

FUTILE FANTASY CREATIONS PRESENT...

SILLY SHORTS

TWIN TAILS

PONYTAIL 2

Charging at one another across the Haruaru Desert, on the verge of doing battle, the Shivaha Tribe and their hatred rival, the Kifah Tribe, were kicking up quite the sandstorm beneath their feet. Wielding razor-sharp spears, these two clans of naked warriors were resolved to making this battle a fight to the death. To the winner, the spoils. To the loser, erasure from existence. No man on the losing side would be left alive.

Battles between such tribes never used to insist on such a final outcome, but in recent years, The Shivaha had been the recipients of a dramatic upturn in their fortunes that the other tribes wanted a piece of. The oasis on which their homestead, Shivah, was built had started to flood every Spring, turning the area around it into fertile soil. Food was in abundance and the tribe had grown strong. Anxious to claim this fertile land for themselves, their two rival tribes had turned hostile. First The Wanzah Tribe had tried to take their land, only to be wiped out. Now it was the Kifah's turn to try their luck. They fancied their chances. The Shivaha Tribe had 150 warriors, whereas The Kifah had 210.

As the battle charge continued, just outside the settlement that they were fighting over, the warriors on both sides only had one thing in mind. Kill! The thought of *being* killed never entered the equation. These were men without fear. Men fired up to the point of psychotic bloodlust. This battle was going to be brutal and every man would play a violent part. Or so they thought. As it turned out, however, The Shivaha charge ended prematurely and without incident. Having been belting forth, screaming savage, murderous cries, they very soon slowed to a jog then stopped to watch their rival tribe with their jaws firmly on the floor. They were being ripped apart by a force, akin to a whirlwind.

The Kifah may have had more men, but The Shivaha Tribe had Aya West and her identical twin sister Kaya, occasionally referred to as Ponytail. These two white women, who hailed from the northerly nation of Lenthom had sought refuge in Shivah eight months ago and had made it their home. As such, they were determined to defend it. The Kifah didn't stand a chance. These two young ladies possessed a rare skill which enabled them to zoom across land at immeasurable speeds. You simply couldn't see them coming. They were nothing more than a blur that would vanish before your eyes could even begin to focus. Having grown up attending military schools and academies, they also knew exactly how to kill a man with precision and ultra efficiency.

Within seconds of the girls zooming in to attack, The Kifah charge turned into a panicked mass of terrified and bewildered men trying to resist whatever it was that was happening to them. For all they knew they were being attacked by the gods themselves. All they could see was the occasional white blur and the odd glimpse of flying ponytails. Their two ultra fast adversaries had started by slaughtering the leader before zooming through the ranks, slashing throats as they went. The screams of death and fountains of blood had immediately brought their charge to an end. Any thoughts of battling The Shivaha Tribe were now long forgotten as they battled to merely remain alive for a few seconds more.

With his eyes wide-open in terror, one Kifah warrior paced backwards from where two of his comrades had fallen then bellowed out to a warrior nearby.

CHIM: Can you see them? Can you see them?

KIBUSA: No!

(He shrieked.)

KIBUSA: Fuck! Yes!!! Duck, Chim!!!

(He then winced as Chim's neck exploded with blood.)

KIBUSA: Shit! We need to retreat! We've angered the gods!!!

MARIFU: These are *not* gods; this is black magic!!!

KIBUSA: Whatever is it, the oasis has blessed our enemy! We must retreat!

MARIFU: Retreat? No!!! As a warrior, I'd rather...

(He then died before he could even pre-empt it.)

KIBUSA: No!!!

(He sighed.)

KIBUSA: We can't fight what we can't see.

(He then snarled determinedly.)

KIBUSA: But I will not die without putting up a fight!

(He then glanced around for a blur. Upon spotting something zoom past on the sand, he then gritted his teeth and charged.)

KIBUSA: The Kifah will fight to the end!!! We will never give up!!!

(By the time he reached where he thought the blur might have moved onto, however, it had long gone.)

KIBUSA: I see!

(He then sighed with frustration.)

KIBUSA: Allow me to rephrase. Sometimes we *do* give up.

(He then knelt in the sand and glanced up at the sky to pray to the gods. Having offered his neck up to Kaya, he was then slain where he knelt.)

KAYA: Too easy!

AYA: Right? If only all our enemies did that.

(One of the surviving Kifah glanced about himself in dismay.)

FRAPPU: What is this? Did you hear that??? Women! We are being slaughtered by women!!!

(Another of the tribe was circling anxiously and flailing his sword around, desperately hoping his act of self-preservation would bear fruit.)

LADIBI: I heard nothing! And I've *seen* nothing but a blur!

FRAPPU: They were women's voices!

LADIBI: Goddesses?

FRAPPU: I fear it may be so!

(He whimpered.)

FRAPPU: Only a goddess could have such a cute voice but exert such brutality.

LADIBI: If you truly believe that, you've never met my wife!

FRAPPU: I *introduced* you to your wife!

(He furrowed his brow.)

FRAPPU: When she was *my* girlfriend.

LADIBI: Um...

FRAPPU: I never did get you back for that, did I?

(He then lashed out and cut Ladibi's head off.)

FRAPPU: Seeing as we're gonna die soon anyway; you can have your punishment now.

(He then collapsed to the sand from a fatal wound to the heart that he didn't even see coming.)

FRAPPU: Ow.

(For thirty seconds or so, the assault continued on as sand flew into the air, kicked up by panicking tribesman and the zooming heels of their two female assailants. Once there was only one tribesman left, however, Aya and Kaya came to a halt, side by side, staring him down. The lone survivor, Mitu, couldn't believe his eyes. His tribe had been butchered by two petite women wearing skimpy, white dresses. Clothes simply didn't exist in the desert and seeing them adorning such garments led him straight to the only conclusion he could comprehend. They must be divine entities. As such, he looked at them in stunned awe for a moment then grimaced.)

MITU: That was you, was it?

(He sunk to his knees.)

MITU: Forgive me, goddesses. I throw myself at your mercy.

(Aya smiled.)

AYA: Goddesses again.

KAYA: Right? I love how desert folk assume we're that.

AYA: Yup. Being revered is awesome.

KAYA: But let's stick to the matter in hand.

AYA: Right.

(She nodded.)

AYA: Kill him or let him go?

KAYA: If we don't kill him, our tribe *will*.

AYA: Hmm... and nowhere near as painlessly.

KAYA: So essentially, it'd be kinder if we did it.

AYA: Agreed.

(Mitu nodded solemnly.)

MITU: So I have to die. Very well.

(He offered them a grateful nod.)

MITU: Please. Just make it...

(He then collapsed to the sand, having been culled by Aya. He hadn't even seen her zoom towards him.)

KAYA: Nice work.

AYA: I'm a nice person.

KAYA: Sure...

(Just then, they became acutely aware of the Shivaha tribesman cheering from where they'd watched the cull; some two hundred metres away.)

KAYA: Hmm... it appears we've gained yet more favour with the tribe.

AYA: So it would seem.

KAYA: Yeah.

(She gave her sister a questioning glance.)

KAYA: So? What do you reckon? If they'd *kept* charging, would they have made it over here *before* we killed everyone?

AYA: Hmm... close, I reckon. They might have got here in time to kill one or two, maybe.

KAYA: Useless. Never send a man to do a woman's job, Aya.

AYA: Right?

(They chuckled together then started to head towards where the Shivaha tribe were celebrating. Upon arriving, they were greeted by many a naked, onrushing warrior, eager to throw his arms around them.)

AYA: Now, now, boys; that's enough of that!

KAYA: Easy, tiger.

AYA: Hands!

KAYA: That's by boob!

(The equally naked leader then intervened.)

RAMARI: Enough! Back away from the goddesses!

(His tribe swiftly obliged. Nodding to himself, the big man then stepped forwards.)

RAMARI: Goddess Aya, Goddess Kaya; once again, you have saved our proud nation. I cannot thank you enough! Just like when you wiped out The Wanzah Tribe, you have...

(He then coughed with annoyance.)

RAMARI: Ahem! My eyes are up here!

(Aya and Kaya averted their gaze from his groin and grimaced at him.)

AYA: Sorry.

KAYA: It's just... it's right there...

AYA: Dangling merrily.

KAYA: And it's huge!

(Ramari allowed himself a smug grin.)

RAMARI: Of course. Why do you think they made me the leader?

(He then ruffled his neck to recompose himself.)

RAMARI: Anyway... enough of that.

(He smirked at Aya.)

RAMARI: And it's not like you've never seen it *before*, is it Aya?

KAYA: You slut!

(Aya blushed.)

AYA: What? It's over a foot long and I was curious, that's all.

KAYA: Disgraceful behaviour.

RAMARI: Not that *you're* in any position to judge, Kaya.

(Kaya winced.)

KAYA: Um...

AYA: Wow. Seriously?

KAYA: I was curious too!

RAMARI: Never mind that. Let's just say that a good time was had by all and move on.

AYA: It *was* a good time.

KAYA: Uh-huh.

RAMARI: Indeed. At one point you howled like a wolf. That was interesting.

(Kaya palmed her forehead.)

KAYA: Aw, crap. I'm so embarrassed.

AYA: Don't be. I'm pretty sure I did the same. It's like fifteen inches long!

RAMARI: Can we get back to the point, please???

KAYA: Right. Sorry.

AYA: Carry on.

RAMARI: Thank you.

(He nodded.)

RAMARI: Because of the fine victory you have won for us today, our nation can now expand. And we can do so without fear of attack, for our enemies are no more!

KAYA: Wait. What? Expand? In what way?

RAMARI: In the same way we expanded after you defeated The Wanzah Tribe!

KAYA: Right...

(She nodded then looked to Aya.)

KAYA: What way's that then?

AYA: I have *no* idea.

RAMARI: Then I shall explain. As honourable men of the desert, we are duty bound to absorb the women and children of the defeated tribes into our ranks.

(His men all punched the air and cheered.)

RAMARI: As such, you will all be expected to take a second wife!

(Another, even louder, cheer rose up. There was, however, one dissenting voice from the somewhat effeminate fellow at the front.)

GUBU: Aw. Just my bleeding luck.

(He then threw out a limp wrist in frustration.)

RAMARI: Not you. You're exempt.

(He shrugged at Aya and Kaya.)

RAMARI: He's as gay as a fruitcake, that one. It's his wife I feel sorry for.

AYA: Right...

RAMARI: Anyway...

(He then stood akimbo with his hands on his hips and raised his chin with pride.)

RAMARI: Today is a day of celebration! Our enemies have been destroyed and our nation is now free to flourish. Therefore...

(He sighed.)

RAMARI: I'll remind you once again, ladies, my face is up here!

AYA: Look at the way it's swaying in the breeze.

KAYA: Like a pendulum between his knees.

RAMARI: Ladies!

(Aya and Kaya glanced up at him.)

KAYA: Yes?

RAMARI: I said my face is up *here*.

AYA: Yes, but you're very tall.

KAYA: We'll get stiff necks staring up at that.

RAMARI: But this is important.

(He nodded proudly.)

RAMARI: I have made a decision. As a reward for everything you have done for our tribe, you will be bestowed with the greatest honour our tribe has to offer. You will both be promoted to the rank of Princess of Shivaha!

(The entire tribe cheered once again.)

AYA: Wow. Really? Princess?

KAYA: Like, royalty?

AYA: Kaya...

KAYA: Oh, like *you* 've never asked a stupid question.

AYA: Fair comment.

RAMARI: It was indeed a stupid question, but I shall answer it anyway. Yes; royalty! It isn't just a fancy title. It's the second highest-ranking position in our tribe; only beneath our esteemed leader. Me!

(He nodded.)

RAMARI: Offering you this high-ranking position is the very least our tribe can do in return for all your great work in ensuring our tribe will thrive without peer or hindrance. Do you accept?

(Aya and Kaya looked to one another.)

KAYA: Do we? We do, don't we?

AYA: I can't think of a single reason why we *shouldn't*.

(She shrugged.)

AYA: I mean, being referred to as a goddess *sounds* better, but that was literally just a title in our case. Having a high-ranking *role*, on the other hand, that means something.

KAYA: It does, yes.

(She exhaled.)

KAYA: But more to the point, I've *always* dreamt of becoming a princess.

AYA: Yes, but it's not going to anything like *your* idea of a princess. You'll be a tribal princess. You won't get to wear a flowing dress and a tiara, you know?

(Kaya furrowed her brow.)

KAYA: I'll wear whatever I like, Aya!

AYA: Will you? These people don't *believe* in clothes. So we *may* be expected to...

(They swiftly turned to face Ramari.)

KAYA: We won't have to strut about naked, will we?

AYA: What she said!

RAMARI: You are goddesses who've ascended to the rank of princess. I think you've earned the right to wear what you like.

KAYA: A flowing dress and a tiara it is then.

RAMARI: If that is your choice, we respect it.

(He nodded.)

RAMARI: As ridiculous as the idea of wearing clothes may seem to *us*; who are we to doubt the ideals of goddesses?

AYA: Good answer.

RAMARI: So, do you accept?

KAYA: We do!

AYA: Where do we sign up? And can we get changed first? We're covered in blood.

RAMARI: Of course.

(He nodded.)

RAMARI: Today, is a day for preparations. The ceremony will be held tomorrow. At sunrise.

KAYA: That's early.

RAMARI: It is, yes, but we *have* to start early.

(He grimaced.)

RAMARI: It tends to drag on a bit, you see?

(He then folded his arms.)

RAMARI: Come. We shall return to the village where you will receive further instruction.

(He groaned.)

RAMARI: And how many times? My face is up here!!!

Back in the village, one hour later, the naked duo of Aya and Kaya found themselves kneeling around a bucket of water in the centre of their tent, scrubbing away at their white dresses. The bloodstains from the battle were proving to be extremely stubborn.

AYA: Easy, Kaya; you'll rip it if you scrub it any harder.

KAYA: But if I don't I'll *never* get the stains out.

(She sighed.)

KAYA: What's their blood made from exactly? It's not normally this hard to wash off bloodstains.

AYA: Because we'd normally use vinegar.

(She sighed.)

AYA: I love this village, I really do, but sometimes I miss home comforts like that.

KAYA: Yeah. Washing was so much easier in Lenthom.

AYA: They don't have wine here either. That sucks.

KAYA: Or a clothes shop.

AYA: Yeah.

(She nodded sternly.)

AYA: That's the one thing I *would* change. I'd love a new outfit; I really would.

KAYA: Some hopes. Clothes are such an alien concept here, *we're* considered prudes! Who'd have thought that would ever happen?

AYA: After a lifetime of getting nagged for being *underdressed*? Not me.

KAYA: Right? We've gone from being considered scantily clad tarts to being seen as overdressed prudes. We can't win, can we?

AYA: We really can't. People are shit, Kaya.

KAYA: Yes. Yes, they are.

(Just then, a female voice rose up from the entrance to the tent.)

MYASHA: Greetings, goddesses.

(Aya and Kaya glanced over their shoulders at her then smiled.)

AYA: Hi.

KAYA: Hello.

AYA: Can we help you?

MYASHA: Yes. My name is Myasha. Ramari sent me. It's about the ceremony tomorrow.

Do you have a few minutes?

(Aya and Kaya shrugged.)

AYA: Sure.

KAYA: Take a seat.

(They then headed over to a semi-circular wooden bench with a crude, woven cover draped over it.)

KAYA: I kinda miss sofas too.

AYA: God, yes.

MYASHA: Sorry?

KAYA: Nothing. Just thinking. Please...

(She gestured to the semi-circular seat. Moments later, once they were all seated with Myasha in the middle, their meeting commenced.)

MYASHA: May I start by congratulating you both on your ascent.

AYA: You may, yes.

KAYA: Thank you.

MYASHA: Our humble tribe are honoured by your acceptance. Noble goddesses of purest beauty; counting you among our number brings us all much joy.

KAYA: Aw. That's so sweet.

AYA: Right?

(Myasha then sighed.)

MYASHA: You make me feel humble. I'd kill for your boobs.

KAYA: What?

MYASHA: They're so big they could feed the entire village.

AYA: Um...

MYASHA: If you were lactating, I mean.

AYA: Right...

MYASHA: Sorry. I got distracted. I'm deeply envious. Of your boobs.

KAYA: We get it!

MYASHA: Oh. Right. Yes.

(She ruffled her neck to compose herself then continued.)

MYASHA: Anyway, I was asked to come and talk you through the ceremony; to let you know what it entails.

KAYA: Okay.

MYASHA: We start at sunrise.

AYA: Okay. That much we knew.

MYASHA: Those in attendance will be, yourselves, our esteemed leader and every male member of the tribe.

KAYA: Just the men folk?

MYASHA: That's right.

AYA: A bit sexist, but okay.

MYASHA: The ceremony should end around sunset. And then the entire village will feast.

KAYA: Ooh, I like a feast.

AYA: They're the best thing ever.

KAYA: I concur.

MYASHA: Motion carried.

(She nodded.)

MYASHA: But there's a lot to do before we reach the feasting stage.

KAYA: Go on.

MYASHA: It begins with vows.

AYA: Vows?

(She chuckled.)

AYA: What, like a wedding?

MYASHA: No. Not *like* a wedding.

(She smiled.)

MYASHA: It *is* a wedding.

(Aya and Kaya glowered at her.)

AYA: Excuse me?

MYASHA: You sound surprised. How can you be surprised? You're becoming princesses because you agreed to marry the prince.

(Aya and Kaya flinched in perfect synchronicity.)

KAYA: Come again!

AYA: We did what now?

KAYA: When? And what prince?

MYASHA: Crown Prince Ramari.

AYA: Um...

KAYA: Wait... what?

MYASHA: Again, you sound surprised. He told me you'd *agreed* to marry him.

KAYA: He didn't even *ask* us to marry him.

AYA: There wasn't even the slightest mention of it.

MYASHA: But did you not accept the position of princesses?

KAYA: Well... yeah, but...

MYASHA: Then the fact it was a proposal was *obvious*. We do not have kings and queens. We have a Crown Prince and to agree to become a princess is to agree to marry *him*.

KAYA: Right...

AYA: That's news to us.

MYASHA: I see. But still... congratulations.

(She exhaled.)

MYASHA: You're so lucky. All the women in this village want to marry *him*.

KAYA: On account of his massive...

MYASHA: Because he's our leader.

KAYA: Right.

(Aya giggled.)

AYA: Fuck sake, Kaya.

KAYA: I didn't know, did I?

MYASHA: Anyway, moving on...

KAYA: Right. I'm not sure I *want* to move on, to be honest. Marriage?

AYA: Yeah...

(Myasha exhaled.)

MYASHA: That's right. Like I said, you're so lucky.

KAYA: Well...

AYA: You *say* that...

MYASHA: Anyway, *after* the vows...

KAYA: Hold on. This isn't what we signed up for.

MYASHA: We'll move on to the confirmation.

KAYA: Wait. I said...

MYASHA: That's where you'll have to prove...

KAYA: We don't want to.

MYASHA: Your allegiance to the tribe.

KAYA: She's not listening, Aya.

AYA: Nope.

(She furrowed her brow.)

AYA: Stop!!! Myasha, is it?

MYASHA: Yes?

AYA: We didn't agree to marry *anybody*.

MYASHA: You didn't?

KAYA: No.

MYASHA: I see.

(She then smiled.)

MYASHA: But still. It's the Crown Prince. Like you'd turn *him* down.

KAYA: Actually...

AYA: Oh, just let her say what she has to say and we can refute it later. Carry on, Myasha.

MYASHA: Right. Okay.

(She nodded.)

MYASHA: I'll start again. After the vows, you'll move onto the confirmation, where you'll prove your allegiance to the tribe.

KAYA: Right...

AYA: And how would we go about that exactly?

KAYA: By reciting a speech probably

MYASHA: No, no; nothing dull like that.

(She smiled.)

MYASHA: You'll prove your allegiance by conceiving an heir.

(Aya and Kaya's brows instantly furrowed.)

MYASHA: I warn you now though. That's going to be exhausting. You see, it's a princess's duty to produce an heir as soon as possible. The first born son, you see, will become the successor to the Prince's throne.

(She nodded.)

MYASHA: So, in accordance with the laws of our tribe, you'll both be impregnated there and then. At the ceremony.

KAYA: Wanna fucking bet?

MYASHA: Sorry?

AYA: Are you seriously telling me, you expect us to get rogered by the crown prince in front of the entire delegation?

MYASHA: No, nothing like that.

(She smiled.)

MYASHA: You'll get rogered by the entire delegation before the prince has *his* turn.

(Kaya's voice became extremely shrill at this point.)

KAYA: What???

MYASHA: Yeah. Like I said, it'll be exhausting.

(She sighed.)

MYASHA: But that's how it is. Tribal tradition forbids one family from having a dynasty, so all the warriors have to take it in turns to roger the princess until she has a male heir. That way nobody knows who the father is, thus preventing one family from ever asserting control. Clever, right?

(She grimaced.)

MYASHA: That's why the ceremony's going to take so long. There's two of you and all one hundred and fifty or so warriors are going to have to do both of you.

(She smiled.)

MYASHA: But don't worry. They've been instructed to thrust as fast as possible in order to speed up ejaculation.

(Aya growled.)

AYA: How thoughtful.

MYASHA: Right?

(She sat back.)

MYASHA: So? Any questions?

AYA: No! None! Not one. We've heard more than enough, thank you.

(She pointed to the exit.)

AYA: You may leave!

KAYA: In fact, we insist on it.

MYASHA: Oh. Well... okay.

(She climbed to her feet.)

MYASHA: I'll return just before dawn to collect you. Oh, and don't wear clothes.

(She then bowed and headed for the doorway of the tent.)

MYASHA: Farewell, sweet goddesses. Thank you for blessing me with the honour of your company.

(She then headed out of the tent. Almost immediately, Aya and Kaya turned and scowled at one another.)

AYA: Nope!

KAYA: That's what I was gonna say.

(She shuddered.)

KAYA: There's no way I'm lying on my back, in full view of everybody, while a hundred and fifty well-endowed men make merry with my love bucket.

AYA: I know, right?

KAYA: It's ridiculous. They all have massive dongs, Aya; that's gonna chafe like hell!

AYA: Like *that's* the issue! They want to impregnate us, Kaya!

KAYA: Right. Yes. You're right. That's far worse.

(She grimaced.)

KAYA: Sorry. As soon as she mentioned it, I pictured their massive man parts and all I could think about was a fiery, burning sensation in my girl parts.

AYA: Yes, well, that's not even relevant, is it? Even if they all had *tiny* todgers like Commander Croxley, it'd still be a no.

KAYA: Right? That would be much easier though. No chafing there. That thing would barely touch the sides.

AYA: Kaya, can you stop focussing on the size of the penises and wake up, please?
Pregnancy, woman!
KAYA: I know!
AYA: Do you?
(She sighed with frustration.)
AYA: Sometimes I think the people of Lenthom named you Ponytail, because they *had* to reference the *outside* of your head.
(Kaya shook her head at her.)
KAYA: Really? Are you still jealous because I was given a superhero nickname and you weren't?
AYA: No.
(She ruffled her neck.)
AYA: It wasn't really fair though, was it? *I* saved the town too; they just didn't see my part.
KAYA: Wow.
(She rolled her eyes.)
KAYA: Just let it go, will you? We need to focus on our next move.
AYA: Yes, well... I'd have thought our next move was obvious.
(They glanced into each other's eyes.)
KAYA: I agree.
AYA: I didn't say anything.
KAYA: We're twins. I can read you like a book. You think we should flee in the night.
AYA: Wrong. *I am* going to flee in the night.
KAYA: Nope. Now it's your turn to be wrong.
(She nodded.)
KAYA: *We're* gonna flee in the night!
AYA: Right. Which way are you thinking?
KAYA: The same as you, I expect.
AYA: North!
KAYA: Maybe not then.
AYA: North just makes sense. For all we know, every other direction might just lead to more desert. Only hotter. And with no oasis. Certain death!
KAYA: That's why I want to go west; back towards Lenthom.
AYA: That's north!
KAYA: It's west!
(They groaned at each other then headed for a map on the wall. Having scanned it with their eyes, they both blushed then glanced away.)
KAYA: Right. So... we'll be heading north-west then.
AYA: Apparently so.
(She then glanced at her sister sternly.)
AYA: Let's get our bags ready, shall we? As soon as that sun vanishes over the horizon we're out of here.
KAYA: Uh-huh. And not a second later!

That afternoon in the nation of Lenthom's capital city, Tifrel, three exhausted men staggered through the streets, towards the large military complex at its heart. Looking very much like they'd just escaped from a war torn hell hole, their clothes were ripped, their boots were on the verge of disintegrating and you could barely see their faces for dirt. The people of the city were giving them an extremely wide berth. Not only did they *look* hideous, but they smelt like a mixture of rotten sewage and death.

Caring very little for the disgusted remarks and revolted glances they were receiving, the three men soldiered forth with their eyes fixed on their goal. The guard at the gate. Not about to relent in their slow and painful stagger, despite their aching feet and burning limbs, they continued on until they were close enough for the guard to acknowledge them. Able to smell them from fifty feet away, the guard in question was not slow in calling them to a halt from a distance and shouting at them.

GUARD: This is a military base! State your business or be on your way!

(He then drew his sword, much to the disdain of the exhausted man in the centre of the three.)

CROXLEY: Put that sword away, you cunt! It's me; Commander Croxley!

(The guard flinched.)

GUARD: Commander???

CROXLEY: You heard me, dickhead. Now let us through!

(The guard scoffed.)

GUARD: Wait! You're not Commander Croxley! Commander Croxley didn't have a beard!

(He then called over his shoulder.)

GUARD: We've got three chancers here, Dave. Bring some of the boys over here.

CROXLEY: I *am* Commander Croxley, you low-ranking halfwit! I've been away on active duty for seven months!!! During which time, I *grew* a beard!!!

GUARD: Yeah? Then who's that with you?

CROXLEY: These two cunts are Agent Six and Agent Seven!

AGENT SIX: I don't think calling us cunts was really necessary, sir.

AGENT SEVEN: Especially after all the shit we've *been* through together.

AGENT SIX: Because of *you*!

CROXLEY: Nobody asked your opinions!!!

(He snarled.)

CROXLEY: Now let us through, guard!

GUARD: Not until you prove you're who you *say* you are!!!

(Croxley growled.)

CROXLEY: I'm gonna hit you with my sword in a minute, boy! The pointy end!

GUARD: Don't be like that. If you are indeed the Commander, you know damned well there are protocols here at the gate.

CROXLEY: There are protocols in *all* walks of army life, you prick! Such as the one that demands that you do what the fuck your seniors *tell* you to do!!!

(Just then, another guard appeared and flinched in astonishment.)

DAVE: Commander? Commander Croxley?

CROXLEY: What?

(He looked enlightened.)

CROXLEY: Wait! I know you! You're Bob!

DAVE: Dave!

CROXLEY: Dave Bobb?

DAVE: No.

(He sighed.)

DAVE: Doesn't matter. Look, we've been given strict instructions...

CROXLEY: Who?

DAVE: The gate team.

CROXLEY: Gotcha.

DAVE: We've been told that if you ever come back, we have you send you directly to the Major-General's office. Right away!

GUARD: Are you sure that's wise? Only, I can smell him from here.

DAVE: Good point.
(He nodded.)
DAVE: Maybe you should visit the showers *then* go.
CROXLEY: Fine! Just let me in!
DAVE: Very well. Use the showers in the training block.
CROXLEY: No! I'll use the showers in the officer's mess.
DAVE: I wouldn't advise that, sir?
CROXLEY: Oh? And why not?
DAVE: They won't let you in smelling like that.
CROXLEY: Why, you...
DAVE: Just use the training block. You can get cleaned up there and borrow a training uniform before you go and visit the Major-General, without offending your fellow officers with the smell. It just makes sense.
(Croxley growled.)
CROXLEY: Fine. I suppose that *does* make sense. I don't exactly *want* my peers to see me looking like this. I'll head to the training block then. Just let me in.
DAVE: Yes, sir.
(He then helped the other guard crank open the gate. Delighted to see it, the three worn out men staggered forth through them. With every step they took, the two men at the gate paced backwards, holding their noses.)
CROXLEY: That's deeply offensive, you know that, right?
DAVE: So is the smell, sir.
CROXLEY: Yes, well... if you'd just endured the hell *we've* endured you'd be a lot more sympathetic, I'm sure.
(He pouted.)
CROXLEY: It's been miserable.
(He then paced onwards, shaking his head.)

In the military base's command centre, approximately one hour later, Major-General Highcroft was in conference with one of his generals; General Goodman. The two men would meet twice a week to discuss the latest developments in Lenthom's war with neighbouring Nawsland. Well aware of the importance of being adaptable during wartime, they'd use these meetings to define tactics and devise back up plans should those tactics fail. Their latest discussion, however, wasn't going so well. There was a problem at hand that neither of them knew how to resolve.
HIGHCROFT: So, what you're telling me, General, is that we may never find out who these miscreants are.
GENERAL: As long as they stay in situ, that might well be the case, I'm afraid.
HIGHCROFT: Shit.
(He bit his lip.)
HIGHCROFT: In that case, maybe we handled the task poorly from the beginning.
GENERAL: I don't see how, sir. In fact, I wouldn't consider anything we've done to be a misstep.
(He sat back and bit his lip.)
GENERAL: We found out that Nawsland had posted spies in several small towns in order to seduce the town chiefs for information, so we warned the town chiefs. That was the right thing to do. Unfortunately, information *kept* slipping out because, quite clearly, some of the randy buggers were so blinded by the spy's feminine charms, they couldn't see them as a threat.

(He nodded.)

GENERAL: So we simply stopped sending town chiefs the latest security updates. The right thing once again. Nothing in that was a misstep.

HIGHCROFT: Indeed. I wholeheartedly agree.

(He sucked his teeth.)

HIGHCROFT: Unfortunately, finding out who those spies *are* is nigh on impossible. And unless the town chiefs come forward and *admit* to shagging a floozy and accidentally let information slip, we might never find out.

GENERAL: Unless the spies decide to suddenly skip town because the information has dried up.

HIGHCROFT: Which few are stupid enough to do, because they know it'll give them away.

GENERAL: Indeed.

HIGHCROFT: Meaning many of our small towns still have Nawsland spies in their midst and we've got no way of flushing them out.

GENERAL: That's about the shape of it, sir.

HIGHCROFT: Quite.

(He nodded sternly.)

HIGHCROFT: Actually, I refuse to accept that. There has to be a way, General, and you and I are going to sit here until we've thought of one. I don't care how long it takes either. You and I have one task today and that's finding a solution to this problem.

(Just then, there was a knocking on the door.)

HIGHCROFT: Shit. I'll get rid of whoever that is and we can get down to it.

GENERAL: Sir.

(The Major-General glanced at the door.)

HIGHCROFT: Enter!

(The door then crept open and Commander Croxley stuck his head around it.)

CROXLEY: You wanted to see me, sir?

GENERAL: Be gone, Commander; we're in the midst of an important discussion here.

HIGHCROFT: Not anymore!

GENERAL: Sir?

(The Major-General's nostril's twitched.)

HIGHCROFT: Get in here, Croxley.

CROXLEY: Sir.

HIGHCROFT: Wait outside, General.

GENERAL: But sir...

HIGHCROFT: Go!

(He then glowered at Croxley.)

HIGHCROFT: I've waited a bloody long time for this!

(The general sighed then upped and headed for the door.)

GENERAL: Very well.

HIGHCROFT: Excellent.

(He watched the general leave before glowering at Croxley again.)

HIGHCROFT: Sit!

CROXLEY: Sir.

HIGHCROFT: But not comfortably.

(He nodded.)

HIGHCROFT: In fact, grab that rock hard cushion from the sofa and put that on the chair before you sit down.

CROXLEY: Um...

HIGHCROFT: Now, Sergeant!!!

CROXLEY: Sergeant???

HIGHCROFT: Would you rather be a corporal? The rank of *private* is available too!

(With a flinch, Croxley hurriedly grabbed the rock hard cushion then raced over to a seat before the Major-General's desk and sat down on it.)

HIGHCROFT: Thank you.

CROXLEY: Right... yes...

(He bit his lip.)

CROXLEY: So... I, um... sense you're not in the best of moods with me, sir.

(Major-General Highcroft just sat there and silently scowled at him.)

CROXLEY: Right. I sensed correctly.

HIGHCROFT: Croxley!

CROXLEY: Sir?

HIGHCROFT: I'd like you to explain something to me. I'd like you to explain a few things, actually. Starting with where the fucking hell you've been for seven months. And why!

CROXLEY: Well...

HIGHCROFT: In your own time. And your own words. If any of those words turn out to be a lie, however, there *will* be consequences. Such as a punch in the face or a mallet to the testicles; depends how I feel at the time really.

(He nodded.)

HIGHCROFT: You may begin.

(Very much aware that he was in a world of trouble, Croxley sat up straight and immediately began to orate his explanation with a view to making himself sound as heroic as possible.)

CROXLEY: Well, sir; we had a situation, you see? A mission came in seven months ago, so as per my role as head of the special agent unit, as always, I assigned the two men whom I thought were the best ones for the task. Unfortunately, angry at being overlooked, two other agents took it upon themselves to sabotage those agents then do the mission themselves. They deserted in order to prove a point.

(He nodded.)

CROXLEY: Well, sir, desertion will not be tolerated. As you know, I'm a stickler for the rules, so I took two of my best agents and headed off in pursuit of them. My goal was to arrest them and bring them back into the fold.

(He sighed.)

CROXLEY: Unfortunately, when we arrived at the location in question, the township of Birdstone, the deserters had already completed the mission and were now on the run. Well, in my capacity of the head of their unit, I decided to go after them and bring them back into the fold. For months on end I pursued them, determined to catch them and return them to the base.

HIGHCROFT: And *did* you catch them?

CROXLEY: Unfortunately not, sir. Despite my best efforts, they somehow gave us the slip. We must have taken a wrong turn somewhere, probably during a blizzard, because I know for a fact that we were right there on their tail for quite some time.

(He shook his head.)

CROXLEY: It was deeply unfortunate. Truly.

HIGHCROFT: So that's where you were, is it? Pursuing them?

CROXLEY: Up hill and down dale, sir; we left no stone unturned in our search.

HIGHCROFT: I see.

(He smiled then sat back.)

HIGHCROFT: I feel you may have left a few things out of that rendition of events.

CROXLEY: Me, sir? No, sir?

HIGHCROFT: Oh, but you did, didn't you? You see, I happen to know you also took agent twenty-three with you. You left him in Birdstone.

CROXLEY: Ah, yes. I *did* forget that minor detail, sir. Forgive me. It's been a while and my memory is a little hazy.

HIGHCROFT: How convenient.

CROXLEY: Well...

HIGHCROFT: I had a good chat with agent twenty-three when he returned to this base, you know? He told me all about how agent fifty-nine sabotaged your journey to Birdstone, giving agent sixty time to complete the mission. Apparently, she made a monkey of you all.

CROXLEY: Well... I wouldn't have said monkey, sir.

HIGHCROFT: You don't have to. Agent twenty-three already said it. He also said, you headed off after the two deserters by charging up the mountain.

CROXLEY: That's correct.

HIGHCROFT: He also told me that the townsfolk were giggling because the two agents you were pursuing ran *down* the mountain.

CROXLEY: What? But I was told...

HIGHCROFT: I know. That's what they were giggling about. A humble townsman sent you off in the wrong direction.

(Croxley's brow furrowed.)

CROXLEY: The bastard!

HIGHCROFT: Well, what did you expect? You were *trying* to arrest the two agents who'd saved their town from obliteration. They were never going to help you, were they? Only an idiot would think otherwise. That idiot being you.

CROXLEY: Right... well... that's... so were never close to catching them at any point?

HIGHCROFT: Correct.

(He nodded.)

HIGHCROFT: Now punch yourself in the face.

CROXLEY: What?

HIGHCROFT: Are you deaf? I said punch yourself in the face. Go on.

CROXLEY: Why would I...

HIGHCROFT: Because if you don't, I will.

CROXLEY: You'll punch yourself in the face?

HIGHCROFT: No! I'll punch you! Now do it!

CROXLEY: Right.

(With that, he braced himself then gave himself a right hook to his own chin.)

HIGHCROFT: Excellent.

CROXLEY: Thank you, sir.

HIGHCROFT: Did it hurt?

CROXLEY: Not really, sir.

HIGHCROFT: Then clearly you did it wrong. Do it again.

CROXLEY: But, sir...

HIGHCROFT: Do it!

(Croxley sighed in defeat then punched himself again.)

CROXLEY: Ow!

HIGHCROFT: There you go. That's much better.

(He nodded.)

HIGHCROFT: So, now I know where you've been, we can get down to the crux of the issue.

CROXLEY: It sounds to me like you *already* knew where I'd been. Agent twenty-three already told you.

HIGHCROFT: Ah, yes. That's very true, actually. And me *already* knowing things is going to be the theme of this conversation, I'm afraid. You see, once my two precious agents, fifty-nine and sixty went missing I did some research.

CROXLEY: Precious, sir?

HIGHCROFT: Yes. Extremely precious. I was horrified, so I did a little digging into *why* they might have disappeared. And now I know everything about it. And everything about you! So, please, bear that in mind when answering in future.

(He furrowed his brow.)

HIGHCROFT: I already *know* what happened!

(Croxley gulped.)

HIGHCROFT: Yes, you might well gulp, arse-face.

CROXLEY: Arse-face?

HIGHCROFT: That's right, shitty-bollocks.

CROXLEY: Um...

HIGHCROFT: What? What's wrong? Do you think I'm being unreasonable?

CROXLEY: Well...

HIGHCROFT: I do seem very cross, don't I?

(He raised a questioning eyebrow.)

HIGHCROFT: Would you like me to tell you why?

CROXLEY: Um... no?

HIGHCROFT: I said, would you like me to tell you why?

CROXLEY: Right. Understood. Yes, please.

HIGHCROFT: Very well. If you insist.

(He then leant on the arm of his chair and sighed.)

HIGHCROFT: I'll start by telling you a story.

CROXLEY: I look forward to hearing it.

HIGHCROFT: Shut up!

CROXLEY: Yes, sir.

HIGHCROFT: Roughly six years ago, I received a memo from the headmaster at Easton Grange Military Academy. It was in regard to two of his female students. Aya and Kaya West. He asked me to come down and assess them. According to him, they were a phenomenon. They had abilities the likes of which he'd never seen before. It had to be seen to be believed, he said. So I popped along.

(He shrugged.)

HIGHCROFT: Mostly out of curiosity. I mean, I've seen a lot of talented students before, what could possibly be any different about these two?

CROXLEY: They...

HIGHCROFT: If you speak again, I'll smash my decanter over your head.

(Croxley just sank in his seat.)

HIGHCROFT: Wise.

(He exhaled.)

HIGHCROFT: Honestly, Corporal...

(Croxley winced.)

HIGHCROFT: I've never seen anything like it. They could zoom at speeds that were impossible for the eye to follow. And they knew how to kill a man; and what's more they were happy to do it. They fully understood the concept of kill or be killed, you see? I tell you, my eyes lit up. With those two girls in our ranks, our chances of winning this war, would rise exponentially. They were essentially stealth assassins who didn't even need to hide. The ultimate soldiers! So I signed them up! There and then!

(His brow then started to furrow.)

HIGHCROFT: I needed to make the most of their talents, Croxley. To maximise their potential. To get the best out of *easily* the two greatest assets in our *entire* military. So I sent them to the special agent unit, where they'd be under the command of my most trusted commander.

(Croxley rapidly started sinking in his seat.)

HIGHCROFT: That was you, by the way. You!

(Croxley could only scratch his neck and whimper.)

HIGHCROFT: But that's enough of the story telling. Let's have a quiz instead.

(He nodded.)

HIGHCROFT: You may now speak, but only to answer my questions. Understood?

CROXLEY: Yes, sir.

HIGHCROFT: Excellent. Question one. I sent those two girls to you to do missions and continue to hone their skills. What did you have them do instead? You may answer.

(Croxley's bottom lip quivered.)

CROXLEY: Well... I... you see... I wasn't quite sure about... you know...

HIGHCROFT: Incorrect! The answer was, you had them doing sexual favours for visiting generals and serving drinks wearing only a thong, in the officer's mess.

CROXLEY: Um...

HIGHCROFT: Question two. A week before I transferred those two young ladies to your command, I sent you the funds to build a female only dorm and shower block in order to accommodate them. What did you do with the money? You may answer.

CROXLEY: Right. Well, you see, sir...

HIGHCROFT: Bear in mind, I already know the answer and any attempt to bullshit me is going to cost you dear. Very dear!

(Croxley grimaced anxiously for a moment then hung his head.)

CROXLEY: I spent it on a golf weekend for myself and the other higher ups.

HIGHCROFT: Correct!

CROXLEY: I can explain, sir...

HIGHCROFT: No need. I already know what happened, remember? I wasn't just going to ignore the fact that my two greatest assets had fled, was I? It was only natural for me to investigate, old boy. You didn't want females in your unit and considered them an unwanted hindrance, so you gave them nothing.

CROXLEY: Yes... I... wish I could deny that, but...

HIGHCROFT: Question three!

CROXLEY: Shit.

HIGHCROFT: When I ordered you to send two agents to our allies in the Saumur nation in order to pose as new recruits while searching out a spy, why did you send agents fifty-nine and sixty to work in the harem instead? You may answer.

CROXLEY: Um... I figured we'd have more success that way.

HIGHCROFT: Incorrect! The answer is, because you're a cunt.

CROXLEY: Yes, sir. Sorry.

HIGHCROFT: Actually, that was just *my* take on it. The real reason was, agent sixty kept pestering you for missions, so you did it to teach her a lesson. Didn't you?

(Croxley hung his head.)

CROXLEY: What can I tell you, sir; I'm ashamed and embarrassed.

HIGHCROFT: Not to mention a cunt and a bell-end.

CROXLEY: That too.

HIGHCROFT: I hate you, Croxley. I sent them to you because I believed you'd take good care of them. And more importantly, make good use of them. Instead, you made them live in

a dorm with randy male soldiers and do perverted chores for the higher-ups. That harem mission was the only one you ever gave them!

CROXLEY: And I feel awful about it, sir.

HIGHCROFT: Good. I hope so too.

(He smiled.)

HIGHCROFT: But I'm a fair man, if nothing else. And I'm willing to give you a shot at redemption.

(He nodded.)

HIGHCROFT: As opposed to simply having you shot out of a cannon.

CROXLEY: Sir?

HIGHCROFT: That was my original thought, but no. I'll give you a chance to make things right.

CROXLEY: That's very gracious of you, sir. And to repay your faith in me, I promise to lead the unit with nothing but the utmost honour and integrity from now on.

HIGHCROFT: Oh, no, no, no, no, no. You misunderstand. That ship already sailed. I made Bingley the commander of that unit months ago.

CROXLEY: What???

HIGHCROFT: You went missing in action, dick head!

(He ruffled his neck.)

HIGHCROFT: And I'm glad, because it forced me to investigate and now I realise you're not cut out for such a role anyway.

CROXLEY: But my redemption...

HIGHCROFT: Ah, yes.

(He nodded.)

HIGHCROFT: Get a good night's sleep then go to the gate at eight AM. Don't be late.

You'll be met by three men of my choosing. You can lead the group, despite being a lowly corporal.

(Croxley's shoulder's slumped.)

CROXLEY: And what will I have to do?

HIGHCROFT: I'm glad you asked me that, I really am.

(He smiled.)

HIGHCROFT: You're going to go to Birdstone to make a start on a somewhat delicate task. I want you to find agents fifty nine and sixty and ask them to come back.

CROXLEY: But, sir... I just came back from hunting them down and...

HIGHCROFT: It's either that or be fired!

CROXLEY: In that case, I'll drag them back kicking and screaming, sir.

(Highcroft gave an exasperate sigh.)

HIGHCROFT: No, you fucking won't! You'll find them then ask them nicely to come back!

CROXLEY: Ask them nicely? They're deserters, sir!

HIGHCROFT: On the contrary, after the way *you* treated them, there isn't a single court in the land who wouldn't consider them refugees, fleeing from a repressive regime! You cast them into what in legal terms would be considered sexual slavery!

CROXLEY: Right...

HIGHCROFT: But our army needs them. It needs them to come back because they *want* to fight for their country. Force them and they'll just run away again. And you know damned well, there isn't a single person in our entire military who could even begin to stop them. No. Their return can only be voluntary. They'll be no use to anybody otherwise. In fact, they may even turn on the Lenthom army and if they do, we can consider the war lost!

CROXLEY: Right. Yes. That makes sense.

(He sighed.)

CROXLEY: Trouble is, I wouldn't even know where to start.

HIGHCROFT: By speaking to their father, obviously. I have a sneaking feeling he might know more than he's letting on.

CROXLEY: Their father?

HIGHCROFT: The chief!

(Croxley flinched.)

CROXLEY: The chief of Birdstone is their father???

HIGHCROFT: Yes. Didn't you know?

CROXLEY: No! The shifty bugger didn't say a word!

HIGHCROFT: Maybe he didn't know at the time. One thing I do know is, he only found out after the Nawsland attack. But then again, he might not have told you anyway. He wasn't going to help you *capture* his children, was he? And that's why it needs to be civil this time. Ask those girls nicely. Beg if you have to.

CROXLEY: Right... yes. Okay. If I can find them.

HIGHCROFT: It's for your own good, shit sack. You never know, showing humility and apologising might just open a few doors for you.

CROXLEY: Well... I can try.

HIGHCROFT: Begging?

CROXLEY: Asking.

HIGHCROFT: Croxley, you'll fucking well beg if need be, do you understand?

(Croxley sighed.)

CROXLEY: Sir.

HIGHCROFT: Excellent.

(He nodded.)

HIGHCROFT: Let's see it then.

CROXLEY: See what, sir?

HIGHCROFT: You begging.

CROXLEY: Begging?

HIGHCROFT: That's right. Get on your knees and grovel, go on.

(Croxley scratched his head.)

CROXLEY: What... like... now?

HIGHCROFT: Why? Have you got something better to do, fuck face?

CROXLEY: Well, no... it's just...

HIGHCROFT: Then get down on your bloody knees and prove to me that your grovelling skills are up to scratch! I need to see it for myself. Only then will I be satisfied that you're capable of the contrition required to win those girls back!

CROXLEY: Right...

(He slowly climbed to his feet.)

CROXLEY: And where shall I...

(Highcroft turned his seat sideways then pointed to his feet.)

HIGHCROFT: Down there.

CROXLEY: Right. Shit.

HIGHCROFT: Sorry?

CROXLEY: I said, yes, sir.

(He then stepped around the desk and knelt before the Major-General.)

CROXLEY: Do you want me to start?

HIGHCROFT: Well, who else is going to?

CROXLEY: No, I meant, do you want me to start *now*?

HIGHCROFT: I do, yes. And I expect to hear much in the way of apologising and self-depreciation.

CROXLEY: Depreciation...

HIGHCROFT: Yes. You know, calling yourself a cunt and all that. Insult yourself liberally and be creative about it. Go on.

CROXLEY: Right...

HIGHCROFT: Start!

(Croxley whimpered then hung his head.)

CROXLEY: I apologise, fair ladies.

HIGHCROFT: What??? Did you just call me a lady???

CROXLEY: No. I was showing you how I'll grovel to agents fifty-nine and sixty.

HIGHCROFT: They're not here!

CROXLEY: I know that. I...

HIGHCROFT: And *why* aren't they here?

CROXLEY: Because...

(He sighed then told the Major-General what he wanted to hear.)

CROXLEY: I'm a cunt.

HIGHCROFT: There you go. Now you're getting it.

(He nodded.)

HIGHCROFT: Okay. Start over. And apologise to *me* this time. And if your feeble brain can't comprehend why you should do such a thing, then let me enlighten you! I secured our nation the two most lethal warriors ever to enter an army barracks! Warriors that could well be the difference between winning and losing this war! And I entrusted them to *you*!!! You should have been overjoyed! They were fifteen and still eager to learn! Ready to be moulded in the ultimate fighting machines! But no. What did you do? Turned them into kinky sex bunnies!

CROXLEY: Well... yes... I did do that, sir, but in my defence, I didn't make them do anything filthy until they were eighteen.

HIGHCROFT: And you think that counts in your favour, do you?

CROXLEY: Well... a little bit.

HIGHCROFT: Then you're wrong. That just means they did fuck all for three years!

CROXLEY: That's not true.

HIGHCROFT: Oh, no, that's right. You made them clean the barracks every day then kept the money we spent on cleaning crews!!!

(He sighed.)

HIGHCROFT: Why am I even giving you this second chance?

(He then growled.)

HIGHCROFT: Grovel, Croxley! Grovel well, or you're going to find an all new respect for the word ouch.

CROXLEY: Right. Yes. Right away, sir.

(He took a deep breath then began.)

CROXLEY: Major-General, I apologise. Am I weak and feeble man. Less than a cockroach.

HIGHCROFT: It's a good start.

CROXLEY: I deserve to be flogged.

HIGHCROFT: I agree.

CROXLEY: A hundred years worth of grovelling could never make up for what I've done. I'm an awful human being.

HIGHCROFT: Harsher!

CROXLEY: I'm a complete and utter fuckwit and me and my tiny penis don't even deserve to be in the same room as you.

HIGHCROFT: That's better.

CROXLEY: I pledge to you, sir, that I'll do whatever it takes to make amends. Even though I'm the worst kind of lowlife maggot...

HIGHCROFT: The *very* worst.

CROXLEY: I hope you'll allow me to make it up to you by serving you until my dying day with nothing but honour and respect. Not that a filthy, low down, pig like me deserves a second chance.

HIGHCROFT: You really don't.

CROXLEY: Nevertheless...

HIGHCROFT: That's enough! Now go and sit down.

(Croxley slowly upped then headed back to his seat, burning red with shame.)

HIGHCROFT: Not bad. You're really quite pathetic.

CROXLEY: Thank you, sir.

HIGHCROFT: Just make sure to be that pathetic when you're begging Aya and Kaya to come back!

CROXLEY: I will.

HIGHCROFT: Excellent. Though just out of interest, seeing as you mentioned your tiny penis; did *you* ever have take those girls for a spin?

CROXLEY: A spin, sir?

HIGHCROFT: Did you have sex with them?

(Croxley winced.)

CROXLEY: I dabbled.

HIGHCROFT: Once again, I feel I have to remind you that I already *know* the answer. Your unit members were very forthcoming when I asked about how those young ladies were treated.

CROXLEY: But it's true, sir. I *dabbled*. With both of them. Several times. Anally.

HIGHCROFT: Well, that's a detail I *didn't* know.

CROXLEY: Fuck!

HIGHCROFT: You make me sick, Croxley! Sick!

CROXLEY: I'm not a fan of myself right now either, sir.

HIGHCROFT: Good. Hold onto that humility, you're going to need it.

(He nodded.)

HIGHCROFT: Now listen up, cock breath, this is what's going to happen next.

CROXLEY: Okay...

HIGHCROFT: You're going to leave here, like I said, at eight in the morning. And you're going to find those girls! I don't care how long it takes; just fucking find them! And do so via polite investigation. If I find out you've *threatened* anyone for information, I'll slice you to pieces with my sword. Investigate cleverly. Using cunning, not force.

CROXLEY: Yes, sir.

HIGHCROFT: Good. Now... you'll leave here tomorrow with a letter from me to the girls. I'm offering them a full pardon for deserting, a luxury apartment with a heated bath and a monumental pay rise! They can also join any unit they like at any fucking rank they desire. They can even operate as wanderers if they like; taking out any Nawsland soldiers they might catch sneaking around in our territory. It's up to them. I just want them back!

(He sat forwards.)

HIGHCROFT: And this is the important part, you fart-smelling vegetable. You need to convince them to *want* to come back! You won't be *dragging* them back! They're not coming back in chains! Bring them back exactly how you received them; anxious to serve the Lenthom nation. If we're going to win this fucking war, we're going to *need* them.

(He nodded.)

HIGHCROFT: So, just like we practiced, beg! On bended knee! And lay the humility on with a trowel! A *big* fucking trowel! Your career depends on it! And I mean depends! Because if you *can't* make them come back, don't *you* bother coming back either!!!
(He then sat back.)
HIGHCROFT: This is it for you, Croxley! Your very last chance. It's not so much do or die, but do or fuck off forever! Understood?
CROXLEY: Sir.
HIGHCROFT: Salute then, you goat-fondling arse-hat!
(Croxley rapidly obliged.)
HIGHCROFT: That's better. Now piss off!
(Croxley jumped to his feet then turned to face the door. He'd barely made it a single step, however, when the Major-General addressed him again; forcing him to turn around.)
HIGHCROFT: Don't you dare be late tomorrow, Croxley! I mean it! If you haven't left the premises by eight in the morning, you'll be court-martialled then fired.
(Croxley scratched his head.)
CROXLEY: Shouldn't the judge at the court-martial decide if I'm fired or not?
HIGHCROFT: I'll appoint *myself* as the judge!!!
CROXLEY: Right...
HIGHCROFT: Now fuck off!
(With a whimper, Croxley then scuttled out of the door. Left behind, the Major-General could only snarl.)
HIGHCROFT: What a cunt!

At six o'clock the following morning, Aya and Kaya raced across a few final stretches of sand then set foot on solid ground for the first time in seven months. They'd cleared the desert in one single night. A normal human being would take three or four days to make such a trip, stopping regularly to take on water. Thanks to their zooming ability, these two superhuman women had made it in less than half a day. This had included two, half an hour, water breaks. It had been a monumental effort, and suffice to say, they'd arrived at the rocky incline next to the desert, thoroughly worn out.

AYA: Kaya!!!
KAYA: I agree!
AYA: Slow down?
KAYA: Actually, I was thinking of stopping.
AYA: Then we're on the same page.
KAYA: How often are we not?
AYA: Good point.
(They then slowed to a halt and caught their breath.)
AYA: Wow. That was quite the run.
KAYA: Yeah. I'm really not sad that's over.
(She glanced at her feet.)
KAYA: I hate running on sand. Flat shoes hurt my feet.
AYA: I know, right?
(They glanced at each other for a moment, then sat down and proceeded to remove their flat shoes. As if they were diseased, Kaya instantly cast hers into a bush. She then reached into her bag and pulled out her thigh high, stiletto-heeled boots.)
KAYA: Oh, how I've missed thee.
AYA: You speak for us both.
(She sighed.)

AYA: It was too hot to wear long gloves and thigh boots out there in the desert. That was the one downside.

KAYA: Being asked to bone a hundred and fifty black blokes with dongs like cucumbers wasn't exactly an upside either, Aya.

AYA: I'm talking about *before* the silly princess thing came up.

KAYA: Gotcha.

(She sighed.)

KAYA: Yeah. Apart from it being too hot for most of our outfits, I really liked our time there.

AYA: Same. I was happy there.

KAYA: Stupid Crown Prince.

AYA: Yup. Once again, just when we think we've arrived where we'll be appreciated, it's ruined by randy men.

KAYA: They'll be putting that on our gravestones, I reckon. Here lie Aya and Kaya; ruined by randy men.

(She pulled her second boot on then beamed.)

KAYA: That's better. Sexy, comfy and lovely and warm in the winter.

AYA: Yeah.

(Her face then dropped.)

AYA: Fuck. Winter.

KAYA: What?

AYA: It's winter *now*, Kaya. And we're heading up a mountain.

KAYA: Oh.

(She grimaced.)

KAYA: Shit. We're gonna freeze! All our winter outfits are back at the army base.

AYA: Yeah...

(She shook her head.)

AYA: I think it's fair to see we've seen the last of them.

KAYA: Well, *I'm* certainly not gonna pop back in to collect them. We'd be arrested on sight.

AYA: We'd resist.

KAYA: And people would get hurt.

AYA: Yeah. I don't want to do that.

KAYA: Injure and kill our old army comrades? Me either. They'd *have* to try to arrest us under orders from Croxley.

AYA: And *we'd* have to resist.

KAYA: Yeah. Let's just... well... we'll have to find a boutique in the nearest town and buy something warm there.

AYA: What with? We're broke.

(They then shared an amused glance and burst out laughing.)

KAYA: Good one!

AYA: Right?

KAYA: Like *we've* ever needed money.

AYA: I know. Big boobs and tear ducts are the only currency we need.

KAYA: Yup. Men are so obliging when we turn on the water works.

AYA: That they are, bless them.

(Kaya smiled.)

KAYA: Shameless.

AYA: Yup.

KAYA: And why not? We were blessed with the faces of angels and the bodies of temptresses. We'd be *insane* not to use them.

AYA: That was always mum's motto, anyway.

(She then climbed to her feet and exhaled.)

AYA: Yes! That's better. My feet were killing me.

KAYA: I know, right? Stupid flat shoes.

(She furrowed her brow.)

KAYA: They're unflattering, they hurt and they make us look tiny.

AYA: We *are* tiny.

KAYA: And they make us look it.

(She then exhaled at her high heels.)

KAYA: But now our hell is over.

AYA: Amen, sister.

(She nodded then started to pull on a long glove.)

AYA: Okay, so where to?

KAYA: Nowhere. I'm still getting changed.

AYA: Afterwards, silly.

KAYA: To the nearest shop!

AYA: After *that*!

KAYA: Oh.

(She grimaced.)

KAYA: I don't know.

AYA: Great. You've been very helpful.

KAYA: *You* think of somewhere then.

(Aya just stared back at her blankly.)

KAYA: I thought as much.

AYA: Well, I only really know two places, Kaya. And one of them is the capital. We're not going there.

KAYA: Which leaves Birdstone.

AYA: Yeah...

(They shared an uncertain grimace.)

AYA: That's an awkward one.

KAYA: I know.

AYA: I want to go there at *some* point, obviously. Finally getting to know our dad would be incredible.

KAYA: And he'd finally get to know *us*.

AYA: Yeah, that'd be a dream come true.

(She sighed.)

AYA: Unfortunately...

KAYA: We're fugitives.

AYA: Yeah.

(She shook her head.)

AYA: There could be people there just waiting for us to return.

KAYA: Not that they'd be able to catch us.

AYA: No, but we might end up having to fight them. And like we already established, I don't want to fight our own army; not when they're only doing as they're told.

KAYA: True.

(She sighed.)

KAYA: And they might decide to take it out on dad if we turn up then run away again. They might assume we've been visiting regularly and he's kept it to himself. That'd be aiding and abetting fugitives.

AYA: Right?

(She shrugged.)

AYA: So where *are* we going to go?

KAYA: A clothes shop!

AYA: Kaya...

KAYA: What? I'm serious. Let's just find something warm to wear in a small town somewhere then decide on where to go once we're ready to face the harsh weather.

AYA: Hmm... yeah... I suppose that'd make sense.

KAYA: Well, it certainly beats just standing here, scratching our arses.

AYA: I wasn't scratching...

KAYA: Not literally.

AYA: Right.

(Kaya smiled.)

KAYA: So? Shall we? A town shouldn't be too hard to find.

AYA: Might as well.

KAYA: Let's go then.

(With that, they slipped their packs back onto their backs then headed off up the rocky path ahead.)

AYA: Oh, yes. That's much better. Walking feels so much more natural without flat shoes on.

KAYA: Doesn't it just. I feel like my old self again.

AYA: Yup. It's good to be back on familiar terrain.

KAYA: Uh-huh.

AYA: I feel a lot more relaxed now.

(Kaya nodded.)

KAYA: Yeah, but let's not relax too much now. There's a woodland up ahead and there *could* be soldiers lurking around in there. It doesn't matter *whose* soldier's either. Nawsland soldiers are the enemy and Lenthom soldiers have a duty to arrest us. Right now, we've got nobody we can call an ally. Meaning that, effectively, you and I are in twice as much jeopardy as every other bugger in the region.

AYA: True story.

(She then glanced away and smirked.)

AYA: But don't worry, Kaya. Big sister will protect you.

(Kaya threw her a stony glance.)

KAYA: Big sister??? Ten minutes, woman! You're older than me by ten lousy minutes!

(Aya burst out laughing.)

AYA: Priceless! You bite every time!

(Kaya glowered at her coldly then started to giggle.)

KAYA: Fuck sake. I do, don't I? I can't believe you got me again.

AYA: I can. And the best part is, I know it won't be the *last* time you bite.

KAYA: Well... we'll see, won't we?

AYA: We will, yes.

KAYA: And besides, *you* bite every time I mention that you got dumped once.

(Aya glowered at her.)

AYA: That can happen to anyone!

KAYA: See?

AYA: Fuck!

(Kaya giggled, much to Aya's annoyance.)

AYA: Oh, grow up.

KAYA: I have. By a full six inches.

(They then glanced at the heels on their boots and exhaled in unison.)

AYA: Perfect.

KAYA: Yup. Life is good again.

Just over an hour and half later, Aya and Kaya had arrived in a small town, half way up the hill. Almost at once, they knew they'd struck gold. As soon as they'd entered the township, they'd noticed a pub called The Sheep's Head, a series of mills and several shops with the word "farm" in the title. Having seen several fields full of sheep from between the trees on their way there, they knew they'd entered a hill sheep farming community. Therefore, wool would be in abundance and warm clothing would be easy to find.

Having shared a knowing glance, they nodded to one another then headed further into the town. Despite being quite early in the morning still, the main thoroughfare was somewhat busy. This was not unusual in rural farming communities. They'd begin work early and go home early. The only places open after four o'clock in the afternoon would be the inns. Anxious to find warm clothing as soon as possible, this was excellent news for the two young warrioresses.

Looking forward to putting their plan into action, they kept an eye open for a clothing shop that looked like it might be opening up soon. Much to their delight, about halfway down the main street, they found just what they were looking for.

KAYA: Clothing shop, just ahead and to the right.

AYA: I see it. And better still, I see a male proprietor setting up for the day.

KAYA: Yup.

(She nodded.)

KAYA: Aya?

AYA: Yes?

KAYA: We're in business.

AYA: We most certainly are!

(With that, they strode over to the shop then stopped opposite the doorway. Following an affirming nod they then turned on the waterworks. Sniffing and whimpering as they allowed fake tears to flow, they made for quite the pitiful sight.)

AYA: What are we going to do?

KAYA: I don't know. I really don't know.

AYA: We're in so much trouble.

(At this point, the owner walked out, carrying a small pile of sweaters. Spotting the two young ladies sobbing, he grimaced then spoke up in an extremely effeminate voice.)

SHOPKEEPER: What's the matter with you two? It sounds like a cat's choir out here.

(Aya pouted.)

AYA: We've run away from our abusive father.

KAYA: We didn't have time to pack though, and now we're cold.

AYA: So very cold.

KAYA: And so very sad.

(They then started to sob again.)

SHOPKEEPER: I see. Didn't really think that through, did you?

KAYA: We...

SHOPKEEPER: Look, no offence, but that racket's going to put off my customers. Would you mind crying further down the street?

(He then plonked the pile of sweaters down before mincing back into the shop.)

SHOPKEEPER: Off you go then.

(Having watched him blankly, Kaya grimaced.)

KAYA: He doesn't care.

AYA: He didn't even ogle our cleavage.

KAYA: Ogle it? He didn't even *notice* it!

AYA: That's no good.

(She nodded.)

AYA: I'll go inside and thrust my boobs in his face; he's *bound* to notice them then.

KAYA: I wouldn't bother, babe.

AYA: What?

(Kaya threw out a limp wrist.)

KAYA: I think he's like that.

AYA: Like what?

KAYA: You know.

AYA: Do I?

KAYA: Yes. He bats for the other team.

AYA: He bats?

KAYA: He's gay, Aya. He likes the cock just as much as we do.

AYA: Oh.

(She looked enlightened.)

AYA: Oh!

(She grimaced.)

AYA: Our boobs are wasted on *him* then.

KAYA: Uh-huh. He wouldn't notice them if you stuck them on his dinner plate.

AYA: Fuck. What are we gonna do then?

KAYA: We're gonna pray that he's not the only...

(She then fell silent and stared across the road.)

AYA: Not the only what?

KAYA: I was *gonna* say, the only shop owner who sells clothes.

(She beamed.)

KAYA: But there's another one just over there.

(She pointed to a shop further down on the other side of the street.)

KAYA: Looks like that one is aimed at a younger clientele too.

AYA: Bonus.

(She nodded.)

AYA: We just have to hope the owner bats for the right team this time.

KAYA: Yup.

(She nodded.)

KAYA: Shall we?

AYA: We shall.

(With that, they started to head across the road.)

AYA: Kaya?

KAYA: Yeah.

AYA: This batting for the other team phrase?

KAYA: What about it?

AYA: What does it mean?

KAYA: It means he's gay.

AYA: Yeah, but where does batting coming in to it?

KAYA: Dunno. I think it has something to do with that rounders game we played at school.

AYA: I see.

(She grimaced.)

AYA: No, I don't. Why do *the other team* have to be gay?

KAYA: Your guess is as good as mine, Aya.

(She shrugged.)

KAYA: Maybe it's just a thing men say. You know what *some* men are like. The ones who act all macho all the time. They call *everything* gay. If a boy is nice to a girl without trying to get her knickers off, he's gay. If he admires a scenic view out loud, he's gay.

AYA: If he lets his tea cool down a bit before drinking it.

KAYA: Gay.

AYA: If he's bad at sport. Gay!

KAYA: Or if indeed, he plays for the other team.

AYA: Right. Yeah. That makes sense. It does *sound* like that kind of logic.

KAYA: See?

(She sighed.)

KAYA: Macho guys are dumb.

AYA: Yeah.

(She sighed.)

AYA: Shame all the sexy ones are macho.

KAYA: Yeah. It means babes like us are doomed for a lifetime on the arms of dumb men.

AYA: Life is cruel, Kaya. Cruel!

(She nodded.)

AYA: Speaking of which, shall we start crying *now*, before we get to the shop?

KAYA: I guess that would make our act more convincing.

AYA: Exactly.

(She bit her lip.)

AYA: And maybe we should come up with something a bit more convincing than saying our dad was mean.

KAYA: Why? It's always worked really well for us in the past.

AYA: Yeah, but we're too old for that now. We're almost twenty-two, Kaya.

KAYA: Yes, but we easily pass for younger. We're only four foot, eleven inches tall, for pity's sake.

AYA: Not in these boots, we're not.

KAYA: Oh. Good point.

(She grimaced.)

KAYA: What *can* we say then?

AYA: Husbands?

KAYA: Husbands? And what's the backstory? We're identical twins who married identically abusive husbands then ran away together?

AYA: I've heard sillier.

KAYA: When?

AYA: Shut up!

KAYA: Right...

(She smiled.)

KAYA: Let's stick with the dad thing. If anyone asks, we can say he's one of them horrible fathers who never let his daughters leave home.

AYA: Yeah... that works, I guess.

(She nodded.)

AYA: He made us wash and clean. And milk the cows. And he'd whip us if we didn't oblige his every demand.

KAYA: But not in a kinky way!

AYA: Obviously.

(She then gave her sister a deeply suspicious glance.)

AYA: Oh, my god, you thought I was airing a fantasy, didn't you?

(Kaya glanced away innocently.)

KAYA: No. Don't be ridiculous.

AYA: You did, you...

KAYA: Aya!

AYA: What?

KAYA: Let's just do our crying act, shall we?

AYA: Fine.

(She ruffled her neck.)

AYA: We can come back to that later.

KAYA: I look forward to it.

AYA: You should. It's going to be the event of the decade. I'm going to invent a litany of brand new insults just for you.

KAYA: You're too sweet.

AYA: So I'm told.

KAYA: Now, let's just focus on the task in hand, shall we?

AYA: Fine.

(With that, they both proceeded to sob and whimper as they headed over to the clothes shop across the road. Once outside, they then added in a narrative that they hoped would catch the attention of the shopkeeper.)

AYA: What are we going to do?

KAYA: I don't know. I really don't know.

AYA: We're in so much trouble.

KAYA: Because we've got nowhere to go.

AYA: And it's so, so cold.

KAYA: Woe is us.

(Just then, the shopkeeper came out and stopped dead in his tracks, his eyes transfixed on Aya's chest.)

SHOP OWNER: Cleavage!

(He then moved his eyeballs onto Kaya's chest.)

SHOP OWNER: Twice!

(He then flinched and stepped back, covering his mouth as he did so.)

SHOP OWNER: Good god, I'm so, so sorry, ladies. I don't know what came over me there.

AYA: He's sorry... and yet he's still staring at them.

KAYA: Hmm... I feel that's a good sign.

(Finally, the shop owner managed to avert his gaze and look at their faces. Only now did he notice their tears.)

SHOP OWNER: Oh my. What's wrong?

(Bang on cue, Aya and Kaya then recited their act again.)

AYA: We're in so much trouble.

KAYA: Because we've got nowhere to go.

AYA: And it's so, so cold.

KAYA: Woe is us.

(The shop owner drew a sigh of relief.)

SHOP OWNER: So you're not upset about me ogling your boobs? That's a relief.

KAYA: Well... I won't lie... I didn't help.

AYA: And you should definitely feel guilty about it.

KAYA: Oh, absolutely.

(She nodded.)

KAYA: But nowhere near as guilty as the abusive father we're fleeing.
AYA: He's a terrible man.
SOAP OWNER: You're fleeing an abusive father?
AYA: Why do you think we're crying?
SOAP OWNER: Well... initially, I thought it was because of me.
KAYA: That's only part of the story.
AYA: Mostly we're crying, because we've run away from our abuse father.
KAYA: And we didn't have time to pack. Now we're cold.
AYA: So very cold.
KAYA: And so very sad.
(The shop owner's brow furrowed over.)
SHOP OWNER: He sounds awful.
AYA: He is.
KAYA: He's terrible.
(She then stepped closer to him, making sure her breasts bounced to their optimum.)
KAYA: You seem nice though.
AYA: I agree.
(She then mimicked Kaya's act of heading over to him with maximum cleavage bounce. The shop owner instantly started to perspire.)
SHOP OWNER: Well, you know... I *try* to be a nice bloke...
AYA: Pardon? I couldn't hear that for my sister's teeth chattering.
KAYA: I'm so cold.
AYA: And we can't afford to buy something warm to wear.
(The shop owner ruffled his neck then tried to adopt a heroic pose.)
SHOP OWNER: Can't have that now, can we?
(Entirely taken in by their seductive sob story, he nodded then gestured across his shop.)
SHOP OWNER: Why don't you choose a warm outfit each? On the house.
AYA: Really?
KAYA: You're such a nice man!
AYA: So nice I could kiss you on the cheek!
KAYA: In fact, let's do that!
(They then stepped up and kissed him on opposing cheeks at the same time. At once, he went weak at the knees and became putty in their hands.)
SHOP OWNER: Right... well... lovely... you know... take your time, ladies. Whichever outfit you like.
AYA: Aw, you're so kind.
KAYA: You're the best.
(They then headed into his shop and made a beeline for the thick, woollen dresses.)
AYA: Well, that was easy.
KAYA: Yup. Either *he's* very lonely or *we're* very sexy.
(Satisfied it was the latter, then they proceeded to flick through the racks with smug expressions on their faces. All the while, the shop owner watched them with a soppy look on his face and glazed eyes. The kisses on the cheek had rendered him hopeless.)
KAYA: Um... Aya? I think we broke him.
AYA: Never mind him, missy; pick something to wear.
KAYA: Right.
(She then proceeded to rifle through a rack of dresses.)
KAYA: Too thin, too long, itchy material, too long again, too short...
AYA: Too short? How can a dress be *too* short?

KAYA: It's the middle of winter, Aya! The wind would blow right up my bum in a dress that short.

AYA: I see.

(She nodded.)

AYA: That's *too* short!

KAYA: Thank you.

AYA: You're welcome.

(She then headed to the opposite side of the rail they were hunting through.)

AYA: That's better. It's a lot easier to focus on the task when *you're* not looking over my shoulder.

KAYA: I *wasn't* looking over your shoulder!

AYA: I know, but I feared you might start.

KAYA: Why? *Why* would I?

AYA: I don't know.

(Kaya just rolled her eyes and continued her search.)

KAYA: Too rubbish, too green, too long, too... ooh, wait. I like this one.

(Aya then peered at her from over the rack.)

AYA: I've found a nice one too.

KAYA: Score. Let's see it then.

(Aya smirked.)

AYA: No.

KAYA: No?

AYA: Let's try them on in the changing rooms then do a big reveal.

KAYA: What for?

AYA: Fun.

KAYA: Fun?

(She mused to herself.)

KAYA: I do *like* fun.

AYA: Well then...

KAYA: Okay. I'm in.

AYA: Excellent. No peeking.

(With that, she hurried over to the changing rooms then ducked behind a curtain. With a roll of the eyes, Kaya followed on.)

KAYA: Like I was *going* to peek.

(She then headed into the changing booth next to Aya's.)

KAYA: Won't be a minute, gorgeous-shop man.

(The shop owner blushed and fiddled with the hair on the back of his neck.)

SHOP OWNER: Oh, stop.

(He exhaled.)

SHOP OWNER: Gorgeous shop-man? She likes me.

(He then beamed with delight.)

SHOP OWNER: And if she plays her cards right, she might well be in luck.

(Blissfully unaware of the shop owner's wild delusions, Aya and Kaya set about changing into the warm dresses they'd chosen in something of a hurry. They didn't want to hear the nauseating sound of their sister whining at them to hurry up. As a result, well under a minute later, Aya spoke up from her booth.)

AYA: Ready?

KAYA: Just a sec...

AYA: Kaya...

KAYA: Done.

AYA: Awesome.

(She nodded.)

AYA: On three? Or after three?

KAYA: I really don't mind how we do it, Aya. There's no way your dress is nicer than mine. So, you're going to be disappointed either way.

AYA: Oh, behave. Mine's gorgeous. You don't have a hope in hell of beating it.

KAYA: We'll see.

AYA: We will indeed. On three!

KAYA: Okay.

AYA: One. Two. Three.

(With that, they both stepped out of the booths and looked each other up and down. A simultaneous groan ensued.)

KAYA: How did we not see *that* one coming?

AYA: We picked the same dress!

KAYA: Don't we always?

(She rolled her eyes.)

KAYA: Our taste in clothes is identical.

AYA: Our taste in most things is identical!

KAYA: Right? What's that all about? Couldn't mother nature at least grant us *something* we can call our own?

AYA: She did.

(She shrugged.)

AYA: Unlike me, *you* like mushrooms.

KAYA: I do, yes.

AYA: Miscreant.

KAYA: Yeah? Well, you like dumplings, you animal!

AYA: And I make no apology for that.

(They shared a cold glance then shrugged.)

KAYA: Oh, well. How do I look?

(Aya gestured down herself.)

AYA: See for yourself.

(They then scrutinised each other up and down with their eyes.)

AYA: Nice. Now turn to the left, please.

(Kaya obliged. Aya looked to her sister's backside then smiled joyously.)

AYA: Ooh, my arse looks nice in that.

KAYA: Let me see!

AYA: Fine.

(Aya then turned to the side to allow Kaya a view of *her* backside.)

KAYA: Wow. You're right. My arse *does* look nice in that.

(They then stood there for a good minute or so more, looking over each other's bodies admiringly. Baffled by it, the shop owner headed over to them.)

SHOP OWNER: What are you doing?

KAYA: Checking out our reflections.

SHOP OWNER: But, don't you need a mirror to...

(He then looked enlightened.)

SHOP OWNER: You use each other as a mirror.

AYA: Yup.

(She chuckled.)

AYA: Having an identical twin is the best thing ever. If you're not sure how you'll look in an outfit, you can just ask your twin to put it on.

KAYA: It's served us well in the past.

AYA: Very well indeed. Many a disaster was averted.

KAYA: Such as finding out that we don't look good in green, *before* we went out.

AYA: Phew.

SHOP OWNER: Right...

(He nodded.)

SHOP OWNER: So you went with the cream, woollen dresses, did you?

AYA: What gave it away?

(Ignoring her quip, the shop owner sucked his teeth.)

SHOP OWNER: They stop a good inch shy of reaching the top of your boots, ladies.

They're very short dresses. You'll get cold.

KAYA: Actually, the speed we move, we'll be glad of the air vent.

SHOP OWNER: What?

AYA: And it's not like they're short-short. I mean, it's not icy-wind up your bum crack levels of shortness.

KAYA: It's just right.

SHOP OWNER: I see. Fair enough.

(He then smirked deviously.)

SHOP OWNER: Anyway, in regard to the non-payment; I said you could have them for free and I meant it... but maybe there's *another* way you can thank me.

KAYA: Happy to.

AYA: Absolutely.

SHOP OWNER: Yeah?

KAYA: Of course.

(With that, they stepped up to him and kissed him on the cheeks again. At the same time, Kaya allowed her hand to gently nudge the bulge in the front of his trousers. At once, he went weak at the knees and collapsed in a heap.)

KAYA: Thank you, kind shop-owner.

AYA: You're the best.

(They then marched out his shop and headed off up the road. Left behind, the shop owner remained on the floor, giggling like a schoolboy as he adjusted his trouser-based excitement.)

KAYA: Okay. Now what?

AYA: Now we start walking up that mountain. This dress is ridiculously warm, Kaya; I'm sweating. We need wind chill!

KAYA: Yeah. Good thinking.

AYA: I don't know where we'll head from there though.

(Kaya gave her an uneasy glance.)

KAYA: You do though, don't you?

AYA: What?

KAYA: We're gonna go and see dad. You know it and I know it.

AYA: I suspect that might be the case, yes.

(She bit her lip.)

AYA: I just hope our visit doesn't land him in trouble.

KAYA: The speed we move? Nobody will even *see* our visit.

AYA: Hmm... you make a good point. A stealthy homecoming it is.

KAYA: Amen, sister.

(She nodded.)

KAYA: Let's just sweet talk that meat vendor over there into giving us some food for the trip before we leave.

AYA: Kaya? I like your style.

(They then headed over to a meat stall, reprising their crying little girl act along the way.)

At ten minutes to eight that morning, just inside the gates of Lenthom's military complex, three soldiers of varying ranks were leaning against a wall, chatting together. All of them had equipment packs by their feet. At fifty-two years old, the eldest of the group, was very much leading the conversation. Blessed with a way with words, he had to the two younger men in his company entirely under his spell.

NASH: Honestly, three times I said it. Just stay low and observe. I couldn't have been clearer. I even told him, this is a simple reconnaissance mission, son, and there's no need to engage. And I know he heard me. He got the message loud and clear, but...

(He sighed.)

NASH: Young fella, wasn't he? Excitable. Exuberant, even. The little bastard was itching for some action; I could see it on his face. Laying low and doing nothing was killing him. He'd signed up for action and he couldn't wait to get some.

(He shook his head.)

NASH: And all that excitement must have made him deaf, because when I said fall back, *he* thought I said charge. Off he went, all by himself against ten Nawsland swordsmen. Fucking idiot. There was only four of us.

(One of the younger two grimaced.)

YARWOOD: What did you do?

NASH: Nothing. I wasn't going to sacrifice myself and the other two to bail out that silly cunt was I? We're supposed to minimise casualties, not commit suicide trying to save an idiot.

(The third soldier winced.)

BAXTER: So what happened?

NASH: The little fucker defeated them, didn't he?

YARWOOD: You're kidding!

NASH: I'm not. He took out three before they even realised he was there!

BAXTER: Blimey.

NASH: That's what we said. Courtesy of having dirt in his pockets to throw in their faces, he then took down the other seven with ruthless efficiency.

YARWOOD: That's incredible.

NASH: Yeah.

(He shrugged.)

NASH: That's Commander Croxley for you. A peerless fighter, but fucking awful at following orders. And even worse at issuing them. How he made commander, I'll never know.

BAXTER: Hearing that, the fact he's been busted down to corporal again makes a lot of sense.

YARWOOD: On the contrary, hearing *that* makes me wonder why he wasn't busted down to *private* again!

NASH: I'm amazed he wasn't.

(He grimaced.)

NASH: Did the Major-General fill you in on why he's been demoted?

BAXTER: Sort of. There were a lot of gaps in the story to be honest.

YARWOOD: And a lot of swearing.

BAXTER: Apparently he made two female soldiers desert the army.

YARWOOD: The one's were going to help him find.

NASH: That's what he told you, is it?

BAXTER: Yeah.

NASH: Right...

(He sucked his teeth.)

NASH: They weren't just *soldiers*, lads. They were the commander-in-chief's pet project. His one great hope.

YARWOOD: Really?

NASH: Yeah. Zoomers, mate. High speed assassins. The likes you only see once in every couple of generations. Difference makers. Major-General Highcroft introduced them to the big cheese and the big cheese demanded that they be treated like royalty. Nurtured and taken care of. So the Major-General left it to what he thought was his best man. Commander Croxley.

(He winced.)

NASH: Did I mention that Croxley is shit at obeying orders?

BAXTER: You did, yeah.

NASH: I may have understated it. Rather than treating them like royalty, he treated them like servants. And once they turned eighteen... well... pretty girls, you see? And I mean extremely pretty girls.

YARWOOD: He didn't.

NASH: Oh, he did. He turned them into sex poodles and pimped them out to his fellow officers. Honestly, the man is a prize-winning cunt.

BAXTER: Holy crap. I amazed the Major-General didn't hang him!

NASH: So am I.

YARWOOD: And that's why they fled, is it?

(Nash shook his head.)

NASH: No. Those girls were such disciplined soldiers, they tolerated it. Saluted his orders, even though they hated them. They were *that* invested in army life. That loyal. The final straw came later.

(He furrowed his brow.)

NASH: A mission came in to go to a small town and protect the chief. Well, the chief happened to be those girl's father. Despite the fact they were his two best soldiers, however, he didn't let them go. Just because they're women. All their loyalty to the army went right out of the window at that point. They fucked off and they haven't been seen since.

(He sighed.)

NASH: Now the two people who could be difference between us winning and losing this war are on the fucking run.

BAXTER: Fuck me. Why *didn't* the Major-General hang him?

NASH: Your guess is as good as mine, mate.

(He shrugged.)

NASH: Maybe he needs him alive so he can fix his error.

YARWOOD: And once he's done it, *then* he'll hang him.

NASH: I won't lie, that's a real possibility.

BAXTER: He should just hang him and let *us* catch them.

NASH: Zoomers, mate. You don't catch zoomers. You can't even see the buggers once they started whizzing about. They need to be talked down. Convinced to come back.

(He shrugged.)

NASH: So in a way, it makes sense to send the cunt who forced them out to do the grovelling.

YARWOOD: I guess.

BAXTER: Yeah.

(He then looked up at the clock tower.)

BAXTER: Just a few minutes to eight. He's cutting it fine. I was told that if he's one minute late, I have to abort the mission and report to the Major-General.

YARWOOD: Same.

NASH: Me too.

(Just then, a carriage rolled towards them. At once, they all glanced up and saw Croxley at the helm.)

NASH: Ah. Here he is, look. The enemy's greatest hope. Cock-face Croxley.

(He rolled his eyes.)

NASH: I swear, if a Nawsland army spy was to ever take over this city, he'd put *him* in charge of our army then sit back and watch as we defeat *ourselves*.

(His two fellow soldiers laughed out loud. Ignoring their mirth, Croxley called down from atop the carriage.)

CROXLEY: Are you the men Major-General Highcroft selected for the Birdstone mission?

NASH: We are!

CROXLEY: Excellent. Hop in, chaps. We're on a tight schedule here.

NASH: Yeah, and you're cutting it fine, mate.

CROXLEY: I had to collect the carriage first. Oh, and a useful bargaining chip.

NASH: Whatever.

(With that, the three of them walked out of the base.)

CROXLEY: Where are you going?

NASH: We want to talk first.

(He gestured to the gate.)

NASH: So drive out of the gate and we can have a little chat.

CROXLEY: But I need to be out of this base at eight o'clock.

NASH: And you will be. You'll be on the *civilian* side of the gate.

CROXLEY: Right. Well... that counts, I suppose.

(He then led the carriage through the gate before bringing it to a standstill at the side of the road. He then climbed down and nodded to the three men before him.)

CROXLEY: Morning, gents. I'm Commander Croxley.

NASH: You're *Corporal* Croxley.

CROXLEY: Well... yes.

NASH: I'm Major Nash.

CROXLEY: Nice to meet you.

NASH: We've met. You were in my unit as a new recruit.

(Croxley looked stumped.)

CROXLEY: I was?

(He then flinched.)

CROXLEY: I remember! You're Captain Nash!

NASH: I was. Now I'm Major Nash!

CROXLEY: Of course. I didn't recognise you without the beard, old boy. How wonderful to see you again.

NASH: Yeah... anyway...

(He gestured to his two fellow soldiers.)

NASH: This is Captain Baxter and this is Lieutenant Yarwood.

CROXLEY: It's a pleasure to meet you all.

BAXTER: Yeah...

YARWOOD: Okay.

CROXLEY: So...

(He sucked his teeth.)

CROXLEY: You all outrank me, I see.

NASH: Correct.

CROXLEY: And yet, I'm in charge, apparently.

(He gave a stifled laugh.)

CROXLEY: It's almost like I'm being tested.

(Seeing three empty expressions staring back at him, Croxley could only wince.)

CROXLEY: Fuck. I *am* being tested.

NASH: I'd say it's more like you're being observed.

CROXLEY: Like in a test.

BAXTER: If you like.

CROXLEY: Bugger.

(He then nodded sternly.)

CROXLEY: Still, it's a test I intend to pass.

NASH: I should hope so, because *your* screw up is the best thing that ever happened to the enemy; and that does not sit well with the rest of us.

YARWOOD: Yeah. Redemption for *you* is going to be a bloody long road.

BAXTER: He's right. Successfully recovering those girls is just the start. You'll still be indebted to everyone because of the six years you spent wasting their talents!

CROXLEY: I see.

(He pulled a strained smile.)

CROXLEY: I'm not amongst friends here, am I?

NASH: Well observed.

CROXLEY: And that's fine. I'm aware of my catastrophic error, but I *will* make amends, you mark my words. I'll start by recovering those young ladies then go on to be the finest warrior this army has ever known.

NASH: No, you won't. Those two girls will be the finest warriors this army has ever known; that's why it's so important that we bring them back.

CROXLEY: Okay. I'll be the finest bar those two.

NASH: Yeah, right.

(Croxley furrowed his brow.)

CROXLEY: I will!

(He shook his fist.)

CROXLEY: Don't you doubt *me*, sonny boy. My sword skills are second to none and I could destroy *you* without even breaking a sweat! And don't go thinking I won't!

NASH: You are aware that I outrank you, right?

(Croxley ruffled his neck.)

CROXLEY: I am, yes. I merely forgot for a moment. This demotion is hard to get used to.

NASH: I see. Well...

(He nodded.)

NASH: At least that's a positive.

CROXLEY: What is?

NASH: Having *started* this journey by threatening to kill your superior, you've pretty much hit rock bottom. Therefore, your quest for redemption can't possibly get any worse.

(Baxter gave a stifled laugh.)

BAXTER: Priceless. We're one foot from the starting point of our journey and his sullied his record already.

YARWOOD: Are you sure you're on our side, Corporal?

CROXLEY: Yes!

(He ruffled his neck.)

CROXLEY: Bloody cheek.

(He folded his arms.)

CROXLEY: Anyway, what was it you wanted to talk to me about?
NASH: Just the usual things.
CROXLEY: Such as?
NASH: As our leader what do you expect from us?
CROXLEY: Loyalty.
NASH: We're soldiers, that's a given.
CROXLEY: Good. Other than that, just back me up when required. There really isn't going to be much you *can* do, to be honest. Getting those girls to come home is down to me. I'm the one who drove them away.
(He sighed.)
CROXLEY: So I'm the one who needs to grovel.
NASH: I look forward to seeing it.
CROXLEY: And I look forward to doing it. It'll mean I've found them. And got them to listen. And that they didn't kill me on sight.
(He nodded.)
CROXLEY: Anyway... to the carriage, men. And be courteous. There's a civilian in there.
NASH: A civilian?
CROXLEY: Yes. Someone I found whom I *think* might be able to help me lure the girls out.
BAXTER: Who?
CROXLEY: That's for *the civilian* to tell you.
BAXTER: Fair enough.
CROXLEY: Now who wants to travel atop the carriage with *me*? It might get cramped with four of you in there *and* all our bags.
NASH: That's up to you; you're the leader.
CROXLEY: I see.
(He nodded.)
CROXLEY: Yarwood, you're with me!
YARWOOD: Fuck. May I ask why?
CROXLEY: You appear to be the least hostile.
YARWOOD: Appearances can be deceptive.
NASH: Just accept your orders, lieutenant.
YARWOOD: Fine.
(He then trudged towards the carriage. Watching him go, Croxley nodded sternly then adopted a heroic pose.)
CROXLEY: So it begins. My quest for redemption begins here. And I won't rest until I've *earned* the rank of commander once again!
NASH: In our army or theirs?
CROXLEY: Nash!
NASH: Yes?
CROXLEY: I don't like you very much.
(He then headed for the carriage.)
CROXLEY: To Birdstone!
NASH: Here's hoping.
(He grimaced.)
NASH: If you lead those horses like you led your former subordinates, god knows *where* we'll end up.

In a deep, thick woodland twenty miles inside Lenthom, a unit of invading Nawsland soldiers was sneaking forth, making sure to stay off the beaten track. Having managed to cross the

border unnoticed, they were now heading for their destination to carry out a mission at the request of their supreme leader. The head of the nine hundred strong unit, Captain Sole, however, was the only one privy to the details of the mission. He was, however, well aware that he'd have to share this information with his second in command at some point. Deciding that this would be as good a time as any, he summoned him to the front of the marching troops then looked him up and down.

SOLE: What the hell are you wearing?

(His second, Vice-Captain Bagg gave him a defiant glance.)

BAGG: It's a bobble hat, sir.

SOLE: A bobble hat?

BAGG: My mother knitted it for me!

SOLE: I see. Was this before or after she changed your nappy?

BAGG: Sir. Don't be like that, it's cold.

SOLE: I realise that, Bagg. But we have such a thing as a uniform.

BAGG: Oh... fine.

(With that, he removed his green bobble hat and pulled on a woollen black one.)

BAGG: Not that it makes any difference.

SOLE: It does. The bobble looked ridiculous. You're a grown man, Tim!

BAGG: I know that, Roy.

SOLE: Please, call me Captain. It's good for my ego.

BAGG: Then call me *Vice-Captain*.

SOLE: I'll call you what I like, I'm the captain.

(He nodded.)

SOLE: See? Ego.

(He ruffled his neck.)

SOLE: Anyway, putting your fashion faux pas aside, I've called you here for a reason.

BAGG: Oh?

SOLE: This mission. It's time I filled you in.

BAGG: Ah, yes.

SOLE: We're to sack a town.

BAGG: Sack it?

SOLE: Until there's nothing left.

BAGG: Okay...

SOLE: Complete and utter obliteration.

BAGG: I see.

(He nodded.)

BAGG: Army town, is it? A strategic military outpost.

SOLE: No.

(He sucked his teeth.)

SOLE: It's a quiet, mountain town with a population of less than a thousand people and very little in the way of a defence.

BAGG: Right. Then I can only assume we're attacking it because its resources are vital to the Lenthom supply chain.

SOLE: You'd think so, wouldn't you? But no, it's just a rural, community town. Nothing more.

(His vice-captain blinked at him in bewilderment.)

BAGG: What?

SOLE: You heard me correctly.

BAGG: We're going to destroy a town full of innocent civilians?

SOLE: And kill everyone in it, yes.

BAGG: I see.

(He gave the captain a sideways glance.)

BAGG: You are aware that such an attack contravenes every military code of conduct ever written, right?

SOLE: Yes, but who are we to question the supreme commander?

BAGG: The supreme commander?

SOLE: That's right. Our orders come directly from *him*.

(Bagg stared right through him.)

BAGG: I see. Well... that's... deeply concerning.

(He bit his lip.)

BAGG: This is a terrible precedent we're setting, sir. If we start attacking ordinary townsfolk, Lenthom might retaliate in kind. At which point, it'll stop being a war and become a race to commit genocide first.

SOLE: Don't be such a drama queen, you. It's not *exactly* an attack on innocent civilians per se. There's more to it than that.

BAGG: Is there now?

SOLE: Yes.

BAGG: Care to share?

SOLE: Of course. That is why I summoned you to me, after all.

(He nodded.)

SOLE: It's all to do with a zoomer.

BAGG: A zoomer?

SOLE: A person who can whizz across the ground so fast you can barely see them.

(Bagg nodded thoughtfully.)

BAGG: Right. I know what you mean. I've heard of such types before.

SOLE: Good. That'll make this explanation infinitely shorter.

(He sighed.)

SOLE: Our army had one, apparently. Her name was Candice. She was capable of moving at such speeds, she could kill a man in full view of everyone and nobody would even notice.

BAGG: The perfect assassin.

SOLE: Exactly. She was invaluable. So invaluable in fact, the army would pander to her every whim.

BAGG: Really?

SOLE: Well, yeah. She could win battles on her own, so keeping her happy was a must.

BAGG: Makes sense.

SOLE: Thank you.

(He rolled his eyes.)

SOLE: Anyway, she decided a while ago that she wanted to try her hand at espionage.

Naturally, the military obliged her request, and sent her to a small town called Birdstone.

BAGG: Never heard of it.

SOLE: Few have.

(He nodded.)

SOLE: Her remit was to seduce the chief for the latest security updates. Sadly, he wouldn't play ball, so she requested permission to kill him. You know, in order to seduce his replacement.

BAGG: Gotcha.

SOLE: Her request was denied. The army didn't want to risk her blowing her cover, you see? So they asked her to sit tight and sent a unit of a hundred men to kill him instead.

(He then leant closer to his vice-captain.)

SOLE: Now, what I'm about to tell you comes directly from a spy posing as a hiker. He hung around the mountain for a while and got friendly with some locals. Apparently, the people of Birdstone like to talk about what happened that day, so now we have the full picture.

(He stood up straight again.)

SOLE: Our unit was defeated. Wiped out. You see, it turns out that the chief's twin daughters are both zoomers as well. Our men didn't stand a chance against two of them. Sadly, nor did Candice. They deduced that she was the one responsible for our army unit attacking them and, well, they killed her too.

(He bit his lip.)

SOLE: The supreme commander was furious. Not only did he lose his best warrior, but he found out that Lenthom have two fucking zoomers. And that's why we're taking to a nine hundred strong unit to sack a town of roughly the same amount of civilians. Those girls might be there and if so, we're going to need a *lot* of men! And if they're not there, they'll soon turn up when they hear their father has been murdered.

(Bagg gulped.)

BAGG: Zoomers...

(He winced.)

BAGG: This sounds like a suicide mission.

SOLE: I have faith in our men, Bagg.

BAGG: Against zoomers?

SOLE: Strength in numbers, old chap.

BAGG: Yeah, well... I'm not sure that's going to help. They can kill at speeds so great, nobody will even see them coming.

(He cringed.)

BAGG: And what if someone *does* manage a lucky blow. To be able to attack as fast as they do, they must have bones made of steel.

SOLE: What do you mean?

BAGG: I mean, if you and I collided at a hundred miles an hour, we'd shatter like cheap tea cups. Not a single bone left unbroken. And yet when zoomers attack at speeds infinitely greater than that, they're unscathed.

SOLE: I realise that, but you're forgetting something.

BAGG: Am I now?

SOLE: Yes.

(He nodded.)

SOLE: Swords are very pointy, flesh is very penetrable and zoomers only have one heart. If the blow we strike is the *right* blow, therefore...

BAGG: I hear you.

(He nodded.)

BAGG: You're right. It's going to be tricky, but with nine hundred men, it's definitely doable. In fact, I don't mind those odds at all.

SOLE: Precisely.

(He mused to himself.)

SOLE: Now what *else* did you need to know?

(He then looked enlightened.)

SOLE: Oh, yes. When I said Birdstone had little in the way of defence, I misspoke. It has a brand new defensive *wall*. Iron and oak. Erected after the last attack.

BAGG: Gotcha. So *that's* why we brought the cannon unit.

(He gestured to the six men lumbering along at the back with cannon parts and cannonballs.)

SOLE: Exactly. They'll have that gate down, then we can set to work, because *apart* from the wall, they have nothing.

BAGG: Except two zoomers!

SOLE: Potentially, yes.

BAGG: That's very much the opposite of nothing, Captain.

SOLE: Yes, but hopefully they won't be there.

BAGG: Right. Agreed.

SOLE: And that's everything.

(He nodded.)

SOLE: Now come. To Birdstone, Bagg; those two girls have to die.

(He furrowed his brow.)

SOLE: Or winning this war is going to get a hell of a lot trickier.

Just after eight o'clock that evening, after a full twelve hours at the reins, Corporal Croxley led his horse and carriage up to the gates of a snowy Birdstone. Delighted to have made it without incident, he exhaled then looked to the lieutenant at his side.

CROXLEY: Not bad, eh? Half a day. We've made good time.

YARWOOD: Yeah?

CROXLEY: Absolutely.

YARWOOD: That's interesting, because before we left, Major Nash told me that Birdstone was half a day away. In that sense, I'd say we made average time.

(Croxley scoffed.)

CROXLEY: You've clearly never travelled from Lenthom to Birdstone with a zoomer sabotaging your carriage.

YARWOOD: Well, no.

CROXLEY: Almost three bloody days it took us. So forgive me, but after that experience, to get here in only half a day feels pretty excellent. Especially when you factor in all this bloody snow.

(With that, he climbed down from the carriage then stepped up to the large, reinforced gates to the town.)

CROXLEY: Blimey. They've made it into a fortress.

(He then glanced up at one of the town's watchtowers, from where a local police officer was scowling down at him.)

CROXLEY: Good evening, that man. My name's Commander Croxley.

(Major Nash then leant out of the carriage window.)

NASH: *Corporal* Croxley!

CROXLEY: Right. Sorry. Forgot again.

(At this point, the man in the watchtower called down to him.)

STEVE: Did you say your name's Commander Croxley?

CROXLEY: I did *say* that, yes...

STEVE: In that case... you, sir, are a wart on the anus of all things decent!

CROXLEY: Excuse me?

STEVE: You heard me! You're not welcome here, Croxley. In fact, I'd rather use a toilet roll made entirely of thistles than open this gate for *you*! Now, bugger off!

(Croxley blinked at him nonchalantly then glanced at the man in the watchtower on the other side.)

CROXLEY: Hello there, my name's...

LENNY: Denied!!!

CROXLEY: What?

LENNY: We all know who *you* are! You're the cunt who's hunting for Ponytail!

CROXLEY: Actually...

LENNY: Well, we happen to be rather fond of that girl around here, so *you* can fucking do one.

CROXLEY: Hmm...

(He turned and grimaced at where the major was shaking his head at him from out of the window.)

CROXLEY: Apparently, I'm not welcome.

NASH: Yes...

(He sighed.)

NASH: Forgive me for not acting surprised.

(With that, he jumped down from the carriage then stepped aside Croxley.)

NASH: Hello there, my name is Major Nash from the fifteenth armoured division.

CROXLEY: Oh, you're in the armoured division now, are you? That's...

NASH: Will you shut up, cock face???

CROXLEY: Charming.

(Nash shook his head then glanced to the watchtower again.)

NASH: My good man, we merely seek an audience with the chief.

LENNY: You seek Ponytail!

NASH: Ponytail?

CROXLEY: It's Kaya's nickname.

NASH: Oh...

(He nodded.)

NASH: We're not after the sisters, old chap. We merely wish to speak to the chief.

LENNY: About Ponytail?

NASH: About important military business!

LENNY: Are you sure?

NASH: Of course!

LENNY: Then why did you bring arse face with you?

NASH: Because arse face is charged with making an apology to the chief.

(Croxley furrowed his brow.)

CROXLEY: Is all this name calling really necessary?

NASH: Shut it, arse face!

CROXLEY: Right...

(Lenny scowled at him.)

LENNY: Hmm... I'm not sure about this. You wait there while I consult the chief.

NASH: Happy to.

LENNY: Good, because you have no choice.

(He then ducked out of view. Not sad to see him go, Croxley puffed out then looked to Nash.)

CROXLEY: So what made you switch to the armoured division? I thought you were a light infantry man, through and through.

NASH: I was, but the armoured division needed a new lieutenant, so the commander-in-chief chose me. I had no say in it.

CROXLEY: Lieutenant?

NASH: I've been promoted since then, obviously.

(He then smirked at Croxley.)

NASH: Promotion, you see, is what happens when your change of rank goes in an *upward* direction. The polar opposite of what *you've* been experiencing.

(Croxley furrowed his brow.)

CROXLEY: Mock me all you like, Major. This is merely a blip. I *will* be a commander again some day.
(He ruffled his neck.)
CROXLEY: And you'll regret making that jibe.
NASH: Yeah. We'll see.
(He then headed back towards the carriage.)
NASH: Come and get me when that local fellow returns.
CROXLEY: Fine.
NASH: Fine, what?
(Croxley rolled his eyes.)
CROXLEY: Fine, *sir*!
NASH: Hmm...
(He allowed himself a devious smirk.)
NASH: Not sure why you called me *that*, Croxley. *You're* the bloke in charge.
(He then climbed into the carriage, giggling to himself.)
CROXLEY: I hate that bloke, I really do.
(He then folded his arms and sulked. The disrespect he was receiving from his peers was hurting him greatly. It was a pain made all the greater by the fact that he knew he deserved every scornful word. His failure to recognise and make the most of the West twin's fighting talents had weakened the army and lessened his country's chances of winning the war. For a proud military man, this was not an easy mistake to live with. As such, he stood there pouting and sighing for a full five minutes until the townsman, Lenny, reappeared in the watchtower.)
LENNY: Hey! Arse face!
(Croxley looked at him with empty eyes.)
CROXLEY: Yes?
LENNY: You suck.
(Croxley shook his head.)
CROXLEY: Just tell us what the chief said! Can we enter or not?
LENNY: I didn't bother asking him in the end. It's too far to walk. Come back tomorrow and ask again.
CROXLEY: You...
LENNY: Just kidding!
(He glanced down over the side of the tower.)
LENNY: Open the gates, lads!
(He then snarled.)
LENNY: And lubricate the town generously; it's about to be entered by a massive prick.

A short while later, in the chief's office, the chief, Chester West and his second in command, Runcorn, were deep in conversation. Having been informed that Commander Croxley was back in town, they couldn't help but speculate as to why. The chief, however, couldn't help but fear the worst.
CHIEF: He's caught them, hasn't he? He's caught and executed my little girls! That's what he's coming to tell me!
RUNCORN: No, Chester. Stop that. You're being ridiculous!
CHIEF: Am I?
RUNCORN: Yes! Your daughters can hurdle entire houses, man. There's not a hope in hell of anyone catching *them*!
CHIEF: Hmm...

(He bit his lip.)

CHIEF: What *does* he want then?

RUNCORN: I don't know.

(He shrugged.)

RUNCORN: From what you've *told* me about the fellow though, I'd assume he's come to shout at you or something.

CHIEF: Shout at me?

(He grimaced.)

CHIEF: It's a hell of a way to come, just to shout at someone. And why would he *want* to?

RUNCORN: Because *your* daughters made him look like a fool.

(He grimaced.)

RUNCORN: Or maybe... he plans to threaten you for information.

(The chief bit his lip.)

CHIEF: In the hope I'll tell him where Aya and Kaya went?

RUNCORN: Yes.

CHIEF: But I don't *know* where Aya and Kaya went.

RUNCORN: Yes, but he doesn't know that.

CHIEF: Hmm...

RUNCORN: It's also possible that he's come here to find out who lied to him.

CHIEF: Lied to him?

RUNCORN: Yes! You told me he was determined to find those daughters of yours, and as we all know, one of the townsfolk sent him off in the wrong direction.

CHIEF: Arthur Rhodes.

RUNCORN: That's right. Well, maybe he's coming to ask you who misled him.

CHIEF: Hmm...

(He mused to himself.)

CHIEF: To punish him for sending him on a wild goose chase.

RUNCORN: Could be that.

CHIEF: Right...

RUNCORN: But don't worry. I don't care what happens. He won't get out anything out of *me*.

CHIEF: Oh, behave. If he so much as snarls at you, you'll confess everything.

RUNCORN: Fact!

(He winced.)

RUNCORN: I don't do well under pressure, old chap.

CHIEF: As that spy, Candice, very quickly found out.

RUNCORN: Yes... that wasn't my finest hour, was it?

CHIEF: No. It wasn't.

(He then folded his arms and nodded sternly.)

CHIEF: Anyway, that's enough speculation. Let's just wait to hear what he has to say, shall we?

RUNCORN: Good idea.

(Just then, Croxley poked his head around the door.)

CROXLEY: Hello?

(Runcorn jumped to his feet and shrieked.)

RUNCORN: It was Arthur Rhodes!!!

CHIEF: You total and utter...

CROXLEY: Sorry? Arthur? What?

CHIEF: Ignore him!

CROXLEY: Right.

CHIEF: Runcorn?

RUNCORN: Chief?

CROXLEY: Go somewhere far, far away and leave this to me. Build a snowman or something; just be somewhere else.

RUNCORN: Yes, I... think that would be best.

(Croxley and the chief watched him skulk out of the room then the chief gestured to the seat in front of his desk.)

CHIEF: Sit!

CROXLEY: Why, I'd be delighted to.

CHIEF: Then don't. You can stand!

CROXLEY: Oh.

(He nodded.)

CROXLEY: Very well.

CHIEF: Come on then! Out with it! But you mark my words, if you've harmed one hair on my girl's heads, you'll be leaving this room in fragments!

(Croxley furrowed his brow.)

CROXLEY: Harmed them? I haven't even *seen* them!

CHIEF: Is that so?

CROXLEY: It is, yes.

(He nodded.)

CROXLEY: And that's why I'm here. I urgently need to find them.

(The chief drew a deep sigh of relief then scowled at Croxley.)

CHIEF: Bugger off and do that then!

CROXLEY: What?

CHIEF: You heard me. Bugger off and start looking. Not that you'll find them unless they *want* to be found. And even if you *do* find them, good luck catching them.

CROXLEY: Chief...

CHIEF: You've got no chance. They're phenomenal. Superhuman almost. No, not almost; they *are* superhuman! I saw them leap twenty feet in the air this summer, whilst in the process of killing someone. *You* can't even begin to compete with that!

(Croxley glanced him up and down bitterly.)

CROXLEY: Nor can *you*!

CHIEF: *I* don't have to!

CROXLEY: Nor do I!

(He furrowed his brow.)

CROXLEY: I haven't *come* to catch them.

(He ruffled his neck.)

CROXLEY: I've come to *grovel* to them.

(The chief stared right through him.)

CHIEF: Grovel?

CROXLEY: Yes...

(He sighed.)

CROXLEY: Remember when I spoke to you in the summer? I told you my superiors would be furious when they found out I'd driven those girls away.

CHIEF: I remember.

CROXLEY: Well, furious was quite the understatement.

(His shoulder's slumped.)

CROXLEY: So they've sent me here to beg them to come back. The punishment for failure? Banishment! So here I am.

CHIEF: Yes. Here you are. Wasting your time. They're not here.

CROXLEY: Right...

(He raised a sceptical eyebrow.)

CROXLEY: Not that you'd tell *me* even if they *were*.

CHIEF: True story; you're a cunt.

CROXLEY: Yes... I've been getting that a lot lately.

CHIEF: That surprises me nil.

CROXLEY: Look. Chief. Just give me some sort of hint. An indication perhaps. A tip. Anything to help me locate them. I swear, I mean them no harm whatsoever. I just need to find them so I can beg for their forgiveness and ask them to come back to the army. The higher-ups are desperate to get those girls back.

CHIEF: For deserting?

CROXLEY: No. I mean, get them back into the army.

CHIEF: I see.

(He furrowed his brow.)

CHIEF: Liar!

CROXLEY: What?

CHIEF: You told me you wouldn't rest until my girls were doing jail time! A lot of it! You also said you wished you'd worked harder to break their spirits. And now you expect me to believe that you love them really, you were only pulling my leg and it was all a jolly jape???

CROXLEY: No! When did I say that?

(He gave a frustrated sigh.)

CROXLEY: I meant it when I said those terrible things, but things have changed!

CHIEF: A likely story!

CROXLEY: It's true! I finally got back to the capital and the Major-General tore me off a strip. And demoted me to Sergeant!

(He ruffled his neck.)

CROXLEY: So I tried to explain what happened. Unfortunately, I chose to leave out a few of the details that made me look bad, so he demoted me again. Down to Corporal. Then he gave me a mission. To beg. To grovel. To apologise to those girls and make them see that my rotten behaviour wasn't representative of the army. I acted alone! They *are* respected and they *are* important. I even have a letter from the Major-General explaining as much!

CHIEF: May I see it?

CROXLEY: No!

CHIEF: Because it doesn't exist?

CROXLEY: Because it's a top secret communiqué from the Major-General to the young ladies in question! One that's more than likely full of nasty comments about *me*. The army want those girls back in the ranks, chief. The desertion charge has been dropped and they can come back at whatever rank they so desire.

CHIEF: Right.

(He nodded.)

CHIEF: Well... if that's the case...

CROXLEY: It is...

CHIEF: And you mean them no harm...

CROXLEY: No harm whatsoever.

CHIEF: In that case, I suppose I can give you a small tip.

(Croxley leant forwards.)

CROXLEY: Go on.

CHIEF: Very well. This should set you in good stead.

CROXLEY: I'm listening.

CHIEF: Jolly good.

(He nodded.)

CHIEF: Croxley?

CROXLEY: Chief?

CHIEF: My advice is simple. You came to the wrong place, because there isn't a single soul in the *whole* of Birdstone who'd be willing to lift a single finger to help *you*.

CROXLEY: What?

CHIEF: Those girls saved this town! They're folk heroes and everybody loves them. Except Rex.

CROXLEY: Who?

CHIEF: Doesn't matter. The point is, nobody is going to help you find our town's saviours. They're worshipped and adored by all. Even to the point where one of our artisans is currently sculpting a statue of them for the main square.

CROXLEY: Chief...

CHIEF: No! No more talk. Sod off. I can't help you and I wouldn't if I could. Now go.

(Croxley nodded slowly.)

CROXLEY: I see. Like that, is it?

CHIEF: Yes.

CROXLEY: Understood.

(He sighed.)

CROXLEY: I was hoping I wouldn't have to do this, but you leave me no choice.

(The chief eyed him suspiciously.)

CHIEF: Excuse me?

CROXLEY: Sorry, old boy, but if you won't listen to *me*...

(He then yelled to the door.)

CHIEF: Send her in!

(He smiled at the chief.)

CROXLEY: Perhaps you'll listen to *her*.

(He then made an exhibition of gesturing to the doorway. Wearing a baffled expression, the chief glanced down at the floor beside the doorway then furrowed his brow.)

CHIEF: My cat?

CROXLEY: No, you cock. Her!

(Just then, a woman roughly the chief's age, stepped into the room with a bewildered expression on her face. At once, the chief gasped in horror then jumped to his feet and pointed at her furiously.)

CHIEF: You!!!

(The woman, the chief's wife, and the mother of his children, grimaced at him uneasily.)

INCA: Um... hello, Chester.

CHIEF: What are *you* doing here, you evil cunt of a woman???

INCA: Well...

CHIEF: You life-ruining sow!!! How dare you enter my room without begging???

INCA: Begging?

CHIEF: Yes! You should have begged on bended knee, so could I watch you humiliate yourself!

(He shook his fist.)

CHIEF: Before telling you to bugger off!

INCA: Chester...

(Croxley smiled.)

CROXLEY: Anyway, I'll leave you two to chat, shall I?

CHIEF: No! You can piss off and take *her* with you!!!

CROXLEY: That won't be happening, I'm afraid.

(He then left the room and closed the door behind him.)

CHIEF: That's him gone! Now it's *your* turn, woman!!!

(Inca glanced at him briefly then hurried to open the door.)

CHIEF: That's right! Now fuck off and don't come back!

(Much to his annoyance, however, she checked that Croxley wasn't listening in then closed the door again.)

CHIEF: Hey; that's not fucking off!!!

INCA: Chester, enough!

CHIEF: Enough??? I haven't even *started* yet! You ruined my life!!!

INCA: Yes, and I'm not going to allow that Croxley to do the same thing to our girls!

(The chief glowered at her coldly.)

CHIEF: Excuse me?

INCA: Just listen, will you?

CHIEF: Why should I?

INCA: Because that Croxley wants to find our daughters and take them back to Tifrel!

CHIEF: I'm well aware of that!

(Inca ruffled her neck.)

INCA: Yes, well, for some reason, he thought that, as their mother, I'd be able persuade you to tell him where they are.

CHIEF: I don't *know* where they are!

INCA: And I wouldn't ask you to tell him, even if you did!

(She sucked her teeth.)

INCA: He's desperate to find them, Chester. His career depends on making them re-join the war effort.

CHIEF: So he claims. Personally, I just think he's out for vengeance. They made him look like a right tit.

INCA: No.

CHIEF: No? Don't say no to me, you...

INCA: Chester, the other people travelling with him are furious at him for driving the girls out of the army. Utterly furious! So I believe him when he says he wants to find them and beg them to come back. I do.

(She bit her lip.)

INCA: The trouble is, it was Major-General Highcroft who sent him here. And I don't trust *him* either. He'd assured me that, when the girls joined the spy unit six years ago, they'd be well looked after by his best man. Well that was a crock of shit. They were sent to Croxley!

CHIEF: I know that!

(He furrowed his brow even further.)

CHIEF: Try telling me something I *don't* know!

INCA: Okay. How's this? I'm *not* going to persuade you to help him find the girls; I'm going to beg you not to.

CHIEF: Beg?

INCA: Yes!

(The chief nodded defiantly.)

CHIEF: Go on then. Get down on your knees and grovel like a randy husband on a month long sex embargo!

INCA: If I must.

CHIEF: You must!

INCA: And if I do, do you *promise* you won't help Croxley?

CHIEF: Yes!!!

INCA: Fine.

(She then sunk down onto her knees. Watching her do it, Croxley gave an exasperated sigh.)

CHIEF: Oh, don't bother!

INCA: What?

CHIEF: Begging.

(He ruffled his neck.)

CHIEF: I've got no intention of helping Croxley anyway. In fact, I'd rather die!

INCA: I see.

(She then climbed to her feet and afforded him a smile.)

INCA: Then we're on the same page.

CHIEF: We *both* think you're a cunt?

(Inca could only sigh.)

INCA: Do we both hate me for what I did to you?

(She shook her head solemnly.)

INCA: Yes, we do.

CHIEF: Right...

(He snarled at her.)

CHIEF: Trust you to ruin it!

INCA: What?

CHIEF: Yelling at you is no fun if you're just going to be contrite and agree with me.

INCA: I see.

(She sighed.)

INCA: What can I tell you? At the time, I did what I thought was right. Knowing how much pain you'd be in never sat well with me though. I knew I'd hurt you beyond words and I hated myself for it.

CHIEF: I hated you for that too.

INCA: And you were right to do so, but... we couldn't raise our babies here, Chester. We couldn't. I definitely wasn't wrong about that.

CHIEF: Well...

INCA: But you never listened, did you?

(The chief sneered at her then sat down.)

CHIEF: You were talking nonsense.

(Inca sighed then attempted to take a seat.)

INCA: I...

CHIEF: You can stand!

INCA: Chester!

CHIEF: What?

(He sighed.)

CHIEF: Fine... just... don't get comfortable.

INCA: In this atmosphere, who could?

CHIEF: Not you. What with you being the villain of the piece.

(Inca sat down then sighed.)

INCA: The villain of the piece, huh?

CHIEF: That's right! The dirty, low-down, life-ruining miscreant in this story is you!

INCA: That's fair.

(She smiled.)

INCA: I did have a sidekick though.

CHIEF: Yes; you're mother.

INCA: No. You!

(The chief was flabbergasted.)

CHIEF: Me???

(He flapped furiously.)

CHIEF: How dare you? What happened was entirely *your* fault! Haven't you heard? It takes one to tango! You!

INCA: It takes *two* to tango, Chester! One person attempting it alone would simply be marching up and down the dance floor like a teapot!

CHIEF: Yes, and that one person was *you*!!!

(Inca blinked at him emptily.)

INCA: What the hell are you talking about?

CHIEF: You! You dancing teapot!

INCA: Can you just calm down?

CHIEF: No! You ruined my life!!!

INCA: I know!

(She sighed with deep annoyance.)

INCA: Just like *you* ruined ours!

CHIEF: Ours?

INCA: Mine and the girls!

CHIEF: How??? How did *I* ruin them???

INCA: By not fucking listening!

(She gave an exasperated sigh.)

INCA: Shortly after their first birthday, I walked into the living room just in time to see Aya jump onto the dining table in a single bound. It was taller than *she* was!

(She sighed.)

INCA: It was horrifying. Mortifying! Because I knew what it meant! My grandfather had the ability to zoom and it ruined his life!

CHIEF: Like you ruined mine.

INCA: Do you want to hear this or not?

CHIEF: Your excuses? Not really, no.

INCA: Well tough. You need to understand why I did what I did.

(The chief sat back and glowered at her.)

CHIEF: Go on then. Enlighten me. Why *did* you ruin my life?

INCA: Don't you mean, how did *you* ruin *our* lives?

CHIEF: I didn't!

INCA: You did! Chester, I was struggling! I tried to put Kaya to bed once, but she didn't want to go. So she zoomed across the room to get away from me. From one side to the other in the blinking of an eye. So, I went to go and get her and she zoomed back again. That went on for two hours!

CHIEF: You left the village and took them with you for that???

INCA: No, you tit!

(The chief flinched, set on edge by her slighting him.)

INCA: Like I said, I knew what it meant. Without strict discipline, they'd go on to live terrible lives. As criminals! Thugs! Bullies! Outlaws! I didn't *want* that for my little girls.

CHIEF: Do you think I *did*?

INCA: No. But you wouldn't listen to me when I warned you, would you? I told you how strong they were. And I told you how fast they were! And more to the point, I told you having such powers affected my grandfather! *He* grew up without discipline and from the age of five, when he realised he could get whatever he wanted just by zooming in and taking it, or bullying others out of it, he became a terrible human being. The most selfish man on earth! A one man crime wave. And he only stopped because when he turned fifty, he realised he had no friends and his entire family had shunned him.

(She shook her head.)

INCA: No. I wasn't going to let Aya and Kaya have a life like that. I wanted them to be able to be around people. To grow up respecting others. To be decent, honest, members of their community. To be happy. One thing my grandad never was! Not until his later years, anyway. Once he'd made amends.

(The chief sighed.)

CHIEF: I wish you'd told me that at the time.

INCA: I did!

CHIEF: I mean, I wish you'd made it *clear*!!!

(He furrowed his brow.)

CHIEF: You just said things like, our girls have the potential to be murderous fiends! Our girls have superpowers and they're dangerous! If they go to a normal nursery, there's a fair chance they'll *kill* anyone who tries to use the same toy as them! You sounded like a lunatic! You did! I thought you were having a breakdown!

INCA: I wasn't though, was I? I was trying to make you understand what might happen if they don't get a strong disciplined upbringing! A disciplined upbringing *beyond* which you and I could give them! They needed martial arts levels of discipline from a very young age! And I was right!

CHIEF: Being right isn't the issue, woman! You communicated it horribly. I mean, I'd never even seen them *do* anything. They'd never jumped on tables or hurdled sofas when I was around. To me they were just normal girls. And there you were, telling me they were potentially psychotic lunatics! Of course, I thought you were having a breakdown.

(He sighed emptily.)

CHIEF: I was looking into getting you some help. Medical help. Then...

(His eyes seemed to lose their light at this point, as if his heart was breaking all over again.)

CHIEF: You vanished. With my two angels. My reasons for getting out of bed in the morning. I was crushed. You absolutely destroyed me when you did that. I didn't know if they were alive or dead.

(He shook his head.)

CHIEF: You'd rattled on about making sure they don't grow up to be psychopaths, so I feared you'd *might* have stopped them by taking their lives. And I lived with that pain for twenty fucking years. Not knowing anything about them broke me as a person.

(He then glanced up at her.)

CHIEF: So when I tell you you're a cunt; don't you dare argue with me. You don't have that right.

(A tear flowed down Inca's cheek.)

INCA: I'm so sorry, Chester. I didn't know you thought they might be dead.

CHIEF: No, but you knew I'd be in pain from not hearing anything about them, didn't you?

INCA: Yes. I did. And I really am sorry.

CHIEF: Shove it.

INCA: Right.

CHIEF: Shove it far.

INCA: Okay.

CHIEF: And make sure it hurts.

(He shook his head.)

CHIEF: Even now I don't know the first thing about them. I just know what they look like. And that's it. And that I love them.

(Inca offered him a weak smile.)

INCA: I can fill in some blanks... if you like.

(The chief glanced at her coldly.)

CHIEF: Yes. I *would* like. I don't exactly like being in the same *room* as you, but I would like to learn about them.

INCA: Okay. Where shall I start?

CHIEF: You can start by telling me where the hell you went when you first ran away!

INCA: Oh. Okay. Well...

(She sat back and crossed her legs.)

INCA: I took the girls to a temple in Tifrel. About a mile from my mother's house.

(The chief furrowed his brow.)

CHIEF: And did your mother *know* you were nearby?

INCA: Of course.

CHIEF: I knew it!

(He shook his fist.)

CHIEF: Curse that evil dragon!

INCA: Chester...

CHIEF: I *went* to your mother's house when I was searching for you! She said she hadn't seen you.

INCA: Yeah... I told her to say that. I was scared you'd take the girls back with you if you found us, you see?

CHIEF: So you and the infuriating harpy you call a mother, conspired to lie to me?

INCA: We were trying to protect the little ones, Chester.

CHIEF: Oh, like I was a threat!

INCA: You were! You wouldn't have let them have the disciplined upbringing they needed.

CHIEF: You don't know that!

INCA: I do. You'd have continued to insinuate that I was just a lunatic, while continuing to ignore the problem!

CHIEF: Well... maybe. I didn't realise there *was* a problem, did I?

INCA: No, but there was one! That's the point! Now do you want to hear this or not?

CHIEF: Fine. The floor is yours.

INCA: Thank you.

(She forced a smile.)

INCA: The spiritual leader at that temple specialised in discipline. He was the one who finally helped my grandfather learn some self-control and restraint. So, he was the obvious choice.

CHIEF: Hmm...

INCA: He did a great job, Chester. And it couldn't have been easy. When toddlers want something, they tend to have tantrums until they get it. And our two little monsters were no different in *that* respect.

(She grimaced.)

INCA: Where they did differ is that they could take what they wanted and potentially hurt anyone who got in their way.

CHIEF: Hmm... so how did he... you know... combat that?

INCA: Rigid denial.

CHIEF: What?

INCA: He'd offer them rewards for being good. If they *weren't* good, however, he denied them the rewards. Steadfastly. No second chances. If they behaved, they were rewarded, if they weren't, then no reward. And I mean *strictly* no reward! It worked, because he didn't show them where the rewards were kept, so they couldn't just take it. They were reliant on him to *fetch* the reward. Therefore, they were motivated to do what he said.

CHIEF: I see.

(He gave her a cold glance.)

CHIEF: You know, where I come from they have a term for that kind of thing. It's called... and I hope this term isn't too technical for you... basic parenting!

INCA: Yes, but you and I couldn't have done it.

CHIEF: Why the hell not?

INCA: For a start, our house wasn't big enough to *hide* the rewards in. We kept things like biscuits in the kitchen. And they *knew* it. And high cupboards were no obstacle to those two! (She ruffled her neck.)

INCA: And besides, that was just step one. He then introduced trust.

CHIEF: Trust...

INCA: Yeah. He let them know where the rewards were kept, but told them they could only have one if he *said* they could.

(She smiled.)

INCA: Aya helped herself once, so he hid them again. And that was how they learned that actions have consequences.

CHIEF: Again, basic parenting.

INCA: Basic parenting that you and I couldn't have done.

CHIEF: Yes, we could!

INCA: Chester, it needed to be strict. Rigid! No second chances. And there's no way in hell you or I could have done that. Especially you.

CHIEF: Excuse me???

INCA: What would you have done if they'd been naughty? Be honest.

CHIEF: I'd have...

INCA: You'd have told them off; they'd have fluttered their eyelashes at you and called you daddy in a cute voice; and you'd have instantly let them off! And I wouldn't have been much better. Parents, by nature, are extremely forgiving. We love our kids, so *sometimes* we let things go. We willingly turn a blind eye. Well that would have done our two no good. If you offer a kid an inch, it'll take a mile. And if you were to allow Aya and Kaya a mile... they could have done a lot of damage.

(She shook her head.)

INCA: I know it sounds harsh, but those two daughters of ours are special cases, Chester. They weren't like other kids. We couldn't afford to make a single mistake on the discipline front. They needed to know they couldn't, under any circumstances, get away with doing as they please.

(She sighed heavily.)

INCA: If they'd thought they could *get away* with knocking another kid over and take his toy... that kid could have been seriously hurt. You understand that, right?

(The chief sighed ruefully.)

CHIEF: I suppose.

INCA: Thank you.

(She nodded.)

INCA: Their spiritual guide did wonders with them, you know? By the time they were three, they'd already mastered saying please and thank you as a reflex. And they were always grateful for what they received.

(She exhaled.)

INCA: Little angels, they were.

CHIEF: By the time they were three?

INCA: Yeah.

CHIEF: Then why didn't you bring them home?

INCA: There was a long way to go, Chester. Their formative years were only beginning.

CHIEF: Fair point.

INCA: Yeah...

(She then shook her head.)

INCA: Things got trickier after that.

CHIEF: Oh?

INCA: On the advice of their spiritual guide, I enrolled them in a military school.

CHIEF: At what age?

INCA: Four.

CHIEF: Four??? Fucking four???

INCA: The discipline needed to keep on coming!

CHIEF: Yeah, but four?

INCA: They needed an education, Chester. A disciplined one. So it was the only choice.

CHIEF: Well...

INCA: It was.

CHIEF: If you say so.

INCA: I do.

(She sighed.)

INCA: It was alright at first. For the first couple of years, it was just like a normal infant school. Then things became... unpleasant.

CHIEF: Oh?

INCA: They were taught to kill.

CHIEF: Right...

INCA: And the way they did it was absolutely horrific.

CHIEF: Wait. You're not going to tell me they had to kill actual people, are you?

INCA: No. They were given kittens or puppies to raise. For three months.

CHIEF: Oh, god no. Don't tell me...

INCA: I'm afraid so.

CHIEF: They made them kill the pet they'd raised.

INCA: Yes.

CHIEF: Oh, fuck me.

INCA: It was a horrifying time for all of us, Chester.

(She sighed emptily.)

INCA: I'd send them to school on Monday and they'd remain there until Friday afternoon. Only coming home at weekends.

CHIEF: Boarding school.

INCA: Pretty much.

(She pouted.)

INCA: I lived for those weekends. I can't even put into words how much I missed them during the week.

CHIEF: Oh, diddums. A whole week.

(He pointed to his chest.)

CHIEF: Twenty fucking years!!!

INCA: Just listen, will you?

CHIEF: I might.

INCA: Wow.

CHIEF: Oh, fine. Carry on.

INCA: Thank you.

(She sighed.)

INCA: Aya and Kaya refused to kill their pets. Couldn't bring themselves to do it. So you know what the school did?

CHIEF: Spanked them?

INCA: Worse.

(She pouted.)

INCA: They refused to let them go home at the weekends until they'd done it. I didn't see them for a month.

CHIEF: Why, that's just nasty!

INCA: It was horrendous. When they finally did the deed, they came home and cried in my arms for hours. A combination of having missed me, and having been forced to murder their pets. They were six years old, for fuck sake.

CHIEF: Right...

(He growled.)

CHIEF: That's made me angry!

INCA: I'm not surprised!

CHIEF: Angry at you!

INCA: Me?

CHIEF: For sending them there!!! You... you... cunt of a woman!

INCA: Can you stop calling me that?

CHIEF: Seems unlikely, why?

INCA: Just don't.

(She shook her head.)

INCA: Anyway, if you're interested, things did get easier for them after that. Having been kept at school for four consecutive weekends for that bout of disobedience, they never disobeyed an order ever again. As a result, they went on to become model students. And model citizens! They turned out polite, eloquent and kind; just as I'd hoped.

(She grimaced.)

INCA: But having rigidly followed the army's teachings, they also became ruthlessly effectively killers. Extremely so.

(She nodded.)

INCA: You know, Chester, they should have left that school at the age of sixteen, but Major-General Highcroft noticed them and promoted them to the army a year sooner. That's how highly rated they were. It was an exciting time. But... well... you know the rest. They ended up with Croxley, being treated as cooks, cleaners and eventually whores.

CHIEF: I hate that cunt!

INCA: Well, you're not alone in that, I can assure you.

(She sighed uneasily.)

INCA: And do you know the punch-line in all this, Chester?

CHIEF: How could I possibly?

INCA: Then I'll tell you. After everything that happened, I'll never know if I did the right thing or not.

CHIEF: You didn't!

(Inca ignored him and continued.)

INCA: Because of their disciplined upbringing, they turned out really well. Like I said, they're polite, kind and loving. *Good* girls, you know?

(She shook her head.)

INCA: But I'll never forgive myself for the hell they went through in getting there.

CHIEF: No. Nor will I.

INCA: How reassuring.

CHIEF: Well, what did you expect? I don't bloody like you!

INCA: Fair comment.

CHIEF: And by the way, I learned very little there.

INCA: But I gave you their life story.

CHIEF: Which was one long procession of waffle about discipline. It hasn't helped one bit. I know they've had a shitty time; they wouldn't have deserted otherwise. And I'd gathered that a military upbringing would have been hard on a kid. You've taught me nothing. (He thumped the desk.)

CHIEF: I still don't know the first thing about them. If it was their birthday tomorrow, I wouldn't have a clue what to get them. I don't even know what they like.

INCA: Right, well...

CHIEF: I know bugger all and it's all thanks to *you*. If they walked through the door right now, I wouldn't even be able to tell them apart! And I'm their father, for fuck sake!

INCA: Well what do you want to know?

CHIEF: Everything! I want to learn about them as *people*. I have no use for their life story; that's the past. I want to get to know my girls.

(He sighed.)

CHIEF: Because if they ever *do* come back to this town, it'd mean a hell of a lot to me just to be able to give them something relevant as a gift. Or to share a conversation with them about the things they care about. I can't do that right now though, can I?

(Inca nodded.)

INCA: Well... okay... I can help with that. Actually, I *want* to. It's the least I can do.

CHIEF: The very least.

INCA: Yeah...

(The chief looked to her imploringly.)

CHIEF: Just tell me about them, will you? I'll just sit here and listen.

(Inca nodded then nestled into her seat.)

INCA: Okay. Well... did you know they have a kind of weird telepathy going on?

CHIEF: I suspected it. They despatched that spy in the summer with a synchronised attack that they didn't even discuss beforehand. Almost like they read each other's minds.

INCA: I can imagine. They've always had that, you know? A weird understanding of the other one's thoughts.

(She raised a single finger.)

INCA: Actually, it goes further than that. They share an empathy.

CHIEF: For whom?

INCA: No, I mean, empathy in the psychic sense. Like an empath.

CHIEF: What?

INCA: When Aya was sixteen, she went out with her boyfriend. On a date, you know?

CHIEF: Okay...

INCA: He broke up with her while they were out. Broke her little heart. And I knew all about it before she even came home.

CHIEF: How?

INCA: Because Kaya suddenly burst into tears for no reason. She'd felt her sister's pain.

CHIEF: Are you serious?

INCA: Deadly so. That kind of thing happened a lot. Like when Aya had her first orgasm. I knew all about that too, because poor Kaya suddenly started whimpering in ecstasy on the sofa. She was having one too. Right in front of my mother and her book group.

CHIEF: I didn't wish to know that!!!

INCA: What?

(She flinched.)

INCA: Right. Yes. Sorry.

(She grimaced.)

INCA: Just saying... they feel each other's emotions. Kaya had too much to drink once, and Aya ended up slurring her words and falling over. She hadn't had a single sip.

CHIEF: That's really weird.

INCA: It is. And they know things about each other that they just shouldn't.

(She shrugged.)

INCA: But at least they don't have any secrets from each other, I suppose.

CHIEF: True.

(He nodded.)

CHIEF: See? This is the kind of thing I want to hear.

INCA: Yeah?

CHIEF: What else can you tell me?

INCA: Well...

(She mused for a moment then her face lit up.)

INCA: Hair!

CHIEF: Right. Hair. Yes. I know they have hair, Inca...

INCA: Yes, but did you know they use hair dye to help people tell them apart? Aya uses red and Kaya uses blue.

CHIEF: I did know that, yes.

INCA: Shit.

(She flinched.)

INCA: But did you know they measure how long their hair is once a week, to make sure their hair is exactly the same length as each others?

CHIEF: What?

INCA: Just one of many lengths they go to remain identical, just in case they *don't* want anyone to tell them apart.

CHIEF: Really?

INCA: Yeah. If Aya, for example, is in trouble, they'll *both* wash out the dye then Aya will swear blind she's Kaya. If they're *both* Kaya then Aya won't get in trouble, you see? And Kaya will do the same for Aya. They've got away with a whole *host* of minor infractions by pulling that stunt.

(She shrugged.)

INCA: It never worked on me though.

CHIEF: No?

INCA: No. *I* can tell them apart. They tried a few times though, bless them.

CHIEF: I see. How *do* you tell them apart though? What's the giveaway?

INCA: There isn't one. I just instinctively know.

CHIEF: Right. Well, that doesn't help *me* very much.

INCA: No, I don't suppose it does.

(The chief sighed.)

CHIEF: So, that's it, is it? There are literally no differences between them?

INCA: I wouldn't say that.

CHIEF: Then what are they?

INCA: Well... Kaya doesn't like seafood. And even the *smell* of honey makes Aya dry heave. There are quite a few subtle things like that. Kaya's revolted by the scent of lavender, for example. And Aya's creeped out by woodlice of all things. You know, just normal quirks.

(She then started to chuckle.)

INCA: I think the *biggest* difference is how they react to being disrespected.

CHIEF: Oh?

INCA: If you put her down in any way, Aya goes into psychiatrist mode.

CHIEF: Psychiatrist mode?

INCA: Yeah. She'll quiz the person who put her down in order to get to the bottom of why they said what they said. If someone makes a sexist remark, for example, she'll examine *why* they said it, until the poor bugger admits to something he didn't want the world to know. Like he's insecure, gay or his mother didn't love him. There's always a *reason* behind blind prejudice. Always! So she'll badger them until they make a fool of themselves by revealing what it is. She's really good at that. And they hate it!

CHIEF: So, in essence, she humiliates them?

INCA: Pretty much. But that's mild compared to how Kaya reacts.

CHIEF: Oh?

INCA: If anyone disrespects *her*, she'll bend over backwards to annoy them. Straight up, she'll play on what they said and deliberately get on their nerves until they lose their temper. She has a very dark sense of humour, you see? And winding up hateful idiots until they're red with rage is her idea of fun evening.

(The chief allowed himself a smirk.)

CHIEF: I believe the huntsman, Rex, is familiar with that tactic.

INCA: Yeah?

CHIEF: Very much so. He despises her. But then again, he feels the same about most women. He's a rampant misogynist, you see?

INCA: Gotcha. That'd be like a red rag to a bull to Kaya.

(She smiled.)

INCA: She's a good girl. They both are. They never start these arguments; they just know how to finish them.

CHIEF: That's good to hear.

(He nodded.)

CHIEF: So? What else?

INCA: Well... let me think.

(She nodded.)

INCA: They both like music, but Aya will walk out if she hears a single note on a trumpet. She can't abide that sound. And she likes romantic plays and books. Kaya prefers comedies. And what else? Clothes and makeup. They have identical tastes there. Which is handy really when you consider they like to look the same sometimes, in order not to be identified.

CHIEF: Okay. And what else?

INCA: Well...

(She mused to herself.)

INCA: From what I've seen, Kaya's the most promiscuous of the two, but Aya's kinkier.

CHIEF: Why would you *tell* me that???

(Inca flinched.)

INCA: Shit. Sorry.

(She grimaced.)

INCA: The differences are so slight, I'm just throwing things out there. I kinda forgot myself. Sorry.

CHIEF: Cunt!

INCA: Chester...

CHIEF: What?

(Inca sighed.)

INCA: I really am sorry for everything I put you through. I know that makes very little difference, but I am. And...

(She smiled.)

INCA: It's good to see you again.

CHIEF: Yes... well... it's not good seeing *you* again. I just want to see my girls again.

INCA: Yeah... so do I. I just hope they don't come back while that Croxley is here.

CHIEF: Like he could catch them.

INCA: True.

(She chuckled.)

INCA: And Kaya would probably enjoy making an exhibition of that fact.

CHIEF: I'd enjoying watching that.

INCA: Same.

(She then nodded.)

INCA: So? What now?

CHIEF: Now Croxley can fuck off back to the capital and take you with him.

INCA: He won't be doing that. He can't return without the girls.

CHIEF: Well, he can't stay here!

INCA: I...

CHIEF: And nor can you! If our girls *do* come back, I want to spend time with them.

Precious time without you in the way; telling them I'm a cunt.

INCA: Excuse me? I never did anything of the sort!

CHIEF: You must have done! I mean you must have told them why you left me, and I'm willing to bet that your account didn't exactly cover me in glory.

INCA: Actually...

(She scratched her head.)

INCA: It did.

CHIEF: What?

INCA: I told them you had to stay behind because the townsfolk needed you. And that the town would fall apart without you, because... well...

CHIEF: Because what?

INCA: Because... you're the saviour of the mountain and the greatest swordsman in the north.

(She scratched behind her ear.)

INCA: I let them think you were a superhero.

(The chief stared at her agape.)

CHIEF: What?

INCA: It was good for their self-esteem.

CHIEF: Well, thanks a bunch. A reputation I can't possibly live up to. They must have been so disappointed when they met me.

INCA: It's unlikely. I think they figured out I was exaggerating a long time ago.

CHIEF: I hope so, woman. God, you're a cunt.

INCA: Yeah... you said...

CHIEF: Look, just... bugger off for now, will you? Go and hang around with your new chum, Croxley.

INCA: He's not my chum!

CHIEF: Fine! Then go and say hello to some of your old friends from the town.

INCA: Yeah, right. I bet they all despise me. I left and ruined your life...

CHIEF: Correct.

INCA: So I'll be about as welcome as Croxley.

CHIEF: Possibly less, but that's your problem.

(He shook his head.)

CHIEF: Just piss off, will you? I don't want to spend another second in your company. Too many painful memories.

INCA: Well... okay. But I'm not leaving town. I want to keep an eye on that bastard Croxley.

CHIEF: Fine.

(He nodded.)

CHIEF: You can stay at number twelve Swan Street.

INCA: Really?

CHIEF: Absolutely. I'll just get the chap who's using it for storage to clear it out, then it's all yours.

INCA: So kind.

CHIEF: You'll like him. He knows Kaya well.

INCA: Oh. I look forward to meeting him then.

CHIEF: I look forward to you meeting him too.

(His brow then clouded over.)

CHIEF: Now piss off!

Across town, at this time, inside The Nest Public House, the monthly meeting of TOPAS, The Official Ponytail Appreciation Society was just getting underway. Present were the group's founders, Eleanor Warren, Frank Evans, Cassie Turner and Portman Rhodes. The first item on their agenda for discussion was the statue of Kaya currently in production elsewhere in the town. Their meeting, however, wasn't going very well. Sitting ten feet away at the bar, the town's wealthiest citizen, Morris Mortimer was heckling them remorselessly. He was still bitter at Kaya for, what he considered, an act of disrespect when she'd last been in town and he was in no mood to let it go.

MORRIS: Hopefully the statue comes out cross-eyed!

(Eleanor glanced up from the table and shook her head.)

ELEANOR: Stop listening in! And stop giving us your childish opinions!

MORRIS: I wasn't *giving* you an opinion. I was just sharing my hopes for the statue.

(He scoffed.)

MORRIS: You idiots hero-worship that bint; it's pathetic. She couldn't give a shit about you lot though; you know that, don't you?

(Frank glowered at him.)

FRANK: Just fuck off, Morris.

MORRIS: No! Why should I? This is a pub! Short for *public house*; emphasis on the word public. Everyone is welcome. So, I'm perfectly entitled to be here.

(He ruffled his neck.)

MORRIS: If you want your meeting to be private, you'll just have to *hold* it somewhere private, won't you?

FRANK: Well, that's one of our two options, I suppose.

MORRIS: And what's the other one?

FRANK: I *could* just knock you the fuck out!

MORRIS: Like you could take me!

CASSIE: Pack it in, you two. Macho displays of testosterone just aren't sexy... when middle-aged men are doing them, anyway.

FRANK: But he's just sitting there, being a cunt again. Like he does at *every* meeting!

ELEANOR: We'll just have to learn to ignore him then, won't we?

FRANK: That's easier said than done.

ELEANOR: I know... it's just...

(She gave an exasperated sigh then glanced at Morris.)

ELEANOR: Why can't you just leave us alone? All we want to do is sit here in peace while we discuss ways to keep our good friend and saviour in everyone's hearts and minds.

MORRIS: Because it's tragic! She's not your friend; she was just doing her job, for fuck sake. And she's certainly not your saviour!

CASSIE: Yes, she is. She's *yours* too.

MORRIS: How? In what way is *she* my bloody saviour?

CASSIE: The literal way! She literally saved your life! You're only here today because...

MORRIS: She was doing her job!

ELEANOR: Wow.

MORRIS: It's true. She didn't see *me* and think, I know, I must save that man. She saw an enemy soldier and killed him.

FRANK: Yeah, an enemy soldier who'd singled *you* out for an extremely gruesome death!

MORRIS: My presence was merely a coincidence. She'd have killed him anyway. Like you say, he was an enemy soldier!

FRANK: *You're* an enemy soldier!!!

MORRIS: Right...

ELEANOR: Leave this to me, Frank.

(She looked to Morris imploringly.)

ELEANOR: Look, we just want to be left alone to discuss someone we happen to think highly of. How is that hurting you?

MORRIS: You're *not* just sitting there hoping to discuss her though, are you? You're looking for ways to keep her in the news. To keep her in everyone's minds, you said.

ELEANOR: So?

MORRIS: So, you're looking to make a false idol of that woman and I'm not going to stand for it. I don't want to live in a town full of people who stupidly hero-worship some random bint who just happened to do her job while she was passing through.

(Cassie scoffed at him.)

CASSIE: You didn't think that little of her when she was saving your arse, did you?

FRANK: Of course he didn't. *He* thought she was a hero too, right up until the moment she ditched us for our own safety.

ELEANOR: Which was actually a classy move.

MORRIS: She didn't ditch us for our own safety; she ditched us because she thought she was too good for the likes of us.

ELEANOR: She was hunting for a dangerous spy and didn't want us to get hurt!

MORRIS: Didn't want us to get in the way more like!

FRANK: And what's wrong with that? I'm bloody glad we weren't in the way. She got embroiled in a extremely violent, fight to the death, if you recall! If we'd have been in the way of that, there's a fair chance we'd have lost a few limbs.

(Morris sighed despondently.)

MORRIS: You just can't see her for what she is, can you?

ELEANOR: I think you'll find that's our line.

CASSIE: Now, go away.

MORRIS: The hell I will! I'm not going anywhere. Like I said, if you want to hold meetings in private, you'll have to *go* somewhere private.

CASSIE: We can't! If we hold our meetings in a closed space we won't get any new members.

MORRIS: You're not getting any new members sitting there either! You've been holding these meetings here for six months now and not one person has joined you.

ELEANOR: Because *you* keep mocking them! And *us*! It puts them off!

MORRIS: I'm just saving them from making fools of themselves by becoming party to your silliness. They should thank me, really.

(Just then, the door opened up and thirty year-old workman stepped up to their table.)

HENRY: Hello, there. Um... are you that appreciation society, dedicated to the chief's daughter?

ELEANOR: That's us.

HENRY: Sweet. I'm interested in joining.

(Morris scoffed.)

MORRIS: I wouldn't bother, lad. This lot aren't quite with it. Star-struck imbeciles, the lot of them.

FRANK: Morris!

MORRIS: They act like that Ponytail's a goddess or something, and nothing could be further from the truth. She's just a large-breasted bimbo who thinks she's better than everyone else! (Henry growled at him then slipped off his coat, revealing extremely muscular arms.)

HENRY: Bimbo? Fucking bimbo? She saved my life, you cunt! Show some respect or I'll punch your fucking lights out!

MORRIS: Um...

FRANK: He's always slagging her off like that.

HENRY: Is he now?

MORRIS: Um... it's time I wasn't here.

(He then took off out of the door like a gazelle sprinting away from a stalking lioness. His departure brought much in the way of relief to those at the table.)

ELEANOR: Thank heavens for that.

CASSIE: He's such an idiot.

FRANK: You mean cunt.

(The fourth member of the group then finally broke his silence.)

PORTMAN: How can a house be public?

ELEANOR: What?

PORTMAN: That Mark fella said this was a public house.

FRANK: His name's Morris not Mark.

PORTMAN: Right. Him then. He said this is a public house. What's that all about? Houses are meant to be private, I thought. *Public* house doesn't make any sense. Or does it? I don't live in a public house, do I? Or *do* I? Can anyone just walk in and use my toilet? I don't get it.

FRANK: It just means it's a house that the owner has *chosen* to open to the public in order to sell drinks, Portman.

PORTMAN: Oh. I might try that.

CASSIE: You live with your parents.

PORTMAN: So?

CASSIE: It's not your house *to* open to the public.

PORTMAN: Right.

(He shrugged.)

PORTMAN: I won't bother then.

(Henry gave him a sideways glance then smiled at Eleanor again.)

HENRY: Anyway, I was looking to join.

ELEANOR: Right, yes. Please. Take a seat.

HENRY: Happy to.

(He then sunk onto a stool and smiled at everyone.)

HENRY: It's nice to meet you all. I'm Henry, by the way. I've been thinking about joining for a while now, but I was a bit nervous about coming forward.

FRANK: Don't be. We're all very friendly here.

CASSIE: That we are.

(She smiled.)

CASSIE: I'm Cassie, by the way.

(She then gestured in turn to those around the table with her.)

CASSIE: This is Portman, this is Frank and this lovely lady is Eleanor.

PORTMAN: Alright?

FRANK: Hello.

ELEANOR: Hi.

FRANK: So, Ponytail saved your life too, did she?

HENRY: Big time. *Three* of them Nawsland cunts were chasing me, then she zoomed past me and wiped them all out. I didn't *know* it was her at first, obviously. I just saw a flash of long hair among the blur.

(He exhaled.)

HENRY: I didn't see her *properly* until the chief introduced her... and I've been unable to take my mind off of her ever since.

ELEANOR: I see.

HENRY: Anyway, I know the requirement for joining this group, so here. I spent a month on this.

(He then delved into his jacket sleeve and pulled out a rolled up sheet of paper.)

CASSIE: Wait. What requirement?

FRANK: Yeah, what do you mean?

HENRY: This.

(Henry then handed Frank the sheet of paper. Wearing a baffled expression, he unfurled it then stared at a pencil drawing Henry had made.)

HENRY: Not bad, eh? Took me ages, but I reckon I nailed it there.

FRANK: What is it?

(Henry furrowed his brow then leant towards him.)

HENRY: You're holding it upside down.

FRANK: Oh.

(With that, he flipped the sheet over. Almost at once his eyes bulged.)

FRANK: Oh, good god.

(He then held the sheet in Henry's direction and furrowed his brow.)

FRANK: Dude!

HENRY: What's wrong?

CASSIE: Let me see.

(With that, she took the sheet of paper and scrutinised it with her eyes.)

CASSIE: Um... okay... so... you drew her *face* kinda well, even if she does look oddly delirious. But what's this bit at the bottom.

HENRY: Where?

(He glanced over her shoulder.)

HENRY: What bit?

(Cassie pointed to the sheet.)

CASSIE: There.

HENRY: Are you serious? That's my cock going right up her...

(Cassie thrust the paper at him and cut him off before he could finish his sentence.)

CASSIE: Leave!!!

HENRY: What? But I thought...

CASSIE: This is TOPAS! The *Official* Ponytail Appreciation Society!

HENRY: I know.

CASSIE: You want the T.P.A.S! The Ponytail Appreciation Society!

HENRY: What the difference?

ELEANOR: Ours is the *official* appreciation society. We're here to appreciate her as a *person*!

(She sneered.)

ELEANOR: The other group consists of seedy little men who like writing sexual fantasies and drawing erotic images of her.

HENRY: That's the one *I* wanted to join!

ELEANOR: Then go and see Benny Goodrich in the Birdstone Tavern!

FRANK: And take your filthy drawing with you!

HENRY: Right.

(He grimaced.)

HENRY: That's quite the mistake, isn't it?

FRANK: Yes!

HENRY: I thought so.

(He then scratched his head before upping and bolting out of the door.)

ELEANOR: Honestly, what is wrong with this people?

FRANK: Don't ask. I *would* put it down to loneliness, but half the cunts have families.

CASSIE: They're just perverts. Why would they turn our heroine into something lewd and disgusting?

ELEANOR: Because they're men.

FRANK: Easy!

ELEANOR: Sorry.

(She sighed.)

ELEANOR: But I'm not entirely wrong, am I?

CASSIE: Nope. After everything she did for this town, all *they* remember is her amazing boobs.

ELEANOR: And her pretty face.

FRANK: Not to mention her gorgeous long legs, perfect arse, full lips...

ELEANOR: We get the point!

CASSIE: Pervert!

FRANK: Less of that!

(He ruffled his neck.)

FRANK: I'm just saying, she was gorgeous. The perfect woman in many people's eyes, so it's understandable that a lot of people are smitten with her.

(He shook his head.)

FRANK: To take it that extreme though? To turn her into something sordid; no more than a sex object? That's just disrespectful. She deserves better than that.

ELEANOR: Good point, well made.

CASSIE: Yup. Sorry I called you a pervert.

FRANK: Good.

(He sighed.)

FRANK: What's she gonna think when she comes back and finds out she's been turned into nothing more than a cheap thrill for the local perverts? That is *not* a fitting legacy for this town's saviour.

CASSIE: Exactly. That's why it's important that we keep fighting to uphold her legend properly.

ELEANOR: As the heroine of the people!

CASSIE: And not an erotic fantasy character!

FRANK: Precisely. I mean those perverts might only make up five percent of the population, but what if their filthy pictures and stories, outlive her legend? She'll go down in history as nothing more than the warrior slut who came to town and slept with half the men!

CASSIE: And half the women, probably. You know what men are like.

ELEANOR: Yeah!

(She sighed.)

ELEANOR: Why are men like that, Frank?

(Frank stared at her coldly.)

FRANK: How is that a fair question?

ELEANOR: Well...

FRANK: My wife had several affairs then stole my money and ran away with a younger bloke, leaving *me* to raise the kids. But have I ever asked you why *women* are like that? No! Because it wasn't your doing. Just like those perverts are nothing to do with me!

ELEANOR: Right. Yes. That wasn't a fair question. Sorry.

(She sighed.)

ELEANOR: I was horrified when I heard your wife had done that. My husband said people like that need to be strung up. Ironical, huh? Just three months ago, he did the same thing to me.

PORTMAN: He ran away with a younger bloke?

ELEANOR: No, you idiot. He left me three months ago and hasn't even come back to visit his children.

PORTMAN: Oh. I didn't know that.

ELEANOR: Well now you do. He claimed he was fed up with my obsession with Ponytail. Then he left. And went straight into the arms of another woman.

FRANK: There's no way that wasn't pre-planned.

CASSIE: Right? Your admiration for Ponytail was just an excuse.

(Eleanor sighed.)

ELEANOR: Let's talk about something else.

FRANK: Like how we'll explain that other group to Ponytail when she returns.

PORTMAN: And when's that?

FRANK: How the hell would we know?

CASSIE: It might not even happen.

(Eleanor smiled.)

ELEANOR: Oh, it will. She said so, and I believe her. I wasn't imagining things, we'd struck up quite the rapport. She meant it when she said she'd look me up. *And* that she was interested in seeing my kids grow up. My husband said I was deluding myself, but I wasn't.

FRANK: She sounded sincere to me too.

CASSIE: I agree.

ELEANOR: Thank god for that. For a moment I feared I was kidding myself. Honestly, things have been so shit lately, I'd die if she came back and didn't even remember me.

FRANK: That won't happen.

CASSIE: Not a chance.

ELEANOR: Thanks, guys.

(She smiled.)

ELEANOR: Which brings us back to the point in this group's existence, how do we mark the occasion?

FRANK: Well, we keep on top of the chap making her statue, for one. He's got a brilliant drawing of her face to work with, so it should look fantastic. But if those cunts from our rival group get in his ear, she could well end up naked.

CASSIE: With giant, rock-hard nipples.

PORTMAN: And Henry's cock up her...

FRANK: Do be quiet, Portman!

PORTMAN: What? Why?

ELEANOR: Because we need someone to check the ceiling fan again.

PORTMAN: Right. Gotcha.

(He then stared at the ceiling and fell silent.)

CASSIE: Sweet. Now the adults can have a conversation.

FRANK: Yup. Starting with, apart from keeping an eye on the sculptor, how else can we protect Ponytail's reputation?

ELEANOR: Hmm...

(With that, the three of them fell silent as they contemplated the answer. They would remain that way for quite some time.)

Out in the vast Lenthom woodlands a good few hundred miles from Birdstone, a few hours later, Aya was heating up some chicken meat over a campfire. Kaya was somewhere nearby, securing a perimeter. Despite the ground being under several inches of snow, Aya had managed to secure enough dry kindling from low tree branches to make a pyre capable of burning all night. Delighted with her handiwork, she watched two large chicken breasts heating up over the flames with a big smile on her face.

AYA: They're gonna taste so nice.

(She exhaled then glanced upwards, deep in thought.)

AYA: It's a *shame* I have a twin really. I could have eaten both.

(A disgruntled voice then rose up from behind her.)

KAYA: Are you going to make that joke *every* time you hear me approaching?

AYA: Probably. It's a good joke.

KAYA: Said nobody ever.

AYA: Incorrect. I literally just said it.

KAYA: Apart from you then.

(Aya chuckled to herself as she watched her sister sit down a few feet to her right.)

AYA: How did it go?

KAYA: Securing the perimeter? I didn't bother in the end.

AYA: I see. Kaya?

KAYA: What?

AYA: Are *you* going to make *that* joke every time you come back?

(Kaya chuckled.)

KAYA: Probably. It's a good joke. Unquote!

AYA: Touché.

(She rolled her eyes.)

AYA: No issues then?

KAYA: None. If anything comes near us in the night, the bell will ring as soon as they make the slightest *contact* with the tripwire. It's nice and taut.

AYA: Good, good.

KAYA: Uh-huh.

(She smiled then glanced across her surroundings.)

KAYA: This is the perfect spot, this.

AYA: There's no such thing as the perfect spot, Kaya.

KAYA: Yeah, but being an alcove, this is pretty close. Cliffs on three sides to shield us from the wind and an umbrella of trees above us to prevent anyone on the cliff-tops from seeing us. And a clear view of anyone approaching the only way in. How often does that happen?

AYA: Not very.

(She shrugged.)

AYA: But as you well know, as long as there's a fire, we're always going to be visible from *certain* angles.

KAYA: There's no pleasing you, is there?

AYA: I'm a perfectionist, Kaya.

KAYA: You're a bloody nitpicker.

AYA: Well excuse me for being concerned about our safety.

KAYA: Aya, there's concern and then there's paranoia.

(Aya furrowed her brow.)

AYA: We're on the run from the army, Kaya. Wanted for desertion! At times like this it pays to be paranoid.

(Kaya shrugged.)

KAYA: Fair enough.

(She beamed.)

KAYA: Is that chicken done yet?

AYA: It was done ages ago. I already ate yours.

KAYA: Aya...

AYA: It'll be ready in a minute, okay?

(She rolled her eyes then started to chuckle.)

AYA: Have you ever heard of a thing called patience?

KAYA: Sure. That's what doctors have.

(She smirked.)

KAYA: In fact, *you'd* be a doctor's patient if you'd *actually* eaten my chicken.

AYA: Think you can take me, huh?

KAYA: I wouldn't need to, love. You'd be seeing the doctor for salmonella. The chicken isn't even cooked yet.

AYA: Right.

(They both chuckled.)

KAYA: But, yes. I can take you.

AYA: We both know that's a fantasy.

KAYA: No, it's not.

AYA: Oh, yeah?

KAYA: I've never once fantasised about beating you.

AYA: Right.

KAYA: I've fantasised about us teaming up and torturing Croxley though.

AYA: Like we'd need to team up for *that*.

KAYA: Yeah, but we would.

AYA: Good point.

(She sneered.)

AYA: See how he likes having things shoved in *his* orifices!

KAYA: Yeah!

(They nodded defiantly then Kaya sighed.)

KAYA: When we were sent to the spy unit, having been allowed to graduate a year early, I was really excited. We were finally soldiers. I couldn't wait to let loose on those invading Nawsland bastards. So much for that, eh?

AYA: Yeah. We became maids.

(She sighed then looked to Kaya.)

AYA: I envy you, Kaya. You finally got to kill some of them this summer. You actually experienced the thing we signed up for.

KAYA: Yeah.

(She smiled.)

KAYA: I wish I could say it was satisfying, but... it was actually really frustrating. Twenty eight innocent people died, because I couldn't kill the invaders quickly enough.

AYA: That's not your fault though. It was a miracle you made it in time.

KAYA: I *didn't* make it in time.

(She shook her head.)

KAYA: If I'd just got there just a minute or two earlier...

AYA: Stop it! You know as well as I do, *what if's* are dumb.

KAYA: Well... yeah.

(She grimaced.)

KAYA: They really were cunts, Aya. They didn't care who they killed.

AYA: I can imagine.

KAYA: They didn't even hesitate when it came to slaughtering the harmless. Women and children were fair game to them.

AYA: Fuckers.

KAYA: Yeah.

(She smiled.)

KAYA: At least it won't be like that this time.

AYA: Yeah. We'll be able to go there as ourselves, without conflict, and finally get to know our dad.

KAYA: I can't wait.

(She exhaled.)

KAYA: He struck me as a really friendly person, Aya. He had a warm aura, you know?

AYA: Sounds awesome.

KAYA: We were right though. Mum is full of shit. He's not a master swordsman and nor is he revered as a god by all the mountain folk. He's well-liked, but nothing like the hero mum made him out to be.

AYA: Then why did they make a statue of him?

KAYA: They didn't. She made that up too.

AYA: Oh.

(She furrowed her brow.)

AYA: We need to have a word with that mother of ours.

KAYA: Yes, yes we do.

(She grimaced.)

KAYA: According to that huntsman... what was his name? Something Bonehead! Our parents were rowing because mum was going insane. Then she fled and didn't tell dad where she went.

AYA: Insane? She's not insane. We *know* that's not true.

KAYA: Right?

(She nodded.)

KAYA: I guess we'll find out the truth when we get there.

AYA: Yeah... unless our dad's version of the truth is just as far-fetched as mum's was.

KAYA: Right...

(She smiled.)

KAYA: Fuck it. Let's just eat our chicken and worry about it when we get there.

AYA: Now that, dear sister, sounds like a plan.

As midnight approached, Inca found herself heading down Swan Street in the heart of Birdstone. She'd left the chief's office quite some time ago, but had had to spend the last two hours giving Major Nash and Corporal Croxley a briefing about her meeting. Her insistence

that the chief had no idea where her daughters were had been met with much scepticism. Convincing them had taken quite a while. Rather miffed about that fact, she paced down the road, grumbling under her breath.

INCA: Bloody doubting *me*. Ridiculous. He doesn't know where they are and he wouldn't tell me if he did. Is that so hard to believe?

(She sighed.)

INCA: I know this is important to them and they need to be thorough, but grilling me like a suspected terrorist isn't on.

(She shrugged.)

INCA: Not that they did that. It's just *feels* like it when they ask the same question over and over again for hours... while plying me with drinks in a bid to appear friendly.

(She grimaced.)

INCA: Come to think of it, it was nothing like a terrorist grilling.

(She nodded.)

INCA: But it was no less annoying. Even if the drinks were delicious. *I* don't know where they are, *Chester* doesn't know where they are, and neither of us would tell them even if we did. What a waste of time.

(She then glanced up and spotted the open door to number twelve. With a smile, she then made a beeline for it. Having passed through it, however, she was greeted with the sight of a muscular, shirtless man, bending over with his backside in her direction. At once, she came to a halt and tilted her head to admire his wares.)

INCA: Oh, my. Really, Chester, you shouldn't have.

(The man span around and glared at her.)

REX: What?

INCA: Just wondering. Do you come with the room?

(Rex just shook his head.)

REX: You sound just like that bloody Ponytail. It wasn't funny when *she* said it either.

INCA: Ponytail? You must be referring to Kaya, my daughter.

(Rex furrowed his brow.)

REX: That bitch is *your* doing, is it?

(He flinched.)

REX: Then you're the horrible old bat who deserted the chief and ruined his life.

INCA: Don't you start.

REX: You've got a nerve showing your face around here.

INCA: Yes, well, it wasn't intentional, I can assure you.

REX: Ruining his life wasn't intentional??? What happened, did you fall down the mountain, land in a cart and wake up a hundred miles away with amnesia?

INCA: Oddly, no.

REX: Then you knew what you were doing!

INCA: That's between Chester and I. And when I said it wasn't intentional, I meant showing my face around here. The army made me come here.

REX: Made you?

INCA: Well... sort of. They said it regarded my children, so as a mother I felt I had no option but to oblige.

REX: Right. Typical woman.

INCA: Excuse me?

REX: Habitual liars, the lot of you.

INCA: When did I lie?

REX: When you said the army forced you to come here.

INCA: I didn't lie. I misspoke. They coerced me by appealing to my maternal nature.

REX: Which is nothing like *forcing* you!

(He shook his head.)

REX: See, this is why I hate women. You can't trust a bloody thing they say.

INCA: You hate women?

REX: Yes!

(He pointed at her angrily.)

REX: And no, I'm not gay.

INCA: Are you sure?

REX: Yes! So don't bother stripping naked just to test me, like your slut of a daughter did.

(Inca giggled.)

INCA: That's my Kaya. No inhibitions whatsoever.

REX: Think it's funny, do you?

INCA: I do. See, you're quite clearly a stern misogynist, so you'd have belittled her. Am I right?

REX: I may have told her what I think of her, yes.

INCA: So she bent over backwards to annoy you, didn't she?

REX: I don't want to talk about that!

(He then picked up a box and headed for the door.)

REX: This is the last one. The room's all yours. I hope it caves in on you in the night.

(He sighed with annoyance.)

REX: Fucking women.

INCA: Wow.

(A miffed expression then crossed her brow.)

INCA: So that's why Chester said he was looking forward to me meeting you. He knew you'd be horrible to me.

REX: It's nothing personal. I hate *all* women!

INCA: Right. I understand.

(She smiled.)

INCA: I'm sorry to hear that. Unhappy childhood, huh? That's tragic. You have my sympathy. It couldn't have been easy growing up with a mother who didn't love you.

(Rex stopped, placed the box down then shook his fist at her furiously.)

REX: You leave my mother out of this!!! She was a wonderful person!

INCA: A wonderful *woman*.

REX: Person!

INCA: Right...

(She bit her lip.)

INCA: You don't see your mother as a woman?

REX: Of course, she was a woman. Just... shut up!

INCA: Okay, so that rules out mummy issues. So, why...

(She bit her lip then shrugged.)

INCA: I give up. Why *are* you like that?

REX: Fuck me, you're even more annoying than your daughter!

INCA: Hardly. That little bugger goes for the jugular. *I'm* just curious.

REX: Look, it's none of your fucking business. Just accept that I hate women and leave me alone! And don't you dare pull my fucking trousers down!

(Inca blinked at him emptily.)

INCA: Why the hell would I?

REX: Your daughter did.

(Inca chuckled.)

INCA: She's a card.

REX: She's a cunt!
INCA: Steady on, sunshine.
(She wagged her finger at him.)
INCA: That's my child you're insulting!
REX: Your child is a cunt!
INCA: I see.
(She smiled.)
INCA: You know you're going to regret saying that, don't you?
REX: Is that a threat?
INCA: No.
REX: Oh.
INCA: I was stating a fact.
(Rex scoffed.)
REX: Why? What are *you* gonna do? Tell the chief? Big deal. He *already* knows how I feel about his daughter.
(He smirked.)
REX: And *I* know how he feels about *you*. He won't be doing *you* any favours, that's for sure.
(With that, he picked up his box then headed off down the street with it.)
REX: Now fuck off out of my life.
(Standing in the doorway, watching him go, Inca nodded to herself.)
INCA: Yup. I'll definitely have to find a way punish him before I leave. And I mean severely.
(She then turned and headed further into the room. Finally able to see the furnishings under the moonlight, she then came to a crashing halt. Much to her horror, there was nothing but a tiny camp bed in the corner, adorned with a wafer thin pillow and some itchy looking blankets.)
INCA: Right... you had him set it up like this on purpose, didn't you, Chester?
(She grimaced.)
INCA: If I didn't know it already, I'd certainly know it now. You're not about to forgive me any time soon, are you?
(She then groaned in defeat.)

The following morning, at six o'clock, a solid hour before the sun was due to rise, the unit of invading Nawsland Soldiers, began their approach to Birdstone. Having been given their final briefing, they'd deviated away from the paths and had spread out throughout the woodland; keeping low all the while. They were going to launch a devastating dawn raid. Heading forth at the front, Captain Sole had his sword drawn, while allowing his other hand to trail behind him. It was a marker to Vice-Captain Bagg to remain at least an arm's length away. Satisfied with his lead, he nodded then spoke up in a lowered voice.)

SOLE: Not long now, Bagg.
BAGG: I can't argue with that, sir.
(He nodded.)
BAGG: Because I didn't hear what you said.
SOLE: I said, not long now.
BAGG: Nod along to what?
(Sole raised his voice slightly.)
SOLE: Not *long* now!
BAGG: Oh, right.

SOLE: Deaf bastard.

BAGG: I couldn't hear you. You walked ahead then whispered.

SOLE: I didn't whisper!

BAGG: Near enough though.

(He furrowed his brow.)

BAGG: Why do you need a walk a full metre ahead anyway?

(Sole glanced back and scowled at him.)

SOLE: Because I'm the leader. I lead! It's what I do. I'm not like one of those cowardly generals, Bagg. I plan to *lead* my men into battle, not *send* them.

BAGG: I see. Noble sentiments, sir.

SOLE: Thank you.

BAGG: But if you want to give me orders to pass along, you're going to have to let me stand where I can hear you.

SOLE: I have to do no such thing.

(He nodded.)

SOLE: I'll just speak up.

(He then waved his hand behind him.)

SOLE: Stop!

(Reacting to his order, Bagg waved his arms above his head. Heeding his motions, the entire unit came to a standstill. They were at the very edge of the woodland, and the township of Birdstone was now only fifty metres away. Between themselves and the gates to the town, there was nothing but an empty plateau.)

SOLE: Excellent. We're in place. Tell the men to prepare for battle. We'll charge as soon as the cannon takes down the gates.

BAGG: Sir.

SOLE: Oh, and... tell the cannon unit to get their arses up here. It's the perfect place to fire from.

(Bagg nodded then spoke urgently to those behind him.)

BAGG: Spread the message to every man beside you and behind you. Prepare for battle.

(A succession of mumbles then echoed out from the woodland as the message was spread to every man in the unit.)

BAGG: Oh, and Jacks?

JACKS: Sir?

BAGG: Go to the back and fetch that cannon unit up here. It's time to get the show on the road.

JACKS: Sir.

(With that, Jacks raced away towards the rear of their ensemble.)

BAGG: Job done, sir.

SOLE: Excellent. Now we wait.

BAGG: Yes, and...

SOLE: Quietly.

BAGG: Right...

(He rolled his eyes then joined Captain Sole in staring determinedly at the gate. He was very much looking forward to getting this operation started. In fact, he could barely wait. He had no idea what they'd be coming up against and it was making him extremely uncomfortable. This battle could go one of two ways. If the gods were smiling on them, they'd find out that Lenthom's two zoomers weren't in town and the operation would be a doddle. If they *were* in town, however, victory would come with a heavy death toll. Waiting to find out which scenario they'd be facing, therefore was deeply unsettling. Not about to show any outwards

signs of his discomfort, however, he waited patiently at the Captain's rear, until his subordinate returned a few minutes later.)

JACKS: Sir!

BAGG: Ah, Jacks. Is the cannon unit on its way up here?

JACKS: No, sir. We...

BAGG: What do you mean; no?

JACKS: We can't find them, sir.

BAGG: What do you mean, you can't find them?

JACKS: Exactly that! They're not there! They've vanished, sir.

(Bagg groaned then looked to his captain.)

BAGG: Captain Sole!

SOLE: Yes?

BAGG: They can't find the lads from the cannon unit.

SOLE: Can't find them?

(Jacks stepped forward.)

JACKS: There were marching at the back, but at no point did they form part of the back row once we'd stopped. They never caught up.

BAGG: That's cobblers. I'll go and look.

SOLE: No!

BAGG: No?

(The captain bit his lip.)

SOLE: Trained soldiers, veterans in their case, don't wander off and get lost.

JACKS: This lot have.

SOLE: No, they haven't.

(He gulped.)

SOLE: I think we need to brace ourselves, chaps. *They're* here!

(Just then, a series of pained screams rose up from the ranks at the rear. At once, everyone in the front row, spun around and drew their weapons. Having done so, they failed to notice a blur in the trees above them. Undetected, the blur whizzed over their heads then leapt over the wall into Birdstone. A split second later, a slightly smaller blur leapt *back* over the wall again and up into the trees; before zooming towards the rear of their ranks. Not one of them spotted it. If they had, they'd might have noticed a few details about the blur. A ponytail and a small, cannon-barrel had entered the town, but only a ponytail had leapt out again. As it stood, however, nobody saw a thing.)

SOLE: Okay, men! It begins! Like we practiced, okay? Build the defensive cogs!!!

(Following his word, the men in his unit hurriedly formed a series of large circles. There were twenty men in each one, standing shoulder to shoulder, facing outwards from the circle.)

SOLE: And... rotate!!!

(With that, his men started to run sideways, maintaining their circles, whilst violently flailing their swords around in front of them. They'd essentially created spinning cogs, with razor sharp blades erratically swinging back and forth around the perimeter. The hope was that the zoomers would charge in and get caught on one of the wildly unpredictable blades.)

SOLE: Excellent! Nice work, men!

BAGG: Um... sir?

SOLE: Shut up, you! Just keep your sword flailing. Those bitches are bound to attack, and there's no way they're going to be able to evade all these blades!

BAGG: But, sir...

SOLE: Those bitches are as good as dead!

BAGG: On the contrary, sir, there's one tiny flaw in this plan.

SOLE: Oh, fuck off, you fault finding bastard! Why do you have to be so bloody negative all the time???

(A cry then rose up from a circle further out in the woods.)

SOLDIER: Entire circle down!!! Entire circle down!!!

SOLE: What?

SOLDIER: Make that two!!!

(Sole was gobsmacked.)

SOLE: How???

(Bagg glowered at him.)

BAGG: Because, you bewildering idiot, by doing this circling nonsense, we've created large empty rings they can jump *into*!

SOLE: What???

BAGG: Look behind you, you moron. It's a giant, empty circle! A giant, empty circle from inside which, they'll have the piss easy task of butchering twenty men from behind!

(Sure enough, taking full advantage of the bizarre tactic, Aya and Kaya had each leapt inside a ring of circling men and had slaughtered them all from behind with consummate ease.)

SOLE: Fuck!

(He growled for a moment then his face lit up.)

SOLE: *I* know! Every second man! Turn around and face inside the circle. And keep flailing!!!

(His men swiftly obliged.)

BAGG: Great. Now there aren't enough blades on the *outside*!

SOLE: Stop finding fault, you cunt! This is fine!

(He snarled.)

SOLE: Come on, bitches! Try your luck!!!

(He then winced at the sounds of more and more of his men crying out in pain.)

SOLE: Oh, boy.

BAGG: Sir...

SOLE: Shut up! This is bound to work eventually; we just need to give it a chance!

(Watching from up in the trees, Aya and Kaya shared an amused smirk then leapt into action once again. Down there in the darkness, the soldiers were circling as fast as their legs would allow. This, however, posed them no obstacle whatsoever. When Kaya had battled Candice in the summer, both of them had moved at lightning speed, but the fight had been a stalemate right up until the end. The reason being; zoomers couldn't just *move* at immense speeds, they could also keep track of an opponent doing it. Their eyes and their brains were every bit as quick as their bodies. As such, it didn't matter how fast the soldier's circled. To Aya and Kaya, they might as well have been moving in slow-motion. Tracking their blades on the outer circle was easy, especially now there were half as many of them. This allowed them to rush into a gap, butcher the soldier there then take their place in the circle. From there, they could simply run through the men, moving them down as they went. And all in the blinking of an eye.)

SOLDIER: Two more circles down!!!

SOLE: Fuck!

BAGG: Do something, you cock. You're gonna get us all killed!

SOLE: Me? *I'm* not the one attacking us!

BAGG: No, but you might as fucking well be. Persisting with *this* tactic is no better than killing us all yourself!

(Sole snarled at him.)

SOLE: Fine! If you want *me* to kill us all, I will! Starting with *you*!!!

BAGG: Captain! Pull yourself together and find a better way!!!

SOLE: Like what?
BAGG: Anything!!!
SOLE: What???
(He growled.)
SOLE: You'd better not be suggesting I surrender! I'm paid to lead, not concede!!!
BAGG: Who said anything about surrendering??? I'm saying we need a new *tactic*! This circling thing is bollocks! Right now, we might *well* go down in history as the only unit to do a fucking folk dance while the enemy mowed us down like maypole-dancing sissies!
SOLE: Fine!
(He growled.)
SOLE: I'll think of something.

(Somewhere in the middle of the pack of Nawsland soldiers, two rather disgruntled members of the unit were sitting beneath a tree with their hands on their heads. Having been ejected from their respective circles, purely on aesthetic grounds, they'd lost all their enthusiasm for the fight. Fully expecting to be butchered without any help from the peers who'd shunned them, they were awaiting death with solemn expressions on their faces.)

WAKEFIELD: Shit, isn't it?

BARNSLEY: Yeah.

(He sighed.)

BARNSLEY: I didn't expect to go out like *this*.

WAKEFIELD: Sitting out the battle?

BARNSLEY: Yeah.

WAKEFIELD: Shit, isn't it?

BARNSLEY: Well shit, mate.

WAKEFIELD: Ostracised by our unit, and for what?

BARNSLEY: Wearing glasses.

WAKEFIELD: Yeah.

(He glanced at Barnsley and grimaced.)

WAKEFIELD: My dorm mates call me four-eyes.

BARNSLEY: So do mine.

WAKEFIELD: Creative bunch, aren't they?

BARNSLEY: Yeah...

(He gave Wakefield a curious glance.)

WAKEFIELD: So... why are you sitting with your hands on your head?

BARNSLEY: Why are *you*?

WAKEFIELD: I copied *you*. I thought it meant something.

BARNSLEY: It does. Sort of.

WAKEFIELD: Oh?

BARNSLEY: It means I give up. My unit have shunned me, so I'm done. I want no further part in this war.

WAKEFIELD: Oh.

(He bit his lip.)

WAKEFIELD: So it's a surrender?

BARNSLEY: Yup. I'm signalling that this fight has fuck all to do with me.

WAKEFIELD: Do you think the enemy will let us off then? You know... if they realise we've opted out?

BARNSLEY: Probably not. But if there's a five percent chance, I'm taking it.

WAKEFIELD: Right...

(He shrugged.)

WAKEFIELD: That's fair.

(He then shook his head.)

WAKEFIELD: I didn't even want to join the army. I was conscripted.

BARNSEY: Same. Conscripted then thrown into a unit full of people who took extreme pleasure from calling me names and throwing things at me.

WAKEFIELD: Yeah.

(He furrowed his brow.)

WAKEFIELD: Since when was there a stigma attached to wearing glasses?

BARNSEY: In my case, since the minute I passed basic training. Until then, I was going places. My future was bright. I like to read, you see?

WAKEFIELD: Same.

BARNSEY: Cool.

(He grimaced.)

BARNSEY: We've been cast out for being nerds, haven't we?

WAKEFIELD: Something like that.

BARNSEY: Stupid unit.

WAKEFIELD: Stupid army.

(He nodded.)

WAKEFIELD: But I'm not just gonna sit here like a twat, waiting to get murdered.

BARNSEY: No?

WAKEFIELD: No.

(He ruffled his neck.)

WAKEFIELD: I'm gonna read a book.

(He then delved into his pocket.)

WAKEFIELD: On second thoughts, no I'm not. I left it at the camp.

BARNSEY: Right... so... sitting here like a twat, waiting to get murdered it is then.

WAKEFIELD: Looks that way.

BARNSEY: Yeah.

(They then shared a simultaneous sigh.)

At the front of the woodlands, nearest to Birdstone, at this time, several members of Captain Sole's circle were starting to get more than a little agitated. The tactic of running sideways whilst whooshing their swords about randomly wasn't something they could get behind, and it wasn't long before they started to speak up.

GRIMES: Captain???

SOLE: What is it, private?

GRIMES: Some of us are starting to feel dizzy, sir!

ROYLE: Dizzy and pissed off!

SOLE: Why would you be pissed off?

ROYLE: Because what we're doing is ridiculous!

SOLE: No, it isn't!

(He furrowed his brow.)

SOLE: It might not be ideal, but...

ROYLE: Not ideal???

(He snarled.)

ROYLE: Captain, I spent five, long years grafting like a bastard in order to master the art of swordsmanship! Why? Because I'm a fucking soldier! Nay, a warrior! Brave and battle ready, eager to face down enemy hoards at the risk of my own mortality; all for king and

country! That's who I am! I'm a man of action and *that's* what I sign up for! I did *not* sign up to put on some weird theatrical display of bladesmanship through the medium of interpretive dance!!!

SOLE: Interpretive dance???

GRIMES: You heard him! We're prancing around in a circle, wafting our arms about! We look like we're doing ballet or something!

BAGG: Ballet? You wish! We look more like a badly coordinated cabaret act!

ROYLE: Exactly!

(He sneered.)

ROYLE: If we put on frilly skirts and kicked our legs out now and again, people would applaud and start throwing money! Well, I'm sorry, but I didn't sign up to *entertain* people; I signed up to kill them!!!

SOLE: And if we persist, sooner or later, we will. We'll kill the two zoomers and I can guarantee there'll be a medal in it for every single one of you. Those two are right at the top of our most wanted list, along with the president of Lenthom!

(He nodded.)

SOLE: Stick with it, boys; success is imminent, I can feel it in my bones!

ROYLE: Success??? What success??? We're meant to be sacking the town, not dancing in circles in the hope that two clumsy bints stumble onto our swords by mistake!

SOLE: Persist, you cunt; that's an order! Sacking that town will be much easier if those two clumsy bints, as you called them, are dead! Now, shut up! It's going to work; trust me!

(Just then, a yell came from further down the woods.)

SOLDIER: Three more circles down!!! Three more circles down!!! Still no sign of the enemy!!!

SOLE: Right... I know that might *sound* bad...

ROYLE: It *is* bad! They literally have every advantage! They're too fast and it's so dark, we can't even fucking see them!

SOLE: Now you listen to me, negative Nellie...

(Just then, hundreds of Nawsland soldiers came charging past them, before sprinting out of the darkened woods and battering into the gates of the town.)

SOLE: Who told you men to break rank???

(One of the soldiers racing forth from the rear, shrugged at him as he passed.)

KENNY: Nobody! It was kind of spontaneous, to be honest. The group next in line for attack said fuck that and charged, so... we all followed suit.

SOLE: Insubordination! There's going to be consequences for this appalling behaviour, you mark my words.

(He then gritted his teeth and glanced at the men in his circle.)

SOLE: Persist, men; you know it makes sense.

ROYLE: Nah. Bollocks.

(The group then splintered and every single member charged for the gates, leaving Sole circling on his own while Bagg stood there and shook his head at him.)

SOLE: Right... by myself, am I? I feel stupid now.

BAGG: And yet you look so majestic.

SOLE: Don't mock me, fuck face.

BAGG: I wasn't! Throw on one of those frilly skirts he mentioned and...

SOLE: Oh, shut up!

(He stopped circling then sighed.)

SOLE: I guess we're moving onto plan B then. Sack the town and hope to kill those two zoomers in the process.

BAGG: It's a long shot.

SOLE: Yes, but unfortunately, now the men have charged, it's our *only* shot.
(He then charged for the gates.)
SOLE: Batter it down, boys! Batter it well!!!
SOLDIER: We're trying, sir. It's made of cast iron!
SOLE: Then try harder! The gates might be tough, but hinges are hinges! Apply enough pressure and they're *bound* to fall!
(He then gulped.)
SOLE: And be quick about it!!!
(With that, he raced through his men and fought his way to the front. He'd just seen two blurs race into the rear of the pack and he was absolutely terrified.)
SOLE: Get that gate down!!! They're here!!!
(Just then, the bell started to ring inside the town, alerting the residents to the fact that they were under attack.)
SOLE: Fuck. Now they're going to prepare their defences.
BAGG: If they *have* any, that is.
SOLE: I'm sure they do, Bagg.
(He flinched.)
SOLE: Wait. Why are you following me?
BAGG: I'm your second in command. It's my job to pass on your orders!
(He winced.)
BAGG: Plus, I saw a blur. The last place I want to be is at the back!
SOLE: Right. Yes.
(He growled then raised his voice.)
SOLE: You lot in the back row, cover the rear! Waft your swords with all the power you can muster! You're our first line in defence against those fucking zoomers. The rest of you... hit those gates with everything you've got, boys! Everything you've got!!! We came to sack this town and we're damned well going to!
(He then whimpered in fear. Right now, he had over seven hundred men battering at the gates, but with two zoomers in their midst, that number could dwindle rapidly. Therefore, he wanted the gates to come down as soon as possible. His orders were to sack the town. Right now, however, there was a risk of the town sacking his unit before they even set foot in the place. Such a failure would go down in folklore as the most feeble military effort in history. At the very least, he wanted to make a *start* on slaughtering the townsfolk. In his heart, however, he knew that a start was all he was going to get. The mission was not going to be the overwhelming success he'd hoped for. With two zoomers present, he and his men were destined to die before they'd completed their task and he knew it. Should he die while *doing* his duty, however, he could accept it. Dying without even getting started; slaughtered without ever setting foot on the enemy's turf, on the other hand, was a legacy he couldn't bear to even think about.)
SOLE: Hurry up, for fuck sake!!!

Inside the town at this time, having reacted to the sound of the warning bell, Eleanor, Frank and Cassie raced down a quiet, moonlit side street. With terror in their eyes, they sprinted forth with everything they had. Eleanor was carrying her eldest child and Cassie was carrying the youngest for her. Gasping for breath and whimpering in fear, they raced onwards until they reached the front door of a small house.

FRANK: Quick!

CASSIE: I know!!!

(She placed Eleanor's child down then unlocked the door. Without a moment's hesitation, Frank then bundled through it.)

FRANK: Hurry!

ELEANOR: We are!!!

(Once they were all inside, Cassie then locked the door again.)

FRANK: Draw the curtains, ladies. I'll barricade the door.

CASSIE: Plan!!!

(With that, Eleanor and Cassie hurriedly closed the curtains, while Frank dragged a large table over to the front door. Grimacing, he turned it sideways then forced it up against the door frame.)

FRANK: Well, that's no fucking good, is it.

(He then tipped the table up, so the table top was blocking the doorway.)

FRANK: That's better.

(He then stood there gasping for breath. Eleanor and Cassie did the same. Eleanor did so whilst cuddling her children.)

CASSIE: Fuck sake.

FRANK: Why can't those Nawsland fuckers just leave us alone?

ELEANOR: Language, guys.

FRANK: Bollocks. If there was ever a time and place for profanity, this is it.

CASSIE: He's right.

ELEANOR: Well... I suppose.

(She smiled down at her children.)

ELEANOR: Don't repeat those words, girls. Swearing is naughty.

(Her eldest smiled.)

CHILD: No shit, mum.

ELEANOR: Great.

(Frank then headed over to the sofa to sit down.)

FRANK: Well, so much for our early morning coffee meeting.

CASSIE: Yeah...

(She smiled.)

CASSIE: But, on the bright side, when the warning bell rang, everyone in the café fled, including the owner, so we didn't have to pay.

ELEANOR: That's a flimsy bright side, Cassie.

FRANK: Wafer thin.

(He sighed.)

FRANK: I wonder how many soldiers they sent this time?

ELEANOR: Yeah...

(She sighed.)

ELEANOR: I just hope the defences can keep them at bay.

CASSIE: But what if they can't?

FRANK: Well...

(He winced.)

FRANK: Then we'd better pray that Ponytail puts in an appearance. If the gates goes...

ELEANOR: I don't even want to think about that.

CASSIE: No. Nor do I.

(Just across town, at this time, the chief was charging down a cobbled street with a deeply troubled expression on his face. The sound of the bell meant that enemy soldiers could pour into the town at any moment. Hoping he could reach his destination before that happened, he gritted his teeth and clenched his fists.)

CHIEF: Damn these aging legs. Why am I so slow?
(Just then, Inca strode out of a house, some fifty metres ahead.)
CHIEF: There you are!!! Inca!!!
(Inca glanced at him then flinched.)
INCA: Blimey. You're up early. And what's that bell for?
CHIEF: We're under attack, you dozy bint!
INCA: What??? From whom?
CHIEF: Roger the tap-dancing wildebeest; who do you bloody think?
(He gritted his teeth.)
CHIEF: Quickly! Come with me!
(Inca raced up to him then they hurried off down the street.)
INCA: Where are we going?
CHIEF: Somewhere safe.
INCA: Safe?
CHIEF: Safer.
INCA: Right...
(She smiled.)
INCA: I knew you didn't hate me really.
CHIEF: What the hell makes you think that???
INCA: Danger rose its ugly head and you came running.
(The chief sneered.)
CHIEF: More like danger arose, so I came running to save *your* ugly head.
INCA: Yeah, right. Admit it; you still care about me.
CHIEF: Fuck off, do I!
(He sneered.)
CHIEF: If I only had myself to worry about, I'd say fuck it and let the enemy *have* you. In fact, I'd be tempted to give them a hand.
(He sighed.)
CHIEF: But it's not *about* me, is it? If anything happened to you, our girls would be devastated and I don't want that.
INCA: I see.
(She smiled.)
INCA: You're a good man.
CHIEF: And you're a cunt.
INCA: Right...
(She rolled her eyes.)
INCA: Where are we going anyway?
CHIEF: To my office. There's a secret door in the floor, leading to a safe room. We had it installed a few months ago as part of the town's new defences.
(He snarled.)
CHIEF: Those Nawsland fuckers won't find us down *there*.
(He grimaced.)
CHIEF: Unless of course, they manage to kill everyone and decide to take refuge in my office. They'd be bound to spot the door sooner or later.
INCA: Right. That'd be bad.
CHIEF: Very.
INCA: We'd better hope those defences hold out then.
CHIEF: Yes. Yes, we had.

(Meanwhile, in a small hut just across town, the huntsman, Rex Townsend was tooling up for war. Standing in front of his weapons chest, he was arming himself to the teeth whilst affirming himself out loud.)

REX: Time to shine, Remy, my boy. Those Nawsland fuckers need taking down a peg or two and you're just the man for the job!

(He secured a knife sheath around his upper right thigh then slipped a dagger inside it.)

REX: Okay then. Righty...

(He tapped an identical sheath on his left thigh.)

REX: Meet lefty!

(He then flinched and glanced down at his left thigh.)

REX: Shit. Forgot to put...

(With that, he reached inside the chest, pulled out another dagger and slipped it in the empty sheath.)

REX: Job done.

(He glanced between the two blades.)

REX: Twin blades; the *only* twins this town needs!

(He sneered then pulled out a razor sharp, short sword.)

REX: I'm gonna slice them invading bastards into tiny pieces. They won't know what hit them.

(He then allowed himself a devilish smirk.)

REX: And when I'm done, those sneering bastards in town will start giving me the respect I fucking well deserve!

(He ruffled his neck.)

REX: Scoffing, looking down at me and talking about me behind my back... just because I made one minor miscalculation and almost got that Ponytailed bitch killed. Bastards! That was her *own* fault. *I'm* this town's hero. *I'm* the one people used to turn to when they needed muscle.

(He clenched his fists.)

REX: So she had no right to fight that spy. It should have been *me*! She shouldn't have even *been* there! So she only has herself to blame when we collided!

(Glossing over the fact that Kaya had been embroiled in the fight for quite a while before he turned up and endangered them both, he nodded defiantly.)

REX: The woman's an incompetent fool.

(He nodded.)

REX: Not to mention an annoying pain in the arse.

(He folded his arms then struck a heroic pose.)

REX: Okay, Nawsland scum... it's time to you fuckers learned the true meaning of pain.

(He then headed for the door.)

REX: You fuckers couldn't even defeat two petite bitches! So, you don't stand a chance against a *real* man! Nope! Not a hope in hell!

(Elsewhere in the town at this time, Morris Mortimer was laying flat on his stomach beneath his house. Satisfied that invaders wouldn't even think about looking for townsfolk underneath their homes, he had high hopes for survival. His young son, William and his wife, Claudia, however, weren't so optimistic.)

MORRIS: Don't worry, lad. We'll be fine. As hiding places go, this is second to none.

WILLIAM: But it's dark and scary.

MORRIS: Yes, but it's nowhere *near* as dark and scary as the lust for the blood, swirling in the evil minds of those murderous barbarians out there.

CLAUDIA: Why would you tell him that???

MORRIS: Because it's true!

CLAUDIA: Morris, he's ten!

MORRIS: Then he's old enough to understand!

CLAUDIA: But not too old be scared witless! For fuck sake, try to be more comforting.

MORRIS: Really?

CLAUDIA: Really!

MORRIS: Even now, when we're cramped beneath the house, face down in the dirt, in the middle of a freezing fucking winter, desperately trying to evade a hoard of psychopathic barbarians, you're going to fucking nag!

CLAUDIA: I'm just saying. He's a child. Don't scare him like that!

MORRIS: He's not scared!

WILLIAM: Yes, I am!

MORRIS: Traitor!

CLAUDIA: Morris!

(She rolled her eyes.)

CLAUDIA: Just stop it, will you?

(She gave an exasperated sigh.)

CLAUDIA: How long are we going have to stay down here, anyway?

MORRIS: Until the enemy go away!

CLAUDIA: What if they *don't* go away?

MORRIS: What?

CLAUDIA: Invaders don't go away, Morris. The invade then stay put!

MORRIS: They... um...

(He grimaced.)

MORRIS: Shit.

CLAUDIA: No plan for that, huh?

MORRIS: Well...

CLAUDIA: So we might be down here for days, shivering and hungry, only to emerge and get caught by murderous invaders. Frozen, starved then beheaded. Great!

(William burst into tears.)

WILLIAM: But I don't want to be beheaded!

MORRIS: Nice! Now look what you've done!

(He gave her a cocky glance.)

MORRIS: Try to be more comforting, is that what you said? Sounds to me like *someone* needs to learn to practice what she preaches.

(Claudia blinked at him coldly.)

CLAUDIA: You think you scored a point there, don't you?

MORRIS: Well...

CLAUDIA: You do, don't you?

MORRIS: I...

CLAUDIA: Well, you didn't. You're a tit. Fancy making us crawl under here with no contingency for what do if the invaders take refuge.

(Morris scowled at her bitterly.)

MORRIS: Well, excuse fucking me! What *more* do you want? What more could I possibly have done? Invent the art of flight, so we could soar out of town like eagles in the event of a fucking emergency? Apart from finding us a hiding place what else could I possibly have done, woman?

CLAUDIA: You could have been far less condescending for one!

MORRIS: And you could...

WILLIAM: Aw, crap. We're all gonna die.

(Claudia and Morris looked to him in astonishment.)

MORRIS: Why would you say that, son?

WILLIAM: Because with you two screeching at each other like a pair of dysfunctional chimpanzees, the enemy won't *need* to spot us, they'll hear us from ten streets away.

(Claudia and Morris glanced at him for a second or two longer then grimaced at one another.)

CLAUDIA: He can be a right cocky little shit when he wants to be.

MORRIS: That's the price we pay for giving him an expensive education. Now when he rudely answers back, he does it eloquently.

CLAUDIA: That's it. If we survive this attack, I'm taking his dictionary away.

MORRIS: Good thinking, dear.

(They shared a defiant nodded then laid quietly for a moment.)

CLAUDIA: So... we're in deep shit here, aren't we?

MORRIS: Well, I won't lie to you, dear. If those Nawsland fuckers get in...

(He grimaced.)

MORRIS: We're fucked.

(Over at the town's largest inn, at this time, Major Nash was snoozing merrily in his bed when he became acutely aware of a distant ringing sound and a hammering noise on the door. Somewhat miffed by it, he sat up and snarled.)

NASH: If that's that fucking Croxley, I'll rip his shoes off and introduce them to his bloody colon!

(With that, he tore back the sheets, stomped up to the door then ripped it open.)

NASH: What???

(Much to his bewilderment an alarmed maid was standing before him, trembling and whimpering in distress.)

MAID: Bad people! Bad people are here!

NASH: What? Bad people?

(He growled.)

NASH: Croxley didn't try to pimp *you* out as well, did he?

MAID: Enemy soldiers, you military idiot!!!!

(Nash's hair stood on end.)

NASH: What???

MAID: They're attacking!

NASH: Are you sure???

MAID: Yes!!! *You're* soldier types! Help!

NASH: You're damned right, we will!

MAID: Good! Then go!!!

(She smiled.)

MAID: Just remember to put some clothes on before you leave.

(She then scuttled away, leaving the naked Nash feeling quite the fool.)

NASH: Right... yes... I hadn't noticed the lack of attire...

(He then shook his head to refocus himself.)

NASH: Never mind that! Yarwood!!!

(A voice rose up from the other bed in his room.)

YARWOOD: What?

NASH: Fetch Croxley and Baxter!

YARWOOD: I'll do no such thing until you've put some pants on.

NASH: You'll go now, damn it!

YARWOOD: The hell I will. *I* don't have any pants on either!

NASH: Then put some on and get going!

(He growled.)

NASH: Those enemy soldiers have come a bloody long way, just to get killed; so it'd be *rude* to disappoint them.

(Yarwood leapt out of bed, hurried into his underpants then sprinted out of the door.)

YARWOOD: I concur! Now get dressed!

NASH: I'm going to!!!

YARWOOD: Good!

(He then zoomed out of the door and barged his way through the unlocked door opposite.)

YARWOOD: Get up, you idiots!!!

(He then turned bright red and averted his gaze. A young lady, dressed only in a towel was sitting at the vanity mirror, looking deeply startled.)

YARWOOD: Um... sorry, young lady. I thought this was my fellow soldier's room.

(A somewhat smug voice then rose up from one of the beds.)

BAXTER: It is. This fine lady was just keeping me company for the night.

YARWOOD: What?

(He grimaced.)

YARWOOD: Blimey. You work fast.

BAXTER: No, Yarwood. I work well.

YARWOOD: Right... never mind that, you smarmy bastard. Where's Croxley?

BAXTER: I'll give you a clue. That snorting-cum-grunting sound isn't a buffalo in the other bed.

YARWOOD: I see!

(With that, he stomped over to the other bed, then kicked Croxley straight off his mattress.

Having landed with a thud, he jumped to his feet and bellowed.)

CROXLEY: Who did that???

YARWOOD: Get dressed, you cunt!

CROXLEY: How dare...

(He was then interrupted by a horrified cry from the young lady at the vanity table.)

MARIANNE: Who the hell's that???

BAXTER: My room-mate, sadly.

MARIANNE: You said that horrible snoring sound was your pet wolfhound.

BAXTER: Well, yeah. I didn't think I'd get the good stuff if you knew there was an old man sharing my room.

MARIANNE: And you wouldn't have.

BAXTER: Then I made the right choice.

CROXLEY: Hey! Who are you calling an old man???

YARWOOD: Never mind that shit, you silly fuckers. Nawsland soldiers are attacking the town! We need to get out there!!!

BAXTER: What???

CROXLEY: Nawsland soldiers???

(He growled.)

CROXLEY: Not on my fucking watch!

(He then picked up his sword and raced for the door.)

YARWOOD: Get dressed first!

(Croxley instantly jammed to a halt.)

CROXLEY: Right. Yes. You make a good point. How foolish of me.

YARWOOD: I wouldn't worry about it. It's surprisingly easy to do, apparently.

CROXLEY: Well...

YARWOOD: Now get a move on, fuck stains! Prepare for battle! We've got work to do!

(In a house a short way down the road, at this time, the former Birdstone chief of police was also preparing for battle. Having disgraced himself the last time the town had been attacked, he was determined to make amends. Because of his neglectful attitude to supervising the switch between the nightshift and the dayshift, the entire police force had been in bed when the prior attack started, leaving the town entirely at the enemy's mercy. There were no guarantees that his men would have made the blindest bit of difference, but for them *all* to be absent from their duties at the town's time of need was a disgrace few would ever forgive. Not about to let the town down again, he stood before a full length mirror, donning some armour he'd purchased, just in case he ever happened to be called upon.)

DESMOND: This time! This time, I'm going to be the hero, not the villain!

(He struggled into his chest plate and growled.)

DESMOND: Last time was unforgivable! Because of my oversight, I was the only police officer on duty when the shit hit the fan. And I didn't make the slightest difference. I got in one fight! One! And even then I had to be rescued by that... that... ponytailed psychopath! (He shuddered.)

DESMOND: Thank god, *she's* not here. Going around, chopping off penises. What sort of monster does that??? Horrible. If *she* was out there, I'd hide under the bloody bed.

(He then whimpered and hurried into his crotch protector.)

DESMOND: Nobody's separating *me* from my middle stump!

(Yanking the crotch protector into position, he then snarled at his reflection.)

DESMOND: That Eleanor can pretend all she likes. I know what I saw. There's no way in hell that fella chopped his *own* thingy off. It was Ponytail!

(He then sighed in defeat.)

DESMOND: Why do I do that to myself? Whenever I think of that day, I picture *that* and make myself feel queasy.

(He growled.)

DESMOND: That silliness ends now! This is not that day! This is *this* day! Today, in fact! A *different* day! And a different outcome! I'll smite those fools, you see if I don't. That solid four weeks of sword training I underwent, isn't going to be wasted; no sir. I'll chop those Nawsland scumbags into mincemeat then make sausages out of them!!!

(His shoulders instantly slumped.)

DESMOND: Why did I have to say sausages? Now I'm picturing...

(He then stood tall.)

DESMOND: No! No more, Desmond! Now let's put those arm guards on and forget all about the past! All that shit is soon to be forgotten.

(He raised his chin proudly.)

DESMOND: For today is the day I ascend to greatness! Watch this space, Birdstone. For I'm about to unleash Armageddon on those Nawsland bastards. Oh, yes! One hour from now, they'll be looking up from hell and wishing they'd never met me!

(A few moments later, primed and ready to do his bit for the Lenthom war effort, Rex sprinted from his house then charged off up the road. Growling to himself as he pounded forth, he looked very much like a man with an armoury full of axes to grind.)

REX: Fucking Nawsland cunts! Coming to my town and starting shit! Well, fine. If it's slaughter you want then it's slaughter you'll get. I kill vermin for a living, so butchering you fuckers will barely be a departure! Just another day, killing vile creatures that have no place in a civilised world!

(He then raced around a corner and growled at a nervous citizen who was charging in his direction)

REX: Move, Dennis! I've got scumbags to obliterate!

DENNIS: Right...

(He furrowed his brow then mumbled under his breath.)

DENNIS: Twat!

(Oblivious to Dennis' scorn, Rex growled then raced into the main thoroughfare.)

REX: Right then! Here we go!!!

(With that, he put his head down and charged towards the main gate. This was going to be his moment. He was going to prove to one and all that, when in danger, Birdstone didn't need ponytailed bimbos zooming about the place; it only needed him.)

REX: I'll cull the lot of them then tonight we'll drink in my honour!!!

(With that, he raced through a crowd of police officers and armed townsfolk, who'd gathered there to do their bit if required. He did so whilst sneering at them bitterly.)

REX: Don't just stand there, you idiots! Let's have at 'em!!!

(He then raced at the gate and cast away the metal girder that had been holding it firmly shut. It was a moment that changed everything. That gate, one of the most secure in the nation, had held firm for a very long time; repelling the enemy by steadfastly refusing to budge. And with every second it held firm, Aya and Kaya were able to slaughter more and more enemy soldiers. Birdstone was safe. Protected. Secure. The Nawsland soldiers didn't even *look* like gaining entry. Within five minutes, their entire unit would have perished out there in the snow without lashing a single blade in anger. Alas, this would no longer be the case. Because of Rex, one shirtless imbecile with an overinflated ego, the town would now be breached.

Having been bashing frantically at the gate in a woefully desperate attempt to batter it down, the Nawsland soldiers at the front of the throng instantly poured through it. Rex's decision to open it had been like turning on a tap. He'd opened the valve and they'd flooded through in their droves.)

REX: A-ha!!!

(Delighted to see the whites of his enemy's eyes, he immediately came out fighting. Not so secure in their battle skills, the rest of those gathered there to defend the town hesitated. They didn't hesitate for long, however, before they were swarmed upon by bulky, armed men with murder in their eyes.)

TOWNSMAN: I hate you, Rex!!!

REX: Why? Because of *me*, we're going to be heroes!

TOWNSMAN: Yeah! Dead ones!!!

(Frantically trying to defend himself from a man twice his size, the townsman whimpered.)

TOWNSMAN: Make it painless!

SOLDIER: No!

(He then raised his sword to strike the townsman down. Rather than following through with the blow, however, he collapsed in a heap with blood gushing from his abdomen.)

TOWNSMAN: What? Eh? I didn't do that, did I?

(He then spotted a blur in the corner of his eye and drew a deep sigh of relief.)

TOWNSMAN: They're here.

(Sure enough, having reacted swiftly to the gate coming down, Aya and Kaya had immediately hurdled the fence and were now fighting from the inside.)

AYA: Keep it going, babe. As long as we can hold them *here*, we should be okay.

KAYA: I hear you.

(She sneered as she zoomed through some enemy soldiers.)

KAYA: But if any of them *do* breach our defences and get further into the town, one of us is going to have to go after them. They'll kill everything from children to household pets, otherwise.

AYA: Okay. If that happens, I'll go after them.

KAYA: Deal.

(They then zoomed past one another, nodding sternly to acknowledge their plan. Having made out a blur as they raced past him, one of the local policemen smiled.)

POLICEMAN: Hope! We have hope!

REX: Of course we do! With *me* leading our defence, there's *always* hope!

(The policeman just scowled at him then hurried into the fray with renewed confidence.)

POLICEMAN: Prick!

(So far, the damage done by Rex's dim-witted exuberance hadn't been too severe. With Aya and Kaya zooming through the hoard, killing the bulk of their enemies, the small group of townsfolk were holding out extremely well. Enemy soldiers were dying in large numbers a short distance from the gate and Birdstone still hadn't received a single casualty.

Unfortunately, thanks to some extremely lucky timing on the invader's part, the situation didn't last. Just after Aya and Kaya had zoomed through the enemies from opposite sides, a larger group managed to bludgeon their way through the gap they'd left in the centre. Having managed to knock all the defending townsmen flying, they'd then charged off into the town.)

KAYA: Aya!

AYA: I'm on it!!!

(She then raced off after them. Left alone to deal with the situation at the gate, Kaya could only snarl.)

KAYA: Fuckers!!! I'll kill every last one of them!!!

(She then zoomed into action, once again.)

Just outside Birdstone, at this time, Captain Sole and his second in command, Vice-Captain Bagg, were ushering their men through the gate with extreme urgency. The captain had very much made up his mind that they'd be entering last. The Captain *had* been determined to *lead* his men into battle, rather than send them, but having seen two blurs hurdle the fence into the town, he'd changed his mind and hurried to the back of the pack. It was a cowardly act that hadn't gone unnoticed by his second.

BAGG: I'm not like those generals, you said. I *lead* my men into battle, you said.

SOLE: This is different!

BAGG: How?

SOLE: The entrance to the town is very small and everyone else is in the way. I *couldn't* go in first!

BAGG: You could! We were up there at the gate when it opened!

SOLE: Yeah, but...

BAGG: But nothing! You shrieked then dragged me all the way to the back. We're here because *this* is where you retreated to!

SOLE: Poppycock!

(He looked to his men.)

SOLE: Faster! Get in there! Go on! Get killing!!!

BAGG: Good idea! Let's practice what you preach!

SOLE: All in good time, Bagg!

BAGG: You...

(He then performed a double take in the direction of the woods.)

BAGG: What the hell are they doing?

SOLE: Who?

BAGG: Two of our men are sitting under a tree with their hands on their heads.

SOLE: They are?

(He glanced into the woods then snarled.)

SOLE: Fetch them, Bagg. Send them in there right away. I won't stand for cowardice.

(Bagg gave him a disbelieving glance.)

BAGG: You mean, *other people's* cowardice.

SOLE: Stop answering back and do as I tell you!!!

BAGG: Fine!

(With that, he hurried into the woods where his two men were conversing.)

BAGG: You there! What the hell are you playing at?

(The two men glanced up at him uneasily.)

BARNSLEY: Um...

WAKEFIELD: We were just... you know...

BARNSLEY: Surrendering?

BAGG: What???

(He yanked out his sword and span it around on his fingertips in a display of his formidable sword skills. At once, a deep sense of foreboding washed over his two subordinates.)

BAGG: Why, I should kill you right here!

WAKEFIELD: We'd rather you didn't.

BARNSLEY: I agree with *him*!

BAGG: Then you're in luck. I'm not *going* to kill you right here. You can get your arse into Birdstone and get killed in there!

WAKEFIELD: What?

BAGG: I mean, you can get into Birdstone and fight. Like soldiers!!!

BARNSLEY: Um...

BAGG: Or I *could* kill you right now, I'd you prefer. You choose.

BARNSLEY: Um... in there!

WAKEFIELD: Yeah, that'd be preferable.

BAGG: Then get up and charge!!!

(Barnsley and Wakefield shared a nervous glance.)

BAGG: Now, fuckers!!!

(Set on edge by his angry chastisement, the two men quickly upped then sprinted towards the town. As they did so, Bagg called out to his captain.)

BAGG: See to it those two go in next!!!

SOLE: Righto!

(He nodded to his men.)

SOLE: Part a little and let these two fuckers in, will you?

(One of his men scowled at him.)

JOSH: Part? It's a fucking bottleneck; there's no room.

SOLE: I see!

(He glowered at where Wakefield and Barnsley were hurrying towards the gate.)

SOLE: Bundle your way through, you two! One sign of hesitation and I'll make sure you die slowly and painfully.

(Wakefield winced.)

WAKEFIELD: I hate this army bullshit!

BARNSLEY: It's certainly no place for the bespectacled, is it?

(With that, they hurried to the back of the pack then started to force their way through it. It took a good forty or seconds or so, but eventually they reached the front and entered the town. Confronted by the sight of hundreds of dead soldiers, they instantly came to a halt.)

WAKEFIELD: Nope.

BARNSLEY: I agree!

(With that, they slipped away sideways and headed for the town fence, a good twenty feet away from the throng. Once there, they slid down onto their backsides and put their hands on their heads.)

WAKEFIELD: It's not as comfy as where we were before, but it'll do.

BARNSLEY: I like it. Out of sight of the command and more importantly, out of the reach of any swords.

WAKEFIELD: Yeah. Now we just have to hope nobody notices us.

BARNSLEY: Hmm... seems unlikely.

WAKEFIELD: I know, but a vain hope is at least *some* hope.

(He grimaced.)

WAKEFIELD: If our own guys see us in the traditional surrendering pose, they'll kill us for cowardice. And if the locals see us, they might *reject* our surrender and kill us. So not being spotted is our only hope.

BARNSLEY: Like I said, seems unlikely.

WAKEFIELD: Seems ridiculous. But...

BARNSLEY: I hear you.

(He sighed.)

BARNSLEY: All this killing...

WAKEFIELD: Yeah.

(He shook a solemn head then scoffed.)

WAKEFIELD: War.

BARNSLEY: Huh?

WAKEFIELD: What is it good for?

BARNSLEY: Absolutely nothing.

WAKEFIELD: You can say that again. I don't even know *why* our two countries are at war.

BARNSLEY: Because our king is a warmongering cunt who likes invading foreign lands.

Lenthom isn't the first.

WAKEFIELD: What an arsehole.

(He sighed emptily.)

WAKEFIELD: Mate?

BARNSLEY: Yeah?

WAKEFIELD: I've changed my mind. I think I preferred sitting outside.

(He grimaced then nodded towards the gate area.)

WAKEFIELD: I've never seen so much blood.

BARNSLEY: I'm trying not to look. There are piles of dead bodies everywhere.

WAKEFIELD: It's horrendous.

BARNSLEY: To put it mildly.

(He grimaced.)

BARNSLEY: When the king addresses the people on the subject of war, he doesn't mention sights like that. Death doesn't even come into it. He makes army life sound glorious and care free.

WAKEFIELD: It isn't. Army life sucks.

BARNSLEY: Especially if you have bad eyesight

WAKEFIELD: Or any *other* defect.

(He shrugged.)

WAKEFIELD: Or maybe that's just *our* unit. Our unit is full of cunts.

BARNSLEY: Of course it is. We're led by Captain Roy Sole and Vice-Captain Tim Bagg!

(He furrowed his brow.)

BARNSLEY: R. Sole and T. Bag!

WAKEFIELD: Yeah.

(They then glanced at the gate area and winced. They'd just seen eight men turn into fountains of blood as a blur zoomed past them.)

BARNSLEY: Mate...

WAKEFIELD: Yeah?

BARNSLEY: Surrendering was definitely the right idea.

With so many enemy soldiers still pouring through the town gate, despite the bloodbath they knew they'd be running into, Kaya and the handful of gallant townsfolk who'd turned up to fight, knew they couldn't relax, even for a moment. If they eased off, just for a second, there was a high chance an innocent civilian could be killed. And so, they continued to fight with everything they had, hoping they could inspire others to join them. After all, right now, Birdstone needed all the heroes it could get. Once such potential hero was the former police chief, Desmond. Having finally finished donning enough armour to bedeck a horse, he was now ready to play his part. Determined to do so as soon as possible, he hurried to his front door then yanked it open.

DESMOND: Okay, Desmond, this is it. Your time to shine has arrived!

(With that, he put his head down and raced out of the door. Having done so, however, he charged straight into Aya's path. Moving at a phenomenal speed, there was nothing she could do to avoid the inevitable collision.)

AYA: Twat!!!

(She then raced onwards and skewered a marauding invader with her blade. The impact hadn't hindered her even for a moment. In fact, she'd barely even felt it. Desmond, on the other hand, bounced and rolled down the street, before landing in a crumpled heap. Dazed and severely concussed, for him, the battle was over. His only consolation was that he'd survived. Had he not been wearing so much padding and plating, a collision with a zoomer would most certainly have killed him instantly.)

DESMOND: I'll just... shine... *another* day.

(He then passed out. To add insult to injury, a stray dog then trotted up to him and used his metallic armour as a lamppost. A heroic contribution to the battle, it was not. His pathetic failure to even take part would haunt him for the rest of his life. It wasn't, however, the most *calamitous* contribution a citizen would make that day. Rex had already won that award when he'd opened the gate. It was a move that most certainly hadn't won him any friends. Those fighting at the gate, in fact, had found a renewed, all consuming hatred for him.)

POLICEMAN: Does this hell ever end???

REX: Yes! It ends when we win!!!

TOWNSMAN: And when's that?

REX: When all the enemies are dead!

POLICEMAN: I wish *you* were dead. That'd be a win for me!

REX: Excuse me???

POLICEMAN: Seriously, you cock! What the fuck did you open the gate for?

REX: So we could fight *these* cunts obviously! How else would we defeat them? By shouting rude names at them over the fence?

(He rolled his eyes.)

REX: Idiot!

POLICEMAN: *I'm* an idiot???

REX: Correct.

(He sneered.)

REX: Now, if you'll excuse me, I see some enemies who need a sound thrashing!

(He then leapt into a group of eight Nawsland soldiers. Unfortunately, it was a group that Kaya had been about to cull. In a bid to avoid his blade, the group swiftly dissipated. As a result, Kaya only managed to chop down two of them before the others raced away. Five charged deeper into then town and only one remained. Oblivious to his disastrous intervention, Rex smirked then focussed on the one who remained with a smug glint in his eyes.)

REX: Looks like you drew the short straw, soldier boy! You've got *me* to deal with!

KAYA: Cock!

REX: What??? You have a woman's voice!

(The enemy soldier growled then laid into him with his blade.)

SOLDIER: That wasn't me!

(Defending with ease, Rex scoffed.)

REX: We both know it was.

SOLDIER: You're a twat, mate!

(He then fell to the ground, having been skewered by Kaya on her way past. Stunned by it, Rex grimaced to himself then glanced from side to side.)

REX: That infuriating harpy... Ponytail is here, isn't she?

TOWNSMAN: Yes! You didn't think *you'd* killed all these enemies, did you?

KAYA: Cock!

(Rex glanced about himself furiously.)

REX: Did she call me a cock as she whizzed past again? She did, didn't she? That's twice!

POLICEMAN: Yes! And she's not alone! We've *all* been calling you that, arse face!

Ponytail was doing fine out there in the woods! There was no *need* to open the fucking gate!!!

REX: Yes, there was!

KAYA: Wasn't!

(Rex glanced about himself again, but there was no sign of her.)

REX: Stop it! Yes, there was!

(He nodded sternly.)

REX: The job of defending this town is ours, not hers! And as our greatest warrior, in order to do that job, I needed the gate open!

KAYA: Bonehead!

REX: Enough!

TOWNSMAN: Are you fucking serious? You think *you're* our greatest warrior?

REX: By far!

TOWNSMAN: Then why did you get in Ponytail's way, allowing five enemy soldiers to escape into town???

REX: I didn't!

(He laid into another Nawsland soldier and nodded.)

REX: Must have been you!

KAYA: Bell end!

POLICEMAN: Well said, Ponytail. Well said.

(He then glanced to where several of the town's citizens were dragging dead bodies out of the way, thus allowing Ponytail and the others to focus on their battle without trip hazards.)

POLICEMAN: Hmm... unarmed, but risking everything to help out.

(He puffed out then raised his voice slightly.)

POLICEMAN: See? Now that's heroic.

REX: I'm just doing what needs to be done. If that makes me heroic then, yes.

TOWNSMAN: He wasn't talking about *you*!

KAYA: Twat!

REX: Hey!

(He snarled.)

REX: I'm gonna slap that bitch one of these days; I really am.

Somewhere across town, at this time, Eleanor, Frank, Cassie and Eleanor's two children were sitting slumped in Cassie's living room. A short while ago, they'd been outwardly hoping for the best while denying that they feared the worst. As the moments passed, however, the denial started to fade. Sitting with her young daughters clinging to her side, Eleanor sighed emptily.)

ELEANOR: I wonder what the afterlife will be like.

(Frank sighed.)

FRANK: Hot and on fire, knowing my luck.

CASSIE: Same. I've not exactly been chaste, you see?

(Frank nodded solemnly.)

FRANK: We know.

CASSIE: What?

ELEANOR: He said we know. It wasn't the big secret you thought it was.

CASSIE: Oh.

(She grimaced.)

CASSIE: So everyone thinks I'm a massive slut?

FRANK: Some have said...

CASSIE: Well that's hardly fair. I wasn't *that* bad!

ELEANOR: Relax, love. There's nothing you can do about it now anyway.

FRANK: Yup. It's too late to make amends.

(He sighed.)

FRANK: I can't believe the attack bell is still ringing.

CASSIE: It's been ringing for ages.

ELEANOR: Meaning we've been under attack for so long, the streets are bound to be crawling with enemy soldiers by now.

FRANK: Going door to door.

CASSIE: Ending us.

(Just then, the door flew open and a muscle bound Nawsland soldier appeared in the doorway, growling at them furiously. Frank's barricade had had no effect whatsoever.

Mostly because the door opened outwards. At once, the room's five inhabitants leapt to their feet and stared at the intruder in horror.)

ELEANOR: Why, Frank???

FRANK: I didn't know!

(As Eleanor clung tightly to her children, the Nawsland soldier cackled maniacally.)

NAWSLAND: It's time, kiddies! Pain will be felt and blood will be shed!

(He was then torn asunder by a cluster of razor sharp knife wounds. Bleeding from eight different areas of his body, he fell lifelessly to the ground.)

FRANK: What the...

(Barely able to believe their eyes, they stared into the doorway in absolutely wonderment.

Having come to their rescue, Aya was staring back at them blankly.)

AYA: You alright?

FRANK: Are we alright? Now *you're* here we are!

CASSIE: This is the best day ever!!!

ELEANOR: How are you, babe?

AYA: Have we met?

ELEANOR: Um... you don't remember us?
(Realising they'd mistaken her for Kaya, Aya looked enlightened.)
AYA: No, I ...
(She then glanced to her right and flinched.)
AYA: Fuck!
(With that, she zoomed away to save someone else. Left behind, Eleanor could barely contain her tears.)
ELEANOR: She doesn't remember us...
CASSIE: Yeah...
FRANK: Ouch.
CASSIE: That really sucks.
ELEANOR: Sucks? It's heartbreaking!
(She pouted.)
ELEANOR: Morris was right. She didn't feel *anything* for us. She *was* only doing her job.
FRANK: Yeah...
(He bit his lip.)
FRANK: And she just did it again. So for *that* I'm grateful.
ELEANOR: So am I, but...
(Cassie nodded sorrowfully.)
CASSIE: She's not our friend.
ELEANOR: Yeah. And that stings.

Just across town, at the chief's house, the chief and his wife, Inca, were sitting on armchairs, sipping at glasses of port as they pondered their situation. The on-going toll of the warning bell was troubling them both immensely. They hadn't, however, shared this information with one another. Instead, they were both sitting there, staring at the floor, wondering if their time in the mortal realm was about to come to an end. Picturing himself being strung up in the town square, the chief could only shudder.

CHIEF: Ouch.
(Inca glanced up at him.)
INCA: Ouch?
CHIEF: Sorry?
INCA: You said ouch.
(The chief furrowed his brow.)
CHIEF: Yes, and *you'll* say it in a minute, if you give me any more shit.
INCA: I wasn't *giving* you any shit!
(She rolled her eyes.)
INCA: And besides, we both know that's horseshit, Chester. If you we're going to strike me, you'd have done it already.
CHIEF: Well...
INCA: And we both know you *wouldn't* hit a woman, so it's entirely irrelevant anyway.
CHIEF: Oh, wouldn't I?
INCA: No.
CHIEF: Actually, fart breath...
(He then sighed in defeat.)
CHIEF: You're right. I wouldn't.
INCA: I know.
(She sighed.)
INCA: This is bleak. I never thought I'd go out like this.

CHIEF: Nor did I. Stuck in a room with *you*; what a horrible way to go.

INCA: Hey! *You* came and got *me*!

CHIEF: Yes, well... we all make mistakes.

(Inca rolled her eyes again.)

INCA: What I meant was, I didn't think I'd be sitting on an armchair, just waiting for it to happen.

CHIEF: No. Nor did I.

(He allowed himself a stifled laugh.)

CHIEF: Once upon a time, my hope was that I'd be old and surrounded by grown-up grandchildren. So much for that.

INCA: Yeah. That's how I hoped I'd go too.

CHIEF: So much for that.

(He shook his head.)

CHIEF: Instead, I could well be going to my death without even getting to know *my own* children, let alone their offspring.

INCA: Because I'm a cunt?

CHIEF: Yes!

INCA: That's fair.

(The chief scoffed.)

CHIEF: No, it's not.

(He sighed.)

CHIEF: Don't listen to *me*, Inca. In the summer, when I found my girls were indeed superhuman like you'd claimed, I was flabbergasted. Stunned beyond words. It actually knocked me sideways a bit, if I'm honest. You see... for twenty years, I'd been calling you a fruitcake. A lunatic. A lip-wobbling asylum candidate. So to find out you were right was hard to take.

(He shrugged.)

CHIEF: Because of that, I had to face the fact that I bore a degree a responsibility for our relationship breaking down. Don't get me wrong, I still considered you a cunt for taking them away, but I had to accept that it was partly my fault. If only I'd be a better husband. If only I'd listened. If only I'd understood what you were trying to tell me.

(He forced a smile.)

CHIEF: If I'd done that, if I'd only taken the time to learn the situation rather than just assuming you were a loony, I'd have probably *agreed* with your assessment. I'd have quit my role as chief and gone to the capital *with* you. To see our little ones get the discipline they needed.

(He shook his head.)

CHIEF: So don't take my abuse to heart. Like I told Runcorn in the summer, you're still a cunt for ruining my life, but I do understand why you felt you had to do it.

(He nodded.)

CHIEF: What I'm saying is, it wasn't *entirely* your fault, no matter how much I try to claim otherwise. And I *will* claim otherwise. Often! And furiously! But that's just twenty years of pent up rage coming out. So, yeah... like I said... don't take my abuse to heart.

INCA: Right. Well... that was...

(She grimaced.)

INCA: Actually, I'm not sure *what* that was. It sounded like you were being remorseful and forgiving, but amongst it all, you called me a cunt twice, so I don't know *what* to think.

(The chief scowled at her.)

CHIEF: Forgiving? Hardly! Your ruined my life! I'll never forgive you for that!

INCA: Oh. Okay.

CHIEF: See? Twenty years!

(He grimaced.)

CHIEF: Sorry.

INCA: It's fine. I get it. I was terrified of coming here today, because I knew you'd be furious. And I knew you had every right to be. So just say what you need to say.

CHIEF: Okay.

(He nodded sternly.)

CHIEF: I'll say *this*! Losing those girls, not seeing them every day and kissing them goodnight, crushed my soul more than I could possibly explain. But you know that. Everyone knows that. The fact I felt that way was obvious. Any father would feel the same. So that's not even news.

(He sighed.)

CHIEF: What *is* news is, well...

(He ruffled his neck.)

CHIEF: I've never told anyone this before, but... losing *you* hurt too.

INCA: Really?

CHIEF: Yes! I loved you, woman! With all my heart! I know things had been strained between us, but I'd been hoping things would improve. I thought you'd get treatment for your lunacy then things would go back to normal.

INCA: I didn't realise. You *acted* like you hated me.

CHIEF: Hated you? Not at all. I was just frustrated with you, that's all.

INCA: I see. I thought you'd started to hate me. That's why it was so easy for me to leave.

CHIEF: You were wrong. I hadn't stopped loving you even for a second. So when you buggered off, you crushed me threefold!

INCA: Oh.

(She grimaced.)

INCA: Well... now I feel even *more* guilty.

CHIEF: Good! Hope it stings!

INCA: Right...

CHIEF: Sorry. I didn't even mean that. I don't even know why I said it.

INCA: Twenty years of pent up rage?

CHIEF: It's a long time, Inca.

INCA: Yeah.

(She smiled.)

INCA: Well, if it helps... I loved you too. But it felt one sided. So... I went.

CHIEF: Funnily enough that didn't help at all, no.

(They shared an amused smirk.)

INCA: So... you loved me, huh?

CHIEF: Well...

INCA: Because I'm gorgeous, right?

CHIEF: No. Because you could cook!

(They shared a chuckle then the chief nodded.)

CHIEF: You were indeed gorgeous back then.

INCA: Ahem.

CHIEF: And you still are!

INCA: That's better.

CHIEF: But more so back then.

INCA: You're losing me.

CHIEF: I don't care. We're gonna die soon, remember?

(He rolled his eyes.)

CHEF: You *were* bloody gorgeous though. Exotic. With your tanned skin, your deep, dark eyes and gorgeous black hair... you were the talk of the town when you first came to this country.

INCA: I know. I couldn't even walk down the street without people telling me to go back where I came from and throwing things at me.

CHIEF: Right. Yes. There was a fair amount of that too, but I meant your looks. Those of us with IQ's higher than that of a tree stump, thought you were stunning. Personally, I was besotted. So, I thought fuck the racists! Let them mock! I'm going to ask you out. And I did.

(He furrowed his brow.)

CHIEF: You said no.

INCA: I thought you were joking.

CHIEF: Yes... I remember...

INCA: I'm so glad you convinced me though, because two years later, I popped out two little ones. With my eyes, my hair and your pasty white skin.

CHIEF: Pasty?

INCA: I meant pale.

CHIEF: Fucking racist!

INCA: Oh, shut up, you white cunt.

(They chuckled together then looked into one another's eyes.)

CHIEF: We had a lot of fun back then.

INCA: Most of it between the sheets.

CHIEF: Good times.

INCA: The best times.

CHIEF: Indeed.

(They glanced at one another silently for a moment then the chief twiddled his fingers.)

CHIEF: You know... Inca... seeing as we're likely to die soon...

INCA: Do I fancy revisiting old times?

CHIEF: Um... yes.

(Inca nodded.)

INCA: Chester?

CHIEF: Yes?

INCA: Throw me down and make me squeal!

CHIEF: Yes, ma'am!

(They then upped and raced into each other's arms.)

Just outside the town gates, at this time, Captain Sole and Vice-Captain Bagg were desperately trying to gee up their men as they headed into the fray. They were essentially asking them to charge headlong into a hell in which there was virtually zero chance of surviving, so the very least they could do was instil some fire in their bellies.

SOLE: That's the spirit, boys! Do it for Nawsland!

BAGG: Make a difference, men! For king and country!

SOLE: You show them Lenthom scumbags who's in charge!

BAGG: There you go!!! Take them down, boys! Take them down!!!

SOLE: Do us proud!

BAGG: Do us *all* proud!!!

SOLE: A-ha! It's Wilson and Green!

BAGG: Yeah, it's...

(He gave Sole a sideways glance.)

BAGG: What?

SOLE: You heard me!

(He nodded to where two burley men were racing towards the gate.)

SOLE: Those two are our finest soldiers! Wilson and Green. Why, they're veritable fighting gods. Build like brick sheds and skilled beyond words!

(He nodded.)

SOLE: Those zooming fucks are gonna have their work cut out.

BAGG: Right...

(He winced.)

BAGG: Good thing too, because we're rapidly running out of men.

SOLE: Hmm... that is indeed a problem.

(He nodded knowingly.)

SOLE: But it's okay. Wilson and Green will even things up.

BAGG: And if they don't?

SOLE: Then it's time for plan B.

BAGG: This is plan B.

SOLE: Plan B mark two then.

BAGG: Plan C.

SOLE: Shut up.

(He ruffled his neck.)

SOLE: That's not even relevant. Wilson and Green *will* get the job done, you mark my words.

(He then beamed with glee at the sight of the two powerful men in question bounding through the gate.)

SOLE: There they go!!!

(Wilson then staggered back out again with blood gushing from his throat. Bagg was not impressed.)

BAGG: Right... and back out they come.

SOLE: Only *one* of them came back out!

BAGG: Probably because the other one died on the spot!

SOLE: Well... yeah... you may well be right.

(He glanced to where Wilson lay dead in the snow then sucked his teeth.)

SOLE: I'm not going to lie to you, Tim. That was the last thing we needed.

(Bagg nodded solemnly.)

BAGG: I know. We're down to about a hundred men! Average ones! All our best ones have been extinguished already.

SOLE: Yeah...

(He stepped forward then peered through the gate and bit his lip. Before him, he could see the backs of his men, stepping over piled-up bodies. A blur then zoomed past and more of his men joined the pile.)

SOLE: We've got no further than that fucking gate, Bagg. We've been held there since the minute the bloody thing opened.

BAGG: I know.

SOLE: It's no good. We can't carry on like this.

BAGG: Yeah...

(He bit his lip anxiously.)

BAGG: The question is, what are we going to do about it?

SOLE: Well, let's look at it logically, shall we? We had nine hundred men! Nine hundred *soldiers*! Nine hundred *well-armed* soldiers against roughly nine hundred civilians! It *should*

have been an easy win! But no! We've only got a hundred men left and, as far as I can tell, *they* haven't lost a single person yet!

(He nodded.)

SOLE: So there's only one thing we can do!

(He then pulled a white flag from the back of his trousers. His second in command couldn't believe his eyes.)

BAGG: You're surrendering???

SOLE: Well, it makes sense, don't you think? In terms of enemy kills, we're losing eight hundred nil!

BAGG: But surrendering, sir...

SOLE: The only *other* options are, to flee like cowards...

BAGG: Never!

SOLE: Or keep doing what we're doing. And that'd be suicidal!

(He sighed.)

SOLE: So surrendering it is.

(With that, he charged forth towards the gate, waving his white flag aloft.)

SOLE: Cease hostilities!!! Cease hostilities!!!

(Bagg watched him disappear through the gate then sighed.)

BAGG: Life as a prisoner of war, huh?

(He then watched Sole's head roll back out of the town.)

BAGG: Or not.

(He puffed out.)

BAGG: I guess they're not in the mood for taking prisoners.

(He shook his head despairingly.)

BAGG: Oh, well. Having sent hundreds of men to their death, there's only one honourable course of action left.

(With that, he pulled out his wallet, opened it up then plucked out a coin.)

BAGG: Well, mum... this old coin you sent me away with as a keepsake, wasn't as lucky as you thought it'd be. It's my turn, you see.

(He smiled.)

BAGG: Take care of little Sarah for me, won't you? Of course, you will. You're a diamond.

(He nodded.)

BAGG: Anyway... I'd better get going. Can't keep the enemy waiting now, can I?

(He sighed.)

BAGG: Try not to mourn for me, mum. I've already sent hundreds to their deaths, so it's not like you can say you raised a good one. Just know that... my shortcomings were not your fault.

(With that, he dropped the coin in the snow and allowed his wallet to fall through his fingers; thus dispensing with all his worldly goods.)

BAGG: Okay...

(He then charged forth and raced through the gate in readiness for his impending demise. It was a demise that happened so quickly, he didn't even see it coming. Within seconds, he was just another body on the pile. It was a fate that was also about to befall every single remaining Nawsland soldier, with the exception of Runcorn and Wakefield. Having scoured the town at lightning speed for invaders three times without finding any, Aya had returned to the fray. Seeing numbers were low, she'd leapt the fence then started to attack the enemy from behind. Sandwiched in a gateway with a zoomer in front and another behind, the final group were mown down in no time at all.

Meeting in the middle, Aya and Kaya came face to face then shared a knowing smirk.)

AYA: Dramatic entrance?

KAYA: Like you even need to ask.

(They then zoomed out of the town together. As they did so, a victorious roar rose up from all those present. Victory had been won. To signify the moment, the gentleman in the bell tower yelled with delight then proceeded to signal the all clear. Within minutes, people from all over the town, started to assemble in the main thoroughfare. So many turned up at once, in fact, they became quite the obstacle for those trying to drag away the dead bodies. In the end, they decided to suspend the project and joined in the celebrations instead. The cheers and cries of the excited townsfolk were such, they echoed across the woodlands for miles.)

LOCAL MAN 01: We did it!!!

LOCAL MAN 02: We did it!!!

(He grimaced.)

LOCAL MAN 02: I'm not sure *what* we did though; I was in hiding.

LOCAL MAN 01: Defeated a massive enemy unit! Without a single casualty!

LOCAL MAN 02: Really?

LOCAL MAN 01: Yeah! As far as I know.

(They then joined in with an extra loud cheer, followed by a repeated cry of Birdstone.)

CROWD: Birdstone!!! Birdstone!!! Birdstone!!!

TOWNSWOMAN 01: You did it! You only fucking did it!!!

(At this point Rex stepped into the middle of the gateway and struck a heroic pose, before calling over the crowd.)

REX: Yes! Yes, I did!

TOWNSWOMAN 01: Not you, dipshit!!!

(At this point, the sun made a dramatic appearance, piercing the peak of the mountain and finally casting its light on the town. With perfect timing, Kaya then appeared on a rooftop next to the main thoroughfare, standing akimbo with her hands on her hips.)

TOWNSWOMAN 01: *She* did!!!

TOWNSMAN 01: Ponytail!!!

TOWNSWOMAN 02: Ponytail!!!

TOWNSMAN 02: We love you, Ponytail!!!

(Ponytail nodded arrogantly then glanced at the rooftop of the other side of the thoroughfare. Aya was standing there in the exact same pose. She had, however, quickly put her hair up into twin tails. Upon spotting her, the crowd erupted again.)

TOWNSMAN 01: Ponytail's sister!!!

TOWNSWOMAN 02: We love you, Ponytail two!

TOWNSMAN 03: Ponytail's sister!!!

(Aya flicked her hair and beamed knowingly.)

AYA: Call me Twin Tails!

TOWNSWOMAN 03: Twin Tails!!!

TOWNSMAN 04: We love you, Twin Tails!!!

(Watching her, Kaya burst out laughing.)

KAYA: Really? You wanted a nickname that badly???

AYA: Shut up!!!

KAYA: Tragic!

AYA: Hey! Respect your elders!

(Kaya gasped in disgust then offered up a rude retort. Her words, however, were drowned out by a spontaneous cheer from the crowd.)

KAYA: Aw.

CROWD: Sisters! Sisters! Sisters!

(Aya beamed.)

AYA: That's right.

KAYA: *Twin* sisters!

(She ruffled her neck.)

KAYA: There's no *elder* sister.

CROWD: Sisters! Sisters! Sisters!

(Just then, an angry cry rose up from near the gate.)

REX: Enemies!!!

(Everyone gasped and shot a glance in his direction. Fuming angrily, Rex was pointing to the rapidly shrinking duo of Wakefield and Barnsley.)

REX: Just sitting there, right under our noses!

(The entire population booed with a fiery hatred.)

WAKEFIELD: Shit. That's not a good sign, mate.

(Snarling bitterly, Rex bent down and scooped up an enemy sword.)

REX: I'll make short work of these two!

(The crowd erupted into further cheers.)

BARNSELEY: That's not a great sign either.

(Just as Rex started to approach them, however, Kaya jumped down in front of the two Nawsland soldiers and held her palm out to him.)

KAYA: Stop!

REX: Move, trollop!

TOWNSMAN: Trollop??? You can't talk to her like that!

POLICEMAN: Boo!!!

REX: Don't boo *me*! Boo the enemies!

(He sneered.)

REX: And boo this bitch for getting in my way!

(He furrowed his brow at Kaya.)

REX: Get out of the way, whore, or I'll just have to go through you!

KAYA: Look... Bonehead, was it?

REX: Rex!!!

KAYA: Whatever. This is the not the time for jokes.

(She rolled her eyes.)

KAYA: Go through me indeed.

(She nodded.)

KAYA: My sister and I...

(She held her palm out to her left, just in time for Aya to appear there as if from nowhere.)

AYA: That'd be me.

(The crowd were in awe.)

TOWNSWOMAN 04: Wow! Damn she's quick!

TOWNSMAN 04: The quickest ever.

(Aya smirked.)

AYA: Not quite. Ask the boys at our old academy. Kaya's much quicker.

KAYA: Hey!

AYA: What?

KAYA: You got dumped!

AYA: Kaya!

REX: Are you two going to move or what?

(Aya and Kaya glanced at him then flinched.)

AYA: Oh, yeah. Bonehead.

KAYA: *Muscly* Bonehead.

AYA: Yeah, him.

KAYA: No, we're not.

REX: Really? Is having the glory of killing them yourselves really that important to you?

KAYA: We're not going to kill them.

REX: Then move, and let...

KAYA: And nor are you.

REX: Excuse me?

TOWNSWOMAN: What gives?

TOWNSMAN: Who *is* gonna kill them then?

KAYA: Nobody.

(A baffled silence filled the air.)

POLICEMAN: Huh?

KAYA: Listen! We followed their unit for quite a while before they attacked!

AYA: We had eyes on them for miles.

KAYA: We were waiting for the right moment to swoop in and steal their cannon, you see? So we saw the entire fight.

REX: And?

KAYA: And at no point did these two take part.

AYA: As soon as it started, these two sat down and surrendered.

(Wakefield and Barnsley sat up a little.)

WAKEFIELD: It's true!

BARN斯LEY: We opted out!

KAYA: See?

REX: So fucking what? Enemy soldiers have to die! Now fucking kill them or piss off and let someone else do it.

(The crowd cheered his words, but soon fell silent when Kaya thrust her hands to her hips angrily.)

KAYA: These men do *not* have to die! Only *invaders* have to die!

AYA: Yeah! Invaders! Those who'd kill *us*! *They* deserve to die! Those who did us no harm, on the other hand, do not.

KAYA: Get it?

(Everyone glanced at one another uneasily.)

KAYA: That's a no.

AYA: Hmm...

(She nodded.)

AYA: These two are clearly conscripts. Unprepared for war and unwilling to kill. More importantly, unwilling to attack a town full of innocent civilians. So they risked the potentially fatal wrath of their superiors and stood down. Refused to attack us.

KAYA: That was brave. And I for one, respect that.

AYA: As do I.

KAYA: So in the interests of justice, they should be spared the blade; just as they spared us from theirs.

AYA: Instead of being butchered they should be sent to a prisoner of war camp.

KAYA: Exactly.

REX: They're Nawsland soldiers!

KAYA: We can see that, Bonehead.

(She rolled her eyes.)

KAYA: That's who we *put* in prisoner of war camps.

(Aya grimaced.)

AYA: Wow, he's just like you described. All muscle, no brains.

KAYA: A sexy yet disappointing idiot.

REX: Do you mind???

KAYA: Yes! We do mind. Now stand down! These men are our prisoners.

REX: No! These men need to die!

KAYA: No! Killing is wrong!

(A townsman raised a nervous finger.)

TOWNSMAN: Um... you two just killed nigh-on a thousand men.

KAYA: That's different.

TOWNSMAN: Right...

AYA: They were invaders. *They* attacked us. These two men did not.

TOWNSMAN: I see. Well... that's fair.

KAYA: Thank you. Now are you going stand down, Bonehead?

AYA: Or do we have to *make* you?

KAYA: I should imagine being struck in the bollocks at a thousand miles per hour hurts.

AYA: That would be my guess too.

(Rex instantly dropped his blade.)

REX: I hate you two.

KAYA: Oh, no. Whatever shall we do?

AYA: I'm heartbroken; truly heartbroken.

(Wakefield raised a nervous hand.)

WAKEFIELD: Thank you for, um... recognising our innocence.

BARNSELEY: We'd be delighted to go to prison.

KAYA: Well, you say that now; the food is terrible, apparently.

(Just then, there was a series of groans and mumbles from the back of the crowd. Those groans soon became boos. Four men were advancing through the throng of townspeople, and they weren't exactly popular. Baffled by it, Aya and Kaya jumped several feet in the air to see who was approaching. Upon landing, however, they instantly sank into fighting stances.)

TOWNSMAN 02: What's going on?

(At this point, Major Nash, Corporal Croxley, Captain Baxter and Lieutenant Yarwood reached the front of the assembly.)

REX: Oh, look. Now all the fighting's over, the army-men have put in an appearance.

(The crowd booed angrily.)

TOWNSMAN 01: Where were you when it was all kicking off?

POLICEMAN: Officers, aren't they? They don't like getting their hands dirty. Cowards!

REX: Scum!

(Major Nash furrowed his brow.)

NASH: Do you mind? We were getting ready!

YARWOOD: As soon as we were alerted to the warning bells, we donned our armour and prepared for battle!

BAXTER: Then we heard the bell to signify that it was over.

NASH: See? There was nothing cowardly about it.

REX: A likely story.

(Nash just scoffed then looked to Croxley.)

NASH: You're up.

(Croxley nodded nervously then glanced to where Aya and Kaya were scowling at him hatefully.)

CROXLEY: Oh, boy.

(He gulped.)

CROXLEY: Um...

NASH: Get on with it, Croxley!

TOWNSMAN 01: Croxley?

POLICEMAN 02: Croxley???

(A series of jeers and boos then rose up from all in attendance. Including Major Nash. He very much disliked the man. The rest of the town's people, however, had heard all about a military officer called Croxley from the chief. They knew he was out to get Ponytail and that made him about as popular as a bout of diarrhoea.)

CROXLEY: Right... um... ladies...

(Aya spoke to Kaya through the side of her mouth.)

AYA: Do you particularly want to stay here and listen to this?

KAYA: No.

(She grimaced.)

KAYA: But if we leave, Rex will kill the two innocents.

AYA: Hmm...

(She furrowed her brow.)

AYA: What do you want, Commander?

CROXLEY: I...

NASH: Please, call him Corporal. He got demoted. A lot.

KAYA: Corporal?

AYA: Really?

(They shared an amused giggle.)

KAYA: Can we ask why?

NASH: For his treatment of you two.

KAYA: What?

CROXLEY: I'll handle this.

AYA: You suck.

CROXLEY: Thank you.

(He sighed.)

CROXLEY: Look, what he said is true. I was demoted for making you two desert. And I've been sent out to find you and, well, to beg you to come back. Lenthom needs you.

TOWNSMAN 01: Bloody right, it does.

(Everyone cheered.)

CROXLEY: So... Agent Fifty-Nine, Agent Sixty, I'd like to request a moment of your time to negotiate your return to the fold.

KAYA: Yeah, right? How do we know you've not just been sent to arrest us?

NASH: I give you my assurances!

AYA: Oh, well, that's alright then. Assurances. The army wouldn't lie, after all.

KAYA: Perish the thought. The army? Lie? Don't be silly. It's not like they'd ever tell people they were going to become agents then make them working as maids for three years.

AYA: Before pimping them out.

KAYA: Yeah. The army would never lie like that.

CROXLEY: I see. You don't believe me.

KAYA: Correct.

(Croxley sighed.)

CROXLEY: How will I ever convince you otherwise?

AYA: You won't.

CROXLEY: But this is a legitimate offer of negotiations.

KAYA: Go away. I dislike liars.

AYA: Sometimes she kills them.

KAYA: Yeah.

CROXLEY: I see. Then you must also hate your father.

KAYA: Excuse me?

CROXLEY: *He's a liar!* He claimed you weren't in town and that he didn't know where you were. And yet. Here you are.

AYA: He doesn't know we're here.

NASH: Hmm...

KAYA: It's true! We went away to the desert and we've only just got back!

CROXLEY: The desert???

KAYA: Yes!

CROXLEY: Good god, I pursued you thousands of miles in the wrong direction.

(He ruffled his neck.)

CROXLEY: Not that I'm pursuing you now. I just wish to negotiate.

AYA: No thanks.

CROXLEY: I see. Then I'll just have to arrest your father for obstruction.

(Nash barked at him.)

NASH: No, you will not! The Major-General gave you strict instructions, Croxley! No threats, no lies; just a full and frank apology. And if I recall, he also told you to get down on bended knee and beg these girls for forgiveness!

KAYA: Ooh, now that I'd like to see.

AYA: Right?

NASH: Croxley!

CROXLEY: Yes?

NASH: Grovel!

CROXLEY: Right...

(He whimpered then slumped to his knees.)

CROXLEY: Ladies... that is Aya... and um...

KAYA: Kaya!

CROXLEY: Right! Yes. Kaya. I...

(Kaya raised her palm towards him.)

KAYA: Wait. As much I want to hear this, can it wait?

NASH: Wait?

KAYA: Yes! We came here for a reason.

TOWNSMAN: To save us?

KAYA: No, that was just good timing.

AYA: We came to... that's none of your business.

(She nodded.)

AYA: The point is, we've got something we urgently need to do. So can we come back to this?

KAYA: And soon. I really want to see him beg.

NASH: Then stay and enjoy the show.

KAYA: No. Just give us half an hour. It's not much to ask! There's something we're both itching to do.

AYA: Uh-huh.

NASH: Fine, we'll wait here then.

KAYA: Okay. But I want assurances that those two Nawsland soldiers will be taken prisoner and not killed. I mean it. If anything happens to them, you can shove your negotiations up your arse.

AYA: Another failed mission for Private Croxley!

CROXLEY: Private???

NASH: You'll accept whatever rank they decide to address you as, fuck face.

CROXLEY: Oh... fine.

(Nash nodded.)

NASH: Ladies, you have my word! These two men will not be harmed.

KAYA: Really?

AYA: That was easy.

NASH: Of course it was. Right now, ladies, our army need you so badly you can ask for whatever you like.

KAYA: Then we'll ask for that. And just that.

AYA: For now.

KAYA: Obviously.

AYA: Right.

NASH: Agreed. So, you want half an...

(His jaw then fell open and all those around them exhaled in awe. Aya and Kaya had leapt up in the air then zoomed out of sight, leaving nothing but a blur.)

NASH: Holy crap. It's a bloody good thing we *weren't* sent to capture them. Can you imagine?

YARWOOD: We'd have more chance of hitting the moon with a bloody catapult than catching *them*.

BAXTER: Formidable.

(They then stood there nodding in awe.)

A few seconds later, having zoomed to the back of the town, Aya and Kaya arrived on the rooftop opposite the chief's house. Looking forward to going inside, Kaya jumped down and immediately started to head for the door. Not quite ready to join her, however, Aya jumped down the tugged her back by the arm.

AYA: Wait.

KAYA: What?

(Aya bit her lip.)

AYA: What shall we say to him?

KAYA: Hello, would be a start.

(Aya nodded nervously.)

AYA: Yeah, that's... good thinking.

KAYA: Come on.

AYA: Wait.

(Kaya rolled her eyes then turned to face her. Upon seeing the look on Aya's face she then offered her a sympathetic smile.)

KAYA: Take all the time you need.

AYA: Right...

(A tear rolled down her cheek.)

AYA: It's just a big moment, you know? We're gonna meet our dad. Properly. With him knowing who we are.

(She wiped the tear away and smiled.)

AYA: It's overwhelming. You know?

KAYA: Yeah.

(Aya forced a stunted laugh.)

AYA: Look at me. Crying like a baby.

KAYA: I'm not gonna criticise you for that.

(She grimaced.)

KAYA: It'd be hypocritical, for one.

(She smiled.)

KAYA: In the summer, when I first met him, he woke up and saw me standing by his bed, acting all professional. The consummate government agent.

(She blushed.)

KAYA: If he'd woken up half an hour earlier, he'd have seen a blubbering mess, whimpering and calling him daddy.

AYA: Really?

KAYA: I was really quite pathetic for a minute or two.

AYA: Like I am now.

KAYA: Well...

(She grimaced.)

KAYA: Actually, you're doing way better than me. *You* didn't cry when you first saw him last summer.

AYA: I *wanted* to. I resisted though, because we were surrounded by townsfolk.

KAYA: True.

AYA: Hey, Kaya?

KAYA: Yeah?

AYA: Thanks for not mocking me.

KAYA: You're welcome. Just remember not to mock *me*, because once we get in there and call him dad, I'm likely to go to pieces.

AYA: That makes two of us.

KAYA: Good to know.

(She held out her hand.)

KAYA: Shall we?

(Aya nodded.)

AYA: We shall indeed.

(With that, they both took a deep breath then headed into the house. Trying to remain composed, they clung onto one another's hands right up until they reached the office door.)

KAYA: Ready?

AYA: What if he's not in there?

KAYA: Then we'll have to go and look for him.

AYA: Right. That was obvious.

KAYA: Yup. So?

AYA: Huh?

KAYA: Are you ready?

(Aya took a deep breath to suck her emotions back in then nodded.)

AYA: Okay.

KAYA: Here we go then.

(She then pushed open the door and the two of them stepped inside. Having done so, they both screamed in distress then raced out again.)

AYA: No!!! Why???

KAYA: My eyes!!!

AYA: That's *not* how I wanted us to meet!!!

KAYA: Run away!!!

(They then bolted out of the house. Having been caught into the middle of having raucous sex on the chief's desk, the chief and Inca were devastated. Remaining prone with the chief still inside her, Inca couldn't help but thump the desk with her fists alternately.)

INCA: No, no, no, no, no!!!

(Propped up by his hands, as if halfway through doing a press up, the chief could only whimper.)

CHIEF: Why did *that* have to happen? Why?

INCA: Chester!
CHIEF: Yes?
INCA: Get off!
CHIEF: Oh. Right.
(He clambered off of her then hurriedly started to dress.)
CHIEF: Fuck sake! They'll never be able to look me in the eye now!
INCA: We need to find them so we can explain! Even if it *does* mean looking at the tops of their heads
CHIEF: The tops of their heads?
INCA: Like you said, they won't be able to look us in the eyes after this! They'll be staring at their feet in embarrassment!
CHIEF: Right. I thought for a minute you were mocking their height.
INCA: No.
CHIEF: I was gonna say, they get that from *you*.
INCA: Fuck off; I'm not that small.
CHIEF: Well... no.
INCA: Look, let's just get dressed, shall we?
(She grimaced.)
INCA: *If* they come back, I'd like to look presentable.

Back at the gate at this time, Rex was having a heated argument with Major Nash, Corporal Croxley and literally everybody else in attendance. He had a bee in his bonnet and was steadfastly refusing to back down. Fortunately, so were his opponents.
REX: Step aside, Major! Those men need to die!!!
WAKEFIELD: We disagree!
BARNESLEY: Steadfastly!
REX: Nobody asked you!
(He sneered.)
REX: Move!
NASH: I will not. These men are my prisoners.
REX: That's not your decision to make, Major! They attacked our town; *my* town. So it's up to the *town* to decide what's done with them!
POLICEMAN: Yes, and Ponytail said we should spare them, which we all agree with.
(Everyone cheered.)
REX: Newsflash, numb nuts. This town doesn't belong to Horse Butt either.
TOWNSWOMAN 02: Horse Butt???
POLICEMAN: He means Ponytail. It's a childish reference to where a Pony's tail is located.
TOWNSWOMAN 02: I see. What is he? Twelve?
REX: No, I'm *not* fucking twelve! If I was, I'd probably agree with you lot. After all, twelve year olds are *susceptible* to hero worship.
(He nodded.)
REX: And that's what this is! You're only agreeing with *her* because you have a romanticised attachment to her. And quite frankly, it's pathetic. She's not the hero you think she is, and nor is her sister!
TOWNSMAN 01: Dude, they literally just saved this town!
REX: Not by themselves. What do you think *I've* been doing all morning?
POLICEMAN: Endangering it by opening the fucking gate!
REX: You fucking...

POLICEMAN: No! Bollocks! Fuck you, Rex. That was pretty much your entire contribution.

TOWNSMAN: Wrong. He also got in the way and allowed five enemy soldiers to race into the town.

POLICEMAN: Oh, yeah!

(He nodded.)

POLICEMAN: Thank fuck, Ponytail and Twin Tail were here to *save* us from your fuckwittery!

REX: I don't have to take this nonsense from you fuckers. Get out of the way now, before I decide to use violence!!!

(He then collapsed to the ground unconscious, courtesy of a perfectly aimed flick to the side of his head.)

KAYA: Whoops.

AYA: How clumsy of you.

(A loud cheer instantly echoed across the town.)

POLICEMAN: You're back!

NASH: Welcome, ladies.

(He nodded.)

NASH: As you can see, the prisoners remain unharmed.

AYA: Good, good.

KAYA: Cool.

(They then glowered at Croxley and spoke in perfect unison.)

AYA & KAYA: Now beg!!!

(At once, the entire town fell silent and everyone craned their necks forwards to listen in.)

CROXLEY: Um...

NASH: Now, shit bag!!!

(Croxley whimpered then sunk to his knees.)

CROXLEY: Humiliating. Yet... no more than I deserve.

KAYA: Begin!

CROXLEY: Right...

(He mouthed nothing for a few moments then hung his head.)

NASH: She said begin!

CROXLEY: I'm going to!

(He looked to Aya and pouted.)

CROXLEY: I am a pathetic excuse of a human being. Unbefitting of being called a man.

I'm the lowest of the low. The bottom rung of the evolutionary ladder. The very epitome of worthlessness. Why, if I was a sandwich, I'd be an apricot jam one; without butter.

KAYA: This isn't contrition, you're just stating facts.

AYA: Yeah. We know you're a lowlife, Croxley; get to the point.

CROXLEY: That *is* the point. I treated you poorly because I'm *all* those terrible things and less. I failed you in a cruel and callous manner, and in doing so, brought shame on the army.

Nay, Lenthom. I truly am a turd on the sole of a farmer's shoe. A mouldy turnip in mediocre stew. A...

KAYA: And he's back to insulting himself again.

AYA: Yeah. Where's the begging part?

CROXLEY: Forgive me. The Major-General ordered me to be self-depreciating.

KAYA: Ordered you?

AYA: So none of this is genuine?

CROXLEY: Oh, it is. You see, I'm extremely ashamed of myself. That's why it's so easy to say these things. I was handed two assets with skills capable of winning the war for us. Not one, but two zoomers. And I turned them into maids.

KAYA: And whores!

CROXLEY: Latterly, yes. And in doing so, not only did I heap misery on the pair of you, but I weakened our entire war effort. As a military man, I doubt I'll ever forgive myself.

KAYA: Well, you're in good company.

AYA: Right?

(Croxley nodded.)

CROXLEY: Aya? Kaya? I apologise to you from the bottom of my black heart. Every fibre of my being is wrought with shame and if need be, I'll grovel all night. It's the least I can do.

NASH: The Major-General will sack him otherwise.

CROXLEY: Yes, but it's deeper than that. I mean every word.

(He offered them a nervous smile.)

CROXLEY: Please. Hate me if you must...

KAYA: Will do.

AYA: Yup. With a fiery passion.

CROXLEY: But please don't punish our country. The army needs you.

AYA: Meh. Didn't feel like it.

CROXLEY: Yes, and that was all *my* doing.

(He then delved into his jacket and pulled out a letter.)

CROXLEY: Here. This is a letter from Major-General Highcroft himself. He's asking for you to return and offering you any rank you so desire. He's also offering you a luxury home and a staff. The army are willing to do whatever it takes to get you back. I hope you'll consider their offer.

(Aya swiped the letter from him and pulled it from its envelope.)

AYA: Hmm...

KAYA: What does it say?

AYA: Pretty much what he said.

(She nodded.)

AYA: Then it says, PS, once you've read this, please do the army the honour of killing Croxley.

CROXLEY: What???

(He looked to them with wide eyes and adopted praying hands.)

CROXLEY: Please don't! I beg of you to show mercy! I know I don't deserve it, but I truly am sorry for how I treated you!

(Aya then started to giggle.)

AYA: Psych! It doesn't really say that.

CROXLEY: What???

(In that moment everybody pointed at him and fell about laughing.)

CROXLEY: Why, that was a downright nasty trick! You, you...

(He then groaned in defeat and hung his head.)

CROXLEY: Mean.

(Aya and Kaya shared a giggle then Aya stuffed the letter up the bottom of her dress and stuffed it in her knickers. Having done so, she pulled her dress down then looked to Nash.)

AYA: This is a genuine offer, is it?

NASH: Absolutely.

AYA: Right. You were bound to say that.

NASH: But it is.

KAYA: But we can never be sure, can we?

NASH: Well... no.

(Kaya nodded.)

KAYA: In that case, you should stick around town while we think about it. But bear in mind, there *will* be conditions. We'll only come back on *our* terms.

AYA: Feel free to keep pointing and laughing at Croxley in the meantime.

NASH: Oh, I intend to.

(He smiled.)

NASH: Will you come and find me when you've decided?

KAYA: That's a fair request.

NASH: Thank you, ladies. I appreciate that. We're staying at that large inn.

AYA: We'll find it.

NASH: Excellent.

(He forced a grin.)

NASH: Any time frame on...

KAYA: Don't push it.

NASH: Right...

AYA: Anyway...

(She smiled down at Croxley.)

AYA: Tell us a little more about what a miserly cockroach you are.

CROXLEY: What?

AYA: Do it, or we definitely won't come back!

CROXLEY: Shit.

(He groaned then looked into her eyes.)

CROXLEY: Fine. Ladies... if I was the surface of a pond, the scum would dissipate because it doesn't want to be associated with a lowlife like me. Why? Because...

(As he continued to put himself down, Aya and Kaya shared a warm smile.)

AYA: This is a beautiful moment.

KAYA: Yes. Yes, it is.

Just around the corner from the main thoroughfare, at this time, Frank, Eleanor, Cassie and Eleanor's children were slowly advancing down the street, wearing glum expressions. They'd heard all the cheering echoing across the town and were en route to join in the celebrations. They did so with heavy hearts.

CASSIE: This isn't going to be easy. I really don't feel like celebrating.

FRANK: Well, no...

(He shrugged.)

FRANK: But it's important that we do. Once again, Ponytail has come to our rescue, so it'd be unthinkable *not* to go and thank her.

ELEANOR: He's right. We need to try to get over the fact that she's forgotten us and give her the credit she deserves.

CASSIE: I know. It's just...

(She pouted.)

CASSIE: We worked so hard on her behalf, you know? We did everything we could to maintain her legend. So to find out she doesn't even remember us stings like hell.

FRANK: It does. It really does.

ELEANOR: Yeah.

(She forced a smile.)

ELEANOR: But you know, when you think about it, she probably meets a lot of people. In the course of going about her heroics, there are probably hundreds of people who've become fans of hers, and you can't expect her to remember *all* of them.

CASSIE: True. I wished she'd remembered *us* though.

FRANK: Yeah.

(He nodded.)

FRANK: She definitely should have remembered *you*, Eleanor. I mean, having promised that she'd look you up next time she was in town, to forget you in a under a year is poor form.

ELEANOR: Maybe.

(She shrugged.)

ELEANOR: But you know, she's still a hero. I mean, she's saved us all from certain death twice. So I'm not going to criticise her. I just won't. Yes, I'm disappointed, but you'll never hear me say a bad word about her.

CASSIE: You won't hear that from *me* either.

FRANK: Or me. Other than to say that forgetting you was poor form.

ELEANOR: Let's just say it was unfortunate.

FRANK: Fair enough.

(They then strolled around the corner and paced down the main thoroughfare, towards the large crowd. Before them, the townsfolk were chanting the word 'speech' repeatedly.)

FRANK: Speech?

CASSIE: Should we join in?

ELEANOR: I...

(Just then, they saw Aya and Kaya leap onto the rooftop, next to the gate, accompanied by a loud cheer.)

AYA: Fine. A speech then. But a brief one.

KAYA: The briefest!

AYA: Kaya will start!

(Kaya glowered at her.)

KAYA: You rotten...

(She then looked towards the assembly and sighed.)

KAYA: Fine.

(She nodded.)

KAYA: People of Birdstone! I...

(She then shrieked with delight and bounced up and down excitedly.)

KAYA: Oh, my god!!! You're here!!!

(With that, she raced along the rooftop towards the back of the crowd then leapt down.

Wearing the happiest of smiles, she then raced up to Eleanor and threw her arms around her.)

KAYA: Eleanor!!!

(Eleanor's face rapidly lit up.)

ELEANOR: You remember me?

(Kaya stepped back from the hug and scoffed.)

KAYA: Of course, I do. I'm not a bloody goldfish.

(She then nodded either side of her.)

KAYA: Hi, Cassie. How are you doing, Frank?

CASSIE: Hi, Ponytail.

FRANK: I'm doing great, Ponytail. How are you?

KAYA: Well... you know... can't complain.

(She then glanced down at Eleanor's children. They were silently staring up at her with awestruck looks on their faces. They'd heard nothing but heroic tales about this woman and truly believed her to be a godlike superstar.)

KAYA: Hi, girls. Aren't you gorgeous?

(She smiled.)

KAYA: They've grown a lot in seven months, or whatever it was.

(She chuckled.)

KAYA: They'll overtake *me* soon.

FRANK: More than likely. You're very small. I reached your height when I was about ten.

(He then hung his head in shame.)

FRANK: I'll just go and throw myself in the river.

KAYA: Don't be silly.

(She smirked.)

KAYA: I actually owe you a favour. You gave me an excuse to come over here, leaving my sister to do the speech she volunteered *me* for.

(She then glanced over her shoulder to where Aya was making a speech whilst scowling at her bitterly.)

KAYA: Karma, bitch.

(She exhaled.)

KAYA: Seriously, it's so good to see you guys again.

FRANK: And it's...

(He then looked enlightened.)

FRANK: Oh, good god. We're so dumb. It must have been *your twin* who saved us earlier, not you.

KAYA: Must be. This is the first time I've seen you since I got back.

FRANK: No *wonder* you didn't recognise us then.

(Cassie and Eleanor gave him a sideways glance.)

CASSIE: Did you literally just figure that out?

ELEANOR: Wow, Frank.

FRANK: Oh, like you'd *already* figured it out.

ELEANOR: We had. It was obvious from the minute she raced over here. She remembered our names. Our rescuer said *have we met*.

CASSIE: Wally.

(She smiled.)

CASSIE: Can you introduce her to us at some point, Ponytail? We need to thank her.

KAYA: Sure.

(She smiled.)

KAYA: When you do, call her Twin Tail. She was all bent out of shape about not having a nickname, you see? Now she has one, hopefully we can make it stick.

(She then glanced upwards and smirked.)

KAYA: Or you could call her *Ponytail's sister* just to wind her up.

CASSIE: Actually, we try not to wind up people who know a thousand easy ways to kill us.

KAYA: Yeah? That's actually a sound policy.

(She exhaled.)

KAYA: Come on then, where is it? Where's my group hug?

(She opened her arms.)

KAYA: Don't leave me hanging.

(Cassie, Eleanor and Frank all stepped forwards.)

KAYA: The no groping rule still applies, Frank.

FRANK: I know.

(They then stepped in and shared a hug.)

KAYA: Right... who's petting my buttock?

CASSIE: Sorry.

(Kaya giggled.)

KAYA: No, it's okay. I'll allow it.

(She then stepped back from the hug.)

KAYA: Okay, so, here's the deal... my sister and I have some things to do, okay? But at some point, we all need to have a drink together like we said we would.

FRANK: Just name the time and place.

KAYA: I don't know the time and place.

(She smiled.)

KAYA: But I do know where your mill is. I'll find you there, then we can fetch these two lovely ladies and head to the pub.

FRANK: Actually, that won't work. I've retired, you see?

KAYA: How is *that* a problem?

FRANK: My sons have taken over the mill and I've let them have the house. I've got a small house on Woodcut Road. Number eight.

KAYA: I'll go there then.

CASSIE: That'd be fantastic.

ELEANOR: It'll be the best night out ever.

(She sighed.)

ELEANOR: Shame *I* can't go.

KAYA: What? Why?

ELEANOR: My husband left me. So I'll have to stay home and be with my girls.

KAYA: Hmm...

(She nodded.)

KAYA: In that case, we'll get some booze and have a drink at *your* house.

ELEANOR: Really?

KAYA: Why not? Pubs are overrated anyway.

(She chuckled.)

KAYA: Men in pubs can be very handsy. So it'll be nice to have a drink without getting groped for once.

(Cassie grinned.)

CASSIE: Noted. I'll try to keep my hands to myself.

(They shared laugh together then Kaya stepped back.)

KAYA: I'll see you guys soon, okay?

ELEANOR: Okay.

KAYA: Take care.

(She then flinched.)

KAYA: Oh, yeah. That other guy, Morris, was it? Is he still angry at me? If not, he can come too.

(Frank sucked his teeth.)

FRANK: Yeah... he won't be attending.

KAYA: Understood.

(She chuckled.)

KAYA: Oh, well.

(She then raced back to where her miffed sister was finishing her speech.)

KAYA: Well said.

AYA: Kaya, I swear, one of these days, I *will* kill you!

At the back of the town at this time, Morris and his family were still lying beneath their house. The all clear had been sounded quite some time ago, but they remained where they were, grimacing uncomfortably at one another.

CLAUDIA: You need to say something, Morris.

MORRIS: What??? Are you insane?

CLAUDIA: We could end up laying here forever if you don't.

MORRIS: Which isn't the worst scenario in the world, quite frankly.

CLAUDIA: Morris, don't be a coward.

MORRIS: But what if I upset him?

(His son yawned.)

WILLIAM: I'm bored.

CLAUDIA: We're all bored, boy. And we'll be bored a lot longer if your dad doesn't grow a spine.

(Morris sighed.)

MORRIS: Fine, but if I end up getting killed, it's all your fault.

(He then glanced to his side, nervously.)

MORRIS: Um... hello?

(He scratched his head.)

MORRIS: Can we help you?

(The Nawsland soldier who was laying there next to them, offered them a smile.)

SOLDIER: No, no. I'm fine, thank you.

MORRIS: Right.

(He looked to his wife.)

MORRIS: He said he's fine.

CLAUDIA: I heard!

(She rolled her eyes then peered over her husband.)

CLAUDIA: Do you mind if we just crawl out?

SOLDIER: What? Oh. No. Not at all. Be my guest.

CLAUDIA: Oh. Thank you.

SOLDIER: You're not hostages.

(He flinched.)

SOLDIER: Did you think you were?

MORRIS: We weren't sure.

SOLDIER: I see. I do apologise.

(He smiled.)

SOLDIER: I just crawled under here to hide, you see? I didn't even know you were down here.

(He sucked his teeth.)

SOLDIER: My lot were being butchered, you see? So I decided to opt out.

MORRIS: Yes, well... we don't need the details.

(He then watched as his wife and son crawled out from beneath the house.)

MORRIS: Anyway... I'll be seeing you.

SOLDIER: Righto.

(He then looked enlightened.)

SOLDIER: Actually, would you mind doing me a favour when you get out?

MORRIS: Um...

SOLDIER: Tell your chief I'm here and that I've surrendered. I figured that being a prisoner was better than being sliced into tiny pieces like a wedding cake.

MORRIS: Um... sure. I can do that. If you like.

(He then crawled up from under the house and staggered to his feet.)

MORRIS: Right... so... he asked me to report him to the chief.
CLAUDIA: And we shall.
(She nodded.)
CLAUDIA: Right after lunch. To The Nest!
MORRIS: Um... darling, there's an enemy soldier beneath our house, don't you think...
CLAUDIA: I need food!
MORRIS: Right...
(He grimaced.)
MORRIS: Apparently, the well-armed, enemy combatant can wait.
(He then headed away, shaking his head.)
MORRIS: What the hell did I marry?

A short while later, having left the people of the town to enjoy their celebration, Aya and Kaya headed back across town in the hope of finally getting their emotional reunion. They did so with much in the way of trepidation. Seeing their parents have sex was something they could both have done without.

AYA: I mean, they must have finished by now, right?

KAYA: I bloody hope so.

AYA: Well, they must have. I mean, they were as shocked as we were.

KAYA: Yeah.

AYA: So the chances are, we killed the moment and they got dressed again.

KAYA: That's the hope. I really don't want to go through that again.

(She bit her lip.)

KAYA: I mean, you and I are liberated, right? Women of the world.

AYA: Absolutely.

KAYA: We know what goes on. Married couple of *all* ages have sex.

AYA: Which is perfectly normal.

KAYA: Right? It's expected.

(She shrugged.)

KAYA: Everybody's parents have sex. It'd be foolish to pretend otherwise.

AYA: Oh, definitely.

KAYA: But...

(She winced.)

KAYA: Knowing it and *seeing* it are very, very different things.

AYA: Nobody wants to *see* it.

KAYA: And anyone who does needs to see a doctor. And soon.

AYA: Sooner than soon.

(She shrugged.)

AYA: It's like, you and I have both had sex before now, knowing there's a fair chance *someone* is watching.

KAYA: I think it's fair to say that's the case.

AYA: Sometimes that makes it exciting.

KAYA: Uh-huh.

AYA: The thrill of getting caught, et cetera. Sexy.

KAYA: Oh, definitely a turn on.

AYA: Exactly. So it's not a big deal if someone sees you doing it.

(She cringed.)

AYA: *Unless* it's your parents.

KAYA: Oh, good, you don't want *them* seeing it.

AYA: Then we're not being unreasonable, are we? We don't want *them* to see *us* doing it, and we don't want to see *them* doing it.

KAYA: Right? We're just being even handed.

AYA: Absolutely.

KAYA: Like you said, they wouldn't want to see us doing it either.

AYA: Of course not. That'd be obscene.

KAYA: Exactly.

(She grimaced.)

KAYA: Aya?

AYA: Yeah?

KAYA: Are we really trying to justify being mortified about seeing our parents doink?

AYA: Apparently so.

KAYA: That's weird. You'd have to be fucking odd *not* to be mortified.

AYA: Yeah.

(She cringed.)

AYA: But there are some very odd people out there.

KAYA: Good point.

(She nodded.)

KAYA: Thank fuck, we're not among their number.

(They then stopped outside the chief's house and glanced to one another.)

KAYA: So...

AYA: You go first.

KAYA: Why me?

AYA: Just in case they're still doing it.

KAYA: Why should I have to suffer???

AYA: Because I like me better!

KAYA: You...

(Just then, the door opened up and their mother stepped out.)

INCA: Girls???

(Her eyes lit up.)

INCA: My babies!

(She then raced over to them and threw her arms around them.)

INCA: Oh, my god; it's so good to see you!

(Hugging her back, Aya smiled.)

AYA: It's great to see *you* dressed. I mean *too*!

KAYA: How are you, mum? And what are you doing in Birdstone?

(Inca stepped out of the hug and furrowed her brow.)

INCA: Croxley came to see me.

KAYA: He did?

INCA: Yeah. He wanted me to convince your father to tell him your whereabouts.

(She shrugged.)

INCA: So I came here to tell your father not to.

AYA: He didn't *know* our whereabouts.

INCA: Yeah, but *I* didn't know that, did I?

(She grimaced.)

INCA: Where did you vanish to anyway?

KAYA: The desert. We joined the Shivaha Tribe.

INCA: What's that?

KAYA: A tribe in the desert.

INCA: Right...

(She grimaced.)

INCA: And they welcomed you, did they? Despite being white an' all.

AYA: Of course. They took really good care of us, actually. They thought we were goddesses.

INCA: Oh? How come?

AYA: We defeated their rival tribe, so they just assumed we were divine.

KAYA: And, you know, we didn't want to disappoint them by telling them otherwise.

(Inca chuckled.)

INCA: Little buggers.

(She then hugged them again before stepping back.)

INCA: You coming in? Your dad's excited to see you.

KAYA: Try stopping us.

(She looked to Aya and beamed.)

KAYA: Ready?

(Aya whimpered nervously then a tear rolled her cheek.)

AYA: Yes.

KAYA: Aw.

(She gave her a brief hug.)

KAYA: Let's go then.

AYA: Right.

INCA: Follow me, girls.

(With that, she headed into the house. Kaya followed on excitedly. Aya brought up the rear, fighting to keep her emotions in check. Unlike Kaya, she'd never spent any time with him before and this was going to be a big moment in here life.)

INCA: He's just in here.

(She then pushed open the door to the living room and headed through it. Kaya hurried after her. Upon sighting her father, smiling back at her by the window, she then came to a halt and whimpered. Last time they'd spoken, he had no idea she was his daughter. Now he was clued in, making this a massive family moment; one she'd always dreamt about. As such, a tear rolled down her cheek and she smiled lovingly.)

KAYA: Hi, dad.

CHIEF: Hi... um...

INCA: That's Kaya.

CHIEF: Hello, Kaya.

KAYA: I...

(Just then, Aya zoomed past crying her eyes out.)

AYA: Daddy!

(She then charged into her father's arms and hugged him with everything she had. The chief hugged her back and closed his tearful eyes.)

CHIEF: Aya... my sweet little Aya.

(He then opened his eyes just in time to see, Kaya march in and join the hug.)

KAYA: Dad.

CHIEF: My little Kaya.

(He exhaled with pure joy. The pain he'd carried in his heart for twenty years had instantly vanished from existence.)

CHIEF: My girls. My beautiful... brilliant girls.

(Watching on, Inca exhaled.)

INCA: That's beautiful.

AYA: Get in here, mum.

KAYA: Yeah. The four of us together.

INCA: Um... sure... if *you* don't mind, Chester.

CHIEF: Just get your arse over here, woman!

(Inca chuckled.)

INCA: If you insist.

(She then stepped in and joined in the moment.)

INCA: This is so nice.

CHIEF: This is perfect.

KAYA: I'm so happy.

(Aya opened her mouth to speak then burst out crying again.)

KAYA: Don't worry, I speak fluent Aya. She said yippee.

AYA: Something like that.

(The hug continued for a solid minute longer then the chief stepped back.)

CHIEF: I'm with my girls at last.

KAYA: And I've finally got to call you dad.

AYA: That!

(She wiped her tears.)

AYA: Sorry. That was really quite pathetic.

KAYA: It wasn't pathetic at all.

(Aya lovingly touched her arm then looked to her father.)

AYA: How are you, dad? How have you been?

KAYA: Tell us everything!

AYA: Every last detail.

KAYA: Yeah.

(The chief chuckled.)

CHIEF: Maybe we should sit down then.

INCA: Good thinking.

(With that, they all headed over the seated area. The chief nestled in his armchair and his wife and daughters took the sofa. Inca was seated in the middle.)

CHIEF: Well, look at that. My wife and my kids, sitting here *with* me where they belong.
(He sighed.)

CHIEF: It was a long twenty years without you.

AYA: We missed you too.

KAYA: Yeah. We talked about you a lot.

AYA: Incorrectly, apparently. We were told you were the hero of the mountains; a powerful warrior revered throughout the region.

CHIEF: Right... well... sorry, ladies; that's a reputation I can't live up to.

INCA: Sorry about that, girls. I took exaggeration to hitherto unexplored levels.

AYA: It's okay. We should have twigged when you told us he used to hunt wild boar with his bare hands.

KAYA: Or when you told us he defeated twenty roaming bandits with nothing but a knife and fork.

AYA: Yeah. And we should *definitely* have figured it out when you said he held back an avalanche with nothing but brute strength and willpower.

KAYA: We were very gullible.

INCA: Only because you wanted to believe it.

(The chief raised a finger.)

CHIEF: What makes you so sure I *didn't* do all those things?

KAYA: The fact they're *obviously* not true.

AYA: Or even possible.

CHIEF: You make a compelling point.

(He nodded.)

CHIEF: But don't think I didn't have my moments. I'm a well-respected chief and in my younger days, I won my fair share of scraps.

INCA: He did. That much is true.

(She smiled.)

INCA: He was very manly. If anyone made jibes about my dark skin, he'd raise his fists and take them on.

AYA: Really?

CHIEF: Absolutely, I would.

(He chuckled.)

CHIEF: I got my arse handed to me on a plate half the time, but I wasn't going to let people to talk to your mother like that.

KAYA: Then you *are* a hero.

AYA: The best kind!

INCA: Well, he certainly was to me.

(She exhaled.)

INCA: A man of honour with a heart of gold, who always stood up for what was right. He was a looker back then too.

CHIEF: Back then?

(Inca smirked at him.)

INCA: Sucks, doesn't it?

CHIEF: Right. I see. Petty revenge. Fair play.

(They chuckled together then Inca sighed.)

INCA: It's such a shame things panned out the way they did.

CHIEF: Yes, well...

(Just then, the door opened up and Runcorn strutted into the room.)

RUNCORN: Chief?

(The chief glowered at him.)

CHIEF: I'm busy!

RUNCORN: But, sir...

(He flinched.)

RUNCORN: Inca???

INCA: Hi, Runcorn.

RUNCORN: You got old!

INCA: You got even *older*.

RUNCORN: Touché. How are...

CHIEF: State your business, Runcorn, will you?

RUNCORN: Oh. Right. You're needed, sir.

CHIEF: By whom?

RUNCORN: Well... the town, obviously.

CHIEF: Why?

RUNCORN: Because of the attack.

CHIEF: Attack?

(He flinched.)

CHIEF: Fuck! That's right! The invasion bell rang.

(He jumped to his feet.)

CHIEF: I'd better find out what that was all about.

AYA: An enemy unit of close to a thousand men attacked the town.

CHIEF: What??? Why???

AYA: Dunno.

CHIEF: Fuck.
 (He then raised a baffled eyebrow.)
 CHIEF: Wait. Nearly a thousand Nawsland soldiers? And we *won*?
 RUNCORN: Yes, sir. Your daughters tore them to shreds.
 KAYA: Hey. It sounds bad when you put it like that. I prefer to think we gave them an object lesson in what happens when you apply speed and pointy objects to human flesh.
 AYA: We taught them well.
 CHIEF: Right.
 (He grimaced.)
 CHIEF: That's not good. We waited here for the all clear, but when it sounded...
 (He ruffled his neck innocently.)
 CHIEF: Events conspired to make me forget... you know... that I needed to go out there and see what happened.
 AYA: Events conspired?
 KAYA: Is that what you kids are calling it nowadays?
 INCA: We most certainly are. But don't go judging us. If it wasn't for conspiring events, you two wouldn't be here.
 (The three of them giggled together.)
 CHIEF: Yes, well, never mind that. I need to go out there and see what happened. To address the people. To do my chiefly duties.
 INCA: You should, yes.
 CHIEF: Sorry, Runcorn. I was just so excited about my girls coming to town, I forgot.
 RUNCORN: Nobody's going to hold *that* against you, Chester.
 CHIEF: Excellent.
 (He nodded to Inca, Aya and Kaya.)
 CHIEF: Can we meet up again later? Please. There's so much I want to tell you. And to ask you. There's so much...
 INCA: We'll be here.
 CHIEF: Thank you.
 (He nodded to Runcorn.)
 CHIEF: Let's check everyone's okay first then once we've figured out what happened, we can hold a town meeting.
 (He then headed for the door.)
 CHIEF: Brief me.
 RUNCORN: Okay. So far, there are no reported casualties on our side. Oh, and Rex has become something of a pariah.
 CHIEF: You mean he wasn't already?
 RUNCORN: Not like this, no.
 (They then headed out of the door. Left behind, Inca exhaled then sat back and held out my arms.)
 INCA: Hug time, ladies.
 (Aya and Kaya just giggled then nestled into their mother.)
 INCA: Today is a good day.

That evening, while a pile of dead bodies were burning in the main square, the entire population of Birdstone headed for the civic hall. The chief had called the meeting to confirm to the people that, despite the scale of the attack, their fine town hadn't received a single casualty. He also wanted to serenade the town's two long-haired heroines; his daughters. With this in mind, he stepped onto the stage, before the overcrowded auditorium

and took a bow. Six people clapped, the others talked among themselves. When Aya and Kaya strode out onto the stage after him, on the other hand, the assembly cheered with everything they had. Mistakenly believing that the applause was for him, the chief nodded acceptingly then raised alternating palms as a symbol of his acknowledgement. Moments later, when Aya and Kaya sat down on their seats, the applause finally started to subside.

CHIEF: Thank you. Thank you. What a lovely warm welcome. I'm touched.

(All eyes shifted towards him.)

CHIEF: Now, let's get down to business, shall we?

(Almost instantly, a voice rose up from the front row.)

ERIC: Aren't you going to sing the town anthem this time?

CHIEF: I... no!

ERIC: Really? A *good* leader would.

(The chief sighed.)

CHIEF: Eric? Why do you even come to these things?

ERIC: *Everyone* comes to them!

CHIEF: Yes, but why do *you*? Specifically. All you do is heckle me!

ERIC: Sounds to me like you've answered your own question there.

CHIEF: You...

(He took a deep breath to calm himself.)

CHIEF: I'm not going to bite.

(He nodded.)

CHIEF: Okay, everyone; here are the details of this afternoon's attack.

ERIC: Fine! *I'll* sing it then!

(With that, he burst into the first verse of the town anthem.)

CHIEF: You...

(Much to his annoyance, the rest of the population then joined in. Somewhat miffed, the chief had no choice but to join them. He sung the entire thing whilst glowering at a sniggering Eric. A few minutes later, once the final refrain had been sung, he then folded his arms and leant on the lectern.)

CHIEF: Now...

ERIC: Encore!

CHIEF: No!!!

(He shook his fist at him.)

CHIEF: One more word out of you and you can fucking stand outside.

ERIC: And who's gonna make me?

(Aya raised her hand.)

ERIC: In that case, I have spoken my last.

(Everyone chuckled, except the chief.)

CHIEF: Cock.

(He ruffled his neck then started over.)

CHIEF: Right then... here are the details of today's attack. We sustained...

(He smirked.)

CHIEF: Zero casualties.

(A loud cheer rose up from the assembly.)

CHIEF: That was my reaction too.

(He nodded smugly.)

CHIEF: The Nawsland Army...

(Everyone booed.)

CHIEF: Sustained a total of nine hundred and two dead and three captured.

(The boo rapidly turned into a cheer.)

CHIEF: And all because my beautiful daughters came to fight for us.
(A succession of chanting then began. Ponytail; Twintail. Ponytail; Twintail.)
CHIEF: That's right, it was all because they were here.
(He rolled his eyes.)
CHIEF: And *despite* the fact that Rex joined in.
(A group of townspeople yelled out angrily.)
GARY: He's a cunt!
ETHEL: Banish him!!!
STEVE: Nobody likes that tosser anyway!
(Charles, the town's aging sexual-deviant then offered up *his* opinion.)
CHARLES: I protest! Those woolly dresses they're wearing don't offer even the merest hint of cleavage.
CHIEF: Excuse me???
CHARLES: You heard me!
(Kaya chuckled to herself then gave Charles a wave.)
KAYA: Hi, town perve.
CHARLES: Hello, gorgeous.
KAYA: How are you?
CHARLES: Disappointed. By those dresses! But other than that, I can't complain. Since your last visit, I've regained the ability to masturbate on a daily basis. All I have to do is think of you and 'boing' up he goes.
(He glanced down.)
CHARLES: Ah, there he is now.
CHIEF: Do you mind??? They're my daughter's you're talking about.
CHARLES: I know. I fantasise about fucking them every night. And I've stained many a pair of pyjamas because of it.
(Kaya giggled.)
KAYA: He's terrible.
AYA: He's twisted!
CHARLES: But he's happy!
AYA: Right. I have no words...
CHIEF: I do. Would you like to hear some?
AYA: No.
CHIEF: Oh.
(He then ruffled his neck and glanced to the assembly again.)
CHIEF: Anyway...
(Just then, Rex started to climb onto the stage.)
REX: Motion incoming!
(He was roundly booed by one and all.)
GARY: Get off the stage!!!
CHARLES: Yeah! Nobody wants to look at *your* tits!
ELEANOR: Somebody throw something at him.
REX: Hey!!!
(He stood tall then nodded defiantly.)
REX: Under the town's bylaws, paragraph three, section one, as a citizen, I have the right to interrupt any town meeting to propose a motion!
(He glanced at the chief.)
REX: Correct?
CHIEF: Well... yes, unfortunately.
CASSIE: I wouldn't bother. We'll reject it just because *you* proposed it!

(Everyone cheered in full agreement.)

REX: Well, we'll see about that.

(He nodded to the chief.)

REX: I would now like to state my case.

(The chief sighed.)

CHIEF: Fine. Unfortunately, I can't stop you.

AYA: *I* can.

CHIEF: I mean legally.

AYA: Oh.

(She smiled.)

AYA: Is that *important* to you or...

KAYA: You can't just knock him out, Aya.

AYA: Aw.

CHIEF: Just let the idiot speak.

AYA: Fine.

REX: Thank you.

(He then scoffed.)

REX: And like you *could* knock me out.

AYA: Dude, my sister knocked you out this afternoon with barely a flick of her finger.

REX: That was luck!

(He then ruffled his neck and stepped up to the lectern. It was not a move that was well received.)

CHARLES: Fuck off!!!

ERIC: Yeah! We'd rather listen to the chief! And that's saying something!

CHIEF: Eric!!!

CASSIE: Boo!!!

FRANK: Just get off the bloody stage, you twat!

REX: Not until I've proposed my motion!

(The chief stepped forwards.)

CHIEF: Just let him do it, people. Then we can laugh at him and get on with the meeting.

(Despite much grumbling, everyone slowly fell silent, allowing Rex to finally began making his case.)

REX: Seven months ago, we were attacked by a hundred Nawsland soldiers.

(Everyone growled.)

REX: Their target was *you*, Chief.

CHIEF: I'm aware.

REX: Today, we were attacked by *nine* hundred Nawsland soldiers. And having spoken with the three that were taken prisoner, we now know that the target of *this* attack was your two daughters here. If *they* weren't in town, however, they were going to lure them out by sacking the entire town and making sure to murder *you*, chief; their father!

CHIEF: Again, I'm aware.

STEVE: So what's your point???

REX: My point is, how many soldiers will they send *next* time? Only it seems to me that they won't *stop* sending troops here as long you and your daughters are linked with the place. And next time it could well be five *thousand* men battering at the gate!

ELEANOR: Which will be fine as long as our resident bell end, namely you, doesn't open it. (Everyone cheered.)

REX: Nobody would *need* to open it. Five thousand men would bring at least a dozen cannons to blow it down with. And if those two long-haired bimbos aren't around, we'll all be slaughtered!

(He nodded sternly.)

REX: Therefore, I propose that, in the interests of preserving this town's safety, the chief should be exiled to the capital and his daughters should fuck off with him!

(In that moment, the rafters in the ceiling began to echo with the furious boos of those beneath it. The very suggestion that they'd exile the chief had gone down like a led balloon.)

ELEANOR: We should exile *you*!!!

FRANK: Banish Rex!!!

CHARLES: Yeah! Only women should be shirtless!!! Speaking of which...

KAYA: No!

CHARLES: Aw.

STEVE: Just fuck off, Rex!

CASSIE: Yeah! Down with Rex!!!

(Cassie's words then became a chanted mantra for the entire crowd.)

CROWD: Down with Rex! Down with Rex! Down with Rex.

(The chief could only smirk.)

CHIEF: Shall we take a vote on this motion of yours, or would you like to run away while you still have a shred of dignity left in tact?

REX: Um...

(Just then, much to everyone's astonishment, Rex received backing from a most unexpected source.)

KAYA: Actually, Muscly Bonehead makes a good point.

(Everyone gasped.)

REX: It's Rex!

KAYA: Not now, Bonehead.

(She shrugged at her father.)

KAYA: Aya and I are a threat to Nawsland and they know it. Like that muscle-bound silly person said, they came for us two today.

(She grimaced.)

KAYA: And if we *weren't* here, they'd have destroyed you and everyone in the entire town just to send us a message. To flush us out.

(She sighed.)

KAYA: It pains me to say it, but the intellectually challenged Neanderthal was right.

(Aya nodded then stepped forward.)

AYA: Being our father makes you a target. And that makes you a liability. For the sake of Birdstone, you *should* go into exile.

REX: Exactly! Thank you.

KAYA: Shut up.

AYA: Yeah! Don't gloat, you bell end!

KAYA: Be fair, Aya. Let him have his moment. It's probably the first time he's been right in his entire life.

REX: Do you want a slap?

(At this point, everyone in the audience fell about laughing.)

REX: Hey!

AYA: He's a wit.

KAYA: Well... half of one anyway.

AYA: Yeah.

(The chief winced uncomfortably.)

CHIEF: Exile... hmm...

(He bit his lip.)

CHIEF: But even if I'm not here, the enemy might still come back!

(Inca then rose from her seat.)

INCA: Then we'll have to make sure word *gets out* that you've gone into exile. Or let it be known that you were *chased* out for being an enemy of the people.

CHIEF: Right... yes... just the legacy I was hoping for.

INCA: Chester...

(She gestured to Aya and Kaya.)

INCA: These two are your legacy.

(The chief's head instantly swelled.)

CHIEF: Yes... I did do rather well in the fathering department, didn't I?

INCA: You most definitely did.

(She glanced away innocently.)

INCA: Even if they *did* get their zooming skills from *my* side of the family.

(Having not heard her, the chief sighed then shook his head.)

CHIEF: Exile sounds so... and where would I go?

AYA: Wherever *we* go.

KAYA: We're going to be most insistent on that; seeing as you have a target on your back.

CHIEF: Well... I suppose that's...

(He then sighed emptily then looked to the townspeople.)

CHIEF: We need to vote on this motion, everyone. And it breaks my heart to say it, but you need to vote in favour. The consequences for me staying could be fatal for each and every one of you.

(He then forced a smile.)

CHIEF: All those in favour, slowly raise your right hands. And I mean slowly. Enthusiasm for the idea would kill me inside.

(Eric's hand rocketed upwards. Everyone else, slowly lifted their hands into the air, snarling at Rex all the while. The chief sighed again.)

CHIEF: All those against?

(Only Charles raised his hand.)

CHIEF: Right... just Charles.

CHARLES: Damned right!

(He furrowed his brow.)

CHARLES: If *you* leave town, never to be seen again, my eyeballs can kiss goodbye to ogling your daughters and their gleefully large love balloons!

CHIEF: Charles...

CHARLES: They bring me joy, damn it!

(The woman next to him shrieked.)

ETHEL: Looks to me like you've had enough joy for one day! Take your hand out of your pocket!

CHARLES: I most certainly will not!

CHIEF: You'd better not be bashing one out, Charles!!!

CHARLES: I'm not!

(He ruffled his neck.)

CHARLES: I'm just keeping the old fella warm.

CHIEF: Wow.

(He rolled his eyes then looked to the grimacing townsfolk.)

CHIEF: Anyway... Rex's motion is... carried. I shall step down as chief and leave town with my family as soon as possible.

(Everyone groaned with bitter disappointment.)

CAROL: That's *too* sad.

CHARLES: It is. Can't you go on your own and leave those girls of yours here?

CHIEF: No!

(He shook his head at him.)

CHIEF: Anyway, I suppose we'd better get on and elect a new chief. I nominate Runcorn.

REX: I nominate myself!

RUNCORN: And I'd like to propose a motion to banish Rex into exile as well!

(Everyone cheered.)

REX: You bastard!

CHARLES: And I'd like to propose a motion to banish *myself* into exile with the chief's daughters!

CHIEF: Denied!

CHARLES: It's not up to you!

CHIEF: Bloody is! Now all those in favour of Runcorn becoming chief, raise your right hand!

(Everyone except Rex and Charles lifting their hands in the air.)

CHIEF: Motion carried!

REX: You didn't even ask who wasn't in favour.

CHIEF: Fine! Who's not in favour?

(Charles and Rex raised their hands.)

CHIEF: Motion carried!

CHARLES: Now do *my* motion!

CHIEF: You're not coming with us!!!

CHARLES: Hey! This is meant to be a democracy! Put it to a vote!

(Starting to lose his temper, the chief yelled at him.)

CHIEF: This *town* is a democracy, you daft old bastard! Who comes to live with me, however, is *my* fucking choice!

INCA: Ours, dear!

CHIEF: *You* can shut the fuck up, an' all!

INCA: Charming.

(The chief gasped in horror.)

CHIEF: Sorry! Sorry! I didn't mean to snap at *you*.

(He looked to his daughters.)

CHIEF: Can we pretend that didn't happen?

AYA: We...

ETHEL: He's masturbating again!

CHARLES: No, I'm not!

(The chief growled.)

CHIEF: Enough!!!

(At once, everyone in the entire hall fell silent and stared at the chief. Trying to calm himself down, he was breathing heavily and counting to ten.)

CHIEF: Right. Thank you. Now... what was next?

RUNCORN: My motion to exile Rex.

REX: I object!

RUNCORN: You don't *get* to object!!!

AYA: Can *I* object?

(Runcorn smiled.)

RUNCORN: Of course you can, love.

REX: How's that fair???

AYA: I was just gonna say, you can't kick *him* out.

KAYA: Yeah. We'd rather he was *here*... because we *won't* be.

AYA: Not only that, but he's the town ranger, isn't he? He kills all the wild boar so it's safe to go outside.

REX: That's exactly what I do!

(He raised a suspicious eyebrow.)

REX: How did you know that?

AYA: My dad told me.

(She smiled.)

AYA: I said to him, what's the point in that deluded dipshit?

KAYA: He didn't even have to ask who she meant.

REX: Well, that's great. Where's the respect?

RUNCORN: Shut up.

(He nodded.)

RUNCORN: I'd like to amend my proposed motion. Rex can *live* here, but from now on, he's not permitted to open the gate!

REX: I'll bloody well do what I like!

CHIEF: All those in favour?

REX: Of me doing as I like?

CHIEF: No! All those in favour of Rex losing his gate privileges!

(Every single hand went up with the exception of Rex and Charles' again.)

CHIEF: Are you against the idea, Charles? You didn't raise your hand!

ETHEL: His hands are busy!

CHARLES: Thin, sexy waist...

CHIEF: You're a disgrace!

(He rolled his eyes.)

CHIEF: Motion carried!

REX: I didn't get to vote no!

CHIEF: What would be the point?

REX: Well... people might have changed their minds.

CASSIE: We haven't!

ELEANOR: She speaks for us all!

FRANK: Yup!

REX: Well, fuck you then.

(He nodded sternly.)

REX: If you're gonna be like that, you can hunt your own wild boar from now on! Fuck the lot of you!

CHIEF: In that case, there's absolutely no point in you being allowed to stay.

RUNCORN: None. I want to put my proposal to oust him back on the table.

REX: Oh, fine! I'll do it! Just... don't expect me to be happy about it!

(He then stormed off the side of the stage. Having watched him go, the chief shrugged.)

CHIEF: Anyway... I'd better make my farewell speech.

(He nodded.)

CHIEF: My family and I have much to discuss.

An hour or so later, Aya, Kaya, Inca and the chief were sitting in the private meeting room at the town's largest inn. Present in the room with them, were Nash, Croxley, Yarwood and Baxter. Aya and Kaya had promised to get back to them about their proposal and were now in the throes of doing so.

AYA: We fully understand that, Major, we do. What with your reassurances, Croxley's grovelling and the Major-General's letter, we've got the message loud and clear. You're desperate for us to return to military service.

KAYA: And it's not something we'd reject *out of hand*. We do have some concerns, however.

AYA: Big concerns.

KAYA: *Very* big concerns. *Very, very* big concerns, actually. Great big, massive, mountain-sized...

AYA: Kaya!

KAYA: Right...

(She blushed.)

KAYA: Concerns.

MAJOR: Okay. Such as?

AYA: Well, trust is going to be an issue for one.

KAYA: Yeah! Highcroft has promised us the world before, you see? And we ended up with fuck face over there.

(She gestured to Croxley.)

KAYA: That won't be happening this time.

AYA: Uh-huh. This time, if you *don't* deliver on your promises, we'll hit the road again.

KAYA: And we won't be coming back.

MAJOR: I can assure you...

AYA: But you can't. That's the problem. We'll have to see it to believe it.

KAYA: So we've made a decision. We'll go back with you, but if our demands aren't met, we'll walk. And... if we get back there and someone tries to arrest us for desertion; I mean if all this was a ruse to capture us, then...

AYA: You'll have made a powerful new enemy.

CROXLEY: You'll defect to Nawsland?

KAYA: No. We'll be enemies of *both* armies!

MAJOR: We really don't want *you two* as enemies.

INCA: That's right. You don't!

AYA: We'll handle this, mum.

INCA: Right. Sorry.

KAYA: So that's how it is.

MAJOR: Okay. So what *are* your demands?

AYA: We want the rank of general.

KAYA: And the salaries to match.

AYA: And we'll be taking that luxury apartment.

KAYA: With a heated bath.

AYA: And nice gardens.

KAYA: And a civilian staff of our choosing.

AYA: And a clothing allowance.

KAYA: Ooh, nice last minute addition.

AYA: Well, it just makes sense. We plan to operate by travelling as normal girls. Normal girls don't wear army uniforms.

KAYA: Good point.

MAJOR: Wait. When you say you plan to operate...

AYA: Ah. I'm glad you asked that. Tell him, Kaya.

KAYA: She's glad you asked us that.

AYA: I mean tell him why!

(Kaya chuckled.)

KAYA: I know.

(She nodded.)

KAYA: We see our role in the army as an undercover role. To wander close to the border, acting all sweet and innocent, while *actually* tracking enemy units. And when we find them, well, you know what'll come next.

AYA: Bloodshed.

MAJOR: You want to pose as civilians while hunting enemy units?

AYA: Then despatching them when we find them.

KAYA: And please, bear in mind, we can cover a hell of a distance in a day.

AYA: The entire three hundred mile long border, in fact.

MAJOR: Wait. I'm lost. How can you act like normal girls *and* zoom three hundred miles in day?

KAYA: We won't be zooming the entire time. We'll just stop and act like normal girls when we're in a place of interest.

AYA: Somewhere the enemy might decide to put in an appearance.

(The major pondered the idea and nodded knowingly.)

MAJOR: You'd be like a booby trap that could spring at any time.

KAYA: Yes, but, please refrain from referring to us as a booby trap.

AYA: That was a cruel nickname they saddled us with at the academy.

KAYA: Whilst doing military exercises, the boys kept getting captured because they'd stop to stare at our boobies.

AYA: Hence booby trap.

KAYA: Yup. And thanks for proving our point, Major. You can stop looking at them now.

(The major glanced at her face then grimaced.)

MAJOR: I'm so sorry. That was most unprofessional.

CHIEF: Cunt.

MAJOR: Quite.

(He nodded.)

MAJOR: Well, *I* find your terms acceptable. And I find your suggestion for a mode of operations most desirable. We'll just need to clear it with the Major-General.

(He smiled.)

MAJOR: I doubt he'll have any objections.

AYA: Good, good.

MAJOR: So, was there anything else?

KAYA: There was, yes.

MAJOR: Oh.

KAYA: Croxley needs to be punished properly before we go back.

(Croxley gasped.)

CROXLEY: But I've already been demoted down to Corporal! And I had to make a complete cock of myself by grovelling to you in public.

AYA: Do you think that's enough? Do you think that makes up for the six years of misery you put us through? You didn't even supply us with a women's toilet!

KAYA: Or a female doom room! We spent six years getting undressed in front of large groups of men because of you!

INCA: They became so desensitised to being seen naked, they used to answer the front door like it.

AYA: Mum...

INCA: But you did. And you'd just yank your tops off in clothes shops to try new ones on. People stared!

(She glowered at Croxley.)

INCA: You made them like that.

CROXLEY: Liberated?

(He scratched behind his ear.)

CROXLEY: That's a good thing, isn't it?

(Having received nothing but icy, cold stares, he hung his head.)

CROXLEY: Fine. What do you want me to do?

AYA: Walk a mile in *our* shoes.

CROXLEY: Eh? How could I possibly? You have teeny-tiny feet and ridiculously high heels.

KAYA: Not literally, you bell-end!

CROXLEY: Right. Then... what?

KAYA: You need to learn how it felt to be us.

CROXLEY: What? Like... in what way?

KAYA: Pimped out and treated like a sex object!

CROXLEY: What???

KAYA: Therefore...

(She nodded sternly.)

KAYA: We should find the gayest man in town and bring him here. Then we'll see how *you* like being ordered to suck on things!

(Croxley's hair stood on end.)

CROXLEY: What??? No!!! No fucking way! There's no way in hell I'm doing *that*!!!

KAYA: Father! Find me a gay!

CROXLEY: Don't fucking bother! I said I'm not doing it, and that's final!!!

KAYA: Why not? You didn't seem to mind making *us* do things like that!

CROXLEY: That's different!

AYA: How???

CROXLEY: You're women!

KAYA: So???

CROXLEY: Women are *attracted* to men! It's normal!

AYA: Normal???

CROXLEY: For *you*, yes!!! For *me* it'd be obscene! I'm not *attracted* to men!

KAYA: Newsflash, fuck face, Aya and I weren't even *remotely* attracted to the fat old men you forced us into serving either!

AYA: Quite the opposite!

KAYA: We we're repulsed!

AYA: But you made us do it under the threat of disciplinary action if we refused.

KAYA: Well, welcome to our world!

(She nodded sternly.)

KAYA: When the gay gets here, you're gonna get on your knees and sample the cheese!

(The chief scratched his head.)

CHIEF: Um... I hate to rain on your parade, girls, but I don't know if there *are* any gays in town.

INCA: It's not something mountain folk care to admit, you see?

CHIEF: There's plenty of ugly, old women though. Perhaps, I could fetch...

CROXLEY: Don't even bother! It's not happening! I refuse!

(He ruffled his neck.)

CROXLEY: In the last few days I've had to accept a chastening demotion *and* make two deeply humiliating apologies! Once to the Major-General and again to the pair of *you*. I think that's punishment enough, don't you? All this castigation has to end somewhere!

(He nodded sternly.)

CROXLEY: And I've decided that it ends here!

AYA: Is that so?

CROXLEY: Yes. I've been kicked all the way down to corporal; one rung above private. That was painful enough, but did it end there? No! I had to subject myself to public humiliation as well. A lesser man wouldn't have *gone* that far... so I'm done.

AYA: Cool.

KAYA: We're happy that you've made that decision.

(Croxley eyed them suspiciously.)

CROXLEY: Really?

AYA: Absolutely.

KAYA: But just to be clear, we, by no means, think you've made amends.

AYA: Not even close.

CROXLEY: Then why are you happy that I refused further punishment?

KAYA: We just are.

(Croxley grimaced uncomfortably.)

CROXLEY: Why do I get the feeling that my refusal is going to come back and haunt me?

AYA: Because you're wonderfully astute.

(Croxley sighed.)

CROXLEY: Fine. Find me a fat woman then.

CHIEF: That's easier said than done.

CROXLEY: But you said there were plenty.

CHIEF: There are, but finding one that might fancy *you*...

CROXLEY: Very witty!

KAYA: It's irrelevant anyway. We told you to suck off a gay!

AYA: That's non-negotiable.

CROXLEY: And it's never gonna happen!

KAYA: And is that your final answer?

CROXLEY: It's my *only* answer!

KAYA: Very well.

(She smiled at the Major.)

KAYA: Despite Croxley's obstinate refusal, we're in.

AYA: Uh-huh. We'll return to the capital with you in the morning.

(The major clenched a triumphant fist.)

MAJOR: Yes! That's excellent news.

AYA: Yes, well, don't get too excited, if our demands aren't met, we'll just bugger off again.

MAJOR: Oh, I'm sure they will be.

(He counted on his fingers.)

MAJOR: What was it? The rank of general and the salaries to match; a luxury apartment with a heated pool and a garden; a civilian staff; a clothing allowance; and the freedom to act as undercover civilians whilst hunting down enemy units.

AYA: Correct.

MAJOR: I don't foresee a problem with that.

(The major chuckled.)

MAJOR: The Major-General wants you back so badly, he'd probably offer a hell of a lot more if you asked. An annex for your parents. Horses. Knighthoods. Not cash or gold though. Lenthom needs that; there's a war on.

AYA: Fair enough.

KAYA: Uh-huh.

(She nodded.)

KAYA: As for our personal staff...

MAJOR: Yes?

KAYA: I have just the people in mind.

(She then smirked to herself knowingly. Baffled by it, Aya gave her a sideways glance.)

AYA: Who?

KAYA: Just some fans of ours.

(Aya glanced at her emptily for a moment then started to smile.)

AYA: Fans... I like having fans. I approve.

KAYA: Then it's settled.

(She nodded.)

KAYA: Aya and I will travel to the capital with you tomorrow. If everything is above board, we'll come back for our parents and personal staff.

INCA: Can't we just go *with* you?

AYA: No. If it's a trap, they might use you as bait.

INCA: Good point.

CHIEF: Excellent. Then it's decided.

(He smiled.)

CHIEF: Hurry back, girls. A new life awaits. As a family. And I, for one, can't wait.

INCA: Nor can I.

(She grimaced.)

INCA: Just bear in mind that my mother *also* lives in the capital.

(The chief could only grimace.)

CHIEF: Yes, well... I never said it was a *perfect* new life.

INCA: Right...

Three weeks later...

In the plush lounge area of a large, luxurious, manor house, Cassie, dressed in a sexy maid's uniform was polishing a candlestick with a warm smile on her face. Humming to herself as she worked, she couldn't have been happier.

CASSIE: I love this job. It's so much better than working in a bar full of uncouth mountain types.

(She exhaled.)

CASSIE: Not only is it a stress-free, piss-easy job with excellent wages, but I also get to wear *this*. This uniform is so gorgeous.

(She smirked at the identically dressed maid on the other side of the room.)

CASSIE: Don't you think?

(Her fellow maid growled at her.)

CROXLEY: No, I don't bloody think!

CASSIE: Oh? Why not? You look adorable.

(She then started to chuckle. Failing to see the funny side, Croxley snarled at her.)

CROXLEY: That amuses you, does it?

CASSIE: You *know* it does. I laugh at you every day.

CROXLEY: Yes, well... I wish you bloody wouldn't. This is humiliating enough as it is.

(Cassie shrugged.)

CASSIE: Yeah, but you only have yourself to blame.

CROXLEY: No, I have Major-General Arse Hat to blame.

(He pouted.)

CROXLEY: This is one punishment too many. And an entirely unnecessary one! I did everything that was asked of me! Everything! There was no need to punish me further.

CASSIE: Yes, there was. Because you *didn't* do everything asked of you!

CROXLEY: I... well... I didn't suck off a gay, no. I steadfastly refused, but...

CASSIE: Ah, see? That was your downfall. You fell into Aya and Kaya's trap.

CROXLEY: Trap?

CASSIE: Yeah.

(She smiled.)

CASSIE: If you hadn't figured it out by now, they asked you to do something unreasonable, that they *knew* you'd refuse to do. Therefore, when reporting to the Major-General, they could tell him they decided to come back *despite* the fact that you refused to meet their demands.

(Croxley was dumbfounded.)

CROXLEY: What?

(His jaw dropped.)

CROXLEY: So they didn't even *want* me to suck a...

CASSIE: Nope. They just wanted you to say no to one of their conditions.

(She chuckled.)

CASSIE: If you'd just agreed to do it, they'd have backed down. They don't *want* to be responsible for that kind of thing. Why? Because forcing people to perform sex acts on others is wrong. And doing so would make them no better than you!

(She furrowed her brow at him.)

CASSIE: Get it?

(Croxley's shoulder's slumped.)

CROXLEY: So... I'm doomed to a six month posting... dressed as a sexy maid... just because I... failed to spot a trap?

CASSIE: Yup.

(She giggled.)

CASSIE: Now you know why I giggle at you a lot.

CROXLEY: Right... I dislike you.

CASSIE: And I don't care.

(Just then, the patio doors opened up and Frank hobbled in, holding his back. Spotting him, Cassie grimaced.)

CASSIE: You alright?

FRANK: No, I bloody aint.

(He placed his hands on his hips and stretched his paining back.)

FRANK: This seemed liked a bloody good idea at the time. After all those years as a miller, living out the rest of my life as Aya and Kaya's personal gardener sounded peaceful.

Tranquil. Idyllic even.

(He shook his head.)

FRANK: I was wrong.

CASSIE: Is your back pain that bad?

FRANK: Back pain? No. That's mild. I can live with that.

(He winced.)

FRANK: The problem is... I'm a miller by trade. Ponytail assumed that just because I was a gaffer, used to getting my hands dirty, gardening would be the perfect role for me. It isn't! Between you and me, Cassie, I don't know the first fucking thing about gardening.

CASSIE: You mean between you, me and Croxley there.

CROXLEY: Like I was even listening!

CASSIE: Heard *that*, didn't you?

CROXLEY: Oh, shut up.

(Cassie rolled her eyes.)

CASSIE: So what are you going to do?

(A voice then rose up from the hallway door.)

CHIEF: He's going to ask for my help.

FRANK: What?

CHIEF: I love a spot of gardening, personally.

(He shrugged.)

CHIEF: In fact, I was disappointed when the girls gave *you* the job. So I'd be only too delighted to help out. Show you the ropes, perhaps.

FRANK: Really? That'd be great!

(He winced.)

FRANK: I'm pretty sure I already killed all those seedlings your wife bought, but if you can breathe life into them...

CHIEF: Killed them?

FRANK: Yeah. Within two days of planting them in the soil.

(The chief stared at him in dismay.)

CHIEF: It's winter, Frank.

FRANK: And... that's a problem, is it?

CHIEF: Yes. They were in the outhouse for a reason. You weren't supposed to transfer them outside until Spring.

(Frank sucked his teeth.)

FRANK: Shit.

CHIEF: You're really that much of a novice?

FRANK: That much and more. I'm utterly clueless, Chief.

(The chief smiled.)

CHIEF: Call me Chester.

(He then started to lead him outside.)

CHIEF: Now let's see what we can do about reviving those flowers, shall we?

FRANK: Yes, please.

(Cassie watched them head outside then started to chuckle.)

CASSIE: Good ol' Frank.

CROXLEY: Good god, woman. All you do all day is bloody giggle.

CASSIE: Well pardon me for being happy.

(She smiled.)

CASSIE: Now hurry up and get this lot clean, the ladies of the house are due back from their hunt today.

CROXLEY: Yeah, right. Like you can put an exact date on a random patrol.

(Just then, the main doors opened up and Aya and Kaya strolled in.)

CASSIE: What was that, Croxley?

CROXLEY: Oh, shut up.

(Cassie waved him away then smiled at Aya and Kaya.)

CASSIE: Welcome home, Lady Aya, Lady Kaya.

(Aya and Kaya went to reply but caught sight of Croxley and burst out laughing instead.)

CROXLEY: Great.

AYA: Priceless. That's never gonna stop being funny.

KAYA: Right? We should buy the Major-General a thank you card.

AYA: Oh, definitely. As punishments go, that's hilarious.

KAYA: And yet fitting.

AYA: And so wonderfully cruel.

KAYA: Genius.

CROXLEY: Oh, whatever. Laugh it up. Enjoy it while you can! Sooner or later, I will work my way back up to commander and when I do...

AYA: You'll *still* be beneath us.

KAYA: If you become a general *and* get a peerage, like we have, then we can talk. Right, Lady Aya?

AYA: Absolutely, Lady Kaya.

KAYA: Until then, get on with your job.

AYA: And try not to ladder your stockings.

(As Aya, Kaya and Cassie stood there laughing, Croxley glanced down at his dress and stockings and sighed in dismay.)

CROXLEY: I hate my life; I really do.

(Ignoring him, Aya smiled at Cassie.)

AYA: Is the cleaning almost done?

CASSIE: There's about ten minutes worth left.

AYA: Croxley can finish up then. You can have the rest of the day off.

CASSIE: Awesome!

CROXLEY: Mean!

CASSIE: I'll retire for my room for a bit then.

CROXLEY: So unfair. I don't even *get* a room. I have to *walk* here everyday. Dressed like this. Stupid Major-General and his stupid orders.

(Cassie rolled her eyes then smiled to Aya and Kaya.)

CASSIE: Anyway... I'll see you this afternoon, perhaps. Your mum wants everyone to have afternoon tea together.

AYA: It's a date.

CASSIE: Awesome. I won't be getting changed though, this outfit completes me.

(She then headed for the stairs, humming merrily. Having watched her go, Kaya smiled then glanced at Croxley.)

KAYA: Put your back into it, Miss Croxley.

CROXLEY: Miss???

(Aya and Kaya just giggled then headed into the kitchen.)

AYA: Ooh, something smells nice.

(Preparing a joint of lamb at the table, the cook smiled back at them.)

ELEANOR: Ah! Welcome home, your ladyships.

KAYA: Aya and Kaya.

AYA: Friends don't use formal terms.

ELEANOR: Right. You keep telling me that, it's just...

(She blushed.)

ELEANOR: I got so excited when you received your peerages. Almost as excited as I got when you asked me to be your cook.

AYA: Yeah...

(She glowered at Kaya.)

AYA: And it was a bloody good thing she *could* cook, seeing as you didn't even ask her.

KAYA: She's a mum!

AYA: So?

KAYA: Mum's can cook!

ELEANOR: Mine couldn't.

(She winced.)

ELEANOR: I grew up on burnt offerings.

KAYA: And I'm betting that's *why* you learned to cook.

ELEANOR: As soon as I was old enough to hold a ladle.

(The three of them giggled then Eleanor offered them an uncomfortable smile.)

ELEANOR: How was the mission?

AYA: Two days of nothing then two days of brutality and violence.

KAYA: Three units tried sneaking into the country via the River Cruikshank.

AYA: It was slow and arduous task. But they all made it across eventually.

KAYA: To find their unit-mates dead in the woods on the other side.

AYA: Some Ponytailed blurs killed them, apparently.

KAYA: Shocking.

AYA: Yeah, I was devastated.

ELEANOR: Hmm... I wonder who that could have been.

KAYA: We may never find out.

(They shared a chuckle then Aya smiled.)

AYA: So, how are the little ones?

ELEANOR: Adorable.

AYA: As adorable as Croxley in his maid's outfit?

ELEANOR: Nobody's *that* adorable.

AYA: Good point.

(Just then, Inca stepped into the room and hurried to hug her daughters.)

INCA: You're back!

AYA: What???

KAYA: We are???

INCA: Don't start that, you little buggers.

(They shared a grin then Inca stepped up to the window.)

INCA: You know...

(She grimaced.)

INCA: What's your dad doing?

KAYA: What?

INCA: He's... gardening.

ELEANOR: Where's Frank then?

INCA: He's with him.

(She grimaced.)

INCA: Does your dad *like* gardening then?

AYA: Dunno.

KAYA: No idea.

ELEANOR: Yeah, the chief was *always* a keen gardener.

INCA: I had no idea.

(She shook her head to clear her thoughts.)

INCA: Anyway, girls, I don't know if anyone told you, but I plan on having afternoon tea with everyone today.

AYA: Everyone in the world?

INCA: In the household!

(She rolled her eyes.)

INCA: Fucking... never have kids.

(She sighed then resumed making her point.)

INCA: I want to make sure everyone's happy, you know? Not Croxley. I hope he's anything but. I mean, the rest of us. Moving from Birdstone to this big old city was a big deal for everyone and I just want to make sure everyone's settled.

KAYA: I think I can already answer that, mum.

INCA: Oh?

KAYA: Cassie is as happy as a clam. She hums all day, every day.

ELEANOR: She does, yes.

KAYA: And Aya and I are loving life. Killing invaders is fun and our home life, well... it's complete.

AYA: Yeah. Being together as a family is wonderful.

INCA: Okay. How about you, Eleanor?

ELEANOR: Inca, love, I wouldn't trade this life for anything in the world. I love cooking, and I earn a good wage doing it. The servant accommodation is lovely and I get to live in the same house as Ponytail and Twintail! How awesome is that? *And* my girls are really happy at their new school. But best of all, we're far less likely to get attacked here.

INCA: Oh. Well, that's great.

(She glanced out of the window again.)

INCA: Now we just need to find out how the men are faring.

AYA: Do we *care* what men think?

(Kaya giggled.)

KAYA: Aya, you're terrible.

AYA: I was just saying.

(Inca chuckled then smiled out the window. Frank and the chief were laughing together with their faces illuminated by their mirth. Fighting back his laughter the chief then looked to Inca and offered her a loving smile. Absorbing it, Inca exhaled.)

INCA: It's fine. Tea is still on, but I don't need to ask any questions anymore. Everything's perfect.

AYA: No, mum. Everything is *okay*. I'll even accept that everything is *better*. But everything isn't *perfect*. It's not even *good*. It won't be *that* until Nawsland surrender.

KAYA: And there's a fair chance that won't happen until most of their army have been slain.

AYA: So Kaya and I will have our work cut out for quite some time.

(The sisters then shared a knowing smirk. It would have been considered unseemly to say it out loud, but thousands more Nawsland soldiers needed to die before the war could end and they were very much looking forward to doing the killing.)

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