

Futile Fantasy Creations Present...

SHE SEEKS SANCTUARY

The All Too Brief Career of Officer Kyrie Severen

CHAPTER ONE – WHO KILLED THE DEAD BLOKE?

Township of Tifaeris; East Hillside Area.

(With determination etched on his brow, Sir Flaxley, the president of Tifaeris, raced along a moonlit cobbled street then darted in between two wooden homesteads. In a hurry to get where he was going, he wasn't about to let any obstacle slow him down. As such, he hurdled a dog kennel then charged into a side street. Before him, a group of the town's guards were standing in a circle holding lit torches in the air. Spying them, Flaxley nodded to himself then raced in amongst them.)

FLAXLEY: Okay, chaps, what have we got?

(The leader of the guards, a pretty thirty year old female, looked to him with a furrowed brow.)

PHISELE: About time, Sir Flaxley.

(Flaxley grimaced.)

FLAXLEY: Yes, sorry about that. I came as quickly as I could.

PHISELE: Did you though? Someone went to get you half an hour ago!

FLAXLEY: I was making love to my wife!

(He then scratched behind his head uneasily.)

FLAXLEY: Like, I said, I came as quickly as I could! Then I got dressed and came here.

(He furrowed his brow.)

FLAXLEY: Never mind that. What have we got?

PHISELE: Looks like a murder. Private Galton found a body while on his patrol tonight.

FLAXLEY: Murder? Are you sure?

PHISELE: Pretty sure, yes. Unless he stabbed himself sixteen times, chopped off his head then dumped his own body in that ditch over there, I think it's safe to say it's a murder.

(Flaxley sneered.)

FLAXLEY: There's no need for sarcasm, Phisele.

PHISELE: That wasn't sarcasm. That new guard you appointed was convinced that was exactly what happened. "Looks like a suicide", she said.

(She gave an exasperated sigh.)

PHISELE: I gave her the night off. Honestly, Flaxley, I don't know what you expect me to do with some of the halfwits you send me.

FLAXLEY: Which halfwit was it?

PHISELE: That girl who washed up on the coast with her sister last month. Kyrie Severen.

FLAXLEY: I see.

PHISELE: You see, do you? Seriously, Flaxley; you need to stop sending my unit so many idiots to babysit.

(Flaxley gave her a condescending glance.)

FLAXLEY: I had the misfortune to work with Sir Lefiat of Guevina on several deadly missions. Trust me, you don't know the *meaning* of babysitting an idiot! That bloke redefined the word stupid, but I did complain?

(He nodded sternly.)

FLAXLEY: Yes, I bloody did! Rigorously and often!

(He then bit his lip.)

FLAXLEY: Right. I see your point. I'll try to send you better people in future.

PHISELE: Thank you.

FLAXLEY: It's just that crime is rare in this town and employing competent folk for guard duty feels like a waste of resources.

PHISELE: Yes, well, it isn't.

FLAXLEY: Fine. Look, just put up with Kerry for now...

PHISELE: Kyrie.

FLAXLEY: Her too. Put up with her for now, if you can; she really needs the job.

PHISELE: Why do you think I haven't fired her yet? She needs the money to support herself and her sister. And her home at the barracks comes free with the job. She'll be homeless if I fire her.

FLAXLEY: Exactly. So you understand?

PHISELE: I do. I'll try my hardest to tolerate her, Flaxley, but I make no promises. She's really, really thick! I may have no choice but to let her go if she screws up again. She's already on her last chance.

FLAXLEY: I see. Well, thanks for trying with her. It's appreciated.

PHISELE: I always *try*, Flaxley. Now can *you* try to make sure the next person you send me can at least spell their own name?

FLAXLEY: Fair enough.

PHISELE: Thank you.

FLAXLEY: Now. Tell me about this murder.

(Phisele nodded then called to where her subordinate was standing over the body.)

PHISELE: Galton!

(Her subordinate shouted back.)

GALTON: Ma'am?

PHISELE: Tell Sir Flaxley about the murder victim.

GALTON: He's dead!

(Phisele gave Flaxley a belittling glance.)

PHISELE: See what I have to work with? And he's one of the brighter ones!

(She then looked to Galton.)

PHISELE: Galton. Tell him what we know so far!

GALTON: It looks like a murder! Judging by the knife wounds, I'd say he was stabbed several times. Probably with some kind of stabbing weapon. Oh, and someone cut his head off; that probably didn't help his cause.

FLAXLEY: I'll take a look for myself.

PHISELE: I reckon that'd be for the best.

(With that, Sir Flaxley and Phisele paced over to Galton's side and stared down at the headless corpse.)

PHISELE: Lower the torch so we can see, Galton.

GALTON: Ma'am.

(Galton then obliged. At once, Flaxley knelt to take a closer look at the corpse.)

FLAXLEY: I don't see any visible defensive wounds.

PHISELE: Not much blood either, considering.

FLAXLEY: Indeed.

PHISELE: The head was found a good fifty feet down the street. Not much blood there either.

FLAXLEY: I see. Death by stabbing then, I reckon. The dead don't bleed out like the living do, and there's not much blood here at all; meaning he was probably already dead when he was decapitated.

PHISELE: I concur.

GALTON: What does that mean?

PHISELE: It means I agree.

GALTON: No, I mean, when you say decapitated...

FLAXLEY: It means beheaded.

GALTON: Oh. Okay.

(Flaxley nodded.)

FLAXLEY: Anyway, we need to find out *why* he was killed and by whom. And the first step in doing that is to find out who he was.

(He glanced to Phisele.)

FLAXLEY: Any ideas?

PHISELE: Not a one. *You* might have some idea though, Sir Flaxley. Take a look at the head and see if you recognise him.

FLAXLEY: Good idea. Where is it?

PHISELE: Right here.

(Much to his surprise, Phisele then produced the head from her bag.)

PHISELE: There you go.

FLAXLEY: I can't see it very well in this light. Bring that torch closer, Galton.

GALTON: Sir!

(With that, Galton thrust the torch towards the decapitated head and accidentally set fire to its hair.)

GALTON: Fuck!

PHISELE: Idiot!!!

(At once, Flaxley calmly rolled the head on the floor to kill the flames then stood up again.)

FLAXLEY: Pillock!

GALTON: Sorry, sir.

(With a roll of the eyes, Flaxley then scrutinised the head closer.)

FLAXLEY: I don't recognise the face. Looks about forty. Dark, straggly hair. Stupid moustache. Eyebrow's melded into one. Wonky mouth. No teeth.

(He grimaced.)

FLAXLEY: I'm starting to think whoever killed him did him a favour.

(Phisele chuckled.)

PHISELE: That crossed my mind too.

(Flaxley then handed back the head and stood tall.)

FLAXLEY: Get that arty chap to sketch the face then post the drawing on the town's news board in the morning.

PHISELE: Will do.

(Flaxley nodded.)

FLAXLEY: So, any sign of the murder weapon?

PHISELE: Not one, annoyingly.

FLAXLEY: I won't act surprised; there never is.

PHISELE: Right?

(She then nodded to Flaxley respectfully.)

PHISELE: I think that about covers it, Sir. We've gleaned all the evidence we're getting; we just need to tidy up now.

FLAXLEY: Fair enough. Then I'll leave it in your capable hands, Phisele. Just don't let Galton here set fire to anything.

GALTON: I really am sorry about that, Sir.

FLAXLEY: Good.

(He smiled.)

FLAXLEY: Give me an update tomorrow at the house. I know Kritz will be delighted to see you.

PHISELE: Will do.

(With that, Flaxley stooped to kiss her head then proceeded to head away.)

FLAXLEY: See you tomorrow.

PHISELE: Bye, Sir Flaxley.

(She smiled then looked to Galton and her face dropped.)

PHISELE: What are you grinning about?

GALTON: He kissed you. Are you two... you know?

PHISELE: Twat! He's old enough to be my dad! In fact, he virtually raised me, you cock. He's a close personal friend.

GALTON: Right. I feel stupid now.

PHISELE: You feeling stupid is like a haddock feeling fish-like.

GALTON: What do you mean?

(Phisele just stared through him.)

PHISELE: Just... go and help them take the body to the morgue.

GALTON: Ma'am.

(He then started to head away leaving Phisele shaking her head.)

PHISELE: Where does Flaxley find these idiots?

Tifaeris Barracks. Room 23. Residence of Kyrie and Cayley Severen.

(Early the following morning, inside Tifaeris's guard barracks, the twelve year old, child-genius, Cayley was sitting on her bed, putting her hair into a ponytail. Her face was the picture of misery. Sighing repeatedly, she couldn't have looked less enthusiastic about the forthcoming school day if she'd tried. As she sat there wallowing, however, the door burst open and her eighteen year old sister, Kyrie, strutted into the room. Having been freshening up in the communal washroom, she was dressed and ready to face the day ahead. Unlike her little sister, she was the picture of excitement.)

KYRIE: Morning, sister face.

(Cayley furrowed her brow.)

CAYLEY: I know it is.

KYRIE: Hey, don't pout! It's gonna be an awesome day.

(She looked to the wall mirror at the foot of her bed and beamed.)

KYRIE: Wow. I'm so gorgeous it ought to be illegal.

(A baffled look then crossed her brow.)

KYRIE: I'm glad it's not; I'm an officer of the law. If it was, I'd have to arrest myself. I'd have to cuff myself and frogmarch me to the guard station. Is that even possible?

(Well aware that her none-to-intelligent sister may well attempt it just to find out, Cayley quickly spoke up.)

CAYLEY: No. It's not!

(Kyrie nodded, conceding to Cayley's opinion.)

KYRIE: Yeah, you're right. It'd never work. I'd be the arresting officer *and* the criminal. That could get confusing. I might accidentally throw the wrong me in jail!

(Cayley just stared through her.)

CAYLEY: Right.

(She then rolled her eyes and continued putting her hair up. Watching her, Kyrie smiled.)

KYRIE: Look at you sitting there, all cute and everything. With that little uniform on. Sitting up straight with your legs crossed. You look like a real girl.

CAYLEY: I *am* a real girl.

KYRIE: I mean an older one.

CAYLEY: A woman.

KYRIE: Yup. My little sister face is growing up fast.

CAYLEY: Yeah, right.

(She then sighed sorrowfully.)

CAYLEY: I wish I *was* an adult, then I wouldn't have to go school.

KYRIE: You love school.

CAYLEY: Not anymore. I hate it and I don't want to go. Why did I agree to sign up for two long years?

KYRIE: I don't know, but you can't quit now. That nice Flaxley bloke paid your fees.

(She beamed.)

KYRIE: He's been so good to us. We were complete strangers when we got washed up on the coast here. He didn't owe us anything. And yet he gave *me* a job with accommodation for us both to live in and covered the fees for *your* schooling. What a great guy. I should have sex with him!

CAYLEY: Kyrie!!!

KYRIE: What? I *like* sex. Get over it.

(Cayley shook her head disdainfully. Her sister's unquenchable thirst for sex was very much an embarrassment to her.)

CAYLEY: We need to find you a new hobby.

KYRIE: No, thanks. I'll stick to what I'm good at. Martial arts, shagging and being gorgeous.

(Cayley sighed.)

CAYLEY: Classy!

KYRIE: Don't judge me, pipsqueak. I don't mock *your* hobbies, even if I *do* find reading and playing musical instruments really, really silly. You'll never hear me mocking you.

CAYLEY: You mock me all the time!

KYRIE: No, I don't. I only mock you when you do something geeky. Or when you start with that nonsense about Sir Flaxley secretly being our dad, even though we were born hundreds of miles away in a place he's never even been to.

(Cayley just pouted then stared at her feet.)

CAYLEY: Shut up. Stupid sister.

KYRIE: Hey, cheer up, misery guts.

(She exhaled.)

KYRIE: Today's gonna be a good day, Cayley. Things are really looking up for us, you know?

CAYLEY: They are?

KYRIE: Yup. I got rewarded for my brilliance at a crime scene last night. Phisele was so impressed with my detective work, she let me have the evening off and promoted me to Special Agent!

CAYLEY: Special Agent?

KYRIE: Yup. Special Agent Kyrie Severen, at your service.

CAYLEY: Are you sure about that? Maybe you misheard!

KYRIE: No, I didn't. As soon as I saw the headless body, peppered with umpteen knife wounds, I knew it was a suicide. Call it instinct if you like.

(Cayley just stared through her.)

CAYLEY: Suicide?

KYRIE: Uh-huh! Remember how you told me about people staging a murder, then trying to make it *look* like a suicide?

CAYLEY: Um...

KYRIE: Well obviously, the same thing works in reverse. It looked so much like a murder, it could only logically have been a suicide staged to *look like* a brutal murder.

(She nodded sternly then pointed to her cranium.)

KYRIE: I know you think I'm not very smart, sister face, but you have to admit, I know my stuff when it comes to killings.

CAYLEY: So... wait, what? You got promoted to Special Agent, because of *that*?

KYRIE: It was a reward for my keen insight.

CAYLEY: Right...

KYRIE: The victim had brown shoes on. And a terrible, terrible moustache. And don't even get me started on his suit! Clearly he'd given up on himself. Lost all his dignity and self-respect.

(She then smiled.)

KYRIE: It was so obviously a suicide. I tell you; this police lark is easy.

(Cayley sighed.)

CAYLEY: Oh, Kyrie. I was worried enough when I woke up; why did you have to tell me that?

KYRIE: What do you mean?

(Cayley shook her head. As she did so, Kyrie turned and looked to the mirror again.)

KYRIE: How sexy am I?

CAYLEY: Never mind vanity, Kyrie.

(She hung her head.)

CAYLEY: We can't afford for you to be fired right now. If you get kicked out, we'll lose this place. We'll have nowhere to live and no income. It'd be a disaster.

(She pouted.)

CAYLEY: This is the last thing I need. Like I didn't have enough to worry about.

(A tear ran down her cheek.)

CAYLEY: I didn't tell you this before because I was embarrassed. School is a disaster, Kyrie. Most the other kids pick on me constantly. I get bullied pretty much non-stop. I don't want to go there anymore.

(She then glanced at Kyrie and saw her still adoring herself in the mirror.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie, did you hear what I said?

KYRIE: Sure. Something about maths, knowing you.

CAYLEY: Maths???

KYRIE: Yeah, you like maths. And all that *other* boring, geeky stuff.

(She smiled.)

KYRIE: But you're also improving on the physical side of things; that's awesome to see. The way you come sprinting out of school every day with those wide-eyes, terrified that the other kids are going to beat you in the race to the gate... it moves my heart.

CAYLEY: Racing? They're chasing me!

KYRIE: Of course they are; you're in the lead!

(She exhaled.)

KYRIE: You never used to show any interest in running whatsoever, but now look at you! You make me proud, sister face; you really do.

(Moved to hear her kind words, Cayley couldn't help but smile.)

CAYLEY: Thanks, Kyrie.

KYRIE: Now come on, let's get going. Would you mind walking yourself to school? I want to get to work early.

CAYLEY: Yes, I *would* mind. I'd mind a lot. Walk me to the school door like always!

KYRIE: Fine. If you insist.

CAYLEY: I do! I really, really do. And make sure you're at the gate when I come out; like always.

KYRIE: Of course. Like I'd miss you racing your friends.

(She then offered her a loving smile. Cayley could only sigh and force one in return.)

Tifaeris Guard Station. Main offices.

(At the guard station's main offices a short while later, Phisele was at her desk writing up some notes about the incident the night before. While she did so, the two subordinates on duty, Galton and Kyrie waited in the reception room outside. Galton was singing inside. Kyrie's lack of intellect had blessed him with a joyous morning. Feigning sincerity, he sighed sympathetically then smiled into her eyes.)

GALTON: Nope. You definitely wobbled. You did!

KYRIE: Rubbish. I was as true as an arrow.

GALTON: No, you wobbled. You were *reasonably* still, but you definitely wobbled.

KYRIE: Rubbish. Standing on my head is my specialty; I've won gymnastics awards for doing it. It's easy.

GALTON: Maybe you've lost the knack or something; there was definitely a wobble.

KYRIE: No there wasn't. I was perfectly still. I always am. Standing on my head is a breeze; I could do it while standing on my head!

GALTON: Fine, do it again then.

KYRIE: Fine. Watch closely this time.

(With that, Kyrie bent on all fours then proceeded to do a headstand. As she did so, her skirt flopped downwards, revealing her lack of underwear to Galton in all its glory.)

KYRIE: See! Not even a wobble.

GALTON: Impressive! See how long you can do it for.

KYRIE: Fine. I will.

(Just then, Phisele stepped out of her office. Upon sighting Galton staring gleefully at Kyrie's exposed genitalia, she threw her arms up in dismay.)

PHISELE: For heaven's sake, Severen, put yourself away!

KYRIE: What?

PHISELE: Your beaver's showing!

(At once, Kyrie proceeded to right herself.)

PHISELE: Have you no shame, Galton?

GALTON: Right... yes. Sorry, ma'am.

(Once Kyrie was the right way up, Phisele stood tall and nodded to them.)

PHISELE: Okay, priority number one today is to find out who the murdered man was. The sketch of his face will be going up on the town bulletin board soon, so I expect we'll get an answer at some point. We're not going to wait around though. This morning I want you two to go back to where we found the body and hunt for the murder weapon. It was dark last night, and we never found it.

(Suddenly, the door crept open and a townswoman entered the room. At once, Phisele offered her a smile.)

PHISELE: Good morning. What can we do for you?

(The woman sighed.)

ETHEL: My husband didn't come home last night, and I'm worried.

(Kyrie gasped.)

KYRIE: I bet he was the dead bloke we found!

(The woman looked most alarmed.)

ETHEL: What???

PHISELE: Severen!!!

KYRIE: What?

PHISELE: Not another word!

(The woman trembled.)

ETHEL: You found a dead body? Should I be worried?

(Phisele offered her a consoling smile.)

PHISELE: It might be nothing, ma'am.

ETHEL: But it might be something, right?

PHISELE: It's too soon to tell.

(She placed a friendly hand on the woman's shoulder.)

PHISELE: What's your name, love?

ETHEL: Ethel. Ethel Baker.

PHISELE: And your husband?

ETHEL: His name's Victor.

PHISELE: And can you describe him?

ETHEL: Um... well, he's about average height... he's got a hideous moustache... and he badly needs a haircut.

(She whimpered.)

ETHEL: Is that like the body you found?

PHISELE: It really is too soon to answer that!

(Ethel whimpered.)

ETHEL: Let it be someone else. Not my Victor.

PHISELE: Ethel, did you husband have any distinguishing marks or features?

ETHEL: Such us?

KYRIE: Sixteen massive holes in his chest; only if he did, he's definitely our guy!

(Phisele was furious.)

PHISELE: Get in my office, Severen! Stay there until we've finished.

(Kyrie sighed.)

KYRIE: Ma'am.

(As Kyrie trudged away, Phisele looked to Ethel and smiled kindly.)

PHISELE: Tell me, Mrs Baker. Can you think of anyone who might have wanted to hurt your husband?

ETHEL: No. Well...

(She then looked enlightened and gasped.)

ETHEL: We went to the inn last night. His brother, Stan, was there. When I left, they were arguing about their shoemaking business. It was getting heated. That's why I left early.

About nine o'clock, I think it was. You don't think... his own brother?

(Phisele bit her lip.)

PHISELE: We don't make assumptions, Ethel, but we would like to talk to him. Where can we find him?

ETHEL: At Baker's Cobblers on the main street. Next to Cobblers bakery.

PHISELE: Okay. Thank you very much, Mrs Baker. We'll look into it. If we find anything out, we'll let you know. But if you husband comes home, could you inform us right away? Just so we know to stop looking.

ETHEL: Of course.

(With that, Ethel sighed then headed out of the door. As soon as it was shut, Phisele glanced to her office.)

PHISELE: Severen, get your arse out here.

(Kyrie swiftly emerged from the office.)

PHISELE: Jennifer's in the back room, tell her to come out here and cover the reception. Us three are going out. This murder may just have solved itself.

GALTON: We're liking the victim's brother for the crime, are we?

PHISELE: Put it this way, Victor Baker matches the description of the deceased and Stan Baker was seen arguing with him last night about an hour before we found the body. It's looking promising.

(Kyrie shook her head.)

KYRIE: I still think it was a suicide made to look like a murder.

(Phisele's nostrils twitched.)

PHISELE: Severen... maybe you should think about a career in a different field.

KYRIE: In a field? What? Like a farmer? I couldn't do that. I *hate* the smell of cow poo.

PHISELE: That's not what I meant.

(She then hung her head in defeat and mumbled to herself.)

PHISELE: Why did I tell Flaxley I wouldn't fire you yet?

The Tifaeris High School Library.

(Over at the town's school at this time, Cayley was sidling along an aisle in the library, searching for a book. As she did so, the kindly school librarian, peered around the side of the aisle and smiled at her.)

LIBRARIAN: Hello, young Cayley. How's my favourite student?

(Cayley smiled at her anxiously.)

CAYLEY: Worried.

LIBRARIAN: Oh?

CAYLEY: I think my sister's in trouble. I just need to confirm it but I can't find the right book.

LIBRARIAN: I see. Well, tell me about it, maybe I can point you in the right direction.

(Cayley hung her head.)

CAYLEY: I think she's about to be fired from her job. She's an idiot, you see? She doesn't mean to make mistakes, she's just really, really clueless about pretty much everything.

LIBRARIAN: I know, love. I met her once.

CAYLEY: Thing is, she's a guard. A police officer. And she thinks she's been promoted to Special Agent. I need to know if she misheard. And if she didn't, I want to know what being a Special Agent really means.

(The librarian sucked her teeth.)

LIBRARIAN: I can help with that. My dim-witted brother was in the guard unit.

(She shook her head.)

LIBRARIAN: They made *him* a Special Agent too.

CAYLEY: But what does it mean?

LIBRARIAN: It means your sister's being put under special scrutiny. With a view to letting her go as soon as she puts a foot wrong.

(Cayley hung her head.)

CAYLEY: I figured as much.

LIBRARIAN: Sorry, love. Once a guard gets Special Agent status, it's only a matter of time. Her next mistake will probably be her last. They'll be looking for any excuse to sack her.

(Cayley sighed.)

CAYLEY: Permission to swear?

LIBRARIAN: Denied.

(She then rubbed Cayley's shoulder reassuringly.)

LIBRARIAN: Don't worry, love. You're a smart girl; you'll figure something out.
 (With that, the librarian headed away, leaving Cayley sighing to herself in the aisle. Wishing there was something she could do to help her sister keep her job, she then leant back against a shelf and started to wrack her brains.)

CAYLEY: Think, Cayley, you idiot. If you don't do something, Kyrie's gonna end up back on the game.
 (She grimaced.)

CAYLEY: That won't put food on the table. She enjoys it so much, she forgets to charge half the time.
 (For a good sixty seconds, she stood there pondering her options, when suddenly, a male voice rose up from the end of the aisle.)

BAZ: Look who I've find, lads! We've finally got her on her own!
 (At once Cayley stared at the end of the aisle in horror. Baz was the toughest kid in school and he'd had it in for her since the first day she'd arrived. Backed up by four of his hangers-on, he smirked at her and started to pound his fist. At once, Cayley's heart sunk. She'd performed wonders in avoiding him up until now, but it seemed her luck had finally run out. The sound thrashing he'd promised her seemed imminent.)

BAZ: So, Cayley, what would you like me to break first? Your fingers or your nose?
 (Cayley whimpered.)

CAYLEY: Neither!

BAZ: That wasn't one of the options.
 (He then smiled warmly.)

BAZ: It's not an easy choice to make though, I guess. I tell you what, I'll decide for you.
 (A devilish look then crossed his brow.)

BAZ: I told you running away was only going to make it worse for you when I finally cornered you, didn't I?

CAYLEY: Leave me alone.

BAZ: Leave you alone? You'll be lucky if I leave you alive!
 (He then started to stomp towards her. As he did so, however, Cayley glanced over his head and her face lit up.)

CAYLEY: Stop him, Sir!!!
 (At once, Baz and his group of friends all spun around to see who Cayley was talking to. Fearing they were in deep trouble with a teacher, they immediately adopted innocent grins. Much to their bewilderment, however, there was nobody there. They then glanced about themselves in astonishment for several moments, before swiftly glowered back at Cayley. Much to their dismay, however, she was nowhere to be seen.)

BAZ: Where the fuck did she go?

DALE: She vanished!

ZACH: How the fuck did she do that?
 (Baz snarled.)

BAZ: She must have crawled through our legs on her hands and knees, the cheeky bitch!

DALE: Let's get after her!
 (With that, that all raced to the exit then charged away, vowing to find her as soon as possible. Delighted to see them go, Cayley then crawled out from the bottom of the book shelf, apologising to the books she'd crushed when she'd squeezed herself in there. Mightily relieved to have avoided a pounding she then stood up and swept the dust from her skirt.)

CAYLEY: I hate school!

(In Tifaeris's quiet town centre a short while later, the door to Baker's Cobblers crashed open and Stan Baker was lead out in handcuffs, protesting his innocence. Manhandled forth by Galton and Kyrie, he wasn't about to go quietly. Caring very little for his protestations, however, Phisele calmly followed on, reading him his rights.)

PHISELE: You have the right to remain silent...

STAN: I didn't do anything!!!

PHISELE: Should you invoke that right, however, you will be presumed guilty and sentenced immediately.

STAN: For what???

PHISELE: I already told you. Murder!

STAN: Murder??? Who did I kill?

PHISELE: Victor Baker! Like you didn't know.

KYRIE: Yeah, you were there when you did it. You probably saw the entire thing!

STAN: Wait! What? Victor's dead??? And this is how you tell me???

GALTON: Of course he's dead. You didn't think he *survived* the beheading did you?

STAN: He was beheaded? Who'd behead my brother?

PHISELE: *You* would!

STAN: I wouldn't! I admit we don't get along, but I wouldn't kill him!!!

(Just then, his eyes lit up and he yelled to a gentleman who was heading along the cobbles towards them.)

STAN: Victor!!!

(He twisted his head to look at Phisele as he was ushered forth.)

STAN: He's there! That fella! That's my brother. He's not even dead!

KYRIE: That doesn't mean you didn't kill him!

PHISELE: Kyrie! Stop talking!

STAN: Victor!!! Come here.

(Looking somewhat miffed, the gentleman in question paced up to them and sneered.)

VICTOR: So, your criminal past finally caught up to you, did it?

STAN: No! They're arresting me for your murder!

VICTOR: *My* murder?

(Phisele eyed Victor suspiciously.)

PHISELE: You know this man?

STAN: Tell them, Victor!!!

VICTOR: Fine. Yes, I know this man.

(He then sneered coldly.)

VICTOR: He murdered me! In cold blood, no less. Brutal it was!

KYRIE: That's good enough for me. Looks like we've got him bang to rights.

STAN: What???

PHISELE: Stop talking, Severen!!!

STAN: How can you stand there and say I murdered you?

VICTOR: You did!

PHISELE: Obviously not! You're not even dead!

(Victor grimaced for a moment then swiftly raised a finger to clarify his point.)

VICTOR: Yes, I am! I'm a ghost. I've come back to get justice. My brother slaughtered me good and proper, he did.

(Phisele just stared through him coldly.)

PHISELE: You know lying to law enforcement officers is a crime, right?

(Victor could only sigh in defeat.)

VICTOR: Yeah, fine. He didn't kill me. I'm not really a ghost. That doesn't mean he didn't kill someone else though! You should arrest him just in case.

PHISELE: I've got a better idea. I'll take you brother's cuffs off and you can two can bugger off. If you decide to settle this with fisticuffs, so be it. Just do it indoors. If you disturb the peace, I'll sling you both in the lock-up.

(She then removed Stan's cuffs and the two men squared up.)

STAN: I can't believe you'd have let me go to jail.

VICTOR: I can't believe you murdered me!

STAN: I didn't! Though, if you keep on, I might.

VICTOR: Did you hear that, guards? He threatened to kill me!

(Phisele just glowered at them.)

PHISELE: Go home!!!

(Just then, Ethel came running up to them excitedly.)

ETHEL: You're alive!!!

(She then threw her arms around Victor's neck. Moments later, however, she stepped back and snarled.)

ETHEL: I smell perfume! You were with that whore all night again!!!

VICTOR: Not guilty!!!

ETHEL: I'm gonna kill you!!!

(She then smiled pleasantly in Phisele's direction.)

ETHEL: Not literally, officer.

(With that, she proceeded to chase him down the street, battering him with her bag. Watch them go, Stan grinned.)

STAN: Justice!

(With that, he headed off back to his place of work. Left behind, Phisele shook her head.)

PHISELE: There goes our only lead. I really thought he was our guy.

GALTON: What now, boss?

PHISELE: Back to square one. No leads.

(She nodded.)

PHISELE: Until we get an identity from that sketch, you two will just have to do it the old-fashioned way.

(Kyrie looked most bewildered.)

KYRIE: What like... the missionary position?

PHISELE: Get your head out of the gutter, Severen. Galton, explain it to her.

(Galton was consummately stumped.)

GALTON: Um... explain what?

PHISELE: Old fashioned investigating!

GALTON: Right.

(He then cringed.)

GALTON: I have no idea what you mean!

PHISELE: For fuck sake!

(She took an exasperated breath.)

PHISELE: We need to find out who's missing. Go knocking on doors! See who didn't come home last night. Find out who's unaccounted for.

GALTON: Good idea. That's clever actually. If nobody answer's the door, it probably means they're dead. Then we'll know who the victim was!

PHISELE: No. It'll probably mean there's nobody home.

GALTON: Because they're at the morgue; dead!

PHISELE: Or at work; at the pub; out for a stroll; on the toilet; it could mean anything.

GALTON: Good point. I didn't think of that.

PHISELE: You're an idiot. Just knock on the door and if there's no answer, go on to the next house. Go on, get cracking.

(Kyrie grimaced.)

KYRIE: Wait! You want us to knock on *every* door in Tifaeris? There's millions of them! Some houses have three or four doors! Dozens if you count interior ones.

PHISELE: One door per house, you tit. The *front* door!

(Galton grimaced.)

GALTON: Even so. That's like, over a thousand doors.

PHISELE: Yes, I know.

GALTON: Are you trying to get rid of us, ma'am?

PHISELE: Absolutely.

(Just then, a worried townswoman came racing up to them from the main square. Deeply troubled, she could barely speak through her fears.)

CELIA: Phisele!

PHISELE: Hello, Celia.

CELIA: My husband's face has been posted on the town bulletin board. It says to contact you immediately.

KYRIE: A-ha! Your husband must be the dead bloke!

CELIA: What???

PHISELE: Kyrie!!!

KYRIE: What?

(Phisele snarled.)

PHISELE: Show some decorum!

KYRIE: Oh, okay.

(With that, she loosened her top to reveal more cleavage.)

KYRIE: How's that?

(Phisele gave her a dismayed glance then looked to where Celia was crying.)

PHISELE: I'm sorry, Celia. We found your husband's body last night.

(She then glowered at Kyrie.)

PHISELE: No details!!!

CELIA: But who would kill my Raymond? Who? Are you sure it was him?

PHISELE: That sketch was drawn by an expert artist, Celia; if it matches your husband, I'm afraid so.

CELIA: I don't understand. Who'd kill him?

PHISELE: That's what we aim to find out.

(She sighed then gave Celia a sympathetic smile.)

PHISELE: When did you first notice your husband was missing?

CELIA: Last night. He went to the inn and never came back.

PHISELE: Did he have any gripes with anyone? Any enemies?

CELIA: No. He worked at the brewery. Everyone loved him.

(She whimpered.)

CELIA: I don't understand.

PHISELE: One more question, Celia, then we'll take you back to the morgue to collect his body.

(Celia whimpered.)

CELIA: Okay.

PHISELE: Can you think of anywhere your husband might have gone after leaving the pub? We're trying to ascertain his movements, you see.

CELIA: He wouldn't have gone anywhere. He never deviated; he always came straight home.

PHISELE: By which route?

CELIA: Ulrich Road. You just turn right when you leave the inn, walk up Ulrich Road then take a left. Ours is the first house.

PHISELE: I see.

(She smiled then turned to Kyrie and Galton.)

PHISELE: Search up and down Ulrich Road; he may have been murdered there.

GALTON: Looking for what exactly?

PHISELE: Signs of a crime obviously!

GALTON: Such as?

PHISELE: Don't make me slap you, Galton!

KYRIE: I think she means blood.

(Phisele looked to Kyrie.)

PHISELE: Yes! Or the murder weapon!

(She then looked at Galton again.)

PHISELE: Congratulations, you're officially dumber than Kyrie!

GALTON: How dare you?

PHISELE: I dare. Now go.

(She nodded.)

PHISELE: While you're doing that, I'll take Celia to the station. Then I'd better report the news to Sir Flaxley. Now be gone!

KYRIE: Ma'am!

GALTON: Ma'am.

(With that, the two of them headed away. Watching them go, Phisele shook her head.)

PHISELE: No doubt the useless buggers won't find anything. If they stumbled across a blood-stained bandit holding up a signed confession, they'd still fuck up it.

(She then turned and led Celia away.)

Victory Street, Tifaeris.

(Early that afternoon, Phisele paced towards Sir Flaxley's home clutching a bottle of wine. Having had a difficult morning, comforting Celia, she was looking forward to seeing a friendly face. An intelligent conversation would also be a rare bonus. Very much looking forward to getting there, she allowed herself a smile. Just then, she spotted Sir Flaxley's two twelve year-old daughters on the path ahead of her. At once, she sped up then stepped in between them.)

PHISELE: Playing truant, are we, ladies?

(Somewhat startled, the two girls, Emma and Jade, leapt out of their skin.)

EMMA: Phisele!!!

JADE: You scared the living daylights out of me!

EMMA: And me!

PHISELE: That was the plan!

(She grinned.)

PHISELE: So, are you? Playing truant? That's a crime, you know?

EMMA: You know damned well we're not.

JADE: We go home for lunch.

PHISELE: I was only kidding.

(She nodded.)

PHISELE: You're so lucky. I wasn't *allowed* to go home for lunch. My mum was busy babysitting every other kid in the neighbourhood. The last thing she needed was me sitting there demanding sandwiches.

EMMA: Pretty much everyone goes home for lunch nowadays, Phisele.

JADE: Yeah, only two take a packed lunch.

EMMA: Cayley and... who's the other one?

JADE: The headmaster!

EMMA: Oh, yeah.

(Phisele grimaced.)

PHISELE: Poor kid.

JADE: It's her own choice to stay and eat with the headmaster.

EMMA: Well, sort of. She's afraid she'll get lynched if she goes home accompanied.

JADE: Yeah, she's really, really unpopular.

PHISELE: I see.

(Jade then glanced up and smiled.)

JADE: We're here!

EMMA: Are you coming inside?

PHISELE: Absolutely. I've come to see your dad.

JADE: Cool.

(With that, the three of them stepped up onto the veranda of the house before entering via the front door. As soon as they were inside, they spotted Sir Flaxley's wife, Kritzeveltia, Kritz for short, laying out plates on the table that dominated the main room.)

EMMA: Hi, mum!

JADE: Hey, mum.

PHISELE: Hi, Kritz.

(Kritz's face immediately lit up.)

KRITZ: Hey!!!

(She then paced over to them. Having kissed both her daughters she then gave Phisele a warm hug.)

KRITZ: How have you been, sweetheart?

PHISELE: Not too bad. You?

KRITZ: Good actually. Even better now you've brought me wine.

PHISELE: What makes you think it's for you?

(Kritz just stepped back from the hug and swiped the bottle from her.)

KRITZ: You're not dumb enough to bring wine into my house then tell me I can't have it.

PHISELE: Good point.

(They shared a chuckle then Kritz gestured to the table.)

KRITZ: Please, take a seat. Join us for lunch; there's more than enough to go around.

PHISELE: Thanks. Don't mind if I do.

(With that, Phisele headed to the table where Emma and Jade were already seated. As she did so, Kritz headed for the kitchen.)

KRITZ: I'll just get Flaxley; he's out in the yard, chopping logs.

(A short while later, lunch was served. Sat around the large table, Sir Flaxley, Kritz, Phisele, Emma and Jade only had eyes for their food. For several minutes, not a word was spoken. Having wolfed down two large portions of chicken, however, Phisele sat back and puffed out.)

PHISELE: Pathetic. I'm full already. I eat like a girl these days.

FLAXLEY: You *are* a girl.

PHISELE: Yeah, but I never used to get full *this* quickly.

KRITZ: You're thirty now, love; that comes with age.

(Phisele looked to Kritz and sighed.)

PHISELE: Coming from you, those words just don't ring true. Nothing comes with age, whereas you're concerned. You're old enough to be my mother but you look twenty five.

KRITZ: I know, right? I haven't aged a day in twenty years.

PHISELE: Yes, and if I didn't love you so much, I'd really, really hate you for that.

KRITZ: I get that a lot.

(Flaxley smiled.)

FLAXLEY: If you're finished with your food...

PHISELE: Yes, you can have it.

FLAXLEY: I wasn't going to say that, but thank you; I'll take it. I was going to say, if you're done eating, you can fill me in on that murder investigation.

(Phisele glanced at Emma and Jade.)

PHISELE: In front of the kids?

FLAXLEY: Why not? It's not like they're suspects!

PHISELE: Fair enough.

(She nodded.)

PHISELE: Well, we've identified the victim. Raymond Apsley.

KRITZ: Celia's fella?

PHISELE: Yeah.

FLAXLEY: I don't know him.

KRITZ: They moved to Tifaeris six months ago. He worked at the brewery.

(Flaxley bit his lip.)

FLAXLEY: Is there anyone in this town that you *don't* know, darling?

KRITZ: Not many.

(She shrugged.)

KRITZ: I'm surprised *you* didn't know him, to be honest. He used to drink at the inn a lot.

(Flaxley glowered at her.)

FLAXLEY: You make it sound like *I* go to the inn a lot. I go two or three times a week, at most. I'm not a piss-head like Bonson. There's *always* people in there I don't know. Bloody cheek.

(Emma then leant towards her mother.)

EMMA: Who's Bonson?

KRITZ: An old fella your father used to work with. Absolutely loved his ale, that man. That was *all* he loved though. He was a horrible old git. Bitter at the world and proud of it.

FLAXLEY: Yup. Old Bonson's been blissfully miserable since the day he was born.

(He shook his head then looked to Phisele again.)

FLAXLEY: Anyway, you were saying.

PHISELE: That's all we have, Flaxley. His identity and the fact he went to the inn last night. He was more than likely killed on his way home from there.

FLAXLEY: I see. So the chances are...

PHISELE: The killer is someone who was at the pub last night.

FLAXLEY: I concur.

PHISELE: Anyway, I've got my halfwits out looking for the murder weapon or the crime scene. Whether they find anything or not, I also plan to take a trip to the inn this evening.

FLAXLEY: To ask the regulars if they saw anything untoward?

PHISELE: Exactly.

FLAXLEY: Sounds like an idea. It does get busy in there though. I'll give you a hand with that.

(Kritz grinned and glanced away.)

KRITZ: Any excuse to go to the inn. Just like Bonson!

FLAXLEY: Hey!

KRITZ: I'm joking, my love. Relax.

FLAXLEY: Well don't. Not about that. If I ever get like Bonson, you have my permission to throw me off a cliff.

KRITZ: I wouldn't wait for your permission, my love.

(Phisele bit her lip.)

PHISELE: I remember Bonson. He came here ten years ago for a visit, didn't he?

KRITZ: Yes. When he wasn't ogling my legs he was at the inn arguing with the regulars. He started three fights.

FLAXLEY: Yet took no part in any of them. Bloody wind-up merchant.

PHISELE: He fondled my boobs, if I recall.

KRITZ: Sounds like something he'd do.

FLAXLEY: Anyway, getting back to the topic, the inn bar opens to non-residents at five in the evening, does it not?

PHISELE: Yes.

KRITZ: Like you didn't know.

FLAXLEY: Stop it. We'll head there for five then.

KRITZ: I'll come with you.

(Emma and Jade shared an exasperated glance.)

EMMA: But what about us?

JADE: Like you even have to ask.

PHISELE: My mum will be happy to babysit.

(Emma rolled her eyes.)

EMMA: We spent more time with *your* mum than we do our own!

PHISELE: My mum's a compulsive babysitter; what can I say?

(She then looked to Flaxley.)

PHISELE: I'll be glad for the help on this one actually, Flaxley. I really want to get to the bottom of this.

FLAXLEY: Of course. Murder is rare in this town and we want it to stay that way. We need to catch the killer soon and make a bloody example of him. People need to know it won't be tolerated.

PHISELE: Well, yeah, but not *only* because of that. All the signs point to the murder taking place on Ulrich Road. The road named after my dad. I take that as a personal insult.

(Flaxley nodded.)

FLAXLEY: Understandable. Don't worry; I'll give you whatever resources you need to get this crime solved.

PHISELE: Yeah? Then how about giving me some officers than can count to ten without using their fingers? Or in Kyrie's case, can count to ten without consulting her sister!

KRITZ: Surely she's not that bad.

PHISELE: She made two women cry this morning, Kritz. Blurted out that their husbands were dead.

FLAXLEY: She did?

PHISELE: Yes! She's got no concept of sensitivity. Or any other mode of decent behaviour, come to that! If she thinks it, she says it! If it crosses her mind, she does it!

(She sighed.)

PHISELE: You have to let me sack her. I know I said I wouldn't but she's incapable of doing the job.

FLAXLEY: She's really that hopeless?

PHISELE: Yes!

(Jade then pouted at her dad.)

JADE: Are you talking about Kyrie Severen? Cayley's big sister?

FLAXLEY: Yes, we are.

JADE: You can't sack her, dad. Cayley's having a tough enough time as it is!

KRITZ: In what way?

EMMA: She's really, really unpopular.

FLAXLEY: She is? But she's a pretty little thing.

JADE: Doesn't matter. The bullies have it in for her. The last thing she needs right now, is for her sister to lose her job. And the home that comes with it!

EMMA: That'd be too cruel.

PHISELE: We can't keep an idiot in the police force, just because she needs the wages. Or because her sister is having a hard time. We need to fill the guard unit with competent officers.

FLAXLEY: Wait a minute!

(He looked to Jade.)

FLAXLEY: Bullies? Cayley's being bullied?

JADE: Yeah.

(She grimaced.)

JADE: On her first day, the boys were all excited. Like you say, she's pretty. She has an exotic, foreign look about her. She was the talk of the school for the first hour. Then it happened.

EMMA: She should have looked away!

JADE: Yeah. You see, this mean kid, Baz, threw a rubber at the teachers head. He was furious! He turned and glared at everyone, so we just looked away and tried to look innocent.

EMMA: Cayley didn't. She'd obviously never seen anyone misbehave like that before.

JADE: She stared at Baz with her jaw on the floor. The teacher just looked at her and knew Baz was guilty.

EMMA: He said, "Thank you, Cayley", then ordered Baz to stay after school.

JADE: It all went sour after that. Everyone glared at Cayley thinking she'd *deliberately* dropped him in it.

EMMA: Now the bullies are making her life a misery.

(Flaxley snarled.)

FLAXLEY: Is that so? I hate bullies.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: Leave it with me.

KRITZ: How come her teachers haven't sorted it out?

JADE: They don't like her either.

EMMA: Yeah, she hasn't exactly helped herself on that score. Our language teacher wrote a sentence on the board once and she corrected his grammar.

JADE: She corrects the maths teacher a lot too. And history.

EMMA: She's ten times smarter than all the teachers; they don't like that!

(Flaxley looked most annoyed.)

FLAXLEY: Poor little bugger. I won't stand for anyone bullying her! You know, her and her sister were terrorised by a madman in their old country for years before washing up here. We gave them sanctuary. They're supposed to be safe here. I need to act.

(He nodded sternly.)

FLAXLEY: I promised Sir Hapslock that I'd take care of them, and I will.

PHISELE: Sir who?

FLAXLEY: Hapslock. The knight they were washed ashore with. Sir Hapslock, Kyrie, Cayley and some weird bloke all washed ashore together. Well, I promised Sir Hapslock, I'd

look after those girls and I'm a man of my word. He left for home a few days later, thinking they'd be safe here, and I'm going to make damned sure they are. The knight's code forbids me from breaking a promise made to a fellow knight and that's the code I live by.

PHISELE: If you want to help them, you can start by giving Kyrie a job more suited to her intellect. Like standing by the main gates, holding a board saying, "Welcome to Tifaeris".

FLAXLEY: Phisele, keep hold of Kyrie for now, okay? Let me help Cayley first, then we can talk about reassigning her.

PHISELE: Thank you.

(She beamed.)

PHISELE: With the end of her in sight, I've suddenly regained my appetite.

KRITZ: Good. Eat well. You're gonna be at the inn all night and if you get peckish you'll have to eat their food.

(At once, everyone shuddered.)

FLAXLEY: She serves a first class ale, but that landlady *cannot* cook.

Tifaeris Inn.

(That afternoon, at 5pm, as planned, Phisele and Galton entered the Tifaeris Inn. Sir Flaxley and Kritz followed shortly afterwards and warned the landlord that they'd be asking questions of the customers. Such was Sir Flaxley's god-like status among the people, the landlord offered no complaint. Kyrie arrived a short while later with Cayley in tow. And so began an evening of investigative scrutiny for all those venturing to the inn that night.

Easily the most popular of all Tifaeris's drinking establishments, by six o'clock, the inn started to get somewhat busy. With four officers of the law present, however, finding time to question everybody wasn't an issue. The lack of intelligence and experience from Phisele's two subordinates, however, very much was.

Flaxley and Phisele greeted everyone with a smile and asked their questions in a calm, dignified manner. As a result of this approach, the pub's clientele were happy to open up to them. Galton, however, very much lacked for subtlety. Within five minutes, two people had threatened to punch him. Directly accusing them of murder was most definitely not the way to start a conversation. As a result, Phisele very quickly had to take him to one side and tell him to tone down his rhetoric. Kyrie was also getting absolutely nowhere. In fact, she was even more hopeless than normal. There were a lot of men in the pub and as such, she was horribly distracted. Her undying lust for sex had taken over her every thought. To that end, most of the questions she posed were directed at male customers in regard to meeting her later for a quickie. Watching on, Cayley was horrified. She could see Phisele was not impressed and the likelihood of her sister getting fired was growing by the minute. Knowing she had to do something, she sighed heavily then looked to the where the landlord was chatting at the bar.)

CAYLEY: I have to. If *I* don't support us, nobody will.

(With that, she headed up to the bar then waved at the landlord. At once, he turned to her and smiled.)

LANDLORD: Hello there, young'un. What can I do for you? You know you're not allowed alcohol, right?

CAYLEY: Actually, I've come to apply for a job.

(She then nodded towards a sign saying, "Musical entertainer wanted: Apply at the bar." At once the Landlord sucked his teeth.)

LANDLORD: Sorry, love, we're looking for a professional. In fact, I'm just about to interview someone now.

(He then gestured to the corner of the room. Much to Cayley's surprise, the person in question was a chap known as Sing-along Sadler, a freestyle minstrel. Along with Kyrie and Sir Hapslock he'd been washed ashore on the beach with her a few weeks earlier. He was now stuck in Tifaeris as he couldn't afford the ferry home. It was a predicament he blamed entirely on Cayley. Kyrie, Sadler, Sir Hapslock and Cayley had all suffered together at the hands of a tyrant before being washed ashore and Sadler was not about to forgive her for it. The fact it hadn't been her fault, was of no consequence to him. He hated her with a fiery passion. Not wanting to be seen by him, Cayley just smiled then hid her face.)

CAYLEY: I'll come back later.

LANDLORD: Save yourself the trouble, little one. I need a professional.

CAYLEY: If you pay me, I *will* be a professional.

(She then sighed to herself.)

CAYLEY: Look, if you change your mind, I'll be in the corner staring in dismay at my sister.

LANDLORD: Fair enough, love.

(Cayley then headed away with her shoulders slumped. Having watched her go, the landlord smiled sympathetically at her then turned and paced to the end of the bar where Sadler was waiting impatiently.)

LANDLORD: Okay, mate. You're up. Show us what you can do.

(Throwing his brimmed hat onto his head, Sadler nodded.)

SADLER: You'll love this. I make up the lyrics as I go, based on the people in the audience.

LANDLORD: Sounds impressive.

SADLER: Oh, it is.

(With that, Sadler headed to the small stage in the corner, holding a lute in his hand. Scoffing at the piano as he did so, he then turned to face the patrons.)

SADLER: Right. Let's get this show on the road.

(He then proceeded to sing about what he saw before him, using an ancient melody called 'Earth Tune' believed to be composed by a gentleman named Mike L. Jackston.)

SADLER: What about Flaxley? What about Kritz? What about burying your head, between her thrupenny bits.

(At once, everyone started to chuckle, including Flaxley and Kritz. It was a good start. Alas, it went downhill from there. Having noticed Cayley sitting in the corner, he immediately lost his composure.)

SADLER: What about Cayley? That horrible git! What about all the ways I'd like to kill that little shit?

(A rumble of disapproval immediately echoed around the room.)

SADLER: Did you ever stop to notice her pasty, stupid face? Did you ever want to grab her and slap her all about the place?

(The evening pretty much ended for Sadler at this point. Within fifteen seconds, both he and his lute went flying out of the main doors. Desperate to raise the money to get home, however, Sadler wasn't about to give up hope. Having slammed into the cobbles, he quickly glanced over his shoulder.)

SADLER: So you'll let me know about the job then, will you?

LANDLORD: You're barred!!!

SADLER: Is that a maybe?

LANDLORD: That's a fuck off!

(The landlord then slammed the doors, leaving Sadler sighing to himself despondently.)

SADLER: It was all going so well...

(His face then clouded over.)

SADLER: Cayley!!! That little twerp has ruined everything!!! Again!

(He snarled.)

SADLER: Bugger it. I might not be allowed in, but they can't stop me busking out here.

(With that, he grabbed his lute then jumped to his feet. He then proceeded to strum enthusiastically and sing along, desperately hoping to impress any passers-by.)

Back inside the inn at this time, the enquiries into Raymond Apsley's death continued. Very much focussed on her task, Phisele sat down with an elderly couple, Reg and Sue Wyatt, then offered them a smile.)

PHISELE: Hello there, Mr and Mrs Wyatt.

REG: Hello, Phisele. How are you, love?

SUE: We don't see you in here very often.

PHISELE: I pop in now again.

REG: I see. It's nice to relax with a drink from time to time, isn't it?

PHISELE: Indeed. Sadly, this isn't one of those times. I'm here now because someone was murdered last night after leaving this inn.

SUE: Oh, that's awful. Who was it?

REG: That dreadful Mr Johnson, I hope.

SUE: It'd be nice if it was that lad with the squint. Veronica's boy. I never liked him.

(Phisele grimaced.)

PHISELE: Actually...

SUE: I'll tell you who someone *should* murder. That Eric Green fella.

REG: Oh, definitely. And his wife.

SUE: And that other fella, Gregory from up north.

PHISELE: Please, we're not here to discuss who *should* get murdered. We're here to talk about the man who did. Raymond Apsley.

(The Wyatt's both gasped.)

SUE: But he was a lovely fella.

REG: Who'd want to kill Raymond?

PHISELE: That's what I'm here to find out. Did you see him here last night?

REG: Yes, he sat with us!

PHISELE: And did you notice anything untoward?

SUE: No. He was his usual cheerful self.

PHISELE: I see. And did anyone follow him outside?

REG: Not that I noticed. He left by himself after three pints; laughing and joking as he went.

(Phisele nodded.)

PHISELE: I see. Well, if you think of anything later that seemed suspicious, you know where to find me.

REG: Of course, dear.

(With that, Phisele climbed from her seat then headed over to Flaxley.)

PHISELE: Any clues?

FLAXLEY: Not a one. Everyone says he was laughing and joking all night then left by himself. Nobody saw him being followed.

PHISELE: That's all I'm hearing too. Maybe we're wasting our time.

FLAXLEY: Maybe we're not though. Stick at it. It only takes one person to remember something and it all might fall into place.

PHISELE: Righto.

(With that, she headed away again.)

In the corner of the pub, a short while later, Kyrie was going about her work with ever-decreasing levels of professionalism. Having plonked herself down between a dashing young gentleman and his father, she then proceeded to question him with a seductive glint in her eye. The gentleman's father was far from amused.)

TOBY: Do you mind, young lady? We were talking!

(Not even hearing the man, Kyrie fluttered her eyelashes at his son.)

KYRIE: You don't mind me asking you a few questions, do you, handsome?

(The young gent drooled.)

HARRIS: Not one bit.

TOBY: Excuse me!

HARRIS: Pipe down, dad!

(He beamed.)

HARRIS: You were saying, gorgeous?

KYRIE: I just have to ask if you were in here last night.

HARRIS: I wasn't, no.

KYRIE: Then where were you? In fact, where have you been all my life?

(She then rubbed his chest lustfully.)

KYRIE: And what are you doing later?

HARRIS: You, with any luck.

KYRIE: You won't need luck. Let's make out right now!

TOBY: Stop that, you shameless slut! That's my son you're talking to. He doesn't make out with *any* old trollop. Our family has standing in this town!

HARRIS: Normally that's true, dad; only this time I'm willing to make an exception.

TOBY: Well don't. Sluts can be dangerous. Trust me, I know!

(He then glanced to the ceiling and sighed.)

TOBY: Back in my old town when I was young, war was raging. All the men were away fighting. Women got lonely, of course. So whenever some of the men came home on leave, the women were all over them. Sluts! It was embarrassing. They were jumping into bed with anyone. Many got pregnant, including my mum; your grandmother. We never did find out who my brother's father was. My mum claimed it was my dad, but I had my doubts about that. My dad had been killed in a battle 18 months earlier, you see? Anyway, point is, all that sleeping around those women did ruined many a family unit. See, son? Sluts are home-wreckers and that why you should pay this trollop no heed!

(He then glanced at his son, only to see Kyrie sitting on his lap with her tongue down his throat. His hand was slowly making its way up her skirt.)

TOBY: Right. I'll talk to myself then shall I?

(Just then, Phisele raced over and dragged Kyrie away.)

KYRIE: No!!!

HARRIS: Why???

PHISELE: Shut it!

(Red with fury, Phisele dragged Kyrie into the corner and shook her fist.)

PHISELE: Give me one good reason why I shouldn't punch you in the face!

KYRIE: I'm a master of martial arts and could kill you with my little toe!

PHISELE: You reckon? Kritz taught *me* how to fight!

(Kyrie grimaced.)

KYRIE: Like an angry savage?

PHISELE: Yes!

KYRIE: That'd be a good contest!

PHISELE: That's not the point. You're here to work! To talk to people!

KYRIE: I *was*!

PHISELE: No, you're weren't! You had your tongue in some guy's mouth!

KYRIE: That's *how* I talk to people!

PHISELE: Kyrie...

(She took a deep breath to calm herself then glowered into Kyrie's eyes.)

PHISELE: From now on, you're only allowed to talk to *female* customers!

KYRIE: Cool. Happy to.

(A defeated expression then crossed Phisele's brow.)

PHISELE: You're attracted to women too, aren't you?

KYRIE: Like a moth to a flame. Sex is sex, Phisele. Never let a lack of men come between you and your orgasm; that's my motto.

PHISELE: Right...

(With that, Phisele skulked away defeated.)

PHISELE: Do what you like; I'm past caring.

KYRIE: Superb!

(With that, Kyrie headed back over towards Harris, rubbing her hands together gleefully, only to find him gone. His father had dragged him home by his ear.)

KYRIE: Aw, crap. Thanks a bunch, Phisele. Interfering all the time. I've been here for two hours and all I've had is three light fingerings and a quickie.

(She then spotted two young men chatting in the corner.)

KYRIE: Bonus!

(She then trotted over there excitedly.)

Across the pub at this time, Sir Flaxley was going about his business with a smile on his face. He'd always enjoyed conversing with the townsfolk. As such, the task in hand didn't even feel like work. Being the ultimate professional, however, he never lost sight of his goal. Sitting among a group consisting of two middle age couples, he listened to what they had to say then nodded.)

FLAXLEY: That seems consistent. Nobody saw anything untoward, it seems. The general consensus is, he was sitting in here quite happily, laughing and joking. He didn't offend anyone and he left alone with a smile on his face.

(One of the men sighed.)

JOE: Sorry we couldn't be more helpful.

FLAXLEY: Oh, don't be. You can only say what you saw, after all.

(Joe's wife shook her head.)

HELEN: This must be frustrating for you, Sir Flaxley.

FLAXLEY: It is, yes.

(Joe nodded sternly.)

JOE: I can imagine. As a teenager you were here when that bloody Trepe Tribe razed the town to the ground. So you went away and struggled and fought to become a man. Then you came back here and started to rebuild the place, only for the Trepe to attack again. Only this time, the army you raised defeated them. Not just defeated them; tamed them. A man-hating, all female tribe, and yet somehow you and Kritz managed to make them civilised.

You made them part of our town. A peaceful haven where nobody is a slave to anyone else. A town where everyone is kind to their fellow man.

FLAXLEY: Unless that man is a twat.

JOE: Of course.

(He shook his head.)

JOE: Having created this utopia out of a derelict shell, beset by war, to have some murderous maniac running around must be bloody infuriating.

(Flaxley sighed.)

FLAXLEY: It was bound to happen sooner or later, to be honest. The bigger the town gets, the more it grows, the more we risk an unsavoury element appearing. That'd just a sad fact of life, I suppose.

HELEN: Well hopefully you'll find this murderer and make an example of him.

FLAXLEY: That's the plan, Judith.

HELEN: My name's Helen.

FLAXLEY: Right...

(He furrowed his brow.)

FLAXLEY: Why am I so terrible with names? I've always been the same.

JOE: You can call us all Harold for all we care, Sir Flaxley. You're a bloody hero, you are. You'll never have to apologise for anything in *this* town.

FLAXLEY: I'm glad you've said that, my friend; I think I just sipped from your tankard by mistake.

(Joe was horrified.)

JOE: You complete bastard! Get the fuck away from my table!

FLAXLEY: Right.

(With a grin, Flaxley then turned to look at the second couple at the table.)

FLAXLEY: Anything to add?

BOB: To what?

FLAXLEY: Did *you* notice anything unusual in here last night?

(Bob furrowed his brow.)

BOB: Unusual? This is Tifaeris. I didn't notice anything *specific* last night, but even if I had I'm not sure it would have registered. Unusual has become the norm for me! Since we moved to Tifaeris three months ago, it's been one bizarre thing after another.

FLAXLEY: Such as?

BOB: Last week, I shared a bottle of wine with your friend Derek, a three foot tall green alien from the planet Tryme 17.

FLAXLEY: I wouldn't worry about that. He freaks *everyone* out at first.

BOB: He's not the only oddity. I swear, every time I go past that monument in the centre of town, it's facing in a different direction.

FLAXLEY: Yeah, we really ought to get that thing concreted in. Every time it gets windy...

BOB: And then there's your wife.

FLAXLEY: You mean the fact she doesn't age?

BOB: No; that can be put down to luck. Two weeks ago, I saw her watering the flowers on your veranda with her fingertips! They were shooting water!

FLAXLEY: She knows H2O magic.

BOB: Yes, well; it's weird. If I *did* see anything unusual last night, Flaxley, I probably just shrugged it off.

(Flaxley nodded.)

FLAXLEY: I see. Thanks for your time, anyway.

(He then upped and headed to the next table.

Across the inn a short while later, the landlord was standing behind the bar pouring an ale for a customer. Having done so, he then slipped it on the counter and smiled.)

LANDLORD: There you go, Dave.

(At once, his customer slipped two coins into his palm.)

LANDLORD: Cheers.

(He then glanced up and saw Cayley sitting against the wall, looking extremely down in the dumps. At once, his heart melted.)

LANDLORD: Poor sod.

(His wife then stepped up beside him.)

LANDLADY: I know. I feel for her actually. When I was her age, *I* had to go wherever my sister went too. It was boring.

LANDLORD: I feel bad now. She asked if she could audition for the musical entertainer's position and I turned her down.

LANDLADY: Why? I've heard she's really talented.

LANDLORD: She's twelve.

LANDLADY: She wants to sing, not engage in a wild piss up followed by a no holds barred orgy. Let her sing, give her something to do.

(The landlord nodded.)

LANDLORD: Fine. Why not.

(Outside the inn a few minutes later, Sadler was frantically strumming his lute, singing at the top of his voice, in the hope somebody would come out and give him some money. Even if they were paying him to shut up, it'd still be a contribution. So far, however, nobody had given him a thing. Even the people he'd accosted as they came and went had offered him nothing other than threats of violence.

Rapidly losing heart, he eventually stopped strumming at his lute and hung his head.)

SADLER: Trapped. Stuck in this god forsaken town forever. And all because that stupid Cayley got me thrown out of the inn. Why did *she* have to be there? Taunting me with that expressionless face. Mocking me with her innocence; pretending she's not out to get me.

(He sighed heavily once again, when suddenly, he heard the piano spark into life from inside the bar.)

SADLER: That's torn it. They're auditioning someone else.

(Just then, an all too familiar voice started to sing along to the piano. At once, Sadler's nostrils flared furiously.)

SADLER: Why, that little shit! She's trying to steal my gig!!!

(Utterly aghast, he then stood there for several minutes, fuming angrily. Convinced her actions were part of some bitter vendetta against him, he was paralysed with rage. As such, he just stood there, perfectly still, transfixed by what he considered the horror that was unfolding before him.)

SADLER: That evil little...

(Much to his horror, the landlady then removed the "position vacant" sign from the window. Cayley had got the job.)

SADLER: You gave her the job??? *My* job???

(With that, he threw his hat on the floor then proceeded to stamp all over it.)

SADLER: Why??? Why???

(Inside the pub, a few moments later, Cayley finished her song then received rapturous applause for her efforts. The audience had loved it. So much so, in fact, she was quickly swarmed upon by the landlord and landlady.)

LANDLORD: The job's yours.

LANDLADY: Three hours per night, six nights a week. You can have Monday's off.

LANDLORD: On full adult pay, of course.

LANDLADY: Plus tips.

(Cayley beamed.)

CAYLEY: I'll take it!

LANDLORD: Superb. You know, young'un, you're a special talent. You are.

CAYLEY: Thank you.

LANDLADY: He's right. When you started singing, everyone went quiet and stared at you with doughy-eyes. You're adorable.

LANDLORD: And now look at them!

(Sure enough, those who weren't still applauding her were staring at her adoringly, many of them wishing she was *their* daughter. Somewhat shy by nature, Cayley whimpered then hid her face.)

CAYLEY: Do I start tomorrow?

LANDLORD: Yes. 7pm.

CAYLEY: I'll see you then then.

(With that, she skulked away to find a quiet corner to hide in. As she did so, she passed by where Galton was sitting at a table with a well-built young man. Having been sent there to quiz him, he should have been asking questions; instead he was just sitting there eyeing the man up suspiciously. Starting to getting annoyed by it, the man eventually snarled at him.)

BRIAN: What the fuck are you staring at?

(Galton nodded.)

GALTON: Aggressive. That fits.

BRIAN: What? Look, what do you want?

GALTON: I just want to know why you did it!

BRIAN: Did what?

GALTON: Murdered Raymond Apsley.

(Brian just stared through him.)

BRIAN: What?

GALTON: Oh, don't deny it. You drink at the same inn as the victim, you're aggressive; it's obvious.

(Brian furrowed his brow.)

BRIAN: Are you stupid or something?

GALTON: Not compared to Kyrie.

BRIAN: Eh?

GALTON: Come on, fess up. It was you, wasn't it?

(Brian snarled.)

BRIAN: I came in here after a hard day lugging timber around, for a relaxing pint and a little conversation. And I get a twat like you giving me crap about some crime I know fuck all about.

GALTON: Denial! Another sign of guilt!

BRIAN: Right. I'm done with you, pal.

(With that, he climbed to his feet and pounded his fist.)

BRIAN: I'm gonna break your face.

(At once, Galton jumped to his feet and stepped back.)

GALTON: You're not making yourself look any less guilty.

BRIAN: I should think not; I'm about to assault a police officer. Brutally!

GALTON: Oh, yeah? That's what *you* think!

(With that, he swiftly delved into his pocket. Upon finding nothing there, he then grimaced uneasily.)

GALTON: On second thoughts; let's just let bygones be bygones.

BRIAN: Bollocks.

(He then leapt forwards and grabbed Galton by the throat.)

GALTON: Don't! I'm unarmed!

BRIAN: So am I. Let's fight!

(Much to Galton's relief, Sir Flaxley then stepped in and pulled them apart.)

FLAXLEY: Enough!

(He looked to Brian.)

FLAXLEY: Drink your pint, Brian!

BRIAN: But...

FLAXLEY: Or would you like a first-hand demonstration of my sword skills?

(Brian swiftly sunk in his seat. Taking on the man reputed to be the best swordsman in the world was never a good idea.)

BRIAN: I'll be good.

FLAXLEY: Thank you.

(With that, he led Galton over to where Phisele was waiting by the bar for someone new to question.)

FLAXLEY: Phisele. Chastise this idiot. He was starting fights again.

PHISELE: Galton!

GALTON: I was trying a new approach!

PHISELE: That's not a new approach; that's the approach I categorically told you to stop taking earlier.

GALTON: Yeah, come to think of it, it did feel kind of familiar.

PHISELE: Now do you see the problem, Flaxley? Do you? This is what you gave me to work with! This one's starting fights with innocent members of the public and Kyrie disappeared into the toilets fifteen minutes ago with that randy blacksmith's assistant. *And* the randy blacksmith! I need proper officers.

FLAXLEY: All in due course, Phisele. Right now, you need to have a word with his idiot. (Just then, Kyrie's voice rose up from behind him.)

KYRIE: Me? I didn't do anything! I was in the toilets being spit-roasted by those two blokes who like hitting metal things with hammers.

FLAXLEY: I wasn't talking about you.

(He gestured to the grimacing Galton.)

FLAXLEY: I was talking about *this* idiot. He's unarmed. The law states that all military personnel must be armed at all times. All times! You're the first line of defence in case of an invasion.

(He sneered at Kyrie.)

FLAXLEY: *You're* armed, I take it.

KYRIE: I take my weapons everywhere. Not that I need them.

FLAXLEY: And why do you do that?

KYRIE: You told me to.

FLAXLEY: See, Galton? Even Kerry gets it.

KYRIE: Kyrie!

FLAXLEY: Exactly!

GALTON: Sorry. I got ready in a blinding rush this morning and forgot to bring them.

FLAXLEY: Cock! You're a fucking soldier!

PHISELE: Like I told you, Flaxley. If you'd stop sending me incompetent numpties, this sort of thing wouldn't happen.

(She sighed.)

PHISELE: Although, maybe it's a good thing he wasn't armed. You know, seeing as he almost got into a fight just now.

FLAXLEY: That's not the issue. This is about standard procedure. You know as well as I do, Phisele, a town can be attacked at any time. You and your people need to be ready.

PHISELE: I completely agree. He'll get a full reprimand, Sir.

FLAXLEY: I hope so too. It's taking every ounce of restraint I have, not to slap him.

(With that, he headed away towards where Kritz was taking to some friends. Watching him go, Galton drew a sigh of relief.)

GALTON: Thank fuck. I thought I was in trouble then.

PHISELE: You are! You're a soldier, Galton. Forgetting your weapons is like forgetting your shoes!

(Her shoulders then slumped.)

PHISELE: You actually did that once, didn't you?

(Galton winced.)

GALTON: Yeah. The cobbles hurt my feet.

KYRIE: Wow. Even *I've* never forgotten my shoes.

(She then exhaled and stared into space.)

KYRIE: But then I love my shoes. They're like my children.

(Phisele could only shake a despairing head.)

PHISELE: Morons.

(A few hours later, once the last few patrons had left, Phisele, Flaxley and Kritz found themselves sitting in the corner discussing their evening. Galton and Kyrie had been allowed to leave a few minutes earlier and Phisele especially was delighted to see the back of them. She wasn't so enthusiastic about the results of their enquiries however. Slumped in her seat, she shook her head repeatedly.)

PHISELE: Nothing. Not a thing. A whole day has passed and all we've learned is the victim's name.

KRITZ: Well, not really. You've also learned that events in this bar had nothing to do with his death.

FLAXLEY: Good point. That's one line of enquiry eliminated at least. Don't worry, we'll find others.

PHISELE: True. Tomorrow I'll take those two halfwits and search Ulrich Road again. I know they spent all afternoon doing it, but if there's something there, they're bound to have missed it.

(She shook her head.)

PHISELE: I should have just done it myself in the first place.

KRITZ: You were busy, Phisele.

PHISELE: Busy wasting my time. I checked with the victim's bank and his known associates for any sign of a financial motive, but that was fruitless too.

KRITZ: You're getting really frustrated, aren't you, love?

(Phisele sighed.)

PHISELE: Like you wouldn't believe. I really want to solve this one, and fast.

(Kritz put her arm around her.)

KRITZ: Be patient. You'll get there.

FLAXLEY: Exactly. Nothing you did is a waste of time. Every dead end is an avenue explored. You're narrowing it down piece by piece. That's good police work.

(He grimaced.)

FLAXLEY: Sorry about the idiots you've been assigned. I'll look into restructuring the guard unit this coming week.

PHISELE: I'd appreciate that. Kyrie and Galton are slowly driving me insane. They have to go.

Ulrich Road, Tifaeris.

(The following day, as planned, Phisele, Kyrie and Galton were out on Ulrich Road in search of a murder weapon. Cobbled down the centre between overgrown grass verges, it offered plenty of places for a person to dump a weapon. Hunting through one of the verges across

the street from Kyrie and Galton, Phisele mused to herself about that fact then sighed out loud.)

PHISELE: People really need to start trimming the grass around their houses. It's not difficult.

(Kyrie called from across the road.)

KYRIE: That's what I said yesterday.

PHISELE: And you were right. It'd certainly make *our* job easier if we didn't have all this unkempt land to sift through.

KYRIE: That's what Galton said. So we gave it a miss and searched the side streets inside.

GALTON: Kyrie!!!

KYRIE: What?

(Looking more than a little miffed, Phisele stood tall and glowered at them.)

PHISELE: You did what? You gave it a miss?

KYRIE: Yeah!

PHISELE: I'm gonna kill you!

KYRIE: Who?

PHISELE: Both of you!

KYRIE: That's hardly fair! He outranks me; I have to do what he says.

(Galton gulped.)

GALTON: Aw, crap.

PHISELE: Who says he outranks you?

KYRIE: *He* did. He's been here longer than me.

PHISELE: He doesn't outrank you! You're both on the bottom rung.

KYRIE: So I don't have to do everything he says?

PHISELE: No!

(Kyrie snarled.)

KYRIE: You lied to me!

GALTON: Yeah, about that...

PHISELE: Silence!

(She flapped furiously.)

PHISELE: I ordered you two to search thoroughly! Why would you defy me?

KYRIE: I was just doing what Galton told me to do. I thought he was my boss!

(Galton trembled.)

GALTON: Um... Kyrie's confused. I never said *not* to look in this wasteland; I said not to look for too long.

KYRIE: We didn't look in them at all!

GALTON: Shut up!

KYRIE: Charming.

PHISELE: You can both shut up!

(At once, Kyrie and Galton fell silent. Unable to keep silent for very long, however, Kyrie soon spoke up.)

KYRIE: So I don't have to take orders from Galton?

PHISELE: No, you don't!

KYRIE: Then I *don't* have to give him blowjobs twice a day, after all?

PHISELE: He told you to do that???

KYRIE: Yeah.

PHISELE: Galton, that thin ice you've been skating on is getting thinner by the second.

GALTON: But I can explain! I like blowjobs and she was...

PHISELE: Gullible?

(Galton hung his head.)

GALTON: Yeah.

PHISELE: That's a fireable offence, Galton!

KYRIE: There's no need to fire him for that. I like giving blowjobs. Sometimes I gave him *three* a day, just for funsies.

PHISELE: Kyrie, you're an idiot!

KYRIE: I love you too, ma'am.

PHISELE: As for you, Galton, when we get back to the office, I'm gonna rip you a new one.

GALTON: That's fair.

(Phisele shook her head.)

PHISELE: Now keep looking. And look closely. Someone could easily dump a stabbing weapon in all this long grass.

KYRIE: I know, right?

(She then bent and picked up a bloody knife.)

KYRIE: There's one right here.

(At once, Phisele raced over to her.)

PHISELE: Let me see!

(Kyrie passed her the knife then shrugged.)

KYRIE: Someone probably used it to chop meat. It's covered in blood.

PHISELE: Kyrie, you silly fucker, this is probably the murder weapon.

GALTON: *I* knew that!

(He nodded.)

GALTON: I'm a detective.

(Phisele gave him a sideways glance then looked at the knife again.)

PHISELE: Simple wooden handle. No engravings. Cheap blade. Shit.

KYRIE: What?

PHISELE: This is a generic hunting knife from right here in Tifaeris.

(She sighed.)

PHISELE: The blacksmith makes these by the dozen.

KYRIE: Are you saying the blacksmith did it?

(Phisele gave her an exasperated glance.)

PHISELE: No, you silly fucker, of course not. I'm saying there's hundreds of these knocking around. You've both got one. They're standard military issue! All the hunters use them, and so do people in catering. The blacksmith sells them for next to nothing. I wouldn't be surprised if every household in Tifaeris has one.

GALTON: That's bad, is it? For the investigation, I mean.

PHISELE: Yes. I was hoping that if we found the knife we could trace it back to the owner. A lot of knives are custom made. They have special designs on the handle. Engravings and such. This is just... useless. Another dead end.

(She shook her head.)

PHISELE: We've identified the body and now we have the murder weapon. And yet, not a single lead from either breakthrough.

(She then nodded positively.)

PHISELE: Let's keep searching, okay? If we're lucky the murderer might have dropped a personal object while he was dumping the knife. You never know.

GALTON: Do you think that's likely?

PHISELE: No, but the trail is going cold and we have to do something.

(She nodded.)

PHISELE: We'll spend another couple of hours on it, okay? Then we'll head back to base. I want to brief you both on a few changes to the police force that Flaxley's making. Okay?

KYRIE: Sir. Ma'am even.

GALTON: Ma'am.

PHISELE: Right, let's get cracking then.

Tifaeris High School.

(That afternoon at 3 o'clock, as always, the door to Tifaeris High School burst open and Cayley came sprinting out with a terrified look in her eye. As ever, Baz and his hangers-on quickly followed, charging after her, snarling furiously.)

BAZ: Fucking headmaster; always giving her a head start!

DALE: I don't know why we bother, by the time we start to gain, she's already run to her sister.

ZACH: We bother because she's a snitch. Snitches have to pay.

DALE: Good point.

BAZ: And pay she will. I don't care if her sister is a police officer with ridiculous fighting skills. One of these days, I'm gonna pound on that girl's face.

(Suddenly his eyes lit up.)

BAZ: And today might well be that day!!! Her sister's not there, look!

(Sure enough, as Cayley raced to the gates, she got a nasty surprise. Kyrie was indeed nowhere to be seen. Overcome with terror, Cayley rapidly called out her sister's name, several times then glanced over her shoulder. At once, her eyes bulged. The delighted looking bullies were gaining fast. With a scream, Cayley put her head down then took off for home as fast as her little legs would carry her.)

CAYLEY: Why, Kyrie? Why?

(As she sprinted off down the street, Baz laughed with delirious joy.)

BAZ: My dad walloped me big time after she dropped me in it. Well, what goes around, comes around.

(Looking forward to battering the poor girl senseless, he then put his head down and charged forth, leaving his friends trailing in his wake.)

BAZ: I'm going to enjoy this!

(Positively singing inside as he gained to within fifteen feet of her, Baz clenched his fists then called out to her.)

BAZ: It's your day of reckoning, maggot. I'm gonna paint the cobbles with your blood.

(Well aware that he wasn't exaggerating, Cayley screamed then zoomed around a corner.

Cackling maniacally, Baz then raced around the corner after her. Watching on from behind, Baz's group of flunkies laughed together excitedly.)

DALE: She's not getting away this time!

ZACH: Nope. We've got her. Finally.

(With that, they raced around the corner then immediately came to a screeching halt. Much to their complete and utter astonishment, Baz was lying unconscious on the ground and Cayley was standing over him.)

DALE: What the fuck?

ZACH: Did *you* do that?

(Cayley just looked at them, wearing a cold, empty expression. Scared witless by it, the flunkies then about turned and ran away with terror in their eyes.)

ZACH: Fuck. Turns out, *she* has ridiculous fighting skills too!

DALE: And she's clearly mental. She could have ended the bullying any time, instead she lured Baz away to beat him up where nobody could see her do it.

ZACH: I'm scared! She might come after us next.

DALE: Fuck.

(As the sound of Baz's panicking friends faded to nothing, Cayley scratched her head then glanced to a nearby doorway, maintaining her empty expression. As she did so, the door opened and Sir Flaxley stepped out.)

FLAXLEY: I think it's safe to say they won't be bullying *you* anymore.

(He then paced away with a satisfied smile on his face.)

FLAXLEY: If anyone bullies you again, just give me a shout.

(Cayley suddenly smiled.)

CAYLEY: Thank you!

FLAXLEY: You're very welcome. Just don't tell Kyrie, okay?

(He then turned and winked at her.)

FLAXLEY: If she finds out they were bullying you, she'll kill the lot of them. And she doesn't deserve to go to jail. Trust me, this was the best way.

(He then head off down the road again. Watching him go, Cayley could only grimace in bewilderment.)

CAYLEY: Wait! How did you know about...

FLAXLEY: You'll figure it out.

(Cayley mused to herself quietly.)

CAYLEY: Emma and Jade would have told him about the bullying. So, he must have asked Kyrie which way we walk home. Then he told her not to pick me up, just so he could lie in wait.

(She then started to chuckle about what had happened. As she'd sprinted forth glancing back in terror, Baz had raced around the corner, only to be floored by Flaxley's mammoth punch. He hadn't seen Flaxley do it, and more importantly, he hadn't seen Cayley not do it. He'd just been taken out in midstride. Having clobbered the bully, Flaxley had then ducked through the doorway to hide, giving her instructions to look angry. She'd failed to do her part and merely looked bewildered, but her empty look had clearly done the trick.)

CAYLEY: Rumours are gonna start that I'm tough and not to be messed with. No more bullying.

(Her heart soared at that moment.)

CAYLEY: And all because of Sir Flaxley.

(With that, she glanced to where Sir Flaxley was walking away and clutched her hands to her heart.)

CAYLEY: Thank you... daddy.

Tifaeris Barracks. Room 23. Residence of Kyrie and Cayley Severen.

(At 5.30pm, Cayley found herself standing before a full length mirror in her room. Nervous about her first night as a musical entertainer, she'd got ready early. Wearing a tight dress, full make-up and high heels, she turned from side to side to check out her reflection then flicked her hair.)

CAYLEY: Wow. I'm actually really hot.

(She then shuddered from head to toe.)

CAYLEY: I sound just like Kyrie.

(She then gasped and leant closer to the mirror.)

CAYLEY: Oh, my god. I look exactly like her.

(A smug grin then appeared on her face and she struck a pose.)

CAYLEY: Gorgeous.

(Just then, she heard an excited gasp from the doorway. At once, she spun around in horror and saw Kyrie standing there with joyful tears in her eyes.)

KYRIE: I always knew this day would come. You've become me!

CAYLEY: Never!

KYRIE: Afraid so!

(With that, Kyrie hurried across the room and pulled Cayley into herself for a tight hug. Struggling to breathe, Cayley flapped her arms desperately.)

CAYLEY: You're squashing me!

KYRIE: Sorry.

(She stepped back then smiled.)

KYRIE: Now do you see? You're way too pretty to be a geek, sister face.

CAYLEY: No, I'm...

(She then blushed and glanced away.)

CAYLEY: You think I'm pretty?

KYRIE: Have I ever told you otherwise?

(Cayley couldn't help but smile.)

CAYLEY: Thanks, Kyrie.

(Kyrie chuckled.)

KYRIE: You were posing in the mirror.

CAYLEY: No, I wasn't!

KYRIE: Yes, you were.

CAYLEY: Leave me alone.

KYRIE: Don't be like that; it was cute. And a bit weird.

CAYLEY: Weird?

KYRIE: Yeah. *I'm* supposed to be the vain one.

CAYLEY: I just wanted to see how I looked.

KYRIE: I know. I heard.

(She giggled.)

KYRIE: Gorgeous was your verdict.

CAYLEY: Don't mock me, Kyrie. I'm nervous enough as it is.

KYRIE: Nervous? Why?

CAYLEY: I'm going to be performing at the inn tonight, remember? You didn't think I dressed up like this just for fun, did you?

(Kyrie grimaced.)

KYRIE: Yes, actually. I forgot you were performing.

(She then stepped to the mirror and started admiring her reflection.)

KYRIE: I don't know why you'd be nervous though. You're an amazing pianist and a brilliant singer. If anything, the audience should be nervous.

CAYLEY: Why would they be nervous?

KYRIE: Because you're way too good for them.

(Cayley blushed.)

CAYLEY: I am?

KYRIE: Yes.

(She then turned from the mirror and smiled.)

KYRIE: You know, if you get really nervous, I know a brilliant technique to calm yourself down.

CAYLEY: Yeah?

KYRIE: Yeah. Pretend you're naked.

CAYLEY: Pretend *I'm* naked? Surely I'm supposed to pretend *the audience* are naked!

KYRIE: How would that work? Half the people in the inn are either obese or old and wrinkly. You'd spend half the night throwing up.

CAYLEY: Kyrie...

KYRIE: Trust me. Pretend you're naked. I used to do that before gymnastics competitions back in the old country. It worked brilliantly.

CAYLEY: That only worked for you because you're an exhibitionist. You *want* people to see you naked. I don't like people looking at me when I'm *dressed*; never mind naked.

KYRIE: Really?

CAYLEY: I'm not as self-confident as you are, Kyrie.

KYRIE: Well... maybe you need to work on that.

CAYLEY: Yeah.

(They shared a loving smile then Kyrie bounced excitedly.)

KYRIE: Oh, by the way, I've got more good news!

CAYLEY: Yeah?

KYRIE: Phisele told me they're going to restructure the guard unit. She reckons that given my suitability to the job, I'll probably get moved on!

(Cayley gasped in horror.)

CAYLEY: Moved on?

KYRIE: Yeah! That means promoted, right?

CAYLEY: Actually...

KYRIE: At this rate, I'll be a sergeant by the end of the year.

(She beamed.)

KYRIE: I'm so proud of myself. I've finally found something I'm good at other than pleasuring men and hitting people.

(Not having the heart to tell her sister what being moved on really meant, Cayley forced a smile.)

CAYLEY: Yeah... I'm proud of you too.

KYRIE: Aw. I love you, sister face.

CAYLEY: I love you too.

(She then bit her lip and trembled. Her job at the inn wouldn't pay enough to keep a roof over their heads and put food on the table. Until she could think of another way to support them, she needed Kyrie to keep her job. With this in mind, she glanced upwards uneasily then offered Kyrie a questioning glance.)

CAYLEY: That murder case you're working on...

KYRIE: What about it?

CAYLEY: It sounds exciting.

KYRIE: Sure. If you like boring things.

CAYLEY: I'm a geek, remember? I love boring things.

KYRIE: Good point.

CAYLEY: So tell me about it. What have you learned so far?

KYRIE: Never get dressed in the dark. I tried to put your bra on the other morning; it really wasn't happening.

CAYLEY: No, I mean tell me all about the case.

KYRIE: Am I *allowed* to do that?

(Cayley glanced away innocently then lied through her teeth.)

CAYLEY: Sure.

KYRIE: Fine. There's not much to say really. Galton found a dead body on Hillside Road while he was doing his patrol.

CAYLEY: Hillside Road?

KYRIE: Yeah, just off Ulrich Road. So we went to look at it. That's when I deduced that it was suicide. For some reason we're treating it as a murder now though.

(She shrugged.)

KYRIE: It's all a bit confusing actually. One minute my deduction was awesome and worthy of a night off, the next it's wrong. I'm not sure what's going on.

CAYLEY: As always.

KYRIE: Right?

(She shrugged.)

KYRIE: And that's all we know.

CAYLEY: No it isn't. You know who the dead guy was. Raymond Apsley.

KYRIE: Oh, yeah! Wait! How do you know that? That's classified!

CAYLEY: I was at the inn with you all night last night while you investigated his movements.

KYRIE: Oh! Is that what we were doing?

CAYLEY: What did you *think* you were doing?

KYRIE: I don't know. I knew we went there for something, but I kind of got distracted and forgot. Not that it matters. Apparently it was a dead end.

CAYLEY: Okay. So what else?

KYRIE: Nothing really. Well... we found the murder weapon today.

CAYLEY: Yeah?

KYRIE: Yeah. That was a dead end too. It was a geriatric hunting knife.

CAYLEY: Geriatric?

KYRIE: So Phisele said.

CAYLEY: You mean generic?

KYRIE: Something like that. Common anyway.

(She then pulled out her own police knife.)

KYRIE: One of these. The army carry them, butchers have them, hunters use them; everyone. Phisele reckons that makes it impossible to trace.

CAYLEY: And where did you find it?

(Kyrie grimaced.)

KYRIE: Ulrich Road. In the grass verges we should have searched yesterday. Phisele was livid. Not that it was my fault. Galton *told* me not to look there. Stupid Galton.

(She smiled.)

KYRIE: Luckily Phisele doesn't hold it against me. If she did, I wouldn't be getting promoted.

(She shrugged.)

KYRIE: That's pretty much everything. It's really boring doing police work. It's all talking to people and looking in bushes. Boring!

(Cayley looked thoughtful.)

CAYLEY: So what you're telling me is, Galton found a body on his patrol route. Galton then tried to stop you looking in the grass verges where the murder weapon was found. A murder weapon which happens to be police issue. The same type of police issue weapon that Galton was yelled at for not having on him last night.

KYRIE: Yeah, pretty much.

(Cayley gave her a condescending glance.)

CAYLEY: Are you not seeing a theme here, Kyrie?

KYRIE: A theme?

CAYLEY: Galton!

KYRIE: What about him?

CAYLEY: Kyrie, it was probably his knife!

KYRIE: It was?

CAYLEY: Well he didn't have it on him last night, even though he knows he has to carry it at all times. Then he tried to stop you looking in the grass verges where it was dumped. Why would he do that?

KYRIE: Because he's an idiot.

CAYLEY: Or maybe, he knew it was there and didn't want you to find it!

KYRIE: To make me look bad?

CAYLEY: No, because maybe he killed Raymond Apsley with it!

(Kyrie stared through her coldly.)

KYRIE: Are you saying Galton is the murderer?

(Much to her astonishment, Cayley suddenly gasped.)

CAYLEY: Oh, my god, Kyrie; you're a genius!

KYRIE: I am?

CAYLEY: You've solved the case!

KYRIE: I have?

CAYLEY: Yes. You just said Galton did it.

KYRIE: That was you!

CAYLEY: I was just thinking out loud, Kyrie. It was *you* who figured it out.

KYRIE: I did? When?

CAYLEY: You literally just told me all the evidence; just now.

KYRIE: Yeah, but...

CAYLEY: But nothing. Kyrie, stop being so modest. You're an awesome detective.

(Kyrie glanced skywards.)

KYRIE: Well, you say awesome...

CAYLEY: You are! Your theory makes perfect sense.

KYRIE: I see.

CAYLEY: We should tell it to Phisele right away!

KYRIE: Tell her my theory?

CAYLEY: Yes!

KYRIE: And what *is* my theory?

CAYLEY: Like you just said...

KYRIE: Remind me.

CAYLEY: Galton did it. It was *his* knife, that's why he tried to stop you looking for it.

KYRIE: That was *my* theory was it?

CAYLEY: Yes! Let's go to Phisele, right now!

KYRIE: Okay!

(With that, Cayley paced towards the door.)

CAYLEY: Come on!

KYRIE: Wow, Cayley. You can walk in heels now?

CAYLEY: Heels?

(She then looked at her feet. Upon spotting her high heels she then wobbled and fell over.)

KYRIE: Should I carry you?

CAYLEY: Yes, please.

(Kyrie then scooped her up and grinned.)

KYRIE: Tomorrow, you're gonna walk up and down the corridor in them shoes until you've mastered it.

CAYLEY: Fine. Let's just get going.

Tifaeris Guard Station. Main offices.

(A short while later, Kyrie paced into the main offices of the guard station with Cayley in her arms. At once, she paced to the front desk then placed Cayley down. With a shriek, Cayley immediately crumpled to the floor, then pulled herself up again and peered over the top of the desk.)

CAYLEY: Where is everyone?

KYRIE: Out the back, I expect.

(She then called out.)

KYRIE: Phisele? Ma'am?

(A few seconds later, Phisele emerged from the back rooms wearing a quizzical expression.)

PHISELE: Kyrie? I thought you were taking Cayley to her job this evening.

KYRIE: I will, but first I need to tell you something.

PHISELE: Oh! What's that?

KYRIE: I have no idea.

(She then started to rack her brains.)

KYRIE: Something about shoes I think.

PHISELE: Kyrie, I'm really busy. Can you...

(Fearing her sister was going to blow it, Cayley spoke up swiftly. With an adoring glint in her eyes, she looked to Kyrie and beamed.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie solved the crime!

PHISELE: What?

CAYLEY: I was eavesdropping. I know I shouldn't have, but I couldn't help myself. She says it's no co-incidence that Galton doesn't have his army knife anymore. She reckons it was the murder weapon. That's why Galton told her not to search in those grass verges.

(She exhaled.)

CAYLEY: It makes so much sense. It's obvious when you think about it.

(Phisele bit her lip.)

PHISELE: Now you mention it, that's a very good point.

CAYLEY: I know. My sister's an amazing detective.

(She then clutched her hand to her heart and fell over again.)

CAYLEY: Shoes!

(Kyrie stared down at Cayley struggling to get up then shrugged at Phisele.)

KYRIE: She's not very good with high heels.

PHISELE: Yes, well, never mind that...

(She then called over her shoulder.)

PHISELE: Galton! Get your arse out here!!!

(A few moments later, Galton emerged from the back.)

GALTON: Ma'am?

PHISELE: Kyrie here has a theory. Tell him, Kyrie.

KYRIE: About Cayley being bad with high heels?

PHISELE: No. You're theory about... never mind.

(She then looked to Galton and furrowed her brow.)

PHISELE: Where's your police issue knife?

(Galton grimaced.)

GALTON: Um... I accidentally left it at home again.

PHISELE: So it's at your house, is it? Or is it in the evidence locker?

GALTON: What?

KYRIE: The murder weapon is your knife! At least I *think* that was my theory.

(Galton scoffed.)

GALTON: My knife? That's ridiculous!

(He then leapt the counter and attempted to make a bolt for the door.)

GALTON: I'm not going to jail!!!

PHISELE: Stop him!!!

KYRIE: Okay!

(Within seconds, Galton was flat on his back, defeated by Kyrie's martial arts skills. Gasping for air, he stared up at her and pouted.)

GALTON: What did you do that for?

(Kyrie gestured to Phisele.)

KYRIE: She told me to.

PHISELE: Nice work, Severen.

(With that, she came around the front desk and stared down at him, shaking her head with disappointment.)

PHISELE: Why, Galton? Why did you do it?

(Galton pouted as he stared up from the floor.)

GALTON: I didn't mean to. I was just doing my patrol, like normal. You know, walking along, minding my own business. Then some bloke came racing around the corner at me. Scared the crap out of me, he did. I just panicked and pulled my knife.

(He sighed.)

GALTON: He ran onto the blade.

PHISELE: So it was an accident?

GALTON: Yeah. At first.

(He sneered.)

GALTON: Then he said, "You stabbed me, you wanker". Nobody calls me a wanker. So I stabbed him again. He died.

(He shook his head.)

GALTON: I knew I was in trouble so I stabbed him several more times and cut off his head to make it look like a suicide.

PHISELE: A suicide? Who'd think *that* was a suicide???

(She then glanced at Kyrie.)

PHISELE: Never mind.

GALTON: So what happens now?

PHISELE: Justice happens now!

GALTON: Fuck.

PHISELE: Sling him in a cell, Kyrie.

GALTON: Wait!

(He then laid there and said nothing.)

PHISELE: What? What are we waiting for?

GALTON: I can see right up your skirt from here, Phisele.

PHISELE: Enjoy the view, it's the last one you're gonna see for quite some time!

(With that, she scooped him up then led him away.)

PHISELE: Pervert.

GALTON: That's what you get for not wearing underwear!

(As the two of them disappeared from view, Kyrie pulled Cayley to her feet and smiled.)

KYRIE: How cool is that? Phisele solved the case!

CAYLEY: No. *You* solved it!

KYRIE: I did?

CAYLEY: For pity's sake, Kyrie.

(Clinging to the counter she sighed emptily.)

CAYLEY: We need you to keep this job, Kyrie. So just take the credit for it, will you? Please? For me?

(Kyrie shrugged.)

KYRIE: Fine. If it's important to you.

CAYLEY: Thank you.

(Cayley then grabbed the counter tighter to avoid falling again.)

CAYLEY: Why am I having so much trouble with these shoes?

KYRIE: Because you think you can't do it. When you talked to me earlier and forgot you had them on, you were fine.

CAYLEY: Maybe.

KYRIE: It's true. Trust that you can do it and you'll be fine, Cayley.

(Cayley smiled.)

CAYLEY: Okay. I'll try.

KYRIE: Good girl.

(Five minutes later, Phisele returned from the cell block and leant up against the counter. Somewhat stunned by what had happened, she shook her head in dismay.)

PHISELE: I should have put two and two together regarding that knife, Kyrie. It was so obvious when you think about it.

KYRIE: Uh-huh.

(Seeing Kyrie visibly distracted, she then peered round her to see what she was looking at. In the middle of the room, Cayley was pacing up and down, looking extremely pleased with herself.)

CAYLEY: I can do it!

KYRIE: Told you.

(She then glanced and Phisele.)

KYRIE: Sorry; you were saying?

PHISELE: That knife. It was obvious when you think about it.

(Remembering her promise to Cayley to take the credit, Kyrie nodded.)

KYRIE: Even to an idiot like me.

PHISELE: Right.

(She then glowered at her suspiciously.)

PHISELE: Cayley figured it out, didn't she?

(Kyrie faked an exasperated expression.)

KYRIE: How could you say such a thing?

PHISELE: It's true, isn't it?

KYRIE: Absolutely not. Cayley who? I don't know any Cayley!

PHISELE: Kyrie...

KYRIE: It was all me!

PHISELE: Oh, really?

(She then looked to where Cayley was pacing back and forth.)

PHISELE: It was you, wasn't it, Cayley? You solved that crime!

(Cayley looked to her innocently and shook her head.)

CAYLEY: It's wasn't me, ma'am. I'm just a kid. I was playing with my toys when she figured it out.

KYRIE: See?

PHISELE: Toys, huh?

CAYLEY: Dolls!

PHISELE: Did you play with those dolls before or *after* you got all dressed up in a tight dress, high heels and make-up?

CAYLEY: I forget.

PHISELE: Right.

(Phisele chuckled then looked to Kyrie.)

PHISELE: After the restructuring of the guard unit; I think I'm going to retain your services, Miss Severen. You could be a valuable asset.

KYRIE: I agree.

PHISELE: I'm glad.

(Having overheard, Cayley punched the air with delight. Having done so, she then beamed with joy.)

CAYLEY: I didn't fall over!

PHISELE: Anyway, you two had better get going. You don't want to be late for your first night.

KYRIE: First night of what?

CAYLEY: My job at the inn, Kyrie.

KYRIE: Oh, yeah. Bye, Phisele.

PHISELE: Bye now.

CAYLEY: Bye, ma'am.

(With that, Kyrie and Cayley headed through the exit and off into the night. Having watched them go, Phisele smirked.)

PHISELE: Yup. Miss Severen will definitely be an asset. I'll just have to learn to tolerate her big sister.

Flaxley and Kritz's residence.

(11 pm. Sitting on the porch outside his house with a beer in his hand, Sir Flaxley looked most relaxed. Having been informed of Galton's incarceration, he was satisfied the town could put the whole sorry episode behind it. Seated with him was his good friend, Derek, a three foot tall green alien from the planet Tryme 17. Very often, the two of them would enjoy a late night drink and a chat. This was one such occasion.)

DEREK: So it was a senseless killing, was it?

FLAXLEY: So I'm informed. Galton stabbed him by accident, then butchered him for calling him a wanker.

DEREK: That's ridiculous. You'd expect to find a motive; a sound reasoning.

FLAXLEY: Indeed. Instead it was almost a random act.

DEREK: And an extremely violent one at that.

FLAXLEY: Now I have to decide whether to execute him or sling him in jail.

DEREK: Execution would be kinder.

FLAXLEY: That's why I'm tempted to jail him. On the other hand, you can escape from jail and the last thing we need is a potentially psychotic hot-head on the loose.

DEREK: That's quite the dilemma.

FLAXLEY: It really is. I might just slap him about for a while, until I've made up my mind. Phisele gave him a pasting earlier too.

DEREK: She's a top lady.

FLAXLEY: She certainly is. She does a great job with very limited resources. Limited mental resources in the case of her staff.

DEREK: I did warn you about that, didn't I? If you keep giving her halfwits to work with, it'll blow up in your face.

FLAXLEY: I should have listened.

(He shrugged.)

FLAXLEY: It's just, crime is rare in this town, Derek. So I figured it'd be okay. The guards are mostly a deterrent after all. It shouldn't matter if the guards are few sandwiches short of a picnic; people just need to feel there's a police presence. Or so I believed at the time.

DEREK: And now?

FLAXLEY: Now I realise that from time to time, we're going to need intelligent investigators. Poor Phisele can't do it all herself.

DEREK: As I told you before.

FLAXLEY: Yes. And as *I've* told *you* before, nobody likes a smartarse.

DEREK: Touché.

(He nodded.)

DEREK: So, what are you going to do about it?

FLAXLEY: I'll do as Phisele requested. She's happy to keep the dozen or so halfwits she's got, so that's fine. She just wants one new person to replace Galton. Someone with a brain.

DEREK: One new person?

FLAXLEY: One.

DEREK: I thought she'd ask for more than that. At least *two* new brains.

(Flaxley grimaced.)

FLAXLEY: As did I. But she's decided to keep Kyrie on as one of the brains.

DEREK: Brains? Kyrie? That girl is as dim as an unlit candle. As sharp as a sphere made from silk. As stupid as a sock with no hole to put your foot in. She's the dumbest of the lot.

FLAXLEY: Yes, but her sister's a genius. A child prodigy. According to Phisele it was Cayley who solved Raymond Apsley's murder, not Kyrie. And I can believe it. She's only been here a month and she already knows the law back to front. And the history of the town from day one.

DEREK: Quite.

(Derek then looked to him enquiringly and bit his lip.)

DEREK: You're worried poor Cayley's going to end up going to school during the day, playing the piano at the inn at night then solving Kyrie's cases in her spare time.

FLAXLEY: That's exactly what I'm worried about.

DEREK: I know. I read your mind.

FLAXLEY: Right. I hate it when you do that.

DEREK: Everyone does.

FLAXLEY: Indeed.

(He sighed.)

FLAXLEY: Anyway, as I was saying, poor Cayley's gonna be exhausted doing all that.

DEREK: Probably.

FLAXLEY: Still, let's hope she never has to do any more detective work. Maybe Phisele and the new chap will have it covered.

DEREK: Maybe, yes. So... anyone in mind for the detective role, Flaxley?

(Flaxley then smiled.)

FLAXLEY: Phisele actually requested you, Derek.

DEREK: Me?

FLAXLEY: Yeah. With that mind-reading skill you'd be perfect. You wouldn't need to investigate, you could just read minds and instantly know who did it.

(Derek furrowed his brow.)

DEREK: And forever be known as Derek the snitch; hated by one and all. My wife and I are the only ones of our kind on this planet, Flaxley. I can't afford to be assassinated.

FLAXLEY: I told her you'd say that.

DEREK: Thanks, but no thanks.

FLAXLEY: Fair enough.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: It'll work out, Derek. I'll make damned sure of that. I've got 5 children living and working in this city...

DEREK: Six!

FLAXLEY: Five. Five beautiful daughters.

DEREK: And a son!

(Flaxley snarled.)

FLAXLEY: I have no son.

DEREK: Yes, you do! Your eldest child. The one with the limp wrist who sings and dances in a cabaret!

FLAXLEY: Shut up, Derek.

DEREK: I'm only saying, you might not like it, but he's still your son.

FLAXLEY: Are you *trying* to wind me up?

DEREK: A little bit, yes.

FLAXLEY: Well don't. I was trying to make a point.

DEREK: Sorry. Carry on.

FLAXLEY: What I was saying is, I need to make sure these streets are safe. Safe for our future generations to grow up in. Safe from outside invaders. And just as importantly, safe from corruption within. To that end, it's important that Tifaeris is policed properly.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: We'll keep growing. And we'll keep vetting settlers to keep out the undesirables. And we'll punish those who threaten our safety and our peaceful way of life. Right now this town is pretty much the perfect place to live. And I intend to keep it that way.

CHAPTER TWO – THE RETURN OF THE BLACK SQUIRREL.

Township of Tifaeris – Ashton Grainger's Residence.

(8 am. In the grand study within one of Tifaeris' plushiest homes, Sir Flaxley stood side by side with the owner, glancing at the wall. Before them, there was a dustless, un-faded rectangle of wallpaper where a painting had recently been hanging. Staring forlornly at the empty space, the house's owner, debonair middle-aged gent, Ashton Grainger, looked somewhat heartbroken.)

GRAINGER: Gone. Gone, Flaxley. Just... gone.

(Flaxley sucked his teeth.)

FLAXLEY: Evidently so.

GRAINGER: One week. That was all. I was away for one week and I came home to this. My prized painting... gone!

FLAXLEY: And it was definitely there when you left?

GRAINGER: Of course it was! It's my prized possession; I'd have noticed if it wasn't.

(He sighed.)

GRAINGER: My ex-wife almost cleaned me out when we got divorced, but she never got her grubby hands on my prized painting. Unfortunately, some other bugger *has*!

(Flaxley gave him a quizzical glance.)

FLAXLEY: You don't think *she* took it, do you? Your ex-wife?

GRAINGER: Oh, god no. She moved overseas long ago. She's long forgotten about me, I can assure you. And besides, she had no idea about art. She thought it was just a worthless portrait. It wasn't. Had she known it was priceless, she'd have wanted it, for sure; but I kept that fact well hidden.

FLAXLEY: I see. So, can you think of anyone else who might have had designs on it?

GRAINGER: Could be anybody, Flaxley. I hold coffee mornings in this room. Half the town have been in this room at one time or another. It could have been anybody.

FLAXLEY: So there's nothing you can think of that can narrow it down?

GRAINGER: Not at the moment. Sorry. I'm still in a state of shock. I returned home a short while ago and noticed it was missing; so I came and got you.

FLAXLEY: Fair enough. Well, give it some thought anyway. Anything you can tell me, no matter how insignificant, might help the investigation.

(Grainger nodded.)

GRAINGER: Okay. Well, as I told you when I came to get you, it's called 'The Princess of Hope'. It was a portrait of Chyna Lee, commissioned by her father; the warlord, Dim Lee himself. Painted by the great Schubert, only weeks before his death. It was his last great work. It's literally worth millions.

(He pouted.)

GRAINGER: More importantly though, it had sentimental value. My divorce was ugly, Flaxley; that cunt of a woman took me for almost everything I had. Hanging onto such a prestige piece was a miracle. To *me* that painting is symbolic of the fact I made it *through* those dark times. When I look it at, I feel like it's a testimony to my ability to survive. I'm sure you understand where I'm coming from.

FLAXLEY: I do. And you have my sympathy.

(He puffed out.)

FLAXLEY: Your ex-wife was the *worst* kind of woman. She allowed you to keep her in luxury while you amassed your fortune, then when you were wealthy enough, she used divorce law to take it all from you. You have my sympathy.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: I'm lucky really. If Kritz and I ever fell out, she'd just kick me in the nuts then bugger off. She has her own style of justice.

(He then mused to himself.)

FLAXLEY: Though even if she *was* the petty type, she couldn't take *me* to the cleaners. We don't have such silly divorce laws.

GRAINGER: Yes, but I lived in Guevina at the time. They *do*!

FLAXLEY: I see. Guevina. A silly place with stupid people and silly laws.

GRAINGER: Exactly.

(He sighed emptily.)

GRAINGER: Still, that's enough about Guevina. I want my painting found, Flaxley. Please, do everything in your power to find out where it is.

FLAXLEY: I will. And your ex-wife isn't a suspect?

GRAINGER: I haven't seen nor heard from that cunt for over twenty years.

FLAXLEY: Then I reckon we can rule her out.

GRAINGER: Absolutely.

FLAXLEY: Okay, leave it to me.

(He nodded sternly.)

FLAXLEY: Albert... I may call you Albert, right?

GRAINGER: No. My name's Ashton.

FLAXLEY: I see. Well, Ashton, try not to worry. I'll make it my top priority. And when I say *my* top priority, I mean I'll delegate the investigation to my top people. I'll get them to drop whatever they're doing; which is currently nothing; and order them to give this investigation their full attention.

GRAINGER: Thanks, Sir Flaxley.

FLAXLEY: You're welcome. Albert, you've been a great benefactor to this town. You paid for the concert hall to be built; you donated to the school and the medical centre; you even donated half the books in the public library. You're an important member of our society, so

like I said, I'll make sure the investigation gets everyone's full attention. After what you've done for this town, it's the least you deserve.

GRAINGER: Thank you, Sir Flaxley.

FLAXLEY: You're welcome.

GRAINGER: Though, it's Ashton; not Albert.

FLAXLEY: Yes, I suspect it probably is.

Tifaeris High School.

(A short while later, Cayley headed into school, clutching several books to her chest. Grimacing nervously, she headed along a corridor then stepped into her form room. At once, her heart sunk and she mumbled under her breath.)

CAYLEY: Not again.

(Just as she'd feared, several boys were hovering near her desk; upon which there were several presents, including flowers and chocolate. One week ago, Sir Flaxley had beaten up the school bully, Baz, on her behalf, and he'd purposefully made it look like Cayley had done it herself. Now everyone in her class thought she was a powerful martial arts expert. As a result, those who'd previously helped Baz bully her were desperately trying to get on her good side by buying her things. They only accounted for a fraction of the gifts, however. Having defeated the much feared bully, she'd become something of a hero and most of the boys had fallen in love with her.)

As had been the case since the incident with Baz, as soon as Cayley had entered the room, an excited whisper had risen into the air. Cayley could only wince. She knew exactly what was coming. Sure enough, all the boys rushed towards her welcoming her to class and offering to carry her books for her. Having always been extremely shy around boys, it made her extremely uncomfortable.)

BOY 01: Cayley, come in; come in.

BOY 02: Let me carry those books for you.

BOY 03: Take a seat, Cayley; I brought you a cushion.

(Trembling, Cayley scampered towards her desk, swarming with boys on either side of her, like reporters hoping to get a scoop from a disgraced politician.)

CAYLEY: I just want to be left alone.

BOY 01: I'll be alone with you!

BOY 02: Me too!

BOY 01: How does that even work???

BOY 04: *I'll* be alone with you at lunchtime, Cayley. I've switched to bringing a packed lunch, just to keep you company.

(At once, all the boys scoffed at him.)

ALL: So have we!

BOY 01: Keep up, mate. We've been doing it all week.

BOY 04: Bastards!

(Cayley's brow immediately furrowed. When she was the bully's number one target, she'd been the *only* pupil who stayed at school for lunch. Now, half the class stayed; the male half.)

CAYLEY: For pity's sake.

(Once she finally made it to her desk, Cayley sat down then stared nervously at the floor; her hands firmly gripping the hem of her skirt tight to her thighs. To say she was tense would be quite the understatement.)

BOY 02: Look what I got you, Cayley! Freshly picked this morning.

BOY 03: Forget that; I made you chocolate.

BOY 05: Yeah, shit chocolate. I bought you the real deal!

BOY 03: Fuck off, mine was made with love.

BOY 05: Yeah? Mine was made by professionals and doesn't taste like dog fart.

(Mercifully, at this point, the teacher entered the room and called for everyone to take their seats. At once, the boys all sighed in defeat then did just that; leaving Cayley to endure the hateful stares she was receiving from many of the girls. Glancing nervously around the room, she could only whimper.)

CAYLEY: Being popular is scarier than being bullied.

(Seated in the chair next to her, her classmate, Foxton, shook his head on her behalf.)

FOXTON: Those lads aren't subtle, are they?

(Cayley could only look at him with wide eyes. She found boys greatly intimidating and didn't know how to respond.)

CAYLEY: I...

FOXTON: You're a nice person, Cayley; you don't deserve to be harassed like that. Those lads need to learn to control themselves.

(He shook his head.)

FOXTON: Hassling a beautiful girl like you just isn't on.

(He then flashed her the whitest, kindest smile, she'd ever seen. In that moment, Cayley's heart skipped a beat. Everything that wasn't Foxton's face immediately went out of focus and she felt incredibly weak all over. All she could do was exhale with love oozing from every pore. Having caught herself doing it, however, she immediately buried her head on her desk, among all the gifts she'd been left. She was burning red with embarrassment.

Watching her, Foxton couldn't help but smirk arrogantly. He then sat back and mumbled under his breath.)

FOXTON: Game on.

Ashton Grainger's Residence.

(A short while later, Phisele, Kyrie and a new detective named Roysten were waiting inside Ashton Grainger's study. Having been shown in by the maid, they were now waiting for their host to join them. Phisele had decreed that their investigation would start with interviewing the victim. Not only might the victim remember something he didn't mention to Flaxley when reporting the crime, but this tactic would offer him reassurance. And so, they could only wait for him to join them. Not blessed with a great deal of patience, this frustrated Phisele somewhat. Having only waited for a minute, she soon started to tap her leg impatiently. The wait, however, didn't bother Kyrie one bit. The new detective, Roysten, had only started that morning and it gave her time to learn more about him.)

KYRIE: You're a man!

(Roysten gave her a sideways glance.)

ROYSTEN: I'm well aware of that, thank you.

KYRIE: I like men!

ROYSTEN: So, I hear.

KYRIE: Don't get me wrong, I like women too. I've slept with hundreds of them; I'm really not fussy.

ROYSTEN: Right.

KYRIE: You're quite sexy for an older guy.

ROYSTEN: Um... thanks?

KYRIE: We should have sex!

PHISELE: Kyrie!

KYRIE: What?

PHISELE: Leave him alone!

KYRIE: I was just making conversation. Meeting new people is exciting.

(She smiled at Roysten.)

KYRIE: I'm Kyrie, by the way.

ROYSTEN: I know. We met this morning.

KYRIE: Right. I was just reminding you; in case you forgot.

ROYSTEN: I won't forget.

KYRIE: Cool. Wanna go upstairs and...

PHISELE: Kyrie!!!

KYRIE: What?

(Phisele rolled her eyes.)

PHISELE: Pack it in, will you? He has no interest in sleeping with you whatsoever.

KYRIE: He's hasn't?

ROYSTEN: No, I haven't!

(Kyrie mused to herself out loud.)

KYRIE: Must be a gay.

ROYSTEN: No, I'm bloody not!

PHISELE: Kyrie, the fact a man isn't interested in you, doesn't mean he's a gay!

KYRIE: I think we both know that's a lie.

ROYSTEN: I'm a happily married man!

KYRIE: So? I'm happy to overlook that!

ROYSTEN: I'm not!

PHISELE: And that's wise! Kyrie, he's married to Kassamandra!

KYRIE: Who?

PHISELE: Flaxley's wife's sister!

KYRIE: Kritz has a sister?

PHISELE: Yes!

ROYSTEN: And I married her.

(He nodded sternly.)

ROYSTEN: Trust me. Anyone with Sir Flaxley for a brother-in-law, knows that infidelity is out of the question. Unless they have a death-wish!

PHISELE: Not that Flaxley wouldn't kill you if you strayed.

ROYSTEN: No?

PHISELE: No. After Kritz was finished with you, there'd be nothing left for him to kill.

(She grinned.)

PHISELE: She can be such a violent psychopath, god bless her.

ROYSTEN: Anyway, the point is, Kyrie, I won't be sleeping with you. Ever. It's more than my life's worth!

(Kyrie licked her lips excitedly.)

KYRIE: Wow. That's so sexy.

ROYSTEN: What?

KYRIE: You're basically forbidden fruit! I want you now!

(Roysten hung his head.)

ROYSTEN: I can't work with this woman, Phisele, she's going to get me killed.

PHISELE: Don't be silly. It's actually very easy to stave off her advances, once you know how.

(She grimaced.)

PHISELE: She came on to *me* at first too. She really isn't fussy, like she said.

KYRIE: See?

(Kyrie then glanced to Roysten seductively.)

KYRIE: What say we head outside and take this to the next level, hot stuff? You know...

(As Kyrie continued to sweet talk him, Phisele suddenly whispered in Roysten's ear. At once, a quizzical expression crossed his brow.)

ROYSTEN: That'll work, will it?

PHISELE: Trust me!

(Roysten nodded then took Phisele's advice.)

ROYSTEN: So, you have a sister, do you, Kyrie?

(In that moment, Kyrie's entire demeanour changed and she beamed merrily. Gone was her lusty expression and her eyes glowed with pride.)

KYRIE: I *do* have a sister! She's so cute. She's really tiny. She's twelve you see; everyone's tiny when they're twelve. And she's a genius!

(Kyrie then went on to gush liberally about how awesome her little sister was. Watching her, Roysten grimaced then looked to Phisele.)

ROYSTEN: It worked like a charm.

PHISELE: Yup. She loves four things in this world. Sex, fashion, fighting and her little sister. Nothing else even remotely matters. And she can talk about them relentlessly for hours. So if she starts on about sex, just bring up one of her other three favourite subjects and you'll be free and clear.

ROYSTEN: Duly noted. Thanks, Phisele.

PHISELE: You're welcome.

(Just then, the door eased open and the homeowner strode into the room. Trying to sound upbeat, he looked to three detectives in his company then nodded warmly.)

GRAINGER: Morning, everyone.

(His head then hung low and his shoulders sunk.)

GRAINGER: No. I can't do it. I can't pretend to be upbeat. My painting's gone and I'm devastated.

PHISELE: And that's exactly why we're here, Mr Grainger. We'll do whatever we can to find it.

GRAINGER: I appreciate that, Phisele, but until it's found you'll have to forgive me for being a tad anxious.

PHISELE: That's to be expected under the circumstances, sir.

(She then nodded and gestured to her two colleagues.)

PHISELE: Anyway, let me introduce you to the team. This fine gentleman is Roysten; he used to work as an investigator for the Republic of Leathrock. He's highly intelligent and extremely perceptive.

GRAINGER: It's nice to meet you, Roysten.

ROYSTEN: Likewise, Sir.

PHISELE: And this young lady is Kyrie. She's... Kyrie.

KYRIE: Hello!

GRAINGER: Good morning.

PHISELE: And you know me, of course.

GRAINGER: Since you were little. And may I say, you've grown into a fine young lady. You *used to be* a right little bugger.

PHISELE: Yes, well, moving on, about this painting...

(Grainger sighed.)

GRAINGER: My precious artwork.

(He shook his head.)

GRAINGER: It was a genuine Schubert. An original. The last painting he was commissioned to make before his death. It was called 'The Princess of Hope'. It was a portrait of Chyna Lee, daughter of the mighty warlord, Dim Lee.

PHISELE: I see. And can you describe it for me?

GRAINGER: I just did. It was a portrait of an oriental woman.

PHISELE: Yes, but can you describe her? It'll help us recognise the painting if we see it.

GRAINGER: Oh, good point. Sorry, I'm not myself today. She was wearing a tight, white dress; one of those oriental things with slits up both sides.

PHISELE: A kung pao?

ROYSTEN: That's a type of oriental chicken dish.

KYRIE: She probably means a qipao.

(At once, Phisele and Roysten looked to Kyrie in astonishment.)

KYRIE: What? You're *surprised* I know about fashion? I'm offended!

GRAINGER: The young lady's spot on. She was wearing a long, white qipao. And she was leaning against a balcony, with rolling mountains in the background.

PHISELE: And what about her hair?

GRAINGER: Long and dark brown; the same colour as all oriental folk. It had white ribbons in it.

(Noting it all down, Roysten nodded.)

ROYSTEN: Noted. Now, cast your mind back, if you can. Can you think of anyone who came to your house and took a particular interest in the painting?

GRAINGER: Most people did. She was a remarkably beautiful woman.

ROYSTEN: I see.

PHISELE: Cast your mind back, Mr Grainger. Think hard. Is there anything you can think of? No matter how insignificant it may seem. Someone took that painting, and the chances are it was someone who expressed more than a passing interest in it.

(Grainger pouted.)

GRAINGER: That's the thing, you see? I don't recall anyone arousing my suspicions.

That's why I'm beginning to think it might have been *him*.

KYRIE: Who? Roysten?

(She shook her head.)

KYRIE: The police in this town commit more crimes than the criminals! First Galton, now Roysten! I'll take him into custody!

GRAINGER: No, you idiot! Not him! Not Roysten! *Him*... the art thief we all fear and daren't even speak the name of.

(Roysten nodded.)

ROYSTEN: The black squirrel!

GRAINGER: Exactly. The shameless master art thief who's evaded capture for over ten years.

ROYSTEN: That's the bugger. He's taken a fortune in artworks over the years and never left a single clue behind.

(Kyrie raised an eyebrow at him.)

KYRIE: It's suspicious that you know that!

PHISELE: I knew it too, Kyrie. Do you want to arrest me too?

KYRIE: Should I?

PHISELE: No. Now be quiet before you embarrass yourself any further.

KYRIE: I'm not embarrassed.

PHISELE: Shut up.

(She rolled her eyes.)

PHISELE: Now...

KYRIE: So who am I supposed to be arresting then?
PHISELE: Nobody! And if you try it, I'll break your face.
KYRIE: It's unlikely. Still, I'll arrest Roysten instead, just to be safe!
PHISELE: No, you won't!
GRAINGER: What's going on here? Is she a bit thick or something?
PHISELE: Incredibly so, yes. She's dim, but she can fight. Roysten is the opposite. Intelligent, but not so good at combat. We need *both* their specialities.
(Kyrie grimaced at Roysten.)
KYRIE: You can't fight?
ROYSTEN: I'm a lover not a fighter.
KYRIE: A wimp then.
PHISELE: Shut up, Severen.
KYRIE: Mean!
(Phisele nodded sternly.)
PHISELE: Okay, let's get this show on the road. Grainger, do you mind if we take a look around? Maybe we can find a clue as to how the thief got in.
GRAINGER: No, of course not please do.
PHISELE: Thank you.
(She nodded.)
PHISELE: I'll scour the ground floor; Roysten, you and Kyrie should check upstairs. Keep a sharp eye on her.
KYRIE: Like any man can avoid doing that.
PHISELE: Focus, Kyrie.
KYRIE: I will. And relax, if we find the murderer, we'll disable him then come and get you.
ROYSTEN: Murderer?
PHISELE: We're looking for signs of a break in, you tit!
KYRIE: Oh! Why?
PHISELE: To find out who stole the painting!
KYRIE: There's a painting?
(Phisele hung her head.)
PHISELE: I give up.
KYRIE: It won't be easy to find a stolen painting. There's hundreds of paintings in Tifaeris; how will we know which was stolen?
ROYSTEN: It...
KYRIE: Maybe the owner can sketch it for us, so we know what to look for.
(Grainger was appalled.)
GRAINGER: Sketch it? It was a master artwork by one of the greatest painters of our time; of course I can't bloody sketch it.
PHISELE: See, Kyrie? This is why I tell you not to speak.
KYRIE: I'm confused.
PHISELE: Just follow Roysten!
(With that, she stormed out of the room, mumbling under her breath.)
PHISELE: Fucking idiot!
(Having watched her leave the room, Roysten shook his head.)
ROYSTEN: Just come with me, Kyrie. I'll try to explain everything again on the way.
(He then led her away. Left behind, Grainger just shook his head.)
ROYSTEN: That girl's an idiot.
(A look of joy then swept onto his face.)
ROYSTEN: World class tits though.

Tifaeris High School.

(At three o'clock that afternoon, Kyrie was, as always, waiting outside Tifaeris High School for Cayley to come out. She did so with a disappointed expression on her face. Cayley used to sprint out of school with a desperate look in her eyes. Having convinced herself that Cayley had taken up running as a form of exercise, Kyrie used to enjoy seeing it. Sadly, she'd somehow failed to spot that her sister's desperate expression was only there because bullies were chasing her. In this last week, however, Cayley had walked from school, surrounded by boys, boxing her in so she couldn't run. Under the impression that Cayley had given up running, she was most disappointed. There was an upside, however. Seeing her little sister getting male attention was adorable. Enjoying a tease, it also gave her scope to wind her younger sibling up.)

As had been the case all week, as three o'clock came, the doors opened and once again, Cayley left the school building, burning red with embarrassment. She was flanked on both sides by amorous boys. With her head down, she soldiered onwards, not acknowledging them once. Upon reaching her sister, she then drew a sigh of relief. Too shy to try their luck with Kyrie around, the boys dispersed, leaving Cayley alone at last.)

CAYLEY: Stupid boys! I don't know how you can stand it.

KYRIE: Yeah, right. You love it!

(Cayley glowered at her indignantly.)

CAYLEY: I do not!

KYRIE: I could always make myself scarce, if you like.

CAYLEY: I would *not* like!

KYRIE: Liar. So which one do you like? The tall one? That blonde kid? Which?

(Cayley burned red and glanced away.)

CAYLEY: I just want to go home, Kyrie.

KYRIE: And miss out on all those boys? Are you mad? Just remember, when you kiss one, relax your jaw and let your tongue do the work.

(With a growl, Cayley then proceeded to head for home.)

CAYLEY: I'm not like you, Kyrie. I don't like boys!

KYRIE: Lesbian!

CAYLEY: What?

KYRIE: Nothing!

(With a chuckle, Kyrie then paced after her.)

KYRIE: I'm only teasing, sister face. It'll be a sad day when you eventually succumb to your natural desires and turn into me.

CAYLEY: That's never gonna happen.

(Kyrie sighed.)

KYRIE: I wish that was true.

CAYLEY: It is!

KYRIE: Okay, you tell yourself that. Just promise me one thing.

CAYLEY: What?

KYRIE: Try to remain all sweet and innocent for as long as you can.

CAYLEY: I...

KYRIE: Sooner or later you'll take a shine to a boy and he'll break your heart. I can't stand the thought of that.

(Cayley just smiled then took her sister's arm and leant her head against it lovingly as they paced onwards.)

CAYLEY: Don't worry about me, Kyrie.

KYRIE: But I do. I worry about you all the time.

CAYLEY: I worry about you too, but that's a good thing, right?

KYRIE: It is?

CAYLEY: Yeah. It means we both have someone out there looking out for us.

KYRIE: We do? Who?

CAYLEY: Each other!

KYRIE: Oh. Right.

(She smiled then glanced down at Cayley.)

KYRIE: Oh, yeah; you're gonna be by yourself tonight, sister face. I have to work; there's been a crime.

CAYLEY: I have to work too. At the inn.

KYRIE: Okay.

CAYLEY: Don't forget to pick me up afterwards.

KYRIE: Like I would. I might be a flaky dipshit but I've never forgotten *you*.

CAYLEY: Back when we were on the run, you left that town and wandered off without me...

KYRIE: I came back, didn't I?

CAYLEY: Yeah, several hours later. I cried the whole time!

KYRIE: That was a year ago.

CAYLEY: Even so...

KYRIE: Cayley, let it go. I'll be there, okay? That was a one off.

(Pacified, Cayley nodded then offered Kyrie a smile.)

CAYLEY: So, what's this crime?

KYRIE: What crime?

CAYLEY: The one you have to work on tonight.

KYRIE: Oh, that.

(She shrugged.)

KYRIE: I have to look for a painting. A stolen one.

CAYLEY: Really?

KYRIE: Yeah.

(She sighed.)

KYRIE: Someone pinched Ashton Grainger's favourite painting and I have to find it.

Somehow. How I'm meant to do that, I don't know. I don't even know what it looks like.

Well, not really.

CAYLEY: He must have given you *some* idea, Kyrie.

KYRIE: Not much of one. I just know it's called The Princess of Rope. It's a portrait of an oriental girl by some bloke called Shoelace.

(Cayley glanced skywards and mused to herself.)

CAYLEY: Do you mean The Princess of Hope by Schubert?

(Kyrie was astonished.)

KYRIE: That's the one! How could you possibly know that?

(She grinned.)

KYRIE: You didn't steal it, did you?

(A horrified expression then crossed her brow.)

KYRIE: Oh my god; you didn't, did you???

CAYLEY: Of course not.

KYRIE: Then how do you know about it?

CAYLEY: I read things, Kyrie. It's a famous piece.

KYRIE: Right. Well that's a relief. I'd hate to have to sling *you* in jail.

CAYLEY: I'd hate that too.

KYRIE: You see the problem though, right? How can I find a picture when I have no idea what it looks like?

(Cayley bit her lip.)

CAYLEY: Actually, I may know a way to remedy that.

KYRIE: What?

CAYLEY: You should visit my art teacher, Mr Lewis. He lives at number 3, Tragen Road.

KYRIE: Wait. What? You know where your teachers live?

CAYLEY: It's right near the school, Kyrie. We see him leave for work most mornings. I pointed him out to you once.

KYRIE: Oh, *that* guy.

CAYLEY: Yeah. You should ask him about it. He could probably sketch it for you; he's really talented.

KYRIE: And kinda sexy if I recall.

CAYLEY: Kyrie, no! Don't sleep with my teachers.

KYRIE: You know I can't make promises like that, Cayley. My lady-box goes where my libido takes her.

CAYLEY: Kyrie...

KYRIE: Fine. I'll behave, okay?

(She sighed.)

KYRIE: Why is everyone on my case today?

CAYLEY: I'm not on your case. I'm just trying to help you find that painting.

KYRIE: Fair enough. I'll drop in on him later on. Thanks, sister face.

CAYLEY: You're welcome.

Mr Lewis' Residence.

(Having seen her little sister home safely, Kyrie headed back out again. Happy to take Cayley's advice, she headed back towards the school then paced up to the art teacher's front door. Having hammered upon it, she then stood there with her hands behind her back, waiting patiently. Moments later, the door slid open and Mr Lewis stood there with his tongue almost on the floor.)

LEWIS: Well, hello there. What can I cleavage for you?

KYRIE: Thank you.

(She looked towards his groin.)

KYRIE: Nice bulge.

LEWIS: What?

KYRIE: Just returning the compliment.

LEWIS: I see. So...

KYRIE: I'm Kyrie. You teach my little sister, Cayley.

LEWIS: I know who you are.

KYRIE: You do? How?

(Not about to tell her how he always drooled over her when she collected her sister from school, Mr Lewis grimaced.)

LEWIS: That's classified.

(Being supremely dim, Kyrie accepted his excuse then smiled.)

KYRIE: Anyway, Cayley says you can probably help me, so I've come to ask you for a favour.

LEWIS: I see.

KYRIE: I know it seems a little rude to ask a complete stranger for something out of the blue, but I'm extremely sexy and you're a man; so I knew you wouldn't mind.

LEWIS: You're right. I don't. Please come in.

(With that, he stepped back then allowed Kyrie into his living room. Having entered the property, Kyrie then shut the door behind her and smiled.)

KYRIE: Thanks. You have an adequate home.

LEWIS: Thank you. So how can I help?

KYRIE: I have to look for a stolen painting. The Princess of Hope. I don't know what it looks like though. Cayley thought maybe you'd sketch it for me.

LEWIS: I see. Actually, I can go one better than that. I have a reproduction of that piece in my studio. Would you like to see it?

KYRIE: Yes. Yes, I would. Let's do that then go upstairs and have copious amounts of hot, sweaty sex.

LEWIS: Sold!

(Beaming with delight, he then hurried into his adjoining studio, encouraging Kyrie to follow. Once inside, he then gestured to a painting on an easel in the corner.)

LEWIS: In my spare time I like to recreate the classics, you see. It's not quite finished yet, but take a look, it's not a bad representation of the original.

(Eyeing up the painting of a beautiful, oriental princess, Kyrie licked her lips.)

KYRIE: Damn. She's really sexy. I totally would.

LEWIS: And she'd have probably let you. Rumour has it, she was quite the slut in her youth.

KYRIE: All the best people are.

(She smiled.)

KYRIE: So that's what I'm looking for. A painting that looks exactly like that.

LEWIS: Pretty much. I'd never claim to be able to paint at Schubert's level, but it's not a bad reproduction, even if I do say so myself.

KYRIE: Awesome.

(She then gave Mr Lewis a knowing glance.)

KYRIE: Right then, let's get me upstairs so you can bend me over and make me squeal.

LEWIS: Outstanding!

Tifaeris Guard Station. Main offices.

(Having left Mr Lewis's home, Kyrie headed back through town then paced back into the guard station. Upon reaching the front desk, she spotted Phisele in the rear office, writing up some notes. Seeing she was busy, she bit her lip then glanced to where Roysten was leaning against the counter, reading a document.)

KYRIE: What are you doing? And why isn't it me?

(Roysten glanced up at her defiantly.)

ROYSTEN: Stop it.

KYRIE: Stop what? I didn't do anything.

ROYSTEN: Stop making suggestive remarks.

KYRIE: I can't do that, I'm afraid. I don't know what they are. Maybe you can take me to bed and tell me over a nice hot cup of sex.

(Roysten sighed.)

ROYSTEN: So, you like shoes, I hear.

KYRIE: Like them? Are you kidding me? I love them. Well, not all of them. Men's shoes are stupid. So are most of Phisele's, but I'd never tell her that.

(Kyrie then continued to waffle randomly about shoes for the next several minutes, giving Roysten time to finish reading his document. Once he'd completed it, however, he then made the mistake of wandering off.)

KYRIE: Where are you going? I was telling you about my thigh-high boots. I spent most of last week's wages on them. Cayley was livid. I spent our entire food budget on them, so she had to spend all her wages from playing the piano to replace it. Still, it was worth it.

ROYSTEN: Kyrie...

KYRIE: Yes, lover?

(She fluttered her eyelashes at him.)

KYRIE: Are you ready to make out yet?

ROYSTEN: No.

KYRIE: But you promised.

ROYSTEN: No, I didn't!

KYRIE: Well someone did. And it wasn't me.

(She then bit her lip.)

KYRIE: Actually, yes it was. I promised myself we'd be making out before nightfall. So we'd better hurry up. I'd hate to think I lied to myself.

(She nodded sternly.)

KYRIE: That'd never do. If I can't trust myself, who can I trust? So, anyway, let's head into the back room and make sweet music together. And by music, I mean a gooey mess on the carpet.

ROYSTEN: Kyrie...

(Much to his relief, Phisele then came strolling from the back office to address them both.)

PHISELE: Good, you're back.

KYRIE: I am, yes.

PHISELE: This evening, Kyrie, I want you to head to the far gates of the town. East and West.

KYRIE: At the same time?

PHISELE: Obviously not.

(She took a deep breath to calm herself then continued.)

PHISELE: Let me explain it so you can understand, Kyrie. I want you both to go to the east gate and ask people there if they saw anyone leave town with what looked like a picture frame, okay?

KYRIE: *Just* a frame? What if it had a picture in it?

PHISELE: Kyrie...

(She then looked to Roysten.)

PHISELE: You know the plan, Roysten. Just go with her and help her out.

ROYSTEN: Yes, ma'am.

PHISELE: And Kyrie, focus.

KYRIE: I always do!

(She sighed.)

KYRIE: It's a bit of a shame we're only looking for a picture frame though. I know what the painting looks like now. I saw it earlier.

(Phisele and Roysten both threw her an astonished glance.)

PHISELE: You did?

KYRIE: Yeah. I told Cayley I had no idea what I'm looking for, so she sent over to see her art teacher, Mr Somebody.

PHISELE: The school's art teacher is Mr Lewis.

KYRIE: That's him. Cute fella with small feet and a massive...

PHISELE: We don't want to know.

KYRIE: Right. Sorry.

(Phisele then looked to her, waiting for her to elaborate on what she'd seen at Mr Lewis's house. Kyrie, however, said nothing.)

PHISELE: You were saying?

KYRIE: Who was?

PHISELE: You!

ROYSTEN: You said you went to see Mr Lewis.

KYRIE: I did, yes.

(Silence ensued.)

PHISELE: And what happened?

KYRIE: Oh. He showed me the painting.

PHISELE: He has the painting???

KYRIE: Well, one that looks exactly like it. Apparently, he likes to recreate old bastards.

ROYSTEN: Old masters.

KYRIE: If you say so.

(Kyrie then stood there, staring into space. As she did so, Phisele bit her lip then stepped close to Roysten; opting to speak to him in a hushed tone.)

PHISELE: She said Cayley sent her to see Mr Lewis, didn't she?

ROYSTEN: She did, yes. Why?

PHISELE: Cayley's a genius. She was the one who solved our last case but made sure Kyrie got the credit.

ROYSTEN: Why?

PHISELE: Because she needs Kyrie to keep her job.

(She nodded.)

PHISELE: I bet she's doing it again. I bet she figured out Mr Lewis was the thief then sent Kyrie over there in the hope she'd arrest him.

ROYSTEN: Do you think that's likely?

PHISELE: I do. Unfortunately for Cayley, Kyrie's so dim she believed Mr Lewis's story about reproductions and came back here instead. Without arresting him.

ROYSTEN: I see.

(He nodded.)

ROYSTEN: We should pay this chap a visit.

PHISELE: Indeed.

(She then stepped around the counter.)

PHISELE: Let's go, you two.

KYRIE: Where?

PHISELE: I want to see this painting you mentioned.

KYRIE: You should. It's really good.

PHISELE: And I will. Now, come on.

(Moments later, the three of them headed from the guard station and paced down the street, en route to Mr Lewis's house.)

KYRIE: It'll be dark soon.

(She nodded.)

KYRIE: We need to hurry up, I've got a promise to keep.

ROYSTEN: No, you haven't.

KYRIE: Yes, I have. And keep it I *will*. Even if I have to tie you to a chair and *make* you do me.

(Roysten furrowed his brow.)

ROYSTEN: You do *know* rape is a crime, right?

KYRIE: Of course I do. I'm a policewoman. I know *all* the crimes. I've committed a few of them myself, actually. And Cayley's been tutoring me on the others. I know what all of them are now.

(She beamed with pride.)

KYRIE: Rape is when you destroy public property for no good reason.

PHISELE: That's vandalism!

KYRIE: It is?

PHISELE: Yes!

(She furrowed her brow.)

PHISELE: Kyrie, did you learn *any* of the crimes I told you to memorise?

KYRIE: Yes. I just said, Cayley's been tutoring me.

PHISELE: And it's been working, has it?

KYRIE: Yup. I really good at it now.

PHISELE: Then what's larceny?

KYRIE: Anal sex. I fail to see why it's a crime though.

PHISELE: Anal sex *isn't* a crime!

KYRIE: Then why put it on the list?

PHISELE: I didn't! I put larceny on the list, Kyrie. Larceny is the theft of personal property.

KYRIE: Since when?

PHISELE: Since crime was invented!

ROYSTEN: What made you think it was anal sex???

KYRIE: It has the word arse in it.

(Phisele's shoulder's slumped.)

PHISELE: You haven't learned a thing, have you?

KYRIE: Yes, I have.

PHISELE: Then what's blackmail?

KYRIE: A description of the mugger!

(She beamed.)

KYRIE: See? I know my stuff.

PHISELE: Kyrie...

(She sighed.)

PHISELE: Never mind.

ROYSTEN: Phisele? How did this person manage to become a police officer?

KYRIE: That's a bit mean!

PHISELE: No, no; he has every right to ask. I'm sure everyone you've ever met is curious.

(She looked to Roysten.)

PHISELE: If you ask Flaxley, he'll say she became a police officer because she can fight.

Fact is, she was washed up on the beach here with her sister, shipwrecked. Flaxley took pity on them and gave her a job. With me. Basically, his innate kindness is my burden.

ROYSTEN: But can't he see she's... unusual?

PHISELE: Yes, he can. Everyone he sends to work with me is bloody hopeless.

ROYSTEN: I'm offended.

PHISELE: Except you. You're the first intelligent person I've worked with in years.

(She sighed.)

PHISELE: It's an easy job, you see? Crime is rare in this town so he doesn't think having top quality policing is a priority. And so I suffer. If there's a well-meaning idiot willing to do the job, they always get sent my way. I can't wait until I reach retirement age.

ROYSTEN: It must be tough.

PHISELE: It's a nightmare.

(They then soldiered onwards with Phisele sighing despairingly. As they did so, Roysten kept a sharp eye on Kyrie, just in case she made any advances in his direction. Kyrie, however, had started thinking about shoes and was away in a world of her own. A few minutes later, however, they arrived at Mr Lewis's house. Standing firm, Phisele hammered on the door then placed her hands behind her back. A few seconds later, the door swung open.)

LEWIS: Yes? Oh, hello again, Kyrie. Phisele. Bloke I don't know.

KYRIE: Hiya!

PHISELE: Mr Lewis, I'm told you have a reproduction of The Princess of Hope by Schubert. Do you mind if I take a look.

(Mr Lewis scratched behind his ear.)

LEWIS: Actually, I was just on my way out. Can it wait until later?

PHISELE: It won't take a moment.

LEWIS: Yes, but I don't have a moment. Now, if you don't mind...

(He then attempted to close the door on them. Before he could quite close it however, Phisele booted the door open again then yelled at Kyrie.)

PHISELE: Subdue him!!!

LEWIS: What???

(Within seconds, courtesy of Kyrie's swift actions, he was pinned to the floor in a hold.)

LEWIS: What are you doing?

PHISELE: Where was the painting when you saw it, Kyrie?

KYRIE: In the main room.

PHISELE: Right. Keep him pinned down. Come with me, Roysten.

(With that, Roysten and Phisele hurried into the living room. Spotting the painting on an easel before them, they shared a wry smile.)

PHISELE: There it is.

ROYSTEN: In all its glory.

PHISELE: Kudos once again to Kyrie's sister. She's solved the crime.

ROYSTEN: Looks like it.

(Phisele then paced back into the hallway.)

PHISELE: Mr Lewis, I'm arresting you for art theft.

LEWIS: Art theft?

PHISELE: Yes. You stole The Princess of Hope by...

LEWIS: It's a reproduction!!! I painted that.

PHISELE: A likely story.

(She then whispered to Roysten.)

PHISELE: Cayley would never make such a silly mistake.

(She then stood tall.)

PHISELE: Kyrie?

KYRIE: Yes?

PHISELE: Take him away.

KYRIE: Who?

PHISELE: Lewis!!!

KYRIE: Where shall I take...

PHISELE: To jail, you idiot!

LEWIS: But I haven't done anything. It's a reproduction.

PHISELE: Lies.

(She then watched as Kyrie carted Lewis away in a headlock.)

PHISELE: Well, well. That was easy. This case almost solved itself.

(She exhaled.)

PHISELE: Marvellous.

Wood Road, Tifaeris.

(Late that evening, following her stint playing piano at the inn, Cayley walked back through the darkened streets of Tifaeris with Kyrie at her side. Worn out from the long day she'd had, she barely spoke a word. Kyrie, on the other hand, was absolutely buzzing. As they headed forth she talked more than enough for both of them.)

KYRIE: As naked as the day I was born, I was. Just running about on the beach. I felt so free. We couldn't have done that in our hometown, sister face. We'd have been arrested. Not here though. I just ran around without a care in the world and nobody minded. Unless you count the dozens of angry beach-goers who told me put some clothes on and threatened me with violence. It was great.

(She exhaled.)

KYRIE: It was the perfect way to spend my time off while I waited for you to finish your shift at the inn.

(Cayley looked to her through tired eyes.)

CAYLEY: They gave you time off? I thought you had a crime to solve.

KYRIE: What crime?

CAYLEY: That art theft.

KYRIE: There was an art theft?

(She suddenly looked enlightened.)

KYRIE: Oh, the thing with the painting. Nope. Phisele solved that one already. Your art teacher, Mr Lewis did it.

(Cayley's eyes rocketed wide open.)

CAYLEY: What???

KYRIE: You heard.

CAYLEY: Why does she think it was him???

KYRIE: Well, I went over there like you told me to. And he showed me a picture that looked just like the original. So I told Phisele and she went over and arrested him.

CAYLEY: Kyrie, he does reproductions of famous art pieces as a hobby. I told you that earlier!

KYRIE: And?

CAYLEY: Did you tell Phisele that, or did you just tell her Mr Lewis has a painting just like the stolen one?

KYRIE: I forget.

CAYLEY: Kyrie...

KYRIE: No, wait. I told her you said he likes to create old bastards.

CAYLEY: I never said that word!

KYRIE: Yes, you did.

CAYLEY: No, I didn't. If I'd used *that* word, you'd have spanked me.

KYRIE: Good point.

CAYLEY: I said old *masters*.

KYRIE: That's the one. Is that bad then?

(Cayley mused to herself.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie, Phisele's not an idiot, you know. As much as we denied it, she knows it was me who solved that murder recently. I bet she thought I'd solved the case again.

KYRIE: I don't follow.

CAYLEY: When you told Phisele that I told you to visit Mr Smith, she must have thought I was pointing you in the right direction for solving the crime.

KYRIE: This is all way too complicated for me.

CAYLEY: What I'm saying is, Phisele's mistaken.

KYRIE: But you just said she's *not* an idiot.

CAYLEY: Even smart people make mistakes, Kyrie.

KYRIE: I see. That's good to know.

(She nodded.)

KYRIE: Anyway, let's go home and make some cocoa before we go to bed.

CAYLEY: No, Kyrie. An innocent man is in jail. We need to sort this out *right now*.

KYRIE: We do?

CAYLEY: Yes. And besides, we're out of cocoa.

(Kyrie gasped.)

KYRIE: We are?

CAYLEY: Yes. Somehow you got it confused with the curry powder the other night, remember?

(Kyrie grimaced.)

KYRIE: Yeah... those onions tasted really weird. And let me tell you, chocolate and chicken really don't mix. It was horrible.

CAYLEY: Not as horrible as the drink you made me before bed!

(Kyrie blushed.)

KYRIE: Yeah, sorry about that.

(She smiled.)

KYRIE: Still, no harm done, right?

CAYLEY: No harm done? My lips felt like fire all night.

KYRIE: Yeah, but on the bright side, your diarrhoea had cleared up nicely by the following morning.

CAYLEY: I don't want to talk about that.

KYRIE: Fine. Let's just get off home and have that cocoa then.

(Cayley groaned.)

CAYLEY: You've got a head like a sieve!

KYRIE: A sieve with amazing hair though, right?

CAYLEY: Whatever. Kyrie, we're out of cocoa and before we go anywhere, we have to see Phisele and set the record straight.

KYRIE: We do?

CAYLEY: Yes. Now, come on.

(With that, Cayley bounded forth towards the police station. With a shrug, Kyrie followed on.

A few minutes later, following a brief walk through the centre of town, Kyrie and Cayley arrived outside the police station. Finding the door locked and the place in darkness, Cayley quickly reached the logical conclusion that Phisele had gone home for the night. Kyrie, however, had her own logic.)

KYRIE: Either they moved the police station while I was out, or we've come to the wrong building.

CAYLEY: Or Phisele's simply gone home.

KYRIE: Nope. This is definitely the wrong building.

(She nodded.)

KYRIE: It can't be helped. All the streets in this town look alike.

CAYLEY: No, they don't.

KYRIE: They do to me. Come on, let's go and find the right building.

CAYLEY: This *is* the right building, Kyrie!

KYRIE: What makes you say that?

(Cayley pointed to the police station sign above the door.)

CAYLEY: Is that clue too subtle for you, detective?

(Kyrie gave her a suspicious glance.)

KYRIE: Are you mocking me, young lady?

(Cayley whimpered.)

CAYLEY: No.

KYRIE: You'd better not be. I can never tell for sure, but you *know* I'm not above giving you a slap if I'm suspicious.

CAYLEY: I wasn't. Honest.

KYRIE: Cayley...

(Just then, much to Cayley's relief, a friendly voice rose up from in front of them.)

FLAXLEY: Hello, ladies.

KYRIE: Hiya.

CAYLEY: Hi, d... Sir Flaxley.

(She then turned bright red.)

FLAXLEY: You're out and about late.

KYRIE: Yeah. So are you.

FLAXLEY: I was just off to see someone.

KYRIE: Cool. I've forgotten what *we're* doing.

(Cayley rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: We were coming to see Phisele.

FLAXLEY: Oh?

CAYLEY: It's about Mr Lewis.

FLAXLEY: The art thief?

KYRIE: That's him.

CAYLEY: We think he's been falsely accused.

KYRIE: We do?

(Cayley lowered her voice.)

CAYLEY: Shush, Kyrie. We need him to think you're a competent detective.

KYRIE: Yeah, but...

CAYLEY: Thing is, Sir Flaxley, Mr Lewis makes reproductions of old masters, you see? So Kyrie thinks arresting him might have been a mistake.

KYRIE: No, I don't.

CAYLEY: Shut up!

(Flaxley bit his lip.)

FLAXLEY: Reproductions, you say?

CAYLEY: Yeah, Kyrie thinks that if you look closely, you'll see the picture he has can't be the original, because the original was painted using Juju dye for the red paint. Look closer and you'll see it's not the original because it was done with cheap, domestic paint. The owner will know what I mean.

(Kyrie looked most impressed.)

KYRIE: I thought all that? Clearly I'm not as dim as I think I am.

(Well aware that Cayley was the brains behind every correct thing Kyrie had ever said,

Flaxley smiled.)

FLAXLEY: I was actually off to see Mr Grainger right now. Leave it with me. Good work, Kyrie.

KYRIE: Apparently so.

FLAXLEY: And don't worry, Cayley. If the painting isn't the original, we'll have Mr Lewis home in a jiffy.
(Cayley beamed.)
CAYLEY: Thanks, dad.
(She shrieked.)
CAYLEY: Flaxley!
(She then took off down the road in tears. Watching her go, Kyrie bit her lip.)
KYRIE: So...
FLAXLEY: She still thinks I'm her father?
KYRIE: Yeah... I kind of didn't tell her otherwise. You know... because...
(She then took off after Cayley. Watching them go, Flaxley just chuckled then headed away.)

Tifaeris Guard Station, Evidence Room.

(Having collected the painting's owner, Ashton Grainger, from his home, Sir Flaxley led him to the police station then took him to the evidence room. Once inside, he showed him to the painting then watched as Mr Grainger scrutinised it with his eyes, rubbing his chin as he did so.)
GRAINGER: Hmm...
FLAXLEY: Something wrong?
GRAINGER: This isn't my painting, Sir Flaxley.
FLAXLEY: I see.
(He mumbled to himself.)
FLAXLEY: So Cayley was right.
GRAINGER: Who?
FLAXLEY: I meant Kyrie.
GRAINGER: Kyrie? The randy halfwit who came to my house earlier?
FLAXLEY: Yes. She suspected this wasn't the original.
GRAINGER: Really? Only she left me with the impression that she couldn't tell a painting from a wheelbarrow.
FLAXLEY: I see. Well, she *can* come over that way, but she's got special something that makes her a superb detective.
GRAINGER: And what's that?
(Not about to reveal that Kyrie's special something was her little sister, Flaxley just smiled.)
FLAXLEY: It's hard to explain.
GRAINGER: I see.
(Mr Grainger then looked to the painting.)
GRAINGER: Anyway, this is clearly a fake. The red paint is clearly wrong. It looks like the cheap stuff I donated to the school. And you can clearly see pencil markings where the artist has drawn it before colouring it in. True masters like the great Schubert would never do such a thing. No, this is a fake and not even a good one.
(He sighed.)
GRAINGER: Bugger. I really hoped it be mine.
FLAXLEY: As did I.
GRAINGER: You'll keep searching, right?
FLAXLEY: Of course.
GRAINGER: Thanks, Sir Flaxley. Though I'm starting to fear it might be lost forever.
FLAXLEY: Don't be downhearted, old chap.
GRAINGER: It's hard not to be, Flaxley. It really is.

(He then offered Flaxley a strained smile before heading for the door. Having watched him go, Flaxley sighed then headed for the cells.)

FLAXLEY: Mr Lewis?

(At once, a desperate cry rose up from the nearest cell door.)

LEWIS: I'm innocent!!!

FLAXLEY: I know. I'm here to release you.

LEWIS: Oh.

(Flaxley then strode up to the cell, opened the door and allowed Mr Lewis to step outside.)

FLAXLEY: Sorry about that. It appears there was an oversight.

LEWIS: Right...

(His nostrils then started to twitch.)

LEWIS: I trust I'll be getting some sort of compensation for this, Sir Flaxley? I was thrown into a cell and treated like a common criminal. It's not on! I'm a law-abiding citizen! Now what are you going to do about it? How are you going to compensate me?

(Flaxley nodded thoughtfully.)

FLAXLEY: You want compensation, do you, Mr Law-abiding citizen?

LEWIS: I do! Yes!

FLAXLEY: Then how's this? As an apology for incarcerating you this evening, I won't tell the school about the paint you stole from the art department to make your reproduction with. The reproduction that got you arrested.

(Lewis trod the ground uneasily.)

LEWIS: Um...

FLAXLEY: Go on, clear off. And let it be a lesson to you. By stealing art supplies, you almost implicated yourself in a major art theft. Some would call that karma, wouldn't you agree?

LEWIS: Well... I guess you could... I'm just gonna go home and say no more about it.

FLAXLEY: That would be wise.

(Lewis then scampered out of the building, leaving Flaxley chuckling to himself.)

FLAXLEY: I love this town, I really do.

(His face then straightened out and he nodded to himself.)

FLAXLEY: I'd better have a word with Phisele in the morning though. We can't go around falsely accusing people of crimes. This isn't some backward, idiot sanctuary like Guevina. Still, that's tomorrow...

(He then rubbed his hands together gleefully.)

FLAXLEY: Now to go home and make love to my beautiful wife. God, I love being me.

(He then strutted away excitedly.)

Outside Tifaeris High School.

(As eight o'clock approached, the following morning, Kyrie and Cayley headed for the town's school. Not looking forward to running the gauntlet of love struck boys again, Cayley was very much ill at ease. Oblivious to this, Kyrie paced forth merrily, revelling in her achievement the night before.)

KYRIE: He just gave it to me, Cayley. He just gave me half a tub of cocoa. I was so happy.

CAYLEY: You said.

KYRIE: I didn't even have to offer to suck him off.

(Cayley groaned.)

CAYLEY: For pity's sake...

KYRIE: But you know me. Just because I don't *have to* offer, doesn't mean I won't.

(She beamed.)

KYRIE: So I did! Shame his wife overheard really. She was livid, but still. Free cocoa. We've got awesome neighbours, Cayley; we really have.

CAYLEY: Our neighbours hate you!

KYRIE: Only the married female ones.

(Just then, Mr Lewis paced past them on his way into school. At once, Kyrie and Cayley came to a standstill and watched on as he glowered at them both.)

KYRIE: He looks really angry.

CAYLEY: Of course he does. He did you a favour by showing you what that painting looked like and ended up in jail because of it.

KYRIE: Yeah, but we got him released. He should be grateful.

CAYLEY: Should he? That's like saying someone should be grateful if you pick them up after pushing them over.

KYRIE: And they should!

CAYLEY: Right...

(She shook her head.)

CAYLEY: I'm going to school.

KYRIE: Okay.

(With that, they shared a hug then Cayley headed for the gates. Watching her go, Kyrie beamed with pride then placed her hands on her hips.)

KYRIE: Have a great day, sister face.

(Just then, a young lad's voice rose up from her side.)

FOXTON: Excuse me? Miss Severen?

(Kyrie looked at him with a highly amused grin on her face.)

KYRIE: Miss Severen? That's a bit formal. Who are you, my bloody doctor? Not ill, am I?

(A look of horror then crossed her brow.)

KYRIE: Oh my god, I'm not am I?

FOXTON: Um...

KYRIE: Wait. You're not my doctor. How old are you? Twelve?

FOXTON: Yes!

KYRIE: Then stop pretending to be my doctor! You can't be a doctor at your age.

(She mused to herself.)

KYRIE: But then again, Cayley could. She could probably be a surgeon too.

(With a nod she then looked the boy in the eye.)

KYRIE: Fine. Go on, give it to me straight. What's the diagnosis?

FOXTON: There isn't one. I'm not a doctor, I'm Cayley's classmate.

KYRIE: Then why tell me you're a doctor?

FOXTON: I didn't!

KYRIE: Well somebody did.

FOXTON: Well it wasn't me.

KYRIE: Are you sure?

(She then bit her lip as she recalled something.)

KYRIE: Wait. I don't even *have* a doctor. Maybe I imagined it.

(She then shrugged it off.)

KYRIE: So, what can I do for you?

(Psyching himself up, the boy took a deep breath then looked Kyrie in the eye.)

FOXTON: Miss Severen, I'd like to court your sister.

KYRIE: Court her?

(She scratched her head in bewilderment for a moment then suddenly looked enlightened.)

KYRIE: You mean catch her. It won't be easy though, her running's improved a lot since we came to this town.

(Foxton looked completely bewildered.)

FOXTON: What? No. I don't mean caught as in catch. I mean I want to *court* her. You know, I want to date her.

KYRIE: No need. I can tell you exactly how old she is. She's twelve.

FOXTON: That's... huh? No. I know she's twelve. So am I. I just asking for your permission to take her to dinner

(Kyrie immediately grabbed him by the collar and pulled him close to snarl in his face.)

KYRIE: If you even *think* about taking her dinner, I'll batter you senseless!

FOXTON: I said I want to take her *to* dinner!

KYRIE: She doesn't *have* two dinners!

(She paused for thought then nodded.)

KYRIE: Unless you count pudding. But still, the answer's no. She needs all the nutrition she can get. Even I know that.

(She let go of Foxton then smiled.)

KYRIE: I have no idea what nutrition is, I just know she needs it. Now run along; you're making me late for work.

(She then headed away, glancing back as she did so.)

KYRIE: And stay away from my sister's food!

FOXTON: I...

(He then hung his head in defeat.)

FOXTON: Right...

Tifaeris Guard Station.

(At the police headquarters at this time, Flaxley and his beloved wife, Kritz, were leaning against the counter talking as they waited for Phisele to arrive for her shift. Having taken a keen interest in the case, Flaxley looked more than a little frustrated.)

FLAXLEY: Where is she? Her shift is supposed to start at nine sharp.

KRITZ: It's just gone eight, my love. Be patient.

FLAXLEY: You make a compelling point.

(Kritz offered him a concerned smile.)

KRITZ: This case is getting to you, isn't it?

FLAXLEY: I won't lie to you, darling. Yes. It is. Ashton Grainger has been a great benefactor to this town. His donations have made all the difference.

KRITZ: Yes, they have. Without him, the school would have next to no equipment. Or furniture! And the public library would never have even got started.

FLAXLEY: Exactly. He's been a godsend. And now, in his time of need, we're struggling to repay his kindness. It's rattling me, Kritz.

KRITZ: I can tell. We only made love four times last night.

(She sighed.)

KRITZ: I felt so neglected.

FLAXLEY: I can only apologise for that.

KRITZ: I'll get over it.

(She smiled.)

KRITZ: Listen, my love, go easy on Phisele when she comes. Everyone makes mistakes.

FLAXLEY: I aware of that, my love. I'm not here to tell her off. Not entirely, anyway. I needed to get here before she did, because if she came in first and found the cells empty, she'd think the prisoner escaped.

KRITZ: I'm just saying, I'm sure Phisele shares your determination to find the culprit, so don't be hard on her.

FLAXLEY: No, no. That's a fair comment.

(Just then, Phisele made her way through the front door. Sighting Flaxley and Kritz, her face broke into a warm smile.)

PHISELE: Oh, hi, guys.

KRITZ: Hello, love.

(They greeted each other with a kiss on the cheek, then Phisele looked to Flaxley.)

PHISELE: You're here early.

FLAXLEY: Indeed. I released Mr Lewis last night, so I had to make sure I was here when you arrived. You know, just in case you thought he'd escaped or something.

PHISELE: Right. I see.

(She grimaced.)

PHISELE: Why did you release him?

FLAXLEY: More to the point, why did you arrest him?

PHISELE: We found him with the painting.

(She smiled.)

PHISELE: When I say, we found him, I mean Kyrie did. Cayley led her to it, but just like last time, she wants Kyrie to take the credit.

(Flaxley shook his head.)

FLAXLEY: Phisele, Cayley merely sent Kyrie to Mr Lewis because he does reproductions of artworks. She just wanted Mr Lewis to show Kyrie an example of what she was looking for. Cayley didn't solve the crime at all.

PHISELE: She didn't? Are you sure?

FLAXLEY: Yes. She told me herself.

(He rolled his eyes.)

FLAXLEY: Anyway, I showed Mr Grainger the picture from the evidence room and he confirmed it wasn't the original. You basically arrested Mr Lewis for being kind enough to do Kyrie a favour.

(Phisele grimaced.)

PHISELE: Aw, crap.

FLAXLEY: Yes. Crap. Crap police work.

KRITZ: Easy, darling.

FLAXLEY: Quite. Sorry.

(Phisele shook her head.)

PHISELE: That's not good, is it?

FLAXLEY: It's horrendous. You assumed because Cayley had sent her sister somewhere, it must be a clue. That's really poor, Phisele.

PHISELE: I know. I'm sorry.

FLAXLEY: Cayley is a child. She's not here to solve crimes.

PHISELE: Yes, but in my defence, she's probably the best detective in Tifaeris. By far. So when I heard she'd sent Kyrie somewhere, and that Kyrie had seen the painting, I just put two and two together.

KRITZ: And came up with four!

FLAXLEY: Two and two *is* four, darling.

KRITZ: I meant five.

FLAXLEY: Right. Anyway, Phisele...

PHISELE: Sir?

FLAXLEY: Get back on the case today, please. Hunt that painting down. We owe Grainger a debt of gratitude. Kritz and I might have rebuilt this town, but his donations turned into a great place to live. So this case needs to be solved as soon as possible.

PHISELE: You know I'll do my best.

(Flaxley placed his arm around her.)

FLAXLEY: I'm sure you will.

(He then kissed the top of her head.)

FLAXLEY: Good girl. And so you know, I'll be out doing some investigating of my own.

PHISELE: Let us know if you find anything.

FLAXLEY: Of course.

(Kritz smiled to Phisele.)

KRITZ: Will you be coming over for dinner this evening, love?

FLAXLEY: No, she won't. She'll be too busy working this case.

KRITZ: She can take an hour off to eat, my love.

FLAXLEY: Then I stand corrected. We'll see you at eight.

PHISELE: Eight it is.

(They all shared a warm smile then Flaxley sighed to himself.)

FLAXLEY: Right. That's that sorted, now I have another problem to fix.

KRITZ: Oh?

FLAXLEY: Young Cayley. She called me dad last night.

PHISELE: Dad?

FLAXLEY: She didn't mean to, but when she realised she had, she fled.

KRITZ: She still thinks you're her dad? Didn't Kyrie tell her otherwise?

FLAXLEY: Apparently not.

PHISELE: Wait, what? Cayley thinks you're her dad?

(Flaxley sighed.)

FLAXLEY: Yes. You know those two books out there in my name?

PHISELE: The ones you didn't mean to get published?

FLAXLEY: Yes, them. They were meant to be my personal notes, but a so-called friend of mine took them and mass-produced them, pretending they were my memoirs.

(He sighed.)

FLAXLEY: He sent some bloke to the new world, including Kyrie and Cayley's home town to do book signings. Masquerading as me! Well, it seems he had a merry old time doing it because I've had several kids turning up here, thinking I'm their father.

PHISELE: Well that can't be good.

KRITZ: It isn't.

(She shook her head.)

KRITZ: That guy got Kyrie and Cayley's mum pregnant when he did the first book tour then did it again for the second book. Hence, Kyrie and Cayley have the same father but have never met him.

FLAXLEY: It seems Cayley found out when the book tours were, and worked out that they were nine months before each of them were born. She put two and two together and came up with...

KRITZ: Five!

FLAXLEY: Exactly.

KRITZ: See? I *can* be taught.

(She chuckled then looked to Flaxley.)

KRITZ: Look, don't worry about that now, my love. I'll talk to Cayley in a few days. It'll sound better coming from me.

FLAXLEY: Well...

KRITZ: It'll also spare you looking into her big, loving eyes and breaking her heart.

FLAXLEY: A good point. Thanks, my love. Did I tell you you're the perfect wife?

KRITZ: Yeah, but it was nothing I didn't know already.

(Phisele grinned then stood tall.)

PHISELE: Anyway, leave it with me, guys. I'll put everything I have into finding that picture. You mark my words. If I don't find it then it can't be found.

FLAXLEY: That's what I want to hear.

PHISELE: I know.

FLAXLEY: I...

(Belated realising what she'd said, Flaxley glowered at her only to find her giggling with Kritz.)

FLAXLEY: That's not funny!

Tifaeris Inn.

(Over at the inn at this time, the landlord and landlady were deep in discussion. They needed a way to bring more customers into the inn, and the landlord had had an idea. Standing across the bar from his wife, he watched her drying a tankard then thumped the worktop.)

LANDLORD: Darling, last night's takings were shit. Utter dog shit.

LANDLADY: Well, yes. It was quiet, I suppose.

LANDLORD: Too quiet.

LANDLADY: Well, we can't expect a packed house every night.

LANDLORD: Actually, I think maybe we can.

LANDLADY: Oh? Sounds like you have a plan.

(The landlord smirked.)

LANDLORD: I have actually.

LANDLADY: Ooh. Let's hear it then.

LANDLORD: Okay.

(He nodded.)

LANDLORD: Kyrie.

(There was silence for a moment then the landlady furrowed her brow.)

LANDLADY: My name's Tracey!

LANDLORD: I know that, dear. I wasn't calling you Kyrie. I'm saying she's the answer.

(The landlady looked most bemused.)

LANDLADY: Come again.

LANDLORD: Surely you've noticed it.

LANDLADY: Noticed what?

LANDLORD: Whenever Kyrie's in the bar, the place is packed. On the night's she *isn't*, all the men pop their head in, groan then leave again. Her mere presence in the bar brings in the punters.

(His wife mused to herself.)

LANDLADY: That's true, actually.

LANDLORD: Right? So it'd make sense to give her a job.

(The landlady scoffed.)

LANDLADY: Yeah, right. Being a barmaid requires certain skills, like being able to count, and remember simple instructions. She's way underqualified.

LANDLORD: I wasn't thinking about giving her a bar job, dear. Just paying her to sit here. To be in the pub is her slutty outfits; making all the men excited with her slutty ways. The girl is a draw.

(The landlady nodded thoughtfully.)

LANDLADY: I think you might be onto something there.

LANDLORD: Right?

LANDLADY: She can't be here every night though. She has to work as a policewoman some nights. And she doesn't come on Cayley's nights off either.

LANDLORD: Yes, but if we were to pay her to come here on the nights when she *is* free, we'll make a killing.

LANDLADY: We will, won't we? I can finally buy that new dining table for the kitchen.

LANDLORD: Sure. Or we could spent it on things we both want.

LANDLADY: We're married now, love; that ship has sailed.

LANDLORD: Shit.

(The landlady nodded.)

LANDLADY: Consider you plan a goer. Like Kyrie. I'll talk to her when she picks Cayley up this evening.

LANDLORD: Excellent.

Tifaeris, Main Thoroughfare.

(That afternoon, Phisele, Royston and Kyrie were in Tifaeris' busy town centre. Having decided to quiz the public for any information they might have about the missing artwork, they were accosting anyone who walked past. Naturally, Kyrie was only targeting the cute ones. Mercifully, Royston and Phisele were far more professional. Conversing with an old couple, Phisele was asking all the relevant questions.)

PHISELE: Cast your minds back. It happened last week. Did you see anything that struck you as odd.

OLD MAN: Like I said, love. We rarely go up that way.

OLD WOMAN: And we didn't see anything out of the ordinary, did we, dear?

OLD MAN: No. Not a thing. If we had, the missus here would have definitely said something.

OLD WOMAN: I would, you know?

OLD MAN: She's very nosey, you see? She's always poking her nose into other's people's business.

(His wife scowled at him.)

OLD WOMAN: I like being helpful, is that a crime?

(The old man smiled at Phisele.)

OLD MAN: By helpful, she means meddlesome.

OLD WOMAN: Hey! I'll be giving your dinner to the dog later!

OLD MAN: We haven't even got a dog!

OLD WOMAN: I never said *whose* dog!

(As the two of them proceeded to bicker, Phisele grimaced then sidled away. Once she was out of their way, she then stepped up to Royston who'd just finished questioning a middle-aged man.)

PHISELE: Any luck?

(Royston flicked through his note book.)

ROYSTON: Mrs Jameson says she saw Ethel's boy, the one with the squint, passing through Grainger's neighbourhood at the time of the crime.

PHISELE: Well, that's something.

ROYSTON: Not really. When pressed, she admitted she didn't even *know* the time of the crime. She then said, and I quote, he must have done something though, he's got that look about him.

PHISELE: Right. So, just a bigoted old lady then?

ROYSTON: Pretty much.

PHISELE: Anything else?

ROYSTON: Apart from Mr Frampton complaining that his neighbour plays his trumpet too loudly, nobody's had anything to say really.

(Phisele sighed.)

PHISELE: Frustrating. Flaxley really wants this case solved. As such, so do I.

ROYSTON: Maybe Kyrie's had better luck.

PHISELE: Oh, she's had luck alright.

(She snarled.)

PHISELE: Twenty minutes ago, she ran off towards the woods with the butcher's oldest son, salivating like a randy bloodhound.

ROYSTON: I see. I bet she didn't even ask about the theft, did she?

PHISELE: Nope. Knowing her, she forgot all about it and used this as an excuse to chat up men. Not that she needs one.

ROYSTON: I honestly don't know how you can work with that girl, Phisele. I really don't.

PHISELE: I do it for Sir Flaxley's sake. I owe him and Kritz everything.

(She sighed.)

PHISELE: That said, there's only so much a girl can tolerate in one lifetime. One of these days I'm going to quit before I lose what's left of my sanity.

ROYSTON: Me too. As soon as this case is over.

PHISELE: Oh?

ROYSTON: I'm only doing this as a favour to my wife; Kritz's sister. Now, don't get me wrong, I think the world of my wife. I do almost anything for her, but getting myself killed is where I draw the line.

PHISELE: Killed?

ROYSTON: Yes. Sooner or later, I might be tempted by Kyrie's persistent advances, at which point I can kiss goodbye to my limbs. And my genitalia. It's not worth it.

PHISELE: Fair enough. Then the search for Galton's replacement continues.

ROYSTON: Sorry to let you down.

PHISELE: You're not letting me down. I'm actually surprised you didn't quit ten minutes after meeting her.

ROYSTON: Well... I won't say I wasn't tempted. The thought of Kritz flying into a psychotic rage, aimed at me, isn't pleasant.

PHISELE: I'll bet. I've seen her lose it a few times, and...

(She sucked her teeth.)

PHISELE: Bloody everywhere.

ROYSTON: Exactly.

(They sighed together then Phisele nodded sternly.)

PHISELE: Look, let's keep trying. I'm sure somebody must have seen something. It could be anything, even the smallest thing. There has to be a snippet of information out there that can lead us to the art thief. There has to be.

ROYSTON: Then let's find it.

(With they, they shared an affirming nod then spread out to continue their work.)

Late Evening, Outside Tifaeris Inn.

(At just after ten o'clock that night, Kyrie and Cayley left the inn and started to head for home. Cayley couldn't stop smiling. There was no school the following day and she was excited about having a day off. Having just been offered the dream job, Kyrie was equally excited. As such, they headed home with a spring in their step.)

KYRIE: They're gonna pay me to sit in a pub and chat up men!

(She pinched Cayley's arm.)

CAYLEY: Ouch!!!

KYRIE: Sorry. I was checking whether I was dreaming or not.

CAYLEY: You're meant to pinch *yourself*.

KYRIE: Why would I do that? Being pinched hurts!

(Rubbing her arm, Cayley glowered at her.)

CAYLEY: I know!

KYRIE: Anyway, now I know I'm not dreaming because you didn't wake up...

CAYLEY: What?

KYRIE: They really are going to pay me to have fun. With men!

CAYLEY: Kyrie, I think they just want you to flirt with them; keep them interested in being in the pub. You can't sneak off and disappear with them like you normally do.

KYRIE: Why not?

CAYLEY: Because they're paying you to be in the pub, obviously.

KYRIE: Bugger.

(She then shrugged.)

KYRIE: It's fine. I'll just get a diary and make appointments to meet them afterwards.

CAYLEY: After you've walked me home, I hope.

KYRIE: Of course.

CAYLEY: Good. Just don't wake me up when you come in.

KYRIE: I never do.

CAYLEY: You *always* do.

KYRIE: Lies!

CAYLEY: Kyrie, the other night you woke me up to see if I was awake!

KYRIE: And you were! See? No harm done.

(She exhaled.)

KYRIE: This is great. Now I have two jobs. I'm so awesome.

CAYLEY: Yeah.

(She smiled.)

CAYLEY: Maybe we can start saving to get our own place, rather than living in one room in a barracks.

KYRIE: Maybe. Then again, I saw some nice shoes at the boutique the other day.

CAYLEY: Kyrie!

KYRIE: What?

CAYLEY: Please stop wasting all our money.

KYRIE: Shoes are not a waste of money, missy! How dare you?

CAYLEY: Whatever.

(She then forced a smile.)

CAYLEY: So how's the hunt for that art thief going?

KYRIE: I have no idea. We were going to ask the public for information this afternoon, but I got distracted. I ended up in the woods with the butcher's son.

(Cayley whimpered.)

CAYLEY: For pity's sake, Kyrie. Can you at least *try* not to get fired.

KYRIE: I won't get fired. I'm doing really well. When I got back from my fun detour in the woods, Phisele said I'm going to be awarded with an official reprimand. That's a medal of honour, right?

CAYLEY: Sure.

(She growled.)

CAYLEY: If you're a proud degenerate you might consider it one!

KYRIE: What?

CAYLEY: Just... don't get fired.

KYRIE: I already told you. I'm doing great.

(Cayley hung her head.)

CAYLEY: Right...

KYRIE: I am, little miss doubtful. Why would they sack *me*?

(She shrugged.)

KYRIE: If anything, Flaxley should sack Phisele. Arresting Mr Lewis was her mistake, not mine. Even *I've* never made a false arrest.

CAYLEY: Not yet anyway.

KYRIE: Apparently, Mr Lewis's reproduction was nothing like the original. It was made using the wrong paint, like you *said* it would be. And you could see these black lines where he'd drawn it first then coloured it in. An old bastard would never make a painting like that, Flaxley said. Phisele really screwed up.

CAYLEY: I hope she didn't get in too much trouble.

KYRIE: Me too. I like Phisele. When she shouts at me, she does it with love. I think.

(Cayley nodded then suddenly looked enlightened.)

CAYLEY: Oh my god, Kyrie, you're a genius!

KYRIE: Hey! What did we say about mocking me???

CAYLEY: I'm not!

KYRIE: Then you think I *am* a genius?

CAYLEY: Well, no, but...

(She shook her head.)

CAYLEY: Listen.

KYRIE: To what?

CAYLEY: Me!

KYRIE: Oh. Okay.

CAYLEY: Is Phisele still working?

KYRIE: Yeah, she went to dinner with Flaxley, but she said she's gonna work late tonight. Why?

CAYLEY: We need to head to the guard station.

KYRIE: We do? What for?

CAYLEY: Because you just solved the crime.

KYRIE: Yay!

(She punched the air with excitement.)

KYRIE: Go, me!

(A baffled look then crossed her brow.)

KYRIE: Wait. No, I didn't. What are you talking about?

CAYLEY: Just come with me. I'll explain on the way.

Tifaeris Guard Station.

(At the police station at this time, Phisele was gathering her things together in readiness to call it a night. She'd run out of leads, and short of talking to the public again, there was very little she could do. And so, on Flaxley's advice, she'd decided to give up for the day. Few people would be on the street at this time of night, and working any later would have been pointless.)

As she filled her bag in readiness to leave, Sir Flaxley leant on the counter, reminiscing gleefully about the meal they'd just enjoyed. To say he was starry-eyed would be quite the understatement.)

FLAXLEY: Kritz always knows exactly how to bring out the best in a chicken. She never fails to pick the right spices, seasonings and sauces. I married well; I really did.

PHISELE: Yes, you did. Dinner at your place was always the highlight of my week. Even as a kid.

(She smiled.)

PHISELE: I'm not saying my mum was a lousy cook, by the way. Don't think that.

Definitely don't *tell* her that! It's just that, like you say, Kritz has a knack when it comes to the fine touches.

FLAXLEY: Indeed. And not just in the kitchen.

PHISELE: I don't think I want to hear about that, do I?

(Flaxley coughed apologetically and adjusted his collar.)

FLAXLEY: Quite. Sorry. That was most unseemly.

PHISELE: It's fine.

(Just then, Kyrie tripped through the door, looking most annoyed.)

KYRIE: Don't push me!

(Cayley then stepped in the room after her, trying to look innocent.)

CAYLEY: I didn't!

(She then spotted Flaxley and turned bright red.)

CAYLEY: Oh, boy.

PHISELE: What brings you here, Kyrie? I thought you were taking Cayley home.

KYRIE: I was, but she insisted I come here because I solved the crime, apparently.

(Cayley gasped.)

CAYLEY: I didn't insist on anything!

KYRIE: You did. You practically dragged me here. You even pushed me through the door.

CAYLEY: It was accident. I tripped.

FLAXLEY: Wait! What do you mean you solved the crime, Kyrie?

KYRIE: Your guess is as good as mine.

(Cayley furrowed her brow. Selling the idea that solving the crime wasn't her *own* work was going to be difficult. Desperate for Kyrie to keep her job, however, she wasn't about to give up.)

CAYLEY: Just tell them what you told me, Kyrie.

KYRIE: Okay.

(She gestured to Cayley.)

KYRIE: I told her I was confused and had no idea what she was talking about.

CAYLEY: Not then, silly. When you mentioned the black outlines on the painting.

KYRIE: When was this?

(Cayley threw out a dismissive wrist.)

CAYLEY: She's so forgetful.

(Phisele rolled her eyes.)

PHISELE: Just tell us what you know, Cayley.

CAYLEY: Me? *I* don't know anything. I'm just an innocent little girl. I was standing in the corner playing with my skipping rope when Kyrie solved it.

KYRIE: No, you weren't. We were walking back from the pub. And I still don't see how *I* solved it.

CAYLEY: For pity's sake.

(Cayley then stepped up on her tip-toes and whispered in Kyrie's ear.)

CAYLEY: Just pretend, remember? Like we discussed on the way here. Pretend *you* solved it.

(Kyrie looked enlightened.)

KYRIE: Oh, yeah. I forgot.

(She smiled at Phisele.)

KYRIE: I remember now. I was all me.

(Phisele and Flaxley smirked at one another then glanced back at Kyrie, looking forward to hearing her elaborate.)

KYRIE: The crime was committed by a black bloke called Mr Lines. Or was he framed? It had *something* to do with a frame.

(She looked to Cayley.)

KYRIE: That's not even remotely correct, is it?

CAYLEY: I don't know. All you said to me was, there were lines on the picture, because the criminal traced it. Mr Lewis, you said. Therefore if you remove the frame, you should find the original underneath his reproduction.

(She shrugged.)

CAYLEY: Something like that, anyway. Personally I don't understand it. I'm only twelve; all this is way beyond me.

(Flaxley and Phisele shared a determined glance then Flaxley stepped forward.)

FLAXLEY: So Mr Lewis *is* the culprit after all?

KYRIE: He is? Wow. I never saw that one coming.

CAYLEY: For pity's sake, Kyrie.

PHISELE: Look, if that's true, what are we waiting for? We need to head over there.

FLAXLEY: I couldn't agree more. Let's go. We can collect Mr Grainger on the way.

PHISELE: Agreed. You should come too, detective. And bring your sister.

KYRIE: You want me to bring Cayley?

PHISELE: I was *talking* to Cayley!

(With that, they all headed out of the door.)

Mr Lewis's House, Tifaeris.

(Restrained by Sir Flaxley, Mr Lewis was absolutely livid. While Kyrie, Cayley and Mr Grainger looked on, he protested his innocence vehemently. Ignoring his angry proclamations, Phisele set about the task of removing the frame from Mr Lewis's reproduction of the missing painting.)

LEWIS: This is an outrage! I can't believe this! You've already falsely accused me once, now you're doing it again. This is harassment! If I wasn't afraid of what you'd do to me, I'd sue!

FLAXLEY: Relax, Mr Lewis. This will soon be over.

PHISELE: And if you didn't do anything, you've nothing to worry about.

LEWIS: Yeah, right. This time. What's the betting you won't back again tomorrow? I'm an innocent man, and I'm being victimised.

(In that very moment, Phisele pulled the front of the frame away from the painting. As soon as she'd done so, the reproduction dropped the floor revealing where the original was hidden behind it.)

GRAINGER: My painting!!! You found it!

LEWIS: Right. I won't lie; that looks bad. Really bad.

(He gulped.)

LEWIS: I was framed!

FLAXLEY: Pun intended?

LEWIS: Not at all. I've been set up! Someone put it there!

PHISELE: Was it you?

LEWIS: Yes. I mean no.

(He then sighed in defeat.)

LEWIS: I'm just making a fool of myself now, aren't I?

KYRIE: Yup. Even *I'm* embarrassed and I make a fool of myself on a daily basis.

CAYLEY: Sometimes hourly.

KYRIE: Shut up, you.

CAYLEY: Sorry.

(Mr Grainger exhaled with delight at his painting then snarled at Mr Lewis.)

GRAINGER: Why, Lewis? Why do that? What did I ever do to you?

(Lewis shook a dejected head.)

LEWIS: It wasn't personal. I had a buyer, you see? She was offering a lot of money.

GRAINGER: She?

(He gasped.)

GRAINGER: Not...

LEWIS: Yes, your ex-wife. She claimed you stole it after she won it in the divorce.

GRAINGER: That lying bitch!

(He growled.)

GRAINGER: Arrange a meet. I'll jump out on her and sock her in the kisser.

FLAXLEY: We won't be doing that.

(He then nodded knowingly.)

FLAXLEY: We will, however, be doing the art world a favour.

PHISELE: Oh?

FLAXLEY: If the former Mrs Grainger ordered this to be stolen on demand, there's only one person she'd go to. The Black Squirrel.

(Everyone except Kyrie gasped.)

PHISELE: You mean...

FLAXLEY: Yup.

PHISELE: He's The Black Squirrel???

GRAINGER: The art thief of international renown?

CAYLEY: The world famous Black Squirrel?

KYRIE: Who?

(Lewis sighed then suddenly stood tall and beamed proudly.)

LEWIS: Actually, yes. It is I; The Black Squirrel. Ace thief and master of deception, perpetrator of over one hundred crimes. Never suspected and never even close to being caught, my reign shall go on forever!

PHISELE: Flaxley has you in a headlock.

LEWIS: Then I stand corrected.

(Having heard enough, Flaxley rolled his eyes.)

FLAXLEY: I'll take him into custody.

(He then looked to Cayley.)

FLAXLEY: Nice work, young lady.

CAYLEY: Nothing to do with me. I'm just an innocent child, looking forward to a bedtime story and a cup of cocoa. It was all Kyrie's doing.

FLAXLEY: Right...

(As Sir Flaxley left to take Mr Lewis into custody, Phisele helped Mr Grainger put the frame back on his original artwork. As she did so, she looked to Cayley and smirked.)

PHISELE: You should be proud, Cayley. Your sister solved the crime again.

CAYLEY: Yup. So proud.

KYRIE: Aw, she's so sweet.

PHISELE: Sure. For a liar.

CAYLEY: I'm offended!

PHISELE: Why don't you just admit it was you?

CAYLEY: Because taking credit would make me a liar. I'm a good girl. Good girls don't lie.

(She then about turned and crept away, whistling innocently. Watching her go, Phisele smirked then winked at Kyrie.)

PHISELE: Take her home, Kyrie.

KYRIE: Will do.

(She then about turned and headed outside.)

PHISELE: Another case solved. I love these moments.

GRAINGER: Not as much as I do, I'd wager.

PHISELE: Well. True.

(Just then, Royston bundled his way into the room looking flustered.)

ROYSTON: I just saw Flaxley with Mr Lewis. He said you've solved the crime.

PHISELE: Cayley solved it. Well, Kyrie officially.

ROYSTON: Really? I was out-sleuthed by a halfwit?

PHISELE: Officially, yes.

ROYSTON: Then thank god I'm quitting.

(He then stomped out of the room, delighted that his time as Kyrie's workmate was over.)

Tifaeris High Street.

(The following morning, Kyrie and Cayley headed for the market to buy some food from the stalls. Having got a second job, Kyrie had promised Cayley a cake as a special treat. Greatly looking forward to it, they paced down the street together, chatting merrily.)

CAYLEY: Can we get one with jam in it?

KYRIE: Of course.

CAYLEY: A chocolate one?

KYRIE: Is there any other kind?

CAYLEY: Yes.

KYRIE: I don't care. I don't want any other kind.

CAYLEY: Good. Me either.

KYRIE: Chocolate with cherry jam would be awesome.

CAYLEY: I concur.

KYRIE: Really? I thought you'd *agree*.

CAYLEY: Kyrie...

(Just then, Foxton from Cayley's class stepped before them and stopped them in their tracks.)

KYRIE: Hey, I know you. You're the weird boy who wanted to steal Cayley's dinner.

CAYLEY: He did?

FOXTON: No. Not at all. She misunderstood.

CAYLEY: Sounds like something she'd do.

KYRIE: I didn't misunderstand anything! You said you wanted to take her dinner.

FOXTON: I said I wanted to take her *to* dinner.

(Cayley instantly turned red. She then stood there trembling as Foxton stepped closer to her.)

FOXTON: I think you're beautiful, Cayley. I want to take you to dinner; to enjoy your company away from school; to hold your hand. To be your boyfriend. What do you say?

(As Kyrie watched on agape, Cayley trod the spot for a few moments then about turned and ran away.)

KYRIE: Cayley?

FOXTON: Cayley?

CAYLEY: I don't want to!!!

(As she vanished around the corner, Foxton hung his head.)

FOXTON: Rejected.

KYRIE: And then some. Bye.

(Leaving Foxton behind, she then headed after Cayley.)

KYRIE: Come back, silly!

(With that, she hurried to the corner and headed around it. Seeing no sign of her little sister, she paused and bit her lip.)

KYRIE: Where'd she go?

(Her shoulders then slumped and she released a defeated sigh.)

KYRIE: Aw, crap.

Tifaeris, Side Street.

(A short while later, feeling more than a tad embarrassed, Cayley jogged towards a park bench then came to a standstill. Cursing herself, she then sat down and hung her head in her hands.)

CAYLEY: What did I run away for? Like I didn't feel silly enough as it was.

(She whimpered.)

CAYLEY: I could have just said no. It would have been so simple.

(She sighed.)

CAYLEY: Everyone's gonna laugh at me when they find out I ran away. Why do boys make me so nervous?

(As she continued to sit there wallowing in self-pity, facing the floor, a pair of feminine feet came into view, standing before her. Staring down at them, Cayley furrowed her brow.)

CAYLEY: Another pair of new shoes, Kyrie? Really?

(She then glanced up and flinched with surprise. Sir Flaxley's wife, Kritz was standing over her, smiling warmly.)

CAYLEY: Um...

KRITZ: Hello, love. Mind if I sit with you?

CAYLEY: Um... actually, I was just leaving.

(Kritz gave a stifled laugh.)

KRITZ: No, you weren't.

CAYLEY: I...

(As she started to stand, Kritz pointed sternly at the seat.)

KRITZ: Sit!

(Cayley immediately obliged.)

CAYLEY: Okay.

KRITZ: Such a good girl.

(Cayley could only grimace at her. Under the illusion that she was Kritz's husband's illegitimate love child, she was always more than a tad wary of her.)

KRITZ: You're scared of me, aren't you?

CAYLEY: No.

KRITZ: Cayley?

CAYLEY: Yes.

KRITZ: I thought so.

(She smiled.)

KRITZ: And I know why.

(Cayley gulped.)

KRITZ: You think Sir Flaxley is your father.

(Cayley gaped despairingly. She desperately wanted to say something, but couldn't find the words.)

KRITZ: You don't have to speak, love. Just listen to me, okay?

(Kritz placed a loving arm around her.)

KRITZ: My husband has never even been to your hometown, sweetheart. The guy who did the book signing was an imposter. An actor, paid to promote the book by *pretending* he was Sir Flaxley of Tifaeris. He's your father. And the father of several other children, it seems. You have a lot of half-siblings.

CAYLEY: I...

KRITZ: Sorry, love, but I had to say something. I couldn't let you continue to kid yourself; it's not fair on you.

(Cayley hung her head.)

KRITZ: Come on, don't be sad. It changes nothing. You and your silly sister are still welcome at the house anytime. In fact, why don't you both come over for dinner tomorrow night?

CAYLEY: I don't think we...

KRITZ: We're having Roast Lamb.

CAYLEY: We'll be there.

KRITZ: Good girl.

(She smiled.)

KRITZ: Are you going to be okay?

CAYLEY: Yeah.

(She forced a smile.)

CAYLEY: Thanks for telling me.

KRITZ: You're very welcome, love.

(She then kissed Cayley's head and stood up.)

KRITZ: You're adorable.

(With that, she started to head away. As she did so, she passed Kyrie who was coming the other way. Sharing a smile, they high-fived one another then Kyrie paced up to Cayley.)

KYRIE: You okay, sister face?

CAYLEY: Yeah. Kinda.

(She then stood up and grimaced.)

CAYLEY: Kritz just told me, Flaxley can't be our dad because he never went to our hometown. She said the guy who signed the books was an imposter. Can you believe that?

KYRIE: Well...

(Cayley grimaced.)

CAYLEY: She's *so* in denial! Wow.

KYRIE: What?

CAYLEY: It's fine though. If Kritz needs to believe that her husband never strayed and made babies with our mum, I understand. I'll just pretend to believe it. It'll make life so much easier.

KYRIE: Um, Cayley, it's true. Our dad was an actor, pretending to be Sir Flaxley.

CAYLEY: Yeah, right. She fooled you too, did she?

KYRIE: Cayley, you need to accept...

CAYLEY: Accept what? That's she's got you fooled too?

KYRIE: Cayley...

CAYLEY: Think about it, Kyrie. One of us two is wrong. Now which one is it most likely to be? Me or you?

(As Cayley looked into her eyes, Kyrie mused to herself for a moment then gasped in horror.)

KYRIE: Oh, my god. Flaxley *is* our father!

CAYLEY: See?

KYRIE: Holy crap. No wonder he didn't want to sleep with me. No man can resist me, but *he* managed it. Now I know why!

(She then exhaled joyfully.)

KYRIE: He's our daddy!

CAYLEY: Yup.

(They then shared a hug.)

CAYLEY: Now you know why he's been so good to us.

KYRIE: I thought he was just being an awesome human being.

CAYLEY: He was, but he's also our father.

(She exhaled.)

CAYLEY: We're not orphans anymore, Kyrie.

KYRIE: Score.

(She nodded excitedly.)

KYRIE: Let's go and buy that cake, sister face. Today, we celebrate!

CAYLEY: Yay!

(With that, they headed off towards the high street together, beaming joyously.)

Sir Flaxley's house.

(That evening, Sir Flaxley was sitting on the porch of his house, enjoying a much deserved ale. In the chair by his side, sat his good friend, Derek, a three-foot tall, green alien from the planet Tryme 17. Blessed and cursed with the power of mind-reading, Derek watched Flaxley take a sip of his ale then sat back and grimaced.)

DEREK: You worry too much, Flaxley.

FLAXLEY: Excuse me?

DEREK: Sorry, your thoughts just popped into my head.

FLAXLEY: Don't apologise, old chap. I've known you long enough to know you can't help it.

DEREK: Indeed. But then, so has Kritz, but every time I read *her* thoughts, she follows it up by thinking about killing me. I have to tell you, it's unpleasant.

FLAXLEY: She never was a fan of that skill.

DEREK: You're not kidding.

FLAXLEY: Anyway, what do you mean, I worry too much?

DEREK: Kritz told you she'd spoken to young Cayley and set her straight about thinking you're her father.

FLAXLEY: That's right.

DEREK: And now you're worried young Cayley's going to be inconsolable.

(Flaxley sighed.)

FLAXLEY: Am I wrong to do that? The child practically hero worships me.

DEREK: Not practically. She does. I read her mind once, and she reveres you like a god.

FLAXLEY: Poor thing's going to be crushed.

DEREK: I don't think so, my friend.

FLAXLEY: No?

DEREK: She's a resilient little thing. She's faced many a hardship for someone of her tender age, don't forget. Forced to marry at the age of ten, only to escape and end up on the run with her gormless sister for two long years. And then to be captured and have to face her own mortality, only to be shipwrecked and left at the mercy of the great blue ocean. Can you imagine?

FLAXLEY: I genuinely can't.

DEREK: No, nor can I. But the point is, she's been through a lot worse, Flaxley, and she's come out the other side of it. She'll handle this disappointment as well, old chap. And be stronger for it.

FLAXLEY: Well... yeah. I expect you're right.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: Kritz invited them over for dinner tomorrow, so if she has any questions I can address them then.

DEREK: Superb. Just show her you care, Flaxley. I reckon you'll still be her hero.

FLAXLEY: Maybe. Not that I particularly enjoy being seen as a hero.

DEREK: You lying bastard.

FLAXLEY: Right. Mind-reading.

DEREK: You love being a hero.

(Flaxley winced.)

FLAXLEY: Is that a bad thing?

DEREK: No. Because unlike most people who claim to be heroes, you've actually *earned* the right to be considered one.

FLAXLEY: Well, you're not wrong.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: I have been pretty excellent all my life.

DEREK: You're modest too.

FLAXLEY: Modesty is for people who can't live up to their own hype, Derek.

DEREK: Right...

(He smiled.)

DEREK: If you insist.

FLAXLEY: I do.

(With that, he picked up his tankard and took another sip of ale.)

FLAXLEY: This is a fantastic brew.

DEREK: Sure. If you like that sort of thing.

FLAXLEY: I do. And it always tastes better when you feel you've earned it.

(He nodded sternly.)

FLAXLEY: I promised Grainger we'd get his painting back for him, and we did. I feel good about that.

DEREK: As you should. A promise kept is always a good thing.

FLAXLEY: Indeed. And that picture meant a lot to him.

DEREK: I'm aware of that. I've read *his* mind before too. If you ask me, it's disgusting, but then who am I to judge?

FLAXLEY: What's disgusting?

DEREK: His love for that picture.

FLAXLEY: It's hardly disgusting. His ex-wife took him for almost everything, but never got her mitts on that picture. To him, it's a symbol of his survival.

(Derek scoffed.)

DEREK: How gullible are you, Flaxley? Yes, he loves that picture, but not because of any sentimental value. He harbours a twisted obsession with oriental women, Flaxley; especially Chyna Lee! He sits in his easy chair and masturbates to that picture every evening. He's in love with it.

(Flaxley was speechless. Staring at Derek in bewilderment, he mouthed nothingness for a few moments then furrowed his brow.)

FLAXLEY: That's disgusting!

DEREK: I told you.

FLAXLEY: I wouldn't have been so obsessed with finding it if I'd known that.

DEREK: Like he was going to tell you.

(Flaxley shook his head.)

FLAXLEY: That's just wrong, that is. A picture is art, Derek. Okay, the subject of that picture was a seductress of international repute with a libido that wouldn't quit, but it was a classy portrait. It was there to be appreciated for the skill of the artist. For us to admire the brushstrokes and the subtleties of the lighting. Not for light titillation.

DEREK: What can I tell you? Mr Grainger is a good man, but quite the pervert.

FLAXLEY: I'm appalled.

DEREK: As am I, but in the end, Flaxley, it's his picture and it's in his own home. He can do what he likes; within reason.

FLAXLEY: True. True. So much for the purity of art though.

DEREK: I think the purity of art kind of died when people started committing crime and killing one another over it.

FLAXLEY: Killing one another *is* a crime, Derek.

DEREK: You know what I mean.

(Flaxley sat back and sighed.)

FLAXLEY: Speaking of purity, Derek. One of the boys in Kritz's self-defence class said something strange earlier, apparently.

DEREK: Kritz is still doing self-defence classes?

FLAXLEY: Yeah. And before you say it, yes, she's started showing them defence this time. Not like her old classes when she taught kids like Phisele to mercilessly beat the crap out of people.

DEREK: That's a relief.

(He nodded.)

DEREK: What were you saying?

FLAXLEY: This boy, Foxtan his name is, asked her how to get a girl to like him. Naturally, Kritz assumed he was crushing on *her*, so she let him down gently, but apparently he was referring to young Cayley.

DEREK: Oh?

FLAXLEY: I was wondering what's to be done about it.

DEREK: Why do anything?

FLAXLEY: Because I should. Okay, you can sully the purity of art, but the purity of a child? I won't allow it. She's twelve, Derek. Maybe I should speak to this Foxtan lad and tell him to leave her well alone.

(Derek looked to him blankly for a moment then grimaced.)

DEREK: You *know* she's not your child. You know it for a fact, so why interfere in her life? Don't you have enough children of your own to worry about?

FLAXLEY: I can't help it, Derek. Kyrie and Cayley washed up here in Tifaeris having endured two full years of hell. Hunted down by a bitter, jilted husband-to-be. Attacked on a daily basis. They've been to hell and back and I feel I owe it to them to take care of them.

DEREK: Yes, but you don't actually owe them anything. It wasn't you who persecuted them!

FLAXLEY: No, but I made a promise.

DEREK: To that other knight, the one who was washed up onshore with them?

FLAXLEY: That's right. Sir Hapslock.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: Before he returned to his homeland, I promised him I'd take care of those girls and having made that promise to a fellow knight, I have to abide by it. The knight's code forbids me from ever doing otherwise. They were his charges and now they're mine. That's why I feel duty-bound to help.

(Flaxley nodded thoughtfully.)

FLAXLEY: I have to get involved, Derek. Especially where little Cayley's chastity is at stake. We can't have her turning into her sister, after all.

DEREK: I suppose not. I mean, if you made that promise to the other knight, making sure she remains chaste is a priority. Especially when her only female role model is an outrageous slut with all the morals of a lap-dancing rabbit in a see-through negligee.

(Flaxley smirked.)

FLAXLEY: That's quite an image.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: And you're right. I shall take Cayley under my wing and protect her from temptation. I'll guard her innocence with my life.

DEREK: Like you did Phisele?

FLAXLEY: Exactly.

(He then nodded to affirm his thinking.)

FLAXLEY: Only *this time* I'll be successful.

CHAPTER THREE – THE BUTLER DID IT.

Township of Tifaeris – Main thoroughfare.

(On a bright summer's morning in the centre of Tifaeris, Sir Flaxley paced towards his home with Kyrie and Cayley on either side of him. Kyrie, as always, was on the lookout for attractive men to seduce. As such, she was relatively quiet. Cayley, on the other hand, was skipping forth excitedly at Flaxley's side, quizzing him liberally. Happy to entertain her endless list of questions, the kindly knight smiled as he strolled onwards.)

FLAXLEY: Absolutely. The whole crew will be there; the six of us together again.

(He then grimaced.)

FLAXLEY: Even the idiot.

(Cayley bounced with exhilaration.)

CAYLEY: Yay! Living legends. This is so exciting.

FLAXLEY: I knew you'd feel that way. That's why I had to come and get you. You'd never forgive me if I didn't introduce you to them while they're here.

(Cayley beamed.)

CAYLEY: So, is Bonson really as mean as the book makes him appear? And is Mandika really that self-involved? And is Lefiat really that hopeless and clumsy?

FLAXLEY: Yes, yes and sadly, very much yes.

CAYLEY: Wow. This is going to be such an eye-opener.

FLAXLEY: Fair warning though, young Cayley. It may not be pleasant. Even though she's never met you, I can assure you, Queen Mandika already considers you nothing more than an unwashed peasant; a disease waiting to happen. And as for Bonson, well...

(He sighed.)

FLAXLEY: At first he's going to despise you merely because you're a child. He hates children. Well, he hates *everyone*, but *especially* children.

CAYLEY: Oh. I'm worried now.

FLAXLEY: You shouldn't be. Once he finds out you're highly intelligent, he'll take a shine to you for certain. He likes intelligent people.

(Cayley breathed a sigh of relief.)

CAYLEY: Thank heavens for that. I'm not worried anymore then.

FLAXLEY: You should be.

CAYLEY: What? But you just said I shouldn't.

FLAXLEY: I misspoke. It'll only be a matter of time before he realises you're smarter than he is, and it'll all turn sour again. As much as he hates idiots, he hates his intellectual betters even more. He always has to be the smartest one, you see. He can't handle the shame otherwise.

CAYLEY: What shame?

FLAXLEY: Your guess is as good as mine. That cranky old fart is a law unto himself.

CAYLEY: Right. So I can expect Mandika and Bonson to be mean then, can I?

FLAXLEY: Absolutely. Not that Mandika is mean on purpose, she's just highly strung and has a disturbingly inflated opinion of her own importance.

CAYLEY: I know the type.

FLAXLEY: Lefiat's okay though. He's a blithering halfwit, but he's harmless... except when he's breaking things and making life-threatening mistakes.

CAYLEY: But in your book, you said he grew up at the end.

FLAXLEY: I said he filled out physically and gained some intellect. Sadly, the clumsy buffoon within is alive and well. And the intellectual growth wasn't quite as much as I'd thought. Basically, he's still an idiot; he's just not as puny.

CAYLEY: Oh. Okay. Now I'm nervous again.

(At this point, Kyrie finally broke away from ogling the local men folk and offered her a smile.)

KYRIE: Don't worry, sister face; if anyone's mean to you, I'll clobber them.

CAYLEY: I don't want you to clobber...

KYRIE: Especially that one who doesn't like idiots. Who does he think he is? Us idiots keep smart people in a job.

FLAXLEY: How?

KYRIE: I don't know. Cayley told me it was true though, so it must be.

CAYLEY: Sometimes I tell her things just to...

FLAXLEY: No explanation needed.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: I wouldn't worry too much anyway, Kyrie. Bonson may dislike the intellectually absent...

KYRIE: The what?

FLAXLEY: Idiots.

KYRIE: Oh.

FLAXLEY: He may hate them, but *you'll* be fine. You have large breasts and you're wearing a skimpy dress; he's going to love you to bits.

CAYLEY: Seriously? He sounds like a really terrible person.

FLAXLEY: He is. He's shallow, petty, angry and bitter.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: At first you'll think he's the nastiest old bugger you've ever met, but once you get to know him, well, you'll realise he's the nastiest old bugger *anyone* ever met.

CAYLEY: I'm amazed you've stayed in contact then.

FLAXLEY: What can I tell you, Cayley? Those three, along with myself, Derek the alien and my beautiful wife, Kritz, went through a torrid time together. Manipulated by higher forces to bring down a threat to mankind. Those were dark times, but the six of us managed to endure them and come out the other side alive and in one piece. That kind of thing bonds people for life.

KYRIE: I hear that. Cayley and me went through a torrid time for two long years, being attacked every day, struggling to make ends meet and keep a roof over our feet.

CAYLEY: You mean heads!

KYRIE: Right. That too. It was a nightmare, but thanks to that ordeal we've become really, really close. Nowadays we're almost like family!

CAYLEY: We *are* family, you idiot! We're sisters.

KYRIE: See?

CAYLEY: Wow.

(Flaxley smiled.)

FLAXLEY: Anyway, let's hurry on. According to the schedule Mandika sent me, their ferry would have docked in Port Shehi about two hours ago. That means their carriage should be arriving at my place anytime now.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: I can't wait to see them all again.

CAYLEY: You said that through gritted teeth.

FLAXLEY: Obviously. Lying doesn't come easily to me, you know? I'm dreading it. I hate it when they visit, I really do.

CAYLEY: But...

(She then leapt back and gasped, before creeping behind Sir Flaxley to hide. On the path before them stood a sword-wielding knight, clad in silver armour from head to foot.

Recognising the sword-drawn stance as an invitation to do battle, Flaxley nodded then took a step forth.)

FLAXLEY: So, you...

(Alas, his words were interrupted by an enthusiastic Kyrie, eager to disarm this foe.)

KYRIE: Leave it to...

(She then shot backwards, having been yanked back by the collar by Sir Flaxley.)

FLAXLEY: Stay out of this. This battle is mine.

(Having clattered to the floor, Kyrie slowly climbed to her feet then watched on as Sir Flaxley stood tall to address his foe; drawing his sword as he did so.)

FLAXLEY: We meet again, good knight. Do you think you're *up* to the challenge this time? (His opponent said nothing and simply sunk into a battle stance.)

CAYLEY: Who's that, Kyrie?

KYRIE: How the hell should I know? I barely know what side of the bed to get in and out of.

CAYLEY: Your bed's against the wall.

KYRIE: Point is, don't ask me stupid questions.

CAYLEY: Right. Fair point.

KYRIE: Anyway, why wouldn't he let me fight?

CAYLEY: The knight's code.

KYRIE: What's that?

CAYLEY: Just... be quiet and watch.

KYRIE: Fine. Whatever.

(They then looked to where Flaxley was still holding a one way conversation.)

FLAXLEY: Not in the mood for banter then I take it?

(His would-be opponent simply remained still.)

FLAXLEY: I'll take that as a no, shall I?

(Receiving no response whatsoever, he shrugged then sunk into a battle stance.)

FLAXLEY: Very well, challenger. Let's get this show on the road.

(Eager to do just that, as soon as Flaxley had finished his sentence, the challenger leapt forward then let loose with several deft blade swings. As quick on his feet as he was during his heyday, however, Flaxley swiftly parried them all then went in for a lunge of his own. Having expected the mighty Flaxley to take down his assailant with this single thrust of his blade, Cayley was mortified to see his challenger dodge the move then unleash a second sortie in return.)

CAYLEY: He missed, Kyrie. He missed.

KYRIE: Yeah, he's rubbish.

CAYLEY: No he's not! Don't be mean.

(She then bit her nails and whimpered. Watching Flaxley fend off the ferocious attack on his person with increased intensity, she was starting to worry. This strange and mysterious opponent was definitely no mug, and Flaxley was being made to work hard to keep up.)

CAYLEY: I'm scared, Kyrie.

KYRIE: Yup. Of pretty much everything.

(Cayley said nothing, opting instead to tremble. Flaxley was being made to dance, duck and weave like a man half his age, just to avoid serious injury. This most skilful opponent was offering him nothing in the way of an opportunity to counter. Just when she was starting to fear the worst, however, the mysterious attacker attempted a powerful overheard sortie.

Seconds later, the stranger's sword went flying from its grasp and the fight was over. With extreme agility and power, Flaxley had managed to parry the sword with such might, he'd actually stung his opponent's hands, forcing them to drop the blade and stagger forwards. Within moments, he'd pushed them to the floor and placed his sword to the challenger's neck. It was a symbol of victory in any duel once an opponent was unarmed, as written in the knight's code. Delighted by the outcome, Kyrie and Cayley rushed to Flaxley's side.)

CAYLEY: Yay, you won.

(She glowered at Kyrie.)

CAYLEY: Told you he wasn't rubbish.

FLAXLEY: She said I'm rubbish?

KYRIE: Um...

FLAXLEY: Never mind that...

(With that, he reached down and helped pull his opponent to their feet.)

KYRIE: What are you doing? You're letting her go?

CAYLEY: Her?

KYRIE: Yeah, that a woman he was fighting.

(At this point, Flaxley's opponent cast her helmet down to reveal that she was in indeed, a beautiful blonde girl, approximately Kyrie's age.)

KYRIE: Me likey!

(She then swooped forward amorously.)

KYRIE: Well, hello.

(Much to her annoyance, she was then bundled to one side by Sir Flaxley.)

FLAXLEY: Stop that.

(He then smiled the widest of smiles at his weary opponent.)

FLAXLEY: How are you, sweetheart?

(His opponent sighed then forced a smile.)

ANOKA: Miffed. I'm never gonna beat you; am I, dad?

CAYLEY: Dad?

KYRIE: Dad? How many kids has he got???

CAYLEY: Five daughters and a son. This must be Anoka.

(Anoka smiled at her.)

ANOKA: Hello.

CAYLEY: Hiya!

KYRIE: Hey, gorgeous.

FLAXLEY: Put a sock in it, you.

(He then placed a hand on his daughter's shoulder.)

FLAXLEY: Never gonna beat me? Is that what you really think?

ANOKA: No. Yes. Well, no. I think I will eventually, but will that be down to *me* getting better, or you getting old?

FLAXLEY: Well, it won't be me getting old. I've got no plans to do that whatsoever.

(Anoka chuckled.)

ANOKA: Right. So come on. Where did I go wrong? I thought for a minute I had you there.

FLAXLEY: Well, you nearly did. Your intensity was truly spectacular. A lesser opponent wouldn't have stood a chance. You kept that up for quite some time. I think ninety-nine percent of opponents would have succumbed to that sortie.

ANOKA: But?

FLAXLEY: But it was going so well, you couldn't resist throwing in an overheard swing for good measure. Those things take time, as you know. It gave me the opportunity to prepare my counter.

(He shrugged.)

FLAXLEY: You ended up slamming your blade into mine as it came the other way, and in such cases, the smaller fighter always loses his or her blade.

ANOKA: Right. I know that, and yet I did it anyway. One of the first things you taught me was never to use an overhead against a bigger opponent.

(She sighed.)

ANOKA: What a screw up. I guess I got carried away.

FLAXLEY: Well, yes. A slight loss of focus, let's say, but other than that, my love, you were sublime. You make me proud, Anoka; you really do.

ANOKA: Thanks, dad.

(Flaxley nodded.)

FLAXLEY: Anyway, let me introduce you to some friends of mine. These two lovely ladies are Kyrie and Cayley.

KYRIE: Hey, beautiful.

FLAXLEY: Will you pack it in?

CAYLEY: Hi!

ANOKA: Hiya.

KYRIE: So, hot stuff...

CAYLEY: Kyrie!!!

(At this point, Cayley hurried Kyrie to one side.)

KYRIE: What; what's wrong?

CAYLEY: Stop hitting on her. She might be our half-sister, remember?

KYRIE: Half?

(She beamed.)

KYRIE: Which half?

CAYLEY: What?

KYRIE: With any luck it's the top half. That way she can still lick my...

CAYLEY: No. Stop it! No. Just behave. And stop saying every thought that pops into your head. No matter how lonely they get.

KYRIE: Fine. Just calm down, will you?

(She then paced back to where Flaxley and Anoka were talking.)

ANOKA: Wow. Shipwrecked, huh?

FLAXLEY: Yup. Those two, some weird guy with a lute and a knight by the name of Sir Hapslock.

KYRIE: Sir Hapslock. Where do I know that name from?

CAYLEY: You called him Frank for some weird, unknown reason.

KYRIE: Frank?

(She beamed.)

KYRIE: I liked Frank. He had a big...

(As always, Cayley hurriedly intervened before Kyrie could embarrass her further.)

CAYLEY: It's nice to meet you, Anoka.

ANOKA: Likewise.

CAYLEY: Is your twin brother here too? Arden?

(Anoka snarled.)

ANOKA: I have no brother.

FLAXLEY: Bloody right, you don't.

CAYLEY: But, surely he's your son...

FLAXLEY: I have no son!

(Cayley grimaced uncomfortably, set on edge by the cold atmosphere her mention of Flaxley's son had created.)

CAYLEY: Um...

(Just then, a series of loud screams rose up from ahead of them. At once, they spun to face the noise then gasped in horror. A horse drawn carriage was hurtling straight at them with nobody at the reins. Scared witless, Cayley was frozen to the spot. Mercifully, her sister was on hand to swiftly bundle her out of the way. Flaxley and Anoka, also had to dive for cover. A split second later, when the carriage whizzed past them, Flaxley shook his fist and bellowed.)

FLAXLEY: Idiot!!!

(He growled.)

FLAXLEY: Endangering the public like that! I'm gonna have words with those little...

(His jaw then dropped.)

FLAXLEY: Wait. That's Queen Mandika's carriage!

(With that, he took off after it.)

FLAXLEY: Remain calm, Mandika!!!

(Following a series of baffled glances, Kyrie, Cayley and Anoka then raced off after him.)

KYRIE: I'm gonna beat this Queen Mandika black and blue when I get hold of her.

CAYLEY: You can't do that!

KYRIE: Yes, I can. I'm really good at that sort of thing.

CAYLEY: I mean, you *mustn't* do that!

KYRIE: Yes, I must. They could have killed you.

CAYLEY: It wasn't their fault. There was nobody driving, Kyrie.

KYRIE: That's no excuse. Then they should have got a carriage *with* a driver, rather than whizzing about aimlessly, endangering my little sister. I'm not having it.

CAYLEY: Kyrie...

ANOKA: Obviously, the driver must have fallen off. It's not Queen Mandika's fault.

KYRIE: Are you sure?

ANOKA: Yes. They'd never have got it started without a driver, obviously.

KYRIE: Fine. Seeing as you're gorgeous, I'll take your word for it.

(Anoka blushed.)

ANOKA: You're not so bad yourself, hot stuff.

KYRIE: Ooh, good answer.

(Cayley rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: For pity's sake.

(She then glanced ahead to where Sir Flaxley was belting forth, desperately trying to catch up with the carriage. The horse, however, was quite clearly panicked and wasn't likely to slow down any time soon.)

FLAXLEY: Hang in there, Mandika!!!

(Looking most alarmed, the queen then popped her head out the window and remonstrated with him.)

MANDIKA: Make it stop!!!

FLAXLEY: I'm trying, Mandika!!!

MANDIKA: I'm too magnificent to die!!!

(She then slipped back inside the carriage and commenced yelling at her husband.)

MANDIKA: Do something, you pointless halfwit!!!

(Racing onwards, Flaxley grimaced. Her husband, Sir Lefiat was probably the most accident prone halfwit he'd ever met, and he feared that any actions taken by this man would only make things worse.)

FLAXLEY: You stay where you are, Lefiat! Leave it to me!!!

(He grimaced.)

FLAXLEY: Not that I can do anything right now. Even I can't outrun a speeding horse.

(Mercifully, salvation was soon at hand. That salvation came in the form of the river than ran through the centre of the township. Unrelenting in its sprint forth, the horse didn't even slow down and belted straight down the embankment and into the shallow water. Moments later, with the carriage snagging on the rocks at the bottom, it finally came to a standstill. Snarling determinedly, Flaxley charged down the river bank then leapt into the water, before wading out towards the carriage. Upon reaching the stricken vehicle, he then hammered upon the door.)

FLAXLEY: You can come out now, your highness.

(In that moment, the door swung open and Queen Mandika growled at him.)

MANDIKA: Your *majesty*.

FLAXLEY: Well, you say that. With that windswept hair and look of horror on your face, you don't look very majestic to *me*.

(Mandika pouted.)

MANDIKA: Really, Flaxley?

FLAXLEY: I jest, my queen. Now come on.

(With that, he stepped closer then allowed her to slip out of the door and into his arms. He then carried her back up the embankment, to where Kyrie, Cayley and Anoka were watching on.)

MANDIKA: Don't crumple my dress.

FLAXLEY: I wasn't going to.

MANDIKA: Good.

(Flaxley then set her down and grimaced.)

FLAXLEY: What the hell happened, Mandika?

(A dark rage immediately descended over her and she snarled hatefully.)

MANDIKA: What the hell happened? I'll tell you what the hell happened. Bonson happened, that's what.

(She then yelled at the carriage.)

MANDIKA: Get your arse over here, you silly old fart! You could have killed us all!

(She sneered at Flaxley.)

MANDIKA: Clearly he's been at the beer again, Flaxley. He was driving like a lunatic.

Unforgiveable. I want him arrested forthwith.

FLAXLEY: Actually, Mandika, he wasn't driving like a lunatic. He wasn't driving at all. Nobody was.

MANDIKA: What? Where is he then?

FLAXLEY: Well, your guess is as good as mine.

(Just then, Lefiat stuck his head out of the carriage door.)

LEFIAT: Are you coming back for me, Flaxley?

FLAXLEY: Don't be ridiculous. You're a grown man! Get out yourself.

LEFIAT: Right. Bugger. I feared you'd say that.

MANDIKA: Just climb out, you silly bastard.

LEFIAT: I'm coming, I'm coming!

(With that, he attempted to climb out of the door, only to slip and fall face first into the river.)

FLAXLEY: Standard.

MANDIKA: Right?

(Lefiat then climbed to his feet and snarled.)

LEFIAT: I'm all wet now!

(With that, he went to wade towards the bank, only to slip on the river bed and fall over again. Cayley was awestruck.)

CAYLEY: Wow. He's exactly how your book described him, Flaxley.

FLAXLEY: Sadly, yes.

(Mandika glanced aside at Kyrie and Cayley then flinched.)

MANDIKA: Peasants!

(She trembled.)

MANDIKA: What do they want?

(Cayley pouted.)

CAYLEY: She's exactly like the book says too.

MANDIKA: Well? What do they want?

FLAXLEY: Never mind that, we'll just wait for Lefiat to...

(He then noticed Lefiat slowly clambering up the river bank.)

FLAXLEY: Ah! Here he...

(Unfortunately, the hapless buffoon then slid back down the embankment and splashed into the river again.)

CAYLEY: Wow.

LEFIAT: It's slippery!

(As everyone watched on with unimpressed faces, he then tried again; this time attempting to sprint up the bank. Much to nobody's surprise, however, he failed miserably. Seconds later, he splashed back into the water again, where he was immediately taken by the current and washed away down river.)

LEFIAT: Why??? Why does it always have to happen to me???

(Watching as Lefiat continued away on the current, Flaxley rolled his eyes then turned to Mandika and smiled.)

FLAXLEY: Oh, well; let's get you back to the house, shall we?

(Cayley whimpered.)

CAYLEY: Shouldn't someone save Sir Lefiat first?

FLAXLEY: No need. He won't be hurt. He's a jammy little bugger, you see? It's the only reason he's still alive. He can make his own way to the house later.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: The objective now is to get Mandika somewhere safe then I can come back and investigate what happened to the carriage.

MANDIKA: And find out where the hell Bonson got to.

FLAXLEY: That would be *part* of the investigation, yes.

(Grimacing, Anoka pointed to the horse.)

ANOKA: I'm guessing it has something to do with that crossbow bolt sticking out of the horse's arse.

FLAXLEY: What?

(With that, they all repositioned themselves to get a better look.)

FLAXLEY: Oh, my. I wonder what...

MANDIKA: Bonson!!!

FLAXLEY: What?

MANDIKA: I'll kill him! That's the final straw. He has to die this time!!!

FLAXLEY: Mandika...

MANDIKA: Obviously, he shot the horse in the arse with a crossbow then jumped to safety, hoping I'd be killed when the horse bolted!

FLAXLEY: Well, let's not jump to conclusions.

MANDIKA: Find him! I'll have him hanged and beheaded for this. Then I'll make him apologise on bended knee!

ANOKA: *After* you've killed him?

MANDIKA: Don't be facetious, you. Of course not.

(She snarled.)

MANDIKA: And all because I refused to let him stop at that ale house on the way here. He has to die!

CAYLEY: But... isn't he your father?

(Mandika gasped in horror.)

MANDIKA: How dare you say that?

(Cayley whimpered.)

CAYLEY: But, the book said...

KYRIE: Wait. I thought you said Bonson was the butler.

CAYLEY: He is.

KYRIE: She makes her father work as a butler?

FLAXLEY: It's complicated.

MANDIKA: No, it isn't. When he was the royal butler, he slept with my mother. That's not complicated. And he's been a horrible old git ever since, that's not complicated either. Nor is operating a guillotine. I'm gonna kill him, Flaxley.

FLAXLEY: Like I said, let's not jump to conclusions. We need to find him first then we can ask *him* what happened.

MANDIKA: Fine. I can't wait to hear his excuse this time.

FLAXLEY: And you will; as soon as we find him.

(Anoka nodded.)

ANOKA: I can help with that. Obviously, that crossbow was fired recently, so he can't be far away. I'll saddle up my horse and search for him outside town.

FLAXLEY: Good idea.

(He nodded sternly.)

FLAXLEY: Clearly *someone* has made an attempt on your life, Mandika.

MANDIKA: Yeah. Bonson!

FLAXLEY: Or someone else.

MANDIKA: Nope!

FLAXLEY: Well, someone did and I'm damned well going to find out who. Now, come on. (With that, he started to lead Mandika away. Anoka followed on. Cayley, however, stood there staring at the bolt in the horse's backside.)

KYRIE: Cayley, we're leaving.

CAYLEY: Right. Yeah. That arrow...

KYRIE: It's a crossbow bolt.

CAYLEY: Yeah, that.

KYRIE: What about it?

CAYLEY: It's...

(She then shrugged.)

CAYLEY: Nothing.

(They then headed away after Sir Flaxley.)

(Just outside Tifaeris, a short while later, Anoka galloped forth on her noble steed; her armour gleaming brightly in the sunshine, and her golden hair streaking out behind her on the wind. Having evoked gasps of awe from all she'd passed, she knew she looked distinctly glamorous. As such, she was disappointed when she turned away from the main road and onto the track leading towards Port Shehi. This was a road seldom travelled by the local people and not many would see her there. As something of an exhibitionist when it came to her beauty, this was indeed disappointing. Dedicated to her task, however, she rode on, keeping a sharp eye out for Mandika's butler, Bonson. Mercifully, the search was a brief one. Barely half a mile up this quietest of roads, she came across an octogenarian, in a scruffy suit, heading up the road, away from town. Quick to recognise the old man from when he last visited Tifaeris, she nodded to herself then called out to him.)

ANOKA: Hello there!

(At once, the old man stopped and scowled at her. Upon sighting her beautiful face, however, his whole demeanour changed. As Anoka slowed her horse to a standstill at his side, he smiled up at her and beamed with delight.)

BONSON: My, my; aren't you a pretty thing.

ANOKA: Thank you, Bonson.

(Bonson flinched.)

BONSON: You know my name?

(He then gasped in dismay.)

BONSON: By golly, you're Anoka.

ANOKA: I know.

BONSON: I haven't seen you since you were small and annoying.

ANOKA: Right...

BONSON: How you've grown.

ANOKA: Well, it *has* been ten years; what did you expect?

BONSON: Right.

(He sneered.)

BONSON: Cocky little shit.

ANOKA: Right, well, never mind that...

BONSON: Wow, you sound just like your father.

ANOKA: I'll take that as a compliment.

BONSON: Excellent. You do that.

ANOKA: I will. Look, I've been sent out to look for you.

BONSON: By whom?

ANOKA: My father, obviously.

BONSON: Right, well, tell him I won't be long. I'm just around the corner.

ANOKA: Yes, but you're heading *away* from Tifaeris.

BONSON: I am?

ANOKA: Yes!

BONSON: Are you sure?

ANOKA: Yes. I've just come from there.

BONSON: I see.

(He scratched his head.)

BONSON: Sounds plausible, actually.

(He sighed.)

BONSON: It was the damndest thing, you see? One minute I was leading the horses forth, cursing like a champion about that stupid bloody daughter of mine, when all of a sudden I found myself lying on the roadside. No carriage in sight.

(He glanced away innocently.)

BONSON: I can only assume, Mandika coshed me then threw me over the side of the carriage.

ANOKA: I doubt it somehow.

BONSON: Then how else do you explain it? I most certainly didn't fall asleep, lose control and tumble overboard. That'd never happen. Only a clumsy buffoon like Lefiat would do that.

ANOKA: Or an old person.

BONSON: Quite. And I'm neither.

ANOKA: You're in your eighties!

BONSON: And you have a stupid face!

ANOKA: Excuse me!

BONSON: You're excused. Now go away. Calling me old, whatever next?

ANOKA: Right. Look, forget it. Do you want a lift to town?

BONSON: From someone who calls me old?

ANOKA: Or would you rather walk?

(Bonson bit his lip.)

BONSON: Fine. I'll allow it. But this isn't over. Bloody going round casting aspersions about a man's age. If you were ten years younger, I'd put you over my knee.

ANOKA: And my mum would beat you to death.

(Bonson chuckled.)

BONSON: She would too. She's really quite the psycho.

ANOKA: I know, right?

(They laughed.)

BONSON: So how is she? Still looking young?

ANOKA: Very much so.

BONSON: And she's kept her lovely long hair, I assume.

ANOKA: Of course.

BONSON: Boobs still perky and firm?

ANOKA: That's my mother you're drooling over, you dirty old git.

BONSON: Quite. How unseemly of me.

(Anoka rolled her eyes.)

ANOKA: Look, let's just get you to Tifaeris, shall we?

BONSON: Fine.

(He nodded.)

BONSON: But go slowly. I hate horses.
ANOKA: You hate everything.
BONSON: No, I don't.
(He ruffled his neck.)
BONSON: Just poofs, animals and children.
ANOKA: Right.
(She then leant over and offered him her hand.)
ANOKA: Allow me to help you up.
BONSON: I can get up myself, thank you.
ANOKA: Can you?
BONSON: No, but I resent you assuming I can't.
ANOKA: Wow. Look, just get on.
BONSON: Fine.
(With that, she pulled him onto the back of the horse then nodded sternly.)
ANOKA: Hold on tight, Bonson.
BONSON: Righto.
(Anoka growled.)
ANOKA: Hold onto my waist, you filthy old git.
BONSON: Is that not...
ANOKA: Let go of my boobs!
BONSON: Oh, right.
(He then relented and grabbed her waist.)
BONSON: Sorry about that. An innocent mistake, I can assure you.
ANOKA: Yeah... right.
(She then set the horse in motion and they headed back towards Tifaeris.)

(A short while later, back at Flaxley's house, the living room was somewhat lively. Mandika was in a foul mood, promising Bonson a grim death and even her best friend, Kritz, could do nothing to pacify her. Somewhat baffled by her attitude, Kyrie and Cayley simply stood and watched, wondering how one person could be so self-involved and angry. Two of Kritz's other daughters, Jade and Emma were also present. They shared Cayley's bewilderment. Sadly, for several days now, they'd also shared a large degree of disdain for Cayley, their classmate. As such, they didn't know whether to glower at her or grimace uncomfortably at Mandika. Such was the extent of Mandika's grouchiness however, it soon become no contest.)

MANDIKA: That horrible old bastard has been nothing but a thorn in my side from the day I was born. He's always been there, sniping and plotting against me. Well, enough is enough. I'm the queen of Guevina; not some ordinary, cheap tart. No offence, Kritz.

KRITZ: Excuse me?

MANDIKA: I'm just saying, I have standing. I matter. I'm important. And I can't have that old fart trying to bring me down anymore. It sets a bad example. What sort of queen would tolerate such a dissenting old miser? A weak one; that's what people must think. Well, it ends today. I'll make an example of the cranky old git; that's what I'll do. I'll have him executed then chuck his head in the river.

(Kritz grimaced.)

KRITZ: Don't you think we should find out if he did it first?

MANDIKA: Really, Kritz? Really? You know, you're becoming more and more like your husband every day. With your sense of justice and determination to do the honourable thing. I prefer the *old* you. The Kritz I knew used to attack first and ask questions later, on the off

chance the person survived. You didn't stand for any of this due process and fairness nonsense, you were raw and angry. I miss that.

(Kritz grimaced at Jade and Emma.)

KRITZ: Mummy wasn't like that *really*.

MANDIKA: You bloody liar!

(Fearing they'd argue and Mandika would lose all her teeth, and possibly her life, Flaxley hurried to intercede.)

FLAXLEY: Anyway, allow me to introduce everyone.

MANDIKA: Fine. If you must.

FLAXLEY: I must.

(He then gestured to where his daughters were sat at the table.)

FLAXLEY: These two lovely things are Jade and Emma; our middle children. I believe they were two when you were last here.

MANDIKA: Something like that.

FLAXLEY: Say hello, kids.

JADE: Hello.

EMMA: Hi.

MANDIKA: I'm not a new school chum; you can at least curtsy.

JADE: Can't be bothered.

EMMA: Nope.

MANDIKA: How rude.

KRITZ: Right, well, moving on.

(She gestured to Kyrie and Cayley.)

KRITZ: I'd like you to meet two friends of ours. Kyrie and Cayley. Kyrie is a policewoman and Cayley's a talented musician.

(Kyrie beamed.)

KYRIE: Hiya!

(Cayley, on the other hand, curtsied nervously.)

CAYLEY: It's a pleasure, your majesty.

MANDIKA: Ah, see? That's better. At least *someone* was raised right.

(At this point, she received several sneers from Jade and Emma. More than a little miffed, the embittered siblings looked to one another and lowered their voices.)

EMMA: Typical. Perfect little Cayley.

JADE: She's such a snivelling kiss arse.

EMMA: I know. What a creep.

JADE: I hate her. And I *especially* hate the way she always plays the cute and innocent act; conning our dad into feeling sorry for her.

EMMA: The same act she used to get all the boys at school to like her.

JADE: Bitch.

EMMA: Yeah!

JADE: He's *our* dad, not hers.

EMMA: Yeah! And *we're* supposed to be the popular ones at school, not her.

JADE: Yeah!

EMMA: Bitch!

JADE: Total bitch.

(Oblivious to the harsh comments being spoken about her, Cayley was by now, half-hiding behind her sister. Not used to being spoken to as a respected royal whilst in Tifaeris, Mandika had been giving her a prolonged, approving smile. Noticing the poor child getting more and more uncomfortable, the longer it went on, Flaxley soon had to intervene.)

FLAXLEY: Anyway, that's everyone. So...

(Just then, the front door cranked open and Phisele paced inside. At once, Mandika's buttocks clenched together and her eyes developed a squint.)

FLAXLEY: Ah, Phisele. You remember Queen Mandika, don't you?

PHISELE: I...

MANDIKA: And I remember *her* too! She threatened to kill me on several occasions! She's vicious!

PHISELE: Right, yeah; sorry about that. But in my defence, I was only nine at the time!

MANDIKA: And that makes it okay, does it?

(Phisele shrugged.)

PHISELE: Well, I won't lose any sleep over it, put it that way.

(Mandika shook her head.)

MANDIKA: What do I need to do to get some respect in this town?

KYRIE: Get your boobs out in the pub. That always works for me, anyway.

MANDIKA: What? Why would you say such a thing? Who is this person, Kritz? A family friend, you said. Is that the sort of weird company you're keeping nowadays?

KRITZ: Mandika...

MANDIKA: I don't like it, Kritz. Tifaeris seems alien and unfamiliar to me now. Kids everywhere and weird people I don't know. Or even want to. And where's Derek? Did you even tell him I'm coming.

FLAXLEY: Of course, we did.

(He then mumbled under his breath.)

FLAXLEY: That's probably why he kept away.

MANDIKA: Sorry, what was that?

(At this point, the door eased open once again and Bonson strolled in with Anoka. Delighted to be indoors, the old man exhaled.)

BONSON: Excellent. It's too bloody hot out there. Stupid Tifaeris. Still, mustn't grumble. Any chance of an ale, Flaxley?

FLAXLEY: Hello to you too, Bonson.

BONSON: Ale first, pointless formalities later. Chop, chop.

FLAXLEY: Chop, chop?

MANDIKA: Never mind that, Flaxley. Why aren't you arresting the horrible old buzzard?

BONSON: Excuse me???

MANDIKA: I wasn't talking to you, you nasty old git. Flaxley, arrest him!

BONSON: What the bloody hell for?

MANDIKA: You tried to kill me!!!

BONSON: Don't be ridiculous. As much as I enjoy fantasising about doing so, I'd never actually go through with it! Why would you even *suggest* such a thing?

MANDIKA: You shot my horse in the arse with an arrow then leapt off the carriage.

BONSON: I did what?

MANDIKA: You heard! We arrived in Tifaeris at the rate of knots, screaming in terror as our out of control carriage zoomed through the streets! We almost ran someone over.

(She shrugged.)

MANDIKA: Luckily it was only a child.

BONSON: Are you insane, woman? Wait; scratch that. The fact you've got a screw loose isn't news to anybody. Allow me to rephrase. Have you gone even *more* insane?

MANDIKA: No. It happened! As you damn well know.

FLAXLEY: It did. We saw it. It almost ran poor Cayley over.

BONSON: Who?

MANDIKA: It doesn't matter who. Fact is, you tried to have me killed and I demand justice. And satisfaction. And by that I mean, you need to be brought to justice so I can have the satisfaction of killing you.

BONSON: You're an idiot! A first class buffoon. Clearly you've been spending way too much time with that dim-witted husband of yours. As much as I'd love to, I didn't try to have you killed.

MANDIKA: Then how did my carriage end up whizzing through Tifaeris with no driver on it?

BONSON: I don't know, do I?

MANDIKA: How could you not? You were supposed to be the one driving it.

(Bonson ruffled his neck.)

BONSON: Yes, well, I may have... fallen off.

MANDIKA: A likely story.

BONSON: Indeed. *Very* likely. Correct. Because that's what happened.

MANDIKA: People don't just fall off of carriages willy-nilly.

BONSON: They do when they're asleep.

MANDIKA: What?

BONSON: Not that I'd ever fall asleep at the reigns, that'd be a gross dereliction of duty.

(Flaxley rolled his eyes.)

FLAXLEY: You fell asleep, didn't you?

BONSON: No.

FLAXLEY: Bonson!

BONSON: What?

FLAXLEY: You fell asleep!

BONSON: No, I didn't.

(He ruffled his neck innocently.)

BONSON: It was more of a light nap than a sleep.

FLAXLEY: Right, now we're getting somewhere. You fell asleep, then what?

BONSON: I don't know. I was asleep.

FLAXLEY: Bonson!

BONSON: Fine. Next thing I knew I was waking up on the side of the road. At my age it's a miracle I didn't break anything. A fall like that could have been fatal.

MANDIKA: You jumped!!!

BONSON: I fell!!!

(He shook his fist at her.)

BONSON: Then I got up and started walking here to Tifaeris. Would I have done that if I'd just tried to murder you? No! I'd have walked the other way.

ANOKA: You *were* walking the other way!

BONSON: What?

ANOKA: When I found you, you were walking *away* from Tifaeris.

BONSON: Right. Yes. Good point. Unintentionally though. I completely lost my bearings. I'm old, you see. The ol' sense of direction isn't what it used to be.

FLAXLEY: Sounds plausible. Falling off a horse must be somewhat disorientating.

BONSON: Exactly.

MANDIKA: Don't make excuses for him, Flaxley. He's clearly lying. He jumped off the carriage then started to walk home. As Anoka witnessed with her own two eyes.

BONSON: You sneak, Anoka!

ANOKA: I was just saying what I saw.

BONSON: You saw a dazed and confused old man.

MANDIKA: She saw a murderous old fart trying to make good his escape, more like. Arrest him, Flaxley.

FLAXLEY: Mandika, stop it. I'm not going to arrest him just yet.

PHISELE: No, but I'm going to take him in custody!

FLAXLEY: What?

BONSON: What???

PHISELE: A serious crime was committed, Flaxley. A crime for which all the evidence points squarely at Bonson here. I know he's your friend an' all, but my job is to serve justice without prejudice.

FLAXLEY: Well, that's true. And I'd be setting a pretty poor example if I tried to stop you.

PHISELE: Yes, you would.

BONSON: Oh, I see. Like that, is it? Stitch up the old fella. I see.

PHISELE: I'm just doing my job, Bonson.

BONSON: Right. That old chestnut.

(He sneered.)

BONSON: I never did like you, Phisele.

PHISELE: And I've never given a hoot *what* you think.

(She then produced a set of handcuffs.)

PHISELE: Now, are you going to come quietly?

BONSON: Of course not. It's like you don't know me at all. I'm going to complain all the way there and call you some choice names in the process. Starting with this one, you foul-smelling, frog-faced fuckwit. How dare you treat me like a criminal???

(He then proceeded to turn the air blue as Phisele slapped the cuffs on his wrists and frogmarched him to the door.)

BONSON: And what's more, your mother smells of cheese.

PHISELE: I'll be back once I've booked him in.

FLAXLEY: Righto.

BONSON: Not just any cheese either, that nasty foreign one with mould on it. We always knew she'd been round here, because Flaxley would have all his windows open. And you know what, you smell just like her.

(Flaxley grimaced.)

FLAXLEY: Remember, Phisele, police brutality is a crime. Don't let him get to you.

PHISELE: He won't. Contrary to what he seems to think, just like everyone else, I never listen to word he says.

BONSON: You've put on weight.

PHISELE: Oh, shut up.

(She then whisked him out of the door. Moments later when the door closed, Flaxley grimaced at Kritz.)

FLAXLEY: Well that was unpleasant.

KRITZ: Yeah, but what can you do? Anoka caught him sneaking away from Tifaeris; that makes him pretty guilty in my opinion.

MANDIKA: Thank you, Kritz. At last, the voice of reason.

KRITZ: Right...

(She then stepped up to Anoka and gave her a hug.)

KRITZ: Welcome home, love.

ANOKA: Hi, mum.

KRITZ: How's the work placement going?

ANOKA: Quite well. I think. It's fun being part of an army; not that I like the way they do things over there. There's way too much emphasis on protecting wealth rather than people.

KRITZ: Yup, that's Leathrock for you.

(Allowing them to catch up, Mandika then looked to Flaxley.)

MANDIKA: What now, Flaxley?

FLAXLEY: Now I need to investigate.

MANDIKA: Why? Bonson's clearly guilty.

FLAXLEY: Well, you say that, but I'm not so sure. I can't see him killing you. For all your many faults, you're still his daughter.

MANDIKA: Faults??? What faults.

FLAXLEY: Right. Bugger. I think I've said too much.

MANDIKA: Well, what faults???

FLAXLEY: Did I say faults?

(Just then, the door cranked open and Lefiat stumbled inside.)

LEFIAT: I made it!!! I survived!!!

MANDIKA: Nobody cares!!! Come on, Flaxley. What are my many faults? Tell me!

LEFIAT: Uh-oh, don't open that door, Flaxley. She can't handle the truth.

(And sure enough, true to form, he'd barely made it three feet inside the door before managing to drop himself in it, thus sparing Flaxley from Mandika's wrath.)

MANDIKA: Truth? Truth??? Listen here, mistake boy...

LEFIAT: Aw, crap.

(As she proceeded to lecture Lefiat angrily, Flaxley grimaced then crept out of the door, delighted to be shot of her. Having sat and watched the whole thing, Jade and Emma grimaced at one another.)

EMMA: Mum and dad have some really silly friends.

JADE: I know, right.

(She then sneered at Cayley.)

JADE: Her for example.

EMMA: I know. I hate her. The way she's got all the boys swarming around her makes me sick.

JADE: I know. That used to be us. They're ours. We're the leader's daughters; we're supposed to be the popular ones.

EMMA: Exactly. Who does she think she is?

JADE: Right? And when she's not tricking boys into falling at her feet, she's following our dad around like a lost puppy.

EMMA: So annoying. He's our dad, not hers. Why's he so protective of that aggravating, boy-stealing nerd anyway?

JADE: Good question. She's not even from Tifaeris.

EMMA: Makes me sick.

JADE: We should start bullying her.

EMMA: Ooh, good idea.

(She then grimaced.)

EMMA: Actually, we'd better not. You know how dad feels about bullies.

JADE: Good point.

(Her face then lit up.)

JADE: Let's just spread malicious rumours about her and let everyone else bully her.

EMMA: Great idea. We'll start tomorrow, as soon as we get to school.

(As they sat there scheming and giggling at the table, Kyrie gave them a sideways glance then turned to face Cayley.)

KYRIE: What a weird morning.

CAYLEY: I know. Too weird. I really wanted to meet these people, Kyrie, but now I kind of wish I hadn't.

KYRIE: Were they not how you expected?

CAYLEY: They were exactly as I expected. I think that's the problem. The book said they were horrible and they are.

KYRIE: And one of them is a murderer.

CAYLEY: Well... suspected. I'll keep an open mind on that one. Bonson's supposed to be intelligent, so a half-baked plan like shooting the horse he's guiding then jumping off a carriage at his age, sounds a bit far-fetched to me. It's not something a clever person would do.

KYRIE: Well, I'll have to take your word for that.

CAYLEY: Of course.

KYRIE: Come on, let's go home.

CAYLEY: Okay.

(They then headed for the door, passing the bickering duo of Lefiat and Mandika on the way. Kritz could only send them off with an uncomfortable grimace.)

(Having escaped Mandika's fiery wrath, Flaxley headed directly to the police station. Upon arrival, he checked Bonson was all booked in properly then headed for the cell block.

Moments later, he stepped up to the first cell then stopped before the bars. Staring back at him from the other side, Bonson looked more than a tad miffed.)

BONSON: Oh, look. Here he is. Mandika's favourite puppet.

FLAXLEY: Don't take it out on me, Bonson; you got yourself slung in here.

BONSON: For the crime of nodding off?

FLAXLEY: You nodding off doesn't explain the crossbow bolt in the horse's arse or the fact you were sneaking away from Tifaeris when Anoka caught you.

(Bonson shook his fist.)

BONSON: Caught me? She didn't bloody catch me, she found me when I was accidentally walking the wrong way having lost my bearings. And as for the crossbow bolt...

(He suddenly looked uncertain.)

BONSON: Maybe it was already there when we set out and I just didn't notice it.

FLAXLEY: Seriously?

BONSON: Right, well... probably not. That doesn't alter the fact that I'm innocent though. (Flaxley nodded.)

FLAXLEY: Well, for what it's worth, I believe you.

BONSON: For what it's worth? It's worth everything. You run this town, that means you can let me go.

(He growled.)

BONSON: So I can put Mandika over my knee and give her the sound thrashing she never got as a kid.

FLAXLEY: Actually, Bonson; it's not down to me. Whether you get detained or not is entirely down to Phisele.

BONSON: How? How is that even a thing?

FLAXLEY: She's in charge of the police. I delegated the job to her and to undermine her would be unforgivable.

BONSON: No, allowing her to sling an old man in jail for bugger all, that's unforgivable.

FLAXLEY: Bonson...

BONSON: Don't argue with me about that, Flaxley. As the wounded party in all this, *I'm* the one who gets to decide what I can forgive; and I can tell you categorically that if you leave me in here to rot, you won't be getting *any* forgiveness. On the contrary, I'll curse you until the day I die. Probably sometime next week, if I have to eat prison food.

FLAXLEY: Don't be ridiculous. The food is fine. And it's not like I'm just going to leave you here. I want to find out what really happened, so you can be released with your good name intact.

BONSON: Well, I suppose that's something. Not much, but something. It's actually the very least you could do, but I'll take it.

FLAXLEY: I promise I'll do my best, Bonson. Just don't ask me to undermine Phisele. If I were to undermine my own police force, just to do a favour for an old colleague, I'd be no better than those dictators in the north.

BONSON: Like Mandika.

FLAXLEY: Well, I wasn't going to say anything, but...

BONSON: Wait! What do you mean an old colleague? Don't you mean friend?

FLAXLEY: That too.

BONSON: Right.

(He shook his head.)

BONSON: I see what's happening here, Flaxley.

FLAXLEY: Oh?

BONSON: Along with Kritz, stupid Mandika, Derek and Lefiat, you and I went to hell and back to save the world. But that was 20 years ago.

(He sighed.)

BONSON: The bond we all had is gone.

FLAXLEY: Don't be ridiculous.

BONSON: I'm not. Did you think I didn't notice you'd hidden your two youngest children?

FLAXLEY: Poppycock.

(He then scratched behind his ear innocently.)

FLAXLEY: The fact they're with a babysitter for no apparent reason is purely coincidental.

BONSON: You're a terrible liar, Flaxley.

(He shook his head again.)

BONSON: Ten years ago, when we last came to visit you, Mandika treated your two year old twins like they were diseased. And the way she spoke to Anoka and Arden... well, I could see Kritz was a stone's throw away from battering her to death. So you hid the young ones this time.

FLAXLEY: Well, it was better to be safe than sorry.

BONSON: Mandika thought the same thing. You know her son is nine years old now, right?

(Flaxley was shocked.)

FLAXLEY: She has a son?

BONSON: Yes.

FLAXLEY: Wow.

(Flaxley trembled.)

FLAXLEY: Doesn't take after his father, does he? The last thing this world needs is another Lefiat.

BONSON: Actually, Flaxley, he *does* take after his father. Very much so. In fact, he's the spitting image.

FLAXLEY: Aw, crap.

BONSON: The spitting image of Mandika's horse-riding instructor. His father.

FLAXLEY: Oh, my. Wait. Why am I acting surprised?

BONSON: Lord knows. She never did make much of a secret of fearing her heir to the throne would take after Lefiat. So the fact she found a backdoor, shouldn't be a surprise to anybody.

FLAXLEY: True.

(He grimaced.)

FLAXLEY: Does Lefiat know he's not the father?

BONSON: Of course not. That idiot wouldn't notice if his shoes had fallen off.

FLAXLEY: Right.

BONSON: Anyway, I digress. She has a son. And she didn't bring him to meet you all.

FLAXLEY: I see.

BONSON: You know why? Because she doesn't want you treating him with the same disdain in which *she* treats *your* children; that's why.

(He sighed.)

BONSON: That's not the behaviour of group of individuals who went to hell and back together, bonded for eternity by their struggles. Derek has obviously decided to blank us entirely, Mandika doesn't want you to meet her child and you won't set me free, despite having the power to do so.

FLAXLEY: Bonson...

BONSON: Don't Bonson me. I'm just an old colleague, remember? Bonson is what my friends call me.

FLAXLEY: Bonson is what *everybody* calls you. It's your name.

BONSON: The point is, Flaxley, I see how it is now. We're not old friends. Friends don't leave ten years between visits. They just don't. They see each other frequently and do whatever they can to help each other. That's not what *we* do though, is it?

FLAXLEY: Bonson, I already told you; I'll do whatever I can to help you.

BONSON: Then let me go.

FLAXLEY: Except that.

BONSON: See? You prove my point. Our bond is dead. Gone. Lost forever.

FLAXLEY: Right...

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: An excellent speech, Bonson. Nobody can you accuse you losing your way with words over the years. A weaker man might even have backed down and released you for old time's sake, on the back of that speech. Sadly for you, I'm not a weaker man.

(He shrugged.)

FLAXLEY: And you're right. The bond does grow weaker, but then it should. It's been a long time since that hellish nightmare we endured, and we've all resumed living our lives. Busy lives. Mandika has a country to run and so do I. We can't visit each other that often, we just can't.

(He nodded sternly.)

FLAXLEY: But the bond will never die out. I can assure you. When you walk out of here a free man, with your name cleared, thanks to my efforts, you'll come to realise that.

BONSON: Yes, well, just don't expect gratitude.

FLAXLEY: I never do. Now, as I was going to say when I came in, before you decided to rant and rave at me like a lunatic... would you like a cup of tea?

BONSON: Flaxley, you can take your tea and shove it right up... actually, on second thoughts, I'd love a cup.

FLAXLEY: Right.

BONSON: Put whisky in it.

FLAXLEY: I wouldn't serve it to *you* any other way.

(Across town at this time, Kyrie and Cayley were still making their way home. As was very often the case, their conversation was dominated by Kyrie. Payday was coming up and she had a million and one ideas about how to spend her share.)

KYRIE: We should buy a boat!

(Cayley gave her a disturbed glance.)

CAYLEY: A boat? What on earth for?

KYRIE: So we can go sailing, silly.

CAYLEY: You don't like sailing. And besides, how much are you expecting to get paid this week?

KYRIE: What's that got to do with anything?

CAYLEY: We can't afford a boat!

KYRIE: Nonsense. With *my* boobs, I can afford anything.

(She cupped her breasts.)

KYRIE: You'd be amazed at the discounts these babies can generate.

(She mused to herself.)

KYRIE: I'll probably have to put out a bit too, but that's fine by me.

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

KYRIE: Don't judge me, pipsqueak. My joy at putting myself about kept us both fed for a very long time.

(She nodded.)

KYRIE: So I make no apology for getting discount luxury goods the same way.

CAYLEY: Right well, let's not discuss that.

KYRIE: Fine.

CAYLEY: And let's not buy a boat.

KYRIE: Oh, whatever. Trust you to spoil my fun.

(Knowing Kyrie would sulk if she didn't justify her objection with something she could relate to, Cayley rolled her eyes then lied impressively.)

CAYLEY: I'm just thinking of you, Kyrie. The salt from the sea water is notorious for ruining a girl's shoes.

(Kyrie gasped in horror.)

KYRIE: Even high heels?

CAYLEY: *Especially* high heels.

(Kyrie gasped again.)

KYRIE: Damn. Thanks, Cayley. It's a good job you know these things.

CAYLEY: Well, you know...

KYRIE: No, don't be modest. If it was left to me, I'd have bought a horse last week and ended up ruining my hair. If you hadn't told me, the moisture in the air at horsey speeds can make a girl go bald, I'd have a comb-over by now.

(Cayley grinned to herself stealthily.)

CAYLEY: You're welcome.

KYRIE: And let's not forget how I almost bought that expensive silk dress the week before. That would have been embarrassing. I had no idea that expensive silk makes dark-haired girls break out in an ugly rash.

(She shuddered.)

KYRIE: I would have been hideous!

(She then took Cayley's arm and beamed.)

KYRIE: You're such an awesome little sister; always steering me away from silly shopping mistakes.

CAYLEY: Not always, Kyrie. As our room full of clutter suggests, you still make a lot of silly shopping mistakes.

KYRIE: Rubbish! Those were all legitimate, essential purchases.

(Cayley furrowed her brow.)

CAYLEY: Well, I suppose that plough might come in handy one day, if we ever move to a farm.

KYRIE: Exactly my thinking.

(Cayley rolled her eyes then looked to her right.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie? Big sister, whom I adore?

KYRIE: I love it when you call me that!

CAYLEY: Can we just go in the library for a minute, seeing as we're passing.

KYRIE: The library?

(She gasped.)

KYRIE: Cuties like me don't belong in such places.

CAYLEY: Yes, you do.

KYRIE: You take that back!

CAYLEY: They have books about fashion in there, you know?

KYRIE: They do?

CAYLEY: And some naughty ones.

KYRIE: I'm listening.

CAYLEY: Some of them have illustrations.

KYRIE: Sold! Let's do that!

CAYLEY: Yay!

KYRIE: Come on!

(With that, they headed off to the library's large doors, then passed through them together, smiling with delight. Safely inside, Cayley then turned to Kyrie and spoke to her urgently, in a lowered voice.)

CAYLEY: No talking.

KYRIE: That was you.

CAYLEY: What? No. Well, yeah, but I was just saying, you're not *allowed* to talk in here.

KYRIE: Stop doing it then.

CAYLEY: Right. I guess I asked for that.

(The librarian then spoke up from behind them.)

LIBRARY: Quite please, young lady.

(Kyrie offered the librarian an apologetic smile.)

KYRIE: Don't worry, I'll keep an eye on her.

LIBRARY: Thank you.

KYRIE: You're welcome.

(She then paced further into the library, leaving her exasperated sister in her wake; chuckling to herself as she did so. Cayley could only shake her head then mumble bitterly.)

CAYLEY: Cheek.

LIBRARY: Shush!

CAYLEY: Right. Sorry.

(She then crept away into the shelves to find the book she wanted. Having not noticed that Cayley wasn't with her, Kyrie strode onwards, right to the very back of the building then turned around and grimaced.)

KYRIE: Where...

(Seeing Cayley nowhere in sight, she sighed then headed back again.)

KYRIE: Bugger.

(Looking somewhat baffled, she strode forth, glancing down the side aisles in the hope of spotting Cayley. It wasn't long, however, before she found herself back at the entrance again.)

KYRIE: Wow. This place is confusing.

(Just then, she spotted a pair of well-tanned female legs in the doorway. Much to her delight, upon further inspection, she noticed they belonged to Anoka. Beaming with joy, she then paced up to her and smirked knowingly.)

KYRIE: Your legs look even better without that armour on.
ANOKA: You should see my boobs then.
KYRIE: Yes, yes I should.
LIBRARIAN: Quiet! Go outside if you want to natter.
KYRIE: Good thinking.
(With that, Kyrie and Anoka stepped outside then immediately turned to face one another.)
KYRIE: So, what brings you here?
ANOKA: I followed you.
KYRIE: Oh?
ANOKA: I saw you leave, so I quickly got changed and tried to catch up with you.
(She shrugged.)
ANOKA: That Mandika's really loud, so I figured I'd see if you wanted to hang out or something.
KYRIE: I'd love to hang out. Sadly, it's against the law.
(Anoka chuckled.)
ANOKA: I wasn't referring to your boobs.
KYRIE: You should; they make excellent viewing.
ANOKA: Right. So, where's your sister?
KYRIE: In there. Getting a book. She's such a nerd.
ANOKA: Yeah?
KYRIE: She's an *awesome* nerd, but still.
ANOKA: Cool. I can be a bit of a nerd myself, sometimes.
KYRIE: Don't be hard on yourself.
ANOKA: I wasn't.
(She smiled.)
ANOKA: Look, are you free later? I thought maybe we could have a few drinks or something.
KYRIE: If by "or something" you mean sex, then yes. Definitely.
ANOKA: I love that. You're really forward.
KYRIE: Sorry. I don't *mean* to be forward, I just go where my boobs are pointing.
(Anoka chuckled.)
ANOKA: You're funny.
(Kyrie sighed.)
KYRIE: No, I'm not. I'm dim. People just *find* it funny. And being dim, I have no idea why. Every word I say is a joke, and I'm the only one who doesn't get it.
ANOKA: Ironic.
(She nodded.)
ANOKA: So, drinks?
KYRIE: In a library?
ANOKA: No. I mean afterwards.
KYRIE: Oh, right. That's a much better idea. I'll need to take Cayley home first, you see. As much as I'd like to ravage you now, she really doesn't want to see that.
(Anoka giggled.)
ANOKA: Little sisters are funny like that.
KYRIE: You have no idea.
ANOKA: I do, Actually. I have *two* sisters Cayley's age.
KYRIE: Then I stand corrected. You have twice as much idea!
(She beamed.)
KYRIE: We're gonna have so much to talk about.
ANOKA: Right?

KYRIE: *After the sex!*

ANOKA: Oh, absolutely. If you've got any breath left.

(She smirked knowingly.)

ANOKA: I've got a lot of energy to burn and I intend to use it all up on you.

(Highly aroused, Kyrie swiftly turned and yelled into the library.)

KYRIE: Get a bloody move on, Cayley!!!

(She was then moved on by a security guard.)

(One hour later, once Cayley was safely back at home and comfortably invested in the book she'd borrowed from the library, Kyrie headed out with Anoka to begin their date. Within minutes, they were holding hands. Barely able to resist ravishing one another on the spot, the struggle to remain composed was very real. Mercifully, unlike Kyrie, Anoka had learned a good degree of restraint. She was having to use every ounce of it, however. Loving the sexual tension between them, but hating having to keep it bottled up, she grimaced then looked to Kyrie urgently.)

ANOKA: I know a nice secluded spot down on the beach.

KYRIE: That'll do!

(With that, they let go of one another's hands then proceeded to run. Every second they weren't ravishing one another felt like a second wasted. Almost sprinting, they charged down onto the beach, then Anoka shot off to her left and across the sand. Instinctively, Kyrie followed suit. Bounding forth, she glanced aside at Anoka's bouncing breasts then exhaled.)

KYRIE: How can anyone be that sexy?

ANOKA: That's what I'm thinking.

KYRIE: Wow. And people say *I'm* vain!

ANOKA: I was thinking it about *you*.

KYRIE: Oh, right. Thank you.

ANOKA: You're very welcome, gorgeous.

(She then grabbed Kyrie's hand and darted into a small alcove among the rocks. Moments later, having arrived at the secluded spot on the sand, she threw Kyrie down then climbed on top of her. Within seconds their tongues were in one another's mouths and their hands were wandering freely. The heat was radiating from them in waves. They both felt they'd waited far too long for this moment and weren't about to waste another second.

Over the next few minutes, the two lust-filled maidens tore off one another's clothes until they were strewn all over the rocks. With nakedness achieved, they then set about one another's bodies with reckless abandon. Suffice to say, what followed could only be described as a lustful jamboree of sexual pleasures, encompassing every kind of carnal act two girls could possibly contrive to enjoy. Their cries of ecstasy could be heard from far down the beach and quite some distance along the cliff tops above. They were two girls in the deepest throes of orgasmic delight.

Having both partaken in the heaviest and lengthiest session of their entire love-making lives, over an hour later, Anoka and Kyrie finally flopped onto their backs and puffed and panted on the sand. It had been as exhausting as it had been sensational. For several minutes, they simply laid there, too tired to speak. Finally, mustering the energy to move, however, Kyrie at last managed to turn her head and gasped in astonishment.)

KYRIE: You must be some kind of machine. No woman has ever kept up with me before!

(Anoka grinned.)

ANOKA: I was just thinking the same thing. That was incredible.

KYRIE: Right? That was so good, I don't even care that I've got sand in my minge.
ANOKA: So have I.
(She grimaced.)
ANOKA: That's gonna get uncomfortable later.
KYRIE: I know.
(She beamed.)
KYRIE: But I regret nothing.
ANOKA: Me either.
KYRIE: I mean literally nothing. Ever! I've done some bad things, for sure, but I have a terrible memory, thankfully.
ANOKA: Terrible things?
KYRIE: So I'm told. I forget. Terrible memory, see?
ANOKA: Gotcha.
(She grimaced.)
ANOKA: You're not saying what we just did was a terrible thing, are you?
KYRIE: God no. That was the *best* thing. That was better than *shoes*! Better than Cayley even.
(She bit her lip.)
KYRIE: Well, maybe not better than shoes.
ANOKA: Or Cayley, I hope.
KYRIE: Shoes don't answer back.
ANOKA: Right.
(She smiled.)
ANOKA: We definitely have to do that again, sometime.
KYRIE: Yup.
(She gasped in horror.)
KYRIE: What am I saying? I never do the same woman *twice*.
(She then gasped in horror again.)
KYRIE: But I really want to.
(She then gasped a third time.)
KYRIE: I'm even looking forward to it!
(And then a fourth.)
KYRIE: Witchcraft!
ANOKA: Nope. Just great sex.
KYRIE: Right.
ANOKA: And because you really like me.
KYRIE: I do, yes. Which is weird. I don't normally feel like this.
ANOKA: Me either.
KYRIE: None of the men I've had have made me feel like this. And I've been with thousands!
ANOKA: Thousands?
KYRIE: Probably more. Like, hundreds even.
ANOKA: Right. Maths isn't your strong point, is it?
KYRIE: Nope.
(Anoka chuckled.)
ANOKA: Well, with that body, who needs a brain?
KYRIE: Aw, that's the nicest and truest thing anyone has ever said to me. I love you.
(In that moment, they both sat up, looking horrified.)
ANOKA: What?
(Kyrie immediately proceeded to panic.)

KYRIE: Nothing! I lied; I'm a liar!

ANOKA: Kyrie.

KYRIE: I hate you! Bloody lesbian!

ANOKA: Really?

KYRIE: I don't know. Leave me alone!

ANOKA: Kyrie, calm down. It's fine. I really like you too.

KYRIE: Yay! But don't. I mean do. I mean yay. I don't like it.

(She whimpered.)

KYRIE: I don't know *what* to think! Where's Cayley when I need her? She does my thinking 'cause I can't be trusted.

ANOKA: Seriously, calm down.

(She smiled.)

ANOKA: It's okay for us to like each other. In fact, it's great. Just enjoy it and don't worry about it.

KYRIE: Right. I can do that. In fact, I'm an expert at just doing things and not thinking about it. I'll just do that.

ANOKA: There you go.

KYRIE: It's just weird. I always thought that if I ever experienced feelings like this, it'd be for a dude.

ANOKA: Well...

KYRIE: I like men, you see? I can't get enough of them actually. Penises are awesome. I don't have to tell *you* that though.

ANOKA: Actually, you kind of do. I've never been with a man, you see?

KYRIE: What? Never? You fool!

ANOKA: Hey! I'm just not attracted to them, okay? I prefer women.

KYRIE: Weirdo.

ANOKA: Do you mind?

KYRIE: Sorry. Just seems weird to me. It would though, wouldn't it? I'm a hypochondriac, you see? I just can't get enough of men.

ANOKA: You mean nymphomaniac.

KYRIE: Probably.

(Anoka shrugged.)

ANOKA: I can't relate. The closest I've been to a penis is when my mum used to bathe Arden and I together as toddlers.

KYRIE: Arden?

ANOKA: My former brother,

KYRIE: *Former* brother?

ANOKA: Yes. He's since been relieved of that post.

KYRIE: I don't follow.

(Anoka nodded sternly.)

ANOKA: I've disowned him. So has my dad. Quite rightly too.

(She sneered.)

ANOKA: He tried to teach him swordsmanship from a very young age, you see? He wanted his son to follow in his footsteps. All Arden wanted to do was dance and wear dresses though. *My* dresses!

KYRIE: Really?

ANOKA: Yeah. He completely turned his back on the way of the blade and embraced a feminine lifestyle instead.

(She sighed.)

ANOKA: He's vehemently *anti*-swords now. And he's making a living dancing in a gay cabaret in Azagotse Township.

KYRIE: Gotcha. So both Flaxley's kids were poofs?

ANOKA: Poofs?

(She chuckled.)

ANOKA: My brother is. The preferred term for *me* is penis resistant shrew.

KYRIE: Wow. That's a mouthful.

ANOKA: It was a joke, Kyrie.

KYRIE: Gotcha.

(She then mused to herself.)

KYRIE: So, your dad disowned him, did he? But not you.

ANOKA: Why would he disown *me*?

KYRIE: Well, *you're* a poof too.

ANOKA: Kyrie...

KYRIE: Seems a bit unfair to me, but on the other hand, gay men don't fancy me, and any man who doesn't fancy *me* is a bit weird in my book. So I guess it makes sense.

ANOKA: Kyrie, you've completely misunderstood.

KYRIE: And will probably continue to do so. So why don't we just lay here quietly together and enjoy the sunshine on our naked bodies for a while?

ANOKA: I...

(She smiled.)

ANOKA: Yup, let's do that.

(They then laid back together and held hands to relax in the afternoon sun.)

(The following morning, having endured a night of listening to Kyrie sighing lovingly and giggling to herself, Cayley turned up at school with a crestfallen look on her face. For quite some time now, she'd had to endure the gauntlet of amorous boys when coming to class, and after a long, sleepless night, she simply wasn't in the mood for it.

Expecting to be swamped as soon as she entered the classroom, she took a deep breath, swept her skirt down then nodded to herself. Psyched up, she then pushed open the door in readiness for the usual avalanche of boys to come her way. Today would be no different. There was, however, an added element of excitement in the air. As soon as she stepped inside, she was greeted by the sounds of excited cooing and the boys flocked her way, as they always did. Somehow, however, they seemed even more delighted to see her than usual.)

BOY 01: Cayley, babe!!!

BOY 02: Looking sexy, girl!

BOY 03: She always does!

(At once, Cayley's head went down and she rocketed towards her desk. She never engaged the boys in conversation or offered them any encouragement; she just wanted them to leave her alone. Alas, they never did. And they most certainly weren't going to start today. As soon as she sat down, she stared dead ahead and did her best to block them out. Some of the things they were saying, however, soon got her full attention.)

BOY 01: How much for the works, Cayley?

BOY 02: Fuck off, I'm first!

BOY 03: You can't afford her!

BOY 02: Fucking can. I'll get a part-time job if I have to.

BOY 04: I don't need one. I'm loaded. I'll give you 50 lig for a blow job, right now.

BOY 02: If you think I'm gonna give you...

BOY 04: I was talking to Cayley, you cock.

BOY 02: Right. Yeah. That was obvious, come to think of it.

BOY 05: I'll just take a tit wank for 30 lig!

BOY 01: Bollocks to that. I want a damn good shag, and I've got 100 lig going spare.

(Cayley looked to them with an alarmed expression on her face.)

CAYLEY: You're all disgusting! I'm a good girl.

BOY 01: Yeah, right. You don't have to pretend in front of us, babe. We know!

CAYLEY: What?

BOY 01: We know!

CAYLEY: What do you know???

BOY 01: What you do for a living!

BOY 03: You're a part-time prostitute over at the inn!

CAYLEY: What??? I play the piano!

BOY 04: Officially, yeah; but we all know what that means.

BOY 05: So, come on. How much for a good, hard shag?

(At once, Cayley's head dropped onto the desk and she buried it under her arms. She couldn't believe what she was hearing. Their attention had always been terrifying, but now it was utterly embarrassing. Burning red, she sat there, cringing; praying they'd all just go away and leave her alone. That was, however, a pipe dream.)

As the boys continued to pester Cayley for prices and appointments, Emma and Jade watched on from across the classroom with nothing but disdain in their eyes. More than a little miffed, they sneered then spoke together in lowered voices.)

EMMA: How the hell did that happen?

JADE: Well... clearly, boys are even more disgusting than we realised.

EMMA: Evidently. Telling everyone she worked as a part-time whore at the inn was supposed to make them hate her. Not endear her to them even more.

JADE: Looks like we didn't know boys as well as we thought we did.

EMMA: Right? She's even more popular than ever now.

JADE: Which was *so* not the plan.

EMMA: Tell me about it.

(Across the room at this time, Cayley's torment continued. As if they expected her to suddenly sit back and cheerfully hand them a price list, the boys kept on questioning her excitedly. Realising they weren't about to stop any time soon, Cayley pouted then sat up and glowered about the classroom.)

CAYLEY: Who the hell started that rumour anyway?

(She then noticed Emma and Jade glowering in her direction and swiftly faced the front of the room again. In that moment, her heart was filled with trepidation. She'd always feared that Emma and Jade would be angry if they found out she was Flaxley's illegitimate love-child, and she could only think this was the case. Whimpering, she buried her head in her arms again then sat there trembling.)

CAYLEY: Go away!!! It's all a lie! I'm a good girl! I'm not *like* my sister!

(Foxton, the boy she sat next to in class, shook his head.)

FOXTON: Ease off, lads. You're embarrassing her.

BOY 01: Ease off? Get fucked.

BOY 03: Yeah, you just want us to leave so you can make an appointment yourself, on the sly.

FOXTON: No, I don't.

(He ruffled his neck.)

FOXTON: I don't sleep with whores.

BOY 02: Are you mad? When the whore looks like her?
BOY 05: You must be gay or something.
FOXTON: No, I just like to earn a woman's love; not buy her.
BOY 01: Wanker.
FOXTON: Say what you like. While you fools are clamouring to buy this poor thing, I'm going to do the decent thing.
BOY 03: Yeah? What's that?
FOXTON: This.
(He then lowered his head to desk level and tried to peer between Cayley's arms.)
FOXTON: Marry me, Cayley. I'll make an honest woman of you. No more sleeping around to make ends meet. My family will take good care of you.
(Cayley could only whimper. Several offers of solicitation and a marriage proposal were definitely not something she'd been expecting; or indeed hoping for. Already, she was mortified and wasn't even 9am.)
CAYLEY: Everybody just leave me alone.
FOXTON: Don't be like that. We'd make an incredible couple, you and I. We'd have so much fun. You could join my father and I when we go hunting from our platform in the woods.
CAYLEY: Stop it.
FOXTON: Well don't just reject the idea out of hand. The platform's in a really scenic spot. You'd love it.
(He beamed.)
FOXTON: It's an awesome place to make out too.
CAYLEY: Kill me!!! Kill me now!!!

(Just outside Tifaeris at this time, Flaxley, Phisele and Kyrie were searching the area where Bonson had been found. Hoping he could find something to clear his grouchy old friend's name, Flaxley was especially focussed. Convinced she'd already arrested the right man, Phisele was less enthusiastic, but still determined to do a professional job. Kyrie, on the other hand, was Kyrie.)
KYRIE: Trees are amazing, aren't they?
PHISELE: You're not supposed to be looking at trees, Severen. Focus on the road.
KYRIE: You sound just like the guy who taught me to drive a carriage.
(She sighed.)
KYRIE: Focus on the road, Severen. Look where you're going, Severen. Watch out for that ditch, Severen. You'd better hope nobody was seriously hurt, Severen. Such a nag.
PHISELE: Excuse me?
KYRIE: Just saying. There's no need to keep on at me all the time.
PHISELE: But there is!
KYRIE: Yeah, that's what he said, shortly before he refused to give me a second lesson.
(She rolled her eyes.)
KYRIE: So what are we looking for anyway?
PHISELE: Clues.
KYRIE: Right. Can you be a bit more specific?
FLAXLEY: Basic police work, Kyrie. Just look for signs that someone other than Bonson was out on the road yesterday.
KYRIE: Such as?
FLAXLEY: Anything out of the ordinary.
KYRIE: Like a duck in a tree?

FLAXLEY: No...

(He furrowed his brow.)

FLAXLEY: You explain it to her, Phisele.

PHISELE: Yeah, thanks.

KYRIE: Well?

PHISELE: Look, if Bonson didn't shoot the horse, someone else did, right?

KYRIE: Obviously.

PHISELE: Then if they were lying in wait for the carriage to pass, they probably left some sort of clue behind.

KYRIE: Like what?

PHISELE: Flattened grass. Maybe a pile of food remains or a drinking vessel. Something like that.

KYRIE: Gotcha. Grass, food and bottles.

(She nodded then pointed to the roadside and gasped.)

KYRIE: There's some grass right there!

PHISELE: Flattened grass, you moron. Like someone had been laying on it, while waiting for Mandika's carriage.

KYRIE: How am I going to know *why* they laying on it?

PHISELE: Kyrie...

KYRIE: Yes?

PHISELE: Just *any* flattened out grass, okay? Any. If you find any, give me a shout.

KYRIE: Okay. And what shall I shout?

PHISELE: My name!!!

KYRIE: Right. Gotcha. There's no need to be snippy; I only asked.

(She then about turned and headed into the long grass by the roadside. Left behind, Phisele spanned a defeated forehead then paced up to Flaxley.)

PHISELE: Seriously, when can I have a new assistant?

FLAXLEY: Actually, there's a new chap starting next week. I was going to tell you about that later on.

PHISELE: Cool. And what's this new guy *like*? Deaf and blind? Dim-witted? Old and frail? What sort of impairment to the job will I have to deal with this time?

FLAXLEY: Actually, he'll be a good fit, I reckon. He's quite nimble for a guy in a wheelchair.

PHISELE: Flaxley...

FLAXLEY: I'm joking. He's fine.

(He ruffled his neck.)

FLAXLEY: Just a little short-tempered and bitter at the world.

PHISELE: Good. I can deal with that.

FLAXLEY: He's also a little dyslexic, and by that I mean entirely illiterate.

PHISELE: Right...

FLAXLEY: Other than that and a touch narcolepsy, he'll be perfect.

(Phisele was appalled.)

PHISELE: Narcolepsy? You mean he could fall asleep at any time???

FLAXLEY: Only if you let him. Now, stop questioning me and focus on the case.

(He rolled his eyes.)

FLAXLEY: You're worse than Kyrie.

PHISELE: You take that back!

FLAXLEY: Right. I apologise, that was going too far.

PHISELE: Yes, it was.

(She then paced away into the trees on her right.)

PHISELE: Give me a shout if you find anything.

FLAXLEY: Will do.

(Just then, Kyrie called out from the long grass up ahead.)

KYRIE: Phisele!!!

(Phisele swiftly rushed out of the trees and looked to her urgently.)

PHISELE: What is it?

KYRIE: What was I looking for again?

(Phisele growled under her breath.)

PHISELE: A brain!

KYRIE: What?

PHISELE: Flattened grass. As well as food and bottles!!!

KYRIE: Cool. Thank you.

(As Kyrie resumed her search, Phisele looked to Flaxley and raised a knowing eyebrow.)

PHISELE: See what I have to put up with?

FLAXLEY: I do. The person whose little sister solves all your crimes for you.

(He then headed away chuckling, leaving Phisele sighing to herself.)

PHISELE: Everyone's a bloody comedian.

(She then snarled at Kyrie.)

PHISELE: Get back to work, Severen. How many times; stop staring at the fucking trees!

(She then stomped back into the woodland at the side of the road. Feeling somewhat miffed at this most recent dressing down, Kyrie furrowed her brow and mumbled to herself.)

KYRIE: I wasn't staring at trees. Just one tree.

(She smiled up towards a small wooden platform in the branches above and beamed.)

KYRIE: Best tree ever. A nice little platform and a ladder up to it. I'll bring Anoka here later and make out with her again.

(She then headed onwards, staring down at the grass as she fantasised about what an amazing evening the two of them might have.)

KYRIE: It's gonna be so good. Yay.

(For the next two hours, she paced up and down, staring at the grass and, mumbling to herself excitedly. She'd long forgotten what she was looking for at this point. She was just doing what felt right. Phisele had told her to look at the grass and if she did that, she wouldn't get yelled at again. To anyone who didn't know better, however, it looked like she was being extremely thorough.

Quite content with the mindless pacing up and down she was doing, Kyrie could have kept it up for several more hours. It wasn't long, however, before Flaxley called her and Phisele over to join him. A few moments later, they assembled together at the roadside, where Flaxley shared his fears with them.)

FLAXLEY: There doesn't appear to be any sign of anything unusual on this side of the road, and unless you two found something over that side, things are looking bleak for Bonson, I fear.

PHISELE: Sorry. I saw nothing even remotely unusual or out of place.

FLAXLEY: And you, Kyrie?

KYRIE: I saw lots of grass.

FLAXLEY: Flattened down?

KYRIE: Nope. Just ordinary boring grass.

FLAXLEY: Bugger. Are you sure?

KYRIE: Positive.

PHISELE: I re-walked her patch to double check, Flaxley. There's no sign of anyone ever being here as far as I can see.

FLAXLEY: Shit.

(He shook his head.)

FLAXLEY: That's in then. All leads are exhausted. Even the crossbow bolt itself is a dead end.

PHISELE: Generic brand?

FLAXLEY: Self-forged. Just a bit of sharpened metal with some duck feathers at the end.

PHISELE: Untraceable then.

FLAXLEY: Exactly.

(He sighed.)

FLAXLEY: Come on, let's get back to town and give Bonson the bad news, shall we?

PHISELE: That he's under arrest?

FLAXLEY: Yeah.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: Allow me to be the one who tells him. After all we've been through together, I think that'd be best.

PHISELE: No way. After all the names he called me when I brought him breakfast this morning, I'm looking forward to it.

FLAXLEY: Right. Let's tell him together then.

PHISELE: Fine. Let's go.

(With that, they all headed off back towards the town.)

(A short while later, as Bonson sat slumped in his cell, cursing the world, the doors to the cell block eased open and Mandika stepped inside. At once, Bonson's brow furrowed and he clenched his fists. She was the last person he wanted to see.)

BONSON: What the bloody hell do *you* want?

(Mandika stepped up to the bars and sneered at him.)

MANDIKA: I've come to see you one last time before you go to the gallows.

BONSON: Right, well, now you have. Piss off, go on! Who let you in here, anyway?

MANDIKA: I'm the queen of Guevina. I can go wherever I like.

BONSON: No, you can't.

MANDIKA: Yes, I can.

BONSON: Fine. Go to Katha and wander into their royal palace uninvited. Those barbarians will chop your legs off.

MANDIKA: That's why I said I can go where *I* like! Not where *you'd* like me to go.

BONSON: Well, even so... get out.

MANDIKA: No.

BONSON: Seriously, who let you in? I'm going to draft a formal complaint!

MANDIKA: If you must know, Kritz let me in.

BONSON: Bitch. I never did like her.

MANDIKA: Liar.

(She smirked.)

MANDIKA: I told her I wanted to say my goodbyes, but in truth, I've come to taunt you about your upcoming departure to the afterlife.

(She pointed to the ground.)

MANDIKA: Down there.

BONSON: Oh, like I believe in all that poppycock.

MANDIKA: Whatever. Look, before I taunt you, just tell me. Why would you try to kill me?

BONSON: I *didn't* try to kill you!

(He nodded.)

BONSON: But then you again, you asked why *would* I. That's a different matter entirely. Allow me to make a list. One, you're a jumped up little madam with no respect for anybody. Two, you're a shit queen and all your subjects despise you. Three, the world would be a better place without you in it. Four, you smell and five, I don't like you. How's that?

(Mandika thrust her hands to her hips.)

MANDIKA: I do not smell!

BONSON: Yes, you do. You smell of failure and disappointment. A reflection of your reign as queen, come to think of it. How we all miss King Falbury. The wrong royal got murdered that day, let me tell you.

(Tears welled in Mandika's eyes.)

MANDIKA: Too mean!

BONSON: It was. We really like King Falbury, now look who we've got.

MANDIKA: You're horrible!!!

(She then ran out of the cell block, crying her eyes out. Watching her go, Bonson called after her.)

BONSON: That's it, you run along. Some excellent taunting you did there, by the way. You sure put *me* in my place. Sterling work.

(He then chuckled to himself before making a horrible realisation.)

BONSON: I may have made things a hundred times worse there. If she didn't have it in for me before...

(He then sunk onto the bed and held his head in his hands.)

BONSON: Idiot. All you had to do was convince her you'd never do such a thing. It wouldn't even be a lie.

(He then spammed his forehead repeatedly.)

BONSON: You pillock.

(Over at Flaxley's house at this time, Kritz and Anoka were sitting at the table, polishing the silverware that Kritz had acquired over the years. Just happy to be spending time with her daughter, Kritz smiled then glanced across the table.)

KRITZ: Something on your mind, love?

ANOKA: What do you mean?

KRITZ: Well, one minute your exhaling like a love struck puppy, the next you've got a weird, quizzical look on your face.

(Anoka smirked.)

ANOKA: Do I really need to explain the quizzical expression, mum?

KRITZ: What do you mean?

ANOKA: Are you ever going to tell us how you acquired all this silverware?

(Kritz grinned to herself and looked away.)

KRITZ: Do you really want to know?

ANOKA: I've wanted to know for years!

(Kritz chuckled.)

KRITZ: Well, I won't go into detail, but, put it this way. Back when we started to rebuild Tifaeris, your dad was busy building homes for all the citizens. So someone had to put food on the table; to earn a living. Me. And there were a lot of people in Azagotse with more money than they'd ever need.

ANOKA: So you stole their silver?

KRITZ: Actually, I won most of it at cards.

(She nodded sternly.)

KRITZ: And stole the rest.

(Anoka chuckled.)

ANOKA: I knew it.

KRITZ: I was a different person back then, love. I was raised to do whatever it takes to survive. And that was what it took at the time. Your dad rebuilt the town and I funded it by selling what I'd acquired from Azagotse. And I kept us in food, of course.

ANOKA: Cool.

(She chuckled.)

ANOKA: And made a small fortune in trinkets for yourself in the process.

KRITZ: Well, yeah. Some of it was too nice to sell.

ANOKA: Right.

(Kritz grinned.)

KRITZ: That's your quizzical expression explained. Now you can explain the love struck bit?

(Anoka exhaled.)

ANOKA: Yeah...

(She blushed.)

ANOKA: I've met someone, mum.

KRITZ: Ooh. What's his name?

(Anoka furrowed her brow.)

ANOKA: Quit clinging on to that fantasy, will you?

KRITZ: Oh, fine. What's *her* name?

ANOKA: Thank you.

(She nodded.)

ANOKA: Kyrie.

(Kritz grimaced.)

KRITZ: Kyrie? Not *our* Kyrie? The halfwit with the adorable little sister?

ANOKA: The very same.

KRITZ: Right...

(She bit her lip.)

KRITZ: That's nice.

ANOKA: I'm falling for her big time.

KRITZ: I see. You... do know she's a bit...

ANOKA: A bit what?

KRITZ: Well, she's not quite... she's not... she's an idiot, Anoka.

ANOKA: I know. Oh, god, I know. Like anyone could fail to notice.

KRITZ: Then what's...

ANOKA: I don't know. The heart wants what it wants, mum.

KRITZ: Yeah, that's true.

(She smiled.)

KRITZ: Well, you have my blessing. Not that you need it. I just want you to be happy, love.

ANOKA: I am.

KRITZ: But...

ANOKA: How did I know there was going to be a but?

KRITZ: It's just... I really can't picture Kyrie being faithful.

ANOKA: She doesn't need to be. I'm going back to Leathrock to continue my training in a few days, anyway. A long term thing would therefore be a waste of time. But while I'm here, I might as well enjoy myself.

KRITZ: Well, I can't argue with that, love. You have fun. Fill your boots, so to speak. Why the hell not? You're only young once. You go for it. Every girl deserves a fling.

ANOKA: Right?

KRITZ: Definitely. Just some harmless fun. Like ships that pass in the night. A onetime thing. Just for the now, with no future in it.

ANOKA: Well...

KRITZ: No future whatsoever.

(She then clasped praying hands together.)

KRITZ: Please don't end up marrying her!

ANOKA: I don't plan to.

KRITZ: Phew. Then have fun.

ANOKA: But if I *did* want to marry her...

KRITZ: I know. Butt out, mum!

(She rolled her eyes.)

KRITZ: So rude. Honestly. I'm just looking out for you, that's all. No matter how old you get, you'll always be my little girl. One day, when you have kids of your own, you'll understand that.

ANOKA: You can let go of *that* fantasy too!

KRITZ: Right. Bugger.

(They then sat there giggling together.)

ANOKA: You're such a pain, but I love you.

KRITZ: Aw. Right back at you, sweetheart.

(She then sat back and smiled.)

KRITZ: You know, if I'm being honest, and I mean *brutally* honest, there a far worse people out there than Kyrie.

ANOKA: I don't doubt it for a moment, mum.

KRITZ: She may have her faults, but that girl has a lot of love to give.

(Anoka's eyes glazed over.)

ANOKA: And she gives it so generously.

KRITZ: Right...

(She glowered at Anoka sarcastically.)

KRTZ: That's not at all creepy.

ANOKA: Sorry.

KRITZ: I didn't mean that kind of love anyway. I was talking about the love she has for little Cayley. It's practically a mother's love. So nice to see. I've kept an eye of those two since the day they washed up on the beach here together, and it's been a pleasure, if I'm honest.

(Anoka bit her lip.)

ANOKA: What's the deal with that? Dad said they were shipwrecked.

KRITZ: Didn't Kyrie tell you?

ANOKA: No. But then, we didn't talk much...

KRITZ: Spare me the details.

ANOKA: Right.

(She smiled.)

ANOKA: So what's her story?

(Kritz puffed out.)

KRITZ: Well, back in their own country, there was this guy, Axion, I think. He had an inheritance that he couldn't unlock until he was thirty and married. Being a vain type of fella, he decided he wanted to marry the best looking woman in the country. Kyrie.

ANOKA: Right.

KRITZ: But he was worried that Cayley might grow up to be even prettier, so he decided to marry them both. She was 10 at the time.

ANOKA: Arsehole!

KRITZ: Right? So, anyway, they fled. They managed to escape their home city, but he caught them and tried to capture them. Kyrie beat up his men and humiliated him. That girl's got mad combat skills, you see?

ANOKA: So I've heard.

KRITZ: Anyway, this Axion fella was so humiliated, he spent the next two years squandering a fortune on summoners, assassins and hitmen. He wanted their dead heads mounted on his wall as a punishment for humiliating him.

(She shrugged.)

KRITZ: Well, to cut a long story short, they were fleeing here to Tifaeris when they were caught by Axion and a group of assassins on the high seas. Again, thanks to Kyrie they managed to escape; sinking the ship in the process. But they ended up stranded on a lifeboat in the middle of the sea.

ANOKA: Well, that's not good.

KRITZ: No, it's not. A storm came and luckily they ended up washing up on our coast. Your dad found them.

ANOKA: Damn. Must have been horrible.

KRITZ: Well, yeah. They endured two years of hell together.

ANOKA: Just the two of them?

KRITZ: Yeah. Well, pretty much. They got the help of a local knight for a few days towards the end of it all; he washed up here too. A lovely fellow called Frank Hapslock. Oh, and there was a weird lute player too. You may even see him about the town here. The four of them appeared together, but yeah; for the most of the last two years it was literally Kyrie and Cayley verses the world.

ANOKA: No wonder they're so close then.

KRITZ: Exactly.

(Anoka smiled.)

ANOKA: That story just makes me like her more.

KRITZ: Fuck.

ANOKA: What?

KRITZ: Don't marry her.

(Anoka could only shake her head in defeat.)

ANOKA: Mother? Behave!

(A short while later, over at the police station, Flaxley and Kyrie stood silently by, watching as Phisele unlocked Bonson's cell. From the minute they'd entered the cell block, he'd made it perfectly clear what he thought about them. To say he'd taken his incarceration badly, would be quite the understatement. And this man was not known for suffering in silence.)

BONSON: Bloody accusing me of murder; whatever next? Honestly, I expected better from you, Flaxley. And you Phisele.

(He looked to Kyrie.)

BONSON: I have no idea who you are, but I must say, you have nice boobs.

KYRIE: Thank you.

BONSON: Now where was I? That's right. You're all bastards. Locking me up for nothing! Honestly, if I was 50 years younger and twice my size, I'd chin the pair of you. Disgraceful behaviour. Now who's going to apologise first?

PHISELE: We haven't come to apologise, Bonson.

BONSON: No, but seeing as you've come to let me go because there's no evidence, you bloody well *should* apologise, wouldn't you agree?

PHISELE: Actually, there *is* evidence and it all points squarely at you. The only thing we couldn't find is evidence that you *didn't* do it.

BONSON: What?

PHISELE: You heard. So like I said, we're not here to apologise, we're here to formerly arrest you on a charge of attempted murder.

BONSON: Attempted murder??? Why you stupid, large-breasted freak, why don't you just...

PHISELE: Would you rather we charged you with regicide?

BONSON: No! Obviously! I'd rather you let me go.

PHISELE: If we let you go, Mandika will arrest you for treason and I think you'll find that's far worse.

BONSON: How? I'm done for either way. At my age, surviving prison just isn't going to happen! So my choices are to die in prison, or just fucking die. Well, thanks a bloody lot, you two.

(He snarled.)

BONSON: Say something, Flaxley!

FLAXLEY: Very well. Bonson, you're under arrest for attempted murder. You have the right to remain silent, but anything you *do* say may be taken and down in used in evidence against you.

BONSON: Say something better!!!

FLAXLEY: Sorry, old chap. There's nothing I can do.

BONSON: Poppycock. There's plenty you can do. Like not arresting *me*! *Not* arresting me is well within your capabilities. I know that for a fact. I've seen you *not* arrest thousands of people; why make an exception for me?

PHISELE: Because the evidence makes you look very guilty.

BONSON: No, the only thing that makes me look guilty is the fact you've arrested me.

FLAXLEY: Chin up, Bonson. Hopefully you can prove your innocence at the trial.

BONSON: And who's the judge going to be? Mandika? This is a fit up! I'm being framed.

PHISELE: Don't be ridiculous.

BONSON: Don't you tell me what to do. I'll be as ridiculous as I like.

PHISELE: Fine, you do that.

(She then spun him around and ushered him back into his cell.)

PHISELE: Back you go.

BONSON: What for?

FLAXLEY: We only got you out to charge you formerly.

BONSON: Oh, right. That.

(He snarled.)

BONSON: You're all bastards.

FLAXLEY: Rest up, Bonson; we'll see you later.

(They then headed out of the cell block. As they did so, a torrent of angry insults flew in their direction.)

PHISELE: He took that pretty well, considering.

FLAXLEY: Indeed. *I* thought he'd be angry.

(They then chuckled and headed away. Watching them go, Kyrie bit her lip then mumbled to herself.)

KYRIE: So... we finally solved a case without Cayley's help. Who thought this day would ever come.

(She then paced out of the room.)

That afternoon, Kyrie picked Cayley up from school as always and walked her home. As soon as they were indoors, Kyrie sighed then shook her head. She now had to go back to work and her heart wasn't in it.)

KYRIE: Screw it. I'll have coffee first *then* go back.

(With that, she left the room to avail herself of the community stove. A full six minutes later, when she returned, she found Cayley sitting at the desk, doing some equations on a sheet of paper. Peering over her shoulder, Kyrie rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: Geek. Who does maths in their spare time?

CAYLEY: I do.

KYRIE: Sad to see. Such a waste of a pretty face.

CAYLEY: Right. Haven't you got to be somewhere?

KYRIE: I'm having coffee first.

CAYLEY: Okay.

(Kyrie sighed.)

KYRIE: Stupid work. I don't want to go back this afternoon. It's really boring when there's no cases to work on.

(Cayley raised a troubled eyebrow.)

CAYLEY: No cases?

KYRIE: None. We solved the last one. Bonson did it. So boring.

(At this point, Cayley turned around in her chair and grimaced.)

CAYLEY: Actually, Kyrie, I'm pretty sure Bonson's innocent.

KYRIE: Not according to the evidence? Or was it according to Phisele? I get confused.

CAYLEY: No, look.

(She gestured to the sheet of paper she'd been working on.)

CAYLEY: According to my calculations, the...

KYRIE: Calculations? You've drawn a horse and cart under a rainbow.

(She beamed.)

KYRIE: It's really good.

CAYLEY: That's not a rainbow; it's an arc.

KYRIE: Like a boat?

CAYLEY: No. Arc with a C.

KYRIE: What the hell are you talking about?

(Cayley rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: It's a diagram of the route the crossbow bolt would have taken.

KYRIE: What crossbow bolt?

CAYLEY: The one in the horse's bum.

KYRIE: Oh. Right. That.

CAYLEY: Well, I compared the angle it landed at with the average weight of a crossbow bolt, and by my reckoning, it was fired from about thirty metres away.

KYRIE: Meaning?

CAYLEY: If Bonson fired it from the carriage he'd have only been *one* metre away.

KYRIE: Oh, right.

(She grimaced.)

KYRIE: So, are we saying Bonson didn't do it?

CAYLEY: We're saying if Bonson did it, he'd have had to stop the carriage and walk thirty metres behind it and fire the crossbow from there.

KYRIE: And that's unlikely, is it?

CAYLEY: I'd say so. I'm pretty sure Queen Mandika would have noticed if they'd stopped.

KYRIE: So, Bonson's innocent then?

CAYLEY: Probably. At the very least, we should let Flaxley know about this as soon as possible. Then he can decide what to do.

KYRIE: Cool. I'll tell him what you found out as soon as I get back to work.

(She nodded.)

KYRIE: I don't like to keep him waiting. He's been really good to us. Really good. He's a great man. Even if he is a homophobe.

(Cayley grimaced.)

CAYLEY: Actually, Kyrie. Don't tell him *I* figured it out. You should say *you* figured it out.

KYRIE: Oh, we're gonna play that game again, are we?

CAYLEY: What choice do we have? If we admit that I've been solving all your cases, they might let you go. And we need your salary to pay for...

KYRIE: Our boat!

CAYLEY: Food!

KYRIE: Boring!

CAYLEY: Kyrie...

KYRIE: Fine. I'll head over there now then.

CAYLEY: Right. And remember. You figured it out, not me.

KYRIE: Gotcha.

CAYLEY: Don't forget this time.

KYRIE: Like I would.

CAYLEY: You *always* do!

KYRIE: Not this time. Bonson's innocent because he was thirty miles away. See? I remember it perfectly.

(Cayley sighed.)

CAYLEY: Let's go over it again before you leave.

KYRIE: What for?

CAYLEY: Trust me; it just makes sense.

(Twenty minutes later, once Kyrie had finished her coffee, she returned to the police station with Cayley in tow. Asking Kyrie to memorise even the simplest of things was hard work; expecting her to remember the results of an equation was bordering on ridiculous. Quick to realise this, Cayley knew she had little choice but to go with Kyrie to act as prompter.

Having entered the police station, Kyrie and Cayley were greeted by the sight of Phisele leaning against the front desk, chatting to Flaxley. Hoping they could convince them that Cayley's theory was in fact all Kyrie's doing, they both smiled innocently and stepped up to them looking more than a little suspicious. Having seen this act before, however, Phisele wasn't fooled.)

PHISELE: You've got your sister with you, Kyrie. And you're doing that innocent act!

(She nodded.)

PHISELE: What did you find out, Cayley?

(Cayley shrugged.)

CAYLEY: Nothing. Kyrie got all excited and insisted we rush over here, so I had to follow. I think she's figured something out. I didn't even get time to change out of my school uniform.

(Phisele gave her a condescending glance then looked to Kyrie.)

PHISELE: I'll humour you. What did you figure out, Kyrie?

KYRIE: When?

PHISELE: Thought so.

CAYLEY: Tell them what you told me earlier, Kyrie.

KYRIE: That I liked your drawing?

(Cayley groaned.)

CAYLEY: No, about Bonson being innocent.

KYRIE: He is? Why did we lock him up then?

(Flaxley smirked.)

FLAXLEY: Why don't you just tell us what you figured out, Cayley?

CAYLEY: I didn't figure anything out. It was all Kyrie. I was playing the piano at the time.

FLAXLEY: At the barracks?

CAYLEY: Yeah.

FLAXLEY: There isn't a piano at the barracks.

CAYLEY: It was air piano.

(Flaxley gave a belittling glance.)

FLAXLEY: That's a lie, isn't it?

CAYLEY: No.

KYRIE: Yes, it is. You were doing that equation, not playing the piano.

(Cayley spanned her forehead.)

CAYLEY: Why would you...

PHISELE: Look, just tell us what you found out.

CAYLEY: Nothing.

(She shrugged innocently.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie did. Not sure what it was about though, I'm just a child. I don't understand these things. Something about the angle of the bolt when it landed in conjunction with the *weight* of the bolt meaning it was fired from thirty metres behind the carriage. Or words to that effect. I don't recall.

(She then turned away and glanced across the ceiling innocently.)

KYRIE: Actually, I've heard that somewhere before.

(She suddenly looked enlightened.)

KYRIE: You mentioned that earlier, Cayley.

CAYLEY: No, I didn't. *You* said it.

KYRIE: Why would I say it? I don't even know what it means.

CAYLEY: Shut up.

KYRIE: No, you shut up.

PHISELE: You can both shut up.

(She bit her lip.)

PHISELE: So the crossbow bolt was fired from thirty metres away?

CAYLEY: So Kyrie says.

KYRIE: I do?

CAYLEY: Yes!

(Flaxley bit his lip.)

FLAXLEY: So unless Bonson stopped the carriage and walked back thirty metres to fire the crossbow, it *couldn't* have been him.

PHISELE: Is that even credible?

FLAXLEY: No. Mandika would have noticed if they'd stopped and besides, I've seen that old fart in action. Weapons are not his thing, trust me. He'd never have made that shot. I doubt he'd even have been able to hold the crossbow still at his age.

PHISELE: So he's innocent then?

FLAXLEY: I would say so.

KYRIE: Wow. I didn't see *that* one coming.

CAYLEY: Yes, you did!

(She then spammed her forehead and sat down just inside the door.)
CAYLEY: She's got a head like a sieve.
(Flaxley nodded sternly.)
FLAXLEY: In light of this new evidence, we should release him at once.
PHISELE: Wait. I want to see this equation first.
KYRIE: Do you mean this?
(With that, Kyrie handed Phisele Cayley's equation.)
KYRIE: It's really good. Cayley's such a talented artist.
CAYLEY: I didn't draw it.
(She then growled under her breath.)
CAYLEY: Why do I even bother?
(Scanning the equation with their eyes, Phisele and Flaxley grimaced at one another.)
PHISELE: What does that symbol mean?
FLAXLEY: I have no idea. And what's that letter V all about?
CAYLEY: Oh, for pity's sake. It's the trajectory of the crossbow bolt based on its weight and velocity, according to the angle the bolt landed at.
PHISELE: I see.
FLAXLEY: Nice work, Cayley.
CAYLEY: Kyrie did it.
KYRIE: No, I didn't.
(Cayley's shoulders slumped at this point and she hung her head in defeat.)
CAYLEY: I give up.
PHISELE: What now, Flaxley?
FLAXLEY: Well, a genius did the maths, so who are we to argue? Bonson's innocent.
PHISELE: I concur.
CAYLEY: Nice work, Kyrie.
KYRIE: Thanks.
(She stood there beaming with delight for a moment, then slowly started to feel silly.)
KYRIE: Wait. What are we thanking me for?
CAYLEY: Just take the blooming credit!!!

(Ten minutes later, courtesy of Cayley's fine work, Bonson found himself free of captivity, and on his way back to Flaxley's house. Just like when he was arrested, however, he wasn't about to go quietly. This man was capable of the most nauseating angry rants even when his life was going to well; when he had an axe to grind, he was unbearable. As such, well aware of his tendency to rant furiously, Phisele had wisely pretended to be busy and delegated the job of escorting him home to Kyrie. This meant Cayley had had to go too. Luckily for their ears, Flaxley had elected to join them. It wasn't Kyrie and Cayley he was worried about, however. In such a foul mood, he knew he'd have to be at home when Bonson arrived, to quell the fights he was likely to start with Mandika and anyone else who dared look at him funny.

For Cayley this was a most uncomfortable moment. She found any form of anger or confrontation deeply unsettling. And with Bonson in full flow, she soon found herself hiding behind Kyrie. A merry and joyous walk it was not.)

BONSON: I mean honestly. What sort of justice is that? Throw the accused in jail then investigate later? There are laws against that sort of thing, you know?

FLAXLEY: No, there aren't.

BONSON: Well, there should be.

(He ruffled his neck.)

BONSON: I've been grossly violated! Sinned against, some would say. And they'd be right. My civil liberties were abused! You'd just better hope there are no lasting effects, Flaxley; prison changes a man, you know?

FLAXLEY: You were in jail for one day. A warm jail, with three square meals and a comfortable bed provided. Kritz even made you a cake!

BONSON: Yes, but the silly fucker forgot to put a file in it.

(He sneered.)

BONSON: And besides, I didn't want a cake. I wanted my freedom. The freedom that every innocent man is justly entitled to under the laws of East Edea.

FLAXLEY: We're not in East Edea.

BONSON: Clearly. They don't sling innocent old men in jail just for shits and giggles there.

FLAXLEY: Nobody did that here either!

BONSON: Did too.

(He ruffled his neck.)

BONSON: What made you come to your senses anyway? Not that I'm grateful. It was way too late for that.

FLAXLEY: Well, it seems that judging by the angle the crossbow bolt landed at, it must have been fired from 30 metres behind the carriage.

BONSON: Well good. And who figured that out? A complicated equation like that is way too complicated for the likes of you.

(Flaxley sneered then gestured towards Kyrie.)

FLAXLEY: Kyrie, officially.

BONSON: I see.

(He beamed.)

BONSON: And there I was thinking she was just a nice pair of tits.

KYRIE: Rude. I also have a perfect arse, a banging minge and hair to die for. And don't even get me started on my gorgeous face. I'm the all-round package. A great face, a great body and I go like a rocket.

BONSON: Right...

(He furrowed his brow.)

BONSON: Well, obviously *she* didn't figure it out. She's way too dim. Who was it really?

FLAXLEY: Bonson...

BONSON: And why do we have a child in tow? I hate children, Flaxley. What does it want? It's not one of yours, her skin's way too dark. Actually, she looks just like halfwit there.

FLAXLEY: Leave her alone, Bonson.

BONSON: Damn right I will. Bloody children are a menace. A complete waste of air and space. People should be locked in a cupboard until they turn sixteen, if you ask me.

FLAXLEY: A waste of air and space?

BONSON: Yes!

FLAXLEY: Right. Well, how would you feel if I told you, she was the one who did the equation? She's the only reason you're free.

BONSON: Well, I'd feel annoyed, obviously. Annoyed at *you* for lying to me. It's a child. Children can't do complicated things.

CAYLEY: Yes, we can. Meany.

(Bonson rolled his eyes.)

BONSON: Right. Good come back.

(He furrowed his brow.)

BONSON: See what I mean, Flaxley? Useless. There's no way a child worked it out.

FLAXLEY: Then how come she did?

BONSON: You lie! If *she* figured it out what method did she use? Answer me that.

FLAXLEY: I don't bloody know, do I?

BONSON: No, nor does she.

CAYLEY: Actually, you mean old man, I used a basic weight to velocity ratio equation then combined it with Alton's laws of trajectory.

(She ruffled her neck indignantly.)

CAYLEY: So there.

(A look of horror then crossed her brow.)

CAYLEY: I mean, Kyrie did!!!

(Ignoring her, Bonson looked to Flaxley.)

BONSON: By golly, that girl's clearly some kind of genius. I take back what I said. She's superb.

(He beamed.)

BONSON: It's an honour to meet you, young lady. It's nice to know there's someone intelligent here in Tifaeris I can talk to for a change.

FLAXLEY: Wow.

CAYLEY: Um... thank you.

BONSON: So tell me, young lady. Are you a big fan of Alton's theories?

CAYLEY: A few. The trajectory one is quite accurate.

BONSON: Accurate?

CAYLEY: Yeah. Some are a bit off though. His theory of economic atrophy was so flawed, I took it to the university of Anoseta, my home town, and had it amended.

BONSON: Amended???

CAYLEY: Yeah. They laughed at me at first. Well, I was only nine at the time, but when they checked, they realised I was right and adjusted it.

(Bonson's jaw gaped for a moment then he looked to Flaxley.)

BONSON: Just how intelligent is she?

FLAXLEY: The scale doesn't go that high.

BONSON: Off the chart then?

FLAXLEY: She's intelligent beyond words, Bonson.

BONSON: Smarter than... me?

FLAXLEY: Yup.

(Bonson's brow immediately furrowed.)

BONSON: Get rid of it. I don't want it following me home. I hate children. How many fucking times do I have to say it?

(Flaxley smiled apologetically to Cayley.)

FLAXLEY: See? Exactly how I said it'd go.

CAYLEY: Yup, you called it.

(Just then, they heard the sound of a lute from across the road. At once, they all looked over and saw the freestyle minstrel, known as Sadler, singing outside the ferryman's house. It was an old tune called I Can Survive made famous by Gaynor Gloriason, to which he'd amended the words accordingly.)

SADLER: Please don't be annoyed, don't be mystified, I'm just trying to earn myself a ferry ride. See I've spent so many nights just wondering where it all went wrong, and this song, well, it ended up too long. So I'll be brief, cut to the chase; on your very next ferry please save me a little space. No, I can't afford the fee, but I really want to sail, so I'm gonna stand here singing all night 'til I prevail. You'll get no sleep, no hope of kip, so you might as well come out here and promise me a free trip. I'll be...

(Having never seen such a thing before, Bonson grimaced.)

BONSON: What the bloody hell's that all about?

FLAXLEY: He washed up here on the coastline a while ago and can't afford the ferry home. I'm guessing he's desperate.

BONSON: I see. What a weird town. Full of weird people. Not to mention annoying people who throw the innocent in jail. And children.

(Flaxley rolled his eyes.)

FLAXLEY: Nope. That's enough. You girls deserve better. Kyrie, you can have the night off. Take Cayley home or something. Just enjoy your evening.

KYRIE: Score!

(With that, she grabbed Cayley's hand and the two of them fled back down the road. Having watched them go, Flaxley nodded.)

FLAXLEY: Right, now let's get you back to my house, Bonson.

(He then spanned his forehead.)

FLAXLEY: That's gonna be fun.

(Flaxley was right to be worried. Just as he'd anticipated, as soon as they entered his house, some five minutes later, Bonson and Mandika growled at one another. An unholy argument then ensued.)

MANDIKA: What the bloody hell are you doing here???

BONSON: I'll tell you what I'm bloody doing here, you infuriating harpy. I've come to give a piece of mind, that's what.

MANDIKA: Like you can afford to spare any!

BONSON: I could spare most of it! Even give half to charity; and I'd still have more than enough left to put you in your place, you jumped up little shit.

MANDIKA: Send him back to jail, Flaxley.

FLAXLEY: I can't, Mandika. He's innocent.

MANDIKA: Since when?

FLAXLEY: Since we found out the crossbow bolt was fired at your carriage from 30 metres away.

MANDIKA: Yeah! By him!

BONSON: Now you're being ridiculous. Like your husband's haircut!

LEFIAT: That's not fair. It was dark and the scissors were blunt.

BONSON: Oh, shut up, you.

MANDIKA: *You* shut up!

FLAXLEY: You can all shut up!

BONSON: Don't tell *me* to shut up!

MANDIKA: Or me! I'm a queen!!!

(Watching on, Kritz rolled her eyes.)

KRITZ: Leave it to me.

(She then bellowed at the top of her lungs.)

KRITZ: Shut up!!!

(At once, everyone froze in fear and whimpered at her. Even Flaxley. Kritz's bellows of rage were notoriously chilling.)

KRITZ: That's better. Now listen quietly while Flaxley explains.

FLAXLEY: Thank you.

KRITZ: Any time.

(Flaxley nodded then looked to Mandika.)

FLAXLEY: The bolt was fired from 30 metres away. Bonson could never have made that shot. And you'd have noticed if he'd stopped.

MANDIKA: Well, maybe.

FLAXLEY: Therefore he's innocent, and you can stop accusing him.

BONSON: Hear, hear.

FLAXLEY: And Bonson?

BONSON: Yes?

FLAXLEY: You can shut up too.

BONSON: Fine. As soon as Mandika apologises, I'll say no more about it.

(Mandika gaped in horror.)

MANDIKA: Me? Apologise? What for?

BONSON: For falsely accusing me, obviously.

MANDIKA: Right. Well... I guess... in that case... I'm... well... I'm...

(She then thrust her hands to her hips.)

MANDIKA: Maybe if you weren't such a horrible old git all the time, I wouldn't have suspected you.

BONSON: That's your apology, is it?

MANDIKA: Yes.

BONSON: Fine. Forget you. I quit. I've had enough of you for one lifetime.

MANDIKA: You *can't* quit. Working as my butler for the rest of your life is your punishment for instigating a revolution against me, remember?

BONSON: Not anymore. I've served my sentence. I'm finished with you.

MANDIKA: Fine. Piss off then.

BONSON: I will.

MANDIKA: No, you merely wish you *could*. You can't though, can you? For one, you can't afford to start over. And secondly, you've got nowhere else to go. Thanks to your lifetime of being an arsehole, all the people you used to consider friends want to batter you black and blue. As soon as you leave the castle, they'll break your legs. And I for one, will applaud them... *help* them.

BONSON: Nonsense.

MANDIKA: No, I will.

BONSON: Not that bit. The bit about having nowhere to go.

(He nodded sternly.)

BONSON: I'll just stay here in Tifaeris.

(Flaxley and Kritz whimpered, horrified by the very idea.)

MANDIKA: Fine, you do that. Become homeless and unemployed here in Tifaeris; I can live with that.

BONSON: I won't be either! Flaxley will let me live *here*.

FLAXLEY: Um...

BONSON: As for employment, I'll just become a police officer. Clearly they're desperate for people. Have you seen the idiots they've got doing it now?

(He sneered.)

BONSON: I could have solved this crime in half the time.

FLAXLEY: The crime hasn't been solved, you idiot. We still don't know who attacked the carriage, just that it wasn't *you*.

BONSON: And that further strengthens my point. The shit police force here need me.

MANDIKA: Fine. Whatever. You go. Works for me. I want nothing more to do with you.

BONSON: And I you. Now go on, bugger off.

MANDIKA: You bugger off!

BONSON: No, you bugger off.

(As the two of them commenced a round of childish bickering, Flaxley looked to Kritz and smiled apologetically. Glancing back at him, Kritz could only sigh in defeat then spam her forehead.)

KRITZ: I do enjoy these visits.

(That evening, as the last ferry from Tifaeris set off upon the ocean, Sadler stood upon the deck, exhaling with relief. He was finally going home. The beating he'd received by the ferryman for annoying his family for several nights had been well worth it. He may have taken quite the pounding, but at least his plan had worked. Looking forward to getting home, he smiled to himself then leant across the deck-rail to stare out at Tifaeris one last time. He most certainly wasn't going to miss the place.)

SADLER: And here endeth my misery.

(He smiled as he stared across the rows of darkened houses, blanketed in the peaceful silence of the night.)

SADLER: Goodbye, hell hole. May we never meet again.

(He then smiled the widest of smiles.)

SADLER: Perfect. I'll never have to listen to that infernal child sing ever again either.

Goodbye, Cayley. May yours be a life of misery and misfortune like the ones you inflicted on me.

(As he stood there smiling, however, a piano struck up in the distance, followed moments later by the sounds of a child singing. Recognising the voice immediately, he sunk to his knees and whimpered.)

SADLER: Why? Even in my moment of victory, she's there. Taunting me.

(He then curled up and cried. He'd had no idea that the sounds from the pub were well known for reverberating down the street then echoing out to sea. Sailors found it a most welcome way to return to port. Sadler, on the other hand, found it mortifying.)

SADLER: Why???

(Blissfully unaware that the tuneful start to her evening shift at the inn had brought Sadler such misery, Cayley continued to sing her heart out. Her audience was captivated as always. They'd all taken this cutest and most talented little girl to their hearts. Her biggest fan, however, was Kyrie. Sitting at the end of the bar, beaming with delight as men drooled around her, she exhaled then looked to the landlord.)

KYRIE: That's my little sister.

LANDLORD: I know.

KYRIE: She taught me everything I know about the world. I've forgotten it all, but you can't fault her for trying.

(She exhaled.)

KYRIE: I'm gonna buy her something nice on pay day. She deserves it. It's about time *I* took care of *her* for a change, rather than the other way round.

LANDLORD: You do your best, Kyrie; I'm sure.

KYRIE: Well, I keep her safe, I guess. She's the one who really keeps our heads above water though. I'm lucky to have her.

LANDLORD: I'm sure she feels the same way.

(Kyrie smiled.)

KYRIE: She hugs me a lot, so maybe.

LANDLORD: That's wonderful.

KYRIE: Right?

(Focussing hard on her music, Cayley then glanced up and smiled at her, sending another wave of love through her heart. She returned it with an excited wave. Inspired by the wave, Cayley beamed then launched into the song's lengthy piano solo. It was a piece she loved to play. Partly because it was a wonderful piece of music, but also because it was extremely easy for her. Nothing, not even the sounds of the patrons talking could distract her.

Normally. As she continued her way through the piece, however, a somewhat miffed

gentleman paced past the piano then sat down at the table to her right. Snarling, he looked to his friends then shook his head.)

HANS: That bloody son of mine. I'll throttle him one day, I tell you!

CHAS: What's he done this time?

HANS: The little bastard's been touching my stuff again.

CHAS: You need to start locking it away, mate.

HANS: No, that little fucker needs to start leaving it alone.

(He sneered.)

HANS: Like I told him just now. Foxton, you little fucker, I said; you touch my stuff again I'll punch you into the middle of next week. And when next week comes and I catch you up, I'll punch you back here again.

(Having heard her classmate mentioned, Cayley grimaced as she carried on playing.

Normally, she'd simply tune him out, but on this occasion, she couldn't help but listen in as she tickled the ivories.)

CHAS: What the hell was he thinking?

HANS: I'll tell you what he was thinking. Birds, mate.

CHAS: Birds?

HANS: Yeah, there's a girl in his class he likes. He sits next to her in his form room. He wanted to impress her.

(Cayley's eyes bulged in horror at this point.)

HANS: He says he's in love with her.

(At this very moment, for the first time in her life, Cayley panicked and hit several wrong notes. Mercifully, this audience was so tone deaf they didn't even notice.)

HANS: He wanted to take her out and show off his skills, so he borrowed my gear, didn't he?

CHAS: Oh, no.

HANS: Yeah. And in all his fucking about he lost one of my prime feathers.

(Whimpering Cayley continued through her solo, when all of a sudden a realisation hit her like a thunderbolt. With a gasp, she swiftly manufactured a fake ending to the song then stood up and curtsied to the crowd. Receiving a baffled look in return, she whimpered then spoke up in a small voice.)

CAYLEY: What? That's how it goes. I didn't write it.

(Accepting her words, the audience then burst into applause.)

CAYLEY: Thanks.

(With that, she zoomed across the room to where Kyrie was sitting.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie, we need to see Phisele straight away.

KYRIE: We do?

LANDLORD: You've only played one song, Cayley.

CAYLEY: Official police business.

LANDLORD: You're not a policewoman.

CAYLEY: No, but Kyrie is?

KYRIE: I am? No, wait. I am!

(She nodded.)

KYRIE: Where are we going?

CAYLEY: Follow me.

KYRIE: Right.

(They then darted out of the door. Left behind, the landlord shook his head.)

LANDLORD: That's a gross dereliction of duty. I should sack her.

DRINKER: Yeah, Flaxley would love that, mate. He'd rearrange your nose.

LANDLORD: I didn't say I was going to.

(He then ruffled his neck indignantly.)

LANDLORD: I just hope she hurries back.

(A short while later, Flaxley paced over to the pub to collect Hans then marched back to his house with him, where Kyrie and Phisele were waiting. Upon entering, Hans then called for Foxton to come out of his room. Sheepishly the lad obliged.)

FOXTON: What's wrong, dad?

HANS: Sir Flaxley here wants a word with you, son.

FOXTON: Uh-oh.

HANS: I should box your ears then throw that you out of that fucking window, boy.

FLAXLEY: You'll do no such thing. Simply batter him with a slipper or a belt; there's no need for violence.

HANS: I apologise.

FLAXLEY: It's fine.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: Foxton?

FOXTON: Sir?

FLAXLEY: I've just heard through the grapevine, that you've been playing with crossbows.

(Kyrie leant close to him and whispered.)

KYRIE: No, you heard it from Cayley. Just now. Remember?

(Phisele swiftly dragged her away.)

PHISELE: Move, Severen.

KYRIE: Yeah, alright.

(Foxton hung his head.)

FOXTON: I don't know what to say.

FLAXLEY: Then *I'll* say it. Word is, you've been playing with your father's things. Your father is a huntsman. Therefore, it wasn't difficult for Cayley... I mean, for the police to deduce that it means you've been playing with your father's crossbow.

FOXTON: Right. Why do you keep mentioning Cayley? Did she figure it out and drop me in it?

KYRIE: Yes.

(Anxious to keep Cayley's name out of it, Flaxley winced.)

FLAXLEY: No! Shut up, Kyrie.

FOXTON: She didn't, didn't she?

(He sighed.)

FOXTON: First she rejects me, now she turns me in to the police.

FLAXLEY: Actually, that was Kyrie... officially.

KYRIE: I rejected him?

(She shrugged.)

KYRIE: Makes sense, he's twelve. Even I'm not *that* depraved.

(Foxton sighed.)

FOXTON: So it was Kyrie. Rejected by the girl I love then arrested by her sister. My life sucks.

HANS: Stop feeling sorry for yourself and tell Flaxley what happened!

(Foxton nodded reluctantly.)

FOXTON: Very well. I just wanted to make Cayley love me.

KYRIE: You did what?

(She growled.)

KYRIE: She's a good girl! I'm gonna kill him!!!

(Phisele then had to drag her outside, kicking and screaming. Watching them go, Flaxley grimaced to himself then turned to face Foxton again.)

FLAXLEY: Continue.

FOXTON: I was gonna invite her out to our hunting platform to show off my skills, you see? Girls like that kind of thing. I was hoping I could win her over.

(He whimpered.)

FOXTON: So, I loaded a crossbow up. I guess I forgot to put the safety catch on, because as soon I set it down, it went off. Next thing I knew, the bolt was whizzing towards this carriage. Luckily the driver was slumped in his seat, fast asleep.

HANS: So you missed?

FOXTON: I missed the driver, yeah. The arrow went into the horse's arse instead. It bolted and raced off towards town, casting the poor driver into the thick grass at the roadside.

(He grimaced.)

FOXTON: I panicked then legged it.

(Flaxley nodded.)

FLAXLEY: So it was all a stupid accident.

FOXTON: Yeah.

HANS: Lock him up and throw away the key, Flaxley.

FLAXLEY: For a misdemeanour? No, no. He can do community service.

HANS: And apologise to the carriage owner.

FLAXLEY: Normally, I'd agree, but it'd only be fair to skip that part. She'd demand we have him hanged. She's not a reasonable person, especially where common folk like ourselves are concerned. She doesn't need to know about it.

HANS: Fine.

FLAXLEY: Foxton, report to the police station after school tomorrow. You're going to clean the place from top to bottom.

HANS: With a tiny brush and nothing but cold water.

FLAXLEY: Um, no. We want it done properly.

HANS: Right. I'll be quiet, shall I?

FLAXLEY: Yes. Yes, you will.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: Foxton...

FOXTON: Sir?

FLAXLEY: You've admitted your crime and for that you have my respect. You'll serve out your community service at the police station, then we'll say no more about it.

FOXTON: Thank you, sir. And how long will I be doing this community service for, roughly?

FLAXLEY: Until I say otherwise. And every time you ask how much longer you have left, I'll add another week. Understood?

FOXTON: Sir.

FLAXLEY: Good.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: Now to draw a line under it. I'll tell Mandika you're going to be executed, I think. She won't stop pestering me otherwise. She's not the forgiving sort.

FOXTON: Thank you.

FLAXLEY: You're welcome.

HANS: Honestly. All this to impress a girl. Idiot.

FOXTON: I love her, dad.

HANS: Like I said, you're an idiot.

FLAXLEY: The heart wants what it wants, Hans.

HANS: And his wants a slap.

FLAXLEY: Right. Well, I'll take my leave now.

(He then nodded and proceeded to lie through his teeth.)

FLAXLEY: Before I go, however, I'd be remiss if I didn't remind you not to take this out on young Cayley. She had nothing to do with it. I merely used her name by accident, when I confused her with her sister. I'm terrible with names, you see?

HANS: We know.

FLAXLEY: Good. I'm glad that's cleared up then. She's a good girl, young Cayley; leave her alone. Kritz and I have become very fond of the little thing, you see?

(He then frowned his brow to make sure Foxton knew he was serious.)

FLAXLEY: She's like a daughter to us.

(Hans shuddered. Everyone in town was well aware that Flaxley's daughters were off limits to any man, and he was left in little doubt as to what Flaxley was saying.)

HANS: Don't worry. If he even looks at her again, I'll break his face.

FLAXLEY: We've discussed this, Hans.

HANS: I meant I'll take my belt to his arse.

FLAXLEY: Thank you.

(He nodded firmly.)

FLAXLEY: And on that note, I declare this case well and truly solved.

(With that, he headed outside and closed the door behind him. Left behind, Hans glowered at his son.)

HANS: You stay away from that girl in future, boy. Well away.

FOXTON: I sit next to her in class.

HANS: Not anymore!!!

(Having been left at Flaxley's house while Kyrie went to Foxton's house with Flaxley and Phisele, Cayley was having a miserable evening. Bonson and Mandika had been squabbling for the duration, forcing Kritz to act as referee. Lefiat had just looked on, too afraid to intervene. Both of them had vile tongues and would be swift to turn on him if he even dared try. Anoka was in the kitchen, making coffee. This left Cayley in the company of Emma and Jade. They'd not been gracious hosts to say the least. Sitting at the table in the centre of the room with her, they'd not been slow in letting her know of their disdain.)

JADE: You snitch!

EMMA: Yeah. You wait 'til everyone at school hears about this.

JADE: Have you no shame? You grassed a classmate up to the police.

EMMA: So wrong. Your days of being popular are finished, Cayley.

JADE: Yup. You're going to be such a pariah.

EMMA: We'll see to that.

(Cayley whimpered.)

CAYLEY: I just did what I thought was right.

EMMA: Yeah, well; actions have consequences.

JADE: And snitches get stitches.

EMMA: Yeah. And if you thought the bullying was bad before, you wait 'til tomorrow.

JADE: Yeah. You're gonna feel pain.

(They then both received an almighty clout around the head from behind.)

JADE: Ow!!!

EMMA: Hey!!!

ANOKA: What? You don't think you had it coming?

JADE: You were supposed to be making coffee.

ANOKA: I was. And I'll go back to it in a minute, but I saw you two snarling at our guest here and thought I'd sneak over to listen to what you were saying.

JADE: We were only playing.

EMMA: Yeah. Right, Cayley?

(Cayley hung her head and nodded nervously.)

EMMA: See?

(They then received a second clout around the head.)

EMMA: Ow!!!

JADE: Why would you do that?

ANOKA: Because you seem think I'm an idiot.

(She rolled her eyes.)

ANOKA: Cayley, can you go in the kitchen for a minute, please? I need to have a word with my sisters.

CAYLEY: Um... okay.

(She then upped and headed into the kitchen. Once she was out of sight, Anoka shook her head then sat down to face the girls.)

ANOKA: What's going on? It's not like you two to bully someone.

(Emma pouted.)

EMMA: We just don't like her.

JADE: Why is she here all the time anyway? She's not part of our family.

EMMA: Yeah. Mum and dad are *our* parents, not hers.

(Anoka furrowed her brow.)

ANOKA: What are you suggesting then? We send her back to her own parents? She doesn't have any.

EMMA: Yeah, but...

ANOKA: But nothing. She's a young, traumatised orphan trying to make it in this world with nobody but her sister for company. She needs guidance from an adult. I mean, Kyrie tries, I'm sure, but she's barely an adult herself.

(She sighed.)

ANOKA: Where's your compassion, girls? That poor kid has faced more hardship that you'll face in a lifetime. We've had it so easy. Our parents are well-respected leaders and we've wanted for nothing. Kyrie and Cayley have had the opposite all their lives. Hardship and suffering. Why would you add to her troubles, girls? Why?

(Emma and Jade pouted.)

EMMA: Sorry.

JADE: Yeah. Sorry.

ANOKA: Don't be sorry; be better.

(She nodded.)

ANOKA: Mum and dad adore you two, you know? There's no need to be jealous. They're just helping out a young girl who's had a hard life. Nothing more, okay?

EMMA: Okay.

ANOKA: Good.

JADE: She is annoying though. All the boys at school have taken a shine to her and don't even notice us anymore.

ANOKA: Oh, so that's what this is *really* about, is it? Boys.

(Emma and Jade hung their heads further.)

ANOKA: You two are dim. How to be popular with boys, lesson one. If a girl is more popular with the boys than you are, become her friend. Then you'll be popular with boys too. Duh!

(She scoffed.)

ANOKA: Even *I* know that, and *I'm* a lesbian.

(She then upped and headed back into the kitchen.)

EMMA: We just got schooled by Anoka. On boys!

JADE: Tell nobody.

(Just then, the door cranked open and Flaxley walked in with Phisele and Kyrie. Before any of them could even speak, Cayley zoomed from the kitchen and sped into hug Kyrie for all she was worth. It made Kyrie's day.)

KYRIE: She loves me.

CAYLEY: I want to go home.

KYRIE: Me too.

(She then waved at Kritz.)

KYRIE: Later!

(The two of them then headed out. Having closed the door behind them, Flaxley nodded then looked to where Mandika and Bonson were arguing.)

FLAXLEY: They're still at it?

KRITZ: That surprises you, does it?

FLAXLEY: Good point.

(He then rolled his eyes and stepped between the bickering twosome.)

MANDIKA: You can't talk to me like that!

BONSON: Yes, I can. Where have *you* been? I've been at it for decades.

FLAXLEY: Enough!

(He shook his head.)

FLAXLEY: This ends now. Tonight should be a celebration.

LEFIAT: It should?

KRITZ: Yes, it should.

BONSON: Of what?

KRITZ: Our success all those years ago.

MANDIKA: That was a different time.

FLAXLEY: It was indeed. It was a dark and deadly time.

KRITZ: It was the worst.

FLAXLEY: But we came through it. Together.

KRITZ: Yup. And now we've all moved on. Our lives are different. Better. And we have our achievement from those dark times to thank for that.

FLAXLEY: And now we're all together again, we should celebrate it.

(Bonson nodded.)

BONSON: Loathe as I am to spend any further time with Mandika here, I have to admit. I do enjoy reminiscing about those times.

LEFIAT: You just enjoy recalling all the rude and sarcastic things you said.

BONSON: Well, I was on top form at the time.

(Mandika sneered at him.)

MANDIKA: You were horrid.

BONSON: Exactly. Thank you. And you were at *your* best too. I never said so at the time, because I don't like you, but you were really pretty back then.

MANDIKA: And I'm not now?

BONSON: Not even remotely.

MANDIKA: Why, you...

BONSON: Fine, I admit you do still have a certain something that men like, I suppose.

MANDIKA: Thank you.

(Bonson then mumbled under his breath.)

BONSON: Money, mostly.

(Mandika sighed then looked to Kritz.)

MANDIKA: I'm exhausted from all this arguing. Why don't we just get some wine and sit down for the evening; talking about old times?

FLAXLEY: Sounds perfect.

KRITZ: It does. I'll fetch the wine.

MANDIKA: No need. We brought some with us. That stuff you make in Tifaeris is unpalatable.

BONSON: Like the local beer.

MANDIKA: So I hear. What is it with southerners? The process for making a decent beverage is lost on them.

BONSON: I've been saying that for years.

(They then wandered to the centre of the room together, chatting like old friends. Watching them go, Flaxley smiled to Kritz.)

FLAXLEY: Peace at last.

KRITZ: Finally.

LEFIAT: It won't last, you know that, right?

FLAXLEY: No, but let's enjoy it while it does.

KRITZ: Amen to that, my love.

(They then headed away to join them.)

(That night over at the barracks, Kyrie was standing in front of the full length mirror, posing in her see-through nightdress. Happy to leave her to it, Cayley was sitting up in bed, reading a book. Struggling to focus, however, she soon sighed and laid her book down.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie?

KYRIE: Hold on, sister face. I'm just trying to figure out which is my best side. My right, or my other right.

CAYLEY: You mean left.

KYRIE: That too.

(She then nodded sternly.)

KYRIE: Yup. Just as I thought. I'm perfect on both sides.

CAYLEY: Well, yes. Yes, you are.

KYRIE: Aw, you're so sweet.

(She smiled.)

KYRIE: What's up? You look troubled.

CAYLEY: Well, it's nothing really. It's just that I... I don't want to go to school anymore. (Kyrie gasped.)

KYRIE: But you love school!

CAYLEY: Not anymore.

KYRIE: But...

(Her brow then furrowed over.)

KYRIE: Are you being bullied? You are, aren't you? Of course, you are; you're a massive nerd. If I was still at school, *I'd* bully you for certain.

CAYLEY: What?

KYRIE: Well, not *you*, obviously. I wouldn't bully *you*. Someone *like* you, I mean.

CAYLEY: You used to bully people?

KYRIE: No. What gave you that impression?

CAYLEY: You just said you'd bully someone like me.

KYRIE: Yeah, but not in a violent way. I'd just tease them about being unpopular with boys. (Cayley sighed.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie, it wouldn't be so bad if I *was* unpopular with boys. I'm not though.

KYRIE: What?

CAYLEY: The boys all think I'm awesome and won't leave me alone.

(Kyrie nodded solemnly.)

KYRIE: So it begins. You've become me.

CAYLEY: No, I haven't. I hate it. I just want them to leave me alone.

KYRIE: You do? What the hell for? Boys are awesome.

CAYLEY: I disagree.

KYRIE: Then you're wrong.

(She gasped.)

KYRIE: Really? You're popular with boys? For real? Are you sure?

CAYLEY: Yes!

KYRIE: Wow.

(She then mused to herself.)

KYRIE: Come to think of it, that Foxglove boy said he was in love with you.

CAYLEY: Foxton.

KYRIE: Yeah. Him. Bastard. Is he why you want to leave school?

CAYLEY: No. Not *just* him. And not just boys. Now the boys like me, all the girls hate me. I just don't want to go there anymore. And besides, it's a complete waste of time, Kyrie. They've got nothing left to teach me. Half the time, I end up taking the class because I know more than the teachers. Going there is just a pointless exercise.

(Kyrie nodded.)

KYRIE: I couldn't agree more. It was a waste of time *me* going to school too.

CAYLEY: Yes, but for very different reasons.

KYRIE: What?

CAYLEY: I love you.

KYRIE: Aw.

CAYLEY: So, anyway. That's how I feel, so I'm going to quit school.

KYRIE: I'd rather you didn't.

CAYLEY: What? But you just said you agree with me. Why would you want me to keep going there?

KYRIE: Because if you don't, I'll have to arrest you.

CAYLEY: Arrest me? What for?

KYRIE: Last week Flaxley made it law for kids to go to school until they're fourteen.

CAYLEY: No!!! Why would he do that?

KYRIE: That's what I said. He told me it was on *your* recommendation.

(Cayley gaped for a moment then hung her head.)

CAYLEY: I'm an idiot.

KYRIE: Well, we are sisters.

CAYLEY: Yup. And right now, I've never felt so close to you, Kyrie. I'm so stupid.

KYRIE: Aw. We're like two really stupid peas in a pod.

CAYLEY: Something like that.

KYRIE: Anyway, try not to worry about it, sister face. In time you'll learn to love male attention. Until then, just hang in there, okay?

CAYLEY: I'll try.

KYRIE: That's my girl.

(She nodded.)

KYRIE: Anyway. I'm off out. I have another date with my sexy new girlfriend.

(She grimaced.)

KYRIE: I just hope Flaxley doesn't find out. He really doesn't like homos.

CAYLEY: What?

KYRIE: He disowned his son for being a poof.

CAYLEY: Actually, he did nothing of the sort.

(She shrugged.)

CAYLEY: I heard Kritz and Anoka talking about it earlier. Flaxley couldn't give a hoot about his son being a gay-boy. He disowned him after he joined the anti-sword coalition and started going on marches.

KYRIE: Gay marches?

CAYLEY: No, Kyrie, you're not listening.

KYRIE: Sorry.

CAYLEY: He went on anti-sword marches; trying to get them banned. He even had the cheek to protest in Tifaeris. That's when Flaxley and Anoka disowned him.

KYRIE: Oh.

(She beamed.)

KYRIE: That's great. I've got nothing to worry about then. I can glug and slurp at her minge until the cows come home, and nobody's going to mind.

CAYLEY: Why do you say these things???

KYRIE: I have no fucking idea. You didn't want to hear that.

CAYLEY: Right?

KYRIE: Right.

(They then started to chuckle together.)

(*Two days later.* As the newly-repaired Royal Guevina carriage headed out of town, Flaxley and Kritz stood outside their home, waving it off with contented smiles on their faces. The royal visit was finally over and they could now go back to resuming their happy lives. Anxious to do so as soon as possible, before the carriage was even out of sight, Kritz nodded then headed indoors.)

KRITZ: Come on, they're Guevina's problem now. Let's go inside.

(Flaxley laughed.)

FLAXLEY: I'll be right with you, my love. I just want to tidy the porch a little.

KRITZ: Good call.

(Kritz then disappeared through the door. No sooner had she done so, however, a voice popped up from Flaxley's side.)

DEREK: Morning, Flaxley.

(Flaxley glanced down to his side, and there was his good friend Derek, the three foot tall green alien from the Planet Tryme 17.)

FLAXLEY: Ah, Derek. There you are. Shocking timing, old chap. Bonson, Mandika and Lefiat just left.

DEREK: I know. And there was nothing shocking about my timing, whatsoever. I waited until they'd gone before I popped over.

(He shook his head.)

DEREK: I can't tolerate their petty bickering anymore, Flaxley. I just can't. And I won't. if I'm honest, I don't care if I never see them ever again.

FLAXLEY: That's a terrible thing to say, Derek. After all we went through, how could you even *think* that?

DEREK: You know I can read minds, right?

FLAXLEY: Right...

DEREK: As they headed out of sight, you were hoping it'd be *at least* another ten years before they return.

FLAXLEY: I was, yes. Guilty.

DEREK: That you are.

FLAXLEY: I know. I literally just said so.

(He then leant against the porch rail and sighed.)

FLAXLEY: It's just a hard thing to admit, Derek.

DEREK: Is it though?

FLAXLEY: Well, it is for me. After all we went through together, I feel kind of obliged to make an effort with them.

DEREK: But all you're doing is pretending the friendship we all profess is real. Sounds kind of silly to me.

FLAXLEY: It *is* real though, Derek.

DEREK: Is that a fact?

FLAXLEY: Yes. In my time as knight and protector of Guevina I got to know Mandika inside out. Yes, there's a darkness there. A real self-involved nasty streak. But...

(His face then completely dropped.)

FLAXLEY: But... um... well... she's not *all* bad... I mean...

DEREK: You've got nothing, have you?

FLAXLEY: Well... no, not really. I mean she really is a terrible human being.

(He shrugged.)

FLAXLEY: But she has the odd nice moments. And those moments are very nice indeed.

Same with Bonson. You have to admit, he can be bloody hilarious.

DEREK: Yes, but is that friendship? It sounds more like tolerance to me.

FLAXLEY: And you're probably right. The thing is though, Derek, as difficult as it is, I'm glad we do it from time to time. We *did* go through a lot together and it *does* make me happy to know they're okay.

DEREK: I guess you have a point.

(He nodded.)

DEREK: But then, so do I. They're shit human beings and I want nothing more to do with them.

FLAXLEY: Point taken. Fancy a coffee?

DEREK: Well, I didn't come over here just to admire your front door, Flaxley.

FLAXLEY: Touché.

(He then pushed open the door and called inside.)

FLAXLEY: We've got a visitor, Kritz. A better one.

(He listened to the reply then started to chuckle.)

FLAXLEY: Well, she's not wrong. That *did* go without saying.

CHAPTER FOUR – HOW TO TRAUMATISE A TWELVE YEAR OLD

(Following another successful evening of playing the piano at the inn, Cayley stepped from the establishment, arm in arm with Kyrie. As always, it was a warm, dry night and the silvery glow of the moonlight was magnificent to say the least. Enthralled by the splendour of the evening, she couldn't help but smile. Tifaeris was indeed a wonderful place to be after dark. The repressive heat of the sun would melt away and leave behind only a serene pleasantness. This was, however, lost on Kyrie.)

KYRIE: What are you grinning at, sister face?

CAYLEY: I'm not grinning, I'm just smiling.

KYRIE: What for?

CAYLEY: I'm just happy, that's all. I like Tifaeris. Especially at this late hour. Night time is fantastic.

(Kyrie furrowed her brow.)

KYRIE: No, it isn't. I work really hard to look this gorgeous, but at night no bugger can see me. All my efforts are completely wasted.

CAYLEY: I disagree.

KYRIE: You always do.

CAYLEY: You don't work hard at all to look gorgeous; it comes naturally to *you*.

(Kyrie beamed.)

KYRIE: You make a good point.

CAYLEY: And you look gorgeous in *any* light. Night *or* day.

KYRIE: Both, in fact.

(Cayley rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: Like I said.

KYRIE: Right.

(She exhaled.)

KYRIE: Thanks, Cayley.

CAYLEY: Just saying it as it is.

KYRIE: Still, your validation means a lot to me. Not that I need it. The fact men drool over me at all hours of the day is all the evidence I need of my gorgeousness.

CAYLEY: Right... your gorgeousness...

KYRIE: My interminable splendour, some might say.

(Cayley looked to her aghast.)

CAYLEY: You used big words!

KYRIE: What?

CAYLEY: Interminable splendour.

KYRIE: What about it?

CAYLEY: Where did you learn an intelligent phrase like that?

(She chuckled.)

CAYLEY: Who are you and what did you do with my sister?

KYRIE: I *am* your sister, silly.

(She ruffled her neck indignantly.)

KYRIE: As for that phrase, I have no idea what it means. I just know it's a good way to describe yourself when you think you look gorgeous.

CAYLEY: I see.

KYRIE: You know, like *you* did earlier when you were posing in front of the mirror because you thought I wasn't looking.

(Cayley's eyes bulged and she whimpered in terror.)

CAYLEY: You mean...

KYRIE: Yup. I saw the whole thing.

(She chuckled.)

KYRIE: Pouting and striking poses; pushing your cleavage up; you looked just like a miniature version of me.

CAYLEY: But, but...

KYRIE: Hey, don't be embarrassed. I do that kind of thing all the time.

CAYLEY: I know. That's *why* I'm embarrassed.

KYRIE: Well don't be. Once you're all dressed up and ready to play the piano, you've every right to be like that, Cayley. With your hair all nice, a pretty dress on and cute shoes on your feet, you look really beautiful.

(Cayley blushed.)

CAYLEY: I do?

KYRIE: Yes!

(She beamed.)

KYRIE: Like I said, you look just like me.

CAYLEY: Well...

KYRIE: Never be ashamed of looking nice, Cayley. You're a good looking girl; embrace it.

CAYLEY: You really think I'm good looking?

KYRIE: Of course, I do. You look like me. And I'm one seriously sexy babe.

CAYLEY: Let's just stick with pretty. I don't want to be sexy.

KYRIE: Good thing too really. In your *everyday* clothes, you're anything but.

CAYLEY: Hey!

KYRIE: Sorry, but, come off it. I mean, who wears slip-on ballerina shoes and pinafore dresses nowadays?

CAYLEY: I do!

KYRIE: Nerds, that's who... oh, you beat me to it.

CAYLEY: Wow.

KYRIE: You need to let *me* loose on your wardrobe, Cayley. I'll throw out all the drab, geekiness and replace it all with cool and sexy things. And those ballerina shoes of yours will have to go. You look lovely in heels. We should buy you more.

(Cayley looked down at her stiletto-heeled shoes and sighed.)

CAYLEY: They are nice, I suppose, but I can't wear them everywhere, Kyrie. They're for when I play the piano and special occasions.

KYRIE: Every day's a special occasion when you've got awesome high heels on, Cayley. Trust me.

(Her mind then started to drift away as she paced on, merrily.)

KYRIE: We should get you some red ones like mine that tie up around the ankle. You'd look great in those. I wonder if they come in a platform too. You could go even higher with the heel then. Damn, I need a pair like that for myself. We should raid our savings when we get back.

CAYLEY: No, Kyrie, we need that to...

(Just then, her heel snagged, having been caught in a gap between the cobbles.)

CAYLEY: What the hell?

(As she commenced battling to free her shoe, Kyrie paced on obliviously, talking to herself as she did so.)

KYRIE: Yup, I definitely need a new pair of shoes. That'd be perfect. It'd cheer me right up. I've actually been a bit down since Anoka went back to Leathrock, Cayley. I miss her, you see? I've slept with a dozen or so men since she left yesterday but it hasn't helped me put her in the past. A nice pair of shiny new shoes would perk me *right* up though. Yup. New shoes it is.

(Having been left behind, Cayley continued to battle with her shoe, whimpering as she did so.)

CAYLEY: Come out, you stupid shoe. What's going on? It's stuck fast.

(She snarled.)

CAYLEY: Give me my shoe back, you stupid fucking cobble.

(She then gasped in horror, before swiftly glancing towards Kyrie. Much to her relief, Kyrie was still pacing onwards and hadn't heard her. Relieved to have avoided the inevitable spanking she'd have received if her sister had heard such profanity, she wiped sweat from her brow then resumed pulling at her ankle.)

CAYLEY: Shift!!!

(Much to her delight, her heel then came free of the cobbles and she staggered backwards a couple of paces. Having righted herself, she drew a sigh of relief then nodded sternly.)

CAYLEY: Right, no harm done. Time to catch up with...

(Just then, a man in a long trench coat, raced from the darkened alley just in front of her. With a gasp, Cayley spun to face him, just in time to see him whip open his long coat and reveal his manhood to her in all its glory. Stunned to the core of her being, Cayley could only gape at in him horror, before her eyes rolled into the back of her head and she passed out. She didn't even manage a scream.)

(At Sir Flaxley's house, at this time, the goodly knight was sitting on a sofa with his beautiful wife, Kritz, sharing a bottle of wine with her. Looking more than a little content with his lot, he sat back in a relaxed position and exhaled to himself.)

FLAXLEY: You know what, darling?

KRITZ: How could I possibly? You're going to have to give me a little more to go on than that, my love.

(As she chuckled to herself, Flaxley glanced down at her coldly.)

FLAXLEY: Must we go through this every time Bonson visits? He's a bad influence on you, you know?

KRITZ: Yeah, so I've been told.

(She smiled.)

KRITZ: So what were you going to tell me?

FLAXLEY: I was just going to say that sitting here like this, with you, late at night, is my idea of heaven.

KRITZ: Aw, so sweet.

FLAXLEY: I'm a sweet guy.

(He smiled.)

FLAXLEY: Yes, this is definitely my favourite time of the day. I take quite the ear-bashing during the day sometimes, you know? We do our best to make Tifaeris the perfect place to live, but some people are never satisfied. All they do when they see me is complain. But not of an evening. No, no. This is *my* time; our time. Nobody's whinging that the cobbles need fixing, a particular road keeps flooding or that some teenage tramp from overseas slept with their husband. Just peace and quiet. The kids are in bed, all is peaceful and quiet, and I finally get to spend time with the most beautiful woman in the world; my gorgeous wife.

(Kritz exhaled.)

KRITZ: I completely agree, my love. It's the best part of the day, by far. We finally get to relax together.

(She then nestled into his arms.)

FLAXLEY: Yeah, this is how life ought to be.

KRITZ: It is.

(She smiled.)

KRITZ: We're so lucky. We've got no financial problems, our kids are safe and healthy, and best of all, we have each other.

FLAXLEY: Yes, we do. And I can safely say that I love you as much today as I did twenty years ago. More so, actually.

KRITZ: I love you too, darling. In fact, why don't we head to bed and...

FLAXLEY: Say no more!

(Just then, the door burst open and Kyrie raced in with Cayley in her arms.)

FLAXLEY: Fuck! Just when I was about to get the good stuff!!!

(More concerned with the anguished look on Kyrie's face, Kritz hurried over to her.)

KRITZ: What's wrong, Kyrie?

(Kyrie whimpered.)

KYRIE: Cayley died again!

(Kritz looked to the dazed and disorientated child in Kyrie's arms and grimaced.)

KRITZ: She's not dead, Kyrie; she's just a bit woozy.

KYRIE: No, she's dead.

KRITZ: I'm not going to argue with you.

(She then looked to where Flaxley was hurrying over to them.)

KRITZ: I'll fetch the smelling salts.

(As Kritz scampered to the kitchen, Flaxley raced to Kyrie's side and grimaced.)

FLAXLEY: What happened?

KYRIE: She died.

FLAXLEY: No, she didn't; I can see her breathing.

KYRIE: Then why is she dead?

FLAXLEY: Look, just tell me what happened!

(Kyrie whimpered.)

KYRIE: I don't know. One minute we were walking home side by side, the next she teleported fifty yards away and died.

FLAXLEY: Right, well that makes no sense.

(He then nodded.)

FLAXLEY: Especially the part about dying; she passed out, Kyrie.

KYRIE: No, she died. She's done it before, you see? She does it a lot actually. When she's stressed or tired, mostly.

FLAXLEY: So she fainted, you mean?

KYRIE: Died.

FLAXLEY: Kyrie... never mind.

(He nodded sternly.)

FLAXLEY: Put your sister on the table. We'll bring her round then find out what happened. And once that's sorted, we'll sit you down and teach you the difference between dying and passing out.

(Kyrie gasped.)

KYRIE: You'd threaten me with education at a time like this? What sort of monster are you?

FLAXLEY: Just put your sister on the table, Kyrie.

KYRIE: What for?

FLAXLEY: Just do it!

KYRIE: Oh, fine.

(A few minutes later, once Kritz had worked her magic with the smelling salts, Cayley sat up looking somewhat sheepish. With her legs dangling over the edge of the table, she whimpered nervously.)

CAYLEY: What am I doing here, Kyrie?

KYRIE: I brought you here.

CAYLEY: Why?

KYRIE: Because you died and I panicked. I didn't know where else to go.

(Cayley hung her head and whimpered.)

CAYLEY: Well, I'm alive again now; can we go home?

(Kritz gave her a friendly smile.)

KRITZ: You should sit there and rest for a bit before you go anywhere, love.

FLAXLEY: She's right.

CAYLEY: I guess.

FLAXLEY: So what happened? Has that landlord been overworking you? I'll box his ears if he has. I warned him about that.

CAYLEY: No, it wasn't that.

(Her entire body seemed to shrink at this point.)

CAYLEY: I don't want to talk about it.

(Kritz smiled kindly.)

KRITZ: Girly problems, is it? Lost too much blood, maybe?

FLAXLEY: Then I don't want to talk about it either!

(Cayley whimpered once again.)

CAYLEY: No, it wasn't that.

KYRIE: Then what was it, sister face? People don't die without a reason.

FLAXLEY: She didn't die!

KYRIE: So you claim.

FLAXLEY: Kyrie... look, never mind that. Cayley, your sister is right about one thing...

KYRIE: That she died?

FLAXLEY: No, the other thing. People don't pass out for no reason.

KRITZ: Sometimes they do.

FLAXLEY: I stand corrected. The question is, why did *you* pass out?

(Cayley turned bright red.)

CAYLEY: There was...

KYRIE: There was what?

CAYLEY: Nothing.

(Kritz patted her shoulder lovingly.)

KRITZ: It's okay, you can tell us.

FLAXLEY: As long as it's not a girly issue.

CAYLEY: It isn't.

FLAXLEY: Then what's wrong?

CAYLEY: Well... there was this man...

KYRIE: Ooh, I like men!

(Cayley pouted at her.)

CAYLEY: You wouldn't like this one.

(She trembled.)

CAYLEY: My shoe got stuck, but you didn't notice. So I got left behind. Then this man...

(She hung her head.)

KYRIE: What man? Was he good looking?

CAYLEY: I don't know, do I? I didn't see his face. He charged out of the darkness from a side street, opened his coat then...

(She winced.)

CAYLEY: Flashed his willy at me.

(At once, Flaxley seemed to grow another foot in height, and the veins in his neck started to protrude.)

FLAXLEY: A flasher? Here? On the streets of Tifaeris???

(At this point, Cayley started to cry. Mercifully, Kyrie and Kritz were on hand to comfort her. As they did so, Flaxley started to pace up and down angrily.)

FLAXLEY: He must be stopped; nay, killed. I'll polish up my sword then use it to cut off his tackle; that's what I'll do. Our streets are meant to be safe at night; we can't have a pervert on the loose. I won't allow it. He must be made to pay.

KRITZ: And pay dearly. Bring him to justice, my love.

FLAXLEY: I will. By cutting his giblets off.

KRITZ: Well, as much as he may deserve that, Flaxley, killing criminals isn't our way anymore, is it? We're a civilised society, and you're in a position of responsibility.

FLAXLEY: Well...

KRITZ: Arrest him then have him sent to jail. Do it properly, my love.

FLAXLEY: But I don't want to.

KRITZ: You have to. If we want to be seen as a lawful society, we need to bring people to justice properly.

FLAXLEY: Well, I see your point, my love, but would you be saying that if it was Jade and Emma he flashed at?

(Kritz froze at this point, then her brow furrowed over.)

KRITZ: Kill him, Flaxley. Kill him well and kill him horribly.

FLAXLEY: I intend to!

(He looked to Kyrie.)

FLAXLEY: Where was she when you found her?

KYRIE: Who?

FLAXLEY: Cayley!

KYRIE: Oh. On the ground.

FLAXLEY: Where in town!

KYRIE: Oh, right. About 100 yards from the inn.

CAYLEY: We were on our way home.

FLAXLEY: And he jumped out on you from a side street, did you say?

CAYLEY: Yeah, Tragen Lane.

FLAXLEY: Right.

(He looked to Kyrie.)

FLAXLEY: Go...

KYRIE: Where?

FLAXLEY: I'm coming to that!

(He rolled his eyes.)

FLAXLEY: Go and get Phisele then meet me at the corner of Tragen Lane.

KYRIE: Which end?

FLALXEY: The same end the inn's on, obviously!

KYRIE: But Cayley...

(Kritz smiled.)

KRITZ: Don't worry, she'll be safe here.

(Cayley whimpered.)

CAYLEY: But I want to go home.

KRITZ: Just stay here for now, sweetheart. I'll make you some hot chocolate and a chicken sandwich.

(Cayley scratched her ear nervously.)

CAYLEY: Well, okay then.

FLAXLEY: Right. Now that's sorted you can go, Kyrie. Get Phisele.

KYRIE: Right.

(Kyrie then stepped forward to hug Cayley briefly before heading for the door. As she did so, Flaxley headed to the wall then yanked his favourite sword down from its mount.)

FLAXLEY: Now let's find that despicable fiend.

(Kritz was astonished.)

KRITZ: You're taking Louise?

(Flaxley glanced at the blade lovingly.)

FLAXLEY: Yes, I am. I know I said she'd been retired, but there's someone out there walking the streets of Tifaeris, scaring little girls.

(He snarled.)

FLAXLEY: Therefore, it's time she came out of retirement. Come, my most noblest of blades, we have work to do.

(He then stormed out of the house. Having watched him go, Kritz grimaced.)

KRITZ: Now there's a man who means business.

(She exhaled.)

KRITZ: He's so sexy. He's totally getting the good stuff later.

CAYLEY: Um...

KRITZ: Shit! Sorry. Forgot you were here.

(She then hurried away to the kitchen.)

KRITZ: Let's make you that drink.

(A few minutes later, Kyrie found herself standing outside Tifaeris inn with Flaxley and Phisele. Flaxley had an air of angry determination about him, the likes of which she'd never seen before. Phisele was her usual focussed self. As such, it was Flaxley who did nearly all the talking.)

FLAXLEY: We're going to find this fiend and exact a chilling punishment on him. Forget justice. He'll get no trial; just a damn good thrashing... from the pointy end of my blade. I won't have it. Not here in Tifaeris. This fiend must die.

(Phisele bit her lip.)

PHISELE: Right, well, just make sure you've found the right person before you start docking them limbs.

FLAXLEY: Well, obviously.

PHISELE: And how will you *know* they're the right person without a trial?

FLAXLEY: I have my methods.

PHISELE: Right. Like beating them up until they confess?

FLAXLEY: Possibly, why? What's wrong with that?

PHISELE: They might confess just to stop you beating them up. Even if they're not the guilty party.

FLAXLEY: Well...

PHISELE: At which point, you'll kill the poor bugger then consider the case closed; leaving the *real* guilty party free to offend again.

(Flaxley ruffled his neck.)

FLAXLEY: Do you think I hadn't thought of that?

PHISELE: Yes!

FLAXLEY: Oh.

PHISELE: You're in a bad mood. I can see it in your eyes, Flaxley; you're itching to cull someone for this.

(Flaxley sighed.)

FLAXLEY: Well, you're not wrong. This case has got me riled.

PHISELE: Then try to remember your knight training. Anger leads to mistakes.

FLAXLEY: Yes, yes it does.

(He nodded sternly.)

FLAXLEY: Thanks for the reminder, Phisele. I'll try to keep a cool head.

PHISELE: I'd expect no less from you, Flaxley.

FLAXLEY: Indeed. And nor would I. Shame on me for letting my emotions get the better of me.

PHISELE: Quite.

FLAXLEY: Shut up, you.

PHISELE: Excuse me?

FLAXLEY: Stop rubbing it in.

(He then ruffled his neck indignantly.)

FLAXLEY: Anyway, never mind that. An orchestrated effort is needed here. The three of us need to work quickly and diligently.

PHISELE: I concur.

FLAXLEY: Although, I have to ask, why *is* it just the three of us? What happened to the new guy I sent you?

(Phisele's brow furrowed over.)

PHISELE: Well, he *was* going to join us, Flaxley. He got all his gear on, but before we could make it out of the door, he fell asleep. Right now, he's curled up on the police station floor, snoring like a wildebeest.

FLAXLEY: Oh. Well, that's...

PHISELE: Narcolepsy, Flaxley! Why would you send me someone with *that*???

FLAXLEY: Right, yes, well... never mind that. Seeing as he's not here, us three need to get organised.

(He then turned away from Phisele's scowl and looked to Kyrie.)

FLAXLEY: Scour the streets, Kyrie. Find...

KYRIE: A mop and bucket, I know.

FLAXLEY: What?

(He furrowed his brow.)

FLAXLEY: It means I want you to *search* the streets, not clean them!

KYRIE: Oh. What for?

FLAXLEY: Men.

(Kyrie's face lit up.)

KYRIE: You want me to trawl the streets looking for men?

FLAXLEY: Yes. If you find any, bring them to the police station.

PHISELE: Wait! Literally just any man? Not a specific type.

KYRIE: Cool. Works for me. I never was the fussy type.

PHISELE: Quiet, Severen.

KYRIE: Right.

PHISELE: Well, Flaxley? Literally *any* man?

FLAXLEY: Yes. Cayley didn't give an accurate description of her assailant, you see? But I figure, at this time of night there won't be too many people out and about anyway, so yes; every man wandering the streets at this late hour is a suspect.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: Go. Round up every man you find and bring them to the station. Note their names, lock them in then find more.

KYRIE: On it!

PHISELE: Wait. Kyrie?

KYRIE: Yeah?

PHISELE: Just bring in the men you find wandering the street; not ones you can see through people's windows, okay?

KYRIE: Gotcha.

PHISELE: Now go.

KYRIE: Woohoo.

(Kyrie then hurried away eagerly. Watching her go, Phisele rolled her eyes.)

PHISELE: You have to be very specific when giving her instructions, Flaxley. And even then she'll probably forget them five minutes from now. I bet she ends up rounding up a

dozen men before sleeping with them all then going home to bed; forgetting all about the case.

FLAXLEY: She wouldn't do that. Her sister is the victim.

PHISELE: Well, maybe; let's just hope you're right.

FLAXLEY: Agreed. Now come on; let's get this show on the road.

(With that, they parted ways to commence their search for the pervert.)

(At Sir Flaxley's house, at this time, Cayley was sitting at the table, nursing a cup of hot chocolate. Sitting across from her, Kritz was relaxing with her glass of wine, looking like she didn't have a care in the world. That was, however, a ruse. She'd always found Cayley quite an interesting case and was looking forward to learning more about her. This opportunity for a one on one conversation was too good to pass up. She couldn't just start chatting to her like an old friend, however, as Cayley was extremely shy. She knew she'd have to handle the situation with subtlety. As such, she took a deep breath before smiling and looking kindly in Cayley's eyes.)

KRITZ: How's the chocolate, love?

(Cayley replied in a small voice.)

CAYLEY: Nice, thank you.

KRITZ: Good.

(She then furthered her smile.)

KRITZ: You're so shy.

(Cayley just hung her head.)

KRITZ: It's cute.

(She then sighed.)

KRITZ: But it's not right.

(Cayley glanced up at her nervously.)

CAYLEY: It's not?

KRITZ: No, it's not. You have everything going for you, love. The big three! You're intelligent, cute *and* gorgeous. A genius, a sweetheart *and* a babe! What have you got to be shy about?

(Cayley stumbled for a reply for a moment then hung her head.)

CAYLEY: I don't know.

KRITZ: I do. The answer is nothing. You've got nothing to be shy about.

(An idea then popped into her head and she nodded sternly.)

KRITZ: I know. Let's end your shyness, shall we?

CAYLEY: Um...

KRITZ: It won't be difficult either. All you need is confidence, and I know exactly how to help you with that.

CAYLEY: You do?

KRITZ: Yup.

(She smiled.)

KRITZ: Stand up, love.

(Cayley whimpered then slowly climbed from her seat and turned to face Kritz.)

KRITZ: Wow. Look at you.

(Cayley glanced down herself.)

CAYLEY: I...

KRITZ: So elegant. You and that dress complement each other well.

CAYLEY: Um... thanks. I have to dress up for my job.

KRITZ: No, you don't. You work at a pub, not an opera house.

(She nodded.)

KRITZ: You like dressing up, but you're too shy to do so normally. Working in the pub, just gives you an excuse.

(Cayley could only whimper.)

KRITZ: Busted, missy.

CAYLEY: Well...

KRITZ: And speaking of busted, that's an impressive rack for a girl your age.

(Cayley trembled.)

CAYLEY: Don't *you* start.

KRITZ: What? It's true.

(She smiled warmly.)

KRITZ: Okay, here's what we're gonna do. We're gonna give you a makeover.

CAYLEY: I don't want one.

KRITZ: Nonsense.

(She nodded.)

KRITZ: Now let's start with that hair.

(With that, she stepped around Cayley then proceeded to fiddle with her hair.)

CAYLEY: What are you doing?

KRITZ: A sexy side ponytail. It'll accentuate your face and free your cleavage a bit.

CAYLEY: But...

KRITZ: Just a sec, love. I'm concentrating.

CAYLEY: Um... okay...

(Too shy to resist, Cayley then stood there trembling uncomfortably as Kritz continued to work on her hair. Not a word was spoke for well over a minute until Kritz finished the job then stepped around the front of her again.)

KRITZ: Perfect. That looks amazing.

CAYLEY: Um... thanks.

KRITZ: Don't mention it. The pleasure is all mine.

CAYLEY: I know. Very much so, in fact. Can I sit back down now?

KRITZ: Nope. We're not done yet.

(She beamed.)

KRITZ: When I'm finished with you, you're going to be sexiness personified.

CAYLEY: But I don't want to be sexy.

KRITZ: Nonsense. Who doesn't want to be sexy?

CAYLEY: Me.

KRITZ: You're only saying that because you lack confidence. Well, that ends today.

CAYLEY: But...

KRITZ: Right, let's see what we can do about those boobs of yours.

(Cayley whimpered and leant back.)

CAYLEY: I don't want to.

KRITZ: Of course, you do. Now keep still.

(Kritz then stepped closer to her and started to fiddle with the front of her dress. All Cayley could do was stand there and tremble.)

KRITZ: Okay, a little tweak here... a little tweak there... there it is...

(She then beamed arrogantly.)

KRITZ: Here's a little trick I learned when I lived with an all-female tribe.

(With that, she threw her arms out to the side.)

KRITZ: Ta-da!

(Much to Cayley's horror, Kritz had somehow removed her bra from under her dress for her.)

CAYLEY: My bra!!!

KRITZ: Yup, you don't need one with that dress. Now let's add the finishing touch.

CAYLEY: I'm scared.

KRITZ: Keep still.

CAYLEY: I want to go home.

KRITZ: Relax, we're almost done.

(She then pulled the front of Cayley's dress down, revealing the maximum cleavage.)

KRITZ: Awesome. Now you can be supremely confident. Look.

(She then pointed her towards the large mirror on the wall. Whimpering, Cayley turned to face it and shrieked.)

CAYLEY: They're almost hanging out!

KRITZ: Exactly. Exciting, right?

CAYLEY: No, I'm scared.

KRITZ: Don't be silly. There's nothing to be scared about. You look supremely sexy now. You know why? Because, now you've got that bra off, they're gonna bounce when you move. Look.

(She then stepped behind her, grabbed her upper arms then started to pull her up and down, much to Cayley's distress.)

CAYLEY: What are you doing???

KRITZ: Helping you with your confidence! Look, Cayley, look in the mirror. Look at them bounce.

CAYLEY: I don't like it.

KRITZ: Don't be ridiculous. Look, look. Boing, boing, boing. How sexy are you?

CAYLEY: I don't want to be sexy; I just want to be left alone.

KRITZ: Too late, missy. You're already there. See? Boing, boing...

(At this point, Cayley's eyes rolled in the back of her head and she passed out again. Having caught her, Kritz stared down at her face blankly for a moment then grimaced.)

KRITZ: Um... maybe I went too far.

(With that, she hurried the unconscious child to the sofa then laid her down. Having done, so she then stood up and grimaced.)

KRITZ: I think I may have goofed there. You're really not ready, are you?

(She then crept away to the kitchen, cringing to herself.)

KRITZ: Whoops.

(Out in one of Tifaeris' main streets, at this time, Phisele was accompanying a seventy year old gentleman to the police station for questioning. Having been accosted for merely being out in the street after dark, it was safe to say the old man was not amused.)

CLEMENT: This is an outrage. Since when was it illegal to go out of an evening?

PHISELE: You're not being arrested for that, sir.

CLEMENT: I'm being arrested???

PHISELE: Well, no; not officially. You're just being detained for the purposes of our investigation.

CLEMENT: But I didn't do anything.

PHISELE: Then you've nothing to worry about, have you?

CLEMENT: So you claim. I've heard all sorts of horror stories about people being convicted of crimes they didn't even commit.

PHISELE: Relax, it won't happen to you.

CLEMENT: Good. It had better not.

(He snarled.)

CLEMENT: Like I could commit a crime anyway. I'm seventy years old. I don't have the strength to murder someone, and trying to get away after robbing a bank at my age, would be a nigh on impossible task.

PHISELE: I agree.

CLEMENT: Then why the hell would you want to detain me?

PHISELE: Because we're investigating a flasher, sir.

CLEMENT: A flasher?

PHISELE: Yes. Someone exposed himself to a little girl a short while ago. And I think you'll agree, it's a crime someone your age is more than capable of committing.

CLEMENT: Well, perhaps, yes, but I can assure you it wasn't me.

PHISELE: And how can we be certain of that until we've investigated?

CLEMENT: Because it's ridiculous.

PHISELE: Is it?

CLEMENT: Yes! I have standing in this community, young lady. As such, I'd never do such a thing. Not anymore, anyway.

PHISELE: Anymore?

CLEMENT: You heard me.

(He ruffled his neck indignantly.)

CLEMENT: Why, I haven't flashed at a little girl for nigh on fifteen years.

(Phisele was horrified.)

PHISELE: What?

CLEMENT: I had to quit after I moved to a small village where everybody knows each other. Flashing there would be asking to get caught.

(He nodded sternly.)

CLEMENT: And I haven't done it since.

PHISELE: You disgust me!

(With that, she proceeded to manhandle him roughly, forcing him forth.)

CLEMENT: Steady on!!! Why the hostility.

PHISELE: Why do you think???

(She then growled to herself, convinced she'd found the culprit.)

PHISELE: I hope Flaxley kills you very, very slowly.

(A few streets away at this time, Kyrie was also escorting a man to the police station.

Unsurprisingly, he wasn't very happy about it either. Not slow in letting Kyrie know the extent of his anger about the detainment, he growled furiously.)

NELSON: This is a bloody disgrace. A flagrant abuse of your powers. How dare you arrest me? I mean, why would you???

KYRIE: Because Flaxley told me to.

NELSON: Flaxley? What did he say I did wrong?

KYRIE: Nothing.

NELSON: Then why did he ask you to arrest me???

KYRIE: He didn't. Well, not you specifically. Every man I find.

NELSON: What???

KYRIE: Hey, I'm not happy about it either. Arresting every man I meet is going to do my love life serious damage.

(She sighed.)

KYRIE: If I keep arresting them after sex, word will get around and people will stop sleeping with me.

(She whimpered.)

KYRIE: The horror. This is so unfair.

NELSON: How do you think I feel then? I didn't even get to have sex with you!

KYRIE: My bad. Later, perhaps. We're in a hurry. Someone flashed at my little sister this evening, and Flaxley wants everyone rounded up as soon as possible.

NELSON: Everyone?

KYRIE: No, just the suspicious men I see when I'm out and about.

NELSON: Suspicious???

KYRIE: Well, not just the suspicious ones. All men I see, actually. You have to admit though, you did look suspicious.

(Nelson growled.)

NELSON: How? How? How the hell did *I* look suspicious?

KYRIE: When I found you, you were standing there with your trousers round your ankles.

NELSON: I was in my bathroom, having a piss.

(He growled.)

NELSON: And what were you doing in my house, anyway?

KYRIE: I was taking a shortcut.

NELSON: What???

KYRIE: What? I *always* take that shortcut.

(She shrugged.)

KYRIE: I was quite surprised actually, you're not normally home.

NELSON: Are you serious???

KYRIE: Why would I lie?

(Nelson shook his head.)

NELSON: Wait, let me get this straight. You were asked to round up all the men you found when out and about, so you came in my house and arrested *me*?

KYRIE: Yup. I was out and about and there you were.

NELSON: In my own fucking house.

KYRIE: Hey, Flaxley said to bring in any man I see when *I'm* out and about. It's not my house, therefore I was out and about. So I'm bringing you in.

NELSON: You're an idiot!!!

(Two streets away at this time, Sir Flaxley was also accompanying some men to the police station. Three in total. Once again, they were greatly incensed by the situation. They did, however, know better than to take their anger out on their revered, very much esteemed town leader. As such, they trudged behind him, keeping their woes to themselves. Sensing their anger, however, Flaxley wasn't slow in trying to calm them all down.)

FLAXLEY: Think of it as an experience, chaps. At least two of you will be going home soon with a story to tell.

(The youngest of the three growled.)

STEVE: A story to tell?

ELLIS: Like we're gonna tell people we got arrested on suspicion of flashing at a little girl.

HORACE: Mud sticks, Flaxley.

FLAXLEY: Don't be bloody ridiculous. Of course you're not going to go home and tell every you got arrested on suspicion of flashing. You're not even under arrest. You can just tell people how the police rounded up all the men who were out at night, and you were part of it.

(He shrugged.)

FLAXLEY: After all, you are helping the police with our enquiries, and if leads to us catching the sick bastard, then you'll be a hero.

HORACE: A hero, eh?

ELLIS: I like that.

FLAXLEY: See? There's nothing to be worried about.

(He shrugged.)

FLAXLEY: Unless you're the guilty party, of course. In which case, you'll be going home with less testicles than you left with.

(The men all shuddered.)

ELLIS: If that's your plan just make sure you get the right person.

STEVE: Exactly. Like someone who was outside this evening.

FLAXLEY: You all were.

STEVE: I was standing outside my house, Flaxley. And I only came out because these two were talking outside my bedroom window. I came out to tell them to shut up, and the next thing I know, I'm being carted off to the police station.

FLAXLEY: Well, that's just unfortunate.

STEVE: It's worse than unfortunate, Flaxley. I haven't got my glasses with me. I can barely see a bloody thing in this light.

HORACE: What light?

STEVE: Precisely.

ELLIS: Oh, quit whining. It's all you've done since the day I met you.

STEVE: That was five minutes ago.

ELLIS: And you're still whining. Everyone's too loud; the police are unfair; you can't see where you're going; it's just one complaint after another with you.

HORACE: That's youngsters for you, Ellis.

STEVE: And you reckon people your age *don't* complain???

(Flaxley rolled his eyes.)

FLAXLEY: Will you lot stop bickering?

STEVE: It's unlikely. I'm very bitter about this.

FLAXLEY: Well, suck it up, matey; this is happening.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: Besides, I won't keep you long. Once Phisele, Kyrie and I are satisfied we've found enough people we can start eliminating you.

HORACE: Eliminating us???

ELLIS: You're going to kill us???

FLAXLEY: Eliminating you from our enquiries!

ELLIS: Oh. That's a relief.

STEVE: Idiots. Honestly, you people are...

(He then looked to Flaxley excitedly.)

STEVE: Wait. Did you say Kyrie was going to be there?

FLAXLEY: I did, yes. What of it?

STEVE: Then consider me pacified. I do like Kyrie, you know? I'm not afraid to admit I've had a thing for her for quite some time. My complaining days are at an end.

FLAXLEY: Good. You were starting to give me a headache.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: Now get a move on. Once I've got you lot back, we can send for the victim and begin the ID parade.

STEVE: ID parade?

FLAXLEY: Yes, ID parade. It's when the victim looks at the suspects and identifies the guilty party.

HORACE: And will it take long? I mean, I take it she got a good look at the filthy pervert. She should be able to pick him out straight away, so we can all go home, right?

FLAXLEY: Hopefully, but then again, it happened quickly, so maybe she won't be able to spot the bastard at all.

ELLIS: But we'll still get to go home, right?
FLAXLEY: If there's no evidence against you, yes.
ELLIS: Good.
STEVE: Good.
HORACE: Good.
(They then hurried onwards to the police station.)

(A short while later, inside the police station, a group of twelve men who'd been gathered from the darkened streets, found themselves stood in a line, inside the police station. As they waited with varying degrees of patience, Cayley was standing in a side room with only Phisele for company. Flaxley and Kyrie were in the main room, making sure none of the men sneaked away. Eager to keep Cayley calm, Phisele spoke to her in a soothing voice. Taking part in an ID parade would mean facing her assailant again and she fully understood how daunting she must have felt.)

PHISELE: You're gonna have to be really brave for me, Cayley. Can you do that, sweetheart?

(Cayley whimpered.)

CAYLEY: I think so.

PHISELE: Good girl. You're very brave coming here.

CAYLEY: Not really. Being alone with Kritz was far worse.

(Phisele grimaced.)

PHISELE: She did ask me to apologise to you about that, love. She just wanted you to realise how adorable you are; to boost your confidence. Sadly, however, Kritz and subtly are entirely incompatible entities. She meant well though.

CAYLEY: I guess.

(Phisele smiled.)

PHISELE: Okay, here's what we're going to do. In a minute, I'll ask you to go into the main room, where a dozen men are standing in a line.

CAYLEY: What? I don't want to!

PHISELE: Don't worry, they won't be able to see you; they'll be blindfolded.

CAYLEY: Well... okay.

PHISELE: If you see the man who flashed you, just give me the thumbs up then we can come back in here again, okay?

CAYLEY: And they definitely won't see me?

PHISELE: I swear. They'll be completely blindfolded to protect your anonymity.

CAYLEY: Okay.

PHISELE: So, are you ready?

(Cayley nodded nervously.)

PHISELE: Good girl.

CAYLEY: It probably won't work though. I didn't really see him that well. It was dark and it all happened really suddenly.

PHISELE: Well, you never know, love. Something might trigger your memory.

CAYLEY: I guess.

PHISELE: That's the spirit.

(She nodded.)

PHISELE: Right, let's get this show on the road, shall we?

CAYLEY: Okay.

PHISELE: Good girl. And don't worry about a thing, your identity will be kept completely secret, okay?

(Cayley nodded.)

PHISELE: Then we can get started.

(With that, she poked her head around the door and glanced into the main room.)

PHISELE: Blindfolds, gents.

(The twelve suspects all shared an uncomfortable grimace.)

HORACE: I'm not sure I...

FLAXLEY: Blindfolds!

(In that moment, they all hurried their blindfolds on, terrified of defying the revered warrior in their company.)

FLAXLEY: That's better.

(He then nodded to himself.)

FLAXLEY: Right. You can come out now, Cayley.

PHISELE: Flaxley!!!

KYRIE: Flaxley!!!

FLAXLEY: What?

PHISELE: Her identity is meant to be a secret!!!

KYRIE: Even I remembered that bit!

FLAXLEY: Right. Shit.

(He cringed.)

FLAXLEY: Sorry.

PHISELE: Pillock.

(She rolled her eyes then looked to where Cayley stood there trembling.)

PHISELE: Sorry about that.

CAYLEY: They all know who I am now.

PHISELE: And I can only apologise for that. I wouldn't worry though. I'm sure Flaxley will *scare* them into keeping your identity quiet anyway.

CAYLEY: Well, yeah... true.

PHISELE: Anyway, let's get this over with, shall we?

CAYLEY: Yes, please.

PHISELE: Good girl. Come on.

(With that, she led the nervous Cayley into the main room then smiled at her.)

PHISELE: Take a good look, and let me know if you recognise the offending party.

(Cayley nodded then glanced at the twelve blindfolded men before her.)

PHISELE: Anything?

(Cayley studied them for a short while longer then sighed.)

PHISELE: What's wrong.

(Turning her back on the men, Cayley leant into Phisele and whispered.)

CAYLEY: I don't recognise anyone.

PHISELE: I see. Well, never mind. I'm pretty sure that Clement fella is the guilty party anyway.

CAYLEY: You are?

PHISELE: Yes. Look at him again.

CAYLEY: But I've never seen any of them in my entire life before, Phisele. At least not that I know of.

(At this point, Flaxley paced over and joined in the whispering.)

FLAXLEY: Is there a problem?

PHISELE: She doesn't recognise anyone.

FLAXLEY: Shit.

PHISELE: But let's arrest Clement anyway. He's done it before, so the chances are it was him this time too.

FLAXLEY: He's done it before?

PHISELE: So he told me.

FLAXLEY: Suspicious. But it's not enough. If we accuse him and he turns out *not* to be the guilty party, we could end up back here with another traumatised little girl a few days from now.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: No, we need to be certain before we proceed.

CAYLEY: Sorry, I couldn't help.

PHISELE: It's not your fault, love.

CAYLEY: I know. This was never going to work. I didn't see his face, and even if I did, with a blindfold on I was never going to recognise him, was I?

FLAXLEY: You didn't see his face?

CAYLEY: No, just his...

(She shuddered.)

FLAXLEY: I see.

(He nodded sternly.)

FLAXLEY: Then the way forth is obvious.

(With that, he turned to face the blindfolded suspects and snarled forcefully.)

FLAXLEY: Trousers and underpants down, gentlemen!!!

HORACE: What???

STEVE: Are you serious?

PHISELE: Um... Flaxley...

FLAXLEY: Don't make me repeat myself.

(Flinching, the twelve men then hurried their trousers down to their ankles.)

FLAXLEY: Excellent!

(He then looked to Cayley.)

FLAXLEY: Now, do you recognise the penis?

(Cayley whimpered in terror and turned away.)

CAYLEY: I want to go home.

FLAXLEY: And you can, just as soon as you've picked the culprit.

CAYLEY: I can't!

FLAXLEY: Just try.

CAYLEY: I can't. And anyway, it looked nothing like any of those, for a start it was pointing upwards.

FLAXLEY: Aroused, eh?

(He snarled.)

FLAXLEY: Men, arouse yourselves, please. Let's see those boners!

STEVE: What?

PHISELE: Flaxley!

ELLIS: Like anyone could get aroused at a time like this.

(Kyrie nodded.)

KYRIE: Leave it to me, Flaxley.

(She then walked in front of the line.)

KYRIE: I have no knickers on, boys. And oops, my boobs just fell out of my top.

(At once, all the men yanked their blindfolds down, and sure enough, Kyrie was standing there with her breasts exposed. In that moment, eleven of the twelve men had no trouble in finding an erection whatsoever.)

FLAXLEY: Nice work, Severen.

(He then turned Cayley to face them.)

FLAXLEY: Now, Cayley, do you recognise... oh. She fainted again.

PHISELE: Well, obviously!

FLAXLEY: That's not going to help.

CLEMENT: On the contrary, I think I've been vindicated. Look, no boner. I haven't been able to get one in years, so obviously it wasn't me.

PHISELE: Damn. I was *certain* it was him.

CLEMENT: Well, it wasn't. I haven't had so much of a hint of an erection for well over a decade.

(He shrugged.)

CLEMENT: Why do you think I *stopped* flashing at little girls and moved to a small village? There was very little point after my boner deserted me.

PHISELE: Flaxley...

FLAXLEY: Don't worry, he'll be dealt with. And I mean dealt with.

PHISELE: Good.

KYRIE: Right, well that's all very nice, but my sister died again. Can someone please bring her back to life?

FLAXLEY: Right. Phisele, you do that while I get rid of these men.

PHISELE: I'd be delighted to.

FLAXLEY: Thank you.

(He then paced over to the suspects.)

FLAXLEY: You're free to go, gents. Thank you for attending.

STEVE: About time too.

(He sighed.)

STEVE: Now I need to stumble home without my glasses on. I can't see a fucking thing without them on.

KYRIE: I could escort him.

STEVE: Yes, please.

FLAXLEY: You'll stay right here, Kyrie.

KYRIE: Bugger. There goes my hopes for a shag before bedtime.

STEVE: I feel your pain.

FLAXLEY: Just go!

(He then paced over and grabbed Clement on his way to the door.)

FLAXLEY: Not you. I want to have words with you, chummy.

CLEMENT: Right... bugger. I had feeling you might. I said too much, didn't I?

FLAXLEY: Actually, you said just enough.

CLEMENT: Uh-oh.

(A short while later, once eleven of the men had gone and Clement had been stashed in a cell, Flaxley, Phisele and Kyrie gathered around the main desk. Having recovered from fainting again, Cayley was sitting on a chair to their side looking more than a little traumatised by the evening's events.)

PHISELE: Poor thing. Look at her. She's still in a state of shock. Traumatised

FLAXLEY: Annoying, isn't it? Despite our very best efforts, we still have *no idea* who made her that way.

(Suddenly feeling uncharacteristically brave, Cayley glanced up.)

CAYLEY: You did!

FLAXLEY: Me?

CAYLEY: All of you! Except Phisele.

PHISELE: You tell 'em, littlun.

CAYLEY: I'm going to.

(She pouted.)

CAYLEY: What were you thinking? You were going to arrest someone for showing me his thingy because I'm not *supposed* to see thingies. And yet now I've seen several! Do you not see the problem?

KYRIE: What problem?

PHISELE: Surely, you're not *that* dim, Kyrie.

KYRIE: I'm not being dim. She saw a willy and we needed her to identify it. What's wrong with that?

CAYLEY: I'm not *supposed* to see willies, Kyrie! That's the whole point. You wanted to arrest a man for showing me his ding dong, and in the process, you made a dozen others show me theirs as well!!! Now I've seen loads. Loads.

FLAXLEY: Right. Good point.

(He grimaced.)

FLAXLEY: Kritz is going to kill me when she hears about this. What the hell was I thinking?

PHISELE: That you'd do anything to solve the case; that's what you were thinking. You completely lost your rationale.

FLAXLEY: Guilty.

(He grimaced.)

FLAXLEY: I apologise, Cayley. That was unprofessional of me. I was so desperate to find the sick fiend who flashed you, common sense went right out the window. Forgive me.

CAYLEY: Okay. But...

FLAXLEY: But?

CAYLEY: Maybe you should work on your victim-relation skills.

FLAXLEY: Well, you're not the first to have said that. My focus on getting to the bottom of a crime has got the better of me before.

PHISELE: Yes, it has. Like when that poor guy had half his house vandalised. In your determination to find a clue somewhere inside the property, you ended up smashing up the rest of it.

FLAXLEY: You exaggerate, but point taken.

PHISELE: Do I exaggerate though?

FLAXLEY: Yes!

(He ruffled his neck muscles.)

FLAXLEY: I merely broke a table, a pot plant and two windows.

PHISELE: Merely?

FLAXLEY: Quiet, you.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: Once again, I apologise, young Cayley.

(Cayley replied in a small voice. Having said her piece, all her shyness had returned in full.)

CAYLEY: It's okay.

FLAXLEY: Thank you.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: Keep investigating, Phisele.

PHISELE: I will.

FLAXLEY: Kyrie, take your sister home.

KYRIE: Yay!

FLAXLEY: And while you're doing that, I'm going to have a word with Clement.

PHISELE: And by a word, you mean?

FLAXLEY: He's going to feel pain.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: Now what's the new chap doing? It's time he got involved.

(At this point, the sound of snoring rose up from the corner of the room.)

FLAXLEY: What the...

PHISELE: Narcolepsy, Flaxley!!! Narcolepsy!

FLAXLEY: Right...

(He grimaced.)

FLAXLEY: I'm gonna go.

PHISELE: Yeah, I bet you are.

(She then stood there shaking her head at Flaxley as he sneaked away to the cells to collect Clement.)

PHISELE: Honestly!

(A short while later, on the cliff tops just outside town, Flaxley was strolling forth, enjoying the smell of the fresh sea air. Alas, he couldn't hear the sound of the waves crashing against the shore, as he had Clement in a headlock. The man was not coming quietly. Vehemently protesting at his treatment, he hadn't stopped complaining since they'd left the police station.)

CLEMENT: This is an absolute outrage. There are laws against this kind of thing! I insist you let me go immediately!!!

(Ignoring his protests, Flaxley strolled onwards.)

CLEMENT: Flaxley? Are you even listening to me? Flaxley? Flaxley?

(He growled.)

CLEMENT: Fine ignore me then. I know you can hear me. Well, hear this. When this is over I'm going to report you, sunshine. I'll go to the human rights commission in Leathrock. They'll soon put *you* in your place. When they hear of atrocities committed anywhere in the world, they make sure to take action. And they can too! They have the biggest army anywhere on the continent! You'll be sorry then. Now let me go, you tyrant.

(Flaxley rolled his eyes.)

FLAXLEY: Your incessant whinging is ruining a pleasant walk, Clement. Put a bloody sock in it.

CLEMENT: Pleasant walk??? You have me in a headlock!

FLAXLEY: Which *I* find rather pleasant.

CLEMENT: But why? I didn't do anything! I even *proved* it wasn't me who flashed at the sexy little girl.

FLAXLEY: Sexy??? She's twelve!

(Clement grimaced.)

CLEMENT: Again, I've said too much.

FLAXLEY: You're a sick, sick man, Clement.

CLEMENT: No, I'm not. I'm not at all. I'm just an old man with a tadger that's long since refused to function. I'm no danger to anybody.

FLAXLEY: So you claim.

CLEMENT: Claim? I did more than claim; I *proved* it. I haven't had a boner for years. Even the glorious sight of Kyrie's mesmeric boobs couldn't jump start the old dog.

FLAXLEY: Yes, but...

CLEMENT: Even the thought of her strutting around with no underwear on did nothing for me.

FLAXLEY: That's...

CLEMENT: Why, I can't even get aroused when I have filthy fantasies about young Cayley. (He then felt Flaxley's grip tighten around his neck.)

CLEMENT: Uh-oh. I really need to learn when to shut up.
FLAXLEY: No, you don't. You have no further need for learning, old man.
CLEMENT: What?
FLAXLEY: Learning exists to set you in good stead for the future. You're not going to have one of those.
CLEMENT: I'm not?
FLAXLEY: No, you're not. You see, I'm about to introduce you to an old friend of mine. (Clement gulped.)
CLEMENT: Oh god, no. Not Louise!
FLAXLEY: Correct. Not Louise.
CLEMENT: Well, that's a relief.
FLAXLEY: Not really. Clement?
CLEMENT: Yes?
FLAXLEY: Meet my good friend, Cliff.
(With that, he cast the old man over the side of the cliff. For a brief minute, he screamed in dire terror then fell silent as his body shattered on the rocks below. Satisfied with his evening's work, Flaxley exhaled.)
FLAXLEY: Report *that* to the human rights commission, arse face. Oh, no, that's right; you can't. Tosser.
(He then clapped his hands together and nodded.)
FLAXLEY: On behalf of all the little girls you've traumatised, I'd just like to say good riddance. Sick bastard.
(He then strutted back towards town, feeling pleased with himself.)

(Having returned home a short while later, Flaxley hung up his sword then exhaled with satisfaction. Knowing there was one less pervert in the world had made him feel all warm inside. Alas, his feelings of euphoria proved to be short-lived. He'd barely made it to the sofa when Kritz paced from the kitchen with a face like thunder. Immediately recognising the danger signs, Flaxley grimaced uncomfortably then glanced away, hoping against hope that it wasn't him she was riled at.)
FLAXLEY: Good evening, my love.
KRITZ: Is it? Is it, Flaxley?
FLAXLEY: Well, that depends on your perspective.
KRITZ: How about young Cayley's perspective?
(Flaxley cringed.)
FLAXLEY: Who told you?
KRITZ: Does it matter?
FLAXLEY: It was Phisele, wasn't it?
KRITZ: Never mind who told me. What the hell were you thinking?
(Flaxley scratched his head nervously.)
FLAXLEY: Can't we discuss it in the morning?
KRITZ: No, we bloody can't.
(She gave an exasperated sigh.)
KRITZ: Well? What were you thinking? You tried to make a twelve year old identify a flasher by looking at a dozen erect phalluses!!!
FLAXLEY: Well, yes, I realise it wasn't the *cleverest* tactic, my love, but...
KRITZ: No, but, Flaxley. No excuses. You were only there in the first place because showing your genitals to a little girl is a criminal offence. A criminal offence that'll

traumatise the poor thing. And yet for some bizarre reason, you decided to make her look at twelve more!!! What on earth possessed you to do such a thing???

(Flaxley grimaced.)

FLAXLEY: I wasn't thinking straight, okay? The objective was to find out who flashed their penis at the poor girl. With that in mind, it just seemed logical to see if she could identify it.

KRITZ: Logical?

FLAXLEY: Like I said, I wasn't thinking straight.

(He sighed.)

FLAXLEY: This case has me on edge, Kritz. We have little girls of our own and to know there's some sicko out there, willing to flash his penis at them, is driving me to distraction.

KRITZ: I get that, Flaxley, I do, but please...

(She shook her head.)

KRITZ: That was so bloody stupid, I bet even Kyrie knew it was wrong.

FLAXLEY: Actually, she didn't.

KRITZ: Right. Well, there it is. Just you and Kyrie then. How does it feel to be her intellectual equal?

(Flaxley gasped.)

FLAXLEY: You take that back!

KRITZ: No. I'm trying to make you realise what a dumb move it was.

FLAXLEY: I already do, woman. It was a brief lapse of judgment. Momentary. You know damn well it's not an example of my everyday state of mind.

(He hung his head in defeat.)

FLAXLEY: If it was I'd never have made it past basic training, let alone the rank of knight. I fucked up, okay? It was the exception, not the rule.

KRITZ: Good.

(She ruffled her neck muscles.)

KRITZ: Don't let it happen again.

FLAXLEY: Of course not.

KRITZ: The poor kid was traumatised enough after what *I* did to her.

(Flaxley gave her a sideways glance.)

FLAXLEY: You?

KRITZ: Yeah...

(She cringed.)

KRITZ: Well, she's a pretty girl, you see? She's witty, intelligent and extremely good looking, but for some reason she's got no self-confidence whatsoever.

FLAXLEY: Go on...

KRITZ: So I...

(She gulped.)

KRITZ: I gave her a makeover in a bid to boost her self-esteem.

FLAXLEY: Right. Well, I fail to see how that's a bad thing.

KRITZ: I made her show more cleavage then bounced her up and down to make her boobs jiggle about.

(Flaxley's jaw dropped.)

FLAXLEY: Why the bloody hell would you do that?

KRITZ: I just wanted her to see how she's growing into a beautiful young woman, that's all. A beautiful young woman with nothing to be shy about.

FLAXLEY: By making her boobs jiggle about?

KRITZ: Well, men find that sort of thing sexy, don't they? So I wanted her to realise *she* was sexy and that she has nothing to be nervous about.

FLAXLEY: Right... she fainted, didn't she?

KRITZ: Yeah. Turns out she's really not ready. Who knew?

FLAXLEY: She did, I expect. I bet she told you so too.

KRITZ: Well...

(She winced.)

KRITZ: Let's discuss it in the morning.

FLAXLEY: Really? When *I* said that you yelled at me.

KRITZ: Yes, well, fine. Look, let's just agree that we both fucked up.

FLAXLEY: Yes, we did.

KRITZ: Though yours was far worse than mine.

FLAXLEY: Kritz!

KRITZ: Yes?

(Flaxley sigh in defeat.)

FLAXLEY: Who am I kidding? What *I* did was unforgivable. Poor kid. Like she wasn't a nervous wreck already. After today... well, I shudder to think.

(Kritz nodded.)

KRITZ: She really is a nervous wreck.

(She shrugged in bewilderment.)

KRITZ: And I have no idea why. She has so much going for her. It doesn't make any sense.

FLAXLEY: Yes, it does. It makes perfect sense.

KRITZ: Oh?

(She then paced to the sofa and sat at Flaxley's side.)

KRITZ: How?

FLAXLEY: Well, think about it.

KRITZ: I have been. All I see is a pretty girl who hides behind her sister every time they meet someone.

FLAXLEY: Yes, but you have to remember where they came from.

KRITZ: Overseas?

FLAXLEY: I don't mean geographically, my love.

(He sighed.)

FLAXLEY: Before washing up here on the beach, Kyrie and Cayley spent two long years on the run. In that time, the vast majority of people they met were assassins or summoners, sent to kill them. Bearing that in mind, it's no wonder Cayley doesn't feel safe around people, is it? For a defenceless child it must have been hell. The only person in her entire world whom she could be certain wasn't out to kill her was Kyrie.

(Kritz looked enlightened.)

KRITZ: Crap. I never thought of that.

(She grimaced.)

KRITZ: That said, she was never shy around *you*. Okay, she'd go quiet when I was around, but I've seen her out and about talking to you, and in those moments she doesn't seem shy at all.

FLAXLEY: Yes, well...

(He cringed.)

FLAXLEY: I was always her childhood hero. She grew up believing that I was beacon for fairness and justice. She's trusts me. Or at least, she did. After tonight, however...

KRITZ: Yeah...

(She sighed.)

KRITZ: You really fucked up.

FLAXLEY: I'm well aware of that, thank you.

KRITZ: You're welcome.

FLAXLEY: Now stop bringing it up.

KRITZ: Well, I would, but let's be honest here, my love; it's not the first time your desperation to solve a case has clouded your judgment, is it?

FLAXLEY: I've already had this lecture from Phisele.

KRITZ: And now you're getting it from the boss.

FLAXLEY: Right...

KRITZ: You really need to work on taking the victims feelings into account.

FLAXLEY: I...

KRITZ: I don't know how many times I've had to tell you that.

FLAXLEY: You don't *have* to tell me anything.

KRITZ: Oh, but I do. That's about six times now.

FLAXLEY: Six?

KRITZ: Or seven. Like that time Sven got attacked in the street, remember? You wanted to access the extent of his injuries by seeing if his arm was broken.

FLAXLEY: I needed to know if was an *attempted* assault or an *actual* assault.

(He winced.)

FLAXLEY: What happened next was unfortunate.

KRITZ: No, it was dumb. You bent his arm the wrong way and broke it in three places.

FLAXLEY: And I apologised for that at the time.

KRITZ: And yet, you learned nothing. A few months later when Arthur Morris's reported his father's headstone had been stolen from the cemetery, you trampled all over his mother's grave in search of footprints. You left it in such a mess, he thought his mother's grave had been vandalised as well.

FLAXLEY: Yes, well, you're forgetting something.

KRITZ: Am I?

FLAXLEY: What did those cases have in common?

KRITZ: You made the victim feel ten times worse than they already did.

FLAXLEY: No.

KRITZ: Yes, you did.

FLAXLEY: Okay, I did, but thanks to my thorough investigating, those crimes got solved.

(He nodded sternly.)

FLAXLEY: So forgive my impulsiveness, but I get results.

KRITZ: Yes, you do. But in both those cases you'd have got a result anyway.

FLAXLEY: We can't know that for certain.

KRITZ: No, but we do know for certain that you're a man of action, not a man of tact and diplomacy.

(She nodded.)

KRITZ: So anyway, I've been thinking. In a case involving a woman's feelings, such as young Cayley's case, I think the police force need a woman's touch.

FLAXLEY: We have Phisele.

KRITZ: Who's basically you with tits.

(She nodded.)

KRITZ: If a victim needs comforting, you should call *me* over.

FLAXLEY: So you can comfort her?

KRITZ: Yes.

FLAXLEY: Like you did young Cayley when you jiggled her boobs up and down and made her pass out.

KRITZ: Um...

(She glanced away innocently.)

KRITZ: Stop bringing it up.

FLAXLEY: Then stop dragging *my* mistakes up.

KRITZ: Fine.
FLAXLEY: Good.
KRITZ: Agreed.
FLAXLEY: Now let's go to bed.
KRITZ: Sex first?
FLAXLEY: Well, obviously.
(They then upped and hurried to the bedroom together.)

(Over at the barracks, a short while later, Cayley was laying in her bed, desperately trying to get to sleep and forget all about the traumatic day she'd had. Unfortunately for her, however, Kyrie had been thinking. Unable to shake the thought of Cayley being so frightened by the flasher that she'd passed out, she was pacing up and down furiously. She did so with gritted teeth, mumbling bitterly to herself.)

KYRIE: The cheek of it. Violating my little sister like that. No wonder she died. Bastards. (Cayley rolled over and furrowed her brow in a bid to block her out, but to no avail. Kyrie's ongoing rant continued to reverberate around the room.)

KYRIE: Someone's head is gonna roll for this. So wrong. And so silly. If you're gonna show a girl your ding dong, show it to *me*. I'd enjoy the show. But no, he opted to scare the living piss out of my little Cayley instead. Wanker.

(Cayley snarled then pulled the pillow over her head. It didn't help.)

KYRIE: Why would they even do that? She's not even sexy. Clearly they were just being mean. And nobody's allowed to be mean to Cayley except me. She's mine. I demand justice. Violent and bloody justice. Showing her their penis, whatever next?

(More than a little annoyed, Cayley sat up and glowered at her.)

CAYLEY: I'm trying to sleep here, Kyrie.

KYRIE: I can see that. Good girl.

CAYLEY: So, can you be quiet?

KYRIE: I could, yes, but I'm ranting right now. That's requires talking.

CAYLEY: You're keeping me awake.

KYRIE: No, I'm not.

CAYLEY: You are! Please, Kyrie, just go to bed and put it behind you for now.

KYRIE: I tried that. I couldn't sleep. I just laid there getting annoyed.

(She gasped.)

KYRIE: I bet that's why *you're* still awake too. You can't sleep either.

CAYLEY: I just told you that.

KYRIE: Angry about what happened, huh?

CAYLEY: Yes, but that's not *why* I can't sleep. I can't sleep because you keep talking.

KYRIE: Well, suck it up, missy. I need to release my anger somehow.

CAYLEY: Can't you go outside and do it?

KYRIE: It's raining.

CAYLEY: No, it isn't.

KYRIE: Fine, but I don't want to.

(She snarled.)

KYRIE: I'm so angry. What sort of evil doer shows a little girl his love truncheon?

CAYLEY: Stop going on about it.

KYRIE: I can't.

CAYLEY: And anyway, you didn't seem to mind when Flaxley made all those suspects show me theirs.

(Kyrie shrugged.)

KYRIE: That's different.

CAYLEY: How?

KYRIE: We were trying to catch a flasher. It was for the common good.

CAYLEY: It was mortifying.

KYRIE: Yet, necessary. Flashing you out of the blue in the street and scaring the shit out of you, on the other hand, that *wasn't* necessary. It was *unnecessary*, that's what it was.

Wrong. Wrong and bad.

CAYLEY: I agree. Can I go to sleep now?

KYRIE: Be my guest.

CAYLEY: And you'll be quiet.

KYRIE: Nope.

CAYLEY: Kyrie...

KYRIE: Just pretend I'm talking about men and tune me out like you usually do.

CAYLEY: I can't.

KYRIE: Why not?

CAYLEY: Because I know you're talking about *me*.

KYRIE: That bothers you, does it?

CAYLEY: Yes.

(She looked into her eyes, pleadingly.)

CAYLEY: Please just go to bed and get some sleep, Kyrie. For me.

KYRIE: Well...

(She sighed.)

KYRIE: Fine. For you then.

CAYLEY: Thank you.

(With that, Kyrie climbed into her bed then sighed.)

KYRIE: Goodnight, Cayley.

CAYLEY: Goodnight, Kyrie.

(With that, she rolled over and closed her eyes, before nestling into her pillow.)

CAYLEY: That's better.

KYRIE: Yeah, right. You know what would be even better? Killing that flasher. Bastard.

Flashing at my little sister, it's not on.

(Finally realising that she wasn't going to win this one, Cayley sighed then shook her head.)

CAYLEY: Great.

(The next morning, a somewhat tired Kyrie headed off to work to join Flaxley and Phisele in the hunt for the flasher. With the previous evening's debacle bringing forth spectacular failure, they'd decided to head from door to door to question the public in relation to a suspicious man wearing a trench coat. It was a long shot, but Flaxley was determined to leave no stone unturned.)

FLAXLEY: Surely, someone had to have seen something.

PHISELE: Well, we can only hope so, Flaxley, but this all feels a little ambitious to me.

FLAXLEY: And it is. It's our only chance of finding a lead though.

PHISELE: The faint chance that someone was looking out of their window last night?

FLAXLEY: Or perhaps they saw something after leaving the pub, I don't know.

PHISELE: I don't rate our chances.

FLAXLEY: Well, don't give up just yet, Phisele. You never know, we might get lucky.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: So, just the three of us, is it?

(Phisele's brow immediately clouded over.)

PHISELE: Yes! Narcolepsy, Flaxley. Narcolepsy.

FLAXLEY: Right, yes, well. Never mind that. I'll go and make a start while you fill Kyrie in on the details.

(He then scuttled away, leaving a snarling Phisele in his wake.)

PHISELE: Yeah, you flee.

(She then looked to Kyrie and nodded.)

PHISELE: Severen?

KYRIE: What?

PHISELE: Excuse me?

KYRIE: Oh. I mean, what, *ma'am*?

PHISELE: Go knocking door to door.

KYRIE: Okay.

(She then turned to go.)

PHISELE: Stop!

KYRIE: What?

PHISELE: I haven't told you why yet.

KYRIE: Right.

PHISELE: Ask if anyone saw a suspicious man in a trench coat last night.

KYRIE: Okay. But what if they don't *know* if anyone saw a suspicious man in a trench coat last night?

PHISELE: What?

KYRIE: Well, how are they gonna know what *other* people saw?

PHISELE: Just ask them if *they* saw anyone suspicious in a trench coat, damn it!

KYRIE: Right. That I can do.

PHISELE: Good. Go and do it then.

KYRIE: Yes, sir.

PHISELE: Excuse me?

KYRIE: Ma'am even.

PHISELE: Just go.

KYRIE: Okay.

(As Kyrie paced away, Phisele hung her head in defeat.)

PHISELE: We'd like you to take charge of the police force, he said. I'd be honoured to, I said. What a fucking idiot.

(She then trudged away in despair. Oblivious to Phisele's misery, Kyrie paced up to the nearest door then hammered upon it. Moments later, the door opened and an old man smiled at her warmly.)

OLD MAN: Hello, young lady. What can I do for boobs? I mean you!!!

KYRIE: I...

(She then wracked her brains for a moment before shrugging emptily.)

KYRIE: I forget.

OLD MAN: I see.

KYRIE: Something about a trench coat.

OLD MAN: Can you be more specific?

KYRIE: He had his willy hanging out!

OLD MAN: Who did?

KYRIE: That's what I'm asking you.

OLD MAN: Right.

(He then slowly backed away, pushing the door shut.)

OLD MAN: I'm gonna go.

(As the door closed, Kyrie grimaced uneasily then shrugged.)

KYRIE: Oh, well. One down...

(Just then, a man stepped up behind her and smiled.)

STEVE: Hello, Kyrie.

(Kyrie turned then beamed with delight.)

KYRIE: You're that man.

STEVE: Well, I'm *a* man.

KYRIE: I like men. Yum.

STEVE: We like you too.

KYRIE: I know this to be true.

(She then grimaced uneasily.)

KYRIE: Wait. I recognise you from last night, but you look kinda different somehow.

STEVE: I'm wearing my glasses.

KYRIE: That'll be it. They're very sexy.

STEVE: You really think so?

KYRIE: No, they're seriously uncool, but I'd never hurt your feelings by saying so. I'm hoping for a shag later, you see.

STEVE: From me?

KYRIE: Among others.

STEVE: Oh, cool. I can dig it.

(He beamed.)

STEVE: That's fantastic news. I've fancied you for ages, you see? I just never had the guts to approach you before.

KYRIE: No?

STEVE: I just didn't know how to break the ice.

(He shrugged.)

STEVE: Just saying hello didn't seem like enough. I figured you'd just brush me off.

KYRIE: You mean suck you off, right?

STEVE: No, I mean I thought you'd reject me.

KYRIE: I won't lie to you, but in those glasses, I probably would have.

STEVE: I see.

KYRIE: Oh, who am I kidding? A shagging is a shag; I'd never reject one of those.

STEVE: Good to know.

(He chuckled.)

STEVE: I was planning to make this outrageously grand gesture just to get you to notice me.

KYRIE: Then why didn't you?

STEVE: I tried to.

(He sighed.)

STEVE: But it all went a bit pear-shaped so I had to abort.

(He smiled.)

STEVE: Still, no harm done. I have your attention now.

KYRIE: Yes, yes you do. Let's go and have a shag.

STEVE: Score.

(Just then, Phisele yelled at her from further up the road.)

PHISELE: Back to work, Severen!!!

(Kyrie flinched then snarled in frustration.)

KYRIE: Shit.

STEVE: Bugger.

KYRIE: Maybe later then.

STEVE: *Definitely* later. I'll head to the pub this afternoon. Come and find me once you've finished your shift.

KYRIE: Okay, I'll meet you in there.

STEVE: Agreed.

KYRIE: I'll be the hot one in the sexy dress with this awesome face.

STEVE: What?

KYRIE: You know, so you recognise me. I know how confusing blind dates can be. I went on one once. I was onto my fifth shag before I found the guy I was *meant* to be meeting.

STEVE: Right. Well, that's... it won't *be* a blind date, Kyrie. We already know each other.

KYRIE: Oh. Cool. That's much easier then.

(She then glanced to one side and saw Phisele shaking her fist at her. She instantly flinched then hurried away.)

KYRIE: Back to work. See you later.

STEVE: Later.

(He watched her pert backside as she trotted away then puffed out in awe.)

STEVE: Fit!

(Inside Cayley's school, a short while later, Cayley and another girl, by the name of Fifi, were sitting in the changing rooms, staring down, ashen-faced at the floor. Their physical activities teacher was in full flow, lecturing them both for their attitude. Suffice to say, she was in a foul mood.)

MISS MILLER: You two never cease to disappoint me, do you know that?

FIFI: It's not our fault.

CAYLEY: We do try.

MISS MILLER: That's you trying, is it? I've seen more enthusiasm from a condemned man on his way to the gallows.

(She sighed despairingly.)

MISS MILLER: You turn up looking like you're about to be tortured, then take forever to get changed. You're just not interested in the slightest, are you?

CAYLEY: I'm really bad at physical activities.

FIFI: So am I.

MISS MILLER: Oh, right. So if a child is terrible at maths, it's okay for them to turn up to class, take forever to open their books then half-heartedly jot down random bad answers, is it? They're bad at maths so why even try?

FIFI: But I'm really good at maths.

CAYLEY: That's not the point she's making.

FIFI: I realise that.

MISS MILLER: Look, I know you two suck at physical things. Cayley, you're still the only person I've ever seen attempt to throw a ball and hit their own foot. As for you, Fifi, my three year old nephew can run a hundred yards faster than you, backwards! And you both need to learn to catch with your hands, not your face. You're terrible.

CAYLEY: Then you understand?

MISS MILLER: No. I don't understand. You're so terrible, you need the practice more than anybody. You should be *first* out on the field, not last. You should be striving to improve, not turning up defeated. You're both smart girls, you know this.

FIFI: Well, maybe.

CAYLEY: I guess.

MISS MILLER: Don't guess. Be better. Don't quit, try to improve.

(She smiled.)

MISS MILLER: I hear your sister used to be quite a good gymnast, Cayley.

CAYLEY: She was. She's good at physical things. *Only* physical things, mind.

MISS MILLER: Then get her to help you. Strive for physical excellence.

CAYLEY: Well, I can ask her.

MISS MILLER: Good. Do that. Not for my sake, but for yours. Your life would be a hell of a lot easier if you were more like your sister.

(Cayley whimpered.)

CAYLEY: I can't afford to be like my sister, miss.

MISS MILLER: Why not?

(Cayley mumbled her reply nervously.)

CAYLEY: *I* haven't got a little sister to keep me in a job while I'm fumble my way through life.

MISS MILLER: What was that?

CAYLEY: Doesn't matter, miss. I'll ask her.

MISS MILLER: Good. As for you, Fifi...

FIFI: Miss?

MISS MILLER: Work harder. Or I'll start handing out detentions. Understood?

FIFI: Yes, miss.

CAYLEY: Miss.

MISS MILLER: Good. Now hurry up and get changed. I'm late starting class because of you two.

(With that, she strode for the exit then bundled her way outside. Having watched her go, Fifi furrowed her brow.)

FIFI: Late starting class because of *us*? Staying here to lecture us two was *her* idea, not ours.

(Cayley nodded nervously.)

CAYLEY: It was.

FIFI: Stupid physical activities. Why can't I just sit out and read a book or something? I'm an intelligent person, for pity's sake. I'm gonna use my brain to make a career. What good is throwing and catching to me?

(Cayley looked to her in wonderment, then nodded in full agreement. In that moment, all her nerves had washed away.)

CAYLEY: Exactly. I've said that so many times, but nobody listens.

FIFI: Right?

(She smiled.)

FIFI: I'm Fifi.

CAYLEY: I know. I'm Cayley.

FIFI: I know.

CAYLEY: Cool.

(She bit her lip.)

CAYLEY: So if you *could* bring a book, which one would it be?

FIFI: The one I'm currently reading, I guess. The Wicca Basket Case by Coltery Flachews.

CAYLEY: Ooh, I've read that. So good.

FIFI: Don't spoil the end!

CAYLEY: I wouldn't dream of it.

(She smiled.)

CAYLEY: So you like supernatural fiction?

FIFI: I like all sorts, to be honest. Even biographies and factual works.

CAYLEY: Me too. I'm reading the history of the Leathrock Navy at the moment.

FIFI: The Eric Smyth one?

CAYLEY: Yes! Wow. You *do* know your books.

FIFI: Of course. I spend most of my life in the library. I want to be a librarian when I grow up, you see?

CAYLEY: That's so amazing.

(She exhaled.)

CAYLEY: Smart *and* cultured. It's so nice to finally meet someone who shares my interests.

FIFI: Ditto.

CAYLEY: I didn't think anyone at school was like me, but it looks like you and I were cut from the same cloth.

FIFI: Hardly. I'm not like you *at all*.

(Cayley grimaced.)

CAYLEY: You're not?

FIFI: No.

(She sighed.)

FIFI: You're pretty for one. I wish *I* was pretty. Boys might notice me then.

CAYLEY: Yeah, right; being pretty is overrated, if you ask me. Boys won't leave me alone. I hate it.

FIFI: You're crazy. I'd kill for male attention.

CAYLEY: Then next time they smarm onto me, you can do us both a favour by killing *me*.

(Fifi glanced at her curiously then started to chuckle.)

FIFI: It's a deal. I'll kill you good and proper.

CAYLEY: It's appreciated, believe me.

(They then sat there giggling for a few moments, before an astonished expression washed onto Cayley's face.)

CAYLEY: I haven't chatted like this with someone my own age for a long time. Does this mean we're... friends?

FIFI: Friends? I don't know. I've never had one before.

CAYLEY: It would be cool to have a school friend for once.

FIFI: Let's be friends then.

CAYLEY: Yes.

(She beamed.)

CAYLEY: Finally. I have a school friend.

FIFI: I thought Jade and Emma were your friends?

CAYLEY: Hardly. They hate me for being close to their dad. And because boys smarm onto me rather than them.

FIFI: But they've been really nice to you these last few days.

CAYLEY: Only because their older sister told them to be. I overheard her saying it. They don't like me *really*.

FIFI: Oh. Well that sucks.

(She shrugged.)

FIFI: At least they stopped being mean though, right?

CAYLEY: Yeah. I hate bullies.

FIFI: Tell me about it.

(They then shared an embittered groan.)

FIFI: Hate them.

CAYLEY: So much.

(They then shared a warm smile.)

FIFI: So, you love books, huh?

CAYLEY: More than anything.

FIFI: Maybe you'd like to see my dad's collection. He has some really rare stuff.

(Cayley bounced excitedly.)

CAYLEY: I'm in. Just tell me where and when!

FIFI: Tonight after school?

(Cayley bounced excitedly.)

CAYLEY: Yay. I'm in.

FIFI: Cool. My dad's gonna pass out when I tell him I'm having a friend over.

CAYLEY: I reckon my sister might do the same.

(They then sat there giggling together for a moment, until a furious voice rose up from the doorway.)

MISS MILLER: Get fucking changed!!!

(At once, Fifi and Cayley both screamed then hurriedly started to undress.)

FIFI: She's angrier than ever.

CAYLEY: I know, but look on the bright side. One day, once we're successful, we'll probably employ her. We can get our revenge then.

(Highly amused they then hurried into the physical activities uniforms, trying their damndest not to upset the teacher further by laughing.)

(That afternoon, following a frustrating day, Flaxley, Phisele and Kyrie gathered back at the police station. No leads had been forthcoming and the case seemed to have come to a dead end. Barely able to contain his anger about that fact, Flaxley thumped the main desk with his fist then shook his head.)

FLAXLEY: Well, that's it then. I guess we've failed, and the pervert remains at large.

PHISELE: Psyched up about having another go, I expect.

FLAXLEY: When? Tonight, do you think? How do these weirdoes think?

PHISELE: Could be tonight, could be three months from now. It depends on how much they fear getting caught. And whether it's a perversion or a compulsion.

FLAXLEY: A perverted compulsion.

PHISELE: Yes, but you know what I mean. If they do it for perverted kicks and love it, it'll be soon. If they only do it when they have urges they can't always control, on the other hand, it could be a while.

FLAXLEY: Shit. So is it worth doing extra patrols tonight?

PHISELE: We should, yes; just to be careful.

FLAXLEY: Agreed. I'll stick close to the pub, I think; seeing as that's where he struck last time.

PHISELE: Good idea.

FLAXLEY: And what about Kyrie?

KYRIE: Me?

PHISELE: She might as well go home for now. I know *I* could use a break from her.

KYRIE: Bonus.

PHISELE: Come back in five hours; tonight you're gonna patrol the streets for a few hours, okay?

KYRIE: I was planning on doing that anyway. You meet some awesome people at night. Awesome, randy, kinky people. Especially in the park.

PHISELE: Yes, well, let's not discuss...

KYRIE: I met *you* there once, Phisele; remember?

PHISELE: Shut up.

(She ruffled her neck.)

PHISELE: Focus on the task in hand.

KYRIE: Which was?

PHISELE: Go home and come back tonight.

(Kyrie beamed.)

KYRIE: Oh, yeah! Woohoo!

(She then rocketed out of the door. Having watched her go, Phisele rolled her eyes then looked to Flaxley.)

PHISELE: So, anyway... what are you looking at me like that for?

FLAXLEY: You went to the park at night?

PHISELE: I couldn't sleep, that was all.

(She glanced away innocently.)

PHISELE: How was I to know that's where all the kinky people go to trawl for talent?

FLAXLEY: Right.

PHISELE: Anyway, what about the new guy? Should I try to wake him up for this evening's patrol or...

FLAXLEY: No, don't bother. Let him go. He's no good.

PHISELE: Really? You think?

FLAXLEY: Don't be facetious.

PHISELE: I'm not. I'm shocked too, Flaxley. Who'd have thought a guy with narcolepsy would be incapable of doing the job? I'm stunned.

FLAXLEY: That's you not being facetious, is it?

PHISELE: Yes.

FLAXLEY: I see.

(He rolled his eyes.)

FLAXLEY: Let him go and I'll find you a replacement tomorrow.

PHISELE: Excellent. What this time? A frail old lady? A hamster, perhaps?

FLAXLEY: Don't be like that. Look, just get some rest or something, okay? I'll see you this evening.

PHISELE: Righto. Bye for now, Flaxley.

FLAXLEY: See you later, Phisele.

(He then headed for the door.)

FLAXLEY: A hamster indeed.

(He smirked.)

FLAXLEY: A ferret would be far better suited to the task.

PHISELE: And I wouldn't be at all surprised if you sent me one.

FLAXLEY: Yes, well... bye.

(He then left the building. Left behind, Phisele puffed out.)

PHISELE: I'd better buy a cage, just in case.

(An hour or so later, at the barracks, Kyrie and Cayley were sitting in their room enjoying their dinner. The tiny table in their room was just big enough for them to sit and eat together around. It was a time of the day that Cayley treasured. Rare, precious family time. Even Kyrie's constant nattering about silly, irrelevant or risqué things couldn't spoil it for her. To her mind, that was exactly what dinner times were for; catching up on how each other's day went. As always, however, she'd have to wait to have her turn. Kyrie liked to talk and could do so without pausing for quite some time.)

KYRIE: Absolutely nothing. Not a shred of evidence against anybody. Not a thing, Cayley. It's almost like the flasher was a ghost or something. Not that that's very likely. I mean, do ghosts even have willies? I've never seen one, so I don't know. Never seen a ghost, I mean. I've seen plenty of willies. More than most, I reckon.

CAYLEY: So there was no evidence then?

KYRIE: What? Oh, yes; that's right. How do you know that?

CAYLEY: You literally just told me so.

KYRIE: Oh.

(She shrugged.)

KYRIE: We won't give up though. Not until that fiendish fiend has been sent to jail. Or killed; I don't mind which.

CAYLEY: Good to know. So what's the next step?

KYRIE: I'm going to eat my peas.

CAYLEY: No, I mean what about the investigation?

KYRIE: Oh, right. We're going to patrol later and see if there's anyone weird around.

CAYLEY: Makes sense.

KYRIE: But before that, I have a date.

(She beamed.)

KYRIE: I'm going to meet up with that guy from last night.

CAYLEY: What guy?

KYRIE: Steve.

CAYLEY: There was a Steve?

KYRIE: Yeah, you remember him.

CAYLEY: No. Sorry. In my defence though, I was unconscious for most of the evening.

KYRIE: You died a lot too.

CAYLEY: Right...

KYRIE: He was the one who keep moaning that he couldn't see anything without his glasses on.

(Cayley nodded.)

CAYLEY: I vaguely remember someone complaining about that.

KYRIE: It was Steve.

CAYLEY: You said.

KYRIE: Right.

(She exhaled.)

KYRIE: Of course, like most men, he's fancied me for quite some time, apparently.

(Cayley rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: I'm happy for you.

KYRIE: Me too.

(She grimaced.)

KYRIE: Unlike most men though, he never said anything to me. I guess he was unnerved by my beauty.

CAYLEY: Yeah...

KYRIE: Sad, right? Some men are intimidated by beauties like us, Cayley. They just can't handle this much sexiness. So they never approach us. They just watch us from a distance. Tragic.

CAYLEY: I wish all boys would do that.

KYRIE: Do what?

CAYLEY: Leave us alone.

KYRIE: We'll have to disagree to agree on that one.

CAYLEY: You mean agree to disagree.

KYRIE: There's a difference?

CAYLEY: Yes. A massive one.

KYRIE: Right. Well, you know what I *meant*. Now where was I? That's it. Men not approaching babes like me.

(She beamed.)

KYRIE: Thankfully, Steve decided not to watch from a distance anymore. Instead, he decided to make, what did he call it? A grand gesture! That's it. Just to break the ice; you know, get me to notice him.

CAYLEY: Oh? What did he do?

KYRIE: He wouldn't say. He just said it went horribly wrong.

(She shrugged.)

KYRIE: I have no idea what that means, nor do I care. It doesn't matter, we've met now and, tonight we have a date. And all because he was arrested and falsely accused of being a flasher.

(Cayley grinned.)

CAYLEY: I bet he feels so lucky.

KYRIE: Right?

(She chuckled.)

CAYLEY: Maybe getting arrested was his grand g...

(In that moment, her jaw dropped and she sat tall in her seat.)

CAYLEY: Oh, my god.

KYRIE: You have a god? Who? Not that weird sun god, is it? The one with the weird hat.

CAYLEY: No. Kyrie, just...

(She then stood up and nodded firmly.)

CAYLEY: Get your coat on, Kyrie; we need to head out.

KYRIE: What coat? I don't own a coat. It's like a million degrees here, day and night.

CAYLEY: Good point. My bad; it was just a phrase.

(She nodded.)

CAYLEY: Even so, we need to head out.

KYRIE: Where to?

CAYLEY: I'll tell you on the way.

KYRIE: But I haven't finished my peas.

CAYLEY: You don't even like peas.

KYRIE: You make a good point. Let's go.

(With that, they both upped and headed for the door.)

(A short while later, Kyrie and Cayley paced into the police station, side by side. Having been napping at her desk, Phisele yawned then glanced upwards.)

PHISELE: You're back? Oh, shit. It's not night time already, is it?

KYRIE: Not quite.

(She nodded.)

KYRIE: We came because Cayley has a...

(Cayley poked her in the side then whispered.)

KYRIE: I mean, *I* have a theory.

(Phisele smirked.)

PHISELE: Oh, yeah? And what *is* Cayley's theory, Kyrie?

CAYLEY: Me? Nothing to do with me. I was at home eating my dinner, minding my own business when she jumped up from the table and told me we need to come here for some reason. I couldn't possibly know why.

PHISELE: Right...

(She rolled her eyes.)

PHISELE: I'll play along. So, Kyrie; what do you know?

KYRIE: Well, those boots you're wearing really don't match the rest of your uniform.

PHISELE: Is that so?

KYRIE: I know a few other things too, but I can't remember them right now.

CAYLEY: But, Kyrie, you said you knew something about the crime. That's why we're here.

KYRIE: I did? When?

(Cayley groaned to herself. Getting Kyrie to take the credit for her theories was hard work.)

CAYLEY: On the way here.

KYRIE: Are you sure?

(Cayley growled quietly.)

CAYLEY: Just tell her about your date, will you?

KYRIE: Why would I do that? She hates hearing about my love life.

CAYLEY: Kyrie!

KYRIE: Oh, fine.

(She rolled her eyes.)

KYRIE: I have a date later.

PHISELE: And? You have two or three dates every day.

KYRIE: I know. I don't know what Cayley's so excited about.

CAYLEY: Kyrie!

PHISELE: For pity's sake. Just tell me what you've figured out, Cayley.

CAYLEY: I didn't figure anything out.

(She nodded sternly.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie had an epiphany then we rushed over there...

KYRIE: I had a what?

CAYLEY: An epiphany.

(Kyrie whimpered.)

KYRIE: You heard that? I thought I'd hidden it so well.

CAYLEY: What are you talking about?

KYRIE: My fart.

PHISELE: Wow.

KYRIE: What? Everybody does it. You should hear Cayley at night. It's like trying to sleep in a room with a brass band practicing in the corner.

CAYLEY: Kyrie!!!

PHISELE: Good god. An epiphany is a realisation, Kyrie; not a fart.

KYRIE: It is?

PHISELE: Yes!

(She growled.)

PHISELE: Now will one of you please tell me what's going on before I lose my temper.

KYRIE: I couldn't if I wanted to.

CAYLEY: Yes, you could. Tell her about Steve.

KYRIE: Steve?

CAYLEY: Your date.

KYRIE: I know that. What about him?

CAYLEY: Tell Phisele what he said.

KYRIE: Okay. He said he plans to do me later.

PHISELE: Right...

CAYLEY: Not that bit.

PHISELE: This ends now.

(She then stepped right in front of Cayley, towering over her and snarling. All Cayley could do was whimper and shrink.)

PHISELE: Tell me what you know, or Kyrie's fired.

KYRIE: Mean!

PHISELE: Shut it, Severen.

(Cayley whimpered again then twiddled her forefingers.)

CAYLEY: All I know is what Kyrie said. It was Steve; he's the flasher.

KYRIE: What??? That bastard!

PHISELE: Wait, are you sure?

CAYLEY: Well, Kyrie seemed to think so.

KYRIE: I did? When was this?

CAYLEY: When you said he tried to make a grand gesture just to break the ice between you.

KYRIE: Oh, that. Yeah, that happened.

CAYLEY: See?

PHISELE: Wait. What grand gesture?

CAYLEY: Well, Kyrie has a notorious fondness for naked men, you see...

KYRIE: Fact.

CAYLEY: So he decided to jump out and flash his bits and bobs at her.
(She scratched behind her ear nervously.)

CAYLEY: But he can't see a thing without his glasses on and...
(She whimpered.)

CAYLEY: He...well... he mistook...

(She then heard a sniggering sound from in front of her and glanced up to see Phisele trying not to laugh.)

CAYLEY: Huh?

PHISELE: Nothing... you carry on.
(She then threw her hand over her mouth to stop herself laughing out loud.)

CAYLEY: It's not funny, Phisele.

KYRIE: What isn't? I'm lost.
(Cayley pouted at her.)

CAYLEY: Steve wanted to flash *you* his willy; that was his grand gesture. But without his glasses on he's as blind as a bat.
(Phisele burst out laughing.)

PHISELE: So the silly fucker ended up flashing Cayley by mistake.
(As she continued to fall about laughing, Cayley hung her head.)

CAYLEY: Stop it.
(Kyrie bit her lip as she mused to herself.)

KYRIE: He mistook you for me?

CAYLEY: Yes!

KYRIE: Well, we do look alike. But, I'm way taller than you. And my boobs are miles bigger.

CAYLEY: Yes, but without his glasses on...

KYRIE: Oh.
(She chuckled.)

KYRIE: That's so silly.

CAYLEY: Don't you start. It's so not funny.

KYRIE: It's kinda funny.

PHISELE: It's hilarious.

CAYLEY: No, it's not.
(Phisele calmed herself then stood tall.)

PHISELE: I should head over there and arrest him. Accident or not, it was still a crime.

KYRIE: But if you arrest him, I won't get my shag.

PHISELE: There *are* other men, Kyrie.

KYRIE: Good point. As you were.
(They then stood there giggling together, much to Cayley's annoyance.)

CAYLEY: Why would you giggle about it? It was horrible. I've been to hell and back because of that.

KYRIE: Hardly.

(She smiled.)

KYRIE: You'll see plenty of doodahs when you're older. Trust me, it's no big deal.

PHISELE: She's right. Now we know it wasn't malicious, you can relax.

CAYLEY: I'll be having nightmares forever.

PHISELE: You'll be fine, love.

(She nodded.)

PHISELE: Nice work, Cayley. You solved the crime yet again.

(Cayley flinched.)

CAYLEY: Me? Nothing to do with me. Like I told you, I was at home eating my dinner and thinking about school. It was all Kyrie's fine detective work that saved the day.

PHISELE: Right. And despite the fact Kyrie knew nothing about it, and *you* had to tell me all the details, you're sticking by that line, are you?

CAYLEY: Steadfastly.

PHISELE: I thought you might.

(She looked to Kyrie.)

PHISELE: You're so lucky to have her.

KYRIE: Who?

CAYLEY: Me!

KYRIE: Oh, right. Well, obviously.

(She beamed.)

KYRIE: Everyone should have a Cayley; they're awesome.

CAYLEY: Aw. I love you too, Kyrie.

KYRIE: How could anyone not?

PHISELE: Easily.

(She nodded.)

PHISELE: Anyway, I'm off to arrest Steve. Well done, Cayley.

CAYLEY: It was Kyrie.

PHISELE: Right... I'm gonna go before I ended up slapping the pair of you.

(She then paced out of the door. Left behind, Cayley looked to Kyrie then smiled.)

CAYLEY: Now what?

KYRIE: Now I need to find a new date.

CAYLEY: Cool. While you're doing that I can go on *my* date.

(Kyrie burst out laughing.)

KYRIE: You have a date? Yeah, right.

CAYLEY: Shut up. I don't mean that kind of date anyway. I mean like a friend date.

KYRIE: A what?

CAYLEY: I'm meeting up with a friend, Kyrie.

(Kyrie gasped.)

KYRIE: A friend?

CAYLEY: Yeah. I've been invited over to my friend's house.

(Kyrie's jaw dropped.)

KYRIE: You have a friend???

CAYLEY: Yes.

KYRIE: You? You? *You* have a friend?

CAYLEY: Yes!

KYRIE: A real, flesh and blood person?

CAYLEY: Obviously.

KYRIE: Like... a girl from your school?

CAYLEY: Where else?

(Kyrie gaped for a moment then strained her eyes.)

KYRIE: You've made a friend? I never thought I'd see...

(She then passed out, overcome with amazement. Standing over her, Cayley could only shake her head.)

CAYLEY: Well, that's just insulting.

(She then stepped over her and headed out of the door.)

(That evening, as midnight approached, Flaxley was sitting out on his porch, enjoying a tankard of ale, with his good friend, Derek, the three foot tall green alien from the planet Tryme 17, sitting at his side. Enjoying the cool evening breeze as it swept across his face, he smiled then glanced up at the sky.)

FLAXLEY: All is good with the world again, Derek.

DEREK: Because you caught the flasher?

FLAXLEY: Because there was never a real flasher out there.

(He grimaced.)

FLAXLEY: Well, there was, but I dealt with him earlier.

DEREK: I see.

(He then grimaced uncomfortably.)

DEREK: You know, throwing a pervert off a cliff is still a crime, don't you? Even if he did deserve it.

FLAXLEY: How did you...

DEREK: I can read minds, remember?

FLAXLEY: Good point.

DEREK: Still, I won't say anything, Flaxley. If you ask me, had got what was coming to him.

FLAXLEY: Exactly.

DEREK: That's the thing about justice. It's not always well served by the law. Sometimes, the only true justice comes from things way outside the accepted norms of society.

FLAXLEY: I couldn't agree more.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: Now I just need to decide what to do with Steve. He did make a full and honest confession to Phisele when questioned, so that should count in his favour. That said, he flashed his knob at a child.

DEREK: It's a tricky one. I mean, if he'd flashed at Kyrie like he planned to, she'd have loved it and nobody would have cared; or even known. But having made such a gargantuan error, well... do you simply forgive mistakes like that?

FLAXLEY: That's why I'm torn, Derek. Half of me wants to let him go and say no more about it, the other half of me wants to strangle the bugger.

DEREK: I'll bet. I mean, look how it escalated.

FLAXLEY: What do you mean?

DEREK: First poor Cayley gets flashed, which must have been upsetting enough for the poor thing, but as a result of that, you ended up traumatising the poor kid even further.

FLAXLEY: Yes, well, that's...

DEREK: For nothing!

FLAXLEY: Yeah, alright; don't rub it in!

DEREK: Sorry.

(He smiled.)

DEREK: So, what are you going to do about it?

FLAXLEY: Well, I'm leaning towards letting it go.

DEREK: You are?

FLAXLEY: Yes. I mean, let's face it, accidents happen. Mistakes are common place, and I don't think punishing them sends the correct message. I mean, he just wanted to get to know Kyrie, so he attempted to do something he knew she'd enjoy. He screwed up, that's all. (He nodded sternly.)

FLAXLEY: If I thought for a minute he *meant* to traumatise a young girl, I'd kill him. That's not what happened though.

DEREK: Yes, but...

FLAXLEY: You see, it's always been my philosophy that mistakes are forgivable, maybe even acceptable, as long as the person's intentions are pure. Take *me* for example. I'd didn't *mean* to traumatise the poor girl. When I told all our suspects to show them her their erections, I just wasn't thinking, that's all. I wanted to solve the case. My intentions were pure, see? I just made a mistake, nothing more. That kind of error is fine.

DEREK: Yes, right. Well, you tell yourself that, Flaxley. If it makes you feel better then bully for you.

FLAXLEY: Why, what are you suggesting? I quit my post as leader of Tifaeris over one silly mistake? What?

DEREK: No, I'm not suggesting that at all. All I'm saying is, you made a terrible fuck up, one that may have traumatised the poor girl more than you'll ever know. You can't just say, whoops and dismiss it because you meant well. You have to fix your mistake.

FLAXLEY: How? I can't go back in time and make her un-see it, can I?

DEREK: No, but you really do need to talk to her. Explain your fuck up. Then apologise to her and make sure she has no long-lasting effects from it.

FLAXLEY: Such as?

DEREK: Waking up in the night, screaming "penis" then crying herself back to sleep.

FLAXLEY: Right...

(He shook his head.)

FLAXLEY: You really do have a way of making a person feel bad.

DEREK: My wife taught me everything she knows.

FLAXLEY: And then some.

DEREK: Seriously though, Flaxley. You clearly feel terrible about it, so go and talk to the girl. Make sure she's okay. Only then can you dismiss the error. And you'll feel better about yourself too.

(Flaxley nodded.)

FLAXLEY: You know what, Derek. You're right.

DEREK: I know.

FLAXLEY: Now shut up.

DEREK: That I can do.

FLAXLEY: Good!

CHAPTER FIVE – The Not Very Good Bank Robbery

It was mid-morning in Tifaeris and as always, everything was peaceful. The sun was shining, the breeze was gentle and birdsong rung out from the treetops. It was just another ordinary day in paradise. As ever, people were casually going about their day in no particular hurry. It was calm. It was tranquil. It was perfect. Almost. There were a *few* unfortunate citizens having a less than stress-free morning, however. Clive Johnson of Kritzeveltia Avenue was having a torrid morning, trying to explain the lipstick stains on his underpants to his wife. Ethel Grimshaw of number twelve Harold Gardens had woken up to find that foxes had

trampled all over her marigolds again. And Phisele, the chief of police, was once again trying to get a straight answer out of Cayley Severen. As always, the young genius had solved Kyrie's crime for her, but wanted Kyrie to take the credit. As such, she was trying to make Kyrie look like a hero before explaining what happened, and it was starting to rattle Phisele's last nerve.

PHISELE: Enough, Cayley. No more nonsense. I don't want to hear anymore lies about "Kyrie Said". I'm not falling for it.

CAYLEY: But...

PHISELE: If you know who did it just tell me!

CAYLEY: Well... according to Kyrie.

PHISELE: No. Not according to Kyrie.

(She growled.)

PHISELE: Stop embellishing and just tell me what you know before I lose my temper.

KYRIE: How can she do that, Phisele? You've *already* lost your temper.

(She mused to herself.)

KYRIE: Unless there's a way to turn back time...

(Phisele growled.)

PHISELE: Kyrie, I have *not* lost my...

(She then took a deep soothing breath to calm herself before smiling at Cayley.)

PHISELE: Look, I just want to know...

KYRIE: Well, don't keep us in suspense. I need to know. What haven't you lost?

(She gasped.)

KYRIE: Were you going to say virginity? Seriously? You're a virgin? At your age?

(Phisele snapped in her direction.)

PHISELE: Temper, Kyrie! I haven't lost my temper!!!

KYRIE: Well you could have fooled me.

PHISELE: Kyrie, a five year old child could fool you.

(She rolled her eyes.)

PHISELE: One did, just last week in fact.

KYRIE: Liar! He was six.

PHISELE: Right...

(Once again, she took a deep breath to gather herself then smiled at Cayley.)

PHISELE: Tell me what you know, love, or so help me, I'll knock you into the middle of next week.

(Cayley whimpered.)

KYRIE: Touch her and I'll break your nose!

(She beamed.)

KYRIE: I'm very protective, you see?

PHISELE: Then tell young Cayley here to get to the point, or she'll be getting a slap.

(Cayley reeled back.)

CAYLEY: Fine. I will..

PHISELE: Good. The truth this time. No more nonsense about Kyrie solving the crime.

(She then stood tall and folded her arms.)

PHISELE: Let's hear it then.

CAYLEY: Okay...

(She looked to her feet and swung her shoulders nervously.)

CAYLEY: Well, according to Kyrie...

PHISELE: Cayley!

CAYLEY: Yes?

PHISELE: I asked for the truth, remember?

(Cayley pouted innocently.)

CAYLEY: It *is* the truth. Kyrie told me that the guy who had his chickens stolen owned the only five Marlboro Brown chickens in the entire continent.

KYRIE: I did say that, yes. Cayley was putting her hair up at the time.

CAYLEY: See?

(She smiled.)

CAYLEY: She then looked enlightened, like she'd had an epiphany. Once again, she'd figured out who committed the crime!

KYRIE: I had? When? I don't remember this.

CAYLEY: Kyrie...

(Phisele shook her head.)

PHISELE: Wow. It's just one lie after another with you, isn't it, young lady?

(Cayley whimpered.)

CAYLEY: No. She really did solve the crime. She said the salesman just happened to have five rare chickens, exactly like those that were stolen. Then she pointed out that this salesman guy doesn't even own a chicken farm. That's when she put two and two together and realised it was the chicken salesman who stole them in the first place. He's been stealing people's chickens then selling them back to them.

KYRIE: Really? What a bastard! I'd never have thought of that.

CAYLEY: Yes, you did.

KYRIE: I did?

CAYLEY: Yes!

(She groaned.)

CAYLEY: For pity's sake, Kyrie.

(Phisele just shook her head.)

PHISELE: So, Cayley, what you're saying is, as is *always* the case, Kyrie told you the details of the case and it was *you* who put two and two together.

CAYLEY: Me? No. I'm just a kid. It was all Kyrie.

PHISELE: Don't be silly, if Kyrie tried to put two and two together her head would explode.

CAYLEY: I think you're being a bit harsh there. Kyrie's an awesome detective.

KYRIE: Aw, she's so sweet.

(Phisele could only roll her eyes.)

PHISELE: Tell me, Cayley, how long are we gonna play this game?

CAYLEY: Game?

PHISELE: Yeah. Where you solve the case then come in and tell us Kyrie solved it.

CAYLEY: I'd never do that. That's dishonest.

PHISELE: Yes. It is! And you do it every time. Just tell the truth for once. You solved the crime, didn't you?

CAYLEY: No. Of course not. I'm only twelve, Phisele. I didn't even know chickens were a thing until Kyrie told me.

(Realising her latest lie was beyond ridiculous, she then hung her head and started to burn red with embarrassment.)

PHISELE: You didn't know chickens were a thing?

CAYLEY: Um...

PHISELE: Really, Cayley? You didn't know chickens were a thing?

KYRIE: I'm sure she did. Maybe she just forgot. I do that a lot. I laid on the floor last night because I forgot I have a bed. We all have these moments I'm sure.

PHISELE: No, Kyrie; we don't. You're just special.

KYRIE: Aw, thank you.

PHISELE: Don't mention it.

(She sighed.)

PHISELE: So that's the story we're going with, is it? Kyrie figured it out.

CAYLEY: Yes, please.

PHISELE: Fine.

(She sighed then looked to the ceiling.)

PHISELE: It's so obvious when you think about it. The only way that salesman *could* have got those five replacement chickens so quickly is if he'd stolen them in the first place. They were incredibly rare.

CAYLEY: That's exactly what Kyrie said.

KYRIE: Really? How come *I* don't remember this?

CAYLEY: Kyrie, shush.

KYRIE: Don't you shush me, pipsqueak.

CAYLEY: Sorry.

PHISELE: Right, well, don't start bickering.

(She shook her head.)

PHISELE: You know, that clue's *so* bloody obvious, I'm embarrassed that I didn't notice it myself.

KYRIE: Don't be. I didn't notice it either.

CAYLEY: Yes, you did!

KYRIE: When. I don't remember this.

PHISELE: Of course you didn't notice it, Kyrie; you're an idiot.

(She shook her head.)

PHISELE: I expect better from myself.

CAYLEY: That's not fair. Kyrie's not an idiot.

KYRIE: I'm not. Since when?

CAYLEY: I'm just saying, you can't be that much of an idiot. You do solve all the crimes around here, after all.

KYRIE: Oh, yeah. That's true.

(She grimaced at Phisele.)

KYRIE: You need to step up your game, Phisele. Flaxley's gonna fire you if you don't shape up and solve a case now and again.

(Phisele growled then raised her hands in readiness to strangle her.)

PHISELE: Kyrie, I'm gonna beat you until...

(Cayley gasped.)

CAYLEY: Um, Kyrie, we should leave. Like now.

KYRIE: But my shift doesn't end until the hands on the clock do that weird up and down thing.

CAYLEY: But...

(Mercifully, Phisele then took a soothing breath and relented her angry stance.)

PHISELE: Kyrie?

KYRIE: Ma'am?

PHISELE: Let's go and arrest that chicken salesman.

KYRIE: Why? What's he done?

(Phisele could only give a stifled laugh and roll her eyes at Cayley.)

PHISELE: Yeah, *she* solved the crime.

(Cayley could only hide her face.)

PHISELE: Come on. Let's get this over with.

(She then headed for the door. Kyrie and Cayley followed on.)

As they marched from the police station, on their way to the chicken salesman's house, Cayley made sure to keep very silent. Phisele was angrily stomping ahead and she could tell that even the slightest thing might well push her over the edge. Sadly, Kyrie was not blessed with the intelligence to read such a situation, and as such aired her thoughts liberally, as only she could.

KYRIE: I'm looking forward to pay day. One of the guys in the market is selling a windmill sail. That might come in handy someday.

(Compelled to break her silence, Cayley spoke up desperately.)

CAYLEY: But we don't *have* a windmill, Kyrie.

KYRIE: No, but we might one day. And if one of the sails falls off, we'll be glad we struck while the iron's hot.

CAYLEY: Kyrie...

(She then mused to herself for a moment before delving into her box of mistruths once again.)

CAYLEY: That'd be a mistake. They don't even use windmills anymore.

KYRIE: They don't? Why not?

CAYLEY: Um... they kept blowing away.

KYRIE: Oh.

(She shrugged.)

KYRIE: Makes sense. Let's not buy that then.

CAYLEY: Good idea.

KYRIE: Thank you. I do have them now again.

(Just then, a friendly female voice called out to them from behind.)

KRITZ: Hey, ladies!

(Phisele, Kyrie and Cayley all stopped and turned to face her.)

PHISELE: Hey, you.

(Stepping up to her, Kritz smiled warmly.)

KRITZ: You're looking spritely this morning.

PHISELE: Uh-huh. We're off to arrest a criminal; my favourite part of the job.

KRITZ: Oh, nice one.

(She glanced at where Kyrie was smiling at her and where Cayley was half hiding behind her sister.)

KRITZ: Your best detective came through again, did she?

KYRIE: Yup. I've solved another one.

(Cayley could only grin nervously at this point.)

KRITZ: Good work, Kyrie. And as always, you just happened to be with Cayley when you solved it, I see.

KYRIE: She's my good luck charm.

KRITZ: Right...

(Phisele rolled her eyes.)

PHISELE: Try as I might, I still can't get the right sister to take the credit.

(Kritz beamed and stroked Cayley's face gently.)

KRITZ: It's okay. She knows she's not fooling anyone. Don't you, littlun?

(Cayley blushed.)

CAYLEY: I don't know what you mean.

KYRIE: Nor do I. Are you saying Cayley's been naughty in some way?

KRITZ: Oh, god no. She's adorable.

(She then glanced to Phisele.)

KRITZ: Which case did she solve?

KYRIE: The chicken molester case.

PHISELE: Theft, Kyrie. Chicken theft.

KYRIE: Same thing.

PHISELE: Hardly.

KYRIE: It kind of is.

PHISELE: No, it really, really isn't.

KYRIE: Hey. Who solved it, you or me?

(Phisele growled.)

PHISELE: Neither of us.

(Kyrie gasped in horror.)

KYRIE: How dare you?

PHISELE: I dare.

(She then rolled her eyes and looked to where Kritz was chuckling to herself.)

PHISELE: You off to the market?

KRITZ: No, actually. I was just heading to the bank.

(She beamed.)

KRITZ: Royalty cheques from Flaxley's books. As much as he hates those books, they do bring in a fair amount of cash.

PHISELE: Really? I thought he refused to *accept* any cash from those books. They're an abomination and he wants nothing to do with them, he said.

KRITZ: He was overruled.

PHISELE: I see. Bullied him, did you?

KRITZ: I don't need to resort to that kind of thing, Phisele. Give him a nice steak and blowjob and he does whatever he's told.

(Her eyes then bulged.)

KRITZ: Sorry, Cayley, you really didn't need to hear that.

CAYLEY: I didn't? Why?

KRITZ: Well...

CAYLEY: I like a decent steak and having my hair done too.

KYRIE: That's a blow *dry*, sister face

CAYLEY: Then what's a blow job?

KRITZ: Doesn't matter, sweetie.

KYRIE: That's when you suck a man's cock.

PHISELE: Seriously, Kyrie???

KYRIE: What? It is? Ask Kritz.

(Kritz grimaced at the rapidly shrinking Cayley then marched away.)

KRITZ: So, yeah, best get going. The bank closes in five hours.

(As she hurried off towards the town square, Phisele rolled her eyes then gestured forth.)

PHISELE: Let's go and arrest our villain, shall we? Before you can corrupt your sister any further.

KYRIE: She's not corrupt. She's a good girl.

PHISELE: Yeah...

(She mumbled under her breath.)

PHISELE: How long's that gonna last with you as a role model?

(With that, they marched away to the end of the road then turned and headed along the cobbled street towards where the bank was situated on the main square. As they paced forth, all Cayley could think about was why Kritz would suck Flaxley's cockerel. She didn't even know he owned a cockerel. The entire conversation made no sense to her. More than used to hearing senseless comments from her sister, however, she soon shrugged it off and started to think about happier things instead.)

A short while later, as they paced across the square en route to arresting their suspect, Kyrie flinched then looked to Phisele. Something wasn't quite right and it made her feel uneasy.

KYRIE: Phisele?

PHISELE: What?

KYRIE: Where are we heading?

PHISELE: To the chicken salesman's house.

(Kyrie sucked her teeth.)

KYRIE: I see. And why are we going there?

(Phisele rolled her eyes.)

PHISELE: Says the genius who solved the crime. We're going there to arrest him, obviously.

KYRIE: I see.

(She grimaced.)

KYRIE: I don't think that's gonna work, Phisele.

PHISELE: No? And, pray tell, why not?

KYRIE: Because he's standing over there, ogling Kritz's legs.

(Phisele swiftly glanced to the side and sure enough, the man they'd come to arrest was indeed standing at the side of the square, drooling as he watched Kritz head into the bank.)

PHISELE: Right. Excellent. Well spotted.

KYRIE: Thank you.

PHISELE: That'll save us a walk.

(With that, she paced across the square towards him. Following on, Kyrie and Cayley shared a smile. His arrest would be another success on Kyrie's impeccable police record.)

CAYLEY: You're doing great, Kyrie.

KYRIE: Right? And I owe it all to...

CAYLEY: Please, it was nothing.

KYRIE: The fact I'm damned sexy.

CAYLEY: Right...

(She then rolled her eyes before coming to a standstill behind Phisele. Having approached the chicken salesman, she was now about to inform of his arrest.)

PHISELE: Gareth Styles?

KYRIE: Who?

GARETH: That's me!

KYRIE: Really? I thought your name was Chicken Salesman.

PHISELE: Do shut up, Kyrie.

(She rolled her eyes then continued with the arrest.)

PHISELE: Gareth Styles, you're under arrest for...

GARETH: For what?

PHISELE: I was coming to that.

GARETH: But I haven't done anything.

KYRIE: You been molesting chickens!

GARETH: And that's a crime, is it?

PHISELE: Yes!

GARETH: Fuck.

PHISELE: But we're *actually* here to arrest you for stealing them.

(Gareth scoffed.)

GARETH: Yeah, right.

PHISELE: Excuse me?

GARETH: Liberating chickens isn't a crime.

PHISELE: Liberating?

GARETH: For want of a better word, yes.

(He ruffled his neck.)

GARETH: Point is, it aint a crime.

(He laughed.)

GARETH: There's no law of confirmed ownership in relation to animals here in Tifaeris; I checked the statutes before I stole them.

(He beamed.)

GARETH: So, yes, it was me. I stole everyone's chickens and sold them back to them. I admit it. You've caught me. Guilty as charged. But not of any crime.

(He nodded sternly.)

GARETH: So there's fuck all you can do about it.

(Phisele just smiled.)

PHISELE: Have you finished?

GARETH: For now, yes. But I reserve the right to mock you again at any time.

PHISELE: Excellent, you do that. And while you're at it, I'll just let you know that after your first crime came to light, Sir Flaxley *amended* the statutes.

(Gareth's jaw dropped.)

GARETH: What?

PHISELE: You heard me. He amended the statutes. Grand Theft Poultry has been a criminal offence for several days now. And you, sir, just admitted to several cases of it.

(Gareth whimpered.)

GARETH: Is that so?

PHISELE: That is indeed so, yes.

GARETH: And um... community service?

PHISELE: Nope!

GARETH: Suspended jail sentence?

PHISELE: Again, nope.

GARETH: Actual... jail... time?

PHISELE: Beheading!

GARETH: What???

PHISELE: Just kidding. You're going to jail.

(Gareth drew a deep sigh of relief.)

GARETH: That's not funny, Phisele!

PHISELE: Nor is stealing people's chickens.

GARETH: Oh, it was. Them coming crawling to me, begging me to sell them more was bloody hilarious.

PHISELE: Well, now you get to do some hilarious jail time.

GARETH: Shit.

PHISELE: Kyrie?

KYRIE: Sir? I mean, ma'am?

PHISELE: Take him away!

KYRIE: Right.

(She grimaced.)

KYRIE: Where to?

PHISELE: Jail, you silly fucker.

KYRIE: Oh, right. Okay. I'll get right on it. Come on, you.

PHISELE: One second.

(She then slapped some handcuffs on the whimpering thief, sighing as she did so.)

PHISELE: Where to, indeed. Why won't Flaxley just let me fire you?

KYRIE: Fire me? Why would you even say that? I solve all your crimes.

(Phisele could only growl.)

PHISELE: Kyrie, take him and go.

KYRIE: Roger.

(With that, she grabbed Gareth's arm and dragged him away.)

PHISELE: Meet me back here when you're done.

KYRIE: Righto!

(As he was led away, Gareth looked to Phisele urgently.)

GARETH: Tell my wife I'm sorry!

PHISELE: *You* can tell her when she comes to visit.

GARETH: Yeah, but it'd sound more convincing coming from you.

PHISELE: Oh, whatever. Just clear off.

(She then watched as Kyrie led him around the corner, before drawing a sigh of relief.)

PHISELE: Thank fuck she's gone.

(She then performed a double take down to her side.)

PHISELE: Cayley? Why didn't you go with Kyrie?

CAYLEY: She's going to the jail cells. I don't like going in there.

(She whimpered.)

CAYLEY: It's dark and creepy.

PHISELE: Well, that's fair, I guess.

(She smiled.)

PHISELE: We'll wait together then.

CAYLEY: Okay.

(Her brow then furrowed over.)

PHISELE: In silence!

(Cayley could only whimper.)

For several minutes, Phisele and Cayley simply stood there in the square as they waited for Kyrie. Quite happy just to be out and about, Cayley was more than content. The silence suited her fine. Phisele was also a fan of the silence. Something, however, was bothering her and as the minutes ticked past, she could feel herself becoming more and more agitated. Starting to let it get to her she then felt compelled to say something.

PHISELE: Cayley?

CAYLEY: Yes?

PHISELE: Why *do* you insist on lying all the time?

(Cayley whimpered and hung her head.)

PHISELE: Seriously, I want to know.

CAYLEY: I *don't* lie.

PHISELE: Yes, you do. And quite frankly it's insulting. If you think for a minute we're going to *believe* that Kyrie solves all these crimes, then you must think we're as dumb as she is.

(Cayley swung her shoulders nervously.)

CAYLEY: I don't think that.

PHISELE: Then why?

(Cayley shrunk on the spot.)

CAYLEY: I don't know.

PHISELE: No, nor do I.

(She smiled.)

PHISELE: Because there's no need for it. Kyrie's never going to be fired, you know that, right?

(Cayley glanced at her.)

CAYLEY: She's not?

PHISELE: Of course not. If I fired her, *you'd* stop helping me. I mean, you wouldn't *be able* to help me for a start. You'd have no information with which to make your deductions.

(She nodded.)

PHISELE: So I *have* to tolerate Kyrie, don't I? *She* gives you the details of the case and *you* figure out who the guilty party was. That's the way this works. You two come as a package.

(She grimaced.)

PHISELE: A really, really annoying package.

(She rolled her eyes then offered Cayley a warm smile.)

PHISELE: Look, I get it, okay? Your sister is a walking disaster; about as qualified to be a police officer as a dead racoon. But you need her to keep her job. So you lie to make her look like she's a competent crime solver. I understand that perfectly, I do. But you can stop doing that now. We all know it's *you* solving the crimes, and we all know we have to keep Kyrie or you'll *stop* doing it. So no more, okay? No more lying.

(Cayley looked to her uneasily for a moment then glanced away and shrugged.)

CAYLEY: I don't know what you mean. Kyrie would never tell me the details of the case, that's unprofessional. She just thinks out loud sometimes, that's all. And I've never solved a crime in my life. I wouldn't know how to. I'm twelve. I only like doing little girl stuff like playing with dolls and that.

(Phisele stared at her blankly for a moment then furrowed her brow.)

PHISELE: You don't believe me, do you? You think that if you confess to solving all Kyrie's case, I'll sack her then go back to the police station to rejoice!

CAYLEY: Um...

PHISELE: Right after I literally told you I *wouldn't* do that! I'm offended. How can you not trust me?

(Cayley could only whimper.)

PHISELE: For pity's sake. One sister's an idiot, the other's paranoid. *And* a compulsive liar!

(She shook her fist.)

PHISELE: You don't even *own* a doll!

CAYLEY: I do!

PHISELE: You don't! I've *seen* your place, remember? There isn't a doll in sight! There is, however, a plough in the corner for some reason.

CAYLEY: Sometimes Kyrie buys things...

PHISELE: I don't want to know.

(She shook her head.)

PHISELE: How can anyone *be* so distrusting?

CAYLEY: I'm not distrusting.

PHISELE: Then why don't you trust me?

CAYLEY: Because you keep being mean to me.

PHISELE: When?

CAYLEY: You're shaking your fist at me right now!

(Phisele quickly placed her hand behind her back.)

PHISELE: No, I'm not.

CAYLEY: And you always shout at me!

(Phisele growled.)

PHISELE: That's because you keep lying to me!!!

CAYLEY: You're shaking your fist at me again!

(Once again, Phisele hid her hand then stood tall and sighed.)

PHISELE: Look. Cayley. I only get angry because you keep lying. If you didn't do that, then we wouldn't have an issue.

(She sighed.)

PHISELE: I wasting my breath, aren't I? You don't trust a word I'm saying.

(Cayley slowly hung her head.)

CAYLEY: I don't know *how* to trust people, Phisele. Until I came to Tifaeris, nearly everyone I met was an assassin sent to kill me. Surely you can understand that.

(She pouted.)

CAYLEY: Learning to trust people again is going to take time.

(A tear rolled down her cheek.)

CAYLEY: And shouting at me and threaten me with your fists isn't going to help. I'm only twelve, remember?

(Consumed with guilt, Phisele cringed then reached forth and placed a kind hand on Cayley's shoulder.)

PHISELE: Hey, it's okay, littlun. I'm sorry, okay? I just get frustrated with all the lies, that's all.

CAYLEY: What lies?

PHISELE: Stop it!

(She rolled her eyes then smiled warmly.)

PHISELE: You know, you actually impress me, Cayley.

CAYLEY: I do?

PHISELE: You do. The way you constantly cover for Kyrie's stupidity, no matter how ridiculous it makes you sound, is actually pretty amazing. She's very lucky to have you. I wish I had a sister like you. You're a good girl.

CAYLEY: Thank you.

PHISELE: Just...

(Suddenly, a scream for help echoed out from the bank. At once, Phisele and Cayley gasped then turned to face it, just in time to see the doors slam shut.)

CAYLEY: Is that...

PHISELE: A robbery? Could well be.

(She nodded sternly.)

PHISELE: Wait there, young lady. I've got work to do.

(She then yanked out her police issue dagger and raced towards the bank. She'd barely made it twenty feet, however, when a crossbow bolt slammed into the ground just in front of her. With a yelp, she jumped backwards just as an angry voice called out from one of the bank's windows.)

ROBBER: Stay back!!!

(Staring at the crossbow bolt in the ground, Phisele mused to herself.)

PHISELE: That's sound advice, I reckon.

(She then hurried back to Cayley.)

CAYLEY: Yes?

PHISELE: It's most definitely a heist.

CAYLEY: Well, obviously.

PHISELE: Right?

(She snarled.)

PHISELE: Don't be facetious.

(Cayley could only offer her a nervous grin.)

PHISELE: Look, I need you do something for me.

CAYLEY: You want me to fetch Sir Flaxley, don't you?

PHISELE: I want you to... oh, you guessed.

(Cayley beamed.)

CAYLEY: Done! Best job ever.

(She then took off like a rocket in the direction of Sir Flaxley's house. Left behind, Phisele turned to face the bank then shook her head.)

PHISELE: Fuck. Kritz is in there!

A short while later, Cayley trotted up to the front door of Sir Flaxley's house and rapped upon it excitedly. Not only was Sir Flaxley her all-time hero, but she also erroneously believed him to be her father. As such, she greatly enjoyed getting to spend time with him. Looking forward to doing so again, she bounced excitedly on his doorstep, when much to her delight, the door swung open. Upon seeing who answered it, however, her smile evaporated and she whimpered nervously.

CAYLEY: Um... hello.

(Standing in the doorway, Flaxley's daughters, Jade and Emma both greeted her with a smile. It was a smile that Cayley hated. They'd recently started a campaign of vile rumour-mongering about her, purely because she was more alluring to boys than they were. In recent weeks, however, they'd tried to befriend her. It made her feel horribly uncomfortable. Having heard the twin's older sister tell them that making friends with Cayley would make *them* seem more alluring too, she was convinced their attempts to befriend her were wholly insincere and that they both secretly despised her still.)

EMMA: Yay, Cayley's here.

JADE: Hiya!

(Cayley whimpered.)

CAYLEY: Um... I need to speak to dad.

(She gasped in horror.)

CAYLEY: *Your* dad! Obviously. Not *my* dad. I don't have one.

(She then giggled uncomfortably.)

JADE: That can wait.

EMMA: Yeah, come in.

JADE: We were just playing a game.

EMMA: You should join us.

JADE: Yeah, come on. Play with us.

CAYLEY: Um... I can't.

JADE: Why not?

CAYLEY: I don't know how.

EMMA: We haven't said what we're playing yet.

CAYLEY: Right... well... chances are, right?

(She then flinched.)

CAYLEY: Actually, I really *can't* stay. I need to see your dad. It's urgent. Phisele sent me.

JADE: Aw...

EMMA: You never want to play with us.

JADE: I'm starting to think you don't like us.

EMMA: That's really mean, Cayley.

(Cayley pouted.)

CAYLEY: So is pretending to like someone.

JADE: Pretending? We're not pretending.

EMMA: We've *never* pretended.

JADE: Not even once.

EMMA: Well, *maybe* once.

JADE: But just for a day.

EMMA: Or two.

JADE: An entire week, in fact, but we actually like you now.

(Cayley grimaced.)

CAYLEY: You do?

EMMA: Yes. We realised we were being too mean.

JADE: Emma was jealous, you see?

EMMA: So were you!

JADE: Right. Yeah. A bit.

(She shrugged.)

JADE: You were stealing all the boys and spending more time with our dad than we were.

EMMA: So Jade got all funny and decided to pick on you.

JADE: Because Emma suggested it.

EMMA: Yeah.

(They grinned at her.)

JADE: Sorry.

EMMA: Really sorry.

(Cayley shuddered.)

CAYLEY: Twins are creepy.

EMMA: What?

CAYLEY: Nothing.

JADE: So, yeah. We've decided to stop being silly. You're a good person and we want to be friends with you for real.

EMMA: We do.

JADE: As such, we don't mind if you borrow our dad from time to time.

EMMA: Just leave some boys for us.

JADE: Yeah.

CAYLEY: Um...

(She flinched.)

CAYLEY: I don't have time for this. I need Sir Flaxley! There's a bank robbery in progress and Phisele needs him urgently.

(In that moment, Flaxley sprung from a side room with a peeved expression on his face.)

FLAXLEY: Did somebody mention crime?

EMMA: Cayley did!

JADE: A bank robbery.

FLAXLEY: Then my sword and I have work to do!

(With that, he paced towards his sword rack, menacingly.)

CAYLEY: Hurry! Kritz was *in* the bank when it started!

(Flaxley flinched then looked to her in horror.)

FLAXLEY: What?

EMMA: Our mum was in there?

CAYLEY: Yes!

FLAXLEY: In that case, blood needs to be spilled!

(With that, he raced to his sword rack, yanked out the two biggest then hurried towards the door. Emma, Jade and Cayley swiftly stepped out of the way.)

FLAXLEY: Don't worry, girls. I'll make short work of those fools. Just keep calm and wait here with Cayley until I come back.

(Cayley's eyes bulged.)

CAYLEY: No, I'm good.

(She then charged off back towards town. Not about to waste a second, Flaxley raced after her. Left behind, Emma and Jade shared a shrug.)

EMMA: Shall we?

JADE: We shall.

(They then raced off towards the bank as well.)

A short while later, Sir Flaxley raced up to Phisele outside the bank. Anxious about his beloved wife's well-being he wasted no time with formalities and got straight to the point as soon as he arrived.

FLAXLEY: Is it true, Phisele? There's a bank robbery in progress and Kritz is in there?

PHISELE: I'm afraid so, Flaxley.

FLAXLEY: Then cover your eyes, this is going to get bloody.

PHISELE: Wait!

FLAXLEY: Wait??? Kritz is in there!

PHISELE: I know, but they've got crossbows!

FLAXLEY: Yes, but I've got me! Now prepare yourself for some inhumane barbarity!

PHISELE: No, Flaxley; you can't rush in. You could get the hostages hurt if you do.

Including Kritz.

FLAXLEY: I doubt that very much. She's a veritable fighting machine.

PHISELE: Yes, but crossbows can still hurt her.

FLAXLEY: Not my Kritz.

PHISELE: Okay, I'll allow you that outrageous delusion, but what about the others?

FLAXLEY: Others?

PHISELE: There might be other customers in there. And if you go charging in, someone could get seriously killed.

FLAXLEY: As opposed to?

PHISELE: You know what I mean.

(She shook her head.)

PHISELE: You need to calm down, Flaxley. Think like a knight, not an angry husband with a new cleaver. Charging in could prove fatal for somebody.

FLAXLEY: Yes, those bank robbers.

PHISELE: And possibly a few innocent citizens. Crossbows, Flaxley.

(Flaxley paused and rubbed his chin.)

FLAXLEY: Hmm, you may have a point. Charging in is definitely not something a knight in his right mind would do.

PHISELE: No, it's something an angry husband would do.

FLAXLEY: Excellent. I'm one of those. Block your ears, Phisele; there's going to be a lot of screaming.

PHISELE: No, Flaxley! For pity's sake, we just established this. If you go rushing in, you could get innocent people hurt.

FLAXLEY: Right...

(He sighed despondently.)

FLAXLEY: Damn it. You make a good point.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: No rushing in then.

PHISELE: Good.

FLAXLEY: What shall we do then?

PHISELE: Not rush in.

FLAXLEY: Apart from that.

PHISELE: Sorry, but I can see it in your eyes, you're itching to get your swords bloody.

FLAXLEY: Can you blame me?

PHISELE: It's not about blame. I understand why you feel that way, but like I said, this is a job for Sir Flaxley the knight, not Flaxley the angry gorilla with an axe to grind.

(Flaxley ruffled his neck indignantly.)

FLAXLEY: It's a sword, not an axe.

PHISELE: Don't be facetious.

FLAXLEY: I...

(He then sighed in defeat.)

FLAXLEY: Fine. What's the plan then?

PHISELE: Actually, before we get to planning, let me explain the situation. The bank doors slammed shut and if anyone goes near, they get shot at. We have no idea how many there are or what they plan to do next.

(She nodded.)

PHISELE: Now you know *that* we can make a plan.

FLAXLEY: Right. Okay.

(He mused to himself.)

FLAXLEY: Hmm... maybe I could...

PHISELE: You're not going to rush in.

FLAXLEY: Oh, fine. Bloody nag. Have you got a better idea?

(Phisele nodded.)

PHISELE: I was thinking we could fetch Derek over here.

FLAXLEY: Derek? What on earth for?

PHISELE: He can read the minds of the bank robbers. You know, get us a head's up on what their plans are. Maybe even *who* they are. Just by listening in he could get us some valuable information.

(Flaxley rubbed his chin.)

FLAXLEY: I see.

(He grimaced.)

FLAXLEY: I could ask, I suppose, but he won't like it. He hates the idea of his skill being used by the police. He thinks he'll get a reputation as Derek the snitch, and end up being shunned by one and all. Possibly assassinated. Convincing him to come won't be easy.

PHISELE: Yes, it will. Just tell his wife that Kritz is in danger.

FLAXLEY: His wife?

PHISELE: Yeah. You know. Zanne.

FLAXLEY: I know who she is Phisele, I just don't see how telling her will help.

PHISELE: Zanne likes Kritz. If she hears she's in danger, she'll *force* Derek to go.

FLAXLEY: Hmm... that could work.

PHISELE: It will. Derek daren't defy Zanne. And Zanne really is fond of Kritz.

FLAXLEY: I know. She wouldn't keep casting cure magic on her to keep her young if she didn't.

(He then froze to the spot and stared dead ahead. At his side, Phisele was shaking her head.)

PHISELE: So that's her secret.

FLAXLEY: Tell nobody. Like I was supposed to. If that secret gets out, everyone will pester Zanne for heals and she'll be fucking livid.

(He gasped.)

FLAXLEY: She may even move away from Tifaeris and never heal Kritz again. Then Kritz will be livid. My love life can't afford to take that sort of hit.

PHISELE: Fine. Her secret is safe with me.

(She nodded.)

PHISELE: It'll be remain between Zanne and Kritz!

FLAXLEY: Thank you.

PHISELE: As long as she heals me too.

FLAXLEY: What?

PHISELE: Nothing. Now, go. Go and get Derek.

(Flaxley nodded.)

FLAXLEY: Right. Consider me gone.

(With that, he put his head down then raced off back down the street, passing Cayley, Emma and Jade along the way. Offering them a polite nod, he then bounded onwards and raced around a corner, towards Derek's house. Before he could quite reach it, however, his attention was taken by a couple having very public sex against the side a house. At once, he came to a standstill and chastised them accordingly.)

FLAXLEY: Hey! Do you mind? This is a public...

(He then rolled his eyes.)

FLAXLEY: Kyrie! I might have known.

(In the middle of enjoying a knee trembler with the chicken salesman she'd arrested, Kyrie waved back at him.)

KYRIE: Not now, Flaxley; I'm getting my end away.

FLAXLEY: Not here, you're not!

KYRIE: Yes, I am. Look.

FLAXLEY: Kyrie...

(He then performed a double-take in her lover's direction and raised a suspicious eyebrow.)

FLAXLEY: Kyrie? Why is he wearing handcuffs?

KYRIE: He's kinky like that.

FLAXLEY: Really? Really, Kyrie? He's kinky, is he? Or were you *meant* to be taking him to jail?

KYRIE: Jail?

FLAXLEY: Yes! Jail.

(Kyrie gasped.)

KYRIE: Come to think of it, Phisele did mention something about that.

FLAXLEY: For fuck sale.

(He then stepped up to the chicken salesman and furrowed his brow.)

FLAXLEY: What have you been arrested for?

GARETH: Um...

FLAXLEY: Bearing in mind that lying to me is a very bad idea indeed.

GARETH: Right...

(He sighed.)

GARETH: I stole some chickens.

FLAXLEY: I see. That was you, was it?

(He then glowered at Kyrie.)

FLAXLEY: I'll ask again. Where are you meant to be right now?

KYRIE: In the highest realms of ecstasy, but you're spoiling it.

FLAXLEY: No. The answer is, on your way to the jail cells.

KYRIE: Oh, yeah. Like Phisele said.

(She nodded.)

KYRIE: I'll go there once we've finished. I can't remember why though.

FLAXLEY: To put your prisoner in jail!

KYRIE: I have a prisoner?

(She then looked enlightened.)

KYRIE: Oh, yeah. I was meant to be taking this sexy fella to jail.

FLAXLEY: Then go and bloody do it.
(Kyrie sighed.)
KYRIE: Fine. Bloody fun-sponge.
(She then pushed Gareth out of her and pulled her skirt down.)
KYRIE: So unfair. I never get to have any fun. Well I do, but only two or three times a day.
It's so unfair.
(She then took Gareth's arm and frogmarched him away.)
KYRIE: Come on, you.
FLAXLEY: Once he's safely locked away, go back and join Phisele outside the bank.
KYRIE: Okay.
(Trudging onwards, she shook her head then looked to Gareth.)
KYRIE: We'd better get a move on and sling you in jail before I forget again.
GARETH: What? No shag? I was enjoying that.
KYRIE: Nope. You're going in a cell.
(She then beamed joyously.)
KYRIE: You can do me through the bars.
GARETH: Excellent.

A short while later, Flaxley arrived at Derek's house and hammered on the door. A few moments later, Derek, the three foot tall, green alien from the planet Tryme 17, answered it then invited him inside. Before Derek could even offer him a drink or a seat, however, Flaxley came straight to the point.
FLAXLEY: A crime in is progress, Derek, and I need you to come with me.
DEREK: What?
FLAXLEY: You heard me.
DEREK: There's a crime in progress and you want me to go with you?
FLAXLEY: What are you, an alien or a parrot?
DEREK: A parrot.
FLAXLEY: What?
DEREK: Ask a stupid question, Flaxley...
FLAXLEY: Touché.
(He nodded.)
FLAXLEY: Let's go. I need to use that mind-reading skill of yours to decipher their next move.
DEREK: No, thanks.
FLAXLEY: Derek...
DEREK: The answer is no, Flaxley. I'll play no part in solving your crimes. My powers are not to be used for snitching purposes. Snitches get stitches.
FLAXLEY: Then it's a good thing your wife has healing powers.
DEREK: Yes, but she doesn't have the power of necromancy.
(Flaxley sighed.)
FLAXLEY: Look, I know how you feel about ending up being known as a snitch...
DEREK: Then accept my answer and bugger off.
FLAXLEY: I can't.
DEREK: You can. It's easy. You just say something like "very well" or "okay", then open the door and fuck off through it.
FLAXLEY: Okay, I can then, but I won't.
(He growled.)
FLAXLEY: There's a bank robbery in progress and Kritz is in there.

DEREK: Yes, well, knowing her, she's probably in on it.

FLAXLEY: How could you say that?

DEREK: Easily. Guevina's most esteemed treasure, a solid gold eagle, is currently cemented into the top of the Tifaeris town hall, because Kritz stole it from their throne room!

FLAXLEY: That's...

DEREK: And if the president of Leathrock ever comes to dinner at your house, you'd better be careful which cutlery you give him, because most of it is his!

FLAXLEY: Look, I don't deny Kritz has been a little light-fingered in the past, but this is different. She only went in there to pay in a cheque and she innocently got caught up in it all.

DEREK: Did she though?

FLAXLEY: Yes!

DEREK: Right... well... even so, the same thing applies. I'm not going to use my powers to solve your crimes. It's more than my life's worth. Even if Kritz *is* in trouble, I won't do it. (Just then, Derek's wife, the equally three foot tall green alien, Zanne, stepped into the room and gasped.)

ZANNE: Kritz is in trouble?

DEREK: No, no, dear; you carry on with what you were doing.

(Zanne glowered at him.)

ZANNE: Derek!

DEREK: Uh-oh...

ZANNE: Why would you lie to me? You know damn well I can read your thoughts. Why would you even think for a minute you could get away with it?

(Derek sighed.)

DEREK: There's no shame in being ambitious.

ZANNE: No, but there is shame in refusing to help your dear friend.

DEREK: Who?

ZANNE: Flaxley!

FLAXLEY: Wow. Thanks a fucking bunch, Derek.

DEREK: What? I wasn't sure if she meant you or Kritz, that's all.

ZANNE: Derek?

DEREK: Yes, dear?

ZANNE: Go. Go and help him save Kritz.

DEREK: But I don't want to.

(Zanne just sneered at him. Reading her mind, Derek gasped.)

DEREK: What? Not even oral? For six months???

(Zanne spanned her forehead.)

ZANNE: I didn't say that out loud for a reason.

DEREK: Quite. Sorry.

ZANNE: Now go. Before I get *really* angry.

(She looked to Flaxley.)

ZANNE: Go and save her, Flaxley. She's my dearest friend.

DEREK: Your *only* friend.

ZANNE: Do you want to make it a year???

(Derek flinched then marched for the door.)

DEREK: Come, Flaxley. There's no time to lose.

FLAXLEY: I agree.

(He then nodded to Zanne.)

FLAXLEY: Thank you, Zanne. And don't worry. I'll see to it Kritz is returned unharmed.

ZANNE: Please do.

(She grimaced.)

ZANNE: Oh, and that thing you're planning to do to the robbers when you catch them...

FLAXLEY: What thing?

(Zanne just raised an unimpressed eyebrow at him.)

FLAXLEY: Right. Yes... mind-reading.

(He grimaced.)

FLAXLEY: What about it?

ZANNE: Make it hurt!

FLAXLEY: Now that I can promise you.

(He then offered her a courteous nod before pacing out of the door. Once outside, he stepped up to where Derek was waiting and smiled.)

FLAXLEY: Let's go.

DEREK: Fine. But if I get any stitches, you're getting some too.

(They then started to head away.)

FLAXLEY: Relax, Derek. They won't even know you were there.

DEREK: Good.

(He cringed.)

DEREK: So, I assume the police are there. Waiting outside the bank.

FLAXLEY: Correct.

DEREK: Kyrie included?

FLAXLEY: She'll be coming once she's finished at the jail cells.

DEREK: Fuck.

(He groaned.)

DEREK: I hate being able to hear her thoughts, Flaxley.

FLAXLEY: Oh?

DEREK: It's like being bombarded with drunken gibberish. As if there's a tiny, intoxicated pixie, whispering stupid things in my ear; trying to rob me of my sanity with its inane wittering.

FLAXLEY: There's no need to explain, old chap. I know exactly what you mean.

(He cringed.)

FLAXLEY: Listening to her *talk* can drive a person insane too.

DEREK: Then why do you insist on keeping her around?

(Flaxley smiled.)

FLAXLEY: Because she's been to hell and back during her young life, Derek. And so has her little sister. The knight in me truly believes that helping them out is the right thing to do.

DEREK: Then you're too kind for your own good.

FLAXLEY: I am, yes. And *you* wouldn't be here if I wasn't.

(Recalling how Flaxley had rescued him from his crashed spacecraft and hidden him away while he nursed him back to health, Derek nodded.)

DEREK: You're right, of course.

FLAXLEY: I know.

(Derek rolled his eyes then growled.)

DEREK: Fucking smartarse.

FLAXLEY: Excuse me???

(Derek gasped in horror at himself.)

DEREK: Oh, my. I do apologise, Flaxley. That was most unseemly of me. Clearly, during my time living in Guevina, I spent far too long with Bonson.

FLAXLEY: Yes...

(He shook his head.)

FLAXLEY: Yes, you did!

A short while later, Flaxley and Derek arrived back at the square to find Phisele had cordoned off an area around the front of the bank with pieces of rope. Delighted with her initiative, Flaxley strolled up to her and nodded firmly.

FLAXLEY: Excellent thinking with the rope, Phisele.

PHISELE: Thank you. I just figured we needed to keep the public out of harm's way.

FLAXLEY: Which you've achieved in some considerable style.

PHISELE: Thank you.

FLAXLEY: Dare I ask how you acquired it so quickly?

(Phisele grimaced.)

PHISELE: Take a look to your left.

(Wearing a quizzical expression, Flaxley glanced to his left then nodded knowingly. Sitting at the roadside were a dozen or so randy sailors, drooling at her legs.)

FLAXLEY: Thanks for the rope, chaps.

(One of the sailors raised a flask of rum in his direction.)

SAILOR: Anything for a sexy lady, Sir Flaxley. We don't see many of those out of the wide blue ocean, says I.

FLAXLEY: No. I don't suppose you do.

(He then looked to Phisele.)

FLAXLEY: That must be really annoying.

PHISELE: You have no idea.

FLAXLEY: Right...

PHISELE: Still, at least they've stopped trying to feel me up now.

FLAXLEY: Well, that's something, I suppose. Honestly, those randy little fuckers are a menace.

PHISELE: As the slap marks on my arse will testify.

FLAXLEY: Really? How horribly unseemly.

(He then nodded firmly.)

FLAXLEY: Anyway, what the situation?

PHISELE: No change. The door has remained firmly shut and it's all been deathly silent.

FLAXLEY: I see.

(He then glanced down at Derek.)

FLAXLEY: This is where you come in?

PHISELE: Me?

FLAXLEY: Derek.

(Phisele glanced down at her side then smiled.)

PHISELE: Oh, hey. I didn't see you down there.

DEREK: I'm small, I get it.

PHISELE: I wasn't mocking.

DEREK: I should hope not. Being small is excellent. I was peering up your skirt just now and I fucking loved it.

(Phisele looked most perplexed.)

PHISELE: Derek? Why are you being a dick?

FLAXLEY: Forgive him, he's in a bad mood. He really doesn't want to be here.

DEREK: I really don't. Snitches...

FLAXLEY: Get stitches! Yes, you said.

DEREK: And still you've made me come here.

(He shook his head.)

DEREK: And *I'm* the one who's being a dick?

PHISELE: You *were* being a dick; what did you expect me to say?

DEREK: Fair comment.

(He then sighed sorrowfully.)

DEREK: I apologise, Phisele. I had no right to take my bad mood out on you. It's just that, Flaxley here knows how I feel about using my mind-reading powers in the pursuit of justice and yet here I am. Forced to come here under threat of marital disharmony.

(He looked to Flaxley.)

DEREK: You have no respect for me, whatsoever, do you?

FLAXLEY: On the contrary, I consider you my *greatest* friend, Derek. Normally I'd respect your wishes, but on this occasion I really need your help. Kritz is in danger, and as you know, I consider *her* my greatest wife.

(He then winced.)

FLAXLEY: Wife! Just wife! Obviously. Look, let's just move on, shall we?

DEREK: Why? Do you have a date with your *other* wife?

(As Derek and Phisele stood there chuckling, Flaxley rolled his eyes.)

FLAXLEY: Yes... very bloody witty.

DEREK: Look... fine... let's get this over with. What do you need me to do?

FLAXLEY: I just need you to approach the bank and listen to the thoughts of those inside. That should give you some idea of how many there are and what we need to do get the staff and customers out safely.

DEREK: Fine.

(He snarled.)

DEREK: But you owe me one.

(With that, he slowly paced towards the boundary rope, before slipping under it then creeping towards the bank. He'd barely made it a few feet, however, when a crossbow bolt thudded into the cobbles near his feet.)

DEREK: Nope! Fuck that. Fuck Tifaeris and fuck you, Flaxley. I'm going home!

(He then hurried back to the rope and leapt over it.)

DEREK: I'll bid you good day!

FLAXLEY: Wait.

DEREK: Wait? For what? To be shot at again. Forget you, Flaxley. I'm out.

PHISELE: Don't be like that, Derek.

DEREK: How do you expect me to be then? I just got bloody shot at. That was not part of the deal.

(He thrust his hands to his hips.)

DEREK: Nope. I'm done. I may be a worthless three-foot-tall, green alien from the planet Tryme 17 to *you* lot, but *I* happen to think my life matters!

PHISELE: Nobody's ever thought that, Derek.

FLAXLEY: Not even for a moment. You're a valued member of society.

PHISELE: With equal rights across the board.

FLAXLEY: Exactly.

DEREK: Well, right now it doesn't feel like it.

(He sneered.)

DEREK: If that little Cayley you're so fond of had mind-reading powers, would you have asked her to do it?

FLAXLEY: Absolutely.

PHISELE: Definitely.

(Derek looked to them uneasily.)

DEREK: Right... I see. Shit.

(Just then, a small voice popped up from a few feet behind them.)

CAYLEY: I'd have said no.

(Flaxley glanced to his side then furrowed his brow.)

FLAXLEY: Jade? Emma? Cayley?

EMMA: Hi, dad.

JADE: Can you save mum now?

FLAXLEY: I'm working on it. In the meantime, stand well back, will you?

(At once the girls started to move away to the left.)

SAILOR: Ooh, things are looking up, say I.

FLAXLEY: Away from the sailors!

(As the three girls paced to the *other* side of the square, Flaxley rolled his eyes.)

FLAXLEY: Ocean-going idiots.

SAILOR: Bloody fun-sponge.

(Flaxley furrowed his brow.)

FLAXLEY: I wish people would stop calling me that.

(He shook his head then looked to Derek.)

FLAXLEY: Anyway, Derek, the point is, nobody thinks you're expendable because you're an alien.

DEREK: Good.

(He nodded.)

DEREK: I actually know that. I was just angry. I don't appreciate being shot at.

PHISELE: I don't suppose you do, but it has proven something to you. Those guys are armed and dangerous. That's why we need all the help we can get.

(Derek sighed.)

DEREK: Fine. What do you need?

PHISELE: Well, seeing as going around the front didn't work, perhaps you could sneak around the back.

DEREK: And get shot at again?

FLAXLEY: There's just one small window around the back, Derek. Avoiding it should be easy.

DEREK: One window too many.

FLAXLEY: Yes, but you're not stupid enough to stand in front of it.

PHISELE: Just go where nobody can shoot you and listen to their thoughts from that side.

(Derek looked to her with uncertainty for a moment then sighed.)

DEREK: Fine. Here's what I'll do.

(He nodded.)

DEREK: I'll pretend I want no further part in it then pretend to storm off. After which, I'll double back and sneak around the other side of the building.

FLAXLEY: Excellent.

PHISELE: That should work.

DEREK: Right. Okay, here goes then.

(He then shook his fist at Flaxley.)

DEREK: No! I'm out! Fuck you, Flaxley; you're a cunt.

(He then stormed off towards the gap between two houses.)

PHISELE: Blimey, he made that sound convincing.

FLAXLEY: Yes, well, I'm not entirely sure it was an act.

PHISELE: You worry too much. Derek considers you his greatest friend too.

FLAXLEY: That's true.

PHISELE: And Zanne is his greatest wife.

(As she stood there giggling, Flaxley shook a solemn head.)

FLAXLEY: Everyone's an arsehole.

As they waited for Derek to complete his mission, Flaxley and Phisele watched the bank, wearing uneasy expressions. Knowing Kritz's life could well be in danger didn't sit well with either of them. Worse still, there was nothing they could do about it. Going close was an invitation to get shot with a crossbow bolt and they were completely out of ideas.

FLAXLEY: I feel impotent right now, Phisele. And no, I don't mean sexually.

PHISELE: I never suggested for a moment that you did.

FLAXLEY: Right...

PHISELE: I actually share your sense of helplessness right now, Flaxley. We're just standing here. Doing nothing. We're at an impasse. I hate that. I'm aching to get proactive but what can we do? I'm completely out of ideas.

FLAXLEY: As am I.

(He shook his head.)

FLAXLEY: All we can do now is wait and hear what Derek has to say when he returns.

PHISELE: And if he's got nothing helpful?

FLAXLEY: Then fuck knows what we're going to do.

(He frowned.)

FLAXLEY: I never overseen a bank robbery before. I never thought anyone would be stupid enough to try it in Tifaeris. Clearly, I was wrong.

PHISELE: Horribly wrong.

FLAXLEY: Fuck you.

PHISELE: What?

FLAXLEY: Nothing. I was just saying. I don't exactly know what you're meant to do in situations like these. Obviously, you minimise the risk to civilians, which we've done, but how do you end the siege peacefully?

(He nodded manfully.)

FLAXLEY: I'm more your '*end it with blood and violence*' type.

PHISELE: As am I. If we even try that though, we'd be putting people in danger.

FLAXLEY: Exactly. Which leaves us with what?

(Phisele mused to herself then performed a double take towards the edge of the square.)

PHISELE: Flaxley?

FLAXLEY: Yes?

PHISELE: Seeing as we're flummoxed, perhaps we should seek advice from a third party.

FLAXLEY: Who?

(She nodded across the square towards Cayley.)

PHISELE: We've got a genius with an IQ higher than Mount Tulumia sitting over there.

FLAXLEY: Mount Tulumia is a useless lump of rock. It doesn't *have* an IQ.

PHISELE: A bit like Kyrie.

FLAXLEY: That's a bit harsh.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: But you may be onto something. *She's* an obscenely smart girl and *we're* both stumped. *Not* consulting her would be foolhardy.

PHISELE: I concur.

(She then called out to Cayley before waving her over. Looking extremely anxious, Cayley whimpered then nervously crept over to them.)

FLAXLEY: Hello again, young Cayley.

CAYLEY: Hi.

FLAXLEY: Listen, Phisele and I have a question for you.

CAYLEY: You do?

FLAXLEY: Yes.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: As you know, the bank is currently in the hands of armed blaggards.

CAYLEY: Right...

FLAXLEY: So my question is this... what... do we do?

(Cayley stared through him emptily. She could barely believe what she'd heard.)

CAYLEY: What?

FLAXLEY: You know. What should our next move be?

(Cayley whimpered.)

CAYLEY: Um... *not* asking random members of the public how to do your job would be an idea. That looks really bad, Sir Flaxley.

PHISELE: We know that, Cayley, it's just that, this is *new* to us. And for once violence isn't going to solve anything, so... any suggestions?

(Cayley bit her lip.)

CAYLEY: Um... I don't know.

PHISELE: Right. Thanks for coming over.

CAYLEY: I suppose you could try communicating with them. That'd be the *obvious* way to get the ball rolling, anyway.

FLAXLEY: Communicating, you say? Hmm...

CAYLEY: Yeah. Maybe you could ask what demands they might have. You know, conditions for letting the hostages go, perhaps.

FLAXLEY: I see.

(Phisele nodded.)

PHISELE: She might be onto something there.

FLAXLEY: She really might actually. In fact, she's given me an idea. I mean if they give us a set of demands, Derek can read their thoughts and know if they're bluffing. Then we'll find out what their intentions *really* are.

PHISELE: You mean, open up a dialogue and use Derek to confirm whether their being honest with us or not?

FLAXLEY: Exactly! Thanks, Cayley. You've given us a way in.

(Cayley beamed.)

CAYLEY: You're welcome, da... Flaxley.

(She then scampered away. Left behind Flaxley nodded to Phisele.)

FLAXLEY: Finally, we have a plan. As soon as Derek gets back, we'll open up a dialogue then take it from there.

PHISELE: Agreed.

As the minutes ticked by, Flaxley and Phisele stood together silently; awaiting Derek's return. Now and again, they'd glanced towards a side street to see if he was coming, but for the most part they remained perfectly still, patiently allowing time to pass. Once fifteen long minutes has past, however, Flaxley suddenly furrowed his brow. He'd just had a revelation and he wasn't very happy about it at all.

FLAXLEY: He's not coming back, is he?

PHISELE: Well...

FLAXLEY: He called me a cunt then buggered off home, didn't he? He never had any *intention* of returning.

(Phisele grimaced.)

PHISELE: Well, yeah, it's starting to look that way.

FLAXLEY: That slippery, green bastard. I mean seriously.

PHISELE: Yeah, that's kind of fucked things a little.

FLAXLEY: I'll say it has. Now we're back to square one with no plan. Well, thanks a fucking lot, Derek.

(He sighed.)

FLAXLEY: He really did spend too much time with Bonson. That's the sort of thing *he'd* have done.

PHISELE: Uh-huh. *Him*, I would have expected it from, but Derek?

(They both shook their heads in annoyance. Just when they thought their day couldn't get any more stressful, however, Kyrie returned with a big smile on her face.)

KYRIE: Mission accomplished, ma'am. Sir! Or ma'am. Whoever's listening.

FLAXLEY: You put him the cell, did you?

KYRIE: Yup. Cell six.

(Phisele blinked at her nonchalantly.)

PHISELE: We don't have a cell six.

KYRIE: Yes, we do.

PHISELE: No, the cells are numbered one to five, and next to that is...

(Her shoulders then slumped.)

PHISELE: You put him in room number six, didn't you?

KYRIE: Yup.

PHISELE: Right.

(She growled.)

PHISELE: That's the fucking stock cupboard!

KYRIE: What? Are you sure?

PHISELE: Yes, I'm fucking sure!

(Kyrie mused to herself.)

KYRIE: Come to think of it, it did seem oddly dark in there. It's the only cell with no windows.

PHISELE: Because it's a fucking cupboard!

KYRIE: Well, *I* wasn't to know that, was I?

(She nodded.)

KYRIE: There were six cell keys on the rack. All numbered. Gareth helped me count them. So I grabbed one and took him to the cell with the matching symbol on the door. The number six, apparently.

PHISELE: And it never occurred to you that...

(She sighed.)

PHISELE: Never mind.

(She rolled her eyes.)

PHISELE: You locked him in, I take it?

KYRIE: Yup. He wasn't happy about it though. It's really dark in there and he couldn't do me through the bars because there weren't any.

PHISELE: Kyrie?

KYRIE: Yes?

PHISELE: You're fucking useless.

KYRIE: Well, that's not very nice.

PHISELE: Yeah, well...

FLAXLEY: Look, never mind arguing, you two; we've got things to do.

KYRIE: He's right.

(She beamed.)

KYRIE: I promised I'd buy Cayley some chocolate biscuits and a cup of tea from the café once we solved the case, so I'd better go and do that.

FLAXLEY: Stay right where you are, Kyrie.

KYRIE: What? Why?

FLAXLEY: Because there's a crime in progress.

KYRIE: Really? Where?

(He gestured to the cordoned off bank right in front of her.)

FLAXLEY: Where do you think?

KYRIE: At the port?

FLAXLEY: No, you clown. At the bank. Right in front of you.

KYRIE: I see.

(She nodded.)

KYRIE: In that case, we should get in there!

(She then spotted the rope and flinched.)

KYRIE: What idiot left that there? We need to get into the bank and it's in the way.

PHISELE: *I* left it there, you daft bitch!

KYRIE: Mean!

(She ruffled her neck.)

KYRIE: There's no need for name calling, Phisele. *I* didn't know, did I?

PHISELE: Whatever.

KYRIE: And it really *is* in our way. We need to get inside the bank and solve that murder.

PHISELE: Who said there was a murder?

KYRIE: I forget.

PHISELE: Nobody did!!!

FLAXLEY: It's a bank robbery, Kyrie.

(Kyrie looked enlightened.)

KYRIE: Oh. That's not good. Not that murder *is*. You know what I mean.

(She nodded sternly.)

KYRIE: Let's go in there and do police stuff.

FLAXLEY: Wait. It's not that easy. They have crossbows.

KYRIE: Who?

FLAXLEY: The robbers.

KYRIE: Right. They sound dangerous.

PHISELE: They are.

(Kyrie shrugged.)

KYRIE: All the more reason to go in and attack them, I reckon.

(She smiled.)

KYRIE: Did they make any demands? Bank robbers usually do. Not that I've seen many.

Just one that happened in my old home town when I was fourteen. They demanded all sorts of silly things.

FLAXLEY: We don't know their demands, Kyrie.

KYRIE: Oh? How come?

FLAXLEY: Well... we haven't asked.

KYRIE: Right...

(She shrugged.)

KYRIE: Maybe you should then.

(Feeling somewhat uneasy, Flaxley and Phisele glanced at one another then proceeded to confer quietly.)

PHISELE: Flaxley?

FLAXLEY: Yes?

PHISELE: She's right and I really don't like it.

FLAXLEY: I share your pain, Phisele.

PHISELE: As you should. Cayley already suggested communicating with them; why didn't we?

FLAXLEY: Well... in our defence, we were thrown by Derek's treachery.

PHISELE: Right...

(She sighed.)

PHISELE: No. No excuses. Flaxley, this is really bad. So far, we've been schooled on bank robbery policing by a twelve year old and an idiot.

FLAXLEY: Yes, but in our defence, the twelve year old is smarter than us. That's not much of a defence, normally, but in Cayley's case...

PHISELE: Fine. Cayley, I'll grant you. But we've just been outdone by Kyrie.

FLAXLEY: Right...

(He sighed.)

FLAXLEY: That's mortifying

PHISELE: It is! How can we be this clueless about how to handle a bank robbery?

FLAXLEY: It's new to us, Phisele. We're learning on the job.

PHISELE: Then we need to learn fast, because right now Kyrie is the most clued in of the three of us, and that can't be good for anyone.

FLAXLEY: Agreed. And I think I know where the problem lies. We're not sure about what to do, so we've been dithering; indecisive. Well, fuck that. I'm going to make a plan and we're going to execute it. The sooner this is over the better.

PHISELE: Works for me.

FLAXLEY: Good.

(He then stood tall.)

FLAXLEY: Here's what we'll do. We'll make contact with them and once they've made their demands, we'll pretend to honour them then bust in there and kill the bastards.

PHISELE: I like it.

FLAXLEY: Thank you.

KYRIE: Cool. If you need me I'll be having tea and biscuits with Cayley.

FLAXLEY: Stay where you are, Kyrie, we need you here.

KYRIE: Oh? Why?

FLAXLEY: Because you're a fucking police officer and there's a bank robbery in progress.

KYRIE: Oh, yeah. Good point. I'll stay then.

FLAXLEY: Thank you.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: Someone get me something I can use as a megaphone, please. It begins.

As Sir Flaxley waited for Phisele to fetch him a megaphone, Cayley continued to watch from the side of the square, looking forward to seeing the great man in action. She was convinced that sooner or later, he'd have to take action and end the standoff by force. Convinced that he'd once again prove himself to be world's greatest warrior and save the day in some considerable style, there was no way she was going to miss it. She'd hero-worshipped this man since she'd first read about his heroics when she was five years old, so for her, the chance to *see* his heroics with her own two eyes was extremely exciting. As far as she was concerned, this was going to be a good day. Sadly, it wasn't going to be perfect, however.

As they had been for most of the morning, Emma and Jade remained at her side. They were behaving as if Cayley was their best friend and it made her feel horribly uncomfortable. After what she'd heard Anoka say, she could never know whether their warmth towards her was genuine or not. It bothered her greatly.

EMMA: I wish dad would hurry up and kick their butts.

JADE: I know, right. I want my lunch.

EMMA: Yeah.

(She nodded.)

EMMA: He needs to save mum, so she can come home and make it for us.

JADE: Exactly.

(She looked to Cayley.)

JADE: You should come too, Cayley. I think we're having chicken sandwiches. My mum makes them with pepper; they're really nice.

EMMA: They really are. And once we've eaten, we can go down to the beach and draw stuff in the sand.

JADE: Awesome. Wanna come, Cayley?

CAYLEY: Um... I can't.

EMMA: Why not?

CAYLEY: I've got... um... homework.

EMMA: No, you haven't. We don't get homework.

CAYLEY: Right... um...

JADE: She tells fibs.

EMMA: Uh-huh.

(She sighed.)

EMMA: She still doesn't trust us, that's why.

JADE: Looks like it.

(She pouted.)

JADE: We said we were sorry, Cayley.

EMMA: No, we didn't.

JADE: We didn't?

(She gasped.)

JADE: Oops. You're right; we didn't.

EMMA: We'll say it now though.

JADE: Yeah.

(They both frowned at one another.)

EMMA: Say it then.

JADE: *You* say it.

EMMA: It's your turn.

JADE: Turn? Since when did we take turns?

EMMA: Since... I don't know.

(She then sighed and looked to Cayley.)

EMMA: Fine. I'll be the mature one then. Sorry, Cayley.

JADE: Sorry, Cayley. Ha! See? I'm mature too.

EMMA: I was mature first!

JADE: Yeah, but I was mature better.

(They sneered at each other briefly then looked to Cayley.)

EMMA: Please?

JADE: Be our friend?

(Cayley looked to them uneasily.)

CAYLEY: I heard what Anoka said, you know? If you made friends with me, the boys who like me would like you too. That's what she said. And right after that, you started pretending to like me.

JADE: Yeah, but we actually *do* like you now.

EMMA: Yeah. Really, truly, genuinely and proper-like.

JADE: Uh-huh.

CAYLEY: How am I ever going to know if that's true or not? How?

(Emma shrugged.)

EMMA: Simple. We're willing to share our mum's awesome chicken sandwiches.

JADE: Yeah, we don't share them with just anyone, you know.

CAYLEY: Well...

(Just then, Sir Flaxley strode over to them then stood there with his hands on his hips.)

FLAXLEY: You young girls shouldn't be here.

JADE: Yes, we should. You and mum are here.

EMMA: And we want our lunch.

FLAXLEY: Then go home and make yourselves something. You're not children anymore.

JADE: Yes, we are.

EMMA: We're twelve, dad.

FLAXLEY: I meant, you're not small, incapable infants anymore.

EMMA: But...

FLAXLEY: Now go. Go home.

JADE: But, dad...

FLAXLEY: You can either go home or join your younger sisters over at Phisele's mother's house, being babysat like six year olds. Pick one.

EMMA: We'll go home then.

JADE: Yeah.

(They then started to trudge away.)

JADE: Can Cayley come?

FLAXLEY: If she wants to.

CAYLEY: She doesn't.

JADE: Oh.

FLAXLEY: Go!

EMMA: Fine.

(As Emma and Jade headed away, Flaxley looked to Cayley and nodded.)

FLAXLEY: You might want to make yourself scarce too. If this bank siege turns violent, things might get bloody. You really don't want to see such horrors.

CAYLEY: Kyrie shot a guy in the head with a crossbow once and bits of his brain went everywhere. His head literally exploded.

FLAXLEY: And... how is that relevant?

CAYLEY: Just saying. I've seen horrors like you wouldn't believe, Sir Flaxley. It's fine as long as it happens to the bad guy.

FLAXLEY: Right... well... don't say I didn't warn you.

CAYLEY: I won't.

(Flaxley smiled then started to turn away.)

CAYLEY: Sir Flaxley?

(Flaxley stopped and glanced to her casually.)

FLAXLEY: Yes?

CAYLEY: Your youngest two seem to spend a *lot* of time with the babysitter. Why is that?

FLAXLEY: I have absolutely no idea.

CAYLEY: Oh.

(He then strode away towards where Phisele was waiting with a megaphone. Watching him go, Cayley could only shrug.)

CAYLEY: I guess Phisele's mum just really loves to babysit.

Inside the bank at this time, two hooded men were guarding the windows with their crossbows poised and ready to be fire. Another was standing over the staff and customers, who'd been gathered together and made to sit on the floor. Armed with his crossbow, he had many of the staff trembling in fear for their lives. A fourth robber, the leader of the crew, was pacing up and down before them, starting to get irritated.

LEADER: This is pissing me off now. One of you must know the combination to the safe!

(Kritz rolled her eyes as she sat crossed legged before him.)

KRITZ: How many times, mate? Like *she* just told you...

(She gestured to a trembling bank teller.)

KRITZ: Only the manager and two other people know the combination to the safe. Two trusted dignitaries; and their ID's are protected. There's nothing anyone here can tell you.

LEADER: And when's the manager due in?

(The staff member, Alice, whimpered.)

ALICE: Next week. He's on holiday.

(The robber standing over them sucked his teeth.)

ROBBER: I don't think I can wait that long, boss. I've got an appointment with my doctor tomorrow.

LEADER: We're not *going* to wait that long.

(He mused to himself.)

LEADER: There has to be a way.

(He then raised a knowing eyebrow.)

LEADER: Wait. Two of Tifaeris's top dignitaries know the combination to the safe, do they?

ALICE: Yes.

LEADER: Hmm...

(He then looked to Kritz.)

LEADER: Those two dignitaries no doubt being Sir Flaxley and his lovely wife.

(He then cast an accusing hand at Kritz.)

LEADER: You!!!

(Kritz instantly burst out laughing.)

KRITZ: Me?

LEADER: What's so funny?

KRITZ: Like Flaxley would tell *me* the combination to the safe.

LEADER: What?

KRITZ: My curtains came from Guevina castle; so did the carpets. I got up in the night last time we were there and swiped them. And there's a priceless, ornamental goddess sculpture in my garden belonging to the mayor of Marlboro. He has no idea it's there. I even swiped the cobbles from Ashrin township to build our garden patio. Nope. Nobody's going to give *me* the combination to safe with millions of lig in it; that'd be asking for trouble.

(The leader bit his lip.)

LEADER: You're bluffing.

KRITZ: No, I'm not. I steal things. It's how the Trepe tribe raised me. Look.

(She then produced a wallet from down her top.)

KRITZ: See?

(The leader checked his pockets then gasped.)

LEADER: Hey!!! Give that back.

(He swiped it from her then snarled.)

LEADER: I'm the robber here, not you.

KRITZ: If you say so.

LEADER: And I still think you know more than you're letting on.

KRITZ: Wrong.

LEADER: Maybe I am. Maybe I'm not.

(He nodded.)

LEADER: Screw it. We hoped it wouldn't come to this but, if nobody knows the combination to the safe, it looks like we'll have to attempt blowing the door off with dynamite.

KRITZ: That'll never work.

LEADER: It might.

KRITZ: It won't.

LEADER: Well, we'll see about that won't we?

(He nodded.)

LEADER: Kevin?

(The robber standing over the hostages gasped in his direction.)

ROBBER: We're not supposed to use our real names!!!

LEADER: That isn't your real name!

(The robber mused to himself for a moment then drew a sigh of relief.)

ROBBER: Oh, yeah. Close one.

LEADER: Kevin!

ROBBER: Who? Oh, yeah. Me.

(He nodded.)

ROBBER: What?

LEADER: Pass me the sodding dynamite!

Outside the bank at this time, Phisele handed Sir Flaxley a megaphone then stepped back and nodded to him. Glancing at the megaphone briefly, Flaxley puffed out then looked towards the bank.

FLAXLEY: Okay, let's get this show on the road.

(He nodded sternly.)

FLAXLEY: What do you reckon, Phisele? Do I start with telling them to come out because they're surrounded, or do I go with something a little more threatening, like surrender or I'll cull the fucking lot of you?

KYRIE: Personally, I'd make some owl noises first, just to frighten them. Megaphones are great for that sort of thing.

FLAXLEY: Nobody asked you, Kyrie!

(He rolled his eyes.)

FLAXLEY: Well, Phisele?

PHISELE: I'd go with subtlety first, personally. I mean we don't want to scare the hostages, do we?

FLAXLEY: Very well, let's try that then.

(With that, he raised his megaphone to his lips then started to relay his message.)

FLAXLEY: You there! Bank robbing ne'er-do-wells! Listen well! You're surrounded by armed guards! Now come out with your hands up and you won't be harmed until nobody's looking!

PHISELE: Flaxley!!!

FLAXLEY: I mean, you won't be harmed at all! Just arrested and thrown in jail! Nicely!

(He then lowered the megaphone and nodded to Phisele.)

FLAXLEY: Now we wait for their answer.

KYRIE: Which is?

FLAXLEY: I don't know yet, obviously. They haven't given it to me!

PHISELE: Kyrie?

KYRIE: Yes!

PHISELE: Be quiet!

(Inside the bank at this time, the leader was glancing towards the window, wearing an uncertain expression.)

LEADER: Kevin?

ROBBER: Sir?

LEADER: Forget the dynamite. I've had an idea.

(With that, he stepped up to the window then yelled out of it.)

LEADER: You're in no place to be making demands, Flaxley. We're in charge here, not you. *We'll* be making the demands!

(Flaxley replied via his megaphone.)

FLAXLEY: Is that so?

LEADER: Yes! I'm in charge and you'll do as I say!

(Flaxley glanced to Phisele.)

FLAXLEY: Hear him out?

PHISELE: It can't hurt.

FLAXLEY: Very well.

(He then placed the megaphone back to his lips.)

FLAXLEY: What are these demands then, arse face?

LEADER: Arse face?

FLAXLEY: You heard me!

(The leader growled then called out again.)

LEADER: We need the combination to the safe! *You'll* provide us with it! Then you'll provide us with a horse and cart with which to make good our escape! If you do not comply with these demands, we'll start killing the hostages! Do you understand?

(Flaxley grimaced.)

FLAXLEY: You want the combination to the safe?

LEADER: Yes!

FLAXLEY: Just ask my wife then! *She* knows it.

(Sitting behind the leader, Kritz rolled her eyes.)

KRITZ: Yeah, great; thanks a lot, Flaxley.

(The leader glowered at her.)

LEADER: You lied to me.

KRITZ: Yeah, but what are you gonna do?

(The leader growled then yelled through the window again.)

LEADER: Fine. Now bring us a cart and horses or we start killing the hostages. Starting with your wife.

KRITZ: Charming!

LEADER: So, Flaxley? Do we have a deal?

(Flaxley growled through the megaphone.)

FLAXLEY: Fine! Wanker!

LEADER: Thank you!

(He then turned to Kritz, before pointing towards the safe.)

LEADER: Open it, bitch.

KRITZ: Excuse me?

LEADER: I said open it, bitch!

(Kritz folded her arms and stared hard into his eyes.)

KRITZ: Sorry?

LEADER: Fine. Open it, *please*!

KRITZ: That's better.
(She then upped and headed over to the safe and stepped up to the door.)
KRITZ: See how much easier life can be when you're polite to people?
LEADER: I do. And *you* 'll see how much *shorter* life can be if *you* keep pissing me off!
KRITZ: Touché.
(She then started to open the door.)
KRITZ: Thirty eight. Twenty four. Thirty four.
(She smiled.)
KRITZ: My vital statistics. I know, right? I'm so top heavy.
(The leader beamed at her breasts.)
LEADER: I had noticed, yes.
(He then flinched.)
LEADER: Wait! Not only did you *know* the combination, but they're *your* vital statistics? Then...
KRITZ: Yeah, I *came up* with the combination.
LEADER: Wow. So all that nonsense you spouted about being untrustworthy and a thief...
KRITZ: It was an exaggeration. I do enjoy a little thievery from time to time, that much was true. I'd never steal from *this* bank though. Every penny is accounted for, you see? So if any did go missing, my husband would instantly know it was me. The other two with the combination are both ridiculously old and devoutly religious, you see? So it's not worth it.
LEADER: I don't need your life story. I just need you to open the safe.
KRITZ: Hey! You asked, so I answered.
(She then tugged open the door to the safe.)
KRITZ: Happy now?
(The leader beamed.)
LEADER: Immensely.
(He then glanced over his shoulder.)
LEADER: Come on, Kevin. Help me load up these bags. We're gonna be rich.
KRITZ: Yeah, right. Like you'll get past Flaxley.
(The leader just smirked at her.)
LEADER: Do you think I can't?
(Kritz could only beam with devilish delight.)
KRITZ: I *do* think that, yes!

Patiently waiting at the side of the square, out of harm's way, Cayley watched Kyrie receive a dressing down from Phisele then shook her head. If only Kyrie was capable of not airing her every feeble thought. If only she was capable of having a sensible one from time to time. If she could just do that, she wouldn't have to worry all the time. Trying not to let it get to her, she shook off her thoughts then leant against a wall. As she did so, however, a boy from her class stepped up beside her and smiled.

OLSEN: Alright, Cayley? What are you doing here?
(Cayley pointed towards Sir Flaxley, Phisele and Kyrie.)
CAYLEY: There's a bank robbery in progress and...
(At this point, she suddenly realised she was alone with a boy and turned bright red.)
CAYLEY: I don't know.
(Being unfeasibly shy, she then looked away and whimpered, hoping he'd wander off and leave her alone. Much to her dismay, however, he made himself comfortable against the wall and folded his arms.)
OLSEN: Cool. I'll watch it with you.

(Cayley could only squeak nervously.)

OLSEN: What?

CAYLEY: I didn't say anything.

OLSEN: Right.

(He smiled.)

OLSEN: You're really shy around boys, aren't you?

(Cayley said nothing.)

OLSEN: That's cool. I used to be terrified of girls, so I get it.

(Baffled by his words, Cayley slowly turned her head to face him.)

CAYLEY: What?

OLSEN: It's true. I used to turn red like a beetroot and run away.

CAYLEY: But why?

(She was genuinely stumped.)

CAYLEY: Girls aren't going to hurt you. We're small and harmless, with tiny torsos and skinny arms.

OLSEN: Yeah, but girls can be really cruel.

CAYLEY: Well...

(Cayley nodded.)

CAYLEY: That's true.

OLSEN: I know boys can be cruel too, but it seemed to hurt more coming from girls. For a start, if a boy was nasty to me, I could hit him. You can't hit girls though; that's a no-no. A dark place where no man should go. So you just have to take their abuse and there's nothing you can do. So I kept away from them. I wasn't mentally strong back then. Couldn't handle the abuse at all.

CAYLEY: I see.

OLSEN: I'm alright now though. I just avoid the horrible girls and talk to the nice ones. Nice ones like you.

(Cayley half forced a smile.)

CAYLEY: Nice?

OLSEN: Well, you *seem* nice anyway. Not that we've ever spoken. You really don't say that much, do you?

(Cayley gave a stifled laugh.)

CAYLEY: My sister would disagree with that somewhat. Apparently I talk too much sometimes.

OLSEN: Siblings, eh? My brother says the same.

(He nodded towards Kyrie.)

OLSEN: That's your sister there, isn't it?

CAYLEY: Yeah.

OLSEN: You too look so similar it's amazing.

CAYLEY: Yeah, we get told that a lot. Some have even said we could be twins.

(She chuckled.)

CAYLEY: Clearly they need glasses. Look at the size difference.

OLSEN: Right?

(They chuckled for a moment then Cayley flinched. She just had a realisation that had hit her like a thunderbolt.)

OLSEN: What? What's wrong? You flinched.

CAYLEY: What? Yeah. Um... I just realised... nothing.

OLSEN: No, come on; what's wrong?

CAYLEY: Nothing. I just realised I'm talking to a boy and I'm not even nervous about it.

(She blushed.)

CAYLEY: That's never happened before.

(Olsen smiled warmly.)

OLSEN: That's fantastic.

CAYLEY: Yeah.

OLSEN: It really is brilliant. Getting over shyness is hard, Cayley. Nice one.

CAYLEY: Thanks. Not that I did anything. It just happened.

(She blushed.)

CAYLEY: Maybe you're just easy to talk to.

OLSEN: Well, yeah, I like to think so anyway.

(He then gave her a warm smile.)

OLSEN: It's hardly been a chore talking to you either, by the way. You're a nice girl.

CAYLEY: Thank you. You're a nice person too.

(Olsen's smile then widened.)

OLSEN: And you're really gorgeous. Do you know that?

(Taken by his words, Cayley's eyes then glazed over and she felt a yearning in her heart. It was like nothing she'd ever felt before and she had no idea what it was; she just knew she liked it. It was a warm, fuzzy feeling that filled her soul with joy and she never wanted it to end. Staring back into Olsen's eyes she could feel herself getting weak at the knees and the urge to lean closer to him soon became overwhelming. And so, she slowly stepped into him, and before she knew it, their lips met and her first kiss commenced. The feeling of his lips against hers was a joy for her heart to cherish. A moment she wished could last forever. Sadly, however, it wasn't going to. From where she was standing aside Phisele, Kyrie had spotted them. At once, her eyes bulged and she proceeded to growl.)

KYRIE: Excuse me, Phisele; I've got work to do.

PHISELE: Kyrie, get your arse back here!

KYRIE: No! Stuff your bank robbery, there's an even bigger crime going on over here!

(With that she stomped up to Cayley and Olsen and threw her hands to her hips.)

KYRIE: What the bloody hell do you think you're doing???

(Caught in the act, they both yelped then jumped backwards. All Cayley could do was stare at her in horror, dreading to think just how she'd explain herself. Not about to explain *himself*, Olsen took off like a rocket., Happy to let him go, Kyrie snarled then rounded on her ever-shrinking little sister.)

KYRIE: Well, Cayley? What the hell are you playing at? *I'm* the family slut, not you! And how long has this been going on???

(She gasped in horror.)

KYRIE: Is that why you said you hate school? You'd rather gallivant from pub to pub, picking up men like a fun-sized effigy of me? It is, isn't it? You've basically become me but with smaller boobs. You idiot! Why would you want to be me? You should be you. Go back to being you before it's too late!!!

(She shrieked.)

KYRIE: Unless it's already too late! What contraception are you using???

(Well aware that Kyrie was attracting quite a crowd, Cayley whimpered then spoke up for herself.)

CAYLEY: I didn't do anything wrong, Kyrie! It was just a kiss! One tiny kiss! My first kiss ever, actually! Stupid sister.

(She pouted.)

CAYLEY: There was nothing sinister about it. And I'm certainly nothing like *you*. I'm a good girl. Now go back to work. Everyone's staring at us.

KYRIE: I don't care. I'm saying my piece.

(Cayley could only sigh in defeat as her sister continued.)

KYRIE: I don't care if it *was* your first kiss! Which is a total lie. I *do* care about that. I care a lot. I'm actually really, really relieved, but that's not the point. It's *starts* with a first kiss, then it's a first fondle followed by a first fingering. And before you know it, you'll be flat on your back with your knees round your ears waiting for your first orgasm!

CAYLEY: Gross!!!

KYRIE: I'm glad you think so, missy, I really am. Now behave! No more kissing boys. Make that first kiss your last kiss and keep your lips off of boys faces in future.

(She nodded sternly.)

KYRIE: We already have a me in the family and that's me. The last thing we need is two me's. It's you *and me*, not me and me. Now stop it.

CAYLEY: Fine. Whatever, Kyrie.

KYRIE: Good. I'm glad we've nipped *that* nonsense in the bud.

(With that, she strutted back towards where Flaxley and Phisele were awaiting delivery of a horse and cart for the bank robbers.)

KYRIE: I'm back.

(Phisele shook her head at her.)

PHISELE: Kyrie, abandoning your post like that to attend to a personal matter is highly unprofessional.

KYRIE: Yeah? Well, so is kissing little boys.

PHISELE: I did no such thing!

KYRIE: No, but Cayley did. Disgusting! I'm appalled. She's only 12. Soon to be... soon to be...

(Her jaw then dropped in horror.)

KYRIE: A teenager!

(With that, she yanked at her hair in a panic, before running off down the street, crying out in anguish.)

KYRIE: Why is this happening??? I'm not ready!!! *She's* not ready!!! Why???

(Having watched her go with bewildered looks on their faces, Flaxley and Phisele grimaced uneasily then turned to face one another.)

FLAXLEY: Well... that was different.

PHISELE: No, that was typical Kyrie.

(She furrowed her brow.)

PHISELE: Fuck it. I can't take any more of her, Flaxley. Every day with her is like a living hell. Well, no more. I'm done. I don't care if Cayley does solve all our cases; she's fired.

FLAXLEY: No, she's not. She needs the job to keep a roof over her head.

PHISELE: But...

FLAXLEY: As soon as she can get a place of her own, *then* you can fire her. Not before.

(Phisele groaned in defeat.)

PHISELE: Fine.

FLAXLEY: Thank you.

(Phisele puffed out ruefully then looked into Flaxley's eyes.)

PHISELE: Okay, so you're set on this plan of yours, are you?

FLAXLEY: I am. Once the carriage arrives, we'll let them go free as long as the hostages are unharmed.

(His face then clouded over.)

FLAXLEY: At which point, I'll hunt them all down like dogs then kill them horribly.

PHISELE: Okay. That does seem to be the safest way of getting it done.

FLAXLEY: Exactly my thinking. Make sure everyone's safe first *then* spill the blood of the savages.

(Just then, a horse trotted into the square from a side road. It was towing a small carriage in its wake. Upon spotting it, Flaxley looked to Phisele and nodded.)

FLAXLEY: Speak of the devil. Their carriage awaits.

PHISELE: Their final carriage.

FLAXLEY: That's the plan.

(Just then, the leader of the bandits called out through the window.)

LEADER: What the fuck is that thing?

(Flaxley furrowed his brow and yelled back.)

FLAXLEY: It's a tree disguised as a piano! What do you bloody think it is?

LEADER: That's our carriage, is it?

FLAXLEY: Yes!

LEADER: Nope! Too small. It's practically a wheelbarrow. We won't all be able to squeeze into that tiny thing.

FLAXLEY: Why? Just how many of you are there?

LEADER: That's none of your business. It's no good, Flaxley. I demand a bigger one!

FLAXLEY: Oh, you do, do you?

LEADER: Yes! Now get on with it, you fucking useless idiot. I want a proper carriage this time.

FLAXLEY: For fuck sake...

(He growled.)

FLAXLEY: Fine! But it'll be a while.

LEADER: No, it'll be quick! Lives depend on it! Twat! Now, hurry up.

(Absorbing his words, Flaxley nodded to himself, slowing starting to seethe. He then looked to Phisele and spoke through gritted teeth.)

FLAXLEY: Nope. He's pushed his luck too far. I'm gonna do what I should have done in the first place.

PHISELE: Meaning.

FLAXLEY: I'm gonna bust in there and kill the fuckers.

PHISELE: How? Crossbows, Flaxley!

FLAXLEY: I don't fucking care, Phisele. I'm going to fetch my heaviest armour and end this fucking idiocy once and for all.

(He then proceeded to stomp away, making sure to snarl back at the bank as he did so.)

FLAXLEY: I'll be back.

(As he stamped off towards his house, Phisele could only suck her teeth.)

PHISELE: An angry Flaxley, eh?

(She grimaced.)

PHISELE: Big mistake, robbers; big mistake.

At the side of the square at this time, Cayley watched Flaxley stamping back up the main thoroughfare then beamed. He looked extremely livid. Having read about how angry Flaxley's were never good news for the bad guys of the world, she couldn't help but bounce excitedly. Things were about to get very interesting indeed. Just as she stood there revelling in that thought, however, Olsen came back from where he'd hidden and stepped to her side again. Grimacing, he looked to her then shrugged nervously.)

OLSEN: So... sorry about that. I didn't mean to get you in trouble.

(Cayley blushed.)

CAYLEY: It's okay. My sister's just being protective, that's all. She can't help being a ridiculous person; that's just her way.

OLSEN: Right...

(They shared a warm smile then Olsen stretched his hand in her direction. Moments later, their fingers met. They then stood there smiling silently, hand in hand together. Having never held hands with a boy before, it was extremely exciting for her.)

OLSEN: So...

CAYLEY: Yes?

OLSEN: About your sister...

(Cayley sighed in defeat.)

CAYLEY: I could explain her to you, but you'd end our friendship with immediate effect then avoid me like a flesh-eating disease for the rest of time.

OLSEN: I see...

CAYLEY: Let's just say she has a unique world view.

(Just then, Kyrie came charging back up the road again, still flailing her arms about in a horrified panic.)

KYRIE: Why??? Why did she have to get older??? Is having a cute, innocent little angel in my life forever really too much to ask??? Why can't she be twelve forever???

(An angry voice then rose up from the roadside and captured her full attention.)

CAYLEY: Because I can't!

(Kyrie stopped and looked forlornly in her direction.)

KYRIE: There she is, my formerly sweet and innocent sister-face.

(She then gasped in horror.)

KYRIE: With another boy!

(She then stamped her way over to her.)

KYRIE: You're worse than *I* am! How many boys are you planning on seducing today, missy?

CAYLEY: It's the same boy I was here with earlier, Kyrie!

KYRIE: Is it? He looks different.

CAYLEY: No, he doesn't.

KYRIE: Has he had a haircut?

OLSEN: Eh? What? No.

KYRIE: Are you sure? He really does look different.

(Kyrie looked enlightened.)

KYRIE: I know what it is.

(She growled at him.)

KYRIE: He doesn't have my sister's face in his mouth!

(Olsen could only whimper.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie! Stop it! What's wrong with you?

(Kyrie looked to her desperately for a moment then her shoulder's slumped.)

KYRIE: I'm panicking, Cayley.

CAYLEY: I can see that.

KYRIE: I don't know how to raise a teenager. I just don't. Raising children is a woman's job. No, wait. *I am* a woman. I mean, it's... *someone else's* job. I wouldn't even know where to start.

(Cayley gave a stifled laugh then stepped closer to her.)

CAYLEY: Calm down, Kyrie. It's gonna be fine. I'm not going to suddenly change into a monster on my thirteenth birthday.

KYRIE: Promise?

CAYLEY: Promise. I'll just be the same old me. Only older.

KYRIE: And more stropy.

CAYLEY: Maybe. I'll still look up to *you* though, Kyrie.

KYRIE: No, you won't. You only look up to me because I'm older than you. That won't be the case forever, you know?

CAYLEY: Um... yes, it will. You'll always be six years older than me, no matter how old I get.

KYRIE: Eh? How does that even work?

CAYLEY: It just does.

(Kyrie attempted to count on her fingers then just shrugged it off.)

KYRIE: Fuck it. I'll just take your word for it.

CAYLEY: Yeah, that'd be best.

KYRIE: Right?

(She then pouted miserably.)

KYRIE: Why do you have to suddenly like boys though, Cayley? They want to do naughty things to a girl and that changes a person. For the better in my case, but not everyone can be as awesome as me.

CAYLEY: Look. Just relax, Kyrie, okay? Yes I'm interested in boys, but so what? I'm still a good girl and I have no intention of losing my innocence, whatsoever.

(Olsen groaned despondently.)

OLSEN: Disappointing.

(He then trudged away, kicking a stone despairingly.)

CAYLEY: Mostly because boys are like *that*.

(Kyrie beamed.)

KYRIE: I'm so glad you've noticed.

(They then shared a warm hug.)

KYRIE: I love you, sister face.

CAYLEY: I love you too.

As Kyrie hugged her little sister tight, a warm glow filled her heart. The sweet little angel that she adored was right there in her arms; still as innocent as ever. Having managed to convince herself that Cayley was about to turn into a teenage version of herself, she'd feared losing moments like this forever. Realising that wasn't to be the case was a mighty relief and she'd have loved the moment to have lasted forever. Alas it was not to be. Only a few moments later, a clattering of metal drew their attention away and they turned to face the thoroughfare together. Sir Flaxley was coming and he meant business.

CAYLEY: You'd better go back to Phisele. It looks like the police are going in.

KYRIE: Then why do *I* have to go?

(She gasped.)

KYRIE: Fuck. I'm a police officer.

(She then hurried back to Phisele. This left Cayley free to beam with delight at Sir Flaxley. Bedecked from head to toe in cast iron armour, and with a sword slung over each shoulder, it was obvious to one and all that he was done messing around. Things were about to get extremely serious. Watching him advance, thudding with every step, Phisele shuddered.)

PHISELE: He's really not pissing about, is he?

KYRIE: Does he normally then?

PHISELE: I suppose not, no.

(She grimaced.)

PHISELE: Let's get out of his way and let him pass.

KYRIE: Good idea.

(They then stood there open mouthed as the iron-clad sword-fighting machine stamped past them and crossed the cordoned off zone.)

FLAXLEY: If I'm not back in two minutes, I'm stamping on their carcasses for fun!
(Phisele and Kyrie both shuddered. Something about his demeanour and tone of voice told them that this man had passed the end of his tether quite some time ago. Bandits had messed with his beloved wife and now they were going to pay dearly. Getting the same sense of foreboding from inside the bank, the robbers immediately opened fire with their crossbows.

Tales of Sir Flaxley's power were told the world over and succumbing to his vengeance was not something to be desired. Hoping he wasn't as superhuman as legend suggested, the robbers prayed for their bows to take him down. Sadly for them, however, the tales of this man's power had not been embellished. If anything, they'd be been toned down to make them more believable. This was a man who'd once caught a canal ball in mid-air then thrown it back, sinking the ship it had been fired from. You did not cross this man without expecting dire consequences. As he deflected the crossbow bolts with his sword, defeating them for speed, the robbers quite rightly feared the worst.)

ROBBER 01: How is he doing that?

ROBBER 02: No man alive can outpace a crossbow bolt with a sword.

ROBBER 01: Then how come he's doing exactly that?

(Just then, one of the crossbow bolts evaded Flaxley's blade and slammed into his shoulder.)

ROBBER 02: I've got him! I've got him!

(As Flaxley yanked the bolt out of his armour then continued to stamp towards them, however, his enthusiasm waned.)

ROBBER 02: It didn't even slow him down.

(Standing behind them at this time, Kritz was chuckling joyfully.)

KRITZ: You lot are so fucked. I mean, wow.

LEADER: Shut up!

KRITZ: Sorry, but it's funny. I mean, fancy getting yourselves in this mess. Of all the towns to commit a bank robbery in, why choose this one? Everyone knows it's a death sentence.

(As Sir Flaxley continued to either bat away or tolerate the crossbow bolts denting his cast iron armour, the robbers at the windows could only whimper. A death sentence did indeed seem imminent.)

ROBBER 01: How is he doing that? Nobody can survive a crossbow bolt!!!

KRITZ: Cast iron armour.

ROBBER 02: Cast iron? That weighs a ton! How can he walk in cast iron armour???

(Kritz beamed.)

KRITZ: Because he's Sir Flaxley of Tifaeris!

(Getting somewhat agitated the leader snarled.)

LEADER: We need to escape, men! Is there another way out of here?

(In that moment, a devious expression crossed Kritz's brow. Allowing herself a devilish smirk, she then straightened her face and looked to the leader.)

KRITZ: Like I'm going to tell you where the secret back exit is.

LEADER: There's a back exit?

KRITZ: Whoops.

LEADER: Where is it? Tell me, damn it, or you'll shoot you in the face.

KRITZ: Whoa. Easy.

LEADER: Tell me!

(Kritz sighed.)

KRITZ: Fine. That bookcase in the back office is actually a secret, revolving door.

(The leader nodded sternly.)

LEADER: Thank fuck.

(He then called out to his two allies at the window.)

LEADER: Come on, men; we're getting out of here.

(Needing no second invitation, the two robbers raced towards him.)

ROBBER 01: Thank fuck. Flaxley's gonna burst in any second now.

LEADER: Fuck him. We'll be long gone. Grab a bag of cash each, boys. We're out of here.

KEVIN: On it.

(Just as the two robbers, who'd been firing from the window, raced towards where the money was stashed, however, Kritz leapt into action. With lightning fast reactions, she leapt upwards then high-kicked one of them in the face, breaking his neck. Upon landing, she then swept the second one's legs away.)

ROBBER 02: Bitch!!!

(He then tumbled forwards, accidentally firing his loaded crossbow into the back of Kevin's torso.)

LEADER: No!!!

KRITZ: Yes!!!

(She then stamped on the robber's neck to finish him off, before charging at the leader.)

LEADER: Bye!!!

(With bulging eyes, he then fled for the door to the rear office.)

KRITZ: Oh, no you fucking don't.

(Suddenly, the front door smashed to smithereens. Sir Flaxley had arrived on the scene. He was just in time to see Kritz take a despairing dive at the leader's legs. Much to his dismay, he managed to evade her by millimetres then charged into the back room.)

FLAXLEY: Kritz...

KRITZ: Get the hostages out, my love. I'm going after bollock breath!!!

(She then jumped to her feet and charged into the back room. With a snarl on her face, she thundered through the hidden doorway then raced out of the back of the bank, into the quiet street beyond.)

KRITZ: I'll take you down if it's the last thing I fucking do!!!

(Happy to leave Kritz to the simple task of beating a criminal to death, something he knew she'd enjoy, Flaxley glanced around at the trembling staff and customers then stood tall.)

FLAXLEY: People of Tifaeris, consider yourselves saved!

(They all looked to one another anxiously.)

FLAXLEY: Go. Go home. And don't forget what you saw here today. The might of Sir Flaxley in action.

(One of the bank tellers grimaced.)

BANK TELLER: *Mrs* Flaxley, maybe. *She* killed the robbers. *You* just got here.

FLAXLEY: Excuse me???

(He growled.)

FLAXLEY: I took a dozen crossbow bolts to give her that opportunity. And I batted away dozens more with lightning speed reactions. Not bad considering I had to walk all the way from my house wearing armour that's heavier than a horse just to bloody get here!!!

(One of the male customers nodded.)

CUSTOMER: We couldn't see that from where we were. Those robbers said you were superhuman, though. A one man army almost.

FLAXLEY: And they were right. I was immense.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: And don't ever forget it. *Mrs* Flaxley indeed!

BANK TELLER: Sorry. Like he said, we couldn't see much from where we were.

FLAXLEY: Yes, well, never mind that. You're free. Go. Hug your families. It must have been quite the ordeal.

BANK TELLER: It was, yes, but luckily we had Kritz to save us.

FLAXLEY: Get out!!!

(He then pointed to the door angrily. At once, all the hostages hurried to their feet then scampered away.)

FLAXLEY: Bloody cheek!

(Having watched the last one vanish, Flaxley shook his head then about turned. As he did so, Kritz stepped back into the building from the back office, shaking her head.)

KRITZ: The fucker got away.

FLAXLEY: From you? How? You're the most agile person on the face of the planet. How the hell did he manage that?

KRITZ: I don't know. He raced around a corner then simply vanished.

(Her shoulders slumped.)

KRITZ: I looked, but...

FLAXLEY: No sign, eh?

KRITZ: Like I said, he vanished.

FLAXLEY: Oh, well. No harm done. The main thing is you're unharmed.

(He then stepped up to her and took her in his arms.)

FLAXLEY: I don't know what I'd do if anything happened to you, my love.

(He kissed the top of her head.)

FLAXLEY: You're my world.

KRITZ: And you're mine.

(She grimaced.)

KRITZ: Now stop crushing me with your cast iron armour!

FLAXLEY: Right. Yes, Sorry.

(He then stepped back and smiled at her.)

FLAXLEY: Let's go home, my love. I'll get Phisele and Kyrie to handle the aftermath.

KRITZ: Now that sounds like a plan.

(She nodded.)

KRITZ: I'll just fetch my bag.

FLAXLEY: Righto.

(He then watched as Kritz hurried out of the rear office and slipping her bag onto her shoulder.)

KRITZ: Right, are we good to go?

FLAXLEY: We most certainly are.

(At this point, Phisele and Kyrie paced in through the open door.)

PHISELE: Did we win?

FLAXLEY: Don't we always?

PHISELE: Good point. So what's the situation?

KRITZ: Three out of four robbers dead; one escaped through the back exit.

PHISELE: There's a back exit?

FLAXLEY: Evidently so.

PHISELE: I wish we'd known. We have covered it.

KRITZ: Nobody's supposed to know. It's only there so someone can escape and get help if there's a robbery. I never got the chance to.

PHISELE: So did *you* know about this back exit, Flaxley?

FLAXLEY: No. Kritz designed the bank. We wanted a system that even *she'd* struggle to steal from.

KRITZ: Yeah, but look how that turned out. He used my secret exit plan to get away.

Wanker.

PHISELE: Yeah, that's not good, is it?

KRITZ: Nope.

PHISELE: So, how about the money situation?

(Kyrie then stepped forward.)

KYRIE: Bearing in mind that if she gets a pay rise, I want one too.

PHISELE: Not that kind of money situation, you moron.

KYRIE: Ouch. You've been really snippy today.

(Phisele ignored her and looked to Kritz.)

PHISELE: So... the money?

KYRIE: One sack of bank notes was taken.

(She sneered.)

KRITZ: I so nearly stopped the bastard too.

(She sighed.)

KRITZ: I misjudged my dive horribly. I'm guess I'm out of practice. In my heyday, I'd never have missed that tackle. So frustrating.

FLAXLEY: Yes, well, don't fret, darling. You took out the other three, so I'd say you've done a bang up job, personally.

PHISELE: Wait. What? There were four of them, Kritz took out three and the other one escaped?

FLAXLEY: Yes.

PHISELE: Then what we're *you* doing?

(Flaxley growled.)

FLAXLEY: I took a dozen crossbow bolts...

(He then shook his head with annoyance.)

FLAXLEY: Kritzeveltia? We're leaving!

(Kritz giggled.)

KRITZ: Yes, yes we are.

(They then headed out of the door, arm in arm. Left behind, Kyrie looked to Phisele.)

KYRIE: Why did he call her a vulture?

PHISELE: A vulture?

KYRIE: Yeah. He called her Kritz the vulture.

PHISELE: No, that's her name. Kritz is short for Kritzeveltia.

KYRIE: I see.

(She bit her lip.)

KYRIE: Is that how they do things in Tifaeris then? Does that make *me* Kyrie-veltia? I'm not sure I'm a fan of that. And Phisele-veltia sounds ridiculous. No offence.

(Phisele just stared through her.)

PHISELE: Kyrie?

KYRIE: Yes?

PHISELE: Go and fetch the locksmith. I'll start the clean-up.

KYRIE: Right... what's a locksmith?

PHISELE: Just bring Stan from the pub, okay?

KYRIE: Right. That I can do.

(She then strutted out of the door. Having watched her go, Phisele could only sigh.)

PHISELE: We don't quite need him yet, but the further away from me you go, the better.

(She then rolled her eyes and set about the arduous task of tidying up the mess.)

PHISELE: What a crap day. Stuck with Kyrie again. And to have a bank robbery... damn. Disastrous.

(She sighed.)

PHISELE: A successful bank robbery at that. Shit! Not good. That thief's long gone by now and I doubt the cash will *ever* be found. Bad, bad day. Awful.

(She then shook her head and resumed work.)

A short while later, in a ditch a few streets away from the back entrance to the bank, the leader of the robbers lay face down, barely moving. Suddenly, with a twitch, his eyes popped open and he sat up feeling somewhat dazed.

LEADER: What happened? One minute I was running then...

(With a gasp, he then glanced all around himself.)

LEADER: Where'd the money go???

(Realising it was nowhere to be found, he then released an anguished cry.)

LEADER: Why??? All that work and for nothing.

(He then stepped to his feet and limped away, anxious to get back to the next nearest town. He vowed never to return Tifaeris ever again.)

Later that evening, Sir Flaxley and Kritz invited everyone involved in the bank incident to join them for drinks and a barbeque in their garden. After an arduous day, they just wanted to give everyone the chance to unwind. Kyrie, however, couldn't quite get her head around the concept. To her, it looked like they were celebrating the bank being robbed and losing a large sack of money, which made no sense whatsoever. As such, she stood in the corner looking puzzled while she stuffed her face with chicken wings.

On the other side of the garden, Phisele, Jade and Emma stood just behind Flaxley, criticising his barbeque skills. Suffice to say, their critique was not well received. His decision to tell them that, however, turned out to be quite the faux pas. That just made them tease him more. Watching from the front of the garden, as the three of them picked on her beleaguered husband, Kritz couldn't help but smirk. With a glass of wine in her hand, she was very much enjoying her evening. Sitting alone, just watching everyone suited her fine. She loved nothing more than seeing her friends and family enjoy themselves. She wasn't alone for long, however. Having just used the ladies room inside the house, Cayley stepped outside then bit her lip nervously. With something on her mind, she then stepped up to Kritz and smiled.)

CAYLEY: Hiya.

(Kritz glanced at her in astonishment.)

KRITZ: Cayley?

CAYLEY: Yup. Hi.

KRITZ: What gives? You don't normally approach me. I usually have to stroke your pretty hair with a fully-extended arm because you're leaning away from me in terror.

CAYLEY: Yeah... sorry about that.

(She glanced away innocently.)

CAYLEY: I'm shy like that. Not today though. You see, there's something I wanted to ask you.

KRITZ: Oh?

CAYLEY: Yeah. Why did you steal all that money from the bank?

(Kritz gasped then looked about herself in horror. Seeing nobody in earshot, she furrowed her brow.)

KRITZ: What on earth makes you think I'd do such a terrible thing?

CAYLEY: The fact that you did.

KRITZ: Cayley...

(She bit her lip then leant closer to her.)

KRITZ: I don't know what you think happened, but...

CAYLEY: Well, listening to what everyone here has said, I think you *let* that robber get past you, so you could chase him and catch him when nobody else was looking. Then you took the money he stole, brought it back and put it in your bag. That way, when you picked up your bag to leave, nobody thought anything of it.

KRITZ: Wow. I'm appalled at you, young lady. Do you really think I'd steal from the good people of this town?

CAYLEY: You didn't. You stole from the greedy people at North International Bank. That money will be replaced by them, so the people of Tifaeris won't lose a single lig. But, you knew that. That's why you were happy to do it.

KRITZ: Wow. What you're suggesting is preposterous.

CAYLEY: Is it? Then how come your bag was slack and empty when you went *into* the bank, but bulging and full when you left?

(Kritz looked to her sternly for a moment then sighed in defeat.)

KRITZ: You really are too smart for your own good.

(She growled.)

KRITZ: Tell no-one.

CAYLEY: I won't. I mean, who would I tell? I don't talk much at school and I don't really know any of our new neighbours.

KRITZ: What new neighbours?

CAYLEY: The ones next to our nice new house.

KRITZ: You have a nice new house?

(Cayley smiled innocently.)

CAYLEY: Not yet, no, but I can't help feeling we'll get one soon. That's if someone in authority is kind enough to let us have one, I mean. Preferably, one of those new builds overlooking the bay. That'd be cool. Having somewhere nice to live and chill out, would definitely help me forget all my troubles. I'd also forget everything I've seen and heard here today, probably.

(Kritz stared at her in astonishment for a moment then started to chuckle.)

KRITZ: Well played, young lady. Well played.

(Cayley looked through her innocently.)

CAYLEY: I don't what you mean. I wasn't playing you or angling for anything, I was just saying.

KRITZ: Stop it.

CAYLEY: Right...

KRITZ: Seriously, you come over as so sweet and innocent, like butter wouldn't melt in your mouth, but that's all for show, isn't it? You're actually as cold and calculated as they come. I bet you're not even that shy.

(Cayley pouted.)

CAYLEY: It's not an act, Kritz. Quite the opposite. I really am shy and quiet. It's just that...

KRITZ: It's just what?

CAYLEY: I have a Kyrie to think about. She's meant to be the provider; the bread winner. We can't get by without her salary and the home that comes with her job. And yet, every time I see her at work, the only thing I can't fathom is how she hasn't been fired yet.

KRITZ: Well, that's obvious. Phisele needs Kyrie there so *you* can solve all her crimes for her.

CAYLEY: Yeah, but for how long? I'm not under any illusions, Kritz. It's only a matter of time before Phisele can't take it anymore and either kills her or fires her. Either way, I end up homeless.

(She blushed.)

CAYLEY: So, sometimes I have to resort to underhand tactics to make things better.

KRITZ: Like blackmailing me into giving you a new house.

CAYLEY: Yeah...

(She glanced away innocently.)

CAYLEY: A nice one, overlooking...

KRITZ: The bay! I heard you!

(She shook her head then started to laugh.)

KRITZ: I'm gonna have to watch you, aren't I? Crafty little bugger.

(Cayley shrugged nervously. Glancing down at her, Kritz continued to laugh then suddenly looked thoughtful.)

KRITZ: You know what, Cayley? You're wasted as a schoolgirl. You're so ridiculously smart, there's not really a lot of point in you going there, is there? I mean, let's be honest, what do you even get out of it? You've learned nothing new, I'd wager.

CAYLEY: Not a thing. It's a complete waste of time. The teachers know less than *I* do.

KRITZ: So Jade and Emma have told me.

(She nodded.)

KRITZ: Yeah, there's no point in you even going. Instead of wasting everyone's time sending you there, we should start utilising your brains to improve the town.

CAYLEY: What?

KRITZ: Just a sec...

(She then yelled across the garden.)

KRITZ: Flaxley, my love! Come here, would you?

(She looked to Cayley.)

KRITZ: Mention what happened at the bank and Kyrie will have a funeral to arrange.

(Cayley winced in terror then shrunk on the spot as she watched Sir Flaxley approaching with a set of tongs in his hand.)

FLAXLEY: What's wrong, darling?

KRITZ: I...

FLAXLEY: Are you okay, Cayley? You looked terrified.

KRITZ: She's just shy, you know how she gets around me.

FLAXLEY: Right. True. So...

KRITZ: I've been thinking. Cayley's genius is wasted at school. It makes no sense to send her there anymore. None, whatsoever. We're wasting *her* time *and* the teacher's time. So maybe we should let her graduate early and set her to work as a town planner instead.

(Cayley's face lit up.)

CAYLEY: Yes, please. That'd be awesome.

FLAXLEY: Would it? Town planning is really boring.

CAYLEY: But I love boring things.

(At this point, with terrible timing whereas Cayley was concerned, Kyrie stepped up and joined them.)

KYRIE: She really does. She could bore at *international* level, this one. Get her started on any of her favourite topics and you'll be asleep in no time. At least, that's what *I* do when I'm having trouble sleeping.

CAYLEY: So *that's* why you asked me about the process for hop fermentation!

KYRIE: Why else?

CAYLEY: Right... I should have known. You're *too* mean sometimes.

KYRIE: Yeah, but what are you gonna do?

(Flaxley nodded.)

FLAXLEY: I'll tell you what she's going to do. She's going to become our town planner.

KYRIE: Wow. That sounds really boring.

(She gasped.)

KYRIE: You'd be great at that.

CAYLEY: Seriously. Too mean.

FLAXLEY: Meet me at the town hall tomorrow at nine o'clock in the morning, Cayley. I'll show you how we do things.

KYRIE: She can't. She has school.

FLAXLEY: Not anymore. She's graduated.

KYRIE: She has? Shit! I missed the ceremony!

(She then grimaced uneasily.)

KYRIE: And the whole of the last two years, apparently. I thought you had to be fourteen to graduate.

FLAXLEY: Nope. I'll amend the law in the morning. For now on, if you're smart enough, you don't have to go.

CAYLEY: Yay!

(Kritz smiled.)

KRITZ: You're excited now, Cayley, but you won't be when you realise how boring the job is. Measuring gaps between land plots with a view to ensuring roads are wide enough; assessing gradients to decide whether to dig into the hillside or build on stilts; calculating the population to shop access ratio...

(Cayley beamed.)

CAYLEY: Sounds awesome.

KRITZ: Deciphering town expansion plans based on the topography...

CAYLEY: Yay!

KYRIE: Stop it, Kritz. You're making her moist.

CAYLEY: Kyrie!!!

KYRIE: What?

(Kritz sighed.)

KRITZ: So boring.

FLAXLEY: Yes, but someone has to do it. And thank god it'll no longer be me.

KRITZ: Right?

FLAXLEY: Now I can spend more time with you, my love.

KRITZ: Yes, but more to the point, we won't have any more silly mistakes like when you built through to Trepe Village.

FLAXLEY: What mistakes?

KRITZ: The road has two sharp ninety degree turns in it!

FLAXLEY: Right, yes... that one. I remember. No need to elaborate.

KRITZ: You got them to build a house in the middle of the road, so they had to build a new one around it.

FLAXLEY: I said there was no need to elaborate!

KRITZ: Right.

(Cayley beamed.)

CAYLEY: I can't wait. I love that kind of thing. I'll be really good at it.

KYRIE: Well, duh. You're really good at everything. Except sporty things.

CAYLEY: Sporty things are for idiots.

KYRIE: Hey!

CAYLEY: What?

KYRIE: Shut up.

FLAXLEY: Anyway, like I said, come and see me in the morning. We'll get you all set up.

CAYLEY: Okay.

KYRIE: Um...

KRITZ: Yes, Kyrie?

KYRIE: This new, boring job of hers?

(She beamed.)

KYRIE: Pay well, does it?

FLAXLEY: Absolutely. It's a difficult job that carries a hell of a lot of responsibility, so naturally a healthy salary comes with it.

CAYLEY: Yay!

KRITZ: The job also comes with a new house.

FLAXLEY: Indeed.

(He flinched.)

FLAXLEY: Wait. What?

KRITZ: Well, why not? Cayley here is an asset to the town. I say we do all we can to make her happy here.

FLAXLEY: Yeah, but... a free house?

KRITZ: Yes. A talent like hers is rare, Flaxley. We need to keep her here, *whatever* it takes. After all, if the president of Leathrock knew we had a genius among us, he wouldn't hesitate to swoop in and snatch her from us.

FLAXLEY: That's true.

(His brow furrowed.)

FLAXLEY: Every time we get someone even remotely talented or sporty, his representatives turn up and next thing we know, they've buggered off. Well not this time. Cayley is one of us and long will it remain. So, yes, fine. It comes with a new house.

CAYLEY: Yay! Thanks, Sir Flaxley.

(She beamed.)

CAYLEY: An awesome new job and a beautiful, big house overlooking the bay.

FLAXLEY: Wait. What? Overlooking the bay? Who said anything about...

KRITZ: Let her have it, my love.

FLAXLEY: What?

(He then nodded in concession.)

FLAXLEY: Very well. There's actually a nice *new* build overlooking the bay.

KRITZ: She knows!

CAYLEY: I know.

FLAXLEY: Oh.

(He smiled.)

FLAXLEY: You can have the keys tomorrow.

CAYLEY: Aces.

(She beamed.)

CAYLEY: I'm so happy. A nice new house overlooking the bay, and a new job with a massive salary.

(She looked to Kritz, blinking innocently.)

CAYLEY: It is massive, right?

(Kritz rolled her eyes.)

KRITZ: Yes! A lot more than you and Kyrie are bringing in right now, that's for sure. A *lot* more.

(She chuckled.)

KRITZ: So *much* more, in fact, Kyrie here could retire and live off *you* forever.

KYRIE: Wait. What? Retire? Already? But I look so young!

KRITZ: I'm joking, Kyrie.

(She rolled her eyes.)

KRITZ: Having said that though, you *could* quit working if you *wanted* to. I mean, it's not like you'll need the free accommodation at the barracks anymore; what with you acquiring a shiny new house, an' all.

(Having heard mention of what she considered all her dreams coming true at once, Phisele zoomed across the garden and arrived among them in seconds.)

PHISELE: What was that? Kyrie doesn't need her police accommodation anymore?

KRITZ: Nope. These two are on the up. They're moving into a nice new house tomorrow. Cayley's got herself a high-paying job too.

PHISELE: Wow. Congratulations, you two.

(She then beamed with delight and said the words she'd long dreamt of saying.)

PHISELE: Kyrie, you're sacked.

(Kyrie looked to her emptily.)

KYRIE: Sacked?

(Cayley gasped.)

CAYLEY: But you said you wouldn't do that, Phisele. You need me to... I mean, you need *her* to solve all your cases.

PHISELE: Yeah, but after today's events, I've changed my mind. And besides, you solving all our cases was only part of it. I was *mostly* keeping her on because Flaxley made it clear you needed the home that came with the job. Now you don't. So, having weighed everything up, and it didn't take long, I've decided. Sacked it is!

CAYLEY: Right. And you wonder why I don't trust you.

PHISELE: Touché. You were *right* not to. I've been itching to sack her since the day we hired her.

(Kyrie grimaced.)

KYRIE: Wait. I didn't understand a word of that. What do you mean I'm sacked?

PHISELE: I mean don't come to work in the morning.

KYRIE: A day off? Cool!

PHISELE: Um, no. I'm saying *never* come to work ever again!

KYRIE: Sweet. *Every* day off!

PHISELE: If you like, yes. No wages though.

KYRIE: Oh. Well, that sucks.

(Cayley looked to her uneasily.)

CAYLEY: You'll be fine, Kyrie. You'll find something to do.

KYRIE: Of course, I will. Men probably.

PHISELE: Excellent.

(She beamed.)

PHISELE: Now that's sorted, I'll be off. Food awaits.

(She then headed off back to the food table to grab herself a slab of beef. Very much a fan of that idea, Kyrie beamed.)

KYRIE: I'll go with her. That beef looks awesome.

(She then headed off after Phisele.)

FLAXLEY: And I'll get back to cooking it. Don't forget, Cayley. Nine sharp.

CAYLEY: I won't.

(As he headed away, Kritz smiled then looked to Cayley.)

KRITZ: Happy now? You've got your new house overlooking the bay and a job with a great salary. Can I consider your silence bought and paid for?

CAYLEY: Definitely.

KRITZ: Thank you.

CAYLEY: There is one thing I was wondering about though, Kritz.

KRITZ: Oh? What's that?

CAYLEY: Where will you keep the money you stole?
KRITZ: In the bank...
(Her shoulders then slumped and she groaned in defeat.)
KRITZ: Aw, fuck!

Later that evening, having had their fill of barbeque, Kyrie and Cayley headed back towards the barracks looking forward to spending their final night there. Having been promised they'd receive the keys to their new house the following day, there wasn't a hope in hell of them taking their time before moving in. Cayley was most insistent about that.

CAYLEY: And you won't forget, will you?

KYRIE: Forget what?

CAYLEY: You've forgotten already?

KYRIE: Apparently so.

CAYLEY: Come and get the keys off me tomorrow, so you can start moving our stuff.

KYRIE: Right.

(She nodded.)

KYRIE: And where am I moving it to?

CAYLEY: Our new house, obviously!

(She spanned her forehead.)

CAYLEY: For pity's sake, Kyrie.

KYRIE: What? I'm only asking. I have no idea where our new house *is*.

CAYLEY: Oh. I thought you were just being dim.

KYRIE: Well, there was probably an element of that, let's not kid ourselves.

CAYLEY: I tell you what, let's head that way now, so I can show it to you.

KYRIE: Yay.

(She beamed.)

KYRIE: Our own house. Just you and me. A far cry from those nights we spent camping under trees, fearing for our lives.

CAYLEY: Yeah.

(She smiled.)

CAYLEY: It felt like those horrible days would never end.

KYRIE: Right? We could never have dreamt we'd own a house and live like normal people. All that seemed a million miles away. Yet, here we are.

(She beamed even wider.)

KYRIE: Yup. Coming to Tifaeris was the best idea I've ever had.

CAYLEY: It was Sir Hapslock's idea.

KYRIE: Who?

CAYLEY: Frank, as you called him. The knight who took us under his wing.

KYRIE: Oh, yeah. I liked Frank. He had a big...

CAYLEY: Kyrie!

KYRIE: What?

CAYLEY: I don't need to hear about that.

KYRIE: Right. Good point. You and men's doodahs don't mix.

(She growled.)

KYRIE: I'll make bloody sure of that.

CAYLEY: Stop it, Kyrie. I have no interest in that anyway.

KYRIE: Good. Glad to hear it. Just focus on your new job and forgot boys ever existed.

CAYLEY: Fine.

KYRIE: Thank you.

(She then grimaced uneasily.)

KYRIE: Speaking of jobs, Cayley. I'm not exactly sure I like my new role at the police station.

CAYLEY: What new role?

KYRIE: Not going there and not getting paid. I'm not sure how that's gonna work.

(Cayley gave her a pitying glance.)

CAYLEY: Oh, Kyrie...

(Kyrie then gasped in horror.)

CAYLEY: There it is. The penny finally dropped.

KYRIE: Sacked means fired, doesn't it? I've been fired!!!

CAYLEY: Yeah.

KYRIE: Damn it.

CAYLEY: It'll be fine, Kyrie. Don't let it bother you. I'll take care of us.

(Kyrie said nothing and continued on. Pacing at her side, Cayley offered her a consoling smile then her face dropped. Kyrie's bottom lip was sagging and a tear was rolling down her cheek.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie...

KYRIE: It's not your job to take care of us, Cayley. You've got a childhood to enjoy. I'm supposed to be the big sister. *I'm* meant to take care of us.

CAYLEY: Yeah, but...

KYRIE: I'm rubbish.

CAYLEY: No, you're not.

KYRIE: Yes, I am. You'd be better off without me.

(Cayley stopped and tugged on Kyrie's arm.)

CAYLEY: Don't.

(Kyrie stared at the ground miserably.)

CAYLEY: You're not rubbish. Far from it. You kept me alive for two long years against ridiculously overwhelming odds! Assassins and summoned beasts came at us relentlessly for two long years, Kyrie, and you defeated every single one of them. I'd be dead without you.

(She then ruffled her neck.)

CAYLEY: I lived in a permanent state of terror for all that time. Petrified, I was. Every minute of every hour was like a living hell to me. But I got through it because of you. And not just because you're an amazing fighter, but because you'd hug me and tell me everything was okay. You gave me hope.

KYRIE: Well, I wasn't just going to sit there and watch you cry, was I? I hate seeing you upset.

CAYLEY: Yeah, because you're awesome like that. Not rubbish at all.

(She shrugged.)

CAYLEY: Kyrie, look at it this way. When we were in dire straits, being attacked, morning, noon and night, you used *your* skills to keep us going. You did your bit. Now we're living in a normal town, it's *my* turn to do my bit. I'm using *my* skills to keep us afloat. We play the role we're best at and support each other. It's just what families do.

(Kyrie mused to herself.)

KYRIE: Hmm... so... that sentence was really long.

CAYLEY: I'll summarise it for you. *You* used fighting skills to save us; *I'm* using brain skills to save us. We're taking in turns to take care of us.

KYRIE: Right. Gotcha.

(She beamed.)

KYRIE: So, it'll be my turn again soon, right?

CAYLEY: Sure. Why not?

KYRIE: Well, that's a relief. I hate the thought of being a burden on you.

CAYLEY: You're not. We're a team. A family. So we take care of one another. After all, we only have each other, Kyrie.

KYRIE: True.

(Cayley smiled.)

CAYLEY: Sounds kinda tragic, doesn't it? We *only* have each other.

KYRIE: Yeah, but at the same time, we'll *always* have each other, so I can live with it.

(Cayley's bottom lip drooped.)

KYRIE: What's wrong?

CAYLEY: That's the most beautiful thing you've ever said.

KYRIE: It was?

CAYLEY: It was actually really profound.

KYRIE: I see. And what does profound mean?

CAYLEY: Right...

(She rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: Never mind.

(She then exhaled merrily.)

CAYLEY: I love you, Kyrie.

KYRIE: I love you too, sister face.

(They then shared a hug before resuming their walk.)

KYRIE: Thanks for cheering me up, Cayley. I needed that.

CAYLEY: It's my pleasure, Kyrie. Getting fired can't be nice.

KYRIE: It's really not. I've never been rejected before.

(She nodded.)

KYRIE: And it's not like I'm totally unemployed anyway. I still have my other job.

CAYLEY: Hanging around in the pub because your presence there attracts customers.

KYRIE: Yeah, that one. I'll keep doing that and I'll also find a new job. One I'm really, really awesome at. That'll show Phisele.

(She pouted.)

KYRIE: Stupid Phisele. I solved all her cases for her and look how she treated me. Kicked me out as soon as she got the chance. Just because being with me every day was driving her to the edge of insanity, she cast me aside. Rude.

(She chuckled.)

KYRIE: Though, to be honest, if you hadn't kept solving all my cases for me, she'd probably have fired me months ago.

CAYLEY: Well... yeah.

KYRIE: Anyway, let's not dwell on it. Let's think about what I'm going to do next.

CAYLEY: Well, you could just enjoy your freedom for a bit.

KYRIE: Hmm... pursue my other passions, you mean? Shopping and sex?

CAYLEY: No! Not shopping. Definitely not. Our agreement to only go shopping *together* still stands.

KYRIE: Fine. Then I'll focus on the sex.

(She exhaled.)

KYRIE: That could be my new job. A bit like my old job really. I do enjoy a bit of prostitution. The tips are awesome. Cash tips, I mean; not the tips of men's...

CAYLEY: Kyrie!

KYRIE: Right... yeah. Got carried away there, didn't I?

CAYLEY: A little bit.

(Kyrie then placed an arm around her.)

KYRIE: We're gonna have a lot of fun, you and me, Cayley. You doing nerdy, boring things and loving it. And me doing filthy, naughty things and loving it. Happiness lies ahead for both of us.

CAYLEY: Well... yeah.

KYRIE: Just don't become a stropky teenager and ruin it.

CAYLEY: I'm not going to!

KYRIE: Good. And stay away from boys.

CAYLEY: Fine.

KYRIE: Let's make a pact. You like books, I like willies. So, I'll stay away from books and you can keep away from willies.

CAYLEY: Oh, good god, Kyrie. Let it go. I kissed one boy, that was all. And he turned out to be horrible. I'm not turning into you.

KYRIE: Good. Glad to hear it. Again.

(Cayley sighed.)

CAYLEY: I'm going to be saying that a lot over the next few years, aren't I?

KYRIE: Yes.

(She then furrowed her brow.)

KYRIE: Because I'll be watching you like a hawk.

CAYLEY: I know.

(She then gave a stifled laugh.)

CAYLEY: See? You're protecting me again. Just like old times. Only this time you're protecting me from a whole different kind of evil.

KYRIE: Boys!

CAYLEY: Exactly.

(They then shared a warm smile.)

KYRIE: We're gonna be fine, aren't we?

CAYLEY: Definitely.

THREE MONTHS LATER

It was a glorious day in Tifaeris. The air was warm yet comfortable and the sunlight glistening off the sea was a joy to behold. It was the perfect day to be out and about, enjoying a stroll. With a mountain of paperwork to get through, however, Phisele had no plans to do anything of the sort. A member of staff down, she'd had a busy few weeks. Getting hardly any time to relax, she was becoming understandably frustrated. Reading through a note that had been written by one of her many unworthy, temporary assistants, she growled through gritted teeth.

PHISELE: Who the hell is Mr Fishface? That dotty old bat never bloody listened to a word anyone told her. And she wrote like a fucking five year old.

(Just then, with spectacularly poor timing, the man responsible for sending her so many useless people to work with, paced inside the door, smiling.)

FLAXLEY: Morning, Phisele.

PHISELE: Is it fuck.

(Kritz then paced in behind him.)

KRITZ: It is, actually, yes.

PHISELE: Oh, hi, Kritz.

KRITZ: Hey, sweetie.

FLAXLEY: No such warm greeting for me, I see.

PHISELE: Of course not. Waltzing in here, declaring it to be a good morning... bollocks.

FLAXLEY: I think you'll find I didn't *waltz* anywhere. I walked in like a normal person. And I never said it was *good* morning.

PHISELE: That was implied!

FLAXLEY: Right...

(He grimaced.)

FLAXLEY: So, what did I do to earn your hostility this time?

PHISELE: The same thing you always do. Hire shit people to be shit police officers then leave me to clean up their mess when they do a shit job.

KRITZ: You sound frustrated, babe.

FLAXLEY: Observant, isn't she?

PHISELE: This is no laughing matter, Flaxley. I've got a mountain of paperwork to do *and* I'm still no closer to finding out who the cartwheel thief is.

KRITZ: Oh no. Then this probably isn't the best time to tell you, he struck again last night.

PHISELE: Fuck.

FLAXLEY: He took all four wheels from Mr Fishcake's cart.

KRITZ: It wasn't Mr Fishcake, my love. It was Mr Fishface!

PHISELE: Wait! What? That's an actual name?

FLAXLEY: Apparently so, yes.

PHISELE: Right...

(She sighed.)

PHISELE: So he struck again, did he?

(She looked to Flaxley imploringly.)

PHISELE: Now do you see the problem? You send me one incompetent buffoon after another, Flaxley. They contribute nothing. They're so useless I have to do everything myself. As a result, I end up with a backlog of paperwork to do and a backlog of crimes to solve. It can't go on. I need a *competent* assistant!

(She shook her head.)

PHISELE: This paperwork is going to build up *even more* now, while I go and see Mr Fishcake.

FLAXLEY: Fishface!

PHISELE: Fuck you.

FLAXLEY: That's his name.

PHISELE: I know. I was saying fuck *you*. I haven't had a day off in weeks!

FLAXLEY: Well, that's bloody charming, that is.

PHISELE: You want me to be charming, do you? Then send me someone with the first idea how to solve a crime.

FLAXLEY: I did once, remember? Kyrie was a virtual crime-solving machine, thanks to her little sister, and you kicked her out.

KRITZ: He does have a point. Cayley would have solved it by now.

PHISELE: Maybe so, yes, but I'd have hung myself from the rafters weeks ago if I'd had to keep spending my days with Kyrie.

(She sighed.)

PHISELE: I just want a competent officer who doesn't drive me to contemplating suicide, is that really too much to ask?

FLAXLEY: No, actually. And we've got the just the person for you.

(Phisele's shoulders slumped.)

PHISELE: You said that last time, Flaxley. He died of old age three days into the job!

FLAXLEY: Yes, well, that was unfortunate.

PHISELE: So, come on. I'll play along. What have you got for me now? Another batty old lady, perhaps? Maybe that crazy old fellow from the docks who shouts at cats. Or is it one of those weirdoes who hangs around the cave, pretending to be a vampire?

KRITZ: Oddly enough, he suggested all of those.

FLAXLEY: I did nothing of the sort!

KRITZ: I'm joking.

FLAXLEY: Well, don't. Women aren't funny.

KRITZ: Ooh, hark at her.

(Phisele and Kritz giggled together.)

FLAXLEY: I think that proves my point.

(He then stood tall.)

FLAXLEY: Anyway, allow me to introduce you to your new assistant.

PHISELE: Fine.

(Flaxley nodded then looked to Kritz.)

FLAXLEY: If you would, my love.

KRITZ: Certainly.

(She then called out of the door.)

KRITZ: You can come in now, love.

FLAXLEY: Really? *I* could have shouted! You were meant to go and get her.

KRITZ: Yeah, but what are you gonna do?

(Just then, Anoka Flaxley stepped through the doorway.)

ANOKA: Hi, Phisele.

(Phisele's jaw dropped.)

PHISELE: Anoka. Hi!

(She whimpered.)

PHISELE: Tell me it's true.

FLAXLEY: It's true. She returned from her apprenticeship in Leathrock last night. And it was perfect timing, actually. You see, I've chosen my successor.

KRITZ: *Your* successor?

FLAXLEY: I mean, I've chosen *our* successor.

KRITZ: *You've* chosen?

FLAXLEY: For fuck sake, does it matter?

(He rolled his eyes.)

FLAXLEY: Fine. *We've* chosen *our* successor. When Kritz and I are too old to run this town, Anoka will take over.

KRITZ: And her apprenticeship starts here. Working with the police force.

FLAXLEY: That's right. We're entrusting our beloved daughter to you, Phisele. Train her well.

PHISELE: I will. I will.

ANOKA: I'm looking forward to it.

PHISELE: Me too. When do you start?

ANOKA: In the morning.

PHISELE: Excellent! It *is* the morning.

ANOKA: Tomorrow morning, I mean. I have a few other things I need to do today.

PHISELE: Oh, okay. Welcome to the force.

ANOKA: Thank you for having me.

(She smiled.)

ANOKA: I'll see you tomorrow then.

PHISELE: Okay. Bye.

(Anoka then stepped forward and hugged her parents.)

ANOKA: I'll see you at home later.
KRITZ: Okay, love.
FLAXLEY: Farewell.
(They watched Anoka head out of the door then Flaxley beamed at Phisele.)
FLAXLEY: See? Not such a bad guy now, am I?
PHISELE: What can I say?
(She then gave him a very deliberate scowl.)
PHISELE: Thank you, Kritz.
(Kritz giggled.)
KRITZ: You're welcome.
(Flaxley could only shake his head with disdain.)
FLAXLEY: Women.

A short while later, Cayley and Kyrie were seated on a bench in their front garden, overlooking the picturesque bay. Resting her head on Kyrie's shoulder, Cayley couldn't have been happier. Life was pretty wonderful right now, and she couldn't stop smiling.
CAYLEY: This is perfect, Kyrie.
KYRIE: What is?
CAYLEY: Being here right now.
KYRIE: Right. Yeah.
CAYLEY: Sitting here in our own private garden, watching the sun reflect off the ocean... there's no better way to spend a day off.
KYRIE: Really? I can think of a few. I'd rather be shagging.
CAYLEY: Trust you.
KYRIE: Just saying. I wouldn't waste *my* day off lazing about doing nothing.
CAYLEY: You don't have days off.
KYRIE: And why would I? I have the best job in the world! People pay me for sex! Fifty to a hundred lig every time. For sex! Sex I was going to have for free anyway.
(She beamed.)
KYRIE: Why would I want to take a day off?
(Cayley rolled her eyes.)
CAYLEY: You're so...
KYRIE: I'm so what?
CAYLEY: Doesn't matter.
(Kyrie chuckled.)
KYRIE: You're just jealous that I make more money than you.
(Cayley furrowed her brow. She'd never admit it, but the fact Kyrie earned so much more than her, was indeed annoying.)
KYRIE: It's true, isn't it?
CAYLEY: I get a really good wage, Kyrie.
KYRIE: And yet I still earn more.
(She beamed.)
KYRIE: I should have quit the police force sooner.
(Cayley ruffled her neck indignantly.)
CAYLEY: You didn't quit, you were fired.
KYRIE: Same thing.
CAYLEY: No, it isn't,
KYRIE: It is to me. Either way, I'm far better off now than I was.
CAYLEY: I suppose.

KYRIE: See? Now cheer up.

CAYLEY: I don't need to cheer up.

(She beamed.)

CAYLEY: I'm already happy.

KYRIE: Good.

CAYLEY: We both have four poster beds, Kyrie. And someone comes in and cleans our house for us. We could have only dreamt of such luxuries at one time. We've come such a long way.

KYRIE: Yup. All the way from Anoseta.

CAYLEY: I don't mean geographically.

KYRIE: Oh?

CAYLEY: No. I'm saying our lives have improved a lot.

KYRIE: Yes. Yes, they have.

CAYLEY: Yup. Life is pretty perfect.

KYRIE: Well... not really.

(She then performed a double take towards the front gate.)

KYRIE: Actually, hold that thought.

(She then upped and strode excitedly to where Anoka was waiting for her on their pathway.)

KYRIE: Anoka!

ANOKA: K...

(Kyrie then thrust her lips into Anoka's and they embarked on a passionate kiss. Watching from the bench, Cayley rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: They didn't even say hello.

(Moments later, the two girls broke off their kiss then stared into one another's eyes.)

KYRIE: You came back.

ANOKA: I did.

KYRIE: I like that you did that.

ANOKA: Me too.

(They held a prolonged smile for a moment then Anoka blushed.)

ANOKA: I finished my apprenticeship in Leathrock, now I'm home. I'm back in Tifaeris to stay.

KYRIE: Forever?

ANOKA: I hope so.

KYRIE: Do you need somewhere to sleep then, only I have a massive bed and I really, really love you.

(She then gasped in horror.)

KYRIE: I mean, I'm horny for you. That's all. Love? No, thanks. Love is for wimps.

(Anoka chuckled.)

ANOKA: Kyrie, I love you too. I couldn't stop thinking about you all the time I was back in Leathrock.

KYRIE: And I couldn't stop thinking about you. No matter how many men I shagged.

ANOKA: Right...

(Kyrie sighed.)

KYRIE: Feeling this way is really horrible sometimes. And yet, I kinda like it.

ANOKA: I know what you mean.

KYRIE: I want to be free to have silly amounts of sex, but I also want to be with you forever.

ANOKA: And I'm happy to let you do both.

(She shrugged.)

ANOKA: It's not really conventional, I know, but... I just want to be your girl.

KYRIE: I want that too.

(They both exhaled lovingly.)

KYRIE: Oh, yeah! Hey! Come and meet my little sister.

ANOKA: We've met.

KYRIE: Then come and meet her again.

ANOKA: Sure.

(With that, the two of them headed over to Cayley and joined her on the bench.)

ANOKA: Hi, Cayley.

(Cayley blushed.)

CAYLEY: Hello.

ANOKA: Still shy, I see.

KYRIE: Nowhere near as much as she used to be.

(Her brow furrowed.)

KYRIE: She's changed a lot. She even has a boyfriend!

ANOKA: Wow. Really?

(Cayley hid her face.)

CAYLEY: Maybe.

ANOKA: Aw.

KYRIE: Crazy, right? After all the men I've been with, I end up with a girlfriend. And the girl who was terrified of the sight of boys, has a boyfriend.

(She smiled.)

KYRIE: It's fine though. She's definitely growing up too fast for my liking, but I'm not afraid of that anymore. She won't turn out like me. Her brain has other thoughts in it than sex, for one. She's a good girl.

CAYLEY: Aw.

(She beamed.)

CAYLEY: And you're an awesome big sister.

KYRIE: I know.

(She then sat back and placed an arm around both Cayley and Anoka.)

KYRIE: Cayley?

CAYLEY: Yes?

KYRIE: You're right. Life is pretty perfect.

(Then they shared a warm smile before glancing out to sea.)

ANOKA: Kyrie, don't touch me there in front of Cayley.

KYRIE: Right. Sorry.

That evening, shortly after sunset, Flaxley found himself seated on his front porch, drinking a flagon of ale with his good friend, Derek, the three foot tall green alien from the planet Tryme 17. Delighted to have his daughter home, Flaxley was feeling very much at ease. Picking up on his relaxed frame of mind, Derek couldn't help but comment.)

DEREK: You know what, Flaxley? I haven't seen you this relaxed for a long, long while.

(Flaxley glanced to him.)

FLAXLEY: No?

DEREK: Not at all. You're usually stressed about *something* or another.

FLAXLEY: Well, yes, but not right now, old chap. Right now, everything's falling into place.

(Derek smirked.)

DEREK: By *everything*, you mean *Anoka's* fallen in place.

FLAXLEY: Well, yes. I suppose you *could* put it like that.

(He sneered.)

FLAXLEY: If you want to be a dick about it!

DEREK: Right. Touché. I asked for that.

FLAXLEY: Yes, you did.

(He took a sip of his ale then exhaled.)

FLAXLEY: I've every reason to feel good about things, right now, Derek. Anoka coming home means all my kids are back in Tifaeris where they belong. No decent father would be unhappy about that.

DEREK: Well, you say that, Flaxley but not *all* your kids are back in Tifaeris.

FLAXLEY: I have no son!

DEREK: Right...

(Flaxley shook his head.)

FLAXLEY: Why that little...

(He growled.)

FLAXLEY: I couldn't have tried harder with that boy, you know?

DEREK: Indeed.

FLAXLEY: When he told me he no longer wanted to train as a knight, to carry on the family tradition, I was crestfallen. Absolutely gutted, I was. But did I get angry and yell? No. I accepted it. I let him be who he wanted to be.

(He shook his head.)

FLAXLEY: And a few years later when he told me he had no interest in girls and enjoyed the company of men, I took that on the chin too.

DEREK: You went in the garden and cried!

FLAXLEY: Point being, I didn't make him feel bad about it. I stood by him. I supported him.

DEREK: You did, yes.

FLAXLEY: Even when he announced he wanted to live his life dressed as a woman and dance in gay cabarets, I respected his decision. I gave him my full backing. Kritz and I even went to see one of his shows.

DEREK: I remember Kritz saying. You wore a fake beard in the hope nobody recognised you.

FLAXLEY: The point is, I went along to cheer him on. I gave him my blessing to be who he wanted to be.

DEREK: Very true.

FLAXLEY: And how did he repay my support? He came inside *my* home, hugged Kritz and Anoka then announced he was in town to join in the anti-sword protest.

DEREK: Terrible.

FLAXLEY: Unforgivable.

DEREK: That'd be like *my* first born coming home to protest against aliens.

FLAXLEY: Exactly. He did a massive shit on everything I stand for.

DEREK: Shocking.

FLAXLEY: Horrifying even.

(He nodded.)

FLAXLEY: He's just lucky Kritz was there to save him from a damned good thrashing.

DEREK: I remember. Anoka was livid. If Kritz hadn't stopped her, she'd still be pummelling him now.

(Flaxley beamed.)

FLAXLEY: That's because Anoka gets it, you see? She understand what it means to be my offspring. We live by the code of the sword in my house.

DEREK: You do indeed.

FLAXLEY: You know, Derek? I'm delighted that she's home.

DEREK: I know.

FLAXLEY: Her return marks the beginning of a new era. She'll be groomed to take over this town and I can rest safely in the knowledge that she'll carry on the great work we've done honourably. My legacy is safe with her, that's for sure. A legacy of principle and fairness. A legacy of greatness. A legacy of valour.

DEREK: How modestly put.

FLAXLEY: I'm right though, aren't I?

DEREK: Well, nobody can deny that.

(He smiled.)

DEREK: She'll do you proud, Flaxley. You raised a good one there.

FLAXLEY: Yes, well, let's not be disingenuous here, old boy. Kritz helped.

DEREK: Helped?

FLAXLEY: You know what I mean.

DEREK: Right.

FLAXLEY: So like I say, it's all falling into place now. Phisele has a competent officer working alongside her now and once again, crimes will get solved. For the foreseeable future the police force is in good hands.

DEREK: Good to hear.

FLAXLEY: As for the town, with young Cayley beaver away in the planning department, we've halved the cost of building and doubled our efficiency. She's added a small fortune to the town's coffers.

DEREK: So I heard. Keep hold of that little genius, Flaxley. Take good care of her. You really can't afford to lose her.

FLAXLEY: Oh, I will. I'll see to it that Kyrie and Cayley and *well* taken care of. Leathrock aren't having Cayley away, my friend. God no.

DEREK: Damned right.

FLAXLEY: So like I say, everything is all falling into place and the future is exceedingly bright.

DEREK: Which is music to my little green ears.

(Flaxley exhaled.)

FLAXLEY: Yes, I finally feel like I'm surrounded by people I can rely on.

(He then glowered at Derek.)

FLAXLEY: For the most part anyway.

DEREK: Wow. Seriously, Flaxley? Are you still upset about that? It was months ago.

FLAXLEY: Yes! I called upon you to do me *one* little favour. One. In all the time you'd lived here in this town, I'd never asked you for anything, had I? But the one time I did, you told me to fuck off then pissed off home.

DEREK: I never!

(He ruffled his neck.)

DEREK: I called you a cunt.

FLAXLEY: And that makes it okay, does it?

DEREK: Look... I apologise, Flaxley. You and I go back a long way and I owe you a great debt. More than I can ever repay. As such, I'd happily do anything you ask of me. Happily! Except *that*. Derek the snitch is never going to be a thing. I won't do it. If I did, the criminals of this town would know that if they wanted to get away with a crime, the first thing they'd need to do is murder my wife and I.

(He nodded sternly.)

DEREK: So no. Never! My mind-reading skill will never be used for anything that might put my life at risk.

FLAXLEY: Fine. Point taken.

DEREK: Thank you.

FLAXLEY: You didn't have to call me a cunt though.

DEREK: And *you* didn't have to think that obscene reply, knowing full well I could hear it.

FLAXLEY: Right...

(They then started to laugh.)

FLAXLEY: We're turning into a right pair of grumpy old farts, aren't we?

DEREK: Well, maybe, but we'll never reach Bonson's level.

FLAXLEY: And the good news keeps on coming.

(Derek smiled.)

DEREK: To be fair though, Flaxley. Grumpy is the last word I'd use. Especially now.

FLAXLEY: Yeah?

DEREK: Definitely. You're extremely relaxed and looking forward to watching young Anoka thrive. Not to mention the joy you get from watching both sets of twins grow up. You're enjoying life right now. As am I. So, no. Definitely not grumpy. We're in a good place.

FLAXLEY: A good place mentally, yes. But a *great* place physically.

(He then stood up and cast his eye over the township.)

FLAXLEY: Tifaeris, you truly are the greatest township in the world.

(He then raised his tankard to toast the town.)

FLAXLEY: Cheers!

THE END

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