KYRIE: I'm scared too and nobody *wants* to get into trouble.  
CAYLEY: But...  
KYRIE: I'm not marrying that man, Cayley. And nor are you!  
(She placed her hands on her hips defiantly.)  
KYRIE: I don't care how far we have to run, even if we have to go overseas to Castaria.  
(Cayley gave a belittling glance.)  
CAYLEY: Castaria isn't overseas.  
KYRIE: It's abroad though, right? A different country?  
(Cayley nodded.)  
CAYLEY: Yeah. You ought to know that, you've been there twice on day trips with grandad.  
KYRIE: No I haven't, the only place I went with granddad was Levestock.  
CAYLEY: Yeah, Levestock, Castaria.  
(She pointed back the way they came.)  
CAYLEY: It's about twenty miles that way. Just over the border.  
(Kyrie nodded then looked about herself determinedly.)  
KYRIE: Right... what were we doing?  
(Cayley rolled her eyes.)  
CAYLEY: Running away.  
KYRIE: Oh, yeah!  
(She nodded sternly.)  
KYRIE: Let's do that then.  
CAYLEY: But, Axion will be livid. I don't want to marry him either but if we don't, he'll be humiliated and he'll punish us. We should go back.  
(Kyrie looked stumped.)  
KYRIE: I'm confused now. Running away seems like a good idea but I was *my* idea, so it can't be. I'm a dipshit; I'm bound to be wrong. Now you... everyone says you're some kind of super intelligent child genius and *you* say go back.  
(She placed a gormless finger on her lip and mused to herself.)  
KYRIE: I say we go back, as much as I hate the idea, doing it my way can't be good.  
(Cayley gave a resigned sighed and shook her head.)  
CAYLEY: No, you were right. We have to run.  
(Kyrie gave her a doubting glance.)  
KYRIE: I'm right? You sure about that, sister face? Only it's never happened before and I'm finding it a little hard to believe.  
CAYLEY: Kyrie, you hit the guards. It's illegal for girls to use violence, you know that.  
KYRIE: It is? Why did they teach me how to do it then?  
CAYLEY: I don't know. The point is, if we go back, you'll get arrested and jailed. I don't want that.  
(Kyrie shuddered.)  
KYRIE: And you'll have to marry poop head without me.

(Cayley's eyes bulged.)

CAYLEY: I really don't want that!!!

KYRIE: Then we run!

CAYLEY: To Castaria!

KYRIE: Right.

(She grimaced.)

KYRIE: You lead. I've got no sense of direction.

(Cayley patted her arm kindly.)

CAYLEY: Don't be hard on yourself, Kyrie; it's not just direction you have no sense of.

(Kyrie smiled warmly.)

KYRIE: Aw, you're so sweet.

CAYLEY: This way.

(She pointed back the way they'd just come.)

CAYLEY: We need to go back to the house on the way.

KYRIE: What for?

CAYLEY: Our stuff obviously.

(Kyrie mused to herself then bit her lip.)

KYRIE: I kind of rushed us before, didn't I?

CAYLEY: Yeah, kinda. This time we'll get our essentials together and some money for the trip.

KYRIE: And I'll hit the guards again to make sure they're unconscious.

CAYLEY: Okay. Let's go.

(And with that, they raced off back to their house. Wasting no time whatsoever, they charged back through the front door, stepping over the prostrate guards. With extreme urgency, they both grabbed their backpacks and proceeded to pack in a blinding hurry. Cayley grabbed a few changes of clothing, some fruit and her favourite book which was a gift from their late mother. She then swiped their sleeping grandfather's wallet. Kyrie on the other hand tried to pack all her clothes and shoes then lost her temper with her pack, swearing at it profusely for being too small. Thankfully Cayley was on hand to calm her down and make her pack properly. Kyrie was devastated at having to leave so many pairs of her precious shoes behind and once her pack was ready, she swore bloody vengeance on Axion. She loved her shoes and losing them was going to be quite the wrench for her. Taking a modicum of solace from the fact she still had her make up and one pair of stilettos, she wiped a tear then looked to Cayley firmly.)

KYRIE: Right, this is it, sister face. You ready?

(With trembling wide eyes, Cayley nodded to her and shuddered all over.)

CAYLEY: Yes.

KYRIE: Then we're out of here.

(With that, she slung her pack on her back, raced back through the house then charged out of the front door. Seconds later, Cayley raced out into the sunlight after her then watched on in bewilderment as Kyrie lifted one of Axion's unconscious guards off the ground by his collar and snarled in his face.)

KYRIE: This is for making me lose all my shoes.

(She punched him full in the face then looked to Cayley and reached her hand out to her.)

KYRIE: Let's go.

(As Cayley trembled nervously for a moment, Kyrie gave her a reassuring smile and flexed her hand towards her to encourage her to take it.)

KYRIE: Come on, I'll take care of you, it'll be fine.

(Reassured by her sister's words, Cayley took Kyrie's hand and smiled.)

CAYLEY: Thank...

(At once her head flung backwards and she screamed as Kyrie raced off up the road, dragging her behind her.)

CAYLEY: Stop dragging me!!!

KYRIE: Run faster and I won't be dragging you.

CAYLEY: I can't run any faster!!!

KYRIE: Yes you can, use *both* legs!

(Cayley scolded at her at she struggled not to fall.)

CAYLEY: Both legs? You just get dumber and dumber, don't you?

KYRIE: I fail to see how that's relevant!

CAYLEY: Just let me run at my own pace!!! Kyrie!!!

(Just then, the inevitable happened. Only thirty feet into their run she pulled Cayley over.)

CAYLEY: Ow!!!

(Not even noticing her sister fall, Kyrie simply raced on, dragging the screaming Cayley across the cobbles behind her.)

CAYLEY: Stop it!!!

KYRIE: Damn it, Cayley, you've got heavy of all a sudden.

(She glanced back over her shoulder then scowled.)

KYRIE: Cayley!!!

(She stopped running and placed her hands on her hips angrily.)

KYRIE: Stop messing about, we've got to get out of here!

(Cayley struggled to her feet and looked down at her bloodied knees.)

CAYLEY: Look what you did!

(Kyrie looked aghast.)

KYRIE: Me? You're the one playing silly buggers!

(Cayley pouted at her then mumbled under her breath.)

CAYLEY: Idiot!

(With that, she raced past Kyrie and headed off up the road. Kyrie rolled her eyes then raced to catch her up.)

KYRIE: Fucking ingrate, that's the last time I help *her*.

(Upon reaching her sister's side, Kyrie glanced around nervously then bit her lip.)

KYRIE: Cayley, are we...

CAYLEY: Don't worry, we're not running west.

KYRIE: Then why is everyone staring at us?

(Cayley looked to her nervously.)

CAYLEY: They've probably never seen a ten year old in a wedding dress before.

KYRIE: Yeah could be that...

(She beamed.)

KYRIE: More likely, they're taken aback by how hot I look in mine.

(Cayley rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: You honestly believe that, don't you?

KYRIE: Of course I do. Face facts, sister face... I'm a babe. I turn heads.

(Cayley glanced at her coldly.)

CAYLEY: Your arrogance can turn stomachs too.

KYRIE: Hey!

(Looking peeved, Kyrie flicked her leg out sideways to trip her up. Seconds later, Cayley went sprawling to the ground, face first. As Cayley pouted at her miserably from the cobbles, Kyrie raced on.)

KYRIE: I can also turn nasty when provoked.

(Cayley scrambled to her feet, fighting back tears as she dusted herself down.)

CAYLEY: If I was a foot taller and knew how to fight, I'd hit you.



(With that, she took to her heels once more and bounded off after Kyrie. Once at her side, she pouted at her bitterly then stared straight ahead.)

CAYLEY: I don't like you.

KYRIE: Whatever.

CAYLEY: Fine.

KYRIE: Fine.

(And so they raced on towards the edge of the city. Very much annoyed with one another, they sneered and pulled faces at each other in a childish display of mutual disdain. They were far from the best of friends at this moment in time. Despite their unfriendliness towards each other, however, with every angry footstep they took, they edged ever closer to the edge of town and the potential sanctuary of the Castaria border.)

Back at their home in the meantime, the guards that Kyrie had floored were starting to come to. First to rouse, the one who'd been guarding their bedroom door bounded out of the house and looked about himself in something of a panic. Spotting three of his comrades stirring and starting to come-to on the sunlit cobbles, he clenched his fist angrily and gritted his teeth.)

FORK: Get up, quick! The girls have gone!!!

(He hurriedly rushed to pull one of the other guards to his feet.)

FORK: Axion's going to go ape shit when he finds out.

(He pulled a second guard to his feet while a third guard leant over a prostrate forth and sucked his teeth nervously. Eager to get off in pursuit of the girls, Fork cuffed the third guard around the head, pointed to the motionless one then raised his voice.)

FORK: Bring him round; we've got to get going.

(The third guard glanced up at him and shook his head sternly.)

STAINES: I can't, Fork. For one, I don't know first aid, and secondly, he's dead.

(Fork looked at him coldly and raised a condescending eyebrow.)

FORK: Then even if you *did* know first aid...

(Staines cut in apologetically.)

STAINES: Yeah, I realised that as soon as I said it.

(Fork growled.)

FORK: Pity's sake, we have to find them.

(He looked to one of the guards he'd helped up and barked an order at him.)

FORK: Kansan, go back to Axion's place and get more men. Those girls could be anywhere, we need to search the entire city, maybe even beyond. Go, sprint!!!

KANSAN: Righto.

(As the guard raced back to Axion's mansion, Fork looked to his two fellow guards and threw his hands up in frustration.)

FORK: If we're lucky Axion will just fire us.

STAINES: Hopefully we'll find them in time and everything will be fine.

FORK: I hope so. Luckily for us, their wedding dresses are gone so they must be wearing them. Two girls in wedding dresses shouldn't be hard to find!

(He nodded sternly.)

FORK: So let's start looking. I'll go north. Staines, you go south and Capstone, you go and search around the lake area.

CAPSTONE: Okay.

STAINES: Gotcha.

FORK: Go!!!

(And with that, they sprinted off in three different directions. Axion was not the sort of man who took mistakes well, especially ones of this magnitude. Failure to find his two young

brides might well end in their executions and they knew it. With this in mind, their hearts raced as they hunted frantically about the city.

Within moments of Kansan returning to Axion's mansion to alert everyone of the girl's disappearance, all hell broke loose. Much like bees swarm out of their hive when it's under attack, Axion's flunkies poured from every exit with extreme urgency. Every single one of his thugs and musclemen fully understood the importance of retrieving the two girls. Losing them would send Axion into a horribly unpredictable rage. The girls were the key to unlocking his inheritance, an inheritance he'd be longing to get his hands on for many years now. Not finding the girls would be a disaster and if they failed, nobody wanted to be the one to tell him.

In a perfect example of what might happen to the messenger should the girls escape, as soon as Kansan informed Axion that the girls had donned their wedding dresses then fled, he was immediately docked one of his limbs. Axion's hair had practically stood on end and he'd grabbed his sword in a rage. Ordering his men to hold Kansan down, he severed one of his arms with a furious blow then raged towards the door.

Armed only with the knowledge that they were wearing wedding dresses, he barked out orders to all those around him then hurried to the stables to avail himself of his fastest horse. He wasn't about to just leave the hunt to his flunkies, this was a matter of extreme urgency and he was going to take part himself. Nobody in his employ was going to be allowed to sit this one out. No stone was going to be left unturned until he'd found them.

Within ten minutes of Kansan breaking the news, the city was swamped with Axion's men. Kicking in doors, breaking open barrels and smashing through hay bails, they started tearing the city apart to find his missing brides. Anyone in their way was simply batted aside. These were men of violence. With barely an IQ point between them, they didn't know any other way. Hunting every nook and cranny for the girls, they left a trail of destruction in their wake. Had any of them had any intelligence, they might have realised that there was a far better way, but alas, they did not. Thankfully for Axion, however, there *was* one man out there with an education. That man was himself. Rather than destroying the city and battering the public, he led his party of seven flunkies, on horseback, up the main street asking those he passed whether they'd seen two girls in wedding dresses run past. Much to his annoyance, he didn't have much luck at first. Nobody appeared to have seen them. Just as he was beginning to think they'd disappeared into thin air, however, his luck changed. As he cantered up the street near the girl's house, he asked a group of conversing peasants and finally received a positive answer. As one, the peasants all pointed in the same direction looking somewhat in awe of his magnificent steed and high class finery. At last, he'd picked up their trail. Following the trail, he repeated the question to all he passed as he galloped forth. Having been pointed in the same direction for over a mile, it soon became obvious to Axion where the girls were heading. Looking thoughtful, he pulled his horse to a halt and looked to the flunky on his right.)

AXION: They're attempting to flee to Castaria from the looks of things.

GRISTLEY: They are?

AXION: This road heads to the northern gates of the city. Beyond those gates there's only one road, the northern highway to the Castaria border!

(He smirked knowingly.)

AXION: We'll catch them up in no time. With any luck they've been held up and haven't even passed through the city gates yet. We've got them! Come on.

(With that, he set his horse in motion once again and galloped ahead. With a shrug, his flunkies all followed suit.

Just as Axion had hoped, the two fleeing brides had indeed not passed through the city gates. It wasn't that they'd made slow progress, they'd got there quicker than either of them could possibly have expected. The problem, as it so often was for females in this country, was the law. Women were forbidden from exiting the city unless they were escorted by a male. As soon as they'd attempted to leave, a guard had stepped in their path and immediately ordered them to halt. He then reminded them they were an all female party before sending them back into the city. Getting to Castaria, it seemed, was going to be difficult, especially if they couldn't even get out of their own home city. Thankfully, Kyrie had come up with a plan. Finding a male to escort her had never been a problem and she immediately set about finding one. Within moments, she'd convinced a drooling young man to help them exit the city. Annoyingly for her however, he'd demanded payment in advance. And so, while Cayley waited impatiently by the city gates, Kyrie found herself kneeling behind some barrels, giving the fellow a thorough oral pleasuring. As soon as she finished the deed, she climbed to her feet, wiped the evidence from her face then reached for his hand. Infuriatingly, however, the lad just slipped his manhood away, laughed at her then started to run off. Not about to let him get away with such a thing, Kyrie growled and raced after him.

Moments later, Kyrie returned to Cayley with a smile on her face and an unconscious young man under her arm. Looking pleased with herself she paced up to the guards on the gate and beamed as Cayley rushed over to her.)

KYRIE: Got a male escort. Can we pass now?

(As the guard looked at her in uncertainty, Cayley nudged her side and murmured to her.)

CAYLEY: You've got some weird, white gooey stuff round your mouth.

KYRIE: I have?

(She placed her finger in the offending substance and placed it on the tip of her tongue.)

KYRIE: Don't worry, it's only cum.

(As Cayley winced and hid her face, Kyrie looked to the guard again.)

KYRIE: Well? Can we pass?

(The guard mused to himself then looked to his comrade.)

GUARD 1: I'm not sure that really passes as an escort, to be honest. What do you think?

GUARD 2: Well, he *is* male. But an escort... can he escort you in such a state? That's the question.

(Having studied the nation's laws one weekend and memorized every single one, the highly intelligent Cayley looked thoughtful then spoke up.)

CAYLEY: He's only sleeping. The law doesn't say he needs to be awake, just that he needs to be with us when we leave the city.

(The guards looked to one another once more.)

GUARD 1: I'm not sure, an escort is supposed to be someone who can keep you safe.

CAYLEY: In theory yes, but we're talking about law not theories. The law doesn't mention a *capable* escort. Just a male one and that's what he is.

KYRIE: He is! I know; I've seen his cock.

(Once again, Cayley hid her face in shame.)

GUARD 1: I suppose we could let you through.

GUARD 2: We could... but I'm still not sure.

(Kyrie sighed then whispered to Cayley.)

KYRIE: Shall I show them my tits? That usually works when it comes to making men do stuff.

(She nodded firmly.)

KYRIE: I will. Failing that, I'll just have to suck them off.

(Cayley scoffed at her harshly and furrowed her brow.)

CAYLEY: No need, Kyrie!

(She rolled her eyes in despair.)

CAYLEY: I'll use *my* secret weapon instead.

(With that, she stepped before the two guards and pouted at them sorrowfully.)

CAYLEY: Please...

(Her voice then turned extremely weak and tears welled in her eyes.)

CAYLEY: Please let us pass; we'll be in trouble if we don't go to Castaria.

(As she stood before them sobbing and sniffing in the most pitiful manner, the two guards looked to one another wearing guilty expressions.)

CAYLEY: Please, mister... my mummy and daddy will spank me if you don't.

(Unable to stand the sight of a child crying before them, they both stepped aside. Feeling horribly guilty, one of the guards nodded to his comrade then gestured towards the gate.)

GUARD 1: There you go; I don't want you getting in trouble on my account.

(As the second guard opened the gate, he smiled to them warmly.)

GUARD 2: Off you go, you've got an escort after all so who are we to stop you? You go home to your mummy and daddy.

(Cayley immediately stopped crying and beamed.)

CAYLEY: Thanks!

(With that, she skipped through the open gate and glanced over her shoulder.)

CAYLEY: Come on, Kyrie.

(Kyrie forced a single laugh then headed through after her with the young lad under her arm.)

KYRIE: Nice work, sister face.

(As soon as they were out of the city, however, Kyrie promptly dropped the young lad on his face and reached for Cayley's hand.)

KYRIE: Let's go.

CAYLEY: Let's. But you're not dragging me this time.

(With that, she started to race away. Kyrie watched her go then grinned.)

KYRIE: So cute.

(She then raced away to join her. Left behind, the two guards watched them go and grimaced uneasily.)

GUARD 1: She just dropped that guy on his face.

GUARD 2: He's not their escort at all!

GUARD 1: And the little one cheered up a bit quick, I reckon.

(They both sighed.)

GUARD 1: We just fell for the oldest trick in the book, didn't we? The crying little girl routine.

GUARD 2: Yup! Let's tell nobody.

GUARD 1: Agreed.

(Finally free of the city, Kyrie and Cayley hastened forth. Although they were out of the city, they knew they were far from out of danger. Axion's men could still find them at any moment. After all, men were allowed to leave the city whenever they pleased. The girls knew they didn't just have to get out of the city; they had to get out of sight of it and hopefully, out of the country.

As they bounded forth, Kyrie stared straight ahead looking determined. Being very much physically fit, she could easily run all day. At her side, however, Cayley was beginning to

look the worse for wear. Wearing a sorrowful pout, she glanced to Kyrie and spoke up in an exhausted voice.)

CAYLEY: Sorry I can't run faster, Kyrie. I'm like a tortoise. You'd have been in Castaria by now if it wasn't for me.

(Kyrie looked to her blankly then scoffed.)

KYRIE: Rubbish, if it wasn't for you, I'd be back in the city still, sucking off those guards.

(She grinned.)

KYRIE: Which would have been okay, one of them was kinda fit and judging by the bulge in his leather codpiece he was hung like a...

(Cayley swiftly glared at her.)

CAYLEY: I'm ten years old, Kyrie, I don't want to know!

(She rolled her eyes then sighed inwardly.)

CAYLEY: Sorry. I'm tense. I've only got little legs so I'm slow and I'm knackered already. If we get caught it'll be all my fault.

(Much to Cayley's amazement, Kyrie stopped running and grabbed her by the arm.)

CAYLEY: Ouch!!!

(Looking extremely serious, Kyrie placed both her hands on Cayley's upper arms and spoke to her in an authoritative voice.)

KYRIE: Stop that!!! If we get caught, we get caught; it's not your fault. None of this is...

(Cayley pouted at her.)

CAYLEY: But...

KYRIE: Don't! If we're going to get away you need to be the smart one, not the whiney one. I'm the dumbest person ever to walk the face of the planet, Cayley. I'm relying on you just as much as you're relying on me. We're in this together, okay? So, we go as fast as *you* can go. (As she looked into Kyrie's eyes, Cayley smiled.)

CAYLEY: You know, you're not as dumb as you make out.

KYRIE: No? I failed languages at school because I spelled my name wrong on the test paper. I'm pretty bloody dumb, Cayley.

CAYLEY: Yeah, but what you said about us needing each other just now, that wasn't dumb, that was perfect.

(Kyrie shrugged.)

KYRIE: Well, when you talk as much as I do, now and again you're bound to get something right. It's called the law of physics.

CAYLEY: Averages!

KYRIE: What?

CAYLEY: It's the law of averages.

KYRIE: Well whatever it is, I think I proved my point. Now come on.

(As she started to race away, Cayley grabbed her hand and ran alongside her.)

KYRIE: Thought you didn't want me to drag you.

CAYLEY: I don't. I just want to hold your hand while we run.

(They shared a warm smile. Whereas they'd been livid with one another only a short while ago, they were now the best of friends. This was very much the way their relationship worked. No matter how much their personalities clashed, underneath it all there was a deep mutual respect and admiration. Cayley idolised her big sister. Kyrie was always there for her and it meant the world to her. She didn't like Kyrie's frankness, her slutty ways or her annoying habit of speaking her mind at the worst possible moment but she was happy to tolerate all her foibles. In her eyes, these few faults paled into insignificance compared to the myriad of things she loved about her. Cayley's love for Kyrie was very much a mutual entity. Kyrie doted on her little sister and she loved nothing more than spending time with

her. They'd been extremely close since their mother's death, some five years before hand, and no minor falling out was ever going to break that bond.

As they raced forth side by side through the Anoseta countryside, Cayley looked to Kyrie and spoke up in a nervous voice.)

CAYLEY: Do you think we'll make it?

(Kyrie looked to her wearing a blank expression.)

KYRIE: Make what?

CAYLEY: To Castaria?

KYRIE: I hope so.

CAYLEY: That's not what I asked.

(Kyrie puffed out nervously.)

KYRIE: Look, if we keep running like this then yeah, I think we can.

CAYLEY: But you're not sure?

KYRIE: No. I'm not even sure we're running in the right direction.

CAYLEY: We are, but... the border's miles away still.

KYRIE: Okay...

(She bit her lip.)

KYRIE: Doesn't matter. Until Axion catches us up...

CAYLEY: *If* he catches us up!

KYRIE: Whatever. As long as he isn't here, there's a chance; and we have to try and take it, no matter how slim it is.

(Cayley nodded, slightly reassured by her words.)

CAYLEY: Okay.

(Sadly, right at that moment, their hopes of evading Axion and his men degenerated from slim to non-existent right before their eyes. They'd barely made it a mile from the city when they were overtaken by two of Axion's flunkies on horse back. Looking mortified, Kyrie and Cayley both slowed to a jog and looked around themselves. Grinning like Cheshire cats, seven of Axion's hired thugs were swiftly starting to box them in and surround them with their stallions. Wearing a nervous expression as the space between themselves and the horses narrowed rapidly, Kyrie looked to Cayley and grimaced.)

KYRIE: Do you think they've spotted us?

(Unable to believe she'd asked such a ridiculous question, Cayley whimpered.)

CAYLEY: Yes!

(As the two lead horses stopped and blocked their path, Kyrie sighed despondently. Their run was at an end. She'd hoped the flunkies were just passing and hadn't seen them. It was a vain hope and obscenely optimistic but nevertheless, having it dashed was mortifying.

Completely boxed in by thugs on horseback, the two girls squeezed one another's hands and trembled. Their escape had been thwarted. Resigned to that failure, they both hung their heads. In complete contrast, the horseman at the back of the pack, Axion, was overjoyed. Wearing a delighted expression, he leapt down from his horse and stepped in front of it to confront the girls.)

AXION: You know, ladies, the word mistake is kind of overused in my opinion. I remember once, I got dressed in the dark and accidentally put my vest on back to front. That wasn't a mistake...

(He looked to the trembling girls and smiled.)

AXION: Forgetting to sugar your tea, that's not a mistake either. Nor is serving red wine with pork, rather than white. Crossing *me*, however...

(He scowled at them both harshly then raised his voice.)

AXION: That is!

(As Kyrie and Cayley looked to one another and shuddered, Axion rubbed his chin thoughtfully, much to the amusement of his seven watching flunkies. Axion could make very amusing speeches when he was livid and they fully expected him to crush the girls with sarcasm.)

AXION: So, care to explain this little foray into the countryside?

(He looked to his lead flunky and scowled.)

AXION: Dismount. All of you.

(As his men climbed from their horses, Axion scoffed.)

AXION: Maybe you were picking flowers to make a bouquet? Or were you going for a run to work up an appetite before the wedding dinner?

(He looked to them and raised an eyebrow.)

AXION: Well, ladies?

(With Kyrie and Cayley silent, Axion shook his head.)

AXION: I'd love to mock you for longer but alas, we don't have time. The weddings must go ahead this afternoon, so here's what we'll do. We'll take you back, get married *then* I'll dish out the punishments.

(He looked to Kyrie and nodded.)

AXION: I'll rape *you*, I think.

(Kyrie just shook her head. She always knew that if he wanted to consummate the marriage that's exactly what he'd have to do. As much as she loved sex, she despised this man. From the moment she'd been told her grandfather had sold her to him, she'd had nothing but contempt for him. Caring very little for the scornful glance Kyrie was giving him, Axion then looked to Cayley.)

AXION: And you... a severe battering might do the trick.

(As soon as he finished his sentence, Cayley's head hung low but Kyrie's pricked up and a red mist descended over her. Axion had lit the blue touch paper. Threatening her precious little sister with a battering had brought out the fire in her. Before Axion could say another word, she released a scream of fury that sent all the horses scattering about the countryside. Looking lost and bewildered, Axion just froze as Kyrie launched into two of his burly flunkies.)

AXION: What the fuck?

(As Cayley scrambled away, all seven of Axion's men swarmed at Kyrie in a bid to subdue her rage. Completely unperturbed by their move, Kyrie swiftly placed her hands on one of the men's shoulders and used him to spring herself up and over their heads. Thrown by her swift disappearance, the gang of heavies thudded into each other, head first, two of them getting knocked out by the impact. Wasting no time whatsoever, as soon as her feet touched the ground, Kyrie spun around and high kicked another flunky on the back of the head, knocking him out cold before any of them even had a chance to see where she'd landed.

(Watching on, Axion's jaw dropped.)

AXION: She's fucking quick!!!

(At once his face clouded over.)

AXION: Take her down!!! Use bats if you have to. Just subdue the bitch

(Heeding his words, his remaining four men all drew their batons and charged at her. Within seconds, the first lashed his baton at her only to drop down dead seconds later from a high kick to the face.)

AXION: Fuck!!!

(He seethed to himself. This was supposed to be an easy capture but it was turning out to be quite the opposite. He'd heard she was good at hand to hand combat but only now was he finding out *how* good. She'd even used the technique of releasing a primal scream

successfully. He'd seen many of his men do it for show, but he'd never witnessed the benefits of it when it was done properly before. The scream was used to channel rage away from the mind and allow the fighter to focus. When used properly, it enhanced the fighter's ability allowing them to gain strength from their rage rather than having it cloud their judgment. It took an exceptional fighter to master this technique and that's exactly what Kyrie was. The fight was only a few seconds old and already four of Axion's flunkies were out of the game. Despite only having three men left standing, however, Axion remained oddly confident of victory. All he needed to do was adjust his priorities.)

AXION: Fuck it! Kill the bitch!!! Use your swords!!! Forget the capture, kill her and I'll just marry the little one!

(From her safe vantage point some thirty feet away, the little one, Cayley, scowled, picked up a stone then threw it at Axion's head. As the stone landed nearer to herself than its intended target she hung her head and sighed.)

CAYLEY: I suck!

(Quick to realise that she was powerless, therefore utterly reliant on Kyrie to win the fight and save them both, she clasped praying hands together and whimpered.)

CAYLEY: You can do it, Kyrie!

(With the three remaining flunkies now attempting to strike her down with their blades, Kyrie had switched her focus to defending then attempting to counter rather than an all out assault. With them snarling and lashing swords at her however, it was proving something of a challenge. Thankfully, for once in her life, her focus was perfect.)

AXION: What are you waiting for??? Kill the fucking bitch!!!

(Just then, as two of the three men continued to try and imbed their swords into Kyrie's body, Cayley screamed out in horror. The third flunky had sneaked away from the fight and placed a knife at Cayley's throat.)

FLUNKY: Surrender or...

(Seemingly from out of nowhere, the flunky was then pounced upon by a large, wolf-like beast. These wild savages, known as Grendiths were the scourge of the countryside. So many innocent people had gone to their deaths at the jaws of these beasts but today, Cayley owed her life to one. As the flunky was savaged to death by the creature, to add insult to his fatal injuries, Kyrie hadn't even heard him call out and the fight had gone on without even the merest pause to acknowledge him. Dodging blades with bewildering agility, she was infuriating the flunkies immensely. The last thing they'd expected was the girls to put up a fight, especially such an effective one. Flustered and bitter at their failures, the remaining duo continued to try and strike her down, but nothing seemed to be working. She simply moved too fast for them to make an effective lunge. Being thugs rather than intelligent fighters, their tactics had been foolish. All out violence was a ridiculous tactic when facing someone with the skill to defend against it and counter attack. Only one of the flunkies had made an intelligent move and he was currently being savaged by a grendith. Had they simply captured Cayley and threatened her life, Kyrie would have swiftly surrendered. Instead, Axion had to watch as his seven men had decreased to a miserly two.)

AXION: Crap, crap, crap, crap, crap!!! My money!!! For fuck sake, kill her!!!

(His shoulders sunk.)

AXION: Oh, come on!!! Please!!!

(Unable to even get close to landing a blow, one of the flunkies looked to his comrade and seethed.)

FLUNKY 2: She's too fucking quick.

(His comrade glanced back at him and growled.)

FLUNKY 3: I know!



(In that moment, the opportunity Kyrie had been waiting for had arrived. They'd both lost their focus and looked away from her. Needing no second invitation, she launched her attack. Snarling venomously, she leapt back then kicked both her legs high into the air, booting their blades clean out of their hands. As their blades flew upwards, they looked to one another in horror then glared at Kyrie.)

KYRIE: Now *nobody* has a sword!!!

(With that, she high kicked one of them backwards before rounding on the other with a flurry of punches. As both men crashed to earth, she bounced on the balls of her feet and growled.)

KYRIE: Get up!!!

(Looking extremely livid, the flunkies both attempted to do just that when, suddenly, their swords rained back down to earth. One landed squarely in a flunky's torso, the other imbedded itself in his comrade's head. Barely able to believe her eyes, Kyrie stared at the last sword to land for a moment then turned to face an astonished Cayley.)

KYRIE: Did you see that???

(As Cayley gaped in astonishment, Kyrie grinned innocently.)

KYRIE: I actually meant to do that.

(She giggled to herself for a moment then her face dropped. Having caught sight of a horrified Axion in the corner of her eye, her nostrils twitched and a growl emanated from her lips.)

KYRIE: You wanker!!!!

(Looking absolutely livid, she stomped over to the three flunkies she hadn't killed and stamped on their heads to make sure they wouldn't get up any time soon. She then bounded over to Axion. Looking deeply distressed, Cayley raced over to her as she grabbed the backtracking Axion by the collar and snarled.)

CAYLEY: We should run, he might have more on the way.

(Kyrie snarled.)

KYRIE: "Moron" is right.

CAYLEY: No, I said "more on the way"... never mind. We should go.

KYRIE: Wait...

(Kyrie snarled harder into Axion's face.)

KYRIE: You bastard. I should kill you right now.

(She growled then threw him down onto his back.)

KYRIE: Fuck off, you're not worth it.

(Axion scrambled to his feet then fled back towards the city.)

AXION: Righto!!!

(In that moment, Kyrie had made the biggest mistake that any human being could ever make. Not only had she and her sister damaged this man's hopes of getting his hands on the fortune he longed for, but they'd humiliated him twice. First by rejecting the idea of marrying him and again when Kyrie manhandled him. This wasn't something he'd ever forgive and consequences were inevitable. To stop that from happening, if ever a murder would have been justified, it would have been then.

As she watched him flee back towards the city, Kyrie sighed out loud then looked to her trembling sister.)

KYRIE: You're a nervous wreck.

(Cayley pouted.)

CAYLEY: The bad man got me. Luckily there was a grendith... it bit his face off.

KYRIE: Yeah, we need to be alert for them out here, don't we?

(With that, they threw their arms around each other for a hug. Things had looked extremely bleak only a short moment ago. They were surrounded by Axion's men and were convinced

they were going to be forced back to the city to wed and suffer the consequences of their actions. Instead, they were alone in the wilderness and Axion was rapidly becoming a small dot on the horizon. Once again, they had hope. Thanks to Kyrie's skills they could breathe a sigh of relief and resume their desperate bid to reach the border. Taking a moment to check Cayley was alright before suggesting they set off again, Kyrie stepped back and looked warmly into her eyes.)

KYRIE: You gonna be okay?

CAYLEY: Yeah, I'll be fine.

KYRIE: Scary, wasn't it?

CAYLEY: Fucking terrifying!

(Much to Cayley's utter dismay and horror, Kyrie then turned her round and slapped her backside with tremendous force. As Kyrie let her go, Cayley rubbed her backside rigorously and pouted at her in considerable distress.)

CAYLEY: You hit me!!!

KYRIE: You swore!

CAYLEY: You're not allowed to hit me, I'm telling...

(As the stark realisation of their situation hit her, her shoulders sunk and a tear ran down her cheek.)

CAYLEY: Nobody to tell...

(She shuddered as a chill ran down her spine.)

CAYLEY: Oh my god, Kyrie... we're on our own.

(Kyrie nodded at her knowingly.)

KYRIE: Yeah, we are.

(Cayley looked back towards the city and pouted.)

CAYLEY: We're really on our own. We're gonna have to fend for ourselves.

(Kyrie looked to her in uncertainty.)

KYRIE: Yeah, I know... have you just figured that out?

CAYLEY: I... yeah.

KYRIE: Wow. And people say *I'm* slow.

CAYLEY: You *are* slow.

(She sighed.)

CAYLEY: With all the panicking it didn't sink in before. We've only got... each other.

(A terrified look crossed her brow and she stared at Kyrie in dismay.)

CAYLEY: You're my guardian!!!

(Kyrie shook her head and sighed.)

KYRIE: I know. Cayley, you're ten years old and I'm your only role model now. Think about it...

CAYLEY: I'd rather not.

KYRIE: I'm a terrible influence! I'm a slut, I'm as vain as hell and I embarrass everyone I meet. I'm not going to have you turning out like me, Cayley. You're going to be a nice girl and if that means walloping you when you're naughty then so be it.

(With that, she grabbed her hand and started to lead her away.)

KYRIE: Now hurry up; we need to get as far away from this place as possible.

(As Cayley raced along at her side, she sighed and looked to Kyrie nervously.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie?

KYRIE: Yeah?

CAYLEY: Turning out like you wouldn't be so bad.

KYRIE: Yes it would.

CAYLEY: Not to me. I like the way you are most of the time.

(Kyrie gave her a warm smile.)

KYRIE: Thanks.

CAYLEY: Yeah, you're a total slut and most definitely vain. You can also be embarrassing but... I love you anyway.

(Kyrie smiled at her lovingly.)

KYRIE: I love you too, sister face.

(As they raced on towards the Castaria border, a million thoughts passed through Cayley's mind. What would become of them once they reached Castaria? Where would they live? How would they support themselves? They were all questions she had no answer to. All she knew was that her life had changed forever. It was impossible to know what to expect and she could only hope that wherever they ended up, they'd somehow manage to live happy lives there. Being highly intelligent, running away like this was far harder for Cayley than it was for her sister. Kyrie's simple mind understood very little. All she knew was that they were alone, on the run and needed to survive. Cayley, however, understood exactly what that meant and exactly what hardships they'd face. In this situation, her gifted mind really was a curse.

As they raced onwards, Kyrie's brain was pre-occupied by one troubling thought. During the fight, one of Axion's flunkies had swept past on her blindside and had put Cayley's life in danger. If they were ever in a battle situation again, she couldn't afford to make the same mistake. Realising they'd need a system where Cayley could attract her attention if she was ever in danger, she raced on. Satisfied with her idea about making Cayley raise the alarm if she was in trouble, her mind then wandered back to the all the shoes she'd had to leave behind. A pout formed on her lips and she sighed all the way to the border.

Forty minutes later, having made his way back home from the wilderness, Axion was decidedly livid. Looking exhausted to say the least, he staggered back into his study and threw himself down in an easy chair.)

AXION: Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck!!!

(Already in the study, having awaited his return, his chief aide, Rico rushed to his side with a freshly poured brandy.)

RICO: Brandy, sir?

(Axion swiped the glass from his hand and rushed the contents down his throat. Screwing up his face as the taste hit his tongue; he shuddered then threw the empty glass across the room.)

AXION: I'm fucking pissed off, Rico!

RICO: Would you rather have a whisky then, sir?

(Axion scowled at him.)

AXION: I'm not pissed off about the drink!

(Rico looked most taken aback.)

RICO: Oh... then...

AXION: Yeah, the bitches got away.

RICO: Damn!

(He sucked his teeth and looked to Axion with uncertainty.)

RICO: What are you going to do now?

(Axion glanced at him for a moment then a dark look descended onto his face.)

AXION: I'll tell you what I'm gonna do. Fetch me a woman to marry, doesn't matter who it is just make sure she's pretty! Beautiful in fact.

RICO: Consider it done.

(Axion looked thoughtful for a moment then raised his palm to him.)

AXION: Scratch that. On second thoughts, I'll find my own woman. I've seen your girlfriend, Rico. When it comes to beautiful women you and I see things very differently.

(Rico looked far from amused.)

RICO: Damn that's kinda harsh, boss.

(Axion scoffed.)

AXION: Harsh? Bullshit! I'll tell you what's harsh. Having two ungrateful bitches run out on you on your wedding day! The two bitches I'd chosen personally, no less.

(He growled.)

AXION: Well, if they think they can just run off like that and deprive me of my inheritance, they're very much mistaken.

(He looked to Rico with a stern glint in his eye.)

AXION: I'll marry some other bint instead. The church is still booked, after all.

RICO: Good idea.

(Axion shook his head.)

AXION: No, the good bit is yet to come.

RICO: It is?

AXION: Yeah. As soon as I've married this person, Cheyenne probably, I'm going to take our wedding registration to the trustee then he'll have no excuse not to pay out as soon as I turn thirty next week.

(He snarled.)

AXION: And you know what I'm going to do as soon I get the money?

RICO: No idea, sir.

AXION: I'm going to hire every mercenary, assassin and summoner I can get my hands on.

(Rico looked stunned.)

RICO: Damn.

AXION: Whatever it takes to make them bitches pay, I'll do it. I want their heads mounted on my wall, Rico.

(Rico looked uncertain.)

RICO: Are you sure about that, boss? Only it seems a bit...

AXION: A bit what?

RICO: Over the top.

(Axion glared at him and growled.)

AXION: Is it? Is it?

RICO: I didn't mean to upset you, I'm just saying...

AXION: Well don't!

(He exhaled bitterly.)

AXION: They humiliated me, Rico. I won't rest until I know they're dead and our so-called hard men aren't going to get the job done.

RICO: No?

AXION: No. If we sent them out there now, in two weeks time they'd still be looking for two girls in wedding dresses. They don't think they just attack.

(He sighed.)

AXION: This is a job for trained killers, not common thugs. The older one is brilliant fighter and incredibly agile, she killed four of the seven men I took with me.

RICO: Damn.

AXION: And the little one, well, if she's the genius they reckon she is... outsmarting our idiots would be a doddle. I need to hire professionals for this one.

RICO: Yeah. Or... hear me out, boss....

(Axion looked uncertain.)

AXION: You have a better idea?

RICO: Maybe, I'm just thinking... those two girls are fleeing to Castaria, right? So that means they're no longer the best looking in Anoseta.

AXION: And?

RICO: Well, if you marry Cheyenne instead, like you were going to in the first place, you'll still have the best looking wife in all Anoseta, like you wanted.

(He shrugged.)

RICO: So, I was thinking, all's well that ends well. Marry Cheyenne this afternoon and you'll have the best looking wife and get your inheritance. Why waste millions hunting down those two girls?

(Axion just shook his head emptily.)

AXION: You don't get it, do you?

RICO: I don't?

AXION: You're right, with those two gone; Cheyenne is the best looking one. Fine, I accept that. If I marry her, I'll still get my inheritance, good, great. It's not about that. They humiliated me! They made me look like a right wanker.

(Rico nodded with understanding.)

RICO: Fair enough.

AXION: They rejected me; that's going to look bad. Jilted on my wedding day, for fuck sake. That's embarrassing enough. Then the older one physically violated my being.

(He visibly started to seethe.)

AXION: It makes my blood boil, Rico. Nobody makes a tosser out of *me*.

(He looked to Rico with resolve etched on his angry brow.)

AXION: However long it takes, no matter how much it costs, I'm going to hunt those bitches down and I'm not going to rest until both their heads are mounted on my wall!

(As Axion sat and seethed, Rico bit his lip nervously. He'd known Axion for a long time and he was in absolutely no doubt that he meant business. Axion was rarely predictable but of this one fact, Rico was absolutely certain. As long as there was a single breath left in Axion's body, he'd never let up in his determination to have the two girls killed.)

## *Chapter One - A Knight to Remember.*

### ***TWO YEARS LATER...***

The numerous evil demons and dark entities that plagued this world always had one thing in common. As if stuck in some bizarre collective mind-set, their methods never varied in any way, shape or form. No matter what sickening deed they were trying to achieve they'd always go about it in the same way. Their reign of tyranny would always start with a few threats and culminate in an untimely end for several unfortunate female virgins.

Needless to say, when evil came to a town the ugliest women quite often headed for the hills. Sadly for them, with so many wild beasts roaming in the hills, they seldom fared any better up there. All these unfortunate ladies could hope for was that their father loved them enough to invite his friend round to close his eyes, swallow his dignity and give her a good seeing to, thus removing her from the sacrificial menu. Alas, in a time where a lady's chastity was still considered sacrosanct, this favour was rarely granted to them. With this axe permanently hanging over their heads, these truly were dark times for the less aesthetically gifted of the fairer sex.

Why those with a hellish desire to kill and terrorise people had this obsession with female virgins, nobody knew. Some elders had suggested they may have wanted virgins for their purity, an unadulterated sacrifice to offer to their deity. This suggestion was always being countered however by the point that, any evil would surely much rather have an experienced sex kitten who isn't slow in giving out the goodies. After all, what would a rampant evil want a good girl for unless he's thinking of learning embroidery or needs someone to darn his socks? Dismissing the idea of virgins being preferred for their purity, the elders had long conceded that the reasoning behind it remained a mystery they may never solve.

Having devoted his life to defending mankind from these evils, Knight of the realm, Sir Hapslock of Leavesbury had often found himself pondering the virgin question himself. At twenty fours years of age, the youngest knight in the nation of Castaria's history, he'd sought the wisdom of many an elder knight on the subject but remained none the wiser. Convinced that a better understanding of his enemies would help mankind eventually defeat them all, he was determined to find out the truth. With this in mind, he'd opted out of guarding royalty, an easy job with a million perks, and volunteered to be a field knight. These brave men, wandered nomadically all over the Castaria nation battling evil and protecting the innocent in whatever village or town they happened to be passing through. Three years into the job, now aged twenty seven, having faced and defeated several evils, he still didn't have an answer. Despite pressing the dark souls and demanding to know the root of their virgin obsession, the reason had never been forthcoming. Determined to keep trying, he'd consciously made it his goal to find the answer someday. Only once he truly knew what drove his enemies, did he believe he could rid the world of them for all eternity. With this as his driving force, he wandered proudly across the nation, saving lives and changing the world for the better in his quest for knowledge. He was the rarest of heroes at a time when the world needed one the most.

*Melville Peak, Outside Little Dudley Village, North Castaria, 1pm...*

Rampaging with all the ferocity of a raging bull, Sir Hapslock's blade was no more than a blur at times but still his enemy stood strong. Despite unleashing everything he had with all

his might, he hadn't even landed a single blow on his foe's odd looking body. Even his powerful fire magic hadn't managed to break through its defences. As an accomplished and capable knight, this most definitely wasn't what he was used to. This eight foot tall, slimy blob of flesh with a giant mouth, freakishly long arms and massive hands was deceptively agile. Heavy set with rolls of flab hanging over its large feet, its entire body looked reminiscent of a beer gut with face drawn at the top of it. To look at it, one would naturally assume this odd looking creature's weakness would be a lack of speed. Alas this wasn't the case. The flabby, slime-covered freak had managed to jump out of the range of every incoming slash from the knight's blade and absorb his fire spells with the palms of its hands, all with consummate ease.

Confident in his own ability, this complete lack of success in trying to land a blow wasn't about to dishearten Sir Hapslock, not even for a moment. Trusting his instincts, he continued with his relentless onslaught, chopping and slashing at the beast with all his might. A strong believer in the theory that attack is the best form of defence, he kept trying to land a blow, reassured by the fact that the beast's constant need to defend itself offered it little opportunity to take the offensive and strike back at him.

While he battled the beast under the burning sun atop the impressive mountain, the villagers in nearby Little Dudley prayed. For months on end, this vile creature had demanded a virgin sacrifice every single day with promises of a massacre if they didn't deliver. Every day at noon they'd drag a different terrified female virgin, kicking and screaming up the mountain trail to meet her doom. It was a horrible undertaking to have forced upon them, which had left the people in disarray. Now there was finally a chance to end this morbid cycle. Unfortunately, there was also a chance that things could get worse. Their very fate lay in the hands of this one brave knight. Should he succeed, their nightmare would be over. Should he fail, the consequences would be dire. The beast would undoubtedly take out his wrath on each and every single one of them. He was their only hope.

While the entire village of Little Dudley gathered at the edge of town, praying for their hero's triumphant return, the man in question, Sir Hapslock was still laying siege to the beast's body with relentless determination. With concentration etched on his brow, the good knight lashed his sword at arms length to strike the beast's torso and unleashed a fireball with his free hand at the same time. Reacting with astonishing speed, the beast somehow hopped back to avoid the blade and swiftly raised one of its giant slimy hands to quell the red hot flame. Undeterred, Hapslock just gritted his teeth and leapt forward to violently crash his blade down on the foe from over his head. Once again, the slimy nuisance simply hopped out of harm's way to one side. Keeping up his intensity with extreme focus, Hapslock simply swung out his arm maintaining the momentum from his overhead swing to lash the blade towards the beast once more. Again, the oddball creature evaded his swing. Still refusing to give up, Hapslock steadied his footing then raged forward once again. Growling as he focussed his energies into his blade, he released an almighty swing towards the beast's fattened belly. As always, the beast hopped out of harm's way, only this time it retaliated with an attack of its own. Almost nonchalantly, it twisted slightly to unleash a blindly fast flailing of its long arm. With an obscenely large hand flailing towards him, Sir Hapslock didn't stand a chance and could only gasp as the slimy extremity batted him into the air. Sent flying backwards towards the rocky ground some twenty feet away, Sir Hapslock thudded to earth and bounced several times, his heavy metallic armour mimicking the sounds of a kitchen related disaster. With one final loud clang, he landed flat on his back and stared up at the blinding sun above. Mistaking the bright light for a call from heaven, he squinted and gritted his teeth.

HAPSLOCK: I'm not ready. Mustn't go into the light... must fight on.  
(Looking determined, he snarled and leapt to his feet. Relieved to discover he wasn't dead, he tightened his grip on his sword and took a deep breath.)  
HAPSLOCK: Close one. Good thing I didn't buy a cheap helmet.  
(He tapped his helmet approvingly then scowled at the beast and gritted his teeth.)  
HAPSLOCK: That was a lucky slap, fiend! This time I'm...  
(Much to his annoyance, the slimy oddball leant back and laughed heartily. As Hapslock sneered, it then scoffed at him in a deep, booming voice.)  
MELMEREX: You amuse me.  
HAPSLOCK: What?  
MELMEREX: You are weak and puny yet you challenge the mighty Melmerex.  
(Hapslock raised a curious eyebrow.)  
HAPSLOCK: Melmerex?  
(Melmerex growled.)  
MELMEREX: Do not speak my name. You are unworthy.  
(Hapslock scoffed.)  
HAPSLOCK: I'll be the judge of that!  
MELMEREX: Foolish human! You have already *been* judged. You are weak and pathetic. You're no more than an annoying fly, buzzing around my head, waiting to be swatted.  
HAPSLOCK: Well, that's just...  
(Remembering how he'd just got in Melmerex's face with several minutes worth of futile attacks only to be swatted away in one flick of his wrist, he paused and bit his lip.)  
HAPSLOCK: Okay, I can see how it'd look that way to you, but...  
(He shook his head to clear his thoughts and stood tall.)  
HAPSLOCK: Now, listen here. I've come to kill you and I bloody well will.  
(Melmerex gave another hearty laugh.)  
MELMEREX: And how do you intend to do that, weak one?  
(Hapslock gave Melmerex a knowing smirk. The last thing he wanted to do was let Melmerex know he was clueless. He'd fought many an evil in his time but none had been impervious to both his physical *and* magical assault before. Melmerex was presenting an entirely new challenge and he wasn't sure how to proceed. The only thing he knew for certain was that he'd never give up trying. The villagers in Little Dudley, especially the female virgins, were depending on him to succeed. With this in mind, he folded his arms and widened his cocky smile in an attempt to hide his uncertainty.)  
MELMEREX: Fool, you can't hide your uncertainty behind a cocky smile.  
(Hapslock scowled.)  
HAPSLOCK: I wasn't. I *am* uncertain!  
(He growled at himself.)  
HAPSLOCK: I meant cocky!  
MELMEREX: Of course you did.  
(Hapslock scoffed.)  
HAPSLOCK: I don't have to justify myself to you.  
MELMEREX: Oh but you do. You're one mere human. You can not defeat Melmerex!  
HAPSLOCK: Oh, can't I now?  
MELMEREX: No! I will not be defeated by a pathetic human like the worthless Melmero.  
HAPSLOCK: Who?  
MELMEREX: He may have been thrice my size but he bore a fraction of my might. He brought shame on our kind.  
(Hapslock scowled.)



HAPSLOCK: If you think I'm gonna stand here and listen to you waffling on about random crap, you're very much mistaken. In fact...

(With that, he charged forth with his sword aloft once more. As the knight raged towards him, Melmerex scoffed and gave a single belittling laugh. Why this lone human was persisting on challenging on him was beyond him. He'd spent the last few months terrorising a village full of puny humans and for one of them to suddenly take him on single-handed seemed laughable.)

MELMEREX: So you still haven't learned your place...

(As Hapslock charged to within a few feet of him, Melmerex bellowed.)

MELMEREX: Very well!!!

(With that, he slung a lightning fast fist towards his incoming adversary. Expecting to easily bat the impudent human back down the mountain to his death, he was shocked to see him roll under the fist and lunge for his inflated belly with an outstretched blade. As the sword cut into his skin, Melmerex screeched and instinctively lashed out at Hapslock with both fists. Reacting swiftly, Hapslock pulled his sword, leapt back to avoid them and stood tall.)

HAPSLOCK: Now who's uncertain? Eh, chummy? Answer me that one, you...

(Memorex then thrust out a giant hand and scooped him up in it. In that moment, Hapslock very much regretted asking.)

HAPSLOCK: Crap, it's me still, isn't it?

(Melmerex replied in a cold growl.)

MELMEREX: Yes! Now prepare to feel pain as I diva you whole.

(As Melmerex cranked open his giant mouth, Hapslock's eyes bulged and he kicked his legs frantically.)

HAPSLOCK: This wasn't the plan!!!

(As Melmerex drew his arm to his mouth to devour him head first, Hapslock bellowed and instinctively plunged his sword deep into Melmerex's face. In considerable agony, Melmerex flailed his arms, casting Hapslock aside before yanking the blade from his flesh and hurling it away furiously. As the good knight crashed to earth without his blade, his armour recreating the sound of falling cutlery, he knew he was in trouble. The evil beast was now livid and he had no idea where his weapon went. Defying the dazed sensation he was feeling, he scrambled to his feet and looked to Melmerex with wide eyes.)

HAPSLOCK: Oh, crap... that can't be good.

(Sure enough, Melmerex was bounding towards him in a fit of undiluted rage.)

MELMEREX: I will diva you and all your pathetic kind!!!

(Hapslock gritted his teeth and scowled before raising an outstretched hand to the furious Melmerex.)

HAPSLOCK: Wait!!!

(Looking furious, Melmerex slowed to a halt and snarled.)

MELMEREX: Wait?

HAPSLOCK: Yes, wait!

(He placed his hands on his hips and raised an inquisitive eyebrow.)

HAPSLOCK: Diva me? What does that mean?

(Melmerex snarled.)

MELMEREX: Are you mocking me?

HAPSLOCK: No, just saying, surely you mean "devour"?

(Melmerex growled under his breath.)

MELMEREX: I see... you *are* mocking me.

(A pout suddenly formed on his giant lips.)

MELMEREX: It's okay for you, this isn't my first language.

(Hapslock gave him an apologetic smile.)

HAPSLOCK: Hey, I didn't mean to...

(A tear run down the beast's cheek.)

MELMEREX: You're so insensitive. I bet I speak *your* native language better than you speak mine. You ignorant bastard.

HAPSLOCK: Look, I'm awfully sorry, I didn't mean to...

(He suddenly looked extremely annoyed with himself.)

HAPSLOCK: What the hell am I saying? I don't care about your feelings; you've been feeding on innocent human virgins for pity's sake.

(He clenched his fists.)

HAPSLOCK: If I had my sword I'd... and why is it always virgins anyway? Why?

(Melmerex snarled coldly.)

MELMEREX: I don't have to justify myself to you, foolish human.

HAPSLOCK: I'm serious, do they taste different? What? Tell me!!!

(Melmerex growled at the top of his lungs.)

MELMEREX: Less talk, more killing you!!!

(A Melmerex reached out and scooped him up again; Hapslock flailed his arms and legs in terror.)

HAPSLOCK: More talk!!! More talk!!!

(Knowing he'd get no mercy from the ruthless killer, he looked about himself desperately. Upon sighting his sword laying on the rocks a good twenty feet away, he made the futile gesture of stretching for it and scowled.)

HAPSLOCK: I knew I should have glued the fucking thing to my gauntlet!!!

(As Melmerex's mouth cranked open wide to swallow him whole, however, a devilish glint appeared in Hapslock's eyes. Staring down the throat of the hungry killer and unable to free himself he only had one option. Wearing a ferocious snarl, he bellowed from the heart of his being and thrust out his hand to release a white hot fireball into Melmerex's mouth. As the inferno raged across his tongue and down into his throat, Melmerex choked and trembled then dropped Hapslock to the ground. Feeling mightily relieved, the good knight ran to retrieve his blade then watched as the evil Melmerex staggered wide eyed across the peak grasping its neck in agony. Clearly unable to breath, the vile killer shuddered violently, desperately trying to gag. Moments later, it collapsed to the ground with a deafening thud and mumbled in a weak, gargling voice.)

MELMEREX: Defeated by a pathetic human... an eternity of shame... just like Melmero...

(As Melmerex fell silent, Hapslock craned his neck to look at him closely and whispered.)

HAPSLOCK: You dead then?

(With Melmerex motionless, Hapslock rubbed his chin thoughtfully.)

HAPSLOCK: Hmm...

(Knowing he could take no chances, he immediately set about exhausting his magic supply in torching the body with his magic. Still not satisfied, he then sliced the body into sections with his blade. Having come so close to death he knew this was no ordinary foe and he was determined to make sure Melmerex was one hundred percent undeniably dead. Only when he was satisfied this was the case did he sit down and try to recover his breath. Exhausted from the fight of his life, he removed his helmet and wiped sweat from his brow.)

HAPSLOCK: Hope I don't come up against too many of those things in future.

(Having allowed himself a few minutes to recuperate, he then took one last sigh of relief before climbing to his feet and placing his helmet under his arm.

HAPSLOCK: Excellent. My blade may be blunted and I've used all my magic, but that's my most satisfying kill yet.

(And with one last look across the peak he nodded approvingly at his days work and strolled away towards the mountain trail.)

---

In the quaint village of Little Dudley at this time, life had come to a complete stand still. The normally bustling market was empty and even the inn was deserted. Desperate to know the outcome of Sir Hapslock's battle with their tormentor, every single citizen had gathered just inside the small wall that surrounded the village. Knowing all too well that if the knight failed there'd be dire consequences for all, tensions were running extremely high. Many would have fled if they could, unwilling to risk Melmerex's wrath should Hapslock fail. Alas, fleeing this village wasn't an option. The land that surrounded this picturesque settlement was overrun with grendiths. These muscular dog-like creatures were never slow in attacking humans and such was their might and speed, the average citizen rarely survived their attacks. It was for this very reason that many citizens lived their entire lives inside the village wall, wisely too scared to venture out.

Due to attacks by grendiths and far larger predators known as cuddyfinkles, trade in the Castaria nation had suffered greatly. Transport from village to village required a heavily reinforced carriage and several well armed guards to accompany it. Due to the cost of supplying such protection many villages had had to become self-sufficient, only doing trade as a last desperate option. With every villager given an important role to keep the self-sufficient infrastructure ticking over, people could rarely afford to take time off. Today, however, was an exceptional case. With their future hanging on one knight's success, concentrating on their jobs was nigh on impossible. And so, they'd all downed tools and headed for the edge of the village to watch the mountain trail in hope of Sir Hapslock making a triumphant appearance.

With so much riding on the good knight, waiting was a slow torture for many of the citizens. Any moment now they would either be free of tyranny or made to suffer horribly for daring to challenge Melmerex. There'd either be rejoicing or terror and the outcome was completely out of their own hands. All they could do was wait. Naturally, some were more patient than others. Some looked relatively calm, others look positively distressed. One man, however, was more stressed than most. Prone to panic over even the tiniest problem, the local inn's drayman, Dexter, was at the end of his short tether. Unable to hide his fears any longer, let alone keep them to himself, he stood at the back of the assembled villagers, flapping wildly with terrified eyes.

DEXTER: He's failed, I know he has. I can sense it. Melmerex will kill us all.

(He bit his nails and screamed.)

DEXTER: I knew it was a mistake to send that knight up there. I told you, didn't I?

(As he slapped himself about the head several times, one of the marketers turned to him and scowled.)

ERIC: Will you just shut up, Dexter?

(Dexter pulled at his hair and stared at Eric.)

DEXTER: What? Did you just tell me to shut up?

(Just then, the tallest and bulkiest man in the village, the local lumberjack turned around and growled.)

WARWICK: Yes, he did!

(Dexter looked at him and gulped.)

DEXTER: Fine! But don't say I didn't warn you.

(Having silently watched the mountain trail since the knight had headed off to battle Melmerex, the villagers around Dexter then struck up a mass conversation.)

HELEN: He's always been a panicky one, that Dexter.

ERIC: Yes, and he's driving me nuts!

GRAHAM: Remember that time he dropped a beer barrel then run around the square screaming "what have I done"?

ERIC: Yeah, it wasn't even leaking. It was fine.

(Dexter placed his hand on his hips and scowled.)

DEXTER: That's not what happened! I dropped the barrel on my foot.

GRAHAM: You still ran round and round the square yelling...

DEXTER: Yeah, alright!

(He folded his arms defiantly.)

DEXTER: So, I panicked? In my defence that was an expensive barrel and I thought I'd broken it.

(He adjusted his collar and shrugged nonchalantly.)

DEXTER: If the boss had taken the cost of that barrel out of my wages I wouldn't have eaten for a month. Of course I panicked.

GRAHAM: Yeah, but to run around the square like that...

ERIC: What do you expect? Every other day he's running around the square panicking about something.

(A small female voice then popped up.)

JADE: Well, in his defence, nobody can blame him for panicking today.

(She looked to the ground shyly and kicked her heels.)

JADE: I mean... our whole future depends on that knight.

(She received several scornful looks from all around her.)

WARWICK: Slut.

GRAHAM: Filthy tart.

ERIC: Whore.

(Jade wiped a tear and hung her head in shame. Three days ago she'd been chosen as the sacrificial virgin. Having been dragged kicking and screaming to Melmerex, she'd immediately been sent back down the mountain with an angry warning only to send virgins in future. Since that moment, she'd received nothing but scorn from half the village and invites to meet her in the barn for a good time from the other half. Feeling very much the outcast, she sighed and butted out of the conversation.)

HELEN: What do you think Melmerex will do if the knight fails?

(Dexter threw his arms into the air and sprinted off towards the village square.)

DEXTER: We'll all be killed!!! We'll all be killed!!!

GRAHAM: I dread to think, Helen.

(Eric shuddered.)

ERIC: There'll be bloodshed for sure.

WARWICK: It doesn't bear thinking about. He might even kill us all!

(Jade frowned.)

JADE: I bet if he *does* vow to kill the entire village, you'll *all* be wanting to meet me in the barn!

(She skulked away muttering under her breath.)

JADE: Bloody two faced... for heaven's sake. Why am I singled out? Do they think I had sex with myself? No, once again the woman gets all the scorn, bloody typical.

(She paced back towards them and raised an angry fist.)

JADE: I'm right aren't I? Faced with death you'll all be banging on my door wanting some? Will you label yourselves sluts though? Of course not.

(With that, she stomped away mumbling again.)

JADE: Fuck sake, one quick fumble in the haystack and I'm labelled for life. Bastards.

(Eric watched her go and raised a curious eyebrow.)

ERIC: What's she mumbling about?

GRAHAM: I dunno; probably something about penises, I expect.

(They both mumbled under their breath.)

BOTH: Slut.

(Just then, an excited scream rose up from the front of the gathered villagers.)

KEVIN: He's back!!! The knight's back!!!

(At once a loud gasp of excitement filled the air and everyone crammed to the front of the throng to get a better look. Sure enough, Sir Hapslock was strutting down the mountain trail towards them wearing a gleaming white smile. At once, a loud cheer filled the air. Upon sighting the knight they knew their dreams of freedom had been realised and nobody could contain their delight. Some sat down and gasped in relief with wide smiles crossing their faces, others danced for joy and some cried elated tears. There wasn't a single villager without a song in their heart, delighting in the end of Melmerex's reign of terror.

As he approached the excited crowd, Hapslock batted a grendith out of the way and beamed. He loved moments like this. Returning a hero and receiving the adulation of the people was the one thing wandering knights lived for. Looking forward to reaching them, he stepped up his pace and headed to the village wall. Despite the jubilation in the air, the villagers knew better than to leap the wall and run to him. Grendiths were quite capable of pouncing at any time. Managing to contain themselves, they all leant over the wall clapping and calling out his name. Wearing a satisfied grin, Hapslock approached the wall then leapt over it in a single bound. As he landed the other side, he was immediately swamped by the village folk.)

KEVIN: You bleeding hero, you. You're a legend.

ELAINE: Let me buy you a pint.

MORRIS: A pint? We'll buy you a whole bleeding barrel, mate.

HAPSLOCK: Please, please, I was only doing my job.

VERNON: No way, the least we can do is ply you with booze.

AMANDA: I'll buy you a bottle of whisky.

JAMES: I'll buy you two!

KEN: Come to my house, I'll get the wife to cook you dinner.

LEE: I'll get my wife to cook you dinner *and* I'll ply you with booze.

DAN: Yeah? We'll if he comes to mine, I'll get the wife to cook for him, ply him with booze and suck his cock!

EDDIE: Right now I'm tempted to suck his cock *myself*; what a guy!

(He looked shifty and grimaced.)

EDDIE: I'm just saying he's a top bloke... I wouldn't actually do it.

AMY: I would!

(Enjoying every second of the adulation, Hapslock edged forth through the crowd before leaping up onto the first high surface he came across, a bench. Eager to make a speech, he held out his hands before him to quieten the excited crowd. Immediately a cry of "speech" came from all sections of the crowd, followed by a series of hushing noises. Moments later, the crowd fell silent. Standing tall, Hapslock placed his hands on his hips and tipped back his head.)

HAPSLOCK: Ladies and gentlemen... I return to you... victorious!

(He then bowed as the crowd released a deafening cheer. Soaking up the adulation, Hapslock nodded proudly and folded his arms. As the cheer started to die down, the good knight then cleared his throat and began to air his thoughts, much to the delight of all watching.)

HAPSLOCK: My work here in Little Dudley is done but before I go, let me tell you one thing. As a knight, I am no more than a man of the people. The people. That includes all of

us. Do not think of me as a hero, think of me as a friend. What I do, I do for all of us, the people. And what's more...

(As the crowd hung onto his every word, Hapslock then scoffed merrily.)

HAPSLOCK: Oh, sod the speech, Melmerex is dead!!!

(As the crowd erupted into a delighted frenzy of clapping and cheering, Hapslock beamed and rubbed his hands together.)

HAPSLOCK: I think I'll have that pint now, if you don't mind.

(Immediately the crowd cheered even louder and led him away to the ale house. Looking overjoyed, they patted his back and complimented him heartily all the way there.)

HAPSLOCK: Thank you. No, no, you're really quite welcome. It was my pleasure. Yes, thank you. Jade you say? And where is this barn, Jade? Oh, you're too kind. Thank you, thank you.

(As they led him into the bar determined to give him an evening fit for a hero, Hapslock only knew one thing. He was in for one hell of a fun evening. Drinking with revelling villagers was always a pleasure and these particular folk were in quite the party mood. No doubt there'd be many an ale sunk, many a hog devoured and many lips kissed. On this day, Little Dudley was indeed a joyous place.)

---

Under Melmerex's evil thumb the villagers had all been tense and living their lives in fear. Now, free from his shackles, they were releasing all their pent up frustrations with the wildest party Little Dudley village had ever seen. Beer and spirits flowed as they let go of all their troubles in one wild night of celebration.

In stark contrast, ever wary of keeping a clear head, the good knight who'd brought the villagers such joy had settled for merely downing two ales and a hearty meal. As ever, putting his duty first, he'd left the celebrations early to get his blade sharpened before retiring to his room for a rest. It was unbecoming for a knight to drink himself into a stupor and render himself incapable of doing his job. The code by which he lived his life dictated that a knight always had to be fit and ready to fight at a moment's notice. Remaining true to that philosophy, he was happy to step back from the festivities. As much as he'd have enjoyed a night of heaving drink and merriment, dishonouring the knight's code never crossed his mind. Satisfied that he'd played his part, he went to his room content to let the people enjoy the festivities. After all, this was *their* special time; it was *their* lives that had been improved. He'd merely won one fight and celebrating that with an endless stream of ale didn't seem appropriate anyway.

Hapslock's lack of sadness about missing the party in the bar wasn't *all* down the knight's code. As soon as he'd retired to his room, a string of beautiful women started taking it in turns to hammer at his door. Being something of a ladies man, he was only too happy to let them in and gratefully accept what they were offering him. This was a true perk of the job. As long as his head was clear and he'd be ready to fight if called upon, he could avail himself of as many women as he liked. Provided he treated the women with the utmost respect and didn't lie to lead them on, he was well within his rights to fill his boots until the cows came home. Needless to say, while the villagers ate, drunk and made merry, Hapslock also had a wonderful night.

It wasn't until long after midnight had gone, having had his way with over twenty lusty lovelies, that the good knight decided to call it a day. Worn out from his exertions, he turned the next waiting randy lass away and turned in for the night.

*Little Dudley Village Inn, Castaria, 6.30am...*

As dawn broke on the following morning, the party in the bar of the inn was still in full swing. Ale continued to flow and laughter constantly bellowed out from all four corners of the lounge. It had been such a wonderful party, nobody seemed to want to leave.

While the loud festivities continued unabated on the ground floor, upstairs in Sir Hapslock's room, nothing stirred. The only sounds were the muffled rumbles of merriment from down in the bar. The good knight himself was sleeping soundly in between two blonde beauties who'd risked life and limb to climb the side of the inn and sneak into his room at four in the morning. Having been woken by them, Hapslock was miffed at first but having calmed down, he found he was actually rather impressed by their actions and happily rewarded them both with a good seeing to.

Despite this break in his sleep, being a creature of habit, it wasn't long before Hapslock's eyes peeled open. He was always awake before seven in the morning regardless of what time he fell sleep. With a yawn, he sat up and rubbed his eyes then glanced either side of himself at the two lovelies in his bed.

HAPSLOCK: Well, well, and there I was thinking I knew beauty.

(With that, he dragged himself to the bottom of his bed, beneath the covers then slid his feet onto the floorboards. Wearing a warm smile, he righted himself then looked back into the bed and nodded approvingly.)

HAPSLOCK: What a wonderful sight to wake up to.

(One of the blondes stirred and peered over the covers at him.)

LISA: You're awake.

(Hapslock nodded and stood tall.)

HAPSLOCK: I know that. We only get one life and I'll be buggered if I'm going to waste mine by laying around in bed all day.

(As the other blonde yawned and opened her eyes, Hapslock placed his hands on his hips and nodded approvingly.)

HAPSLOCK: Thank you for last night, ladies. You were bloody brilliant.

(Lisa shrugged.)

LISA: You're welcome.

(The other blonde shrugged nonchalantly.)

HANNAH: No need to thank us, we were only doing our jobs!

(Hapslock rubbed his chin thoughtfully.)

HAPSLOCK: You're whores?

HANNAH: Of course.

HAPSLOCK: Oh!

LISA: Because you weren't at the party nobody could thank you properly for what you did, you see. So being business minded I suggested to the girls we could offer ourselves as presents to you.

(Hannah smiled.)

HANNAH: It was amazing; the guys in the bar were queuing up to send us up here.

LISA: Yeah, you're a popular guy.

(She looked uncertain.)

LISA: What did you do to become so well liked anyway?  
(Amazed she had to ask, Hapslock furrowed his brow.)  
HAPSLOCK: I killed Melmerex.  
(Much to his disbelief, the girls looked back at him empty.)  
HANNAH: Is that all?  
(Hapslock was incensed.)  
HAPSLOCK: All? All? That thing has been terrorising this village for months!  
LISA: I suppose!  
HAPSLOCK: Good god, woman. "Is that all" indeed.  
HANNAH: Alright, calm down, how were *we* to know it was that big a deal?  
LISA: Yeah, it's not like Melmerex was *our* problem. We're whores.  
HANNAH: Yeah, he only wanted the fugly girls who can't get a shag for love nor money.  
(Hapslock's jaw dropped.)  
HAPSLOCK: What an appalling attitude.  
LISA: Whatever, we've done our bit. Let's go, Hannah.  
(As Hannah and Lisa leapt from the bed to reunite themselves with their clothing, Hapslock mused to himself.)  
HAPSLOCK: Say... were *all* the women who came up here whores?  
LISA: Well, duh.  
HANNAH: Of course they were.  
HAPSLOCK: What... none of them were just... grateful?  
(Much to his annoyance, Lisa and Hannah looked to one another and giggled.)  
HAPSLOCK: What? I'm a knight. I get a lot of fan sex from lusty groupies!  
LISA: Not in this village you won't.  
HANNAH: Yeah, especially after what happened to Jade.  
HAPSLOCK: Jade? I think I met her... what's she got to do with anything?  
LISA: Look, in this village if you're not a whore you'd better keep your legs well and truly closed.  
HAPSLOCK: I don't follow.  
HANNAH: It's not difficult, Capslock...  
HAPSLOCK: Hapslock!  
HANNAH: Whatever. If you sell it you're a whore; an honest career woman. If you give it away, you're a slut and nobody's gonna want to know you.  
(Hapslock was lost for words and gaped.)  
LISA: All Jade had to do was join the union, get a prostitution license and ask for a fee; instead she opted to give some guy a freebie in the barn. Now she's lost all her friends and spoilt herself for marriage.  
HANNAH: Yup. Still, I say it serves her right for pretending to be a virgin.  
LISA: Well, Melmerex soon put paid to that illusion, didn't he?  
(Hapslock just shook his head.)  
HAPSLOCK: How horribly unfair on the poor thing.  
LISA: Yeah, well. After what happened to her don't expect any groupie fan sex in *this* village.  
(She looked to Hannah.)  
LISA: Come on, let's get off home.  
(Still only half dressed, they both headed for the door. As he watched them go, Hapslock rubbed his chin thoughtfully.)  
HAPSLOCK: No lusty groupies, eh?  
(He shuddered.)  
HAPSLOCK: Thank heavens I'm leaving this place.



(A smile then appeared on his lips and he sighed to himself happily.)

HAPSLOCK: Still, who needs groupies when grateful drunks keep renting you fine fillies like last nights bevy of lovelies...

(He beamed.)

HAPSLOCK: Good times.

(Ten minutes later, wide awake and fully refreshed, Sir Hapslock headed back down to the bar to say his farewells. With his job well and truly complete, he was looking forward to enjoying yet more worship before he made his heroic exit out of town. Wearing a proud glint in his eye, he strutted down the stairs and into the lounge. At once, he was greeted with a cheer and several partying villagers swarmed around him to tell him what a great man he was. Soaking up the adulation, Hapslock acknowledged their compliments with nods and words of gratitude for their kind sentiments. Heading for the door with a throng of excited village folk slowing his path, he was very much the man of the moment. This was exactly the heroic farewell he'd been hoping for. Every man wished they were him and every woman wished they were more like Jade. As all the men tried to shake his hand and all the women allowed themselves a quiet fantasy about him, Hapslock couldn't help but smile from ear to ear. How he loved being a knight. Being revered by the public was an absolute joy. Looking like the cat who got the cream, he struggled through the joyous partiers with a song in his heart. It was difficult to make progress towards the door being swamped by so many well-wishers but it was an inconvenience he was happy to endure. Feeling certain they'd all follow him to the very edge of town, he satisfied himself that he'd have to be patient and grinned as he slowly made his way forward.)

HAPSLOCK: Thank you, thank you. A hero? Well, I suppose I am in a way.

BARRY: We love you, man.

CHAS: They should build a statue of you, mate.

ERIC: We'll never forget what you've done for us.

(Just then the landlord of the inn raised his voice from behind the bar.)

LANDLORD: Hey!!! Your bill!!!

(All at once, the crowd who'd practically been glued to him for the last few minutes, evaporated. Looking sheepish, they all filed away to different parts of the bar and looked away from him. As they all mumbled uncomfortably, Hapslock raised an eyebrow and looked to the landlord.)

HAPSLOCK: My bill, you say?

(He glanced at the villagers and furrowed his brow. Normally in such situations, the villagers would chip in and pay the bill or the landlord would waive the fee. Bizarrely, for the first time in his career, neither had happened. Looking somewhat peeved, Hapslock shook his head and looked to the landlord.)

HAPSLOCK: So, even the hero who saved your village has to pay, does he?

(He glanced around the room as the villagers continued to deliberately avoid looking at him.)

HAPSLOCK: Oh, I see. Like that, is it?

(The landlord sighed apologetically.)

LANDLORD: I know it seems like a liberty, mate, but to be fair it's a pretty hefty bill.

(Hapslock looked stunned.)

HAPSLOCK: Hefty?

LANDLORD: Here.

(He handed Hapslock a slip of paper and bit his lip. Feeling extremely put out, Hapslock sighed and read it to himself silently. Seconds later, he released a furious bellow.)

HAPSLOCK: How much???

(He did a double take.)

HAPSLOCK: 926???

(His arms dropped by his side.)

HAPSLOCK: Are you taking the piss?

(The landlord nervously shrugged and held out his palms.)

HAPSLOCK: Good god, man.

(He looked at the bill again and scowled.)

HAPSLOCK: Wait a damn minute; you've charged me for two beers, a meal and 23 whores!

LANDLORD: Yes... that's what you had... sir...

(Hapslock growled.)

HAPSLOCK: After everything everyone said, I even have to buy my own beer?

(He looked around the room at the skulking villagers and snarled.)

HAPSLOCK: At least forty of you offered to buy me a beer yesterday... I saved your bloody village and you didn't even buy me a beer???

(He glared at the landlord.)

HAPSLOCK: I didn't order these whores. I'm not paying that.

(The landlord replied sheepishly.)

LANDLORD: But... you slept with them didn't you?

HAPSLOCK: So???

LANDLORD: Well, someone has to pay.

HAPSLOCK: Well I bloody well aint! What the hell? What are they doing on my bill anyway; they were supposed to be gifts!

LANDLORD: Looks like people ordered them and...

(Hapslock placed his hands on his hips.)

HAPSLOCK: Looks like what?

(The landlord scratched his head nervously.)

LANDLORD: I think maybe... well... people wanted to do something nice for you...

(He gave Hapslock a nervous grin.)

LANDLORD: Maybe they realised after they hired the girls that, well, they couldn't afford it.

HAPSLOCK: So, you're charging *me*???

LANDLORD: Well, to be fair, you could have sent them away if you didn't want them.

(Hapslock was enraged.)

HAPSLOCK: Why would I do that? I didn't even *know* they were whores until this morning!!!

(He seethed and reached for his coin purse.)

HAPSLOCK: Like that, is it? I save you all from torment at the hands of that creature and that's what I get. I have to buy my own beer and pay for my own thank you gifts!

(He thrust nine one hundred groat coins and a twenty groat coin in the landlords hand and snarled.)

HAPSLOCK: You can let me off the six!!!

(With that, he thrust away his purse and headed for the door.)

HAPSLOCK: Fucking liberty!!!

(Looking furious, he stopped in the doorway and bellowed at all and sundry.)

HAPSLOCK: I hope Melmerex's family hear he's dead and come here to wreak bloody vengeance on the fucking lot of you!!!

(He nodded defiantly as he snarled.)

HAPSLOCK: If they do, don't come fucking crying to me.

(With that, he stormed out of the door and stepped into the warm, morning sunshine.)

HAPSLOCK: Fucking peasants!!!

(As he thundered away from the inn towards the edge of town, Sir Hapslock was enraged. Wearing a fixed snarl, he couldn't help but growl under his breath about what had just

happened to him. As a knight it was his job to save the people and he'd done so without question. He hadn't hesitated; he'd headed up the mountainside and ended their suffering. Having merely served his purpose, he wasn't angry about the lack of rewards. He didn't need rewards to feel vindicated. As much as he loved the perks of his job such as free ale, excited women and all the massaging his ego could stand, they weren't essential to what made him tick. Having been *offered* the perks, however, as a man of honour he expected the people to deliver. To promise him ale and ply him with loose women then shirk their responsibilities was simply unacceptable in his eyes. The money he'd been forced to pay out wasn't even an issue. Roaming Knights carried a card entitling them to withdraw cash from any bank in any town. The cash came straight from the nation's coffers entitling them to live comfortably as they went about their good work. Whether they'd charged him one groat or 926, it made no difference. Promises had been broken and he'd been dishonoured.

Not about to let go of his anger any time soon, Sir Hapslock bounded forth getting angrier and angrier with every step. Fighting the temptation to return to the inn and give all the villagers a lecture on truthfulness, honour and ethics, he surged forth continually gritting his teeth and grumbling out loud.)

HAPSLOCK: A man's word should be his bond, not a maybe.

(He sneered.)

HAPSLOCK: Bloody irresponsible.

(He shook his head and mocked the things they'd said to him the day before.)

HAPSLOCK: Let me buy you a beer, no I'll buy you a beer, no me, me, me... bloody liars!

(He seethed.)

HAPSLOCK: And to send me whores and charge them to *my* room... have they no shame???

(As he bounded onwards angrily to the edge of town, he sighed emptily and shook his head.)

HAPSLOCK: I've never been so insulted.

(Feeling horribly let down, he looked all around himself at the empty streets and scoffed.)

HAPSLOCK: Not a soul around.

(Having been used to fending his way through adoring crowds every time he left the scene of a victory, he couldn't help but feel slightly downhearted.)

HAPSLOCK: I'll see myself out then, shall I? Bloody ingrates!

(As he neared the wall at the edge of the village, still complaining liberally to himself, a single female voice called out to him from thirty feet behind.)

JADE: Sir Hapslock!!!

(With a sigh, Hapslock stopped and turned to see who was calling him.)

HAPSLOCK: Hmm, she wasn't at the bar yesterday... looks familiar though...

(He beamed and stood tall. This young lady wasn't to blame for what had happened and he wasn't going to take his anger out on the innocent. Fully expecting her undying gratitude for defeating Melmerex, he waited for her to catch up with a smile on his face. To receive a heroic farewell, even if it was only from one person was still very much worth it. As the young lady trotted up close to him, Hapslock offered her his hand and nodded gracefully to her.)

HAPSLOCK: Hello, pleasure to meet you, my dear. What can I do for you on this fine summer morning?

(Much to his horror, rather than shake his hand she slapped him hard across the face and pouted.)

JADE: Don't talk to me about pleasure, you bastard.

(Hapslock rubbed his cheek and scowled at her.)

HAPSLOCK: What the bloody hell was that for?

(The young lady sneered wildly at him and shook her fist.)

JADE: Four hours, you bastard! Four hours I waited for you.  
 (Hapslock looked baffled.)  
 HAPSLOCK: Excuse me?  
 JADE: I waited in the barn for you for four fucking hours! How could you???  
 (Hapslock then remembered where he'd seen her face before and grimaced.)  
 HAPSLOCK: Jade, isn't it?  
 JADE: So you remember that much then. I waited in that barn for you for four hours! I even wore my sexiest corset!!! Why didn't you come???  
 (Hapslock gave her a sideways glance.)  
 HAPSLOCK: You were serious about that?  
 JADE: Of course I was!!!  
 (She hung a saddened head.)  
 JADE: I wouldn't have offered otherwise.  
 (Hapslock raised an impressed eyebrow.)  
 HAPSLOCK: Is that so? Well it's good to see *someone* round here can make good on their promises.  
 (He nodded sternly.)  
 HAPSLOCK: Very well, to reward your honourable deed, I'll gladly take you to the barn right now and hump you senseless.  
 (Much to his surprise, his offer received a cold glance in return.)  
 JADE: The moment's over, bonehead.  
 (She scowled.)  
 JADE: Luckily for me, two farmhands caught me in the barn and raped me.  
 HAPSLOCK: Luckily???  
 JADE: Well... I went there for a shag and I got *two*, I could hardly complain!  
 (As Hapslock's jaw dropped, Jade folded her arms indignantly.)  
 JADE: So yeah... anyway, I'm glad I caught you. I was afraid you'd leave town before I could tell you what a complete bastard I think you are.  
 (Hapslock rolled his eyes and headed away towards the village wall.)  
 HAPSLOCK: I'm going now!  
 (As he paced up to the wall and hopped over it, Jade ran up to it and screeched at him.)  
 JADE: And don't come back, you bastard.  
 (As the knight paced away and ignored her, Jade ruffled her neck and folded her arms.)  
 JADE: That told *him*!  
 (As Jade headed back to the barn in the hope the farmhands would catch her again, Hapslock strolled forth into the beautiful green countryside and didn't even look back. Little Dudley was not a place he'd remember fondly. Normally he'd be plied with freebies and escorted out of a town like a true hero. Here, he'd been thrown an expensive party then given the bill before being slapped and called a bastard as he left. Suffice to say, he wouldn't be going back there in any hurry.)

---

Leaving Little Dudley's protective wall behind him, Sir Hapslock strolled into the picturesque meadow with a smile on his face. Despite being an empty, lonely and dangerous place, he loved the Castaria countryside. Walking for days on end between settlements, camping and absorbing the peacefulness of it all was something he could never tire off. In this part of the world it was rare to ever go longer than an hour without a grendith attacking, so boredom was never an issue. With his trusty blade for company, he'd casually stroll along with his head held high, enjoying all nature had to offer. He felt truly blessed to be a knight at times like

these. Not many got to enjoy the countryside but being able to take down grendiths with ease he was in a privileged position. Being aware of all the signs that a larger and far more dangerous cuddyfinkle might be nearby, he knew how to avoid them and this made him one of a rare few who didn't feel threatened by the great green wilderness. To him, being a knight was the perfect job. He had the world at his feet. The only downside to his career choice, as far as he could see, was Little Dudley.

Certain he'd never return to the village that had disrespected him and left him in a rage, Sir Hapslock was a happy fellow. A firm believer that what doesn't kill you can only make you stronger, he put all that happened in Little Dudley down to experience and started to look forward to whatever mission he'd take next. Would it be a village under siege from a beast again? Would it be a rescue mission? Would it be a simple investigation? The possibilities were endless. Satisfied he wouldn't find out until the next town, he took a deep soothing breath and absorbed the sights around him. Always eager to enjoy the moment he was in, he rarely wasted time by speculating about the future. He'd find out what tomorrow had in store when tomorrow came, until then he'd savour today.

Feeling completely at peace as he paced down a slight grassy incline, he looked all around at the trees dotted throughout the meadow and sighed happily to himself. Having put a good five miles between himself and Little Dudley, all his woes were quickly becoming a distant memory. With his head and his heart at ease, he paused for a moment and looked all about himself at the spectacular view and nodded merrily. The countryside looked especially glorious on a sunny day like this. Delighting in everything he saw, he beamed and paced forth when suddenly, without warning, a grendith raced at him from behind. As it snarled and bore its vicious fangs at him, Hapslock simply turned and plunged his sword through its face.

HAPSLOCK: Like I didn't know you were there.

(Allowing himself a single chuckle, he slipped his sword away and strolled forth once again, whistling a happy tune. Grendiths were exceedingly stupid. If they attacked in small groups, even in pairs or threes, they'd be a threat. Very much lone creatures however, they always hunted alone, thus offering no challenge to a strong knight whatsoever.)

HAPSLOCK: Silly, silly creatures.

(As he marched forth once again enjoying the grassy wilderness around him, he knew it wouldn't be long before another foolish grendith tried its luck. Knowing his sword would make swift work of them every time, he didn't feel even remotely intimidated. It had been the same thing every day for the last three years. Brisk walk, kill a grendith, brisk walk, kill another grendith. The routine never varied. Little did Hapslock know however, that was all about to change. A good mile or so on from where he killed the last grendith, he strolled up a short grassy incline looking forward to seeing what glorious views lay on the other side. Would there be a town or a forest? Maybe he'd be able to see the sea. Eager to find out, he stepped up his pace when suddenly a grendith raced at him from directly ahead of him. In the blink of an eye, he pulled his sword and raced forth to meet it head on. Eager to make a meal of the good knight, the grendith leapt up at him as soon as he was in range. Seconds later, it was impaled on the sword, offering up a pathetic whimper as its life drained away.)

HAPSLOCK: Nice try, chummy.

(As he yanked his sword free and flicked off the blood, a second grendith raced along the top of the incline before bounding down the slope on the other side of it. Looking somewhat baffled, he raced after it, desperate to know what it was charging at. As he reached the top of the slope, however, he couldn't believe what he was seeing. In the middle of the wilderness where he never normally saw another soul, two young girls, one in her late teens, the other

roughly twelve years old, were having a picnic and the grendith was charging straight at them.)

HAPSLOCK: Holy buffalo of the immortal moons!!!

(Instinctively, he drew his sword and charged after the grendith, hoping he'd be quick enough to at least save one of the girls from a grizzly death. The average citizen didn't stand a chance in a grendith attack. They were as quick as they were savage. Certain he was their only hope; he gritted his teeth and raced as fast as he could to try to spare their lives. He was absolutely convinced that if he wasn't fast enough, at least one of these two defenceless young girls would be ripped apart. Why two pretty young ladies would put on nice pink dresses and have a picnic in such a deadly place was beyond him. The whole thing seemed ridiculous. This was no place for two very obviously girly girls to be snacking on sandwiches. These were harsh lands where many a war hardened veteran had feared to tread. As the grendith raced to within fifteen feet of the girls, Hapslock snarled and yelled out.)

HAPSLOCK: Grendith!!!

(Still some way from catching up, he gritted his teeth harder and doubled his efforts to reach them in time. Putting all his heart and soul into getting there as quickly as possible, he grimaced and released a primal scream. With the grendith almost upon the girls, he knew bloodshed was imminent and all he could do was try to minimise it. As the grendith bared its fangs and lunged at the older sister, Hapslock squeezed the handle of his sword tight and bellowed out again.)

HAPSLOCK: Look out!!!

(Expecting to see the grendith inflict a deep, gaping wound at the very least, what happened next left the good knight dumbfounded. Reacting at lightning speed, the older girl leapt up from where she'd been sitting and toe-punted the grendith in the jaw. As the foul creature yelped and sprinted away screeching in dire agony, she then flicked her long black hair and charged straight at *him*.)

KYRIE: Back off!!!

(Hapslock screeched to a halt and took up a defensive stance as she raged towards him.)

HAPSLOCK: Don't tell *me* to fuck off!

KYRIE: I said *back* off!

(Not giving him any time to comply with her request, she then aimed a flurry of swift punches at his face as soon as she reached him. Completely thrown by her needless hostility, Hapslock dodged the first punch only to be sent tripping backwards as the second connected with his left cheek. Ever determined to defend himself, Hapslock snarled and steadied himself.)

HAPSLOCK: Careful who you're messing with, I don't care much for people who...

(Not about to let him finish his sentence, she attacked again. As punches and kicks flew his way with alarming speed and regularity, it was all Hapslock could do to avoid them.

Ducking and leaping back, he barely managed to avoid each one in the nick of time.)

KYRIE: Stop dodging!!!

(Hapslock snarled.)

HAPSLOCK: Fine, I will!

(With that, he sheathed his sword and came out punching. A man of honour, he refused to use his sword against an unarmed opponent. Using all his boxing skills and the hand to hand combat skills he learned in training, he blocked her next right hook with his arm, and made the most of his superior reach to punch the girl on the chin. He then stopped and apologised profusely.)

HAPSLOCK: Awfully sorry, you okay?

(The girl just snarled.)

KYRIE: Of course I'm okay, you punch like a girl!

HAPSLOCK: I do not, that's an outrageous thing to...

(While he was busy complaining, the girl wasted no time in taking full advantage of his lack of concentration. Looking furious, she growled and leapt up to kick him in the head. Seeing it late, Hapslock's eyes bulged and he threw himself onto his back to avoid it.)

HAPSLOCK: What the...

(His face then bore a look of absolute horror as she dived at him with a ferocious snarl on her face.)

KYRIE: Why can't you lot just leave us alone???

(Fearing the girl might be horribly deranged, Hapslock swiftly rolled out of her way leaving her to thud face first into the grass. Releasing a whimper of agony, the girl lifted her head and wiped away a tear.)

KYRIE: That hurt.

(Hating to see a woman cry, Hapslock was immediately overcome with guilt and climbed to his feet looking ashamed.)

HAPSLOCK: Sorry about that...

(Next thing he knew, his legs were flying into the air and he was thudding down onto his back again. While he'd been lost in remorse, the girl had swept his legs away and jumped back on her feet again. As soon as he crashed to earth, he hurriedly stood himself back up and stared harshly into her eyes.)

HAPSLOCK: That was a downright nasty trick.

(She shrugged.)

KYRIE: I had to try *something*, you're pretty strong.

(Hapslock raised an eyebrow.)

HAPSLOCK: You're pretty strong too.

KYRIE: I'm going to win though; you're too gullible to beat me.

HAPSLOCK: Is that so? I'll have you know...

(Immediately his words dried up and his mouth fell open. In the middle of his sentence, she'd about turned and lifted the bottom of her dress to reveal her tight G-string to him. To say she had a perfect backside would be something of an understatement and Hapslock couldn't help but feast his eyes and beam happily. Having temporarily stunned him into drooling, Kyrie then swiftly aimed a spin kick at his head and knocked him clean off his feet. As he rolled to a standstill, flat on his back, she then placed her foot down hard on his neck.)

KYRIE: Don't you lot ever learn?

(Knowing he'd been well and truly beaten, albeit not in a fair or clean manner, Hapslock scowled at her. Well aware that she could break his neck in his heartbeat, he laid perfectly still and snarled.)

HAPSLOCK: You cheated!

KYRIE: I'm talking.

(Looking furious, she stepped harder on his neck and gritted her teeth. Clearly emotional, she spoke in a passionate, angry tone.)

KYRIE: You can't make us go back! We'll never go back!!! How many of you do I have to kill before you understand that???

(Having no idea what she was talking about, Hapslock furrowed his brow as he choked out his words.)

HAPSLOCK: Go back where? And how many of who?

KYRIE: Don't act the innocent with me!!!

HAPSLOCK: Look, miss, I don't know who you think you are but this is no way to treat a knight of the realm!!! I was trying to help you, for pity's sake!

(Kyrie scoffed.)

KYRIE: Yeah right.

(Hapslock sighed.)

HAPSLOCK: First Little Dudley now you. Gratitude isn't what it used to be, that's for certain.

KYRIE: What the hell are you talking about?

(Hapslock sighed then tried to speak in his best authoritative voice.)

HAPSLOCK: Look... as an ambassador of his majesty the king, I demand you unhand me at once. Take your foot off my neck and let me up this instant!

(Kyrie looked baffled.)

KYRIE: The king?

HAPSLOCK: The king! I told you, I'm a knight of the realm. Now let me up.

KYRIE: Lair, you're not a knight. You're one of Axion's men!

HAPSLOCK: Who the hell is Axion? I'm a knight damn it!

KYRIE: Stop lying!!!

(Just then, the younger of the two siblings popped her head round her sister and looked him up and down. Wearing a sheepish grin, she then looked to Kyrie.)

CAYLEY: Um, Kyrie?

KYRIE: Not now, sister face. I'm busy. I can't decide whether to kill him or knock him out and run for it.

CAYLEY: But...

KYRIE: But nothing!

CAYLEY: But, I think he's telling the truth. He's a knight.

(Kyrie gave her a suspicious glance and raised an eyebrow.)

KYRIE: How can you tell?

CAYLEY: That's the uniform Castaria knight's wear.

(Hapslock rolled his eyes.)

HAPSLOCK: There, see?

KYRIE: Um...

(Well aware that assaulting a knight was a serious offence, Kyrie gulped and whimpered to herself.)

KYRIE: I didn't know, I thought he was... you know...

CAYLEY: Then let him go, sis. We'll be in big trouble if you don't.

(Kyrie whimpered again and took her foot off of his neck.)

KYRIE: Okay.

(Feeling extremely put out to say the least, Hapslock sat up and rubbed his aching neck.)

HAPSLOCK: You could have killed me.

(Kyrie hung her head and swung her shoulders nervously.)

KYRIE: That's probably what I was going to do, yeah.

(Feeling horribly aggrieved, the good knight climbed to his feet and dusted himself down.)

HAPSLOCK: Appalling behaviour. That's no way for a lady to conduct herself.

(Looking extremely apologetic, Kyrie blushed and hunched her shoulders.)

KYRIE: Sorry, Mr Knight, sir.

(She offered him a cheesy grin then looked away. Eager to know why this young beauty had attacked him so vehemently, Hapslock folded his arms and stood tall.)

HAPSLOCK: Now... you can either be arrested for assaulting an officer of the crown...

(As the two girls pouted at him in lip quivering terror, Hapslock raised an inquisitive eyebrow.)

HAPSLOCK: Or you can explain yourself. Starting with *why* you attacked me and how the hell a hot babe like you managed to beat me.

(He paused and gritted his teeth.)

HAPSLOCK: Scratch that, I know how you beat me, you cheated. Well, what's it gonna be?



(Kyrie looked stumped.)

KYRIE: What were the options again?

(Thankfully her little sister was on hand to answer for her.)

CAYLEY: The second one, explaining.

HAPSLOCK: Good choice. Now...

(He gestured to their picnic sheet and offered half a smile.)

HAPSLOCK: Shall we?

(Looking sheepish, Kyrie skulked to the sheet and knelt down. As her sister nervously sat beside her, Hapslock rubbed his chin and sat himself opposite them. Something most definitely wasn't right about these two girls and he was determined to get to the bottom of it. Already having his own suspicions about them, he looked across at their ashen faces and raised an eyebrow.)

HAPSLOCK: Well? Who wants to start?

(As Kyrie looked to her trembling sister, Hapslock folded his arms and sat tall.)

HAPSLOCK: Shall I tell you what I think and you can correct me if I'm wrong?

(They both mumbled at him incoherently.)

HAPSLOCK: Right. Well, judging by your accents you're from Anoseta in the south, therefore you probably entered this country illegally.

(The two girls looked to one another in horror then pouted at him sorrowfully, their bottom lips almost dragging on the ground.)

HAPSLOCK: Anoseta is known for its hand to hand combat, you have to attend classes on it from the age of ten I believe.

(As the two girls hung their heads and said nothing, Hapslock nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: Okay... just correct me if I'm wrong then. You're clearly on the run from someone called Axion and you've come to this country to get away from him. Now judging by what you said about his "lot" never giving up, I'm assuming he's sent people after you. So, you keep moving in the hope he doesn't find you. How am I doing so far?

(Kyrie looked to Cayley through her hair and nodded towards Hapslock, prompting her to answer him. Horrendously shy by nature, Cayley looked to him and trembled.)

CAYLEY: Please don't make us go back, he'll kill us.

(Hapslock nodded and sat easily.)

HAPSLOCK: I'm not going to.

(A great deal more at ease, he then gestured towards Kyrie and chuckled.)

HAPSLOCK: Even if I wanted to, madam here would only kick up another rumpus. No, no, the law isn't always black and white. By rights I ought to send you back, but I'm going to rely on my own discretion in this case.

(As Kyrie and Cayley both drew deep sighs of relief, Hapslock gave them an inquisitive glance.)

HAPSLOCK: Though, I would like to know *why* you're on the run from this Axion fellow.

(Feeling a might more relaxed, the two sisters then bombarded him with answers.)

KYRIE: He's disgusting.

CAYLEY: He wanted to marry both of us!

KYRIE: And our stupid grandad agreed.

CAYLEY: Yeah, so we ran away but he sent people after us. We thought you were one of them.

KYRIE: Yeah, sorry about that. They just keep coming, see; and we naturally assumed you were another one.

CAYLEY: It's incessant. We barely go a whole day without being attacked. He wants us dead so badly.

KYRIE: It's been like this for two years!

CAYLEY: Yeah, and he won't give up until he's killed us both.

(Cayley placed her head on Kyrie's shoulder and sighed.)

CAYLEY: We just want to be left alone.

KYRIE: We're trying to go somewhere safe where they won't be able to find us. We want to get on with our lives but... they always seem to find us.

CAYLEY: It's like he's got eyes everywhere.

(As they both let out deep sighs and fell into a saddened silence, Hapslock took a moment to absorb their words and scratched his head. Moments later, looking more than a little stunned, he lifted a single finger in the air and raised a disturbed eyebrow.)

HAPSLOCK: Hang on, let me just get my head around this... he wants to marry *both* of you?

CAYLEY: Not anymore. Now he wants to kill us for running away and embarrassing him.

HAPSLOCK: But, before... I mean... he wanted to marry *both* of you?

KYRIE: Disgusting, isn't it?

HAPSLOCK: But... more than one wife?

CAYLEY: Men can have five wives in Anoseta.

HAPSLOCK: Even so...

(He gestured towards Cayley.)

HAPSLOCK: You're what? Fourteen?

(Cayley gave him a bewildered glance.)

CAYLEY: I'm twelve!

(Hapslock bit his lip.)

HAPSLOCK: Damn. You know, I thought twelve when I spotted you from a distance but then I saw your...

(He looked at her chest then looked away.)

HAPSLOCK: Nothing.

(Cayley wrapped her arms around her chest and pouted forcing Kyrie into a hearty chuckle.)

KYRIE: She's embarrassed about her boobs.

(Cayley scowled at her.)

CAYLEY: Shut up, Kyrie.

KYRIE: Don't be like that, sister face.

(She grabbed her own ample bosoms and bounced them up and down.)

KYRIE: If you embarrassed now, imagine how you'll feel when they're this big.

(She beamed and looked at Hapslock. Noticing his admiring expression, she positively glowed. She was fiercely proud of her large breasts and loved the attention.)

KYRIE: Do you wanna see them?

(Eager to maintain his professionalism, Hapslock looked her in the eye and cleared his throat.)

HAPSLOCK: No. Good grief, no thank you. Maybe later... I mean no.

(He shook his head.)

HAPSLOCK: Anyway... where were we?

(Cayley pouted at him sorely.)

CAYLEY: You thought I was fourteen 'cause of my chest.

HAPSLOCK: Ah yes, sorry to make you self conscious.

(He looked to Kyrie.)

HAPSLOCK: And you're how old, young lady?

KYRIE: Please, call me Kyrie...

HAPSLOCK: Okay, Kyrie. And how old are you?

(She gave him a shy smile.)

KYRIE: I'm Eighteen!

HAPSLOCK: I see. Legal then?

KYRIE: Oh, totally.

(At this point, Hapslock winced to himself. He wanted desperately to be the model professional but this most spectacularly beautiful girl was distracting him something chronic.)

HAPSLOCK: Let's get to the point, shall we?

KYRIE: There's a point?

HAPSLOCK: Of course. From what you've told me it's safe to say that you two ladies are what we knights call damsels in distress. As a wandering knight, a champion of the people, it's my duty to assist you.

(They girls looked at one another.)

CAYLEY: Assist us?

HAPSLOCK: Yes. You might not be Castaria citizens but you are in Castaria and so is your problem.

(He tilted his head slightly and raised a manly eyebrow.)

HAPSLOCK: This Axion has sent his minions into Castaria to catch you; this isn't something our fine nation can condone. By aiding you in your search for sanctuary from this Axion fellow, not only will I be saving your lives but I'll also be saving Castaria from the invaders who cross our borders to hunt you down.

(Satisfied he'd heard enough and that the two girls were a worthy cause, he nodded proudly.)

HAPSLOCK: In the name of the king, I hereby accept this to be my next mission.

(He placed his hand on his heart.)

HAPSLOCK: Long live the king!

(As the girls looked at him in bewilderment, not sure what to make of his declaration, he smiled and laid himself sideways with his chin resting on his elbow.)

HAPSLOCK: So, Kyrie... nice name by the way... where'd you learn to fight like that?

(Kyrie looked stumped.)

KYRIE: In class obviously.

(Cayley smiled.)

CAYLEY: She started at ten like everyone else, but she got really good at it. She mastered all the disciplines in five years.

(She looked stumped.)

CAYLEY: Which is odd 'cause she's a bit of a dipshit.

(Kyrie snarled and clumped her round the head.)

KYRIE: Language.

CAYLEY: Ouch. That hurt!

KYRIE: It was meant to.

(She chuckled.)

KYRIE: She's right though, I'm embarrassingly thick. I failed *all* my other classes.

HAPSLOCK: All of them?

KYRIE: Well, except gymnastics. I was too easily distracted by the opposite sex. I still am, actually.

(Hapslock nodded knowingly.)

HAPSLOCK: I know how that feels...

(He rubbed his chest proudly.)

HAPSLOCK: I'm actually something of a ladies man, myself.

(Kyrie bounced excitedly.)

KYRIE: Cool, so *you're* a slut too!

HAPSLOCK: Um... I wouldn't have said I was a slut...

KYRIE: Oh I am! In the last town we stopped at, I shagged three ship builders, a security officer and two lumberjacks all in one afternoon.

(She sighed merrily to the sky.)

KYRIE: Happy times.

(As Hapslock's jaw dropped, Cayley hung her head and sighed. She hated her sister's insatiable lust for the opposite sex and hearing her brag about it always got her down.)

CAYLEY: Oh, Kyrie... why do you have to...

KYRIE: Oh shut up, geek. I don't have to justify myself to you. I like sex, get over it.

(She rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: Honestly, I'd be a bloody nun if you had your way.

(Cayley frowned.)

CAYLEY: No, you wouldn't. I don't expect you to live a totally ascetic life but everything in moderation, for heavens sake.

(Kyrie glared at her.)

KYRIE: What have I told you about using big words I can't understand?

(Cayley rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: Whatever.

(Eager to halt any arguments, Hapslock swiftly looked to Cayley and cut in.)

HAPSLOCK: What about you? Um...

CAYLEY: Cayley!

HAPSLOCK: Right, Cayley!

KYRIE: She's a virgin obviously.

(She shook her head.)

KYRIE: What a stupid question.

HAPSLOCK: I meant can she fight!

(Kyrie looked enlightened.)

KYRIE: Oh...

CAYLEY: No. I only had three lessons before we had to run away.

HAPSLOCK: I see.

(She beamed.)

CAYLEY: I'm a really good pianist though! They said I was a child protégé because of my really high IQ and they made me learn an instrument. So, I learned all of them... but I like the piano best.

(Kyrie rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: It's true; she's a genius or something. Always reading a book. Geek.

(Cayley pouted.)

CAYLEY: Don't be mean!

KYRIE: That wasn't mean, *this* is mean!

(With that, she grabbed her little sister in a headlock and started to run her knuckles up and down the top of her head.)

CAYLEY: Ouch, get off!!! Stop it!!!

KYRIE: Who's my bitch, huh? Who?

CAYLEY: Fine! *You're* my bitch!

(Kyrie chuckled then let her go.)

KYRIE: See?

(Her face dropped.)

KYRIE: Wait a minute...

(Cayley sighed at Hapslock.)

CAYLEY: See? As dumb as they come.

(Kyrie snarled.)

KYRIE: I'm gonna pound you in a minute.

(As the sisters glared at one another, Hapslock looked Kyrie up and down and licked his lips. Taking a moment to savour the sight, he nodded approvingly. Catching himself in the act, he

swiftly looked away and scowled at himself. This was most unprofessional behaviour and he was more than a little annoyed with himself. Women didn't normally have such a debilitating effect on him, especially when they were just sitting there not even looking at him. Convinced he must have hit his head in the fight and it was making him act out of character, he shook away the thoughts and climbed to his feet.)

HAPSLOCK: Right then...

(The girls looked at him and slowly rose to their feet also.)

HAPSLOCK: It begins!

(He nodded sternly.)

HAPSLOCK: Together we'll overcome whatever obstacles lay in your way and whatever it takes, we'll find a way to end your troubles for good. As your knight you can take my word for that. I won't rest until I'm sure you're safe!

(Kyrie and Cayley both looked awestruck.)

CAYLEY: You mean... you're really going to help us?

KYRIE: For free?

CAYLEY: Out of the goodness of your heart?

(He smiled warmly and stood tall.)

HAPSLOCK: Of course. It's my duty!

(As the girls exhaled, Hapslock pointed across the meadow.)

HAPSLOCK: Let's head to then next town, we can decide what to do next from there.

(Cayley looked sheepishly down at the ground.)

CAYLEY: Maybe we should put away the picnic first.

(Kyrie then released a defeated sigh and pointed over Hapslock's shoulder.)

KYRIE: Or maybe we should defeat *that*!

(As he turned to see where Kyrie was pointing, Hapslock couldn't believe his eyes. Having emerged from a clump of trees just ahead of them, a muscular ape like creature was snarling straight for them. As he watched it bound towards them with its lengthy arms swinging in front of it, Hapslock raised a curious eyebrow.)

HAPSLOCK: Apes aren't native to Castaria, what gives?

(As he glanced over his shoulder to gauge Kyrie's reaction, he noticed she'd retreated to lecture her sister.)

HAPSLOCK: Leave it to me!

(He drew his sword then checked his supplies of fire magic when a troubled expression crossed his brow. Looking somewhat annoyed at himself, he threw his free hand up in frustration. He'd left Little Dudley in such a rage, he'd forgotten to restock his magic.)

HAPSLOCK: Damn it.

(As he stood and despaired at himself, some fifteen feet behind him, Kyrie was holding her sister's upper arms and speaking urgently into her face.)

KYRIE: Remember, stay back and whatever happens, don't move unless you see a grendith!

(Cayley nodded with fear in her eyes.)

CAYLEY: I know the drill. If I see one, whistle!

KYRIE: Good girl.

(They shared a loving hug then Kyrie raced to Hapslock's side and raised her fists.)

KYRIE: This should be much easier with two of us.

(As the primate started to close on them, Hapslock nodded sternly.)

HAPSLOCK: As long as we don't get in each other's way, we'll be fine. I just wish I had some fire magic.

(Kyrie gave him a sideways glance.)

KYRIE: Fire magic?

HAPSLOCK: Yeah. I forgot to stock up on the ingredients before I left the last town. I've run out. Doesn't matter though, I've still got my faithful blade.

(Kyrie nodded urgently.)

KYRIE: Okay, in the meantime, just avoid its arms and aim for the eyes.

HAPSLOCK: Or I could just run my sword through its torso.

KYRIE: Whatever! Just do what you have to do and I'll do what I *always* do when I fight these things.

(He did a swift double take in her direction.)

HAPSLOCK: You've fought these before???

(He then furrowed his brow and protested.)

HAPSLOCK: Hey!

(Rather than wait for the primate to reach them, Kyrie had left him standing and charged at the beast.)

HAPSLOCK: Wait!!!

(As he charged after her, Kyrie raced up the giant ape with her fists at the ready. Overcome with a primal urge to rip its enemy to pieces, the giant beast wasted no time in flailing a wild outstretched arm at her. With lightning speed reactions, Kyrie snarled and plunged into a roll underneath its fist and leapt up to her feet again.)

KYRIE: Missed!

(With that, she leapt up and threw a punch at the apes face. Growling ferociously, the colossal ape just threw her back to the ground and started to hammer its chest with its fists.)

KYRIE: What was I thinking? That was a pathetic attempt.

(As he streamed past her with his sword aloft, Hapslock concurred.)

HAPSLOCK: I won't lie to you; that was rubbish!

(He then leapt up at the ape, swinging his sword up towards its neck. Two seconds later, he found himself sitting next to Kyrie having also been thrown to the ground.)

HAPSLOCK: Okay, I admit that wasn't any better...

KYRIE: I know. At least my attack *looked* good.

(As the beast clapped its giant hands together and snarled at them in a primal attempt to intimidate them, Hapslock and Kyrie leapt to their feet and took up fighting stances.)

HAPSLOCK: How do *you* normally beat them?

KYRIE: I just keep trying to hit them until I win. Takes hours usually.

HAPSLOCK: Then maybe we should coordinate.

(Kyrie looked thoughtful.)

KYRIE: Coordinate, huh? What does that mean?

HAPSLOCK: Work as a team.

(Kyrie looked enlightened.)

KYRIE: Right!

HAPSLOCK: Can you keep it occupied from the front?

(Kyrie shrugged with uncertainty.)

KYRIE: I don't know. Let's find out shall we?

(And without hearing what he had in mind, she took off and charged towards the giant foe.)

HAPSLOCK: Hey, I hadn't finished!

(He frowned.)

HAPSLOCK: Doesn't matter.

(With a focussed glint in her eyes, Kyrie leapt on the balls of her feet before the savage creature, teasing it into aiming punches at her. With every swing and miss from the beast, she'd then leap up and try to punch it between the eyes. Sadly for her, she had one, distinct, telling disadvantage.)

KYRIE: Fucking thing!!! Why did god have to make girls so short?

(As she continued her routine, Hapslock quickly realised why she'd said it takes her hours to defeat them. Punching a nine foot tall ape in the face would obviously be quite the challenge for a five foot, five inch woman to meet. Knowing she'd get an opportunity sooner or later, should the ape stoop or make a mistake, all she could do was persist.)

KYRIE: Why'd it have to be one of these, I hate fighting these!!!

(Just then, as she continued to bounce up and down and duck and weave, the ape yelped out in extreme agony and started to tumble.)

KYRIE: What the hell?

(As its lifeless body hit the ground, she saw Hapslock standing behind it with blood running down his sword blade. Looking enlightened, she smiled and clapped her hands together.)

KYRIE: Cool.

(She flicked her hair and turned to look at her sister.)

KYRIE: Come here, Cayley.

(Having packed away the picnic, Cayley bounced with joy and trotted to her side. After flicking the blood from his sword, Hapslock strutted around the beast's torso and gave them both a toothy smile.)

HAPSLOCK: That told *him*, don't you think?

(Kyrie gushed, delighted not to have to endure another ape fighting marathon.)

KYRIE: You were amazing.

(As she fluttered her eyelashes at him, Hapslock felt a stirring in his groin and frowned at himself.)

HAPSLOCK: Get a grip, man.

(Fighting back yet more lusty feelings for the sexy, black haired bombshell before him, Hapslock closed his eyes and counted to five in his head. As he re-opened his eyes, he saw two bewildered girls staring back at him.)

CAYLEY: You okay?

KYRIE: You look tired.

(He took a deep breath and stood tall.)

HAPSLOCK: I'm fine.

(He mused to himself.)

HAPSLOCK: Though I'm more than a little curious to know what a giant ape was doing in Castaria.

(Cayley sighed.)

CAYLEY: It was sent to kill *us*.

HAPSLOCK: Yes but... an ape?

KYRIE: Just one of a million different creatures that's appeared from nowhere and started on us.

CAYLEY: Bears, apes, two headed hell hounds, even demons.

HAPSLOCK: I thought you said he sent *people* after you!

KYRIE: He did.

CAYLEY: Yeah, and some of those people are summoners.

(Hapslock looked slightly alarmed.)

HAPSLOCK: Summoners?

CAYLEY: Yeah. Sometimes we get attacked by warriors and mercenaries but it's mostly summoned beasts.

(Hapslock sighed and bit his lip.)

HAPSLOCK: Interesting. This mission is going to be different to say the least.

(He then stood tall and nodded defiantly.)

HAPSLOCK: Still, I think I've had an idea. I think I know how to get you ladies to safety.

(Kyrie and Cayley looked to him inquiringly.)

HAPSLOCK: We should head for the new world.

(Cayley beamed.)

CAYLEY: That's where we're going. We're heading to Port Amok to catch a boat. We decided last month we've wandered aimlessly for far too long and we're sick of it, so we're heading *there*. Hopefully, if we can get to the new world we can have a few weeks peace *at least* before they find out where we went and follow us.

HAPSLOCK: Only two weeks? If you get to the new world, it's quite possible that all your troubles could be over for good!

(Kyrie and Cayley looked to him in amazement, imploring him to elaborate with their eyes.)

HAPSLOCK: You see, the *summoners* don't actually know where you are. Their summoned beasts can sense those they're sent to attack, however, and they'll always find you. Now, here's the thing, these beasts *can't* sense people miles away over the sea. They'll appear to hunt you down on *this* continent and wander forever unable to track you down. To a summoned beast, your being on another continent will be as if you've vanished off the face of the planet.

(He nodded thoughtfully.)

HAPSLOCK: Of course, warriors could still be a problem but if we can sneak you to the new world without any of them knowing about it, the odds of them finding you on a different continent are unfeasibly minute.

(He looked to the heavens and pondered his idea over in his head for a moment then looked to Kyrie and Cayley.)

HAPSLOCK: What do you think?

(Upon spotting them hugging one another and crying, he scratched his head and grimaced.)

HAPSLOCK: Not keen on that idea then?

(A tearful Cayley clasped her hands together imploringly.)

CAYLEY: We love it. We had no idea that summoners don't actually know where we are. We thought they knew our exact location *all* the time. If we'd known, we'd have headed for the new world long ago. Thank you, thank you so much, if you're right about summoners this will definitely work.

HAPSLOCK: Of course I'm right. It's my job to *know* these things.

(Kyrie was also tearful.)

KYRIE: We thought going to the new world would mean a few weeks without being attacked. Could it *really* be more?

HAPSLOCK: Well yeah, I mean summoned beasts won't find you and if the warriors think you're on *this* continent, they'll never find you either!

(Kyrie exhaled and clutched her hands to her heart.)

KYRIE: That's fantastic! You are *so* getting some, Mr Knight.

(Hapslock coughed and adjusted his collar awkwardly.)

HAPSLOCK: Good, I mean bad... I mean...

(He shook his head clear then stood tall.)

HAPSLOCK: Right then. Let's do it. Let's head for the new world and you young beauties will have sanctuary.

(He gestured across the meadow.)

HAPSLOCK: To Port Amok it is. It's quite a long way but I'll be with you every step of the way. I won't leave your sides until you're safely on a ship.

(Cayley looked uncertain.)

CAYLEY: Problem is, we've got no idea how we'll afford the sea crossing!

(Hapslock smiled knowingly.)

HAPSLOCK: I wouldn't worry about that. You've got the full weight of the king's resources behind you now. You leave that to me.



(As Kyrie and Cayley both exhaled in wonderment, Sir Hapslock raised a knowing eyebrow.)

HAPSLOCK: Shall we?

KYRIE: Yay!

CAYLEY: Let's.

HAPSLOCK: Let's go then.

(With a proud glint in his eye he then proceeded to lead them away. For the first time in years, the girls had hope and followed him excitedly. Finding out that travelling to the new world could mean permanent sanctuary rather than the mere temporary respite they'd thought it'd be, had lifted them greatly. They knew the journey would be a long one, but at last, after two long years, there was light at the end of the tunnel. Having gifted them with this wonderful news then promised them full use of the king's resources to help them get there, to Kyrie and Cayley, this knight was most definitely a hero.)

Having only led them fifty feet or so from where they'd defeated the ape, however, Hapslock stopped and looked thoughtful.)

KYRIE: What's up?

CAYLEY: You okay?

(Hapslock nodded and glanced over his shoulder.)

HAPSLOCK: The name's Sir Hapslock of Leavesbury by the way. You can call me Hapslock.

(As Kyrie and Cayley grinned back at him, Hapslock gave a single, playful laugh.)

HAPSLOCK: Come on; let's get you girls to safety.

(And with that, he led them across the meadow to begin escorting them on their journey to sanctuary.)

## *Chapter Two - The Chords of Discord.*

Crossing the vast plains lands with Kyrie and Cayley had been quite an experience for Sir Hapslock. Normally, he ambled forth admiring the views and revelling in the peacefulness of it all. Apart from the roar of the vile grendiths that attacked randomly, all he'd hear was the sounds of birdsong and the wind whistling through the leaves. This near silence, away from the bustle of civilization was something he enjoyed immensely. To Hapslock, the peace and quiet of the countryside was simply a godsend and he loved to savour every second of it. With these two girls in tow, however, there was very little chance of that today. One thing these two sisters were good at was talking incessantly. Having had to listen to them natter excitedly at a million miles per hour, he very quickly realised that the peace and quiet he loved so much simply wasn't going to happen.

Being the consummate professional, rather than complain or get angry about his companions unyielding desire to talk, Sir Hapslock used it as an opportunity to learn more about them. Listening carefully as they spoke, he very quickly started to understand quite a bit about their personalities. Kyrie was obscenely vain, breathtakingly stupid and loved being mean to her little sister. On the other hand, she was also a warm, friendly person who loved her little sister to bits. Cayley was frighteningly intelligent, good natured and extremely tolerant. She could also be extremely sarcastic. The real downside of their personalities, as Hapslock found to his cost was that the two of them shared a disturbing love for fashion which they could maintain a conversation about for hours on end. He admired many things about them such as Cayley's brain, Kyrie's body and their sisterly adoration for each other. Sadly these things paled into insignificance after enduring hour after hour of listening to them rave on about clothes and accessories.

As they'd marched through the great green wilderness, the poor unfortunate knight had slowly started to be driven insane by their extremely girly conversation. He'd barely got a moments respite from it. Only during two short breaks to rest their legs did the girls change the subject. Other than those brief moments, the girls had stuck to the same topic all day.

During those two short breaks, Sir Hapslock had managed to learn a great deal about his two new charges. During the first break, Cayley had pulled out a book and started to read, allowing him to have a one on one conversation with Kyrie. During the second break, Kyrie started to pine for a pair of red stilettos she'd left behind when she ran away from home. As she sat ashen-faced and heartbroken, he'd managed to hold a good conversation with Cayley instead. These two chats had been real eye-openers. Kyrie, it seemed, was a first class fighter, a sex maniac and a fashion lover, nothing else. Apart from a deep desire to take care of her beloved little sister, she only cared about those three things. She really wasn't a complicated person. Cayley on the other hand, had a lot of interests. The young genius loved to read and could hold a conversation on a whole variety of subjects. Her favourite being the new world. Having read about a knight from the new world named Sir Flaxley and all his brilliant deeds, she couldn't wait to go there and see the new world for herself. To meet Sir Flaxley in person being her greatest ambition. After his chat with her, Sir Hapslock was impressed. When they resumed their trek and she re-joined a discussion about shoes with her sister, however, he was mortified. Travelling with these two young ladies was indeed going to be a challenge.

*Plain lands, near Roseville Township, Castaria, late afternoon...*

Sir Hapslock's words about the sanctuary of the new world had had quite a profound effect on Kyrie and Cayley's morale. Having been wandering for two years, to at last have a final destination had lifted their spirits immensely. They could finally see an end to their life of continually fending off attacks and hiding. In the new world, the vengeful Axion, the source of all their hardship, would at last be unable to blight their lives. With this as their driving force, they'd marched at a pace alongside their knightly comrade with a spring in their step. After two years of deflated dawdling they were now motivated and for the first time since they'd fled their homeland, a long walk didn't seem like a depressing chore.

Buoyed by the knowledge that at the end of this trek sanctuary was waiting, it seemed nothing could break their spirits. With Hapslock to assist them, umpteen grendith attacks were thwarted and they soldiered on eagerly. Such was the excited pace of their march, by the time the sun showed signs of quitting for the day, they'd almost reached the township of Roseville, their first stop on the road to Port Amok and the boat to freedom. For Hapslock, their progress was no surprise. To cover so many miles in a day was nothing to him. For Kyrie and Cayley on the other hand, it was quite the miracle. Being slow walkers by nature, they'd never even walked *half* as far in just one day.

Just as the eighteenth hour of the day passed and the shadows of the trees started to extend, the township of Roseville came into view. With only one more mile until they reached its walls, Hapslock beamed, looking forward to a hearty meal at one of the local inns. The timing looked perfect. They'd have time for a hearty meal, a couple of ales and still be able to get a good night's sleep in readiness to march again on the morrow. Looking forward to filling his stomach with an extra large helping of steak, he put his head down and picked up the pace for one final push. Certain they'd be in the town in under ten minutes, he beamed at his two companions then slowed to a halt and rolled his eyes. Watching as Cayley smiled to him apologetically and rushed into the nearest bush, he sighed to himself and placed a hand on his rumbling stomach.

HAPSLOCK: Be still, my friend. It won't be long.

(Standing just over his shoulder, keeping a watchful eye on where Cayley went, Kyrie replied to him absently.)

KYRIE: What did you say?

(Hapslock smiled and turned to face her.)

HAPSLOCK: Nothing, just looking forward to a nice juicy steak.

(Kyrie gave him a sideways glance.)

KYRIE: Steak? How can you afford that?

HAPSLOCK: I'm a knight. The king's paying.

(Kyrie sighed.)

KYRIE: I've never had steak, can't afford it.

(Hapslock exhaled happily.)

HAPSLOCK: You haven't lived. A good steak is a taste of heaven. And even a bad one is still bloody marvellous.

KYRIE: A bad one? Like rotten?

(Hapslock raised a single finger and beamed.)

HAPSLOCK: No, I mean, a badly prepared one. You see, the secret is all in the preparation.

(Far from interested, Kyrie scowled at the bush and urged Cayley to hurry up in her mind.)

HAPSLOCK: Thing is, you don't just lob the meat on the coals; you have to tenderise it first.

(Feigning interest, Kyrie replied emptily.)

KYRIE: Is that so?

HAPSLOCK: Absolutely. You have to lay the steak out and bash it flat first; then it comes out lovely.

KYRIE: Bash it, huh?

(She gritted her teeth and yelled to the bush.)

KYRIE: Get a move on!

HAPSLOCK: See, some places don't bother to beat the steak first and then wonder why it doesn't quite hit the spot, terrible really.

(Just then, Cayley sheepishly emerged from the bush.)

KYRIE: Oh, thank god.

CAYLEY: Sorry.

KYRIE: Did you wipe your...

(Cayley scowled.)

CAYLEY: Yes!!! Good god, Kyrie.

(Hapslock beamed.)

HAPSLOCK: We ready then?

CAYLEY: Uh huh.

(As they started to head towards Roseville, Cayley smiled.)

CAYLEY: So, what were you guys talking about?

(Kyrie shrugged.)

KYRIE: Just about how he loves to beat his meat.

(Hapslock's hair practically stood on end and he flapped in abject embarrassment.)

HAPSLOCK: What? No! Badly put, badly put!!! We were talking about steak.

(Kyrie and Cayley both gave him baffled looks.)

KYRIE: What are you panicking about?

CAYLEY: I thought you were *supposed* to tenderise steak, what's wrong?

(Hapslock raised an eyebrow.)

HAPSLOCK: Didn't notice the double entendre then?

KYRIE: Eh?

CAYLEY: There was a double entendre?

HAPSLOCK: Well... don't *I* feel a fool?

(With that, he paced ahead whistling innocently to himself. This was another lesson learned. Lewd double meanings would not be a problem with these girls. Being a slut and a genius he was sure they'd notice but luckily for him they were also an idiot and an innocent. The double entendre went right over Kyrie's head and Cayley was far too innocent to understand it. Feeling mightily relieved, Hapslock smiled to himself.)

HAPSLOCK: Come on, let's hurry on and get ourselves a room for the night. I'm starving.

(And with no more ado, he led them into Roseville to put an end to their long march for the day.)

*Roseville Township, Castaria...*

Roseville Township was without doubt the most picturesque township in the whole of Castaria. Set upon a crystal clear, blue lake with a large pine forest surrounding it on three sides, the views in certain areas were simply breath-taking. Eager to maintain the tranquillity of this wonderful setting, the town founders had gone to great lengths to ensure that the settlement was just as beautiful as its surroundings. All buildings were erected using the finest white granite and pine beams to create a serene ambience. It was a design that those in power refused to ever deviate from, even to this day. As a result of their determined efforts, they'd created a veritable utopia for the eyes to behold.

Over the last one hundred years, word of Roseville's magnificence had started to spread throughout the land. Every year, more and more tourists were attracted to the township until it eventually started to thrive as a resort town. With such beautiful views on offer, not to mention the warm atmosphere inside the township, it didn't take long to be regarded as the national city of romance. From all over Castaria couples would come to get married, renew their vows or simply enjoy a romantic time away. Such was the demand for weddings in Roseville, there was a chapel on every street and every inn had at least one large reception room.

Like any settlement reliant on tourism, Roseville had a joyous air about it. The locals were always delighted to welcome the tourists. These new customers were essential to their livelihoods and were always treated like old friends. The tourists themselves were, of course, delighted to be there. It all made for a wonderful atmosphere.

Having strolled into the city and been greeted like royalty by sentry guards, Hapslock, Kyrie and Cayley couldn't help but smile. Hapslock was more than used to receiving a warm welcome but rarely did it feel as sincere as the one he'd just received. More used to strolling into a town and being sneered at for having exposed cleavage and a skimpy mini-skirt on, Kyrie was delighted. Their reception had been so warm, even Cayley felt confident. Normally, she'd shyly hide behind Kyrie and hope none of the scoffing locals started any trouble. Receiving warm smiles and welcoming waves as they marched into the town, they instantly took Roseville to their hearts.

Within fifteen minutes of walking into town, Hapslock booked them all a room at the Royal Lakeside Hotel. While he used his knightly credentials to complete the booking formalities, Kyrie and Cayley could only gape in wide-mouthed awe at the magnificent decor in the foyer area. This was a far cry from the dumps they were used to staying in. With the booking process complete, a concierge then led them to their room. Kyrie and Cayley remained dumbstruck all the way there. Once inside the room, Hapslock gave the concierge a tip and closed the door behind him. Wearing a relaxed smile, he then turned to face the two bewildered girls. Looking very much like fish out of water, they both stood coyly looking about the room in total wonderment of it.

HAPSLOCK: You okay there, Ladies? You look a little... shocked.

(Kyrie lowered her head from the ceiling and stared at him.)

KYRIE: This room... it's got like... curtains and everything!

(Cayley bounced excitedly.)

CAYLEY: And a bookshelf.

KYRIE: And that's a nice carpet!

(She knelt down and felt the soft fibres with her fingers.)

KYRIE: Oh my god, it feels like velvet or something.

(Remembering the girl's failure to spot a double entendre earlier in the day, Hapslock allowed himself a smirk.)

HAPSLOCK: Nothing like a good quality shag, is there?

(Kyrie furrowed her brow at him.)

KYRIE: Oh I see! So that's why you brought us to a hotel is it?

(Hapslock looked most taken aback.)

HAPSLOCK: I beg your pardon.

KYRIE: I might have known there was a catch! It's lucky for you I'm a slut.

(She shrugged.)

KYRIE: I was going to shag you anyway.

HAPSLOCK: But... I didn't mean...

KYRIE: Just *me* though...

(She gestured towards Cayley.)

KYRIE: You even look at her funny and I'll pull your testicles off.

(Hapslock folded his arms indignantly.)

HAPSLOCK: I can assure you...

KYRIE: Relax; I said you'd get some, didn't I?

(She rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: Men are always so impatient... but then I am fucking hot, I suppose.

HAPSLOCK: Let's get one thing straight here, young lady...

(Realising he was on a promise from this stunning eighteen year old beauty, he then bit his lip and stood at ease.)

HAPSLOCK: So... you like the room then?

(Cayley refrained from glaring coldly at Kyrie and beamed.)

CAYLEY: It's amazing. I've never stayed in a room this nice before.

KYRIE: Yeah, we usually have to cram into one tiny, bug ridden bed... this room has like two massive beds.

(She then frowned at Cayley.)

KYRIE: Why were you glaring at me just now?

CAYLEY: Because "shag" is what they call carpet fibres, stupid!

(Kyrie scoffed.)

KYRIE: No, shag is a posh way of saying fuck.

(She rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: And I thought *I* was the dumb one.

CAYLEY: You are! Fornicate is the polite way to say fuck!

(Her faced then turned pale and her shoulders sunk.)

CAYLEY: Poop.

(Hapslock then watched in amazement as Kyrie bounded over to a seat by the window, sat down then pointed angrily at her lap.)

HAPSLOCK: What's going on?

KYRIE: Just a minute.

(As Cayley ambled towards her trembling, her bottom lip almost dragging on the floor, Hapslock scratched his head.)

HAPSLOCK: Hmm... surely you're not going to... no, can't be.

(As a tearful Cayley leant over Kyrie's lap, his jaw dropped.)

HAPSLOCK: Oh my...

KYRIE: Now, less of your language, missy.

(She then proceeded to spank Cayley's backside five times. As the final spank ended, Kyrie helped her tearful sister up and wagged her finger at her.)

KYRIE: Just be grateful Hancock is here or it'd have been your bare arse.

(Cayley pouted through quivering lips and looked her nervously in the eye.)

CAYLEY: Sorry.

(As they shared a warm hug, Hapslock nodded thoughtfully.)

HAPSLOCK: Discipline, good to see. It'll serve her well.

(Cayley scowled at him coldly and sat on one of the beds.)

HAPSLOCK: Well it's true. A good spanking never hurt anyone.

CAYLEY: No? Then how come my bum stings?

HAPSLOCK: I meant in the long run... obviously.

(He then scowled at Kyrie.)

HAPSLOCK: Who the hell is Hancock by the way?

(Kyrie looked amazed and scoffed.)

KYRIE: You are, stupid.

HAPSLOCK: I'm Hapslock.

KYRIE: Really? Since when?

HAPSLOCK: Since birth!

KYRIE: Oh... okay.

(She upped and headed towards the window.)

KYRIE: So, what now?

(As Hapslock went to reply, Kyrie cut over him.)

KYRIE: Plenty of time for that shag later, I mean in the meantime.

(As Cayley sighed, saddened by her sister's willingness to put herself about, Hapslock stepped up to the window and rubbed his chin.)

HAPSLOCK: I say we eat. How do you ladies fancy a steak dinner?

(Much to his amazement, Kyrie shrugged.)

KYRIE: Sure, I guess so.

(Glancing back and seeing Cayley silent, Sir Hapslock scratched his head.)

HAPSLOCK: Maybe you didn't hear me, I said steak.

KYRIE: We heard you.

(The good knight then mused to himself.)

HAPSLOCK: I guess you can't get excited about something you've never had.

(He beamed.)

HAPSLOCK: Well, are you two in for a treat?

(He stood tall and folded his arms.)

HAPSLOCK: Then here's the plan. The concierge let us in with his master key, apparently this was the last room left and the manager has the other one. He'll be here in just over an hour. Let's spend a few moments getting to know each other better then once we get the room key we can hit the town and find a bloody good restaurant. Sound good?

(Cayley nodded warmly.)

CAYLEY: Thank you, Sir Hapslock.

KYRIE: Cool, thanks, Sir... what was it again?

HAPSLOCK: Hancock. Hapslock!!!

(He spammed his forehead and sat on the other bed.)

KYRIE: So which is it?

HAPSLOCK: Hapslock.

KYRIE: Can't I just call you "Frank"?

(Hapslock looked appalled.)

HAPSLOCK: What? No! Why would you even ask that?

KYRIE: Well... you kinda look like a Frank to me.

HAPSLOCK: Frank? Frank? Giles or Lance I could accept but Frank? I look nothing like a Frank!

KYRIE: Oh come off it. You look just like a Frank and let's face it; you could never pull off Lance.

(Hapslock flapped.)

HAPSLOCK: Now listen here...

(As Cayley sat giggling to herself, Hapslock and Kyrie glared at her.)

HAPSLOCK: Something amuses you?

(Cayley chuckled behind her hand.)

CAYLEY: She said you could never pull off Lance.

(Alarm bells immediately rung in Hapslock's head. "Pull off Lance", surely this seemingly innocent young girl hadn't spotted a double entendre and repeated it knowing full well that

her sister wouldn't notice? As he stared at her in horror, Kyrie also started to chuckle. Maybe these two girls weren't as impervious to double meanings as he'd thought they were.)

KYRIE: Lance, I remember. My first boyfriend at school.

(Hapslock bit his lip.)

KYRIE: I was only eleven.

(Hapslock's hair stood on end.)

HAPSLOCK: You pulled him off when you were eleven???

KYRIE: He dared me to.

HAPSLOCK: Even so.

CAYLEY: It was so funny.

HAPSLOCK: You were there???

CAYLEY: I helped her.

HAPSLOCK: What???

KYRIE: He said I wouldn't dare pull him off his pony so we grabbed his leg and pulled him.

CAYLEY: He landed in some dung and cried; it was so funny.

(Kyrie smiled.)

KYRIE: We still laugh about it now.

(Hapslock chuckled to himself.)

HAPSLOCK: So, nothing to do with a double entendre then?

CAYLEY: There was a double entendre?

HAPSLOCK: No, doesn't matter.

KYRIE: Unless by "pulling off Lance" he thought I meant wanking him off!

(Hapslock spammed his forehead and sighed.)

HAPSLOCK: I give up.

(Realising the girls might well pick up on double meanings but be too mature to point them out, he sighed and puffed out. Maybe these girls wouldn't be as easy to read as he'd expected. With this in mind he looked to Kyrie and smiled. Upon spotting her cleavage he drooled for a moment then shook his head.)

HAPSLOCK: Stop it, you fool.

KYRIE: Hey, there's no need for name calling.

(She scowled.)

KYRIE: Frank!

(Hapslock sighed and shook his head. This wasn't the first time the sight of Kyrie's body had clouded his thinking. Desperate to remain professional, he gave her a warm glance and urged her to sit with her sister. Only too happy to oblige, Kyrie sat down and Hapslock smiled to them both.)

HAPSLOCK: Seeing as we have time to kill, let's have a little chat. Anything you want to ask *me*, for instance?

KYRIE: Like what?

HAPSLOCK: Whatever you like. Surely, you must be curious about something.

(Cayley shyly spoke up.)

CAYLEY: Well...

(She hung her head and clammed up.)

HAPSLOCK: It's okay, young lady, you can ask.

CAYLEY: It's just that... you're a knight.

HAPSLOCK: Yes, I know.

CAYLEY: Well... you help people for a living so we kinda don't need to ask about that.

(Hapslock mused to himself.)

HAPSLOCK: Really? Is that how you see knights? As people obliged to help and nothing more?



CAYLEY: No, it's not that... it's just...

(She looked to Kyrie nervously then back at Hapslock.)

CAYLEY: It's hard to know what we can ask without being rude.

HAPSLOCK: Like I said, ask anything.

CAYLEY: And you won't take offence?

(Hapslock looked slightly baffled.)

HAPSLOCK: Why would I take offence?

CAYLEY: The men in Anoseta would.

(Kyrie nodded.)

KYRIE: Men get angry if a woman asks them anything.

CAYLEY: It's true.

HAPSLOCK: Really? So your home town's like that is it?

(The girls both nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: Well I won't take offence. I asked you to ask me.

CAYLEY: Okay...

(She bit her lip as if psyching herself up then blurted out her question.)

CAYLEY: When we get to the new world can you help us find someone?

(She hid her face and trembled as Kyrie gave her a sideways glance.)

KYRIE: Flaxley again?

(Cayley peered over her hands at her.)

CAYLEY: Maybe.

(Kyrie rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: She's obsessed.

(Hapslock rubbed his chin thoughtfully.)

HAPSLOCK: I actually meant, is there anything you wanted to ask *about* me. My job or my personality, what makes me tick... but okay...

(He nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: You want to find someone do you?

(As Cayley pouted, Kyrie rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: She's obsessed with some dude in the new world. I don't know why, I don't listen.

Not much of an attention span, see?

(She shrugged.)

KYRIE: Her reasons are bound to be geeky, though.

CAYLEY: No they're not.

HAPSLOCK: So what are your reasons, Cayley?

(Kyrie interrupted.)

KYRIE: Don't care. I don't know anything about this new world or any Flaxley; I just know I want to us to get somewhere where we'll be safe. And that I'm hungry... and a little horny.

(As Cayley hung her saddened head, Hapslock spoke in a warm tone.)

HAPSLOCK: Flaxley, eh?

(Cayley's little face lit up.)

CAYLEY: Yeah, Sir Flaxley of Tifaeris.

(Kyrie rolled her eyes and sighed.)

KYRIE: She's off.

CAYLEY: He's like... the greatest knight ever.

(Hapslock chuckled.)

HAPSLOCK: Sure, if you believe the hype.

(As Cayley scowled at him, Hapslock smiled.)

HAPSLOCK: Don't pout; it might be true I guess.

CAYLEY: It is.

KYRIE: Yeah? Then if he's *that* good, why did he go to the new world instead of staying in this one and fighting for justice?

HAPSLOCK: He didn't *go* to the new world, Kyrie. He's always been fighting for justice over there.

KYRIE: Really? But... how? It was only discovered 10 years ago, where was he before that?

HAPSLOCK: It was discovered 23 years ago! And he was already there. The fact *we* only just discovered it, doesn't mean it wasn't there before.

KYRIE: It doesn't?

(She looked lost and laid back on the bed.)

KYRIE: This is too complicated for me.

HAPSLOCK: Complicated? It's not even remotely hard. 23 years ago, our sailors discovered new lands, several new continents full of people living just like us.

CAYLEY: She isn't listening. Her eyes have glazed over; she does that every time *I* try to explain too.

(She shrugged.)

CAYLEY: The only time she ever listens about new world stuff is when I tell her about how high heels were invented!

(Kyrie immediately sat up.)

KYRIE: High heels?

CAYLEY: Flaxley!

(Kyrie instantly flopped back down again.)

CAYLEY: See?

HAPSLOCK: Hmm...

(He nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: So, why do you want to find Sir Flaxley anyway?

(Cayley bounced, excited to get the chance to discuss it.)

CAYLEY: He's my hero. He did so many amazing things.

HAPSLOCK: Yes, so he says. I read his book too.

CAYLEY: The first one?

HAPSLOCK: The second one!

(Cayley placed her hand on her heart.)

CAYLEY: Oh my god, the first one is so much better. "Sir Flaxley, my life in words". It's incredible. He saved his home town, killed witches, discovered a civilization, you name it. And some of the beasts he killed... Aleclaw, the Birdmen, Melmero...

(She exhaled excitedly.)

CAYLEY: Wow.

(Hapslock wracked his brains and mused to himself.)

HAPSLOCK: Melmero? I know that name from somewhere.

CAYLEY: It was a forty foot tall, slimy beast with giant hands that absorb magic. And a gaping mouth to eat people with.

(Hapslock looked enlightened.)

HAPSLOCK: Melmerex!

CAYLEY: No, Melmero.

HAPSLOCK: No, you don't understand, I killed a monster called Melmerex the other day. It too was slimy, had giant hands and wanted to eat people.

(He scoffed with much amusement.)

HAPSLOCK: It was ten foot tall. Forty indeed.

CAYLEY: But...

HAPSLOCK: He's clearly embellished the story to make it a million times better than it was.

(He shook his head.)

HAPSLOCK: I despise boastful knights like that.

CAYLEY: It *was* forty feet tall, I tell you. You probably fought a baby one.

HAPSLOCK: Poppycock.

CAYLEY: Anyway, he had witnesses; there were four other people and an idiot in his party.

HAPSLOCK: It took six of them?

(He laughed to himself.)

HAPSLOCK: I took one down by myself and I won't need to exaggerate my deed by selling my memoirs. This Flaxley is clearly a fraud!

(Cayley was livid and bellowed at him.)

CAYLEY: You're a fraud! And you smell.

(She folded her arms and sulked.)

HAPSLOCK: No need for that kind of behaviour, young lady.

(She poked her tongue out at him.)

HAPSLOCK: I say!

CAYLEY: Meany! Flaxley *is* a hero!

HAPSLOCK: Don't call me a meany! It's childish!

CAYLEY: You're probably the hapless idiot, apprentice knight he only referred to in the book as "the idiot", that's why you're bitter.

HAPSLOCK: Now you're being ridiculous, when Flaxley was in his prime I was a mere child...

(He shook his head.)

HAPSLOCK: Anyway, grow up. I was merely saying...

CAYLEY: You wet the bed.

HAPSLOCK: Excuse me?

CAYLEY: And you're gay too.

(Hapslock placed his hands on his hips and growled.)

HAPSLOCK: Now look here, young lady. Stop it.

(He ruffled his neck.)

HAPSLOCK: I'm half tempted to put you over my knee and spank you, just like your sister did.

(Without moving from where she was laying, Kyrie spoke up calmly.)

KYRIE: If you even breath near her, I'll break both your legs!

(As Cayley pulled a face at him, Hapslock shook his head.)

HAPSLOCK: Shocking. Just because I don't share your willing to believe his ridiculous claims.

(Kyrie sat up.)

KYRIE: Listen, Frank...

HAPSLOCK: It's Hancock!!!

(He spammed his forehead.)

HAPSLOCK: Oh for heaven sake!

KYRIE: I might not listen to her fantasies about this hero of hers but I'd never try to take them away from her.

(She gave him a pitiful glance.)

KYRIE: That's just mean. You're a meany!

(Hapslock rolled his eyes.)

HAPSLOCK: Don't you start!

(He sighed sorrowfully.)

HAPSLOCK: Fine, I apologise, Cayley. Believe what you like.

(He nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: Maybe I was harsh.

CAYLEY: You were mean.

HAPSLOCK: Fine, I was mean.

(He rolled his eyes again.)

HAPSLOCK: I didn't mean to upset anyone. Look, when that chap comes with our key, we can get out there and enjoy a hearty meal. Until then, let's all be civil.

CAYLEY: Don't be mean then.

HAPSLOCK: Fine. I still think you made a big deal out of it but whatever it takes.

(He looked to the window.)

HAPSLOCK: We're in the city of romance where food is cooked with love; let's try to focus on that, shall we?

KYRIE: City of romance?

HAPSLOCK: Yes. Every restaurant sets extremely high standards here. Nobody wants a trashy meal after a special occasion after all. You really are in for a treat.

KYRIE: Wait, forget food. What's this about romance?

HAPSLOCK: Well... this is the city of romance, you see. People come from all over to get married here. Twenty four hours a day, there's always a wedding going on and you can always get a meal fit for the occasion.

(Kyrie and Cayley looked at one another.)

CAYLEY: Uh oh, no Kyrie.

KYRIE: Shut it, nerd.

CAYLEY: Hey!

KYRIE: We have to gate-crash a wedding!

HAPSLOCK: Excuse me?

KYRIE: I want to see a wedding. Or at least a reception.

CAYLEY: As nice as that'd be, we can't gate-crash a wedding, it's illegal.

KYRIE: Shush, geek. I want to see a wedding.

(Although she'd never been to one, Kyrie loved the idea of weddings. She adored the notion of two people being joined together for life, bound by love. Although she hated the idea of only having sex with the same person for the rest of her born days, the thought of *other people* committing to it, moved her greatly. Knowing all too well how her sister was an incurable romantic when it came to other peoples weddings, Cayley sighed.)

CAYLEY: No point arguing with her. Once she makes up her mind there's no changing it. (She mumbled under her breath.)

CAYLEY: She doesn't have room for *two* thoughts in there.

(Hapslock mused for a moment then nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: Okay, I'll see what I can do.

(Kyrie bounced excitedly.)

KYRIE: Yay!

CAYLEY: Seriously? You'll help gate-crash a wedding?

HAPSLOCK: Well, maybe a reception. I mean, I should imagine you two rarely get to enjoy an evening out, so why not?

(Cayley sighed regretfully.)

CAYLEY: We *never* get to have a fun night out.

KYRIE: That's not true, we went to see those fireworks last month, remember?

(Cayley gave her a sideways glance.)

CAYLEY: How can I forget? We got attacked by a gang of stealth assassins. Hardly a fun night out.

(Kyrie sighed.)

KYRIE: Yeah, I guess you're right. What with being broke all the time and getting attacked everywhere we go, we rarely get the chance to have *any* fun.

HAPSLOCK: I figured as much. Well, as a knight it's against the law to refuse me access *anywhere*, so getting into a reception won't be a problem. Consider it done.

(Expecting much in the way of gratitude he was most put out to see Kyrie musing upwardly, oblivious to what he'd just told her.)

KYRIE: Well, when I say we never get to have *any* fun, that's not really true. I get a lot of sex and that's always fun!

HAPSLOCK: Right... well, anyway...

KYRIE: It's no fun for Cayley having to wait for me but still, we have to get money from somewhere, right?

(Hapslock gave her a pitying glance.)

HAPSLOCK: You've had to sell yourself for sex?

KYRIE: Yeah, cool huh?

(Hapslock was horrified.)

HAPSLOCK: Cool? How is that cool?

KYRIE: I get a good shag *and* a pile of cash!

HAPSLOCK: But that's prostitution.

KYRIE: Not necessarily. Seeing as I'm always willing to give it away anyway, I see it more as accepting a donation.

(Hapslock groaned and held his head in his hands.)

HAPSLOCK: Good grief.

(Having allowed himself a moment to absorb her words, he shook his head then looked to the girls and smiled warmly.)

HAPSLOCK: You know, come the morning we'll be off marching across the countryside again, fighting off grendiths and keeping a sharp eye open for whatever other enemies might try their luck.

(He looked thoughtful.)

HAPSLOCK: Which reminds me, I must remember to buy fire magic ingredients before we set off tomorrow.

(He nodded to confirm his thought then smiled to the girls.)

HAPSLOCK: Anyway, it's going to be hard work once we get going again, so I say let's just not worry about it tonight. Once the key arrives, we'll have dinner, take in a wedding reception and then enjoy a decent night's sleep in a comfortable bed.

(Kyrie and Cayley beamed excitedly.)

HAPSLOCK: Tonight, you two can feel like normal girls for a change. After suffering like you have for two years, god knows you deserve it.

KYRIE: Yay! Sounds wonderful.

CAYLEY: Sounds too good to be true.

(Kyrie scoffed.)

KYRIE: Fascist!

(Cayley gave her a belittling glance.)

CAYLEY: You mean pessimist.

KYRIE: No, even I know that's someone who hates fighting.

CAYLEY: That's a pacifist!

KYRIE: Whatever, geek.

HAPSLOCK: Right... glad that's settled. Still, we can't do anything until that key arrives.

KYRIE: Damn.

CAYLEY: That might not get here for ages.

(They all sat silently for a moment looking stuck for what to do when a wry smile appeared on Kyrie's face.)

KYRIE: I know a great way to pass the time.

(Kyrie gave Hapslock a sexy glance then whispered in Cayley's ear. Cayley looked upset and pouted at her.)

CAYLEY: But, Kyrie, I don't want to.

(Kyrie scowled at her.)

KYRIE: Fine. Either do *that* or stay here and watch.

(Shuddering all over, Cayley's eyes bulged and she made a dash for the door.)

CAYLEY: My book!

(She skidded to a halt, about turned and raced back to rummage in her pack.)

CAYLEY: Got it.

(She then made a bolt for the door. As the door slammed behind her, Hapslock raised a curious eyebrow.)

HAPSLOCK: What was that all about?

(As Kyrie licked her lips and flicked her hair at him, he swiftly looked enlightened.)

HAPSLOCK: Oh... I see.

(A smile enveloped his face and he climbed to his feet.)

HAPSLOCK: I like that idea.

(It was times like this that Hapslock was most proud of his decision to become a wandering knight. The knights who'd opted for jobs guarding the royal princesses would be hung if they slept with *their* charges. In Hapslock's line of knightly labour, however, sleeping with a beautiful and willing charge was a more than acceptable perk of the job. One he absolutely relished.

With a knowing glint in his eye, he climbed to his feet, offered a hand to Kyrie and pulled her to her feet to face him.)

HAPSLOCK: I warn you now, I'm very good. Think you can handle me?

(Kyrie looked into his eyes and pouted sexily.)

KYRIE: I know I can.

(As she went to kiss him, Hapslock swiftly spun her around and pulled her towards him, pressing his chest against her back. With one arm across her chest pulling her tight to him, he then ran his other hand down her thigh. Having swept her hair aside with his face, he peered over her shoulder and whispered in her ear.)

HAPSLOCK: You're hot.

(Kyrie tipped her head back and tried to look at him.)

KYRIE: I know that too.

(With her head tipped far back, she tried to reach up and kiss him but he moved his face back out of her way.)

HAPSLOCK: All in good time, my love.

(Kyrie grinned.)

KYRIE: Teasing me, huh? That's risky, you know. I might change my mind.

HAPSLOCK: But then, you might not.

(With that, he allowed his hand to hoist the front of her skirt up and started to rub her femininity through her underwear. Kyrie groaned in ecstasy.)

KYRIE: Ooh... that's nice.

(As she relaxed her head back onto his chest, Hapslock then slipped his hand inside her knickers to pleasure her further.)

KYRIE: Oh, wow.

(Hapslock then nuzzled her neck for a moment before lowering his head to kiss her over her shoulder. Kyrie looked at his incoming lips with glazed eyes and murmured her words playfully.)

KYRIE: Oh, so now you want to kiss, do you?

(Hapslock replied in an embarrassed tone.)

HAPSLOCK: Yes, sorry about that. These days I always check for a vagina before going in for the kiss... I've been hurt before.

(Kyrie froze and gave him a baffled glance.)

KYRIE: Eh?

(Recalling the night he only wished he could forget, Hapslock snarled and spun Kyrie to face him.)

KYRIE: Ooh, aggressive. I like that.

HAPSLOCK: Good. Glad to hear it.

(With that, he lobbed his manhood free of his trousers and placed his hands on hips menacingly.)

HAPSLOCK: Now drop and give me plenty!

(Kyrie chuckled.)

KYRIE: You're crazy.

(With that, she sunk to her knees and proceeded to fellate him with vigour and gusto. Going cross-eyed with joy, Hapslock puffed out and gritted his teeth.)

HAPSLOCK: Holy crap.

(He then looked down and felt a great pride inside.)

HAPSLOCK: I'm all man, damn it. All man!

(He nodded sternly.)

HAPSLOCK: And more importantly, you're a woman!

(He then allowed a dopey expression to cross his brow and exhaled joyously. It would be safe to say, Hapslock was in heaven at this moment. He'd been on the receiving end of many an oral stimulation in his time but rarely had one ever felt this good. Another lesson learnt, Kyrie was exceptional at fellatio. Despite Hapslock having an impressively large manhood, she was managing to make the entire length disappear without even the merest hint of gagging. For Hapslock, watching from above, the sight was a joy to behold.)

HAPSLOCK: Outstanding!

(Hearing his words as she continued to pleasure him, Kyrie felt warm inside. Such compliments validated what she always knew. When it came to sexually gratifying men, she was in a class of her own.

Having pleased Hapslock orally to the point of making her jaw ache, Kyrie climbed onto one of the beds on all fours and looked back over her shoulder with a sexy glint in her eye. Struck by the look in her eye, Hapslock puffed out and in awe.)

HAPSLOCK: You're red hot!

(Running on lust, he swiftly clambered onto the bed and grabbed both her hips to penetrate her from behind. Determined to pleasure her to the same standard she'd just pleased him, he gritted his teeth and started to thrust. Immediately, Kyrie went cross-eyed.)

KYRIE: Fucking hell... wow.

(In no doubt whatsoever that this would be a moment neither of them would ever forget, Hapslock beamed then proceeded to delight her moist femininity extremely hard for over forty minutes, utilising nine different positions. Suffice to say, by the time Hapslock withdrew to climax, they were both thoroughly exhausted and completely satisfied.

Laying side by side on their backs as they caught their breath, Hapslock and Kyrie stared at the ceiling wearing expressions of both joy and amazement. Blinking with astonishment as he tried to get his head around just how incredible the sex was, Hapslock puffed out and turned his head to look at her.)

HAPSLOCK: You know....

(He started to slip his hand under her neck to pull her close for a cuddle.)

HAPSLOCK: That was the best sex I've ever had... and I've had a *lot* of sex!

(Just as he started to pull her head towards his chest, however Kyrie sat up then slid off the bed.)

KYRIE: Cool, glad you enjoyed yourself.

(She looked about herself.)

KYRIE: Where the hell did my knickers go... ooh, there they are!

(As Kyrie started to get dressed, Hapslock watched her in bewilderment for a moment when he was overcome by an empty sensation in his heart.)

HAPSLOCK: You didn't enjoy that?

(As she fixed her bra, Kyrie replied with a smile.)

KYRIE: Don't be silly, it was amazing.

HAPSLOCK: Then...

KYRIE: If we're going for dinner later, maybe I should wear a nice dress.

(Hapslock's mouth fell open. She sounded sincere about enjoying the sex but her actions suggested otherwise. Normally after high grade intercourse, a woman would cuddle up to him and swoon merrily about it for the next half an hour. Kyrie simply leaping out of bed and starting to think about dinner was the last thing he'd expected. As he tried to fathom her behaviour, Hapslock's face bore an astonished expression. An expression which swiftly turned to one of horror. In that moment, his fear that she may not have enjoyed herself was replaced with a far greater one. He'd just made a realisation that shook him to the core of his being. He wanted to cuddle. This most definitely wasn't like him. Like all men, he only took part in cuddling after sex for the woman's benefit. Normally, he'd much rather go home or roll over and fall asleep.)

HAPSLOCK: Holy shit, I'm going soft!

(Kyrie looked at his penis and shrugged.)

KYRIE: It's supposed to, isn't it?

(Hapslock scowled at her.)

HAPSLOCK: Not that!

KYRIE: Whatever. Look, get dressed so Cayley can come back in.

(Hapslock relented his scowl and hung a dejected head. Being around Kyrie was having a bizarre affect on him and he wasn't comfortable with it. On several occasions he'd caught himself lustfully staring at her and losing concentration, something a knight should be above doing. And now, he'd found himself wanting to cuddle her after sex. As he sat pondering the mess for a moment, he sat bolt upright looking tortured.)

HAPSLOCK: Shit!!!

(Standing in front of the mirror holding a dress in front of herself, Kyrie furrowed her brow.)

KYRIE: Fine, I'll wear the black one then!

(Ignoring her, Hapslock held his head in his hands and trembled. The revelation he'd just had was like a dagger to his heart. Could it be that he was falling in love with this beautiful idiot? Fearing the worst, he shuddered then suddenly looked thoughtful.)

HAPSLOCK: No... it can't be. It's just an anomaly.

KYRIE: What is?

(He looked to Kyrie as she stepped into her dress.)

HAPSLOCK: Nothing.

(Looking relieved, he slipped from the bed to retrieve his underpants. As far as he was concerned, the concept of falling in love with Kyrie was a ridiculous one. If she'd grown up in *his* home town she would have been the type of girl to end up working as a barmaid, before marrying badly and having several unimpressive children. There was no way a knight such as himself could fall in love with such a woman. Convinced of this, he nodded to himself,



safe in the knowledge that when he was finally ready to settle down, the woman he fell in love with would be chaste and noble to say the least. This after all, was the way of the world.

Once Hapslock was finally redressed and ready to face the world again, Kyrie headed for the door to let Cayley back in. As she pulled it open, she saw her sitting cross-legged on the corridor carpet engrossed in her book.)

KYRIE: We're finished.

(Cayley replied without looking up.)

CAYLEY: Let me just finish this sentence.

(Her eyes scanned the page for a few seconds then she closed the book, climbed to her feet and pouted.)

CAYLEY: How could you leave me out here on my own for *this* long?

(Kyrie smiled and gestured back into the room towards Hapslock.)

KYRIE: Blame *him*!

(She gushed.)

KYRIE: He lasted twice as long as they normally do and he knows some amazing positions. (Shocked to hear her tell her twelve year old sister such things, Hapslock had to turn away to hide his conceited grin. Equally as disturbed by Kyrie's honesty, Cayley looked at her through terrified eyes.)

CAYLEY: I didn't need details.

KYRIE: Why ask then?

CAYLEY: I didn't.

KYRIE: You did!

(She ruffled her neck.)

KYRIE: Besides, those weren't details; I merely answered your question. If I was going to give you details I'd tell you how he's hung like a donkey and made me cum six times.

(Cayley whimpered and leant back from her.)

KYRIE: Now, get your glad rags on; when that key gets here, we'll be going for dinner.

(Cayley nodded and held up a key.)

CAYLEY: This key?

KYRIE: What? Where did you get that?

CAYLEY: The hotel guy gave it to me about ten minutes ago.

(Kyrie suddenly looked furious and dragged her sister in the room, throwing the door shut behind her.)

KYRIE: You let some guy approach you and didn't whistle???

CAYLEY: Well...

KYRIE: How did you know he was the hotel guy? He could have been posing as one!!!

CAYLEY: But...

(Kyrie shuddered with rage.)

KYRIE: No fucking butts, Cayley!!! How many fucking times do I have to tell you???

(As tears welled in Cayley's eyes, Kyrie continued to fume.)

KYRIE: If someone approaches you and I'm busy, whistle!!! That could have been one of Axion's men!!!

(Hapslock watched on stunned as Kyrie continued to yell at her tearful sibling.)

KYRIE: What the hell were you thinking??? You're supposed to be the smart one!

CAYLEY: But... you were having... you know, and I didn't want to...

KYRIE: What? Disturb me? I've told you a million times...

(Cayley pouted sorrowfully.)

CAYLEY: Sorry.

(Kyrie threw an arm towards Hapslock.)

KYRIE: He's just a fucking bloke, Cayley. I can get a million of those! I'll never have another you!!!

(Hapslock went to protest but thought better of it as Cayley burst into tears.)

KYRIE: Shit, Cayley.

(She relented her anger and sighed.)

KYRIE: You've got to be smarter than that. Axion's men get everywhere, you *know* that.

(At this point tears welled in Kyrie's eyes too.)

KYRIE: Stupid cow. I can't lose you, I can't. You've got to be smart, Cayley 'cause god knows *I* never will be.

(With that, she threw her arms around her and they both cried their hearts out.)

CAYLEY: Sorry. I'll do better next time, I promise.

KYRIE: I know you will, darling. I love you.

CAYLEY: I love you too.

(Kyrie stepped back from the hug and wiped a tear.)

KYRIE: Now go on, put your lovely white dress on and we can get going.

(Cayley nodded.)

CAYLEY: Okay, but I don't own a white dress.

(Kyrie looked stumped.)

KYRIE: You don't?

CAYLEY: No, the only white dress I've ever worn was the wedding dress I had on when we ran away. We threw it in that ravine.

(Kyrie nodded thoughtfully.)

KYRIE: Oh yeah... shame, you looked lovely in that.

CAYLEY: Besides, it was two years ago, there's no way it'd still fit me anyway.

KYRIE: True, especially not in the chest, eh?

(Cayley scowled at her harshly and covered her chest.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie!!!

KYRIE: What?

CAYLEY: And anyway, if we're going to gate-crash a wedding reception later, I can hardly wear a wedding dress, can I?

KYRIE: That's true. Wear the red one then.

CAYLEY: Okay!

(With that, she headed for her pack and started to rummage through it before putting her underwear in a draw and hanging her coat up in the wardrobe. Once she found the dress in question, she beamed to Kyrie then they both glared at Hapslock.)

HAPSLOCK: What did *I* do wrong? I didn't say a word.

(Kyrie pointed to the door.)

KYRIE: Wait in the corridor, will you, Frank? We'll be out in a second.

(Hapslock looked peeved.)

HAPSLOCK: My name isn't Frank! And why the hell would I want to wait in the corridor?

KYRIE: Fine, don't then. If you enjoy watching a twelve year old girl getting changed, stay by all means.

(Hapslock shrugged.)

HAPSLOCK: Sure, I don't mind. It beats watching a twelve year old boy, that's for certain.

(As the girls fumed at him, Hapslock chuckled and headed for the door.)

HAPSLOCK: I'm kidding, I'm kidding. See you in a minute. Try not to be long though, I know what you girls are like.

KYRIE: We won't be long.

HAPSLOCK: I'm sure you will be.

(He yanked open the door and turned to look at the girls.)

HAPSLOCK: If you come out and I'm not here then you'll know you took *too* long, okay?  
(With that, he pulled the door closed behind him.)

KYRIE: Quick, put that dress on and I'll do your hair. I've got a horrible feeling he's not joking.

---

Having readied themselves to go out for dinner in what constituted a world record fast time for females, Kyrie and Cayley were well rewarded. Within an hour of leaving the hotel, they were treated to their first ever high quality steak dinner. Never before in their lives had either of them tasted anything so heavenly. Seated in a high class restaurant, they felt like royalty as they devoured their prime sirloins. Hapslock hadn't exaggerated, it really was a meal fit for a deity. It wasn't often that these two troubled young ladies experienced any kind of luxury whatsoever, so to be sat in their favourite dresses in a fine eatery, enjoying such quality food felt wonderful to them. The only low point of the meal coming when Kyrie loudly exclaimed that the food was so good she almost had another orgasm. Despite the objections from other diners, however, her comment went unpunished, largely due to the presence of a knight at their table.

As they left the restaurant that evening and stepped back out into the moonlit city, Kyrie and Cayley felt calmer than they'd felt in a very long time. For once, they didn't feel like victims. Thanks to Hapslock, on this night they felt special. They felt included in society. After two years of running and hiding from whatever kind of beast or warrior Axion sent to kill them, they'd forgotten how wonderful life could actually be. This special night was serving up a taste of how good their lives could be once they reached sanctuary.

As they paced away from the restaurant, Hapslock walked behind joyfully listening in as the girls chatted excitedly with a smile on their faces. All the way down the street they gushed excitedly about all the wonderful things they'd do once Axion was off their back. All the foods they'd like to try, activities they'd like to attempt and of course, all the clothes they could buy. To see the girls so excited, Hapslock felt warm inside. Bringing them joy and relieving their stress was a large part of his job and tonight he was excelling at it like never before.

As he beamed to himself, Hapslock looked down at Kyrie's pert backside and his eyes glazed over. Hypnotised by the mesmeric sight of her dress swaying against her thighs, he puffed out in awe. Never had simple creases in cheap cloth looked so appealing. As he started to drool, however, he realised what he was doing and a horrified look crossed his brow. Fearing he'd been noticed, he panicked and reacted swiftly to change the subject, despite the fact he hadn't even been a part of their conversation.

HAPSLOCK: So, that Axion sounds like a bit of a scallywag!

(He winced. Having helped the girls forget their troubles for this one special evening, all their woes immediately flooded back.)

KYRIE: He's horrible.

CAYLEY: He's disgusting.

KYRIE: To want to marry a child; I mean, gross!

CAYLEY: And then to do this to us...

(They gave each other a saddened glance then started to relate some of the troubles they'd faced since fleeing their home nation. As they reeled off a list of attempts on their lives, Hapslock quickly forgot his error and his jaw dropped. Somehow, with only Kyrie's fighting

skills to defend them they'd faced and defeated countless giant beasts and enough warriors to create a small army. Such was Axion's determined efforts to kill them, the longest they'd gone without getting attacked was three days and on one particularly bad afternoon they'd had to face five summoned beasts and three assassins in the space of a few short hours.

As the girls continued to horrify him with their tale Hapslock couldn't help but sigh. The cruelty these two girls had been forced to endure was far worse than he'd imagined. Listening on as they related their sadness and suffering, Hapslock started to get angry. Nobody should be made to suffer in such a way. Every horrifying story they told, served to strengthen his resolve even further, nothing was going to stop him from leading these two young ladies to sanctuary. It meant more than merely doing his duty as a knight; it was his obligation as a human being to help them. Nodding sternly as he paced behind them, Hapslock forced a smile then stepped between them and put his arms around them both.)  
HAPSLOCK: Ladies, you've suffered enough and I swear on all I hold dear, whatever it takes, I'll get you to sanctuary. Even if it kills me.

(As Kyrie and Cayley offered him up a sincere smile, Hapslock nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: Tomorrow, we'll set out in earnest and end your nightmares for good, but for tonight...

(He smiled.)

HAPSLOCK: Let's make this an evening you'll never forget. You deserve an extra special night.

CAYLEY: It's been amazing already, that dinner was incredible.

KYRIE: It was!

HAPSLOCK: That was just the beginning. Seeing as you're both dressed for the occasion, what say we gate-crash that wedding reception now?

KYRIE: Yay!

CAYLEY: Cool.

HAPSLOCK: Excellent. We've a long day ahead tomorrow, so let's paint the town red!

KYRIE: Paint it?

HAPSLOCK: Not literally.

CAYLEY: It means "to have fun", Kyrie.

(Kyrie looked enlightened.)

KYRIE: Ooh, I like fun!

HAPSLOCK: Then follow me.

(Looking assertive, he marched on high, with the girls following on excitedly, towards a plush looking building to their left.)

HAPSLOCK: This is the Roseville Plaza, the most exclusive reception venue in the entire city. They're bound to have a reception on.

(As the girls beamed, he led them into the foyer of the exclusive venue and up to three burly security guards who were guarding the entrance to a corridor.)

HAPSLOCK: Knight of the realm here, I'm taking these girls to the big wedding reception.

(Much to Kyrie and Cayley's delight, the guards parted and allowed him through.)

GUARD: It's down the end of this corridor and through the double doors, sir.

HAPSLOCK: Good, good.

(As he led them down the finely decorated corridor towards a set of large white doors, Kyrie and Cayley were smiling the widest of smiles. They'd never been to a party before and had often longed to experience one.)

KYRIE: Best day ever!

(Cayley grinned and held Kyrie's hand.)

CAYLEY: Exciting.

HAPSLOCK: Indeed. It'll be interesting to see who's getting married.

(Cayley chuckled.)

CAYLEY: Knowing our luck it'll be one of Axion's men and all his cronies will be there.

(As Hapslock and Cayley chuckled, Kyrie pretended she understood the joke and elaborated.)

KYRIE: Yeah, or a cuddyfinkle and all his cuddyfinkle relatives will be there.

(Hoping desperately that her comment had fitted the jocular conversation, she grimaced nervously at her two companions. Receiving two baffled glances in return, she furrowed her brow and cursed under her breath.)

KYRIE: Stupid brain, stop making me look stupid.

(Cayley gave her a warm hug.)

CAYLEY: But, you *are* stupid, sis.

(Kyrie sighed.)

KYRIE: Yeah, true.

CAYLEY: Good thing you're pretty, really.

(Kyrie clutched her hand to her heart lovingly.)

KYRIE: Oh, Cayley, you're so sweet.

(She kissed her forehead.)

KYRIE: You're pretty too.

(Cayley beamed.)

CAYLEY: I'm pretty *and* smart!

(Kyrie sneered and grabbed Cayley's ear.)

KYRIE: Don't forget weak! Arrogant little shit!

(As Cayley proceed to release and endless stream of ouches, Kyrie scoffed.)

KYRIE: I'll ask you again, who's the bitch?

CAYLEY: You!

(Kyrie let her go and nodded.)

KYRIE: And don't forget it... hey, you did it again.

(Cayley placed her hands over her ears and poked her tongue out.)

KYRIE: Cow!

HAPSLOCK: Girls, if you're done making an exhibition of yourselves, can we go in now?

(Hapslock gestured to the large white doors making both Kyrie and Cayley bounce excitedly.)

KYRIE: Yes please.

CAYLEY: Please.

HAPSLOCK: Right.

(With that, he slung open the door and the girls gasped in awe. Before them was a large white marble room, filled with excited, well-dressed revellers. In total awe and feeling somewhat out of their depth, the girls both stepped inside slowly with their mouths wide open. Every table had fine white linen set upon it and waiters swerved among them passing out champagne flutes. In the corner a string quartet were playing a catchy tango tune and several couples were dancing in perfect time with one another. This was most definitely a world the girls weren't used to. Everything looked perfect.)

HAPSLOCK: Impressed?

(Kyrie and Cayley looked to him in wide-mouthed silence.)

HAPSLOCK: I thought so. Do you want to mingle or watch for a bit first?

(The girls both answered without looking at him.)

KYRIE & CAYLEY: Watch!

(Remaining awestruck for a good few minutes, the girls ignored a waiter's offer of champagne and didn't move from where they stood. Having availed himself of a glass, Hapslock watched them with an amused expression on his face. A few moments later as her

eyes surveyed the room, Kyrie finally broke their silence. Upon sighting the blushing bride, she looked to Hapslock and exhaled lovingly.)

KYRIE: Do you think I'll make a beautiful bride?

(As alarm bells rung in his head, Hapslock turned to her swiftly and replied in a panicked voice.)

HAPSLOCK: I'm not ready! It's a massive step and besides, I'm really not cut out for marriage...

(As he gasped for air, Kyrie frowned at him.)

KYRIE: What's that got to do with anything?

(She rolled her eyes then looked to Cayley.)

KYRIE: How hot would I look in a wedding dress?

(Cayley looked to her warmly.)

CAYLEY: Very.

(Kyrie smiled at her then glared at Hapslock.)

KYRIE: See how easy that was?

(Hapslock simply adjusted his collar and looked away.)

KYRIE: Silly sod.

(She then looked to Cayley again and grinned.)

KYRIE: What are you doing, sister face?

(Cayley was gently bobbing her head to the melodic sounds of the string quartet and half closed her eyes to listen more attentively.)

CAYLEY: I'm enjoying the music.

(Kyrie looked at her inquiringly for a moment then half closed her eyes too.)

KYRIE: It's nice.

(Cayley bounced excitedly.)

CAYLEY: It is!

(She exhaled merrily.)

CAYLEY: The lovely music, the chandeliers, the people all dressed in nice clothes... even the buffet looks amazing. It's perfect. It kind of reminds me of that poem grandad used to read to us.

(Only recalling one poem, Kyrie looked baffled.)

KYRIE: The chimps of doom were on the moon?

(Cayley scoffed at her harshly.)

CAYLEY: No you idiot. The one about the king... jewellery and finery, pillars of gold, the finest of luxury for all to behold. Remember?

(Kyrie looked blank.)

KYRIE: The one where chimpanzees ate all the cheese?

CAYLEY: No, that's the chimps of doom were on the moon again.

(She hung her head and puffed out in defeat.)

CAYLEY: I give up.

(Kyrie shrugged and looked around the room once more. Everything she saw left her with a feeling of awe. Some of the dresses the ladies were wearing looked extraordinarily expensive and the jewellery they were wearing was all of the highest quality. She knew she could never afford such luxuries and could only watch on in wonderment. Everyone in the room was either seated at a table laughing and joking, gathered in groups for excited conversation or dancing merrily to the string quartet. It was like peeking through the window to another world, one she wouldn't mind being a part of someday.)

KYRIE: One day when I'm rich and successful, we're going to have parties like this everyday, Cayley.

(Cayley smiled at her well meaning sentiment.)

CAYLEY: Would be nice, wouldn't it?

(Just then, the string quartet fell silent and a gentleman in an expensive looking suit stepped up onto the small stage. Eager to know what was going on, Hapslock, Kyrie and Cayley all strained their necks to get a better view as the gentleman pulled a sheet of paper from his pocket and started to read from it.)

HOST: Ladies and Gentlemen, we have a special surprise for you this evening. Hailing from right here in Roseville, we bring you the world's most renowned freestyle minstrel, Sing-along Sadler.

(Cayley bounced with excitement. She loved freestyle minstrels. It was a career she was quite interested in pursuing herself. It required a great degree of skill to invent relevant lyrics whilst also performing with an instrument and few had ever been successful at it. Looking forward to seeing a world renowned professional in action, she stepped in front of Kyrie to get a better view. At once, her eyes lit up as a middle aged gentleman took to the stage carrying a lute. To a polite round of applause, he bowed then cleared his throat. As the room fell silent, he then projected his voice to the waiting ears of everyone in the reception room.)

SADLER: Good evening ladies and gentlemen, bride and groom. My name is Sing-along Sadler and I'll be performing a song for you based solely on all the things I've heard simply by mingling among your wonderful selves this evening.

(He smiled then looked to the bride and groom.)

SADLER: Rupert, Elizabeth, this song is just for you.

(As he started to play a few simple chords on his lute, Cayley clasped her hands together, excited to hear what kind of beautiful lyrics he'd conjure up to mark such a romantic occasion. Also looking forward to a romantic ballad, Kyrie hugged Cayley from behind and listened on as Sadler begun singing the first verse.)

SADLER: Under the light of the silvery moon, we see the bride and her groom... her hair is gold like the sun, while he, he sadly has none.

(As many in the room chuckled, Sadler continued, staring hard at his lute as he did so.)

SADLER: Their love, their love is so deep; it made the bride's mother weep...

(The mother of the bride blushed.)

SADLER: They remind her of a love she once knew, with the man you all know as Hugh.

(Sadler winked at the bride's father only to see him glaring at the groom's father with a hateful look on his face. As the bride and groom's father's suddenly started pushing one another and shouting, Sadler started to sweat and desperately tried to change the subject in a bid to restore peace.)

SADLER: Today is about Rupert and Liz, let them show us what true love is... forget that I mentioned Hugh, and listen to what I sing to you...

(Sadly, his last couplet had fallen on deaf ears. Having found out that his wife was in love with the groom's father, Hugh, the bride's father had come out fighting. Sadler could only stop playing and watch in horror as the bride's father laid into Hugh and everyone from both families leapt into the fray. Within seconds, an unholy fight had broken out and all around the luxurious reception room the two families had starting laying into one another relentlessly. Watching on, Hapslock, Kyrie and Cayley were stunned. It had all been so joyous a moment ago and all of a sudden there was pandemonium.)

HAPSLOCK: Well, that was unexpected.

(Kyrie chuckled.)

KYRIE: That minstrel's dumber than I am.

(Cayley sighed.)

CAYLEY: He made everything rhyme, can't fault him there...

(She turned and looked up at Kyrie with a saddened pout on her face.)

CAYLEY: But you have to think intelligently not just recite anything you might have heard that happens to rhyme. He should have checked who Hugh was before he sung about it.  
(She sighed.)

CAYLEY: He messed up.

HAPSLOCK: Indeed. Question is, what's he going to do about it?

KYRIE: I'd flee if I was in his shoes.

HAPSLOCK: Well, that's one option, I suppose. In fact, it's the only option. There's no coming back from that performance.

(As they watched the fight rage on, Sadler stood nervously on the stage unable to quite believe what he'd done. Knowing this performance might just be the one to end his career, he was in little doubt he had to try his best to put things right. If word got out that his song had turned a reception into brawl, he'd be finished as an entertainer. Even if it meant lying, he knew he had to stop the fighting. With this in mind, he yelled out over the fighting crowd, offering up the mistruth that he hoped would save the day.)

SADLER: Stop!!! Stop!!! Don't fight, I was joking!!!

(He sighed then yelled again.)

SADLER: I made it up!!! I was joking!!!

(As the fighting halted and all eyes turned to Sadler, the watching trio of Hapslock, Kyrie and Cayley all hunched their shoulders and sucked their teeth.)

KYRIE: Not clever.

CAYLEY: So not clever.

(Sure enough, as Sadler stood grinning uncomfortably on the stage, both families looked his way and snarled.)

GROOM: You were joking???

BRIDE'S FATHER: You thought that song was funny?

(At once, Sadler started to shrink as several angry voices raged his way.)

GROOM'S MOTHER: You bastard!

GROOM: You ruined everything!!!

UNCLE BOB: I ought to come up there and punch you a third nostril!!!

(Sadler looked from side to side then grimaced.)

SADLER: Maybe it'd be best if I wasn't here.

(With that, he started to hurriedly sidle away from the stage. Watching him go, the two families fumed and it was obvious to everyone what was coming next.)

HAPSLOCK: They're going to lynch him.

KYRIE: Yup. Wouldn't want to be in his shoes right now.

(Cayley pouted miserably.)

CAYLEY: Can't we do something?

(Cayley hung her head. She understood the difficulties facing a freestyle minstrel and how easy it would be to make a mistake. As such, she couldn't help but sympathise with his plight. Considering the unfortunate Sadler a fellow musician, her heart went out to him. Sadly for Sadler, however, she was the only one. The two families weren't about to be so understanding and proceeded to chase after him.)

SADLER: No!!!

(Desperate to escape the room with as many limbs as he came in with, Sadler charged for the door with almost a hundred rampaging wedding guests, hot on his heels, baiting for his blood. Much to his dismay, as he raced for the exit, he noticed his path was blocked by two burly men. Reacting in a blind panic, he screeched, changed direction and ran off across the back wall of the room instead. Had he not been in such a panic, he'd have noticed that the two burly men were in fact hotel staff and would have let him pass. Sadly, he was in such distress, everyone looked like an enemy to him at this point.



As Sadler and the furious mob raced along the back wall behind her, Cayley sighed in deep sadness. She couldn't stand the thought of anything happening to the unfortunate lutist. Spotting her sister's sadness, Kyrie sighed inwardly then rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: Fine, I'll help him, okay?

(Cayley looked to her with hope in her eyes.)

CAYLEY: You will?

KYRIE: Sure.

(She thumped Hapslock on the arm and gestured to the terrified Sadler.)

KYRIE: Come on, Frank. Let's help him out.

(Hapslock glared at her.)

HAPSLOCK: Stop calling me Frank!

(Kyrie looked baffled.)

KYRIE: Why? It's your name, isn't it?

(With that, she raced off towards Sadler. Hapslock just rolled his eyes and raced after her.)

HAPSLOCK: Wait there, Cayley.

CAYLEY: Will do.

(As Sadler continued to race around the edge of reception room, desperately trying to stave off the hateful, screaming violent mob, Cayley smiled to herself. She had every faith in her sister to save the terrified musician and felt sure everything would work out well. Kyrie had leapt to *her* rescue a thousand times since they'd been on the run and she fully expected her to be successful once again. As she held that thought for a moment, however, her face dropped. When it came to saving her, all Kyrie had ever done was leap into battles with her fists flying. This was far from what was needed. Knowing all too well what was coming, Cayley's eyes bulged and she placed horrified hands on her head. With wide eyes, she could only watch on as Kyrie raced between Sadler and the large mob of wedding guests and set about flooring them all with her fists.)

CAYLEY: Oh, hell!

(Feeling powerless, Cayley continued to watch in horror as the mob retaliated and set upon Kyrie. Naturally, true to his duty, Hapslock leapt in to defend her and once again, all hell broke loose. Bewildered to suddenly have a buffer between himself and the mob, Sadler didn't know whether to thank Kyrie and Hapslock or take the opportunity to flee. As a result, he stood there like a baffled statue and did neither while the fight escalated in front of him. Thankfully, Kyrie and Hapslock were more than adept at fighting and were managing to keep the large mob at bay. For now. Well aware that such a mob may overpower them both any time soon, however, Cayley knew she had to do something to help end the fight.)

CAYLEY: Think, Cayley, think!

(Looking all about herself desperately, she noticed some cutlery on the table and considered picking up a knife and joining in the fight. Quickly realising that would be a terrible idea with her lack of battle skills, she shook her head and looked around once more. As her eyes scanned the stage area in the corner, however, she noticed a grand piano and a thoughtful expression crossed her brow. Nodding to herself, satisfied she'd had a good idea, she charged over to the stage with one eye on the brawl on the dance floor. Blissfully unaware of her little sister's actions, Kyrie continued to punch and kick wedding guests with increased vigour and gusto. With Hapslock at her side, she'd pretty much forgotten why she was doing it. All she remembered was that Cayley had asked her for help. With this in mind, she kept on battling. Being a knight, Hapslock was all too aware that killing civilians was both highly illegal and extremely immoral. With this very much at the forefront of his mind, he'd kept his sword sheathed and was also using his fists. As he battled at her side he knew he'd have to

frequently remind Kyrie not to kill anyone either. They were only supposed to stop the mob killing the minstrel, the last thing he wanted was a massacre on his hands.)

HAPSLOCK: Nice punch, Kyrie. Careful you don't overdo it though!

(As she punched another angry wedding guest, Kyrie frowned.)

KYRIE: I know what I'm doing.

HAPSLOCK: I know, just saying. No roundhouses to the temple, we're only here to protect the minstrel!

(Kyrie stopped fighting and glared at him.)

KYRIE: I'll punch *you* in a minute!

(Hapslock also stopped fighting and glared at her.)

HAPSLOCK: There's no need to get upset about it, I was only...

(Before he could finish his sentence, however, they were both flattened by the rampaging mob as they made an angry advance towards the trembling Sadler. Having stopped fighting to bicker they'd given the mob exactly what they were after. At once, they swamped the terrified musician and set about kicking him while he was huddled up the floor. Mortified by their mistake, Hapslock and Kyrie swiftly battled to their feet and rushed into the mob to try and save the battered and bruised Sadler.)

HAPSLOCK: Don't! You'll kill him!!!

GROOM: We intend to.

(As they continued to batter the poor Sadler senseless, however, a melodic piano riff filled the air. Ignoring it, the mob continued to punish the terrified lutist when a few seconds later, a soft, almost angelic, female voice rose up to accompany the beautiful sound of the piano.

At once, everyone froze and looked to the piano in awe. Sitting at the piano, Cayley launched into her own made up love song about the bride and groom.)

CAYLEY: The bride and groom start out on their journey together, taking a vow to be as one forever. Their hearts entwined as they go on with life, she loves her man, he adores his wife. There's nothing any fool can say, to tear their beautiful love away. There's nothing anyone can do, to rip perfect this love in two.

(Extremely taken by the sight of this young girl with the sensational singing voice, the guests all exhaled lovingly. Forgetting all about the fight, the bride and groom hugged one another as they listened on to Cayley's serenade.)

CAYLEY: I see two families full of passion, families who bring love back into fashion. Generations of these two families, brought together for eternity. This is a love that will not fail, unless you all end up in jail. So let your true love flow, and let the lutist go...

(Taken in by her words, all over the reception room, members of both families hugged one another and several of them helped Sadler to his feet and shook his hand apologetically.

Looking terrified, Sadler just nodded at them wide-eyed and plucked out a broken tooth from his mouth.)

UNCLE EDWARD: Sorry about the beating. Rather forgot what today was about.

SADLER: Okay... can I go now?

AUNT EDNA: No. Please, have a glass of wine.

(As Edna passed the trembling Sadler a drink, Kyrie watched Cayley singing and exhaled.)

KYRIE: Isn't she amazing?

(Hapslock looked to her then hid his face.)

HAPSLOCK: Indeed.

(Kyrie gave him a suspicious glance and placed her hands on her hips playfully.)

KYRIE: Are you crying?

(Hapslock looked to her uneasily with a tear running down his cheek.)

HAPSLOCK: It's a very moving song.

(He looked away and grimaced at himself. To cry at a song was most definitely not like him. Once again, he could only assume it was Kyrie having a bizarre affect on his brain and he hung his head.)

HAPSLOCK: I'm so embarrassed.

(Kyrie offered him a smile.)

KYRIE: Don't be. You're not the only one.

(As he looked up, Hapslock was amazed to see almost everyone in the room in tears and hugging one another in an extraordinarily embarrassing public display of emotion. Having never seen such a thing before, Hapslock scratched his head in bewilderment.)

HAPSLOCK: Your sister must be a witch or something.

KYRIE: Nope, she's just small, cute and a bloody good singer. And she's smart, she knew exactly what to say to move everyone.

(She mused to herself for a moment then exhaled in awe.)

KYRIE: She's a pretty amazing pianist too.

(Hapslock nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: She is. That nobody can deny.

(As Cayley continued to play the piano and entertain the guests with her singing, the reception soon returned to normal. Guests returned to their tables to listen and conversations once again struck up around the room. It was as if the big fight had never occurred. Looking ashen-faced, Sadler watched the young girl sing and sighed to himself. It was supposed to be him up there on the stage and he couldn't help but feel a little hard done by. In his mind, she'd hi-jacked his act and he wasn't enjoying having to listen to her. He simply wanted to go home. Sadly for him, however, Aunt Edna had singled him out to listen to her old war stories and he wouldn't be able to up and leave any time soon. And so, he was stuck there with an old lady waffling in one ear and the girl who stole his act singing into the other.

As she watched Cayley sing, Kyrie's heart swelled with pride. Everyone in the room adored her and it made her feel warm inside.)

KYRIE: She's pretty amazing you know.

HAPSLOCK: She's quite an outstanding singer and a wonderful pianist, I agree.

KYRIE: You have no idea.

(Hapslock gave her a sideways glance.)

HAPSLOCK: I don't?

KYRIE: Nope. She only gets to play a piano like, I dunno, twice a year. And yet she remembers everything.

HAPSLOCK: Twice a year?

KYRIE: Yeah. It's not often we happen across one she's allowed to play.

HAPSLOCK: I see.

KYRIE: I can't remember things I did yesterday, and yet she can remember where every key is, every... you know, music thingy...

HAPSLOCK: Note?

KYRIE: Yeah, that's the one. Not bad for a twelve year old.

(Hapslock smiled.)

HAPSLOCK: Not bad at all.

(He then clapped his hands together and rubbed them vigorously.)

HAPSLOCK: Well, we ought to get going soon.

(Kyrie glared at him bitterly.)

KYRIE: Not until Cayley's finished doing her thing.

HAPSLOCK: But...

KYRIE: But nothing.

HAPSLOCK: Kyrie...

(He sighed.)

HAPSLOCK: Fine, a little longer then. Just don't forget, we've got a long journey ahead of us and we're gonna need a good night's sleep before we set out tomorrow.

(Kyrie sighed.)

KYRIE: Fine. Whatever. Just a few more songs.

HAPSLOCK: Okay.

(As they resumed watching Cayley perform, the bride's uncle suddenly stepped up behind them and tapped Kyrie on the shoulder. Annoyed at being interrupted, Kyrie turned around and glared at him.)

KYRIE: What now?

(The bride's uncle was most taken aback.)

BRIDE'S UNCLE: No need to snap at me!

KYRIE: I'm trying to listen to my sister sing!

(The bride's uncle looked enlightened and nodded.)

BRIDE'S UNCLE: Ah, so she *is* your sister. I thought so. That's what I wanted to ask.

(Kyrie nodded then looked to Cayley.)

KYRIE: She's pretty amazing, isn't she?

(She looked back at the bride's uncle and smiled.)

KYRIE: Don't you think?

BRIDE'S UNCLE: Indeed I do.

(He rubbed his hands together and beamed.)

BRIDE'S UNCLE: Now, tell me... how much?

(Kyrie gave him a suspicious glance and furrowed her brow.)

KYRIE: What do you mean?

BRIDE'S UNCLE: You know... how much?

(Sensing he was being cryptic, Kyrie nodded understandingly and looked about herself cautiously. Satisfied only Hapslock was in earshot, she leant forward and spoke to the bride's uncle in a quietened voice.)

KYRIE: 20 for oral, 40 for full sex. Anal is extra because it can chafe a bit. Last time I did it, I could hardly sit down for two days.

(As Hapslock's jaw dropped, the bride's uncle stared at Kyrie in a state of shock.)

BRIDE'S UNCLE: Excuse me?

KYRIE: What? It's a fair price. If you can't afford it, I can do you a hand job for 10.

(Wearing a disgusted frown, the bride's uncle leant back and held his palm out to her.)

BRIDE'S UNCLE: You misunderstand me. I don't want to hire you for sex...

(He gestured to the stage.)

BRIDE'S UNCLE: I was talking about your little sister.

(Looking absolutely furious, Kyrie grabbed his collar and growled.)

KYRIE: She's twelve years old, you sick bastard!!!

BRIDE'S UNCLE: No! Not like that! I want to hire her to play.

(Kyrie gave him a doubting glance and tightened her grip on his collar.)

KYRIE: Play with what?

BRIDE'S UNCLE: A piano! I'm renewing my vows next month, and I'd like to hire her to play at the ceremony.

(Feeling quite the fool, she set him down and rubbed her neck uneasily.)

KYRIE: Um... yeah, sorry. Misunderstood a bit.

BRIDE'S UNCLE: I'll say!

(She gave him an embarrassed grin and fiddled with her hair.)

KYRIE: Can I get back to you on that?

BRIDE'S UNCLE: Fine!

(He looked about himself then leant in to speak to her quietly.)

BRIDE'S UNCLE: As for the other thing. It's a deal; I'll take the full works.

(He slipped her a bag of coins then winked at her.)

BRIDE'S UNCLE: There's eighty there. Just be discreet and don't let my wife know.

(Kyrie looked to Hapslock for a moment then beamed.)

KYRIE: Cool. I was down to my last few coins.

BRIDE'S UNCLE: Meet me in room 17 in ten minutes! Bring lubricant.

(As he crept away, Kyrie stuffed the coins down her top and patted Hapslock on the shoulder.)

KYRIE: Look after sister face for me, Frank. I'm gonna go and wash me girly parts.

Appearances are everything after all.

(As she started to head away, Hapslock furrowed his brow in disbelief. Not only did he dislike the idea of her jumping into bed with someone else but he couldn't believe she'd sell herself like this so easily. Detesting the very idea of what she was about to do, he swiftly grabbed her upper arm and halted her in her tracks.)

HAPSLOCK: Wait!

(Kyrie looked to him enquiringly.)

KYRIE: What? What's up?

(Not wanting to look foolish or say anything hurtful, Hapslock thought hard about what he'd say and ended up simply puffing out in frustration. He couldn't tell her he had feelings for her and didn't want her to sell herself, he was far too proud to do that. He could barely admit it to himself, let alone tell her about it. As he stood there in silence, Kyrie rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: Look, I've got to go. Some of us have to earn a living.

(As Kyrie headed for the ladies room, Hapslock watched her go with a heavy heart. A reality had dawned on him that left him feeling somewhat numb inside. Kyrie wasn't going to jump into this bed with this man for a few hours of passionate fun; she was going to have sex with him simply so she and her sister could go on living. Suddenly, any feelings of jealousy he had, evaporated. The sex he'd had with her was for pure pleasure but what she was about to do with the bride's uncle was another thing entirely. He no longer felt threatened. Instead, he felt a deep sense of sorrow on Kyrie's behalf. She'd been on the run for two years, since the age of sixteen, selling her body for sex to keep both herself and her sister alive. The more he thought about it, the angrier he felt. The angrier he felt, the more respect he gained for Kyrie. This girl had so much to contend with, it beggared belief. She was a warrior, fighting everyday to protect herself and her younger sibling from harm. She was also mother figure to her little sister, keeping her disciplined and safe from temptation. At the same time, she was keeping them both fed and clothed by means of prostitution. Knowing he had to do all he could to ease her burden, Hapslock nodded to himself and bounded off after her. Looking determined, he paced across the reception room and straight into the ladies toilets. As several female guests fled in a chorus of screams, he marched up to where Kyrie was washing her hands and stood tall, placing his hands on his hips defiantly.)

HAPSLOCK: Kyrie, you don't have to do this anymore.

(Kyrie glanced up at him then looked around the empty room.)

KYRIE: Dude, you can't come in here, this is the ladies!

HAPSLOCK: I'm well aware of that. What's more, I don't care.

KYRIE: I don't suppose you do. All the other female guests probably do though.

HAPSLOCK: I don't care about them, you're my charge and I've come to tell you, you don't have to sell yourself anymore.

(Kyrie looked to him with uncertainty.)

KYRIE: What do you mean?

HAPSLOCK: As a knight of this realm, I'm more than prepared to take care of whatever financial needs yourself and Cayley might have. Allow me to take your financial burden from you. You don't have to sell yourself for sex any more. In fact, I insist you don't. (Kyrie looked to him uneasily for a moment then forced a smile.)

KYRIE: You insist?

HAPSLOCK: Steadfastly, yes!

(Much to his bewilderment, Kyrie looked hurt.)

KYRIE: Wow, that's mean.

(Hapslock was baffled.)

HAPSLOCK: Mean?

KYRIE: Yeah, mean. I have the greatest job in the world. I get paid really well *and* get to have sex with hundreds of different men! And you want to deprive me of that???

(Hapslock could only gape.)

HAPSLOCK: Huh?

KYRIE: Tall ones, short ones, thin ones, fat ones, white ones, black ones, yellow ones, men my age, older men... I get to experience sex with all kinds of men and *they* pay *me* for the privilege! How could you even think of taking that away from me?

(As a tear rolled down her cheek, Hapslock scratched behind his ear uncomfortably.)

HAPSLOCK: So, you enjoy being a prostitute?

(Kyrie just glared at him.)

KYRIE: I already told you, I'm an outrageous slut, of course I do.

(She shook her head angrily.)

KYRIE: I'm so mad at you right now.

(With that, she grabbed a towel, rubbed her hands on it violently then threw it in the sink.)

KYRIE: Now if you don't mind, I've got a cock to pleasure.

(As she stormed towards the door, Hapslock paced after her in bewilderment.)

HAPSLOCK: I didn't mean to offend you.

KYRIE: Whatever. Just keep an eye on Cayley.

(With that, she ripped open the ladies room door and paced back in the reception room. As soon as her feet hit the carpet, however, she froze and stared straight ahead in a state of shock. Cayley was looking extremely flustered and battering the piano keys while singing in her loudest voice. In front of her, the wedding guests were once again rounding on the unfortunate Sadler. Despite Cayley's desperate attempts to calm them down with her music, they all looked absolutely livid. Pushing and poking the trembling lutist, the groom was especially angry.)

GROOM: Of all the bloody nerve. You come to my wedding, reduce the entire thing into a mass brawl then have the unbelievable audacity to ask when you're getting paid???

(Sadler backed away looking terrified.)

SADLER: I was... joking again!

GROOM: Joking? Joking? Have you ever thought that comedy might not be your forte?

(Looking on, Hapslock leant to Kyrie.)

HAPSLOCK: Or music, come to that.

(Kyrie chuckled then looked to him urgently.)

KYRIE: I'll get Cayley back over here before things get ugly.

(As Kyrie raced away, Hapslock watched the rowdy crowd of revellers snarl and gather round the terrified Sadler.)

COUSIN DAVE: I say we take this clown outside and teach him a lesson.

GROOM: One he'll swiftly forget what with all the brain damage.

UNCLE STAN: I'm game. Everyone bring some cutlery, we're gonna mess him up big time.

(With that, the large mob bundled him out in the corridor, many of them grabbing cutlery from the tables as they went. Watching them all charge from the room, Cayley flapped in distress.)

CAYLEY: They'll kill him, they'll kill him.

(Having just reached her, Kyrie sighed despondently.)

KYRIE: You want me to save him, don't you?

(Cayley pouted and looked to her with puppy dog eyes.)

KYRIE: I'm immune to that face, Cayley, I invented that expression. Just answer the question.

CAYLEY: Okay. Yes, please.

KYRIE: Fine. Stay behind me, sweetheart.

(With that, she bounded out of the room with Cayley hot on her heels. Not about to get left behind, Hapslock bounded after them, catching them up in no time as they raced down the hotel corridor.)

HAPSLOCK: We saving the music chap again?

KYRIE: Yeah.

HAPSLOCK: I figured as much. I'm in. Only this time, can we just rescue him and go rather than starting a massive brawl?

KYRIE: I can't promise anything.

CAYLEY: She's a fighter not a tactician.

HAPSLOCK: Very well, in that case, leave the rescue to me. Hopefully I can bring everything to a peaceful conclusion.

(With that, he sped up and raced out of the front doors of the hotel. Moments later, Kyrie and Cayley charged out into the night after him. Barely having made it outside of the hotel, however, they both immediately screeched to a halt and their jaws dropped. Before them, the wedding guests were scattering in all directions, screaming for all they were worth. The only ones not fleeing were Sir Hapslock, Sadler and a fifteen foot tall, fire breathing quadruped. Standing with his back to the giant furry beast; having somehow not noticed it; Hapslock was under the false illusion that *he'd* scared the guests away and beamed with pride as he dragged the panicking Sadler back over to Kyrie and Cayley by the arm.)

HAPSLOCK: There you go; one safe minstrel. People know better than to mess with a knight of the realm.

(Fully expecting to receive much in the way of kudos, he was most taken aback to see Kyrie and Cayley staring high over his shoulder with horrified looks on their faces.)

HAPSLOCK: What's the matter with you two?

(As Sadler desperately struggled to evade his grasp, Hapslock gave him a nervous glance then peered back over his shoulder. Spotting the fire-breathing giant snarling down over him, he slowly turned his head back to face Kyrie and Cayley.)

HAPSLOCK: They weren't running away from me at all were they?

(As a terrified Kyrie and Cayley shook their heads at him, he gulped and slowly led Sadler to the girl's side and joined them in staring up at the snarling beast. Looking very much like a giant cat with a fox's head, it was abundantly clear that this creature wasn't a member of the local wildlife that had accidentally wandered into town.)

HAPSLOCK: A summoning?

(Kyrie sighed.)

KYRIE: It's a volcano foot camera!

CAYLEY: It's a Vulpine Feline Chimera! They breathe fire and they're really violent.

HAPSLOCK: Fire?

(He sighed despondently.)

HAPSLOCK: If I'd just remembered to restock my magic before I left Little Dudley, I could have used fire too.

CAYLEY: It wouldn't work anyway; it's immune to fire attacks.

HAPSLOCK: Immune? How do you know?

CAYLEY: I read.

KYRIE: She does. Total geek.

(Hapslock looked to Kyrie with uncertainty.)

HAPSLOCK: I've never fought one of these before. It might take me a while to figure out how I kill it.

KYRIE: *We've* fought one before. Well... sort of.

CAYLEY: We fled and barely escaped with our lives.

KYRIE: We stole a horse drawn carriage.

(More than a little daunted by the giant foe, Hapslock nodded to Kyrie's words then looked up at the growling beast.)

HAPSLOCK: Why isn't it attacking us?

CAYLEY: It will!

(Breaking his terrified silence, Sadler pulled himself free of Hapslock's grasp and whimpered.)

SADLER: Run away!!!

(With that, he took off down the street as fast as his legs would carry him.)

HAPSLOCK: *We* should have thought of that.

KYRIE: It'd chase *us*. It's *us* it's after, silly.

HAPSLOCK: Then why hasn't it attacked you yet? You're right here!

(Cayley whimpered from behind Kyrie.)

CAYLEY: They charge their fire attack first then they attack.

HAPSLOCK: So... it's not ready to attack yet, is that what you're saying?

CAYLEY: Yes.

(There then followed a few seconds of thoughtful glances before the three of them bolted off down the street for all they were worth. Not about to let them go, the Chimera immediately howled into the sky then gave chase, rocking the very ground as it bound after them. Staring over her shoulder in terror, Cayley cried out as they raced forth.)

CAYLEY: We'll never outrun it.

(Kyrie glanced back at her and seethed.)

KYRIE: And it'll follow us wherever we go. Those things have an incredible sense of smell.

CAYLEY: They're almost impossible to lose.

KYRIE: We'll have to steal the next carriage we see and get the hell out of town.

(Cayley looked mortified.)

CAYLEY: But... my book!!!

KYRIE: Book?

CAYLEY: All of our stuff is back at the hotel, we need to go and get it.

KYRIE: No chance!!! We can always buy new stuff. We need to hi-jack the first carriage we see and get as far away as possible.

(Cayley looked devastated.)

CAYLEY: But... my book.

KYRIE: Look, I know that book means the world to you, darling, but it'll be no good to you dead. Forget our stuff; as soon as we get the chance, we're getting out of here.

(Desperately wanting to collect her stuff before they fled town, Cayley looked thoughtful as she bounded forth. Suddenly thinking of the perfect way to make Kyrie change her mind, she puffed out in faked acceptance.)



CAYLEY: I suppose you're right. I can always get a new book... and you can always replace all your shoes.

(Cayley had struck gold. Kyrie's faced dropped and she glared at Hapslock.)

KYRIE: Go to the hotel and get our packs, hurry!

(Hapslock glared back at the advancing beast and frowned.)

HAPSLOCK: Are you insane???

KYRIE: Go! It's not after *you*. I'll keep it busy until you get back.

HAPSLOCK: Keep it busy? How?

KYRIE: Same way I always do, I'll improvise!!! Now go!!!

(Hapslock growled.)

HAPSLOCK: I can't just leave you alone with that thing.

KYRIE: We'll be fine, trust me!!!

(Unable to bear the thought of losing her book, Cayley chimed in urgently.)

CAYLEY: Trust her!!!

(Hapslock growled then gritted his teeth.)

HAPSLOCK: Fine, I'll be as quick as I can.

(Trusting her judgment, albeit reluctantly, he veered off and left Kyrie and Cayley racing away from the rapidly advancing beast.)

KYRIE: Keep running, sister face.

(Struggling along behind her, Cayley yelled back.)

CAYLEY: I'm trying!!!

(Slowing her pace to let Cayley run along side, Kyrie snarled to herself.)

KYRIE: Don't worry, darling, I won't let anything happen to you.

CAYLEY: I know.

(She looked troubled and bit her lip.)

CAYLEY: I'm just worried that if we keep running, Hapslock won't know where to find us when he gets back.

KYRIE: Who?

(Cayley rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: Frank.

(Kyrie looked peeved.)

KYRIE: Damn. My shoes! Good point.

(With that, she ground to a halt and turned to face the advancing Chimera.)

KYRIE: Stay back, I'll keep it occupied.

(As Cayley halted her run and watched on with terror in her eyes, Kyrie glared at the advancing foe and growled under her breath.)

KYRIE: You can attack me with swords, you can breath fire at me... hell, you can run me through on a horse if you like but nobody puts my shoes at risk, nobody.

(With that, she charged straight at the rampaging, Chimera. In utter disbelief, Cayley watched her go and screamed.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie!!!

(As Kyrie raced towards it, screaming like a rampaging Amazon warrior, the Chimera bounded forth towards her and immediately released the torrent of flame it had been storing up in its throat. As Kyrie disappeared into the flames, Cayley sunk to her knees and screamed her heart out. As she looked up in broken hearted terror, however, she saw Kyrie race onwards, ripping her burning clothes off and yelping in distress.)

CAYLEY: She's not dead. Thank the stars...

(As naked as the day she was born, Kyrie rolled several times on the cobbles to douse the flames in her hair, then charged onwards, underneath the Chimera and out the other side. Growling wildly, the Chimera span around and gave chase.)

CAYLEY: What the...

(Not knowing whether to chase after the Chimera or hope Kyrie found her way back to her, Cayley bounced on the balls of her feet and whimpered to herself uneasily.)

CAYLEY: What do I do, what do I do...

(For well over a minute she stood there dithering in a panic. The Chimera had long disappeared from view but she simply didn't know what to do. One on hand, finding Kyrie made sense, but on the other hand, letting Kyrie find her seemed equally as logical. As she stood there panicking, however, her jaw dropped and her arms fell to her side in astonishment. Much to her utter bewilderment, the Chimera bounded back up the street towards her, bucking like a wild bronco with Kyrie clinging to its back for dear life.)

CAYLEY: What is she doing?

(As she nervously backed herself against a building to watch the furious Chimera bounce and growl its way past, Cayley didn't know what to think. The fact the beast was disorientated and unable to attack her was a good thing, the fact Kyrie was stuck on its back was not. Biting her nails, she watched the creature bounce past her with Kyrie screaming in terror on its back.)

KYRIE: Cayley!!! I made a mistake!!! I don't want to be up here anymore!!!

(At first Cayley watched with trepidation, terrified of what might happen should her sister fall. With wide eyes, she watched and prayed Kyrie would be safe. Several minutes later, however, when the Chimera bounced back past her for the seventh time, she simply rolled her eyes and looked to the heavens. Even Kyrie wasn't panicking anymore. She had a firm grip and wasn't likely to fall any time soon. The only one still interested was the Chimera, still desperate to fling Kyrie from its back somehow. When Hapslock returned with the girl's packs, a full five minutes later, he was astonished to see Cayley slumped against a wall looking bored stiff, while the Chimera hopped and bounded back and forth in a vain bid to throw the unimpressed looking Kyrie off of its back. Scratching his head in bewilderment, he raced over to Cayley and threw his arms out to the side.)

HAPSLOCK: What's going on?

(Cayley looked to him and sighed.)

CAYLEY: She found a way to keep it occupied.

(She shook her head.)

CAYLEY: Might as well get comfortable, Sir Hapslock.

(Hapslock rubbed his chin thoughtfully.)

HAPSLOCK: As soon as she gets off that thing's back, it's going to go ballistic at her, isn't it?

(Cayley nodded.)

CAYLEY: Exactly. I mean, Kyrie's stupid but even she isn't dumb enough to get off any time soon.

HAPSLOCK: What's she going to do then, stay there and hope it has a heart attack and dies?

CAYLEY: That's what I'd do.

HAPSLOCK: That's insane. We need to find a way to get her off the beast safely.

CAYLEY: Well, I'm a genius apparently and all I can think of is waiting until it has a cardiac arrest and keels over. What have *you* got?

(As he watched the Chimera bounce and twirl its way up and down the street, Hapslock sucked his teeth. Kyrie looked totally safe where she was and rescuing her it seemed, was only going to put her life in danger.)

HAPSLOCK: Well, to be honest... I've never come across a situation like this before. I don't have a...

(At this point, he noticed a carriage heading down the road towards them from the other side of the Chimera and he raised a knowing eyebrow.)

HAPSLOCK: I've got an idea.

(He passed Cayley her pack and looked to her urgently.)

CAYLEY: Sling that on, we're going to get your sister off that beast and away to safety.

(Cayley looked to him uneasily.)

CAYLEY: How?

(He gestured to the carriage as it sped their way.)

HAPSLOCK: We're gonna get a lift, that's how.

(With that, he threw Kyrie's pack over his shoulder and raced to where the Chimera was bounding around in the street like a lunatic. Looking extremely urgent, he yelled up to Kyrie.)

HAPSLOCK: Kyrie?

(Kyrie looked over to him from the marauding beast's back and raised an inquiring eyebrow.)

KYRIE: What?

HAPSLOCK: Leap on that carriage, we're getting out of here!!!

(Kyrie looked up and saw the carriage in question then yelled back.)

KYRIE: Okay. Good idea! I hate it up here.

(She then grimaced sheepishly.)

KYRIE: Couldn't chuck some clothes up here for me, could you? It's kinda chilly and I'm butt naked.

(Hapslock beamed for a moment then quickly delved in her bag and pulled out a red cloth.)

HAPSLOCK: This one?

KYRIE: That's a nightie.

(He delved once again and pulled out a floral dress.)

KYRIE: That'll do.

HAPSLOCK: Right.

(With that, he threw her the dress and yelled back as he raced towards Cayley.)

HAPSLOCK: Don't forget to jump on the carriage, Kyrie.

(Kyrie frowned as she slipped the dress on while holding tightly onto the beast's back with one hand.)

KYRIE: Yeah, like I was going to.

(With Kyrie clued in to the plan, Hapslock then availed Cayley of his idea.)

HAPSLOCK: Cayley, see that carriage coming down the road towards the Chimera?

(Cayley glanced past the Chimera and nodded.)

CAYLEY: I see it.

HAPSLOCK: We're gonna get on it while it's moving.

(As Cayley gulped in uncertainty, Hapslock elaborated.)

HAPSLOCK: Now, in order to do that, I need you to sprint away from it.

CAYLEY: Away from it?

HAPSLOCK: Yeah. Run in the same direction it's travelling in.

(Cayley sounded uncertain.)

CAYLEY: Okay...

HAPSLOCK: Sprint down the road, then jump on the back platform of the carriage as soon as it passes you.

(She looked enlightened for a moment then gave him a curious glance.)

CAYLEY: It has a back platform?

HAPSLOCK: Yeah, I can see from here, it's a gypsy carriage! They have platforms at the back, trust me. Just leap on it as it passes, okay?

(Cayley nodded.)

CAYLEY: Okay, I'll try.

HAPSLOCK: You'll be fine. I'm going to get on the same way once Kyrie's made her move.

(Cayley nodded nervously.)

CAYLEY: Right, okay. Do you want me to take Kyrie's bag, or are you okay?

HAPSLOCK: I'm fine.

(He looked down the road at the advancing carriage and nodded firmly.)

HAPSLOCK: Go, start running now, as fast as you can.

(Doing as she was told, Cayley nodded and raced off down the street away from the carriage.)

CAYLEY: This had better work!

(With Cayley on her way, Hapslock braced himself for the carriage to pass the Chimera so he too could start to chase it. Unfortunately, he'd overlooked one minor point. There was a massive Chimera in the road and the carriage driver didn't have a death wish. Screaming like a little girl, as soon as he spotted the giant beast, he turned his horses around and galloped off in the opposite direction.)

HAPSLOCK: Coward!!!

KYRIE: Go and get it!!! Cayley's off and running already, good knows where she's going to end up.

(Hapslock frowned as he charged after the carriage.)

HAPSLOCK: She isn't *you*, Kyrie. She's bound to notice and come back.

(As he sprinted off in pursuit of the carriage, Kyrie furrowed her brow and yelled after him.)

KYRIE: Yeah? Well she isn't *you* either!

(She ruffled her neck then nodded to affirm herself.)

KYRIE: *I* know what I meant.

(Confident she'd put him in his place, she looked to the chimera's head and frowned.)

KYRIE: Just quit fidgeting already, will you?

(As the chimera bounded up and down, still determined to throw Kyrie off, the fleeing Cayley stared wide-eyed over her shoulder, then rolled her eyes and stopped running. Being a good girl could be such a burden. She knew the plan wouldn't work but she'd done as she was told anyway. How she wished she was a grown up and had license to tell people their stupid plans were stupid. Instead, to avoid a spanking, she always obeyed her elders no matter how ridiculous their ideas were. Feeling somewhat aggrieved, she paced back up the street towards Kyrie and mumbled to herself.)

CAYLEY: Adults. They're bloody useless.

(Just then, she looked up and saw a carriage galloping down the street towards Kyrie once again. Feeling pretty certain she'd be given the same instructions; she stopped and prepared to run again.)

CAYLEY: Pity's sake.

(As it turned out, she was right to be prepared. Having caught up with the owner of the gypsy style carriage, Hapslock had used his knightly credentials to commandeer the vehicle and force the driver to hand over the reins to him. He'd immediately turned the horses back around and started heading back for Kyrie. Sitting next to Hapslock as he galloped for the gap between the chimera and the roadside, the wagon's owner growled bitterly under his breath.)

SADLER: I'm not happy about this you know. I've had an awful day and this is the last thing I need.

HAPSLOCK: Whatever. Your awful day was of your own making.

SADLER: And what's more, I object to the way you manhandled me earlier. And of course, I object to you taking my vehicle like this. It's simply not on.

HAPSLOCK: And I simply don't care.

(With that, he gritted his teeth and whipped the reins to make the horses sprint. As Sadler hid his face and screamed, the carriage whizzed past the Chimera. As it did so, wasting no time whatsoever, Kyrie immediately sprung from the back of the chimera and landed on the roof.)

KYRIE: Ouch!!!

(She rubbed her sore knee and glanced over the side of the carriage. Up ahead, Cayley was sprinting as fast as her little legs would carry her and just behind, the Chimera was in hot, angry pursuit.)

KYRIE: Grab Cayley, grab Cayley!!!

(As the carriage zoomed forth, Cayley whimpered and raced on, glancing back over her shoulder, terrified at the thought of failing to get on and being devoured by the Chimera.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie!!!

(Not about to let anything happen to her beloved little sister, Kyrie snarled and decided to take matters into her own hands. Looking extremely determined, she stood tall then charged to the front end of the carriage. Without even a pause, she leapt straight over Hapslock and Sadler's heads and landed perfectly astride one of the horses.)

KYRIE: I've got you, Cayley!!!

(As Hapslock and Sadler looked on in amazement, she then leant over the side of the horse and snatched Cayley up as soon as they caught up with her. In a display of immense strength, she swung her onto the horse in front of her and held her tight.)

CAYLEY: Thank you, Kyrie.

(Kyrie kissed the top of her head then smiled.)

KYRIE: My pleasure, babe.

(She then exhaled lustfully.)

KYRIE: Speaking of pleasure... bareback. Ooh, that feels good.

(Cayley blushed and fell silent. She knew exactly what she meant but would never let on. Seeing the two girls safe on the horse in front, Hapslock lifted his head to peer back over the gypsy carriage. The chimera was no match for the speeding carriage and was swiftly losing ground. Looking relieved he sat back down and whipped the reins once more. In a matter of minutes, the carriage headed out of Roseville and back out into the darkened wilderness beyond. Sadler complained like merry hell every inch of the way.

As the carriage headed into the darkness, further and further away from Roseville, in one of its finer hotels, the bride's uncle lay on the bed growling to himself bitterly.)

BRIDE'S UNCLE: The bitch isn't coming!

(He spammed his forehead.)

BRIDE'S UNCLE: Why the hell did I pay in advance?

A few hours later, with the Chimera long gone and forgotten about, Hapslock pulled the carriage to a halt at the side of a picturesque looking lake and sat back to take a breather. A left hook had stopped Sadler complaining and he wanted to enjoy a moment's peace to stretch his legs. With a happy sigh, he climbed down and took a deep breath of fresh air then looked to the girls, still astride one of the horses.)

HAPSLOCK: Well, it worked. We're safe.

(He chuckled.)

HAPSLOCK: As safe as anyone *can* be out here in the wilderness, anyway.

(As he strode down to the lakeside, Kyrie spoke softly into her sister's ear.)

KYRIE: Do you want to get down?

(Cayley looked over her shoulder at her and nodded nervously.)

CAYLEY: Yes please.

KYRIE: Okay.

(Kyrie leapt down then looked up at where Cayley sat upon the horse's back. Wearing a warm smile, she patted Cayley's thigh and spoke to her in a kind voice.)

KYRIE: Hold onto my neck.

(Looking terrified, Cayley did as she was told and closed her eyes. She hated getting off of horses with a fiery passion having twice landed on her head when attempting to do so. As Kyrie placed her safely on the ground, Cayley opened her eyes and smiled.)

CAYLEY: Thanks, Kyrie.

KYRIE: You're welcome, sister face.

(With that, she headed across the grass to join Hapslock at the lakeside.)

KYRIE: You okay?

(Hapslock looked to her and smiled.)

HAPSLOCK: Yeah, you?

(Kyrie shrugged.)

KYRIE: Yeah, I'm okay. Kinda anxious to get to this new world though. I'm so sick of being attacked.

(She gestured over her shoulder at Cayley.)

KYRIE: One of these days I'm not going to be able to save her, and that's...

(She shuddered and a tear rolled down her cheek.)

HAPSLOCK: Doesn't bear thinking about, does it?

(As Kyrie wiped her eyes, Hapslock nodded to himself. He wanted to get the girls to safety as soon as possible and he knew just the person to help. Looking determined, he strode back to the carriage and climbed up next to the unconscious Sadler. Looking extremely urgent, he swiftly propped him up and slapped him across the face. As Sadler started to stir, Hapslock shook him and slowly but surely he roused from his slumber.)

SADLER: What the... what's going on?

(Hapslock glanced to where Kyrie and Cayley stood chatting aside the lake and then turned to face Sadler.)

HAPSLOCK: You hit your head. I saved you.

(Sadler furrowed his brow furiously.)

SADLER: I didn't hit my head! *You* hit my head! You punched me.

(Hapslock shrugged then gave a conceding sigh.)

HAPSLOCK: Yeah, you got me, I hit you. But in my defence, you're really quite the whinging old fart, aren't you?

SADLER: I beg your pardon?

HAPSLOCK: You heard me.

SADLER: I rarely whinge and nor am I old. I'm 48.

(Hapslock bit his lip.)

HAPSLOCK: Yeah, that's pretty old, mate.

SADLER: Oh, is it?

(He folded his arms indignantly and glared at Hapslock.)

SADLER: Look, I don't know who you are...

HAPSLOCK: I told you, I'm Sir Hapslock, knight of the realm.

SADLER: Okay, I do know who you are. Point is; you've used my carriage now. I've helped you out, so now you can bugger off and leave me to get on with my business.

(Hapslock gave him a pitying sigh and puffed out.)

HAPSLOCK: Sorry, old chap. It's not that easy. We need a ride to Port Amok and I'm afraid you're it.

SADLER: Port Amok? That's miles away!

HAPSLOCK: It's a couple of days at most.

(He glanced away innocently and continued.)

HAPSLOCK: Of course, you'll be well rewarded for your efforts...

(Sadler suddenly looked interested.)

SADLER: I will?

HAPSLOCK: Of course. The king is very generous to those who are generous to him.

(Sadler looked thoughtful for a moment then nodded.)

SADLER: Okay, I'm in.

(He looked to Kyrie and Cayley and sneered.)

SADLER: Not that helping that little cow who stole my act will bring me any joy. But I'll do it for the king... and whatever reward he sees fit to offer me.

(He sighed and tried to obtain sympathy from Hapslock.)

SADLER: She swooped in and stole my act. It was *my* time on the stage, mine.

(Hapslock gave him a pitying sigh.)

HAPSLOCK: Well, in her defence, you were shit. *And* her actions saved you from a beating. You should be grateful.

(Sadler scoffed.)

SADLER: Rubbish. You're a knight, what do you know about music anyway?

HAPSLOCK: Nothing, my friend. At least we have that in common.

SADLER: I'm going to regret agreeing to help you, aren't I?

(Just then, Cayley yelped out in a panicked voice as she rummaged through her bag.)

KYRIE: What? What's wrong? Not your book?

(Cayley looked to her through troubled eyes.)

CAYLEY: No, not my book. He forgot to get my...

(She turned red and looked away. Hapslock looked over biting his lip uneasily.)

HAPSLOCK: What? What is it?

(Burning red, she looked to him and pouted.)

CAYLEY: When you went to get our packs, did you look in all the draws and cupboards?

HAPSLOCK: As far as I know, yes.

(Cayley just shook her head and looked at Kyrie.)

CAYLEY: He didn't pack my underwear, Kyrie.

(Kyrie rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: Is that all? I thought it was something important.

CAYLEY: It is!

KYRIE: Since when? Sometimes I go for weeks without wearing any underwear.

(She scoffed.)

KYRIE: Underwear? I'm not even overjoyed about over-wear!

(Seeing Cayley's ashamed expression, Kyrie rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: Prude. Look, whatever, we can buy you some more undies when we get to the next town, okay? In the meantime, let's brush that hair of yours.

(As Kyrie delved in her bag for her hairbrush, Hapslock beamed. His smile wasn't just because she was facing away from him and bending over, but because he knew they'd now make steady progress on their journey. Having acquired a carriage, he felt confident their travels would be a much easier from hereon in. Resolved to helping these two girls reach their sanctuary, he couldn't help but feel good about the acquisition.

Well aware that midnight was approaching, Sir Hapslock made the decision to settle for the night at this point, thus ending the day on a positive note. They'd all need their rest so they'd be fresh to recommence their journey on the morrow. Having raised the suggestion of sleep, within half an hour, Kyrie, Cayley and Sadler were all fast asleep in the gypsy carriage. The girls in one bed and Sadler in another. When the time came, Hapslock would be happy to slumber on the floor. He wouldn't be happy to call it a night, however, until he'd performed one minor task. He wanted to check the carriage was roadworthy. He'd heard of two cases where a knight had lost his charge in a road accident due to unsafe carriages, one involving a princess, and he wasn't going to take any chances.

Making sure to scrutinise every inch of the vehicle, first he checked the wheels were fitted correctly then he searched underneath for signs of damage to the chassis. Finally, having gone to great lengths to ensure that every bolt was tightly fixed he stepped back, satisfied with what he'd seen.)

HAPSLOCK: Nice!

(As he glanced the carriage over, he couldn't help but feel impressed. This was a high end model and he was delighted to see that Sadler had taken such good care of it. If he ever decided to own a carriage, this would be the model he'd buy. The twelve foot long by seven foot wide housing was very spacious and well lit thanks to a large window on each side. The best feature of all, however, being the fact that the twelve foot housing was set on a fourteen foot long platform. This left two feet of platform at the back, ideal for using as a fishing jetty or for simply relaxing upon on a warm summer's day. It even came with a set of detachable steps that fixed onto the back platform. The only thing he'd change was the carriage's only door. Leading onto the back platform, if anything it was a little too narrow for a man of his stature. This was however, only a minor drawback and would in no way stop him buying one some day.

Giving the carriage one last improving glance, Hapslock nodded happily and headed for the back platform. Come the morning the long journey to Port Amok would continue and he'd need a good sleep; something he was certain he wouldn't have any trouble getting in such a luxurious carriage.)



### *Chapter Three - Grand Theft Cayley.*

They say that getting a good night's sleep is essential for a person to be at their best during the day. If that's the case then Sir Hapslock would have been pretty much at his worst on this most drizzly of overcast mornings. Having paid for an expensive hotel suite, he'd found himself trying to sleep on the floor of a gypsy carriage in the middle of nowhere with the infuriating sounds of a middle-aged man snoring, echoing around his head. The sound had been so intensely annoying he'd actually been glad when a grendith tried to attack one of the horses in the night. Compared to trying to sleep on solid oak with Sadler's deafening snoring resonating around the carriage, getting outside to kill it was a pleasure.

By the time dawn broke and Cayley rose from her slumber, Hapslock had only managed to grab a single hour's sleep. More than used to rising early, however, he sat up and greeted her with a welcoming smile and well meaning "hello". Words that were greeted with a miserable "Do you mind? Some of us are trying to sleep!" from the grouchy Sadler. Avoiding the temptation to strangle him, it was all Hapslock could do to go outside and set the carriage in motion.

And so, the journey had resumed prematurely. With the carriage rocking as it headed forth towards Port Amok, it wasn't long before Kyrie and Sadler were both shaken awake. Unwashed and feeling far from fresh, they could only hope it wouldn't be long before Hapslock pulled the carriage to a halt so they could wash and freshen up. Unfortunately for them, however, Hapslock was only thinking of one thing. There was a merchant town some way down the road and he couldn't wait to get there and replenish his supplies of fire magic. Until they reached it, he had no intention of stopping whatsoever.

Sitting tiredly in the carriage, Kyrie slouched on a bed, while Sadler tuned his lute. He was still feeling bitter that Cayley had played his set at the wedding in Roseville and was in no mood to speak to her. As far as he was concerned, this child, this amateur had broken the golden rule that all performers had to adhere too. Respect your fellow performer's boundaries. Completely unaware that she'd offended him in any way, Cayley watched as he strummed away on his lute, enjoying the crisp sound he was creating.

CAYLEY: Have you been playing the lute long, Mr Saddle?

(Sadler glanced upwardly at her coldly.)

SADLER: It's Sadler. Sing along Sadler.

(Cayley pouted and hung her head.)

CAYLEY: Sorry. I didn't mean to offend you.

(As Sadler strummed three chords then groaned at himself, Cayley rubbed her chin thoughtfully.)

CAYLEY: What's wrong?

(Again, he answered bluntly and coldly.)

SADLER: Nothing you'd understand.

CAYLEY: I might.

(Sadler just scoffed then played the three chords again. Once again, he groaned and shook his head.)

SADLER: That's not right either.

CAYLEY: What isn't?

(Sadler glanced at her briefly then looked back at his lute.)

SADLER: I'm trying to go from a C-minor to an A-sharp but I can't quite get the fingering right.

(Cayley looked enlightened and nodded.)

CAYLEY: That's why I like the piano. Fingering is easy.

(Sadler scoffed, doubting very much that anyone her age could possibly know music. Even though he'd seen it with his own two eyes, his brain refused to acknowledge it.)

SADLER: Piano indeed. An easy instrument. Any fool can play one of those.

(He rolled his eyes.)

SADLER: The lute on the other hand, this is a real instrument. It takes skill.

CAYLEY: So does the piano!

SADLER: Poppycock.

(He scoffed at her again.)

SADLER: Now be quiet. I need to concentrate on fingering, you silly girl.

(Before Cayley could reply, Kyrie sat up and glared at him. Having been half asleep she hadn't quite heard him right.)

KYRIE: What did you say???

(She looked to Cayley.)

KYRIE: Did he just say...

(She whispered in Cayley's ear. Cayley's eyes immediately bulged.)

CAYLEY: No!!! He was talking about his instrument.

(As Kyrie snarled, Cayley swiftly clarified.)

CAYLEY: His lute!

(Wearing a distrusting look, Kyrie glared at Sadler and mumbled out loud as she lay her head back down.)

KYRIE: I'll be keeping an eye on you, mister.

(As Sadler scoffed at her and continued to make a mess of finding his A-sharp, Kyrie whispered to Cayley quietly.)

KYRIE: If he says or does anything even remotely suspect, Cayley, wake me up and let me know. I've heard about his type before.

(As she closed her eyes and tried to doze back off, Sadler laid his lute down and growled.)

SADLER: I give up. It's quite clearly impossible to do without three hands, for heaven's sake.

(With that, he sat back and sighed heavily.)

SADLER: Annoying. I've been trying to combo between those two notes for months now. I'm sure it can't be done.

(As he laid back and mumbled under his breath bitterly, Cayley looked at his lute and bit her lip. He'd made such a fuss about finding the A-sharp, she desperately wanted to see if it was as difficult as he was making out. Well aware that she shouldn't really do so without asking, she nervously reached for his lute and pulled it to herself. Looking increasingly nervous she then picked it up and played the chords that had evaded Sadler, first time. Sadler immediately sat up and yanked the lute out of her arms.)

SADLER: How dare you???

(Cayley sat back and pouted apologetically.)

CAYLEY: I'm sorry.

(He seethed at her and shook his fist.)

SADLER: Are you trying to humiliate me? That was beginners luck.

(Cayley looked away and mumbled.)

CAYLEY: No it wasn't.

SADLER: It was! A bloody fluke! You must have giant hands, giant lucky hands or something.

(Cayley held her hands up to him and pouted.)

CAYLEY: My hands are tiny.

SADLER: Anyway, that's not the point. Keep your hands off my lute in future, got it?

(Cayley sighed apologetically.)

CAYLEY: Sorry. It won't happen again.

(Sadler ruffled his neck and nodded firmly.)

SADLER: I should hope not. It's private property. *My* private property.

(Accepting her apology was genuine; Sadler relented his angry stance and offered her a half sincere smile.)

SADLER: Let's say no more about it.

CAYLEY: Okay.

SADLER: Except... how *did* you reach that note exactly?

(Cayley could only shrug.)

CAYLEY: I'm a *good* musician.

(At first Sadler looked enlightened then his face dropped.)

SADLER: Hey!!! What are you implying?

(Sick of his mean and grouchy attitude towards her, Cayley just sat back and folded her arms.)

CAYLEY: Nothing. I just said I was a good musician. I wasn't implying anything.

SADLER: You implied I can't reach that note because I'm *not* a good musician.

(Cayley just shook her head.)

CAYLEY: Whatever. You're grumpy, I'm ignoring you now.

(Sadler just looked to her and seethed for a bit then resumed trying to reach the A-sharp just to prove to her that he could do it.)

SADLER: I'll show *you*.

(Cayley just rolled her eyes and sat back. Travelling with this fellow was going to be interesting to say the least.

At the front of the gypsy carriage in the meantime, Hapslock was putting the horses through their paces, convinced they were making excellent time. At their current speed he was convinced they'd make it to the merchant town well within the hour. Sadly for him, however, he'd overlooked one minor factor. Nature. As the horses bound forth, a giant dragon-like creature, known as a cuddyfinkle, appeared on the road, some 100 yards ahead of him. Instinctively, he brought the horses to a standstill and yanked his sword from its sheath.)

HAPSLOCK: You picked the wrong day to piss *me* off, Mr Cuddyfinkle.

(Wearing a ferocious snarl, he leapt down from the carriage and lashed his blade through the air.)

HAPSLOCK: Time to die, fiend.

(With that, he raced forth, head down, in the cuddyfinkle's direction. He was more than used to fighting these giant foes and had little doubt he'd make short work of killing it, even without fire magic at his disposal. Although they were slightly less common than grendiths, he'd fought enough of them to know exactly how to best them with his blade. It was a simple case of striking, defending, striking then leaping in for a killer blow to the neck. They may have been strong and well armoured, but they were slow and always made the same mistake, leaving their fleshy necks exposed. Snarling as he rapidly approached the giant carnivore, Hapslock growled under his breath.)

HAPSLOCK: May your death be a lesson to all your kind.

(Fully psyched up to fight, he then charged towards the giant, scaly creature with his sword aloft. Upon spotting the puny human, the cuddyfinkle instinctively threw out its tail in his direction and roared its foul roar. Well aware that the tail attack was coming, Hapslock simply jumped over it and lashed his sword towards the beast's neck. Thinking he may have scored a first strike kill for himself, Hapslock beamed as his slash homed in on the fleshy part

of the beast's neck. Sadly for him, however, the cuddyfinkle managed to thrust itself back just in time to avoid the blade. Foiled by the movement, Hapslock tripped forward and was immediately battered backwards by the cuddyfinkle's giant claw. As he bounced and thudded backwards, his heavy metal armour clanging and ringing like a tin pot drum solo, he growled to himself bitterly.)

HAPSLOCK: So close!

(As soon as his prolonged tumble came to an end, he leapt to his feet and steadied himself, once again raising his sword aloft. Cuddyfinkle's may have been slow on their feet but he knew better than to take his time getting up. Sure enough, as he expected, the colossal beast was indeed charging straight for him. Ever ready, Hapslock set his stance and snarled.)

HAPSLOCK: You foolish beasts, never learn.

(Before he could even begin to charge, however, Kyrie suddenly raced past him. As the carriage had come to a standstill, she'd quickly alighted it in the hope they were near a lake so she could have a wash. Upon sighting the cuddyfinkle, however, she'd immediately come running, eager to aid Sir Hapslock in the fight.)

KYRIE: Don't play with it, kill it!

(As he raised a protesting finger to chastise her for the rudeness of her comment, Sir Hapslock's mouth fell open. What Kyrie did next defied belief. With almost superhuman agility, she leapt onto the beast's front leg and used it to springboard towards its neck. Then, with both arms wrapped around its neck, she kicked her feet off its torso and cart-wheeled over the beast's head, twisting its neck and cutting off its air supply.)

HAPSLOCK: That's not even possible!!!

(As if that wasn't impressive enough, she then cartwheeled back over the beast's head, her arms still firmly wrapped around its neck. As she landed back on the ground, she leapt back to safety and watched as the choking beast fell to the ground and died in front of her.)

HAPSLOCK: Well, I'll be buggered.

(Kyrie rubbed her hands together then smiled.)

KYRIE: I've been buggered quite a lot. It's over-rated, to be honest.

(She shrugged.)

KYRIE: Still fun though.

(She then headed back towards the carriage.)

KYRIE: It's dead. Let's go. Just give me a shout if there's any other feeble creatures you can't manage to kill.

(Hapslock watched her go in bewilderment for a moment then frowned.)

HAPSLOCK: Hey! Damn cheek.

(Taking one last glance back at the dead cuddyfinkle, he raced to her side and quickly gave her a piece of his mind.)

HAPSLOCK: I'll have you know, I had everything under control.

KYRIE: Getting battered and rolling fifty feet was part of the plan was it?

(He scowled at her harshly.)

HAPSLOCK: Occupational hazard!!! Besides, not everyone can do superhuman gymnastics like that. Normally I'd distract them with fire then catch them off guard with my blade but I don't have that option, do I?

(Kyrie looked to him and smiled.)

KYRIE: Calm down, I'm only playing with you. I know they're a tough kill.

HAPSLOCK: Thank you.

KYRIE: We used to run away from them until I figured out how to do that move.

(Hapslock looked impressed.)

HAPSLOCK: I've got to say, killing one with you bare hands, that's pretty amazing.

KYRIE: I know. And I always feel so horny afterwards.

(She beamed then pointed to the carriage.)

KYRIE: Still, no time for sex right now, you can do me later. Let's hurry; I don't want to leave Cayley with Sadler for too long. I've got a nasty feeling he's a kiddie fiddler.

HAPSLOCK: What?

KYRIE: Come on.

(As Kyrie raced away and boarded the carriage in something of a hurry, Hapslock shook his head and paced up to the horses. Once again, Kyrie had set his mind racing. As he clambered onto the carriage and set it in motion, all he could think about was how this thin, lightweight woman had brought down a two ton beast in a matter of seconds with only her bare hands. It didn't seem humanly possible. As he tried to make sense of it, it made his head ache. A young, eight stone, unarmed woman verses a two ton giant should have been no contest, an easy meal for the cuddyfinkle. For Kyrie to wipe the floor with it so quickly simply didn't make sense. If he hadn't have seen it with his own eyes, he'd never have believed it. As he sat and pondered the bizarre occurrence, his mind led him to a few things that suddenly *did* make sense. These two young girls had survived for two years against overwhelming odds, now he understood why. Kyrie was no ordinary girl, she was no ordinary fighter. She was phenomenal.

As the carriage soldiered on towards the merchant town, Hapslock continued to think about Kyrie's extraordinary fighting talent. Letting his mind wander, he then started to think about her other talents. This eighteen year old stunner knew the perfect seductive expression and when she walked she oozed sexiness with every deliberate sway of her hips. And when it came to the act of sex itself, she excelled once again. As his mind put everything together he suddenly felt a swelling inside his trousers. Kyrie was the ultimate dangerous woman, a sex kitten with fists of steel and a willingness to kill. She was his ultimate sexual fantasy. Trying to control his thoughts, he adjusted himself down below and growled under his breath. To have such acute lustful thoughts about her was utterly unacceptable. To share bodily fluids with her was fine, but to lust over her and get aroused by merely thinking about her, that was not good form. Desperate to rid himself of the naked image of her in his mind, he closed his eyes tight and tried to picture Sadler naked instead. Seconds later, the swelling in his trousers subsided and he threw up over the side of the carriage. With the carriage now rolling into the merchant town, it was a price worth paying.)

*Merchant Town, Castaria, 10am...*

(Like many who visited this town, Kyrie and Cayley were going to be in for a shock. Merchant Town was actually the name of the settlement. It wasn't simply an ordinary town where merchants liked to stop and trade, there was one vast building, a giant merchant trading centre, and that was it. The security was supplied by national guards and the many shops inside were run by folks who lived in the back of their business premises. There were no houses, no parks and no amenities.

There were several Merchant Town's dotted all over the nation and this particular one served as the cash and carry for the many towns and cities in the north of Castaria. Being the closest wholesale complex to Port Amok, traders from the new world sold their goods there and the merchants resold them to retailers from towns and cities throughout the region. Being a gathering of wholesalers, the prices inside the trading centre were extremely cheap. For those lucky enough to hold a trading membership card, there were many good bargains to be found inside.

As the carriage turned into the extraordinarily busy carriage park, Hapslock pulled an uncomfortable grimace. With so many carriages and people walking around, he had a horrible feeling they'd have trouble parking. Thankfully, some fifty yards from the giant building, he managed to find just the right place to pull the horses to a halt. Wearing a satisfied smile, he parked the carriage then leapt down. Delighted with his work, he then wandered round the back of the carriage and pulled open the doors.)

HAPSLOCK: We're here!

(As he peered inside the carriage, Cayley smiled back at him and waved. Sadler was facing him but had terrified, sideways eyes fixed on Kyrie. Kyrie, for her part, was glaring hatefully at Sadler.)

HAPSLOCK: Everything okay?

(Sadler's bottom lip trembled and he shifted his eyes to Hapslock nervously.)

SADLER: Make her stop. She's been glaring at me for the last half an hour.

(He then shifted his eyes back to Kyrie.)

HAPSLOCK: You okay, Kyrie?

(Kyrie just looked to him and smiled.)

KYRIE: Oh hi. Have we stopped?

(With that, she upped and climbed from the carriage then turned to face back inside.)

KYRIE: Come with me, Cayley.

(As Cayley slipped past Sadler and out of the carriage, Kyrie stared hard at Sadler's hands.

Once Cayley was safely out, Kyrie smiled again and rubbed her hands together.)

KYRIE: Is there a river or anything near here? I need to get cleaned up.

(Baffled by her changing moods, Hapslock furrowed his brow.)

HAPSLOCK: Wait a minute. Why were you staring at Sadler like that?

(Kyrie looked baffled.)

KYRIE: I wasn't staring.

SADLER: You were!

KYRIE: Was I?

(She offered Sadler an apologetic smile.)

KYRIE: Sorry, didn't realise I was.

(She then turned to Hapslock and murmured under her breath.)

KYRIE: Don't leave him with Cayley, whatever you do.

(Sadler looked peeved to say the least.)

SADLER: I heard that! I don't know what idea you've got into your head about me, but I can assure you, whatever it is, you're very much mistaken.

(He flexed his neck muscles then folded his arms.)

SADLER: I'm not going to tolerate you *or* your show stealing sister a second longer. I'll be travelling up front with Hapslock in future.

(Hapslock sighed.)

HAPSLOCK: Just my luck.

SADLER: Excuse me?

HAPSLOCK: Never mind that. We're at the merchant town. I'm going to get magic supplies, but is there anything else we need?

KYRIE: Water, I need a wash, I told you that already.

(Hapslock chuckled.)

HAPSLOCK: Of course.

(He pointed back the way they'd come.)

HAPSLOCK: There's a pond just beyond those trees over there.

KYRIE: Cool, that'll do.

HAPSLOCK: I actually meant, what do you need to *buy* from the merchants.

KYRIE: Oh, right. Well...

(She looked around at all the many carriages parked up around the area and promptly forgot what she'd been about to say.)

KYRIE: Sorry, what?

HAPSLOCK: What do you need from the merchants?

KYRIE: Just some stuff for...

(She paused then looked around at the expanse of carriages again.)

KYRIE: What are all these carriages in aid of?

(Hapslock looked to her and smiled.)

HAPSLOCK: They all belong to people heading to see the merchants.

KYRIE: All of them?

HAPSLOCK: I expect so.

(He pointed her towards the nearby giant concrete building.)

HAPSLOCK: It's a big old place.

(Kyrie took one look at the sizeable structure and her jaw dropped.)

KYRIE: Fuck *me*! Not literally. Not yet anyway.

(She exhaled happily then looked to Cayley.)

KYRIE: Once we're washed and ready to face the world, you and me are gonna shop 'til we drop, sister face.

(Cayley gave her a sideways glance.)

CAYLEY: We've only got 123 groats, Kyrie. We're going to need that.

HAPSLOCK: Indeed. Besides, *you* can't go in there. You have to be a merchant card holder, or indeed a knight like me. They won't let you in otherwise.

(Kyrie looked peeved to say the least.)

KYRIE: A merchant card holder? What the hell does that mean?

HAPSLOCK: You need a merchant card to get in. It's proof of identity given to merchants. They don't sell to the public, you see. They're wholesalers.

KYRIE: Sailors?

HAPSLOCK: Wholesalers! This is where the shops come to buy their stock.

(Kyrie looked enlightened.)

KYRIE: Oh... I had wondered about that actually. Back in Anoseta, there was a fruity... fruiter...

CAYLEY: Fruiterer!

KYRIE: Yeah, one of those. He always had fresh fruit every day and I never quite figured out how he got it.

HAPSLOCK: He probably made daily runs to the nearest wholesaler.

KYRIE: That would make sense. I always thought he had a secret underground orchard, but when you think about it, that's just silly.

HAPSLOCK: Indeed. Anyway, whatever you need, you three; let me know and I'll pick it up for you.

(Sadler looked to him arrogantly and shook his head.)

SADLER: No thanks. Besides, if I did need anything, I'd get it myself.

(He beamed.)

SADLER: I have a merchant card.

KYRIE: Cool, can we borrow it?

(Sadler puffed out in disgust at the very suggestion.)

SADLER: No you may not!

KYRIE: Why not?

SADLER: Because I don't like you!

(Hapslock rolled his eyes.)

HAPSLOCK: And anyway, they have the holder's name, gender and date of birth on them.

(Kyrie looked enlightened.)

KYRIE: Oh. I'd never pass for a sixty year old dude.

SADLER: I'm forty-eight!!!

(Kyrie couldn't help but laugh.)

KYRIE: Yeah, right.

(As Sadler glared at her, Kyrie allowed herself one last chuckle then smiled to Hapslock.)

KYRIE: So, you'll have to get our stuff for us then?

HAPSLOCK: That's right. So let me know what you need and I'll get going.

(He reached into his trouser pocket then looked alarmed.)

HAPSLOCK: Oh, god no!

(Looking horribly flustered, he hastened his hands into every pocket and pouch on his person while his three companions looked to him in bewilderment.)

KYRIE: What are you doing?

CAYLEY: Have you lost something?

(Hapslock gaped in dismay.)

HAPSLOCK: My royal pass!

(He threw his hands to his head in frustration.)

HAPSLOCK: You absolute idiot!!!

KYRIE: Hey!

HAPSLOCK: Not you, *me*!

(Kyrie grimaced.)

KYRIE: Yeah, I know. That was a reflex; couldn't help it.

HAPSLOCK: I've lost my royal pass. I'm screwed without it; I won't be able to get in anywhere.

(He shook a sorrowful head and sighed.)

HAPSLOCK: It must have fallen out of my pocket when we fought that cuddyfinkle.

(He looked to Sadler urgently.)

HAPSLOCK: Here's what we're going to do. We can't go back, that'd be a foolish waste of time. While Kyrie and Cayley get washed up, I'll run back and look for it. You'll have to go and buy the stuff from the merchants. I need a bag of fleur rouge and a peck of grange peppers for my fire magic. And get whatever the girls need, okay?

(Sadler looked most put out.)

SADLER: Why should I help these two?

(He sneered at the girls.)

SADLER: Give me one good reason.

HAPSLOCK: Because as a knight of this realm, I order you to do so.

(With that, he turned as if to run back the way they'd come.)

HAPSLOCK: I mean it, Sadler. We need to get to Port Amok as soon as possible and if you slow us down by refusing to help with this one simple task, I'll use the power vested in me by the king to see to it you never play the lute again.

(Sadler looked horrified.)

SADLER: You'll confiscate my loot???

HAPSLOCK: I'll cut off your hands.

(As Hapslock raced away, Sadler gulped.)

SADLER: That's far worse.

(He sighed then looked to Kyrie and Cayley. Much to his annoyance they were both grinning at him with much amusement.)

SADLER: What?

KYRIE: You got told.



CAYLEY: You really did.

(Sadler rolled his eyes and sighed.)

SADLER: Fine, what do you need me to get?

KYRIE: A sense of humour.

CAYLEY: Music lessons.

KYRIE: A diet with less lard in it!

CAYLEY: Some clothes from *this* century.

(As Kyrie and Cayley chuckled together childishly, Sadler growled and jumped from the carriage.)

SADLER: Tell me what you want me to buy or I'll be forced to guess. Don't blame me if I come out with a bucket and a set of pruning sheers.

(Kyrie rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: Fine. Knickers.

(As Cayley blushed, Sadler froze to the spot in horror.)

KYRIE: Madam here hasn't got any underwear 'cause Frank left them in our hotel.

CAYLEY: Hapslock.

KYRIE: Yeah.

(She pushed Cayley away at arms length then spoke quietly to Sadler in no uncertain tone.)

KYRIE: Cotton briefs, aged 11-12, 3 pairs should do. If you buy her satin lingerie, I'll ram them so far up your arse you'll have to *spit* them out.

(She handed him 20 groats.)

KYRIE: And don't even think about keeping the change.

(She looked to Cayley and winked only to be quite taken aback by the cold glare she was receiving in return.)

KYRIE: What's up with you?

CAYLEY: Satin lingerie indeed. Why say such a thing?

(Kyrie smiled.)

KYRIE: It's okay; I whispered it so you couldn't hear me.

(She then glared at the horrified looking Sadler.)

KYRIE: Go on then, what are you waiting for? A tip?

SADLER: But... I can't buy girly underwear! Someone might see me.

KYRIE: Oh, grow up. Our grandad wasn't embarrassed to do it, don't be so feeble.

SADLER: I'll look silly.

KYRIE: Of course you will, that's a very silly shirt.

SADLER: Excuse me?

KYRIE: Go on then, off you go.

(She gave him a less than sincere smile.)

KYRIE: Cotton briefs, aged 11 to 12, just in case you forgot.

(Sadler gulped.)

SADLER: This is going to be embarrassing.

(Sympathising with him, Cayley smiled warmly and tried to be reassuring.)

CAYLEY: You'll be fine, Mr Sadler.

(As soon as she spoke, he glared at her then stomped off towards the building.)

SADLER: Don't smile at *me*, devil child.

(As he headed away mumbling under his breath, Cayley looked to Kyrie and bit her lip.)

CAYLEY: He really doesn't like me much, does he?

(Kyrie watched him go and snarled to herself quietly.)

KYRIE: Or maybe he likes you too much.

(Having not heard her correctly, Cayley replied inquiringly.)

CAYLEY: Sorry, what did you say? He likes what?

KYRIE: Doesn't matter.

(She then looked to her and beamed.)

KYRIE: Let's get our stuff to wash with then I'll braid your hair.

(Cayley bounced excitedly.)

CAYLEY: Yay!

(With that, she raced into the carriage to grab her pack.)

KYRIE: Good girl.

---

Many miles south in the oddball nation of Anoseta at this time, Axion was raging. He'd just received word of yet another failed attempt to kill Kyrie and Cayley and was liberally airing his thoughts on the matter to a loyal bunch of cronies. Pacing up and down in front of the desk in his study, he snarled and made absolutely certain that each and every one of his men knew exactly how angry he was.

AXION: Almost a million!!! Almost a fucking million I've spent on summoners, ninja's, warlords, barbarians... you fucking name it. Five percent of my inheritance, wasted already!

(He thumped his desk with his fist as he paced before it.)

AXION: And what have I got for my million?

(He threw his arms in the air.)

AXION: Are those two bitches dead? Are their heads mounted on my wall yet? No!

(He seethed.)

AXION: All my million has bought me is the odd message now and again telling me where they were last spotted.

(He sighed furiously and shook his head.)

AXION: Another homing pigeon returned today. Apparently they were last seen in Roseville, yesterday.

(He threw his backside upon his desk and sneered.)

AXION: That's what my million has got me. An update on their whereabouts!

(He shook his head angrily.)

AXION: Fifty four assassins, eight summoners, over five hundred mercenaries... that's a veritable army. I even sent fifty spies to hunt the girls down and help the hired killers keep track of them. And what have they achieved in two years? They knew where she was *yesterday*, for fuck sake!

(He clenched his fist.)

AXION: The spies took ten carrier pigeons with them so they could let me know as soon as the deed was done. Six of them have come back, all with depressing messages on them.

(He shook his head.)

AXION: This person is dead, that person is dead, they were last seen heading here, they were last seen heading there...

(He puffed out furiously.)

AXION: Fucking useless.

(He then stood up and placed his hands on his hips angrily.)

AXION: Well, fuck it. No more. I've finally realised something. If I want the job done properly I'm going to have to do it myself.

(He nodded to affirm himself then continued.)

AXION: A month ago they were spotted in Archville, yesterday it was Roseville. That means they're heading along the North Castaria peninsula. Now...

(He about turned to reach for a rolled up map on his desk then glanced over his shoulder.)

AXION: Gather round, men.

(As his men started to assemble around him, he unfurled the map and spread it across the top of his desk.)

AXION: Right, listen.

(He pointed to a spot on the map and looked around at his men's faces.)

AXION: This is Archville. Now, do you see how the land gets thinner and thinner as you go east? That's a peninsula. Surrounded by water on three sides but attached to the mainland.

(As his men all looked closer, he moved his hand along the map.)

AXION: And this town here is Roseville. See how they're heading deeper and deeper into the peninsula?

(As his men all looked to one another, Axion pointed to the coastline North of Roseville and nodded sternly.)

AXION: That's Port Amok there. Which, unless I'm very much mistaken, is where they're heading. The bitches are trying to escape to the new world.

(His chief aide, Rico looked to him and bit his lip.)

RICO: They could just be unaware they're heading down a dead end piece of land.

(Axion shook his head.)

AXION: If the older girl was alone, I'd accept that as a theory. The little one's a genius though, remember. With her there, I bet they know exactly where they're going.

(Rico nodded.)

RICO: True.

AXION: Anyway...

(He stood tall and let go of the map, allowing it to curl itself up on the desk.)

AXION: To have taken that long to get to Roseville, they either walked very slowly or wandered miles out of their way for the last two years, who knows?

(Just then, one of his flunkies raised a hand.)

AXION: What is it, Blake?

BLAKE: The spies you sent, they'd know.

(Axion gave a stifled laugh.)

AXION: I don't *need* to know where they wandered to or why, Blake. That was a rhetorical question.

BLAKE: Right. I don't know what that is.

AXION: Of course not, you're a thug not a scholar.

(Blake rubbed his chest proudly.)

AXION: Point is, whether they wandered randomly for two years, got lost or only just found out about the new world, they're *now* heading for Port Amok. That's all we need to know.

(He nodded firmly.)

AXION: And I'm going after them.

(Rico stood tall.)

RICO: Shall I prepare your carriage then, boss?

(Axion scoffed.)

AXION: Don't be ridiculous. It'd take almost a month by carriage; they'd be long gone by then.

(He unfurled the map again and pointed to Anoseta.)

AXION: We're here.

(He then ran his finger in a Northerly direction on the map.)

AXION: Port Amok is up there.

(Rico looked enlightened.)

RICO: I get it.

BLAKE: I don't. Thug, remember?

AXION: It's simple. See how Castaria is crescent shaped?

BLAKE: Crescent?

AXION: Shaped like a banana.

BLAKE: Like the number C!

AXION: Like a C, yes. It'd take four weeks to go around on land. I'm thinking no more than two days by sea. You can almost go in a straight line.

(Once again, he let the map curl up and stood tall.)

AXION: Blake, Rico, you're coming with me; the rest of you should get back to work.

RICO: But... three of us, Axion? We'll need more than that to take them down. Look how many trained killers have failed so far.

(As everyone except himself, Rico and Blake headed for the door, Axion nodded knowingly.)

AXION: Oh, *we* won't be fighting them, Rico.

RICO: We won't?

AXION: Of course not. Look, those bitches may not know it, but they've played right into my hands. Everything is going to work out perfectly. Ever heard of the silver arrow assassins?

(Rico looked more than a little baffled.)

RICO: They mythical hit squad?

AXION: They're not a myth, Rico.

RICO: They're not?

AXION: No, the myth that they're a myth, that's the myth. The silver arrows assassins are very real.

(Rico looked uncertain.)

RICO: You sure about that?

AXION: I'm positive. My father used them once when he was president. A gang of lowlives were terrorising a town in the east somewhere, so he called them in to take down their leader and restore order.

(Rico looked stunned.)

RICO: Wow. Didn't know that.

AXION: It was privileged information, obviously. I knew, and I still know how to contact them.

RICO: Well... excellent.

AXION: And the beauty of it is that they're based in Port Amok.

(Rico nodded and a grin appeared on his lips.)

RICO: Useful.

AXION: Convenient, isn't it?

(He rubbed his hands together gleefully.)

AXION: We'll need money to hire them of course and Blake here will be our bodyguard for the journey.

BLAKE: Thug!

AXION: Exactly. Anyway, once we've hired them, the nightmare will be as good as over. They've got a proud perfect record when it comes to making hits. Nobody has ever escaped their grasp.

RICO: What, you mean nobody ever?

AXION: Not one. Only the top ten hit men are invited to join, you see. They've got magic, weapons experts, every kind of assassin in their mix and they compete to make the kill. They even keep a score.

RICO: Like a sport?

AXION: Yeah, a sport they take very seriously. They'll hunt those bitches down in no time, capture them, take them somewhere then compete for the kill. And they never fail.

(Rico looked uncertain.)

RICO: If they're that good, why didn't you just hire them in the first place?

(Axion snarled.)

AXION: They're fucking expensive, Rico. This is going to cost two million.

RICO: Two million???

AXION: Yeah. And two years ago, I thought the veritable army I sent would be enough. I had no idea that I'd end up spending a whole million for nothing. Now this two million is a lot but it'll draw a line under it and I can go on with my life.

RICO: I see.

AXION: Anyway, that's enough talk. I'll fetch the money, say farewell to Cheyenne then meet you at the stables, Blake. Rico, help him prepare the carriage to take us to the port. The sooner we get going, the sooner those bitch's heads will be mounted on my wall.

(And with that, they all headed from the room, Axion more determined than ever to have Kyrie and Cayley killed in the most horrible way possible, regardless of the expense.)

---

*Merchant Town, Castaria...*

As he entered the giant wholesale complex in Merchant Town, Sadler looked very much like a man with the weight of the entire world upon his shoulders. The last twenty four hours had been a complete nightmare for him and things looked set to get worse. Recalling every moment of it, he sighed heavily as he made his way along a corridor inside the building. He'd made of mess of his appearance at the wedding the night before, he'd been mobbed by furious guests, come face to face with a Chimera and had his carriage commandeered by a knight. Now to cap it all, he had to buy female underwear for a girl he couldn't stand. Right now, the world felt so cruel. Sighing to himself heavily once again, he paced along the thoroughfare in the centre of complex, past a meat merchant and a jeweller before stopping outside a shop named "Lucinda's Undies". Satisfied this was where he needed to go, he gulped to himself then took a single step towards it. Feeling immensely foolish he then stopped and bit his lip.

SADLER: Humiliating.

(He stared through the shop window at the display of girly undergarments and hung his head. This was the last place in the world he wanted to be right now. Knowing he was under threat from a knight of the realm, not to mention Kyrie, to get the job done or else, he shook his head and groaned. He knew there was no way he could back out and any moment now, he'd have to enter the shop and face the indignity of purchasing female underwear. Hoping the clerk or the owner would be sympathetic; he allowed himself an umpteenth sigh then entered the shop looking decidedly nervously. Sadly for him, his hope that the owner would be sympathetic proved to be somewhat optimistic. Stunned to see a member of the opposite sex enter her establishment, she paced up to him suspiciously and raised a distrusting eyebrow.)

LUCINDA: We prosecute thieves here, you know?

(Sadler looked to her in horror and gaped.)

SADLER: I...

LUCINDA: Bored of washing lines, are you? Come to steal from the source?

(Burning red with embarrassment, Sadler whimpered at her with a trembling voice. Being in a ladies clothing shop was horrifying enough, but to have this lady chastising him loudly just inside the door was mortifying.)

SADLER: I haven't come to steal *anything*.

(Lucinda scoffed.)

LUCINDA: No, of course you haven't. Do you think you're the first dirty old man to come in here and try his luck do you?

SADLER: I...

LUCINDA: I come across your sort all the time, matey.

(She rolled her eyes angrily.)

LUCINDA: Coming in here and stealing my merchandise to feed your filthy perversions.

You make me sick.

(Sadler looked to her with trembling lips then raised a protesting finger.)

SADLER: I'm not a thief... I was sent here to buy things.

(Lucinda nodded knowingly and sneered.)

LUCINDA: Oh, right. Sent here, were you? Let me guess, your wife sent you. Your wife who just happens to be the same size as you?

SADLER: No... I...

LUCINDA: I don't want to know.

(She looked him up and down and scoffed.)

LUCINDA: The lingerie for oversized ladies is at the back. And no, you can't try it on before you buy.

(Feeling incredibly miffed by her coldness, Sadler placed his hands on his hips angrily and scowled at her.)

SADLER: How dare you accuse me of cross-dressing! I'm not here to buy lingerie for myself, thank you very much.

(Lucinda gave him a distrusting look.)

LUCINDA: Then who *are* you buying lingerie for?

SADLER: A twelve year old girl...

LUCINDA: Your daughter?

SADLER: No, just some girl I met yesterday!

(As Lucinda's face screwed up in disgust, Sadler slapped his forehead with this palm in frustration.)

SADLER: Let me clarify that...

LUCINDA: Don't bother, you're disgusting. That's worse than buying it for yourself, you make me sick.

SADLER: It's not like that!!! She asked me buy them for her.

LUCINDA: A likely story!

(Sadler sighed heavily and threw his arms up in defeat.)

SADLER: Look, I just need three pairs of knickers, age 11 to 12. Let me buy them and I'll be on my way, this is humiliating.

LUCINDA: Fine.

(With that, she stamped away to a nearby shelf and reached for a small hanger with 3 pairs of knickers attached to it.)

LUCINDA: Here. These are for petite ladies; they should fit an eleven year old.

(She threw him the hanger and sneered.)

LUCINDA: I just hope this girl's father finds out and beats you to death.

(As he caught the hanger, Sadler looked at the underwear on it and shuddered.)

SADLER: These are silk!

LUCINDA: Yeah. Three silk, crotchless thongs, I know what you perverts like.

(Sadler's eyes bulged and he screamed.)

SADLER: Crotchless thongs???

(Looking tortured to the very core of his being, he then cast the hanger into the air in a blind panic.)

SADLER: That's obscene.

(As the hanger flew upwards and got caught up in the ceiling fan, Lucinda growled.)

LUCINDA: Now look what you've done!

SADLER: Me?

LUCINDA: Yes, you!

(She watched the knickers spin round and round on the fan and sighed.)

LUCINDA: I've a good mind to make you go up there and fetch them. Bloody kiddie fiddler!

(Sadler just shook a solemn head.)

SADLER: Look. I was asked to buy three pairs of cotton briefs, aged 11 to 12 for a girl I'm travelling with. I'm also travelling with her 18 year old sister and a knight of the realm, by the way. It's all perfectly innocent. The knight is indisposed and the girls don't have a merchant card, so *I've* had to come and buy the underwear.

(He sighed sorrowfully.)

SADLER: It was embarrassing enough as it was, but you've turned it into a complete nightmare. Thanks for that.

(Lucinda bit her lip and sighed.)

LUCINDA: Is that true?

SADLER: Yes. You can come outside and meet them if you don't believe me.

(Lucinda nodded apologetically and forced a smile.)

LUCINDA: I apologise.

SADLER: Good. You should.

LUCINDA: But in my defence, you looked really shifty when you walked in.

SADLER: I was nervous.

LUCINDA: Maybe so, but you looked horribly suspicious. I just assumed you were either going to steal something or were... shopping for yourself.

(She gave him a pitying smile.)

LUCINDA: As for the kiddie fiddler thing... you have to admit, you *do* have a certain look about you.

(Sadler growled and shook his fist.)

SADLER: What?

LUCINDA: I'm just saying...

(Crucified by her words, Sadler snarled and raised his voice furiously.)

SADLER: Cotton briefs, aged 11 to 12, three pairs, now!

(Lucinda flinched and rushed away.)

LUCINDA: Right, of course, my bad.

(Looking thoroughly fed up, Sadler stamped up to the counter and glared at her as she fetched the briefs.)

SADLER: I've never been so insulted in all my life. And I get insulted a lot!

(Lucinda yelled out across the shop.)

LUCINDA: Because of your dress sense?

SADLER: Just fetch me my knickers.

(He winced and laid his hat down on the counter.)

SADLER: *Her* knickers! Just... knickers.

(Moments later as Lucinda rushed back around the counter; Sadler shook his head at her and sighed.)

SADLER: I hope you don't treat all your customers like this.

(Lucinda grimaced apologetically.)

LUCINDA: Only the ones that look...

(She clammed up and sighed.)

LUCINDA: Sorry.

(She placed three pairs of cotton briefs in a paper bag then passed them across the counter to Sadler.)

LUCINDA: Six groats please. I think you'll find that's a bargain.

(Sadler replied sarcastically as he reached for his money pouch.)

SADLER: I wouldn't know, contrary to your beliefs, I've never bought underwear for a little girl before.

LUCINDA: Fair comment.

(As Sadler continued to fiddle for coins, Lucinda ducked beneath the counter to reach for her receipt book. Consequently, neither of them noticed the hanger and crotchless thongs, fly off of the fan and land in the dip on the top of Sadler's hat. Remaining oblivious, Sadler laid six groats on the counter and Lucinda handed him a receipt. Coldly and without a smile, Sadler then placed his hat upon his head and bid her farewell.)

SADLER: I won't be shopping here again.

LUCINDA: Very well.

(As Sadler paced out of the door with the paper bag in his hand and a hatful of petite lingerie, Lucinda watched him go and raised a suspicious eyebrow.)

LUCINDA: So, if he's not a thief, a cross-dresser or a paedophile... I wonder what it could be. There's definitely something not right about him.

(She then shook her head and wandered off to insult another customer. With the shopping trip behind him, Sadler paced towards the exit of the giant merchant building with his head held high. He was so pleased with himself, he completely forgot all about the things Sir Hapslock had asked to him buy. Buying the underwear had been an arduous task but he'd overcome it and would never have to suffer such an indignity ever again. Unable to stop feeling pleased with himself, he marched for the exit wearing a triumphant smile, humming all the way.)

---

In the carriage at this time, Cayley was sitting on the floor, engrossed in her book while Kyrie sat behind her brushing her hair for her. Looking a tad embarrassed, Sir Hapslock sat opposite them sweating from having run back down the road to find his royal pass.

HAPSLOCK: And that's when I remembered. I took it out last night and left it on the side in here.

(He laughed to himself.)

HAPSLOCK: The stupid thing is, I *always* take it out of my pocket at night so I don't crease it up in my sleep. Fancy forgetting *that*! So, anyway, once I finally realised, I ran back again. I'm kinda knackered now.

(Kyrie smiled at him as she continued to run a brush through Cayley's hair.)

KYRIE: I'm always forgetting things too. It's easily done.

HAPSLOCK: Yeah, but something as important as my royal pass?

(Kyrie grinned.)

KYRIE: A few months ago, I left this town and got two miles away before I realised I'd forgotten something *extremely* important.

(Cayley lifted her head and turned to scowl at her.)

KYRIE: I said I was sorry, didn't I? And I came straight back for you.

(Cayley just rolled her eyes and turned back to continue reading. Resuming brushing her hair for her, Kyrie grimaced.)

KYRIE: She was kinda mad at me.

(Hapslock just looked at her in disbelief.)

HAPSLOCK: You forgot your sister?



KYRIE: Like I said, these things happen.

HAPSLOCK: Wow.

(Just then, Cayley chuckled as she scanned the pages of her book.)

CAYLEY: He really *was* an idiot.

(Hapslock looked to her and smiled.)

HAPSLOCK: You enjoying that book, Cayley?

(Kyrie rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: She enjoys *all* books.

(Cayley ignored Kyrie's comment and beamed at Hapslock.)

CAYLEY: I love this book. I've read it a hundred times and it never gets boring.

HAPSLOCK: No? What book is it?

CAYLEY: Same as before, Sir Flaxley's first one.

(Hapslock bit his lip and scratched behind his ear.)

HAPSLOCK: Very much not my thing.

CAYLEY: When we meet him, I'm going to get his autograph then I'm going to ask him to show me his sword moves.

(She exhaled happily.)

CAYLEY: How cool is that going to be?

KYRIE: If a geek like you thinks it's cool, then not very.

CAYLEY: Leave me alone.

(As she looked back to her book, Hapslock mused to himself.)

HAPSLOCK: Is that the only book you've got, Cayley?

(Cayley glanced up at him.)

CAYLEY: Yeah, I don't have room in my pack for more than one.

HAPSLOCK: And you chose that one?

CAYLEY: Well, yeah...

(She sighed and looked to the floor sorrowfully.)

CAYLEY: My mum gave it to me.

(Kyrie smiled and set the brush down to stroke Cayley's hair with her hand.)

KYRIE: It's a keepsake, a memory of our mum, like my necklace.

(She fiddled with her necklace and a tear ran down her cheek.)

KYRIE: Seven years ago, she died. I still miss her.

(Cayley laid her head back and glanced up at her warmly.)

CAYLEY: You've still got *me*, Kyrie.

(She sat forward again and grinned menacingly.)

CAYLEY: And unless you wander off and leave me in some strange town again, you always will have.

(Kyrie chuckled and playfully slapped the top of her head.)

KYRIE: Cheeky cow.

(Feeling a little uncertain about what to say in regard to their mother, Hapslock opted to smile warmly and offer them the chance to change the subject or elaborate.)

KYRIE: So yeah, that book means everything to her.

(At this point, Cayley closed the book, climbed to her feet and headed over to her bag to put it away.)

KYRIE: You read enough for one morning?

CAYLEY: No...

(She slipped her book away then sat down next to Kyrie and cuddled into her.)

CAYLEY: But I get the feeling you need a hug.

(Kyrie smiled.)

KYRIE: No, I'm... thanks, sister face.

(Watching them sit, cuddled up, Hapslock smiled to himself.)

HAPSLOCK: Wherever your mum is, I bet she'd be really proud of you both.

(Kyrie looked uncertain.)

KYRIE: Wherever she is? She's isn't anywhere, she's dead. I told you that.

HAPSLOCK: I meant, wherever she is, as in heaven or somewhere.

(Kyrie was far from pleased with his comment and snarled.)

KYRIE: Or somewhere? Why wouldn't she be in heaven? What are you implying?

HAPSLOCK: I...

CAYLEY: Kyrie, he means she might not be in heaven; she might be somewhere here, keeping an eye on us.

HAPSLOCK: Yeah, that kind of thing.

(Kyrie bit her lip.)

KYRIE: Oh. Sorry.

HAPSLOCK: No, it's okay.

(He bit his lip unsure whether to ask them about something that was on his mind. Deciding there was no harm in asking anything that helped him understand them better, he then sat back and spoke in a friendly, inquiring tone.)

HAPSLOCK: If you don't mind me asking, what happened to your dad?

(Kyrie looked to him angrily as Cayley bit her lip.)

CAYLEY: That's... an odd one.

HAPSLOCK: It's okay if you don't want to tell me. It's just that, I know your grandfather was your guardian when you were sold and that your mother passed away seven years ago... so I was just curious about your dad.

(Kyrie shrugged bitterly, eager to change the subject.)

KYRIE: We've never met him.

HAPSLOCK: Really?

(He looked stumped.)

HAPSLOCK: Wait. How could *you* have not met him, Kyrie? You must have been five or six when Cayley was conceived.

(Kyrie pouted and shuffled angrily in her seat.)

KYRIE: It's complicated.

HAPSLOCK: It's downright impossible you mean. Unless you two have different fathers.

KYRIE: What? Of course we don't have different fathers.

HAPSLOCK: Then how...

(Cayley rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: She doesn't like to talk about it.

KYRIE: Well, would you?

(She pointed at herself angrily.)

KYRIE: I got the shit end of the stick; it was okay for you, Cayley. Mum was mean and doomed me to a life of being inadequate.

CAYLEY: No she didn't.

KYRIE: She did! She slept with some guy who visited our town to do a book signing and accidentally got pregnant with me. Mean! Then when he came back to town six years later to do another one, she shagged him again to get pregnant on purpose. Mean!

HAPSLOCK: How does that make her mean?

KYRIE: Isn't it obvious?

HAPSLOCK: No!

KYRIE: *I* was an accident, Cayley was planned! Mean! So unfair. That's why I'm a dipshit and *she* isn't!

(Hapslock looked stunned.)

HAPSLOCK: You think you have a low IQ because...

CAYLEY: I've told her it doesn't work like that a million times, but she never listens.

KYRIE: Damn right I don't. I'm thick because mum forgot to plan me.

HAPSLOCK: Wow!

(Kyrie exhaled warmly.)

KYRIE: I still love her though, I always will. She did give me a beautiful face, massive tits, a perfect arse and amazing hair, after all.

(She sighed.)

KYRIE: Doesn't seem fair that she gave you all that too, Cayley. She might have given me *something* I can call my own.

CAYLEY: You're an amazing fighter and a prize winning gymnast.

KYRIE: Oh yeah!

(She beamed.)

KYRIE: Cool.

(As the two girls sat quietly before him deep in thought, Hapslock couldn't help feeling amazed. Kyrie putting her stupidity down to something as meaningless and not being planned by her parents spoke volumes about her mind-set. Just like any other human being, she tried to rationalise everything in her life but without the intelligence to find sensible answers, her brain would settle for whatever it could get. This explained a lot of the strange comments she'd made since he'd met her. A child without a football might settle for kicking a cabbage around instead because that was the next best thing. A little girl without a doll to play with might draw a face on a bag of flour and pretend it was a doll. Again, because that was the next best thing. And a girl with no rationalisation skills would also have to settle for the next best thing; whatever explanation her mind could offer her. This was Kyrie. When her brain couldn't make sense of things, it simply made up its own explanations. Suddenly, he understood her much better. She saw the world in a different way to most people. She could only understand it in the way her mind allowed her to. Finally he understood her need for promiscuity. Her mind told her she loved to have sex and that was all it wrote. She couldn't rationalise society's inhibitions or understand the concept of chastity. Sex was simply what she knew it to be. Fun. Looking enlightened by his thoughts, Hapslock nodded in wonderment then accidentally aired his thoughts out loud.)

HAPSLOCK: Now wonder you're such an almighty slut.

(Cayley was livid.)

CAYLEY: Hey! That was horrible!

(Kyrie patted Cayley on the leg and smiled.)

KYRIE: No, he's right, I am.

CAYLEY: Even so.

(Hapslock was appalled at himself.)

HAPSLOCK: No, I *am* sorry, that was a dreadful thing to say. My mind wandered and I accidentally spoke out loud. Sorry.

(Cayley scowled at him and pouted bitterly.)

CAYLEY: Don't even think that way about her.

(Kyrie smiled at her warmly.)

KYRIE: Aw, you're so cute when you defend me.

(She sighed.)

KYRIE: And when you don't. You're just cute all the time.

(She shrugged.)

KYRIE: Still, you can keep your cuteness; I'm hot!

(Hapslock glanced at her uneasily for a minute then sat back.)

HAPSLOCK: Well, there's no denying that.

KYRIE: Anyway, what were we talking about?

CAYLEY: Our dad.

KYRIE: You sure? I thought it was shoes.

HAPSLOCK: No, it was about your father.

(Kyrie scoffed dismissively.)

KYRIE: Well, that must have been a pretty pointless conversation then because there's not much we can say about him. We've got no idea who he is and there's no way in hell we could ever find out either.

(Hapslock looked thoughtful.)

HAPSLOCK: Oh, I dunno.

(Cayley glanced to him nervously as he continued.)

HAPSLOCK: You already know he was doing book signings when you were both conceived. You might be able to trace him through that.

(Kyrie grinned as Hapslock continued.)

HAPSLOCK: See, your dad must have been an author. If you can find out what author released books in the years you two were conceived, you might find your answer.

(He smiled.)

HAPSLOCK: There can't be many who wrote books in both years *and* stopped off in your home town both times as part of his signing tour.

(Much to his amazement, Kyrie started to laugh heartily. Cayley on the other hand, turned red and glanced away, deliberately hiding her face.)

HAPSLOCK: You alright there, Cayley?

(Cayley pouted and turned her back on him.)

CAYLEY: Shut up. Don't get her started.

(Sadly for Cayley, her words came too late. Laughing hysterically, Kyrie pointed at her and recalled a deeply embarrassing moment from Cayley's past.)

KYRIE: Detective Cayley here already investigated that one, actually.

(She laughed some more and rubbed her eyes.)

KYRIE: She found out that Sir Flaxley's books both came out shortly before we were conceived and told everyone at school he was our dad.

(She wiped away tears and chuckled heartily.)

KYRIE: I was rescuing her from bullies for weeks.

(Cayley turned to face her, glowing red with embarrassment.)

CAYLEY: Fine, I made a mistake, okay? I was only little.

KYRIE: You're still little!

CAYLEY: I was even littler then though! Leave me alone.

KYRIE: She became the ultimate geek that day. I mean she was bad enough as it was what with the maths and the music, but to have fantasies that some legendary knight was her father...

(She chuckled some more.)

KYRIE: For once I wasn't the biggest idiot in our family.

CAYLEY: Oh, you were!

(Just then, the carriage doors flew open and Sadler clambered inside in a blind panic. Turning pale, he threw his hat on the shelf beside him and bellowed angrily.)

SADLER: Why weren't you watching them???

(Hapslock, Kyrie and Cayley stared at him in bewilderment.)

HAPSLOCK: Watching who?

SADLER: The horses, you cock!!!

(At once, Hapslock's face dropped and he bundled his way outside past Sadler.)

HAPSLOCK: Tell me you're joking!!!

(Looking deeply flustered, he raced to the front of the carriage and froze in horror.)  
HAPSLOCK: Well, fuck my uncle's elbow.  
(Sure enough, the horses were nowhere to be seen.)  
HAPSLOCK: Shit.  
SADLER: Goliath, Fogimort... they're gone.  
(Hapslock gave him a sideways glance.)  
HAPSLOCK: Fogimort?  
SADLER: Never mind that, do something!!!  
(As Cayley and Kyrie come out to join them, Sadler sunk to his knees.)  
SADLER: I hate my life! Why couldn't you just let the wedding guests kill me?  
(Kyrie shrugged.)  
KYRIE: We were going to but Cayley felt sorry for you.  
(He glared at her and his nostrils flared.)  
SADLER: I don't like you!  
(Kyrie returned his glance.)  
KYRIE: Yeah, we both know who *you* like.  
(She then stood in front of Cayley as if to shield her.)  
HAPSLOCK: Look, enough bickering. We need to find out who swiped the horses.  
(As soon as he said it, a gentleman passer-by stopped and sucked his teeth in their direction.)  
ANGUS: Lost your horses, have you?  
SADLER: They were stolen.  
ANGUS: Aye!  
(He sighed.)  
ANGUS: That'll be those Camberley brothers again, no doubt.  
(Hapslock raised a curious eyebrow.)  
HAPSLOCK: Camberley brothers?  
ANGUS: Aye, the thieving bastards. They've become a real problem around here. You can't leave your horses unattended for very long these days, I tell you.  
(Sadler glared at Hapslock, Kyrie and Cayley.)  
SADLER: I didn't, *they* did!  
HAPSLOCK: Silence, Sadler.  
(Hapslock looked to the passer-by.)  
HAPSLOCK: Say, passer-by, where might we find these Camberley brothers?  
ANGUS: Well...  
(He pointed to a clump of trees in the south.)  
ANGUS: Their house is about a mile that way but I wouldn't go there if I was you.  
HAPSLOCK: No? And pray tell why not?  
ANGUS: Because nobody's ever come back alive that's why. There's twenty of the fuckers and they're all violent bastards.  
(He bowed his head towards Cayley.)  
ANGUS: Excuse my language, young missy.  
CAYLEY: It's okay.  
ANGUS: Anyway, I'm off. See you.  
(As the man headed away, Hapslock ran his forearm across his face and snarled.)  
HAPSLOCK: Wait here, I'm going to get the horses back.  
(Cayley looked uncertain.)  
CAYLEY: From twenty of them? You heard what the man said.  
HAPSLOCK: Well, I have to try.  
KYRIE: I'll come with you. If there's a fight, I'm your girl.  
(She beamed and turned to face Sadler.)

KYRIE: Can you look after...

(She shuddered.)

KYRIE: On second thoughts, Cayley, you're coming with me.

SADLER: I'm going too, they might have loads of horses and you won't know which two are mine.

HAPSLOCK: We will! Goliath and Fogimort.

SADLER: You know what I mean. You couldn't identify them.

HAPSLOCK: Fine. Lock the carriage up then.

(He snarled.)

HAPSLOCK: Let's go and get our horses back.

---

When Angus had told Hapslock that the Camberley brother's residence was about a mile away, he'd neglected to mention one small detail. It was a mile of nothing but swamp land. With one of the party not prepared to sully their precious boots by crossing it, they'd had to find a way around it, doubling the length of their walk. That same person then complained all the way, much to Kyrie, Cayley and Hapslock's annoyance. It wasn't that Sadler was incapable of walking long distances; he just didn't like the exercise. This was a man who never walked anywhere. To suddenly have to trek two miles was like a form of torture to him. Not about to suffer in silence, he groaned and cursed the whole way there. In stark contrast to Sadler, having spent years wandering miles and miles everyday, his three companions thought nothing of walking such a minute distance. The only thing annoying them on this short trek was Sadler's complaints. After his recent run of bad luck, Sadler felt he was overdue a good rant and he wasn't slow in airing one. Bringing up the rear he kicked his heels and shared his angry thoughts liberally.

SADLER: And to make matters worse, I left my hat in the carriage. I feel naked without it. (He sighed heavily.)

SADLER: I shouldn't have thrown it on the shelf in a temper. I should have thrown it at you three.

(He scoffed bitterly.)

SADLER: Getting me attacked by Chimera's and sending me on humiliating shopping trips... I'm a professional entertainer, I deserve better. You couldn't even watch my horses properly. (Cayley glanced back over her shoulder then looked to Kyrie.)

CAYLEY: He's angry.

KYRIE: I noticed.

(Leading them around the edge of the swamp, Hapslock puffed out.)

HAPSLOCK: He's getting on my nerves. I mean, I like a rant as much as the next man but he's taking the piss... kit. Taking the biscuit!

KYRIE: Nice save.

HAPSLOCK: Well you know, I don't like to swear if I can help it.

(Having overheard their complaints about him, Sadler raised his voice.)

SADLER: Under the circumstances, I'm entitled to make myself heard, don't you think? If you'd just watched my horses, none of this...

(Sick of his constant whining, Kyrie rolled her eyes and turned to face him.)

KYRIE: Take a butchers at these and shut the fuck up.

(With that, she lifted her top and revealed her breasts to him. At once he fell totally silent and turned red with embarrassment.)

KYRIE: That's better.

(She then resumed her trek and left Sadler drooling on the spot where she'd revealed herself to him.)

KYRIE: See, Cayley. Boobies are powerful things. The sooner you accept that...

(Cayley glared at her coldly and folded her arms across her chest.)

CAYLEY: Shut up.

(She then allowed Kyrie a smile.)

CAYLEY: Nice job though, he was driving me insane.

KYRIE: It was the least I could do. And I like getting them out in public, you know that.

(Just then, Hapslock stopped and turned to face them both urgently.)

HAPSLOCK: There's a house up ahead, that must be the Camberley place.

(Kyrie and Cayley both stepped up to his side and stared ahead. A few feet before them stood a giant oak tree and a hundred yards beyond it, there was a large white painted house.

Behind the house, they could see a paddock, packed full of horses.)

CAYLEY: Horses!

(She looked to her side then furrowed her brow.)

CAYLEY: Where's...

(She glanced behind her and sighed. Some way back, Sadler was still rooted to the spot.)

CAYLEY: What's Sadler doing?

(Hapslock glanced back and rolled his eyes.)

HAPSLOCK: I'll go.

(As Hapslock paced back to retrieve Sadler, Cayley chuckled playfully at Kyrie.)

CAYLEY: Your magic boobies must have paralysed him.

(Kyrie chuckled to herself.)

KYRIE: You think that was impressive, wait until you see what my mystical minge can do.

(At once, Cayley's smile evaporated and she shook her head solemnly.)

CAYLEY: If a thought enters your brain, you just *have* to let it out, don't you?

(Kyrie shrugged.)

KYRIE: Of course I do. Like you said, I don't have room for *two* thoughts in there, so I have to get rid of it before another one comes along.

(She shrugged.)

KYRIE: That's how biography works.

CAYLEY: The word is biology and no... it isn't.

(Kyrie glanced at her coldly, objecting to her sister's condescending tone.)

KYRIE: Actually, you're wrong and I can prove it.

CAYLEY: Oh yeah, how?

(A devilish glint appeared in Kyrie's eyes.)

KYRIE: Like this!

(With that, she quickly grabbed Cayley's hand and started to squeeze it extremely hard. At once, Cayley's eyes bulged and she yelped in pain.)

CAYLEY: Ow, ouch... stop it!!!

KYRIE: Then admit I'm right!

CAYLEY: No!!!

KYRIE: Fine! Have it your way.

(She then grimaced and started to squeeze with all her might.)

CAYLEY: Ouch!!!

KYRIE: Go on, say I'm right and I'll let you go.

(Cayley squeaked in pain.)

CAYLEY: Okay, okay... I'm right.

(Kyrie let go at once and scoffed.)

KYRIE: See?

(As Cayley placed her hands behind her back and chuckled, Kyrie furrowed her brow.)

KYRIE: Hey! How do you keep doing that?

(Before Cayley could offer up a cocky retort, Hapslock rushed back with Sadler at his side.)

HAPSLOCK: I'm back.

KYRIE: Hi.

(She cuffed Cayley round the head then looked to Hapslock with urgency.)

KYRIE: So, what's the plan?

(Hapslock glanced at the house with the paddock in the rear and nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: I think we should keep it simple. Let's sneak up to the paddock, Sadler here can identify his horses and we'll pinch them back.

(Kyrie nodded.)

KYRIE: Let's go then.

CAYLEY: Wait!

(Kyrie glared at her coldly and raised a questioning eyebrow.)

KYRIE: Wait? What the hell for?

CAYLEY: Four of us stealing two horses... who's going to ride and who's walking? I'll walk.

(She shuddered.)

CAYLEY: I don't like being on horseback.

(Kyrie exhaled.)

KYRIE: I do.

(Knowing Kyrie was about to elaborate lustfully about the pleasurable sensations a woman could enjoy while on horseback, Cayley turned to Hapslock urgently.)

CAYLEY: Say something!

(Hapslock looked to her and shrugged.)

HAPSLOCK: Well, it's simple. We should return two on each horse.

(He nodded to himself.)

HAPSLOCK: We'll have to distribute the weight evenly of course. The heaviest and the lightest should travel together. That's...

(He fought off a look of delight and nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: Sadler, you've got all that old-man fat and Cayley, you're tiny. You two should go together.

(Kyrie growled.)

KYRIE: Not happening!!! If you think I'm going to let him get his filthy hands on...

(She nodded defiantly.)

KYRIE: Cayley's coming with me.

(Hapslock and Sadler looked to one another and shuddered.)

HAPSLOCK: We can't share a horse!

SADLER: We'd look well gay.

HAPSLOCK: We'd *feel* gay, rubbing up against each other every time the horse took a step. Think again!

(Kyrie sighed.)

KYRIE: Fine, *I'll* go with Sadler.

(She then looked Hapslock hard in the eye.)

KYRIE: Just make sure you're careful with Cayley, Frank.

HAPSLOCK: It's Hapslock.

KYRIE: It'll be Hapslock VIP, if anything happens to her.

(Sadler look baffled.)

SADLER: VIP?

HAPSLOCK: She meant RIP, I think.

SADLER: Right.



(Hapslock looked to Kyrie and gave her a reassuring smile.)

HAPSLOCK: Don't worry. You're my charges, okay? Cayley's safety is of paramount importance to me.

(Kyrie nodded cautiously.)

KYRIE: Okay. It'd better be.

HAPSLOCK: Anyway, let's get this show on the road. Follow me.

(With that, he put his head down and bounded towards the giant oak tree. Looking extremely nervous, Sadler and Cayley raced after him, followed by a determined looking Kyrie. Once they were all pressed up against the tree, Hapslock nodded and clenched his fist.)

HAPSLOCK: Okay, stay low and run to the paddock fence, okay?

CAYLEY: Okay.

SADLER: Right.

KYRIE: What's a paddock?

CAYLEY: Just follow *us*, Kyrie.

HAPSLOCK: Indeed. Now, come on.

(He then raced around the tree and ducked down as he bounded past the house towards the paddock. Copying his low stance, Cayley, Kyrie and Sadler followed on, looking left and right for danger. As soon as he reached the paddock fence, Hapslock stood tall and waited for the others to catch him up. Once Sadler arrived at his side, Hapslock glanced at him swiftly and spoke in a determined voice.)

HAPSLOCK: Which ones are yours?

(Sadler nodded and glanced around the busy paddock urgently.)

SADLER: Not mine... no, too brown...

(He then bounced excited and pointed.)

SADLER: There they are!

HAPSLOCK: Excellent, let's go and get them then!

(Before he could even begin to hop the fence and retrieve the stolen horses, however, the booming voice of a gormless hick rose up from behind him.)

JIMBO: Where in the fuck do y'all think you're going???

(At once, Hapslock, Sadler, Kyrie and Cayley all spun around to see where the voice had come from. Much to their dismay, a group of twenty, well built, toothless hillbilly types were snarling back at them. Instinctively, Hapslock reached for his sword.)

HAPSLOCK: Damn it!

(He turned and seethed in Kyrie's ear.)

HAPSLOCK: What a prick, I left my sword in the carriage.

(He swiftly looked to Sadler.)

HAPSLOCK: Did you get my magic supplies.

(Staring in horror at the large group of thugs, Sadler whimpered.)

SADLER: Whoops. I knew I'd forgotten something.

(Hapslock sighed angrily.)

HAPSLOCK: You tit!

(Having received no reply from the four trespassers before him, Jimbo snarled and raised his voice.)

JIMBO: I repeat, where in the fuck do y'all think you're going???

(Hapslock glanced to his three companions and nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: Leave this to me.

(He then stepped forward confidently and stood tall.)

HAPSLOCK: I, Sir Hapslock of Leavesbury, knight of the realm, am arresting you on two counts of horse theft! You will be taken to...

(At once, all twenty of the burly men fell about laughing, some literally bent double with laughter. As their hilarity filled the air, drowning out his speech, Hapslock grimaced and glanced over his shoulder.)

HAPSLOCK: I get the feeling they're not going to comply.

(Cayley trembled.)

CAYLEY: What are we going to do then?

HAPSLOCK: Well, they're clearly looking for trouble... I didn't bring my sword and dopey here forget to buy my magic supplies... but it looks like we'll have to fight them anyway.

(Sadler stepped back and shuddered.)

SADLER: I'm not a fighter, I'm a musician.

HAPSLOCK: Fine, stand there and get hit then.

SADLER: What? Are you seriously expecting *me* to fight?

HAPSLOCK: I don't think they're going to offer you a choice.

(Sadler groaned then glared at Cayley.)

SADLER: I bet nobody expects *you* to fight.

HAPSLOCK: Of course not, she's a twelve year old girl, you tit.

SADLER: And *I* fight like a twelve year old girl. This is just favouritism.

HAPSLOCK: No it's not.

KYRIE: It is! We like Cayley.

(Sadler snarled.)

SADLER: Oh I see.

(Before he could complain any further, the lead thug, Jimbo, forced back his tears of laughter and pointed at Hapslock.)

JIMBO: Man, you are one hilarious son of a bitch. It'll almost be shame if we have to kill you.

HAPSLOCK: I was serious. I'm a knight, an officer of the law, and you're horse thieves.

JIMBO: We aint thieves!

HAPSLOCK: Yes, you are! The two horses we just had stolen from us are right over there in your paddock!

JIMBO: Well none of *us* put them there. We never stole nothing. I'm as honest as a holy man in a poker match. I speak only the truth or my uncle aint my daddy.

(One of the other hicks looked confused and spoke up from, behind.)

ROSCO: But *I'm* your daddy, Jimbo. And your brother!

(Jimbo growled at him from the corner of his mouth.)

JIMBO: Shut it, you.

(He rolled his eyes then looked to Hapslock.)

JIMBO: Point is, this is a horse sanctuary. We find abandoned horses and give them a home.

HAPSLOCK: Abandoned horses? They were attached to our carriage!!!

(Jimbo shrugged.)

JIMBO: That aint how *we* choose to remember it, boy.

HAPSLOCK: No, I don't suppose it is.

JIMBO: Look, I'm a reasonable man. There's no need for hostility. Rather than forcing us to resist arrest and kill y'all, what say we make a deal?

HAPSLOCK: Never!

(Just then, Sadler barged past him and nodded enthusiastically.)

SADLER: Don't be hasty now! A deal? I like that idea.

HAPSLOCK: Sadler, you pillock...

SADLER: Less of that, I want to hear what he has to offer.

(Jimbo rubbed his hands together.)

JIMBO: Rather than beating y'all to death, we'd be happy to sell you some horses. Pick whichever ones you want.

(Sadler looked uncertain.)

SADLER: Okay... how much.

(A fiendish grin appeared on Jimbo's face.)

JIMBO: 1000 groats each!

(Sadler almost coughed himself to death.)

SADLER: How much???

JIMBO: You heard me! One grand per horse. It's either that or a violent end, I'm afraid.

(Sadler clenched his fist angrily.)

SADLER: I can't afford that!!! Be reasonable.

JIMBO: Fair enough. How about 999?

(As Sadler protested and tried to lower the sum, Hapslock swiftly turned to face Kyrie.)

HAPSLOCK: I've got an idea.

(Kyrie nodded and pointed to Cayley.)

KYRIE: Tell the brains of the outfit.

HAPSLOCK: They're going to want to fight, there's no doubt about that. They're just having fun teasing that lute playing moron.

CAYLEY: Obviously.

HAPSLOCK: So, this is my plan. Kyrie and I will keep them busy, fighting. While we're doing that, you and Sadler should fetch the horses and ride them back to the carriage. Once we've stalled them long enough, we'll run back to the carriage and meet you.

(Cayley whimpered.)

CAYLEY: I can't ride a horse.

(Kyrie scoffed.)

KYRIE: Yes you can, you used to love it.

(She looked to Hapslock.)

KYRIE: She fell off one once and she's been scared to ride one ever since.

(Hapslock sighed heavily.)

HAPSLOCK: Can't you at least try, this is a pretty dire situation we've got ourselves into.

CAYLEY: I...

KYRIE: I don't like the idea of her going off without me. Especially with *that* weirdo.

HAPSLOCK: Well what else can we do? There's twenty of them and I didn't bring my sword. Kyrie, if we don't stall them while those two steal the horses, the only other option is for us all to stay here until we've defeated the bloody lot of them.

(Kyrie sighed and gestured to Cayley again.)

KYRIE: Look. I told you to talk to the brains of the outfit. Ask *her*, your complicated plan makes no sense to me.

HAPSLOCK: My plan is simple.

KYRIE: And so am I. Or hadn't you noticed?

(Hapslock sighed and looked to Cayley.)

HAPSLOCK: Well?

(Cayley sighed and spoke up in a small voice.)

CAYLEY: I suppose I can try to ride a horse again.

(She bit her nails and whimpered.)

CAYLEY: Okay, I'll do it.

HAPSLOCK: Good girl.

KYRIE: Wait! What?

(Hapslock rolled his eyes.)

HAPSLOCK: For heaven's sake, Kyrie. You and I will fight while Cayley and Sadler steal the horses back, okay?

(Kyrie looked most surprised.)

KYRIE: Wow, you're right, that *is* a simple plan.

(She then looked to Cayley urgently.)

KYRIE: Be careful, okay? If there's even the merest hint of danger, come back to me. And watch that Sadler like a hawk, you hear me?

(Cayley nodded nervously.)

KYRIE: Good girl.

(As Kyrie placed her arm around her lovingly, Hapslock looked to Sadler to see how his negotiations were going.)

SADLER: I'm beginning to think you're not taking this very seriously.

(Jimbo looked offended.)

JIMBO: How could you say such a thing? You just gone done hurt my feelings.

SADLER: You just countered my offer of 100 groats by asking for 998.

JIMBO: So?

SADLER: I'd got you down to 995 before that.

JIMBO: Fair enough, you're right. I was being silly. I tell you what, call it a round 1000 and you've got yourself a deal!

SADLER: What? That's...

(Hapslock rolled his eyes and batted Sadler out of the way.)

HAPSLOCK: Enough of this nonsense, clearly you've no intention of selling us the horses. And seeing as you refuse to come quietly, there's nothing left for us to do but fight.

(Jimbo laughed and glanced over his shoulder at his gormless looking men.)

JIMBO: You hear that, boys? The lawman finally figured it out. We didn't come here to talk; we came here to slap you good.

(He snarled.)

JIMBO: Arm up, boys.

(At once, they all seemed to pull chains and bats from nowhere and pulled snarling faces. Sadler's hair literally stood on end.)

SADLER: A grand each it is!!! I'll sell the carriage, I'll get a proper job... please don't hit me!!!

(Hapslock glanced at Kyrie and nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: You ready?

(He then watched in bewilderment as Kyrie charged towards the herd of inbred thugs.)

KYRIE: Bastards!!!

HAPSLOCK: I'll take that as a yes!

(With that, he rushed off after her. As soon as Kyrie had raced forth, Jimbo and his mob had raced to meet her head on. Making the mistake of thinking this sexy young woman would make an easy kill, they all looked rather amused. Seconds later, however, as two of them collapsed to the grass on the receiving end of her roundhouse kick, she didn't seem so funny anymore. Standing back by the paddock fence, Cayley watched on wide-eyed, and Sadler trembled all over, whimpering like a scared puppy.)

SADLER: I'm too talented to die.

(Fully expecting some of the thugs to charge at him any moment now, he screamed in fear and grabbed hold of Cayley, thrusting her in front of himself like a human shield.)

SADLER: Take the girl!!! Spare me!!!

(He then stared with wide-eyes at the mob and bit his lip in uncertainty.)

SADLER: What gives?

(Sadler was baffled. The fight was underway and fists were flying everywhere but none of the angry mob had made an advance towards either him or Cayley. Hoping against hope it'd stay that way, he bit his nails and trembled. Well aware of what was going on, Cayley turned to face him and pouted.)

CAYLEY: You're horrible!

SADLER: Shut up! Respect your elders.

(Cayley sneered at him coldly then looked to the fight. This fight was exactly the same as every fight Kyrie had been involved in since she'd fought Axion's men two years earlier. Since that day, nobody had ever slipped past Kyrie on her blindside. No matter how many people she was fighting, she always managed to keep herself between Cayley and anyone who might wish her harm. Facing so many of them, however, wasn't easy. She was being forced to use every ounce of her agility just to keep them at bay. These were big, burly men and they weren't going down easily. Hapslock was also in stalling mode, punching men back rather than going for an all out assault. With so many men to overcome, he was certain that their best chance of victory was for Sadler and Cayley to carry out his plan. And so, between them, Kyrie and Hapslock battled on, concentrating all their efforts into keeping the thugs away from Cayley and Sadler.)

Satisfied her sister and Hapslock had everything under control; Cayley nodded and looked to Sadler urgently.)

CAYLEY: Right, come on.

(As Cayley leapt the paddock fence, Sadler looked to her and furrowed his brow.)

SADLER: You're running away?

(He gasped.)

SADLER: By golly, that's a brilliant idea.

(Then he too, leapt the fence.)

SADLER: See ya!

CAYLEY: We're not running away, those two are stalling while we steal your horses back.

(Sadler looked uncertain.)

SADLER: You mean...

(He shrugged.)

SADLER: Even better, no fighting and I get my horses back! I'm in.

(With that, the two of them charged towards the middle of the paddock. As soon as they reached one of Sadler's horses, he patted it lovingly on the nose then raced to clamber onto its back.)

CAYLEY: Wait, what about the other one?

(Sadler pointed to the horse right next to her.)

SADLER: There! That's Fogimort.

CAYLEY: Fogimort?

SADLER: I named it after my mother.

(He snarled and stared ahead.)

SADLER: To the carriage!

(Cayley stared up at him and rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: Ahem!

(Sadler glared down at her and frowned.)

SADLER: What? Hurry up and get on the horse.

CAYLEY: I'm four foot, eight, Sadler! I can't climb that high!

(Sadler growled then climbed back down from his horse.)

SADLER: Children are fucking useless at everything.

(Cayley mumbled under her breath.)

CAYLEY: At least I can play the lute.

SADLER: I heard that!!!

(Cayley glanced back towards the fight and bit her lip.)

CAYLEY: They're still keeping them at bay.

(She then looked at Sadler.)

CAYLEY: Ready?

(Sadler stooped and cupped his hands in front of himself to give her a boost.)

SADLER: Hurry.

(Cayley trembled and started to lift her foot into his hands.)

CAYLEY: Careful... and don't look up my skirt.

SADLER: Like I was going to.

(As she placed her foot in his hands, Cayley winced and allowed him to hoist her upwards.)

CAYLEY: Careful!!!

(Looking terrified, she plopped belly first over the horse's back then threw a hand back over her backside to protect her modesty.)

CAYLEY: Look away!

(Seeing Sadler already getting back on the other horse, she slowly turned herself and got into a seated position on the horse's back. With terror in her eyes, she then looked to Sadler.)

CAYLEY: Don't go too fast, I'm really scared.

(Sadler scoffed.)

SADLER: Pathetic!

CAYLEY: I mean it; I don't want to fall off.

(Sadler just scoffed arrogantly as he kicked his horse into motion.)

SADLER: Just follow me.

CAYLEY: I'll try.

(She then kicked her horse into motion and screamed as she clung onto its neck for dear life.)

CAYLEY: I don't like it, I don't like it!!!

(As the crying girl raced up behind him, Sadler rolled his eyes and sighed.)

SADLER: I hate children, I really do.

(At the side of the house in the meantime, Hapslock and Kyrie were far from enjoying their fight. The Camberley brothers simply wouldn't stay down. Every time they managed to knock one off of his feet, he'd get straight back up again. They had a reputation for being as hard as rocks and it was proving well founded. Kyrie had been attacked by large groups of men several times over the last two years but even she'd never faced anything like them. In return, however, they'd never faced anyone like her before either. Every time they thought they were about deliver a powerful blow, she'd somehow manage to avoid it with speed and agility unlike anything they'd ever imagined. Hapslock, on the other hand, was proving to be a far more accommodating opponent. Several times they'd managed to land blows upon his heavy armour and twice he'd found himself bouncing to the ground. With every clang and thud however, he too had managed to keep on fighting. Desperately trying to batter Kyrie with everything he had, Jimbo was starting to get annoyed.)

JIMBO: Sooner or later, you're gonna go down, bitch.

(Kyrie scoffed.)

KYRIE: No, I won't.

(He then received a punch in the face as confirmation.)

KYRIE: See?

(As Jimbo held his paining face, three of his brothers rushed at Kyrie with their chains aloft. Anticipating their next move, she bounced in readiness for their imminent attack. As the first chain swung towards her, she dropped to the ground and swept all their feet away. One by

one, the three of them thudded down onto their backs as Kyrie leapt back into a fighting stance.)

KYRIE: *Lame!*

(Just then, she caught sight Hapslock in the corner of her eye. He'd been doing exceptionally well up until now but all of a sudden, he was in trouble. One of the bigger brothers had breached his defences and had landed a blow with his long wooden bat. Stunned, Hapslock staggered back as the thug took another swing. Once again, he connected with Hapslock's head and it was all Hapslock could to stay on his feet.)

BILLY-BOB: Any last requests, lawman?

(As Hapslock's eyes finally refocused, the first thing he saw was the thug rocketing sideways on the end of Kyrie's high-speed flying kick. As she landed back on her feet, Kyrie raced to his side and snarled at the mob.)

KYRIE: You okay?

HAPSLOCK: I'm fine.

(As Kyrie raced back to dish out some more attacks, Hapslock snarled at himself. Forgetting his sword was the stupidest thing he could possibly have done. He was a swordsman not a brawler. This style of fighting wasn't his forte and he felt horribly inadequate. Being rescued by his charge wasn't a proud moment for him. He was supposed to be Kyrie's protector, so having her save him was quite the indignity. A black moment in his career that he doubted he'd ever be able to forget. Enraged that the Camberley brothers had brought about this indignity, he snarled and raced back into the fray, determined to make them pay. Finally, he made an impression. As he threw wild punches with his gauntleted fists, he managed to make not one but two perfect connections. One thug fell backwards like a felled tree, another collapsed like a demolished building. At last he'd learned how to brawl. It was a simple case of coming out and punching people with all his might and ferocity. As a swordsman he was more used to taking a guarded approach and it had taken him a while to get the hang of things. Having finally figured it out, however, he wasn't about to look back. What Kyrie showed in agility, skill and speed, he matched with gusto and raw power. Finally, he was in the game.)

HAPSLOCK: Who's next, eh?

(As he raged towards one of the thugs, however, he could only watch in despair at seeing him uprooted by his own brother, flying backwards on the end of Kyrie's deft punch.)

JIMBO: You two are starting to piss me off!!!

(Ignoring Jimbo's rage, Kyrie continued to rush among the brothers, dishing out punches and kicks without a single reply. She was confident they'd never be quick enough to hit her but how she wished they'd stay down more often. Only three had been knocked out and she felt she'd done enough to win the fight several times over by now. Looking a little fed up, she raced to where Hapslock was laying into two brothers and sighed.)

KYRIE: I'm bored now, they won't stay down and it's spoiling the fun!

(Hapslock punched one man back and Kyrie kicked another in the face.)

KYRIE: They just keep on coming.

(Again, they both threw out swift attacks at the raging thugs.)

HAPSLOCK: Maybe it's time we left then.

KYRIE: Left? Like they'll just let us leave.

(Kyrie punched an assailant then high kicked another while Hapslock boxed a third thug's face.)

HAPSLOCK: We don't need their permission to leave! Cayley and Sadler have had more than enough time to take the horses back! So, there's no reason for us to be here anymore.

KYRIE: Yeah, but...

(She then shrieked as Hapslock grabbed her forearm and raced away with her.)

KYRIE: What are you doing?

HAPSLOCK: Trust me!

(Stunned by their sudden retreat, the Camberley brothers all stood agape and watched as Hapslock and Kyrie hurdled the paddock fence.)

THUG: They're... running away.

(Jimbo shrugged.)

JIMBO: Looks like it.

(He then turned to his brothers and beamed merrily.)

JIMBO: That was like... the best fight I ever done had.

(At once they all started to high five one another and gush excitedly about what a wonderful, fun afternoon of violence it'd been. Being lazy types they made no effort to chase Kyrie and Hapslock whatsoever.)

THUG: Best day ever.

THUG 2: Sure was.

JIMBO: I just hope they come on back some time.

(He then started to head for the house.)

JIMBO: Come on boys, mother didn't grant us six sisters for nothing. Let's get our rape on.

(At once they all cheered then raced indoors. Outside in the paddock at this time, unaware that the Camberley brothers weren't even interested in chasing them, Hapslock scrambled onto a horse and stared down at Kyrie.)

HAPSLOCK: Get on a horse.

KYRIE: Okay!

(With that, she scrambled onto the nearest horse as quick as she possibly could. His.)

HAPSLOCK: I meant a different horse!

(She placed her arms round his waist and scoffed.)

KYRIE: No, I'm fine here, thanks.

(Hapslock rolled his eyes.)

HAPSLOCK: Fine.

(With that, he kicked the horse into action and galloped away.)

---

Back at the carriage at this time, a relieved looking Sadler was busy attaching his horses to his gypsy wagon. Delighted to be reunited with them, he exhaled joyously as he hastened to fix their harnesses and ready them to leave.

SADLER: I thought I'd never see you again. It was horrible.

(He patted Goliath's nose.)

SADLER: You deserve a damn good feed.

(Having tried to help him only to be told bluntly to "sod off" several times, Cayley looked to him wearing a sorrowful pout.)

CAYLEY: Do you think they're okay?

(Sadler glanced at her coldly.)

SADLER: They're a bit thirsty perhaps, but otherwise they're fine. I take good care of my horses.

CAYLEY: I'm talking about Kyrie and Hapslock.

(Sadler shrugged.)

SADLER: None of my business.

(He sighed then looked to Cayley harshly.)



SADLER: You know, grendiths won't chase a speeding horse out of fear of getting kicked. As for cuddyfinkles, when I see one on the road, I always turn back. I never take risks. I'd never do anything to endanger my horses.

(He growled.)

SADLER: Then you lot came along...

(He scoffed at her and threw out a dismissive hand.)

SADLER: You three are the bane of my existence.

(As Cayley pouted, Sadler shook his head.)

SADLER: Don't give me the sad face. Save it for someone who gives a crap.

(He then stepped back and beamed.)

SADLER: All done. We're ready to go.

(Cayley nodded nervously.)

CAYLEY: I'll see if they're coming.

(With that, she raced towards the back of the carriage. Inside, her heart was racing. She'd never been away from Kyrie for this long before without knowing exactly what she was doing. Unable to help fearing the worst, she bit her nails then rushed back to Sadler.)

CAYLEY: I'm worried.

(Sadler climbed atop his carriage and shrugged down at her.)

SADLER: What do you want me to do about it?

(He then held his palm out to her.)

SADLER: I'm not going back there if that's what you're thinking.

(He rolled his eyes.)

SADLER: You were really quite pathetic on that horse earlier, you know that?

(Cayley placed her hands on her hips and scowled at him.)

CAYLEY: I was scared, that's all.

SADLER: You cried and screamed all the way back here. You made quite an exhibition of yourself; I've never been so embarrassed.

CAYLEY: You're mean.

(She pointed back towards the Camberley brother's house.)

CAYLEY: I'm going to walk down there a bit and see if they're coming.

(Sadler shrugged.)

SADLER: Fine, do what you like.

(With that, Cayley hurried around the rear of the carriage. Just as she reached the back door, however, she stopped and looked thoughtful.)

CAYLEY: I could take Hapslock's sword to him.

(With that, she darted into the carriage.)

CAYLEY: Where would he have left it...

(Upon sighting it laid out on one of the beds, she made a dash for it but accidentally caught her arm on Kyrie's bag, which she'd left precariously on the edge of the bed. Before she could react, the bag tipped and fell to the floor, the contents spilling out all over the floorboards.)

CAYLEY: Oh, shit.

(Fearing a severe spanking, she immediately froze and looked around for Kyrie. Seeing nobody around, she drew a sigh of relief then fell to her hands and knees to start cleaning up her mess. Sitting atop the carriage at this time, Sadler sighed to himself. Looking miserable he started to think about the events of the last twenty four hours. How he wished he'd never met that infernal knight and his two annoying charges. Wallowing in self pity he sighed then started to fantasise about how wonderful it would be if he could take off and ditch them. Suddenly, a devious look crossed his brow. Kyrie and Hapslock were nowhere to be seen and Cayley had wandered off to see if they were coming. He was alone and the carriage was

ready to go. This was his chance. Needing no second invitation, he immediately grabbed the reins and set the carriage in motion. As far as he was concerned, those three nuisances would have to find another mug to transport them to Port Amok. All he had to do was get far enough away that he was out of sight and he'd be home and dry.)

SADLER: Sadler, you're a genius.

(Inside the carriage, Cayley was terrified. As soon as the horse's had headed off, the carriage had jolted and the back door had slammed shut. Sat upon the floor where she'd been repacking Kyrie's bag, her eyes bulged and she yelped in distress.)

CAYLEY: What's going on???

(Looking tortured, she raced to the back wall of the carriage and thumped on it to get Sadler's attention.)

CAYLEY: What are you doing???

(Galloping forth happily, Sadler didn't hear her thumps or her cries. All he could hear was the wheels in motion and the galloping of hooves. Quick to realise she was getting nowhere, Cayley raced back towards the backdoor and tripped over Kyrie's pack. Hitting the deck wearing a sorrowful pout, she then threw the bag onto a bed and scrambled to her feet to open the back door. Looking deeply distressed, she forced open the door and pouted sorrowfully at the sight of the carriage leaving the merchant town carriage park.)

CAYLEY: Oh, no... what do I do?

(She craned her neck to peer at the road beneath the carriage and bit her lip. Half of her wanted to leap out but the other half was very much afraid. Starting to get horribly flustered, she whimpered and a tear rolled down her cheek.)

CAYLEY: I don't know what to do.

(Pining for Kyrie, her bottom lip quivered when suddenly, a horse came dashing from out the trees nearby. Riding forth upon the steed was a furious looking Sir Hapslock. From under his arm she could just make out a miffed looking Kyrie. Bouncing for Joy, Cayley waved at them frantically.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie!!! Kyrie!!!

(As Hapslock galloped swiftly in her direction, Cayley placed a hand to her heart and allowed herself a deep sigh of relief. She was too scared to leap from the moving carriage and if Hapslock hadn't seen her, she'd have been devastated. Being separated from Kyrie was something she couldn't bear to even think about.

Thinking he was away and free from the three people he despised, Sadler exhaled merrily. Little did he know, Hapslock's horse was gaining on him rapidly. Oblivious to this fact, Sadler started to whistle just as Hapslock reached the back of his gypsy wagon.)

HAPSLOCK: Stand back, Cayley.

(Cayley swiftly did as she was told and retreated into the carriage as Kyrie leapt majestically from the horse and onto the back platform. Having landed in a crouched position, she instantly jumped to her feet and raced to throw her arms around Cayley.)

CAYLEY: Thank fuck for that!

(She then sighed despondently and bent over the bed.)

CAYLEY: Make it quick!

(Kyrie smiled then yanked down Cayley's knickers.)

KYRIE: Okay.

(As she proceeded to spank Cayley's bare backside five times, Hapslock steadied himself on the horse then also leapt to the back platform of the carriage. Thudding face first into the open door as he landed, he staggered inside then fell flat on his face.)

HAPSLOCK: Ow!!!

(As his eyes came back into focus, he saw Cayley pull her skirt back down then hug Kyrie, tears streaming down her face.)

HAPSLOCK: Hey, it's okay, Cayley, we're here now.

KYRIE: She's not crying because we're back.

(Cayley pouted.)

CAYLEY: I sort of am...

KYRIE: She got a spanking. The F word.

(Hapslock sat up and puffed out.)

HAPSLOCK: Wow.

(This was yet another eye opener for Hapslock. Even in extreme circumstances, Kyrie would not let up on Cayley for a moment when it came to her colourful language. This was a situation where profanity might well be excused but Kyrie would have none of it.)

HAPSLOCK: That's a bit harsh actually, considering.

(Kyrie scowled at him.)

KYRIE: You take care of your own family; I'll take care of mine.

(Hapslock furrowed his brow.)

HAPSLOCK: I'll take care of Sadler first. What the hell happened, Cayley?

(Cayley shook her baffled head.)

CAYLEY: I don't know. I was in here minding my own business and the next thing I knew, the carriage started moving. The door slammed on me and by the time I was up and able to open it, it was moving too fast to jump out of.

(She wiped away a tear.)

CAYLEY: I was really scared.

(Kyrie sneered as she held her little sister close.)

KYRIE: I'm gonna kill him. What if we hadn't came back and seen the carriage when we did?

CAYLEY: Exactly. We'd have lost each other.

HAPSLOCK: What the hell was he thinking?

(Kyrie seethed.)

KYRIE: I told you he was a wrong 'un.

(She let go of Cayley and bounded over to the shelves.)

KYRIE: Let's smash his lute up, that'll teach him.

(Cayley looked horrified.)

CAYLEY: Not the lute, it's a precious instrument.

KYRIE: His precious hat then.

(With that, she yanked the hat from the shelf and a small hanger dropped to the floor in front of her.)

KYRIE: What's this?

(She bent to pick up the hanger and her nostrils flared.)

KYRIE: That sick...

(She held up the hanger to reveal 3 pairs of shiny knickers hanging from it. Starting to burn red with rage, she looked to Hapslock and growled furiously.)

KYRIE: Silk crotchless thongs!!! In Cayley's size!!!

(As Cayley reared back in disgust, Hapslock winced and turned his head.)

HAPSLOCK: That's just... wrong!

KYRIE: Now I get it! I know exactly what happened! With us two out of the way, he tried to abduct Cayley!!!

(Cayley trembled and grabbed hold of Hapslock.)

CAYLEY: Gross!

KYRIE: It bet he was going to make her wear these and turn her into his fun size, sex bitch.

(She threw the hanger down and pounded her fist.)

KYRIE: As soon as this carriage stops, I'm going to rearrange his teeth!!!

---

Happy in the delusion that he was all alone and would never see Hapslock, Kyrie and Cayley ever again, Sadler rode onwards into the afternoon with a big smile on his face. He was looking forward to arriving in a village off of the beaten track where he could lay low for a few days and wait for the hated trio to pass on their way to Port Amok. Once he was satisfied he wouldn't bump into them again, he'd return to Roseville and take a well earned break. He had it all planned out and everything in his garden seemed positively rosy again.

Having put in a good day's travelling, once he finally arrived in the small village of Dastley, just before sunset, he called the horses to a halt and exhaled merrily to himself. This picturesque lakeside village would be the perfect place to relax for a couple of days. Overjoyed with himself, he climbed down from his carriage and slowly paced around the back of it, looking forward to reuniting himself with his lute. Grinning merrily, he opened the carriage door and was immediately greeted by the sight of an incoming, gauntleted fist. As soon as the fist met his face, he was out cold.

When he came to, several hours later, the sun had set and he found himself tied to a tree in front of a blazing camp fire. Seated around the fire, the furious looking trio of Hapslock, Kyrie and Cayley glared back at him.

HAPSLOCK: It's awake.

(Still a little dazed, Sadler strained his eyes and mumbled.)

SADLER: This is just a bad dream.

(He closed his eyes and implored to himself.)

SADLER: Wake up, Sadler, wake up, lad.

(As he opened his eyes to the reality that he wasn't dreaming, he yelled out and struggled furiously.)

SADLER: What the hell? You lot??? This can't be happening.

(Unable to move, he continued to struggle and glared at Hapslock.)

SADLER: What the hell's going on?

(Hapslock placed a hand on Kyrie's shoulder and sneered back at him.)

HAPSLOCK: You're tied up, Sadler.

(As Hapslock climbed to his feet, Sadler scowled back at him.)

SADLER: I'm well aware of that!!!

(Hapslock glanced at Kyrie uneasily then paced up to him.)

HAPSLOCK: Sadler, you're under arrest for attempted abduction and intent to corrupt a minor.

SADLER: What???

HAPSLOCK: You'll be taken to the Port Amok guard station where you'll be formally charged and remanded in custody.

(Sadler stared at him in utter disbelief.)

SADLER: Abduction? Corruption? I did nothing of the sort. All I did was help you out, and this is the thanks I get?

(Hapslock was dumbstruck.)

HAPSLOCK: You want to be thanked?

SADLER: Well I certainly don't want to be arrested on trumped up charges. Let me go!

(Hapslock looked to him coldly.)

HAPSLOCK: You really don't want me to do that.

SADLER: Oh, don't I?

HAPSLOCK: No. As long as you're in my custody, you're under my protection. If I let you go, however...

(He stepped aside and gestured to where Kyrie sat gritting her teeth and seething.)

HAPSLOCK: Then Kyrie will be free to issue her *own* brand of justice on your sorry backside.

(Sadler looked to her and trembled.)

SADLER: She looks decidedly insane with rage!

HAPSLOCK: She is.

SADLER: In that case, I'm happy to stay in your custody.

(Hapslock just shook his head.)

HAPSLOCK: It's taking all my strength just to refrain from punching you, Sadler.

(Sadler sighed and hung his head.)

SADLER: Fine, I apologise. It was wrong of me to try to ditch you.

(He grimaced.)

SADLER: But to fit me up like this... don't you think you're overreacting somewhat?

(Kyrie leapt to her feet and bellowed.)

KYRIE: Overreacting??? That's done it! Sorry, Frank, I'm going to kill him.

(Hapslock immediately raced to Kyrie to calm her down, as did the nervous looking Cayley.)

KYRIE: I'm going to rip your balls off!!!

(As she streamed forwards furiously, Hapslock blocked her path.)

HAPSLOCK: Calm down, Kyrie

CAYLEY: He's not worth it!!!

KYRIE: I don't care! He needs a good, sound butchering!

(Sadler trembled and protested vehemently.)

SADLER: You want to kill me? For merely trying to ditch you?

(Hapslock glared over his shoulder at him as he continued to hold Kyrie back.)

HAPSLOCK: Like it's about you trying to ditch us. It's about you trying to abduct Cayley and turn her into your underage sex poodle.

(At this point, Cayley ran off and hid in the carriage, thoroughly embarrassed.)

SADLER: I didn't abduct her, that's such a lie. My only crime was to bugger off and leave you three behind. And what the hell are you talking about? Sex poodle? She's eight years old!

(Just then a bitter voice yelled out from the carriage.)

CAYLEY: I'm twelve!!!

SADLER: Even so, this is absolutely ridiculous.

(Cayley peered from the carriage doors and scowled at him.)

CAYLEY: Dirty old man.

SADLER: Stop saying that!

(Hapslock sighed heavily and pushed Kyrie back.)

HAPSLOCK: Stop it! Let the law deal with him. He'll be sorry when he gets to jail and his fellow inmates hear what he's in for.

(Finally, Kyrie relented and paced back to the side of the fire.)

KYRIE: You make me vomit, Sadler.

(Hapslock looked miffed and glared at her.)

HAPSLOCK: So you can remember *his* name?

(Kyrie gave him a disbelieving glance.)

HAPSLOCK: Right... yes, hardly the point is it?

(He looked to Sadler and shook a disgusted head at him.)

HAPSLOCK: You're the lowest of the low.

(Sadler sighed.)

SADLER: Look, I'm sorry, okay? You and Kyrie weren't back from fighting those hooligans and Cayley wandered off to see if you were coming. I was all alone, the horses were ready to go and I couldn't resist it. My life has been a nightmare since I met you three and I just wanted to get away. I realise that was wrong. I made a promise to help you and I should have stuck around and honoured it.

HAPSLOCK: Yeah well, you...

(He then looked stumped.)

HAPSLOCK: What do you mean you were all alone? You were never alone.

SADLER: I was!

HAPSLOCK: No you weren't. When you rode off, Cayley was in the carriage.

(Sadler's jaw dropped and he suddenly looked enlightened.)

SADLER: Right...

(He bit his lip.)

SADLER: No wonder you're livid then.

(Hapslock looked uncertain.)

HAPSLOCK: Are you saying you didn't mean to abduct her?

SADLER: Of course I didn't.

(He furrowed his brow.)

SADLER: Why the hell would I want to abduct some pint-sized, amateur musician who likes to steal my stage time? She's the one I wanted to get away from the most.

HAPSLOCK: I see...

(He mused to himself.)

HAPSLOCK: That's kinda plausible I suppose, but how do you explain the underwear?

(Sadler looked baffled.)

SADLER: Underwear?

HAPSLOCK: The kiddie lingerie!

SADLER: I just bought what I was told to, three pairs of cotton briefs.

(Hapslock shook a disdainful head.)

HAPSLOCK: You bought silk, crotchless thongs. We've seen them.

SADLER: I bought nothing of the sort.

(Kyrie glared at him from the fireside.)

KYRIE: Liar!

SADLER: It's true. I bought cotton briefs! They're in a brown paper bag inside the carriage. I threw them down when I threw my hat down!

HAPSLOCK: Sadler, we saw them. They were crotchless thongs.

(Just then a small voice rose up from inside the carriage.)

CAYLEY: Oh my god, he's not lying.

(Cayley peered round the door.)

CAYLEY: There's 3 pairs of proper knickers in here.

HAPSLOCK: So, you bought both?

SADLER: No! I don't know anything about any crotchless thongs, I swear.

(Hapslock looked thoughtful.)

HAPSLOCK: You know, I'm inclined to believe you.

KYRIE: You are?

CAYLEY: You are?

HAPSLOCK: I am. A liar would have made up an excuse for the crotchless thongs, he's denying all knowledge. Maybe this was all a big misunderstanding.

(Kyrie looked uncertain.)

KYRIE: Oh, I dunno. I think he's guilty. I mean, if it looks like a kiddie fiddler then it's probably a...

(Sadler screwed his eyes tight shut and bellowed.)

SADLER: I'm not a bloody kiddie fiddler!!!

(Cayley rubbed her chin thoughtfully.)

CAYLEY: Maybe he's not a pervert after all.

KYRIE: Maybe not... maybe he is though.

HAPSLOCK: I'm not sure what to think.

(He smiled.)

HAPSLOCK: Okay, so if what you're saying is true and you didn't *abduct* Cayley with a view to *corrupting* her, that only leaves one charge.

SADLER: There's another one?

HAPSLOCK: Yeah. When you decided to ditch us, you basically ran out on an agent of his majesty the king, me. Knowing I was reliant on you to take us on our journey, you willingly abandoned your civic duties as a royal subject. Basically, you absconded and obstructed a knight from doing the king's work. Under Castaria law, that's a kin to treason.

(Sadler hung his head.)

SADLER: Treason? That's going to be a hefty fine, I expect.

HAPSLOCK: A fine? The punishment for treason is beheading.

(Sadler sighed.)

SADLER: I thought it was, I was being optimistic.

(He shook a solemn head.)

SADLER: Fine, I admit it. I left you all behind on purpose. Guilty. But I most certainly didn't abduct anyone deliberately and I definitely don't have any weird desires towards little girls.

(Kyrie gave Cayley a sympathetic glance.)

CAYLEY: Why are you looking at me like that?

KYRIE: Just thinking, it sucks to be you.

CAYLEY: What?

KYRIE: Can't be good for your self esteem, can it? If someone thinks *you're* sexy, people automatically assume they're either weird or mental.

(Cayley pouted at her bitterly.)

CAYLEY: I'm twelve; I'm not supposed to be sexy!

(Hapslock offered her a reassuring smile.)

HAPSLOCK: Don't worry. You're not!

(As Cayley's eyes filled with tears and she ducked back inside the carriage, Kyrie scowled at Hapslock and raced into the carriage after her. Oblivious to the scornful glance he'd just received, Hapslock paced behind Sadler and started to untie him.)

SADLER: Are you... letting me go?

HAPSLOCK: No. I'm untying you.

SADLER: Then...

HAPSLOCK: As long as you're polite, courteous and help us get to Port Amok without further incident, I might be persuaded not to report your indiscretions.

SADLER: Agreed!

HAPSLOCK: But, if you even look at Cayley funny or I think for a moment you're a flight risk, you'll be arrested for treason, abduction, intent to corrupt and any other charges I decide to add. Do you understand me?

(Free from his binds, Sadler stepped forward and rubbed his wrist.)

SADLER: I understand.

(He sighed.)

SADLER: Is it okay if I complain a lot though? Only I really hate that little girl.

(Hapslock shook his head.)

HAPSLOCK: Where did I lose you on the whole polite and courteous issue?

SADLER: Fine, I'll keep my complaints to myself. I'll still make them, just when nobody can hear me.

HAPSLOCK: That's up to you. Now go and sit by the fire, we're going to cook a chicken in a minute.

SADLER: Don't mind if I do.

(He sat at the fireside then watched as Hapslock did the same.)

SADLER: I mean it, you know. I apologise for trying to ditch you. As much as I dislike you all, that was bad form. I'm sorry.

HAPSLOCK: Apology accepted. I'm still bloody annoyed at you, though. How could you forget to buy my magic supplies?

(Sadler blushed.)

SADLER: Sorry. In all the humiliation, I simply forgot.

HAPSLOCK: Kyrie and Cayley hunted everywhere for it while you were unconscious. The only trader in this village sells nothing but chickens and hog meat, so god only knows when I'll next get the chance to buy some.

(He rolled his eyes then suddenly looked stumped.)

HAPSLOCK: Hey, where'd Kyrie go?

(Just then a voice yelled out from inside the carriage.)

KYRIE: I'm in the carriage. Girl talk, you're not allowed in.

(Sadler and Hapslock looked to one another and rolled their eyes.)

SADLER: As if we'd *want* in.

HAPSLOCK: Quite.

(Inside the carriage, Cayley was cuddled up to Kyrie. Her eyes were puffy and tears were rolling down her face.)

KYRIE: Don't let it upset you, sweetheart.

CAYLEY: But... it was so mean. I don't want to be thought of as sexy... but for someone to tell me I'm *not* sexy... that makes me sound repulsive.

KYRIE: I know what you mean. I think. Actually, I'm lost already.

CAYLEY: It's okay.

KYRIE: It's not; I'm supposed to be able to help you with these things.

(She sighed.)

KYRIE: When he said you weren't sexy, I think he was just trying to be kind. Men aren't good at that kind of thing though.

CAYLEY: I get it. I'd hate to be sexy, but when someone says you're not sexy, it's like they're saying you're ugly.

KYRIE: Oh, Cayley, you are *not* ugly. You're cute, pretty even. Sexy will come in time though, whether you like it or not.

CAYLEY: Will it?

KYRIE: Well duh, you're my sister, sexiness is in our blood. So be warned, before long men will be fighting over you.

CAYLEY: I'm not sure how I feel about that.

(Kyrie giggled.)

KYRIE: You'll love it. You'll tell yourself you don't, but you will.

CAYLEY: I dunno, I'm not like you when it comes to boys.

KYRIE: You will be.

(Cayley shuddered.)

KYRIE: You'll hate it when they look at you but get paranoid if they don't.



(She shrugged.)

KYRIE: That said, these days they *always* look at me and I *always* love it. But then I'm a slut, you're better than that.

(She kissed her head.)

KYRIE: Come on, let's go back outside.

CAYLEY: Okay.

(With that, they both upped and went outside to sit back around the camp fire, Kyrie giving Sadler a suspicious glance as she did so.)

KYRIE: Is he meant to be sitting there?

(Hapslock chuckled.)

HAPSLOCK: No, he escaped, but rather than flee, he decided to warm up by the fire.

KYRIE: Then shouldn't you have tied him back up?

HAPSLOCK: I was joking. I've decided to give him a chance to redeem himself.

(Kyrie bit her lip and sat down next to Cayley.)

KYRIE: I see.

SADLER: On which note, seeing as you're here now, I apologise once again. Abandoning you like I did was unforgivable.

KYRIE: Yes it was.

(Sitting at Kyrie's side, Cayley helped her give Sadler a disdainful glare.)

SADLER: I accept your harsh looks but I won't apologise again. I've vowed to make up for what I did and that's what's going to happen. If you refuse to accept my efforts then there's nothing I can do about it.

(He nodded firmly.)

SADLER: Now, what say I grab the old lute and sing us all a song to lighten the mood?

KYRIE: Oh, god no!

CAYLEY: Please don't.

HAPSLOCK: Try it and you'll be back tied to that tree before you even know what hit you.

(Sadler looked extremely miffed.)

SADLER: Hey, I'm not *that* bad!

(As Kyrie and Cayley nodded at him apologetically, Sadler folded his arms and scowled bitterly at the fire.)

SADLER: Like that, is it? And you wonder why I ditched you!

(With three furious looks coming his way, Sadler hung his head and sighed.)

SADLER: I'll tie *myself* to the tree, shall I?

HAPSLOCK: Just... sit quietly.

SADLER: Yes... I think that'd be for the best.

(As he sat and hid his face, Sadler knew he'd been lucky. Trying and flee from a knight of the realm that he was supposed to be helping was an extremely stupid thing to do. Grateful for a reprieve, he was determined to do all he could to make amends for his foolishness. He knew, however, it wouldn't be easy. He still didn't like the knight much and he simply couldn't abide the two girls in his charge. The next few days would most definitely be a challenge.

Despite the hardships faced during the day, when Kyrie and Cayley laid their heads down to sleep that night, they were both very conscious of one thing. They'd gone an entire day without being attacked by one of Axion's warriors, assassins or summoned beasts. This was rare. It wasn't however, cause for celebration. There'd be days without attacks and there'd be days with an overwhelming amount of them. They wouldn't celebrate anything until they thought they were safe.

Hapslock shared the girl's sentiments. They'd travelled closer to Port Amok on this day but that was all. There was still quite some way go. Although every step was a step in the right direction, until they reached the new world, the two girls would always be in danger. With this in mind he didn't think to even mention they'd gone a day without an attack by Axion. His focus would remain strong and he wouldn't get carried away by meaningless milestones or quiet days. Unless the girls were in sanctuary, as far as he was concerned, they were still in purgatory. The only thing he'd take solace in on this night, was the fact that he was likely to get a better night's sleep than he had the night before. With the girls distrusting of Sadler, they'd made him sleep by the campfire. Without his snoring echoing around the carriage, failing to get his forty winks seemed extremely unlikely. Trying not to get his hopes up that a grendith would attack Sadler in the night, he too managed to doze off pretty quickly. Well aware that grendiths were afraid of fire, however, so did Sadler.

*Chapter Four - The mad, mad morning.*

As Sadler started to stir with the heat of the morning sun and the still burning fire upon his face, his ears were treated to a joyous symphony. Barely awake, a silly smile crossed his face. If he'd died in the night and gone to heaven, he was absolutely certain he'd be happy here. It was warm and the melodic soundtrack in the air was crisp and note perfect. As his eyes fluttered, he sighed merrily to himself when suddenly the perfect symphony in his ears took a dramatic turn for the worse. In that moment, the triumphant sound of the lute was accompanied by the sound he hated most. That infernal child, Cayley, singing along to it. Could it be that the emasculating twelve year old twerp who thought she knew music had also died and gone to heaven? If so, she was going to ruin it for everyone. Not about to let that happen, Sadler's eyes rocketed open and he sat up in a blind panic. Realising where he was, his nostrils flared and his eyes started to twitch.

SADLER: Cayley!!! That spawn of Satan's violating my lute!!!

(With that, he leapt to his feet and charged towards the carriage, where the noise was coming from.)

SADLER: I won't have it!!!

(Burning red with rage, he bounded round to the back door of the carriage and thrust it open.)

SADLER: Now look here, madam!!!

(At once his eyes bulged and he froze in horror. Wearing only their bras and knickers, Kyrie and Cayley were staring back at him, matching his silent horror. Kyrie was in mid dance and Cayley had frozen in the middle of playing a note on his lute. For what seemed like an eternity, they shared icy and terrified eye contact until Sadler finally managed to break his catatonia with a mortified gulp.)

SADLER: This isn't going to end well for me.

(With that, he threw the door closed and slapped himself on the forehead.)

SADLER: Cock!

(As he stood there berating himself, Hapslock appeared from around the carriage carrying two buckets of water.)

HAPSLOCK: Ah, you're up. Good timing, I just fetched some...

(Before he could finish his sentence, however, a stark naked Kyrie burst from the carriage and leapt on Sadler, knocking him clean of his feet.)

KYRIE: You did that on purpose!!!

(Trying desperately to cover his face from her assault, Sadler remonstrated with her in a terrified voice.)

SADLER: I didn't know!!! How could I have known?

(Hapslock rolled his eyes, set the buckets down then lifted Kyrie off Sadler.)

HAPSLOCK: What have you done this time?

KYRIE: Put me down, I can't pummel him if I'm floating in mid air.

HAPSLOCK: I'm well aware of that.

(Kyrie stopped struggling and glared at him.)

KYRIE: Put me down, or I'll make you put me down.

(Hapslock sighed and set her down.)

HAPSLOCK: Fine, now calmly tell me what he did to upset you this time.

KYRIE: He burst into the carriage while Cayley and me were still in our underwear!

(Hapslock looked baffled.)

HAPSLOCK: But... you're naked.

(Kyrie shrugged.)

KYRIE: Well, I wasn't going to go outside in my underwear, was I? If the wrong person saw me I'd get arrested for indecent exposure!

HAPSLOCK: So you came out naked instead?  
(Kyrie looked stumped for a moment then giggled to herself.)  
KYRIE: I didn't think of that! I did a Kyrie, didn't I?  
(Starting to blush at her silliness, she turned and headed back into the carriage.)  
KYRIE: I'll get dressed *then* I'll pummel him.  
(As she closed the door behind her, Hapslock helped Sadler to his feet.)  
HAPSLOCK: Great start at trying to make amends, Sadler.  
(Sadler sighed defensively.)  
SADLER: It's not like I knew they weren't dressed. And besides, that little rascal was playing my lute. I won't have it.  
(Hapslock rolled his eyes.)  
HAPSLOCK: Fine. I'll try to clear everything up for you. The last thing I want is a bad atmosphere all day.  
SADLER: Thank you, I appreciate it.  
HAPSLOCK: I'm glad.  
(He nodded.)  
HAPSLOCK: Right, I'll talk to the girls then make breakfast. Just stay away from the carriage until then, okay?  
SADLER: Fine.  
HAPSLOCK: First things first. To knock on the carriage door before I enter.  
(As Hapslock grinned, Sadler furrowed his brow and paced back round the carriage towards the fire.)  
SADLER: Bloody comedian now, are you?

(Luckily for Sadler's face, Hapslock's attempt to clear the air and dispel any bad feeling was a complete success. Kyrie accepted her use of violence may have been hasty but reserved the right to change her mind at any given time if Sadler got on her nerves. And so, with peace restored, they all set about washing themselves and preparing for the long day ahead.

Once they were all ready to begin their day, the four travelling companions gathered around the fire to enjoy a hearty breakfast of hog meat which Kyrie and Cayley had purchased in the village the day before. Staring into the flames, Hapslock and the girls tucked into theirs merrily. Sadler, however, was struggling. He had something on his mind and his desire to share it was dominating his every thought to the point where he couldn't even concentrate on his food. Unable to keep it to himself, he dropped his meat onto his plate then glared at Cayley.)

SADLER: Do dictionaries not contain the word "private property" where you come from?

(Cayley looked to him uneasily.)

CAYLEY: That's two words!

(Sadler growled.)

SADLER: Oh, goody, another bloody comedian.

(Cayley pouted at him nervously.)

CAYLEY: Did I do something wrong?

(Sadler flapped wildly and shook his fist at her.)

SADLER: You violated my lute!

(As a peeved expression appeared on Cayley's face, Kyrie grinned then nudged Hapslock.)

KYRIE: Watch this. When it comes to violence I'm always having to save her but when it comes to arguments, Cayley's in a league of her own.

(Hapslock raised a curious eyebrow then looked to where Cayley was furrowing her brow at Sadler.)

CAYLEY: I violated your lute?

SADLER: Yes you did! Despite my telling you never to touch it ever again.

CAYLEY: I didn't violate it, I tuned it!

(Sadler sneered.)

SADLER: That's neither here nor there. I told you not to touch it. That lute is a fine example of quality craftsmanship, not for a child's hands.

CAYLEY: Yes, it *is* a fine instrument, I agree. It's a sin that you don't know how to tune it.

(Sadler looked most taken aback.)

SADLER: Excuse me?

CAYLEY: Look, all I did was tune it for you then play a little melody for Kyrie. Where's the harm?

SADLER: Where's the harm? You're the harm!

CAYLEY: Hardly.

(She glanced away in a deliberate display of nonchalance.)

CAYLEY: I did your lute a favour.

(She then looked to him and smiled warmly.)

CAYLEY: A quality instrument like that was made to be played properly. I bet if it could speak, it'd thank me for making it feel alive again.

SADLER: What's that supposed to mean?

(He gasped in horror then snarled at her.)

SADLER: You're implying I don't play it properly! How dare you?

CAYLEY: I wasn't saying you don't play it properly, I was saying you *can't*!

(Sadler was livid.)

SADLER: That's a scandalous thing to say. I'll have you know, I know all seven chords!

(Cayley gave him an emotionless glance and replied in an empty voice.)

CAYLEY: Seven?

SADLER: Yes, all seven!

(He nodded victoriously.)

SADLER: Didn't know there were that many did you? Not so clever now are we?

(Cayley shook her head in dismay.)

CAYLEY: You know seven chords?

SADLER: I do. And I can prove it.

CAYLEY: So despite the fact there's 12 major chords, 12 minor chords and practically an infinite amount of variations, you only know seven of them?

(Sadler looked to her uneasily and said nothing.)

CAYLEY: So you don't even know what a "seventh" is?

(Sadler glanced from side to side and replied uncomfortably.)

SADLER: It's the seventh and final chord, obviously.

CAYLEY: Wow.

(She shook her head at him in a pitying manner.)

CAYLEY: There's said to be around 450 million possible chords on a six-stringed instrument and you only know seven? How have you made a living playing one?

(Sadler's nostril's flared.)

SADLER: Simple. By not letting people like *you* violate it!

(He ruffled his neck and snarled at her.)

SADLER: Which brings us back to my original point. Never touch my lute again!

(Cayley scoffed and looked away, mumbling quietly.)

CAYLEY: Why, what are you going to do? Abduct me again?

SADLER: I'm not deaf you know!!!

(He puffed out in annoyance.)

SADLER: Why am I even arguing with you? Sitting there making stupid comments about phantom chords that don't exist, whatever next? I'm the professional musician here, not you. (He folded his arms and pouted.)

SADLER: So there.

CAYLEY: Don't feel bad, Mr Sadler. It's not like a freestyle minstrel *needs* to know many chords anyway. What with you making up such simple songs as you go along.

(She smiled.)

CAYLEY: Sure, you can't play the classics what with your limited knowledge but then you don't need to.

(Sadler slung his head in her direction and growled.)

SADLER: Can't play the classics? I've never been so insulted!!! I'll show you!!! I'm going to fetch my lute!!!

(With that, he leapt to his feet and raced towards the carriage. As soon as he was out of sight, Cayley started to chuckle and Kyrie grinned at Hapslock.)

KYRIE: See? First she implies they're inadequate then she tricks them into proving it.

HAPSLOCK: Wow, that's kinda... mean.

KYRIE: Maybe, but when people doubt her skills or knowledge, she's kind of entitled to show them up, I reckon.

HAPSLOCK: Maybe.

KYRIE: Like the time this guy tried to doubt her knowledge of geography, he ended up getting annoyed and fetching a map. Two minutes later he tore up the map, claimed it was printed wrong then threatened to hit her.

(She blushed.)

KYRIE: I broke two of his teeth.

(She shrugged.)

KYRIE: Don't feel bad for him though, he started the argument! Just like Sadler did. Cayley was minding her own business and he started on her. Serves him right.

(Hapslock chuckled.)

HAPSLOCK: I can't argue with that.

(He then looked at Cayley and bit his lip.)

HAPSLOCK: In fact I daren't argue with you two ever again!

(Just then, Sadler raced back with his lute.)

SADLER: Can't play the classics? Was that what you said?

(As Kyrie and Hapslock looked on, Cayley glanced up at him and smiled.)

CAYLEY: I don't recall. I may have. My mind's moved on to more important things.

(Sadler scowled.)

SADLER: No way, you're not getting out of it that easily.

(He nodded to affirm himself.)

SADLER: Watch and learn, child.

(He then steadied himself and played three notes.)

SADLER: Wait, wait... I've got this. It's Elfengard's "lute fantastic" in C-minor.

CAYLEY: C-minor? That must be one of the seven chords you know.

SADLER: Oh, shut up.

(He flexed his neck.)

SADLER: Now listen.

(With that, he played the short intro to the piece. His eyes were wide and sweat was starting to pour down his forehead. Worried sick about making a mistake and looking silly, he concentrated hard as he strummed the strings and ran his digits up and down the fingerboard. Once the thirty second intro was over, he lowered the lute and breathed a sigh of relief.)

SADLER: There...

(He then stood tall and beamed.)

SADLER: What do you think of that, eh?

(Cayley shrugged.)

CAYLEY: I wasn't bad, I suppose.

(Walking straight into Cayley's trap, Sadler flapped angrily and said the exact words she'd hoped he'd say.)

SADLER: Not bad??? I'd like to see you do better!

(Cayley sighed.)

CAYLEY: Okay, I'll try.

(At once, Sadler's face dropped. He was trapped. If he refused to let her try, he'd look silly. If he allowed her to try, however, he'd more than likely be made to look even sillier. For a moment his lips quivered and he said nothing. His mind ran riot and he wanted desperately to think of a way to save face. Realising his only hope was to pass her the lute and pray she made a mistake, he sighed heavily then handed her the lute.)

SADLER: Just...

(He sighed.)

SADLER: Don't break it.

CAYLEY: Okay.

(Cayley took the lute and smiled.)

CAYLEY: Lute fantastic in C-minor?

(Sadler nodded nervously.)

SADLER: Full thirty second intro.

CAYLEY: Okay... I'll do my best.

(With that, she proceeded to play. Looking calm and comfortable, she strummed and fingered with precision, quietly humming the tune harmoniously as she did so. Half way through it, Sadler started to burn red with rage when suddenly an overjoyed expression appeared on his face and he pointed at her in delight. As soon as she finished playing and lowered the lute, he bounced excitedly and mocked her gleefully.)

SADLER: Wrong! That was different to mine! You played it wrong!

(Cayley nodded.)

CAYLEY: Of course it was different. I played it in tune.

(Sadler scoffed.)

SADLER: Yeah right!

(Hapslock nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: I'm familiar with that piece and I have to say, Cayley's one sounded right to me.

CAYLEY: See?

KYRIE: I've no doubt Cayley's was better even though they sounded the same to me.

(Sadler was very much incensed.)

SADLER: Poppycock!!! She made a complete mess of it!

(Cayley just glanced at him nonchalantly.)

CAYLEY: No, I played the eight chords it requires. You don't even know eight chords. Seven, wasn't it, Mr Sadler?

(Sadler looked to her and fumed.)

SADLER: What?

CAYLEY: It's a complicated piece, don't feel bad.

(Sadler flapped wildly then grabbed the lute off of her.)

SADLER: That just proves what I've said all along. You're nothing but a child, what do you know?

(With that, he stomped off towards the carriage.)

SADLER: Aren't we supposed to be heading for Port Amok? The sooner I'm shot of you lot the better.

(He then climbed up on the carriage and sat there indignantly cuddling his lute.)

SADLER: Well?

(Kyrie looked to Cayley and winked.)

KYRIE: Nice!

CAYLEY: Thanks.

(Hapslock climbed to his feet.)

HAPSLOCK: Lousy musician or not, Sadler's right, we ought to get going.

KYRIE: Okay.

(She climbed to her feet.)

KYRIE: Travel in the carriage with me, Frank; I haven't had sex for...

(She then bit her lip.)

KYRIE: Scratch that, Cayley's not riding up front with...

(She then hid her face from Sadler as not to offend him.)

KYRIE: *That* geriatric kiddie fiddler.

(Sadler glared at her.)

SADLER: It's customary to lower your voice when you want to say something insulting in private!!!

(He rolled his eyes.)

SADLER: I'll be so glad to be rid of you lot. The things I've been accused of.

(Cayley climbed to her feet and looked to Kyrie in disbelief.)

CAYLEY: I wish you'd stop calling him that, it freaks me out.

(Kyrie shrugged.)

KYRIE: Just be grateful I'm onto him. If I wasn't it'd be your arse, probably literally.

(Hapslock looked to the heavens.)

HAPSLOCK: So much for having a happier atmosphere today.

(He sighed then gestured to the carriage.)

HAPSLOCK: Shall we, ladies?

(Kyrie and Cayley nodded then headed around the carriage while Hapslock climbed on top of it and sat next to Sadler.)

HAPSLOCK: Right, just give those two a moment to get inside and we'll be on our way.

SADLER: Shouldn't we put the fire out first?

HAPSLOCK: No, nature can take care of that.

(As the sound of the carriage's rear door being slammed echoed through the nearby trees, Hapslock beamed.)

HAPSLOCK: Right, that's my cue. Let's go.

(With that, he set the horses in motion and their journey began once again.)

---

As the carriage headed swiftly down a dirt track through the centre of a woodland, Hapslock glanced to his side and furrowed his brow. Beside him, the miserable looking Sadler was in no mood for conversation. He'd stared down at the horses, sighing repeatedly, looking very much depressed about everything since the moment they'd started moving.

HAPSLOCK: Cheer up, Sadler. It may never happen.

(Sadler glanced to him briefly then looked back down.)

SADLER: It already has.

(With Sadler silent and not likely to be much fun to ride alongside, Hapslock rolled his eyes and glanced down at the dirt track before him. The woodland around them was extremely



quiet and peaceful and he couldn't help but take a relaxing breath of fresh air. Normally when in the driving seat he'd be extremely vigilant for danger but being on such a minor road as they were, the likelihood of encountering any highway robbers was exceptionally slim. Robberies on minor thoroughfares simply never happened. And so, feeling utterly relaxed his mind started to wander. This was in fact the main cause of accidents on the back roads, drivers feeling too relaxed and riding into trees.

With Sadler silent, therefore unlikely to derail his train of thought any time soon, Hapslock, as he so often did, started to think about his charges. With a slack grip on the reins, he allowed the horses to navigate the road themselves as he pondered how Cayley had behaved earlier. Normally, should a twelve year old win an argument, they'd be animated in letting their opponent know about it. They'd leap around, poke out their tongues and make an exhibition of saying "I told you so". Cayley, however, had been cold in victory. Rather than being overtly annoying about it, she'd been icy in her reaction, casually explaining why she'd been right. Barely giving away any hit of smugness or satisfaction, she'd made Sadler feel as if he'd always been an idiot and he was the only one who hadn't realised it. As if his defeat was a given and the entire world knew it. As he thought about it, Hapslock sucked his teeth. Given the choice, he'd rather have an annoying child dance in his face. As he considered the matter further, Hapslock raised an interested eyebrow. He was in little doubt that Cayley had taken a leaf out of her sister's book. In all the fights they'd been involved in, not once had Kyrie talked up her chances of victory. Not once had she gloated about her skills. Even when the fights were over, she'd still neglected to gloat. Just like Cayley reacted to winning arguments as if it was always going to be the case, Kyrie walked away from fights as if her victories were never in doubt.

As he thought everything over in his mind, Hapslock was impressed. These two girls were quiet and unpretentious, almost humble in their conduct and yet when challenged they packed more than enough brains and brawn to overcome pretty much any hardship. They never caused any trouble but if anyone caused *them* any, they'd soon wish they hadn't. Suddenly, he knew exactly how they'd managed to keep one step ahead of Axion and survive for two years. Together they were a formidable force. As he continued to ponder the two girl's strengths he then bit his lip and wondered if they really needed his help at all. He then nodded to himself, satisfied that they did. He'd alerted them to the potential for permanent sanctuary in the new world after all and in a fight, two people were definitely better than one. In this moment, he couldn't help but smile. To have two such exceptional charges made him feel warm inside. As far as he was concerned, if anyone deserved the success a knight's help can bring, it was Kyrie and Cayley. The two young ladies were a just cause and getting them to sanctuary would be his finest victory as a knight. Unable to hide his smile, Hapslock looked to Sadler and sighed merrily.)

HAPSLOCK: We're doing a great thing, you know?

(Sadler glanced to him coldly, sighed then looked away again.)

HAPSLOCK: Oh, cheer up, you miserable git.

(Sadler peered gloomily over the side of the carriage.)

SADLER: Can't.

HAPSLOCK: Of course you can, you just have to want to.

(Sadler shrugged.)

SADLER: I suppose.

HAPSLOCK: Look...

(Hapslock bit his lip, not sure whether to finish his sentence or not.)

HAPSLOCK: ... I know it's not been easy for you but... do you want to talk about it?

(He cringed.)

HAPSLOCK: A trouble shared is a trouble halved, after all.

(He then scoffed at his own words.)

HAPSLOCK: Actually, forget I said that. I really don't want to be sitting here listening to you whinge. I did that when we left Roseville and you barely survived the journey.

SADLER: I barely survived?

HAPSLOCK: Trust me; I came within minutes of killing you. Damn, you're a whiney bugger.

(Sadler shook his head emotionlessly.)

SADLER: I don't need you to listen to me, anyway. I never talk things out with people, I don't need to.

(He pulled his lute close to himself and sighed.)

SADLER: When I've got something on my mind, I sing my troubles away.

(Hapslock looked to him nervously.)

HAPSLOCK: You're going to sing?

(Sadler shrugged.)

SADLER: I think so.

(Hapslock's shoulder's sunk.)

HAPSLOCK: Great.

(He edged away from him and stared hard at the road.)

HAPSLOCK: I'll concentrate on driving, you do what you like.

SADLER: Fine.

(Trying to blank out the cruel world around him, Sadler started to play a few chords on his lute as he thought hard to himself. Eager to shut out all distractions and concentrate on singing through his pain; he then closed his eyes and turned away from Hapslock. Focussing on all his woes, the world melted away and he started to formulate a tune on his lute. Alone with his mind, he then started to hum to the tune of "cats in the cradle", a song he'd once heard performed by a band named Lovely Squid Moe in Roseville. One they'd stolen from a singer named Henry Chapman. Once he was satisfied he'd conditioned his mind, he opened his eyes, pulled a hard done by expression and started to sing in a hushed voice.)

SADLER: A knight arrived just the other day; he commandeered my carriage in the usual way. Said there were girls to help and lives to save, and he turned me into his personal slave. I was in trouble and I knew it and as we rode, he'd said you know I really dislike you, lad. Sadler, I dislike you.

(Suddenly, he started to play the lute much faster and loudly burst into the chorus, very much forgetting anyone else was around.)

SADLER: Now there's girls in my carriage and they're far from cute, little one's rude and keeps stealing my lute. The bigger one's a bully and I don't know why, she makes me wanna cry. How I wish they'd all just die.

(As Hapslock glared at him, Sadler dramatically slowed and eased into the second verse, completely oblivious to the fact he was even there.)

SADLER: I got accused of crimes only yesterday, they said I was a pervert and would have to pay. I cleared my name and thought I'd be okay, but I've been accused of it again today. And as we ride away I know they think of me, as nothing but a dirty old man, yeah. Nothing but a dirty old man.

(Again, he burst into a lively chorus.)

SADLER: Now there's girls in my carriage and they're far from cute, little one's rude and keeps stealing my lute. The bigger one's a bully and I don't know why, she makes me wanna cry. How I wish they'd all just die.

(Again, he slowed to a verse, oblivious to Hapslock's increasing anger.)

SADLER: Well, I've played the lute for over thirty years, singing at weddings and impressing my peers. But when that Cayley person hears my playing style, she sits there smugly and says with a smile.

(He suddenly livened up the verse to sing his way into the third chorus.)

SADLER: "You played it wrong, it was out of key", that little shit thinks she's better than me! Now there's girls in my carriage and they're far from cute. Little one's rude and keeps stealing my lute. The bigger one's a bully and I don't know why, she makes me wanna cry. How I wish they'd all just die.

(As he slowed into the fourth verse, Hapslock started to grit his teeth and snarl.)

SADLER: When we arrive in Port Amok I'll say, get out of my carriage and go away. They'll find a ship and head off overseas, and I'll pray to god "now can you sink it please?" They've been nothing but hassle and I'm too old for this, but it'd be real nice watching them sink, yeah. It'd be real nice watching them sink"

(As he went to head into another chorus he suddenly noticed Hapslock out of the corner of his eyes and gulped. At once, his playing slowed and he cut to the end of a verse.)

SADLER: And as I sing this song it occurs to me, the knight is listening to me. The knight is growling at me!!!

(Looking terrified, he then launched into one final chorus; sweat pouring from his forehead.)

SADLER: Now there's girls in my carriage and they're really cute, little one's nice and Kyrie's a hoot. The knights a great bloke and that's no surprise, he's a real cool guy. He's a hero says I.

(Looking livid, Hapslock swiped the lute out of Sadler's hands and bellowed at him.)

HAPSLOCK: You just can't do it, can you? Polite and courteous, that's all I asked! Is it really that hard?

(Sadler gaped at him.)

SADLER: I couldn't help it. I was singing out my pain and I had to be honest with myself. You three are the source of all my woes; after all, what was I supposed to sing?

(Hapslock thrust his lute back at him and snarled.)

HAPSLOCK: Anything else would have done. Even a happy song about trees might have cheered you up.

SADLER: Well, I doubt it; I don't really like trees to be honest.

HAPSLOCK: That was an example. You could have sung about anything, literally. Why choose that???

SADLER: I told you. I was putting my pain into words!

HAPSLOCK: Yeah? Well next time you put your pain into words, those words are going to be, "ouch, ouch, gaping sword wound"!!!

(He shook his head angrily.)

HAPSLOCK: Idiot. You haven't cheered up one bit and now *I'm* angry too. You're bloody hopeless.

SADLER: Actually, I *had* cheered up a little, but now I'm afraid you're going to hit me.

(Hapslock puffed out furiously.)

HAPSLOCK: Look, from hereon in, just say nothing. Not a word. Okay?

(Sadler sighed.)

SADLER: Fine!

HAPSLOCK: What did I just tell you? Not a peep!!!

(As Sadler gaped at him nervously, Hapslock nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: That's much better. Now keep it like that.

(And so, they headed onwards down the dirt track in silence. Hapslock was too angry to speak and Sadler daren't. Conversely, inside the carriage, the art of conversation wasn't just alive and well, it was positively thriving. Cayley had mentioned Sadler's shoes, and at once a

lively discussion about fashion faux pas had struck up between them. Quite capable of chatting about fashion for hours without pausing for breath, Kyrie hugged her little sister to her side and shared her animated point of view generously.)

KYRIE: Exactly, you are *so* my sister. Brown goes with brown, nothing else. When brown comes into fashion, then fashion goes out of fashion, as far as I'm concerned.

(Cayley grinned.)

CAYLEY: Maybe Sadler's shoes aren't brown; maybe he's stepped in poo and hasn't noticed.

(Kyrie held her hand to her mouth and laughed.)

KYRIE: I know that's a really childish comment, but it tickled me.

(Cayley blushed.)

CAYLEY: I'm ashamed I said that, to be honest.

KYRIE: Don't be, poo is a funny word.

(Cayley giggled.)

CAYLEY: It is!

KYRIE: And anyway, you're a child, you're *allowed* to be childish.

(She beamed.)

KYRIE: And being an idiot, so am I.

(Cayley nestled her head into Kyrie's neck.)

CAYLEY: Don't say mean things about yourself.

KYRIE: I wasn't. I *am* an idiot. And proud of it. Now where were we?

CAYLEY: Sadler's shoes.

(Kyrie chuckled.)

KYRIE: That's right. Poo.

(Suddenly, there was almighty thudding sound on the roof. At once, both Kyrie and Cayley slung their heads upwards and screamed.)

CAYLEY: What the fuck was that???

(She growled.)

CAYLEY: Oh for pity's sake!

(As she bent over the bed, ready for a spanking, outside the carriage, Hapslock was in dismay. As if from nowhere, ten masked men had leapt from the trees towards the carriage. One had bounced off of it and another had made a fool of himself altogether by missing it completely, but eight of them, armed with swords had made it. Forced into taking rapid action, Hapslock had thrown the reins into Sadler's arms and leapt onto the carriage roof to face them.)

HAPSLOCK: What's the meaning of this???

(One of the masked men growled at him and raised his sword aloft.)

ASSASSIN 1: Death to Kyrie and Cadbury!!!

(His fellow assassin rolled his eyes.)

ASSASSIN 2: It's Kylie and Cadbury!

ASSASSIN 1: Whatever!

(He then charged at Hapslock. Ready for anything, Hapslock leapt into a fighting stance and raised his blade.)

HAPSLOCK: Not so fast.

(Much to his amazement, the assassin slowed down.)

ASSASSIN 1: Why not?

(Hapslock just rolled his eyes and went on the offensive. He wasn't the type to suffer fools easily and he certainly wasn't about to entertain one.)

HAPSLOCK: Die!!!

(As the carriage bounced and rocked beneath the feet, the two men clashed head on. As the other seven assassins braced themselves, ready to join in, the first assassin and Hapslock exchanged swings, neither of them managing to land a blow.)

ASSASSIN 1: Can you ask the driver to slow down; it's bloody difficult to fight up here!

HAPSLOCK: No, I bloody well can't.

ASSASSIN 1: Oh, go on.

HAPSLOCK: Never!!!

(With that, he lashed his blade at the assassin from a high angle. Reacting swiftly, the assassin held his sword up to absorb the blow. Unable to take the blow and maintain his balance on the rocking carriage, he tripped and staggered backwards.)

ASSASSIN 1: Oh, shit!!!

(Much to Hapslock's amazement rather than catch their comrade before he fell, the other assassins all stepped back and left him to stagger his way right off the back of the carriage. As he plunged to earth and out of the battle, the remaining seven then turned and glared at him.)

ASSASSIN 3: Now, that idiot's out of the way, we can go on with the plan. Gilbert and I will keep this fool busy, you five go and kill Kerry and Caitlin.

ASSASSIN 4: Roger!

(One of the other assassins looked to him urgently.)

ASSASSIN 5: What?

ASSASSIN 4: Not you, Roger.

ASSASSIN 3: Look, just do your jobs!!! Come on.

(With that, he and one other assassin glared at Hapslock while the other five headed to the back of the carriage.)

HAPSLOCK: Damn you!!!

ASSASSIN 2: Silence knight, you will die by my hand!!!

(He sighed.)

ASSASSIN 2: Only I left my sword at the hotel.

ASSASSIN 3: Good thing I brought two then.

(He passed his comrade a sword and nodded.)

ASSASSIN 3: Now kill!!!

(As the two of them charged into him, unleashing one rapid swing of their blades after another, Hapslock had no choice but to defend for his life. Despite concentrating hard just to remain alive, his heart was racing and all he could think about was his two charges. He was stuck up on the roof of the carriage and could do nothing to help them. At this moment he was deeply regretting his failure to stock up on fire magic. With it, he could have despatched these foes easily and gone to their aid, instead he was stuck in a melee and couldn't get to them. Luckily for him, he needn't have worried. The assassins, quite clearly *not* the smartest group of men who ever picked up a sword, hadn't thought their plan through very well.

Although it was a good idea that two kept the knight busy while the others made their way down to the carriage doors, they'd overlooked one minor detail. Dropping from the carriage roof to the back platform meant dropping down into Kyrie's path. One by one, like lemmings, they leapt down from the roof to the platform and Kyrie simply pushed them off. She didn't need to swing her fist or even clench one. It was so simple to defeat them, in fact, before the last one jumped down; Kyrie invited Cayley over so she could have a go. Sure enough, he leapt down and Cayley pushed him before he could regain his balance on the rocking platform. As he tumbled off of the carriage, she bounced with joy. She'd never won a fight before and couldn't contain her excitement.)

CAYLEY: Can I do it again???

(Kyrie glanced upwards and frowned.)

KYRIE: I think that's all of them, can't see anyone else, anyway.

CAYLEY: Oh.

(She sighed.)

CAYLEY: Disappointing.

KYRIE: Let me have a look.

(As she went to lift herself up and peer over the top of the carriage, Cayley yanked at her top.)

CAYLEY: Don't. They might have been trying to lure you out.

KYRIE: Meaning?

CAYLEY: There might be someone up there waiting for you to stick your head up over the top.

(Kyrie looked enlightened.)

KYRIE: Good thinking, sister face.

(Cayley smiled then rushed into the carriage.)

CAYLEY: I've had an idea.

(Kyrie watched her go and raised a suspicious eyebrow as Cayley bent to delve into her bag.)

KYRIE: Cayley?

(Cayley grabbed her mirror then rushed back out onto the back platform.)

CAYLEY: Yeah?

KYRIE: That skirt of yours is kinda tight round the hips but I didn't see a panty line. Are you wearing one of those thongs?

(Cayley looked nervously aside and lied through her teeth.)

CAYLEY: No!

(Kyrie snarled.)

KYRIE: Cayley!!!

CAYLEY: Okay, yes then.

(She shrugged.)

CAYLEY: I thought you'd have noticed when you pulled them down to spank me just now, but... whatever.

KYRIE: Why are you wearing *them*?

CAYLEY: You wear thongs all the time! And you said they were comfortable! And they are. And... okay they're crotch-less but who's going to see them?

(Kyrie sighed in defeat.)

KYRIE: Fine, you can keep them on for now, but we'll be discussing it again later!

(She nodded to affirm her words then looked to Cayley sternly.)

KYRIE: So what was your plan?

CAYLEY: This!

(She held her mirror up and positioned it so she could see on top of the carriage.)

KYRIE: Damn, you're clever.

(Cayley gasped.)

CAYLEY: Hapslock is fighting two men!

KYRIE: He is? Why isn't Frank helping him?

CAYLEY: Frank *is* Hapslock!

KYRIE: Then who's driving?

CAYLEY: Sadler, obviously.

(Kyrie looked enlightened)

KYRIE: Oh, right. It gets confusing with so many of us.

CAYLEY: There's only four of us! Look, never mind that. It's all clear so get up there and help him.

(Kyrie nodded enthusiastically.)

KYRIE: Will do.

(And within seconds she was gone from the platform and up on the roof. Using her incredible gymnastic ability, she'd grabbed the ledge above and pulled herself up there with jaw dropping ease.)

CAYLEY: I wish I could do that.

(As she climbed to her feet upon the roof, Kyrie looked to Hapslock battling away bravely against two swordsmen and smiled. No man had ever done anything so selfless on her behalf before and she exhaled lovingly. Having placed a limp hand on her chest and watched him for a few moments, she then proceeded to pace over to the fight. As the two assassins persisted in trying to strike the stubborn knight down, Kyrie suddenly appeared in between them and placed a hand on each of their shoulders.)

KYRIE: Hi, boys!

(The assassins were stunned and glared at her in disbelief.)

ASSASSIN 2: It's Katie!

ASSASSIN 3: Or is it Carrie?

(Much to their frustration and horror, before either of them could make any attempt to kill their target; Kyrie simply smiled and thrust her arms out to the side, casting them both off either side of the carriage. As they both thudded to earth, they could only sit up and watch in dismay as the carriage rolled onwards and out of sight. Up on the roof, Hapslock regained his breath and looked to Kyrie through defeated eyes.)

KYRIE: You okay? You look kinda... fed up.

(Hapslock puffed out and shook his head.)

HAPSLOCK: Firstly, thank you for coming to my aid. You saved my life and I'm eternally grateful. I owe you one.

KYRIE: Cool, you can give me one when we get to town. I aint had sex for two whole days; I might as well join a convent!

(Hapslock stared happily into space.)

HAPSLOCK: I'd be only too happy to help with that...

(Gathering himself, he shook his head and growled.)

HAPSLOCK: Get it together, man.

KYRIE: What?

(Hapslock sighed.)

HAPSLOCK: Kyrie, this isn't good for my reputation. If only I had my magic. That's twice you've saved me now. I'm supposed to be *your* knight. I'm meant to save *you*.

(Kyrie shrugged.)

KYRIE: Who cares about reputation? That's just what other people think of you.

HAPSLOCK: *I* care. A knight needs to protect his reputation.

(Kyrie shrugged again.)

KYRIE: Well, you needn't worry then. If anyone asks I'll tell them how amazing you are.

HAPSLOCK: You'll lie? I don't want my reputation to be false. I'm the idiot who forgot to stock up on fire magic and left himself short of the means to defend his charges. After a mistake like that, claiming I'm amazing would be a lie.

(Kyrie scoffed.)

KYRIE: No it wouldn't! You fight for Cayley and me as if you love us or something. It's pretty amazing. That's no lie. Fact is, you're the greatest thing that ever happened to us. We don't see you as our knight, we see you as our friend and equal.

(Normally it would have been deeply insulting for a common girl like Kyrie to call a knight of the realm her equal but Hapslock loved her sentiment. This wasn't an intelligent girl, but she was a sincere one.)

HAPSLOCK: You're a good person, Kyrie.

(She beamed.)

KYRIE: I'm hot too.

HAPSLOCK: Yes, indeed you are. But the fact remains that my reputation needs to be based on my ability to protect you. I'm not doing so brilliantly on that score.

(Kyrie shrugged, clearly disagreeing.)

HAPSLOCK: Unless I start saving you when the chips are down, anything kind you say about me will be a falsehood.

(Kyrie looked stumped.)

KYRIE: Like a hat, you mean?

HAPSLOCK: Sorry?

KYRIE: A hat is a false hood, right? Or do you mean like a wedding veil? Either way I don't get it.

(Hapslock chuckled and turned away from her.)

HAPSLOCK: It doesn't matter. Look, we can't stand up here and chat all day. I'll go and relieve Sadler. You better go and check on Cayley.

(Kyrie nodded.)

KYRIE: Okay, we've got Cayley's underwear issues to discuss anyway.

(Hapslock winced. A discussion about a child's underwear was not something he was about to take part in.)

HAPSLOCK: Bye then!

KYRIE: Later.

(As Kyrie headed off, Hapslock jumped back down next to Sadler and gave a sigh of relief.)

HAPSLOCK: Thank heavens that's over.

(Sadler looked to him through terrified eyes.)

SADLER: You won, I take it?

HAPSLOCK: Of course I did. Or did you think I'd left them to fight among themselves while I took a breather?

SADLER: No need to be sassy about it, I only asked.

HAPSLOCK: Well, it was a stupid question.

SADLER: Even so. I'm allowed to ask stupid questions when I'm scared. I wasn't expecting an ambush and I thought we'd had it then.

HAPSLOCK: Well, we're fine so just relax, okay?

(Sadler handed him the reigns and nodded.)

SADLER: Very well, I will.

(As Sadler laid back and took a sigh of relief, Hapslock scowled at the road ahead. They may have won the fight but he was beginning to feel inadequate. The girls could get attacked anywhere at any time, he already knew this and he wasn't surprised by the assassin attack. He was, however, furious at himself that he hadn't been more successful in thwarting it. Instead, his charge had won the fight for him. This was not good for his self esteem. Such was his state of mind at this time, a few important facts of the matter weren't occurring to him. Firstly, the assassins were all first class swordsmen and he'd faced two of them and lived. Secondly, the only reason they'd failed to kill Kyrie and Cayley was because they couldn't reach them without being thrown off the carriage by a mere push. And lastly, Kyrie had defeated the two men he was fighting in the same way. She'd crept up, said hello then cast them off the carriage. Had any of the assassins managed to steady themselves and pull a sword on Kyrie and Cayley, the outcome might well have been very different. Until Hapslock realised this however, he'd sit and seethe and chastise himself for what he saw as his failure.



A solid hour later, having missed the turning for the main road, the carriage continued along the dirt track. Having not noticed the turn off due to panicking during the assassin attack, Sadler had managed to put himself even deeper into Hapslock's bad books. Convinced the lute playing, buffoon could do nothing right, he said nothing to him and snarled as he led the carriage forth. Inside the carriage in the meantime, Kyrie was trying to take a nap and Cayley was reading her book. Engrossed in a chapter about the redevelopment of Sir Flaxley's home town, Cayley stared hard at her page and gasped in awe.)

CAYLEY: Wow.

KYRIE: Shush, I'm trying to have a kip.

(Cayley looked to her and smiled.)

CAYLEY: Sorry. I know it shouldn't amaze me, I've read it so many times before... but it always does. Tifaeris grew by a mile a year for three years on the trot.

KYRIE: Boring!

(Cayley sneered indignantly and mumbled under breath.)

CAYLEY: Only because you're too thick to understand it.

KYRIE: Do you want me to put you in a headlock?

(Cayley leant away from her and pouted.)

CAYLEY: No! I'll be good.

KYRIE: You'd better be.

(She yawned.)

KYRIE: Now be quiet and let me sleep.

(With that, she adjusted her thong and nestled herself into the bed.)

KYRIE: Hang on!

(She sat bolt upright.)

KYRIE: Talking of thongs, you and me need to have that little chat.

(Desperate not to discuss it, Cayley's eyes bulged and she looked away nervously.)

CAYLEY: We *weren't* talking about thongs.

(She then proceeded to lie impressively.)

CAYLEY: In fact we haven't spoken about them all day. You must have nodded off and dreamt it.

(Kyrie growled.)

KYRIE: Stop it.

(Cayley looked to her angelically.)

CAYLEY: Stop what, Kyrie?

(Kyrie growled.)

KYRIE: Stop trying to trick me. We're going to talk about that thong you've got on!

(Cayley looked to her and smiled.)

CAYLEY: But I'm not wearing one, like I said, you must have nodded off and dreamt it.

(Kyrie looked uncertain and mused to herself.)

KYRIE: Really? That is possible I suppose...

(She then growled.)

KYRIE: Hey! I said stop that! Enough of the mind games.

CAYLEY: I'm not playing any mind games.

(Kyrie thrust her hands to her hips and snarled.)

KYRIE: You are too!

(Cayley sighed in defeat.)

CAYLEY: Okay, sorry. I'll be a good girl from now on. You can go back to sleep now, I'll behave. You win.

(Kyrie nodded victoriously.)

KYRIE: Good. Glad we nipped *that* nonsense in the bud.

(She laid back down then growled furiously.)

KYRIE: Cayley!!!

(She sat back up and glared at her cowering little sister.)

KYRIE: What did I tell you about tricking me?

CAYLEY: You said...

KYRIE: I know what I said!

(She seethed.)

KYRIE: Cheeky little shit.

(She flexed her neck muscles then shrugged at Cayley.)

KYRIE: Why do you want to wear a thong anyway?

(Cayley blushed and looked away nonchalantly.)

CAYLEY: I dunno... why do *you* wear a thong?

KYRIE: So men can check out my perfect arse without my panty line showing!

(Cayley looked at her in terror and whimpered.)

CAYLEY: That's not what *I* want.

KYRIE: Then why?

(Cayley fiddled with her fingertips nervously.)

CAYLEY: Sometimes I want to feel more grown up.

(She hung her head.)

CAYLEY: And... I want to be more like you.

(Kyrie looked to her and her heart melted.)

KYRIE: Oh, Cayley that's...

(Suddenly, alarm bells rung in her head and her eyes bulged.)

KYRIE: You slut!!! You want to me more like me??? At your age!!!

(Cayley whimpered.)

CAYLEY: What?

KYRIE: I should spank you until your teeth fall out!

(Cayley shuddered.)

CAYLEY: What did *I* do? Why are you being so mean?

KYRIE: Mean? This is nothing! If you think I'm going to let you go shagging every bugger in sight at your age, you're very much mistaken!

(Cayley reeled back and grimaced in disgust.)

CAYLEY: I don't want to do... that... with anyone!!!

(Kyrie looked stumped.)

KYRIE: You just said...

CAYLEY: I said I wanted to be *more* like you, I didn't mean in every single way.

(She pouted.)

CAYLEY: I just want to be... I dunno.

(Kyrie bit her lip.)

KYRIE: Explain it to me. No big words.

(Cayley shrugged.)

CAYLEY: Well, you wear nice clothes... sometimes... and I dress like a kid.

KYRIE: You *are* a kid.

CAYLEY: I knew you wouldn't understand.

(She sighed.)

CAYLEY: Fine, I'll wear the briefs.

KYRIE: Wait a sec.

(She mused to herself.)

KYRIE: Is this a big girl thing? You want to feel more like a big girl?

(Cayley shrugged.)

CAYLEY: I suppose.

(Kyrie nodded.)

KYRIE: I had the exact same argument with Grandad when *I* was twelve. I called him a bastard because he wouldn't let me go to a party wearing a naughty nurse outfit.

(Cayley looked miffed.)

CAYLEY: It's hardly the same.

KYRIE: Isn't it? I was twelve and wanted to be fifteen, isn't that exactly how you feel sometimes?

(Cayley's jaw dropped. She was stunned by her intellectually challenged sister's sudden bout of insight.)

CAYLEY: Well... yeah, actually.

(Kyrie nodded.)

KYRIE: See?

(She then sighed.)

KYRIE: There was a point to this but I can't remember what it was.

(Cayley rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: Something about shoes, was it? No! That outfit. He was right to stop me wearing it. Or was he wrong? I forget.

(A wry smile suddenly crossed Cayley's brow.)

CAYLEY: I think what you're saying is; I can wear a thong from now on. That's what I understood from it.

(Kyrie nodded thoughtfully.)

KYRIE: Yeah... I guess that's what I said.

(She then laid back on the bed and puffed out.)

KYRIE: Tell you what though, for someone who gets all self conscious when people notice her boobs, wearing underwear to draw attention to your butt as well is just asking for trouble.

(Cayley's eyes suddenly popped out of her head and she jumped to her feet, reached up her skirt and started pulling her knickers off.)

CAYLEY: I want to wear briefs!!!

(As the knickers hit the floor, she raced to her bag and delved inside it for her cotton briefs. Watching her panic, Kyrie sat up, shook her head and sighed.)

KYRIE: I don't get to say this very often but, Cayley, you're a dipshit.

CAYLEY: Oh, shut up!

KYRIE: We could have cleared this up an hour ago, but you had to manipulate me into forgetting the subject, didn't you?

(She sighed.)

KYRIE: Now look at you panicking.

CAYLEY: If we'd discussed it an hour ago, I'd have panicked then too.

(Once her briefs were on, she sighed with relief and pulled her skirt down.)

CAYLEY: That's better. I feel dressed now. I'll never wear a thong ever again.

(Kyrie sighed and a pout formed on her lips.)

KYRIE: Yeah, you say that now. But what happens when you start *wanting* boys to look at your butt?

(Cayley shuddered.)

CAYLEY: Gross.

KYRIE: It will happen, Cayley. What do I do then? I can protect you from assassins, but boys?

(She sighed.)

KYRIE: You're gonna be so beautiful when you're older and they're all going to wanna try their luck.

(Cayley looked at her in disgust.)

CAYLEY: Why do you say disgusting things to me, Kyrie? I'm twelve.

(Kyrie looked peeved.)

KYRIE: I'm not saying disgusting things. I'm stating a fact. You're gonna be hot and those boobies will be like a magnet to guys.

CAYLEY: Gross.

KYRIE: And I can't protect you from that.

(She sighed.)

KYRIE: If you do end up like me, it'll be all my fault. I'm a terrible example.

(As a tear rolled down Kyrie's cheek, Cayley pouted and sat at her side.)

CAYLEY: If end up like you, then it's my own fault, Kyrie. I'm smart enough to make my own decisions.

KYRIE: Even so, I don't help you much when it comes to being a role model, do I?

CAYLEY: You reckon?

(She laid her head on Kyrie's shoulder and smiled.)

CAYLEY: When you do things I don't like, I learn from them. I hate the way you sleep around, you know? So, there's no way I'm gonna be like that. Back in Anoseta when you cared more about love than just dirty stuff, I saw boys pray on you and make you cry... and I told myself I'd never let them do it to *me*.

(She smiled.)

CAYLEY: I get to do things right in life because I can watch you and learn from your mistakes. I learn from what you do right *and* what you do wrong. If I've grown up well so far, it's because you showed me the way, Kyrie.

(Kyrie's face lit up and she hugged Cayley tightly into herself.)

KYRIE: Thanks, sister face, that was such a beautiful thing to say. Even if you *were* only saying it to make me feel better, it was nice.

CAYLEY: But I wasn't saying it to make you feel better. I said it because it was true.

(She sighed sorrowfully.)

CAYLEY: I barely even remember mum. And grandad wasn't a very good female role model. You're the one who raised me.

(She shrugged.)

CAYLEY: All my life, you've been my big sister *and* my mum.

(Kyrie kissed her head then raised a suspicious eyebrow.)

KYRIE: You think of me as a mum?

CAYLEY: I suppose so... you've always been the nearest thing I've had to one.

KYRIE: I don't dress like a mum though.

CAYLEY: You spank me like one, and tell me off.

KYRIE: Yeah but I'm way too cool to be a mum.

(She nodded defiantly.)

KYRIE: And I'm far too sexy to be a mum.

(She turned her head to face her and smiled.)

KYRIE: Cayley...

(Cayley looked into her eyes and smiled.)

CAYLEY: Yeah?

KYRIE: I know you meant well, but if you ever call me a mum again, I'll throw your shoes in the fire and replace them with brown ones. Okay?

(As Cayley shuddered in horror, Kyrie nodded sternly.)

KYRIE: And if you do it a second time, I'll follow you around telling everyone to stare at your chest.

(Cayley pouted at her bitterly.)

CAYLEY: I get the point.

(She sighed.)

CAYLEY: All this because I wanted to be more like you.

KYRIE: Well don't.

CAYLEY: I won't.

KYRIE: Good, because if you start doing the things I do, I'll stop doing them just so you can't copy me.

(Cayley looked thoughtful.)

CAYLEY: So, if I started sleeping around, you'd stop doing it?

(Kyrie looked to her in bewilderment for a moment, her lips quivering as she tried to think.)

KYRIE: Shut up.

(She waved her away with a dismissive hand.)

KYRIE: Go and read or something. Geek.

CAYLEY: Whatever.

(As Cayley tried to return to her book, the carriage suddenly rocked violently and she was thrown to the floor.)

CAYLEY: Fucking hell!!!

(As the carriage stopped rocking and ground to a sudden halt, she leapt to her feet and shook her fists at herself furiously.)

CAYLEY: For pity's sake, not again!!!

(She then threw herself face down on the bed in despair.)

CAYLEY: Do what you've gotta do, Kyrie.

(As Kyrie prepared to spank her sister; outside the carriage, Hapslock and Sadler were staring ahead of themselves in utter horror. As if from nowhere, a giant rhino had raced into their path and turned to face them. They'd barely managed to stop the carriage in time. Looking wild with rage, it snarled at them and dragged one of its feet as if ready to charge.)

HAPSLOCK: I don't think my sword is going to be enough, Sadler.

(He glanced to his side and did a double take at the empty seat next to him.)

HAPSLOCK: Where'd you go?

(He then shook his head in disgust as he caught sight of Sadler fleeing through the nearby trees.)

HAPSLOCK: What a shocking coward!!!

(He snarled then leapt down from the carriage and drew his sword. As he turned to face the snarling beast, however, a troubled expression crossed his brow. Just how he'd manage to take on a ten foot tall rhino, he had no idea. His sword might not even be able to pierce its skin. As he stared the beast in the eyes, Kyrie and Cayley rushed up to him from behind.)

KYRIE: What's going on? Why did you stop so suddenly?

CAYLEY: Yeah, my bum hurts because of you.

(Upon sighting the giant rhino before them, Kyrie's shoulders sunk and Cayley swiftly darted behind her.)

KYRIE: Aw, crap! Not that thing again.

(Hapslock glanced over his shoulder at her urgently.)

HAPSLOCK: Again?

KYRIE: Yeah, this is the third time it's found us.

HAPSLOCK: Found you...

(He looked uncertain.)

HAPSLOCK: When you say it's found you...

KYRIE: We managed to run away and lose it twice. It's not like I could defeat it.

(Hapslock stared at the beast and bit his lip.)

HAPSLOCK: I see. Then we've got a problem.

KYRIE: You don't say.

(Hapslock glanced around at his surroundings and thought hard.)

HAPSLOCK: We can't afford to let the carriage get damaged or have the horses get injured...

KYRIE: I'm more worried about ourselves getting hurt.

HAPSLOCK: That goes without saying.

(He nodded sternly.)

HAPSLOCK: Without my fire magic, the only way I can keep us all safe *and* protect the horses and carriage is to lure it away.

(He glanced swiftly back towards Cayley.)

HAPSLOCK: You should go and wait in the carriage, Cayley.

CAYLEY: No way, if it gets ambushed while I'm sitting in it all by myself, I'll have no chance. I'm staying with Kyrie.

KYRIE: She's right. If those assassins were to come back...

HAPSLOCK: Fine, I get the point.

(He stood tall.)

HAPSLOCK: Doesn't matter anyway, this one's down to me. Wish me luck; I'm going to lure it away.

(With that, he raced past the rhino and whacked its sizable rump with his blade as he passed it.)

HAPSLOCK: Come and get me, fat boy!

(Kyrie and Cayley just looked to one another and shook their heads. They knew for a fact that's Hapslock's plan was a non starter and could only sigh to themselves, knowing full well what was about to happen next. While Hapslock charged away; hoping the rhino would chase him; Kyrie and Cayley turned and fled as the rhino charged at *them* instead. This was a summoned beast. It wasn't going to waste time chasing just anybody; it was under the thrall of a summoner with express instructions to kill Kyrie and Cayley. Feeling quite the fool, Hapslock stopped running quite some distance down the road then stared back in horror at the sight of the Rhino racing past the carriage in pursuit of his two charges.)

HAPSLOCK: Fuck! What a great knight I'm turning out to be!

(With that, he put his head down and raced after the rhino. All he could think about as he bounded forth was that he'd let the girls down horribly. He was supposed to be their protector and saviour and yet, not for the first time, they were off saving themselves while he was indisposed. As he raced past the carriage, he winced to himself and his comments about keeping the carriage and horses safe, came back to haunt him. The rhino wasn't interested in flattening the carriage or killing the horses, it only had eyes for slaughtering the young sisters. They should have been his *only* concern. Furious at himself for even considering the welfare of the carriage, he raced around it and charged onwards into the trees at the side of the road, in pursuit of the rampaging rhino. He couldn't see his two precious charges, but he could hear Cayley's screams from up ahead of the marauding beast. As the sound sent a chill down his spine, he gritted his teeth and doubled his efforts to catch them up.)

HAPSLOCK: If anything happens to them, I'll...

(He growled.)

HAPSLOCK: Hang in there, girls!!!

(As he bounded between two trees, at last the girls came into view. With the rhino hot on their heels, Kyrie had swiftly veered off to the right in a bid to out manoeuvre it. Much to Hapslock's bemusement, she was carrying Cayley in her arms.)

HAPSLOCK: What the?

(Kyrie and Cayley had argued many times over the years about their tactics when they were being chased. When they ran away, Cayley always lagged behind and in her attempts to hurry her along, Kyrie was forever pulling her over. As a result of such incidents, now, when

they were in fear for their lives, Kyrie always scooped her little sister up and carried her. It was the only logical way to proceed. Kyrie could run faster with Cayley in her arms than Cayley could alone. This way, their escape speed was optimised. Totally unaware that Hapslock was in the near vicinity, Kyrie bounded through the trees, swerving left and right in a desperate bid to thwart the cumbersome giant on her tail. Having almost hit her head on several trees, Cayley was terrified. Laying in her sister's arms, she stared in the direction they were fleeing in and cried out in a distressed voice.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie, I'm scared!!!

(Kyrie sneered as she ducked to her left and hurried onwards.)

KYRIE: I'm hardly having a picnic myself, Cayley.

(Cayley whimpered.)

CAYLEY: Sorry.

(Kyrie sighed heavily.)

KYRIE: Don't worry, sister face. I'll get you to safety somehow.

(Typically, at this point, up popped our old friend fate. Yes, that easily tempted blighter with the sick sense of humour decided this would be a great time to pay the girls a visit. As soon as Kyrie told Cayley she'd get her to safety, fate leapt into action, unable to resist making Kyrie stumble and trip, rendering her anything but safe. Looking mortified, Kyrie could do nothing to retain her balance and fell flat on her face, dropping Cayley beneath her and leaving her right in the rhino's path.)

KYRIE: Cayley!!!

(As the rhino charged at her, it's razor sharp horn poised to tear her asunder, Cayley could do nothing but scream, her tiny body frozen with fear. Reacting without a second thought for own safety, Kyrie screamed and jumped back to her feet. As if she'd acquired superpowers from somewhere, she grabbed Cayley by her upper arms and tossed her aside, a split second before the rhino's horn could tear into her. Left in the way of the charging colossus, Kyrie had no option but to grab the rhino's horn and jump onto it's face to avoid being crushed.)

KYRIE: Fuck!!!

(Having landed with a quite a thud, Cayley spun around and bellowed out in distress.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie!!!

(Looking terrified, Kyrie was clinging onto the rhino's face for dear life. Rampaging wildly, the rhino was throwing its neck around wildly in a bid to throw her off.)

KYRIE: Shit!!! I don't like this!!!

(Pouting on the verge of bursting into tears, Cayley leapt to her feet and bellowed.)

CAYLEY: Leave her alone!!!

(She then raced after the rhino looking insane with rage. As he gained rapidly, Hapslock couldn't believe what his eyes were showing him. Kyrie was whimpering and panicking as the rhino thrashed around, unable to throw her off its face and Cayley was rampaging after it, looking very much like she was ready for a fight. Not about to stop and marvel at their role reversal, however, he raged onwards, passing Cayley, determined to do all he could to save them both.)

HAPSLOCK: Wait there, Cayley. I'll save her!!!

(Cayley slowed to a stand still and looked to him nervously. How he was going to save her, she didn't know. This was a formidable enemy. Becoming increasingly overwhelmed by it all, she sighed and hung her head.)

CAYLEY: I wish Sir Flaxley was here.

(Having overheard and taken the comment as an insult to his skills, Hapslock glared back at her as he chased the rhino.)

HAPSLOCK: Yes, his exaggeration skills would certainly be a bonus, right now.

(Cayley glared back at him. She genuinely believed Sir Flaxley to be a godlike force for good, capable of defeating any foe. She didn't mean it as an insult, she was innocently wishing for intervention from someone powerful enough to kill this seemingly unbeatable foe. She certainly didn't deserve to have her belief in Sir Flaxley belittled. Angered by the comment, she pouted and mumbled to herself.)

CAYLEY: You're mean. Sir Flaxley wouldn't be mean.

(Having raced onwards, focussing hard on trying to help Kyrie, Hapslock hadn't heard her comment. Right now, his mind was concentrating on one thing. Getting Kyrie off of this giant rhino's face without hurting her. With only a sword to assist him, the way forth seemed obvious. To stop it trying to kill Kyrie, he'd have to appeal to its instinct to survive. With the decision made, he snarled and thrust his sword towards the rhino's neck. Even if the blade didn't make much of an impression, surely self preservation would take over and the beast would have to attack him instead.)

HAPSLOCK: Fight *me*, varmint!

(Much to Hapslock's delight, his sword pierced the beast's thick skin and he'd managed to draw blood. Unfortunately, however, this didn't help Kyrie much right now. It wasn't like the beast had Kyrie in its clutches and would now let her go. *Kyrie* was clinging to *it* and all the attack had served to do was panic the giant killer into thrashing about even more violently than it had been.)

HAPSLOCK: Damn it!!!

(Being thrown about wildly, Kyrie cried out in anguished despair.)

KYRIE: I want to get off!!!

(The very second she finished her sentence, once again, our old friend fate, popped his head up from the long grass to play his part in the proceedings. Kyrie got her wish. Unable to hold on any longer, she was thrown into the branches of a nearby tree. Hitting a high branch with tremendous force, she screamed then fell back through the tree until she came to a thudding halt on a low branch, the impact knocking her out. Hapslock watched her land and growled to himself.)

HAPSLOCK: Damn it!

(He held his sword aloft and nodded sternly.)

HAPSLOCK: At least you'll be safe up there.

(By now, fate was having a field day. As soon as Hapslock finished speaking, the rhino thudded head first into the tree and it started to topple over.)

HAPSLOCK: Crap!!!

(To make matters worse, before he could even begin to help her, the rhino turned and charged at him. At last, he'd got his wish. He finally had the rhino's attention. All he could do was listen to the felled tree crashing to earth while he focussed his energies into battling the rhino with his blade.)

HAPSLOCK: You picked the wrong day to mess with Sir Hapslock!!!

(With that, he swung his sword with all his might at the rhino's horn. As soon as his blade thudded into the ivory, however, a painful vibration shot up his arm as if he'd just hit a cast iron pillar with a golf club.)

HAPSLOCK: Ouch!!!

(He then fell back onto his backside and seethed at himself. His attack had failed miserably.)

HAPSLOCK: Useless!

(Suddenly, a bewildered expression crossed his brow. Why the rhino hadn't run him through, he had no idea. It could have killed him right there and then. Instead, it had deliberately bypassed him. Seconds later, he realised why. Cayley was alone; alone and vulnerable. Screaming for her life, she was racing through the trees with the rhino hot on her heels.)

HAPSLOCK: Not on my watch, you low down piece of summoned filth.



(With that, he charged after the rhino wearing a face of absolute hatred. One of his charges was already hurt, maybe even dead and he wasn't about to allow anything to happen to the other one. Driven by pure rage, he caught up to the rhino in no time and lunged his blade into its buttock. Infuriatingly, the rhino seemed to ignore the pain and continued after Cayley.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie!!!

(As she raced in zigzags, she whistled and screamed for her sister, terrified tears pouring down her cheeks.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie!!!

(Further enraged by the sound of Cayley's distress, Hapslock snarled and raced alongside the rhino.)

HAPSLOCK: I'm coming, Cayley!!!

(Cayley whimpered and charged onwards as quickly as her little legs would carry her. A speed that was far from impressive. The rhino wasn't exactly the quickest animal on the planet either but it was certain to catch her any time soon unless either herself or Hapslock found a way to stop it. Well aware of this fact, Hapslock whacked and thudded at it with his blade as he charged past it. With such thick skin, however, he was barely making an impact.)

HAPSLOCK: Why won't you just die???

(Had the rhino been able to speak, it might well have said the same thing about Cayley. She was slow and lacked agility and all that was keeping her alive right now was the extra speed boost she'd gained through sheer adrenaline. Once her body ran out of adrenaline, she wouldn't have a prayer.)

HAPSLOCK: Keep running, Cayley!!!

CAYLEY: I'm trying!!!

(Hapslock seethed to himself.)

HAPSLOCK: There has to be a way to kill this thing! If only I had my magic!!!

(An enlightened expression then crossed his brow. Cuddyfinkles were also giant foes and he killed them by striking at their fleshy, vulnerable area with his blade. The same would apply to this rhino.)

HAPSLOCK: Keep going, I'm going to strike at its weak point!

(As she raced on, Cayley was puzzled. This rhino's skin was practically solid and striking at its tiny eyes would be immensely difficult. It didn't seem to have a weak point. Luckily for her, however, Hapslock knew exactly what he was talking about. Concentrating hard, he let the rhino overtake him and snarled.)

HAPSLOCK: I won't lie to you, rhino boy; this is really going to hurt!

(With that, he lifted the rhino's tail and plunged his sword deep into its anus. At once, the rhino screeched out in severe distress and threw itself around 180 degrees, forcing Hapslock to let go of his sword.)

HAPSLOCK: Damn!!!

(Much to his relief however, the rhino kept screeching and leaping around in distressed half circles, seemingly oblivious to anything but its own pain. Realising she was no longer being chased, Cayley turned and raced back to Hapslock with a terrified look in her eyes.)

CAYLEY: What's it doing? We should go! Where's Kyrie?

(Hapslock exhaled angrily.)

HAPSLOCK: It's distressed because I stuck my sword up its bum. As for Kyrie...

(He looked to her sorrowfully and placed a consoling hand on her shoulder.)

HAPSLOCK: There was an incident with a tree...

CAYLEY: I know. I saw it.

(She pouted.)

CAYLEY: Why are you acting so glum?

HAPSLOCK: Well, I'm not sure she's going to be okay...

(Cayley scoffed.)

CAYLEY: If you think being knocked out then crashing from a felled tree is going to stop her, you obviously don't know Kyrie very well.

(She looked behind him and beamed.)

CAYLEY: See?

(Sure enough, just behind Hapslock, Kyrie was staggered through the trees, looking very much like she'd just done battle with a herd of elephants and lost. Her hair was all over the place and she was clearly dazed and confused. Seeing she was alive, Sir Hapslock drew a deep sigh of relief.)

HAPSLOCK: Thank the stars, she's okay.

CAYLEY: Yeah, but when she reaches us, don't mention her hair.

(Hapslock puffed out and gestured to the panicking rhino.)

HAPSLOCK: Forget her hair; I'm more worried about that thing. Once it accepts it can't remove the sword from its backside, it'll go ballistic.

(Cayley whimpered.)

CAYLEY: And chase us again, you mean?

HAPSLOCK: Yeah.

(He puffed out in frustration.)

HAPSLOCK: I need to get my sword back but again, as soon as I remove it from its bum, it's going to rampage.

(Cayley trembled.)

CAYLEY: So, what are we going to do?

(Hapslock nodded firmly and watched the rhino leap around in extreme agony.)

HAPSLOCK: I'm going to have to go over there and twist the knife, so to speak. If I can stab a few internal organs...

CAYLEY: But... it's not going to let you get near it.

HAPSLOCK: I'll just have to be quick then, won't I?

CAYLEY: Wait! That sounds dangerous. I don't want you to get killed.

(Just then Kyrie staggered up to them and threw an arm round Cayley. Her eyes were glazed over and she slurred her speech)

KYRIE: Why's that elephant dancing?

(She strained her eyes then hugged Cayley lovingly.)

KYRIE: How's my precious little sister face? Give me a kiss, you.

(Cayley leant away from her and looked to Hapslock.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie's delirious, you've lost your sword and that rhino is likely to come for us again real soon. We ought to get out of here.

HAPSLOCK: Without my sword? No way!

(He gestured to the frantic rhino.)

HAPSLOCK: My sword's already inside the rhino, it'll just take a little caution and skill and I can finally kill the bloody thing.

CAYLEY: But it's dangerous!

(Hapslock shrugged.)

HAPSLOCK: Well, apart from running away, what else are we going to do?

(Just then, a whooshing sound emerged from the trees to their right. At once, the rhino collapsed dead to the earth and a hillbilly like voice filled the air.)

STRANGER: I'll tell you what you're going to do. You're going to get the fuck off my land. That's what.

(Delighted at seeing the rhino die, Hapslock raced over to it, while Cayley looked to the stranger agape.)

CAYLEY: What was that? Did you do that? Did you kill the rhino?

(The stranger smirked.)

STRANGER: Yeah I did. One crossbow bolt to the head and it went down like a whore with no legs. Now if it can do that to a rhino, imagine what it'll do to *you* if you don't get off my damn land.

(Kyrie beamed and staggered two feet to her left, still very much dazed.)

KYRIE: We should discuss it over sex.

STRANGER: No way ma'am, you aint my type. I'm as gay as a rainbow coloured banjo! Now...

(He started to reload his crossbow, just as Hapslock retrieved his sword.)

STRANGER: Do I have to shoot you?

(Hapslock dried his blade on the grass and replied sternly.)

HAPSLOCK: We will respect your wish. This is your land after all. We'll be on our way.

STRANGER: Good call.

HAPSLOCK: We'll just head to our carriage and be out of your hair.

(The stranger nodded acceptingly.)

STRANGER: I appreciate that.

(Hapslock sheathed his blade then paced over to Kyrie and Cayley.)

HAPSLOCK: Let's get going.

(He looked to the stranger.)

HAPSLOCK: Thanks for you help with the rhino.

STRANGER: I wasn't helping you; I just don't want a giant rhino on my land, that's all.

(He nodded.)

STRANGER: Now round up those girls and take your fine butt out of here.

(As Hapslock glanced at him uneasily, the stranger shrugged.)

STRANGER: What? I told you I was gay, didn't I?

(Hapslock shuddered and ushered Kyrie and Cayley away.)

HAPSLOCK: Quick, that bloke's clearly insane.

KYRIE: Yeah, gay or not, who could resist *me*?

(As Kyrie fell over and giggled, Hapslock scooped her up and took one final glance at the stranger.)

HAPSLOCK: Bye!

(The stranger watched them go uneasily then raised his voice.)

STRANGER: Where the hell you going? The edge of my land is the other way

HAPSLOCK: We're going back to our carriage, it's over there.

(He pointed towards the carriage.)

HAPSLOCK: We got ambushed on the road over there.

(The stranger sucked his teeth.)

STRANGER: Oh, now, see, that aint good. That road is my property too. You should have turned off some way back up the road.

(Hapslock recalled Sadler missing the turning and sighed.)

HAPSLOCK: Yeah, we realise that.

STRANGER: So I guess we have a problem.

HAPSLOCK: We do?

STRANGER: You're gonna be trespassing for quite some time if you go back to that carriage.

(He mused to himself.)

STRANGER: Here's what I'll do... rather than shoot you...

(He then placed his fingers in his mouth and whistled extremely loudly.)

STRANGER: I raised me a pack of grendiths and right now they're coming to get you.

(He beamed.)

STRANGER: If you're still on my land when they get here then, well... good luck.

(With that, he laughed then turned to walk away.)

STRANGER: City folk, they never read signs.

(As he headed away, Hapslock hurriedly carried Kyrie towards the carriage while Cayley raced along behind.)

HAPSLOCK: Hurry, Cayley.

CAYLEY: I am! I'm shattered and this is as fast as I can manage.

(Hapslock groaned.)

HAPSLOCK: If I didn't have to carry Kyrie, I'd carry you, but she's far too delicious to run.

(Kyrie beamed as she lay in his arms.)

KYRIE: I am delicious, aren't I?

HAPSLOCK: I said delirious!

CAYLEY: You didn't. You said she was delicious.

KYRIE: And he's right! Why argue about it?

HAPSLOCK: Nobody's arguing.

(Cayley gave him a belittling glance.)

CAYLEY: You really, really fancy her, don't you?

HAPSLOCK: I do not!!! I just...

(Suddenly, the terrifying sound of howling and snarling grendiths filled the air. At once Cayley found extra speed from somewhere and Hapslock started to sprint.)

HAPSLOCK: Cayley, when we reach the carriage, get inside and shut the door. And keep Kyrie inside there with you. If we have to fight them, leave it to me, she's useless in this state.

(Kyrie scowled at him.)

KYRIE: Useless? I'll give you useless.

(She looked to Cayley.)

KYRIE: I don't like Frank anymore, Cayley, *you* can carry me.

HAPSLOCK: Don't be ridiculous!

(As they raced on, however, Kyrie started to struggle.)

KYRIE: Put me down! Cayley, tell him to leave me alone!!!

(Cayley glanced at her.)

CAYLEY: Just let him carry you for a bit longer, Kyrie.

KYRIE: Oh, I see. Like that, is it?

(She then pouted and glared at Hapslock as he raced forth with her.)

KYRIE: You're rubbish at sex. I didn't want to say anything before but seeing as you've upset me I'm going to be unreasonable and lie. I faked all six orgasms and I wasn't really naked... I faked that too.

(As the howls of the incoming grendiths grew louder, Cayley pointed ahead and yelled excitedly.)

CAYLEY: There's the carriage!!!

(Hapslock nodded sternly.)

HAPSLOCK: Excellent!

(Suddenly, his face dropped into an exasperated expression.)

HAPSLOCK: Unless I'm very much mistaken, the carriage is leaving on its own!!!

(As once, both he and Cayley snarled venomously.)

CAYLEY: Sadler!!!

HAPSLOCK: That low down...

(He growled.)

HAPSLOCK: Permission to swear, please.

CAYLEY: Go on then.

HAPSLOCK: That...

(He puffed out.)

HAPSLOCK: Forget it. Run!!!

(Sure enough, up ahead of them the carriage was indeed slowly starting to move forwards. Sprinting for all they were worth, Hapslock raced onto the road and bounded after it. Being left behind, all on her own, Cayley was crying her eyes out. Knowing there were grendiths coming and that she was in the frontline, she was absolutely terrified.)

CAYLEY: Why would you leave me behind??? I'm gonna get eaten!!!

(Ignoring her cries, Hapslock raced to the back platform of the departing carriage and threw Kyrie onto it. Wearing a determined expression, he then about turned and raced back for Cayley. Without stopping to feel guilty about the sorrowful expression on her face, he scooped her up then charged back towards the carriage with her. As it gathered speed, however, it became apparent to him that he wasn't going to be able to catch up with it.)

HAPSLOCK: Holy crap!

(To make matters worse, the snarling grendiths were now in sight. With drool dripping from their mouths the pack of ten hungry beasts emerged from the woodlands and started racing down the road after them.)

HAPSLOCK: I think I'm going to have to fight them! I've never fought ten before; they don't normally attack in numbers. This won't be easy.

(They both trembled as he charged onwards. Even if he could defeat all ten, Hapslock wasn't sure whether he could protect a defenceless twelve year old girl at the same time. She'd be a sitting duck for any grendith he didn't have his eye specifically on.)

HAPSLOCK: When I put you down, Cayley, if you can climb a tree, do it! This won't be...

(Just then, he noticed the carriage up ahead start to slow as if going around a corner. At once his heart regained hope and his face lit up. There was a right angled turning in the road and the carriage was slowing down to take it. If he was quick enough, he could gain on it by taking a short cut through the trees.)

HAPSLOCK: Scratch that!

(With that, he put his head down and charged through the trees in a bid to cut the carriage off at the bend. With the grendiths gaining swiftly, he bounded through the trees, his face contorted with sheer determination.)

HAPSLOCK: Come on, Hapslock!!!

CAYLEY: Come on, Hapslock!!!

(Like a man possessed, he sprinted through the trees then leapt a fallen log, before bounding out onto the road, beside the carriage.)

HAPSLOCK: Yes!!!

(He then raced to the back platform as the carriage picked up speed once again. Wasting no time whatsoever, he immediately threw Cayley onto the platform. As she landed next to her dazed and bewildered sister, Hapslock then clambered up after her.)

HAPSLOCK: We did it!!!

(Just as he went to pull his foot up, however, the leading grendith leapt up and sunk its teeth into the sole of his boot.)

HAPSLOCK: Damn!!!

(Looking livid, Cayley snarled venomously then kicked it in the face.)

CAYLEY: Fuck off!!!

(The grendith yelped then plummeted to the ground allowing Hapslock to scramble safely onto the back platform. With the carriage swiftly picking up speed again they then sat and watched, gasping for breath, as the grendiths fell behind then gave up the chase. Drawing a deep sigh of relief, Hapslock looked to Cayley and smiled.)

HAPSLOCK: We made it.

(Cayley beamed.)

CAYLEY: We did! Thanks to you.

HAPSLOCK: Hey, you did your bit. You can be very proud of yourself, young lady.

(He held his hand aloft and Cayley slapped it.)

CAYLEY: Yay!

(She then glanced at Kyrie and her face dropped. Suddenly very much awake, Kyrie's nose was twitching and she was pointing inside the carriage.)

CAYLEY: But...

KYRIE: No buts, you said the F word!

(As Cayley climbed to her feet and miserably made her way inside, Hapslock bit his lip nervously.)

HAPSLOCK: Right... on that note, I'm off to let our driver know exactly what I think of him.

(As Hapslock climbed onto the roof of the carriage, Kyrie got to her feet and stepped inside.)

KYRIE: You just don't learn do you, missy? And they say *I* can't be taught!

(With that, she slammed the door behind her and spat on her hand.)

KYRIE: Skirt up, knickers down, ten of the best for you, madam. This is the third time today.

(While Kyrie proceeded to re-educate Cayley to the consequences of colourful language, Hapslock made his way slowly and cautiously across the roof of the carriage. Looking far from impressed, he edged his way to the driver's bench then dropped down next to Sadler. Taken utterly by surprise, Sadler screamed and swung his head towards him in horror.)

SADLER: Who the...

(He suddenly looked relieved.)

SADLER: Oh, it's you!

(His look of relief was short-lived, however, and swiftly turned to one of dismay.)

SADLER: Right... judging by that scowl, you're probably wondering why I took the carriage again...

(He sighed and hung his head.)

SADLER: I'm in trouble, aren't I?

(Hapslock folded his arms then scowled at him angrily.)

HAPSLOCK: You tried to ditch us again!

(Sadler looked to him imploringly.)

SADLER: That's not what happened!

(Despite being livid inside, Hapslock somehow managed to remain calm enough to ask one thing of him.)

HAPSLOCK: Explain yourself. And trust me, this had better be good!

SADLER: Well, what was I supposed to do? That rhino appeared and I ran. You saw me, it leapt in front of us and I took off into the woods.

HAPSLOCK: I remember. It was impressive, very brave.

SADLER: Well, no it wasn't, but anyway... I got lost in the woods.

(He ruffled his neck then continued.)

SADLER: Anyway, to cut a long story short, I wandered about for a bit then I heard a pack of grendiths howling, so I panicked and ran.

(He sighed.)

SADLER: Luckily I found the carriage almost immediately. And... you lot were nowhere to be seen, so I naturally assumed...

(He hunched his shoulders and glanced at Hapslock apologetically.)

SADLER: I assumed the rhino had killed you all.

(He shrugged innocently.)

SADLER: So I made good my escape. It's really quite innocent, you know? I didn't ditch you, I thought you were dead.

(Hapslock smiled at him coldly.)

HAPSLOCK: When we get to Port Amok, I'm taking you straight to jail.

(Sadler pouted.)

SADLER: But it was an innocent mistake!

HAPSLOCK: You heard the grendiths, saw the carriage then got on it and fled. Did you even bother to *find out* if we were okay? No, you tried to bugger off and leave us behind again.

SADLER: Yes, but like I keep telling you, I thought you were dead!

(He shrugged.)

SADLER: I didn't try to ditch you, I swear! Look, last time I took the carriage, I did it out of spite, I admit that was wrong. It's not like that this time. I genuinely thought you were dead. Okay, maybe I should have checked but I didn't think. There were grendiths coming and I was scared. I didn't want to get hurt! And I didn't want the horses to get hurt either. So, I took off.

HAPSLOCK: Right, but a knight of the realm and two young ladies getting hurt, that's okay, is it? As long as you and the horses are fine, that's okay?

(Sadler sighed.)

SADLER: Like I said, you weren't even there! You were presumed dead!

(He looked to Hapslock imploringly.)

SADLER: You make it sound like I deliberately left you all to die!

HAPSLOCK: You did!

SADLER: I didn't! Not intentionally, anyway.

(He sighed.)

SADLER: I *wouldn't* take off and leave you all to die. I just wouldn't! I wish neither you or Kyrie any harm, you have to know that.

HAPSLOCK: Bullshit. What was it you sung? How I wish they'd all just die! And you hoped their ship would sink! If that's not wishing harm on us then what is?

SADLER: I was just letting off steam. I've calmed down since then. I've got nothing against you *or* Kyrie anymore!

HAPSLOCK: What about Cayley?

(Sadler shrugged nonchalantly.)

SADLER: I already told you, I wish neither you or Kyrie any harm whatsoever.

(Hapslock shook his head.)

HAPSLOCK: So, you wish Cayley harm!

(Sadler shook his head.)

SADLER: No, of course not. I don't wish her harm... I just wouldn't be overly sad if harm came her way, but I don't wish it on her as such.

(He sighed in defeat.)

SADLER: Look, there was a hoard of grendiths on the loose so I took my *own* carriage and rode away on it to get away from them. If that's a crime then arrest me.

HAPSLOCK: Okay, I'm arresting you for treason, two counts.

(As Sadler gaped, Hapslock smiled at him coldly again.)

HAPSLOCK: You're going to hang, Mr Sadler. And unlike your act, the people who come to see it will find it thoroughly entertaining.

(Sadler looked to him with begging eyes.)

SADLER: Please. Give me another chance. I didn't mean to ditch you this time.

(Hapslock furrowed his brow then looked to Sadler furiously.)

HAPSLOCK: Right... listen...

(He then grabbed Sadler by the collar and snarled.)

HAPSLOCK: If anything happens to those two girls because of you, I'm going to send you to jail for rape. And you know what happens to rapists in jail!

SADLER: I...

HAPSLOCK: I mean it, Sadler! It's only through sheer good fortune that Cayley and I made it back this time. If anything like that happens again, you're in for a world of pain.

(Sadler nodded enthusiastically.)

SADLER: I accept your terms. Just... please give me another chance to prove myself.

(Hapslock threw him back in his seat and snarled.)

HAPSLOCK: Fine!

(He took the reins and sneered at him.)

HAPSLOCK: You're lucky I'm a tolerant man, Sadler.

(Sadler adjusted his collar and nodded nervously.)

SADLER: Yes, quite. You're one of the good ones.

HAPSLOCK: And don't you forget it.

(And so, they rode on side by side with Sadler staring from one side of the carriage apologetically as Hapslock rode on angrily. Not a word passed between them. Even when they eventually made it back to the main road, not a single word passed either of their lips. For mile upon mile they headed down the long straight road in perfect silence, passing numerous, milestones, turn offs and laybys without a single word. It wasn't until Sadler's stomach rumbled at round about midday, in fact, that a single sound emanated from either of them.)

SADLER: I'm hungry.

(Hapslock glared at him.)

HAPSLOCK: You'll have to wait; we've lost enough time as it is. We can eat when we get to Brampton Village.

SADLER: How far is that?

HAPSLOCK: About five hours away!

(Sadler looked mortified.)

SADLER: Five hours?

(Hapslock glared at him.)

HAPSLOCK: Got a problem with that?

(Sadler sunk in his seat and mumbled.)

SADLER: No. It's fine.

HAPSLOCK: Good. I was hoping we'd arrive in Port Amok sometime tomorrow but I don't think we're going to make it. Thanks to you, we've ended up on back roads and gone well out of our way.

(He puffed out.)

HAPSLOCK: Still, we're back on the main road now so it should be plain sailing from hereon in.

(And yet again, finding the moment too delicious to let pass, fate leapt onto the scene once more and unleashed its unique brand of black humour upon them. Having declared it would be plain sailing, the next thing Hapslock heard was an almighty cracking sound. Looking alarmed he peered over the side of the carriage and grimaced in frustration.)

HAPSLOCK: Oh, that's all we need.

(He sighed and sat up straight.)

HAPSLOCK: The front wheel on my side has cracked.

SADLER: Really?

HAPSLOCK: It's a bad one too.

SADLER: It must be if you can see it while we're moving.



HAPSLOCK: Exactly.

(Sadler sighed.)

SADLER: Annoyingly, I don't have a spare.

(Hapslock looked to him in dismay.)

HAPSLOCK: You don't?

SADLER: No, somebody stole it.

HAPSLOCK: Damn.

(He sighed heavily.)

HAPSLOCK: We passed a turn off a short way back. There was a milestone just before it saying there was a town half a mile away. We should turn back and head there.

(Sadler nodded.)

SADLER: Good idea. Someone there is bound to have a spare.

HAPSLOCK: Or at least there'll be a repair place, I expect.

(He sighed.)

HAPSLOCK: Let's turn round; I doubt that wheel's going to take us much further.

(With a heavy heart, he slowed the horses then turned the carriage around to head back the way they'd come. At this moment, Hapslock was deeply frustrated. After such a traumatic and crazy morning this latest setback was one he could well have done without. And so, despairingly, he led the horses back down the road then took the next turning towards a town called Kingswich. Once again, their journey was taking an unwanted and time consuming detour.)

*Chapter Five - Hexed, vexed and oversexed.*

*Kingswich Township, Castaria...*

Hapslock's decision to about turn and head for Kingswich had been an inspired one. Just as they'd arrived in town, three of the spokes in the wheel had shattered and they'd come to a halt on a small green by the roadside. The wheel was beyond repair. Having spent many hours travelling down uneven and rocky back roads, the wheel had simply fell victim to wear and tear and fallen apart. Had they not turned back, they'd have been stranded on the main road miles away from the nearest town.

Luckily for them, shortly after the wheel related disaster had occurred, a bypassing townsman had spotted their dilemma and informed them there was a second hand carriage parts dealer in town. Eager to get going again, Hapslock thanked the passer-by, asked him for directions then headed off to avail himself of their services. Convinced he could finally buy the ingredients he needs for his fire magic while he was away, he'd left his companions behind with something of a spring in his step.

Waiting for him back at the carriage, Sadler, Kyrie and Cayley were far from talkative. Sadler daren't look at the girls having left them behind at the mercy of the grendiths and Cayley had decided she didn't like Kyrie anymore. More than used to Cayley sulking and giving her the cold shoulder every few days, Kyrie just laid on the grass by the carriage and enjoyed a rest in the sunshine. Cayley in the meantime, knelt on the grass twenty feet away from her, scowling at her bitterly. Definitely not about to get involved, Sadler waited further up the road and played on his lute to keep himself entertained.

As Kyrie continued to ignore her scornful glances, Cayley growled and leant on her side, anything to keep her buttocks off of the ground. Having been spanked three times in one morning, her backside was extremely sore. Although she'd never admit it, those three spankings were the reason she was angry with Kyrie. Rather than own up to that embarrassing fact, however, she'd decided to create something else to complain about in the hope she could make her feel guilty. Child genius or not, she was still very much a child. Pouting at Kyrie bitterly, she furrowed her brow then told her what she thought of her.

CAYLEY: I don't like you!

(Kyrie smiled and opened one eye.)

KYRIE: Whatever, Cayley!

CAYLEY: You wanna know why?

KYRIE: I already know why, it's because I spanked you.

(Cayley flapped at her indignantly.)

CAYLEY: No, it's because you never say nice things to me! Not even when I'm good.

(Kyrie chuckled.)

KYRIE: You're getting desperate; you used that excuse to be mad at me two weeks ago.

CAYLEY: No, I didn't!

(Kyrie sat up and looked to her wearing an amused expression.)

KYRIE: Cayley, you nearly always sulk after a spanking but it's never *because* of the spanking, is it? Always some other lame excuse.

(She chuckled.)

KYRIE: At least until today, it was always a different excuse.

CAYLEY: It's not an excuse!

KYRIE: Let me see now... you've claimed I only buy clothes for myself, I never buy any food you like, I deliberately hurt you when I brush your hair, I deliberately walk too fast because I know you can't, I hog all the drinking water when we're between towns, I always burn your dinner on purpose when it's my turn to cook... there's hundreds of them.

(Cayley pouted at her and folded her arms.)

CAYLEY: And they're all true. You're just a big fat meany!

(Kyrie glared at her.)

KYRIE: I am *not* fat!!!

(She then looked enlightened and laid back down.)

KYRIE: I'm not going to argue with you, squirt. Sulk as much as you like.

CAYLEY: Whatever! Loser!

KYRIE: Grow up. You swore, you got spanked. Accept it!

CAYLEY: It's not about the spanking!!!

(She sighed heavily then looked sorrowfully at the grass.)

CAYLEY: Though, you didn't have to spank me that hard.

(Kyrie chuckled to herself.)

KYRIE: I knew it.

(Cayley snarled at her and mocked her words in a silly voice.)

CAYLEY: I knew it. I'm Kyrie and I spell my name wrong all the time.

(As Kyrie laughed at her, Cayley pouted and looked away bitterly.)

CAYLEY: I don't like you.

KYRIE: Yeah, you mentioned that. Now be quiet, your whiney voice is giving me a headache.

(Just then, Sir Hapslock came storming back to them with a face like thunder. Having never seen him look so furious, both Kyrie and Cayley jumped to their feet and raced over to him. Having seen him this livid on several occasions, Sadler wisely kept his distance. Looking like he was about to explode, as soon as the girls reached him, he immediately aired his frustrations to them.)

HAPSLOCK: This town is bloody useless. Not a fleur rouge or a grange pepper any bloody where! Is it really too much to ask for someone to supply fire magic ingredients?

(He growled.)

HAPSLOCK: Apparently it is! The shopkeepers all stared at me like I'd ask for bag of hyena droppings.

(He snarled and his face burned even redder.)

HAPSLOCK: As for those little buggers in the carriage repair shop... I'm a knight of the realm, for pity's sake. How dare they speak to me like that?

CAYLEY: What happened?

KYRIE: Yeah, what poop face said.

HAPSLOCK: I'll tell you what happened, they told me they were going to lunch in ten minutes and refused to help. They told me to come back in 90 minutes!

(Cayley looked uncertain.)

CAYLEY: That... doesn't sound unreasonable.

HAPSLOCK: No? I'm a knight of the realm! When I demand assistance they're obliged to help me by law. When I informed them of that though, they changed their tactics. They told me they're out of stock! Of everything! Until, surprise, surprise, after lunch! The bastards. And being out of stock isn't something I can legally chastise them for, so we're going to have to wait.

(He sighed heavily.)

HAPSLOCK: I don't want to be waiting around for another two hours.

KYRIE: Two hours? You said ninety minutes, that's not even an hour!

(As Cayley and Hapslock gave her a condescending glance, Kyrie pouted.)

KYRIE: Shut up!

(She glared at Cayley.)

KYRIE: Don't make me slap you!

(As Cayley shied away from her, Hapslock groaned bitterly.)

HAPSLOCK: We'll wait, we have no choice, but once it's over I'm going to give those three young lads a sound thrashing!

(Kyrie suddenly looked interested.)

KYRIE: Three young lads? How young?

HAPSLOCK: About your age. That's not the point! They disrespected me! I don't care if they *are* young; they need to be taught a lesson.

(Kyrie nodded excitedly then looked to Hapslock.)

KYRIE: Which way was it? If they haven't gone to lunch yet, maybe I can convince them.

(Cayley shook her head.)

CAYLEY: Three young men and suddenly she's interested.

KYRIE: Shut your face, fart breath.

CAYLEY: Hey!

KYRIE: Well, Frank? Directions? They might listen to me; I have a way with men.

CAYLEY: You mean you have *your* way with men.

(Kyrie snarled.)

KYRIE: You're asking for a pasting, Cayley.

(Once again, Cayley reeled back and clammed up.)

KYRIE: Frank? Directions!

(Hapslock shook his head.)

HAPSLOCK: It's pointless, Kyrie. And stop calling me Frank!

(He rolled his eyes.)

HAPSLOCK: They won't help you. And if you threaten them they'll claim they're out of stock again. I can't force anyone to sell things to me unless I know they have them in stock.

They've got us beaten, I'm afraid.

(Kyrie pouted.)

KYRIE: You've got no faith in me, have you? I can do it, trust me.

(Hapslock looked to her then shrugged.)

HAPSLOCK: Fine. Just head up that main road there and turn left at the first alley. It's at the end of that alley.

(Kyrie nodded then looked to Cayley.)

KYRIE: Left?

CAYLEY: The boot with the L on it.

(Kyrie looked at her boots then blushed at Cayley. Cayley rolled her eyes then made an L shape and held it to her forehead.)

CAYLEY: The one shaped like what you are. Loser.

(Kyrie looked down at the L on her left boot and nodded.)

KYRIE: Gotcha! Right, I'm off.

(As she turned to go, Hapslock looked stunned.)

HAPSLOCK: Wait! You're not taking Cayley? You normally insist she goes everywhere with you.

(Kyrie looked shiftily and glanced from side to side.)

KYRIE: Um... no, I fancy some alone time. You know, time alone to clear my head.

(Cayley scoffed.)

CAYLEY: Of what? There's naff all in there!

(Kyrie pointed at her bitterly as she turned to race away.)

KYRIE: Take good care of her, Frank. I want her to be in one piece when I slap her silly later.

(With that, she dashed off up the road. Watching her go, Cayley shook her head.)

CAYLEY: I wish she wouldn't...

(She clammed up and hung her head.)

HAPSLOCK: What is it, Cayley?

CAYLEY: Nothing. Just don't expect her to be quick when there's young men involved.

(Keeping a sharp eye on her left boot, Kyrie raced up the street then rushed down the first alley on the left as instructed. It was rare for her to understand directions, even simple ones but today, she'd managed to follow them to the letter. Feeling extremely pleased with herself, she bounded up the thin dank alleyway when she spotted three young men walking towards her. Unsure whether it was the three men from the carriage parts shop or not she bit her lip and raced on towards them scrutinising them with her eyes. Two of them were white skinned, one with brown hair, the other with blonde and the third was black with thick afro hair. Almost immediately she satisfied herself that it couldn't be them. They were nothing like the description that Hapslock had given her. As she started to reach them, however, she suddenly didn't feel so sure. Remembering that Hapslock hadn't even given her a description of them in the first place, she then realised they might well be the lads she was looking for after all. Eager to find out, she rushed up to them and smiled.)

KYRIE: Excuse me...

(The lads all looked to one another deviously then the blonde one stepped forth.)

LONDE: Give us your money, bitch!

(At once they all pulled knives on her.)

KYRIE: Hey, that's not nice.

(The one with brown hair scoffed.)

ROWN: We're not trying to be nice!

(The black one nodded.)

JAFFRO: Exactly. Now hand it over or we'll cut you, bitch!

(Kyrie sighed.)

KYRIE: You don't want to mug me.

LONDE: No? Why's that then?

KYRIE: Because...

(With that, she leapt up and high-kicked the brown haired one and left him dazed and semi-conscious on the floor. As the black one then tried to rush her, she sunk down and swept his legs away. As he hit the ground and banged his head, he too was barely conscious. With his two friends down, the blonde one backed away from her and threw his knife down.)

LONDE: Alright! You win... you can go.

(Kyrie looked suspicious and raised an eyebrow.)

KYRIE: Are you the three from the carriage place?

(Londe looked nervous.)

LONDE: Yeah... why do you ask?

(Kyrie placed her hands on her hips angrily.)

KYRIE: Because I came here to get some sex and I'm damn well gonna get some.

(With that, she hoisted up her skirt and backed up against the wall of the alley.)

KYRIE: Now get over here and do me!

(As she slipped her knickers down and kicked them off, Londe beamed.)

LONDE: Score! Those two get a beating; I get a knee trembler with a fit bird!

KYRIE: Hurry up! I haven't had a shag in two days and I'm getting cranky.

(Looking delighted, Londe rushed up to her and pushed his pants down to free his manhood.)

KYRIE: Right...

(With that, she pulled him close, reached down to help him penetrate her then placed her hands over his shoulders.)

KYRIE: Go!

(As he started to thrust, a look of delight and relief crossed her brow. Her appetite for sex was insatiable and if she went too long without it she started to stress. She was completely addicted and could easily become irritable like a smoker deprived of cigarettes. Right now, however, she was happily feeding her habit and groaned with ecstasy.)

KYRIE: Oh, that's nice, keep doing it like that.

(Much to her dismay, however, Londe turned red and groaned with unreserved joy.)

LONDE: I'm gonna cum!!!

KYRIE: Not inside me, you're not!

(With that, she pushed him away, allowing him to spill his seed on the ground.)

LONDE: Excellent.

(Kyrie pouted, clearly disagreeing.)

KYRIE: It's over already?

(She furrowed her brow then pointed at the black man as he lay on the ground in a daze.)

KYRIE: You! Get over here and finish what your friend started.

(Making a swift recovery, he sat up and looked to her excitedly.)

JAFFRO: Me?

KYRIE: Yes you!

(He raised a triumphant fist and leapt to his feet.)

JAFFRO: I must warn you though; it's true what they say about black guys.

KYRIE: I know! You just tried to mug *me*, remember?

(He gave her a bitter glance and slipped his pants down.)

JAFFRO: Not that!

KYRIE: What then? That you can dance and throw balls into hoops? What a useful contribution to society!

(Jaffro scoffed.)

JAFFRO: You're a racist.

KYRIE: No I'm not. If I was, I wouldn't let you shag me!

JAFFRO: Well... true.

(With that, he stepped up to her and once again, she guided his penis inside her then placed her hands over his shoulders.)

KYRIE: Go! And don't be as quick about it like blonde boy over there!

(As he started to thrust, Kyrie went cross-eyed and exhaled.)

KYRIE: Damn!!!

(Jaffro beamed.)

JAFFRO: Yup, hung like a donkey.

KYRIE: I've had bigger!

JAFFRO: Excuse me?

KYRIE: Just keep thrusting.

(Quickening his thrusts, Jaffro sneered.)

JAFFRO: I hope you realise you're being spoiled now. Once you go black, you never go back. White men will never be able to satisfy you.

(Kyrie laughed, groaned with ecstasy then laughed again.)

KYRIE: I've gone black loads of times and I *always* go back. White men, black men, yellow men... hell they don't even have to be men! I don't care about colour or size, I judge on performance!

(She looked at the blonde guy and shook her head.)

KYRIE: I judge you harshly!

JAFFRO: Excuse me?

KYRIE: Not you, you're doing well so far.

JAFFRO: Right.

(She groaned in delight then bit her lip and looked thoughtful.)

KYRIE: Hey, tell me something. How come a black man's sperm isn't black?

(Quickly realising he was having sex with an idiot, Jaffro chuckled.)

JAFFRO: Same reason a pink skinned man's sperm isn't pink.

KYRIE: I don't follow.

(Jaffro laughed out loud as he thrust his penis into her.)

JAFFRO: Do you always talk this much during sex?

(Annoyed at being laughed at, Kyrie scowled at him.)

KYRIE: Not when I'm enjoying it! Now shut up and pump!

(Jaffro snarled.)

JAFFRO: Fine!

(With that, he doubled his efforts and pulled her backside close.)

KYRIE: Oh my god, that's amazing!!!

JAFFRO: Yeah?

(He grimaced as he thrust with all his might.)

JAFFRO: You like that do you? You like that big black dick, huh?

(He gritted his teeth.)

JAFFRO: All the girls love a big black cock!!!

(Halting her moans of delight, Kyrie furrowed her brow at him.)

KYRIE: Dude, calm down. We get it, you're black.

JAFFRO: What?

KYRIE: Big whoop, you're black. You're black because your parents were black, *you* haven't achieved anything! Get over it!

(She rolled her eyes then exhaled heavily.)

KYRIE: That's perfect! Like that!!!

JAFFRO: No surprises there, I always do better when I'm angry!!!

(He looked to her as he continued to thrust hard.)

JAFFRO: God, you're annoying!

(Kyrie said nothing as her pleasure escalated.)

JAFFRO: Say something!

(She replied in a strained voice.)

KYRIE: Can't! Cumming!

(Seeing he was about to do likewise, she puffed out then pushed him out and away, again allowing him to spill his seed on the ground.)

KYRIE: Wow!

(She beamed.)

KYRIE: Right! I'm satisfied now! I'll be off.

(As Jaffro went and sat down next to Londe, looking smug, the brown haired guy sat up and pouted.)

ROWN: What about me? Don't I get a go?

(Kyrie rolled her eyes and sighed.)

KYRIE: Fine. Another one for the road won't hurt, I suppose.

(With that, she walked over to where he lay, pulled his pants down then mounted him.)

KYRIE: Happy now?

ROWN: Very!

(He grabbed her hips and puffed out in delight as she started to ride him.)

ROWN: Best mugging ever!

(Just then, as she rode up, his penis fell out of her.)

KYRIE: Damn, this is awkward; you have a very tiny penis.

(As Rown whimpered, she put him back in and rode lower.)

KYRIE: Don't worry, I'll make allowances. It's about performance, remember.

(Rown raised an eyebrow.)

ROWN: Good point.

(With that, he lifted her buttocks and started to thrust upwards at her. At once, Kyrie went cross eyed.)

KYRIE: Oh my god! I so have to teach Frank how to do this!!!

(Rown beamed.)

ROWN: I aim to please.

KYRIE: And you're a bloody good shot!!!

(Several minutes later, when Rown was ready to discharge, she climbed off of him and as always, let him spill his seed elsewhere. Looking worn out, she stepped to the side of the alley and swept her hand through her hair.)

KYRIE: Brown haired bloke, you were amazing. That really was a victory for the little guy.

(She exhaled.)

KYRIE: You were incredible and in no way inadequate!

ROWN: Thank you. We smaller guys need to hear that kind of validation from time to time.

KYRIE: So I heard.

ROWN: You know, I heard some writers with small penises, write stories about moments like this just to make themselves feel better.

(He shrugged.)

ROWN: That's writers though! We're not writers, what we just did isn't a reflection of *anyone's* insecurities or anxieties in any way, shape or form.

KYRIE: Of course!

(She smiled to herself then looked to the three exhausted men before her.)

KYRIE: So, you rudely tried to mug me *and* I had sex with all three of you.

(Jaffro looked to Londe then scowled at Kyrie uneasily.)

JAFFRO: Now I suppose you want something in return.

KYRIE: No. You tried to mug me which was kinda mean but then you all kindly shagged me, so that makes us even.

(She smiled.)

KYRIE: Bye!

(As she headed off, they watched her go and smiled to one another.)

LONDE: Best lunch break ever.

JAFFRO: I'll say.

ROWN: It'll take some beating, that's for sure.

(As Kyrie strolled away smiling, she suddenly started to feel awkward. It was as if she'd forgotten something but couldn't think what it was for the life of her. Unable to recall anything, she paused, looked skywards and thought long and hard. It wasn't until a few minutes had passed that she suddenly remembered sitting at the roadside with her angry sister while Hapslock went to find a wheel for the carriage. At once, it all came back to her and she rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: I'm a dipshit!

(With that, she about turned and paced back up the alley. Fact was, as soon as Hapslock had mentioned the three lads, the prospect of having sex became real and she'd forgotten all about the wheel. Even before she left Hapslock and Cayley's side, any mention of the wheel went into her head and got lost in the empty wilderness within. When it finally staggered its way to her brain, like most words, it had been transformed into the word sex. She very much had



a one track mind. She hadn't gone to find to a wheel and stumbled luckily onto some sex, she'd gone to the alley specifically for sex with the possibility of finding a wheel merely a potential bonus. As she made her way back up the alley, she found the three men exactly where she'd left them, seated around on the ground looking smug.)

KYRIE: Hi, guys!

(They all looked to her and smiled.)

KYRIE: I need a wheel for my carriage!

(The lads all looked to one another and grinned.)

ROWN: Sure, we can do that.

LONDE: Absolutely.

JAFFRO: Of course!

(He grinned.)

JAFFRO: But first, we all want a blow job!

(Rown and Londe grinned.)

ROWN: Nice!

LONDE: Very!

(Kyrie shrugged.)

KYRIE: Fine!

(She pointed to Rown.)

KYRIE: I'll suck his, you can two can suck each others.

JAFFRO: What?

LONDE: Fuck off! We want blow jobs from you!

(Kyrie bit her lip.)

KYRIE: I have to suck all three of you?

JAFFRO: Well, duh!

KYRIE: Doesn't seem fair but... okay.

LONDE: Nice!

KYRIE: Then you'll give me a wheel, right?

ROWN: We'll *sell* you a wheel!

KYRIE: Agreed. Who's going first then?

---

A full eighty minutes after she'd left, Kyrie returned to the carriage with the three young lads and two new wheels. Kyrie hadn't known the size required so they'd brought the two most common sizes. Mercifully, one of them fit. Having checked there was no damage to the other three wheels, the three lads immediately set about changing the wheel. It was a job Hapslock or Sadler could easily have done had they had the tools with them. Instead they had to pay the three young men to do it. It was a service that didn't come cheap. Not about to spend the king's money on letting them to do a shoddy job, Hapslock watched closely as they set to work. Worried about his carriage, Sadler also watched on with interest. Even Kyrie and Cayley watched them carefully. Cayley was interested to see how it was done; Kyrie just liked to watch men work. And so, the three men went about their task in the shadow of four interested viewers.

LONDE: You really did a number on that old wheel. Though, to fall apart like *that* it must have been fitted wrong in the first place.

(Sadler nodded.)

SADLER: Maybe. There's a lot of charlatans out there, after all!

JAFFRO: Oh, we know.

ROWN: We heard about one guy who likes to take the old wheel off a carriage then renegotiate on the deal before he puts the new one on.

(Hapslock frowned.)

HAPSLOCK: That's not even legal, is it?

LONDE: It's legal, yeah. Not exactly moral though.

JAFFRO: It's a diabolical liberty, that's what it is.

ROWN: Terrible way to behave.

(Kyrie chuckled.)

KYRIE: Says the three guys who tried to mug me.

(Being in the presence of a lawman, their attempt to mug her was the last thing the three lads needed her to mention and as soon as the words passed her lips, they all shuddered in terror.

Quick to think of an excuse for their behaviour, Londe looked to her nervously and grinned.)

LONDE: Um... yeah, that was just a joke, actually. We were kidding.

(Delighted by his friend's quick thinking, Jaffro looked relieved.)

JAFFRO: Yeah, we like a joke.

ROWN: We do. We weren't really going to mug you; we were just trying to break the ice.

LONDE: Yeah, it's our way of meeting girls.

(Hapslock raised a suspicious eyebrow.)

HAPSLOCK: You meet girls by pretending to mug them?

(He scoffed.)

HAPSLOCK: I bet that's a successful tactic.

(Rown beamed.)

ROWN: It worked today.

JAFFRO: Yeah, we all got to meet Kyrie.

LONDE: And got a blow job and a shag each.

(Rown and Jaffro hunched their shoulders and glared at him.)

LONDE: What?

(They both gestured towards Sir Hapslock with their eyes.)

ROWN: Knight, dude.

LONDE: So?

JAFFRO: She's his charge.

(Londe shrugged and glanced at where Hapslock was standing.)

LONDE: He seems okay with it.

(He nodded sternly.)

LONDE: Right, that's the old wheel, sorted. Now we need to lift the carriage and slide the new one into place.

(As the three men set about their task, Hapslock continued to watch them emotionlessly. He looked very much enthralled by what they were doing. In reality however, he was trying desperately to hide from his feelings. Upon hearing that Kyrie had had sex with all three of these men, he'd felt an aching in his heart. Part of him felt like crying and part of him felt like rampaging and killing these three men horribly. Conflicting emotions like this was not something he was used to and his mind was running riot. He couldn't understand why he felt like he did. He'd suppressed the idea that he could have feelings for this idiotic girl and yet all the signs were pointing to it being true. For such a great sadness and rage to engulf him at the same time, there could be no other explanation. He was falling in love with her. As this realisation hit him, his jaw dropped and he turned pale. This wasn't supposed to happen to a wandering knight. They were notorious womanisers; they didn't fall in love with anyone, especially not their charges. Not knowing what to do with this realisation, he looked to Kyrie and forced a nervous smile. As she smiled warmly back at him, he shuddered and spammed his forehead.)

HAPSLOCK: Good grief!

(Bewildered by the moment, he had to step back and take a moment for himself. Kyrie's smile had warmed the cockles of his heart. It was as if her eyes had lit up the universe. Clueless as to how to handle the situation, he looked back at Kyrie and sighed. She was watching the three lads fit the new wheel with a lusty expression on her face, one he found hard to watch. Lost in his thoughts he then glanced at Cayley. For some reason, she was looking to him wearing a saddened expression. Quickly realising he must look thoroughly miserable; he cleared his throat then stepped back towards the carriage purposefully, deliberately hiding from his pain.)

HAPSLOCK: How are we doing?

(Cayley looked to him warmly.)

CAYLEY: You okay, Sir Hapslock?

(Hapslock nodded to her forcefully.)

HAPSLOCK: I'm more than okay, I'm outstanding!

(Quickly realising that overcompensating was just as likely to give away his emotions as throwing himself on the ground and crying his eyes out, he coughed and tried to qualify his comment.)

HAPSLOCK: Outstanding because the wheel is almost fixed. We're not far from Port Amok and there's a lovely blue sky above us.

(He winked at Cayley.)

HAPSLOCK: And because I'm travelling with my two favourite charges.

(He ruffled Cayley's hair.)

HAPSLOCK: You being my favourite, you little scamp.

(As the three lads continued to fix the wheel, Kyrie sucked her teeth and looked to him nervously.)

KYRIE: Tell me you didn't just call her a scamp!

(Hapslock looked to her uneasily.)

HAPSLOCK: Shouldn't I have? It's a playful enough term.

KYRIE: Maybe so, but apart from having her hair ruffled, nothing annoys her more.

(Hapslock bit his lip.)

HAPSLOCK: Oh... I did both.

(He looked to Cayley and grinned apologetically.)

HAPSLOCK: Sorry.

(Cayley pouted at him.)

CAYLEY: Why don't you just tickle my tummy and throw a ball for me to chase?

HAPSLOCK: I...

CAYLEY: I'm a child not a puppy!

(Hapslock threw his hands up in defeat.)

HAPSLOCK: I was just trying to be friendly. I'll be mean from now on, if you'd rather.

CAYLEY: Actually I would. Scamp indeed.

(Just then, Londe stood tall and beamed as his two colleagues started to pack away their tools.)

LONDE: There you go, all finished. And this time we didn't even renegotiate half way through the job.

(He then gasped in horror at himself.)

LONDE: Not that we normally would! Only other people do that. We're not muggers or charlatans, no way, no sir, no how.

(Hapslock gave him a doubting glance.)

HAPSLOCK: Right... how much do I owe you, anyway?

LONDE: 300 groats ought to cover it.

(Hapslock sighed.)

HAPSLOCK: 300? Very well. It's expensive but we're desperate.

(As Hapslock reached for his coin purse, Londe looked to Kyrie and winked.)

LONDE: Hi.

(Hapslock growled.)

HAPSLOCK: Who do I pay?

(Rown stepped up to him and beamed.)

ROWN: That'll be me.

(As Hapslock started to count out the coins, Londe gave Kyrie another knowing glance then turned to face Cayley.)

LONDE: You must be the younger sister.

(Cayley frowned.)

CAYLEY: I'm an individual in my own right, actually.

LONDE: Yes, yes you are. And you're a pretty little thing too.

(Cayley didn't know whether to vomit or exhale lovingly. She wasn't used to being the focus of a boy's attention and she couldn't decide whether she loved it or hated it. Her heart swooned but her head felt repulsed. All she could do was stare at him in bewilderment.)

CAYLEY: I'm... pretty?

LONDE: Yes, you are. Some might even say hot.

(Cayley giggled and played with her hair nervously, not knowing where to look or put her hands.)

CAYLEY: Don't be silly.

KYRIE: Don't be disgusting more like! She's twelve!

(Londe scoffed.)

LONDE: Twelve? Bollocks!

(Cayley pouted at him angrily.)

CAYLEY: I am! I'm twelve.

LONDE: Fuck off. Whoever heard of a twelve year old with tits *that* big?

(As Cayley folded her arms across her chest and turned away in distress, Londe looked to Rown and Jaffro with a highly amused smile on his face.)

LONDE: This girl's got tits like giant water melons and she's trying to say she's twelve!

(He then grimaced with uncertainty.)

LONDE: What's up, lads? Why are looking at me like that?

(As Hapslock's shadow engulfed him, Londe gulped and slowly turned to face him.)

LONDE: Oh, shit.

(As his two friends fled, Londe gulped and looked Hapslock nervously in the eye.)

LONDE: Not the face!

(Hapslock spoke down him in uncertain tone.)

HAPSLOCK: Apologise to the young lady.

(Londe whimpered and peered round him at Cayley.)

LONDE: I'm sorry! You're definitely twelve!

(He then looked up at Hapslock and forced a weak smile.)

LONDE: Can I go now?

HAPSLOCK: Depends. You wanna punch him, Kyrie?

(Kyrie looked thoughtful.)

KYRIE: Sure. Why not? There's no excuse for what he said. I mean, for a twelve year old she *does* have massive boobies but...

(As Cayley pouted at her sorrowfully, Kyrie continued.)

KYRIE: No matter how giant her boobs are, it's not nice to go on about them, especially when she's so self-conscious about them.

(She nodded firmly.)

KYRIE: Fine, I'll hit him.

(With that, she threw a lightning fast fist at Londe's face.)

KYRIE: That's for pointing out my sister's massive tits.

(As his unconscious body hit the floor, Kyrie nodded firmly then smiled at Cayley.)

KYRIE: There you go, sister face.

(She then looked to Hapslock.)

KYRIE: Now, no more banging on about Cayley's giant boobies.

(She sighed.)

KYRIE: Making her feel uncomfortable just because she's got enormous tits... it's not on.

(Hapslock watched Cayley flee in tears towards the back of the carriage and furrowed his brow.)

HAPSLOCK: Um, Kyrie?

KYRIE: I mean it, Frank. She hates it when people go on about her large breasts all the time and I won't stand for it.

HAPSLOCK: Yes, but...

KYRIE: Anyway, enough about Cayley's ample bosom, we should get going.

(She suddenly looked stumped.)

KYRIE: Where is she anyway?

HAPSLOCK: She just ran into the carriage crying.

(Kyrie sighed and shook her head.)

KYRIE: Poor thing. He must have really upset her, going on about her giant bazookas like that.

(She smiled.)

KYRIE: You get the carriage going and I'll cheer her up. It's time like this that she needs her big sister to give her a hug.

(As she disappeared around the back of the carriage, Hapslock rolled his eyes.)

HAPSLOCK: I'm sure she'll be delighted to see you, Kyrie.

(He looked to Sadler then gestured to the top of the carriage.)

HAPSLOCK: Shall we?

SADLER: Absolutely. I think all this has given me an idea for a song.

HAPSLOCK: Oh god no. Has it?

(Sadler frowned.)

SADLER: Don't be like that, you haven't heard it yet.

HAPSLOCK: Just get up on the carriage, will you? We've wasted enough time as it is.

SADLER: Fine.

(And so, at last, the journey began once again. Raring to make up for lost time; Hapslock guided the carriage out of the town and back onto the main road. Desperate to get as close to Port Amok as possible before nightfall, he hurried the carriage forth determinedly. With concentration etched on his face, he stared hard at the road ahead. Right now, it was important for him to focus hard on where they were going, partly because danger could be lurking anywhere but mostly because it helped him block out the sound of Sadler practicing his new song in the seat next to him. Caring very little for Hapslock's disdain, Sadler strummed gently on his lute and sung under his breath, anxious to perfect the lyrics. Horrifyingly for Sir Hapslock, only ten minutes into their journey, Sadler sat back and beamed.)

SADLER: Perfect, all done!

(Hapslock looked to him in horror.)

HAPSLOCK: That was fast!

SADLER: It's only a short one and besides, I'm a professional. What did you expect?

(Hapslock shuddered.)

HAPSLOCK: I really have no idea what to expect.

(Sadler beamed.)

SADLER: Then you're in for a pleasant surprise.

(He strummed his lute.)

SADLER: Ready?

HAPSLOCK: No!

SADLER: Then I'll begin!

(With that, he started to play his lute then burst into song. In the carriage in the meantime, Kyrie's attempts to console Cayley hadn't gone as well as she'd expected. Cayley was genuinely upset and sitting in the corner tearfully. Having tried everything from hugging her to kind words, Kyrie couldn't seem to cheer her up. Stuck for what to try to next, she sat across the carriage from her scrutinising her with her eyes as she desperately tried to think of an idea. Sick of being stared at, the puffy eyed Cayley turned her head to face her and scowled.)

CAYLEY: Stop staring!!!

(Kyrie bit her lip.)

KYRIE: I'm not! I'm just... looking at you while I think.

CAYLEY: That's staring!

KYRIE: No it's not.

(As Cayley faced away from her, Kyrie scratched her head.)

KYRIE: Call me paranoid, but I'm beginning to think it's *me* you're angry at! Properly angry, not sulking because you got spanked angry...

(She then gasped and placed a stunned hand over her mouth.)

KYRIE: Oh my god! You are! You're angry at *me*!!!

(Cayley gave her a dagger look then stared away again.)

KYRIE: Wow.

(She placed a finger to her lips and thought long and hard.)

KYRIE: It can't be the spankings, you sulk, you don't get angry...

(She looked to her nervously and spoke in a small inquiring voice.)

KYRIE: It's not because I'm prettier than you, is it?

(Cayley scoffed and glared at her through disappointed eyes.)

CAYLEY: You don't have a clue, do you?

KYRIE: Generally? No.

CAYLEY: You just don't think.

(Kyrie pouted.)

KYRIE: Thinking makes my brain hurt.

(As Kyrie crossed her legs and sighed, Cayley winced and turned her head away.)

CAYLEY: Oh my god; put some knickers on, for crying out loud.

KYRIE: I've *got* knickers on!

(She bent forwards to look up her own skirt.)

KYRIE: Holy crap, where'd they go?

(As Cayley seethed, Kyrie suddenly looked enlightened.)

KYRIE: I kicked them off to shag those three guys and forgot to pick them up.

(She sighed.)

KYRIE: Damn it, they were my favourite pair.

(Cayley threw her arms into the air and raised her voice.)

CAYLEY: For heaven's sake, Kyrie, listen to yourself.

(Kyrie looked baffled.)

KYRIE: What for?

CAYLEY: I shagged *this* guy, I shagged *that* guy...

(Kyrie was livid.)

KYRIE: You did what???

CAYLEY: I was doing an impression of *you*, stupid.

(Kyrie looked extremely relieved.)

KYRIE: Thank god for that.

(She gave her a pitying glance.)

KYRIE: That was a pretty awful impression, by the way. I don't sound anything like a whiney twelve year old.

(Cayley sighed heavily.)

CAYLEY: It's hard work being angry with you.

KYRIE: Yeah, you might as well give up.

CAYLEY: No!!!

(She pouted.)

CAYLEY: You embarrassed me so much today.

KYRIE: I did? How?

CAYLEY: When you went off and had sex with those boys.

KYRIE: They were men, Cayley; don't make me out to be a Sadler.

(Cayley snarled and raised her voice.)

CAYLEY: Whatever! You never stop and think about *me* when you're doing that kind of thing, do you?

(Kyrie screwed up her face and shuddered.)

KYRIE: Of course not! When I'm getting my end away, you're the last person I want to think about.

CAYLEY: I don't mean it like that.

(Kyrie glared at her coldly.)

KYRIE: Then explain yourself because I'm starting to get pissed off with you raising your voice at me.

CAYLEY: Fine I will. Do you know what people think of you when they hear how many guys you've had sex with?

(Kyrie shrugged.)

KYRIE: How lucky I am?

CAYLEY: No, they...

KYRIE: How pretty I am?

(Cayley seethed.)

CAYLEY: No, they think...

(Kyrie bounced excitedly.)

KYRIE: Got it! It's how sexy I am, isn't it?

CAYLEY: No, you sappy bint! They think you're disgusting!

(Kyrie's jaw dropped.)

KYRIE: How could you say that?

CAYLEY: It's true. They think you're a disgusting slag.

(Kyrie looked tearful.)

KYRIE: Shit, Cayley, that's mean.

CAYLEY: Suck it up, Kyrie. The truth hurts. They all think you're a filthy whore then they look at me and assume I'm going to be just like you.

(Kyrie whimpered.)

KYRIE: What?

CAYLEY: Like today when that boy boasted that they all shagged you. You should have seen Hapslock's face...

KYRIE: You mean Frank or the weird one?

CAYLEY: Frank!

(She rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: He looked at you with disgust then he looked at me! It's not fair. Everyone we meet assumes I'm going to be a slag, just because *you* can't keep your legs shut for five minutes.

(She snarled.)

CAYLEY: You don't ever think about that though, do you? You go off and have a good time and you couldn't care how it affects me!!!

(Kyrie furrowed her brow and snarled back at her.)

KYRIE: You think I don't care about you? Is that it? I've got a fucking funny way of showing it then. How many times have I risked my life to save you? Eh? Come on, answer me that, you ungrateful little cow.

CAYLEY: I'm not a cow!!!

KYRIE: Stop acting like one then!

(She seethed.)

KYRIE: It's just been you and me for two years, Cayley. So what if the odd person we cross paths with thinks I'm a slut and looks down on you? Who the fuck are they?

CAYLEY: You don't have to swear so much.

KYRIE: Yes I do! You've really pissed me off! I don't have to justify myself to anyone, especially not to you. Why the fuck should I care what some passing stranger thinks?

CAYLEY: Because they're right! You *are* disgusting!!!

(Kyrie made a fist then sucked her teeth.)

KYRIE: I'm really gonna punch you in a minute!

(Cayley pouted at her furiously.)

CAYLEY: Go on then, I don't care.

KYRIE: You will when you've got no teeth left to eat with!

CAYLEY: Yeah right. Go on, hit me. That doesn't prove me wrong. You're still disgusting.

KYRIE: No, I'm not!!!

CAYLEY: Yes, you are. You had sex with three men at lunchtime, it's gross!

(Kyrie scoffed.)

KYRIE: You know what, this is fucking stupid.

CAYLEY: You're stupid!

KYRIE: Why am I arguing with *you* about sex? What the hell do you know about it?

(Cayley went to mumble a reply but could only muster gibberish.)

KYRIE: Exactly, nothing! You don't know what it's like! You've never even *had* a guy put his doodah in your flimflam.

(Cayley leant back from her and shuddered.)

CAYLEY: That's not what my flimflam's for!!!

(Kyrie scoffed.)

KYRIE: I think you'll find it is! Look...

(She shook her head furiously and placed her hands on her hips.)

KYRIE: When you're grown up and know what sex is, we'll talk. Until then, shut your fucking mouth and don't ever judge me again. Got it?

(Cayley pouted bitterly.)

CAYLEY: It's not about *me* judging *you*, it's about people judging me *because* of you!

(Kyrie looked to her emptily for a moment then scratched her head.)

KYRIE: It's not about judging who because of what now?

(Cayley sighed heavily.)



CAYLEY: Forget it. There's no point discussing it. You're a slut and you always will be. If people look down on me because of it, then why should *you* give a crap?

(She sneered.)

CAYLEY: I don't matter, obviously.

(Kyrie offered her a consoling smile.)

KYRIE: Look, Cayley...

(Before she could carry on with her sentence, Cayley snapped at her.)

CAYLEY: Just forget it, okay. A thick waste of space like you could never understand.

(She sneered and looked away.)

CAYLEY: Go and lick a shelf or something.

(She scoffed.)

CAYLEY: Pointless halfwit.

(As she snarled ahead of herself, she had no idea how much she'd hurt Kyrie. Tears were streaming down both her cheeks and she had a severe aching in her heart. They both joked about Kyrie's intellectual shortcomings from time to time, and now again Cayley would throw it out as a flippant remark, but she'd never battered her with it in a heated argument before. This was the type of cheap shot used by people who wished her harm; she never thought she'd hear it from the one person in the world she dearly loved. Oblivious to just how much she'd crushed her sister's heart, Cayley scoffed then glared at her once more.)

CAYLEY: You know what? One of these day's I'm gonna...

(Before she could finish her sentence, however, Kyrie slapped her fully across the cheek with her open hand.)

KYRIE: Shut up!!!

(Cayley grabbed her burning red cheek and tears poured down her face.)

CAYLEY: What did you do that for???

(Kyrie bellowed at her furiously.)

KYRIE: Just shut up, you nasty little bitch!!!

(Matching her fury, Cayley bellowed back at her.)

CAYLEY: I hate you!!!

KYRIE: Fuck off then!!!

(With that, Cayley threw herself face down on her bed and cried her eyes out. Furious with her, Kyrie sat down and rolled onto her side, before also starting to sob heavily. They'd never fallen out with one another this intensely before and they were both extremely upset. Such was the extent of the hurt they were both feeling, it'd undoubtedly take a while for their wounds to heal.

Completely oblivious to the unhappy atmosphere inside the carriage, Hapslock and Sadler were deep in conversation. For the first time since they'd met they actually had something to discuss. Sadler's new song. A full hour after he'd stopped singing it, Hapslock still had questions.)

HAPSLOCK: And the la, la, la bit?

(Sadler shrugged.)

SADLER: I haven't thought of a third verse, yet.

HAPSLOCK: Right.

SADLER: Anything else?

HAPSLOCK: No, I think I'm done.

(Sadler beamed.)

SADLER: Excellent, so... what did you think?

(Hapslock grimaced.)

HAPSLOCK: Honestly?

(Sadler sighed.)

SADLER: Say no more.

HAPSLOCK: I think that would be best.

SADLER: What was wrong with it though? I mean specifically.

(Hapslock shrugged.)

HAPSLOCK: Pretty much everything!

SADLER: Excuse me?

HAPSLOCK: It wasn't catchy enough to be considered lively and it wasn't mellow enough to be a ballad. Plus, the lyrics made no sense and were quite frankly... wrong.

(Sadler frowned.)

SADLER: The lyrics were good!

(Hapslock looked thoughtful.)

HAPSLOCK: You rhymed carriage with disparage, that was pretty good.

SADLER: Thank you.

HAPSLOCK: But you also rhymed Kyrie with horse.

(Sadler sighed.)

SADLER: Well nothing rhymes with Kyrie.

HAPSLOCK: That's a weak excuse.

(He smiled.)

HAPSLOCK: I like the sentiment of the song; young men these days *are* disrespectful. That said, to sing about putting them all in jail from the ages of eighteen to twenty five just because they're annoying... that's pretty inciteful.

(Sadler beamed.)

SADLER: Thank you.

HAPSLOCK: That wasn't a compliment. I wasn't saying you had good insight. I was saying it might incite young men to take a swing at you.

SADLER: Oh!

(He looked baffled.)

SADLER: I didn't think that kind of "inciteful" was even a word.

(Hapslock sighed.)

HAPSLOCK: According to the Boxford dictionary it is, it's not in all dictionaries though. I guess the jury's still out on that word.

SADLER: I see.

(He nodded.)

SADLER: Okay, what if I change that line to this... before the little buggers can harm me; we should make them all join the army?

HAPSLOCK: That's kind of the same.

(He shrugged.)

HAPSLOCK: It's your call though, if you want to risk alienating parts of your audience, who am I to stop you?

(Sadler nodded acceptingly.)

SADLER: You'd think I'd know better by now, wouldn't you? I always manage to upset someone. Even after nigh on thirty years.

HAPSLOCK: I can believe that. I only saw you play once and you ended up getting lynched.

SADLER: Don't remind me.

(He growled.)

SADLER: That little shit stole my stage time.

(Hapslock gave him a dismayed glance.)

HAPSLOCK: Your recollection of that evening is very different to everyone else's, isn't it? That "little shit" as you like to call her, saved your arse!

(Sadler gave him a doubting glance.)

SADLER: What are you talking about?

HAPSLOCK: Look...

(He rolled his eyes.)

HAPSLOCK: When you came out to play, her little face lit up. She was really excited to see a fellow musician. And when you got in trouble, we only came to help you because she looked so upset.

SADLER: That's no excuse for her stealing my stage time.

HAPSLOCK: Sadler, you tit, when you messed up that song, Kyrie and I just thought you were a cock. Cayley, on the other hand, empathised and understood how you could have made that mistake. She was the only one in the entire room that was on your side. You were in deep shit and they all wanted to kill you; so she got up on stage to get their attention and stop them beating the crap out of you.

(He sighed.)

HAPSLOCK: But if you want to persist in alienating the one person in the entire world who actually respects what you do for a living, then go ahead.

(Sadler nodded.)

SADLER: I will. You may well be right, she may well have been excited to see me play, I am a minor celebrity after all, but that doesn't excuse her behaviour *since* then. As far as I'm concerned, she saw the stage was free and took it. And as for her violating my lute...

(Hapslock looked to him and furrowed his brow.)

HAPSLOCK: Just when I was beginning to think there might be a decent person underneath that ridiculous exterior, you had to prove you're an utter cock, didn't you?

(Sadler pouted at him.)

SADLER: Excuse me?

HAPSLOCK: Don't pout, you look like Cayley!

SADLER: You take that back!

HAPSLOCK: I will. Cayley deserves better!

SADLER: Well that's just rude.

(Hapslock sighed.)

HAPSLOCK: Look, let's just do what we normally do, shall we? I'll lead the horses and think intelligently while you sit quietly and stare at the grass.

SADLER: Suits me fine.

HAPSLOCK: Good!

SADLER: Just don't be surprised if I decide to sing my feelings again.

HAPSLOCK: In that case don't be surprised if I wrap that lute around your head!

(Sadler nodded defiantly.)

SADLER: Fine!

HAPSLOCK: Good.

SADLER: Whatever!

HAPSLOCK: Oh, shut up!

(And so they travelled onwards into the late afternoon, as ever, in perfect silence.)

---

As the day wore into night and Sir Hapslock led the horses forth, he started to feel greatly encouraged. Despite an awful start to the day, they'd gone several hours without any hitches or needless breaks. Thanks to this prolonged session on the road, they'd regained pretty much all the time they'd lost by fighting and replacing the wheel. He was now confident they'd reach Port Amok sometime on the morrow. Greatly enthused by their progress, he'd have

liked to have kept riding long into the night but alas, he was starting to get hungry and a toilet break was becoming long overdue.

And so, with the sun long set, he took advantage of the next turn off and led the carriage down a thin dirt track towards the village of Wyndham. With tall trees on either side of the road, visibility was poor. Thankfully, the moonlight was just good enough for him to make out a large grassy clearing in the trees to his left. Satisfied that this would be an ideal place to set up camp for the night, he steered the horses into the clearing. Once he was a good fifty feet away from the road, he pulled the carriage to a halt and looked about himself. With a road on one side and trees on the other three sides of the clearing, it looked ideal. The trees would provide excellent cover and the road was nearby should they need to make a hasty exit.

HAPSLOCK: Perfect.

(Sadler looked to him and nodded emotionlessly.)

SADLER: It'll do.

(With that, they both climbed down from the carriage.)

HAPSLOCK: Right, I'll tell the girls we've arrived then rustle us up a fire.

(With that, he bounded around the back of the carriage and clambered onto the platform before knocking on the door firmly.)

HAPSLOCK: It's me, Sir Hapslock. We're going to set up camp for the night.

(Hearing no reply, he bit his lip then slowly eased the door open.)

HAPSLOCK: Ladies?

(As he peered inside the lantern lit carriage, he was deeply troubled by what he saw. Kyrie and Cayley were sitting at opposite sides of the carriage with faces like thunder, facing away from one another coldly. Clearly they'd had a falling out. Not wishing to get involved, he propped open the door and jumped back down from the platform.)

HAPSLOCK: I'll make a fire then.

(With that, he dashed off into the trees, offering Sadler a stern warning as he passed him.)

HAPSLOCK: Careful, the girls have got the hump from the looks of things.

(Sadler gulped and felt his collar.)

SADLER: Cripes, thanks for the warning.

(With that, he climbed back on top of the carriage and vowed not come down until he was satisfied that it wasn't him that the girls were mad at.

Once Sir Hapslock had gathered enough wood, he immediately started a fire several feet to the left of the carriage, using its bulk to block out any hint of a breeze. He then erected a spit over it to cook some meat. Having done this kind of thing almost every night for the last three years he could pick his spot, make a fire and be eating in no time. Like all the wandering knights, setting up camp was second nature to him. Within ten minutes of them stopping, the fire was ablaze and the food was cooking. As he sat by the fire, he glanced around at his surroundings and nodded. This seemed like the perfect campsite. The ground was firm yet comfortable to sit on and he'd found a small stream in the woods. Come the morning they'd have the ideal place to wash and freshen up. On a calm, warm night like this he couldn't have picked a better place to set up camp. If he could, however, he would have picked better company to spend the night with. As soon as he'd lit the fire Kyrie had emerged from the carriage and sat herself down by it in angry silence. Cayley had followed a few minutes later, matching her silent rage. Remaining true to his vow, Sadler had stayed seated on the carriage, still none the wiser as to why the two young ladies were so furious. Not a single word had passed any of their lips. With this coldest of atmospheres ruining his mood, Hapslock sighed and stared into the flames.)

HAPSLOCK: Well, this is nice.

(Kyrie half looked at him then stared back at the fire.)

HAPSLOCK: Food won't be long.

(He sighed.)

HAPSLOCK: So... campfire. Anyone have any interesting stories?

(Cayley sighed, Kyrie shook her head and Sadler didn't even flinch.)

HAPSLOCK: No? Anyone?

(He sighed.)

HAPSLOCK: Down to me then, is it? Fair enough!

(He shrugged then started to recall a tale from his early days as a knight.)

HAPSLOCK: When I first set out, wandering from town to town, I was a bit wet behind the ears. Well, clueless would be more accurate. All the training in the world can't prepare you for what the job's actually like. Anyway, I arrived a town called Pitmouth. I was eager to please, obviously, so I asked the mayor if he needed any help. Well, he asked how much I wanted and I told him I don't charge people for helping them.

(He chuckled.)

HAPSLOCK: Anyway, to cut a long story short, I ended up working as a barman for two days. The mayor had a pub you see and he thought I was volunteering as free labour!

(He chuckled to himself then groaned in defeat. Not only did nobody acknowledge his story but he couldn't even be sure they'd listened.)

HAPSLOCK: Fine.

(He rolled his eyes.)

HAPSLOCK: What a waste of breath.

(Suddenly a loud scream rose up from the woods. At once, Hapslock, Kyrie and Cayley all leapt to their feet and Sadler leapt down from the carriage to join them.)

HAPSLOCK: What was that?

(He drew his sword and looked to his three companions. Sadler was trembling and Cayley was cowering aside Kyrie, all three of them staring at the direction of the noise.)

HAPSLOCK: Don't all answer at once, will you?

(Just then, a terrified looking young man charged out of the woods towards them. Hapslock immediately raised his sword.)

HAPSLOCK: Halt!

(Much to Hapslock's disbelief, the young man ignored him and continued to race his way.)

HAPSLOCK: Desist, I tell you!!!

(Upon spying the sword, the young man's eyes bulged and he swiftly veered away, whimpering in terror. Hapslock, Kyrie, Cayley and Sadler could only watch in bewilderment as he bypassed them and charged onwards into the trees on the other side of the clearing.)

HAPSLOCK: What the hell is he running from?

(Finally, Kyrie broke her silence.)

KYRIE: Could be a grendith!

(With an urgent expression on her face, she raised her fists and jumped in front of Cayley, making a point of stepping on her foot.)

CAYLEY: Ow!!! You did that on purpose!

(Kyrie ignored her and snarled into the woods.)

KYRIE: I hate grendiths!!!

HAPSLOCK: You and me, both!

(Just then, the sound of a rowdy pack of men echoed out across the nearby trees. Having been expecting to hear the unmistakable cry of a hungry grendith, they were all somewhat baffled.)

HAPSLOCK: What the hell?

(He fixed his sword stance and sneered.)

HAPSLOCK: Could be assassins of some kind. Noisy and disorganised ones!

(Just then, a large hoard of men with torches and pitch forks came racing out of the woods towards him.)

HAPSLOCK: Halt! As a knight of the realm, I demand you desist immediately.

(At once they all ground to a halt and stared at him in dismay. Judging by their reaction, Hapslock could only assume they were doing something illegal and the presence of a lawman was the last thing they wished to encounter.)

HAPSLOCK: What are you people up to?

(The eldest of the men stepped to the front of the pack and sneered.)

ERIK: We just want to know which way the philanderer went. We aint looking for any trouble.

HAPSLOCK: You're out in the woods at night, hunting a man and you say you're not looking for any trouble?

ERIK: With *you* I meant.

(He ruffled his collar and sneered.)

ERIK: We just want a word with him that's all.

HAPSLOCK: And you need pitchforks for that, do you?

(Erik rolled his eyes.)

ERIK: It's just to scare him.

HAPSLOCK: Well from what we saw, it seemed to be working.

(He nodded firmly.)

HAPSLOCK: I'm sorry, but as a knight of this realm, I really must insist you put the pitchforks down this instant or I'll be forced to arrest you.

(Erik glanced over his shoulder.)

ERIK: Don't do it, lads. There's forty of us and only one of him.

(He sneered.)

ERIK: Like I said, I don't want any trouble. Now tell us which way he went and we'll be out of your hair.

HAPSLOCK: Like I'm going to tell you.

(Just then, a nervous looking Sadler, piped up.)

SADLER: He went that way.

(He pointed into the woods and frowned.)

SADLER: He screamed like a little girl all the way!

HAPSLOCK: Heaven sake, Sadler!

(Sadler shrugged.)

ERIK: Right, thank you.

(He nodded politely to Hapslock.)

ERIK: Good day, sir knight!

(He then yelled over his shoulder to his comrades.)

ERIK: Let's go, lads!

(With that, they all raced off across the clearing in pursuit of the panic stricken young man. Looking totally baffled, they all watched them go then Hapslock spun around and glared at Sadler.)

HAPSLOCK: What the hell, Sadler?

(Sadler grimaced nervously.)

SADLER: Sorry... it just seemed to make sense to tell them. There was forty of them and they were all armed.

HAPSLOCK: You're a shocking coward.

SADLER: And I'm not ashamed of it either. When a hate mob ask me a question, I tell them the answer.

HAPSLOCK: You...

SADLER: Look, it made sense. They said they'd be on their way if we told them where he went, so I told them.

(Hapslock sighed and shook his head.)

HAPSLOCK: You do realise that if they catch him and kill him, you're an accessory to his murder?

(Sadler looked to him blankly for a moment then sighed in dismay.)

SADLER: I'm a bloody one man crime wave, aren't I?

(Hapslock shook his head then looked to Kyrie and Cayley.)

HAPSLOCK: You girls okay?

(Kyrie shrugged, completely untroubled by the event. Cayley on the other hand, looked thoroughly unsettled and nervous.)

CAYLEY: I don't like it here. They were hunting a human. They might be cannibals or devil worshippers. We should go somewhere else.

(Kyrie swiftly glared at her and turned her nose up hatefully.)

KYRIE: Fuck off, Cayley!

(Much to Hapslock's utter dismay, she then pushed her over onto her backside and snarled.)

KYRIE: I'm so sick of you!

(As Hapslock stooped to help her up, Cayley's bottom lip was almost dragging on the ground and her eyes were filling with tears.)

KYRIE: Oh, for fuck sake, the baby's gonna cry again.

(Hapslock snarled and raised his voice.)

HAPSLOCK: Enough!!!

(He furrowed his brow then threw his arms into the air.)

HAPSLOCK: That's your sister! Your only flesh and blood, Kyrie!

(Kyrie shrugged.)

KYRIE: She's just a burden, always has been.

HAPSLOCK: That's bullshit and you know it!

(As Cayley stood behind him trying desperately not to cry and failing miserably at it, Kyrie looked to her then scoffed.)

KYRIE: Look at her.

(Suddenly, a pout formed on her lips and she filled up with tears.)

KYRIE: She's...

(With that, she burst into tears.)

KYRIE: I'm sorry, Cayley!!!

(As they threw their arms around each other, Hapslock watched them cry their hearts out then grimaced to himself.)

HAPSLOCK: Right... I'll just check on the food, shall I? Excellent.

(With that, he darted off to the fireside to spare himself the ear-splitting cacophony of two females trying to cry and apologise at the same time. As far as he was concerned, no man deserved to hear such an awful racket.

A few minutes later when the food was served, Sadler and Hapslock found themselves banished to the far side of the fire so Kyrie and Cayley could talk. It was a sacrifice they were happy to make. As much as Hapslock was keen to learn all he could about his charges, he wanted no part in their private conversation. As far as he was concerned, it was important they settled such matters between them without third party mediation. After all, these two girls only had each other and it was important they knew how to communicate. And so, he

was glad to step back and leave them to it. Sadler, for his part, was happy not to get involved because he could stand either of them.

As they chewed their meat by the fire, Cayley sat with her head leant on Kyrie's shoulder. Hating being at odds with the big sister she idolised, she was desperate to make the bad feeling go away. Having always doted on her precious little sister, Kyrie matched her desire to make peace but wasn't about to forget the harsh things that had been said. It was important to her that Cayley understood her and she wanted to settle their disagreement rather than just make up and pretend it never happened. There was no way she was going to take the risk of leaving it to fester only to raise its ugly head at another time. With this in mind, she chewed on her meat and tried to steer the conversation away from where it was going.)

KYRIE: I know you're sorry but that aint the point.

CAYLEY: It's not?

KYRIE: No. You said the way I act is a problem.

CAYLEY: I didn't mean it.

(Kyrie shook her head.)

KYRIE: Yes you did. You meant every word.

(Cayley hung her head.)

CAYLEY: So, you won't forgive me?

KYRIE: Cayley, you're missing the point.

(She suddenly looked enlightened.)

KYRIE: This is what talking to *me* must be like!

CAYLEY: What?

KYRIE: Hard work.

CAYLEY: But... Kyrie, I really am sorry. I was horrible.

KYRIE: And I accept that, I really do.

(She sighed.)

KYRIE: I'm not explaining this very well.

CAYLEY: It's okay. Take your time.

KYRIE: Okay... see... you raised a problem with me. A problem you have with me and the way I am.

(She sighed.)

KYRIE: I sleep around and make *you* look bad, you said.

CAYLEY: But, I was just being mean.

KYRIE: No! Don't lie. You were furious. I've never seen you so angry.

CAYLEY: Okay... so, yeah. It does upset me but I had no right to talk to you like I did.

KYRIE: And you've apologised for that. I accept your apologies but it's no longer about saying sorry.

CAYLEY: Then what?

KYRIE: I need you to know why I'm like I am.

(Cayley bit her lip nervously.)

CAYLEY: You want to tell me why you sleep around, you mean?

KYRIE: Yeah!

(Cayley trembled.)

CAYLEY: I'm only twelve remember, I don't need sordid details.

(Kyrie gave a single, stifled laugh.)

KYRIE: Fair enough. I won't mention my flimflam or anyone's doodah!

(Cayley nodded shyly.)

CAYLEY: Okay.

(Kyrie smiled then tried to begin her explanation.)



KYRIE: You know, like, when we meet people and...  
(She sighed to herself.)  
KYRIE: I don't know where to start.  
CAYLEY: How about at the beginning?  
(Kyrie looked uncertain.)  
KYRIE: I don't think there is a beginning.  
(She sighed.)  
KYRIE: I'll just start talking and see what happens.  
CAYLEY: Okay.  
KYRIE: Well, people don't like me, Cayley.  
(She scoffed.)  
KYRIE: Okay, well, that's not even true. A lot of people adore me...  
(She bit her lip.)  
KYRIE: That's not true either.  
(She grimaced.)  
KYRIE: I'm not doing well here, am I?  
CAYLEY: Keep trying.  
KYRIE: Right. It's not that people dislike me; they just don't have time for me.  
(She sighed.)  
KYRIE: Do you remember the night we spent in that town?  
(Cayley gave her a sideways glance.)  
CAYLEY: Can you be a bit more specific?  
KYRIE: I don't know, what does specific mean?  
CAYLEY: What town was it?  
(Kyrie looked stumped.)  
KYRIE: I don't know... it had a funny name. We had a little extra money so we had a night out. Remember? We spent the evening in that public house with all the swords mounted on the wall.  
(Cayley looked enlightened.)  
CAYLEY: Oh yeah. That was Radstock, the university town.  
(She exhaled happily at the memory.)  
CAYLEY: That was the best night ever. We sat with that group of professors and students and talked all night. I had an amazing time.  
(Kyrie sighed.)  
KYRIE: *I* didn't! That was the longest night of my life.  
(Cayley looked stunned.)  
CAYLEY: What do you mean?  
KYRIE: I was bored rigid all night and you didn't even notice.  
(Cayley looked to her with uncertainty.)  
CAYLEY: I thought you enjoyed that night!  
KYRIE: How could I? Nobody was talking to *me*.  
CAYLEY: They weren't?  
KYRIE: No. You didn't notice how bored I was because you were busy discussing the pillar box of fluff or whatever it's called.  
CAYLEY: The paradox of thrift?  
(Kyrie shrugged.)  
KYRIE: Maybe. I couldn't understand a thing you were talking about.  
(She sighed.)  
KYRIE: People don't want to hear what a dipshit like me has to say, Cayley.  
CAYLEY: That's...

KYRIE: A fact? I know it is. Whenever we meet intelligent people, you chat to them and I get left out.

(Cayley looked saddened and sighed.)

CAYLEY: Oh my god, I feel terrible now. Why didn't you tell me before? I feel awful.

KYRIE: No. Don't feel bad. When you get to have an intelligent conversation, your face lights up and you become so alive. I can't deprive you of that.

(Cayley smiled to her warmly.)

CAYLEY: Thank you.

(Kyrie sighed.)

KYRIE: But it makes me sad sometimes. Conversations look like fun.

CAYLEY: They are.

KYRIE: People talk back and forth and before I can understand what their point is, they've changed the subject. Even on the rare occasions when I do understand, I've got nothing interesting to add. I just end up saying something dumb and being ignored.

(Cayley placed a loving hand on her knee.)

CAYLEY: I'm sorry it's hard for you.

(Kyrie sighed.)

KYRIE: So, yeah. People aren't interested in me. They don't want to know what I think and they don't care for what I have to say. My opinion is worthless and they don't want to spend time in my company.

(She shrugged.)

KYRIE: It gets very lonely when nobody wants to talk to you. Even when I'm in a big crowd of people, I'm still completely alone.

(She sighed.)

KYRIE: I sometimes feel like I don't exist, you know? When I was at school, there were times when I used to wonder if I'd imagined myself.

(A warm smile then crossed her brow.)

KYRIE: Luckily for me, I'm hot.

(Cayley looked to her and smiled.)

CAYLEY: I think I understand what you're telling me, Kyrie. The only time you get to enjoy human interaction and feel involved in the world is when you're with a guy.

(Kyrie looked to her in uncertainty.)

KYRIE: How did you figure that out? I hadn't got round to explaining that part yet.

CAYLEY: It was easy to see where you were going with it.

KYRIE: Damn. You *are* a genius.

(She exhaled and looked to the heavens.)

KYRIE: The people I have sex with may not even like me but they do make me feel alive.

(She beamed.)

KYRIE: Suddenly I'm important. I matter, you know?

(Cayley trembled.)

CAYLEY: You're going to go into detail, aren't you?

(Lost in her own thoughts, Kyrie continued joyously.)

KYRIE: Right in that moment when I start making out with someone, I'm special to them, you know? And when I pleasure them orally, I'm the queen of their entire universe.

(She sighed.)

KYRIE: If I could talk and suck a guy's doodah at the same time, I could ask him for anything and he'd give it to me. That's how important I become. Suddenly I'm somebody.

(Cayley whimpered.)

CAYLEY: I get it. Please stop.

(Kyrie looked to her and smiled warmly.)

KYRIE: I like sex!

CAYLEY: I know!

(She hugged Cayley close then smiled.)

KYRIE: So, there you have it, sister face. I'm sorry if people assume you're going to be a slut just because I'm one. But if I wasn't a slut, I'd be nobody.

CAYLEY: You'd still be someone to me.

(Kyrie kissed the top of Cayley's head and sighed.)

KYRIE: I guess we're kind of even. When you start chatting to people about clever stuff, I'm made to feel stupid and worthless. And when I sleep around, you're made to feel paranoid and embarrassed.

CAYLEY: Yeah.

(She smiled.)

CAYLEY: But now I understand *why* you have sex so much, I can learn to ignore the condescending looks I get.

KYRIE: Thanks, babes.

(She beamed.)

KYRIE: That's exactly what I wanted to hear.

(She then raised a distrusting eyebrow.)

KYRIE: Wait a minute. Telling me what I want to hear is what you do best. You're not just pretending to understand are you?

CAYLEY: No! Of course not! The only time you feel included in society is when you're having sex. See? I get it.

(Satisfied by her sister's words, Kyrie exhaled and hugged her close.)

KYRIE: That's my girl.

(Cayley beamed.)

CAYLEY: So, we're cool again, right?

KYRIE: Yeah we are.

(She suddenly looked stumped.)

KYRIE: Wow. I'm cool *and* hot, how does that work?

(Cayley chuckled and laid her head in Kyrie's lap.)

CAYLEY: Never stop being you, Kyrie.

(Kyrie stroked Cayley's hair and took another bite of her meat while her sister stared into the flames. Within a matter of seconds, Cayley's eyes glazed over and she yawned.)

KYRIE: You tired, sister face?

(Cayley replied in a sleepy voice.)

CAYLEY: Yeah. I think I might go to bed. If that's okay.

KYRIE: Of course it's okay.

(With that, she climbed to her feet and lifted Cayley to hers.)

KYRIE: Come on, sweetheart.

(As she lifted her off the ground and carried her to the carriage Hapslock and Sadler looked up and watched them with interest.)

SADLER: Do you think they made peace?

(Hapslock gave him a knowing glance.)

HAPSLOCK: I reckon so. Which is bad news for *you*!

(Sadler looked to him in disbelief.)

SADLER: For me?

HAPSLOCK: Yeah. When girls make up, it's hell on earth for the people they don't like.

SADLER: What do you mean?

HAPSLOCK: You've never seen them do it? When girls make up after a falling out, they go out of their way to reaffirm their friendship... and anyone who's ever annoyed them gets ganged up on. So, I really wouldn't want to be you, right now.

SADLER: Poppycock, you're making it up.

HAPSLOCK: I'm not. It's classic female behaviour. They all do it!

(As Sadler bit his fingers nervously, Hapslock grinned and looked to see Kyrie cradling Cayley as she made her way towards the carriage. At once his draw dropped and the sounds of the woodland fell away to be replaced by the sound of a choir of angels. Hapslock then had to do a double take as Kyrie's angelic face was suddenly surrounded by a glowing white aura. She'd never looked so beautiful. In fact, nobody had ever looked so beautiful. As she disappeared into the carriage, however, the sound of the woodland returned and Hapslock snapped out of his trance.)

HAPSLOCK: Damn it!

(There could be no doubt in his mind whatsoever now that Cupid had got his way. He was very much in love with Kyrie. Terrified by the very idea, he thrust his head into his hands and whimpered sorrowfully.)

HAPSLOCK: This can't be happening.

(He sighed and shook his head pitifully.)

HAPSLOCK: The sooner those girls are out of my life the better.

(Sadler looked delighted.)

SADLER: Excellent, you're finally seeing things *my* way.

(He nodded.)

SADLER: We can ditch them tomorrow when they go to wash down by the stream.

(Hapslock glared at him.)

HAPSLOCK: I mean, the sooner they're safely on a boat and out of danger, the better!

(Sadler looked to him uneasily then grinned.)

SADLER: That's what I meant too!

HAPSLOCK: The hell you did.

(He grimaced and looked away.)

HAPSLOCK: I want this mission to be over so I know they're safe. I don't just want to get rid of them.

(Sadler nodded.)

SADLER: Good plan, forget I said anything.

(Hapslock gave a sigh of relief. The last thing he wanted was for Sadler to know his real reason for wishing the mission to be at an end. It was hard enough to admit his feelings for Kyrie to himself and he certainly wasn't going to share them with Sadler.)

In the carriage in the meantime, Kyrie tucked Cayley in then sat on her bed, stroking her hair and smiling to her lovingly. They were both greatly relieved that their spat was over and that they had this chance to be alone together. As she gently ran her fingertips through Cayley's hair, Kyrie sighed apologetically and shook her head.)

KYRIE: You and me shouldn't fight like that. Ever.

(Cayley pouted.)

CAYLEY: Sorry I said angry, mean stuff!

(Kyrie smiled.)

KYRIE: It's okay. Anger makes us mean. I'm sorry I called you a bitch.

(Cayley smiled.)

CAYLEY: It's okay, I was kind of being one.

(They shared a warm smile then Kyrie leant down to kiss her head.)

KYRIE: You gonna be okay if I go back outside?

CAYLEY: Of course, I'll be asleep.

KYRIE: Right. And you've folded your clothes properly?

CAYLEY: Yes!

KYRIE: Good girl.

(She climbed to her feet and smiled down at her.)

KYRIE: Goodnight.

CAYLEY: Goodnight, Kyrie.

(As Kyrie left the carriage, Cayley rolled over then closed her eyes. It had been a long day and she was in little doubt she'd fall asleep in no time.)

As she strode out of the carriage, Kyrie puffed out with relief. It had been a heavy day for her emotionally and she was feeling somewhat drained. Looking more than a little tired, she slowly paced towards where Hapslock was sitting by the fire and smiled.)

KYRIE: Hi, Frank.

(Sir Hapslock looked to her and bit his lip nervously.)

HAPSLOCK: Kyrie. Hello.

(Terrified that she'd sit next to him and stir up further unwanted romantic feelings within him, Hapslock climbed to his feet and faced her.)

HAPSLOCK: So... Cayley's in bed is she?

(Kyrie nodded as she stepped close to him.)

KYRIE: She was worn out, poor thing.

(Much to Hapslock's horror, she then reached her hands up and placed them over his neck before laying her head on his chest.)

KYRIE: I don't ever want to have another day like today.

(Hapslock's mind lost control at this point. Kyrie was draped all over him and he couldn't figure out whether he was in heaven or in hell. He'd conditioned himself to believe that falling in love with her would be a disaster and yet it felt so good to have her holding him. Bewildered by his conflicting emotions, he gaped in search of something to say. Rendered speechless, however, he could only wince and mumble silent nothings into the air. He desperately wanted to tell her to get off him but at the same time he hoped she'd never let go. In the end, the only sentence he could muster was a well rehearsed line, tailor made for when one doesn't know what to say.)

HAPSLOCK: Is there anything *I* can do?

(Nestling her head into his chest, Kyrie sighed comfortably.)

KYRIE: Just hold me for a while.

(Naturally inclined to do anything for his charge's peace of mind, he slowly slipped his arms around her and hugged her close.)

HAPSLOCK: Like that?

KYRIE: That's perfect.

(As he held her close in his arms, one of his conflicting emotions suddenly waved the white flag and surrendered unconditionally. The part of him that had been battling against his desire to love her could no longer justify its stance. Holding her felt heavenly and fighting it no longer made sense. It just felt so right. This common idiot had won his heart and it was time he finally accepting his feelings towards her. Wearing a loving expression, Hapslock stroked her hair, exhaled then kissed the top of her head gently. As far as he was concerned, this was the perfect moment. This was the moment true love arrived for real. Taking the kiss as no more than a sexual come on, Kyrie smiled then looked up at him knowingly. Wearing a seductive expression, she licked her lips then spoke out in her sexiest voice.)

KYRIE: I like the way your dirty mind works.

(With that, she run her finger up his inside leg and started to tease the top of his manhood through his trousers.)

KYRIE: Look what I found.

(Hapslock gaped. What she was doing felt extremely good but this was not the right time. He didn't want to end up in the throws of passion until he'd told her how he felt. Determined to do the right thing, even though turning sex with Kyrie down was extremely difficult to do, he stepped backed and grabbed both her hands in his. Wearing a nervous expression he looked to her and his lips trembled.)

KYRIE: What are you doing? I was playing with your doodah.

HAPSLOCK: It's not the time for that, Kyrie.

KYRIE: But... it's always the time...

(She bit her lip and glanced into his eyes nervously.)

KYRIE: What's wrong? You look serious.

(He fought back his nerves and nodded firmly.)

HAPSLOCK: I am serious. Kyrie, there's something I have to tell you.

KYRIE: Nothing bad is it?

HAPSLOCK: No... well, I hope you don't think it is...

(He closed his eyes for a moment, then opened them again and looked to her lovingly.)

HAPSLOCK: Kyrie, I love you.

(Kyrie looked to him blankly and raised a confused eyebrow. Unsure how to take her reaction, Hapslock glanced from side to side then grinned at her nervously.)

HAPSLOCK: To say I feel foolish right now would be quite the understatement.

(Kyrie looked lost and bit her lip.)

KYRIE: Why would you tell me you love me? I was already going to put out!

(Hapslock looked to her blankly.)

HAPSLOCK: Sorry?

KYRIE: You don't have to say that kind of thing to get *my* knickers off, I'm a slut remember? I probably want it more than you do.

HAPSLOCK: I wasn't saying it to...

(He sighed and looked deep into her eyes.)

HAPSLOCK: I mean it Kyrie, I love you.

KYRIE: Well... I love you too.

(As Hapslock exhaled joyously, Kyrie mused outwardly.)

KYRIE: Cayley loves you too. You've been like a big brother to both of us.

(Hapslock looked devastated and whimpered.)

HAPSLOCK: Not like a brother!!!

(He let go of her hands and slapped himself on the forehead.)

HAPSLOCK: Don't you get it? I love you!

(He threw his hands into the air.)

HAPSLOCK: Proper love, damn it.

(Kyrie scratched her head.)

KYRIE: What are you so flustered about? I said I love you too.

HAPSLOCK: Yeah, like a brother.

KYRIE: Well yeah, you're too manly to be a sister.

(Hapslock shook his fist at her in frustration.)

HAPSLOCK: Pay attention, you halfwit!!! I love you, romantically! I want to be at your side night and day, to hold you in my arms and whisper sweet nothings in your ear. I want to gently kiss you in the moonlight and hold your hand. Is that so hard to understand?

(He threw his hands up in defeat and shook his head at her.)

HAPSLOCK: I'm in love with you, you dipshit!

(As he stood before her seething, Kyrie looked to him and pouted. All she'd heard was the word "halfwit". Throughout the rest of his rant she'd stood there trying to figure out why he'd say such a mean thing to her.)

KYRIE: Why call me a halfwit? That's mean!

HAPSLOCK: Oh, for fuck sake.

(With that, he stomped off towards the woods.)

HAPSLOCK: Forget it.

(Kyrie scratched her head and looked to where Sadler was sitting on the opposite side of the fire, having watched the whole thing.)

KYRIE: What's *his* problem? One minute we were going to have sex, the next he's calling me names.

(Sadler shrugged at her.)

SADLER: Can you blame him? He confessed his love to you and you made him feel stupid. No man deserves that.

(Kyrie looked stumped.)

KYRIE: I said I love him too though.

SADLER: Yes, but he wasn't talking about brother and sister love. He meant the other kind.

KYRIE: What... like proper girlfriend and boyfriend kind of love?

(Sadler nodded.)

SADLER: Yup, and you crushed him like an earwig.

(Kyrie looked thoughtful for a moment then chuckled.)

KYRIE: Yeah, right. You almost fooled me then. As if anyone could fall in love with a common trollop like me. Especially *someone* of his standing.

SADLER: I know I can't believe it either.

KYRIE: So why did he *really* get so mad?

(Sadler just looked at her blankly. There was no point in explaining it further as Kyrie had quite clearly made her mind her up that nobody could ever love her.)

SADLER: You know, for such an arrogant person you've got some serious self-esteem issues.

(Kyrie shrugged.)

KYRIE: I don't even know what that means.

(Suddenly, the air was once again filled with the sound of the young man screaming in the woods nearby. At once, Sadler and Kyrie propped their heads up and glared in the direction the noise came from.)

KYRIE: Do you think they caught him?

(Sadler shuddered.)

SADLER: I hope so. I don't want that mob coming back here again!

(Kyrie glared at him.)

KYRIE: You hope so?

(Sadler grinned at her innocently.)

KYRIE: You're not a very nice person, do you know that?

(Just then, the young man who was being hunted by the mob, raced from the woods looking absolutely terrified. Still scowling at one another, neither Sadler or Kyrie noticed the panicking young lad race straight to the carriage and charge inside it.)

SADLER: In my defence, I never claimed I *was* a nice person!

(Just then, the hate mob raced from the woods in pursuit of the young man. Having seen where he went, the leader pointed at the carriage and bellowed out.)

ERIK: Inside the carriage, men! Get inside the carriage!!!

(Kyrie was livid. Why these strange men wanted to go in the carriage she had no idea but she certainly wasn't about to let them all charge inside while Cayley was in there. Looking insane with rage, she raced to the back of the carriage and screeched to a halt in front of the

doors with her fists poised. Ignoring her presence entirely, all forty of the pitchfork wielding maniacs, hurtled forth, determined to get inside the carriage. Not about to let that happen, Kyrie went on the offensive. Determined to protect her sister at all costs, she jumped into a roundhouse kick and connected powerfully on four of their jaws. As soon as she landed, she then performed a sweep to knock two more off of their feet. Incensed by her actions, the leader, screamed out.)

ERIK: Kick her head in then bring me that little shit!!!

(Unfortunately for him, however, kicking Kyrie's head in was easier said than done, especially when Cayley's safety was her motivation. Reacting with tremendous speed, she was holding her position perfectly and battering anyone who dared try to pass her. To make matters worse for the hate mob, Sir Hapslock had heard the commotion from the woods and had returned to assist her. Laying into those at the back of the throng, he was making short work of reducing their numbers.)

ERIK: Come on!!! She's just a girl, she can't be that hard to hit!

(Unfortunately for him, as Kyrie's fist connected with his jaw and sent him flying, he found out just how wrong he was. Trying to hit Kyrie nearly always resulted in punching at air then getting punched to the ground two seconds later. Having found this out the hard way, he stared around the ground at his dazed men then leapt back to his feet.)

ERIK: Run away!!! She's a maniac!!!

(With that, he took to his heels and fled. Very much in favour of the move, his men all raced after him. Even the one's who'd taken a beating managed to stagger to their feet and beat a hasty retreat. Within a matter of seconds they were gone. Watching them flee, Kyrie sneered then looked to Hapslock. Staring back at her from where he'd been fighting at the back of the throng, he offered her an apologetic smile.)

HAPSLOCK: Sorry. I should have been here.

(Kyrie nodded to accept his words then looked to where Sadler was huddled in a ball at the side of the fire.)

KYRIE: What a wimp.

HAPSLOCK: Forget *him*, what did that mob want this time?

(Kyrie looked stumped.)

KYRIE: I don't know. They were trying to attack the carriage for some reason.

(Just then, a loud girly scream rose up from inside the carriage. Reacting instinctively, Kyrie whimpered Cayley's name then leapt on the back platform and charged inside it. As Hapslock followed on to watch from outside the doorway, Kyrie came to a screeching halt at Cayley's bedside and growled furiously.)

KYRIE: What the fuck???

(Before her eyes was a sight she prayed she'd never see. Cayley in bed with a man. Trembling uncontrollably, she was holding the covers over herself and biting them as she stared at the intruding man in terror. Looking equally terrified, the young man stared hard at Kyrie over the covers on the far side of the bed and whimpered.)

JACK: It's not what it looks like!

(Kyrie growled ferociously.)

KYRIE: Pretty soon you're not going to look like what you look like either.

(With that, she grabbed him by his collar and yanked him over Cayley and out of bed.)

CAYLEY: Ouch, careful!

(Kyrie snarled at her as she held the trembling man in her grasp.)

KYRIE: I'll deal with you later, you brazen hussy. You ought to be ashamed.

(Cayley whimpered.)

CAYLEY: I didn't do anything, I was sleeping and when I rolled over there was a bloke in my bed.



(Kyrie glared coldly at her for a moment then snarled ferociously at the trembling young man. Suddenly recognising the man's face, an enlightened expression crossed her brow and she gaped at Cayley in disbelief.)

KYRIE: Hey, he's that guy the hate mob were after!!!

CAYLEY: Well, duh!

KYRIE: No wonder they wanted to get in here so badly, *he* was hiding in here!!!

(She grinned at Cayley sheepishly.)

KYRIE: Sorry, sister face. Thought for a minute you were being sneaky and getting your slut on while I was wasn't looking.

CAYLEY: Then why would I have screamed?

(Kyrie looked stumped.)

KYRIE: Good point. Still, at least now you know how I'm going to react when the inevitable day comes that I catch you sneaking some guy into your room for a bit of...

(Cayley scowled at her.)

CAYLEY: That day will never come.

KYRIE: We'll see!

(With that, she dragged the trembling man towards the door.)

KYRIE: Nobody puts *my* sister's life in danger and gets away with it. You're gonna feel pain, mister.

(The man trembled in terror.)

JACK: Please, don't make me go back out there. Beat me black and blue in here if you have to. I don't want to go out there!!! *They're* out there!!!

(Ignoring his plea, Kyrie dragged him outside and threw him onto the grass. As he landed in a tumble, Hapslock hurried over to him and picked him up by his neck.)

HAPSLOCK: If by "they" you mean the mob with pitchforks, they're long gone.

(He then clouted him around the forehead.)

JACK: Ouch!

HAPSLOCK: Those cowards won't be coming back anytime soon but now you've got an even bigger problem. As a knight of the realm, I'm arresting you for trespassing!

(With that, he walloped him again.)

JACK: Ouch! Arresting me?

HAPSLOCK: You heard me.

(Before he could begin to mount a protest, Kyrie then bounded over to him and slapped him across the face.)

JACK: Ow!

(Bizarrely, Sadler suddenly rushed over and also slapped him about the head.)

JACK: Hey!

HAPSLOCK: Sadler?

KYRIE: Why did *you* join in?

(Sadler shrugged as he snarled at the man.)

SADLER: I don't have a clue. I just had an overwhelming urge to slap him.

(Hapslock nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: I can relate to that!

(With that, he cuffed the man around the head once more.)

KYRIE: Stop hitting him! I want to do it!

(The man looked to her imploringly.)

JACK: Please, no more. I didn't mean to trespass! It was all perfectly innocent!

KYRIE: There's nothing innocent about getting into a little girl's bed! Especially when the little girl's in it!

JACK: It's the curse!!!

KYRIE: The curse? Of being a pervert?

(At once, Kyrie, Hapslock and Sadler all clouted him about the head.)

JACK: Ouch!!! Will you stop that and let me explain?

(He sighed despondently.)

JACK: I was panicking and I hid! I didn't even know anyone was in the bed... until she...

(He gulped.)

JACK: Rolled over, hugged me and called me Kyrie.

(Once again, a trio of slaps rained down on his head.)

JACK: Ow!

KYRIE: You're a disgrace!

HAPSLOCK: Disgusting.

SADLER: I didn't hear what he said; I just can't control the urge to hit him!

JACK: Why am I disgusting? I didn't know she was going to do it!

(He whimpered.)

JACK: I was just trying to hide! That mob want to kill me.

KYRIE: I can't say I blame them. So do I!

HAPSLOCK: Me too.

(He looked thoughtful.)

HAPSLOCK: Which is strange because I have a feeling his actions *might* have been perfectly innocent.

KYRIE: Innocent? He got into bed with Cayley.

HAPSLOCK: Yes, in a moment of panic induced madness. It could all be a misunderstanding and yet oddly I want to batter him senseless, sling him in jail then throw away the key!

(The young man looked to him desperately.)

JACK: That's the curse, you see.

(He sighed heavily.)

JACK: Ever since I met that woman, my life's been a misery.

(Just then, Cayley appeared in the carriage doorway having got dressed and run a quick brush through her hair. Looking deeply troubled she watched from the doorway as Kyrie, Hapslock and Sadler all took in turns to slap the young man.)

KYRIE: Curse indeed.

SADLER: Utter nonsense.

HAPSLOCK: I have a feeling you might be telling the truth!

JACK: Stop hitting me then!

HAPSLOCK: I can't!

(Much to everyone's amazement, Cayley then rushed up to them and placed a gentle hand on the young man's chest.)

CAYLEY: Stop being bullies, it's not his fault.

(The young man started to sweat, terrified of the look on Kyrie's face.)

JACK: It's the curse again, it's the curse!!!

(He burst into tears.)

JACK: Fine, send me to jail then! Kill me, if you want to. My life isn't worth living anyway.

(Cayley gave him a pitying glance and fluttered her eyelashes at him.)

CAYLEY: So, you don't have a girlfriend to live for then?

(Jack whimpered.)

JACK: Don't say things like that!

CAYLEY: Why not?

(Three more slaps then came the unfortunate young man's way.)

JACK: That's why!

(He hung his head and groaned miserably.)

JACK: Stupid curse.

(Hapslock raised a curious eyebrow and mused to himself. If he was going to saddle this man with a charge of trespassing, he needed to know all the facts. As great as it felt to hit him, being an agent of the law, he had a duty to see to it that justice was done fairly. Even though he disliked the accused there was no way he was going to shirk that responsibility and bring shame on himself as an officer of the law. With this in mind, Hapslock rubbed his chin then gestured towards the fire.)

HAPSLOCK: If this curse of yours is your defence then I want to know more about it.

Come, you can tell us about it by the fireside. If you can explain yourself to my satisfaction then I'll let you go.

JACK: Okay... just don't throw me into the flames.

HAPSLOCK: I'm making no such promises.

(Moments later, they all found themselves gathered around the camp fire. Sadler was glaring at the young lad from across the flames, Hapslock was sitting to his left and Kyrie was sitting to his right, constantly having to restrain Cayley from trying to crawl over her and sit right next to him. Struggling to keep the love struck Cayley at bay; Kyrie looked to the ashen faced fellow and demanded an answer.)

KYRIE: What's this curse then? And why is my sister acting like... well... me?

(On trial for his freedom, the young man replied in a desperate and pleading voice.)

JACK: It's the curse.

KYRIE: I knew you were going to say that.

JACK: All women love me and men hate me for it.

(Everyone gave him a doubting glance.)

JACK: It's true. Or my name isn't Jack Smith!

KYRIE: What *is* your name then?

(Jack looked confused.)

JACK: Jack Smith.

(Kyrie looked lost then snarled at Cayley and pulled her back across her lap, away from Jack.)

KYRIE: Come back here, you little shit!

CAYLEY: But he needs me!

KYRIE: I'll knee you in a minute!

(Cayley pouted at her.)

CAYLEY: I said need.

KYRIE: And I made it into a witty pun. Now shut up and sit still!

(She rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: Cocky little bugger.

HAPSLOCK: So, come on, Jack. Explain yourself.

KYRIE: Wait! He said his name *wasn't* Jack.

(Jack looked to her in bewilderment.)

JACK: No, I didn't.

KYRIE: Yes you did! You said your name *isn't* Jack Spiff.

JACK: Smith! And yes, my name *is* Jack!

(Kyrie looked stumped.)

KYRIE: That's confusing. I'll just call you Frank!

(Hapslock looked peeved.)

HAPSLOCK: I'm Frank!

(He rolled his eyes.)

HAPSLOCK: Even though I'm not. Call him Jack!

KYRIE: But he looks like a Frank!

HAPSLOCK: Does everyone you meet look like a Frank to you?

(Kyrie shrugged.)

KYRIE: A lot of them do, yeah.

(She sighed and threw her hands up in defeat.)

KYRIE: Fine, I won't call him Frank then.

(She mused to herself.)

KYRIE: What shall I call him then?

HAPSLOCK: How about Jack?

(Kyrie looked enlightened.)

KYRIE: I'll call him Hapslock. That's a name, right? I've heard it somewhere before, I'm sure.

(Hapslock sneered.)

HAPSLOCK: *I'm* Hapslock.

(Kyrie scoffed.)

KYRIE: Of course you are, Frank.

(Hapslock hung his head in defeat. Looking fed up to the back teeth he couldn't imagine for the life of him just how he'd fallen in love with such a stupid person. Sensing his displeasure, Kyrie sighed.)

KYRIE: Fine, until he tells us his real name, I'll call him Jack.

(Jack looked from side to side and spoke up nervously.)

JACK: Is anyone interested in my story or aren't they?

(Cayley exhaled lovingly.)

CAYLEY: I am!!!

(As Cayley tried to crawl over to him, Kyrie pulled her back and slipped her hands under her armpits to get her in a full nelson wrestling hold.)

CAYLEY: Ouch!!! Kyrie!!!

KYRIE: You're going nowhere, missy! Now behave!

(Kyrie then looked to Jack.)

KYRIE: You were saying, Dave?

JACK: Jack!

KYRIE: Dave!

(As Jack looked to her in bewilderment she sighed and rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: Fine, Jack then.

(Jack nodded then sighed outwardly.)

JACK: Yeah, my curse... I used to be just your average bloke, you know, work by day, go out and have a beer at night, chat up the ladies...

(He sighed sorrowfully.)

JACK: Then I met *her*. Sally! She was pretty good looking so I took her out for the evening, you know? Like you do? Anyway, the night was a disaster, she hardly spoke and we had a horrible time.

(He shrugged.)

JACK: So I took her home and forgot all about it. Anyway, it turns out she enjoyed herself. Well, you could have fooled me. She looked bored rigid but she had a great time and was waiting for me to come round and ask her out again.

(He hung his head.)

JACK: I didn't, obviously. And what a mistake that was.

KYRIE: Why?

JACK: She was a bloody witch.

(He sighed.)

JACK: She saw me out on the street one day and had a go at me. She told me she waited for me for weeks. She accused me of thinking I was god's gift to women then... cursed me.

(A pout formed on his lips.)

JACK: She said that if I thought I was such a catch, she'd make me one. Now every female I see falls in love with me.

(Kyrie looked greatly suspicious.)

KYRIE: That's crap! I don't fancy you even for a minute and I'd sleep with pretty much anyone.

(Jack looked nervous and bit his lip.)

JACK: That's part of the curse. Women I'm actually attracted to don't fancy me.

(At once, Cayley's bottom lip dropped and tears started to well in eyes.)

JACK: No offence.

(Cayley sighed then forced a smile.)

CAYLEY: It's okay, you'll learn to love me in time. I'm gonna be hot like Kyrie!

(As Kyrie and Hapslock snarled at him, Jack threw his hands up in defeat.)

JACK: See my problem here? Your daughter likes me, so you'll both want to kill me before she grows into a hotty!

(Kyrie was livid.)

KYRIE: She's my sister!!!

(She clenched her fist.)

KYRIE: My daughter indeed, I'm eighteen years old!

HAPSLOCK: She's not *my* daughter either. I was 15 when she was born!

(He looked thoughtful.)

HAPSLOCK: So I understand how you could have made that mistake. Carry on.

(Jack sighed.)

JACK: Women fall at my feet and it makes their boyfriends and husbands furious. Even when they're single, they're so in love with me their fathers want to kill me!

(He whimpered.)

JACK: And even when there's no women around, my life is a living hell. All men see me as that smarmy tosspot in the bar that attracts all the women; you know, the bloke you just want to punch. That's why you can't stop hitting me. And that's why that mob want to kill me.

(He sighed.)

JACK: That's all I have to say really. I'm sorry I trespassed, I really am, but I was scared, I panicked and I didn't think.

(He looked to Hapslock nervously.)

JACK: That's it. That's my story.

(He shook a solemn head.)

JACK: My life's a joke.

(Cayley pouted at him sympathetically.)

CAYLEY: Poor Jack. Let me give you a hug!

(With that, she screwed her face up and desperately tried to struggle free of the hold Kyrie had her in.)

CAYLEY: Let me go!

KYRIE: Not likely!

(As the two of them struggled, Hapslock looked to Jack and raised an eyebrow. Having given his story adequate consideration, he then folded his arms then delivered his verdict on it.)

HAPSLOCK: I pity you your curse, and the life you're going to have. Arresting you would be wrong. Fun, but wrong.

(He nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: I just hope the next lawman you cross paths with is as open-minded as me. You're free to go.

(Jack's face lit up.)

JACK: I can go?

HAPSLOCK: Go!

(Cayley looked devastated.)

CAYLEY: No!!! Stay forever!!!

(She whimpered.)

CAYLEY: Marry me!!!

KYRIE: Hey, less of that, missy. We've only just got out of marrying some weirdo!

CAYLEY: That was two years ago!!! And he's not a weirdo.

(Looking greatly relieved, Jack smiled at her as he climbed to his feet.)

JACK: That's right, I'm not. I'm just an ordinary guy going through hard times.

CAYLEY: See!

(Jack nodded and smiled to Hapslock then Kyrie.)

JACK: Thank you. You saved me from that mob and I'll never be able to repay you.

(Sadler sneered.)

SADLER: I'm going to hit him again!

(Jack stepped back from him.)

JACK: Don't. I'm leaving.

SADLER: You'd better be.

(Cayley then burst into tears as her heart broke into a thousand tiny fragments.)

CAYLEY: No! Don't go!!! I love you.

(As Kyrie snarled, more than a little tempted to punch Jack into the middle of the next week, he looked to Cayley and smiled sympathetically.)

JACK: Our love would never work.

CAYLEY: It will!!!

JACK: It won't. Already you're beautiful and once you become a woman, I'd fall in love with you in a heartbeat.

(He sighed.)

JACK: But thanks to the curse, as soon as I fell for you, you'd fall straight out of love with me. A beauty like you can only break my heart and we're destined to be apart. I'll never forget you though.

(As Cayley literally swooned into Kyrie's arms, Jack smiled at her then raced off into the thick woodland. As he disappeared from view Cayley beamed.)

CAYLEY: Ours was a brief romance but ultimately a doomed one.

(She sighed.)

CAYLEY: My being beautiful was such a curse. For both of us.

(Hapslock couldn't help but smile. Already she'd managed to romance the events into a fairy-tale to make herself feel better. Being a child with no real understanding of the concept of romantic love, it had been easy for her to let her imagination take over and protect her from feeling hurt. In that moment he decided that if he ever saw Jack again he'd have to thank him for saying such kind words and allowing her to do that. Then he'd punch him. As he marvelled at Cayley's mental resourcefulness, he then noticed Kyrie and his heart sunk. If only he could sweep his love for *her* aside like Cayley had her feelings for Jack. As he thought it over in his head, he sighed sorrowfully.)

HAPSLOCK: I wish *I* was twelve!

(Kyrie gave him a sideways glance.)

KYRIE: You do? Why?

(She grinned.)

KYRIE: Is it because you could play hopscotch with Cayley?

(Hapslock gave her a sideways glance.)

HAPSLOCK: Don't be ridiculous.

CAYLEY: Yeah, I hate hopscotch.

(She blushed.)

CAYLEY: It's too difficult.

(Kyrie put her arm around her sympathetically.)

KYRIE: Rolling a stone accurately then hopping a few feet without falling over is beyond her sporting capabilities.

CAYLEY: It is.

KYRIE: She's quite a pathetic human being.

(Cayley pouted at her furiously.)

CAYLEY: Hey!!!

KYRIE: What?

(Kyrie rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: Shouldn't you be in bed?

(Cayley frowned at her bitterly.)

CAYLEY: Fine! I'll go back to bed then.

(With that, she folded her arms indignantly then stomped towards the carriage.)

CAYLEY: I just hope these steps aren't too much of a challenge for a pathetic person like me.

(With that, she stamped up the ladder at the back of the carriage and tripped, landing in a heap on the platform at the top of it. Hoping nobody noticed, she swiftly jumped to her feet, dusted herself down then stomped into the carriage. Watching her go, Kyrie chuckled.)

KYRIE: Let's pretend we didn't see that.

HAPSLOCK: I think that'd be for the best.

(He smiled then looked in the direction that Jack had disappeared in.)

HAPSLOCK: Do you think he'll be okay?

(Kyrie shrugged nonchalantly.)

KYRIE: Doubtful.

(Hapslock curled his lip and nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: Yeah, with a curse like that he's kinda screwed, isn't he?

KYRIE: Yup.

(Hapslock sighed.)

HAPSLOCK: Oh well, there's nothing *we* can do about it.

(With that, he stepped closer to the fire and knelt down.)

HAPSLOCK: Anyone want more meat?

(Kyrie knelt at his side and glanced to him seductively.)

KYRIE: I *always* want more meat.

(As Hapslock glanced to her and smiled lustfully, a worried expression crossed Kyrie's brow.)

KYRIE: And by meat I mean your cock, don't cook me anything.

(Hapslock gave her an exasperated glance.)

HAPSLOCK: I know what you meant, Kyrie.

KYRIE: Cool. As long as we're on the same page

(As she nudged up closer to Hapslock at the fireside, Sadler continued to stare into the woodland at the point where Jack had disappeared from view.)

SADLER: I really didn't like that person.

(He then glanced aside at Hapslock and Kyrie before turning to look at the carriage where Cayley was trying to get back off to sleep. Remembering he didn't like any of *them* either, he looked skywards and mused to himself.)

SADLER: Maybe I'm just not much of a people person.

(He nodded sternly.)

SADLER: Of course, I'm not. Everyone I've ever met is an asshole. I hate mankind, I really do.

(With that, he sighed despondently and headed for the carriage.)

SADLER: I'm going to bed.

(As he headed away, Kyrie glared at him.)

KYRIE: If you're going to sleep in the carriage tonight, get into the *empty* bed, face the wall then close your eyes. If you even look at Cayley, you're going to need a new set of testicles.

(Sadler rolled his eyes.)

SADLER: And that's *why* I hate mankind.

(Hapslock looked to him from the fireside.)

HAPSLOCK: Be very quiet in there and just to be on the safe side, sleep in your clothes.

SADLER: I was going to!

KYRIE: And be grateful we're *letting* you sleep in there!

(As he disappeared inside the carriage, Sadler snarled to himself. This carriage had been his home for over twenty years and now he needed someone else's permission to sleep in it.

Even *with* that permission he couldn't sleep in his own bed. Cayley and Kyrie were sharing that one and he'd been relegated to slumbering in the harder and much smaller spare. Feeling incredibly hard done by, he sighed, sat down on the bed then mumbled under his breath.)

SADLER: They treat me like a child. I'm not a child. I fucking hate children.

(As he laid himself down, Cayley's sleepy voice rose up from the darkness.)

CAYLEY: We hate you too.

(Outside, at this time, Kyrie and Sir Hapslock were huddled up by the fire, talking intimately. Surrendering to his feelings, Sir Hapslock placed a nervous arm around her and glanced at her lovingly. Having earlier failed to make it clear how he felt about her, he'd decided he was going to show her.)

HAPSLOCK: You look even more beautiful in the light of the flames.

(Kyrie nodded knowingly.)

KYRIE: I look beautiful in any light. I'm beautiful, you see.

HAPSLOCK: I *do* see.

(Kyrie turned her head sideways to look into his eyes and a worried expression crossed her brow.)

KYRIE: What's that look for? You look like kinda lost.

(Hapslock smiled.)

HAPSLOCK: I am lost. Lost in your beautiful eyes.

(With that, he eased her back to lay her on the grass and lifted himself on top of her.)

KYRIE: Oh, cool, we shagging then?

(Hapslock gently planted a soft kiss on her lips then pulled back to look deep into her eyes.)

HAPSLOCK: I wouldn't call it shagging.

KYRIE: Of course not, you're a posh knight, you probably call it fucking.

(He looked to her and lifted his finger to her lips.)

HAPSLOCK: Don't speak, beautiful.

(With that, he lowered his head to kiss her. Having accepted several soft pecks on her lips, Kyrie opened her mouth, grabbed him tight to her and tried to force her tongue into his



mouth. Determined to take things much slower, Hapslock pulled back and started to nuzzle her neck instead. Somewhat thrown by his actions, Kyrie pouted.)

KYRIE: Hey!

(Again he urged her to hush then started to run his hand up the outside of her thigh as he continued to kiss her neck.)

KYRIE: Okay... we'll take it slow then...

(Hapslock said nothing and continued to pleasure her neck with his lips. Enjoying the sensation, Kyrie closed her eyes and ran her hands up his backside. She enjoyed long, lingering foreplay and was happy to let him lead her. Twenty minutes later, however, they hadn't even got round to orally pleasuring each other and she was starting to get worried. Trembling as she laid beneath him with her breasts exposed to the world, she tried to reach inside his trousers only for him to gently move away and slowly kiss his way down her torso. Hoping he was going to continue on downwards and pleasure her femininity with his tongue, she was far from pleased when he slowly moved back upwards and started to tantalise one of her nipples instead. Getting increasingly agitated, her nostrils flared and she spoke up in an irritated voice.)

KYRIE: Are we going to have sex any time soon, or what?

(Hapslock just lifted his head, winked at her then resumed what he was doing. At once, a peeved expression crossed her brow.)

KYRIE: Stop! Get off me. Enough!

(As Hapslock lifted himself and glanced to her in dismay, she rolled out from underneath him, pulled her top down and sat up.)

KYRIE: What are you doing?

(Hapslock slipped into a kneeling position and gave her a baffled glance.)

HAPSLOCK: You've done it enough times to know exactly what I'm doing!

(Kyrie trembled.)

KYRIE: Not like *that* I haven't.

(She pouted at him.)

KYRIE: I like foreplay, you know I do, but what was that?

(Hapslock looked deeply dismayed.)

HAPSLOCK: Are you implying I'm a lousy lover?

KYRIE: No...

HAPSLOCK: Then what's the problem?

(Kyrie shuddered.)

KYRIE: You were trying to make love to me!!!

(Hapslock gave her a condescending glance.)

HAPSLOCK: Yes, and?

(Kyrie flapped in frustration.)

KYRIE: Why would you do that to me? I wanted raw, passionate sex!

(Hapslock looked to her in disbelief.)

HAPSLOCK: I was just trying to make it special, that's all.

(Kyrie glared at him bitterly.)

KYRIE: Well don't! I want sex, not lovemaking!

(She pouted and continued to rant at him.)

KYRIE: Pretty soon, we'll say goodbye forever so what's the point in doing something meaningful and emotional?

HAPSLOCK: I just wanted to make you happy, that's all.

KYRIE: By doing *that*? Making love gives people feelings for one another! Were you *trying* to make me fall in love with you?

(Hapslock's bottom lip quivered nervously.)

HAPSLOCK: No!

KYRIE: Well then. Stop bugging about and do me properly.

(She nodded defiantly and laid back down.)

KYRIE: I want to see proper lusty enthusiasm this time. Give me a damn good servicing and no more of that romantic, kissing nonsense. I want a seeing to that I'm never going to forget.

(She then fluttered her eyelashes at him and opened her legs.)

KYRIE: Let's get this show on the road.

(Staring back at her, Hapslock furrowed his brow and folded his arms defiantly.)

HAPSLOCK: I don't think I want to have sex with you anymore.

(Kyrie gave him a one eyed scowl and sneered.)

KYRIE: Excuse me?

HAPSLOCK: You heard me.

KYRIE: Just get your arse down here and do me. After that prolonged non-event I just endured, you owe me a good shagging.

(Hapslock looked deeply insulted.)

HAPSLOCK: Non-event? I was being sensual!!!

KYRIE: Sensual? Hardly! I'm quite capable of twiddling my *own* nipples thanks! I wanted to be stimulated not irritated!

(Hapslock growled and climbed to his feet.)

HAPSLOCK: Right that's done it. This ship has sailed. I've never been so insulted in my life!

(As he upped and started to pace away, Kyrie also leapt to her feet.)

KYRIE: Oh no, you don't. You come back here.

HAPSLOCK: The hell I will.

(Much to his amazement, Kyrie snarled and started to run at him.)

KYRIE: I said come here!!!

(Instinctively he raced around the fire to get away from her.)

HAPSLOCK: What the hell are you doing?

KYRIE: I told you I wanted sex and you're damn well gonna give me some!!!

HAPSLOCK: The hell I am!!!

(With that, they proceeded to race round and round the fire, yelling at one another.)

KYRIE: Give me your doodah!!!

HAPSLOCK: No! You insulted my integrity as a lover.

KYRIE: No, I insulted your attempt at pleasuring me!!!

HAPSLOCK: It's the same thing!

KYRIE: Whatever! You owe me a seeing to.

HAPSLOCK: Like hell I do, you had your chance and you blew it!

KYRIE: That's what *you* think!!! Come back here and bring your penis with you!!!

HAPSLOCK: Forget it. I'm not doing you and that's final.

(Kyrie snarled as she bounded after him.)

KYRIE: I'm *going* to catch you! And when I do I'm going to ride you so hard you'll think there's an earthquake.

HAPSLOCK: In your dreams! I've already gone floppy!!!

KYRIE: It won't be floppy for long.

(Finally realising the futility in chasing one another round and round in circles, they both slowed and stared at each other over the flames.)

HAPSLOCK: I'm not going to do you, Kyrie, you'd better get used to the idea.

KYRIE: You *are* going to do me, whether you like it or not. You can't get me started then quit on me, that's not right.

(Hapslock shrugged.)

HAPSLOCK: You should have thought about that before you ragged on my sexual stimulation skills.

(Kyrie nodded bitterly and took a pace back from the fire.)

KYRIE: Fine, I'll give you a chance to come to your senses.

(With that, she sat down upon the grass and opened her legs.)

KYRIE: I'm prone!!!

HAPSLOCK: So?

KYRIE: So, if your doodah isn't up my flimflam by the time I count to ten, I'm going pound you until you cry.

(She sneered.)

KYRIE: One...

HAPSLOCK: As if that's going to work.

KYRIE: Two... I mean it, Frank; you'd better come and do me. Three...

HAPSLOCK: Kyrie, you're...

(Just then, he caught sight of something in the woods and his jaw dropped. Deeply troubled by what he was seeing, he looked to Kyrie urgently.)

HAPSLOCK: Get up, quick!

KYRIE: Four!

HAPSLOCK: I mean it, Kyrie, look!

(As he pointed in the woods, Kyrie gave him a distrusting glance.)

KYRIE: Six!

HAPSLOCK: Kyrie!!!

KYRIE: Five, I think!

(She glanced into the woods then stared back at him.)

KYRIE: Six!

(She then performed a double take and stared back in the woods in horror.)

KYRIE: What the hell?

(Some distance away between the trees, burning flames were illuminating the darkness all across the hitherto black woodland horizon.)

KYRIE: What is it?

(Hapslock bit his lip.)

HAPSLOCK: Torches, I think!

KYRIE: A hate mob?

HAPSLOCK: More than likely. Several hundred strong.

(Kyrie shuddered.)

KYRIE: I don't fancy fighting that right now.

HAPSLOCK: Without fire magic, nor do I.

(He nodded urgently then raced to the back of the carriage.)

KYRIE: What are you doing?

HAPSLOCK: We're getting the fuck out of here!

(He lifted the carriage steps and slid them into the back door.)

HAPSLOCK: That wasn't very intelligent, now was it?

(He then had to climb onto the back platform to shut the door.)

HAPSLOCK: Idiot.

(With that, he jumped down and urged Kyrie to follow him.)

HAPSLOCK: Get on the carriage; we're getting out of here.

(Kyrie nodded then raced to his side.)

KYRIE: Do you think it's the same mob?

HAPSLOCK: Probably. They failed to beat us with what they had so they've gone to get reinforcements.

KYRIE: That's kinda gay. Like losing a fight so going to get your dad.

HAPSLOCK: Yeah, pretty much.

(Kyrie sighed.)

KYRIE: So where are we going to go?

HAPSLOCK: I don't know. Anywhere's better than this though, right?

KYRIE: Definitely.

(As Hapslock hurried atop the carriage, Kyrie climbed up after him then took the reigns.)

KYRIE: Right, how do I do this?

(Hapslock nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: Well, first you pass me the reigns.

(Kyrie nodded and handed him the reigns.)

KYRIE: Okay, now what?

HAPSLOCK: Now you let *me* drive!

(With that, he set the horses in motion and headed back towards the road.)

HAPSLOCK: I really liked that campsite but that mob... well they ruined everything.

KYRIE: Yeah, hate mobs tend to do that, I hear.

(Hapslock chuckled.)

HAPSLOCK: I guess that's why they're not called helpful and friendly mobs.

(As the carriage rolled onto the road then sped away to safety, Kyrie lay herself on his shoulder and sighed.)

KYRIE: Sorry I tried to make you have sex with me.

(Hapslock grimaced.)

HAPSLOCK: It's fine.

KYRIE: It's not. I feel silly now.

(She shrugged.)

KYRIE: I don't take rejection very well.

HAPSLOCK: Yeah, I noticed.

KYRIE: I tell you what, to make it up to you, why don't I suck your cock while you're driving?

(Hapslock glanced at her coldly.)

HAPSLOCK: You're determined to get some sort action tonight, aren't you?

(Kyrie shrugged.)

KYRIE: Fine, I won't then.

(Hapslock's eyes bulged and he looked to her imploringly.)

HAPSLOCK: I didn't say no!

(He sighed.)

HAPSLOCK: Later though, let me get off this dark road first. I need to be concentrating on where we're going and a blow job would be distracting to say the least.

KYRIE: Okay.

(She yawned then puffed out despondently.)

KYRIE: I'm starting to feel sleepy.

HAPSLOCK: Nap on my shoulder then.

KYRIE: Okay... thanks.

(She sighed.)

KYRIE: I can't believe it's this late and we're back on the road.

HAPSLOCK: Yeah, stupid hate mob.

(He shrugged.)

HAPSLOCK: Still, it wasn't a complete waste of time stopping there.

KYRIE: I disagree. I didn't get any sex *or* any sleep. What's the point in stopping somewhere for the night if you don't get at least one of the two?

HAPSLOCK: Well, normally I'd agree with you but we did a good deed tonight.

(Kyrie lifted her head off his shoulder and looked at him inquiringly.)

KYRIE: We did? What was that then?

HAPSLOCK: We saved that young man, Jack, from that hate mob.

(Kyrie looked thoughtful.)

KYRIE: Yeah, we did. Cool.

(She then laid her smiling head on his shoulder and closed her eyes.)

KYRIE: Thanks to us, he gets to live another day.

(Hapslock looked skywards and mused happily.)

HAPSLOCK: It feels good to be someone's saviour, doesn't it? In fact, that's why I became a knight in the first place. To save lives.

(Staring happily into space, he failed to notice the young man, Jack, rush from the woods, straight into the path of the carriage.)

HAPSLOCK: That young man probably thought his number was up.

KYRIE: Yeah, his whole life probably flashed before his very eyes.

(As the horses ran Jack down and the wheels of the carriage ran over his head, killing him outright, Kyrie exhaled happily.)

KYRIE: We did a wonderful thing, Frank. We're good people.

(Sir Hapslock nodded then raised a curious eyebrow.)

HAPSLOCK: What the hell was that bump just now I wonder.

KYRIE: A pothole probably.

HAPSLOCK: It was a bloody big one then. It felt more like I ran over a badger or something.

(Kyrie opened her eyes and glanced to him.)

KYRIE: Shall we stop and look?

HAPSLOCK: No, if it was a badger there's nothing we'll be able to do for it anyway.

KYRIE: True.

(She then closed her eyes again and yawned.)

KYRIE: Wake me when you find a new site. Or if you want a blow job.

(As she nuzzled into his shoulder, Hapslock stared ahead at the road and smiled. At last, the main road was in sight.)

HAPSLOCK: Excellent.

(As Kyrie started to softly snooze on his shoulder, Hapslock turned onto the main road and exhaled happily to himself. Having her so close filled him with a warm sensation he was pretty certain he could easily get used to. For all her vanity, stupidity and bizarre behaviour, being with her was never dull. As far as he was concerned, getting to know this kind-hearted simpleton had been a privilege. As he continued on down the road delighting in Kyrie's proximity, he thought back to something she'd said by the fireside earlier. At once, a look of uncertainty crossed his brow and he quickly got lost in his thoughts. She'd stated that making love makes people have feelings for each other. This wasn't something a person could be taught, especially a halfwit like Kyrie. This must have been something she'd lived through, a personal experience. As he thought about it further, something started to make sense. Her reasons for not wanting to make love to him were purely born out of self defence. She'd probably made love to a guy before and ended up getting feelings for him, only to lose touch with him when she'd fled town with Cayley. Having had her heart broken like this before it was little wonder she was closed off to the idea of him making love to her. Just like whoever it was she'd had feelings for in the past, he'd soon be leaving her life too.

With this in mind he became resolved to keeping his feelings to himself. Having already told her how he felt, he was thankful that her tiny mind hadn't understood. As great as it felt to be

in love with her, it'd be selfish to let her know about it. Port Amok wasn't far away and they'd soon be parting ways. If he'd made love to her and she'd developed feelings for him, she could have ended up being crushed. Knowing he'd soon be leaving her life and would most likely never see her again, he knew he had no choice but to bury his feelings forever. He'd wave her off at the port and let her know what a wonderful person he thought she was, but that would be it. He'd watch the ship sail out of port then go back to his life without her.

Half an hour after Kyrie had first dozed off, with Hapslock still deep in thought, she suddenly lifted her head off of his shoulder and yawned.)

KYRIE: Do you want that blow job now?

(Seeing how immensely tired she was, he looked to her and smiled.)

HAPSLOCK: No, don't worry. Next turning we see, I'll pull over and you can get a proper sleep in a comfy bed.

(Kyrie frowned at him tiredly.)

KYRIE: But I want to suck your thingy.

(With that, she leant forward and fell asleep in his lap. Watching her laying there, Hapslock forced a laugh then faced forwards again. As luck would have it, just up ahead, there was an open gate leading into a field. Satisfied that compared to the last campsite, anywhere would do, he slowed the horses and prepared to make a turn.)

HAPSLOCK: Thank heavens.

(Breathing a sigh of relief, he then steered the horses into a lush green meadow. Taking care to point the carriage at the road, he turned it around then pulled up to a halt next to a thick bush. Satisfied he'd found the best cover from prying eyes that he could, he then rocked Kyrie awake.)

KYRIE: I'm sucking, I'm sucking!!!

(She sat up looking lost and confused.)

KYRIE: Where's this?

HAPSLOCK: Just a field. Hopefully one with no angry mobs planning to pass through it.

(As she looked about the meadow in a weary daze, he smiled to her warmly.)

HAPSLOCK: Go and get some sleep, Kyrie. I'll be along in a minute.

(Kyrie smiled at him then started to climb down from the carriage.)

KYRIE: Frank?

HAPSLOCK: Yeah?

KYRIE: Goodnight.

(Sir Hapslock smiled at her warmly.)

HAPSLOCK: Goodnight, Kyrie.

(With that, Kyrie staggered around to the back of the carriage, scrambled onto the back platform and hastened inside. As she climbed into bed and cuddled up to Cayley, Hapslock loosened the horse's harnesses so they could lay down then looked all about the darkened meadow.)

HAPSLOCK: Another day done.

(He puffed out then paced around the carriage and climbed up on the back platform. Rather than entering the carriage, however, he opted to sit on the platform and take a minute for himself. The next twenty four hours were going to be a struggle. Even in the unlikely event of them not getting embroiled in a fight, lying to himself and denying his feelings for Kyrie wasn't going to be easy. He wanted nothing more than to let her know about his euphoric feelings for her but it simply couldn't happen. He'd managed to find himself in the bizarre scenario where to be the hero meant *not* getting the girl. As he thought things over in his head, he sighed outwardly then forced a smile. Despite the pain in his heart, his head was pretty certain he was doing the right thing.

Ready to curl up on the floor and try to sleep through the maddening sounds of Sadler's snoring, he climbed to his feet and opened the carriage door. On the morrow, they'd finally arrive at Port Amok and their journey would be at its end. Kyrie and Cayley would head off to the sanctuary of the new world, Sadler would go back to insulting the world with his music and he'd resume his duties as a wandering knight. Not sure whether he was overjoyed or devastated by that fact, he closed the door behind him and settled down for the night.)

## *Chapter Six - Journey's End.*

As dawn broke and the sun rose over the meadow to chase the darkness away, all was silent in Sadler's carriage. After what had been a long, difficult day, all four inhabitants of the carriage were enjoying a well deserved sleep. Having been rolled onto his side in the night by an angry Sir Hapslock, even Sadler was silent, his snoring no longer audible. Kyrie lay cuddled up to Cayley in the larger bed, Sadler snoozed merrily in the smaller bed and Sir Hapslock slept soundly on the floor in between the two. Apart from the odd sleeping groan not a single sound had emanated from any of them for many hours now.

The first to awaken, as the sun gleamed through the window and into her eyes, Kyrie's eyelids flickered and she groaned despondently. Cuddled up to her sleeping younger sibling, she was far from enthusiastic about the idea of getting up. Swiftly deciding she wasn't going to, she nestled back into her pillow again and tried to doze off. Seconds later, irritated by the bright sun shining directly onto her face, she sighed and started to roll over to block it out. Blissfully unaware that Cayley's hair was caught up in her necklace, she threw herself over, yanking several strands of it straight out of her head. At once, Cayley sat up and screamed in agony.)

CAYLEY: Ow!!!

(Woken with a start, Sadler sat bolt up right and yelled in terror.)

SADLER: Banshee!!!

(Thrown into a panic by the sudden cries of distress, Kyrie jumped out of bed wearing only her bra and knickers and landed with one foot on Sir Hapslock's crotch and the other on his stomach. As he slid out from underneath her feet and lay writhing in agony on the floor of the carriage, Kyrie bounced on the floorboards with her fists raised, looking all about herself in a panic.)

KYRIE: What's going on? Who do I hit?

(Cayley pouted at her furiously.)

CAYLEY: You pulled my hair!!!

(Kyrie stopped panicking and gave her a baffled glance.)

KYRIE: No, I didn't!

(Cayley pointed to Kyrie's necklace and snarled.)

CAYLEY: What's that then?

KYRIE: My bra!

CAYLEY: You're necklace, stupid!

(She looked down at the hair tangled up in her necklace and grimaced at Cayley.)

KYRIE: Whoops. I did it again, didn't I?

(Sadler glared between them both and snarled.)

SADLER: I'm so glad I'm getting rid off you two today.

(He shook his head and laid back down.)

SADLER: If I wasn't being forced to act polite and courteous I'd elaborate but seeing as I don't want to go to jail, I'll be quiet.

(Kyrie looked to him emptily for a moment then glanced down to where Sir Hapslock was gasping for breath on the floor.)

KYRIE: You alright there, Frank?

(Receiving only a cold stare in return, Kyrie grabbed her dress and threw it on over her underwear.)

KYRIE: Everyone's so grouchy this morning, damn.



(With that, she paced to the carriage door and threw it open. Squinting to block out the sun as she emerged onto the back platform, she was immediately greeted by the sound of an angry old man on the grass below her.)

ALBERT: Prepare to die!!!

(As Kyrie looked down from the platform at him in bewilderment, he shook his fist and slowly waved a garden fork at her. Far from intimidated by him, she jumped down to the grass then looked his bony frame up and down.)

KYRIE: Prepare to die? That's a bit ambitious isn't it?

(Having heard the threat from inside the carriage, Hapslock and Cayley rushed out to join her just as the old man reaffirmed his stance.)

OLD MAN: You'll die by my hand!!!

(As Kyrie chuckled, Hapslock and Cayley climbed down from the back platform and stood either side of her.)

HAPSLOCK: Old man, is this your field? If so, we didn't mean to trespass. And although I'm a knight of this realm and entitled to use it, we'll get off your land as soon as possible.

(The old man looked peeved.)

OLD MAN: This isn't my field! I'm not a farmer.

HAPSLOCK: Then who *are* you?

OLD MAN: I'm an assassin.

(He gestured to his garden fork and sneered.)

OLD MAN: Me and this here battle trident will make short work of you!

CAYLEY: Battle trident?

HAPSLOCK: It's a garden fork!

(The old man snarled.)

OLD MAN: Don't talk nonsense!

HAPSLOCK: I'm not! It's a common garden fork.

OLD MAN: It's a trident!

CAYLEY: No it's not; it's got four prongs for a start!

OLD MAN: So?

CAYLEY: By definition, a trident can only have three. Hence, tri!

(Kyrie rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: Nobody likes a smartarse, sister face.

(With that, she stepped towards the old man.)

KYRIE: Look, put that down before you hurt yourself.

(Ready for a fight, the old man groaned then swung his fork at her with all his might. Sadly for him, using all *his* might meant the fork barely swung six inches and he was exhausted at the end of it.)

KYRIE: Seriously?

(Looking extremely peeved, Cayley paced past her and snatched the fork from the old man's hand.)

CAYLEY: Don't swing that thing around! You could hurt someone!

OLD MAN: I'm trying to, damn it! I'm an assassin.

(With that, he punched her on the chin and broke three of his fingers. Cayley barely even felt the impact. As he yelped in pain and nursed his paining hand, a furious Kyrie rushed up to him and poked him in the chest.)

KYRIE: Hey!!! That's my sister you're failing to push around.

(The old man looked to her hatefully then his eyes bulged wide-open.)

KYRIE: I don't know who you think you are and I don't care...

(As Kyrie continued to poke the old man, he staggered backwards and gasped for air.)

KYRIE: Nobody picks on my sister, except me! Got it?

(She snarled.)

KYRIE: Now, I suggest you run along before I do something I regret.

(As the old man clutched his chest and dropped down dead of a heart attack, Kyrie stood over him and grimaced.)

KYRIE: Right...

(She glanced back at an equally baffled Hapslock and Cayley.)

KYRIE: I think I killed him!

HAPSLOCK: No, no, time did that.

(Cayley looked to Hapslock nervously.)

CAYLEY: Now what are we going to do?

(Hapslock shrugged.)

HAPSLOCK: Well, we can't just leave him *there*.

(With that, he paced over to the old man's body, picked him up then lobbed him into the nearby hedgerow.)

HAPSLOCK: There!

(Cayley looked to him in disbelief.)

CAYLEY: How is throwing him in there any different to leaving him where he was?

HAPSLOCK: Are you mad? What if a child found him laying there half decomposed in the middle of the field?

CAYLEY: What if a child finds him half decomposed in the hedge?

HAPSLOCK: Be honest, Cayley, that's far less likely.

(He clapped his hands together then rubbed them rigorously.)

HAPSLOCK: Anyway, enough of that! Let's get heading for Port Amok.

KYRIE: I need a wash first!

HAPSLOCK: Fine, we'll head to water then to Port Amok.

KYRIE: Cool.

(As Hapslock headed back to the carriage, Cayley looked towards the old man's remains sticking out of the hedge and puffed out in amazement.)

CAYLEY: Axion really did send every assassin he could find, didn't he?

(Kyrie chuckled.)

KYRIE: Looks that way, doesn't it?

CAYLEY: I just keep wondering how these assassins know where to find us all the time. I mean even *that* senile old fool managed it.

(Kyrie shrugged.)

KYRIE: I don't know. But then I wouldn't, would I?

CAYLEY: I know a lot of them ask around and track us down that way. You know, they ask if anyone's seen us and which we went then cut us off on our way to the next town. I get that, but... guys like that old man... this is the middle of nowhere and he doesn't even have a horse, so where did *he* spring from?

KYRIE: Maybe he lived locally.

(She suddenly looked enlightened.)

KYRIE: Or maybe he was just a crazy old man. It's possible Axion didn't even send him.

(Cayley nodded thoughtfully.)

CAYLEY: Yeah, maybe we just encountered a lunatic like you do from time to time.

KYRIE: Yeah.

(She smiled and placed a loving arm around her.)

KYRIE: Let's not bother worrying about it. It doesn't matter how they find us, it's just important that we beat them when they do.

CAYLEY: True.

KYRIE: Come on; let me brush that hair of yours. The ones on your head not...

(Cayley looked alarmed and snapped her head towards her.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie!!!

KYRIE: What? I was going to say the ones on your head, not the ones in my necklace.

(She rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: You've got a filthy mind, sister face.

(As Kyrie paced back into the carriage, Cayley watched her go and shook her head in disbelief.)

CAYLEY: *I've* got a filthy mind? Unbelievable!

(With that, she too headed into the carriage.)

Wide awake after their bizarre start to the day, it wasn't long before everyone was dressed and ready to leave. And so, once again, with Sadler and Hapslock atop the carriage and Kyrie and Cayley inside it, the journey to Pork Amok resumed. Under strict instructions to stop at the next source of water so the girls could wash up, Hapslock led the carriage onto the road and they were away. Hapslock's difficult day had begun. Barring any absolute disasters, this would be the day they arrived in Port Amok. For Sir Hapslock, the reward for a successful end to this journey would be a painful farewell that he was dreading. Setting that sad truth to one side, he put his head down and urged the horses forth on the look out for water. Today was about being the consummate professional and he wouldn't be able to let his personal feelings interfere in any way. He wouldn't be able to get through the day any other way.)

---

Little did Kyrie and Cayley know as they sat in their carriage chatting innocently, they weren't going to be the first Anoseta citizens arriving in Port Amok on this day. Axion had beaten them to it. Had the girls had any idea that this was going to be the case, they'd undoubtedly have forced Sir Hapslock to turn the carriage around and take them as far from Port Amok as possible. This most despicable of men was the bane of their existence, the sole reason for their two years of torment. Despite being immensely rich and powerful, he was still determined to crush them both for subjecting him to the one moment in his life where he hadn't got his own way. He'd decided to marry them to guarantee himself the prettiest wife and unlock his father's fortune. Despite managing to do that even *without* marrying them both, he was still hell bent on making them pay for their defiance and he wasn't worried how much it cost him.

Having disembarked from his ship, Axion strolled along the bustling Port Amok dockside with his aide, Rico and his hired muscle, Blake. Sensing that an end to his quest to kill Kyrie and Cayley was near, he sniffed the sea air and exhaled merrily.

AXION: You know what, Rico? This is going to be my day; I can feel it in the air.

(As Blake paced behind them clutching a large bag of money, Rico looked to him and nodded.)

RICO: So, you think they're definitely here?

AXION: Yes! Well, if they're not here now then I've no doubt they will be soon. I'm in absolutely no doubt that they were coming here.

RICO: It definitely looked that way, I agree.

(Axion exhaled contentedly then glanced out to sea.)

AXION: Anoseta used to have a proud navy once, you know?

(Rico looked surprised.)

RICO: Well still do, don't we?

AXION: No, not like it used to be anyway.

(As they turned from the dockside and headed into the streets of the town, Axion looked skywards and exhaled sorrowfully.)

AXION: Our nation could have ruled the seas. We had all the best ships, the best seamen; we were a force to be reckoned with. And it was almost all wiped out in one fell swoop.

RICO: Really?

AXION: I'm afraid so.

(He looked to Rico inquiringly.)

AXION: Ever read about the Kiena uprising?

RICO: Wasn't that seventy years ago?

AXION: It was. The people of Kiena revolted against their king and civil war broke out.

RICO: Yeah, I remember reading about that.

(Axion nodded.)

AXION: Well what you probably haven't read about is Anoseta's involvement.

(Rico looked shocked.)

RICO: I didn't know we had any involvement.

AXION: That's because our history books don't like to mention it.

RICO: I see.

AXION: We agreed to help the king of Kiena and sent three quarters of our navy to assist in his campaign. Most of the ships contained soldiers, supplies and weapons. Others were going to be used to attack the rebel strongholds from the sea. Nothing like a cannon bombardment to stir things up, you know?

(He sighed.)

AXION: Well, anyway, just as the ships started to approach the Kiena coast, there was an earthquake. And ten minutes later, a powerful tsunami rose up out of the sea and devastated our entire fleet.

(Rico bit his lip.)

RICO: That's awful.

AXION: It was. We lost all the ships, all our men, everything. And to make matters worse, the Kiena rebels won the civil war and threatened revenge on Anoseta for attempting to fight against them. Of course, we'd lost so many soldiers that if they did come in search of revenge we'd have nobody to fight them with. There was panic in the streets and what with the Kiena soldier's reputation for raping and pillaging, many of Anoseta's women fled west to the Menzaland border in their thousands. That's where the law forbidding women to run west comes from incidentally.

(Rico looked enlightened.)

RICO: I see! I had wondered.

AXION: Well, we couldn't let all our women emigrate now, could we? We'd become a nation of gays then die out.

RICO: I'd prefer to think we'd become a nation of abstinence in that situation.

AXION: Well, me too but there's some filthy buggers out there, you know?

RICO: I've heard a few stories, yes.

(Just then, Axion stopped and gestured to a building on their right.)

AXION: Here we are; the Siaras mining company.

RICO: Mining company?

AXION: Just follow me.

(With that, he led Rico and Blake into the building through a small wooden door. As they entered a small room featuring minimal decor and one friendly looking old lady sitting behind a desk, Rico looked uncertain.)

RICO: Are you sure this is the right place?

(Axion grinned knowingly.)

AXION: I am.

(He then paced up to the old woman and smiled.)

AXION: Hello there?

(The old lady up from her desk and offered him a welcoming expression.)

OLD LADY: Hello, young man. How can I help you?

AXION: I've come to invoke the silver arrow assassins.

(The old lady looked uncertain.)

OLD LADY: Who are the silver arrows assassins, young man?

(Axion gave her a sideways glance.)

AXION: What do you mean by that? You know...

(Suddenly, realising she was playing dumb; he nodded and gestured to the bag in Blake's arms.)

AXION: There's two million in that bag. Now I'll ask you again.

(The old lady held her palm up at him.)

OLD LADY: No need, you had me at two million!

(She smiled then gestured to a door at the back of the room.)

OLD LADY: Mr Vaska will be happy to see you.

(Axion nodded.)

AXION: Mr Vaska, got it. Thank you.

(As they headed through the door at the back of the room, Axion and his two cronies were quite taken aback but what they saw. In stark contrast to the bland reception room, the door opened up into a fine marble hallway. At the end of the hallway they could see the open door of a plush looking office, decorated with fine art works from around the globe. Axion, of course, felt very much at home in this setting.)

AXION: Now this is more like it.

(He smiled joyfully at Rico as they paced to the end of the corridor then stepped from the marble hallway floor and onto the high quality rug just inside the office door.)

AXION: It's good to know I'm not the only man in the world who knows quality decor when he sees it.

(As they approached the expensive, mahogany desk at the end of the office, Vaska, a portly old gent wearing a fine suit and smoking an expensive look cigar, spun around in the desk chair and greeted them all with knowing smile.)

VASKA: Good morning, gentlemen.

(Axion stopped before the desk and smiled.)

AXION: Mr Vaska?

(Vaska smiled.)

VASKA: That's me.

AXION: Good morning. My name's Axion.

(Vaska looked uncertain.)

VASKA: Axion? I know that name from somewhere.

AXION: I was here once before; when I was about nine; with my father Lord Moulin.

(Vaska looked enlightened.)

VASKA: Oh, I remember. My, my, you've grown.

AXION: Well, of course I have. What did you expect?

(Vaska laughed out loud.)

VASKA: Quite! So, is this old office of mine how you remember it?

(Axion looked around the room and shook his head.)

AXION: To be honest, I don't remember much about that day. Only that your building is near the docks and that your cover is the Siaras mining company.

VASKA: I see. Well, it was a long time ago.

(He gestured to the seats in front of his desk.)

VASKA: Please, take a seat.

(Axion nodded, took a seat then gestured for his two comrades to do the same. Quickly obliging, they sat either side of him as Vaska climbed to his feet and headed to his drinks cabinet.)

VASKA: Drink, anyone?

AXION: Ah, yes, thank you. Do you have cognac?

VASKA: I have everything.

(He then proceeded to pour cognac into four glasses. Waiting patiently, Axion looked around the walls in awe.)

AXION: You've assembled a fine collection of artworks, if you don't mind me saying.

VASKA: Why would I mind?

(Axion gave a single laugh.)

AXION: Indeed, why would you?

(Vaska smiled and returned to them with two cognacs.)

VASKA: So...

(Rico took the cognacs from him and passed them to Axion and Blake as Vaska returned to collect the other two glasses.)

VASKA: What can I do for you?

(Axion nodded sternly.)

AXION: I wish to invoke the silver arrow assassins.

(Vaska returned to his desk with a cognac in each hand and sat down. Having slid one cognac across the desk to Rico, he then sat back and took a sip of the other.)

VASKA: Invoke, eh?

(All of a sudden, his smooth and polite demeanour disappeared to be replaced by a sarcastic and mocking one.)

VASKA: Invoke? That's a little dramatic don't you think?

(Axion glared at him suspiciously.)

AXION: Are you mocking me, Mr Vaska?

(Vaska sighed apologetically.)

VASKA: Sorry. It's been a slow month and I've got in the habit of mocking people just to keep myself amused. I mean no disrespect or offence.

(Axion nodded.)

AXION: Fair enough, none taken.

(Vaska smiled.)

VASKA: So, what have you got for me?

(Axion nodded sternly and leant forward to get down to business.)

AXION: I want to have two people killed.

VASKA: Anyone two people in particular or aren't you fussy?

(Axion furrowed his brow and sat back.)

AXION: You're mocking me again!

(Vaska sighed apologetically.)

VASKA: I am, aren't I? Sorry.

AXION: Are you?

VASKA: Yes, yes I am. I'll try to keep a lid on it, I apologise.

(Axion shook his head.)

AXION: I thought as leader of the silver arrow assassins, you'd be more professional than this.

VASKA: I am normally. I can't apologise enough for my behaviour today.

(He nodded firmly.)

VASKA: So, I'm not even going to try.

(He gestured towards Axion with his hands.)

VASKA: Anyway, where were we? You need two people killed, you say?

(Axion scowled at him coldly for a moment then leant forward again.)

AXION: Yes, two girls. Well, one's a woman now, she's 18.

VASKA: And the other?

AXION: She's 12.

(Vaska looked stumped.)

VASKA: You need to hire the silver arrow assassins to kill a teenager and a child?

AXION: I know it sounds lame but my personal gang of heavies and the veritable army that I sent after them have all failed miserably. For two years I've been trying to have them killed.

(Vaska bit his lip.)

VASKA: But, they're just a teenager and a child.

(An angry snarl crossed Axion's brow.)

AXION: The older one's no ordinary teenager, trust me!

VASKA: What do you mean?

AXION: She's like a living, breathing, fighting machine. She's quicker than any warrior or assassin you've ever seen. And her skills are phenomenal!

(Vaska gave him a doubting glance.)

VASKA: Quicker than any assassin *I've* ever seen? I'm the leader of the silver arrow assassins, the greatest assassins on earth.

AXION: Even so, I stand by what I said. Trust me; the girl's a formidable opponent.

(Vaska nodded.)

VASKA: Okay, I'll take your word for that.

AXION: Make sure you do, it'd be unwise to underestimate her.

VASKA: We never underestimate anyone, Axion, don't you worry about that.

(As Axion nodded to acknowledge his words, Vaska stubbed out his cigar and glanced at him enquiringly.)

VASKA: And what about the other one? The twelve year old? Is she a fighter too?

(Axion looked lost for a moment then shrugged.)

AXION: Well, to be honest, apart from her name, I don't know much about her other than the fact that she's a pretty good pianist.

(Vaska nodded sternly, clearly sympathising with his plight.)

VASKA: Then it's a good thing you came to me. Those pianists can be ferocious.

(Axion furrowed his brow and replied in a protesting voice.)

AXION: No, you don't understand. Her sister protects her and...

(Vaska raised his palm at him.)

VASKA: You don't have to explain it to *me*, Axion. I understand your difficulties perfectly. I mean, it takes more than a man with his own army of thugs to take down a pianist. Many a veteran, battle-hardened warrior has come a cropper against those ivory tickling maniacs, I can assure you.

(As Axion seethed, Vaska exhaled in awe.)

VASKA: Just when you think you've got one beat they always somehow manage to pull up a stool and belt out a few sea shanties. How can any mere mortal compete???

(Axion was livid.)

AXION: I'm getting rather sick of you mocking me, Vaska!!!

(Vaska looked to him as he tried to shake off a bout of laughter.)

VASKA: I'm sorry... that just struck me as funny, that's all...

(Axion snarled.)

AXION: You won't be laughing in a minute when me and my two million walk straight out of that door!!!

(Vaska sat tall in his seat and straightened his lips.)

VASKA: Quite! Forgive me!

AXION: I'm really not impressed with the service I'm getting so far, Vaska, I must say.

(Vaska nodded and leant forward on the table.)

VASKA: Service you say? You want service? Well how's this for service, I can guarantee you satisfaction?

AXION: Plenty of assassins have done that before, Vaska. And do I look satisfied to you?

VASKA: No, you most certainly don't.

(He nodded and looked Axion in the eye.)

VASKA: Look, tell me all you know about these two girls. Then I'll tell you exactly how and when we're going to make the kill.

AXION: Okay.

(He looked to Rico and nodded.)

AXION: Tell him everything we know.

RICO: Okay...

(Before he could begin, Vaska raised a finger to hush him.)

VASKA: Wait a moment.

(He then tipped back his head and yelled out.)

VASKA: Evangeline!

(Almost immediately a leggy blonde strolled into the room holding a notepad.)

EVANGELINE: Yes, Mr Vaska?

(Axion, Rico and Blake drooled as she sat on his desk and pushed out her chest.)

VASKA: Take notes would you? This gentleman is about to describe our next targets.

(Evangeline smiled and looked to Rico.)

VASKA: She's listening.

(Rico removed his eyes from her chest and looked to Vaska.)

RICO: Sorry, what?

VASKA: Begin, tell me about these girls.

(He looked enlightened then glanced back at Evangeline's chest again.)

RICO: Okay. Well, the older sister is called Kyrie and the right breast is called Cayley, we don't have a surname for them.

(Axion slapped him about the head and snarled.)

AXION: Stop looking at her boobs and concentrate.

RICO: But...

AXION: Look at Vaska while you're talking, she can still hear you.

(Rico nodded reluctantly then continued his description.)

RICO: Yeah, so Kyrie and Cayley... they're both Caucasian with tanned skin, brown eyes and black hair. Both have a slim build. We can't really say much more about the younger one.

She was ten when we last saw her, now she's twelve and it's anybody's guess how much she's grown since then. So obviously her height and whatnot are a mystery. So, sticking with what we do know... well, Kyrie has...

(He looked embarrassed and bit his lip.)

RICO: Very large breasts.

(They all glanced to Evangeline's chest then looked back at Rico.)

RICO: And, yeah... she's roughly 5 foot 5 inches tall... I think that's everything.

VASKA: Okay, nice descriptions, but is there anything else you can tell us to help locate them?

(As Rico went to speak, Axion cut over him with a furious look on his face.)



AXION: The bitches are on their way here to Port Amok. In fact there's even a slight possibility they might be here already.

VASKA: Really? They're coming here?

AXION: I think so. In fact I'm sure of it. I've had various reports of where they've been spotted over the last two years and right now they seem to be on a path towards Port Amok. Undoubtedly they're going to try to get passage to the new world by sea.

VASKA: I see.

AXION: They were in Roseville 3 days ago.

(Vaska nodded.)

VASKA: It *is* possible to make it here from Roseville in three days by carriage. Less on horseback. How are they travelling? Do you know?

AXION: I can't be certain. That said, judging by the time it took them to get to Roseville from the previous town, I can only assume they were on foot.

(Vaska nodded.)

VASKA: Well, that doesn't mean they'll always be on foot.

(He mused to himself.)

VASKA: It seems unlikely they've made it here already but we don't deal in likelihoods, we leave no stone unturned.

(He nodded sternly.)

VASKA: You wanted service, Axion, well this is what we're offering. We'll find out if the girls are in town and if they've already sailed. If they've sailed then we'll head after them and bring them back again! And if they're in town, we'll capture them.

AXION: And if they're not in town yet?

VASKA: Then we'll wait. If they're coming here to Port Amok as you suggest, we'll have eyes on them as soon as they set foot in town, we're *that* good!

(An overjoyed expression crossed Axion's brow.)

AXION: And then you'll kill them?

VASKA: We'll capture them.

(Axion rolled his eyes.)

AXION: And hunt them down later for sport, I suppose.

VASKA: Of course, that's what we do. And don't worry about how strong this older sister is, we don't capture anyone by means of violence, we're more subtle than that. We'll put them in a situation where we can offer them a friendly, spiked drink.

AXION: I see.

(Vaska mused to himself and smiled.)

VASKA: You know, if they're coming here to sail then that's perfect. Almost too good to be true. We've got just the place to hunt them down and they'll walk there on their own accord.

(Axion looked a little lost.)

AXION: What do you mean?

VASKA: It's pretty simple, Axion. Once they hit town, we'll find them then lead them straight to the hunting ground. You're welcome to come and watch us make the kill, of course.

(Axion shrugged.)

AXION: I just want them dead. I don't have to see the deed but I do want to spit on the bodies. And I want them shipped back to Anoseta so I can have their heads stuffed and mounted.

VASKA: We can arrange that.

(He nodded.)

VASKA: Right. Well as long as you're certain they're headed here to Port Amok then I know exactly what we're going to do.

(Axion nodded.)

AXION: I'm absolutely certain of it.

VASKA: That's perfect then.

(He smiled.)

VASKA: Okay, so for your two million this is what you'll get. Our network of prying eyes will find them as soon as they make it here to Port Amok. Guaranteed. As soon as they try to get a ship, we'll make contact. We'll offer them transport on one of our mining ships. Of course, the ship is no longer used for transporting what we've mined. These days the hull is our hunting arena. They'll be tricked into boarding the ship, offered a complimentary drink and be subsequently rendered unconscious.

(He smiled.)

VASKA: Once they awaken, they'll be taken to said hunting arena where they'll be confronted by the ten deadliest assassins known to man. A brilliant collection of killers with every skill in the book between them. Stealth assassin, mage, swordsman... every type of assassin you can think of. The girls will die and the assassin who makes the kill scores 100 points to his or her tally. My money being on the giant making the kill.

AXION: Giant?

VASKA: Eight feet tall, thirty stone yet freakishly agile. Not that it matters to you who wins; the sport is for our *own* amusement. Regardless of who wins, all you need to know is that those two young ladies will be utterly and certifiably dead.

(Axion grinned from ear to ear.)

AXION: You guarantee that, do you?

VASKA: Or your money back. And we've never had to issue a refund yet!

AXION: Fantastic. It's a deal.

(Axion thrust his hand into Vaska's and they shook on the deal.)

VASKA: Best two million you ever spent.

(He beamed then looked to Evangeline urgently.)

VASKA: Take the man's money and put it in the safe.

(Blake handed her the cash as Vaska continued to issue his order.)

VASKA: As soon as you've done that, circulate the girl's descriptions to the network; find out if they're in town or if they sailed recently. If they haven't, I want eyes on them as soon as they enter town. As soon as they're located come and let me know.

(As Evangeline left the room, Axion looked to Vaska enquiringly.)

AXION: How long before we'll know anything?

(Vaska smiled.)

VASKA: Providing they haven't sailed yet, within five minutes of them getting into town, we'll know about it.

(Axion looked overjoyed.)

AXION: Perfect.

(Vaska smiled.)

VASKA: See, now you can relax. The ball's rolling. Now you've got the silver arrow assassins on the case, all your worries are a thing of the past.

(Axion drew a deep sigh of relief and clenched his fists.)

AXION: At last.

(As if the weight of the world had been lifted from his shoulders, Axion sat back and looked to the ceiling in delight. The silver arrow assassins were every bit as lethal as their reputation suggested and now they'd taken his case. They may have been expensive but they never failed to kill their target and that was everything to Axion. At last, he felt certain that Kyrie and Cayley's days were numbered. He didn't care that this most deadly of assassin clans liked to make a game of it, all that mattered to Axion was that they never failed to make the kill.

As far as he was concerned, they were welcome to have their fun. As soon as he glanced down on Kyrie and Cayley's lifeless corpses, he'd have his.)

---

As midday came and went and the carriage gleamed in the early afternoon sunshine, Hapslock snarled and urged the horses forth and he sat aside the bored looking Sadler. They'd already made a stop so the girls could wash and freshen up and now all that remained was the final, angry push to Port Amok. Eager to get the journey over and done with so he wouldn't have to tolerate Sadler's complaining any longer, Hapslock was setting quite a blistering pace. No longer willing to talk to him for fear of being told to shut up again, Sadler just watched the horses and said nothing. As ever, they were far from enjoying one another's company and travelled forth in silence.

Sat side by side inside the carriage at this time, Kyrie and Cayley were starting to get excited. Before long they'd be reaching the end of their journey and heading for the sanctuary of the new world. Finally their hell would be at an end and they'd be free to enjoy an adventure in a strange new land together. Barely able to contain their excitement as they sat together in the carriage, they started to fantasise about the new world and how magnificent life there would be.

KYRIE: Think, sister face, we're going to the place where high heels were invented.  
(Cayley beamed.)

CAYLEY: They weren't actually invented there; Sir Flaxley's wife brought them back from...  
(Kyrie frowned.)

KYRIE: I don't need boring details! Fact is; they gave us high heels!

CAYLEY: True.

KYRIE: I bet the fashions are amazing!  
(Cayley grinned happily.)

CAYLEY: No more dressing to look like a geeky kid.

KYRIE: That won't stop you being a geeky kid, though.

CAYLEY: Hey! Don't be mean.  
(Kyrie exhaled happily.)

KYRIE: I bet they eat steak there every day!  
(Cayley gave her a baffled glance.)

CAYLEY: What makes you think that?

KYRIE: Well, being a *new* world, they've probably got millions of cows there.

CAYLEY: How on earth did you reach that conclusion?  
(Kyrie shrugged.)

KYRIE: Well, we *used* to have millions of cows too but people in *this* world have been eating steak for centuries, so we must be running low on them by now, surely. That's just common sense! Being a *new* world, they won't have that problem yet. They'll still have loads of cows left.

(Cayley looked to her blankly.)

CAYLEY: You don't just eat steak until you run out of cows. You get the cows to breed and make new cows!

(Kyrie looked shocked.)

KYRIE: Really? That's kinda clever.  
(She nodded.)

KYRIE: We should tell them about that when we get there. Being a new world, they probably haven't heard about that yet.

(Cayley gave her a disbelieving glance.)

CAYLEY: It's not actually a *new* world. It hasn't only just been created. It's been there as long as our world has.

(Kyrie gave her a belittling glance.)

KYRIE: Don't be silly. If that was true it'd be called the equally as old world.

CAYLEY: Kyrie, it doesn't work like that. Both worlds are old, they just didn't know about each other.

(Kyrie snapped her neck at her and barked.)

KYRIE: Stop trying to confuse me with your crazy theories!

CAYLEY: You mean facts!

KYRIE: Yeah, them!

(She shook her head in disappointment.)

KYRIE: Why are you trying to ruin my excitement?

CAYLEY: I'm not.

KYRIE: Good, because you can't. We're going to the land of plenty and greatness and even *you* can't sour *that* for me.

(Cayley pouted.)

CAYLEY: When do I sour *anything*?

(Kyrie offered her a sympathetic smile.)

KYRIE: Let's not argue, Cayley.

CAYLEY: I wasn't going to.

KYRIE: Good.

(She beamed then resumed gushing about the wonders of the new world.)

KYRIE: Great food, great fashion, I bet the guys there are hot too.

(Cayley smiled warmly.)

CAYLEY: I'm just looking forward to settling down and being able to go to school again.

KYRIE: Oh, good point. I'll have to get a job. I bet prostitutes earn good money over there. Being a new world, they probably haven't got many yet, that means more business for me.

(Cayley just looked to her emptily and shook her head. There was no point in correcting her twice. Once she'd made her mind up about something, it remained made up. As far as Kyrie was concerned, the new world was exactly what it sounded like. New. Cayley could have pointed out that the new world had been discovered twenty three years earlier, and that Sir Flaxley, who was now in his fifties, had lived there all his life. Kyrie, however, would then have simply assumed he was there all by himself. Sometimes it was easier just to let Kyrie have her thoughts.)

KYRIE: We're gonna be so happy there.

(Cayley smiled happily.)

CAYLEY: Yeah we are. No more being hunted and attacked.

KYRIE: Yeah, we'll be able to live normal lives, like normal people.

(She sighed happily.)

KYRIE: And I'll have kept the promise I made myself.

(Cayley glanced to her enquiringly.)

CAYLEY: You made yourself a promise?

KYRIE: I did. To keep you safe.

(Cayley looked to her lovingly.)

CAYLEY: You're the best sister ever, Kyrie.

(Kyrie shrugged modestly.)

KYRIE: I know.

CAYLEY: Still, there's a few hours to go before we get there, it's not over yet.

(Kyrie nodded.)

KYRIE: True, but... there's no way I'm going to get *this* close to safety and lose you now. If any fool *does* dare try their luck, they're gonna regret it.

(They shared a warm smile.)

CAYLEY: Hopefully nobody will.

KYRIE: Yeah, hopefully.

(She exhaled joyfully.)

KYRIE: Think, only a few more hours to go and we won't have worry about this sort of thing ever again.

CAYLEY: I can't think about *anything* else! No more summoned beasts following us about, no more warriors leaping out on us. It's going to be heaven.

KYRIE: It is.

(She looked thoughtful and bit her lip.)

KYRIE: I wonder if the assassins will just give up looking for us and go home. Or will they wander Castaria forever looking for us like the summoned beasts?

CAYLEY: I should imagine they'll stop looking after a while.

KYRIE: Probably.

(She grinned.)

KYRIE: Though it'd be kinda funny if they just wandered about forever getting annoyed.

(Cayley chuckled.)

CAYLEY: Yeah, spending years travelling all over Castaria looking for us while we're miles away over the sea having fun in the sunshine.

KYRIE: Yeah.

(She beamed.)

KYRIE: And we *will* have fun, Cayley.

CAYLEY: I know.

KYRIE: You can go to school and do all the geeky crap *you* like and I'll do all the cool fun stuff that *I* like.

(Cayley pouted.)

CAYLEY: My interests aren't geeky.

KYRIE: Then why are *you*?

CAYLEY: Hey! Reading isn't geeky, nor is studying...

(Her shoulders then sunk and she pouted miserably.)

CAYLEY: I'm a geek.

KYRIE: Yeah, you are.

(Cayley shrugged.)

CAYLEY: Oh, so what? I like what I like, it doesn't matter what other people think.

KYRIE: Exactly, other people look down on my hobby too, but I don't care.

CAYLEY: Sleeping around isn't a hobby!

KYRIE: Yes it is.

(She giggled.)

KYRIE: I collect sex partners.

(A deeply troubled expression she swept onto her brow.)

KYRIE: Hey, this new world does have lots of men, right? Only being new they might not have that many yet... and very few hot ones.

CAYLEY: Relax; there'll be thousands of them.

KYRIE: There'd better be or I'm not going!

(Kyrie gave her a condescending glance.)

KYRIE: How do you know there'll be thousands of men there? You've never been!

(Cayley sighed. Explaining things to Kyrie was often tiresome and although she didn't like to do it, lying at times like this made her life a thousand times easier.)

CAYLEY: I know it because I read it somewhere. I'm a geek, remember?

KYRIE: You read it? What did it say?

CAYLEY: Just that there's thousands of men there, lots of hot ones too.

(Kyrie looked relieved and puffed out.)

KYRIE: Good. Good. Panic over then.

(Cayley smiled.)

CAYLEY: You know what would be cool?

(Kyrie nodded.)

KYRIE: Of course I do, but I very much doubt you do.

CAYLEY: Don't be mean.

KYRIE: I'm not.

(She rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: Fine, what would be cool?

(As Cayley opened her mouth excitedly to speak, Kyrie cut over her and rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: You're going to say meeting Sir Flaxley, aren't you?

(Cayley pouted.)

CAYLEY: No!

KYRIE: Cayley?

CAYLEY: I was going to say that going to Tifaeris would be cool.

KYRIE: And why would it be cool?

(Cayley hung her head.)

CAYLEY: Because Sir Flaxley is there.

KYRIE: I knew it! You're so predictable. Flaxley this, Flaxley that, everyday you mention that guy!

CAYLEY: No I don't!

(As Cayley folded her arms and sulked, Kyrie looked to the ceiling with a longing expression on her face.)

KYRIE: Though you know, it might be fun to meet him. Not just to watch you going weak at the knees and gushing, but because of the other thing.

(Cayley pouted at her.)

CAYLEY: What other thing?

KYRIE: Well, rumour has it; he's hung like a horse.

(Cayley glared at her and snarled.)

CAYLEY: Don't talk about him like that! And anyway, that's not a real rumour, you made it up.

KYRIE: *It is* a real rumour! It's just not a rumour anyone would tell a twelve year old.

CAYLEY: Just shut up! Stop making things up just to tease me.

KYRIE: I'm not! I remember it from school. They made us look through a copy of some princess' diary and *she* said so. It was the only time I ever paid attention to a text book, so I remember it well. That princess started the rumour; I'm not making it up to tease you at all.

(Cayley was horrified. She'd heard of a leaked royal diary in which Sir Flaxley was referenced and it was indeed rumoured to contain some risqué details unsuitable for a child's eyes.)

CAYLEY: So... you're not lying?

KYRIE: Of course not!

(She exhaled lustfully.)

KYRIE: I tell you what; if this Flaxley's cock is as big as she said it is, I'm definitely gonna take it for a spin.

(At once, Cayley turned pale and she adopted begging hands. Quivering in terror she then looked deep into Kyrie's eyes imploringly.)

CAYLEY: Oh my god, Kyrie. You have to promise me right now that you won't do that!  
(Kyrie looked stumped.)

KYRIE: Why?

CAYLEY: Just promise me!

(Kyrie looked most put out.)

KYRIE: Why should I? I love a massive dong and I'm not going to pass one up just because you idolise the guy who owns it.

(Cayley was almost in tears.)

CAYLEY: I mean it, Kyrie. Please don't do it. Promise me you won't, please!!!

KYRIE: Give me one good reason why I should.

(Cayley whimpered.)

CAYLEY: Because... if you do... it'll be bad.

KYRIE: Not for me it won't.

(She then looked deeply offended.)

KYRIE: You think me shagging him will suddenly make him less worthy of being idolised, don't you? As if being with me would soil his reputation! That's pretty bloody insulting, Cayley.

(Cayley looked to her imploringly.)

CAYLEY: It's not about that, Kyrie!

KYRIE: Then what?

(Cayley trembled and looked away.)

CAYLEY: Just, trust me. You can't have sex with him, you just can't.

KYRIE: Why not?

(An enlightened expression crossed her brow.)

KYRIE: Wait a minute, you still...

(Her enlightened expression then turned to one of great amusement.)

KYRIE: You still think he's our father, don't you?

(Cayley looked mortified and stared at her with wide eyes.)

CAYLEY: No, I don't!!!

KYRIE: Yes, you do! Why else would you be so terrified I might have sex with him?

(As Cayley whimpered with dread and hid her face, Kyrie laughed hysterically and pointed at her mockingly.)

KYRIE: Our dad, the world famous swordsman. And who's our mum, the Queen of Castaria?

(Cayley turned and pouted at her.)

CAYLEY: We know who our mum is, stupid!

KYRIE: *I'm* stupid? You can't turn this around on me, missy. It's your turn to shine in the stupidity department.

(She chuckled some more then shook her head.)

KYRIE: I can't believe you still think that.

(Cayley pouted and stared at the floor.)

CAYLEY: I don't like you anymore. It's rude to point and laugh at someone.

(Kyrie faked a worried look and leant back.)

KYRIE: Please don't tell daddy that I laughed at you, he'll write about it in his next book and I'll look bad.

CAYLEY: Shut up!

(Kyrie grinned.)

KYRIE: Don't be angry, Cayley, it's unbecoming of a knight's daughter.

CAYLEY: Leave me alone.

(As Kyrie proceeded to laugh at her hysterically again, Cayley furrowed her brow and sneered.)

CAYLEY: Fine, be mean. If you want to upset me, then I guess it's only fair if I do the same to you.

(Kyrie struggled to reply through laughter.)

KYRIE: You can't upset me, I'm laughing too much.

CAYLEY: No? Not even when I tell you *this*? Fashion goes in cycles, one minute something is cool the next minute it's not.

(Kyrie chuckled.)

KYRIE: So?

CAYLEY: So, sooner or later high heeled shoes will go out of fashion and never come back.

(At once Kyrie stopped laughing and grabbed Cayley by the throat. Shuddering with rage, she stared hard into Cayley's trembling eyes and bellowed.)

KYRIE: You take that back!!!

(Cayley whimpered.)

CAYLEY: Stop laughing at me then!

KYRIE: I'm not joking, Cayley! Take it back!!!

CAYLEY: Promise you'll stop laughing at me first!

(Kyrie snarled.)

KYRIE: Take it back this minute or I'll disown you!!! If anyone asks about you, I'll tell them I have no sister!!!

(Cayley whimpered.)

CAYLEY: Okay, I'm sorry!!! High heels will be in fashion forever.

(Kyrie released her throat and snarled at her.)

KYRIE: And don't you forget it.

(She then flexed her neck and nodded.)

KYRIE: Sorry you made me do that.

(Cayley looked to her and pouted sorrowfully.)

CAYLEY: Would you really have disowned me?

(Kyrie looked to her sternly then sighed to push her away her anger. Taking pity on her, she forced a smile and looked kindly into her eyes.)

KYRIE: No. I'd probably have just beaten you up a bit.

(As Cayley whimpered, Kyrie offered her a reassuring smile.)

KYRIE: I'd have done it with love, of course.

CAYLEY: A loving beating?

KYRIE: Yeah, where does it say you can't pummel the one you love? Men in Anoseta beat their wives all the time.

(She snarled.)

KYRIE: Which is fucking wrong.

CAYLEY: Yes, it is!

(Kyrie looked to her with disappointed eyes.)

KYRIE: Oh great, now I have to spank you.

(Cayley looked horrified.)

CAYLEY: What? Why?

KYRIE: I said the F word and you agreed with me. That's as bad as saying it yourself!

(Close to tears, Cayley protested.)

CAYLEY: No it isn't!

KYRIE: Cayley, what happens if you argue about it?

(Cayley hung her head and mumbled miserably.)

CAYLEY: I get an extra spank.



KYRIE: Exactly, now come on, bend over and be a good girl.  
(Cayley started to cry and bent herself over the bed.)  
CAYLEY: I *was* being a good girl.  
(Knelt over the bed, she whimpered as she braced herself for her first spank.)  
CAYLEY: You just want to hit me because of what I said about high heels.  
(Kyrie sighed.)  
KYRIE: Cayley, Cayley, Cayley, you know that's not true.  
(As Cayley closed her eyes and trembled, expecting a painful slap on her behind any moment, Kyrie suddenly started laughing.)  
KYRIE: Fooled you!!!  
(Cayley opened her eyes and glared at her.)  
CAYLEY: What?  
KYRIE: Like I'd really spank you for agreeing with me.  
(As Kyrie fell about laughing, Cayley sat up and scowled at her hatefully.)  
CAYLEY: That was just mean, Kyrie!  
(Kyrie stopped laughing then smiled.)  
KYRIE: No, that was payback. Don't you ever say high heels are going out of fashion ever again.  
(As Cayley pouted at her furiously, Kyrie sidled up closer to her on the seat and placed her arm around her.)  
KYRIE: That was fun.  
CAYLEY: Was it?  
KYRIE: Well, not for you, but *I* enjoyed it.  
(She chuckled.)  
KYRIE: You were outsmarted by a dipshit. How dumb are you?  
(As Kyrie continued to chuckle, Cayley rolled her eyes bitterly and sighed to herself. Whenever Kyrie had managed to trick or deceive her in the past, she'd gloated about it for hours and been unbearably smug. Not about to sit through such a torment this time, Cayley mused to herself for a moment and a devious expression crossed her brow. Knowing exactly how to stop her sister gloating before she could even really get started, she faked a worried expression then pointed at Kyrie's left foot in disgust.)  
CAYLEY: Kyrie, what's that thing on your foot?  
(At once, Kyrie's laughter fell silent and she stared down at her feet. As she did so, her hair fell over her eyes and she couldn't see. With an annoyed groan, she then flicked back her head so she could see again.)  
KYRIE: Stupid hair!  
(With that, she looked back at her feet and her hair fell over her eyes again.)  
CAYLEY: It's still there.  
KYRIE: I know that!  
(Desperate to know what Cayley had spotted on her foot, she flicked her head back time and time again only for her hair to fall back over her eyes every time she bent forward. Watching her as she repeated the process over and over without showing any sign of wising up, Cayley exhaled happily then closed her eyes.)  
CAYLEY: That should keep her occupied for a while.  
(She then chuckled to herself before settling down to enjoy a much deserved moment of peace.)  
CAYLEY: I'll give you a shout when we reach Port Amok.

---

Sitting on top of the carriage at this time, Hapslock was concentrating hard on the road while Sadler sat as his side swearing under his breath. In a never ending cycle, Sadler was falling silent for a moment, swearing profusely then falling silent again. Getting more than a little agitated with the many streams of profanity he was having listen to, Hapslock was struggling to focus on the road. Feeling pretty certain that both he and his charges were the source of Sadler's anger, he wasn't sure how much longer he could tolerate it. As far as he was concerned, Sadler could call him every name under the sun if he wanted to, but he wasn't prepared to keep having his charges insulted in such an outrageously colourful manner. Some of the words Sadler was using were extremely distasteful and he wasn't about to let him get away with it. Sure enough, as Sadler launched into yet another foul mouthed rant, Hapslock threw his head in his direction and bellowed at him.

HAPSLOCK: That's enough!!!

(Sadler glared at him in horror as he continued to chastise him.)

HAPSLOCK: I won't sit here and listen to you saying such things about those two girls. How dare you sit there and swear about them like that? Any more of that and I'm throwing you over the side of the carriage.

(Sadler looked stumped and replied in a small voice.)

SADLER: I wasn't swearing because of the girls.

(Hapslock gave him a suspicious glance.)

HAPSLOCK: You weren't?

SADLER: No! I didn't mention Satan's bastard child *or* her psychotic hussy sister. Not even once!

(Hapslock snarled at him and clenched his fist.)

HAPSLOCK: What did you call them???

(Sadler flinched and reeled away from him.)

SADLER: Sorry!!! You threatened me and I panicked.

(Hapslock shook his head angrily.)

HAPSLOCK: You really are pushing your luck, Sadler.

(Sadler furrowed his brow and sat up straight.)

SADLER: Luck? What luck?

HAPSLOCK: What luck? Most knights would have killed you long ago.

(Sadler looked to him and smiled unconvincingly in a bid to get him onside.)

SADLER: Not you though, you're great.

HAPSLOCK: Yeah? Then why were you swearing about me?

(Sadler looked stumped.)

SADLER: I wasn't!

HAPSLOCK: You just said you weren't swearing about the girls, so that only leaves me.

SADLER: Don't be ridiculous. Why would I do that?

(He then gave him a toothy smile and a hearty thumbs up before winking at him.)

SADLER: You're a great guy!

(Hapslock snarled.)

HAPSLOCK: Don't patronise me, Sadler! You must think I was born yesterday. I know for a fact, you hate me as much as you do Kyrie and Cayley.

SADLER: I *wasn't* patronising you!

HAPSLOCK: Bullshit!

(Sadler exhaled in defeat.)

SADLER: Fine, you're right. That thumbs up kind of robbed me of my integrity, didn't it?

HAPSLOCK: So did the fake smile and ridiculous choice of words.

(Sadler sighed.)

SADLER: Which is why I'm a musician and not an actor.

HAPSLOCK: I'm not interested, Sadler!

(He glared at him coldly and raised a distrusting eyebrow.)

HAPSLOCK: I want to know who you were swearing about, and I want to know now.

(Sadler looked to him nervously for a moment and said nothing.)

HAPSLOCK: Are you going to tell me or do I have to throw you over the side?

(Sadler puffed out bitterly and shook his head.)

SADLER: Fine! I was me, okay? I was swearing at myself.

HAPSLOCK: What?

SADLER: I've been trying to think of a lyric all morning and I can't come up with anything decent. It's bloody frustrating and I was just letting off steam. I wasn't swearing about you three at all!

HAPSLOCK: Good, you'd better not have been.

SADLER: I wasn't. As much I'd love to tell you all exactly what I think of you, I'm not that stupid.

(He pouted and glanced away from him.)

SADLER: Though it does seem somewhat unfair that you three can say whatever you like about *me*.

(Hapslock glared at him coldly for a moment then faced the road.)

HAPSLOCK: So, this lyric...

SADLER: Lyric?

HAPSLOCK: The one you're stuck on.

SADLER: What about it?

HAPSLOCK: What is it? What's the problem?

(Sadler scoffed inwardly.)

SADLER: Like *you* could help.

HAPSLOCK: I'm an educated man, Sadler. I'm good with words.

(He looked to him and sneered.)

HAPSLOCK: I'll be happy to try and help. Anything to stop you from sitting there swearing like you were. That was extremely annoying.

(Sadler glanced to him for a moment then sighed.)

SADLER: Very well. I'm having trouble with the word "love".

HAPSLOCK: What kind of trouble?

(Sadler sighed and shook his head.)

SADLER: Rhyming it with anything is a pain. Everything is a cheesy cliché, you know? So many songs rhyme love with things like, a gift from above, fits me like a glove or some reference to a white dove. Lyrics like that are lame even by my standards.

HAPSLOCK: Okay...

SADLER: Some have got round the problem but pronouncing love *wrong* to make it rhyme. I remember one song where the singer rhymed "love" with "enough". It was unbelievable. I mean, what the hell is luff?

HAPSLOCK: Luff? That's a sailing term isn't it?

SADLER: I've no idea!

HAPSLOCK: It is, that's what they call it when the sail starts to flap about in the wind.

SADLER: Even so, to sing luff instead of love, that's unforgivable.

(Hapslock grinned to himself.)

HAPSLOCK: Maybe he *meant* luff. The song might have been about how sick he was with flapping about in the wind all the time.

(Sadler gave him a sideways glance.)

SADLER: I don't think so, do you?

HAPSLOCK: Was the lyric "Oh no, I'm starting to luff, that's it, I've had enough?"

(Sadler shook his head at him.)

SADLER: No.

(He sighed.)

SADLER: You're not taking me seriously.

HAPSLOCK: I am! Tell me the lyric you're stuck on and I'll see what I can do.

(Sadler glanced at him in uncertainty for a moment then sighed.)

SADLER: Fine, what harm can it do? So far I've got, "when you and I make love". And I can't get anything good to rhyme with it.

(Hapslock looked thoughtful.)

HAPSLOCK: How about, "If it all goes wrong, don't blame me, guv"?

SADLER: Don't be silly.

HAPSLOCK: Okay, then how about, "When you and I make love, in your hole, my cock I'll shove"?

(Sadler glared at him and folded his arms angrily.)

SADLER: Forget it! If you're just going to be stupid, I don't want your help.

(Hapslock laughed out loud then looked to him sympathetically.)

HAPSLOCK: Sorry, I'm just playing with you.

(He smiled.)

HAPSLOCK: Why don't you try changing the first line instead?

SADLER: What do you mean?

HAPSLOCK: Instead of singing, "When you and I make love", you could sing, "When I make love to you".

(Sadler looked enlightened and nodded.)

SADLER: You know, for a layman, that's not half bad. I'll try that.

HAPSLOCK: Thanks.

(He smiled.)

HAPSLOCK: Finding words to rhyme with "you" should be easy. There's a ton of options.

SADLER: Indeed.

(He exhaled happily.)

SADLER: That will help. I've been working on this song for ages. If I'm ever lucky enough to find a woman I like, I want something romantic to sing to her.

HAPSLOCK: I see! Well, in that case, women like the personal touch, you know?

SADLER: They do?

HAPSLOCK: Yeah, so make it about *you*. You know, your personal experiences et cetera...

(Sadler looked thoughtful.)

SADLER: I see!

HAPSLOCK: Something like "When I make love to you, I won't know what to do." Or, "When I make love to you, you'll doze off half way through". Women appreciate honesty.

(Sadler snarled at him.)

SADLER: Are you implying I can't satisfy a woman?

HAPSLOCK: I don't know, can you?

(Sadler grimaced and looked away in embarrassment.)

SADLER: I don't know. I've never tried.

HAPSLOCK: Thought not.

(He grinned.)

HAPSLOCK: In that case how's this, "When I make love to you, please don't jeer and boo"?

(Sadler glared at him furiously.)

SADLER: Stop belittling me!!!

HAPSLOCK: I'm not! I'm looking out for you. There's nothing worse for a man's self-esteem than when a woman boos him out of bed. It happened to a friend of mine once, he was devastated.

(Sadler flapped wildly and shook his fist.)

SADLER: That's it! I'm not paying attention to you anymore. My music is important to me and if all you're going to do is mock then forget it.

HAPSLOCK: I wasn't mocking your music, your music mocks itself. It was you I was mocking.

SADLER: Fine, you do that. From now on, I'm ignoring you. Pretty soon we'll be in Port Amok and I'll never have to tolerate you ever again, until then why don't we just sit here in silence?

(Hapslock exhaled joyously.)

HAPSLOCK: Yes! Let's do that.

SADLER: Fine.

HAPSLOCK: That's not silence!

SADLER: Whatever!

(As Sadler folded his arms and scowled ahead, Hapslock smiled to himself. At last, he'd have peace and quiet. Or so he thought. Unfortunately for him, he'd only managed to get a few seconds of peace when a group of eight men on horseback came screaming from behind a clump of trees on the roadside. Clearly intent on wreaking havoc, they yelled out to one another as the lead horse raced alongside the front of the carriage.)

ASSASSIN 1: Come on!!!

ASSASSIN 2: Go, go, go!!!

(Ever ready to take them on, Hapslock scowled furiously and threw the reigns to Sadler. Looking terrified, Sadler grabbed them and tensed up.)

SADLER: Don't let them kill me!!!

(Hapslock snarled at him.)

HAPSLOCK: Under attack or not, the same rule applies, shut the fuck up!

(With that, he glared at the nearest horseman and yanked his sword from his sheath.)

HAPSLOCK: Make your move, fool, I dare you!

(Almost as if he was accepting the challenge, the lead horseman then leapt from his saddle towards the driving seat atop the carriage. At once, Hapslock jumped to his feet and steadied himself to push him off.)

ASSASSIN 1: Death to the weak!!!

(As he landed upon the driver's seat, Hapslock thrust out his arms expecting to push him off with ease. Much to his dismay, however, the assassin tripped forwards upon landing, thanks to the momentum he'd gained from the jump. Slipping between Hapslock's arms, he hurtled forwards into him causing them both to fall down by Sadler's feet.)

HAPSLOCK: You lucky bastard!!!

(The assassin laughed coldly.)

ASSASSIN 1: That's me. Allegro, the lucky assassin!

(As the two men wrestled at his feet, Sadler stared down and trembled.)

SADLER: Kill him! Kill him!!!

HAPSLOCK: I'm trying to!!!

SADLER: Good!

(He gulped then bit his lip.)

SADLER: I was talking to the eventual winner by the way! I'm very much on your side!

(Knowing he needed to make sure Kyrie and Cayley were okay, Hapslock growled furiously as he wrestled the assassin. Laying on the footboard of the driver's seat was the last place he wanted to be right now. Getting angrier and angrier as he exchanged blows with his

assailant, he knew he had to rid himself of him as soon as possible. This was no time for honour, he had to do everything in his power to dispose of this enemy then see to it his charges were protected. With this in mind, he snarled then grabbed the assassin's crotch. At once the assassin went cross-eyed and whimpered in agony.)

HAPSLOCK: I apologise for this underhand tactic but you left me no choice.

(With his opponent gasping for breath and no longer struggling, Hapslock scrambled to his feet then bent down to pick him up by his upper arms.)

HAPSLOCK: The battle's over for you, sunshine.

(With that, he stood him up then pushed him off the side of the carriage.)

HAPSLOCK: Right! The girls!

(Much to his dismay, however, seconds later, the assassin came flying back at him from over the carriage as if by magic.)

ASSASSIN 1: The fight's over when I say it's over!!!

(Having hit the road, the assassin's coat had got caught up in the carriage wheel. With the wheel turning at a tremendous pace, it had immediately propelled him up into the air back towards the driving seat.)

HAPSLOCK: How did you do that?

(As he zoomed through the air towards him, the assassin laughed arrogantly.)

ASSASSIN: Told you I was lucky!!!

(Hapslock was furious and lifted his sword.)

HAPSLOCK: Your luck ends now!!!

(Determined to put and end to his jammy opponent's challenge, as soon as he came into range, Hapslock thrust his sword up at him. Looking terrified, the assassin kicked out in a panic, managing to boot Hapslock's sword back out of harms way and secure himself a safe landing. Enraged by the sheer luck of the man, Hapslock growled furiously and grabbed his collar.)

HAPSLOCK: Okay, it ends *now* then!!!

(With that, he cast him off the front of the carriage. Infuriatingly, rather than thudding to the ground then disappearing under the carriage never to be seen again, the assassin threw out his legs either side and managed to land akimbo upon the horses. Hapslock looked insane with rage.)

HAPSLOCK: How are you doing that???

(The assassin grinned back at him and laughed.)

ASSASSIN 1: I told you, I'm lucky!

HAPSLOCK: Lucky? That's more than luck.

(He threw a pointing finger into the sky.)

HAPSLOCK: Somebody up there really likes you.

(The assassin scoffed.)

ASSASSIN 1: The gods you mean? Fuck *them*, this is all *me*, mate!

(With that, he lost his balance, fell off the horses and tumbled to a painful death. Sadler was mortified.)

SADLER: If we survive this, I'll never blaspheme ever again.

(Hapslock snarled.)

HAPSLOCK: Not if! When!

(Determined to rescue the girls, he then leapt onto the top of the carriage and was immediately confronted by a waiting assassin.)

HAPSLOCK: Fuck!

(He glanced back at the rest of the horsemen riding behind the carriage and snarled to himself. They were clearly making a beeline for the girls but he couldn't do anything to help them until he'd despatched the assassin before him. Once again he was left rueing his failure

to replenish his fire magic supplies. Certain this assassin's sole purpose was to stall him so his comrades could attack the girls, he tightened his grip on his sword then came out fighting.)

HAPSLOCK: Die!!!

(Unwilling to grant Sir Hapslock's request, the assassin snarled and pulled out his blade to meet him head on. Seconds later, steel met steel and a violent melee commenced.)

Inside the carriage at this time, having seen the horsemen from the window, Kyrie was standing at the door watching them gallop after them while Cayley sat on the floor at the back of the carriage, cuddling her book and trembling. Wearing a peeved expression, Kyrie glanced over her shoulder and snarled.)

KYRIE: It really is never going to end until we're on that boat, is it?

(Cayley whimpered.)

CAYLEY: I know.

KYRIE: Well don't you worry, sweetheart, like every other idiot who's tried to kill us, they're gonna pay.

(With that, she turned to face the advancing horses and snarled.)

KYRIE: Okay, here they come.

(Sure enough, one of the pack had sped up and was preparing to jump on the back platform.)

KYRIE: Come on, hurry up.

(Wearing a ferocious snarl, the horseman bellowed out then leapt towards her with all his might. Fixing her stance, Kyrie grinned knowingly and prepared to push him off.)

KYRIE: These fools never learn!

(Much to her horror, however, as the assailant landed, his momentum carried him forth into her before she even had a chance to begin her push. As a result, they both tumbled to the platform with an almighty crash.)

KYRIE: Fuck!!!

(Lying there beneath her assailant, feeling somewhat dazed and disorientated, she groaned briefly then attempted to push him off her so she could get to her feet. Before she could even begin, however, the assassin thrust both his hands around her neck and started to squeeze. Having had a soft landing thanks to Kyrie's ample bosom, he had all his wits about him and was determined to make the most of the advantage. Unable to get him off of her, Kyrie thrashed her arms and legs about frantically as he continued to squeeze the life out of her. Being of such a slender build and weighing very little, Kyrie had never felt so helpless in all her young life. Unable to get her powerful attacker off of her, the attributes she carried in abundance such as speed and agility counted for nothing. She was slowly suffocating and could do nothing to stop it. Fearing her number was up, she looked up at her attacker with terror in her eyes when suddenly, a shadow engulfed the pair of them. Scared witless, Cayley had rushed to her aid. Wearing a look of both terror and rage, her lips quivered uncontrollably as she slammed her book down on the assassin's head. Shocked by the unexpected blow, the assassin swiftly sat up and glared at her, releasing Kyrie's neck from his grasp.)

ASSASSIN 2: You bitch!!!

(Terrified to her very core, Cayley screamed and raced to the back of the carriage again.)

ASSASSIN 2: I'm gonna...

(He then fell silent and his eyes bulged. Freed from the weight of his upper body crushing down on her, Kyrie had released a series of deft punches into his stomach. Finishing her sortie off by punching him in the face, she then managed to push his limp body away and jump to her feet. As the severely winded assassin struggled to get up, Kyrie glanced to Cayley and puffed out in relief.)

KYRIE: Oh my god, thank you, Cayley!!!

(Cayley looked back to her with wide eyes and whimpered.)

CAYLEY: Just kill him!!!

KYRIE: Now that I can do.

(Kyrie then set about giving the man a sound thrashing. As she did so, Cayley sat back down on the floor, looked to her book and sighed emptily. Had anyone else hit the man with such a hefty book, they'd probably have knocked him out. Despite hitting him with all her might, however, she'd merely put him off and annoyed him. Thankfully, this has been enough to save her sister's life. Very much grateful for that, she drew a sigh of relief then looked to Kyrie again. Punch drunk, the assailant had got to his feet but was barely able to stay upright as Kyrie laid into him with several furious blows.

Well aware that Kyrie would kill him if he didn't do something about the situation, the assassin growled and used what little strength he had left to throw himself towards her in a desperate bid to stop her punching him. More than a little thrown by his move, Kyrie jumped back then kicked him into the carriage. Out for the count, the assassin flew into the carriage, his head landing between Cayley's knees. Absolutely terrified by his sudden arrival, Cayley flapped wildly, screamed her lungs out then proceeded to hit him on the head repeatedly with her book. Having started to rush to her aid, Kyrie slowed and looked down to where Cayley's book thudded down time and time again on the assassin's head and forced a smile. Cayley might have been weak but it was a heavy book and she was very scared. If the assassin was to survive, there was absolutely no doubt that his fighting days were over.)

KYRIE: Yup, he's not getting up from that.

(With that, she raced back to the platform to await the next attack. Having learned not to make the mistake of trying to push them straight off the platform, she bounced on the balls of her feet and growled at the incoming horsemen.)

KYRIE: Next!!! Come on!!!

(Looking absolutely furious, one of the riders sped forth and braced himself to leap at her.)

ASSASSIN 3: That was my brother you just killed!!!

(Kyrie scoffed.)

KYRIE: He's not completely dead! Yet!

ASSASSIN 3: Bitch!!!

(With that, he leapt at her from his horse with a deathly snarl on his face.)

ASSASSIN 3: This is for Jeremy!!!

(Not about to be leapt on again, Kyrie swiftly jumped aside and readied herself for action. As the assassin landed on the platform, however, he bounced forwards and thudded headfirst into the door frame. As he staggered backwards in a daze, Kyrie merely stuck her foot out to trip him.)

KYRIE: Bye!

(As the assassin screamed and fell off the back of the platform, Kyrie chuckled.)

KYRIE: I'll tell Jeremy you popped by.

(She then raised her fists and glared at the pursuing horsemen again.)

KYRIE: Next!

(Spying there were only two left, she clenched her fists and snarled.)

KYRIE: Let's do this.

(At once the two horsemen nodded to another. Having witnessed their comrade's failure a moment ago, they'd hatched a plan. They were going to leap at her at the same time. Their idea being, that if they could confuse her, one of them should be able to break her defences and mount a meaningful attack upon her person. Unfortunately for them however, they weren't the only ones who liked to confuse people and throw off their opponent's



concentration. As they rode up to the back of the carriage and prepared to leap, Kyrie grinned from ear to ear and peeled her top off. Giggling to herself, she then unhooked her bra and threw it into the carriage.)

KYRIE: Come and get it, boys.

(As she flicked her hair and pouted at them in a sexy manner both horsemen froze and stared at her lustfully. Immediately, all their coherent thoughts went up in smoke and they were reduced to drooling fools.)

KYRIE: Well, what are you waiting for?

(Paralysed with lust, one of the horsemen merely toppled sideways off his horse like a horny statue, unable to even move his legs and begin making the leap. As he bounced along the road, screaming in agony, Kyrie sneered at him then turned her focus to the other one. As he stared lustfully at her breasts, bracing himself to leap at her, a ferocious snarl appeared on her face. In that moment, she'd realised something. This last remaining horseman could well be the last assassin they'd ever face. These cold hearted killers had made her and Cayley's lives a misery for two long years. Two long years in which they'd never been able to relax for fear of imminent attack. Now only this one remained. Upon making this realisation, Kyrie knew what she had to do. For her own peace of mind, she needed to batter this one senseless and release the last two years of torment and frustration upon his face. Pulling a wild snarl, she bounced eagerly and her fists literally shuddering with rage. As soon as he landed, she was going to come out fighting.)

Completely unaware of her wild rage, the horseman focussed hard on her bouncing breasts and dribbled down his chin. Desperate to get his hands on her bare chest, he then steadied himself and leapt towards her, drooling lustfully. Having been focussed on her breasts rather than where he was going to land, however, the randy horseman misjudged his leap horribly. With his eyes fixed on Kyrie's exposed nipples, he just about reached the very edge of the platform with his toes. Barely able to balance, he then flapped his arms about in windmills and cried out.)

ASSASSIN 4: Crap, crap, crap!!!

(Although Kyrie could have simply pushed him off the carriage at this point and put an end to his challenge, her desire to drag him onto the platform and pound him senseless took over and she reached out to grab him instead. He wasn't going to get off that lightly, she wanted to batter him. And so, as he started to tip backwards, Kyrie lunged forwards and grabbed a firm hold of the top of his trousers. As he continued to tip back, however, her actions merely served in pulling his underpants and trousers down to his knees. Determined not to let him fall, she then instinctively reached out and grabbed the nearest part of him. His erection.)

ASSASSIN 4: Ow!!!

(Having secured a firm grip, Kyrie commenced trying to pull him onto the platform so she could give him a pasting. Unfortunately for her, with the screaming assassin flapping wildly and leaning back, desperately trying not to fall, she couldn't quite manage to yank him hard enough.)

KYRIE: Get on the platform, damn it!!!

(Snarling as she tried to summon the strength to drag him towards her, sweat started to pour down her forehead. After a full thirty seconds of trying to heave him onto the platform, she growled then puffed out in frustration.)

KYRIE: I can't!

(It was at this point that the realisation of what she was doing struck her. This assassin was destined to fall backwards and the only thing that was stopping him was her grasp on his penis. Suddenly finding it quite amusing, she glanced over her shoulder at Cayley.)

KYRIE: Come and look at this!!!

(Still pummelling the assassin with her book like her life depended on it; Cayley didn't hear her sister's request and failed to even look up. Kyrie watched her for a moment then sighed to herself.)

KYRIE: Maybe it's best if you don't see this, anyway.

(She then turned to face the assassin she was holding in her hand and grinned at him. The look on his face redefined the word pain.)

KYRIE: I bet you didn't think you'd be doing this today.

ASSASSIN 4: Kill me!!!

(Just then, he went cross-eyed and exhaled heavily.)

KYRIE: What the?

(Looking somewhat disturbed, she released his penis and looked into her hand. Finally free, the assassin thudded to the ground as she stared into her palm in disbelief.)

KYRIE: *That* made him cum?

(She then shrugged and flicked his semen off her hand.)

KYRIE: Oh well, it's not the weirdest hand job I've ever given.

(With that, she paced back into the carriage and knelt before Cayley.)

KYRIE: You can stop that now, sister face!

(Ignoring her advice, Cayley continued to batter the assassins head with her book.)

CAYLEY: I want to make sure he's dead!

(Kyrie grabbed her wrist and spoke softly to calm her down.)

KYRIE: Cayley, sweetheart, it's okay. He's not going to get up.

(Cayley looked to her and trembled.)

CAYLEY: Are you sure?

KYRIE: I'm positive. Look, let me get me rid of him, okay?

CAYLEY: Okay.

(Kyrie smiled then dragged the assassin to the carriage doors and chucked him overboard.)

KYRIE: There. Gone.

(She smiled and picked up her top.)

KYRIE: Now...

(She slipped her top back on then smiled.)

KYRIE: Come here and give me a hug.

(Just as Cayley climbed to her feet, however, they both suddenly heard a thudding on the roof.)

CAYLEY: What the f...

(She stared at Kyrie in horror.)

CAYLEY: I didn't say it!!!

(Kyrie stared back at her and snarled.)

KYRIE: I know. Wait here!!!

(With that, she rushed to the back platform then climbed up on top of the carriage in a blinding hurry. Much to her dismay, Sir Hapslock was up there fighting an assassin with his sword, and two more were riding alongside.)

KYRIE: What the hell???

(Delighted to see her, Sir Hapslock ducked under the assassin's blade and called out to her.)

HAPSLOCK: Kyrie!!! You're okay!

(Kyrie pouted.)

KYRIE: Only okay?

(Suddenly realising what he meant, she snarled.)

KYRIE: Let me help!!!

(Hapslock growled bitterly.)

HAPSLOCK: I tried to come and help you but I couldn't get past this bastard!!!

KYRIE: Soon remedied!!!

(Having been riding in reserve, ready to take over should Hapslock better their comrade, the other two horsemen looked to one another and nodded. With their fellow assassin now facing two people they decided it was time to leap into action. Doing just that, one of them raced alongside the carriage horses while his comrade pulled out a lasso. Looking determined, the first assassin leapt onto one the carriage's horses, rupturing himself on its spine before toppling off in agony. The other one, however, threw his lasso at Kyrie, landing it squarely over her head and upper arms just as she was about to lay into the assassin who'd been fighting Sir Hapslock. Fearing the worst, Hapslock bellowed out.)

HAPSLOCK: Kyrie!!!

(Fearing she'd be yanked off the carriage and dragged to her death along the bumpy road, he desperately tried to reach her, only to be batted back by his sword wielding assailant. Fortunately, however, Kyrie knew exactly how to save herself. Not allowing him the opportunity to get the leverage he'd need to pull her down, she raced to the side of the carriage and leapt straight at the assassin. With the rope limp, he could only watch in horror and she flew towards him before thudding down face to face with him on his horse.)

KYRIE: Failed!!!

(Not about to be thwarted, however, the assassin snarled and swiftly reached for his dagger.)

KYRIE: Wrong again!!!

(Looking furious, she made full use of her trademark agility and swooped towards his sheath, yanking the blade out before he could quite finish fumbling for it. Wearing a ferocious snarl she then glanced towards the carriage and threw the dagger. Despite having her upper arms bound, she somehow managed to throw it with astonishing accuracy, straight into the neck of the assassin Hapslock was fighting.)

KYRIE: What else have you got?

(The assassin looked to her in complete bewilderment and struggled for words.)

ASSASSIN: Rope?

(Kyrie scoffed and bent her arms to lift the rope over her shoulders and free herself. As she threw it down to the ground, the assassin let go of his end of the rope and sighed lovingly.)

KYRIE: And what else?

(He offered her a cheesy grin then glanced away.)

ASSASSIN: An erection!

(Just then, Hapslock yelled over to her from the top of the carriage.)

HAPSLOCK: You okay, Kyrie?

(Kyrie stared hard into the assassins eyes and called out her reply.)

KYRIE: I'm fine!

(Hapslock sighed with relief then kicked the dead assassin over the side of the carriage.)

HAPSLOCK: Good riddance to low life, pond scum.

(He then glanced to Sadler.)

HAPSLOCK: Speaking of which, you okay, Sadler?

(Riding forth in terror, Sadler whimpered.)

SADLER: Yes!

(Hapslock nodded then raced to the back of the carriage and laid down. Leaning his head over to peer inside the carriage, he called out to where Cayley sat biting her nails in the back.)

HAPSLOCK: You okay, Cayley?

(Cayley looked up at his head and nodded nervously.)

CAYLEY: Where's Kyrie?

HAPSLOCK: Don't worry; she's just finishing off now.

(He smiled then glanced to where Kyrie was sitting upon the assassin's horse and his face dropped.)

HAPSLOCK: Oh, for heaven's sake.

(Much to his disbelief, Kyrie was passionately kissing the assassin and their hips were bumping hard into one another.)

HAPSLOCK: She's unbelievable!

(Much to his horror, Cayley's voice then piped up from directly beneath him.)

CAYLEY: What do you mean?

(With that, she peered around the side of the carriage and her shoulders sunk.)

CAYLEY: I might have known.

(Looking peeved, she furrowed her brow and yelled to her.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie!!! He's an assassin!!!

(Hapslock nodded and joined her in offering up his disapproval.)

HAPSLOCK: He was going to kill you, what the hell are you doing?

(Kyrie glared back at them and raised her voice.)

KYRIE: He had an erection; I could just let him waste it!

(Not about to let her off the hook, they both yelled back at her.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie, he's the enemy!!!

HAPSLOCK: Just end the fight, will you?

(Kyrie sighed to herself and mumbled.)

KYRIE: They never let me have any fun!

(With that, she head butted the assassin then pushed him off his horse.)

KYRIE: You happy now?

(Looking, extremely peeved, she turned to face the way she was riding and guided the horse to the carriage so she could jump onto the back platform. Delighted that the fight was over, Cayley allowed herself a sigh of relief and stepped back to watch as Kyrie lined herself up with the platform then leapt onto it. As soon as she steadied herself, Cayley then rushed up and hugged her.)

CAYLEY: Yay, we won!

(Kyrie beamed.)

KYRIE: Of course.

(She snarled.)

KYRIE: I just wish you hadn't ruined my fun at the end.

(Cayley looked to her blankly for a moment then mused to herself.)

CAYLEY: That might have been the last assassin we ever have to face. Rather than having sex with him, I'd have thought you'd have beaten him black and blue.

(Remembering she'd planned to do exactly that, Kyrie looked livid with herself.)

KYRIE: Idiot, Kyrie!

(As Cayley hugged her tight, Hapslock nodded sternly and talked down to them from the roof.)

HAPSLOCK: We should be in Port Amok in a few hours tops, ladies. Try to relax if you can. I'm going back take the reigns.

(As Hapslock disappeared from view, Cayley beamed.)

CAYLEY: I love you, Kyrie.

KYRIE: I love you too.

(She smiled warmly.)

KYRIE: And you saved my life today. Once we get to Port Amok, I'm gonna buy you an extra big ice cream as a thank you.

(Cayley looked delirious and grinned.)

CAYLEY: Happy!!!

(As an excited discussion about ice cream commenced *inside* the carriage, on top of it, Hapslock took a seat next to Sadler and allowed him to pass him the reigns.)

HAPSLOCK: Not a word remember?

(As Sadler looked to him silently, Hapslock nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: That's good. See, you *can* be taught.

(As he resumed leading the horses forth, Hapslock couldn't help but feel more than a little relieved. His charges had once again had to fend for themselves while he got stuck in a swordfight, but thankfully, once again everything had worked out well. As their knight and protector, getting caught up in battles while his charges fought their own corner was deeply humiliating. To that end, he couldn't help but feel glad their journey together would soon be at an end. It was rapidly becoming clear that he couldn't protect them to the extent he'd like and as such, seeing them sailing off to safety would be a great weight off his mind.

As he continued to ponder the girl's imminent departure, he pictured Kyrie having sex with the assassin in his mind then furrowed his brow. Falling in love with her suddenly seemed twice as foolish. He was just glad that she hadn't understood him when he told her about it. Having this free spirit for a girlfriend would have been a nightmare. Had she accepted his love and agreed to be his woman, such was her insatiable lust for sex, he could never have been certain she'd be faithful. Trust would always have been an issue and their relationship would have been doomed from the very beginning.

Suffice to say, at this moment in time, he didn't feel very good about himself. What sort of knight gets into fights while his charges protect themselves? What sort of knight falls in love with a highly promiscuous charge? If someone had asked him those same two questions a week ago, he'd have said a terrible one. And so, with a miserable pout on his face, he led the horses forth and sighed. For him, reaching Port Amok couldn't happen quickly enough.)

---

As the milestones along the route to Port Amok counted down into single figures, Hapslock and Sadler couldn't help but share a warm smile. Inevitably, that shared smile turned into a mutual scowl but nevertheless they both felt warm inside. The end of their journey was almost upon them and pretty soon they'd both be able to return to the former lives. Although Hapslock's joy was somewhat tinged by his sadness at having to say goodbye to his charges, like Sadler, he couldn't wait for the journey to be over.

Inside the carriage at this time, Kyrie and Cayley couldn't help smiling. From the window, they'd watched the numbers on the milestones get lower and lower and had greeted each and every single one with an excited cheer and a hug. To them, every milestone passed was another huge leap towards sanctuary. Gushing excitedly as she stared from the window, Cayley was particularly animated.

CAYLEY: Only a couple more miles to go until...

(Kyrie beamed and attempted to finish her sentence.)

KYRIE: Until all our troubles are over.

CAYLEY: Well, they won't *really* be over until we're on the boat. I was going to say only a couple more miles until I get my giant ice cream.

(Kyrie looked to her and chuckled.)

KYRIE: If I didn't know better I'd think you were more excited about ice cream than you are sanctuary.

(Cayley looked to her and smiled sheepishly.)

CAYLEY: I really, really like ice cream.

(Kyrie smiled.)

KYRIE: Well, who doesn't?

CAYLEY: A girl in my class at school didn't like ice cream.

(Kyrie gave her a disturbed glance.)

KYRIE: Seriously? What was wrong with her?

CAYLEY: She was just weird. She used to eat acorns and chase boys while barking like a dog.

KYRIE: Damn. That's not normal. Apart from chasing boys, I used to do that all the time.

CAYLEY: You still do!

(Kyrie scoffed at her.)

KYRIE: Don't be ridiculous. I haven't chased a boy since I became a teenager and they stopped running away.

(She rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: These days they just *let* me catch them. Kinda takes the fun out of the chase really.

CAYLEY: And yet you still do it.

KYRIE: Of course I do. These days, the fun comes *after* I catch them.

(Cayley gave her a disturbed glance and rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: Can we talk about something else, please?

(Kyrie shrugged.)

KYRIE: Sure, like what?

CAYLEY: Like...

(She beamed with delight and pressed a pointing finger on the window.)

CAYLEY: The sea!!! I can see the sea.

(Kyrie rushed her nose to the glass and a look of delight appeared on her face.)

KYRIE: Yay, the sea!!!

(At once, they hugged each other close and bounced for joy.)

CAYLEY: Yay!!!

(As they continued to celebrate together, the carriage turned and started to rock as if on very uneven ground. Assuming they were turning into a bumpy, cobbled street at the edge of Port Amok, the girls pulled out of the hug and stared into one another's eyes, sharing an excited hunch of the shoulders and a toothy grin.)

CAYLEY: I think we're here!

KYRIE: Must be!!!

(Just then, the carriage turned again and ground to a halt. From one window they could see the sea and from the other, nothing but a meadow. Baffled as to why they couldn't see Port Amok, they shared a suspicious glance then Kyrie led Cayley to the carriage door. As Kyrie pushed the door open she was greeted by the sight of Sir Hapslock stepping to the back of the carriage.)

HAPSLOCK: I was just coming to get you, ladies. Come and see this.

(As Sadler appeared, trudging reluctantly around the carriage to join them, Kyrie looked to Cayley and shrugged.)

KYRIE: What does he want us to see?

CAYLEY: I don't know, let's find out, shall we?

(Kyrie nodded.)

KYRIE: Sure, okay.

(As they emerged from the carriage, Cayley gasped in awe. Sir Hapslock had parked the carriage at the top of a cliff and the view before them was a joy to behold. Ahead of them, just over the cliff, there was nothing but endless blue sea, glistening beneath the mid afternoon sun. A short distance along the cliff top, in the direction the carriage was facing, lay Port Amok. The end of the journey was no more than a five minute ride away.

Not quite understanding why they'd stopped, Kyrie looked to Hapslock nervously.)

KYRIE: It's a lovely view, Frank, but why stop now?

(For the first time since he'd met her, Sadler agreed with her sentiments.)

SADLER: Good question! And why did you insist I had to get down from the carriage? I don't care for the view one bit.

(Hapslock snarled at Sadler.)

HAPSLOCK: I told you to get down so you won't be tempted to try and ditch us again.

SADLER: Oh, well that's lovely, that is.

(Hapslock then looked to Kyrie and Cayley.)

HAPSLOCK: Kyrie, I stopped here because I wanted you to see the view, that's all. I thought it'd be nice if this wonderful view was your last memory of Castaria.

(He nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: I'm proud of my country and I'd hate to think that all you remember of it is the hardships you've faced here.

(He sighed then looked to the sea.)

HAPSLOCK: Think. Pretty soon you'll both be out on that water and on your way to sanctuary.

(Kyrie looked to him in bewilderment.)

KYRIE: We'd be out there even sooner if we hadn't stopped here.

(The only one to appreciate the gesture, Cayley looked to Sir Hapslock and smiled.)

CAYLEY: The sea looks beautiful from here.

(As Sadler fumed behind them and Kyrie gazed emotionlessly at the sea, Cayley stepped closer to Hapslock to speak to him personally.)

CAYLEY: It's going to get busy once we get to Port Amok, isn't it? So, you wanted to take a moment here to clear your head and savour the end of the journey!

(Hapslock forced a single laugh and smiled to her.)

HAPSLOCK: No twelve year old should be that perceptive, Cayley.

CAYLEY: Sorry.

HAPSLOCK: No, don't apologise.

(He exhaled and placed his arm around her.)

HAPSLOCK: Once we get into town anything could happen. We might even find a ship straight away and you'll be gone before we even really get to say goodbye. So, yeah, I just want to take a moment in your company and make sure I'm ready for anything once we get to town.

(Cayley smiled to him.)

CAYLEY: That's cool.

HAPSLOCK: Thank you.

(He took a deep breath to savour the fresh air then gestured across the sea.)

HAPSLOCK: Think ladies, just a hundred miles over this water, the new world awaits you. Sanctuary.

(Cayley looked surprised.)

CAYLEY: Just a hundred miles?

HAPSLOCK: Yeah, that's all it is.

CAYLEY: It's a wonder they didn't discover it sooner then.

(Hapslock nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: I know. It's incredible to think that in a thousand years of seafaring, nobody ever sailed a hundred miles north until those brave pioneers only twenty three years ago. The reason being, of course...

(Kyrie gave him a condescending glance and interrupted.)

KYRIE: Maybe they *did* sail there a thousand years ago and it wasn't there yet. It's a *new* world, remember?

(As Hapslock turned to her as if to correct her, Cayley nudged him and shook her head.)

CAYLEY: Don't bother; it's not worth the heartache.

KYRIE: And we're hardly ones to criticise them for *not* sailing. We came here to catch to a boat but instead we're standing on a cliff top like morons, gawking at the sea! We're not sailing either.

(Sadler nodded.)

SADLER: Absolutely right. You forced me to bring you here so you could cross the sea, not stare at it like idiots.

(Hapslock glared at Sadler.)

HAPSLOCK: I don't want your opinion, old man.

(Sadler sighed and looked at his feet.)

SADLER: Now there's a surprise.

(He then looked to Kyrie.)

HAPSLOCK: As for the new world being new...

(Before he could continue, Cayley nudged him again.)

CAYLEY: Seriously, don't waste your breath.

(He glanced to her for a moment then sighed in frustration.)

HAPSLOCK: Fine, okay, whatever. Nobody's interested in what I have to say.

CAYLEY: I am!

(He smiled to her warmly then gestured towards the sea once again.)

HAPSLOCK: Thank you, Cayley. I was just going to say, the reason they didn't bother going north is because they thought that this was the top of the world. As far north as man could go. Of course, these days...

KYRIE: Boring! With all your dull facts and whatnot, you sound just like Cayley!

HAPSLOCK: Excuse me?

KYRIE: I just want to go to Port Amok, Frank. I don't want to be educated. I wouldn't tolerate it at school and I'm certainly not going to start now!

(Hapslock fought back the urge to retort angrily and sneered.)

HAPSLOCK: I was just telling Cayley about...

KYRIE: Well don't. She already knows *everything*. Now, stop wasting everyone's time and let's get going!

(Starting to get really quite annoyed, Sir Hapslock snarled and clenched an angry fist.)

HAPSLOCK: Fine, forget I said anything! Let's just go.

(At once, Sadler raced to climb onto the carriage and Kyrie disappeared inside it. Watching them rush off in such a tremendous hurry, Hapslock growled.)

HAPSLOCK: Unbelievable!

CAYLEY: I know.

(She gave him a kind smile and looked into his eyes.)

CAYLEY: At least *I* was paying attention. Forget *them*, what were you going to say?

(Hapslock looked to her warmly then sighed.)

HAPSLOCK: Sorry, Cayley, but I don't *feel* like it explaining it anymore. Let's get going.

CAYLEY: But... it was interesting.

(Seeing her cute little face smiling up at him, Hapslock forced a single laugh then gestured towards Port Amok.)

HAPSLOCK: Okay, just for you then.

CAYLEY: Yay!



HAPSLOCK: I was just going to say, these days people sail to and from Port Amok from all over the new world. If you know who to ask you can get transport to Tifaeris, Leathrock, Azagotse, Tang Yul, Guevina... you name it.

(Cayley's face lit up.)

CAYLEY: We want to go to Tifaeris!!!

HAPSLOCK: Okay, but...

CAYLEY: Tifaeris! Forget the other places, especially Guevina! According to Flaxley's book that stupid place is full of idiots.

HAPSLOCK: Well, I'll see what I can do but there might not be any boats going to Tifaeris.

CAYLEY: But...

HAPSLOCK: You could always travel across the new world *to* Tifaeris from one of the other towns over there though.

(Cayley shook her head obstinately.)

CAYLEY: Nope! We want to go straight to Tifaeris.

HAPSLOCK: Well, like I said, I can't guarantee...

CAYLEY: Yes you can, you're a knight! It has to be Tifaeris because Sir Flaxley lives there.

(Hapslock rolled his eyes.)

HAPSLOCK: That guy again!

CAYLEY: So, you'll find us a boat to Tifaeris then?

HAPSLOCK: I said I'd try!

(Cayley scowled at him bitterly, clearly on the verge of a tantrum.)

CAYLEY: Do more than try; we don't want to go anywhere else!

(Trying to maintain his patience, Hapslock clenched his fist and spoke to her firmly.)

HAPSLOCK: I'll try! It's the best I can do!

CAYLEY: No, it isn't!

HAPSLOCK: Yes, it...

(As if his patience hadn't been tested enough, Cayley then started to dance on the spot; singing loudly with a finger in each of her ears. Having set her heart on going to Tifaeris, she no longer cared for what she considered to be his excuses.)

CAYLEY: Tifaeris, Tifaeris, Tifaeris, Tifaeris...

(Hapslock watched her dance around and spoke through gritted teeth.)

HAPSLOCK: I said, I'd try, that's the best I can do!

CAYLEY: Tifaeris, Tifaeris, Tifaeris, Tifaeris...

HAPSLOCK: I said I'd try, damn it!

CAYLEY: Tifaeris, Tifaeris, Tifaeris, Tifaeris...

(As his anger continued to swell, Kyrie bounded out of the carriage, leapt to the grass then threw her hands into the air in frustration.)

KYRIE: Are we going or aren't we? I've been waiting in there forever!

(Adding to Hapslock's swelling rage, Sadler then chimed in with *his* two penneth.)

SADLER: Quite! I want to get rid of you lot and get my life back. Hurry up!

(At once, unable to take it anymore, Hapslock exploded. Turning red with rage, he bellowed at Cayley and pointed at the carriage.)

HAPSLOCK: Get!!!

(Terrified by his tone, Cayley screamed and sprinted towards Kyrie at the back of the carriage.)

HAPSLOCK: Now shut the door, we're getting out of here!!!

(With that, he paced back towards the carriage, aching to punch Sadler.)

HAPSLOCK: I just wanted a moment to clear my head and enjoy a nice time together before we say goodbye, was that really too much to ask?

(He then climbed atop the carriage and glared at Sadler.)

HAPSLOCK: You're not worth it!!!

(Sadler peered back at him over the hands he was using to shield his face and nodded in full agreement.)

SADLER: Indeed, I'm really quite worthless. There's absolutely *no* point in hitting one so pathetic and feeble, oh god no.

(Hapslock nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: True, but I'm still going to.

(With that, he punched Sadler square on the jaw. As Sadler thrust a hand to his painful face, Hapslock growled then set the horses in motion with a furious look on his face. As the carriage started to edge forwards, however, his expression mellowed and he quickly started to feel regretful about yelling at Cayley.)

HAPSLOCK: Maybe that was harsh; she's just a kid after all.

(He then glared at the trembling Sadler and his angry expression returned. He certainly wasn't sorry to have punched him. He despised everything about the man and connecting with his jaw felt wonderful.)

HAPSLOCK: You make me sick, Sadler!

(Sadler pouted at him and whimpered.)

SADLER: *I* don't like *you* either!

HAPSLOCK: Good.

(He turned his nose up at him and snarled under his breath.)

HAPSLOCK: Bloody kiddie fiddler.

(As the two of them sneered at one another, Kyrie looked up from where she was comforting Cayley on the grass and screeched in dismay.)

KYRIE: The carriage's leaving!!!

(Thankfully, being on bumpy soil, the carriage was moving so slowly even Cayley could catch it up with ease. As they jumped onto the back platform, Kyrie helped her sister to her feet then grimaced.)

KYRIE: Poor Frank. I think we pissed him off.

CAYLEY: Just a bit!

KYRIE: Still, I never thought he'd leave without us.

(Cayley nodded.)

CAYLEY: I think he thought we were already in the carriage.

KYRIE: Maybe!

(She smiled and stroked Cayley's hair.)

KYRIE: Maybe we could have been nicer to him just now. I shouldn't have raised my voice.

CAYLEY: And I could have been nicer about the Tifaeris thing.

(Kyrie nodded.)

KYRIE: We should do something nice for him when we get to Port Amok.

(Cayley pouted.)

CAYLEY: You mean sex, don't you?

KYRIE: No! I meant we could buy *him* an ice cream too!

(She rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: Sex indeed. I said, *we* should do something nice for him.

(Cayley nodded and gestured inside the carriage.)

CAYLEY: Okay. Good idea. Come on, let's go and sit down.

(With that, they closed the door behind them and raced up to the window to watch excitedly for their big moment. The moment when the carriage rolled into Port Amok.)

Within a few minutes of Hapslock mobilising the horses again, the carriage rolled onto a cobbled street and passed a sign emblazoned with the words that the four passengers had all longed to see. Welcome to Port Amok. As soon as she saw it, Cayley leapt for joy and threw her arms around Kyrie. Having only got as far as reading the first two letters of the first word, Kyrie also celebrated, taking Cayley's word for it that they'd arrived. On top of the carriage, as soon as they were past the sign, Sadler drew a deep sigh of relief and immediately told Sir Hapslock that his deed had been done and that he demanded to be let go immediately. It was a demand to which Sir Hapslock replied coldly. Without even facing him, he told Sadler that he was indeed free to go but if he wanted his carriage back he'd have to travel with them all the way to the dockside. Having always pictured himself dumping them by the roadside on the very edge of Port Amok, Sadler didn't take the news very well at all and complained all the way to the dockside. It was the longest three minutes of Sir Hapslock's life.

By the time the carriage finally pulled to a halt at the edge of a bustling market square within sight of the docks, Sir Hapslock was at the end of his tether. How one man could complain so incessantly without stopping for breath was beyond him. It had literally taken everything he had not to knock Sadler out and throw him over the side of the carriage. With the journey now at its end, however, he could at last take solace in the fact that he'd never have to listen to Sadler's whining voice ever again. It was a point he was swift to make as soon as the horses stopped moving. Coldly turning his head towards him, he nodded his goodbye and spoke in a firm tone.)

HAPSLOCK: Well, Sadler, it's been horrifying. It's been a chore knowing you and I can only hope that I never have to set eyes on your pasty, annoying face ever again.

(With that, he leapt down from the carriage and made his way towards the back to reunite himself with his charges. Unfortunately for him, however, having already donned their packs and alighted the carriage, Kyrie and Cayley had made their way towards the front of it on the other side. As a result, Hapslock had to walk all the way around it and already his dream of never seeing Sadler's face again was dashed.)

HAPSLOCK: Are you still here, Sadler?

(Sadler stared down at him and snarled.)

SADLER: You know what, Hapslock, I...

(Just then, he was distracted by the sight of a sign in a nearby hotel window. As he peered over the bustling crowds, he read it to himself and promptly forgot all about his rant. As if he'd died and gone to heaven, his face lit up and he exhaled joyfully.)

SADLER: Entertainers wanted? Apply within?

(He then glanced across at all the many townsfolk and travellers in the square and bit his lip. Wearing an uneasy grimace, he then looked down at Sir Hapslock.)

SADLER: Say, I don't suppose you'd mind looking after my carriage for me for a moment, would you? Only there might be thieves about.

(Hapslock glared at him coldly.)

HAPSLOCK: Seriously? After everything you've done, you'd still have the cheek to ask me for a favour?

(Sadler shrugged.)

SADLER: Of course! Does it *surprise* you that I have no dignity?

HAPSLOCK: Good point.

(He nodded then looked to the girls.)

HAPSLOCK: This could be useful actually. I don't want to drag you two around the docks, if I can help it. It's not a very pleasant place to be, especially for young ladies. Why don't you two look after the carriage instead and I'll go and see if I can secure you a place on a ship?

(Cayley looked to him and grinned nervously.)

CAYLEY: A ship to Tifaeris?

HAPSLOCK: I'll try, that's the best I can offer you.

(He then looked to Kyrie.)

HAPSLOCK: You okay with that idea?

(Kyrie shrugged.)

KYRIE: I don't know. I just do what Cayley thinks is best.

HAPSLOCK: Right, of course.

(He then looked to Cayley.)

HAPSLOCK: So, are *you* okay with me finding you a ship while you wait?

(Cayley nodded.)

CAYLEY: I guess so. It's not up to me though, I'm just a kid. I do what Kyrie tells me to do.

(He rolled his eyes and stood tall.)

HAPSLOCK: In that case let's take a break from the norm and do what the knight suggests.

(With that, he glanced up to Sadler and scowled.)

HAPSLOCK: Fine, go. The girls will look after the carriage!

(Sadler instantly punched the air in triumph then clambered down from the carriage and raced into a crowd of people. Having watched him go, Hapslock then looked to the girls.)

HAPSLOCK: Okay, just relax for a bit or something. I won't be long.

(As Cayley went to speak, Hapslock quickly spoke over her.)

HAPSLOCK: And yes, with any luck I'll find a ship heading to Tifaeris.

CAYLEY: Yay!

HAPSLOCK: Right, see you in a bit.

(As he paced away towards the docks, Kyrie watched him go and raised a curious eyebrow.)

KYRIE: Where's *he* going?

(Cayley looked to her in disbelief.)

CAYLEY: The docks!

KYRIE: Shouldn't we be going with him then?

(Cayley shook her head and sighed.)

CAYLEY: You didn't listen to a word anyone said, did you?

(Kyrie looked to her and shrugged.)

KYRIE: Two hot guys walked past! Not one, two!

CAYLEY: For pity's sake, Kyrie.

KYRIE: Never mind that, why aren't we going with Frank?

CAYLEY: Because he's gone to the docks and he says the docks aren't a very nice place for girls to be. So we're looking after the carriage instead!

(Kyrie looked peeved to say the least.)

KYRIE: But I was looking forward to getting *away* from this stupid carriage.

(Cayley sighed.)

CAYLEY: I know; so was I.

KYRIE: Still, Frank's right. The docks are no place a good girl like you.

(She sighed.)

KYRIE: Unless you're getting on a ship, the sailors automatically assume you're a prostitute. Which is fine for a slut like me, last time we stopped in a town with docks, I sold so much sex we both ate really well for two weeks.

(Cayley shuddered.)

CAYLEY: Gross!

KYRIE: So... yeah. Docks are great for selling... that, but they're definitely no place for an innocent little thing like you. Sailors can be very busy with their hands, you see?

CAYLEY: Yuck!

(Kyrie nodded.)

KYRIE: I'm not surprised he didn't want to take us with him. In his shoes, I wouldn't either. He was just being responsible.

(Cayley smiled.)

CAYLEY: I guess we'll just have to get comfy and wait then.

(With that, she tried to clamber atop the carriage and failed miserably.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie?

KYRIE: You need a boost, short arse?

CAYLEY: Yes please.

(Little did the girls know as they clambered atop the carriage, from across the square, two men wearing Siaras mining company helmets were watching every move they made. Having shared an animated discussion, one of them nodded profusely then thrust a thumb into the air to send a signal to his comrade further down the square. Looking satisfied with their efforts they then firmed their stances and started to converse as they continued to watch them.)

---

Having made his way down onto the dockside, Sir Hapslock paced along the cobbles keeping a sharp eye on the boats at his side. There were vessels of every shape and size moored in the harbour and dockworkers were rushing to and fro all around him. Through all the chaos, Sir Hapslock was looking for something specific. He wanted to find a crew he'd feel safe handing the girls over to. A crew of rowdy young men most certainly wouldn't do.

Having paced past several unsuitable ships, dismissing them out of hand, he then strolled up to one that looked too good to be true. Wearing a curious expression, he stopped walking for a moment and watched as the ship's crew loaded some boxes onto their small transport vessel. The captain looked very much like a wily old seadog but the same couldn't be said of his four, thirty year old crew members. This crew of two men and two women struck him as being somewhat out of place. Unlike most sailors, their arms weren't completely hidden under tattoos and they weren't turning the air blue with their language. This was most definitely a good thing. Having watched them for a moment, Hapslock nodded to himself, satisfied he needed to know more. And so, he stood tall and marched up to where one of the two male crew members was sizing up the box he was about to carry to the ship.)

HAPSLOCK: Good day to you, sir.

(The man glanced to him and smiled.)

REEFE: No thanks, mate. I'm not into that kind of thing.

(Upon noticing he was addressing a knight, he looked appalled at himself and saluted.)

REEFE: Oh my god!!! Sorry, I didn't realise you were a knight!

(Hapslock smiled.)

HAPSLOCK: Don't worry. If a stranger had walked up to *me* unannounced on the dockside, I'd have said the same thing.

(Reefe laughed.)

REEFE: Well, you can never be too careful.

(Recalling a terrible memory, Sir Hapslock sighed emptily.)

HAPSLOCK: No, you can't, even if they look like women...

(He shook his head to wipe away the nasty thoughts then forced a smile.)

HAPSLOCK: Anyway, let me get to the point. I may have a job for you, but first I'd like to know a little about your captain and crew, if I may.

REEFE: Sure, no problem.

(He then turned to call out over his shoulder.)

REEFE: Graydon, Alvarez, Josie, Mercedes, come over here, a knight wants to talk to us.  
(At once the other male crew member and his two female crewmates paced over to them from the side of the ship. The captain on the other hand, elected not to come and called out instead.)

GRAYDON: Tell him to bugger off, we're busy!

(Reefe grimaced.)

REEFE: He's old and forthright but he's okay once you get used to him.

(Just then, the other male crew member reached them and started to reach his hand out to greet him.)

ALVAREZ: Hello there, good knight, how are...

(Before he could quite reach to shake his hand and finish his sentence, however, one of the female crew members bashed him aside and curtsied in what can only be described as a very flirtatious manner.)

JOSIE: Hi, handsome.

(She giggled and stroked her hair.)

JOSIE: So, what can I do to you? With you! *For* you!

(Alvarez glared at her.)

ALVAREZ: Can you at least *try* to be subtle, Josie?

(She blushed and hung her head.)

JOSIE: Sorry.

(She looked to Hapslock and smiled.)

JOSIE: I meant to say, to what would you like to pleasure me?

(She stamped her foot in annoyance with herself then stomped back to the boat.)

JOSIE: To what do I owe the pleasure, damn it. Typical! I finally meet a nice looking knight and I go and blow it!!!

(More than used to this kind of reaction from women, Hapslock simply gave a stifled, inward laugh. The position of knight made him something of a woman magnet and her reaction hadn't been even slightly unusual. What was unusual however, was the fact he wasn't interested. Josie was a very good looking woman and normally he'd be half way to charming her underwear down by now but for some reason he couldn't find it in him to do so. As he stood there worrying about his lack of interest in her, the other female crew member stepped up to him.)

MERCEDES: Hello. Nice to meet you.

(As she offered him a sincere smile, Sir Hapslock returned it then looked to the two men and nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: Let me just say that, judging on my first impressions, you four strike me as good people.

(Alvarez nodded.)

ALVAREZ: We don't seem like sailors, you mean?

HAPSLOCK: Well, honestly, no you don't.

REEFE: That's because we're not, not really. We only live like this because we have to.

(Hapslock looked stunned.)

HAPSLOCK: You have to?

REEFE: Yeah, years ago there was a disaster in our home town and we kinda set out to put things right. And well... to cut a long story short, we got caught in a storm at sea one night and got horribly lost. We thought we'd be lost forever. Anyway, ten years later here we are. We failed to save our home town and now we make end meets doing deliveries at sea.

(Alvarez nodded sorrowfully.)

ALVAREZ: Yeah, our families and everything we knew were wiped out. And all because we failed to save...

(He sighed, unable to finish his sentence.)

HAPSLOCK: I'm sorry to hear that.

(Mercedes forced a smile.)

MERCEDES: We're just happy to be alive.

(She then curtsied and started to walk away.)

MERCEDES: It was nice to meet you but please excuse me. Josie's going to speak to Graydon about something and I need to be there with her.

(She shrugged.)

MERCEDES: You know, to back her up. We don't want a repeat of what happened last time we forgot about having a back up, do we?

(As she wandered away, Reefer looked to Hapslock and smiled.)

REEFER: So, anyway, what can we help you with?

HAPSLOCK: Actually, I was wondering where you were headed and whether you've got room for two passengers.

REEFER: I'll have to ask...

(His words were then rudely interrupted by the captain calling out to him.)

GRAYDON: Reefer, who is this shipment for?

(Reefer sighed and yelled back.)

REEFER: Amethyst holdings limited.

GRAYDON: That's what I thought but I can't find their file anywhere.

REEFER: Have you looked in the Amethyst folder?

GRAYDON: Yes, but the file seems to have disappeared into thin air.

(Reefer looked to Alvarez.)

REEFER: Would you?

ALVAREZ: Help him find it? I'll have a go.

(Alvarez then nodded to Sir Hapslock.)

ALVAREZ: Nice to meet you.

(He then shook his hand and headed back to the ship.)

REEFER: Sorry about that, it's always chaos around here. I suppose that's what happens when you work with friends and family.

HAPSLOCK: Family?

REEFER: Yeah, didn't I mention it? Mercedes is my sister.

(Hapslock nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: I see.

REEFER: Anyway, as I was saying, I'd have to ask the captain about taking passengers. As for where we're headed, we're going to a town called Marlboro on one of the smaller islands.

(Hapslock mused to himself for a moment then bit his lip.)

HAPSLOCK: A smaller island wouldn't be ideal but... I like you. You all seem like good people and I don't doubt the passengers would be safe in your capable hands.

(He smiled.)

HAPSLOCK: Can I get back to you?

REEFER: Sure. We don't sail for another hour or two. In the meantime I'll talk to Graydon.

HAPSLOCK: Excellent.

(With that, he thrust out his hand and Reefer shook it firmly.)

HAPSLOCK: It's been a pleasure.

REEFER: Likewise.

(With that, Hapslock turned and headed off down the dockside once more. The crew of this small, friendly vessel had impressed him greatly. They didn't seem overly efficient but they had a reassuring way about them. If he *did* end up picking them as Kyrie and Cayley's transport he felt certain they'd both enjoy the trip and be in no danger whatsoever. Apart

from their intended destination, they had all the ingredients he was looking for and he was pretty sure they'd be hard to beat.

As he paced along the dockside, his mind then wandered back to the troubling incident that had occurred with Josie at the small vessel. Thinking back over it was leaving him bewildered. Josie had an extraordinarily pretty face and he couldn't believe he hadn't been interested. As he continued to think about it, however, the reason why soon became clear. Every time he thought of Josie, his mind would switch to picturing Kyrie and her image would bring heartfelt longing with it. To him, Josie was just a very good looking woman whereas Kyrie was so much more than that. Wishing he didn't feel the way he did, Sir Hapslock sighed. He could do nothing about his feelings and it made him uncomfortable. He loved Kyrie to the point where other beauties paled into insignificance. Fearing he'd never be attracted to another woman ever again, thus losing his libido forever, he kicked a stone then snarled to himself. Just then, a wave of shame washed over him and he felt extremely appalled at himself. Trudging forth like a beaten man was not the way of a knight. Having chastised himself inside for his outward display of self pity, he then stood tall and paced forwards determinedly. Setting his woes to the back of his mind, he then resumed his search for a ship. He doubted very much he'd find a better crew than the one he'd already spoken to but he owed it to the girls to try.

Almost certain he'd found the ship the girls would eventually be leaving on, Sir Hapslock paced onwards down the dockside, openly scrutinising all the crews he passed with his eyes. Almost every single ship was manned by what looked like toothless thugs and the further he went, the more he was convinced that the girls would be heading away with Reefer's friendly crew. Nodding to affirm his thoughts, he murmured to himself as he paced along the dockside.)

HAPSLOCK: It can *only* be them, really.

(Just then, a gentleman in a Siaras mining company helmet, paced towards him from among a large stack of crates.)

ESPEN: Hello there. What a pleasure to have a knight of the realm amongst us.

(He stopped to shake Sir Hapslock's hand and smiled.)

ESPEN: My name's Espen, by the way, I'm head of the Siaras mining company shipping division.

(Hapslock shook his hand and nodded politely.)

HAPSLOCK: Nice to meet you.

ESPEN: Like wise.

(Very much a salesman, Espen smiled to him knowingly.)

ESPEN: Say, I watched you walking up the dockside and I was wondering, are you looking for passage on a ship, Sir Knight?

(Hapslock puffed out.)

HAPSLOCK: Well, yes actually.

ESPEN: And may I enquire where to?

HAPSLOCK: Well, ideally to Tifaeris, but...

(Esen beamed and swiftly interrupted.)

ESPEN: Ah, then you're in luck, sir. We've a ship leaving for Tifaeris in two hours and there's room leftover for passengers.

HAPSLOCK: Really?

ESPEN: Absolutely. And it's not just any ship either. I'm talking about the Siaras, our company flagship. Interested?

(Hapslock looked uncertain.)



HAPSLOCK: That depends on the crew and the rest of the passengers really. If they're all randy miners then no. I need a ship that women and children can travel on safely.

ESPEN: Then the Siaras is perfect! Why, my own wife and two daughters will be sailing. (Hapslock looked impressed.)

HAPSLOCK: Really?

ESPEN: Indeed. Yes, there may well be miners aboard the ship but there's also going to be lots of women and children. You see, we used to sail to Tifaeris and back to deliver what we've mined and the ship was always half empty. That seemed silly when you think this world is crying out for a ferry service. So, these days we offer the empty cabins to passengers. The miners stay down below and you won't even notice them.

(Hapslock looked sorely tempted.)

HAPSLOCK: So essentially, it's half mining ship, half ferry?

ESPEN: Luxury ferry, sir.

HAPSLOCK: And you're certain the miners will be out of the way?

ESPEN: Indeed. Now, the crossing can take half a day so you'll be supplied with a cabin, but little else I'm afraid. I would suggest buying food for the trip and maybe some candles.

HAPSLOCK: Candles?

ESPEN: To keep the cabin lit.

(Hapslock frowned.)

HAPSLOCK: How can you call it a luxury cabin and then tell me to bring my own candles?

ESPEN: I didn't say the cabin was luxury, I said the ferry was. On most ferries you don't even get a cabin.

HAPSLOCK: I see.

ESPEN: True, the cabin is basically a room with a bed in it but... it's a comfortable bed, and a much needed one for such a long trip.

HAPSLOCK: Good point.

(Espen rubbed his hands gleefully.)

ESPEN: So, would you like to sail with us today? It'd be wonderful to have a knight along so I'm sure we can come to some sort of arrangement over the fee.

(Hapslock looked to him for a moment then bit his lip.)

HAPSLOCK: Wait, let me think about this.

(As he weighed up the idea of letting the girls travel on the mining ship, one thing kept dominating his thoughts. The look on Cayley's little face if he was to tell her she was going to Tifaeris. As much as he liked the other crew, he couldn't overlook the fact that they were heading nowhere special. This mining ship, on the other hand, was heading to a place that would be a little girl's dream come true. As he continued to think, the idea of sending the girls away on a large ship with a private cabin slowly became more and more appealing. Eventually convincing himself of the right answer he nodded to himself then looked to Espen.)

HAPSLOCK: I won't be sailing with you today, sir.

(Espen looked devastated.)

ESPEN: I see.

HAPSLOCK: No, I don't think you do. I was never sailing in the first place; I was looking for room on a ship for my charges.

(Espen looked enlightened.)

ESPEN: Oh, okay.

HAPSLOCK: If you can guarantee safe passage to Tifaeris for two young ladies then I'll be happy to let them travel with you.

(Espen nodded.)

ESPEN: Of course, sir. Our ships are among the safest on the ocean. And I guarantee they won't be accosted by any miners.

HAPSLOCK: Then it's a deal.

(Espen beamed.)

ESPEN: Excellent! Now, will they require a cabin each or just the one?

HAPSLOCK: Just the one I think. They're very close.

ESPEN: Okay. Let me get my ticket book and we'll talk about the fee.

HAPSLOCK: Excellent.

(With that, Espen headed away towards a small log cabin at the back of the dock. Watching him go, Hapslock nodded to himself. He'd secured the girls a private cabin en route to Tifaeris and he was in little doubt they'd both be extremely happy about it.)

Once Espen re-emerged from the log cabin, he and Sir Hapslock haggled over a price briefly then the good knight handed over the agreed fee and accepted two tickets in return. Looking forward to telling the girls all about it, he then about turned and paced back down the dockside. As he watched him go, however, Espen smirked knowingly then nodded towards a Siaras mining company dockworker. The dockworker gave him the thumbs up in return, then proceeded to follow Sir Hapslock down the dockside. Just as Vaska had suggested, the prying eyes of the Siaras mining company were everywhere.)

---

Upon returning to the carriage, Sir Hapslock approached where the girls were sunbathing in the driving seat and allowed himself a wry smile. As disappointed as he was that Sadler hadn't left and taken the carriage with him, he couldn't resist the opportunity to have a little fun at the girl's expense before he gave them the good news. As they lay on their backs facing the warm sun, Sir Hapslock stepped aside Cayley's side of the carriage and put on a troubled expression.

HAPSLOCK: Ladies?

(Kyrie and Cayley glanced to him lazily and smiled.)

KYRIE: Hi, Frank!

CAYLEY: Hiya.

(Hapslock sighed then climbed up onto the driver's seat with them. Happy to make room for him, Cayley shifted up close to Kyrie and allowed him to sit. As soon as his backside hit the seat, he sighed and held his head in his hands despairingly.)

HAPSLOCK: That was a disaster!

CAYLEY: Why? What happened?

HAPSLOCK: All I could get was a raft and you'll have to row it yourselves.

(He sighed.)

HAPSLOCK: On the bright side, you can pick your own destination but your arms are going to ache like buggery when you get there.

(Not falling for it for a moment, Cayley grinned. Kyrie however, was devastated by the fake news.)

KYRIE: That sounds like hard work.

HAPSLOCK: There is one other option, of course. Swimming.

(Kyrie sighed and shook her head.)

KYRIE: That's no good, madam here can't swim.

(Cayley glared at her.)

CAYLEY: Yes I can!

KYRIE: Thrashing about yelling "save me, Kyrie" isn't swimming!

CAYLEY: That happened once! I've learned to float and do doggie paddle since then.

KYRIE: You're gonna doggie paddle 100 miles?

(Cayley looked to her and laughed.)

CAYLEY: No, silly.

(She gestured to Hapslock.)

CAYLEY: He's joking. We're not going by raft *or* swimming.

(Kyrie looked across at the smirking Hapslock then raised a curious eyebrow at Cayley.)

KYRIE: How do *you* know he's joking?

CAYLEY: It's obvious.

(Sir Hapslock laughed out loud and looked to Kyrie.)

HAPSLOCK: Sorry, I just couldn't resist it. I was joking

(Kyrie looked thoughtful and glanced sideways into the sky.)

KYRIE: Shall I tell him he's not funny or pretend to laugh for *his* benefit?

(Seconds later, she looked to Hapslock and laughed.)

KYRIE: Good one!

CAYLEY: You do realise you said that out loud just now, don't you?

(Kyrie looked highly embarrassed.)

KYRIE: I did?

(As she hid her face, Cayley looked to Sir Hapslock nervously.)

CAYLEY: So, what happened? Did you get us a boat?

(Hapslock smiled and nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: I did. I got you a cabin in a large ship heading for Azagotse.

(Cayley sighed downheartedly.)

CAYLEY: That's cool, I guess.

HAPSLOCK: Wait, maybe it wasn't Azagotse.

(He mused to himself deliberately.)

HAPSLOCK: No it wasn't. It was going to some place starting with...

(He looked to Cayley and winked knowingly.)

HAPSLOCK: The letter T!

(At once Cayley's eyes filled with hope and she stared him excitedly.)

CAYLEY: You mean... Tifaeris?

(Hapslock laughed and smiled to her warmly.)

HAPSLOCK: That's exactly where you're going, yes.

(Looking delirious with joy, Cayley leapt to her feet and threw her hands into the air, celebrating like she'd just scored the winning goal in the FIFA World Cup Final. Releasing a series of high pitched cries of joy as she did so, everyone in the busy market square stopped what they were doing and stared at her. Too excited to care about the attention she'd just attracted, she threw herself back in her seat then hugged Sir Hapslock.)

CAYLEY: Thank you, thank you, thank you...

(With the little girl's display of delight at an end, everyone in the square slowly stopped staring and went about their business again. Everyone, with the exception of the watching Siaras employees, that is. Keeping hawk like eyes on the girls they remained fixed at their posts ready to report any movement to their comrades through a series of well rehearsed hand gestures. Still blissfully unaware that they were being watched, Sir Hapslock and Cayley looked to Kyrie as she voiced her opinion on the boat trip they were to undertake.)

KYRIE: If sister face is happy then I don't care where we go. As long it's not that Guevina place. Cayley says people there are all inbred and have webbed feet.

(Cayley nodded.)

CAYLEY: Sir Flaxley said so in his book.

HAPSLOCK: Of course he did. He said a lot of things.

(Hapslock smiled to Cayley.)

HAPSLOCK: Try not to build your hopes up if you meet Flaxley, Cayley. You'll end up disappointed. There's no way he's as great as he claims he is.

(Cayley shook her head.)

CAYLEY: Normally I'd be mad at you for saying that, but you did get us a boat to Tifaeris, so I'll let you off.

HAPSLOCK: I wasn't trying to upset you; I just don't want you to be disappointed.

CAYLEY: I won't be!

HAPSLOCK: Anyway, the boat leaves in under two hours and you're going to need some provisions.

KYRIE: What's that mean?

HAPSLOCK: Stuff. You'll need some stuff.

(Cayley beamed.)

CAYLEY: Like ice cream, you mean? We're getting *you* one; our treat!

(Hapslock looked extremely touched.)

HAPSLOCK: Me? Why?

CAYLEY: For taking care of us!

KYRIE: Yeah, we kinda love you for that.

(Hapslock glanced at her lovingly for a moment then shook his head to erase his romantic thoughts.)

HAPSLOCK: Well... thank you.

(He sighed.)

HAPSLOCK: Though I really don't deserve it. You girls took care of yourselves all the way.

(He forced and embarrassed laugh.)

HAPSLOCK: Normally I'd have taken my charges to the dock with me, just in case they were attacked while I was away. This time though, if you *had* been attacked, I'd have probably ended up stuck in a sword fight over the other side of the square while you two fended for yourselves again anyway. There's been a horrible pattern of ineptitude on my part since I met you.

(He sighed.)

HAPSLOCK: It could have all been so much easier if I'd restocked my fire magic supplies.

Instead it's all been something of a debacle. I've been pretty useless

(Kyrie and Cayley looked to him in disbelief.)

KYRIE: No you haven't.

CAYLEY: You've been great to us.

(Hapslock shrugged.)

HAPSLOCK: I think we're going to have to agree to disagree on this one.

(He nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: Anyway, provisions...

(Just then, Sadler came storming out of a nearby building and paced up to the carriage.)

SADLER: Second rate musician, indeed.

(Looking livid, he stopped at the side of the carriage and sneered up at the driving seat.)

SADLER: I'm back. You can go now. More importantly, *I* can go! Somewhere you three aren't!

(Very much looking forward to getting rid of him, Hapslock leapt down from the carriage in an instant. Cayley, however, was not so fast. To her it was a long way down and she was terrible at climbing. Thankfully, Sir Hapslock was on hand to lift her down. As Kyrie, leapt down after them, Sadler looked to the empty driver's seat then held his hand towards Sir Hapslock.)

SADLER: Sir Hapslock!

(Sir Hapslock looked at his hand and sneered.)

HAPSLOCK: I refuse to shake your hand, sir, on the grounds that I distrust and despise you.

(Sadler rolled his eyes and turned his palm upwards.)

SADLER: I don't want a handshake, I want payment.

(Had Sir Hapslock been drinking anything at this point, he'd undoubtedly have spat it all over Sadler's tunic; such was his shock and amazement at what he'd just said.)

HAPSLOCK: Payment???

(Sadler nodded sternly.)

SADLER: When you forced me to make this journey, you told me I'd be rewarded well for my efforts. You also said the king would be very generous. Well, I've done my bit, I've got you all to Port Amok, in fact I've taken you all the way to the dockside. Now it's time to make good on your word.

(Hapslock nodded acceptingly.)

HAPSLOCK: Very well, it'd be wrong not to deliver on what I promised you.

SADLER: Indeed.

(As Sadler stretched his hand closer to him, Hapslock looked him in the eye coldly.)

HAPSLOCK: Your reward is to be your freedom. Despite committing treason twice, abducting a minor and being an accessory to attempted murder, I'm going to let you go.

(He sneered.)

HAPSLOCK: You're welcome to refuse this generous offer, of course. I'd be quite happy to turn you into the authorities, if that's what you'd prefer.

(Sadler stared into his eyes and gaped in horror.)

SADLER: You're going back on your word?

HAPSLOCK: No. I told you I'd turn you in unless you got us to Port Amok, and you have. So I'm letting you go.

SADLER: You also told me I'd be rewarded generously.

(Hapslock looked dumbfounded.)

HAPSLOCK: After what you did, you thought you'd still get paid *and* be set free?

SADLER: Well, you never stated otherwise!

(Hapslock clenched his fist and growled.)

HAPSLOCK: Sadler, if you're not on that carriage and disappearing out of view by the time I finish this sentence...

(Sadler eyes bulged and he swiftly made a beeline for the carriage.)

SADLER: I get it!!!

(As he clambered atop the carriage and grabbed the reins, he sneered back down at Hapslock.)

SADLER: Double crossing, ne'er-do-well.

(With that, he flicked the reins to set the horses in motion. Turning around to go back the same way they'd come into town, he snarled at Kyrie as the carriage semi circled around her.)

SADLER: Blithering idiot! I hope you get syphilis!

(Once the horses were straight and facing in the right direction, he then stared down at Cayley.)

SADLER: As for you, child. I hope...

(Not about to let him finish his insult, Sir Hapslock whacked the back of one of the horses with his hand prompting it to gallop away. Thrown back into his seat by the sudden increase of speed, Sadler could only scream as he struggled to bring the horses under control. Watching as he disappeared up the road, crying out in panic, Sir Hapslock shook his head.)

HAPSLOCK: Pillock. Can you believe that? He called *me* a ne'er-do-well!

KYRIE: He said he wanted *me* to get syphilis. That's far worse.

CAYLEY: I hate to think what he was going to say to *me*.

(As they watched him go they all shook disdainful heads and said nothing. The same, however, couldn't be said of the Siaras mining company operatives who'd been watching them. As soon as Sadler had started to move, they'd sent hand singles to their co-workers down the road and one of them had leapt onto a horse to pursue him. Watching as Sadler disappeared out of sight with a horse hot on his tail; Sir Hapslock turned to Kyrie and chuckled.)

HAPSLOCK: Hopefully that horseman's going to rob him.

(Cayley looked uncertain.)

CAYLEY: Do you think he was going to?

HAPSLOCK: I doubt it. He was probably just going home or something. It's nice to dream though.

(Kyrie nodded.)

KYRIE: It is. I dream about sex a lot. Sometimes I even daydream about sex when I'm having sex. You know, if the guy's a bit rubbish.

(Hapslock looked at her and shook his head in amusement. As always she was in a world of her own and wouldn't be playing any part in any coherent conversation. This was something uniquely Kyrie and he found it really quite endearing.)

HAPSLOCK: Kyrie, you're priceless.

KYRIE: No, I'm not! It's 20 for oral, 40 for full sex and extra for anal.

(Hapslock looked to her coldly for a moment then glanced at Cayley. Seeing Cayley staring at Kyrie wearing her familiar despairing expression, he started to laugh.)

HAPSLOCK: I'm really going to miss you two.

(He allowed his laughter to subside naturally then rubbed his hands together.)

HAPSLOCK: Right. We need provisions. You'll need candles for lighting your cabin, some food for the trip and of course, I still need fire magic ingredients.

(He gestured towards the market and smiled.)

HAPSLOCK: We've got over an hour to kill so... shall we, ladies?

(Looking overjoyed, Kyrie and Cayley appeared at his side in an instant.)

KYRIE: Shopping, we like shopping!

CAYLEY: Ice cream!

KYRIE: And shoes!

(Hapslock gave her a sideways glance.)

HAPSLOCK: We don't need shoes.

KYRIE: We'll see.

(With that, she proceeded to drag him into the bustling market. As they marched around the many busy and well stocked stalls, Sir Hapslock once again got a taste of what life would be like with Kyrie as his girlfriend. Despite the fact they only needed candles, food and magic herbs, Kyrie stopped at every stall and her eyes lit up with a desire to buy everything on it. She would definitely not make a cheap girlfriend. Shoe stalls, jewellery stalls, ornament stalls and even furniture stalls, she wanted everything in the entire market. Such was her desire to stop and see every last item on sale, Sir Hapslock ended up having to make a practical suggestion. He proposed that Kyrie should go off on her own to look around and he'd take Cayley with him to choose their food. It was a suggestion which Kyrie met with a smile and a nod. Her reaction may have been the result of her not listening but Sir Hapslock decided to take it as a sign and led Cayley away to a food stall. Had they continued to shop with Kyrie, stopping every few feet, the exercise would have taken hours and they might well have missed their ship.

Shopping with Cayley only was very easy. She followed Sir Hapslock attentively and clung onto his hand, never daring to let go in case there was an assassin around. Within ten minutes

he'd managed to purchase 10 candles, a book of matches and all the fruit and meat the girls would need for the trip. And at last, he'd got his hands on grange peppers and fleur rouge; the two ingredients for fire magic. With all the provisions now in their possession, Hapslock grinned to himself. He couldn't help being amused at how women loved to think that shopping was *their* forte, and yet they were terrible at it. It always took women ages to get round to buying what they needed when a man could do it minutes. Not about to share this thought with Cayley, he offered her a smile and suggested they find Kyrie then head for the docks. Receiving a lecture about her going nowhere until Kyrie had bought her the ice cream she promised her, he rolled his eyes then headed off between two stalls.

When they finally found Kyrie some fifteen minutes later, she was wearing a different dress to the one she'd had on when they'd left her. Looking delighted, she paced up to them in the middle of a busy market aisle, grinning all over her face.)

KYRIE: How sexy am I?

(She twirled to show off her new revealing pink outfit with matching shoes and fluttered her eyelashes at Sir Hapslock.)

KYRIE: Nice, huh?

(Sir Hapslock drooled.)

HAPSLOCK: Outstanding!

(Shaking his head free of such improper thoughts, he smiled to her and gave her his good news.)

HAPSLOCK: We've got all the supplies you'll need and you're good to go.

CAYLEY: Once I've had my ice cream!

(Kyrie looked to her for a moment then her face dropped.)

KYRIE: Crap, I forgot all about that!

(She whimpered.)

KYRIE: I spent all our money on this outfit.

(Cayley looked mortified.)

CAYLEY: All of it???

KYRIE: And then some, I had to suck the merchant off as well.

(She sighed.)

KYRIE: He drove a hard bargain.

(As tears welled in Cayley's eyes, Kyrie looked to her and pouted miserably.)

KYRIE: I'm a bad person!!!

(Seeing the girls were both about to burst into tears and make a scene, Sir Hapslock stood tall and spoke out in a hurried bid to calm them both.)

HAPSLOCK: I'll buy the ice cream!!! Please! For heaven's sake, don't cry!

(They both looked at him tearfully then rushed to hug him.)

CAYLEY: Thank you.

KYRIE: You're so nice.

(Sir Hapslock forced a laugh and shook his head. So much for avoiding a scene.)

HAPSLOCK: Let me go, ladies. Come on, let's find this ice cream.

(Ice cream was a rare and expensive dish in this part of the world. In colder parts of the country it would sell for merely 1 groat. Here on the warmer north coast, it would cost ten times that. With no way to keep it cool, it would go off within a few hours and the makers charged a lot more to compensate for their losses should they fail to sell it all while it was fresh. Thankfully, with the king's coffers at Sir Hapslock's disposal, money wasn't an issue.

Having purchased an ice cream each for his two charges, Sir Hapslock found them a public bench to eat them on and stood guard over them while they devoured them. During his vigil,

he slipped their supplies into their packs then finally set about fixing the magic herbs to his mystic bracelet. At long last, he was now equipped with fire magic again. Feeling very much relieved, he took a deep breath then stood tall and looked to the girls once more.

As he watched them tuck into their icy dairy delights, Hapslock couldn't help but grin. Kyrie ate hers wearing a devious expression. She'd take a lick and look around as if she was doing something devilishly naughty and enjoying every second of it. Cayley, on the other hand, reverted to a six year old again. Unable to stop grinning, she licked away at it constantly, letting it drip down herself and accidentally smearing it all over her face at the same time. She looked far from the distinguished genius he knew her to be.

Once they'd finally finished eating, Sir Hapslock looked to them both and sighed. The time had come to head for the docks. Pretty soon, they'd be getting on a ship and leaving his life forever. All of a sudden, he felt numb inside. Although leaving for the new world would be a great moment in the girl's lives, he was struggling to tell them that the time had now arrived. Their farewell was imminent and saying goodbye was going to hurt. The marketer who'd sold him his fire magic ingredients, had smiled at Cayley while he was serving him and told him he had a pretty daughter. Rather liking the idea, he'd said nothing to correct him. Cayley had brought out paternal feelings in him and he was happy to admit he loved her dearly. Although he'd only known her for a few days, he'd taken her to his heart. As for Kyrie, he most definitely had a place in his heart for her too. Letting these two go wasn't going to be a moment he'd enjoy. They weren't just charges; they were people he truly cared about. After a full two minutes of failing to say anything, he shook his head then looked to the heavens. Clearing his mind of sad thoughts he then forced a smile and gestured in the direction of the sea.)

HAPSLOCK: It's time, ladies. Let's get you to that ship.

(As he turned and headed away, Kyrie and Cayley rose up from their seats and started to follow him. The importance of the moment wasn't lost on Cayley; she was however, powerless to give it any consideration. Glaring at her despairingly, Kyrie had pulled her close to brush all the excess ice cream off of her chin and nose with the complementary tissue they'd received from the ice cream vendor. Stuck in a headlock, all she could do was flap her arms and follow on; hoping Kyrie would soon be done wiping her face. The importance of the moment, of course, went straight over Kyrie's head.)

---

As Hapslock walked along the dockside with Kyrie and Cayley at his side en route to the Siaras mining ship, he couldn't help but feel more than a little glum. Not only would he miss his two charges, but he wasn't looking forward to going back to his ordinary routine. The two young ladies had been a welcome break from the norm and despite the hardships they'd faced he'd enjoyed being their knight immensely. He'd never felt such sorrow before about parting with his charges and he only knew one way to handle the moment. To pretend his sadness didn't exist and walk tall. And so, he paced along with his head held high while Kyrie and Cayley paced at his side. For Cayley, the docks were every bit as intimidating as she'd been told. Everyone there looked like a thug or a crook and she wasn't about to let go of Kyrie's hand even for a moment. As she glanced around wide eyed and trembled, Kyrie strolled casually aside her, waving at some of the dockworkers and even calling out "hello" to some of the sailors. When surrounded by men, Kyrie was very much in her element. In stark contrast to Cayley, she found the dockside a very welcoming place.



As she headed forth in between Sir Hapslock and Cayley, Kyrie pointed towards a ship and exhaled happily. Mistakenly thinking anyone would be interested she looked to her two companions and smiled.)

KYRIE: I had sex with two of that ship's crew when it was docked in... some other town.  
(Hapslock gave her a sideways glance.)

HAPSLOCK: I don't think Cayley wants to know that!

KYRIE: She doesn't mind, do you Cayley?

(She glanced at Cayley's scowling face and smiled.)

KYRIE: See? She's fine!

(She then called out to a sailor as he leant over the railings of his ship.)

KYRIE: Hi, Justin!

(Looking somewhat surprised, the sailor smiled and yelled back.)

JUSTIN: Hey, Kyrie! Looking good.

(As Hapslock and Cayley looked to her enquiringly, Kyrie shrugged.)

KYRIE: What? That was Justin. I don't remember his real name; I called him that because of his penis.

(As Cayley shook her head, Hapslock raised an eyebrow.)

HAPSLOCK: Little fellow, was he?

KYRIE: Hardly! It was so big he could have used it for jousting. Hence, Justin.

(She then pointed to his ship mate.)

KYRIE: I shagged *him* too.

(She chuckled.)

KYRIE: He had letters tattooed on his penis. When it was limp it said "hi".

(Hapslock rolled his eyes.)

HAPSLOCK: Yeah and when it was erect it said, "How are you? My name is Dave, nice to meet you; it's a beautiful day, says I". That's the oldest joke in the world, Kyrie.

(Kyrie looked baffled.)

KYRIE: Um... no! When it was erect it still said "hi", but the letters were stretched.

(Hapslock sighed and shook his head in defeat.)

HAPSLOCK: I see.

KYRIE: Besides, I never joke about a man's doodah. Penises are sacred to me, I'd never make light of a man's genitalia.

HAPSLOCK: Well, that's good to know, now can we change the subject? Being here is scary enough for Cayley without you rambling on about sex.

(Kyrie gave him a cold glance.)

KYRIE: I wasn't rambling. I was waffling.

HAPSLOCK: Fair enough, but does it have to be about sex?

(Kyrie scoffed at him mockingly.)

KYRIE: You *have* met me, haven't you?

(She waved at him sarcastically.)

KYRIE: Hello, it's me. Sex maniac, Kyrie. Remember me? Ever since we met I've done nothing but talk about sex and you hadn't even noticed?

HAPSLOCK: I'm well aware that you like sex, Kyrie.

(Looking somewhat devious, Kyrie leant to one side and spoke through the side of her mouth.)

KYRIE: Tell you what, Cayley, for a knight he's a bit slow on the uptake isn't he?

(Hapslock glared at her and furrowed his brow.)

HAPSLOCK: That's me you're murmuring at, halfwit! Cayley's the *other* side of you.

(Kyrie looked up at him and blushed.)

KYRIE: Oh my god, sorry, Frank.

(Just then, Cayley pulled on her hand and whimpered.)

CAYLEY: Look, can we just hurry up and get to our boat, please? This place creeps me out.

(As she looked to Kyrie nervously, Sir Hapslock stopped walking and smiled.)

HAPSLOCK: Don't worry, Cayley. We're here.

(He then gestured to the waters edge where the impressive looking vessel, the Siaras was docked at their side.)

HAPSLOCK: Isn't she magnificent? Look at the sheer size of the thing.

(The two girls looked up at the giant ship and gasped.)

KYRIE: Holy crap!

CAYLEY: F... flaming hell.

(Kyrie winked at her.)

KYRIE: Nice save.

CAYLEY: Thanks.

(Sir Hapslock stared up at the ship and nodded proudly.)

HAPSLOCK: Think, ladies. This is it. The ship that'll take you away from all the summoned beasts. This is the vessel that will put you beyond the reach of all those assassins. This is your passage to sanctuary.

(Much to his surprise, Kyrie then burst into tears and threw her arms around him.)

KYRIE: Thank you so much, Frank.

HAPSLOCK: Don't thank *me*.

(He sighed.)

HAPSLOCK: You were already coming here, I just came with you. This is your moment, not mine.

(As Cayley watched her proudly, Kyrie leant back and stared into her eyes.)

KYRIE: Stop saying that, you did more for us than you could ever know.

HAPSLOCK: I doubt that. Without my fire magic I was useless.

KYRIE: No. You weren't. You've been amazing to us.

(She exhaled at him lovingly.)

KYRIE: You bought us ice cream!

(As she hugged him tightly and continued to cry, Cayley gave Kyrie a sideways glance then looked to Sir Hapslock warmly.)

CAYLEY: Not to mention the fact you secured us transport, risked your life fighting for us, saved me from a dirty old man and you've been the best friend we've ever had.

(With that, she too welled up and threw her arms around him.)

HAPSLOCK: Well...

(Feeling extremely proud of himself, he too burst in tears.)

HAPSLOCK: I love you girls!!!

(Crying her eyes out, Kyrie leant her head back and wailed at him.)

KYRIE: We love you too!!!

(Cayley then joined in the tearful chorus.)

CAYLEY: We do!!!

KYRIE: We'll miss you, Frank.

CAYLEY: We'll never forget you!

HAPSLOCK: And I'll never forget you two!!!

(Suddenly noticing that everyone at the docks had stopped working to stare at them, Hapslock quickly cleared his throat and stood tall.)

HAPSLOCK: Anyway, yes... the ship.

(As Kyrie and Cayley stepped back from him, Sir Hapslock smiled to them lovingly and reached out to stroke the hair on the backs of their heads.)

HAPSLOCK: I'm not going to deny my feelings just to feel like the big man here, girls. I mean this; it's been an absolute privilege meeting you two. I love you both and I'm really going to miss you.

(Kyrie gave him a loving glance.)

KYRIE: We *know* how you feel. We saw you crying like a girl.

(She smiled warmly.)

KYRIE: You're just a big girl in a suit of armour. Having you around is like having a girl friend to hang with, only you have a penis. Which is a wonderful bonus.

(Hapslock furrowed his brow angrily and stood tall.)

HAPSLOCK: I know you think that was a compliment but trust me, it wasn't!

(Kyrie bit her lip nervously and leant to Cayley.)

KYRIE: Uh oh, careful what you say, I think he's on his period.

(Cayley sighed and turned to face her.)

CAYLEY: How many times? Guys don't have periods!

KYRIE: Yes, they do!

CAYLEY: No, they don't. Girls have periods, boys don't. Simple as that.

(Kyrie sneered at her coldly then shrugged nonchalantly.)

KYRIE: *You* don't have periods, are *you* a boy?

(Cayley flapped at her.)

CAYLEY: I've been having them for a whole year!!! How many times have we talked about it???

(Kyrie sucked her teeth then looked to Hapslock.)

KYRIE: Careful what you say to her, I think *she's* on her period too!

(As Sir Hapslock and Cayley shook their heads at her, Kyrie started to feel uncomfortable and hung her head.)

KYRIE: Mine's due in a few days if it makes you feel better.

(Sir Hapslock started to laugh.)

HAPSLOCK: It's these bizarre conversations I'm going to miss most.

(He then hugged them both close to him once more.)

HAPSLOCK: Now go on. Get yourselves off to sanctuary.

(With that, he let them go and pulled two ship tickets from upon his person.)

HAPSLOCK: Here. Take these, get on the boat and enjoy your new lives. You deserve it.

(Kyrie gently took the tickets from his grasp then looked him in the eye.)

KYRIE: I don't know much, Frank. I'm so stupid, I amaze myself sometimes but I do know one thing. We'll never forget what you've done for us. I love you.

(Cayley stood at Kyrie's side and nodded.)

CAYLEY: I can't say it better than that.

(She smiled.)

CAYLEY: Goodbye, Sir Hapslock.

(Hapslock nodded warmly and gestured to the ship.)

HAPSLOCK: Kyrie, Cayley, farewell.

(With that, Kyrie turned around, took Cayley's hand and led her towards the ship. As Hapslock watched proudly, they handed their tickets to a man beside the gangplank then headed up it towards the large deck. Watching as a small group of miners followed them; carrying their pickaxes and lanterns aboard the vessel; Sir Hapslock furrowed his brow. So far, the girls seemed to be the only civilian passengers. Only a few seconds later, however, his mind was set to rest when a family of five started to make their way onto the ship.)

HAPSLOCK: Excellent.

(As the girls reach the top of the lengthy gangplank and waved at him from the deck, Hapslock waved back and smiled to himself. His heart was paining but it felt good. It was

the right kind of pain. He was hurting because he'd miss them, not because anything had gone wrong. It was a pain that proved how much he cared about them. Knowing the pain in his heart was exactly what he should be experiencing right now; he exhaled happily then stood tall.)

HAPSLOCK: Perfect.

(Just then, he felt a heavy tapping on his shoulder. Looking somewhat surprised, he turned around and saw a clerk of the docks standing behind him looking deeply concerned.)

HAPSLOCK: What's wrong?

(The clerk's lips quivered as he stared into his eyes urgently.)

CLERK: Come quickly, there's trouble afoot.

HAPSLOCK: But, I'm seeing off some friends.

CLERK: But you're a lawman, aren't you? There's a robbery in progress, it's your duty to come.

(Hapslock sighed.)

HAPSLOCK: I know my duty!

(He sighed again then looked up to the girls on the deck. Seeing them waving down at him from the safety of the ship, he looked thoughtful. His time as their knight was at its end.

Now, he was once again at the beck and call of the people he was sworn to serve. The clerk's request wasn't something he could ignore. Nodding to affirm his thoughts he looked to the clerk and raised an eyebrow.)

HAPSLOCK: One mission ends and another one begins.

(With that, he saluted to the girls and smiled warmly.)

HAPSLOCK: It was a pleasure, fair maidens; farewell.

(He then looked to the clerk.)

HAPSLOCK: Take me to these robbers, good fellow. Sir Hapslock of Leavesbury is on the case.

(As the clerk raced away between a large stack of crates at the back of the docks, Sir Hapslock raced after him, eager to get back to doing what he did best. As soon as he raced into the darkness between the crates, however, he was suddenly coshed over the head by a large man wearing a Siaras mining helmet, who'd been hiding in a gap between two crates. At once, his eyes rolled up into his head and he collapsed unconscious to the floor.)

CLERK: Nice.

(He looked to the thug who'd coshed him and nodded.)

CLERK: You sneak him round the back and I'll let Vaska know we've bagged the knight.

(Bewildered by Sir Hapslock's decision to race away with the clerk of the docks, Kyrie and Cayley leant against the deck railings looking somewhat disappointed.)

KYRIE: Why'd Frank go with that guy, Cayley? I wanted to wave to him all the way out to sea.

(Cayley sighed.)

CAYLEY: I don't know. Maybe... well, he's finished helping us. Now he's got to help others.

KYRIE: I suppose.

(She sighed.)

KYRIE: I'm really going to miss him, you know?

CAYLEY: Yeah, me too.

(She smiled.)

CAYLEY: We don't meet many people who care about us, but *he* did.

(Kyrie looked uncertain.)

KYRIE: He probably just thought I was dipshit.

CAYLEY: Maybe he did. I bet he thought I was an annoying, whining, cry baby too but he cared about us anyway.

(Kyrie looked to her and smiled.)

KYRIE: He did, didn't he? He liked us despite our faults.

CAYLEY: Yeah, he did.

(With that, they turned away from the railings and looked about the deck. At one end miners were queuing to head down to the lower decks of the ship. At the other, all their equipment including helmets, pickaxes, lanterns and a vast quantity of dynamite were being organised into containers by a group of ship workers. Spying the sticks of dynamite, Kyrie smiled.)

KYRIE: Look, candles. We needed candles for our cabin didn't we?

(Cayley was horrified.)

CAYLEY: That's dynamite!!!

KYRIE: It is?

CAYLEY: Yes!

(She puffed out nervously.)

CAYLEY: If I wasn't here you'd have taken some and blown us both to smithereens as soon as it got dark tonight, wouldn't you?

(Kyrie winced.)

KYRIE: Probably.

(She giggled to herself.)

KYRIE: Imagine getting this close to sanctuary then getting blown up by my stupidity.

(Cayley looked to her and trembled.)

CAYLEY: I *can* imagine it, Kyrie. I live with these kinds of fears every day.

KYRIE: Yeah, I should imagine you do. I'm kinda disaster prone.

(She then placed a loving arm around her and smiled.)

KYRIE: It doesn't matter, so long as we have *you* to keep my stupidity in check, we'll be fine. Just make sure you always keep an eye on me, sister face.

(Her face adopted a deeply troubled expression.)

KYRIE: Or it'll be curtains for both of us.

(As Kyrie hugged her worried younger sibling, way up above them in the bridge of the ship, two pairs of interested eyes watched their every move. Wearing a knowing smile, one of the two men looked to his companion and smiled knowingly.)

VASKA: Well, there they are, Axion. The fighter and the pianist.

(He forced back a chuckle then stood proudly.)

VASKA: The lobsters are in the kitchen, now we just need to throw them in the pot.

(Axion shook his head.)

AXION: Worst analogy ever.

VASKA: Wrong! I once compared fishing to playing darts with socks on your hands. That was far worse. Hell, it wasn't even relevant.

AXION: No, no it wasn't.

(He shrugged.)

AXION: That's beside the point though. I have to say I'm impressed, Vaska.

VASKA: You don't *have* to, you could lie. I've *been* paid, what do I care?

AXION: From here I've seen you take out a knight of this realm and now the two bitches I despise are right where I want them.

(Vaska nodded.)

VASKA: It was easy. We just offered them what they wanted and they came to us. I tell you, Axion, this wasn't even a challenge. We usually have to work much harder than this to capture our targets. It's almost perfect that they were coming to our home town and wanted to sail. Our battle arena is this ship. We just had to tell the right lies to steer them here.

(He smiled then pointed down at the queue of miners.)

VASKA: Those miners down there. They're not real. Nor are the other passengers. They're getting on at this end of the ship and getting off at the other end. For a small fee, people are happy to play their part. I mean, if someone offered you money to briefly walk through a ship, would you say no?

AXION: I would, yes.

VASKA: Well, maybe you would, yes, but a hard up person on the street wouldn't say no.

AXION: I see.

(He nodded.)

AXION: Right, well this is all very clever but when do we set sail?

VASKA: Soon, Axion, soon. And once we're out on the ocean, the killing can begin.

(Axion exhaled joyously.)

AXION: I can't wait. Thank you, Vaska.

VASKA: Don't thank me; it's all part of the service.

(Axion smiled then glanced down onto the deck once more. Right beneath him, the bane of his existence, the two girls he despised beyond reason were innocently talking together as they leant over a ship rail. At last the end of his quest to destroy them was in sight.

Oblivious to any danger, Kyrie and Cayley continued to chat. They also thought Axion's quest to destroy them was over, but in a very different way. As far as they knew, they were on an ordinary boat and any moment now, they'd sail off to sanctuary and begin their new lives, free from torment. If they'd known what the ship's owners had in store for them, however, they'd both have leapt overboard. The silver arrow assassins were ruthlessly efficient and merciless; and their sights were set firmly on killing them both horribly.)

*Chapter Seven - Let the games begin.*

As the Siaras mining ship headed out to sea and Port Amok became a tiny spec on the horizon, Cayley stood upon the deck with her hands down at her side, looking up at Kyrie as if she was insane. With tears pouring down her face, Kyrie was leaning over the ship's railing and waving frantically at the distant coastline, pining for all she was worth.

KYRIE: Bye, Frank!!! We love you! We miss you already!!!

(As she wailed and sobbed, Cayley shook her head and spoke to her in a soft tone, half expecting to be ignored.)

CAYLEY: He can't see you, Kyrie. And besides, he cleared off long before we set sail.

(Kyrie pouted at her miserably.)

KYRIE: Frank would never do that! He must be over there somewhere, sobbing his heart out.

(Cayley sighed and hugged her from behind.)

CAYLEY: He's gone, Kyrie. And now we're safe.

(Kyrie turned in her arms to hug her and puffed out sorrowfully.)

KYRIE: I miss him, Cayley. More than I thought I would.

CAYLEY: I know you do, Kyrie. He was one of the good ones.

KYRIE: One of?

CAYLEY: Okay, he was the *only* good one.

(She sighed.)

CAYLEY: We don't have much luck with the people we meet, do we?

KYRIE: He was kind, handsome, well hung... I think I love him, Cayley.

(She sighed.)

KYRIE: Not that my love would make him happy. He's a knight; he'd never go for a common slut like me. If I told him I loved him, he'd laugh at me.

CAYLEY: He wouldn't. He was nice, remember?

KYRIE: Oh god, even worse. He'd be kind about it and say nice things like, "It's not me, it's you." Or tell me he's not looking for anything serious right now then ruffle my hair and call me a scamp.

(She then looked enlightened and leant back to look Cayley in the eyes.)

KYRIE: Damn, no wonder you hate that so much.

CAYLEY: I doubt he'd be that patronising, Kyrie.

(Kyrie sighed.)

KYRIE: It's irrelevant now though. He's gone. Not that I'd ever tell him how I feel anyway. I hate rejection.

(She shook her head then forced a smile.)

KYRIE: Besides, being with one man forever really isn't me, is it?

(She shuddered.)

KYRIE: Gross! Love is dumb.

(With that, she stepped out of Cayley's arms and smiled at her.)

KYRIE: Shall we go and look at our cabin?

CAYLEY: We can't!

KYRIE: Why not?

CAYLEY: Remember that crewman who told us he'd let us know when our cabin was ready?

KYRIE: Yeah.

(Having expected the penny to drop, Cayley rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: He hasn't let us know our cabin's ready yet.

KYRIE: Oh right.

(She sighed and threw her arms out to the side.)

KYRIE: That's not fair, everyone else seems to have got theirs; we're the only ones still out here on the deck. We have been since we sailed.

CAYLEY: I know, but we can we do? We'll just have to wait until he comes back.

KYRIE: Then what are we supposed to do in the meantime?

CAYLEY: I don't know. I'm happy just to stand here and think about how we'll never get attacked by a summoned beast ever again. We're really on our way to sanctuary, Kyrie.

(Kyrie nodded warmly.)

KYRIE: Yeah, we are. It feels great... but I miss Frank.

(Just then, a young woman dressed in a sailors outfit approached them carrying a tray with two drinks on it.)

WOMAN: I do apologise for the delay in getting your cabin ready. Please accept these complimentary drinks by way of an apology.

(Kyrie beamed.)

KYRIE: Don't mind if I do.

CAYLEY: Thank you.

(They both took a glass and smiled.)

CAYLEY: What is it?

WOMAN: A blend of exotic fruit juices, ma'am.

(At this point they both giggled childishly.)

CAYLEY: Ma'am.

KYRIE: Maybe she thinks you're the queen.

(Cayley giggled, took one sip of her drink then collapsed to the floor in a heap. Kyrie looked at her in astonishment and furrowed her brow.)

KYRIE: She doesn't normally do that, no matter how tired she is.

(Just then, a suspicious look crossed her brow and she glared at the woman who'd served them the drinks.)

KYRIE: You poisoned her drink!!!

(As her blood began to boil, she clenched her fist and looked for somewhere to put her drink down so she could punch the woman.)

KYRIE: I'm gonna kill you!!!

(Unable to put the drink anywhere, she drunk it down in one go then threw the glass overboard.)

KYRIE: Right! You're for it!!!

(With that, she took an almighty swing at the woman, missed by a mile then collapsed on top of Cayley. Looking mightily relieved, the woman wiped sweat from her brow and puffed out.)

WOMAN: Damn. She's dumb!

(With that, she signalled over her shoulder and two men rushed from the ship to drag them inside.)

---

When Cayley finally came to, some two hours later, she found herself bound and gagged, slumped against the wall of a luxury cabin with Kyrie, Hapslock and Sadler. Much to her horror and dismay, Axion was there, standing shoulder to shoulder with a man she didn't know. Instantly panicking, she struggled in vain to free herself. Watching her, Axion's companion grinned knowingly.)

VASKA: At last, you're all awake.

(At once, they all tried to shout at him but with their gags tight around their mouths they could barely muster a sound.)



VASKA: Please, don't try to speak. You'll only wear yourselves out and it really is a waste of time. A bit like chatting up a lesbian really. It seems like a good idea but it's ultimately futile.

(He grinned.)

VASKA: Anyway, firstly, welcome to my personal cabin, slash, taunting room. This is where I bring people like you to mock them before they die.

(As tears streamed down Cayley's terrified face, Vaska forced a gasp.)

VASKA: Oh my, I forgot. Miss sleepy head still doesn't know who we are.

(He looked to Cayley then raised a devilish eyebrow.)

VASKA: Allow me to introduce myself. My name's Vaska, head of the silver arrow assassins.

(As Cayley swiftly doubled her panicked efforts to escape, Vaska gestured to where Axion was stood smirking at them.)

VASKA: Now, Kyrie, Cayley; my good friend Axion here tells me you've been something of a thorn in his side. Now, unfortunately for you, he's appointed *me* to see to it that your days of thorn-sidedness come an end.

(He chuckled.)

VASKA: Thorn-sidedness, that's so not a word.

(He cleared his throat then continued.)

VASKA: Anyway, here's what we're going to do. We're going to take you girls into the hull in a minute where you'll be hunted down and killed by the best ten assassins in the entire world. After which, we'll be chucking your bodies into the sea. Then, just to tie up loose ends we'll be killing the two fools you travelled with. You know, just to be on the safe side.

(He then rubbed his hands together excitedly.)

VASKA: And when it's all over and your corpses are being devoured by sharks, we're all going to have tea and cake. I'm thinking strawberry sponge... something creamy anyway. Anyway, I digress. Your lives won't be given in vain; they'll make the man next to me very happy for a start.

(Axion beamed.)

AXION: Deliriously so.

VASKA: Also, whoever kills you will score points in our little game of death. Of course, that's not good news for you two girls. With two of you to kill, there's more points up for grabs and I'm sure our assassins will be even more determined than normal to kill you something terrible. So, as I said, your deaths won't be meaningless. They most certainly won't be pointless... each one is worth *100* points in fact.

(He smiled to himself then paced before his four captives.)

VASKA: Now, this vessel, the Siaras, has a specially designed maze in the hull. *That* will be the battle arena. All you have to do is kill all ten assassins and you've won the game. Sadly for you, however you'll be locked inside the steel hull and will die of starvation anyway.

We're not going to let you go, obviously. Axion here has paid me a lot of money to make sure you girls end up dead.

(He smirked.)

VASKA: Where he comes from no mere warrior can compete in battle with a gymnast and a pianist apparently.

(As Axion snarled at him, Vaska looked to him and grinned.)

VASKA: Sorry. I know I shouldn't but it still amuses me.

(He cleared his throat then looked to his captives again.)

VASKA: Now, before I introduce you to the assassins who'll have the pleasure of taking your lives today, let me tell you a little about ourselves. Yes, we are the silver arrow assassins.

No, we're not a myth. And yes this is a toupee. It may not be a very convincing one but it

keeps my head warm. Now, we've been in existence for over fifty years and we've killed more people than I can possibly remember. And yet, we've never even come close to getting caught. Nobody has ever managed to elude or evade us and nobody has ever killed any of our assassins. I won't lie to you, you're up against it.

(He then mused out loud.)

VASKA: Actually when I say we never came close to getting caught, the former king, prior to the fine fellow we have now... *he* started a hunt for the silver arrow assassins. He came closest, I'd say. You see, he commissioned a hunt for any group referring to themselves as S.A.A. As if we'd be stupid enough to refer to ourselves by an obvious abbreviation.

Hilariously, he never did figure out that the word "Siaras" is in fact made up of the first *two* letters of each word in silver arrow assassins.

(As Sir Hapslock winced, wishing he'd noticed it earlier and hadn't left the girls in such a dire mess, Vaska continued.)

VASKA: So, anyway, to cut a long story short, the king's hunt for the S.A.A ended in tragedy when several members of the Stanton Athletics Association were hilariously beheaded. That was as close as anyone ever came to finding us. And that wasn't very close at all.

(He nodded firmly.)

VASKA: Right, now I've left you in no doubt of just how doomed you all are, let me introduce you to the good people who intend to kill you this very evening.

(With that, the door opened and a skinny looking fellow walked into the room carrying a dagger.)

VASKA: Meet Dan the dagger. A veteran of over 100 kills, he likes swimming, golf and listening to mellow guitar music.

(As Dan about turned and headed back out of the door, a masked, black haired woman dressed all in black, entered the room.)

VASKA: And next we have the luscious Loretta. Don't let her sultry looks fool you, she's one sadistic stealth assassin. Her hobbies include flower pressing, basket weaving and committing multiple homicides.

(Over the next few minutes, Vaska introduced two dark mages, a swordsman, a crossbow expert, two hand to hand combatants and a psychotic looking axe handler. They'd all paraded through looking mean and menacing while Vaska orated their vital details in what he considered an amusing manner. With no option but to watch the charade, Kyrie and Sir Hapslock scowled at them all hatefully. Cayley, very much like Sadler, could only tremble and cry in terror. Very much enjoying himself, Vaska smiled then rubbed his hands together.)

VASKA: And last, but by no means least, I give you... the giant.

(At once they all stared at the door and froze in disbelief. He was too big to fit through the cabin door. All they could see of his wide, muscular body was his feet up to the top of his chest. His neck and head were hidden behind the top of the doorframe.)

VASKA: He's a big fella, isn't he? Plus, he has the agility of a ballerina and the speed of a gazelle. If the others don't get you, he most certainly will.

(As the giant disappeared from sight, Vaska exhaled happily.)

VASKA: I do enjoy those introductions, you know.

(He nodded.)

VASKA: Anyway, that's enough from me. Before we begin, would you like to add anything Axion?

(Axion stood tall and snarled.)

AXION: Yes, I bloody well would.

(With that, he stepped forward and pointed at Kyrie violently.)

AXION: You made a bloody fool out of me. First when you eloped and again when you defeated my men outside the city walls. Since then I've invested a vast fortune into hunting you down and all I've ever got in return was nothing but failure after failure.

(He forced a laugh.)

AXION: Now who's going to have the last laugh though, huh?

(He snarled and looked hard into Kyrie's eyes.)

AXION: Before you die, I want you to remember when you had me all alone, by the throat in the middle of nowhere. You could have easily killed me but what was it you said? I wasn't worth it! I bet you regret that now, don't you bitch? You could have lived forevermore in peace, but because of your own mistake, you're now going to die at my whim!!!

(As Axion went on to rant about how much he hated the two girls, Vaska looked to him in disbelief. From what he could tell, this man had wanted to marry them so he'd get his inheritance *and* the best looking wife. With them fleeing town, he'd married the best looking woman who remained and still got his hands on his fortune. Ultimately, they'd deprived him of nothing and yet he wanted them dead so much, he'd spent 3 million on getting it done. This seemed bizarre enough, but to now learn that the girls had once spared his life and shown him mercy, he couldn't believe what he was hearing. Axion had to be singularly the pettiest man who'd ever walked the face of the earth. When these girls had a chance to kill him, they'd let him live. To then repay their mercy by spending so much money on bitterly hunting them down seemed beyond pathetic. Not about to question the paying client's motives however, Vaska nodded sternly as Axion finished his rant.)

AXION: And judging by the size of her tits at this age, I was right to pick both of you all along.

(Vaska clapped and stepped forwards.)

VASKA: Excellent, excellent. A twelve year old girl's breasts, what a fantastically relevant subject to end on. Thank you, Axion.

(Axion looked to him and pouted.)

AXION: Just saying... some people thought it was wrong to marry a ten year old but it looks like I've been justified.

VASKA: Indeed, but only to yourself.

AXION: Excuse me?

VASKA: Never mind that. We've had our say, now let's hear from the soon to be dead folk. (With that, he paced up to Cayley and pulled her gag from her face. At once the sounds of her crying her eyes out filled the room.)

VASKA: Boohoo, yes! An excellent point; well made.

(He then paced along the line and ripped Kyrie, Hapslock and Sadler's masks off. At once, he was subject to a torrent of abuse and the sound of crying doubled, courtesy of Sadler.)

KYRIE: Wankers!!!

HAPSLOCK: I'm a knight of the realm; I'm going to have your heads for this!

(Vaska scoffed.)

VASKA: Well, clearly somebody wasn't listening. You're going to die, knight. You won't have anybody's heads for anything.

(As Kyrie turned her head towards Cayley and tried to whisper reassuring words to her, Sir Hapslock snarled furiously at Vaska.)

HAPSLOCK: You so much as think of hurting one hair on those girl's heads, I'll kill you.

VASKA: I already thought of it. Hell, I've planned it. Still, if making empty threats makes you feel better, knock yourself out.

HAPSLOCK: I'll knock *you* out in a minute.

VASKA: That's the spirit!

HAPSLOCK: You...

(Vaska rolled his eyes.)

VASKA: Does anyone have any last requests?

(Cayley wailed at him desperately.)

CAYLEY: Let me go!!!

KYRIE: *Us*, Cayley! *Us*.

VASKA: Quite, don't be selfish! And the answer's no.

(Just then, Sadler stopped crying and looked up.)

SADLER: I'd like to play the lute one last time.

(Vaska looked thoughtful.)

VASKA: There *is* a lute on-board I think.

(He nodded.)

VASKA: Granted. Though you'll have to play it with your teeth because I'll be buggered if we're going to untie you.

(With that, he called out towards the door.)

VASKA: Seaman, find that lute and bring it in here will you.

(He then nodded.)

VASKA: Right, it's time.

(At once, Cayley screamed the room down and Sir Hapslock bellowed at him.)

HAPSLOCK: You sick bastard, she's only a child!!!

VASKA: I don't care!

(He then yelled over his shoulder.)

VASKA: Men, take the hunted to the arena!!! It's time!!!

HAPSLOCK: What sort of depraved people are you???

VASKA: The worst some say. Though I quite like me!

(As a large group of men rushed into the room, Vaska stepped back.)

VASKA: Remove their packs before you take them down there. They might have stuff in there they can use.

(As Cayley cried her eyes out and Kyrie did her desperate best to console her, the men wrestled their packs from their backs and stuffed them down by Sadler's feet. They then dragged them both kicking and screaming out of the door, Kyrie vainly trying to bite them as they did so. With her hands and feet bound tightly, it was the only offensive move she had at her disposal. As they were dragged away Hapslock hung his head and sighed.)

HAPSLOCK: What have I done? I led them straight to him.

(Sadler gave him a sideways glance and sneered.)

SADLER: Yes, well done!

HAPSLOCK: Shut it, cry baby.

(As Vaska and Axion left the room, leaving them alone together, Sadler shook his head.)

SADLER: I'm so happy I met you, Hapslock. Thanks!

HAPSLOCK: Fuck off, Sadler. I don't care about you.

SADLER: Evidently you care enough to get me murdered.

HAPSLOCK: No. All I care about is the girls. I just hope there's a heaven and they can forgive me.

(Sadler pouted.)

SADLER: I hope they can too, because I bloody well won't.

(As Sadler fumed angrily, Sir Hapslock shook his head and sighed in defeat. The charges he loved were about to be killed on the ship *he'd* found them passage on. All of sudden his prior failings meant nothing. This mistake was a fatal one and even if he should ascend to the afterlife, he'd never forgive himself.)

Having been forewarned about Kyrie's formidable fighting talent, the silver arrow assassins had been left with a dilemma. Traditionally they'd frogmarch their blindfolded, intended kill to the centre of a large, empty kill zone then lower a maze down over them, thus setting the scene for the hunt. Well aware that Kyrie might come out fighting as soon as they untied her however, frogmarching her to the centre didn't seem like a good idea. To combat this problem, they found a very simple answer. From the viewing gallery above, the crossbow expert kept his bolt aimed squarely at a blindfolded Cayley as she was led into the centre of the ship's hull and untied. They then informed Kyrie of what would happen to her beloved little sister if she struggled. Terrified at the very thought of Cayley being hurt, she relented any attempt to struggle and allowed them to untie her and lead her, also blindfolded, into the centre of the hull. With the girls side by side, still blindfolded, they then lowered the maze into the hull. They weren't even allowed to catch a peak at the maze as it was lowered. The blindfolds were kept on to ensure any chance of a possible advantage was denied to them.

Once they were safely in the centre of the maze, the crossbow expert headed off to prepare himself for the hunt and Vaska stepped out onto the viewing gallery with Axion. Standing proudly, he stared down at the girls and smirked.

VASKA: You can always see the kill perfectly from here.

(Axion shuddered.)

AXION: I told you before. I don't want to see that kind of thing. I just want them dead.

(He then headed back out of the viewing gallery.)

AXION: Just let me know when it's done.

(Left alone on the viewing gallery, Vaska rolled his eyes then stared down at Kyrie and her trembling sister.)

VASKA: Ladies, you may now remove your blindfolds!

(With trembling hands, Cayley fumbled to slide her blindfold over her head while Kyrie slightly lifted hers over one eye and scowled at him.)

KYRIE: You're fat!

(Having expected her to say something a lot more meaningful, Vaska pouted.)

VASKA: That's just cruel, that is.

(He then shrugged.)

VASKA: Still, you're not wrong. I *do* enjoy a good meal, you see.

(Checking to see if she could reach up to the viewing gallery to escape, Kyrie glanced along the wall beneath it and sighed in disappointment. She then looked to Cayley and smiled.)

KYRIE: We can't get out through the viewing gallery but I'll find a way, trust me.

(As Cayley fell tearfully into her arms, Kyrie looked up at Vaska again and sneered.)

KYRIE: I hate you!

(Vaska shrugged.)

VASKA: Well, naturally.

(He nodded then clapped his hands together.)

VASKA: Anyway, that's enough bugging about; let's get this show on the road.

(As Cayley tensed up in terror, Vaska placed his hands on the railings at the front of the viewing gallery and yelled down to them coldly.)

VASKA: When I give the word, the ten assassins will be freed and the hunt will begin.

(He grinned.)

VASKA: And should you find a door, don't bother trying to get through it. The doors are made from six inches of solid steel and they're manned by the hunt admin stuff. Unless you're an assassin, they won't let you out no matter how much you beg.

(He laughed.)

VASKA: Three people were caught and killed last year begging at the door, it never ceases to amaze me how desperate you people become.

(He sneered.)

VASKA: That's beside the point, though. Nobody wants to hear me waffling, there's killing to be done.

(He nodded sternly then cleared his throat.)

VASKA: Okay. Firstly, I shall put on these sunglasses.

(He placed a pair of darkened glasses over his eyes and grinned.)

VASKA: The winner has to find you using skill, not by looking at me to see what *I'm* looking at. I'm not here to give your position away, that'd kill the sport in it.

(With that, he stood tall and placed his hands behind his back formally.)

VASKA: Okay! Let the countdown begin! Ten... nine...

(Staring around at the close walls and the single narrow passageway before them, Cayley whimpered in a panic. She'd heard all about the reputation of the silver arrow assassins and she was in morbid fear of her young life being snuffed out any time soon. Kyrie on the other hand, watched Vaska countdown with no more than angry expression on her face. One of the first things she'd been taught in combat class was that fear was her enemy. Fear led to self doubt and self doubting fighters made mistakes. Since that day, she'd mastered techniques to conquer her fears and now she feared nothing. Without fear, she had *no* self doubt. Her confidence in battle was immense. She truly believed that if she faced any danger head on, she could overcome it. She knew the fight would be a difficult one but she didn't doubt for even a moment that she was going to win. If only Cayley could have shared her confidence.

Looking up above the walls of the maze towards the viewing gallery, Cayley didn't know whether to hug Kyrie, burst into tears or run. Beside herself with terror, she did nothing. All she could do was stare up at Vaska as he continued his countdown.)

VASKA: Three... two... one...

(He grinned from ear to ear then yelled at the top of his voice.)

VASKA: Begin!!!

(At once, a set of double doors opened at the back of the hull and the ten assassins raced through it into the maze. Unable to see them, Kyrie and Cayley heard the doors slam shut and turned to face one another. At once, Kyrie had to thrust her hands onto Cayley's shoulders to try to stop her getting hysterical.)

KYRIE: Cayley, calm down. Don't panic! I'm here, okay?

(Shaking like a leaf, Cayley looked into her eyes and nodded.)

KYRIE: Good girl.

(Kyrie then reached out and stroked Cayley's hair to reassure her further.)

KYRIE: I'm going to put my blindfold back on for a moment, okay? Keep breathing constantly, in, out, in, out, so I know where you are, yeah?

(Cayley whimpered a barely audible reply.)

CAYLEY: Okay.

(Kyrie gave her a warm smile, pulled her blindfold back over her eyes then slipped into a fighting stance. Watching her nervously, Cayley kept her breaths constant and deliberate. Up above them in the viewing gallery at this time, Vaska furrowed his brow. Normally by now the prey had left the centre of the maze in a desperate panic. Watching the two of them remain in exactly the same place they'd been standing when he started the hunt, he sighed to himself and mumbled under his breath.)

VASKA: If they're just going to stand there, this is going to be over in no time.

(Back in the centre of the maze at this time, Cayley continued to breathe heavily while Kyrie listened hard to her surroundings. Just then, breaking the inanimate silence, Kyrie spoke out in a whisper.)

KYRIE: Cayley, move very slowly to my left... or my right.

(She held out her left hand.)

KYRIE: That way, okay?

(Scared witless, Cayley gingerly crept to one side.)

KYRIE: Perfect, stop there.

(Just then, the crossbow expert leapt around the corner and appeared in the thin metal passageway ahead of them. Looking to make an instant kill, he fired off his crossbow bolt at Cayley. The bolt travelled at such a speed, she didn't even see it coming. Luckily for her, however, Kyrie heard it. Beating the bolt for speed, she kicked it out of the air then raced at the assailant as he scrambled to reload. Just as he managed to fix the bolt into place, Kyrie high-kicked him under the chin, snapping his neck. As the assassin fell lifelessly to the floor, Vaska yelled out in a rage.)

VASKA: She killed him!!!

(Having never seen an assassin thwarted before, he threw his sunglasses off and grabbed the railings in front of him furiously.)

VASKA: You'll pay for that, you bitch!!!

(Looking extremely determined, Kyrie ripped off her blindfold and snarled back at him.)

KYRIE: You've said enough!!!

(With that, she grabbed the loaded crossbow from the ground and put a swift end to Vaska's participation. With extreme accuracy, she fired the bolt straight between his eyes, shattering his skull and splattering the viewing gallery wall with his brains. Looking extremely urgent she then grabbed Cayley's hand and started to race away with her. Ideally, she'd have preferred to have stood her ground. The centre of the maze was essentially a dead end, meaning they could only be attacked from one side. Unfortunately however, the watching Vaska had given away their position to the other assassins leaving them no choice but to move. Determined to get as far away from the centre as possible before all the assassins converged on it at once and made short work of ending their precious lives, they raced forth along a bland steel passageway. In very little doubt that they'd very soon run straight into an assassin, Kyrie slowed as they came to a T-junction in the maze then pouted back at Cayley.)

KYRIE: This is terrible, sister face.

(Cayley whimpered.)

CAYLEY: I know.

KYRIE: I can't believe I'm going to lose another pair of shoes.

(She stepped out of her shoes then looked to Cayley.)

KYRIE: You too, missy. If we're going to be running around in here, we need to do it with bare feet.

(As Cayley stepped from her shoes, Kyrie faced the T-junction then thrust a hand back in her direction. Looking extremely focussed, she whispered as Cayley picked up their shoes to carry them.)

KYRIE: Someone's coming.

(As Cayley tensed up and stood perfectly still, Kyrie closed her eyes to listen carefully.)

KYRIE: There's two of them, one from the left, one from the right.

(With extreme caution, she then stepped into the middle of the passageway and leant her head forwards to try and peer round the corners. Looking left she saw nothing, but to the right she just about caught a glimpse of a foot creeping forth quietly. Looking uncertain, she stepped back to the side of the passageway and whispered to Cayley.)

KYRIE: When they paraded them in front of us, which one had green shoes on?

(Cayley looked to her and whispered uneasily.)

CAYLEY: One of the two mages did, I think.

KYRIE: You think?

CAYLEY: I was scared, Kyrie, I wasn't pay attention to their clothes.

(Kyrie nodded.)

KYRIE: Okay, well, you have a super brilliant brain, so you're probably right.

(She bit her lip then nodded.)

KYRIE: Stay here, Cayley, okay?

(Cayley looked terrified.)

CAYLEY: Where you going?

KYRIE: Not far.

(With that, she raced forwards to the T-junction then jumped into the passageway facing the assassin with green shoes on. Upon sighting her, the green shoed assassin, who was indeed a mage, swiftly thrust his hands towards her. Coming the other way towards them, one of the hand to hand combatants leapt into a fighting stance and they both commenced their assaults at the same time. Having had to face multiple attackers on several occasions, this was exactly what Kyrie had expected them to do. Using her astonishing agility, as soon as the mage fired his deadly lightning magic, she leapt up and over it towards him. His comrade, the hand to hand combatant, took the full blast in his chest and was instantly fried alive by 50,000 volts of electricity. Seconds later, the mage joined him on the fatality list. Upon landing from her leap, Kyrie had unleashed a fearsome assault on his face before he could even begin to think about casting another spell. Innumerable punches later, he collapsed to the ground haemorrhaging blood from his nose and ears. With two more assassins accounted for, Kyrie then rushed back Cayley's side.)

KYRIE: Sorry about that.

CAYLEY: Don't be, you were awesome.

(Kyrie grinned modestly.)

KYRIE: I was just being me.

(She reached for Cayley's hand and nodded.)

KYRIE: Let's move on.

CAYLEY: Okay.

(With that, they rushed around the corner straight into the path of Loretta, the masked stealth assassin. Caught in mid tip-toe, she stopped and stared at them bitterly. Instinctively, Kyrie pushed Cayley behind her and snarled.)

KYRIE: Another one.

(Loretta looked to the two dead assassins in the passageway and raised an eyebrow.)

LORETTA: Impressive!

(She then pulled out a pair of duelling daggers and snarled.)

LORETTA: Now let's see how you fare against a *real* assassin.

(As she ducked into a fighting stance, Kyrie did the same and spoke to Cayley from the side of her mouth.)

KYRIE: Keep your back to the wall and if another one comes, scream, okay?

(Cayley nodded frantically and did as she was told.)

KYRIE: Good girl.

(As Loretta stared hard into Kyrie's eyes, she pulled a puzzled expression and mused outwardly.)

LORETTA: You hand to hand fighters are normally so easy to read, but your eyes are saying nothing to me.

(Kyrie sighed.)

KYRIE: Apparently I've got the dead eyes of a dipshit.



(Cayley whimpered.)

CAYLEY: I didn't mean it.

KYRIE: Don't worry, Cayley; that was a long time ago.

(She then sneered at Loretta.)

KYRIE: Now, are we fighting or...

(Just then, Loretta charged at her with her blades ready and poised for the kill.)

KYRIE: Oh right, we *are* fighting!

(As Loretta lashed and fizzed her blade at great speed, Kyrie swayed and dodged utilising her incredible agility to the full. Daggers whooshed past her ear, across her face and beneath her chin but not a single one made contact. Jumping back to end her sortie, Loretta snarled.)

LORETTA: So you can dodge, but can you fight?

(Kyrie nodded.)

KYRIE: Yeah.

(A rare moment of silence fell and Loretta bit her lip.)

LORETTA: That's your comeback is it?

(Kyrie shrugged.)

KYRIE: You asked me a question and I answered it.

LORETTA: Fighting talk not your thing then?

(As Kyrie shrugged again, Loretta groaned then launched another assault. Flailing her arms about at insane speeds, she lashed and chopped towards Kyrie's body but once again, her every attempt to cut into her flesh failed. Using perfect footwork Kyrie managed to dance and twist her body out of harms way at every turn.)

LORETTA: Oh, for fuck sake, you're getting on my nerves now.

(With that, she jumped back and snarled hard into Kyrie's eyes.)

LORETTA: How are you doing that?

KYRIE: I'm very bendy!

(Starting to get angry, Loretta growled.)

LORETTA: Your luck's about to run out, bitch!!! This ends now.

(With that, Loretta charged at Kyrie once more, lashing out with her blades in a frenzy of rage. Seconds later, she collapsed to the floor, choking from a single precision punch to the throat. As Cayley looked on in dismay, Kyrie then paced over to Loretta, grabbed her in a headlock and snapped her neck. In that moment, her giggly, shoe obsessed sister had become a cold hearted killer.)

CAYLEY: Holy crap, Kyrie!

(Kyrie just looked to her and smiled uncomfortably. She wasn't happy that Cayley had seen her do such a thing but she knew she'd had no choice. Being no fool, however, Cayley understood she had no choice and no matter how disturbing it was to see, she was glad she'd done it. Stuck in the moment they looked to one another blankly for a second or two then Kyrie reached out her hand.)

KYRIE: Let's move on.

CAYLEY: Okay.

(Cayley raced up to her looking down at Loretta's masked corpse when an enlightened expression crossed her brow. At once, she swung her head towards Kyrie with a look of hope in her eyes.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie, I think I know how we can get out of here.

(Outside the windowed doors of the battle arena at this time, two Siaras operatives stood watching through the thick glass for any sign of a victorious assassin. Charged with the task of manning the doors and releasing the assassins once the kill had been made, their job was a simple one. They'd keep watch through the tiny three inch square windows and as soon as

they spotted an assassin approaching with their dead victim, they'd open the doors and let them out. Once all the kills were accounted for and the hunt was officially over, they'd then prop open the doors and head to the after hunt party. It was a job so simple, even Kyrie could have done it. The job was also a very often brief one. Some hunts took under a minute and only on the rare occasions were they ever left waiting longer than five. On this day, however, as the fifth minute approached with still no sign of a victorious assassin, one of the men looked to his comrade and sighed.)

BYRON: I hope they hurry up, I've had naff all to eat all today.

(His comrade averted his gaze from the three inch square window in the door and puffed out.)

KYLE: Me either. I was saving myself for the party.

BYRON: Same here.

(He exhaled merrily.)

BRYON: I went past the galley earlier. You know what they were cooking?

KYLE: What? Tell me!

BRYON: Chicken wings, mate. Hundreds of them.

(Kyle went starry eyed and exhaled.)

KYLE: Their chicken wings are like heaven on earth, mate.

BRYON: They were making sausages too.

(Kyle pulled a disgusted face.)

KYLE: Geezer, are you trying to make me vomit?

BRYON: You don't like sausages?

(Kyle looked most offended.)

KYLE: Of course not. I'm a vegetarian!

(Bryon glared at him coldly.)

BRYON: But you'll eat chicken wings?

KYLE: Of course.

BRYON: Are chickens vegetables where you come from then?

(Kyle scowled at him.)

KYLE: No, but white meat's alright, I can eat that!

BRYON: Then how does that make you a vegetarian?

KYLE: Because I don't eat red meat. There's nothing more sickening than eating the flesh of a beast.

(Bryon looked to him in absolute bewilderment.)

BRYON: White meat's the flesh of a beast an' all! White meat, red meat, it's all meat! That's why white meat is called white meat, because it's fucking meat!

(Kyle shook his head defiantly.)

KYLE: No, it's different!

BRYON: It's not! Chicken is meat not a vegetable! Therefore, you son, are *not* a vegetarian. Claiming you're a vegetarian is like me shagging my wife's sister then claiming I'm faithful.

(He then spoke in a mocking voice.)

BRYON: It doesn't count as infidelity, because I only shagged a member of my wife's family.

(He scowled at him and shook his head.)

BYRON: Meat is meat in both instances, women and food! Pillock!

(Continuing to stare through the window into the battle arena, Kyle scoffed.)

KYLE: You mate, you're...

(He grinned from ear to ear.)

KYLE: Hold up, this looks promising.

BYRON: You seen something?

(As he peered through the window in the door, he spotted what looked like Loretta pacing towards him with a dead Cayley in her arms.)

BRYON: About bloody time.

(On the other side of the doors, having donned Loretta's top and face mask, Kyrie rushed towards them with Cayley playing dead in her arms. They'd found the doors with surprising ease and managed to stay out of sight of any further assassins. Now they just had to hope the two doormen would fall for her disguise and let them out. Hoping they wouldn't get rumbled at the last minute, Kyrie rushed close to the doors when Cayley mumbled something to her. At once, a troubled look crossed Kyrie's brow. Looking very much like she'd lost all her confidence in their plan, she grimaced uneasily then murmured through the side of her mouth.)

KYRIE: I wish you hadn't said that, Cayley. I mean, we can't back out now. Are you sure this plan won't work?

(Cayley replied, murmuring out of the side of her mouth that the men looking through the glass couldn't see.)

CAYLEY: Of course it'll work, I ever said it wouldn't!

KYRIE: Yes, you did. Just now.

CAYLEY: I didn't.

KYRIE: You did. You said the plan was fool proof.

CAYLEY: Fool proof isn't proof you're a fool. It means even a fool can't fail to succeed.

(Kyrie looked enlightened then sped up a little, buoyed by Cayley's confidence. Just then, the doors before them opened wide. There were no signals needed, no conversation called for and no proof of identity was even hinted at. The doors to freedom simply fell open before them. The two men on door duty knew Loretta had long black hair and wore a mask and were in absolutely no doubt Kyrie was her. After all, the silver arrow assassins never failed to make their kill and they had no cause to assume it had been any different this time.

Through the tiny window they'd seen what looked like an assassin carrying what looked like a dead body. For fifty years this had always meant the kill had been made and it was time to open the doors.

As Kyrie raced out of the giant maze and into the corridor, Kyle smiled to Bryon and they both drew a sigh of relief.)

KYLE: One down, one to go.

BRYON: Nice job, Loretta.

KYRIE: Thanks.

(Overjoyed to have made it safely out of the doors, she then started to set Cayley down on her feet. At once, Cayley's heart raced and she desperately tried to murmur to her quietly.)

CAYLEY: Don't stand me on my feet; I'm supposed to be dead.

KYRIE: Stop talking then!

(Having heard the mumbling corpse, the two doormen suddenly looked alarmed.)

KYLE: Hey, she's not dead.

BYRON: She's about as dead as *he's* a vegetarian!!!

(Swiftly realising they'd be rumbled, Kyrie snarled and dropped Cayley onto her backside.)

CAYLEY: Ouch!

(Knowing she had to act fast, Kyrie swiftly grabbed hold of Kyle and threw him through the doors. Not about to let her manhandle him in the same way, however, Byron raised his fists to put up a fight. Seconds later, Kyrie punched him through the doors then slammed them shut.)

KYRIE: Damn it, Cayley! Why did you speak? You almost cocked that up for us.

(Cayley scrambled to her feet looking most put out.)

CAYLEY: Me??? You tried to get me standing on my own two feet. Dead people can't do that.

(Kyrie looked uncertain then offered her a cheesy grin.)

KYRIE: I never thought of that. Sorry.

CAYLEY: Don't worry about it. It's not important now anyway.

(Cayley reached for her hand and nodded urgently.)

CAYLEY: We should run away!

(Kyrie nodded.)

KYRIE: Okay, just let me taunt them first.

(With that, she poked her tongue out towards the tiny windows in the doors and scoffed.)

KYRIE: How do you like me now, asshole?

(Cayley frowned at her.)

CAYLEY: The door's soundproof, Kyrie. It's six inches of solid steel.

KYRIE: Oh! Forget it then.

(With that, she took Cayley's hand and raced away with her.)

KYRIE: Let's save Frank! Again!

CAYLEY: Okay!

(As the two girls raced away, they left behind scenes of absolute discord in the maze of death. Blaming each other for the debacle, the two doormen pushed one another violently, almost coming to blows. Not only had the two targets gone free, but now they and all the assassins were locked in the maze themselves. To make matters worse, the one person who should have been watching over proceedings, therefore able to raise the alarm and free them all, Vaska, was unusually absent from the viewing gallery.)

Naturally, Bryon and Kyle were mortified. When the assassins found out what they'd done they'd be furious and for all they knew, Vaska would probably have them both killed.

Having no idea that Vaska was already dead the two men were terrified. Their only hope was that the assassins could somehow break out, find the girls then bring them back before Vaska found out.)

---

Still bound up tightly with rope in Vaska's luxury cabin, also known as his taunting room, Sir Hapslock was in a deep depression. In his mind he couldn't help picturing the girls being slaughtered and the images in his head were slowly torturing him. Slouching against the wall in a defeated slump, he was in absolutely no doubt that it was all his fault. He'd led the girls to this ship and now they were doomed to die. This was most definitely his darkest hour. He didn't care that he'd soon be put to death with them, as far as he was concerned it was the least he deserved. He was supposed to be their knight and protector instead he felt like he'd been their executioner.

Sitting at his side, with a lute resting against his leg, the crestfallen Sadler also looked pale and beaten. Resigned to his fate, he sat, tied up, slumped against the wall with his head tipped to one side, quietly singing out his pain to himself. Unlike Sir Hapslock he didn't feel any guilt about the dire straits everyone was in. He did, however, know who he blamed for it. Singing in a hushed and defeated voice, he miserably crooned out his pain to the tune of a classic from his hometown, "My way" by Hank Sumatra.

SADLER: And now the end is near, and so I face the final curtain. My friend, I'll say it clear, it's Cayley's fault, of that I'm certain.

(He sighed.)

SADLER: I've lived a week of hell, and travelled each and every highway, and yet, what do I get?

(A tear then rolled down his cheek.)

SADLER: Death coming my way.

(He shook a solemn head then continued.)

SADLER: Regrets I've had a few, and meeting her is quite a big one, she's led me to my doom, and now I'm sure she's Satan's daughter. She planned the whole damn thing, each painful step along the byway, and now, thanks to that cow...

(He then hung his head to whimper the last line of the verse.)

SADLER: Death's coming my way.

(Just then, the door burst open and Kyrie and Cayley rushed into the room. At once, the colour returned to Hapslock's cheeks and Sadler swiftly forgot all about how much he hated Cayley.)

HAPSLOCK: You're alive!!!

SADLER: Untie me!!!

(Much to Sadler's annoyance, Kyrie and Cayley both rushed over to Hapslock ignoring him completely. Watching them both make a beeline for the knight at his side, he growled under his breath and promptly remembered just how much he hated Cayley again.)

SADLER: Typical.

(As if he wasn't even there, Kyrie stepped on Sadler's foot then knelt to try and untie the ropes around Sir Hapslock's wrists.)

KYRIE: Bear with me, I'm not good with knots.

(Hapslock just looked to her and breathed a sigh of relief.)

HAPSLOCK: I'm just happy you're alive.

KYRIE: Of course I'm alive. I've been alive since I was born.

HAPSLOCK: But how did you escape from the assassins?

KYRIE: Using my skills, obviously.

HAPSLOCK: But...

(Kyrie furrowed her brow at him as she kept up her struggle to undo the ropes.)

KYRIE: I'll tell you about it later. Right now, let me concentrate on these ropes then we need to think of a way off this boat.

(Cayley pouted at her as she struggled to untie Hapslock's feet.)

CAYLEY: I told you three times; there's lifeboats we can escape on.

KYRIE: And I told *you* three times, we can't all escape on a tiny little floating ring thing.

(As Kyrie rolled her eyes, Cayley scowled at her.)

CAYLEY: That's a life *belt*. I'm talking about the little rowing boats they use in case the ship sinks.

(Kyrie looked enlightened.)

KYRIE: Oh... in that case it's a good idea. Sorry I slapped you for making a silly suggestion.

CAYLEY: You didn't.

KYRIE: I didn't? I meant to.

(She shrugged then continued to struggle with the ropes.)

KYRIE: No harm done then.

(As she fiddled vainly with the ropes, Cayley pouted.)

CAYLEY: I can't undo the knots, Kyrie.

(Kyrie grimaced back at her.)

KYRIE: Nor can I.

(She then looked enlightened.)

KYRIE: Use your fire magic, Frank.

(Hapslock sighed.)

HAPSLOCK: I can't, they must have taken my mystic bracelet off me when they took my sword.

(Kyrie and Cayley looked to one another uneasily.)

KYRIE: What do we do then?

(Sadler looked to them both imploringly.)

SADLER: Try untying *me*! My ropes might not be tied so tightly.

(Kyrie and Cayley looked to him briefly then back at each other.)

KYRIE: We could always use the candles we bought to burn the ropes. Where's my pack?

SADLER: Fine. I see. Like that is it?

(Upon spotting her pack on the ground at Sadler's feet, Kyrie swiftly hurried over to it.

Watching her go, Cayley looked sheepish and grinned.)

CAYLEY: We didn't actually get candles, Kyrie.

(Hapslock gave her a doubting glance.)

HAPSLOCK: Yes, we did. *You* picked them out.

(Cayley hid her face and scratched behind her ear.)

CAYLEY: They were chocolate ones.

(Sure enough, Kyrie pulled out several chocolate candles from her pack.)

KYRIE: They're no bloody good!

(She rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: That's why you never let a guy and a kid take care of the shopping. He'll buy the first thing he sees and she'll con him into buying her sweets!

(Hapslock bit his lip, relieved he hadn't now ranted about how useless women were at shopping. Just then, he remembered a second purchase they'd made.)

HAPSLOCK: Matches will work. We bought a thin book of matches; that much I *do* know!

(Cayley blushed again.)

CAYLEY: That was a wafer thin mint and I already ate it.

(Hapslock rolled his eyes.)

HAPSLOCK: Perfect, now what are we going to do?

(Cayley looked deeply troubled and pouted at him.)

CAYLEY: I don't know, but we have to do something. Pretty soon, someone will find out we escaped and they'll come after us.

HAPSLOCK: Yes, they will. If only we had a knife or something.

(Kyrie nodded sternly.)

KYRIE: Leave it to us. Let's try the cabin opposite. Come on, Cayley.

(With that, she raced for the door, dragging Cayley behind her. As the two of them disappeared from view, Hapslock snarled determinedly and looked to Sadler.)

HAPSLOCK: Who'd have thought it? She defeated the assassins!

(Sadler looked to him and frowned.)

SADLER: That's all very well, Hapslock, but we're still stuck here.

HAPSLOCK: Not for long we won't be.

SADLER: No? I'll believe it when I see it.

(He sighed.)

SADLER: Something's bound to go wrong. You lot are a bleeding curse.

(As Sir Hapslock looked eagerly at the door for the girls return, Sadler glanced down at the lute by his side and sighed.)

SADLER: Those assassins are too cruel. To give me a lute then refuse to untie me so I could play it was beyond nasty. What sort of an evil way was that to grant a last request?

(Hapslock gave him a sideways glance.)

HAPSLOCK: Forget about it, it really doesn't matter anymore.

SADLER: Maybe not to you.

(Just then, the door flew open and Kyrie raced in followed by an excited looking Cayley.)

CAYLEY: We found a penknife in the room opposite.

(As Kyrie rushed to cut Hapslock free, Sadler looked to her in delight.)

SADLER: Quick, hurry up and free me.

(Kyrie slashed through the ropes around Sir Hapslock's feet and sneered.)

KYRIE: *We* found a knife, did *we*, Cayley?

CAYLEY: Okay, *you* did. Who cares? We can get out of here now.

(As soon as Kyrie cut his hands loose, Sir Hapslock beamed and leapt to his feet.)

HAPSLOCK: Kyrie, you're amazing.

(Kyrie nodded in full agreement.)

KYRIE: I am. I'm sexy as hell too.

(She then grabbed Sir Hapslock's hand and started to race to the door.)

KYRIE: Now let's go and find this lifeboat!!!

(At once, Sadler's eyes bulged.)

SADLER: What about me???

(Without acknowledging him, Kyrie reached her other hand out towards Cayley.)

KYRIE: Stay close to me, Cayley; we're getting out of here.

(Before she could quite reach the door, Cayley pouted at her sorrowfully.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie, what about Sadler?

KYRIE: Sadler?

(Pausing, she glared back over her shoulder at Sadler and her jaw dropped.)

KYRIE: How long's *he* been here?

HAPSLOCK: As long as we have!

KYRIE: Really?

CAYLEY: Yeah, he's been here all along.

(Sadler pouted at Kyrie and furrowed his brow.)

SADLER: Look, are you going to free me or aren't you?

(Much to his horror, Kyrie looked to the ceiling, giving the question some serious consideration.)

KYRIE: I don't know, what do you think, Frank?

(Much to Sadler's further horror, Sir Hapslock also looked uncertain.)

HAPSLOCK: I'm not sure.

(Upset by their attitudes, Cayley pouted at the both of them.)

CAYLEY: Don't be mean!!!

SADLER: Yes! Don't be mean!!!

(Kyrie looked to Cayley then rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: Fine. I'll cut him loose. But I'm only doing it for *you*.

(As she knelt to cut the ropes around his legs, Sadler pouted bitterly at her.)

SADLER: No, no, don't do *me* any favours, will you?

(Kyrie snarled at him and stood up.)

KYRIE: Sod you then.

(At once, Sadler's eyes bulged in horror.)

SADLER: I'm kidding. Do me favours, do me favours!!!

KYRIE: Make your sodding mind up.

(With that, she knelt again and slashed through the ropes binding his legs. As she cut through the ones around his wrists, Sadler immediately grabbed the lute and leapt to his feet angrily.)

SADLER: Were you really going to leave me here? Do you hate me that much?

KYRIE: I hate *all* kiddie fiddlers.

(Sadler growled.)

SADLER: I'm not a bloody kiddie fiddler!

HAPSLOCK: I think you're a corrupt, petty little man and I don't trust you one bit. I hate you immensely and helping you escape isn't going to sit well with me.

(He nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: But if it makes Cayley happy then so be it. Once again you have *her* to thank for your life.

(Sadler glared at Cayley and shuddered.)

SADLER: Thank *her*? Tie me up again, this instant!

(He then shook his head to clear his thoughts and frowned.)

SADLER: What am I saying? I'll take the freedom you're offering but I'll be buggered if I'm thanking *anyone*. It was you three clowns who got me into this mess in the first place.

(As he stood nodding sternly to reaffirm his thoughts, he then glanced towards the door and shrieked.)

SADLER: Wait for me!!!

(Not about to listen to him ranting, Sir Hapslock, Kyrie and Cayley had all grabbed their packs then made a beeline for the door and were now heading down the corridor outside it. Desperate not to get left behind, Sadler raced after them keeping a firm grip on his lute. Once safely amongst them, he drew a sigh of relief and nodded firmly.)

SADLER: See, ditching people isn't as easy as it looks, is it?

(Luckily for him, everyone ignored his comment and raced on down the thin corridor in search of the deck. Unsure as to what level they were on, they didn't know whether they'd need to go up or down to find it. Thankfully, Cayley was on hand with a practical solution. It may not have taken a genius to think of what she did, but nobody else had thought of it. As soon as they came to the next door, she pushed it open, raced inside the room then looked out of the window. Spying the deck two levels below, she turned around and beamed with delight. Moments later, she screamed then raced out of the door. Nobody had seen her rush into the room and they'd all continued off down the corridor without her. Thankfully, her loud girly scream had alerted them all to the fact she was lagging behind and they all raced back to collect her. Reunited, they then resumed racing down the corridor together.)

CAYLEY: I can't believe nobody noticed I was gone.

(Sadler looked to her and sneered.)

SADLER: I noticed.

CAYLEY: I was talking about people who matter.

KYRIE: Sorry, Cayley-cakes, but if you're going to wander off like that, you're bound to get lost.

CAYLEY: I didn't wander anywhere! I went to find our bearings; we're two levels above the deck.

(Hapslock nodded firmly.)

HAPSLOCK: Excellent work, Cayley. Next stairwell we see, we'll head down it.

(Just then, he screeched to a halt beside an open cabin door and his jaw dropped with delight.)

HAPSLOCK: Wait!!!

(At once, they all skidded to a halt and glared at him.)

SADLER: Wait for what?

KYRIE: What have you seen?

HAPSLOCK: A sword.

(With that, he darted through the open cabin door. Looking curious, Cayley raced in after him. Sure enough, there were two swords mounted on the wall. Taking one down, Sir Hapslock beamed to himself then felt the blade.)

HAPSLOCK: Good quality battle sword. I'm back in the game.

(He then sheathed the sword and glanced to Cayley.)

HAPSLOCK: Let's go.

(Cayley looked thoughtful for a moment then a wry smile crossed her brow.)

CAYLEY: Wait.



HAPSLOCK: Wait?

(She pointed to a box of matches on the cabin dresser and smiled.)

CAYLEY: I've had an idea.

HAPSLOCK: I see. Do tell!

(She grinned knowingly.)

CAYLEY: Grab those matches and let's hurry to the deck.

(Hapslock nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: Okay. Care to tell me why?

CAYLEY: I'll explain on the way.

(With that, she raced out of the door to re-join Kyrie. Watching her go, Hapslock shrugged, grabbed the matches then raced out into the corridor after her.)

HAPSLOCK: What's your plan then, Cayley?

(Cayley looked back to him as she raced forth.)

CAYLEY: Well...

(As she explained her plan to him in all its simple glory, Hapslock lips curled up at the edges.)

HAPSLOCK: Excellent.

(Just a minute or so later, having charged down two flights of stairs, the three comrades and Sadler, bounded down a corridor at deck level then raced outside into the summer evening air. Eager to set Cayley's plan in motion, as soon as the heat of the lowering sun hit his face, Sir Hapslock pointed along the deck and barked a request to Kyrie.)

HAPSLOCK: Go and fetch some dynamite from the stack, please, Kyrie.

(Kyrie just looked at him blankly.)

KYRIE: Do what now? Stack?

(Cayley rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: I'll show her.

HAPSLOCK: Excellent, you do that while Sadler and I release a lifeboat.

CAYLEY: Okay!

(As Kyrie and Cayley raced towards the front of the ship, Hapslock charged towards one of the lifeboats and gave it a swift once over with his eyes.)

HAPSLOCK: How do you release these into the sea?

(Sadler looked to him and furrowed his brow.)

SADLER: How should I know? I'm a lutist.

HAPSLOCK: Just come over here and help me figure it out, will you?

(As the two of them started to look the lifeboat over, Kyrie and Cayley raced up to the piles of mining equipment stacked up on the front of the ship.)

CAYLEY: Here we are.

(With extreme urgency, Cayley grabbed as many sticks of dynamite as she could fit in her hand.)

CAYLEY: Let's go.

(Kyrie held her palm out to her and raised her voice.)

KYRIE: Let's take more than one, Cayley.

(She then slipped her pack from her back and filled it with sticks of dynamite.)

KYRIE: You have freakishly tiny hands, Cayley.

CAYLEY: Don't be mean!

KYRIE: I'm not. They're really tiny

(Having filled her pack, she slipped it back on her back then nodded.)

KYRIE: Right, that's the dynamite he wanted. Now where's this stack we're supposed to be looking for?

(Cayley looked to her in disbelief and pointed at the dynamite.)

CAYLEY: Right here! We just took the dynamite from it.

KYRIE: We did? Where?

(As she looked about herself in confusion, Cayley gave her a sideways glance.)

CAYLEY: You're looking for a haystack, aren't you?

(Kyrie looked shiftily for a moment then grinned.)

KYRIE: So, are we done?

(Cayley just shook her head.)

CAYLEY: Come on; let's get back to Sir Hapslock.

(As the girls raced back towards Sir Hapslock they saw him leaning over the side of the ship, lashing at an overhanging rope with his new blade. Attached to the rope, a small rowing boat was dangling over the sea. Having already cut the rope that had been supporting the front end, he was now hacking away at its second and final support. Seconds later, as his blade cut through the rope, he peered over the railings and watched as the rowing boat dropped into the ocean below.)

HAPSLOCK: Perfect!!!

(He nodded sternly then raced to Sadler.)

HAPSLOCK: Seeing as you'll be too chicken to jump, let me help you!!!

(With that, he scooped Sadler off his feet and raced to the side of the ship with him. Sadler was, of course, terrified.)

SADLER: What are you doing???

HAPSLOCK: Helping you!!!

(With that, he lobbed him overboard. As he peered over the edge and watched Sadler splash into the water, Kyrie and Cayley raced up to him.)

CAYLEY: We're back!

(Hapslock looked to them and nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: I released the lifeboat and Sadler's already jumped.

(At once Kyrie looked down to where Sadler was thrashing about in the sea and a wry smile crossed her brow.)

KYRIE: Maybe we should wait a minute or two and get a different boat.

(Finding her idea really quite appealing, Hapslock nodded knowingly.)

HAPSLOCK: I like where you're coming from, Kyrie.

(Kyrie looked extremely peeved.)

KYRIE: You like my mother's flimflam???

HAPSLOCK: No...

(Realising explaining what he meant would probably take too long, he sighed and gave her an answer she might just understand.)

HAPSLOCK: I mean Anoseta.

(As he rolled his eyes, Cayley interceded.)

CAYLEY: What are we waiting for? Let's go.

(As Hapslock and Kyrie shared a knowing glance and peered down at the struggling Sadler, Cayley pouted.)

CAYLEY: No. That's a horrible thing to do. He might be a nasty, perverted old freak but abandoning him at sea... that's *too* cruel.

(Kyrie sighed.)

KYRIE: Fine.

(She shrugged to Hapslock.)

KYRIE: Sorry, Frank. The voice of my concubine has spoken.

CAYLEY: You mean conscience.

KYRIE: More than likely.

(With that, Kyrie looked to the rowing boat and flung her pack down towards it. With perfect accuracy her bag landed dead in the centre.)

KYRIE: Now give me yours, Cayley.

HAPSLOCK: Pass it this way first actually, Cayley.

(Having pulled her pack from her back, Cayley held it towards Sir Hapslock. Disappointed not to be abandoning Sadler, Sir Hapslock sighed then slipped his matches into Cayley's bag. Cayley then passed the bag to Kyrie.)

KYRIE: Thank you.

(She then threw Cayley's bag perfectly into the centre of the rowing boat.)

CAYLEY: She never misses a throw! Ever!

(With the bags safely in the boat, Hapslock looked to Cayley and nodded sternly.)

HAPSLOCK: Are you going to be okay to jump, Cayley? Or would you like me to...

(Before he could finish, Kyrie scooped Cayley up and looked him in the eye.)

KYRIE: She's my problem, Frank.

(Cayley looked hurt.)

CAYLEY: I'm a problem?

KYRIE: You know what I mean!

(With that, she hurdled the side of the ship and disappeared from view. Anxious to help make sure they were safe, Sir Hapslock then leapt overboard after them without a word. Having splashed into the sea, he swum back to the surface then looked about himself desperately. Much to his relief, as he spun around, he saw Kyrie pushing Cayley into the rowing boat.)

HAPSLOCK: Thank heavens.

(He then swum to the boat to join them. Once Sir Hapslock, Kyrie and Cayley were all safely on-board, Hapslock nodded sternly and grabbed the oars.)

HAPSLOCK: Right, let's get out of here.

(Cayley glared at him coldly.)

CAYLEY: Sir Hapslock!!!

(Sir Hapslock sighed.)

HAPSLOCK: Fine!

(With that, he reached over the side of the boat with one hand, picked Sadler up by his collar and dropped him into the boat.)

HAPSLOCK: Happy now?

(Sadler sat up and glared at him.)

SADLER: *I'm* not! I've been trying to climb on for ages, why didn't you help me?

(Receiving no reply, he scowled and folded his arms.)

SADLER: Oh, I see. Why am I not surprised?

(He then reached over the side and scooped up his floating lute.)

SADLER: I hate you lot, I really do.

---

Down in the hull of the ship at this time, the assassins were enraged. Having seen Vaska murdered and found out that the girls had escaped and locked them in, they were frantically trying to get out to rectify the situation. With the giant their best hope for salvation, they watched him desperately as he thudded his mighty frame into the solid steel doors. Having been at it for several minutes, he was finally starting to make an impression. The doors were beginning to dent and creak under his weight. Hoping against hope that'd he'd soon make a break through, the surviving hand to hand combatant stepped up to Dan the Dagger urgently.

MARCO: As soon as that door's open we've got to find those bitches and kill them. If they escape our reputation will be in tatters.

(Dan sneered.)

DAN: You think I don't know that?

MARCO: We'll never find a cushy job like this anywhere else, that's for certain. Marks handed to us on a plate... all that will go out the window. And all because of those two fools. (He pointed to the freshly slaughtered bodies of hunt admins, Kyle and Byron and seethed.)

MARCO: This is a disaster.

(Dan nodded solemnly.)

DAN: It's going to be bad enough if they've escaped, but what if they've killed the guy who hired us?

MARCO: Axion?

DAN: Yeah? Who's going to hire a bunch of assassins who got their last client killed by the very people he wanted taken care of?

(Marco shuddered.)

MARCO: We have to get out of here right now. If we don't we're finished.

(They both looked to where the giant continued to thrust his entire weight into the doors and bit their lips.)

DAN: So long as we have *him*, there's hope.

MARCO: True. No man alive should be strong enough to even make the slightest impression on those doors, but he's...

DAN: Something else?

MARCO: To put it mildly.

(Just then, as the giant whacked shoulder first into the doors, a snapping sound echoed around the hull. Wearing hopeful glances, all the assassins stared hard at the doors and adopted praying hands.)

DAN: Tell me that was the lock snapping.

(Sure enough, the giant then kicked the doors and they flew open.)

MARCO: Nice work, giant!!!

DAN: Come on!!!

(At once, they all streamed out of the hull and raced down the corridor outside.)

DAN: Find the two bitches and kill them. And for heaven's sake, find Axion while you're at it. The last thing we need is the client being killed.

(Blissfully unaware of what was going on in other parts of the ship at this time, Axion sat in the ship's bar, supping at a cognac and puffing on a large cigar. Any moment now he was expecting Vaska to come through the door and give him the news he'd been longing for. The news that Kyrie and Cayley were dead and he was free to take their corpses away to be mounted on his wall. Had he known what was happening, he'd have been beside himself. Despite having paid them two million in advance, the silver arrow assassins had not only failed to make their kill but now the two girls were not even on the ship. Rather than being dead, they were in a rowing boat some hundred feet away from the ship, putting the final piece of their plan into action.

Satisfied that their rowing boat was a safe enough distance away from the sizeable Siaras mining company flagship, Kyrie climbed to her feet and stood with her legs apart to steady herself on the swaying sea. Looking determined she then bent down and grabbed a stick of dynamite from her pack. Giving her an uncertain glance, Sir Hapslock bit his lip.)

HAPSLOCK: Are you sure you can throw it that far and that high, Kyrie?

(Kyrie nodded.)

KYRIE: Normally I can.

HAPSLOCK: Accurately?

(Cayley scoffed at him.)

CAYLEY: I told you, she never misses!

(Hapslock nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: Okay, then what are we waiting for? Let's do it!

(With that, he delved into Cayley's pack and started to rummage around. With her eyes fixed only on her target, Kyrie heeded his words and nodded.)

KYRIE: Okay, here goes.

(With that, she threw the stick of dynamite with all her might, towards the deck of the ship. Watching it fly through the air, she adopted praying hands and whispered to herself.)

KYRIE: Make it... go on. Go on...

(As the stick of dynamite plummeted down onto the deck of the ship, she punched the air and bellowed out.)

KYRIE: Bull's-eye!!!

(Feeling extremely pleased with herself, she beamed at Cayley then glanced at Sir Hapslock.)

KYRIE: Not bad, huh?

(Hapslock looked to her and nodded blankly.)

HAPSLOCK: It wasn't bad but what say you let me light it before you throw the next one?

(Kyrie's face immediately dropped.)

KYRIE: You mean... it wasn't lit?

HAPSLOCK: No, but, it was impressive anyway.

(He smiled then lit another stick of dynamite and passed it to her.)

HAPSLOCK: Have another go.

(Kyrie took the dynamite and nodded.)

KYRIE: Okay, just give me a moment to psych myself up first.

(As she lowered her head and took a deep breath to concentrate, Hapslock, Cayley and Sadler all bellowed at her in distress.)

HAPSLOCK: Now, Kyrie!!!

CAYLEY: Throw it!!!

SADLER: Throw the bloody thing!!!

(Kyrie opened her eyes and looked to them all enquiringly.)

KYRIE: What's wrong with you lot?

(Cayley pouted at her in terror.)

CAYLEY: The fuse, Kyrie, the fuse.

KYRIE: Fuse?

(She looked at the fuse then her eyes bulged.)

KYRIE: Fuck!!!

(With that, she cast her arm back and threw the dynamite towards the ship with all the power she could muster.)

KYRIE: Bloody hell, Cayley, I get stupider by the minute.

(Seeing the dynamite flying off towards the ship, Hapslock, Cayley and Sadler all drew a sigh of relief.)

SADLER: You could have killed us all!

(Hapslock clouted him round the head and then pointed at the dynamite.)

HAPSLOCK: Never mind that! Nice throw, Kyrie!

(At once he rushed his eyes to the flying dynamite and they all held their breath. On-board the ship at this time, the assassin known as "the giant" raced up to the upper levels to see if Axion was okay while the remaining five all rushed onto the deck, determined to find the girls. Spotting the rowing boat almost immediately, Dan the dagger swiftly glanced to his mage comrade.)

DAN: Blow them out of the water!

(The mage nodded.)

ARNZ: It'll be my pleasure.

(As he focussed his aim, the four people aboard the rowing boat suddenly started to celebrate wildly. The dynamite Kyrie had thrown had landed squarely on the deck, right next to the large stack of dynamite they'd swiped it from. Bewildered by their celebrations, the mage raised a curious eyebrow.)

ARNZ: What are they so happy about?

DAN: Who gives a shit? Just blow them the fuck up.

(Agreeing with his sentiments entirely, the mage fixed his aim, snarled then was promptly blown off his feet by a massive explosion. From the rowing boat, Hapslock, Kyrie, Cayley and Sadler saw the ship literally split in two and the upper levels collapse down onto the ones below them. To say Cayley's plan, and Kyrie's throw, had been effective would be the understatement of the century. Within minutes, the entire Siasas had sunk under the waves.

As they watched the last signs of the ship disappear into the ocean forever, Kyrie sat back down then hugged Cayley close and kissed her cheek. Their hell at the hands of the silver arrow assassins was at an end.)

KYRIE: We did it!

(Hapslock looked impressed and nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: Yes, you did. You defeated the silver arrow assassins. That's just... well, phenomenal.

(Cayley pouted sorrowfully.)

CAYLEY: I really thought I was going to die.

KYRIE: No way, sister face. I'd never let that happen.

(As the girls shared a loving smile, Hapslock exhaled.)

HAPSLOCK: Think, Axion was on that ship. So that's the end of him. Axion gone; silver arrow assassins gone. Now you really are safe.

(Sadler bit his lip and sighed.)

SADLER: Are we? Are we really?

(Hapslock glared at him.)

HAPSLOCK: Don't you even *try* to sour the moment, arse face.

(Cayley looked mortified.)

CAYLEY: Oh my god, Sadler's right.

(She glanced around at the open sea and gulped.)

CAYLEY: We're in a tiny rowing boat in the middle of nowhere. It's getting dark and we have no idea which way land is!

SADLER: Exactly.

(As everyone looked across the ocean nervously, Kyrie bit her lip.)

KYRIE: Maybe we should just row back the way we came.

HAPSLOCK: We don't know which way we came.

KYRIE: But...

(She pointed out to sea.)

KYRIE: The ship was facing that way...

(She then pointed in exactly the opposite direction.)

KYRIE: So surely, it came from that way.

(Cayley sighed.)

CAYLEY: It could have turned at anytime, Kyrie. They might not have wanted to go too far offshore so sailed parallel with the coast, who knows? It may even have been sailing back to Port Amok when we blew it up.

HAPSLOCK: Exactly. There's no way to tell which direction land's in.

(Kyrie bit her lip.)

KYRIE: You lost me, but if Cayley says we're screwed then I guess we are.

(At once they all fell silent and looked across the vast empty ocean. They may have averted tragedy at the hands of the silver arrow assassins but now they were at the mercy of the merciless ocean. In an instant, all hint of celebration had died and they were all left in a distraught daze. With no idea where they were or where to go they all felt wholly powerless. No amount of agility or fighting talent could get them out of this mess. They'd now have to guess on a direction to travel in and pray that the wind and currents were kind. Left feeling like they'd simply swapped one nightmare for another one, Kyrie looked to Cayley and sighed.)

KYRIE: Still, at least things can't get any worse.

(Just then, the heavens opened and a howling wind swept across them. At once, Cayley sighed despondently and hung her head.)

CAYLEY: Had to say it, didn't you?

(Looking extremely peeved, Sir Hapslock grabbed the oars and snarled.)

HAPSLOCK: There's only way to deal with this. Row like hell in the same direction the wind's blowing and hope to god that somebody up there likes us!!!

(As he proceeded to row with all his might, Kyrie and Cayley looked to one another and shuddered in terror. In that moment, they felt doomed. Having survived one hell after another for two years, it seemed their luck had finally run out.)

## *Chapter Eight - The kindness of strangers*

*Two days later.*

For two nights in a row, Mother Nature had punished the ocean, north of Port Amok. Swirling winds and driving rain had whipped up countless amounts of freakishly large waves for hours on end, from dusk until dawn. On both nights, the storms had been ceaseless. Bitter, ice cold rain had rocketed down from the sky like crystal bullets and the chilling wind had blasted its way north, carving up the ocean in its wake. Nights like these were very much every seafarer's nightmare. These were the sort of nights when boats were battered beyond repair and lives were lost. On such nights, anyone unfortunate enough to be stranded at sea was truly at the mercy of the gods.

Shortly after dawn broke following the second night of deathly storms, the sun broke through the clouds and all sign of Mother Nature's wrath swiftly disappeared. The sea flattened out, returning to a serene calmness that had looked impossible only one short hour before hand. On the landmass closest to the eye of the second storm, the burning sun hurriedly dried up all the rain and once again the air was filled with birdsong. Had anyone managed to sleep through the violent storms and stepped out in the warm air, they wouldn't even have known it had rained. It was almost as if the gods had decided the storms were a mistake and acted to pretend they'd never happened.

On one particularly beautiful beach that morning, two young children raced along the sand, eagerly competing with one another to collect shells. With the storms now a thing of the past they were out enjoying the glorious morning sunshine. As was their family routine every morning, the children played upon the beach while their mother enjoyed her morning walk among the palms trees. Desperate to outdo one another and find the biggest and shiniest shell, the two children charged along the seafront when suddenly they spotted something unusual in the sand. Sharing a baffled look they then raced up to the peculiar looking object and stared down at it. Assuming it was a coconut with a stick driven through it, one of them reached down for it when they heard a groaning sound from behind a nearby rock. Looking extremely nervous they both glanced over to the rock when a dazed looking man in his late forties appeared, struggling to his feet.

SADLER: Where the hell am I?

(At once, the two children ran off, screaming for their mother. Watching them go, Sadler furrowed his brow and snarled.)

SADLER: Children! I fucking hate children!

(He shook his head then glanced down at where the two children had been standing. At once, his eyes lit up with joy. What the children had mistaken for a coconut with a stick driven through it was in fact his lute.)

SADLER: My lute!!!

(Looking like an excited child he then raced around the rock and picked it up.)

SADLER: Thank god for that.

(He exhaled happily then looked about himself. At once, a troubled expression crossed his brow and he returned to the first question he'd asked when he came to.)

SADLER: Where the hell am I?

(He looked up and down the coast then sighed.)

SADLER: Which way's Port Amok, I wonder?

(Starting to worry about his two horses, Goliath and Fogimort, he sighed and shook his head.)

SADLER: What if I don't find them?



(He then glanced up the beach and shuddered. The two children he'd frightened were tugging on their mother's dress and pointing in his direction. As the mother then thrust her hands to her hips and stared his direction, he quivered, backed away and bit his lip.)

SADLER: Uh oh.

(Although he'd done nothing wrong, being a quivering coward, he was in no mood for confrontation. Finding the idea of fleeing far more appealing than the idea of explaining himself, he swiftly about turned and raced straight into the rock he'd woken up behind. At once, he tumbled over it face first and his legs flew high into the air. Seconds later, he thudded to a heap behind the rock and sighed to himself despondently.)

SADLER: Why do bad things happen to me when there's kids around?

(He then climbed to his feet, dusted himself down and grumbled to himself.)

SADLER: Bloody kids, people should stop having the little fuckers.

(With that, he started to hobble away, anxious not to face the children's mother. As he paced forth slowly, every tired bone in his body ached.)

SADLER: Ouch.

(Struggling onwards, he thought back to being in the rowing boat and the terrible storms that had risen up in the night. Recalling how terrified he was, he shuddered and puffed out.)

SADLER: Terrible.

(Continuing to wearily progress along the beach, he mused to himself and bit his lip. He had no recollection of washing up on the beach and absolutely no clue what had happened to the other three people in the boat. All he knew was that he was tired, aching all over and extremely thirsty.)

SADLER: I need water. And a bed. And a massage.

(He then glanced down at his fingernails.)

SADLER: And a manicure would be nice!

(Just then, he heard a yelling sound from over his shoulder. At once, he stared back and immediately his eyes bulged. The mother of the two children he'd accidentally frightened was racing up the beach towards him.)

SADLER: Oh, for fuck sake!

(At once, he put his head down and desperately tried to sprint away. Aching all over and with very little energy left, he puffed and wheezed as his feet slipped on the sand, barely giving him any grip. He wasn't the fastest runner at the best of times but on this surface and with every ounce of his strength already used, his progress was sluggish at best. Such was his determination not to be confronted by the children's mother, however, he somehow found enough energy to keep going. Focussing only on making good his escape, he struggled onwards; looking dead ahead and blocking out any distractions from the corner of his eyes. All he could see was the beach directly in front of him, stretching onward to the horizon. The sea on one side and the palm trees on the other became no more than a blur in his peripheral vision. So, blinkered was his vision, he didn't even notice a full crate of whisky that had washed up on shore. Focussed only on getting away he raced straight past it. Such was his terror at the thought of being accosted by the potentially angry parent, he might have scrambled onwards forever had he not been distracted by the sound of his own name piping up miserably from the seafront. Thrown by it, he glanced to one side then promptly lost his concentrating and his footing. Releasing a fearful shriek he plummeted face first to the sand when he heard his name spoken once again in a heartbroken, female voice.)

KYRIE: Sadler?

(He looked up in horror and sure enough, Kyrie was sitting against a rock, cradling a motionless Cayley in her arms. Distraught at seeing her again, he quickly glanced behind him in desperation. The last thing he wanted was to be caught between Kyrie and an angry

mother. Much to his relief, as he glanced back, he saw the mother racing down the beach away from him. Puffing out, Sadler wiped sweat from his brow then struggled to his knees.)

SADLER: That's one less evil, I suppose.

(He then glanced back at Kyrie and felt extremely uneasy. She was clearly in a deep depression and had been crying for quite some time. Not knowing quite what to say, he looked about himself then offered her a nervous glance.)

SADLER: Nice weather today, isn't it?

(Eager to get away from her as soon as possible, he started to climb to his feet when Kyrie sighed miserably.)

KYRIE: She didn't make it.

(He looked to where she gently stroked Cayley's hair and bit his lip.)

KYRIE: I've lost my Cayley.

(She cried harder and pulled Cayley's body closer to her.)

KYRIE: My beautiful Cayley.

(At this point, Sadler was lost for words. He may have found Cayley a loathsome child but nevertheless, for her to die so young seemed beyond cruel. In that moment his desire to up and walk away from her as soon as possible, started to fade away. Seeing Kyrie so devastated, he couldn't help but feel he should try to say something comforting before he left. Stuck for words, however, he bit his lip and said nothing. As he knelt there dithering, however, Sir Hapslock appeared from some trees at the top of the beach, carrying a coconut. Still clueless over what he should say, he watched Sir Hapslock approach then held out his palms to the side.)

SADLER: What can a person say at a time like this?

(Hapslock gave him a sideways glance and shrugged nonchalantly.)

HAPSLOCK: I wouldn't worry about it.

(Sadler was shocked.)

SADLER: That's a bit cold isn't it?

(Hapslock shrugged again.)

HAPSLOCK: No, not really. And anyway, how did *you* manage to survive?

SADLER: What do you mean?

HAPSLOCK: I waited for Cayley to fall asleep then threw you out of the boat long before it overturned.

SADLER: You did what???

(Sadler looked livid for a moment then bit his lip and mumbled quietly.)

SADLER: Look, this is hardly the time to discuss it. I just want to say something comforting to Kyrie then get going.

(Hapslock shrugged once again.)

HAPSLOCK: I wouldn't bother.

SADLER: Wouldn't bother? Why the hell not?

(Just then, Cayley coughed in her sleep and licked her lips. At once, Sadler's jaw dropped and Sir Hapslock smirked at him.)

HAPSLOCK: That's why the hell not!

(Sadler looked to him blankly for a moment then turned to Kyrie.)

SADLER: Kyrie, she coughed!

(Hapslock sighed.)

HAPSLOCK: Save your breath, Sadler. Trust me.

SADLER: Kyrie, Kyrie. She coughed.

(Kyrie looked to him tearfully and sighed.)

KYRIE: Dead people do that sometimes. Cayley told me about it.

(She then sighed and shook her head in devastation.)

KYRIE: She did a fart earlier too.  
(At this point Cayley half opened one eye and pouted at her.)  
CAYLEY: I didn't fart!  
(She rolled her neck and pouted.)  
CAYLEY: And dead people can't cough.  
KYRIE: Yes they can!  
CAYLEY: No they can't.  
(Kyrie then looked to Sadler and pouted.)  
KYRIE: See? Dead people can even argue.  
(As Sadler looked to her waiting for the penny to drop, Sir Hapslock rolled his eyes.)  
HAPSLOCK: She'll figure it out eventually.  
(With that, he threw the coconut down on the sand and drew his sword.)  
HAPSLOCK: Poor kid's exhausted.  
(Kyrie pouted at him.)  
KYRIE: *You'd* be exhausted too, if *you* were dead!  
(Cayley sighed and opened her eyes wide.)  
CAYLEY: Kyrie, I'm not dead, for pity's sake.  
KYRIE: Yes you are!  
CAYLEY: I'm not; could I talk if I was dead?  
KYRIE: You can cough, fart and argue, so yeah!  
(Cayley pouted.)  
CAYLEY: I didn't fart, my tummy rumbled.  
(Kyrie sighed the stroked her head again.)  
KYRIE: Even in death you can't admit to farting. I'm going to miss you.  
(As she started to cry again, Cayley furrowed her brow then tried to roll out of her arms. Not about to let her drop, Kyrie pulled her tight to her and sighed.)  
KYRIE: Don't try to get up, sweetheart. Like you said on the ship, the dead can't do that!  
(Stuck in Kyrie's arms, Cayley gritted her teeth.)  
CAYLEY: Pity's sake.  
(Watching in amazement, Sadler shook his head then looked to Hapslock.)  
SADLER: I'm going!  
(With that, he started to head away.)  
HAPSLOCK: Grab some more coconuts for me, Sadler, and I'll chop one open for you.  
(Sadler looked to him uneasily for a moment then sighed.)  
SADLER: Fine. But only because I'm thirsty. Then I'm out of here; I hate you lot.  
HAPSLOCK: Good. The feeling's mutual.  
(As Sadler headed towards the trees, Sir Hapslock chopped into the coconut with his sword then scooped it up off of the sand.)  
HAPSLOCK: Here. Kyrie, let her drink some coconut milk.  
(Kyrie pouted at him sorrowfully.)  
KYRIE: What good will that do?  
HAPSLOCK: Look, just let her have a drink will you?  
(Kyrie sighed.)  
KYRIE: Fine, whatever. Not that it'll do her any good.  
(With that, Hapslock paced over to her and knelt down before Cayley's head. Relinquishing her tight grip on her for a moment, Kyrie allowed her to tip back her head. Feeling extremely thirsty, Cayley pursed her lips, eager to get a drink inside her. As Sir Hapslock poured the coconut milk down her throat, Cayley closed her eyes with relief. It tasted absolutely horrible yet at the same time it was the most incredible thing she'd ever let pass her lips. Moments later, when Sir Hapslock, pulled away and stood up, Cayley exhaled joyously.)

CAYLEY: That was...

(An enlightened expression then crossed her brow and she faked a shocked expression.)

CAYLEY: Oh, my god! I'm alive!

(Kyrie gave her a sideways glance.)

KYRIE: Stop saying that!

CAYLEY: I am! I *was* dead but now I'm alive again. That must have been a magic coconut!

(Kyrie's jaw dropped.)

KYRIE: No way!

CAYLEY: It was. Sir Hapslock found a magic coconut and now I'm alive again!

(Sir Hapslock looked at Cayley in disbelief and rolled his eyes.)

HAPSLOCK: Even *she* isn't dumb enough to fall for that.

(Much to his amazement however, Kyrie trembled and tried to set Cayley down on her feet.)

KYRIE: Please tell me it's true!

(Desperate to get out of her clutches, Cayley jumped to her feet and beamed.)

CAYLEY: Yay, look at me, all alive and everything!

(Kyrie looked at her in overjoyed astonishment and gushed.)

KYRIE: You can stand... on your own two feet. That means...

(She then burst into tears and leapt to her feet to lift Cayley up and hug her.)

KYRIE: You're back!!! My beautiful sister-face lives!!!

(As they hugged, Sir Hapslock watched on open mouthed and shook his head.)

HAPSLOCK: I'm lost for words.

(Kyrie then threw Cayley down onto the sand and turned to hug him.)

CAYLEY: Hey!!!

KYRIE: You found a magic coconut and saved my Cayley!!! You're so getting laid!

(As Hapslock beamed, Cayley climbed to her feet and trembled.)

CAYLEY: Magic coconuts are rare though, Kyrie. Next time we get attacked, don't let me die then try to find one to revive me with.

(Kyrie stepped from Sir Hapslock's arms and hugged her again.)

KYRIE: Of course not. I know we got lucky.

(As Cayley drew a sigh of relief, Sadler suddenly returned with three coconuts.)

SADLER: Here.

(He threw them down then scoffed.)

SADLER: Open me one and I'll be on my way.

(As Hapslock scowled at him and bent to pick one up, Kyrie beamed at Sadler.)

KYRIE: Cayley's alive!

(Sadler glared at her coldly.)

SADLER: I know!

(Annoyed at his cold reaction, Kyrie scoffed.)

KYRIE: Sod you then.

(Having cut open a coconut for Sadler, Sir Hapslock passed it to him then sneered.)

HAPSLOCK: Now piss off. I hope you get lost in the wilderness and a cuddyfinkle eats you.

(Sadler swiped the coconut and sneered.)

SADLER: Doubtful. I got chased by an angry parent earlier; that means there's a town nearby. I'll simply head along the beach until I find it.

(Hapslock sneered at him and shook his fist.)

HAPSLOCK: An angry parent? My god, you kiddie fiddlers work fast!

(Sadler looked extremely peeved.)

SADLER: I didn't do anything wrong. I just accidentally frightened her children

HAPSLOCK: Then why was she angry?

(He looked thoughtful and growled.)

HAPSLOCK: Wait a minute! *How* did you frighten her children? You didn't show them your thingy, did you?

(Sadler was outraged.)

SADLER: Good god, no! How dare you?

(As the two of them stood arguing, Kyrie and Cayley watched them briefly then turned to face each other.)

KYRIE: I really, really, really, really, really love you, Cayley.

(Cayley smirked.)

CAYLEY: Really?

KYRIE: Really!

(She then pulled Cayley's head into her chest and exhaled lovingly.)

KYRIE: I'm so happy you're not dead.

(As Cayley tried desperately to escape Kyrie's clutches and Sadler and Hapslock argued, none of them noticed a large male figure in his early fifties, approach them from the top of the beach. So engrossed were they in what they were doing they didn't even notice the impressive, muscular fellow until Sadler lost his temper and attempted to storm off. With a face like thunder, he called Sir Hapslock some choice names then about turned and stomped straight into him, getting knocked flat onto his backside by the impact.)

SADLER: An assassin!!!

(At once, Sir Hapslock drew his sword and Kyrie pushed Cayley behind her then adopted a fighting stance. The stranger had a sword sheathed at his side and they weren't prepared to take any chances.)

HAPSLOCK: Back!!!

(Highly amused by their reaction, the man reached down to help Sadler up and smiled. Being a far from trusting sort, Sadler whimpered and scrambled backwards.)

SADLER: Please don't kill me.

(Fixing his grasp on his sword, Hapslock snarled.)

HAPSLOCK: I said back!

(Much to his surprise the stranger simply shrugged, stepped back and held out his hands. Satisfied he was getting somewhere, Sir Hapslock then nodded and looked the stranger dead in the eye.)

HAPSLOCK: If you're not an assassin, identify yourself and tell us what you want?

(The stranger nodded and stood tall.)

FLAXLEY: Very well, my name is Sir Flaxley.

(He then gestured behind him.)

FLAXLEY: Oh, and... welcome to Tifaeris.

(At once, Cayley went weak at the knees and gushed under her breath.)

CAYLEY: Daddy!

(Staring to where Flaxley had gestured, Kyrie screwed up her face in bewilderment.)

KYRIE: Tifaeris is a tree?

FLAXLEY: Beyond the trees, pretty one, above the beach.

(Hapslock looked to Flaxley wearing a distrusting expression.)

HAPSLOCK: There's probably a million madmen in this world who claim to be Sir Flaxley. Why should we believe you? You still haven't told us what you want.

(Flaxley nodded.)

FLAXLEY: True. I was informed by a townswoman that she'd seen someone who looked like he'd been shipwrecked. Apparently she chased him to offer help but he fled...

(As Sadler winced, Flaxley continued.)

FLAXLEY: So, I thought I'd check it out myself.

(Hapslock raised a suspicious eyebrow.)

HAPSLOCK: We *have* been shipwrecked, yes. What of it?

FLAXLEY: I was coming to offer you something to drink and some food. A place to rest for a bit, perhaps. That's all. As president, it's my duty to look after those who get washed up here.

(As soon as he mentioned offering food and drink, Cayley zoomed passed Kyrie and arrived at Flaxley's side. Looking deliriously happy she stood close up next to him and stared up into his eyes as if he was a god. Watching her, Kyrie couldn't help but chuckle.)

KYRIE: Do you get the impression Cayley likes him?

(Hapslock bit his lip.)

HAPSLOCK: I don't trust this guy.

KYRIE: Well, with all due respect, last time we trusted *your* judgment we ended up on a ship with the silver arrow assassins. Maybe we should let Cayley judge people's character from now on.

(As Hapslock glared at her bitterly, Sir Flaxley looked to them all and smiled.)

FLAXLEY: So, anyway, the offer's there if you want to come with me.

(Cayley instantly tried to offer a reply. Unfortunately for her, she was so nervous she could only muster a series of gaping breaths.)

FLAXLEY: Well?

(Finally, Cayley managed to muster an awestruck word.)

CAYLEY: Please.

(Flaxley glanced down at the loving child by his side and smiled.)

FLAXLEY: Well, aren't you an adorable little scamp?

(As he then proceeded to ruffle her hair, Kyrie winced.)

KYRIE: Uh-oh!

(Much to her amazement however, Cayley simply pulled a dopy face and pushed her hair against this palm, like she was a cat rubbing scent on her owner.)

KYRIE: Wow. Never thought I'd see the day!

(Having received quite the opposite reaction from her when he'd done exactly the same thing, Hapslock scowled at Cayley and growled.)

HAPSLOCK: Bloody favouritism.

FLAXLEY: Right, if you want food and drinks, come with me, if not... then don't.

(As Hapslock stood seething, Sir Flaxley turned and wandered back towards the trees with Cayley stuck to his side like glue. Taking pity on him, Kyrie patted him on the back then raced off after them.)

KYRIE: Don't worry; you're still her *second* favourite knight.

(As Sadler laughed at him then followed Kyrie, eager to get some food inside him, Hapslock hung his head.)

HAPSLOCK: Guess we're going with him then.

(With that, he followed on miserably. It was, however, a misery that didn't last long.

Although he'd taken an instant disliking to Sir Flaxley, he soon had a most brilliant realisation. They'd arrived safely in the new world. The girls had at last found the sanctuary they were looking for. Despite all the disasters they'd faced along the way, he'd done it. His mission had been a complete success. Suddenly feeling good about himself, he paced behind Kyrie watching her perfect hips sway and sighed to himself with satisfaction. Today was most definitely a good day.)

---

The township of Tifaeris was an impressive place to say the least. Although it spread out for miles along the coastline, it still retained the feel of a warm and friendly village. The

townspeople always greeted one another with a smile and nobody was ever too busy to help out a neighbour. In this town people didn't live a strict nine to five existence. They didn't obsess about outdoing one another and money didn't rule their world. They'd get up when they were ready, do their full days work in their own time then spend their evenings relaxing or socialising with other townsfolk. Sir Flaxley wouldn't have had it any other way.

He'd returned to Tifaeris in his late twenties having worked as royal knight in the northern city of Guevina. At the time, the township had been in ruins. It had been razed to the ground by a nearby tribe, some ten years earlier and simply hadn't recovered. Having initially left the town after it was first destroyed, when Sir Flaxley returned, he and his wife, Kritzeveltia changed everything. They initiated a rebuilding programme, built city walls, raised an army and even managed to tame the nearby tribe that had once destroyed the town. Very soon people started to come from all over the continent hoping to live there. As long as they were good people, they were welcomed with open arms. Those with a big city mentality, who liked to keep their heads down and keep themselves to themselves, however, were turned away. Sir Flaxley didn't want Tifaeris to become yet another soulless metropolis and thanks to his careful efforts, it hadn't. The first new settlers had fitted in well with the local traditions and had adapted to their way of life easily. Since then, all new arrivals were greeted warmly and swiftly converted to the Tifaeris way. The result was the world's largest close-knit community where every newcomer was treated like an old friend. Tifaeris truly was the closest the world had to a utopia and it was all down to the efforts of Sir Flaxley and his beloved wife.

Unsurprisingly, having turned Tifaeris from a broken shell of a village to the magnificent township it was today, Sir Flaxley and Kritzeveltia, also known as Kritz, were extremely popular. After they'd masterminded the defeat of the tribe that had once destroyed the place, the people had taken it upon themselves to erect a large statue of them in the centre of the town square. In the years since then, in honour of their on-going service to the town, the people had also begun construction of a palace for them. Sir Flaxley was after all, their president, having been elected unopposed in every single election since he'd returned there. Suffice to say, Cayley wasn't the only one who thought he was the greatest man ever to walk the planet. Everyone in Tifaeris also thought so. To that end, when he walked back through Tifaeris that morning, it wasn't unusual to see an awestruck child walking at his side. It was however, most unusual to see a knight pacing behind him, scowling at his head, wearing a most distrusting sneer.

With Cayley pacing at Sir Flaxley's side adoringly and Sir Hapslock glaring at him hatefully, Kyrie was completely confused. She didn't want to talk to Sadler and she couldn't choose between Sir Hapslock and Cayley. One was bound to gush about this great man and the other would roundly condemn him. Not keen on the idea of being gushed at *or* complained at, she tried desperately to choose between them and ended up saying nothing as they all followed Sir Flaxley to his home through the picturesque Tifaeris streets. Feeling somewhat troubled by the silence, Sir Flaxley bit his lip and mused to himself as he paced forth. Realising they'd probably be exhausted after their recent shipwrecking, he then nodded to himself and glanced over his shoulder at Sadler.)

FLAXLEY: I was just thinking. You must all be exhausted. No wonder nobody's said much. (Sadler sighed.)

SADLER: Normally when I speak they tell me to shut up. Besides, I've got nothing to say to these three ingrates anyway.

(Listening to Sadler's words, Sir Flaxley grimaced. He sounded very much like a miserable old man he knew extremely well from his days in Guevina.)

FLAXLEY: I see.

(Not about to get into a conversation with such a grouch, he then glanced over his shoulder at Kyrie.)

FLAXLEY: So, where are you people from?

(Having been desperately trying to decide whether to engage Sir Hapslock or Cayley in conversation, Kyrie looked to him at beamed. Realising he was a third option for conversation and that she didn't have to be moaned at by Sir Hapslock *or* listen to Cayley gush, she stepped up to Cayley's side and pouted.)

KYRIE: We're from Anoseta, Cayley and me, but we had to flee there...

(She then proceeded to tell him her life story, warts and all from the minute she'd heard about being forced to marry to meeting Sir Hapslock in Castaria. Barely pausing for breath, she talked incessantly at a hundred miles an hour, frightened of leaving out any minor detail. Fortunately for her, Sir Flaxley had a wife and five daughters. He was very familiar with female speed ranting and over the years he'd become fluent in the language. As such, he was able to listen carefully to her rant and nod with interest as they headed on through the streets. In stark contrast to Sir Flaxley, rather than learn the language, Sir Hapslock had learned to tune it out. Instead of absorbing her words, he went into his own head and started to dissect his own thoughts. As per usual, they were thoughts of Kyrie. Kyrie, the girl who'd been under Axion's death sentence for two long years. The girl who'd been forced to kill countless men to protect herself and her sister. The girl who'd had to master every technique for killing a man with her bare hands just to survive. This girl who, despite living in its shadow for two years, didn't even understand what death was. She thought dead people could argue then be resurrected by magic coconuts. This girl clearly had no concept of how final death was. As he marvelled at that thought, however, he saw Sir Flaxley gesture towards him and at once his train of thought evaporated.)

FLAXLEY: Then it's a good thing you had a knight with you.

(Despite having not heard what led to Flaxley's comment, Sir Hapslock nodded, taking the opportunity to make his feelings known.)

HAPSLOCK: Quite. I'm their knight. And I'm a real knight too. A lone fighter against evil. I don't travel in large parties then exaggerate my skills just to sell books.

(Much to his annoyance, Sir Flaxley liked his attitude.)

FLAXLEY: And that's as it should be.

(Even more to Sir Hapslock's displeasure, Sir Flaxley then turned away from him and looked to Kyrie sympathetically.)

FLAXLEY: Sounds like this Axion fellow has given you a torrid time. I'm sorry you had to go through that.

(Kyrie shrugged.)

KYRIE: It's cool. It's over now anyway.

(As Sir Hapslock stomped forwards, determined to chastise Sir Flaxley further for being what he considered a fake; a scantily clad, large-breasted beauty charged from the door of the house they were passing. At once, Sir Flaxley's face lit up.)

FLAXLEY: Darling.

(The beauty stopped, smiled warmly his way then paced towards him. Looking delighted, Sir Flaxley stopped walking and the two shared a kiss. He then glanced around at the four people in his company and beamed proudly.)

FLAXLEY: Everyone, I'd like you to meet my beautiful wife, Kritz.

(Kritz offered them all a warm smile.)

KRITZ: Hello there.



(She then looked to Cayley and exhaled.)

KRITZ: Well, aren't you a cute one?

(Rapidly becoming immensely shy, Cayley rushed to hide behind Kyrie. Convinced that she was Sir Flaxley's illicit love child, the last person she wanted to meet was the wife he betrayed to impregnate her mother. Unfortunately for her, however, despite having six of her own, Kritz absolutely adored children, even other peoples, and wasn't about to let her shy away. As Cayley pouted in terror, Kritz reached out and stroked her chin.)

KRITZ: She's lovely.

(Much to Cayley's relief, she then let her be and looked to her husband.)

KRITZ: Everything okay?

FLAXLEY: Everything's great. I just found these four people shipwrecked down on the beach and I'm talking them home for a drink and a snack if that's okay.

(Kritz nodded warmly.)

KRITZ: Of course, it's okay.

(As Flaxley smiled to her, Kritz gestured behind her then started to pace backwards.)

KRITZ: Anyway, I've got to run, my love. I just popped out to borrow pepper from Mrs Jarrow and I've left the stove on.

FLAXLEY: Righto. We'll see you there shortly.

(Kritz smiled and raced away calling over her shoulder as she went.)

KRITZ: I'll prepare some drinks for you all.

(As she disappeared from view, Flaxley paced on and smiled.)

FLAXLEY: She's wonderful, isn't she?

(Pacing behind, Sir Hapslock clearly disagreed. Looking peeved, he mumbled to himself in annoyance.)

HAPSLOCK: What a fake, he even has a trophy wife, half his age.

(Little did Sir Hapslock know, Kritz was in fact in her mid forties. She was only six years younger than her husband. Somehow, she'd managed to defy biology, however and had barely aged since she was twenty five. Not blessed with this knowledge, however, meeting her had only served to fuel Sir Hapslock's theory that Sir Flaxley was merely a fraud, soiling the good name of knights for his own personal gain.)

HAPSLOCK: Disgraceful.

(In two minds whether or not to give him a piece of his mind now or wait until after he'd had something to eat, Hapslock scowled at the back of Flaxley's head. Oblivious to the scorn he was receiving, however, Sir Flaxley continued onwards.)

FLAXLEY: Two years without a place to call home? That must have been awful.

KYRIE: We did okay. We camped out a lot; that was fun. But when we were in towns I sold my minge for sex so we could get a hotel.

(She then beamed excitedly.)

KYRIE: Speaking of naughty bits, is it true you've got a massive dong?

(As Flaxley beamed proudly, Cayley snarled at her and swiftly remonstrated with her under her breath.)

CAYLEY: Don't say things like that to him!!!

KYRIE: Why not?

(She then looked enlightened and started to laugh.)

KYRIE: Oh, that's right...

(Much to Cayley's abject horror, Kyrie turned to Sir Flaxley and chuckled.)

KYRIE: You'll never guess who Cayley here thinks our father is!

(As Cayley folded in half, cringing with consummate embarrassment, an angry voice suddenly filled the air around them.)

AXION: You bitches!!!

(At once everyone spun around to face the direction of the sound. Unable to believe what they were seeing, Kyrie and Cayley's jaws instantly dropped. Before them, Axion was furiously standing aside the assassin Vaska had introduced as "the giant", snarling like a rabid wolf. Recognising him immediately, Sir Hapslock drew his sword and adopted a fighting stance. Matching his urgency, Kyrie raced to his side then did the same. Naturally, Sadler, raced away to watch from a safe distance while Cayley stepped up to Sir Flaxley's side, convinced he'd despatch them both in no time. Shaking with rage as he stared hatefully into Kyrie's eyes, Axion growled and shook his fists.)

AXION: You're alive!!! You're still alive!!!

(He seethed.)

AXION: How do you bitches keep doing that?

(Finding amusement in Axion's anger, Cayley looked to Flaxley fully expecting him to step in and kill him horribly. Much to her dismay however, he simply stood back and listened to Axion's rant with interest.)

AXION: We were lost at sea for two whole nights; thinking we were the only ones to survive but... you bastards survived too! Somehow!!!

(He looked to the giant and seethed.)

AXION: These are the fuckers I was telling you about. These are the bitches I wanted killed. (He sneered violently then looked to Kyrie.)

AXION: These are the bitches I'm going to pay you handsomely to kill right now. How does a cool million sound?

(The giant nodded then, much to everyone's amazement, spoke in a well educated tone.)

GIANT: Why, that sounds simply marvellous.

AXION: I thought it might.

(As Kyrie fixed her stance, Sir Hapslock snarled.)

HAPSLOCK: That ship snapped in two, how the hell did you survive?

(Axion snarled a furious reply.)

AXION: I was blown out the window and into the sea. The giant here saved me. *He* simply survived just by being what he is. I mean look at him. Not even a ton of dynamite can kill him, so what chance do you stand?

(Cayley looked to Sir Flaxley and beamed. As far as she was concerned, Axion could have a hundred giants and it'd still be nothing compared to having Sir Flaxley on your side. She was certain that as soon as any fight begun, he'd leap straight in and end it all with one swipe of his noble blade. Convinced that Sir Flaxley was merely an author with a penchant for exaggerating, however, Sir Hapslock snarled, convinced *he'd* be the one doing all the blade work.)

HAPSLOCK: It ends now, Axion. You've tortured these girls for far too long and now you'll be put to death.

(Axion growled arrogantly.)

AXION: Oh really?

(He then snarled to the giant and raised a hateful eyebrow.)

AXION: Kill them!!!

(With that, the giant raced forward with his rock like fists at the ready and immediately took a swing at Sir Hapslock. Somehow managing to avoid the blow, Sir Hapslock rocked back then lashed towards the giant with his blade aloft. Seconds later, having missed by a mile, Sir Hapslock was then punched backwards by the giant's enormous fist. As he skidded along the ground on his back, Cayley looked urgently to Sir Flaxley. Much to her horror, this man, her hero, a fighting legend of international repute, simply placed his hands on his hips and did nothing to help.)

CAYLEY: Da... Sir Flaxley???

(Watching as Kyrie ducked and weaved only to receive a powerful punch on the jaw, she tugged Sir Flaxley's tunic and implored him with her eyes.)

CAYLEY: Help them!!!

(Flaxley looked down to her calmly and smiled.)

FLAXLEY: I can't!

(At once, Cayley's heart sunk. She'd worshipped this man for longer than she could remember, but now it looked like Sir Hapslock was right about him being a fraud all along. Fearing the worst, she then looked to where Kyrie and Sir Hapslock were desperately trying to fight the fearsome giant and trembled. They were making no headway whatsoever. The giant matched Kyrie for agility and speed and dwarfed Sir Hapslock for size. This opponent was immense. To make matters worse, having managed to punch both Kyrie and Sir Hapslock several times, the giant then pulled out a sword. Among all his many skills, he was also a master swordsman.)

GIANT: As much as one likes to punch puny folk like you, I feel like chopping off some limbs today.

(At once, Sir Hapslock and Kyrie gulped as they stared him down.)

KYRIE: He's as quick as me! Nobody's as quick as me. What do I do?

(Hapslock tightened the grip on his blade and snarled.)

HAPSLOCK: I don't know. We'll just have to keep trying.

(He sighed.)

HAPSLOCK: I only wish that fraud Flaxley was as good as he claims he is, then maybe we'd have a chance.

(Kyrie glanced back at Sir Flaxley then pouted to Sir Hapslock.)

KYRIE: Why isn't he helping?

HAPSLOCK: He probably doesn't know one end of a sword from the other, that's why.

(With that, Sir Hapslock bellowed and raced at the giant once more. Wearing a ferocious snarl, he swung his blade towards the giant only to have his move blocked with a deft parry from the giant's own sizeable blade. As if he'd just lashed his sword into a trampoline, his arm flew backwards and he was sent sprawling back ten feet. Such was the giant's might; even contact from blade to blade was enough to knock this big man clean off of his feet. At a loss to how anyone could possibly defeat such a foe, he sat up and watched as Kyrie raced towards the giant to launch her assault. With incredible speed, she raced in towards him, ducked to avoid his flailing blade then leapt up to high kick him in the face. Matching her speed, the giant simply leant back and reached out his free hand, catching her between the legs and hoisting her above his head like a lightweight trophy. As she kicked and thrashed her legs furiously in a vain bid to make him put her down, Sir Hapslock jumped to his feet and bellowed.)

HAPSLOCK: Unhand her at once!!!

(As Sir Hapslock raced forth once more, Kyrie continued to kick her legs out wildly. As much as she normally liked men putting their hands up her skirt, this was deeply humiliating.)

KYRIE: Put me down!!!

(As Sir Hapslock launched into him with another sword attack, the giant grinned.)

GIANT: As you wish.

(With that, he kicked Sir Hapslock back then threw her at him. Looking horrified they both screamed then thudded into one another. Such was the impact of the throw, they were both sent tumbling back past Sir Flaxley and Cayley, rolling like tumbleweed across the ground. Surprisingly, Axion was livid. As much as he liked to see Kyrie suffer, he wanted so much more.)

AXION: I'm not paying you to amuse yourself, giant. Kill the fucking bitch!!!

(The giant looked to him and pouted.)

GIANT: Can't I do both?

AXION: No! Now stop fucking around and kill them!!!

(The giant sighed.)

GIANT: Fine. You're the boss.

(As Sir Hapslock and Kyrie struggled to their feet, Cayley looked to Sir Flaxley and whimpered desperately.)

CAYLEY: Do something. That guy's too strong.

(Flaxley sighed.)

FLAXLEY: Believe me, I'd love to. I just can't.

(Cayley sighed despondently.)

CAYLEY: I should have known you were a fraud. Everyone else thought so.

FLAXLEY: A fraud?

(As Sir Hapslock and Kyrie raged towards the giant once more, Cayley looked to him angrily and snarled.)

CAYLEY: Can't you at least *try* to help? Get your army if you're too weak. They're gonna die!!!

FLAXLEY: I'm not too weak, I just *can't* join in. The knight's code says I can't interfere in another knight's fight without his express permission. My hands are tied.

(Cayley looked enlightened then glanced to where Sir Hapslock and Kyrie were ducking and defending for their lives, not even coming close to landing a blow.)

CAYLEY: You should tell him that!

FLAXLEY: He's a knight. He already knows.

(At once her heart sunk. All Sir Hapslock and Kyrie's efforts had been a complete waste of time and things were looking decidedly bleak. Defeating the giant seemed impossible. His defences were immaculate and when he attacked, he did so with extreme precision and power. To this point, it was taking everything they had just to avoid being killed. Getting incredibly frustrated by the futility of it all, Sir Hapslock jumped back out of the giant's sword reach and growled. A move soon emulated by Kyrie.)

HAPSLOCK: He's too powerful!

KYRIE: I know!

(She whimpered.)

KYRIE: We need help!

(Hapslock sneered.)

HAPSLOCK: Well don't bother asking that fraud Flaxley. Quivering, cowardly, piece of shit.

(He then snarled back at Flaxley sarcastically.)

HAPSLOCK: We're fine, don't worry. Don't help out, whatever you do.

(Much to his amazement, Flaxley saluted.)

FLAXLEY: Understood. I know my duty.

(Finding Flaxley's attitude extremely insulting to proper knights everywhere, Hapslock growled then stared at the giant.)

HAPSLOCK: Okay, now I'm angry!

(With that, he charged forth at the giant. Eager to assist, Kyrie raced after him and within seconds found herself being clattered into by Sir Hapslock, returning backwards to her on the end of the giant's powerful punch. As the two of them crashed to earth, Axion bellowed.)

AXION: Now kill them!!!

(The giant nodded.)

GIANT: Righto.

(As the giant streamed forth at the floored twosome, Cayley screamed out in a panic.)

CAYLEY: Tell Sir Flaxley he can join in!!!

(As he scrambled backwards with Kyrie, Hapslock yelled out to her angrily.)

HAPSLOCK: He *knows* he can join in...

(He then mumbled under his breath.)

HAPSLOCK: He just won't.

(At once, Flaxley's face lit up and he drew his sword.)

FLAXLEY: I can? Superb!

(With that, he bounded towards the giant and raised his voice.)

FLAXLEY: Desist this instant, giant fellow!!!

(Much to Axion's annoyance, the giant stopped homing in on Sir Hapslock and Kyrie and grinned at him.)

GIANT: Or you'll do what exactly, puny man?

FLAXLEY: Or I'll kill you horribly.

(As the giant stood tall and laughed, Flaxley shrugged apologetically.)

FLAXLEY: Sorry, that was misleading. I'm going to kill you horribly whether you desist or not.

GIANT: And how do you intend to do that?

(Flaxley nodded.)

FLAXLEY: Raise your sword and I'll show you.

(As the giant grinned from ear and took up a fighting stance, Sir Hapslock and Kyrie scrambled to their feet. Kyrie then raced to Cayley's side and Sir Hapslock watched Sir Flaxley suspiciously.)

FLAXLEY: So, giant bloke, would you like some banter first, or would you like to cut straight to the being killed?

(In this moment, hope returned to Cayley's eyes. From what she'd read about him, Sir Flaxley loved his pre-fight banter and right now he was looking very much like the knight she'd always thought he was. Considering the banter to be nothing more than a stalling tactic, however, Sir Hapslock also thought he was being very much the knight *he* suspected Flaxley to be; all talk and no action.)

HAPSLOCK: What are you going to do, Flaxley? Exaggerate your skills to the point where he's frightened to death?

(Concentrating on what he was doing, Sir Flaxley didn't hear the quip from Sir Hapslock. He was too busy taunting the giant.)

FLAXLEY: For a fat bloke you're very light on your feet, true. From what I've seen of your sword skills, however, you won't last long.

GIANT: Is that what you think? How foolish!

(Preparing to leap in and resume fighting as soon as the giant killed Sir Flaxley, Sir Hapslock fixed his stance and puffed out.)

HAPSLOCK: Just attack him, will you, Flaxley?

(As Cayley watched on hopefully, Sir Flaxley glanced over his shoulder at Sir Hapslock and nodded.)

FLAXLEY: You know, that's exactly what *I* was thinking.

(With that, he raced towards the giant with his blade in his left hand. At once, the giant scoffed and lashed his powerful blade towards Flaxley's mid-riff. Much to everyone's astonishment, Flaxley then tossed his sword upwards, ducked beneath the giant's blade and caught it again in his right hand, leaving him free to plunge the blade into the giant's exposed heart. Having never seen such skill, Sir Hapslock dropped his sword in astonishment. Thinking nothing of it, Sir Flaxley simply pulled his sword put of the giant, then paced past him and grabbed Axion in a headlock. As the giant's body plunged to the ground, Flaxley then paced back towards Cayley with Axion under his arm.)

FLAXLEY: What do you want done with this?

(Looking overjoyed, Cayley stuck her tongue out at Hapslock.)

CAYLEY: Told you he was the best!

(She then raced behind Sir Flaxley and proceeded to kick Axion repeatedly up the backside. Watching her little sister's animated antics, Kyrie drew a sigh of relief then suddenly started to cry. Seeing the giant killed and Axion in a headlock, it had finally hit home. Their hardship was at an end. Watching her joyful tears flow, Sir Hapslock smiled then looked to Sir Flaxley apologetically.)

HAPSLOCK: So, you really are a tremendous swordsman after all.

(Flaxley looked flummoxed.)

FLAXLEY: Who said I wasn't?

(Hapslock coughed and looked away innocently.)

HAPSLOCK: Not me, that's for sure.

(As Kyrie slowly stepped to Sir Hapslock and threw her arms around him for a hug, Sir Flaxley grimaced and pointed under his arm.)

FLAXLEY: My question still stands, by the way. What do you want done with this?

(As Axion struggled and growled, Kyrie looked to him and snarled.)

KYRIE: *That* bastard?

(She let go of Sir Hapslock and paced towards him with her fists clenched furiously.)

KYRIE: He's mine!!!

(Cayley relented kicking his backside for a moment and looked to her sternly.)

CAYLEY: Kill him! If you let him go he'll send more assassins after us.

KYRIE: I know.

(Axion's eyes bulged and he tried to look up to Kyrie with pleading eyes.)

AXION: I won't! I swear. You win, you win!!!

KYRIE: Liar!

(Before she could start pummeling him, Flaxley looked to her sternly and raised his voice.)

FLAXLEY: Wait!

(As Kyrie looked to him enquiringly, Flaxley raised a knowing eyebrow.)

FLAXLEY: From the little I've been told, this man will undoubtedly send more people to kill you if you let him live. That much is a given. Like you said, you showed him mercy once and he repaid you with two years of misery. Therefore, he has to die. Agreed!

(He nodded to affirm his thoughts.)

FLAXLEY: That said, I want to minimise what violence the good people of this town have to put up with seeing.

HAPSLOCK: You want to take him somewhere else and kill him?

FLAXLEY: No, no. No need. I just need you to allow me the pleasure of doing this...

(With that, he tightened his forearm around Axion's neck to a vice like grip then punched him hard in the face with his free hand to snap his neck.)

FLAXLEY: There. Dead.

(He nodded firmly then dropped Axion's body onto the ground.)

FLAXLEY: Now, if you'll help me carry these two to my house, I think this would be a great time for a bonfire.

(Seeing Axion laying lifeless on the ground, Kyrie paced up to Cayley and took her in her arms.)

KYRIE: It's really over, Cayley. We're free.

(Cayley exhaled and squeezed Kyrie tight.)

CAYLEY: Yeah it is. No more running away.

(Watching them hug, Sir Hapslock beamed proudly.)

HAPSLOCK: This is the reason I became a knight. To end the troubles of others.

(Sir Flaxley nodded.)

FLAXLEY: There's no feeling like it in the world is there?

HAPSLOCK: Not a one.

(Just then, Sadler slowly made his way back from where he'd been hiding and gave a sigh of relief.)

SADLER: Thank heavens for that. That giant was a terrifying bugger.

(Flaxley gave him a sideways glance.)

FLAXLEY: Where did you disappear to?

(Sadler looked at him in disbelief.)

SADLER: I hid, of course.

FLAXLEY: You hid?

SADLER: Yes! Like I was going to stick around while all that fighting was going on!

(Flaxley gestured to Cayley and furrowed his brow at him.)

FLAXLEY: This little girl stuck around.

CAYLEY: Yeah, but in his defence, I'm twice the man he is.

(Sadler nodded.)

SADLER: Exactly.

(Flaxley looked stumped.)

FLAXLEY: You accept *that* as your defence, do you?

SADLER: I not a proud man, Sir Flaxley.

FLAXLEY: Clearly.

(He shook his head then gestured to the giant's body.)

FLAXLEY: Care to give me a hand carrying this to my house, Sir Hapslock?

HAPSLOCK: I'd be happy to.

(As Sir Flaxley reached down to pick the giant up beneath his armpits, Kyrie smiled at Cayley.)

KYRIE: You get Axion's legs and I'll carry his head. We can kick him while we carry him.

CAYLEY: Okay.

(As the two knights picked up the giant's corpse and started to pace away, Cayley grabbed Axion's legs and struggled forth as her sister bared the weight of his upper body.)

CAYLEY: Heavy!

KYRIE: You're such a weakling.

CAYLEY: I'm little, Kyrie.

(Kyrie sighed and stared skywards.)

KYRIE: Mum used to call *me* little Kyrie.

(Cayley rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: Yeah, that's relevant.

(As they headed towards Sir Flaxley's home, Sir Hapslock glanced to where the girls were carrying Axion and shook his head. Axion must have been the most pathetic, foolish person ever to have existed. This man had had everything, power, money, women and a whole long life ahead of himself to enjoy it. Rather than making the most of it, however, he'd wasted a vast chunk of his sizeable fortune on a petty, needless grudge that had ultimately got him killed at the age of 32. A more pathetic man would definitely be hard to find. As he looked to Axion, he shook his head in disdain then glanced at the two girls carrying him. A youthful genius and a beautiful airhead, finally free from tyranny. For the foreseeable future their lives would be wonderful. They could go where they pleased and do what they pleased and finally have the luxury of what most people took for granted, not being attacked by trained killers or summoned beasts. Thinking about it, Sir Hapslock couldn't help but smile. At last they could live freely and had a chance of happiness. And if anyone deserved happiness it

was surely these two girls. Heading onwards with the giant's corpse, Sir Hapslock smiled once more. As far as he was concerned, everything had worked out beautifully.)

---

As was always the way in Tifaeris households, Sir Hapslock, Kyrie, Cayley and Sadler were welcomed into Sir Flaxley's home with open arms. His beautiful wife, Kritz had made them all drinks and prepared them snacks. She then kept them company while Sir Flaxley made a pyre in the garden to incinerate Axion and the giant's bodies. Once the pyre was built, Flaxley then re-joined them all as they sat around the large table that dominated the main room of the house. With Flaxley's four youngest daughters in the room, two of them her own age, it was a very bewildering time for Cayley. Convinced all of Flaxley's offspring were her half siblings, she desperately wanted them to like her but at the same time she was terrified they'd find out who she was. As such, she became horribly shy and hardly said a word until the four of them decided to go outside and play. Looking relieved, she perked up a little at this point, only to sink into her shell again every time Kritz looked in her direction. Terrified of what might happen if Kritz ever found out she was her husband's illegitimate love child, she couldn't even look her in the eye. Luckily for her, Kritz had no such suspicions and merely thought Cayley was a shy and quiet person. She didn't however, think the same about Kyrie. Despite being worn out, since they'd all sat down she'd hardly stopped talking. The reason for her excitement being Kritz's claim to fame. Legend had it that this was the woman who'd brought high heels back from the future and as such, Kyrie could barely contain herself. This girl could talk about shoes for days on end and never get bored.

KYRIE: And I had these white ones with bows on the top but they were a bit wide for my feet, so I couldn't really wear them much.

(Seated around the table with her, Sir Flaxley, Kritz, Sir Hapslock, Cayley and Sadler all stared at her in various states of emotion. Cayley was shocked having not realised just how many pairs of shoes Kyrie had had to leave behind in Anoseta. Sadler simply glared at her hatefully. Sir Hapslock and Sir Flaxley, however, listened attentively; eagerly awaiting a chance to change the subject. And Kritz looked to her, nodding with interest, greatly enjoying the shoe related topic.)

KYRIE: And the stiletto heels were so thin and pointy, I miss that pair the most I think.

(Kritz exhaled longingly.)

KRITZ: They sound adorable.

KYRIE: Oh, they were.

FLAXLEY: Good, glad to hear it. Does anyone want some more fruit juice?

(As he reached for the jug, Sir Hapslock was swift to answer.)

HAPSLOCK: Yes please. Made from local fruit, is it? You have nice fruit round here, do you?

(Desperate not to listen to any more shoe talk, he hunched his shoulders and prayed someone would give him an answer he could build on.)

KYRIE: Speaking of fruit, I had a pair of strawberry coloured shoes...

FLAXLEY: Yes, Sir Hapslock. All the fruit is local. This part of the world is well known for its fruit actually.

HAPSLOCK: I'm glad to hear you say that. You have no idea how much.

FLAXLEY: Actually, I think I do.

(Eager to turn the topic away from shoes, he poured some juice into Sir Hapslock's glass then winked at him.)

FLAXLEY: Leave it to me, fellow knight.

(He then looked to Kyrie and smiled.)



FLAXLEY: So, I assume you'll try to rebuild your shoe collection now you're free to settle down...

(As Hapslock glared at him in dismay, Flaxley suddenly twisted the topic.)

FLAXLEY: That won't be cheap! I mean, where will you get the money? How are you going to earn for a living?

HAPSLOCK: Nice!

FLAXLEY: Thanks!

(Kyrie mused to herself for a moment then shrugged.)

KYRIE: I only know how to do one job.

FLAXLEY: Fighting?

KYRIE: Fucking!

(She beamed.)

KYRIE: I'm brilliant at sex. Aren't I, Frank?

(She looked to Kritz and smiled.)

KYRIE: He fucked me in our hotel; he'll tell you.

(Upon noticing the host of despairing glances she was receiving, she bit her lip and glanced to one side.)

KYRIE: What? What did I say?

(Taking control of the conversation, Flaxley looked to her sincerely.)

FLAXLEY: There must be other things you're good at.

KYRIE: Nope, just sex. I'm a born prostitute!

(Flaxley shook his head.)

FLAXLEY: I don't believe that.

(Kyrie scowled at him.)

KYRIE: I'll bloody show you then! I'm a phenomenal fuck! Take your trousers off!

(As Kritz snarled at Kyrie for having the audacity to even suggest such a thing, Flaxley swiftly interceded to calm things down.)

FLAXLEY: That's not what I meant! I'm sure you an ace in the sack, but that's not *all* you can do. I saw you fight. You were superb.

(Kyrie looked enlightened and calmed down.)

KYRIE: Oh... sorry. I thought you were saying I'm rubbish in bed.

(She looked at Kritz and blushed.)

KYRIE: Sorry, Kritz.

(Already well aware that Kyrie was an idiot, Kritz relented her anger and made allowances.)

KRITZ: It's okay. Don't worry about it, babe.

(Kyrie gave her a warm smile then looked back at Flaxley.)

KYRIE: So, yeah, I can fight... but what use is fighting? That's not going to keep a roof over our heads.

FLAXLEY: Oh, I dunno. We could use someone like you in our army. It's mostly police work, what with the lack of wars, and the pay is mediocre at best, but you do get free accommodation. The job's yours if you want it.

(Kyrie nodded.)

KYRIE: I see. What does mediocre mean?

FLAXLEY: Not very good.

KYRIE: Okay. And accommodation?

FLAXLEY: Somewhere to live.

(Kyrie looked thoughtful and bit her lip then gestured to Cayley.)

KYRIE: Somewhere for *both* of us to live, is it?

(Flaxley nodded.)

FLAXLEY: Of course. Quite a few of the troops have a family member with them in the barracks.

(Kyrie then beamed and looked to Cayley.)

KYRIE: I accept!

(As Cayley smiled back at her proudly, Flaxley nodded and leant on the table.)

FLAXLEY: We'll take you over to the barracks later then so you can meet everyone and pick up a uniform.

KYRIE: Score; I've got a job.

(She looked uncertain.)

KYRIE: Can I still be a prostitute in my spare time?

(Flaxley looked to her blankly.)

FLAXLEY: Your free time is your own.

KYRIE: Result.

FLAXLEY: And what about the rest of you? Any plans?

(Cayley nervous glanced at Kritz then spoke shyly to Flaxley.)

CAYLEY: I want to go back to school.

(At once Flaxley and Kritz started to laugh.)

FLAXLEY: Good one.

KRITZ: She's cute *and* witty.

CAYLEY: But, I do!

(Flaxley chuckled.)

FLAXLEY: Like anyone *wants* to go to school.

(Kyrie sighed.)

KYRIE: *She* does. She's a genius, you see. She actually likes it.

(Realising Cayley had been serious, Flaxley and Kritz looked to one another then glanced at her apologetically.)

FLAXLEY: Right, then I guess that can be arranged.

KRITZ: Yeah, sorry. We thought you were kidding. You can see the school master this afternoon if you like, get yourself a uniform.

(Cayley's face lit up.)

CAYLEY: Thank you.

(Finding Cayley's desire for education extremely weird, Kritz looked to Flaxley and grimaced.)

KRITZ: I never thought I'd see the day.

FLAXLEY: Indeed. It's actually kind of refreshing. A willing student.

(Flaxley then looked to Sir Hapslock.)

FLAXLEY: I assume you'll be heading back to your king.

(Hapslock nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: I should, yes.

(He sucked his teeth.)

HAPSLOCK: But I'd like to stick around for a bit, if that's okay.

FLAXLEY: Of course it is. But shouldn't you...

HAPSLOCK: Yes, I should go back but...

(He smiled at Kyrie and Cayley.)

HAPSLOCK: These two girls have become more than just charges to me. They're my friends. I'd like to stick around and see them get settled.

FLAXLEY: Okay... sounds like a gross dereliction of duty to me but what do I know?

HAPSLOCK: Yeah, I'm well aware it's wrong to get attached to your charges but I'm only human. We can't all be like you.

(Flaxley chuckled then looked to Kritz.)

FLAXLEY: I can't really say much to be honest. After I met Kritz, I left the kingdom where I was employed without so much as a goodbye to the king. I just quit.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: You have to follow your heart. Not just as a knight but as a man.

(As Kritz smiled at him lovingly, Flaxley folded his arms and sat back.)

FLAXLEY: I tell you what, you're a trained swordsman, so why don't you join our army too, just for the time being? After all, your currency is useless here and you'll need a way to support yourself.

(Hapslock nodded acceptingly.)

HAPSLOCK: How very kind of you, I accept.

(Flaxley then looked up towards Sadler.)

FLAXLEY: What about you, chicken shit? What are you going to do?

(Sadler looked to him and furrowed his brow.)

SADLER: If you must know I'm going back to the old world. My carriage and horses are there and so are all the places I ply my trade.

FLAXLEY: Excellent. I'm sure somebody at the docks will give you a ride if you've got the money. 150 lig is the going rate, I believe.

SADLER: Lig? What a silly name for a currency.

(He sighed.)

SADLER: I don't have 150 lig.

FLAXLEY: Then you're stuck here.

(Sadler looked at Cayley and snarled.)

SADLER: With *that* evil child? Never. I'll sing for the money and I'll be out of here in no time. In fact, I'll start now!

(With that, he upped and left the house in a temper.)

FLAXLEY: Where did you find that guy?

HAPSLOCK: What can I say? As a knight you sometimes get saddled with idiots.

(Flaxley nodded sternly.)

FLAXLEY: That I can most definitely agree with.

(He then gritted his teeth and mumbled an incoherent word.)

HAPSLOCK: I'm sorry, did you just say "lefty hat"?

FLAXLEY: Doesn't matter. The main thing is, you three are all sorted after your ordeal.

(Just then, one of Flaxley and Kritz's daughters raced into the house and ran around to Cayley's chair.)

DAUGHTER: Will you come outside and play with us?

(Cayley whimpered and stared at her in horror. She didn't want to go but she most definitely didn't want to seem rude.)

FLAXLEY: That's a good idea. Cayley here will be going to your school soon, you can tell her what it's like.

(At once, Cayley's face lit up and all her butterflies melted away. Eager to hear all about the school, she was up and out of her chair in no time. As they raced away, Kyrie watched her go and bit her nails.)

KYRIE: I should keep an eye on her.

FLAXLEY: Why? They're perfectly safe in our garden.

(Kyrie bit her lip.)

KYRIE: It just doesn't seem right not to watch her.

(Kritz gave her a sympathetic smile.)

KRITZ: That's understandable after what you've been through but you're safe now. It'll take a while but you'll get used to letting her be alone eventually.

(Kyrie nodded.)

KYRIE: I guess so.

(Kritz smiled.)

KRITZ: She'll soon make friends.

(Much to Kritz's amazement, Kyrie shook her head.)

KYRIE: No she won't. Other kids find her weird and pick on her. She's really intelligent, you see. I was always saving her from bullies.

(She sighed.)

KYRIE: But... I guess I can't stop her from wanting to learn.

(She then forced a smile.)

KYRIE: We'll be okay. We're survivors. We'll get by somehow.

(Flaxley nodded.)

FLAXLEY: That's the spirit. It's never easy settling into a new place, but you'll be alright.

This is a nice town.

(He then looked around the faces remaining at the table.)

FLAXLEY: So, anyone else want some more fruit?

(Hapslock looked to him and raised an enquiring eyebrow.)

HAPSLOCK: You're a kind man, Sir Flaxley.

FLAXLEY: I do my best.

HAPSLOCK: You hardly know us and yet you've set these two girls up with a place to live and a given Kyrie and I the chance to earn an income.

FLAXLEY: And?

HAPSLOCK: You're a kind soul and a sensational swordsman... very much the embodiment of the perfect knight. Even now, long after retirement, you live by the knight's code, for heaven's sake.

(He looked uncertain and shook his head.)

HAPSLOCK: So, if you don't mind me saying it seems strange to me that you'd sell yourself out and publish your memoirs like your did. It doesn't seem very honourable to me if I'm honest. It seems to go against everything you are.

(Flaxley's face then clouded over.)

FLAXLEY: Those damned books.

(As Kritz patted his back reassuringly, Flaxley clenched his fists.)

FLAXLEY: I didn't even write those books.

HAPSLOCK: You didn't?

FLAXLEY: Well, I did I suppose but... only for me. The man who trained me told me always to keep a diary. To make notes on my deeds and thoughts for the benefit of future knights to read. So, I did.

(He sighed.)

FLAXLEY: Well, a so-called friend of mine offered to have them printed up for me; so they'd still be readable in years to come. Well, it made sense to me so I accepted.

(He seethed.)

FLAXLEY: The bastard printed up thousands of them and sold them as my autobiography. He even got some impostor to go on book signing tours in the new world, for heaven's sake.

HAPSLOCK: So, you had nothing to do with it?

FLAXLEY: No! A knight's diary is a personal thing and I certainly don't have time to go around the world for months on end doing book tours.

(He shook his head.)

FLAXLEY: First he released my accounts of battles and incidents then he released a second book, full of my notes about tactics and the knight's code. The bastard.

(Kyrie looked to him nervously and scratched her head.)

KYRIE: So, you didn't come to our home town to do book signings?

FLAXLEY: No, I've never even been to the new world. The guy signing the books was some actor he hired.

(Kyrie bit her lip.)

KYRIE: Poor Cayley.

(Kritz gave her a sideways glance.)

KRITZ: Why poor Cayley?

(Kyrie looked to Flaxley.)

KYRIE: Because of the timing of the book signings, she's somehow convinced herself you're our father.

(Flaxley plopped his head down on the table and groaned in despair. As he did so, Kritz rubbed his back and smiled to Kyrie.)

KRITZ: It seems the actor had a good time doing those book signings. Cayley isn't the first kid to turn up here looking for her father.

FLAXLEY: There's been 4 others, so far.

(Kyrie bit her lip.)

KYRIE: Wow.

(She nodded to herself.)

KYRIE: I'll tell her tomorrow. Let's just let her enjoy today.

(Bizarrely, she suddenly looked extremely happy.)

KYRIE: So *that's* where I get it from. I'm a slut just like my father!

(Kritz patted Flaxley's back once more then smiled at Kyrie.)

KRITZ: I don't like that word. Slut is such a derogatory term when there's nothing even wrong with being promiscuous at a young age. I mean, I was the same... except I was raised by an all female tribe.

(At once, Sir Flaxley and Sir Hapslock's eyes glazed over with delight.)

KRITZ: I had lots of sex albeit rarely with a guy. I was kind of a slut, then I met "the one" and I changed. You'll probably be the same.

(Kyrie shrugged.)

KYRIE: I hope not!

KRITZ: You might.

(Kyrie shook her head.)

KYRIE: Nope. Doubtful.

(Kritz glanced lovingly upon Flaxley and exhaled.)

KRITZ: Someday you'll meet someone with quirks you'll find adorable and impossible to resist. He'll be so much of everything you want, you won't even look twice at anyone else anymore. That's what happened to me.

(Kyrie looked uncertain.)

KYRIE: I really can't see that happening to me.

KRITZ: Well, that's the thing, you see? You won't see it coming.

(Hapslock looked to Kyrie and sighed. If what Kritz was saying was true then he certainly wasn't the one for Kyrie. She'd already had sex elsewhere since he'd been with her and was showing no sign of ending her promiscuous ways. Once again, he was greatly relieved she hadn't understood when he confessed his love. Sighing to himself, he looked to Sir Flaxley, envious of what he had with Kritz, only wishing he could have been as lucky with Kyrie.)

HAPSLOCK: You're a lucky man, Sir Flaxley.

(Flaxley smiled.)

FLAXLEY: Indeed I am.

(He gave Kritz a conceited grin.)

FLAXLEY: It was my dashing good looks that did it, wasn't it?

(Kritz nodded half-heartedly.)

KRITZ: Partly. Mostly it was your personality and some of the things you said.

FLAXLEY: Such as?

KRITZ: I don't know, you were kind of reassuring in a way I liked. Even when you weren't quite being honest, you still made me feel secure.

(Flaxley gave her a sideways glance.)

FLAXLEY: When am I ever less than honest?

(Kritz shrugged.)

KRITZ: Well, for example, you like to claim you became a knight to help those in need.

FLAXLEY: And?

KRITZ: You learnt to be a swordsman because you wanted to get revenge on the tribe that destroyed this town all those years ago. And you only became a knight because you were promoted to the head of the Guevina army and the position required a knighthood.

(Flaxley gave her a sideways glance.)

FLAXLEY: I still wanted to help people.

KRITZ: I don't doubt that.

(Hapslock chuckled.)

HAPSLOCK: You know, that's funny to me because I use the same excuse. Saying I want to help people. I do, but I became a knight because the money was excellent, no other reason. I had the skills so I took the job.

(He nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: And as a field knight, I'm glad I did. Protecting the royal family would have been no fun.

(Flaxley nodded.)

FLAXLEY: Again, I can relate to that.

HAPSLOCK: Instead I wander the land, saving people from various evils. All too often weird beasts looking to kill virgins.

(He then looked to Flaxley and raised an eyebrow.)

HAPSLOCK: Speaking of which. I fought a slimy handed freak called Melmerex. He was very much like you described Melmero in your book.

(Flaxley nodded.)

FLAXLEY: Immensely tall and disgusting?

HAPSLOCK: Ten feet tall!

FLAXLEY: Ten?

(He scoffed.)

FLAXLEY: A mere baby then. Melmero was enormous.

KRITZ: He was. The building was incredibly tall and his head was just shy of the roof.

(Hapslock looked suspicious.)

HAPSLOCK: So you weren't exaggerating?

FLAXLEY: Why would I exaggerate in personal notes that only future knights were supposed to see?

(Hapslock nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: Good point.

(He shrugged.)

HAPSLOCK: Still, why do they always want virgins? That question has annoyed me since day one. What difference does it make to evil types whether their sacrifice is a virgin or not?

(Flaxley looked to him and smiled.)

FLAXLEY: I know the answer to that, actually.

(Hapslock's face lit up.)

HAPSLOCK: You do?

FLAXLEY: It's not because they're pure, it's because of how we humans perceive purity.

HAPSLOCK: I see.

FLAXLEY: In our human societies we see virgins as unspoiled perfection.

KYRIE: I don't. Stupid cows don't know what they're missing.

FLAXLEY: So, anyway, to evil types, there's nothing better than needlessly wasting something humans greatly revere. If we looked down on virgins...

KYRIE: Like I do!

FLAXLEY: Like Kyrie does, they'd sacrifice someone else instead.

(Hapslock looked enlightened and nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: You know, that actually makes sense.

FLAXLEY: I should hope so too. It comes from a very reliable source. A mystic wise man with four hundreds years' experience of fighting evil.

(Hapslock nodded.)

HAPSLOCK: Amazing. You know, I feel there's much I could learn from you, Sir Flaxley.

(Flaxley nodded warmly.)

FLAXLEY: I feel that way too!

(As the two knights looked to one another admiringly, Kritz laughed, patted Kyrie on the back and smiled.)

KRITZ: You'll all stay for dinner won't you?

(Just then the front door flew open and Sadler poked his head inside.)

SADLER: Dinner?

(At once, Flaxley yelled at him.)

FLAXLEY: Get out!!!

(Sadler snarled.)

SADLER: Fine!

FLAXLEY: And stop loitering on our porch!

(They all listened to Sadler stomping off then Kyrie looked to Kritz.)

KYRIE: Dinner would be amazing.

HAPSLOCK: Thank you.

(Having fed the hungry trio of Kyrie, Cayley and Hapslock, true to his word, Sir Flaxley took Hapslock and Kyrie to the barracks that afternoon to meet the person who'd be their commanding officer in the army. Having been fitted for uniforms, they were then shown to their rooms. At the same time, Kritz and her daughters took Cayley to visit the local schoolmaster where she was registered as a pupil and also given a uniform. Greatly looking forward to restarting her education she was then taken to the barracks to be reunited with Kyrie.

If Sir Flaxley hadn't already been a hero in Cayley's eyes, he most certainly would be now. Within hours of meeting them he'd given them a wonderful start to their new life. Thanks to his kindness Kyrie was primed to earn a dignified living and they already had a roof over their heads. Their accommodation may only have been a moderately sized, basic room, but Kyrie and Cayley were delighted with it. At last, they had a place to call home.

When Kritz dropped Cayley off and went home, leaving the two girls alone in their new room together for the first time, neither of them could stop smiling. They could have ended up living on the Tifaeris streets, scraping by off whatever Kyrie earned from prostitution, just like they had for the last two years. Instead, thanks to the generosity of someone who didn't even know them, they had a roof over their heads and a role in the community. Instead of becoming a pair of humble vagabonds, they were now a soldier and a schoolgirl. Naturally, they were both extremely overjoyed. They'd seen little in the way of human compassion over the last two years and to suddenly receive so much of it from Sir Flaxley and his wife had

restored their faith in humanity. Their kindness had transformed their lives, something for which they'd be eternally grateful.)

---

A few hours after the sun set on Tifaeris that night, Sadler found himself standing outside a busy tavern, singing his heart out and imploring people to throw money into his hat. Sadly for him, inside the tavern, a far more talented lute player was putting his melodies to shame and not one single lig had come his way. At this rate, his chances of ever sailing home again looked bleak.

Over the other side of town at this time, Sir Hapslock was in his room trying on his new uniform. Looking forward to trying out his skills in a policing role, he looked into his mirror and nodded to himself. It was a challenge he was more than ready for. Satisfied his uniform looked good on him; he then sat down upon his bed and smiled to himself. Tifaeris, he felt, would be a fun experience. He could earn a living and watch his two young friends start to build a life. With his feelings for Kyrie still weighing heavy on his heart, he was glad he'd decided to stay. He wasn't quite ready to say his goodbyes just yet. He felt certain that one day they'd part ways and he'd return to Castaria but until then he was going to enjoy every minute of being with them in this new, friendly land.

Just across the drill square from Sir Hapslock's room, in the female dormitories, Kyrie was also trying on her uniform. Unsurprisingly, she thought she looked amazing. She was yet to find an outfit she didn't love on her and was always quick to share her thoughts with Cayley.

KYRIE: Could I possibly be any sexier, Cayley?

(Looking across at her in her new school uniform, Cayley chuckled.)

CAYLEY: No, Kyrie, you've pretty much peaked. It's all downhill from here.

(Kyrie gave her a suspicious glance.)

KYRIE: Are you making fun of me?

CAYLEY: Would I do that to you?

(Kyrie sneered.)

KYRIE: Yes then!

(She then smiled and looked Cayley up and down.)

KYRIE: You look so cute in that school uniform.

CAYLEY: You always say I look cute.

KYRIE: Well, you always look cute! You're a cute kid.

(Cayley pouted.)

CAYLEY: It's not because I'm a cute kid. If I was twenty years old and wearing a leather cat-suit you'd still say I look cute.

KYRIE: Well, cats are cute!

CAYLEY: Okay, lingerie then!

(Kyrie rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: Look, what do you want me to say? You look sexy?

(Cayley shrugged nervously.)

CAYLEY: Well, no but...

KYRIE: It's a school uniform, Cayley! They're not meant to be sexy.

(She then bit her lip and mused to herself.)

KYRIE: Though that is a very short skirt...

(She nodded firmly.)



KYRIE: It'd look sexy on me. Maybe you're just not a sexy person. You are twelve, remember?

(Cayley gave her a cold glance.)

CAYLEY: You're mean.

KYRIE: No, I'm not.

CAYLEY: Can't you just say I look pretty? I don't care about sexy. Pretty would do. Why does it always have to be cute?

(Kyrie smiled.)

KYRIE: Because you're my cute little sister face.

(She then looked down herself and exhaled.)

KYRIE: An army uniform this sexy ought to be illegal. I love this skirt.

(She exhaled then sat on one of the beds.)

KYRIE: Come here, missy.

(Cayley nodded then paced up and sat beside her.)

KYRIE: So anyway, there's something I need to tell you before you go to bed.

CAYLEY: There is?

KYRIE: Yeah, it's about Sir Flaxley.

(Cayley gushed.)

CAYLEY: Oh my god, wasn't he amazing? I had such fun. Even his children were nice to me! I'm so happy we came here, Kyrie.

(Kyrie nodded.)

KYRIE: Well, yeah, me too, but... you see, I found something out about the book signings today...

(As Cayley looked to her wide-eyed with excitement, Kyrie fumbled for words.)

KYRIE: You see, the thing is...

CAYLEY: What?

(Seeing her sister's excited face, Kyrie clammed up and sighed.)

KYRIE: He said it was so long ago he doesn't even remember them.

(Cayley looked to her and shrugged.)

CAYLEY: I don't suppose he does; it was a long time ago.

KYRIE: Fair enough. You should get ready for bed.

(Cayley nodded and slowly started to remove her uniform. As she did so, Kyrie turned away and allowed herself a contented smile. Believing Sir Flaxley was her secret father had made Cayley so happy, she didn't have it in her to tell her it wasn't true. Satisfied that Cayley would keep her secret to herself and wouldn't cause any trouble she decided it was kinder to let her enjoy her delusion. Cayley's happiness was after all, very dear to her heart. Rightly or wrongly, she felt in her heart she was doing the right thing for her.)

Once Cayley was ready for bed she looked to Kyrie and bit her lip.)

CAYLEY: Which bed?

(Kyrie looked to the two beds and mused to herself. One was set along the wall opposite the door and the other was along the right wall at a ninety degree angle to it.)

KYRIE: I don't know. This is a confusing set up.

CAYLEY: Confusing?

KYRIE: Normally beds are side by side.

CAYLEY: I'd hardly call it confusing.

(She rolled her eyes then pointed to the bed opposite the door.)

CAYLEY: Shall I have this one?

(Kyrie nodded.)

KYRIE: Sure. If you want that one.

CAYLEY: I do. We'll be here all night if we let you choose one.

KYRIE: We're going to be here all night anyway, Cayley, it's our bedroom!

CAYLEY: You know what I mean.

(With that, she rolled her eyes and climbed into bed. As soon as she was settled, Kyrie leant over her and kissed her forehead.)

CAYLEY: Tomorrow is going to be the first day of the rest of our lives, Kyrie.

(Kyrie stared straight through her blankly.)

KYRIE: Isn't everyday?

(Cayley chuckled.)

CAYLEY: Yeah, I suppose it is.

KYRIE: Why say it then?

CAYLEY: Because we won't be getting attacked by people anymore. Tomorrow is going to be a fresh start.

(Kyrie exhaled happily.)

KYRIE: You're so right.

(She smiled and looked into Cayley's eyes.)

KYRIE: When we ran away together, I was so scared. I didn't know what we were going to do. I thought if I could keep you safe we might just be okay, but everything's turned out so well.

CAYLEY: Yeah it has. We're in a new land and we have a place to live. I have a school to go to and you have a job. I'm so proud of you, Kyrie.

(Tears then welled in her eyes.)

CAYLEY: So proud of you.

(Kyrie instantly welled up too.)

KYRIE: I'm proud of me too.

(With that, they shared a little cry and a warm, loving hug.)

KYRIE: Oh, sister face. I love you.

CAYLEY: I love you too.

(Kyrie pulled out of the hug then kissed her on the lips.)

KYRIE: Off to sleep now, missy. School in the morning.

CAYLEY: Yay!

(As Cayley rolled over to sleep, Kyrie started to undress and exhaled happily. Right at this moment her life felt complete. Cayley was safe, they had a place to call home and a normal life would resume on the morrow. She had every right to be proud of herself. They'd come off the back of two years of sheer hell and they were still standing strong together. Axion and countless others had failed to destroy them. Thinking it over proudly in her head, Kyrie laid her uniform down, put out the lantern then laid herself down to sleep. She also had an early start in the morning. Giving one last sigh of satisfaction, she rolled over then closed her eyes. Thirty seconds later, however, she opened her eyes and groaned.)

KYRIE: This bed's uncomfortable and the pillow is kinda spiky.

(Cayley yawned.)

CAYLEY: That's a doormat, Kyrie. You're laying on the floor.

(Kyrie sat up and looked about herself.)

KYRIE: Oh my god.

(She'd been so used to hotel rooms having their beds side by side; she'd naturally assumed her bed would be next to Cayley's.)

KYRIE: Where's *my* bed then?

(She furrowed her brow and glanced up at the empty bed.)

KYRIE: We're putting them side by side tomorrow!

(With that, she climbed onto the bed and laid down her head. One second later, she growled.)

KYRIE: Cayley, did you swipe my pillow?

(Cayley sighed.)

CAYLEY: Try looking by your feet!

(Kyrie glanced down the bed and sure enough, there was her pillow.)

KYRIE: What's it doing there? My head's up this end!

CAYLEY: You got in the wrong end, Kyrie.

(Kyrie sighed then turned herself around and placed her head on the pillow.)

KYRIE: That's better.

(Moments later as Cayley started to chuckle, Kyrie furrowed her brow and scowled at her.)

KYRIE: Oh, shut up!

(Seconds later, she too started to giggle.)

KYRIE: I'm dumb!

(As the two of them lay there giggling together, one thing was for certain. They didn't have a worry in the world. Their hell was over. After two long years they were no longer two young girls on the run from turmoil, they were normal girls with normal lives once again. The future was bright and they were looking forward to living it together.)

THE END.

She Seeks Sanctuary. The storyline and all characters are a creation of the artist. The artist reserves all rights to this story and everything within.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED – Futile Fantasy Creations.

First Draft Completed – 14/06/2011.