

FUTILE FANTASY CREATIONS PRESENT...

THE HAMMER FALLS ON CAPSWAY ISLAND.

(New Capsway Island, six months after the failed misogynist coup at the military training base.)

Just after darkness had descended, the six regular members of the 123rd Wraith containment unit were all out in the yard of their base. There had been a disciplinary breach and the leader, General Kasira Ashwood was in the middle of overseeing punishment for those concerned. Those three unfortunates being Brigadier Soapy Candiru, Sergeant Sika Owsley and Sergeant Ambre Solaire. Normally a lenient and somewhat forgiving boss, it was rare for Kasira to dish out such punishments, but such was her outrage at the breach, she felt she'd been left very little choice. And so, having made the three of them work all day to make up for their misdemeanour, she was now giving them an extra, physical punishment to hammer home the point. Such behaviour would not be tolerated!

Of the three soldiers involved, two of them had been extremely contrite, and had accepted their punishments without complaint. The third, however, 18 year-old Sika, was not about to suffer in silence. Although she knew she'd done wrong, as far as she was concerned, anything other than a light telling off was extremely harsh; a word she tended to use a lot. Being made to do a hundred press-ups therefore was never going to be something she'd take lightly. Barely half way through, as she pushed herself up for what felt like the millionth time, she pouted indignantly.

SIKA: This isn't fair! This is...

KASIRA: Harsh?

SIKA: Yes!

(She lowered herself then sighed emptily.)

SIKA: It was bad enough making us do slave labour all day, but to force us into physical labour is just wrong. And probably illegal! This is abuse! A flagrant violation of my human rights.

(At this point, Kasira's normally placid second in command, Commander Cayley Avanti, stepped forward and sneered at her angrily.)

CAYLEY: I violate your face in a minute, Sika!

(Sika whimpered. Cayley was the nice one of the unit and it was rare for her to use such terms.)

SIKA: What? Cayley...

CAYLEY: Don't you Cayley me! I spent most of yesterday making three hundred biscuits for Kasira's meeting of the generals tomorrow, and you three little shits got up in the night and ate the lot! The lot!!!

SIKA: But...

CAYLEY: No excuses! And shut up about slave labour. All I did was make you three replace them! It was the least you could do. That was just making you act responsibly. This is the first *actual* punishment you've had.

(She ruffled her neck.)

CAYLEY: And if you ask me, you're getting off lightly. You're lucky Kasira's in a good mood. If it was left to me, I'd lock you in a dark room with Nivea and her hands of lusty weirdness!

(Soapy and Sika both shrieked.)

SOAPY: No!!!

SIKA: Anything but Nivea!!!

CAYLEY: Stop whining then.

(Having watched quietly up until this point, the soldier in question, Brigadier Nivea Visage stepped forward, smirking lustfully)

NIVEA: No, no; keep whining. It's been a while since I performed a good groping.

SOAPY: And may it *continue* to be a while.

(She grimaced.)

SOAPY: Please, Cayley; anything but that. I wasn't even the one complaining. I accept what we did was wrong. Just let Nivea have Sika.

SIKA: You filthy turncoat!

(Kasira rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: Enough! Just get those bloody press-ups done.

SOAPY: Ma'am.

SIKA: Whatever.

(She pouted.)

SIKA: Though I'd be remiss if I didn't point out that you're being somewhat unfair on Soapy and me. Ambre fell asleep after twenty press-ups and you didn't even *try* to wake her. If we'd done that you'd have shouted at us.

(Kasira glanced down at where Ambre was fast asleep on the concrete then looked to Sika again.)

KASIRA: You know as well as I do things are different for Ambre.

SIKA: Are they though? If you ask me...

KASIRA: Which I didn't!

SIKA: She's just being sneaky because she knows you'll let her off.

CAYLEY: Ambre wouldn't know *how* to be sneaky.

SIKA: So you claim. This is blatant favouritism.

KASIRA: Do you *want* Cayley to throw you in that dark room with Nivea?

SIKA: Eek!!!

(She pouted.)

SIKA: Fine. I won't say another word.

KASIRA: See? She can be taught.

SIKA: Except this...

KASIRA: I stand corrected.

SIKA: Threatening us with Nivea's twisted, perverted hands is tantamount to a cruel and unusual punishment. As outlawed under federal law!

KASIRA: Don't lecture me on how I can and can't punish you, missy. I know the military's disciplinary handbook back to front.

SIKA: You do?

(She gasped.)

SIKA: Why would you feel the need to memorise *that*? Only a tyrant would do something like that.

KASIRA: I didn't feel the need to memorise it. Not once. Then *you* joined the bloody unit. I had to learn it back to front just because of you!

SIKA: That's such an exaggeration. I feel bullied!

SOAPY: You always feel bullied.

SIKA: That's because I keep getting bullied!

KASIRA: Nobody's bullying you!

CAYLEY: Yet!

SIKA: Okay, maybe not yet, but if you throw me at the mercy of old man-hands Nivea there, *that'll* be bullying. A gross violation of conduct; not to mention decency.

NIVEA: Man hands again? Wow, it's like she's begging for it.

SIKA: No, I'm not. Groping me is wrong. *And* it's a violation of the sexual conduct rules. Groping is strictly forbidden!

(Kasira smirked.)

KASIRA: It is, yes.

SIKA: See!

KASIRA: Between men and women.

SIKA: What?

KASIRA: In their infinite wisdom the regulation makers completely overlooked groping and unwanted physical contact between people of the same gender. There's not a single mention of it.

(Sika gulped.)

SIKA: Are you sure?

KASIRA: Yes. I've memorised the disciplinary rules, remember?

SIKA: Cripes.

KASIRA: So shut up and finish your press-ups or Nivea can *have* you!

(Sika whimpered then quickly stepped up her game. Too afraid to complain any further, she focussed hard on getting her punishment finished as soon as possible. Watching her do so, Cayley and Kasira shared a stealthy fist bump. Not about to let her off the hook so easily, however, Nivea knelt down before Sika's face and beamed with fiendish delight.)

NIVEA: Gruelling, isn't it? This punishment is way too severe, you should say something. Complain to Cayley; she's nice.

(Sika could only whimper again.)

NIVEA: Go on. Protest.

(She laughed an evil laugh.)

NIVEA: My hands are tingling. I'm feeling extra handsy today, you see? Your boobs are mine, all mine.

(Soapy glanced to her and shook her head as she continued to perform her push-ups.)

SOAPY: There's something seriously wrong with you, woman.

NIVEA: Nonsense. I just enjoy giving a good boob mashing; there's nothing wrong with that.

(She beamed.)

NIVEA: And Sika's tiny boobs are primed for the fondling.

SIKA: Tiny? They're not tiny! Cayley's are...

CAYLEY: Cayley's are what?

SIKA: Um...

(She gulped.)

SIKA: I'm sorry I ate your biscuits, Cayley.

CAYLEY: Right...

KASIRA: You didn't eat Cayley's biscuits. You ate my fellow general's biscuits.

CAYLEY: I just paid for the ingredients! Out of my own wages! Then spent the whole day baking them!!!

(She growled.)

CAYLEY: We should let Nivea have her anyway.

NIVEA: Please do!

SIKA: No!!!

KASIRA: Calm down, Sika.

(She then looked to Cayley and grimaced.)

KASIRA: You should calm down too, love.

CAYLEY: I've been calm all day, Kasira. I was as calm as they come when I made those three remake the biscuits. Now it's done, I want vengeance.

KASIRA: By that you mean you want to see the guilty parties punished.

CAYLEY: Yes. Vengefully.

KASIRA: Right...

(She rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: We made them remake the biscuits and the money for the ingredients will come out of their allowances...

SIKA: Mean!

SOAPY: Damn it.

KASIRA: Now they're doing a physical punishment. What more can I reasonably do?

CAYLEY: Lock Sika in a dark room with Nivea.

SIKA: Why just me???

CAYLEY: Because Soapy and Ambre have accepted their wrong doing and apologised profusely. All you've done is complain.

SIKA: No, I haven't. That's so harsh. I said I was sorry *this morning*!

CAYLEY: Then walked away, expecting to be let off.

SIKA: Which wasn't unreasonable in my book.

(Nivea beamed with joy.)

NIVEA: I'm here, Cayley. Just say the word and I'll defile her good and proper.

(Sika shrieked.)

SIKA: I'm sorry, Cayley!!!

CAYLEY: You'd better be!

SIKA: I am!

NIVEA: Don't let her off that easily. I'm primed and ready to go.

SOAPY: Wow. You truly are a pervert beyond words, Nivea.

NIVEA: Yup. And I have you two in my sights. Be afraid.

SOAPY: Us *two*? That's not fair, Cayley! I apologised profusely and I've accepted every punishment without complaint!

CAYLEY: I never suggested otherwise.

NIVEA: Yeah. You're in my sights just because I like groping you.

SOAPY: Weirdo.

SIKA: Right? She should be illegal.

CAYLEY: No, Sika; *you* should be illegal. I put my heart and soul into making those biscuits...

(She sighed.)

CAYLEY: I need to calm down, don't I?

KASIRA: Yes. Yes, you do.

NIVEA: I disagree. Lose it big time and throw her my way. Throw both of them, actually.

You can even throw in Ambre as well if you like. She committed the crime too, don't forget.

(Soapy sighed.)

SOAPY: No, that's not fair. Yes, she ate the biscuits, but only because Sika and I told her it was okay. She didn't know any better.

SIKA: Yeah...

(She grimaced.)

SIKA: Our only mistake was telling her she could have as many as she likes.

SOAPY: Right? We figured there was so many, we could gorge ourselves and nobody would notice anyway.

SIKA: We forgot that swift humans can eat that much.

SOAPY: Whoops.

(Kasira rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: For pity's sake, you two. You know damn well her diet needs to be regulated. That's the one of the first things you learn about swift-humans. Never tell them they can eat as much as they like.

CAYLEY: Why do you think they're banned from all you can eat buffets?

KASIRA: They can survive perfectly well on the same portions as us. Living day to day like we do. But they can also eat fifty times as much as we do then go without food for months.

SOAPY: Yeah... we forgot.

SIKA: That's because she's part wild animal, right?

KASIRA: Yes!

NIVEA: Yes, well, never mind that. I'm feeling double extra perverted today, so when am I getting my Sika shaped gift?

(She licked her lips.)

NIVEA: I'm gonna do such filthy things to you.

SIKA Go away.

SOAPY: Freak.

NIVEA: You love it really.

SIKA: No, I bloody don't.

NIVEA: Really? Let's test that theory, shall we? Cayley, permission to...

KASIRA: Stop it, Nivea. That's enough teasing for one day.

NIVEA: Aw.

(She sighed.)

NIVEA: Spoilsport. When you take away teasing these two chumps, you take away my reason for living.

KASIRA: Which doesn't reflect well on you, to be fair.

NIVEA: Oh I dunno. It just reflects that I like having fun. And teasing these two idiots is *great* fun. Not to mention easy. They try to tease me back but I always win.

SOAPY: Rubbish. We always give as good as we get.

SIKA: Yeah! We tease you all the time!

NIVEA: Not successfully, you don't.

(She beamed.)

NIVEA: I have no secrets and no shame; so there's nothing to tease me *about*.

(Just then, the army base's bell rung from just the other side of the gate. Baffled as to who could be calling at this hour, Kasira grimaced at Cayley.)

KASIRA: Who...

CAYLEY: Eksi and Lycia maybe?

KASIRA: Ooh, that'd be nice.

(With that, she strutted up to the gate then slowly levered it open. Having seen who was on the other side of it, however, she shrieked then slammed it shut again.)

KASIRA: We're not in!!!

(Everyone shared a baffled glance.)

CAYLEY: Who...

KASIRA: Shh. Pretend we're not here.

CAYLEY: But they saw you, surely.

NIVEA: And who...

(A man's voice then rose up from the other side of the gate.)

SVALBARD: Hello?

CAYLEY: Kasira...

(Kasira replied in a hushed voice.)

KASIRA: Quiet. They're Akkerians.

(Cayley looked enlightened then fell deathly silent. Akkerians, those affiliated to a religious order called the Akkerian Society, would travel from door to door, aggressively promoting their ridiculous beliefs. Even though mankind had literally *seen* the gods at the beginning of the wraith war, the Akkerian Society refused to believe they were real. They believed in a supreme being; one true god. And nothing, not even proof to the contrary would shake their unfounded belief. It was a belief they promoted with extreme vigour and gusto. All too often, non-believers would get stuck at their door for long periods of time, trying to get rid of them. To say they were pushy would be quite the understatement. Not about to suffer such a fate, Kasira had opted to do what millions of people had done all across the globe for centuries. Pretend there was nobody home. As such, the girls of her unit stood perfectly still, hoping and praying they'd swiftly give up and go away.)

For several moments, silence reigned, when the bell rang once again; this time much more aggressively. Not about to pander to it, however, the girls remained silent. Hoping this would be the last time, they shared a nervous glance, when a voice rose up from the other side of the gate.)

SVALBARD: Hello? Um... would you mind coming to the gate, please?

(Kasira pushed her fingers to her lips to discourage her unit mates from speaking.)

SVALBARD: I know you're in there. I saw you!

(Kasira furrowed her brow.)

KASIRA: That was someone else!

(She then grimaced with embarrassment, defeated by the condescending looks her unit mates were giving her.)

SVALBARD: Right... well, can *you* open the door, please?

KASIRA: Um... no. We're good, thanks.

SVALBARD: But I...

KASIRA: There are no non-believers here. Try the house down the road.

SVALBARD: But we're not here on religious duty.

(The girls gave each other a doubting glance.)

KASIRA: Is that so?

SVALBARD: Yes, we've come to see our little girl.

(Kasira flinched.)

KASIRA: What?

SVALBARD: Our daughter. Nivea!

(With lightning speed, everyone shot a glance in Nivea's direction, only to find she long since fled indoors.)

SVALBARD: We were on the mainland doing business and we'd thought we'd pop by.

(Kasira cringed.)

KASIRA: Right, so...

(She whimpered.)

KASIRA: I'd better let you in then.

SVALBARD: If you wouldn't mind.

KASIRA: Well... okay. But no preaching!

SVALBARD: Your terms are acceptable.

KASIRA: Right...

(She looked to Cayley.)

KASIRA: I suppose I'd better let him in.

CAYLEY: Are you sure? Those people are always on duty. They might not have come for that, but I can guarantee they'll be here all blooming night trying to convert us.

KASIRA: I know, but what can I do? I can't turn Nivea's parents away.

(Just then, Sika and Soapy appeared at her side.)

SIKA: You really can't.

SOAPY: This is too good an opportunity to miss.

SIKA: Right? Those people are chastity freaks and Nivea's an outrageous slut. I bet they have no idea.

SOAPY: Exactly. It's gonna be hilarious.

(Kasira furrowed her brow.)

KASIRA: Get back over there and finish your press-ups, you horrible little buggers.

(With a pout, Sika and Soapy then proceeded to do just that.)

KASIRA: And don't you dare go using this visit as an excuse to make Nivea's life a misery. (She beamed.)

KASIRA: Not until her parents have left, anyway.

(She then stepped up to the gate and yanked it open. Unsurprisingly, she received no gratitude whatsoever. More than a little miffed about being kept waiting, Svalbard and his wife stepped through the gates and glowered at her. Kasira could only grimace back at them uncomfortably. They were clearly true devotees. Svalbard's wife walked two feet behind him and her hair was covered by a headscarf. And she wasn't just moderately dressed; she was virtually hidden from the world; such was the way of the Akkerian people. Women we're very much second class citizens in their world and had to cover up, by order of the men folk. Knowing this was their way served to worry Kasira even further. Her unit wouldn't accept *any* form of misogyny lightly, and should they make an issue of it, an angry scene was a distinct possibility. As such, she was overcome by a horrible sense of foreboding.)

SVALBARD: About bloody time too.

KASIRA: I...

SVALBARD: Are you this discourteous to everyone who visits?

KASIRA: Absolutely.

SVALBARD: What?

KASIRA: Um... I mean, it's an army base. We have to be careful who we admit.

SVALBARD: Right...

(He shook his head.)

SVALBARD: Can I see my daughter, please?

(Cayley smiled.)

CAYLEY: Of course. Just as soon as these two young ladies have finished their penance, we'll take you inside.

(She gestured to Sika and Soapy then performed a double take. Dying to get inside to tease Nivea, they were doing their press-ups with extreme gusto.)

SVALBARD: Blimey. They're keen.

KASIRA: Um... yeah. Discipline, you see.

SVALBARD: Good to see. Though... why is the other one asleep?

CAYLEY: She wore herself out from all the hard work.

SVALBARD: Excellent.

(He nodded.)

SVALBARD: So when will they be...

(Sika and Soapy then jumped to their feet.)

SOAPY: Finished!

SIKA: Yup!

SOAPY: You only did ninety four.

SIKA: Oh, how would you know?

SOAPY: I counted!

SIKA: Oh, fine...

(She then jumped down and rapidly knocked out another six press-ups, before leaping back to her feet.)

SIKA: Done. Now can we please get inside and torment Nivea?

SVALBARD: Torment?

SOAPY: She meant, visit.

SVALBARD: I see. Very convincing. Anyway, shall we?

(Kasira gulped.)

KASIRA: You really want to head inside, do you?

SVALBARD: No, we'd like to stand out here all night conversing with you idiots.

(He rolled his eyes then glanced to his wife.)

SVALBARD: Come along, dear.

(His wife replied in a downtrodden voice. In their culture women were very much their husband's shadows and were only allowed to speak when addressed.)

INGRID: Yes, dear.

(Svalbard looked to Kasira.)

SVALBARD: Lead the way.

KASIRA: Right...

(With that, they all headed for the entrance to the base. Kasira did so with much in the way of apprehension. Sika and Soapy on the other hand, were chomping at the bit to make this is a night Nivea could only wish she could forget. Collecting Ambre along the way, Cayley very much shared Kasira's foreboding. This was going to be an awkward evening.)

Inside the base, a few minutes later, Kasira, Ambre, Sika and Soapy were all seated around the table with Nivea's parents. Cayley was in the kitchen making tea. Nivea was in her room. Kasira had called for her to join them, but so far she hadn't surfaced. And so they waited. Sika and Soapy did so with gloriously excited expressions on their faces. Taunting the notoriously promiscuous Nivea in front of her devoutly religious parents was going to be a joy beyond a joy. Having only just woken up, Ambre barely had a clue what was going on. Well-behaved and obedient by nature, she just sat there quietly as she tried to make sense of it all. Unfortunately for her, Nivea's father's questions and Kasira's defensive answers did not make it an easy task.

SVALBARD: There's no need to look so alarmed, young lady. I'm only asking about your views on a chastity because I'd hate to think there was a loose morality in the camp which might lead my daughter into temptation.

(Sika and Soapy burst out laughing.)

SVALBARD: What's so funny?

KASIRA: Um... private joke?

SVALBARD: I see. We don't like those, do we dear?

INGRID: No, dear.

SVALBARD: Now will you answer the question or not? As the leader, do you set a good example by live a chaste life?

KASIRA: I'm not sure how to answer that...

SVALBARD: Are you a virgin? There! Was that easier for you?

(Kasira glowered at the giggling duo of Sika and Soapy, before pouting at Svalbard.)

KASIRA: I'm not, no. I'm a married woman.

SVALBARD: Are you? Then why can't I see your ring?

SIKA: She's sitting down.

(Soapy almost choked on her own laughter at this point.)

SVALBARD: Sitting down? What on earth is she talking about?

KASIRA: She means she wants to volunteer for toilet cleaning duty for a month.

(Sika instantly fell silent and her face straightened.)

SVALBARD: Toilet duty? Who cares about that? We were discussing the reputation and chastity of this unit. It's important damn it. I won't have my innocent little Nivea corrupted.

(Having tried her hardest to set a good example by taking him seriously, Kasira could no longer keep a straight face. Struggling to keep her laughter in, she glanced away and scratched behind her ear.)

SVALBARD: What are you grinning at?

(Kasira gathered herself she then looked to Svalbard.)

KASIRA: Mr Visage, I can assure you, sir; nobody in this unit could *possibly* corrupt Nivea even if they wanted to.

SOAPY: Fact!

SIKA: Yup. That's the undiluted truth.

KASIRA: There's no way on earth *we* could teach *her* bad habits. Not a chance.

(Not about to explain that Nivea was *already* beyond corrupt and was a practitioner of virtually ever bad habit going, she then smiled and left it at that.)

SVALBARD: Well, that's good to hear.

KASIRA: And it was fun to say.

SVALBARD: Fun?

SIKA: I think she meant funny.

SVALBARD: Funny? You lot talk in riddles.

(He rolled his eyes.)

SVALBARD: So? Are you a virgin or are you married, which is it?

KASIRA: I'm married. Not that it's any of your business.

SVALBARD: Then where's your wedding ring?

SIKA: In the sea where she threw it.

KASIRA: Sika!

SIKA: What? You did.

SVALBARD: Why would you do that?

KASIRA: Well...

(She shrugged.)

KASIRA: To my native tribe, that's the tradition. Get married then throw the ring in the eternal sea for a life blessing.

SVALBARD: What sort of bizarre, twisted logic is that? Only god can grant you blessings.

The sea is just a thing. A big, watery mass full of salt.

(He glowered at her angrily.)

SVALBARD: You're lying to me! Where's the ring really?

(Kasira furrowed her brow.)

KASIRA: I just told you...

SVALBARD: I don't appreciate being lied too, young lady.

KASIRA: Fine. Fuck you then. If you must know, I threw it away because the cunt left me. Happy now?

(Svalbard and Ingrid gasped.)

SVALBARD: I've never heard such profanity; have you, dear?

INGRID: No, dear.

SOAPY: I know, right? Kasira's fucking incorrigible.

SIKA: Right? She swears like a bastard all the bloody time.

SVALBARD: I... I... I'm appalled. You're the people the army entrusted with my chaste and innocent daughter? You're savages!

(Kasira took a deep breath to calm herself then offered him a smile.)

KASIRA: Look, I apologise. You kept probing into my private matters and I lost my temper.

SOAPY: Must be a subterranean thing; Nivea enjoys a good probing too.

(Sika burst out laughing.)

SVALBARD: Something tickles you, madam? Is Nivea's pursuit of learning amusing to you? Of course she enjoys a good probing. I taught her to investigate life thoroughly. To explore the myriad of things man has to offer.

SIKA: Well she's certainly done that.

SOAPY: She has. Sometimes the men don't even need to offer.

SVALBARD: So she has a reputation for learning? That's good to hear.

(He nodded to Kasira.)

SVALBARD: I apologise if I offended you with my forwardness, but you must understand something. If Nivea ever hopes to find a man to rule over her, like I rule over my wife, she needs to be...

KASIRA: Let me guess; chaste and innocent?

SVALBARD: Exactly. And I just wanted to make sure you were a good influence on her that's all.

(He nodded then glanced to Sika and Soapy.)

SVALBARD: These two seem to have some kind of giggling disease. And what's with the silent one?

AMBRE: I'm Ambre.

SVALBARD: So you *can* speak?

AMBRE: I can, yes. I'm really good at that. I can read sometimes too.

SVALBARD: What?

(He looked to Kasira.)

SVALBARD: Is she a simpleton? I thought they exterminated those.

KASIRA: Wow!

SIKA: No, you did not...

SOAPY: We'll exterminate *you* in a minute.

KASIRA: Girls, calm down. He was just being a pig ignorant cunt.

SVALBARD: How dare you...

KASIRA: I dare. Sergeant Ambre is a valuable member of our unit and we love her very much. And we won't have her insulted like that.

SVALBARD: I didn't insult *anybody*! I just asked. Back in my day, they exterminated the defective.

KASIRA: Defective???

SVALBARD: Their term, not mine. I was always against it, wasn't I, dear?

INGRID: Very much so, dear.

SVALBARD: See?

(He nodded to Ambre.)

SVALBARD: You go, simpleton.

AMBRE: Go where?

SVALBARD: Right...

(He rolled his eyes.)

SVALBARD: Anyway, where's that sweet and innocent daughter of mine got to?

(Sika beamed.)

SIKA: I'll go and get her!

KASIRA: No, you won't! I called her and she said she'd be out in a minute.

(She glanced at Svalbard then looked away.)

KASIRA: She was praying, I think.

(Nivea's parents shared a joyful glance.)

SVALBARD: She's a credit to the faith. You may speak.

INGRID: I agree.

SVALBARD: I had a feeling you might.

(Just then, Nivea appeared in the doorway dressed in a headscarf, a thick jumper and a long skirt that protected her modesty. If she hadn't have been burning red with embarrassment, she'd have been the spitting image of her mother.)

NIVEA: Humble blessings to Akkeri. Hello father; mother.

(At once, her parents leapt up and rushed to give her a hug. Making quite the fuss of her, they were oblivious to the fact that Sika, Soapy, Ambre and Kasira were all in fits of hysterics at the table. A modestly dressed, holy Nivea was something they'd never dreamt they'd ever see. It was in complete contrast to the perverted woman they knew, and as such they were all shedding tears of laughter. Nivea's discomfort was radiating off her in waves. This was most definitely the most embarrassing moment of her life. It was a side of her she never wanted her friends to see. The ribbing was going to be immense and she knew it. Having decided to face the horror and get it over and done with, however, rather than fleeing, she gestured to the table then smiled.)

NIVEA: Please, take a seat.

SVALBARD: All in good time, my precious dumpling. Now let me take a look at you.

(He stepped back then smiled.)

SVALBARD: You look well. Doesn't she, dear?

INGRID: Absolutely, dear.

SVALBARD: And you're as beautiful as ever. Humble blessings to Akkeri.

(He nodded.)

SVALBARD: *Now* we can take a seat.

(Just then, Cayley entered the room with a tray containing two pots of tea and eight cups. Having taken one look at Nivea, however, she burst out laughing then about turned and walked back into the kitchen again.)

SVALBARD: There must be something in the water around here.

(Her parents then returned to their seats. As they did so, Nivea glared at Sika and Soapy, defying them to say anything that might land her in trouble with her deeply religious folks. It was ambitious and she knew it. Not about to let them go unwarned, however, she held her defiant glare right until the moment she took her seat at the table. She then turned and smiled at her parents.)

NIVEA: So... what brings you Capsway Island?

SVALBARD: I was here on business, so I figured we'd stop by and say hello.

NIVEA: How lovely. Humble blessing to Akkeri.

SOAPY: The humblest.

SIKA: We are but ants; ants I tell you.

(Svalbard gave them a baffled glance then looked to Nivea.)

SVALBARD: So, tell me. What do you get up to here, my precious?

NIVEA: Oh, you know. Army things.

SIKA: Like skinny dipping.

SOAPY: Groping boobies.

SIKA: Having copious amounts of sex with multiple sex partners.

SVALBARD: Do you mind? I was asking my daughter what *she* does?

SIKA: We know.

SVALBARD: Then let her answer.

(He sneered.)

SVALBARD: I'm not interest in what *you two* get up to! And I doubt Akkeri is either. Quite obviously he's already forsaken you.

SOAPY: And we're gutted.

SIKA: Yup. Whatever shall we do?

SVALBARD: Well you could always try *not* dressing like whores.

(He looked to Nivea.)

SVALBARD: Who knows? If you dressed more like my precious Nivea, you might even find some kind of salvation.

SIKA: Noted. From now on I'll dress like a knob.

SOAPY: You already do.

SIKA: Hey!

KASIRA: Girls, can you just bloody behave for once?

SVALBARD: Quite. Listen to your captain.

(He looked Kasira up and down.)

SVALBARD: But don't copy her dress sense.

KASIRA: Excuse me?

SVALBARD: Hell awaits, young lady.

KASIRA: Hey! You said you wouldn't preach!

SVALBARD: I wasn't preaching.

(He ruffled his neck.)

SVALBARD: I was advising.

KASIRA: Right...

SVALBARD: Now where was I? That's right. What do you get up to here, Nivea?

NIVEA: I... don't know.

SVALBARD: What?

NIVEA: You know... normal stuff? Like reading the holy text and praying.

SVALBARD: Humble blessing to Akkeri.

(Soapy smiled.)

SOAPY: That's true actually, she prays a lot.

(Nivea looked most relieved.)

NIVEA: See? Like *she* says. I pray pretty much all the time.

SIKA: Yup. She prays on Soapy and I several times a day.

SOAPY: Not to mention the local men folk.

SIKA: But despite her being a sexual predator of the scariest order, we still think the world of her.

SOAPY: Yup. She's *our* precious dumpling too.

SVALBARD: You know what? I'm getting a little bit sick of you two and your...

(Just then, Ambre leant to Kasira and spoke up in a baffled voice.)

AMBRE: Kasira, why is Nivea is dressed like a silly sausage all of a sudden?

(Nivea gasped.)

NIVEA: I dress like this all the time!

AMBRE: No, you don't.

NIVEA: Ambre!

(She whimpered.)

NIVEA: She's such a wind up.

AMBRE: No, I'm not!

(She pouted.)

AMBRE: I preferred you in that red mini dress you had on earlier. You look really weird in that silly costume; it's giving me the creeps.

NIVEA: See? She's a tease.

(She looked to Ambre and desperately mouthed for her to shut up.)

AMBRE: She's telling me to shut up now.

SVALBARD: And shut up you shall.

(He furrowed his brow.)

SVALBARD: Like I said, I was always very much against it, but having met you, exterminating the retarded suddenly makes sense.

(As a gasp of horror rose from the table, Svalbard nodded to himself then turned to face Nivea.)

SVALBARD: Now... what's that face for?

(Nivea just looked him up and down then punched him full in the face.)

SIKA: Holy shit!

SOAPY: He is, yes.

(Everyone then upped and glanced to where Svalbard was spark out on the floor.)

KASIRA: You knocked him out.

(Nivea's mother was aghast.)

INGRID: Nivea!!!

NIVEA: What?

INGRID: Good shot!

NIVEA: Huh?

INGRID: You could have no idea how long I've ached to see *somebody* do that.

NIVEA: Right...

(Kasira smirked then knelt by Svalbard in a bid to revive him.)

INGRID: That felt good, right? Really liberating. You were awesome. Whack! Right in the kisser. He didn't even see it coming. Good girl.

NIVEA: It did feel good, yes. He's a terrible person, mum. Ambre didn't deserve that.

(She looked to Ambre.)

NIVEA: I'm sorry if his words hurt you, sweetheart.

AMBRE: Why would they?

NIVEA: Well...

SIKA: You don't know what exterminate means, do you, love?

(Ambre blushed.)

AMBRE: No.

(Kasira then gasped and looked up from the ground.)

KASIRA: Um... girls? I think he's dead.

NIVEA: What?

INGRID: Dead???

KASIRA: Yeah...

SOAPY: When you say you *think*...

KASIRA: No, he's dead. Like... gone.

NIVEA: Whoops.

(Ingrid looked to Nivea in horror for a moment then clenched her fists triumphantly.)

INGRID: Yes!

(She beamed then yanked off her headscarf, before throwing it on the floor and proceeding to jump up and down on it.)

INGRID: I'm free!!! Woohoo!!! I won't be needing *this* anymore!

(She then yanked off her jumper, threw it across the room and resumed dancing on her headscarf; her bare breasts exposed to the world.)

KASIRA: Um... girls? This is really bad.

SIKA: Not for mankind.

KASIRA: Don't be a dick, Sika. Nivea just murdered her father.

NIVEA: And I'm okay with it.

KASIRA: Yes, but that doesn't alter the fact that murder is a capital offence.

(Nivea gasped then burst into tears.)

NIVEA: I'm going to jail!

(At once, Sika and Soapy rushed in to console her. Ambre just sat there looking baffled by it all.)

NIVEA: I'm going to the gallows.

SIKA: Not if we can help it.

SOAPY: Which we can't.

SIKA: No, but I meant well.

(Just then, Cayley paced into the room again with the tray of tea held out before her. She then froze. Before her, Svalbard was laying motionlessly on the floor, his wife was dancing for joy with her boobs jiggling all about the place and Nivea was bawling her eyes out. With a grimace, she glanced across them all then mused to herself.)

CAYLEY: Well... that escalated quickly.

(She then took another look at Nivea, burst out laughing and headed back into the kitchen. A helpful contribution it was not.)

KASIRA: Girls, we need to do something.

SIKA: Agreed. Soapy, you contact the authorities and we'll detain Nivea until they come.

NIVEA: Why, you rotten...

KASIRA: We're not going to do that.

(She looked to Ingrid.)

KASIRA: Will you help us cover this up for Nivea's sake?

INGRID: Meh. Just throw the cunt in the sea.

NIVEA: Mother!

INGRID: What? I've been dying to have a good swear for decades.

NIVEA: Yeah, but...

INGRID: Now get changed. Go on. Put that red mini dress on that the nice girl mentioned before.

(Ambre beamed.)

AMBRE: She called me a nice girl.

KASIRA: Yes, well, never mind that. What are we going to do? Disposing of a body isn't as easy as you'd think.

INGRID: Actually...

(She looked to Soapy.)

INGRID: Are you a person or a fish?

SOAPY: I'm a human being!

SIKA: She's a fish. A penis fish to be precise.

SOAPY: Hey!

INGRID: What?

NIVEA: It's true...

(She giggled.)

NIVEA: She's named after a fish that swims up people's naughty bits.

INGRID: A Candiru?

NIVEA: Yes! How did you know?

INGRID: I was tempted to put one in your father's bath, but they're really hard to find, sadly. (She sighed.)

INGRID: So I opted to poison his food with arsenic instead. Even that didn't work.

NIVEA: Mum, are you saying...

INGRID: I am, yes. I've been trying to bump him off for years.

(She exhaled.)

INGRID: Thank fuck we decided to come here.

SIKA: You mean thank Akkeri.

INGRID: Fuck Akkeri. What idiot believes that nonsense nowadays? The true gods revealed themselves for pity's sake. Only a first class cunt would deny their existence after that.

Sadly, I was born into one such family of dickheads.

NIVEA: I hear that.

(She then smirked at Sika and Soapy devilishly.)

NIVEA: This is my mum. A woman who's harboured murderous intentions for decades. A bit of a psycho, some might say. And I take after her. Are you sure you want to keep teasing me all the time?

(Sika and Soapy gulped.)

SIKA: Well...

SOAPY: Um...

SIKA: I do actually.

SOAPY: Yeah, it's worth it.

KASIRA: Yeah, that's great an' all, but may I remind you we have a dead body to deal with?

INGRID: Oh, yeah. Easy peasy. This fish can swim his body out to sea and dump it among the sharks. Sorted.

SOAPY: This fish is a human being.

INGRID: But mostly a fish.

SOAPY: No...

KASIRA: Never mind arguing. Soapy can you...

SOAPY: No.

KASIRA: Soapy...

SOAPY: I'm not refusing, Kasira. I just can't. There's only one of me and he's a dead weight. It won't be like giving Ambre rides on my back, it'd be like swimming with a cannon strapped to my back.

KASIRA: Shit. Then...

(Just then, Cayley returned. She took one look at Nivea however then burst out laughing and left again.)

NIVEA: Cayley, can you not do that?

(Cayley called out from the kitchen.)

CAYLEY: Get those ridiculous clothes off then.

NIVEA: I...

CAYLEY: And while you're doing that Sika and I will fly the dead body over the old Capsway Island and drop him in the lava flow.

KASIRA: Is that still going?

CAYLEY: Just about, yes. It'll dissolve the body and all will be well.

NIVEA: The only loose end being the two mouthy girls who know too much.

(She glowered at Sika and Soapy.)

SIKA: We won't say anything.

SOAPY: Nope. What happens on base stays on base.

KASIRA: Make sure it does.

NIVEA: Or you'll both be going the same way.

KASIRA: No they won't.

NIVEA: Stop spoiling my fun.

KASIRA: Excuse me?

NIVEA: Stop spoiling my fun, *ma'am*.

KASIRA: Much better. Now go and get changed so Cayley can come out and help Sika dispose of the body.

NIVEA: Ma'am.

INGRID: Fetch me a cute dress too, love. From today onwards, I'm going to start to live!

NIVEA: Awesome!

(Nivea then paced out of the room, beaming with delight. As she did so, Sika sighed.)

SIKA: Why do I have to go?

SOAPY: Who else is gonna help Cayley fly over there? Ambre? Kasira?

AMBRE: Not me. I don't know *how* to fly. Sika should do it.

KASIRA: And Sika will.

SIKA: Shit.

(She sighed.)

SIKA: Fine.

KASIRA: Excellent. Get it done as soon as...

SIKA: Possible! I know.

KASIRA: No. As soon as you've finished your tea. Cayley...

(Cayley called out from the kitchen.)

CAYLEY: Coming.

KASIRA: Excellent.

(She grinned playfully.)

KASIRA: Just try not to murder anyone else in the meantime, Nivea.

SIKA: Nivea's gone to her room.

KASIRA: Shit.

In the base's courtyard a short while later, Sika and Cayley were standing face to face on either side of Svalbard's body with their wings fully extended from their backs. Standing over Svalbard's head, Kasira looked down at his body with an anxious expression on her face. Glancing over her shoulder, Ambre and Soapy shared her sense of unease. As did Nivea and her mother; now both wearing skimpy dresses.

KASIRA: Okay, let's get this done, ladies. The sooner he's out of our base, the happier I'll be.

SIKA: We're ready when you guys are.

CAYLEY: Yup.

NIVEA: Okay, Soapy. Let's get this done.

(They shared a determined nod.)

SOAPY: Right.

(With that, they stepped in between Sika and Cayley then stooped in readiness to pick up Svalbard's body. Once down in a crouched position, Nivea looked to Soapy then puffed out.)

NIVEA: On three, okay?

SOAPY: Okay.

NIVEA: And brace yourself. The fat bastard must weigh a tonne.

SOAPY: You have no love for that man whatsoever, do you?

NIVEA: I grieve in *my own* way.

SOAPY: And what way is that?

NIVEA: An honest one. He was a cunt and I'm glad he's dead.

(She nodded.)

NIVEA: Now let's do this. Ready?

SOAPY: Yup.

NIVEA: Right. One, two, three, lift.

(With that, they yanked his body from the floor, grimacing with the strain as they managed to hold him in a seated position.)

CAYLEY: Perfect. Hold him like that!

SIKA: Yeah. Now pass him to us!

NIVEA: Right!

(She then stood there looked baffled.)

NIVEA: How are we gonna do that exactly?

(As they stood there looking perplexed, Kasira bit her lip.)

KASIRA: What's the hold up, guys?

SIKA: Those two are holding him exactly where *we* need to hold him. Under his legs and behind his back.

KASIRA: So?

CAYLEY: So we can't get in because they're there.

AMBRE: Tell them to move then.

SOAPY: She's so cute.

AMBRE: Patronising!

SOAPY: Sorry.

(Kasira glanced to where Nivea and Soapy were holding the body in a seated position then sighed. Cayley and Sika literally had no way of taking him from them.)

KASIRA: It's not gonna work, girls.

NIVEA: I agree.

(She then lowered her arms and allowed her father's body to plop face first onto the ground.)

NIVEA: So how are we gonna do this?

KASIRA: Good question.

(She mused to herself then looked to Cayley.)

KASIRA: And you definitely can't get down there to lift him up yourselves?

CAYLEY: We can *get down* there, Kasira. The issue is, when we crouch our feathers scrape the floor.

SIKA: We can't take off like that.

KASIRA: And you're sure, are you?

SIKA: Yes.

CAYLEY: We can't catch air beneath our wings when our wings are on the floor.

KASIRA: Hmm... sounds sciencey.

(Nivea leant to her mum.)

NIVEA: Kasira's terrible at science.

INGRID: Evidently. Who says "sciencey"?

NIVEA: Right?

(As the two of them giggled, Kasira turned to face them.)

KASIRA: Rather than mocking me, would it be too much to ask for you to help me come up with a solution?

CAYLEY: Before rigor mortis sets in. We need him to be in seated position to carry him.

AMBRE: Why don't you just pick him up *before* releasing your wings?

SIKA: Ambre. Ambre, Ambre, Ambre...

AMBRE: Yes?

SIKA: Poor, uneducated Ambre...

AMBRE: That's me.

SIKA: That'd be a no, love.

CAYLEY: Nice try, Ambre, but it's a natural reaction for our arms to move outwards when our wings sprout.

SIKA: We're guaranteed to drop him. Poor, poor, clueless Ambre.

AMBRE: Be nice.

SIKA: Be smart!

AMBRE: I don't need brains.

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: Unlike you, I have boobies.

(Sika was aghast.)

SIKA: Ambre? Why would you? And besides...

AMBRE: Kasira told me to say that next time you say I'm stupid.

SIKA: Oh, did she now?

KASIRA: I did, yes. Now shut up.

(She rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: So you need to grab him while standing up with your wings out, do you, Cayley? There's no other way?

(Nivea's mum looked to Cayley.)

INGRID: Just crouch down with your wings out, scoop him up then stand up again with him in your arms. Your wings won't be on the floor when you try to fly then.

SIKA: Ingrid. Ingrid, Ingrid, Ingrid. Poor, uneducated...

NIVEA: Do you want a punch in the face like my dad, Sika?

(She whimpered.)

SIKA: No.

NIVEA: Then don't insult my mother. I've got a perfect horrible parent *down there* you could be insulting. Why pick on the one I like?

SIKA: Sorry.

INGRID: What were you going to say anyway?

SIKA: Poor, uneducated Ingrid.

INGRID: *After* that!

SIKA: Oh. Something about saying no, I think.

CAYLEY: Why? It's a good idea. And an *obvious* idea. We should be blooming embarrassed we didn't think of it ourselves.

SIKA: I am embarrassed! Why do you think I was making excuses?

CAYLEY: Sika...

(Sika sighed.)

SIKA: Fine. Let's do that then.

CAYLEY: Let's.

(Sika pouted.)

SIKA: Gonna get my feathers dirty now.

(She kicked some dust from the ground.)

SIKA: Whoever was on yard sweeping duty did a lousy job.

KASIRA: That was you!

(Sika gulped.)

SIKA: Um... let's get this done.

CAYLEY: Nope. Nope, nope, nope. I've changed my mind!

KASIRA: Cayley?

CAYLEY: I only washed my fathers this morning, Kasira. Look at them. See how gleaming they are? If you think I'm dusting Sika's dirty floor with them, you can forget it.

KASIRA: Seriously? I thought I was the girly one?

SIKA: Actually, in Cayley's defence, her feathers look awesome. I wouldn't want to get them dusty either.

CAYLEY: Thank you.

(Nivea rolled her eyes.)

NIVEA: You're so vain, Cayley. You should be more like Sika. She doesn't care *what* sort of unholy, skanky mess *she* looks like.

SIKA: Yeah?

NIVEA: Yup.

SIKA: Well, you should try not killing your father; then we wouldn't be in this mess.

NIVEA: Nope. Tried that for years. It sucked.

INGRID: Royally.

KASIRA: Girls...

(She sighed.)

KASIRA: Look, Cayley, if you do this, I'll personally help you groom your plumage again this evening. Feather by feather.

(Cayley gasped.)

CAYLEY: No mere layperson is going to groom *my* feathers, Kasira. It's a skill your race doesn't possess.

KASIRA: Cayley...

AMBRE: Um...

KASIRA: If you tell me what to do, you know I'll do a bang up job. Beauty treatments are kind of my thing.

CAYLEY: But feathers are not.

AMBRE: Kasira?

KASIRA: Just a minute, love.

AMBRE: But I have an idea.

SIKA: Yay. I love Ambre's ideas, they're hilarious.

SOAPY: Right? Silence, everyone. Ambre's about to make a funny.

AMBRE: No, I'm not.

NIVEA: We'll be the judge of that.

AMBRE: I was just going to say, if I turn into a gazelle, you can stick him on my back and Cayley and Sika can take him from there.

(Nivea, Sika and Soapy all burst out laughing.)

AMBRE: What's so funny?

KASIRA: Yeah, that's a great idea. Why are you laughing?

(Nivea relented laughing and cringed.)

NIVEA: To save face, mostly.

(Sika then sighed.)

SIKA: And because it was easier than crying.

SOAPY: Uh-huh. I hate it when she has great ideas. We end up looking silly.

KASIRA: Morons.

NIVEA: That's fair.

(Kasira then smiled at Ambre.)

KASIRA: Transform then, sweetie. And when...

(She watched Ambre turn into a gazelle then smiled.)

KASIRA: At least I have one professional in the ranks.

CAYLEY: Harsh.

SIKA: That's my line.

CAYLEY: I'm borrowing it!

KASIRA: Harsh indeed.

(She mimicked Cayley in a mocking voice.)

KASIRA: I can't do any soldiering today, Kasira; I don't want to get my feathers dirty.

CAYLEY: We're not soldiering, Kasira; we're committing a crime.

KASIRA: Whatever. Nivea, Soapy, just get him loaded on Ambre's back, will you?

NIVEA: Ma'am.

SOAPY: Ma'am.

(With that, Nivea and Soapy pace over to the corpse then proceeded to scoop it up, before struggling over to Ambre. With Ingrid's help they then hauled him onto Ambre's back.)

KASIRA: Perfect. Now...

(Without prompting, Ambre then headed in between Sika and Cayley so they could relieve her of him.)

KASIRA: Quick now. Gazelles aren't elephants, she must be feeling the strain.

SIKA: Okay.

CAYLEY: Let's get this done, Sika.

SIKA: Yup.

(With that, they stepped either side of Ambre then proceeded to reach underneath him.

Moments later, when he was secure in their arms, they looked to one another then nodded.)

CAYLEY: Ready?

SIKA: He's heavy.

CAYLEY: That's wasn't the question!

SIKA: Yes, I'm ready; let's just get started.

CAYLEY: Okay then. Move forwards, Ambre.

(Ambre promptly obliged.)

CAYLEY: Okay. One, two, three, go!

(With that, they set their wings in motion then slowly lifted off the ground.)

SOAPY: Yes! Success.

(As they gradually rose into the air, Ambre trotted back to Kasira's side then joined her in watching their two airborne allies in their attempts to gain altitude. It wasn't long, however, before they noticed something was very much amiss.)

NIVEA: Not going very high are they?

KASIRA: Or very far.

(Sure enough, they were hovering some ten feet off the ground, wincing with the strain.)

INGRID: Should have known. The fat cunt is too heavy.

KASIRA: Looks like it.

INGRID: I can't even act surprised. Having sex with that man was like being bounced on by a walrus.

NIVEA: Mum!

INGRID: What? It was!

NIVEA: Even so. I don't want to hear...

(She then grimaced as she watched Svalbard slip through Cayley and Sika's fingers then plummet back to the ground.)

KASIRA: Well, that's not...

(Moments later, much to everyone's dismay, Svalbard hit the concrete and screamed out in agony.)

SVALBARD: Ow!!! My legs!!! My arms!!! Just... all of me!!! Ow!!!

(Ingrid grimaced.)

INGRID: Kasira?

KASIRA: Yes?

INGRID: Apparently he's not as dead as you suggested.

KASIRA: Yeah. I may have miscalculated there.

(Coming in to land, Sika and Cayley stared down at the paining man in their midst then cringed.)

SIKA: Cayley. He's not dead.

CAYLEY: You think?

(She then held her palms in his direction and threw out some healing magic. Within seconds, as his body absorbed the healing, he felt all his pains wither away then he drew a sigh of relief.)

NIVEA: I kind of wish you hadn't done that, Cayley.

CAYLEY: What?

NIVEA: He's gonna be fucking livid.

(Sure enough, Svalbard then leapt to his feet and growled.)

SVALBARD: What the hell's going on? You struck me!!!

(He then gasped in horror at the sight of his wife and daughter dressed in skimpy dresses.)

SVALBARD: What the hell are you wearing?

INGRID: Clothes! Nice clothes! Sensible clothes! I'm done dressing like a twat just to appease you and you're ridiculous belief in some bell end who clearly doesn't exist!

Enough! I'm leaving you!

NIVEA: So am I! I mean, I'm done with appeasing you! *I'm* not leaving you, obviously; I live *here*.

INGRID: He gets it!

NIVEA: Right.

SVALBARD: Leaving me? Me??? How dare you? I'll ruin you! You see if I don't! I'll report you to the elders and you'll be shunned! Ostracised! Out on you ear without a single bit of currency to your name, woman!

(He growled.)

SVALBARD: Abandoning me; whatever next?

INGRID: I also insulted your god, don't forget. Tell that to your chums too.

SVALBARD: Oh, I will. You're finished! Finished, I say!

(He then glowered at Nivea.)

SVALBARD: As for you striking me... big mistake. Nobody does that and lives! I'm going to beat you black and blue, missy!

(He then pounded his fists and took a step forward, before being charged into by a rampaging gazelle. At once, his feet left the ground and he thudded into the heavy iron gates.)

SVALBARD: Ow!!!

NIVEA: Priceless. Dad, meet my friend, Ambre. She doesn't like it when people threaten her friends.

(In that moment, Ambre returned to her human form then nodded defiantly.)

AMBRE: No, she does not.

(She then stepped to Kasira's side.)

AMBRE: I'm in trouble now, aren't I? You told me never to do that.

KASIRA: Do what? I didn't see anything.

AMBRE: I charged him with my horns.

KASIRA: You patted him on the back and wished him well? What a nice girl.

AMBRE: No, I...

KASIRA: I said what a nice girl. Now let's leave it at that.

AMBRE: I'm confused.

(Nivea placed her arm around Ambre's shoulders.)

NIVEA: She's making an exception, love.

AMBRE: Oh.

(Ambre beamed.)

AMBRE: Yay.

(Fuming angrily, Svalbard staggered to his feet then growled.)

SVALBARD: Fucking women. I'm leaving!

(Everyone cheered.)

NIVEA: Try not to fall off the boat and drown on your way home.

INGRID: Don't try too hard though.

SVALBARD: Silence, you.

(He sneered.)

SVALBARD: I'm going to ruin you, you hear? Ruin you!!!

(He then yanked open the door and staggered through it, swearing as he went. Eager to make sure he was really leaving, Nivea immediately climbed onto a bench and peered over the wall to watch him. The others gathered in the centre of the courtyard.)

KASIRA: Well... that was interesting.

CAYLEY: To say the least.

SOAPY: I'm just glad Nivea's off the hook for murder.

(Ingrid smiled.)

INGRID: Nivea means a lot to you, does she?

SOAPY: She's the source of half our nightmares.

SIKA: Yeah. We weren't making it all up earlier. She really does grope us.

SOAPY: And sleep with men in their droves.

SIKA: But mostly it's the groping we're worried about.

SIKA: You should have a word with her.

INGRID: I see.

(She nodded.)

INGRID: And tell her not to do this?

(She then reached out and honked one of Soapy and Sika's boobs with each hand.)

SIKA: Hey!

SOAPY: Why?

INGRID: Sounded like fun!

KASIRA: Aw, crap. She's just like her daughter.

CAYLEY: Another one was the last thing we needed.

INGRID: I'm just playing around.

AMBRE: That's what Nivea says.

INGRID: Awesome!

(Just then, Nivea gasped then glanced back at them from the wall.)

NIVEA: Kasira?

KASIRA: Yeah?

NIVEA: It might be an idea to start the evening patrol now.

KASIRA: Oh?

NIVEA: Yeah. A group of wraiths are attacking my dad.

CAYLEY: Fuck.

KASIRA: Get out there, girls!

NIVEA: Wait!!!

(At once, all eyes turned to Nivea.)

KASIRA: What? What is it?

NIVEA: Just a second...

KASIRA: Nivea?

NIVEA: Just... okay. It's cool, you can go and kill the wraiths now. I just wanted to make sure they killed him first.

KASIRA: For pity's sake, woman.

(She rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: Cayley, Sika, Soapy; it's your shift tonight. You'd better get cracking.

CAYLEY: Ma'am!

(With that, Cayley, Sika and Soapy all hurried out of the gate.)

KASIRA: And while they're doing that I'd better write up a wraith report.

INGRID: Wraith report?

KASIRA: Explaining how he died after visiting our base.

NIVEA: Say he died saving my mum from a wraith attack on the way here. Single-handedly took them all on, so she could run to safety.

INGRID: What? He did nothing of the sort. He'd stormed off on his own after I decided to leave him.

NIVEA: Yes, but there's no need to broadcast that. If we make out he died in the course of being a good husband to his devoted wife, you can return to the community and inherit all his assets. Then you can move away and start your new life; a life of wealth. The life you want.

INGRID: Wearing pretty dresses, groping boobies and being an almighty slut, you mean?

NIVEA: The good life, yes.

INGRID: I see.

(She beamed at Kasira.)

INGRID: Write that. He died saving me.

(Kasira chuckled.)

KASIRA: Consider it done.

(They then headed back inside.)

KASIRA: Hey! Don't grope *me*!!!

INGRID: Sorry!

KASIRA: You fucking will be!

NIVEA: Kasira and Cayley are off limits, mum.

INGRID: Oh. Why?

NIVEA: They outrank me.

INGRID: Gotcha.

(She then grabbed Ambre's backside.)

AMBRE: Hey!

KASIRA: Wow. The sooner we send you packing the better.

INGRID: You're kicking me out?

KASIRA: As soon as I've written that report. You can take a copy with you.

INGRID: Awesome.

KASIRA: Now hands off!

Some ten minutes later, having been issued with a copy of Kasira's report, Ingrid stood at the gate of the base saying her farewells to Nivea. Fifteen feet behind them, Kasira and Ambre stood together, face to face, pretending they weren't listening in. Oblivious to their presence, Nivea only had one concern on her mind. Looking directly into her mother's eyes, she reiterated a point she'd already made three times.

NIVEA: No, mum. Don't go until you hear a wraith whistle.

(Ingrid rolled her eyes.)

INGRID: I know. You said. Several times. Just how absent-minded do you think I am?

NIVEA: You keep swaying closer to the exit.

INGRID: I was readjusting my stance, that's all. I can't stand perfectly still, love. I'm not a bloody statue.

NIVEA: Fine. Just...

INGRID: I know. Don't go until I hear a wraith whistle.

NIVEA: It shouldn't be long. As soon as one of them blows the whistle, we'll know they have the wraith's attention then it'll be safe for you to walk back to the port.

INGRID: Nivea, love; I haven't seen you for years. Not since you last came home on leave. So, yeah, it's been a while, but I didn't lose the ability to follow simple instructions in that time. You can stop telling me that now.

NIVEA: Right.

(Ingrid smiled.)

INGRID: I was always worried about how army life would suit you, love. You'd always tell us you were doing fine and that you really liked your unit-mates, but I feared for you. Being a lone Akkeri girl in a world full of non-believers is hard. I remember that from *my* time in the army. They dressed in as little as they liked and said whatever they felt like. They had so much fun, while I continued to live a quiet, ascetic life; envying their every freedom. I was the weirdo, the outcast; the one they chose to tease. But your friends here had never even seen the Akkeri side of you until tonight, had they?

NIVEA: Nope.

(She groaned.)

NIVEA: And boy are they gonna take the piss.

INGRID: Really? But they seem so nice.

NIVEA: They are, but...

(She cringed.)

NIVEA: Part of our camaraderie is to rip the piss out of every little fault. And fuck me; did I give them a shitload of ammo to shoot me with tonight.

INGRID: I see.

NIVEA: Kasira will tease me a little, so will Cayley. Ambre won't; she probably has no idea what's going on. Sika and Soapy on the other hand...

INGRID: The two young'uns?

NIVEA: Yeah. We have this dynamic, you see? We bait each other pretty much all the time.

(She whimpered.)

NIVEA: Those two are gonna have a field day.

INGRID: I see. Just be sure to give as good as you get then, love.

NIVEA: Oh, that's not even in doubt, mum. I'll grope the little shits until their eyeballs fall out.

(Ingrid chuckled.)

INGRID: Fun. I can't wait until I get my inheritance and move away from the community. I'm gonna grope every bugger I meet.

NIVEA: Um... no, mum; that's not how it works. It's just a prank to use on your friends.

INGRID: It is?

NIVEA: Yes.

INGRID: Oh.

(She then shrugged.)

INGRID: I'll just have to make friends fast then, won't I?

(Nivea chuckled.)

NIVEA: I'm loving this new, liberated side of you.

INGRID: It's not new, love. It's always been there. The community merely suppressed it. I was never happy in a clan that made me a subservient drone in order to worship a god who quite obviously doesn't exist. I think a lot of girls feel that way.

NIVEA: I know I certainly did. I really didn't appreciate being treated like a servant to the men in our community while all the other girls at my school were living fun lives. That sucked.

INGRID: Been there, love.

NIVEA: So I stopped it. On my first day in training, I waved you and dad off at the gate, went inside the building then headed straight to the toilet block.

INGRID: That's right. You had chronic diarrhoea that morning.

NIVEA: No, I didn't.

INGRID: No?

NIVEA: Where did you get that from?

INGRID: I just thought...

NIVEA: I went into the toilet block and changed into a nice dress.

(She nodded.)

NIVEA: What I told you and dad was a bag of cuddly toys, was actually a bag full of ordinary clothes I'd been collecting.

INGRID: Wow. Really?

NIVEA: Yeah. I was the weird girl at school, mum; and that was enough. I wasn't going to be the weird religious nut at the academy as well. Nobody had the slightest clue I was raised under Akkeri culture; not a clue.

INGRID: But how did you afford a bag full on nice clothes?

NIVEA: Well... remember when you told dad that he gives me way too much pocket money?

INGRID: Yeah?

NIVEA: He gave me way too much pocket money.

INGRID: Oh.

NIVEA: So I bought clothes with it, looking forward to the day I entered the academy and could live like a normal person.

(She then became acutely aware of giggling behind her.)

KASIRA: Normal?

AMBRE: *She's* not normal.

KASIRA: I know, right?

(Nivea turned to them and furrowed her brow.)

NIVEA: Do you mind?

KASIRA: What? Never mind us, Nivea. We're just standing here; minding our own business.

AMBRE: While listening to you.

(Kasira spammed her forehead.)

KASIRA: Ambre...

AMBRE: Yes?

KASIRA: Just... forget it.

(Nivea shook her head at them then looked to her mum.)

NIVEA: So, you're gonna be okay, are you?

INGRID: Okay? I'm gonna fucking thrive, girl. My life starts here. Don't you worry about that. I'm gonna be fine; more than fine.

NIVEA: Good.

INGRID: Just promise me you'll continue to live the life you're living. Maximising the fun.

NIVEA: Now that I can do.

INGRID: Promise me, love. Never revert to following your father's righteous ways.

NIVEA: I won't mum. I'm a naughty girl.

INGRID: Good girl.

NIVEA: No, a naughty girl.

INGRID: Don't make me slap you.

NIVEA: Right...

(They then shared an amused grin before stepping close to hug one another.)

INGRID: I love you, dumpling.

NIVEA: I love you too, mum.

(She then stepped back from the hug.)

INGRID: Right. It's been great seeing you, love, but it's time I was on my way I think. You look after yourself, sweetheart; and don't forget to write, okay? B-bye.

(As her mum turned away, Nivea spammed her forehead.)

NIVEA: Seriously?

INGRID: What?

NIVEA: Not until you hear the wraith whistle!

INGRID: Oh, yeah.

(They then stood there giggling together.)

NIVEA: I fear for you, mum. I really do.

On the hillside a short distance from the base, at this time, Cayley was pacing up a sharp slope in between Sika and Soapy. Her face bore the look of a woman with very little faith in humanity left. On either side of her, her two young comrades were gushing excitedly about all the mean things they planned to say and do to taunt Nivea once they returned to base. To say she despaired of them would be an outrageous understatement.

SIKA: I'll never call her Nivea ever again. From now on she's Princess Dumpling.

SOAPY: Right? Or Madame Dumpling the Chaste.

SIKA: There's so many choices.

(She beamed.)

SIKA: I can't wait to start trying them out.

SOAPY: I know, right? This patrol can't end soon enough for me.

(Cayley rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: Finally; something we can agree on.

SIKA: It's gonna be great fun, Cayley.

SOAPY: Yeah. Don't even pretend you're not going to join in.

SIKA: You have to. It's like the law.

SOAPY: No. *It is* the law!

SIKA: I stand corrected. Has to be done. For pity's sake, at one point she even said, "I'm a good girl, mummy."

SOAPY: When?

CAYLEY: No, she didn't!

SIKA: No, but we can *say* she did. She did imply it after all.

CAYLEY: What???

SIKA: She came out in dowdy, traditional costume and tried to convince her parents she was a god-loving virgin. A lady of virtue.

SOAPY: Yup. She did *do* that!

SIKA: See? She was basically declaring she's a good girl to mummy and daddy. Okay, she may not have said the words, but her actions certainly implied it.

SOAPY: Sold! We'll tease her about that too then.

CAYLEY: Girls; that's your unit mate you're talking about. Your friend.

SOAPY: So?

CAYLEY: She was humiliated. She's probably never been so embarrassed in all her life.

SIKA: Exactly. There's no way we're gonna let *that* go without squeezing every ounce of fun out of it.

SOAPY: And there's enough there to keep us going for months.

SIKA: Forever!

SOAPY: Probably.

CAYLEY: Can't you just be nice for once?

SOAPY: Like she'd be nice if the same thing happened to us?

CAYLEY: Well...

SIKA: If the boot was on the other foot, she'd stamp on us with it.

SOAPY: Nice analogy.

SIKA: I'm a wordsmith; what did you expect?

SOAPY: Right...

CAYLEY: Fine. Do what you like. But if you end up getting a cosmic mega-groping that leaves you both trembling in the corner in tears, don't say I didn't warn you.

SIKA: We won't.

(She beamed.)

SIKA: I bet she had to happy-clap and sing along to hymns about *praise be to Akkeri* as a kid.

SOAPY: While sitting in a circle around the campfire. We definitely have to tease her about that.

CAYLEY: You don't even know if it happened!

SIKA: True, but we'll *say* it did, just for deeper humiliation.

SOAPY: Love it.

CAYLEY: Wow.

(She shook her head then glanced upwards.)

CAYLEY: Right, we're here. Time to get...

(She then paused and grimaced uncomfortably.)

SIKA: Time to get what?

SOAPY: What's wrong?

CAYLEY: What the hell was Kasira thinking, sending us three?

SIKA: What?

SOAPY: Oh, shit. This aint gonna work.

SIKA: What isn't?

SOAPY: No tank, dumb arse.

SIKA: Oh, yeah.

(She furrowed her brow.)

SIKA: Less of the dumb arse, penis-fish.

SOAPY: Sika...

CAYLEY: Stop it!

(She rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: Kasira was obviously distracted when she picked this team.

SIKA: Well, to be fair, it was rather crazy before we left, what with Nivea trying to murder her father an' all.

SOAPY: Only for him to survive then get eaten by wraiths instead.

SIKA: It's little wonder she was distracted, really.

CAYLEY: True.

(She grinned.)

CAYLEY: Plus, she's got one eye on the general's meeting tomorrow.

SIKA: Yeah.

SOAPY: Why would that distract her?

(She then looked enlightened.)

SOAPY: Oh. I get you. *He's* going to be there.

SIKA: Who?

SOAPY: Kasira's secret boyfriend.

SIKA: Oh, yeah.

CAYLEY: This happens every time she meets a man she likes. Half her brain goes out of the window.

SIKA: Like when she first met Lassu.

CAYLEY: Exactly.

SOAPY: Yeah, well, hopefully this courtship will end on a happier note than that one.

SIKA: Right? She deserves a bit of happiness after what happened with him.

SOAPY: It's just a shame she needs to keep her relationship a secret.

SIKA: A shame? It's a bloody disgrace. She's a grown woman. And he's a grown man.

Why shouldn't they be allowed to date? Just because they're both generals? There's no good reason for that rule to exist.

SOAPY: No, but it does.

CAYLEY: And she'll have to pretend to abide by it, but that doesn't help us out of current predicament, does it? An island full of wraiths and no blooming tank.

(Just then, they heard the sound of hooves racing up behind them. At once, they spun around and saw a gazelle charging towards them.)

SIKA: Ambre!

SOAPY: It'd better bloody be.

CAYLEY: Right?

(Having arrived at their side the gazelle then transformed into Ambre.)

AMBRE: Only me!

SIKA: Hey, you.

SOAPY: What gives, Ambre?

AMBRE: I have no idea. Kasira told me to turn into a gazelle and catch you up, so I did. I have no idea why though.

CAYLEY: Did you wait for her to explain?

AMBRE: Nope.

SIKA: So she said she wanted you to catch us up and you ran off before she could explain herself?

AMBRE: No. She said Cayley would *know* why I was here.

(Cayley looked enlightened.)

CAYLEY: I do, yes. We need you to use Fluffy, love.

AMBRE: Oh. Easy cheesy.

(Fluffy, her human-shaped familiar, formed from solid rock then appeared at her side.)

AMBRE: Hi, Fluffy.

FLUFFY: Fluffy happy. Fluffy see Ambre. Ambre friend.

AMBRE: I'm happy too.

FLUFFY: Fluffy say yay.

(Ambre beamed.)

AMBRE: I taught him that.

SIKA: We know.

CAYLEY: Anyway, in you're own time, love. The rest of you step back and give Fluffy some room.

SOAPY: Ma'am.

SIKA: On it.

CAYLEY: You mean "ma'am". We're working right now.

SIKA: Ma'am then.

(She rolled her eyes.)

SIKA: Becoming a commander has gone straight to her head.

CAYLEY: Sika...

SIKA: I'm kidding.

(She then offered her a cheesy grin.)

SIKA: I love you.

CAYLEY: Shut it. You've pushed your luck far enough for one day.

(She then glanced around at her three comrades. Seeing them all suitably spaced out, she then nodded to Ambre.)

CAYLEY: He can whistle now, sweetie.

AMBRE: Okay. It's time, Fluffy.

(Seconds later, a loud whistle rose from Fluffy's rocky lips. Knowing that every wraith on the island would soon be charging in therefore, everyone sunk into battle stances. For all their silliness and misbehaving, these girls didn't take their battle duties lightly. For a good forty seconds they waited patiently with their eyes wide open for danger before Soapy finally broke the silence.)

SOAPY: Incoming!

(She pointed to where dozens of wraiths were charging up the hill then looked to Cayley.)

SOAPY: May I?

CAYLEY: Just let them get a little closer to the whistle. You don't want to steal their attention away from Fluffy.

SIKA: You get told that every time.

SOAPY: Shut it, you.

(Eager to get shooting, Soapy then hopped up and down anxiously for the next ten seconds, dying to hear Cayley give her the go ahead.)

AMBRE: They're really close now.

CAYLEY: Agreed.

(She nodded.)

CAYLEY: Okay! Let's get this done!

(Needing no second invitation, Soapy then opened fire. Mortified by the very thought of Soapy making her look bad, Sika then followed suit. Delighted by what she saw, Cayley herself then proceeded to open fire. Fighting her battle her own unique way, Ambre focussed her mind on controlling another wraith then ordered it to attack its own kind. It was extremely effective to say the least. This evening's spawn had brought forth seventy wraiths and with four of them on the attack, they were getting through them extremely quickly. Sika and Cayley's vortex like magic was either crushing them or ripping them apart; Soapy's extremely powerful blasts were blowing them to smithereens and several were being killed by one of their own before they even got to within twenty feet of the peak. As a result, in well under a minute of giving the order to begin, the wraiths had all been wiped out without even reaching their intended target; Fluffy.)

SOAPY: Damn, we're good!

SIKA: Yup. Especially me. Did you see how I...

CAYLEY: Stop that, you. You were all equally fabulous, okay?

SIKA: Well, you say that...

CAYLEY: I do, yes!

SOAPY: But I don't want to be equal to Sika. I haven't been at her magic level since I was twelve.

SIKA: Why, you...

AMBRE: Can I say goodbye to Fluffy now, ma'am?

CAYLEY: You may. Thank you, Fluffy.

FLUFFY: Fluffy not do anything. Fluffy disappointed.

AMBRE: There's always next time, Fluffy.

FLUFFY: Fluffy agree. Farewell, Ambre; friend.

(He then vanished into the ether.)

AMBRE: Aw. He felt like the let the side down.

SOAPY: No, that was Sika.

SIKA: What???

SOAPY: I'm joking, you silly sod. Lighten up.

CAYLEY: Hear, hear.

(She rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: Anyway...

(Just then, the clouds above them started to rumble then bunch together. Having never seen such a phenomenon, the girls all gathered together to stare up at it.)

AMBRE: Please don't be lightning, please don't be lightning, please...

CAYLEY: Stay calm, okay? It doesn't look like a stormy kind of sky, Ambre.

SIKA: No, but something weird is happening. Definitely.

(Soapy beamed.)

SOAPY: Please be a haze break. Please be a haze break. Please...

SIKA: Why would you want one of them???

SOAPY: Wraiths. Duh!

CAYLEY: It's not a haze break either. The conditions for one of those is a million times different to this.

AMBRE: Then what is it, Cayley?

CAYLEY: I don't know. Freak winds, maybe? Some weird kind of weather phenomenon, perhaps?

(She shrugged.)

CAYLEY: Who knows? And who *cares*? There's nothing we can do about it, is there?

SIKA: True.

AMBRE: Can we go home then?

CAYLEY: Sure.

AMBRE: Yay!

(Before they could even begin to take a single step forwards, however, a bright light shone from the sky, wiping out the night by illuminating the world for as far as they could see.)

SIKA: Me no likey!

SOAPY: Me likey even less!

(Cayley just gulped.)

SIKA: It's a meteor, come to finish us off.

AMBRE: Eek!

(She then charged into Sika and hugged her tight, hiding her face in her neck as she did so.)

SIKA: Ambre?

AMBRE: Scared now. I don't want to be crushed by a meteor.

(Mercifully, before Sika could speculate any further and scare Ambre to death, a godly face appeared in the clouds.)

SIKA: What the?

SOAPY: Holy...

CAYLEY: Uh-huh...

SIKA: Ambre, look.

(Ambre nervously glanced up then gasped.)

AMBRE: It's Mr Cloud Face. I have a book about him.

SIKA: Mr Cloud Face?

AMBRE: Yeah. I'll lend it to you.

SIKA: Right... I can't wait...

(Just then, the face in the clouds began to speak in a loud, authoritative tone.)

VOICE: Citizens of the world!!! Your penance is complete! After the fourteenth rise of the sun, the afterlife will reopen to all living things! Their spirits will no longer return to punish you! Your arrogance is forgiven if not forgotten! Now go in peace, citizens; your war is at an end. Live well and never blight yourselves with such hubris again!!!

(The cloud then faded away and darkness returned in all its glory. It had all happened in the blinking of an eye. The gods had appeared, said what need to be said then vanished again. It had left the entire population of the world dumbfounded. Cayley, Ambre, Sika and Soapy, like millions of others around the world were left stunned, and continued to stare into the sky in a catatonic trance for a long time afterwards. This had been a monumental moment in the world's history. Of course, in Akkerian communities they were all scoffing and making outlandish claims about it being a clever trick played by the army using lights and megaphones, but to those blessed with a modicum of rational thinking, it'd had been a momentous, life-changing event.

As what she'd witnessed slowly started to sink in, Cayley bit her lip uneasily then glanced sideways at Soapy. Her head was hung low and she couldn't stop sighing. At her side, Sika and Ambre were clinging to one another, still staring at the sky as if they'd witnessed a ghost and had frozen to death in fear. Quite certain they'd both calm down in a moment or two, Cayley nodded to herself then looked to Soapy.)

CAYLEY: What's wrong?

(Soapy pouted.)

SOAPY: No more wraiths.

CAYLEY: Well, yeah...

SOAPY: But I like killing wraiths. What am I gonna do now?

(Cayley puffed out.)

CAYLEY: What are any of us gonna do? No more wraiths means no more job.

(Sika slowly craned her neck towards her.)

SIKA: No more wraiths?

CAYLEY: Yeah. You heard the voice.

(Sika grimaced.)

SIKA: No, I didn't. I was... listening to something else.

SOAPY: Something else???

AMBRE: So was I. Sika kept mumbling, "please don't kill me" over and over again, so I didn't hear what the nice evil ghost in the sky had to say.

SIKA: I was mumbling no such thing.

AMBRE: Yes, you were. You were really scared!

SIKA: No, I bloody wasn't!

CAYLEY: Sika, calm down. Nobody's judging you. It's okay to be scared at a time like that.

SIKA: Yeah, right! Scared? Me? Huh!

SOAPY: You were.

SIKA: Rubbish!

SOAPY: Sika, you're clinging onto Ambre like a bloody barnacle. Still!

SIKA: *She's* clinging onto *me*!

(Ambre raised her arms.)

AMBRE: No, I'm not. Look.

(Sika finally let go of Ambre then ruffled her neck.)

SIKA: I just thought she might need comforting, that's all.

SOAPY: Right... very convincing.

SIKA: I did!

SOAPY: The only one who needed comforting was you, you big sissy.
CAYLEY: Says the girl who's almost in tears because the war is going to end.
SOAPY: I wasn't almost in tears.
SIKA: Yes, you were. Cry baby.
SOAPY: Oh, what would you know about it? You were still staring at the sky in horror and pissing in your knickers when Cayley noticed me, um... *not* crying.
SIKA: I did not piss my knickers!
(Ambre blushed.)
AMBRE: Yeah, that was me!
(Everyone cringed.)
SIKA: Gross.
SOAPY: Seriously, Ambre?
CAYLEY: We'd better get you back so you can change then.
(Ambre stamped her foot indignantly.)
AMBRE: I was joking!
SIKA: Were you though?
AMBRE: Yes! And the fact you were all so readily believed me is really, really insulting.
SOAPY: Yeah...
AMBRE: It's my brain that doesn't work properly, not my wee-wee bits. I'm stupid not disgusting.
(She pouted.)
AMBRE: You've really hurt my feelings.
CAYLEY: Right. Yeah. Sorry, sweetie.
SIKA: Forgive me?
SOAPY: Sorry, Ambre.
AMBRE: Well...
(She beamed.)
AMBRE: Okay! So what's this about the war ending?
(Soapy sighed in defeat again and hung her head. Consoling her with a gentle back-rub, Cayley looked to Ambre.)
CAYLEY: I'll explain on the way back down to the base.
AMBRE: But I don't *need* to get changed.
CAYLEY: No, but we've finished our work here and the base is where we live. It's where we always go after a patrol.
AMBRE: Oh, yeah. Let's do that then.
SIKA: And you'll explain what the voice in the sky said on the way?
CAYLEY: I said I would, didn't I?
SIKA: Cool.
(Soapy sighed.)
SOAPY: It shouldn't take too long to explain. It was easy enough to grasp. They said the wraiths will stop spawning in two weeks, meaning the war's over and we're all unemployed.
AMBRE: What???
SIKA: Fuck!!!
(She whimpered.)
SIKA: Is that true?
(Cayley started to head away, talking as she went. The others quickly hurried after her.)
CAYLEY: I don't know so much about the unemployed bit, but the wraiths... yup, they're gonna stop coming. Whether or not we get to keep our jobs or not is another matter.
SIKA: Is it though? No war, no army, no job.
CAYLEY: Yes, but our leader is a general. It might be different for us.

(She shrugged.)

CAYLEY: Generals will get to make the decision on what happens next and I'm willing to wager they'd all vote to keep their own jobs in an international army of some kind, and maintain a staff. So who knows? We might be in luck.

SOAPY: Sounds plausible.

CAYLEY: Right? We need to speak to Kasira really. See what she has to say about it.

SIKA: Then hope all goes well at the general's meeting tomorrow.

CAYLEY: Yeah.

SIKA: Then it's a good thing we made the generals all those biscuits today, really. Hopefully that'll put them in a good mood.

(She beamed.)

SIKA: I'm glad I decided to do that now.

CAYLEY: You *decided*???

SIKA: Um...

CAYLEY: I'm gonna thump you one of these days, Sika; I really am.

SIKA: I wouldn't. Ambre is my best friend. If you try to harm me, she'll headbutt you.

AMBRE: No, I won't. I'd never do that to Cayley.

SIKA: Traitor!

AMBRE: Be nice!

CAYLEY: Put a sock in it, will you?

(She rolled her eyes then clumped Sika around the head.)

SIKA: Ow!!! Why did you...

CAYLEY: Because I wanted to! Now be quiet.

SIKA: Fine. You're mean.

SOAPY: That's it, Sika; you keep angering her.

CAYLEY: You can shut up, an' all.

SOAPY: Harsh!

SIKA: Can everyone please stop saying that? It's *my* word!

AMBRE: It sounds wrong when someone else says it.

SIKA: See? Even Ambre knows it's wrong.

AMBRE: Even Ambre?

(She pouted.)

AMBRE: Harsh!

SIKA: Don't you bloody start.

(Cayley chuckled then pointed towards the base.)

CAYLEY: Come on, girls; let's get a shift on. The sooner we get back to base, the sooner Kasira can fill us in on what she knows. I, for one, will feel a lot better about things if she has something reassuring to say about what the generals might do in this situation.

(Agreeing with her sentiments entirely, everyone then hurried forth.)

Back at the base, at this time, Kasira and Nivea were seated on a bench in the yard, looking far from happy with the world. Discussing what the future might hold, they were both more than a little anxious.

KASIRA: I just know these protocols exist. I have no idea what's in them though; I've never seen them. I never even gave them a second thought, because I never thought this would happen.

NIVEA: So you've never heard any mention who gets to stay or what happens to the army when the war ends?

KASIRA: No. I just know it's all written in those documents.

NIVEA: Shit.

(She sighed.)

NIVEA: In that case it'd be foolish to speculate, I guess. I mean, you'll find out tomorrow.

KASIRA: Well, yeah, speculating *would* be a tad foolish, but we're going to do it anyway.

NIVEA: We are?

KASIRA: Yes. We're women. There's not a hope a hell of us lasting the night without speculating, reading things into it and worrying ourselves sick. We're genetically *programmed* to do it!

NIVEA: Good point.

(She sighed.)

NIVEA: We're gonna be fired, aren't we?

KASIRA: Not if I have any say in it.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: And I do. As a general, I'm one of the privileged few who gets to decide what happens next.

NIVEA: Well, that's encouraging.

KASIRA: Yes, but I'm only one voice, remember? If the others disagree and decide to cull half the army, the half with us in it, there's nothing I can do.

NIVEA: So, you really can't say either way.

KASIRA: Nope.

(She puffed out.)

KASIRA: I'll do my best to keep us our unit employed though; that's for sure.

NIVEA: Well... cool.

(She then glanced to the ground and mused to herself. At her side, Kasira did the same. What the future held for them was very much unknown. Deciding not to dwell on that fact, Nivea bit her lip then glanced to Kasira again.)

NIVEA: We saw a god, Kasira. With our own two eyes. And heard his words. With our own two ears!

KASIRA: Yeah...

(She blushed.)

KASIRA: It scared the living crap out of me.

NIVEA: I know. You grabbed onto my arm so hard, you almost cut off the circulation to my hands.

KASIRA: Sorry.

NIVEA: Don't worry about it. It was cute. Not as cute as your girly shriek, but...

KASIRA: Nivea...

NIVEA: What? I'm just saying.

KASIRA: Yes, well...

NIVEA: You're very girly.

KASIRA: Stop it.

(They shared an amused grin then Kasira glanced to the sky.)

KASIRA: It was nothing like I imagined it to be.

NIVEA: What wasn't?

KASIRA: Seeing the gods. The thing we were literally just talking about.

NIVEA: We were talking about *you* being really girly.

KASIRA: No, *you* were talking about that!

(She rolled her eyes then resumed relating her thoughts.)

KASIRA: For some reason I thought, if the gods ever returned, they'd appear to us as a floating face in the sky. Not as a cloud.

NIVEA: You didn't study the text very well then, did you? It literally says they appeared as a cloud.

(Kasira furrowed her brow.)

KASIRA: It was well over ten years ago, Nivea.

NIVEA: Fair enough. I forgot you were getting on a bit.

(Kasira glowered at her.)

KASIRA: Seriously? Do you really think you're in a position to tease me, right now, Nokia, my precious dumpling?

(Nivea whimpered.)

NIVEA: Too mean.

KASIRA: Well stop it then.

NIVEA: Yeah, okay.

KASIRA: Thank you.

(She grinned.)

KASIRA: Though I have a feeling you're going to have get used to being called our precious dumpling. There's no way Sika or Soapy are going to let that one slide.

NIVEA: I'm aware of that; thank you.

(She growled.)

NIVEA: They're going to go to war on me, aren't they? Well, bring it on. Those two little fuckers won't know what hit them.

KASIRA: Don't hit them.

NIVEA: I meant figuratively.

KASIRA: Good. Make sure you did.

NIVEA: Of course.

(She then sighed and looked to the sky.)

NIVEA: Why now, I wonder. Why did the gods choose to end the war now?

KASIRA: Because they hate *me*!

NIVEA: What?

KASIRA: I've only been a general for six months, Nivea. Six months. I'm finally earning good wages and I've got myself into a position of respect. Of course they want to take it away from me. I swear they only exist to wind me up.

NIVEA: Wow. Calm down, Kasira. You literally just told me there's a fifty/fifty chance you'll get to keep your job.

KASIRA: I know, it's just... half of me fears I'm about to lose it all.

NIVEA: Right...

KASIRA: It's a horrible thought. If they decide to do away with this unit, I may never see you guys again and that'd suck.

NIVEA: And then some.

(She smiled.)

NIVEA: Still... fingers crossed. With any luck it'll all work out.

KASIRA: Yeah... we'll see.

(Just then, the gates crashed open and Sika, Soapy, Cayley and Ambre strode into the yard. Scowling at her three subordinates, Cayley then closed the gate behind her.)

CAYLEY: No, no; its fine. I'll do it.

SIKA: Yay!

SOAPY: You're the best!

CAYLEY: Wow.

AMBRE: Kasira? We want to know if you're going to fire Sika.

SIKA: What? Why would she...

SOAPY: That wasn't the question, Ambre. We were going to ask her what happens next. If the wraiths stop coming will we all get fired?

SIKA: Why you decided to single *me* out, I don't know.

AMBRE: Because Cayley said if anyone gets fired it'll more than likely be you.

SIKA: She did?

(Cayley sneered at her.)

CAYLEY: I said if it was up to *me*!

SIKA: Harsh!

CAYLEY: *That's* not harsh. I can *show* you harsh if you like!

(Sika shrieked then hid her face.)

SIKA: No, thank you.

SOAPY: So? What's the story, ma'am?

NIVEA: She doesn't know.

KASIRA: What Nivea said. I'll find out where we stand tomorrow at the general's meeting.

All I can really do is fight our corner and hope for the best.

CAYLEY: So you don't know of any protocols...

KASIRA: They exist, yes, but I don't know their contents.

CAYLEY: Poop.

KASIRA: All you can do is wait. I'll let you know what was decided as soon as the meeting is over.

SOAPY: Fair enough.

AMBRE: So... this meeting...

(Kasira looked to her and smiled.)

KASIRA: It actually couldn't have come at a better time for us really, Ambre. The agenda we *were* going to discuss is going to have to be torn up and replaced with a brand new one. Instead of discussing tactics and which regions need strengthening, we're going to have to discuss what happened just now.

AMBRE: Sika getting on Cayley's nerves?

KASIRA: No. What the gods said.

NIVEA: And besides, Sika getting on everyone's nerves didn't only happen *just now*. It's been going on since the day we met her.

SIKA: Well pardon me for not being dull.

NIVEA: Who said you weren't dull?

SIKA: I did! I'm fun, damn it. Yes, some people don't like it, but we can't *all* be precious dumplings like you, Nokia.

NIVEA: You...

KASIRA: Stop it!!!

(She rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: As I was saying. Tomorrow's agenda at the general's meeting will be brand new. It'll involve the protocols for what comes after the war is over. A lot of it will have been decided and agreed upon long ago, but there's bound to be flaws in the plan that need ironing out. And that works well for us.

SOAPY: How?

KASIRA: What hasn't been decided will be decided with my input. I'll be in there fighting our corner, before anything gets rubber stamped. Had I not been a general, we'd have had no say in anything they decided. As it stands, however, we've got a chance of coming out of this quite well. At least, I hope so.

(She grimaced.)

KASIRA: I just need them to take me more seriously this time.

CAYLEY: And will they?

KASIRA: I fucking hope so, Cayley. I just want to be known as General Ashwood. Not General Gorgeous; General Sexy or just plain old love, sweetheart or darling.

(She sighed.)

KASIRA: Being the only woman sucks.

NIVEA: Pun intended?

KASIRA: There was no pun, Nivea. Just your filthy mind.

SOAPY: Akkeri will be so disappointed in you.

NIVEA: Soapy, I'm gonna...

KASIRA: Point is, I'm a general. Not eye candy, brought in to brighten up the room. So I'm gonna stand up for myself tomorrow. I'll make myself heard. You guys are counting on me, and I won't let them patronise me and talk me down. No more.

SIKA: You go, girl.

SOAPY: Yeah, you tell them.

NIVEA: We believe in you, Kasira.

CAYLEY: If anyone can make them listen, you can.

AMBRE: And if not, you can always get your secret boyfriend to back you up.

(Kasira glowered at her.)

KASIRA: What secret boyfriend?

AMBRE: The general.

KASIRA: What are you talking about?

AMBRE: Cayley told us you've got a...

(They were all then distracted by the sight of Cayley trying to creep indoors with an innocent grin on her face.)

KASIRA: Stop right there, you!

CAYLEY: Aw, poop.

KASIRA: I told you about my boyfriend in confidence, woman!

CAYLEY: I know.

KASIRA: And I told you not to tell anyone.

CAYLEY: Yes, and in that same spirit, I told these guys not to tell anyone too. I passed it on, like a good second in command should. Your secret shall never leave this base.

KASIRA: It wasn't supposed to leave my office!!!

CAYLEY: Right...

(She sighed.)

CAYLEY: I apologise.

KASIRA: Yes, well...

CAYLEY: I didn't actually *mean* to let the cat out of the bag. I thought you'd come in the kitchen once while I had my back turned, so I mentioned it. Unfortunately, it wasn't you; it was Sika, sneaking in to steal some biscuits.

SIKA: I wasn't going to *steal* them! I was going to...

SOAPY: Take them without asking?

SIKA: Borrow them.

NIVEA: Wow.

AMBRE: Sika *likes* to borrow things.

CAYLEY: Hmm...

AMBRE: And she borrows them for a really, really long time.

SIKA: Ambre...

AMBRE: Sometimes forever!

KASIRA: Yes, well, we all know about Sika's shortcomings, Ambre. There's no need to elaborate.

SIKA: What shortcomings?

(At once, Soapy and Nivea's faces lit up.)

SOAPY: You're a dipshit for one.

NIVEA: With tiny tits.

SOAPY: And a face like an arse.

NIVEA: And don't even get me started on the smell.

SIKA: Hey!!!

(She threw her hands to her hips aggressively.)

SIKA: Dipshit? Dipshit??? I'm the smartest person here. By far! And the best looking.

Plus, my tits are perfect. As for saying I smell, I don't have to take that from a cave dweller and a manky bloody fish.

(Ambre grimaced.)

AMBRE: But I thought Cayley was the smartest one here.

SIKA: I...

AMBRE: And Kasira's easily the best looking one.

SIKA: Ambre...

AMBRE: You're telling fibs again.

(Sika gasped.)

SIKA: Fibs? I don't fib! I can't believe...

(She then caught a glimpse of Soapy and flinched.)

SIKA: Why are you glaring at me like that?

SOAPY: A manky fish???

SIKA: Well...

SOAPY: Sika...

KASIRA: Nope!!!

(She nodded sternly.)

KASIRA: I'm nipping this in the bud now. Girls, I know you're tense because of future's might be on the line, but you need to calm down. I won't have you sniping at one another like that. Just keep calm and support each other for now, okay?

CAYLEY: She's right. At times like this you need to lean on one another, not bitch and snipe at each other like savages.

NIVEA: But we bitch and snipe at one another even at the best of times. It's fun.

KASIRA: Not for us poor sods who have to listen to it.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: Just for tonight, be good to each other, okay? Cherish the friendships you've got for once, rather than being dicks to one another!

AMBRE: Yay! Can we? Can we?

SIKA: Sounds like a fair request.

SOAPY: It does.

SIKA: Just for tonight we should be extra nice to each other. And we should celebrate how fate brought us all together. Akkeri's doing probably. Praise be to him.

NIVEA: Sika...

SOAPY: No, no; Sika's right. We should use this time to count our holy blessings. And to thank the divine mother, Nivea, for bringing us his sacred message.

NIVEA: I'm gonna crush you two one of these days.

(She nodded.)

NIVEA: Not tonight though. Tonight...

SIKA: Is prayer night?

(Nivea growled at her.)

NIVEA: Is a night to reflect on friendship! Like Kasira suggested.

(She nodded.)

NIVEA: I, for one, will be reflecting on what I did wrong in my past life to end up getting saddled with you two idiots.

KASIRA: Wow. It's like my words went in one ear and out the other.

(She snarled.)

KASIRA: I said be civil to each other, didn't I?

AMBRE: No.

KASIRA: Ambre?

AMBRE: You said we should support each other.

KASIRA: It's the same thing. Just stop bloody bickering!

AMBRE: I wasn't!

(Kasira's head dropped into her hands.)

KASIRA: I give up.

(She shook her head.)

KASIRA: Fuck it. I'm gonna have a bath.

(She then climbed to her feet before looking to her comrades.)

KASIRA: Seriously, if any of you are tense or anxious about what the future might have in store for us all, just come and talk to myself or Cayley. Don't suffer in silence. Be open about how you feel. I mean, this is a huge deal.

AMBRE: Not really. I have no doubt whatsoever that you'll go to that meeting tomorrow and win.

KASIRA: Win what?

AMBRE: Um... the meeting?

KASIRA: Right. Well, you have a lot more faith in me than I have in myself.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: That said, the omens are good. The meeting is right here on Capsway Island.

Right on our doorstep. Our home. If I was superstitious, I'd say that having home advantage bodes well.

NIVEA: You *are* superstitious.

KASIRA: Then I'll say it bodes well.

CAYLEY: You realise there's absolutely no logic in that statement, right?

KASIRA: Yes; yes, I do. I'm going to pretend it matters though. Whatever boosts my confidence for tomorrow. You and I have been off work all week because the training base is being prepared for the meeting, that's also a good sign in my opinion.

CAYLEY: How come?

KASIRA: Well... we're well rested and relaxed.

SOAPY: On the contrary, this is the most stressed I've ever seen Cayley.

(Everyone glowered at Sika.)

SIKA: Hey!

KASIRA: Look, I'm just trying to see everything from a positive perspective, okay? I know there's no logic in it, but if I can go into that meeting in a positive frame of mind, I'll be more likely to come out of it again with answers we're going to like. So just let me have my omens.

NIVEA: Sounds fair.

(She nodded.)

NIVEA: Just make sure that secret boyfriend of yours gives you a good shafting before you go in.

KASIRA: Do you mind???

NIVEA: What? It'll help! Trust me. A good seeing to is an awesome confidence booster.

KASIRA: Then your confidence must be through the roof by now.

(Nivea beamed.)

NIVEA: It's certainly not lacking, no.

SIKA: Then it's the only part of you that isn't.

NIVEA: Sika, you...

KASIRA: Nope. Fuck this. Bath time. I won't have you lot ruining my mood.

(She then strode back into the base. Having watched her go, Cayley nodded.)

CAYLEY: All she asked for was one night without you lot being morons to one another.

(She rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: Some hopes. She might as well have asked the army to give her her own battleship for when she wants to go shopping.

(She then strode into the base leaving Ambre, Sika, Soapy and Nivea cringing in her wake.)

That evening, bathed and ready for bed, Kasira, Ambre, Sika, Soapy and Nivea were seated around the table in the main room of the base. As had become tradition, they'd end their day with some tea and cake. As they waited for Cayley to bring it in, Ambre was especially excited.

AMBRE: This is gonna be awesome. *I* helped make tonight's cake.

KASIRA: Really? Weren't you making biscuits all day?

AMBRE: What?

(She grimaced.)

AMBRE: Is that what I was doing?

SOAPY: Yes!

AMBRE: Oh. I thought I was helping Cayley make a cake.

SIKA: Well, you weren't. You were being punished for eating all those biscuits last night.

(Ambre blushed.)

AMBRE: I didn't realise.

(She grimaced.)

AMBRE: I shouldn't have done that, Kasira.

KASIRA: I know. Why do you think you got punished?

AMBRE: Yeah...

(She grimaced.)

AMBRE: I had no idea that was a punishment. I just thought I was helping Cayley.

SOAPY: Well, now you know better.

AMBRE: I do.

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: Helping Cayley is fun. If that's what punishments are like, I should be naughty more often.

(Everyone chuckled.)

KASIRA: Right... well... don't actually do that, love.

AMBRE: Okay.

(Just then, the door creaked open and Cayley entered carrying a tray containing six cups of tea and a large chocolate cake. Upon sighting her, everyone fell silent and stared at her excitedly. Finding it all a little too disturbing, Cayley placed the tray down on the table then grimaced.)

CAYLEY: Do you have to stare at me like that? It's seriously off-putting.

SOAPY: Oh, like we were staring at *you*.

SIKA: Yeah, don't flatter yourself. We were staring at the cake, not you.

NIVEA: You speak for yourself. I was staring at Cayley. It just *looked* like I was drooling at the cake. She was holding it at boob height. Me likey.

CAYLEY: Weirdo.

NIVEA: But your boobs are like two blancmanges with cherries on top. When I see them come into view with an awesome chocolate cake, how can I *not* drool?

KASIRA: Enough of that. Let's just eat, shall we?

NIVEA: Cayley's boobies?

KASIRA: The cake!

NIVEA: Bugger.

(Soapy giggled.)

SOAPY: Not that she wants her boobies really. She's a good Akkeri girl.

SIKA: Right? She just *pretends* to be outrageous to throw us off the scent.

SOAPY: Exactly. All this time we've been under the impression that she takes men into the woods for a bit of the other, when really, she's been taking them there to preach to them.

SIKA: And do readings from the holy scriptures.

SOAPY: Well she is the holy precious dumpling, after all. It comes with the territory.

(As the two of them sat there giggling, Nivea furrowed her brow at them coldly.)

NIVEA: You think that's funny, do you?

SIKA: No, we think *you're* funny.

SOAPY: Why, is that a sin, oh great one?

SIKA: Forgive us, your dumplingness.

AMBRE: What are they talking about, Kasira?

KASIRA: The usual, sweetie. Sika and Soapy are digging a hole for themselves and Nivea's gearing up to grope them.

AMBRE: Nothing changes, does it?

CAYLEY: Nope. Why they can't just shut up and enjoy a quiet cup of tea and a slice of cake, I'll never know.

KASIRA: They're savages, Cayley; pure and simple.

SIKA: We're not savages.

SOAPY: Quite the opposite. I mean, Nivea's a discipline of the holy sky fairy, for one.

SIKA: And we're just two lost souls she's aching to redeem.

SOAPY: Hardly savages.

(Nivea furrowed her brow.)

NIVEA: You want redemption, do you?

SIKA: Nope.

SOAPY: But that's not going to stop you. As the sacred dumpling of Akkeri, it's your duty to try.

NIVEA: I guess it is. And you know what? There's no time like the present. I'll start by doing that holiest of holy acts.

(She beamed.)

NIVEA: I'll lay my hands on you and heal the aching in your hearts.

(Sika whimpered.)

SIKA: Hearts?

NIVEA: And by hearts I mean these...

(She then pounced at Sika. With a shriek, Sika leapt from her seat then sprinted for the exit. Soapy was extremely quick to follow. Not about to let them escape so easily, however, Nivea charged out of the door after them.)

NIVEA: Come to me, my beloved sheep. I need to endow you with the holy boob mashing from hell!!!

(As the sounds of the lively trio faded away outside, Kasira and Cayley sighed then shared a defeated glance.)

KASIRA: All I wanted was some quiet time.

CAYLEY: Yeah, right. Good luck. I've been off work all week, so the academy can be prepared for the general's meeting and it's been the longest week of my life. I actually miss going to work!

KASIRA: I share your pain.

CAYLEY: Still, let's not waste this moment. While they're running about out there, we can finally enjoy some peace and quiet.

(Ambre's tired voice then rose up from across the table.)

AMBRE: Peace and... quiet.

(She then nodded off with her head on the table.)

KASIRA: Wow. Those twenty push-ups she did really took it out of her.

CAYLEY: Actually, Kasira, she was buzzing about in the kitchen all day, that's what's done for her. She loved it. I've never seen anyone so enthusiastic about their punishment before.

KASIRA: She didn't know it was a punishment, Cayley.

CAYLEY: No?

KASIRA: She just said so when you were in the kitchen. She thought you'd entrusted her to help.

CAYLEY: That would explain it. If you include her in a task, she gets all excited. Not being left out means everything to her, bless her.

KASIRA: Yup. She's the model professional.

(She sighed.)

KASIRA: If only I could replace the rest of the unit with Ambre clones.

CAYLEY: Ouch.

KASIRA: I didn't mean you.

(Cayley smiled.)

CAYLEY: I know.

KASIRA: You're the only one who keeps me sane. If you'd left when your ten years were up, I'd be in the fruitcake factory by now.

CAYLEY: Licking the padding on your cell.

KASIRA: Screaming night and day because I can still hear Sika complain.

(They chuckled together then Kasira smiled.)

KASIRA: Thanks for staying, love.

CAYLEY: Like it was ever in doubt. I couldn't just go away and leave my best friend here all by herself to go round the bend, could I?

KASIRA: And it's appreciated.

(She exhaled.)

KASIRA: We've had some fun times, Cayley. It's really gonna suck if it all ends when the wraiths stop coming.

CAYLEY: Big time. I've kind of resigned myself to this being my life now. I'm enjoying it. Working with you every day is a pleasure.

KASIRA: Exactly my sentiments.

(She patted Cayley's hand.)

KASIRA: If it does all come to an end, I need you know how grateful I am for your friendship, and how much I cherish all the fun times we've had.

CAYLEY: And I need you to know the same thing.

(She smiled.)

CAYLEY: Eleven years, Kasira. That's a really long time to work with someone. And live with them everyday.

KASIRA: Without driving each other bonkers.

CAYLEY: It's a miracle.

KASIRA: It is.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: You were a breath of fresh air when you arrived, Cayley. The rest of the unit didn't like me much.

CAYLEY: Captain Bulldog Breath hated you. She didn't like *me* much either.

KASIRA: Nope. She despised pretty girls.

CAYLEY: With a fiery passion. What was it she said? She wanted soldiers not...

KASIRA: Trollops.

CAYLEY: That's it.

KASIRA: Thank fuck she left when she did.

CAYLEY: Right? The other girls stopped bitching at us then.

KASIRA: I know, right? Turns out, they were only doing it to keep the captain sweet.

CAYLEY: Idiots.

KASIRA: And then some.

(She sat back and exhaled.)

KASIRA: For the first year, I was terrified. I cried at night, you know? Not every night, but often I did. I was hating life. Then you came. You were nice to me. You were nice to everyone. Obviously. Being nice is kind of your thing. The boss was a dick still, but with you around I could handle it.

CAYLEY: A problem shared is a problem halved, I guess.

KASIRA: Yeah. Not that I was *happy* that she picked on you as well. I was just didn't feel so singled out anymore.

CAYLEY: I get you.

(She smiled.)

CAYLEY: After she left things were great, weren't they? That's when the fun really started. Even before Nivea came. You and me, messing around and having a laugh.

KASIRA: Yup. We got up to all sorts. Skinny dipping, pranking the new captain...

CAYLEY: Having midnight feasts.

(Kasira chuckled.)

KASIRA: Experimenting sexually.

(Cayley winced.)

CAYLEY: Oh, good god. How drunk were we?

KASIRA: I'm thinking very.

CAYLEY: Paralytic. We made out for two solid hours!

(Kasira chuckled harder.)

KASIRA: At one point you said my minge tasted like lavender.

CAYLEY: You said mine tasted like soap then accidentally licked my bum hole.

KASIRA: I did?

CAYLEY: Yes!

(They chuckled until tears formed in their eyes then Kasira waved her hands in front of herself.)

KASIRA: What the hell were we thinking.

CAYLEY: Right? That's so not our thing.

KASIRA: Definitely. That was the only time I've *ever* had sex with a woman and so it shall remain.

CAYLEY: Ditto.

(At this point, Ambre opened one eye, gulped in terror then quickly screw her eyes up tight and pretended to be away with the fairies. Oblivious to this, Kasira smiled.)

KASIRA: Let's never get that drunk again.

CAYLEY: Agreed.

KASIRA: Just men, men, men from now on.

CAYLEY: That many, huh? Have you been getting tips from Nivea?

KASIRA: No. I was thinking one at a time.

CAYLEY: So definitely not like our Nivea then.

KASIRA: Nope.

(She mused to herself.)

KASIRA: When I say one at a time; I'm kind of hoping there'll only be one from now on.

CAYLEY: Oh? Your secret boyfriend?

KASIRA: Yeah. Not that he's a secret anymore... Cayley!

CAYLEY: Right. Sorry about that.

KASIRA: Nah, forget it.

(She smiled.)

KASIRA: I really like this one, love. I really do.

CAYLEY: Yeah?

(She bit her lip.)

CAYLEY: How well do you know him though? I mean really. Not being a dick, Kasira; I'm genuinely interested.

KASIRA: Well... obviously I don't know him inside out yet. What I do know about him so far though... I like.

CAYLEY: That's cool.

KASIRA: We meet at the first meeting I went to. The one at Shamir Town. We spent a pleasant evening together then made out for a bit. Then at my second general's meeting, the one before this one, we took a boat ride together, had a moonlit walk on the beach, a romantic dinner then went back to my room and made love. All night.

CAYLEY: Aw...

KASIRA: He's so loving and gentle. A caring kinda guy, you know?

CAYLEY: A rare breed.

KASIRA: Yeah. He is. So, yeah... I'm kinda hoping he's the one.

CAYLEY: I'll keep my fingers crossed for you, love.

KASIRA: Awesome. A futile gesture is just what every relationship needs to thrive.

CAYLEY: Then I'm definitely your girl.

(They chuckled together once again, when suddenly, the door crashed open and Sika and Soapy charged inside with Nivea hot on their heels.)

SIKA: Too slow, man hands!

SOAPY: She's getting old now.

SIKA: And fat!

NIVEA: Oh, this does not end well for you two little shits!!!

(Not about to tolerate any more of their tomfoolery, Kasira swiftly stood up and raised her voice.)

KASIRA: Stop!!!

(At once, the three of them froze to the spot.)

KASIRA: Pack it in. You'll wake Ambre.

(Upon hearing her name mentioned, Ambre swiftly sat up.)

AMBRE: I heard nothing!!!

KASIRA: What?

AMBRE: Um...

(She blushed.)

AMBRE: Just a dream I had.

KASIRA: Right...

(She looked to her three noisy subordinates.)

KASIRA: Just sit down, drink your tea and eat your cake, will you?

SIKA: Aw, crap. Cake! I forgot about that.

(She then hurried to the table. Soapy and Nivea followed suit.)

NIVEA: You'll keep.

SOAPY: Yeah, right.

KASIRA: Stop!!!

(She rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: Cayley, if you will...

(She gestured to the cake.)

CAYLEY: Absolutely.

(With that, she proceeded to dish out the cake which she'd already sliced into even parts before bringing it in.)

SIKA: Already sliced? Nice.

CAYLEY: Of course. After last time, there's no way I was going to slice it in front of you lot.

(She rolled her eyes then started to mimic her subordinates.)

CAYLEY: Wah. Boohoo. That's not even. Her slice is bigger than mine. I don't want that bit. Her slice has more strawberries on it than mine.

SIKA: Well... it did.

SOAPY: And her slice *was* bigger than mine.

AMBRE: No, it wasn't.

(Kasira rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: Nope. I'm gonna eat mine in the office. You lot are giving me a headache.

(With that, she climbed to her feet, grabbed her plate and her cup then turned to go.)

KASIRA: See you in a bit.

CAYLEY: Okay, love.

AMBRE: Bye. Oh, and Kasira...

KASIRA: Yes?

(Eager to reassure herself, having being stunned by what she'd overheard earlier, Ambre smiled. She didn't understand it, but knew she had to say something to make herself feel better about it.)

AMBRE: Don't worry. I still love you.

KASIRA: What?

(Ambre just beamed at her then quickly tucked into her cake.)

KASIRA: Right... I love you too.

AMBRE: In a family kind of way, right?

KASIRA: Well what else?

AMBRE: Nothing. I like this cake.

KASIRA: Well... good.

(She then shrugged and headed out of the room.)

CAYLEY: Right, now listen up. The fact Kasira's gone changes nothing. I want to eat my cake in peace. So any racket from you lot and you'll be punished again tomorrow.

AMBRE: Yay.

CAYLEY: I'll make you clean the base from top to bottom.

AMBRE: Not yay.

CAYLEY: Exactly.

AMBRE: We'll be good. *I* was behaving anyway.

SIKA: Creep.

AMBRE: Mean!

(She ruffled her neck indignantly then smiled at Cayley.)

AMBRE: Don't you worry either, Cayley. I still love you too.

CAYLEY: Aw.

SIKA: Why do you keep telling people you love them, Ambre?

AMBRE: No reason. I was asleep at the time and didn't hear it.

SOAPY: Hear what?

AMBRE: I don't know. Now leave me alone.

SOAPY: Ambre...

CAYLEY: Just leave her in peace.

(She then furrowed her brow in bewilderment.)

CAYLEY: It must have been one seriously weird dream.

(Everyone shrugged then tucked into their cake. Happy to put Ambre's words down to her simply having one of her moments, it was promptly forgot about. Thankfully, Nivea's embarrassment from earlier in the evening was also forgotten about; albeit temporarily. Nobody was any doubt that the baiting and mocking would resume in the morning, but mercifully, the rest of the evening passed by quite peacefully.)

The following morning at 8 o'clock, Nivea staggered half asleep from the corridor and into the kitchen then slumped herself on a chair. Sporting the darkened goggles she needed to see in daylight, she looked very much like a punch-drunk skier after colliding with a tree. Despite her obvious discomfort, however, she received no sympathy from her unit mates. Seated around the table with her, Sika, Soapy, Ambre and Cayley all rounded on her immediately.

SOAPY: Here she is, look; her holiness, the precious goggle-eyed dumpling.

SIKA: Worn out from a night of heavy night of prayer and meditation.

CAYLEY: Never mind baiting her; what happened, Nivea? You were meant to be on tea making duty this morning.

AMBRE: *I* had to do it!

(Nivea frowned.)

NIVEA: For crying out loud, people. Give me a minute to wake up before you savage me.

CAYLEY: You've had plenty of time to wake up.

AMBRE: A whole night's worth.

SIKA: Yeah... that's not quite how it works, Ambre.

AMBRE: I don't know.

(Ambre then resumed scanning a letter she'd received with her eyes.)

NIVEA: Look, it's not like I planned on waking up late. I just did. I didn't sleep very well.

SIKA: Poor thing. Being a deity, answering everyone's prayers all night, must really take it out of you.

NIVEA: Shut your face, woman.

SIKA: Easy!

CAYLEY: That's enough now. Grab some toast and I'll pour you some tea, Nivea.

NIVEA: Toast? What happened to the bacon?

CAYLEY: Yours is being kept warm under the grill; I'll fetch it in a minute.

(She rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: You lot think I'm a blooming octopus.

AMBRE: I don't get it.

CAYLEY: It means, you lot seem to think I have eight arms.

SIKA: An octopus doesn't have *any* arms; it has legs.

CAYLEY: Seriously? Do you want to get punished again?

(Sika whimpered.)

SIKA: No.

CAYLEY: Then stop giving me a bum ache.

(Sika pouted.)

SIKA: You're mean when Kasira's not around.

NIVEA: Kasira's not around?

CAYLEY: She's gone to her meeting already. And as for me being mean when she's not around; I'm nothing of the sort. When she's not here it's *my job* to tell you off when you're being a poop head.

SIKA: I wasn't being a poop head, as you call it. I was just saying an octopus has legs.

CAYLEY: Which was a completely needless and pedantic point to make.

SIKA: Well...

CAYLEY: No. It was. But more importantly, when your senior is trying to make a point, don't chime in just to be a smart arse; that's never going to end well, is it?

(Sika pouted begrudgingly.)

SIKA: Yeah, okay.

CAYLEY: Thank you.

AMBRE: I really don't get it.

NIVEA: Wow. An octopus has eight extremities, Ambre.

(Ambre glanced up from her letter.)

AMBRE: What?

NIVEA: I said an octopus has eight extremities.

AMBRE: Right...

(She then glanced back at her letter.)

AMBRE: This makes no sense at all.

SOAPY: So it's your letter that confused you, not the octopus thing?

AMBRE: What octopus?

SOAPY: Right...

CAYLEY: What's confusing you, love?

AMBRE: This letter makes no sense. Its gibberish.

(Sika gasped.)

SIKA: Rubbish. That letter was brilliantly written!

(Everyone gave her a sideways glance.)

SIKA: Um... I would assume.

CAYLEY: So what bit makes no sense?

AMBRE: Well...

(She glanced up nervously.)

AMBRE: I don't want to say. It's from that boy who's been writing to me.

SOAPY: Your boyfriend – slash – pen pal?

AMBRE: Yeah.

CAYLEY: Then just read us the lines you can't make sense of.

(Ambre blushed.)

AMBRE: Well... okay. He wrote...

(She then proceeded to read slowly and very much in the style of a child.)

AMBRE: Even if I can't hold you in my arms... I can hold you in my heart.

SOAPY: That's so sweet

AMBRE: I don't get it. Hearts don't have arms.

SIKA: I was... he was speaking figuratively

AMBRE: What's that?

(She then looked at the letter.)

AMBRE: And what does this bit mean. Our love has great awesomegeivity.

(Everyone instantly glowered at Sika.)

CAYLEY: That's your word!

SIKA: My word? I don't own words!

NIVEA: You own that one. Nobody else would ever use it.

SOAPY: Because you made it up!

SIKA: No, I didn't!

CAYLEY: Sika?

SIKA: What?

CAYLEY: Have you been writing Ambre love letters?

SIKA: Don't be preposterous!

NIVEA: You have, haven't you? That's why you were so adamant it was well-written. You wrote it!

SOAPY: Busted!

(Sika growled.)

SIKA: Fine. It was me!

AMBRE: What? But why would you...

(Sika sighed.)

SIKA: Because when he stopped writing to you six months ago, you were heartbroken. And it made me feel sad.

(She ruffled her neck.)

SIKA: So I decided to cheer you up by pretending he was still writing.

(Ambre's bottom lip sagged.)

AMBRE: So he isn't? It was you all this time?

SIKA: I just wanted to make you happy, Ambre.

AMBRE: But... I wrote back to you!

SIKA: And it was very disturbing, but I won't let on; don't worry.

NIVEA: Wait, how did you receive her letters?

SIKA: I told her I was going to post them, but opened them and read them instead.

AMBRE: I feel... I feel...

CAYLEY: Violated?

SOAPY: Fucking embarrassed?

AMBRE: Sad.

SIKA: Aw.

(Ambre then gasped and sat back.)

AMBRE: So you wrote all of them?

SIKA: Only for the last six months.

(Ambre whimpered.)

AMBRE: I don't like it.

(Sika grimaced.)

SIKA: What bit in particular?

AMBRE: What you wrote! Why do you want to touch me *there*, Sika? We're both girls!

SIKA: I don't! I was saying what a boy might say!

AMBRE: Then that boy's disgusting!

(Sika furrowed her brow.)

SIKA: I don't remember you complaining when you wrote back to me!

AMBRE: I thought I was writing back to whatever his name was.

NIVEA: Whatever his name was?

AMBRE: I've forgotten.

NIVEA: Wow. You really rocked Ambre's world there, Sika. She's forgotten you already.

SOAPY: Can you even act surprise that her lovers find her forgettable though?

SIKA: We're not lovers!

AMBRE: Yeah. No matter how much she begs!

SIKA: Begs???

AMBRE: You said you'd do anything to get in my knickers! That's begging.

SIKA: *I* don't want to get in your knickers! I was pretending to be a boy!

SOAPY: Well you have the figure for it.

SIKA: Shut up, you.

(She sighed.)

SIKA: Look. Ambre. I was just trying to do a nice thing. To cheer you up.

AMBRE: The thought of *you* put your hands *there* does not cheer me up!

SIKA: You were meant to think I was the boy you like!

AMBRE: Yes, but you're not. You're a girl and it's weird!

(She ruffled her neck.)

AMBRE: You'd better not touch me in my sleep tonight!

SIKA: Why would I???

AMBRE: Because you said...

SIKA: It was an act!

(She sighed with frustration.)

SIKA: Can someone please explain to Ambre what I was trying to do?

NIVEA: Sure. She was trying to seduce you!

SOAPY: And turn you into her fluffy love bunny.

SIKA: I was doing nothing of the sort!

(She furrowed her brow.)

SIKA: Help me out here, Cayley.

CAYLEY: No, I'm good.

SIKA: Cayley!

CAYLEY: Oh, fine.

(She rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: Ambre, you were sad, remember? When that boy said he wasn't going to write anymore.

AMBRE: Yeah.

CAYLEY: So Sika thought she'd pretend she was him and write to you, to stop you being sad.

AMBRE: I *have* stopped being sad.

SIKA: Then it worked!

AMBRE: It has, yes. Now I'm terrified.

(She looked to Soapy urgently.)

AMBRE: Can I share a room with you from now on?

SIKA: Ambre, that's mean.

AMBRE: No. Doing disturbing things to me in my sleep is mean.

SIKA: I'm not going to...

(She threw her hands up in defeat.)

SIKA: How are you not getting this?

AMBRE: Wrong'un!

SIKA: Ambre!

AMBRE: The world made sense until yesterday, now it's all twisted and weird.

SIKA: I was trying to be nice!

AMBRE: Everyone's weird except Soapy!

SOAPY: Agreed!

AMBRE: You want to touch my never-never; Nivea always gropes my boobies and don't even get my started on Kasira and Cayley!

SOAPY: What???

SIKA: Kasira and Cayley?

NIVEA: This is new!

CAYLEY: She's got the wrong end of the stick somewhere. I wouldn't worry about it.

NIVEA: Right...

SOAPY: Yeah. Sounds like something she'd do.

SIKA: Never mind that. Ambre, I need to get it through your thick skull...

AMBRE: Mean!

SIKA: I meant *pretty* skull.

AMBRE: No, that's worse. I don't like you calling me pretty anymore.

SIKA: Fine. Thick skull it is then. I need you get it through your thick skull that I'm not interested in your sexually or romantically. I was just trying to make you happy.

AMBRE: Are you sure? You went into lots and lots of details.

SIKA: Yes, I'm bloody sure! I was trying to do a nice thing.

AMBRE: You could have just made me a sandwich. You didn't have to write dirty letters about taking into the barn and...

SIKA: Fine!

SOAPY: Taking you in the barn and what?

NIVEA: Yeah, do tell.

(Ambre blushed.)

AMBRE: I don't want to say.

SIKA: Thank you.

(She smiled.)

SIKA: Ambre, nothing has changed, okay? When it comes to our friendship, it's all the same as it was yesterday. The only difference is now you know those letter weren't real.

(Ambre sighed.)

AMBRE: I liked getting those letters.

SIKA: I know.

SOAPY: They got her all excited.

NIVEA: So much so she'd go to her room and strum her bits for hours.

SIKA: Gross!

NIVEA: It is, yes. You got Ambre aroused.

SOAPY: That's as bad as fondling her yourself.

NIVEA: Right?

SIKA: You two...

CAYLEY: Nope. That's enough now. This silly conversation has gone on too long as it is.

(She looked to Ambre.)

CAYLEY: Ambre, Sika just tried to do a nice thing, okay? There's nothing dirty about it.

AMBRE: But...

CAYLEY: Trust me, there really wasn't. It was stupid, not dirty.

SIKA: Since when was trying to be nice *stupid*?

CAYLEY: Since you decided to do it like *that*.

SIKA: Harsh.

CAYLEY: Now let's just finish our breakfast in peace, okay?

(Ambre forced a smile.)

AMBRE: Okay. I'm sad and really confused but I'll try my best.

CAYLEY: Good girl.

(She nodded then glanced up at the clock.)

CAYLEY: I wonder how Kasira's getting on at her meeting.

NIVEA: Yeah... I'm not gonna be able to rest until I know what the future holds for us.

SIKA: Scary times.

SOAPY: Uh-huh.

CAYLEY: I know, but look on the bright side. Kasira's out there right now, fighting on our behalf. And I, for one, believe in her.

NIVEA: Yeah, she has a way of making things right, doesn't she?

CAYLEY: Absolutely. So let's not panic unduly. She's over at the training base right now, fighting the good fight; putting our needs first and trying to strike a blow for this unit. That's one thing you can be sure of. Right now, she's working our arse off for us; of that you can be certain.

At the Capsway Island training base at this time, Kasira was laying back on her desk going cross-eyed with ecstasy. Before her desk, her new flame General Amru was pounding her vagina with several inches of prime man meat. Kasira didn't have to arrive at the meeting so early; she'd only gone in so soon to make the most of this opportunity to be intimate with her man. It was something she was achieving in some considerable style. They'd met up an hour ago, headed to her office and had been deep in the throes of a raucous sex session ever since. When the time came to fight the good fight for her unit, she'd be ready and give it everything she had. Until then, however, she was going to have a little fun.

As the clock ticked onwards and Kasira released her thousandth squeal of ecstasy of the morning, she started to feel somewhat queasy. The sex had been exhausting. Not about to let up however, she glanced up and spoke through exhausted breaths.

KASIRA: Such stamina! You could be a racehorse.

(Amru beamed.)

AMRU: Would you still sleep with me if I was?

KASIRA: What?

(He winced.)

AMRU: Um... nothing.

KASIRA: Right... just focus on giving me a seeing to.

AMRU: Right, yes. Sorry... got distracted...

(He then groaned.)

AMRU: Orgasm incoming, you see?

(With that, he let out a cry of ecstasy, withdrew then ejaculated across Kasira's stomach.)

AMRU: Holy fuck that feels good.

KASIRA: I aim to please.

AMRU: And you're an excellent shot. I'm just sorry it didn't last even longer. I tried to hold out as long as I could, but when an orgasm's ready...

KASIRA: You don't need to apologise for cumming. I've had three orgasms already.

(She exhaled.)

KASIRA: And besides, you pounded me good and proper for over an hour. You've nothing to apologise for.

AMRU: Is that so?

KASIRA: Hell, yeah.

AMRU: Good to know.

(He then set about cleaning himself up. As he did so, Kasira towelled herself down then headed for a water cubicle in the corner.)

KASIRA: Seriously, where did you learn to make love like that?

AMRU: My parents owned a brothel.

KASIRA: What?

AMRU: Just kidding.

(He smirked arrogantly.)

AMRU: It's not really something I learned. I'm just inspired by *you*. You're the most beautiful woman I've ever clapped eyes on, Kasira. I'm lucky to have you. Thankful, even. And what better way to repay my gratitude than to make love to you like a hyper-charged gigolo on a mission.

KASIRA: I like that answer. That's the best answer ever.

AMRU: Just speaking my truth, darling.

KASIRA: And it's appreciated.

(A short while later, once they were both dressed again and ready to face the day, Kasira and Amru sat down side by side on the desk then reached for one another's hands.)

KASIRA: Becoming a general was the best thing that ever happened to me.

AMRU: Oh?

KASIRA: I got to meet *you*. I like *you*. *You* is awesome. *You*... feel right.

AMRU: Our genitals are a good fit too.

KASIRA: I agree. They're very compatible.

(They both chuckled.)

AMRU: I have to say, Kasira, I share your sentiments. I meant what I said about your beauty. Your face is uniquely breathtaking to look at.

KASIRA: Thank you.

AMRU: And on top of that you have an arse to die for and the tits of a fucking goddess.

KASIRA: I have nice hair too; let's not overlook that.

AMRU: I wouldn't dare.

(They both laughed then Kasira exhaled.)

KASIRA: We have a good laugh together. And the sex is mind-blowing.

AMRU: Thank you.

KASIRA: You're welcome.

(She smiled.)

KASIRA: It's all so positive, you know? I mean, we don't really know each other yet, but I have a good feeling about you. I reckon I could be happy with you.

AMRU: I feel exactly the same way, my love.

KASIRA: You do?

AMRU: I do. I'm starting to think you might be the one. The elusive angel I get to spend the rest of my life with.

KASIRA: I've been thinking the same thing.

AMRU: Good to know.

(He nodded.)

AMRU: And in light of our shared revelation, maybe we should cement our feelings by having sex again.

KASIRA: We'll be late for the meeting if we do.

AMRU: Shit. Good point. We can't miss that. Our very futures are hinging on the outcome of this meeting.

KASIRA: Exactly.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: But don't worry. Should you propose anything, I'll be sure to back it. Even if I'm the only one who does.

AMRU: And I'll do the same for you.

KASIRA: Thank you.

(She grimaced.)

KASIRA: I mean, thank you, seriously. As the only woman, I'm kind of worried my input will be ignored.

AMRU: Oh? How come?

KASIRA: I'm not really taken seriously, am I? You're referred to as General Amru. I get called things like sugar lips, hot stuff and Captain Gorgeous.

AMRU: Captain?

KASIRA: Right? Two insults for the price of one.

AMRU: Well, don't worry. I'll stand up for you.

KASIRA: Thank you.

AMRU: Think nothing of it. You are my woman, after all.

KASIRA: Yes, yes I am.

(They shared a loving smile for a moment then Amru slid from the desk.)

AMRU: We should get going really.

KASIRA: Yeah...

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: You go first. I'll catch you in a minute.

AMRU: Oh?

KASIRA: That way we won't be seen arriving together.

AMRU: Good point. We don't want to set tongues wagging, do we?

KASIRA: Nope. The higher-ups wouldn't approve one bit, and knowing my luck, I'd get fired.

AMRU: Well, we can't have that, can we?

KASIRA: No, no we can't.

AMRU: Right then.

(With that, he straightened his tie then stood tall.)

AMRU: See you in there, beautiful.

KASIRA: Yes, yes you will.

(With that, he paced away and headed out of the door, making sure to close it behind him.

Left alone, Kasira exhaled then sat back a little.)

KASIRA: I'm so blessed.

(She then closed her eyes and allowed herself to fantasise about the future the two of them might have together. It proved to be an excellent way to pass the time. Before she knew it, ninety seconds had passed and she could now head to the meeting without anyone knowing about her romantic morning with her fellow general. And so, psyched and ready to fight her corner and bring good news to her unit at the end of the day, she nodded to herself then marched out of the door. Having marched back through it two seconds later, feeling quite the fool, she slipped her feet inside her stilettos then headed back out again. In this moment she felt strong; empowered. She had the love of a good man who was willing to support her and this had boosted her confidence no end. Right now, she felt unstoppable.)

KASIRA: You can do this, Kasira. You can do it.

(At this point her foot slipped out of her shoe and she stumbled forwards. Having righted herself, she then stopped to put her shoe on properly. As she did so, however, she heard two voices rise up from the men's lavatories to her left.)

AMRU: I must say, you're looking well, General Kukri.

KUKRI: Why, thank you. You're looking pretty sharp yourself, General Amru.

(Kasira smirked knowingly then mumbled to herself.)

KASIRA: You should see him naked then.

(She then proceeded to giggle to herself as the conversation continued.)

AMRU: So, how's *Mrs* Kukri?

KUKRI: Oh, you know... the same. Always nagging, burning the dinner and denying me sex.

AMRU: Ouch.

KUKRI: Indeed. And what about you? How are the wife and kids?

(Kasira's jaw dropped like a stone.)

KASIRA: Huh?

AMRU: Pretty good actually. The missus is still giving the good stuff and making excellent food.

KUKRI: And that's why I hate you.

AMRU: Right?

(He chuckled.)

AMRU: As for the kids, they're fine. Little Teemu is five now, you know? Lovely lad.

KUKRI: Ah, they're great at that age, aren't they?

AMRU: Absolutely.

KUKRI: Anyway, that's enough faffing about. I'm gonna get going. I have a feeling this meeting is going to be interesting.

AMRU: Righto. I'll see you in there.

KUKRI: Indeed you will. Cheerio.

(Kukri then headed out of the door, winked at Kasira then headed for the meeting hall.

Ignoring him completely Kasira simply stood there seething. Moments later, when Amru emerged from the toilets, he flinched then took a step backwards.)

AMRU: Kasira? You startled me.

(Kasira's nostrils twitched.)

AMRU: Are you okay? You look somewhat cross. Nay; psychotic with rage.

KASIRA: You complete bastard!

AMRU: Steady on, woman. And keep your voice down.

(Well aware that making a scene could well get her demoted, Kasira growled then spoke up in an angry but lowered voice.)

KASIRA: You have a wife and kids?

AMRU: What? No, I don't! Who said that?

KASIRA: *You* did! To that other general.

AMRU: Right...

(He winced.)

AMRU: Rumbled.

KASIRA: How could you...

AMRU: Don't make a fuss, darling. We both knew I couldn't be trusted when we started this thing.

KASIRA: I knew nothing of the sort.

AMRU: Well, you do now.

(He smiled.)

AMRU: Which is a *good* thing. I'm *glad* it's out in the open. Now we can carry on our affair without me keeping secrets from you anymore.

KASIRA: Oh, lucky me.

AMRU: Blessed, some would say.

(Kasira shook her head.)

KASIRA: I had no idea you were like that. I thought we had something special.

AMRU: We did. The sex.

KASIRA: You arsehole. You told me I was the one.

AMRU: And you are. You're the one I have sex with before meetings.

KASIRA: Are you fucking kidding me???

AMRU: Far from it. We really *have* been having sex before meetings. You ought to know, you were there. *I* was great.

KASIRA: I...

AMRU: You said so yourself.

KASIRA: Amru...

(Amru rolled his eyes.)

AMRU: Look, there's no need to get all hormonal, love. Let's just agree to have a sordid affair and leave it at that.

KASIRA: No. I'll never be the other woman.

AMRU: Bugger. Good fanny is so hard to find.

KASIRA: Wow.

AMRU: Yes, well, never mind wow. If you don't want to be my fancy woman, that's your loss.

KASIRA: *My* loss?

AMRU: Yes. Your loss. Just remember to keep your gob shut.

(He ruffled his neck indignantly.)

AMRU: Our affair getting out could mean terrible things for me.

KASIRA: Fucking... diddums.

(Amru furrowed his brow.)

AMRU: Seriously; keep it quiet, you. If people find out, it'll be curtains for your career too.

KASIRA: Oh, like I'd *want* people to know you lied your way into my knickers.

AMRU: Good. Then we understand each other. Anyway...

(With that, he nodded to her respectfully then headed for the meeting hall.)

AMRU: You might want to get a move on too, Kasira. Some of the other generals might fancy a cup of tea before we start and seeing as you're a woman... well, you can see where I was going with that. Just don't be late.

(Kasira shook her head disdainfully then sighed in defeat.)

KASIRA: Men. Why do I always pick the shit ones? I should have become a lesbian when I had the chance.

(And with one final groan she then ambled towards the meeting hall. Suffice to say she was not in the best of moods right now. Managing to keep her emotions in check, however, she refocussed herself on getting the best outcome for her unit and set her man troubles to the back of her mind. Even the other generals wolf whistling and demanding cups of coffee as soon as she entered the hall were not going to distract her from that. She was a woman with a mission and any heartbreak or offensive comments would have to be addressed later.)

Some fifteen minutes later, once all 118 generals had taken their places at their tables in the grand hall, the meeting finally got underway. At the front of the room sat the head of the army, the supreme leader himself; an elderly gentleman named Fortingly. To his side, sat the four major generals, including Major General Hasham whose wife had been the driving force behind Kasira's promotion to general. All around the edges of the hall, the generals were seated behind tables, all of which had name plates on. Very much in the form of a political forum, it had been arranged so everyone could see everyone else. Nobody was looking at the back of a colleague's head.

Normally, a meeting would start with the supreme leader greeting everyone then cracking a few jokes to lighten proceeds before the important business of military governance got

underway. On this occasion, however, because of the gravity of the situation, the leader's welcome speech took on a far more serious tone.

FORTINGLY: Good morning, everyone. We've got a lot to get through today, so I suggest we get cracking.

(He nodded.)

FORTINGLY: The day we both longed for and feared has come, everyone. The gods have spoken. Our war is set to end. Therefore, the first item on the agenda should be the implementation of our global peace plan.

(Kasira grimaced. She had no idea what this plan was.)

FORTINGLY: Luckily, we only updated it four meetings ago, so I don't think I need to tell you the details.

(Having only attended the last three meetings, Kasira cringed then started to raise her hand.)

FORTINGLY: Okay then; the global peace plan. Our plan for what to do when the war ends. Unless there are any objections I say we move straight on to voting whether to implement it in its current form or make some amendments.

(A little nervous about raising her hand to highlight the fact that she was the only one who didn't know what the plan was, Kasira whimpered then decided to bite the bullet. As far as she was concerned, it was better to ask a question and *look* like a fool than *not* ask a question and prove herself to be one. And so, her hand raised in the air, immediately catching the eye of the supreme commander.)

FORTINGLY: Yes, general?

(Hoping not to make an exhibition of herself, Kasira stood up then nodded sternly. Before she could even speak, however, the supreme commander barked at her angrily.)

FORTINGLY: Good god, man! Look at you, you're a disgrace! Get a bloody haircut! How dare you come in here looking like that??? And what's with those weird trousers?

KASIRA: Um... it's a skirt, sir.

FORTINGLY: A skirt? Wait...

(He grimaced.)

FORTINGLY: That was a woman's voice.

KASIRA: I'm a woman, sir.

FORTINGLY: Then why are you here? Tea break is in an hour!

(At this point, Major General Hasham hastily whispered in his ear. Listening to what he was being told, the supreme commander looked enlightened.)

FORTINGLY: So the rumours are true?

(He nodded then looked to Kasira.)

FORTINGLY: I do apologise, dear. I had heard a woman was joining us, but it seems to have slipped my mind.

KASIRA: It's fine, sir.

FORTINGLY: Thank you. So you're a woman, are you?

KASIRA: Um... yes...

(Fortingly quickly reached for his glasses and slipped them over his eyes.)

FORTINGLY: And by golly, what a woman! Miaow. You're lovely.

KASIRA: Um...

(Fortingly winced.)

FORTINGLY: Right... yes... that was thoroughly unprofessional of me. I do apologise.

(He nodded.)

FORTINGLY: What did you wish to ask?

KASIRA: It's about the global peace plan.

FORTINGLY: What about it?

KASIRA: Well... what... is it?

FORTINGLY: You don't know???

KASIRA: I wasn't here four meeting ago, sir.

FORTINGLY: Ah. I see. Then I'll explain the main points to you all again. Please be seated General Lovely.

KASIRA: What?

FORTINGLY: Right... yes... that's probably not your name, is it?

KASIRA: No. I'm General Ashwood.

FORTINGLY: Noted. Now sit down.

(Kasira dutifully obliged.)

FORTINGLY: Okay, the global peace plan in a nutshell is as follows. Upon the resolution to the war against wraiths, the army will become a global police force instead. Each base will host between two and six officers, depending on the size of the settlement. In places where a police force is no longer required, the bases will be sold off to the public. In all, our combined force will shrink by roughly fifty percent, but as the upholders of justice we'll retain a strong presence in the world. Happy, Miss Ashwood?

KASIRA: Sir!

FORTINGLY: Good.

(He nodded.)

FORTINGLY: Oh, yes; that was it. Also, seeing as the need for boots on the ground will no longer be urgent, women will no longer be allowed to serve in the force.

KASIRA: What???

FORTINGLY: All those in favour?

(At once, every single hand other than Kasira's rose into the air. All Kasira could do was growl under her breath.)

KASIRA: Oh, I see...

FORTINGLY: Excellent. That's everybody, I think. Still, I'd better follow protocol and ask. All those against?

(Kasira thrust her hand into the air bitterly. Glancing around the room, the supreme commander could only shake his head.)

FORTINGLY: There always has to be one awkward bugger. No matter what the situation, there's always one annoying so and so who has to disagree.

(He rolled his eyes.)

FORTINGLY: And it's always a bloody woman.

(He sighed.)

FORTINGLY: Well? Let's hear it.

KASIRA: Hear it?

FORTINGLY: Your objection! As you ought to know, if a motion doesn't pass unanimously, we have to have to hear both sides of the debate. Basic protocol.

KASIRA: Oh. Okay. Well...

FORTINGLY: Stand up to address the assembly, Miss Lovely.

(Kasira stood up.)

KASIRA: It's Miss Ashwood, sir. I mean *General* Ashwood.

FORTINGLY: Right...

(He then leant to the Major General at his side.)

FORTINGLY: She might be an obstructive pain in the arse, but I fucking would.

KASIRA: Sorry?

(Realising he'd spoken far too loudly, the supreme commander sat up and grimaced.)

FORTINGLY: Um... never mind me. If you have an objection, let's hear it.

KASIRA: Okay.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: I object to the section of the plan stating that woman should no longer serve in the army...

FORTINGLY: Well that figures.

(He shook his head then leant towards Major General Hasham.)

FORTINGLY: So much for an early lunch. Honestly, Hasham, if I'd known she was just going to be an obstacle, I'd have blocked her promotion.

KASIRA: Um...

FORTINGLY: How *did* she make general anyway? Outstanding service in the field of cooking and cleaning?

(Hasham leant back towards him.)

HASHAM: She's the leader of that unit that successfully overcome four wraith infestations.

FORTINGLY: Oh, she is?

HASHAM: Yes, sir. And this academy was opened specifically so she could teach future captains her leadership skills.

FORTINGLY: I see. Impressive.

(He shrugged.)

FORTINGLY: Oh, well. Fair enough. She earned it.

(He then looked to Kasira.)

FORTINGLY: Sorry, what was the objection again?

(Kasira rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: I object to the section of the plan stating that woman should no longer serve in the army.

FORTINGLY: Yes, but on what grounds?

KASIRA: I was coming to that, sir.

FORTINGLY: Then get a move on.

KASIRA: Right. There are some absolutely first class female soldier in this army and... stop laughing, you lot.

FORTINGLY: Quite! Silence during a fellow general's speech, unless her funny comment is *meant* to be a joke.

(Silence descended, so Kasira resumed.)

KASIRA: Like I said, there are some top class female soldiers in this army and there are some pretty awful male ones. What sense would it make, therefore, to kick out the good female ones and retain the poor male ones on the grounds of gender alone? That would be ridiculously self-defeating.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: Such a move would be ghastly. These are your daughters and grand-daughters you'd be throwing on the scrap heap. Rendering them jobless merely for being female, without even considering their fitness to do the job is obscene. The people the army choose to retain should be selected on merit. After all, a meritocracy is the most productive form of governance, by far.

(She folded her arms indignantly.)

KASIRA: The entire concept is offensive. Offensive to common sense and offensive to women everywhere. We're not useless sex objects, cooks or cleaners; we're people. And people need jobs. We should see that those jobs go to those who merit them. Anything else would be wrong.

(She then took a seat and nodded defiantly.)

FORTINGLY: Some excellent points, Miss Lovely. Excellent points, well made.

(He then glanced across the room.)

FORTINGLY: Would anyone like to counter Miss Lovely's boobies?

(Laughter rose up from the assembly.)

FORTINGLY: I meant points. Would anyone like to counter her points?

(Kasira glanced from side to side urgently; desperately hoping that would nobody would. Her point being accepted and understood was her only hope. Much to her dismay however, she then spotted General Amru smirking in her direction. Maintaining his cocky smile, he then climbed to his feet.)

AMRU: I would, sir.

FORTINGLY: Very well. What do you have to add?

AMRU: I'd like to add that the new police force will not be the same as the army, sir. Sure, women can kill wraiths... eventually. They might make an almighty song and dance about it, but they get it done, I agree. The police won't be dealing with wraiths, however. They'll be maintaining law and order. Dealing with rowdy human beings. And so, seeing as we need to reduce numbers by roughly fifty percent, one half; it just makes sense to kick out the women and retain the physically superior half. After all, what good will a woman be if a mob of louts decide to start a fight in a pub? Not much; that I can tell you. No, no; keeping women in the force would be utter tomfoolery. Policing is a man's job. The women can go back to cooking, cleaning and milking cows; jobs more suited to their feebleness.

(He then sat down again.)

FORTINGLY: Thank you, general.

AMRU: You're welcome, sir.

FORTINGLY: Anyone else?

(Nobody batted an eyelid.)

FORTINGLY: Then it's time for the final vote.

(He nodded.)

FORTINGLY: All those in favour of women no longer serving in the force, please raise your hands.

(Kasira's heart instantly sunk. Once again, all the other hands were raised.)

FORTINGLY: All those against?

(Kasira sighed then raised a lone hand.)

FORTINGLY: Right. Same as before. The motion passes by 117 votes to 1.

(He rolled his eyes.)

FORTINGLY: Well that was a complete waste of time. Our lunch is delayed now and for nothing. Women!

(He sighed.)

FORTINGLY: Anyway, let's move on to the second item, shall we?

(As the supreme commander continued, Kasira slumped in her seat. It had been a disastrous outcome; far worse than she'd even anticipated. The sexist sentiment in the room was rife and she'd never stood a chance. Wallowing in this fact, she sat and silently cursed the rest of the generals in her mind. As such, her ears didn't absorb a single word until some five minutes later when she heard Capsway Island mentioned.)

FORTINGLY: This academy here on New Capsway Island will become a cadet training base. One of fifteen such places in our plan.

(He flicked through his notes.)

FORTINGLY: Now to oversee the transition, I'm proposing we retain the current staff in each of the academies. From the teachers to the gatehouse staff. Male or female. The whole thing might run a lot smoother then. We can make changes going forward, but for now I'd suggest the current staff remain in their academic or admin roles.

(He glanced up.)

FORTINGLY: Any objections?

(He glowered at Kasira. Much to his delight, however; she remained dormant. Keeping her job as headmistress would be a scant consolation, but right now it was the only consolation

she had. As such, she was very much in favour of his plan. Unfortunately for her, however, not everyone agreed with the motion.)

AMRU: I have one *slight* objection, sir.

(He climbed to his feet.)

AMRU: Actually, it's more of a suggestion for an amendment rather than an objection, but I believe it to be an important one.

FORTINGLY: Then let's hear it.

AMRU: Yes, sir.

(He nodded.)

AMRU: Well, the way I see it is, retaining the teaching, admin and gate staff at the academies is indeed an excellent idea. That said, however, we ought to replace any headmistresses.

KASIRA: What???

FORTINGLY: Silence, you; General Amru has the floor.

AMRU: Thank you, sir. My thinking is that a man should have the role as head. A male head for a male base; that's just common sense.

FORTINGLY: I concur. Any objections?

(Kasira instantly jumped to her feet.)

KASIRA: Yes!

FORTINGLY: Oh, for fuck sake. We'll be having lunch at dinnertime at his rate.

(He rolled his eyes.)

FORTINGLY: Go on then. State your case, woman.

KASIRA: Fine.

(She shook her fist at Amru.)

KASIRA: Why do you hate me???

FORTINGLY: That's your case, is it?

KASIRA: What? No.

(She furrowed her brow.)

KASIRA: *This* is my case. As the headmistress of the very academy we're sitting in right now, I find the inference that I wouldn't be able to do an outstanding job as the head of a male base, beyond insulting. My work has been beyond reproach until now. The fact I'm a woman hasn't stopped me doing a first class job in the past and nor will it in the future. I'm capable leader, damn it.

(She then sat down and nodded sternly.)

KASIRA: Bloody doubting *me*; whatever next?

FORTINGLY: Right. Thank you, Miss Lovely. Now let's put it to a vote. All those in favour of replacing headmistresses with headmasters, raise your hands.

(Kasira watched every other hand go up then growled with annoyance.)

KASIRA: Well there's a fucking surprise.

FORTINGLY: All those against.

(Kasira sneered and raised her hand.)

FORTINGLY: Just you. Again!

(He shook his head then glanced to the Major General at his side.)

FORTINGLY: So much for everyone pulling in the same direction. She's a pain in the arse, this girl.

HASHAM: Yes, but considering we've spent this entire meeting discussing how to ruin her life, I can't help but feel she has a *right* to be miffed, sir.

FORTINGLY: Yes, but can't she do it quietly?

(He puffed out.)

FORTINGLY: Anyway, that's that one sorted. No more headmistresses. Now onto the next item on the agenda.

KASIRA: What's that? Legalising punching women in the face?

FORTINGLY: Excuse me?

KASIRA: Oh, forget it.

FORTINGLY: It's forgotten. Now be quiet. If you don't mind, we'd like to move onto the next item on the agenda.

KASIRA: Fine by me. I mean, what's the worst that can happen? You've run out of carriages to throw me under now anyway.

FORTINGLY: Then be quiet.

(He shook his head.)

FORTINGLY: Okay, we need to start selecting the bases we can close and sell off quickly. The ones we definitely won't need due to our reduction in numbers. So, I'll go around the room and you can let me know of any definite surplus bases in your jurisdiction, okay?

(He then looked to Kasira.)

FORTINGLY: Let's start with you. Seeing as you're bound to find a way to make it drag on twice as long as it should, I'd prefer to get *your* recommendations out of the way.

KASIRA: What recommendations? There's only one base in my jurisdiction; mine. Right here on New Capsway Island.

FORTINGLY: A woman's base?

KASIRA: Obviously.

FORTINGLY: Excellent. We definitely won't be needing *that* anymore. The policing can be done by the staff here at the academy instead. Admin, put it on the list to be sold off as soon as possible.

KASIRA: Sure, why not? You've already taken my livelihood, why *not* make me homeless.

FORTINGLY: It's an army base; not your home. You'd be out on your ear anyway.

KASIRA: Even so.

(She ruffled her neck indignantly.)

KASIRA: Did you have to be that gleeful about it?

FORTINGLY: Right... it's not what I said, it's the way that I said it, yes?

KASIRA: Yes.

FORTINGLY: Idiot.

KASIRA: Hey!

FORTINGLY: Silence. That's the first base chosen. The hammer falls on Capsway Island first. Make a note of that, admin.

(Just then, General Amru climbed to his feet once again.)

AMRU: Sir, I have a question.

FORTINGLY: Oh?

AMRU: Seeing as women are being booted out of the army, and headmistresses are all set to be replaced, is there really any point in General Ashwood being here any longer? You know, seeing as she's basically being fired.

KASIRA: You bastard!

FORTINGLY: Silence!

(He then looked to Kasira and shrugged.)

FORTINGLY: He makes a good point. It doesn't make sense to have *you* sitting here making decisions when you're about to be booted out, does it? You may leave.

KASIRA: But...

FORTINGLY: Leave!!!

(Kasira's shoulder's slumped.)

KASIRA: Fine.

(She then pouted indignantly.)

KASIRA: But in accordance with regulation 16 subsection 37, as a departing general I'm entitled to make a parting speech.

(Fortingly spammed his forehead.)

FORTINGLY: Is that true, Hasham?

HASHAM: It is, sir; yes.

FORTINGLY: Fuck.

(He groaned.)

FORTINGLY: Go on then! Just be quick about it.

KASIRA: It'll take as long as it takes, in accordance with the regulation!

FORTINGLY: Shit.

KASIRA: Right...

(She folded her arms bitterly then began.)

KASIRA: After everything I've been through for this stupid army, I can't believe you're treating me like this. I got battered, raped and abused for years by General Wilson and didn't complain to the high command once. I tolerated being beaten, despised, sexually abused and spat on by the public too. And the army did nothing to help. Nothing. Not a bloody thing. I went through all that for you bastards and for what?

(She growled.)

KASIRA: To be kicked out and treated like dirt just because I have boobs!

FORTINGLY: And a vagina!

HASHAM: Don't interrupt, sir.

FORTINGLY: Why? Is that against the rules too?

HASHAM: Well, no, but it'll last longer if you interrupt.

FORTINGLY: Good point. Carry on.

KASIRA: I will!

(She shook her head.)

KASIRA: After all that crap I went through, I still sailed through the ranks, earning promotion after promotion. Four wraith infestations I overcame. Four! Most people never even experience one. I battled my way through four! Led my unit through the toughest of situations, four fucking times. Without losing a single member! You should be discussing commissioning a bloody statue of me, not booting me to the curb like a worthless piece of rubbish. Shame on you.

(She nodded sternly.)

KASIRA: Sexist bastards! This is discrimination of the highest order! If a man had achieved what I have, you'd revere him like a god. But no, because I'm a woman, I just get thrown out with the excess from the long-drop.

(She pouted.)

KASIRA: It makes me wonder. What sort of army is this? What sort of army doesn't move heaven and earth to keep it's best people? A stupid one, that's what? Four infestations!

Does that mean nothing to you??? You're all really mean...

(Tears started to well in her eyes.)

KASIRA: You've really hurt my feelings. I don't deserve to be treated like this. How can you all sit there and do this to me? I worked so hard and now I'm homeless and unemployed. How can that be fair? It's cruel; cruel and...

FORTINGLY: Nope! No more! Listening to a nagging woman is hard enough; I can't sit here and tolerate a crying one too!

HASHAM: We have no choice.

FORTINGLY: Bloody do.

(He looked to Kasira.)

FORTINGLY: General, I'll do you a deal. If you quit complaining and piss off, you can keep your sodding base!

KASIRA: I don't want...

(His words then filtered into her mind clearly.)

KASIRA: Keep it?

FORTINGLY: Yes! We have the forms here. I'll sign the bloody thing over to you right now, if you like. Just promise me you'll take the deeds and bugger off.

(Kasira mused to herself.)

KASIRA: I get to keep the base. As in, I'll own it?

FORTINGLY: Yes!!!

(Kasira ruffled her neck indignantly.)

KASIRA: I suppose... your terms are acceptable.

(Sick to death of her complaining, everyone drew a sigh of relief.)

FORTINGLY: Good, good. Admin, draw up the forms, will you?

(As the admin set about filling in the form, the supreme commander looked to Kasira.)

FORTINGLY: We'll all sign it then you can go.

KASIRA: Fine!

FORTINGLY: After you've made me a coffee.

KASIRA: Fine, but I'm taking back at the biscuits Cayley made. You lot don't deserve them.

FORTINGLY: Whatever you say, love.

(Just then, an admin passed the supreme commander three identical forms.)

FORTINGLY: What are these?

HASHAM: The deeds, sir. You both need to sign each copy then the transfer is complete.

FORTINGLY: I see.

(He glanced at the form.)

FORTINGLY: Under *fee* it says zero.

HASHAM: Because we're giving her the base for free.

FORTINGLY: Right. A small price to pay for peace and quiet.

(He then signed the first form.)

FORTINGLY: Enjoy your concrete bunker, Miss Lovely.

(Well aware that he had no idea how plush their base was, Kasira shrugged.)

KASIRA: I will.

(Moments later, once the forms were signed, Kasira took her copy then nonchalantly folded it up.)

KASIRA: I'll be going now then.

FORTINGLY: Excellent. Don't come back.

KASIRA: I won't. No matter how much you beg. Good luck with the next wraith infestation.

FORTINGLY: Same to you, dear. You're the one who seems to attract them, after all.

KASIRA: What can I tell you? I'm very attractive!

(She then strutted towards the door, swaying her hips arrogantly. Despite the humiliation of the day she wanted to go out with her pride intact. Knowing that all the men were drooling at her as she left very much helped with that. Before she could quite reach the door, however, the supreme commander called out to her.)

FORTINGLY: Oh, just for your records, Miss Lovely. According to the protocol, after three days with no wraiths, all women will be officially kicked from the force. Your commission will stop and so will your wages.

KASIRA: And?

FORTINGLY: I was just letting you know.

(Kasira turned and smiled at him.)

KASIRA: Fine. Now you can all watch my butt as I leave.
(She then turned again. As she did so, however, a vengeful expression appeared on her face.)
KASIRA: Oh...
(She then turned again and was greeted by a mass groan.)
KASIRA: To be honest, I wasn't *always* a great soldier. I did do the *odd* bad thing. For a start, I've been sleeping with General Amru. And that's a sacking offence for both us, isn't it?
(Having expected everyone to gasp and condemn General Amru roundly, Kasira was most put out by their reaction. Most of the generals applauded him, and several encouraged him to "get in there son". He received many a high-five. Somewhat miffed by it all, Kasira just growled then stormed out of the door. Delighted to see her go, the supreme commander exhaled then glanced across at the generals.)
FORTINGLY: What this? Why were you all clapping? What happened?
AMRU: Nothing major, sir.
FORTINGLY: No, wait. Was it something Miss Lovely said, only I didn't quite catch it?
AMRU: No, no. It's nothing to concern yourself about. Let's plod on, so we can get as much done as we can by lunchtime.
FORTINGLY: Ah, yes. Lunch. Okay... bases. I'll go around the room and you can advise me on which ones can definitely be closed.
(As the meeting continued, Kasira stormed out of the front of the academy, growling to herself. Absolutely livid about the outcome, she then kicked a pot plant.)
KASIRA: Ow!!!
(She then hopped about in agony.)
KASIRA: Just... fucking why???
(She then dropped to the ground and her shoulders slumped in defeat.)
KASIRA: Aw, bollocks.

Some fifteen minutes later, as she approached her base, Kasira felt a mix of contrasting emotions. As much as she was looking forward to seeing some friendly faces, she was dreading having to break the news to them. Telling everyone except Cayley that they were all to be fired would be devastating. Knowing she couldn't delay the matter, however, she picked up the pace then gritted her teeth.

KASIRA: Oh, well; here we go then.
(With that, she bounded through the gates then crossed the courtyard with a resolved spring in her step. She was determined to break the news confidently and reassure her friends that unemployment was not the end of the world. If their attitudes were right, they could all find jobs and make a success of themselves in another field. Desperate to get this point across, she barged her way through the doors then strode into the living room. Upon arriving however, she stopped dead and stared ahead of herself in astonishment at what she was seeing. Sika was down on all fours like a horse and Soapy is riding upon her back. Both were wearing nothing but their bras and knickers. Nivea was standing over them, brandishing a whip. Staring back at her in abject horror, Sika and Soapy looked like their world had come to an end. Nivea, on the other hand, was struggling desperately not to laugh. For several seconds an uncomfortable silence reigned then Kasira's jaw dropped.)
KASIRA: What the fuck is this now?
(At this point, Cayley glanced up nonchalantly from where she was reading a book at the table.)

CAYLEY: They were bugging about when they should have been cleaning so I threatened to punish them.

KASIRA: And...

CAYLEY: They doubted I'd punish them sternly if *you* weren't here. I'm soft apparently. So I let Nivea have them.

(She then resumed reading her book. Astonished by her reply, Kasira shook her head then glanced to where Ambre was scribbling on some paper at the table, eagerly avoiding eye contact.)

KASIRA: You alright, Ambre?

AMBRE: I'm not here.

KASIRA: Right...

(She looked to Cayley.)

KASIRA: Cayley...

(She then rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: I don't even want to know. How you choose to punish them when I'm not around is your affair.

CAYLEY: Uh-huh.

(Kasira then looked to Nivea.)

KASIRA: That's what you chose to do, is it? Make them strip to their underwear then play horsey.

NIVEA: I'm only getting started, Kasira. They're mine for another twenty minutes yet.

(Sika and Soapy both gulped.)

KASIRA: Actually, they're mine now. Fun time is over.

SIKA: Yay!

NIVEA: That's not fair.

SOAPY: Suck it up, man hands.

(Sika then climbed to her feet.)

SIKA: Weirdo.

(Kasira then clumped them both around the head.)

NIVEA: Awesome.

SIKA: Ow!

SOAPY: Why?

KASIRA: Don't bugger about when you should be cleaning.

(She rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: Now get your arses over to the table; I've got massive news.

CAYLEY: Oh? Good or bad?

KASIRA: I'm back really, really early, Cayley. It's an all day meeting and I'm home before 10am, what does that tell you?

CAYLEY: That's not good, is it?

KASIRA: You'll find out in a minute.

(She then looked to Nivea.)

KASIRA: You too, you freak. Sit down.

NIVEA: Fair enough. I'll punish them again later.

KASIRA: Just sit.

(With that, they headed over to the table and took a seat. Once she was satisfied everyone was ready, she then glanced at Ambre.)

KASIRA: Put the crayons away, Ambre. This is important.

(Ambre glanced up.)

AMBRE: Okay.

(She then scooped her crayons back into the box and sat up straight.)

AMBRE: Ready!

KASIRA: Okay then.

(She sighed.)

KASIRA: I wasn't sure how to tell you this, so I'll give it to you straight. Once the war ends and wraiths stop coming, we'll have three days left.

SOAPY: No way!

KASIRA: I'm afraid so. Once we've gone three days without a wraith attack, that's it. No more job; no more pay.

SIKA: But that's not fair.

KASIRA: You're telling me it isn't. They've decided the army will become a global police force instead, with greatly reduced numbers.

NIVEA: So they're firing *us*?

SIKA: And you voted for that???

KASIRA: Of course not, dumb arse. I was the only one who voted *against* it. They've decided the best way to half the numbers is to kick all the women out. That's why I'm back so early. They decided there was no point me being there to make decisions seeing as they're firing my sorry arse.

CAYLEY: Sexist idiots.

AMBRE: Sad now.

KASIRA: Me too. Kicking the women out *wasn't* the sensible thing to do; it's moronic and bloody cruel.

NIVEA: They just wanted to maintain the patriarchy.

KASIRA: Yup.

SIKA: That's so harsh.

NIVEA: Harsher than Harsh Harris's harshest hard-on.

(Soapy gave her a sideways glance then added her two penneth.)

SOAPY: It's not fair. I love army life. And I'm really good at it.

SIKA: Same!

NIVEA: Don't exaggerate, Sika.

SIKA: Hey!

NIVEA: So what happens now, Kasira?

SOAPY: What are we gonna do?

AMBRE: Where are we going to go?

SIKA: Fuck. Good point. Where are we gonna live???

KASIRA: Relax, Sika. We can live here.

(She plonked a document on the table.)

KASIRA: They let me keep the base on the condition that I stopped complaining.

(Everyone looked to her blankly.)

CAYLEY: What?

AMBRE: They gave you the base?

SOAPY: To stop you complaining?

NIVEA: So you basically *nagged* them into it?

(Kasira shrugged.)

KASIRA: Why *shouldn't* a girl use what god gave her?

SIKA: Right? Men really hate it when we complain.

KASIRA: I cried a bit too.

CAYLEY: Ooh, you doubled down on the emotional blackmail.

KASIRA: Yup.

(She then grimaced.)

KASIRA: Not intentionally though; I was genuinely upset. They got all uncomfortable though and bought me off with the base.

SOAPY: So we can live here forever?

KASIRA: Well... I guess.

SIKA: But how will we afford food?

(Cayley nodded.)

CAYLEY: We'll just have to find work somewhere else.

(Ambre whimpered.)

AMBRE: But I don't want to work somewhere else.

KASIRA: You don't have a choice, love.

AMBRE: Who's going to give me a job though? I'm stupid.

KASIRA: No, you're not. You'll find something. And I'll support you in the meantime.

SIKA: I...

(Soapy glowered at her.)

SOAPY: We're not going to support you as well!

SIKA: I wasn't going to say that.

NIVEA: No, but that's what you'll expect when you fail to find a job.

SIKA: Fail? I won't fail! People will be queuing up to hire a babe like me. Kicking me out of the army is the best thing ever happened to the employment market. I'm pretty much good at everything, you see. Within weeks, I'll be a manager. A chairwoman even.

(Soapy looked to Nivea and grimaced.)

SOAPY: She'll be fired for being egotistical and annoying before her first day is out and we'll be paying for her existence forever.

NIVEA: I know.

SIKA: Hey!

KASIRA: Enough of that, ladies.

(She sat forwards.)

KASIRA: Cayley, you're covered. They're retaining the staff from the academy.

CAYLEY: Oh. I get to keep my job there?

KASIRA: Yes.

CAYLEY: And you...

KASIRA: They're replacing headmistresses with headmasters.

CAYLEY: Damn. That's just wrong.

KASIRA: My secret boyfriend's doing. I found out he's married, so he moved heaven and earth to see I was kicked out.

(She grimaced.)

KASIRA: Not that he had to work very hard in a room full of misogynist wankers.

NIVEA: Nightmare.

SOAPY: Okay, so Cayley has a job, but the rest of us...

(Kasira then stood up and nodded defiantly.)

KASIRA: The rest of us need to get changed. Get your nicest clothes on, ladies. We're going to the mainland!

(Sika beamed.)

SIKA: Shopping?

AMBRE: Ooh. Is it food shopping?

KASIRA: Nope. Job hunting!

SIKA: Boring!

(She then groaned in despair.)

SIKA: Yet, necessary.

NIVEA: Uh-huh.

CAYLEY: Wait!

(Everyone glanced at her blankly.)

CAYLEY: Doesn't anybody want to go home? You can always go home to your families if you'd rather. The war is going to end.

SIKA: No, thanks. My home town sucks.

CAYLEY: But your family...

SIKA: You lot are my family now.

SOAPY: I concur. I don't want to go home yet either. I love my folks, but I like it here more.

AMBRE: I'm already with my legal family.

NIVEA: I want to stay here too. I get the feeling my mum is likely to try to be a carbon copy of me for a while and I really don't want to see that.

SIKA: Nobody does.

SOAPY: The original is bad enough.

SIKA: Right?

CAYLEY: So nobody wants to return home after the war?

SIKA: Nope.

SOAPY: Never! Well, not never.

NIVEA: It's unanimous, we're staying.

AMBRE: Yay!

CAYLEY: Cool.

NIVEA: Why? Do you want to get rid of us or something?

(Cayley smirked.)

CAYLEY: Always.

NIVEA: Ouch.

(She chuckled.)

NIVEA: She comes over as so docile and loving, but she's actually a monster.

CAYLEY: And don't forget it!

(She then did a tiger roar that was so adorable everyone cooed at her lovingly.)

CAYLEY: Shut up.

KASIRA: Anyway, now we've established that we're staying, we should get changed.

CAYLEY: No, *they* should get changed. *You* should keep your general's uniform on.

KASIRA: Why?

CAYLEY: This is why?

(She swept the hair from the left side of Kasira's chest.)

CAYLEY: Your medals!

(She then pointed to the sleeves on Kasira's jacket.)

CAYLEY: And that second stripe; the mark of a general. Long after leaving the army, general's are very much held in high-esteem in society, Kasira. Wearing that you'll get whatever job you want.

KASIRA: Ooh, good thinking. I'll wear this then.

(She then nodded sternly.)

KASIRA: The rest of you can go and get changed. It's time to find ourselves gainful employment, ladies. Our service may be ending, but our lives are just beginning. Now let's do this. Let's not delay even for a moment, okay? Let's go. And I mean right... as soon as I've had a nice cup of tea!

(She then fluttered her eyelashes at Cayley.)

CAYLEY: I'll go and boil some water.

KASIRA: You're the best.

CAYLEY: I know.

(She then headed out of the room.)

Within the hour, the girls of the soon to be defunct 123rd Wraith Containment Unit found themselves on a ferry to the mainland. Apprehensive about having to apply for jobs, Ambre was biting her nails constantly. A great degree more confident, Kasira was staring out to sea, contemplating her options. Her thoughts were only interrupted now and again by briefs moments of giggling about what Cayley had told her when they boarded the ferry. She'd filled her in on Sika writing letters to Ambre, and how Ambre had misconstrued it all. She couldn't help but find it more than little amusing.

Standing in a circle behind them, Sika, Soapy and Nivea had been having a conversation with Cayley about the most sensible way to approach an interview. Within two minutes, however, the conversation had broken down and all Cayley could do was stand there and despair at them.

SOAPY: Now you're being absurd!

NIVEA: No, no; credit where credit's due; Sika makes a good point. You really are a waste of a ferry ticket!

SIKA: See? Outvoted.

SOAPY: Ridiculous.

SIKA: No it's not. You could have swum over there.

NIVEA: Like you do when you sneak off to see that boy you think we don't know about.

SOAPY: I do nothing of the sort!

NIVEA: Well, no; not anymore. Not since he dumped your sorry arse.

SOAPY: I dumped him!

SIKA: A-ha!!!

NIVEA: I knew it!

SIKA: Busted!

SOAPY: Shit.

NIVEA: Case closed. You are indeed a waste of a ticket.

SIKA: Right? We should throw her overboard.

NIVEA: Nah. No point. The ticket's been paid for now.

SIKA: I know. I was just thinking it'd be fun.

SOAPY: Stay away from me, you shit.

(She ruffled her neck.)

SOAPY: And besides, I couldn't have swum this time anyway.

NIVEA: You forgotten how?

SOAPY: No, you moron.

(She rolled her eyes.)

SOAPY: We're going to apply for jobs.

SIKA: So?

SOAPY: So turning up for interviews soaking wet is a virtually guaranteed way to fail.

NIVEA: Hmm... you make a good point.

SIKA: Does she? Does she though?

SOAPY: Yes, I do. And besides, if anyone is a waste of ticket it's you!

SIKA: Me???

SOAPY: Yes!

NIVEA: Actually, she's spot on.

SIKA: No, she isn't. She's just saying that because I said it about her. Well you can't turn it around on me that easily, missy.

SOAPY: No? Watch me!

(She sneered.)

SOAPY: You could have flown across! Like you do whenever Kasira sends you an errand!

SIKA: No, I...

(Realising she had absolutely no defence, Sika whimpered.)

SIKA: Um...

NIVEA: Let's throw *her* overboard!

SIKA: No! Then *I'd* be turning up to interviews soaking wet.

SOAPY: That's fine. Nobody's going to employ you anyway.

SIKA: Hey!

NIVEA: Go, Sika. Fly away. Or go swimming.

SIKA: Shan't.

(She ruffled her neck.)

SIKA: Flying is tiring, and I can't go to an interview all sweaty, now can I?

SOAPY: Like I said, it doesn't matter how *you* turn up. You're bound to make a terrible first impression and fail anyway.

NIVEA: Right? Let's chuck her overboard.

SIKA: Stop it.

(She pouted.)

SIKA: And besides, if I'm a waste of a ticket then so is Cayley! She can fly too.

(Cayley flinched then furrowed her brow in Sika's direction.)

CAYLEY: Excuse me? I *paid* for the tickets you cheeky little beggar!

SIKA: Um...

NIVEA: Permission to cast her into the ocean?

CAYLEY: Denied!

NIVEA: Fuck.

SIKA: Ha!

SOAPY: So what are we saying? Those two could have flown, but Cayley's absolved because she bought our tickets?

NIVEA: Yup. Meaning Sika is the only one at fault. The freeloading parasite.

SIKA: Hey! I already told you, I can't turn up all sweaty.

(She nodded sternly.)

SIKA: I'd still be a shoo-in for most jobs, but there might be the odd one I can't get if I'm all sweaty. The one I really want. Well, I'm not gonna take that risk. Nope. I'm going to go into the employment bureau thingy looking immaculate.

NIVEA: Gonna nip home and change then, are you?

SIKA: Shut up, you. I'm perfect as I am.

(She exhaled.)

SIKA: Not only do I look the part, but I interview really well. They're going to be seriously impressed. I've got looks and brains, you see?

SOAPY: No, we don't see.

SIKA: Then you need to get your eyes examined. Idiot.

SOAPY: Right...

SIKA: Oh what do you know, anyway? Just wait. You'll see. I'll get the perfect job in no time. And I'll be brilliant at it! Whatever the job is! I'm an ace at admin work, a world class seamstress and I can milk cows like a seasoned veteran; I'd be the perfect farmhand. I can do it all. Ploughing, feeding; you name it.

NIVEA: Wow.

SIKA: Wow, what?

NIVEA: You're no good at *any* of those things you listed!

SIKA: Yes, I am!

NIVEA: Admin work? Your handwriting is passable at best and you panic when confronted with even the simplest form to fill out. As for claiming you're a first class seamstress...

SOAPY: World class, she said.

NIVEA: Well, that's even sillier.

SIKA: No, it isn't.

CAYLEY: Yes, it is. You got a tiny rip in your dress last week and ran around the room crying. It's ruined, you said.

(Soapy giggled.)

SOAPY: Cayley stitched the seam back together in about thirty seconds.

SIKA: Yes, but... yeah... but... I *could* have done it myself; I was just...

NIVEA: Incapable?

SOAPY: Too ugly?

SIKA: Fuck off, you.

CAYLEY: Sika, calm down. They're only teasing.

SIKA: Well...

CAYLEY: They do have a point though. You're a lousy seamstress. I've only seen you use a needle and thread once and I had to heal you three times.

NIVEA: Then finish the job for her.

CAYLEY: Yeah!

(Sika ruffled her neck indignantly.)

SIKA: I was young.

CAYLEY: It was last month.

SIKA: I was younger then!

(She furrowed her brow.)

SIKA: And besides, why would you say these things to me? Meanies! Why would you knock my confidence when I'm on my way to look for a job? Why do that? That's too mean.

SOAPY: Because you're full of yourself.

NIVEA: Full of shit, more like.

SOAPY: That's what I said.

SIKA: Stop it!

(She ruffled her neck.)

SIKA: I'm done with you two now. Knocking me like that just to score points. If I fail to get a job now, it's because you ruined my confidence.

SOAPY: And here come the pre-failure excuses.

NIVEA: Right?

(Cayley sighed.)

CAYLEY: Sika, nobody means to knock your confidence.

SOAPY: We don't?

NIVEA: That's news to me.

CAYLEY: Okay, *I* don't mean to knock your confidence, but you do need to rein yourself in a bit. If you go in there boasting that you can do literally anything, you could well come out with a job way in excess of your talents. And that really *will* damage your confidence.

NIVEA: She's right. If you were to land the job as head nurse at the infirmary, imagine how horrible you'd feel when all your patients started dying because you don't have the abilities you told them you had? They'd bomb you out as a failure and you'd be crestfallen.

SOAPY: It's true.

SIKA: Well... not really. You're overlooking one thing.

NIVEA: Here we go again.

SIKA: I'd be an *awesome* head nurse. The best! I mean, so what if I don't have the *magical* ability to heal. I can heal people with my outstanding knowledge of medicine and anatomy instead. I did a first aid course once at my academy, you see. And I came top of my class.

CAYLEY: You got kicked out after half a day for being a danger to the patients. I've read your notes from the academy remember?

SIKA: The teacher didn't like me, that's why! I was doing a better job than them and they were jealous.

SOAPY: Wow.

NIVEA: She's just incredible.

SIKA: Thank you. Yes, I am!

NIVEA: I didn't mean...

SIKA: Nope. No taking it back.

NIVEA: Sika...

(Just then, Kasira and Ambre appeared among them. Well aware she'd have to stop any silly arguments or teasing before she could be heard, Kasira instantly raised her voice.)

KASIRA: Listen up, girls.

(Everyone glanced at Kasira, except Sika who shrieked and jumped back.)

SIKA: You scared the crap out of me then.

SOAPY: Not all of it, sadly.

SIKA: Soapy...

KASIRA: Nope! Stop that!!!

(Everyone fell silent.)

KASIRA: Good. Now listen up. We make landfall in about ten minutes, okay? And as soon as we do, I want you to put your professional heads on.

AMBRE: Which doesn't mean literally changing your head.

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: Kasira explained it to already.

SIKA: Too cute.

AMBRE: Nope. Not cute. Not today. I'm all professional today. Grr.

SOAPY: Grr?

AMBRE: Focus; like a tiger.

KASIRA: The same focus I want to see from you girls.

(She puffed out.)

KASIRA: Whatever jobs we get will be our sole source of income once the wars ends.

Failing to get one means being broke, and I'm sure none of you want that.

SOAPY: You'll get used to it, won't you, Sika?

SIKA: Hey!

(Kasira then clumped Soapy round the head.)

SOAPY: Hey!

KASIRA: Don't knock her confidence. Not now, god damn it. That's too mean.

SIKA: See? Meany.

KASIRA: Okay, we're luckier than most as we'll have a place to live. Rent free.

NIVEA: So what we earn, we can keep!

SOAPY: Yay!

SIKA: Result!

AMBRE: We can't keep all of it, surely. We'd need to chip-in for food and repairs and things.

(She blushed.)

AMBRE: Wouldn't we?

KASIRA: We would, yes. Well done, love.

AMBRE: Phew.

(Kasira glanced at her other subordinates.)

KASIRA: See? Ambre gets it. We'll all be living together, so we'll have to share all the bills, okay?

(She shook her head.)

KASIRA: Why am I having to tell you this? Are you sure you're *ready* for adult life?

AMBRE: I am!

KASIRA: Well, at least two of us are.

CAYLEY: Ahem.

KASIRA: I mean three.

CAYLEY: Thank you.

KASIRA: Anyway. As I was saying. We all need a job. Being the only one without one would be miserable. It'd crush your self-esteem. I mean, nobody likes a freeloader, do they?

SIKA: Shut up, Soapy.

SOAPY: Wow. I think it and she objects.

KASIRA: Stop it!

(She rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: Anyway, like I said, once we leave this ship, I want to see you focussed. No pissing about. Keep your eyes on the prize.

AMBRE: Like a tiger.

KASIRA: Yeah. You can piss about all you like on the way home, but while we're there, I want to see professionalism.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: Don't hold me that. When I said you can piss about all you like, I mean within reason.

CAYLEY: A normal person's reason; not your own.

SIKA: Harsh.

SOAPY: Very.

KASIRA: Anyway, that's all I wanted to say. Professionalism, okay? This matters.

AMBRE: Don't worry, Kasira; I'm gonna be so professional, I'll end up with *lots of lots* of jobs by the time I come out.

KASIRA: You only need one, sweetheart. We just need one each.

AMBRE: Oh...

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: Easy cheesy.

KASIRA: Good girl. That's the spirit.

(She then turned and glanced towards the front of the deck.)

KASIRA: This is it, girls. What happens today could well impact on your very futures. Make it count, okay?

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: This is huge.

A short while later, once the ferry had docked at the quayside, Kasira strode down the gangplank and onto dry land. Her five subordinates followed her in silence, having been threatened with not having any cake that evening if they showed her up. It hadn't been the warmest pre-disembarkation speech, but it had done the trick.

Once they'd all assembled on the quayside, Kasira turned to face her subordinates then nodded sternly.

KASIRA: Okay, ladies. To the labour hall!

(She then marched away. Once again, her subordinates followed her in silence. Not a word was spoken as they headed across the concrete then passed the security barriers. A few seconds later, however, as they passed the queue of people waiting to get onto the quayside, a man's voice rose up that caused Nivea to shriek.)

YURKI: Nivea??? Nivea Visage?

(Having almost had a heart attack, Nivea stepped back then gaped at him in horror. Bemused by it, Kasira stepped up to her then furrowed her brow.)

KASIRA: What's the matter with you all of a sudden?

(Nivea whimpered to her quietly.)

NIVEA: That's my father's business partner; the head of the Akkeri temple.

KASIRA: And that's bad because?

NIVEA: It's bad because seeing me like this; dressed as a sinner, he might decide to seek penance from my family. And by seek penance, I mean punish my family harshly; namely my mum! *Before* she gets her inheritance. Under Akkeri law, they could excommunicate her and take everything; that's how their society works.

KASIRA: Then deal with it.

NIVEA: What?

KASIRA: Deal with it!

NIVEA: Right...

(She then ambled nervously towards him.)

KASIRA: Wait for Nivea, girls.

(Obeying her word, Cayley, Ambre, Soapy and Sika all assembled around her, a few feet behind where Nivea was trembling before an angry looking Yurki.)

NIVEA: Um...

YURKI: Speak!

NIVEA: Right. So... um... Yurki-father... long time no see.

YURKI: Never mind that, young lady; what the hell are you wearing? Explain yourself!

NIVEA: Um... goggles. They're so I can see in the daylight.

YURKI: I know that, you idiot. I'm wearing them too.

NIVEA: Right...

YURKI: Why are you dressed like a hell bound heathen??? And where's your headscarf???

NIVEA: Well, you see... um...

(Her eyes then lit up and an excuse came to her.)

NIVEA: That's the thing, you see... I'm not *allowed* to wear a headscarf when on active duty, under army regulation 15 paragraph 6.

(Sika gave her a baffled glance.)

SIKA: We're not even *on* active duty!

NIVEA: Shut up, Sika!

SIKA: Charming!

YURKI: Nivea!

NIVEA: Yes?

YURKI: Why are you lying to me?

NIVEA: I'm not!

YURKI: Oh, but you are. That *particular* regulation refers to the minimum number of lifeboats per passenger on an army ship!

NIVEA: It does?

(She started to sweat.)

NIVEA: Maybe I quoted the wrong one then, there's definitely a regulation that says I can't wear it.

YURKI: No there bloody isn't!

NIVEA: There...

YURKI: Aside from my duties at the temple, I'm a legal consultant for the global army. I know the regulations backwards, woman. There's no such law whatsoever!

(Nivea gulped.)

NIVEA: There isn't?

YURKI: No!

NIVEA: Bugger.

(She winced.)

NIVEA: Then I've been horribly lied to.

YURKI: I know the feeling.

NIVEA: But I was! Um... Major Miles told me I wasn't allowed to wear a headscarf on active duty.

YURKI: Is that so?

(Nivea could only offer him a cheesy grin.)

NIVEA: Yes?

YURKI: I see.

(He shook his head.)

YURKI: Sounds like something he'd do. Always messing with the female soldiers, that one. I bet he was the one who told you to dress like a slut too.

(Nivea flinched, barely able to believe her lie had struck gold so easily.)

NIVEA: Eh? I mean, yes. He said Akkeri clothing intimidates the public, so female soldiers should always go out looking like bimbos. Nobody is intimidated by bimbos.

YURKI: Yup. That's Major Miles alright.

(He growled.)

YURKI: I'm so glad they fired that old bastard.

(At this point, Kasira burst forwards and barged Nivea aside. Her face was lit up with a joy that glowed brighter than a thousand suns.)

KASIRA: He got fired?

YURKI: Wait. Who are you?

NIVEA: She's my boss.

YURKI: I see. That would explain all the medals. Fair enough. Yes, he got fired.

(He shook a disdainful head.)

YURKI: He went to visit the female unit in Sashimi township a few months ago and tricked their leader into giving him a blowjob.

KASIRA: Really?

YURKI: Really.

CAYLEY: He tricked her into giving him a blowjob? Just how gullible *was* she?

(Kasira instantly twisted around and glowered at her. Sighting her giggling to herself among her amused subordinates, she furrowed her brow.)

KASIRA: You're a bad friend.

(She then turned to face Yurki.)

KASIRA: Anyway, sir, we've got important business to attend to, so...

YURKI: Very well. You take care now. And Nivea?

NIVEA: Yurki-father?

YURKI: Get a headscarf in town and cover up.

NIVEA: Yes, sir. I look forward to it. I feel like a sinner when I'm dressed like this and I hate it.

YURKI: Praise be to Akkeri. Your father raised you well.

SIKA: Said nobody ever.

YURKI: What?

SIKA: I was talking to Soapy.

YURKI: Right...

NIVEA: Anyway... bye!

YURKI: Farewell. Cover up well. And tell your unit-mates to cover up too; educate them.

NIVEA: I've tried to, sir, but they're filthy sinners, one and all; beyond redemption.

(At this point, Kasira grabbed her ear and dragged her away.)

KASIRA: That's enough out of you.

NIVEA: Ow! That hurts, Kasira!

KASIRA: Of course it does. I'm a filthy sinner; I hurt people!

NIVEA: Right... touché.

(Once they were a good twenty metres away, Kasira released Nivea's ear then stood before her assembled troops.)

KASIRA: Okay, girls, let's start our job hunt, shall we?

AMBRE: Yes, please.

KASIRA: No messing about on the way there. Look professional. Or at least try to look civilised. There could be potential employers watching you at any moment. Drooling probably, but even so. Men look at us when we're out and some of them might own businesses so don't make dicks of yourselves.

SOAPY: Ma'am.

SIKA: You don't have to keep telling us that, ma'am.

KASIRA: I beg to differ.

SIKA: Yes, well, that's harsh if you ask me.

CAYLEY: Everything is harsh according to you.

KASIRA: Anyway, I've made my point, so...

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: Let's go, ladies. Gainful employment in civilian life, here we come.

(She then strutted away with her five subordinates in tow.)

Back on Capsway Island at this time, Kasira's little sister, Eksi was pacing up and down angrily inside the small gatehouse in front of the base. Accompanying her on her shift, Lycia was resting with her elbow on the desktop and her chin resting on her fist. Watching Eksi fume as she paced back and forth was almost hypnotic.

EKSI: It's not right! It's an outrage, that's what it is! How can they fire my sister like that? After all she's done, they should be *kissing* her arse, not kicking it out of the door. I'm disgusted. Disgusted!!!

(Lycia yawned.)

LYCIA: Yeah, but still... at least it wasn't all bad news. *We'll* get to keep our positions. (Eksi gave an exasperated glance.)

EKSI: How selfish can you be, woman???

LYCIA: I'm not being selfish, I'm just happy I'll still have a job.

EKSI: As am I. I'm delighted even, but have you no empathy? What's wrong with you? When Kasira came past earlier, she was devastated; does that not bother you?

LYCIA: It does bother me, yes; of course it does, but what do you want me to do about it? Put on a clown wig and improvise a comedy routine to cheer her up?

EKSI: No, I...

LYCIA: Perhaps I could pop to the mainland and book some entertainers for an impromptu variety performance to help her take her mind off of things.

EKSI: Lycia...

LYCIA: Or maybe we could club together and buy her some dildos and a bunch of flowers; that'd brighten her day.

EKSI: Stop it!

(She shook her head briefly then gave Lycia a disturbed glance.)

EKSI: Dildos and a bunch of flowers?

LYCIA: Well *I* don't know what she likes, do I?

EKSI: Clearly. She not interested in flowers.

LYCIA: But dildos...

EKSI: She's a woman! With needs!

(Lycia chuckled.)

LYCIA: Look, just calm down, will you? I agree. Kicking her out that was obscene. It's horrifying, actually, but there's literally nothing we can do about it.

EKSI: Yeah, but...

LYCIA: But nothing. Getting all uppity about it like you are, isn't going to do anyone any good, Eksi. They've made the decision and we all just have to put up with it.

(Eksi sighed.)

EKSI: I suppose.

LYCIA: Thank you. Now, take a seat.

EKSI: Fine.

(She then started to head for her seat. Before reaching it, however, all her anger returned and she growled bitterly.)

EKSI: No! How can I sit down at a time like this?

LYCIA: Why *wouldn't* you? You can be just as angry in a chair.

EKSI: Forget chairs! I'm too outraged to relax.

(She shook her fist.)

EKSI: Booting my sister like that; are they insane?

LYCIA: No, just sexist.

EKSI: Not to mention stupid. My sister is the best soldier in the entire god damned army.

LYCIA: Not that you're biased.

EKSI: I'm not *being* biased. She is. Nobody else has led a unit to four victories against wraith infestations. She's the only one. Ever!

LYCIA: True.

EKSI: We can't allow this to happen, Lycia. We should definitely do something about it.

LYCIA: We can't!

EKSI: Yes, we can!

LYCIA: Like what?

EKSI: Like making placards and holding a work to rule protest.

LYCIA: Great idea!

EKSI: Yeah?

LYCIA: Absolutely. We should definitely do that. And ten minutes later, once they'd fired us and given our jobs to someone else, we can walk away with our heads held high; knowing we've made a difference.

EKSI: What?

LYCIA: That difference being that we've thrown away our careers and *joined* your sister on the shit heap of despair. Yup. Great plan. It's a definitely a goer.

(Eksi blinked at her nonchalantly.)

EKSI: You know, Lycia, I don't appreciate all this sarcasm you're throwing my way today.

LYCIA: Yeah? Well, your hysteria is getting on my tits too.

EKSI: It's not hysteria.

LYCIA: It is!

(She sighed.)

LYCIA: Eksi, listen to me. It's done. The army have made their decision. There's absolutely nothing we can do to change it. Not a damn thing.

EKSI: But...

LYCIA: I'm not finished. All you can do now is accept it and try to be there for Kasira if she's feeling down, okay? Focus on that. Focus on being a good sister. It's quite literally the only thing you can do to help her right now.

(Eksi's shoulders slumped.)

EKSI: Shit.

LYCIA: What?

EKSI: I hate it when you're right.

LYCIA: I'm right all the time.

EKSI: And that's why I hate you so much.

LYCIA: Right...

(They then shared an amused chuckle.)

EKSI: Bitch.

LYCIA: What?

EKSI: Nothing.

(She then sat down and glanced forlornly out of the window.)

EKSI: What a shit, shit day.

Across the water, in the township of Copperwood, at this time, Kasira was doing her utmost to keep her five unit-mates focussed on the task in hand. She knew it would not be an easy undertaking. They were always one poorly chosen word or slip of the tongue away from their conversations descending into pure silliness. As such, she chose her words carefully.

KASIRA: Seeing as we won't have any rent to pay, the wage you're offered isn't really important, you see? The main bill is covered. As long as it's enough for your share of running the house, anything else is a bonus really. So don't feel bad if you can only find something part time, okay?

SOAPY: Cool. That's actually reassuring.

NIVEA: Very. It looks like Sika's career delivering leaflets might actual pay its way.

SIKA: Excuse me!

KASIRA: Don't!

(She growled.)

KASIRA: What's wrong with you lot? You can't bloody focus for two minutes, can you?

NIVEA: Sorry.

SOAPY: Sorry, ma'am.

SIKA: Say sorry to *me*!

SOAPY: Oh, dream on.

KASIRA: Girls...

(She sighed in defeat.)

KASIRA: Forget it.

(As Kasira paced forth, sighing ruefully, Ambre stepped to her side then gave her a questioning glance.)

AMBRE: If we all gets jobs, Kasira, will we have to ride on the boat everyday?

KASIRA: Probably. Why?

AMBRE: We get seasick when it's choppy. I don't like feeling seasick. Or any other kind of sick.

(She whimpered.)

AMBRE: I actually felt really sick this morning when I found out Sika's in love with me.

SIKA: I'm not in love with you!

AMBRE: So you claim.

(She grimaced.)

AMBRE: I dread to think what she might have been doing to me in the night.

SIKA: I haven't done anything!

SOAPY: Haven't you though?

SIKA: No!

(She scowled.)

SIKA: I try to do a nice thing and what do I get? Treated like some kind of deviant who molests people in their sleep. It's not on.

CAYLEY: It's harsh, isn't it?

SIKA: Yes! Yes, it is.

CAYLEY: Thought so.

KASIRA: Just relax, Sika. I'll explain everything to Ambre in detail once we leave the labour hall, okay?

AMBRE: Explain what to me?

KASIRA: Sika's intentions.

AMBRE: I know her intentions, Kasira; I read them. They were really disturbing.

SIKA: No, they...

(She groaned.)

SIKA: Nope. I'm sick of explaining it.

NIVEA: Good, because we're sick of your excuses. Just admit you love her.

SIKA: Shut up!

SOAPY: Ooh, touchy. It seems you hit a nerve, Nivea.

SIKA: I'll hit *you* in a minute, Soapy.

SOAPY: Right... how terrifying.

KASIRA: Will you lot just behave?

(She rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: Stupid question really. Of course you won't.

(Seeing Kasira was starting to get stressed, Cayley bit her lip uneasily then quickly changed the subject.)

CAYLEY: Copperwood.

SOAPY: Copperwood?

CAYLEY: Yeah. Such an odd name for a town.

SIKA: Is it?

CAYLEY: Well, yeah. It just sounds wrong. The town of Birchwood is called Birchwood because the houses are made from the wood of birch trees. Same with the town of Oakwood and it's oak trees.

KASIRA: Sturdiest houses ever.

CAYLEY: Right? But sticking with the point...

(She rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: In that sense, Copperwood makes no sense. The houses are made from pine trees from the looks of it. So where does the copper part come in?

SOAPY: Maybe copper is the colour of the wood.

KASIRA: Nope. It's all made of pine, look. The houses are pretty much beige.

SOAPY: Good point.

(Sika scoffed.)

SIKA: Are we really discussing this? It's a just a name, ladies! It doesn't have to have a reason behind it. Someone probably just thought it sounded nice.

CAYLEY: They were wrong then.

SIKA: Yeah, well; it happens. Soapy's parents made the same mistake when they named *her*.

SOAPY: You bloody...

(Cayley quickly raised her voice.)

CAYLEY: It *could* just be a random name with no meaning, I suppose. You're not wrong.

SIKA: Thank you. It's just like the town of Red Hill. It's not red; and nor is it on a hill. It's just a name.

CAYLEY: Red Hill? Where's that?

SIKA: My home town.

SOAPY: It sounds rubbish.

SIKA: *You* sound rubbish!

KASIRA: Girls! Behave!

SIKA: Right. Sorry.

(Just then, Ambre spoke up and distracted everyone.)

AMBRE: Hey. Look at this, everyone. I found a job poster.

(At once everyone turned to see where she'd stopped to read a sign outside a building.)

AMBRE: Female strippers wanted. I can do that. Painting in straight lines is really, really easy.

KASIRA: Um... that's not what it says, sweetie.

AMBRE: Yes, it is. Look. Strippers.

CAYLEY: There are two P's.

NIVEA: Strippers, Ambre. Strippers wanted.

AMBRE: Oh. Gotcha. Of course it is.

(She then turned bright red)

AMBRE: Oh. Oh... I'm not doing that. I saw a female stripper once at my academy. Yuck.

CAYLEY: I think you speak for everyone, love.

SIKA: And then some.

SOAPY: Right? All those filthy old men drooling at us while we jiggle our bare boobies around. No, thanks.

(Nivea beamed.)

NIVEA: Just me then, is it? Later!

(With that, she strutted off into the building with an excited spring in her step. Left behind, her unit-mates could only despair of her.)

KASIRA: We should have seen that coming really.

CAYLEY: Uh-huh.

SIKA: She's such a pervert.

SOAPY: Right? I blame her parents.

SIKA: Why?

SOAPY: Clearly they never encouraged her to be chaste and innocent.

(Everyone then burst out laughing, including Ambre, even though she didn't understand the joke.)

KASIRA: Brilliant.

(She winced.)

KASIRA: But you know, it's actually the opposite of that. She's an almighty slut now, because her parents worked *too hard* to force her into chastity.

CAYLEY: Yup, that's exactly why.

SIKA: Classic ideology rejection.

SOAPY: Text book.

KASIRA: Uh-huh.

(She winced.)

KASIRA: Still, let's not mock her too much. The war ends soon and every woman in the army will be looking for a job. With that many people fighting over the good ones, we could end up struggling to find something that pays well enough. If that should happen, we could *all* end up as strippers.

SOAPY: Nope. Never gonna happen. Not me. I won't do that kind of thing. My chastity is important to me.

SIKA: Since when?

SOAPY: Since forever!

SIKA: Yeah, right. Your squeals of delight and extremely loud proclamation about how you were going to cum last time the delivery men came by, suggests you're telling fibs.

SOAPY: Oh, shut up, you.

KASIRA: Enough now, please.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: Let's get going. The labour hall isn't much further.

(They then resumed their walk.)

AMBRE: So... what sort of job should I get, Kasira?

KASIRA: Just wait and see what they've got, then you can pick the one you like the look of best.

AMBRE: Oh, okay.

(Just then, a loud explosion echoed out across the sky. Scared witless by it, Sika and Ambre clung onto one another for dear life.)

AMBRE: What was that?

SIKA: Our island exploded again!

SOAPY: No, it bloody didn't!

CAYLEY: That came from the quarry.

SIKA: There's a quarry?

CAYLEY: Yes. This entire town was built around the quarry.

KASIRA: Half the population are quarrymen.

SIKA: Right. I didn't know that.

AMBRE: So it's safe?

SOAPY: Yup. You can stop clinging onto one another now.

(Cayley rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: They did that last night when the gods spoke too.

(Sika and Ambre slowly parted.)

SIKA: Don't mock. It's a natural reaction to fear.

AMBRE: Yeah. I wouldn't cling onto her otherwise; she might try to touch my bits and pieces.

SIKA: Why the hell would I do that???

AMBRE: Because you're in love with me!

SIKA: No, I'm not. For pity's sake, Ambre. Why...

KASIRA: Chill, Sika. I already told you, I'll explain everything to her later.

SIKA: Fine. Just... explain it well.

KASIRA: I will.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: Now let's get a move on.

SOAPY: And try not to shit yourself before we get there.

SIKA: Seriously?

SOAPY: What? It's a reasonable request. That's twice in two days you've leapt into Ambre's arms like a spooked chihuahua.

SIKA: I was startled that's all. I didn't know there was a quarry around here.

SOAPY: If you say so.

SIKA: I didn't!!!

KASIRA: Stop bickering!!!

(She growled.)

KASIRA: Let's just hurry on to the labour hall before you exhaust my patience entirely.

(With that, they resumed their trek. Soapy and Sika did so with apologetic grimaces on their faces.)

SOAPY: Sorry, ma'am.

SIKA: Yeah. Sorry.

KASIRA: Whatever. Just behave.

SIKA: Yes, ma'am.

AMBRE: So... does the quarry blow up a lot?

CAYLEY: The quarry didn't blow up, love. They blow up the rock faces with dynamite then harvest the stone.

AMBRE: Oh.

(She sighed.)

AMBRE: Sounds complicated.

KASIRA: Actually, it's anything but. It's actually really simple stuff.

(She then mused to herself out loud.)

KASIRA: Maybe I should apply for a job there. I reckon I'd be good at that.

(She then became acutely aware of stealthy giggling going on around her.)

KASIRA: What? What's so funny?

CAYLEY: Well... no offence, love, but you? Working in a quarry?

KASIRA: What about it?

CAYLEY: How do I put this?

SOAPY: You're way too girly to do that for a living!

KASIRA: Excuse me?

SIKA: She's right. Working in a quarry *is* so not you.

CAYLEY: Yup. I can see it now. Ten minutes into the job, you'd be crying in the corner because your nail varnish got chipped.

KASIRA: Wow. Is that how you see me?

AMBRE: That's how you are.

KASIRA: Wow.

AMBRE: Like a princess.

SIKA: More like a Diva I'd say.

CAYLEY: Yes, then you wonder why Kasira shouts at you.

SIKA: Yeah... that probably wasn't clever.

KASIRA: No. It wasn't!

SIKA: I wasn't a mile away though, was I? You are really, really girly.

(Kasira pouted.)

KASIRA: So what if I am? There's no shame in that.

AMBRE: Not even a teeny tiny bit. We love you like that.

CAYLEY: We do. But getting back to the point, the quarry company wouldn't.

SOAPY: In short, the quarry is not for you.

KASIRA: Fine.

(She ruffled her neck.)

KASIRA: I'll leave it you butch bitches.

SIKA: Ouch!

SOAPY: The diva has claws.

(Kasira glowered at her for a moment then started to chuckle.)

KASIRA: Yeah, fine. I'll admit it. The idea of me working in a quarry is beyond ridiculous.

SIKA: Yup. It's more the kind of job Nivea would excel at. She wouldn't even need to shovel the rocks; not with her enormous hands.

SOAPY: She's not here, Sika.

SIKA: Shit.

SOAPY: Don't worry. Memorise it and taunt her with it later.

SIKA: I already plan to.

AMBRE: So... would *I* be any good in a quarry?

KASIRA: No!

CAYLEY: Actually, Kasira, it's simple labour and Ambre's actually really strong, so...

KASIRA: They'd make her transform into a gazelle then load her up like a mule, Cayley. And she'd let them do it. That's not right.

CAYLEY: Good point.

AMBRE: So I should avoid working there then?

KASIRA: Very much so.

SIKA: We all should. I can't honestly see anyone of us doing that for a living. Not well, anyway.

SOAPY: Suits me. I wouldn't want to work there anyway.

(She exhaled.)

SOAPY: I've always wanted to work at sea.

(She furrowed her brow.)

SOAPY: And no, me catching and eating fish isn't cannibalism.

(Sika giggled.)

SIKA: It's like you can read my mind.

SOAPY: I can. It's a very easy thing read. Like one of Ambre's children's books.

AMBRE: But I haven't got any children.

KASIRA: She didn't mean that, darling.

AMBRE: But... I don't know.

SIKA: Chill, Ambre. She was just making a childish attempt to mock my awesome sense of humour.

SOAPY: Predictable sense of humour, you mean! You were going to go on and make some sort of quip about the rest of my crew accidentally catching *me*. I *am* a fish after all, according to you lot. Then you'd make some crude jibe about them throwing me back.

SIKA: Of course. There's no way on earth anyone would consider *you* a keeper.

SOAPY: Oh, shut it you.

(She ruffled her neck.)

SOAPY: I was just telling you about the kind of job I'd like, that's all. There was no need to be a dick about it.

CAYLEY: She wasn't being a dick about it. *You* made all the cruel jibes about it yourself.

SOAPY: I...

(She then blushed.)

SOAPY: Good point.

SIKA: What a wally.

SOAPY: Get stuffed.

CAYLEY: So what about you, Sika? If you could have *any* job...

SIKA: I *can* have any job. I'm that awesome.

CAYLEY: But what would you be your *preferred* job? Please, just tell us that, there's no need for the self-indulgent speech; we've already heard it.

SIKA: Right. My preferred job...

(She beamed.)

SIKA: The one with the fewest hours and highest salary. I want that one.

CAYLEY: Right. Yeah... good luck.

(She rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: What about you, Ambre?

AMBRE: I just don't want to be bullied.

(Everyone pouted at her.)

KASIRA: Aw.

SOAPY: Are you worried about that then, Ambre?

AMBRE: Yes. Our unit is the only place I've been where everyone's nice. Even if some of them do want to fondle me in the night.

SIKA: No, I... I give up.

AMBRE: I'm also worried I might make lots and lots of mistakes.

KASIRA: Ambre, you'll be fine. There's bound to be something you can do.

AMBRE: But what if there isn't? I had a job once before, you see? And I wasn't very good at it.

SIKA: You had a job?

AMBRE: Yes!

(She sighed.)

AMBRE: I was a firework tester. My friends at the academy wanted to find out which fireworks were the best, you see? But they didn't want to litter the academy with them. So they paid me to stand twenty feet in front of them and catch them once they'd been fired.

(She sighed.)

AMBRE: I missed every single one.

(She pouted.)

AMBRE: So they docked all my wages. Dark times.

(Her friends were aghast.)

SOAPY: How many times, Ambre? Those people were not your friends!

AMBRE: Not this again.

SOAPY: It's true. They gave you some money to trick you into standing there while they shot fireworks at you. For fun!!!

AMBRE: Not for fun. I was testing them!

SOAPY: Ambre...

AMBRE: You don't know; you weren't there.

SOAPY: At least tell me you didn't get hurt.

(Ambre blushed.)

AMBRE: Of course not. I kept ducking out of the way. That's why I was fired.

(She pouted.)

AMBRE: But I couldn't help it. It was instinctive.

SOAPY: And thank fuck for that.

SIKA: You could have been seriously killed.

KASIRA: Or scarred for life at the very least.

AMBRE: I doubt it. They wouldn't have asked me to do it if it was dangerous. They were my friends.

SOAPY: They really weren't, Ambre; trust me.

AMBRE: You don't know that.

SOAPY: Actually...

(She then sighed in defeat.)

SOAPY: Let's just agree that the main thing is you're okay.

AMBRE: Why wouldn't I be?

SOAPY: Just let it go, Ambre.

AMBRE: Oh.

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: Okay.

SIKA: So cute.

KASIRA: Right?

CAYLEY: So what about you, Kasira? What's your ideal job?

(Kasira mused to herself.)

KASIRA: I'm not sure.

(She shrugged.)

KASIRA: That said, I always kind of wanted to be a milk maid.

SIKA: A milk maid?

SOAPY: How come?

KASIRA: They wear really cute dresses.

CAYLEY: Wow. You really, really are...

SIKA: Such a girl.

KASIRA: Oh, shut up. I like nice dresses, so what? So do you? All of you.

CAYLEY: We do, yes; that's true. But are you sure it's *just* the dresses that appeal to you?

KASIRA: If you're going to suggest that fondling udders appeals to me...

CAYLEY: I wasn't.

(She smirked.)

CAYLEY: I just thought your ambition to become a milkmaid owed more to your fantasy about a hunky farmhand taking you roughly in the barn.

KASIRA: Cayley!!!

(She furrowed her brow.)

KASIRA: I told you that in confidence!

CAYLEY: Um... actually, you didn't. I was joking. I made it up. Or I *thought* I had.

KASIRA: You...

(She turned bright red.)

KASIRA: I don't want to talk about this anymore.

(She then drew a sigh of relief.)

KASIRA: And thankfully, I don't have to. We're here.

(She nodded to the labour hall to their right.)

KASIRA: Okay, girls. Let's get this done.

(She then strode purposefully into the hall without so much as a pause. Her desperation to get inside owing as much to her determination to find a job as it did to her desire to avoid explaining her outburst. Still smirking about it, the others all shrugged then followed her in. Their job hunt had begun.)

A short while later, Ambre found herself sitting at a desk opposite one of the labour hall's career advisors. She'd been more than a little baffled by the job descriptions on the vacancies board, so Kasira felt she might benefit from face to face advice from an expert before choosing a career. And so, while the others continued to focus on the labour hall's job vacancies board, she'd found herself talking to a stranger about her life goals and career skills. Unsurprisingly, it hadn't taken the advisor long to realise that she wasn't talking to a genius. Undeterred, however, she flicked through her vacancies file, hoping to find her client something suitable. All Ambre could do was watch with a baffled grimace on her face as she did so.

ADVISOR: Cashier; nope. Planner; nope. Assistant manager to; nope. Trainee medical technician; not a chance.

(She then sat back.)

ADVISOR: Oh, here we go. This one seems promising.

AMBRE: Yay.

(The advisor then scanned the document with her eyes.)

ADVISOR: Yup... this one really *is* promising, actually. We've had the vacancy open for two months and nobody else has applied.

AMBRE: Score. Sika said that's the *only* way *I'll* get a job; if nobody else wants it.

ADVISOR: I see.

AMBRE: Kasira gave her a clout for being mean.

ADVISOR: Okay...

(She grimaced.)

ADVISOR: You do realise I have no idea who these people are, don't you?

AMBRE: That's okay. I do.

ADVISOR: Right...

(She shook her head.)

ADVISOR: Anyway; this job. It's at the Copperwood Retreat; a holiday resort. Your job will be to stand outside the doors of the main hotel in a bikini from between 10am and 4pm holding a sign, and saying *welcome to the Copperwood Retreat* to anyone who comes in.

AMBRE: Right...

ADVISOR: What do you think?

AMBRE: It depends. What sort of sign do I have to bring?

ADVISOR: They'll supply the sign.

AMBRE: Oh. Well that's a relief. Only my spelling isn't very good, you see?

ADVISOR: I'd be shocked if it was.

(She smiled.)

ADVISOR: So, what do you think?

AMBRE: About standing outside a hotel and holding a sign? Easy cheesy.

ADVISOR: You don't just hold a sign. When people come in, you have to say 'Welcome to Copperwood Retreat'.

AMBRE: Welcome to Copperwood... what was it?

ADVISOR: Retreat.

AMBRE: Right. Easy.

(The advisor looked uncertain.)

ADVISOR: Say the whole thing.

AMBRE: The whole thing.

ADVISOR: No. Say the line I told you. Welcoming people to the hotel.

AMBRE: Oh. Um... welcome to tumbleweed retreat.

ADVISOR: No.

AMBRE: Aw.

(The advisor winced.)

ADVISOR: Miss Solaire, I never thought I'd say this to *anyone*, but I fear this job might actually be too complicated for you.

AMBRE: Why?

ADVISOR: You can't even remember the five words you have to recite.

AMBRE: That's because I haven't had time to memorise them yet.

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: I'll definitely pick it up, if you give me time. I'm really, really good at things when I get used to doing them. Ask Kasira.

ADVISOR: Again, I have no idea who she is.

AMBRE: Oh, yeah. Soon remedied.

(She then turned her back and called out to Kasira.)

AMBRE: Kasira!!! Ma'am! Over here!

(Kasira looked up from where she'd been scrutinising a board then paced over to the desk.)

KASIRA: What? What is it? She wasn't bullying you, was she?

AMBRE: No. She doesn't think I'll be able to do this job because I can't remember a short sentence. I told her I'd memorise it eventually, because I can be really clever when... well, not clever, but I can do things really well when I'm used to them.

KASIRA: Okay. And what is the job?

ADVISOR: She has to stand outside a hotel and say "Welcome to the Copperwood Retreat" to anyone who comes in.

AMBRE: Easy.

KASIRA: Yeah. She could do that standing on her head.

AMBRE: No, I...

KASIRA: Not literally.

ADVISOR: But she couldn't remember the phrase.

KASIRA: Not straight away no. She has a... she's... you need to be patient with her. Give her ten minutes and she'll have it down, no problem.

ADVISOR: And you're sure, are you?

KASIRA: Do I look like a dishonest person?

(The advisor glanced her up and down then spotted the second stripe on her cuff.)

ADVISOR: You're a general?

KASIRA: I am. And currently, this young lady is in my employ. So I can vouch for her one hundred percent.

ADVISOR: Then that's good enough for me.

(She then handed Kasira a sheet of paper, detailing the job requirements.)

KASIRA: The pay is terrible... and she has to wear a bikini everyday.

AMBRE: Yay.

(She grinned.)

AMBRE: I mean, yay to wearing a bikini.

KASIRA: It's minimum wage, love. How much do you actually want to do this job?

AMBRE: Lots and lots.

KASIRA: Then go for it. The job's yours.

AMBRE: Yay!

ADVISOR: Wait. That's not your decision to make. The retreat put *me* in charge of recruiting.

KASIRA: Right. Sorry. Got carried away there. I'm used to being in charge.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: So can she have the job?

ADVISOR: Absolutely. Just make sure she's memorised the line before she starts.

KASIRA: Count on it.

ADVISOR: Okay. Done.

(She then slapped a sheet of paper on the desk.)

ADVISOR: If you could just sign the contract...

KASIRA: Sure.

ADVISOR: I was talking to Miss Solaire.

AMBRE: I'm not allowed to sign contracts. My legal guardian has to do it.

KASIRA: That's me.

ADVISOR: Very well. And once that's done, maybe you'd like to pop over to the Copperwood Retreat and take a look at it.

AMBRE: That'd be cool!

KASIRA: I'll get Cayley to take you then.

AMBRE: Yay.

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: I've got a job!

(Kasira beamed with delight then rubbed her back.)

KASIRA: Well done, love.

(She then glanced over her shoulder to where Cayley was telling Sika and Soapy to behave. Her eyes instantly rolled.)

KASIRA: Seriously, I'd kill to have three of you; I really would.

(She then stomped over to them and had her say.)

KASIRA: Cayley, seeing as you don't need to find a job, would you mind escorting Ambre somewhere?

CAYLEY: Happy to. Where?

(Kasira pointed to where Ambre was watching them nervously.)

KASIRA: The lady interviewing Ambre will give you the address.

CAYLEY: Oh. Okay. You can stay here and try to make these two little devil's behave.

KASIRA: Happy to.

(As Cayley headed away, Kasira furrowed her brow.)

KASIRA: Did I ever tell you two that I'm psychic?

SOAPY: Um... no.

KASIRA: Well, I am. And right now, I can see a future for you two that involves making cake everyday and never getting to eat any.

SIKA: You wouldn't!

KASIRA: Wanna try me? We might all be leaving the army soon, but until that happens, you'll do as your told. Otherwise, you'll go cake-less until we leave.

SOAPY: We'll be good.

SIKA: We will.

(She glanced away innocently.)

SIKA: But if not, we'll just have to settle for biscuits instead.

(Kasira growled.)

KASIRA: Sika!

(Sika gulped.)

SIKA: Ma'am?

KASIRA: Go and find a job!

SIKA: I've already got one!

KASIRA: What? When?

SIKA: Just now.

KASIRA: I didn't see you go and apply for anything.

SIKA: That because you were busy *reading the job descriptions* on the boards. And explaining them to Ambre.

(She exhaled with self-satisfaction.)

SIKA: I'm smarter than that though. Rather than wasting time doing that, I scanned the salaries briefly then went and applied for the *best paying* one.

(She beamed.)

SIKA: Nailed it.

(She then held up a certificate.)

SIKA: See?

(Kasira swiped it from her grasp then read it.)

KASIRA: So...

SIKA: Hmm?

KASIRA: Sika?

SIKA: Yes?

KASIRA: Trainee manager?

SIKA: Nope. Read it again.

(Kasira perused the certificate again then flinched.)

KASIRA: *Training* manager???

SIKA: Yup.

KASIRA: How did you wangle that???

SOAPY: She lied, obviously. You so getting found out.

SIKA: Oh, behave.

(She nodded.)

SIKA: Of course, I lied. I lied my arse off. Sold myself good and proper. And the interviewer saw straight through me. He said I was so full of shit I could have been a neglected cow field.

KASIRA: That's the worst simile ever.

SIKA: Right? But still, he said he was happy to *overlook* my lies. I had exactly the patter and the attitude he was looking for. I was so persistent and *confident* in my own bullshit, it made me the perfect girl for the job.

KASIRA: Seriously?

SIKA: Yup. Training manager in the *sales* department. It'll be my job to teach everyone there to be just like me.

(Soapy shuddered.)

SOAPY: Cripes; imagine working there.

(Kasira also shuddered.)

SIKA: Of course, it won't be possible to make everyone just like me; I'm cut from special cloth, but still. I'll see to it they learn to emulate my spiel and stuff.

(She beamed.)

SIKA: See? Told you I could get any job I wanted. I even got caught lying and got one. My brilliant personality simply shone through and he was dazzled into hiring me.

KASIRA: Right... you mean you were so full of shit, and so pushy, he decided you'd make the perfect salesperson.

SIKA: The perfect employee, yes.

KASIRA: I see.

(She smiled.)

KASIRA: Well... congratulations. Well done, Sika.

SIKA: Thank you.

(She smirked.)

SIKA: Now we just need little miss halibut here to get her arse in gear.

SOAPY: Hey!

(Kasira looked deeply suspicious.)

KASIRA: Sika? Was Cayley telling you off because you were taunting Soapy about finding a job when she hasn't?

SOAPY: Yes!

SIKA: That's only half the story. She was also telling *her* off for calling me a c...

KASIRA: I get the point.

(She rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: Sika, go and sit down somewhere. Soapy, you and I can look again. There has to be something we can do.

SOAPY: There is. We found three jobs *you'd* be great at. I'm the one struggling. There's nothing here that involves working with the sea.

SIKA: There was a fishmonger. But that'd basically be human trafficking to you, wouldn't it?

SOAPY: Sika...

KASIRA: Nope.

(She then dragged Soapy away.)

KASIRA: Search.

SOAPY: Ma'am.

(She then glanced up and spotted Cayley and Ambre heading from the building.)

KASIRA: Good, good.

(She then noticed Sika, sheepishly sitting down on a bench.)

KASIRA: Perfect.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: Okay, let's bag us something, Soapy.

SOAPY: I'll try.

KASIRA: Try hard. Sika and Nivea aren't here to lead you astray now, so make the most of it.

SOAPY: Ma'am.

(She then deposited a sheet of paper under Kasira's nose.)

SOAPY: Here's one of the jobs we figured *you'd* like.

KASIRA: Oh?

(Kasira took the sheet of paper then perused it with her eyes.)

KASIRA: Headmistress at a girl's school?

SOAPY: Yeah. As a former female army general, they'll be falling over themselves to hire you.

KASIRA: Hmm... thanks, Soapy.

(With that, she headed off to the desks where the labour hall advisors were seated. Soapy watched her go then sighed.)

SOAPY: Now I just need something a fish can do.

(Her shoulders slumped.)

SOAPY: Now I'm bloody saying it.

(She then glanced up and saw Sika resting her eyes on the bench; more than content with her day so far.)

SOAPY: Wow. How is that fair? She blagged a high-paying job. Blagged it.

(She sighed.)

SOAPY: She's so lucky. I wish I was a gobby idiot.

(She then resumed reading the boards.)

Some twenty minutes later, having found absolutely nothing she was willing to do for a living, Soapy kicked the floor then stormed over to where Sika was napping on a chair. Unable to resist it, she then kicked the seat and threw her fingers towards her face. Having woken with a start, Sika screamed then curled into a ball on the seat.)

SIKA: I'm too awesome to die!!!

(As Soapy fell about laughing, Sika furrowed her brow.)

SIKA: How is that funny? I could have died!!!

SOAPY: No. No, you couldn't.

SIKA: You don't know that!

SOAPY: Yeah, right. Listen, Sika, this is a waste of time. There are no suitable jobs for me on the boards; not one. So I'm gonna head down to the docks and ask around.

SIKA: Perfect. I can see you working on the docks, actually.

SOAPY: Yeah?

SIKA: Yup. In your stockings and suspenders, doling out blow jobs for ten florins a turn. That's ideal for you.

SOAPY: I didn't mean that kind of dock work.

SIKA: Didn't you though?

SOAPY: No! And you know I didn't!

(Sika chuckled.)

SIKA: I know nothing.

SOAPY: Finally, something we can agree on.

SIKA: Hey!

SOAPY: Look, can you just tell Kasira the labour hall wasn't working out, so I've gone to the docks. Please?

SIKA: Why can't *you* tell her?

SOAPY: Because she might say no. A girl going to the docks by herself isn't always advised. But she can't say no to me if I've already left.

SIKA: Sneaky.

SOAPY: Thank you.

SIKA: I like it.

(She glanced across at the advisor's desks.)

SIKA: So where is she?

SOAPY: She went to see an...

(Upon noticing that Kasira wasn't at any of the desks, Soapy bit her lip.)

SOAPY: She's gone. I bet she went to an interview on site.

SIKA: What?

SOAPY: Didn't you see her pass you?

SIKA: I was resting my eyes.

SOAPY: Oh, yeah.

(She then beamed with delight.)

SOAPY: Score. Kasira already left!

SIKA: What? That's so rude!

SOAPY: Rude?

SIKA: Rude of Kasira. She left us behind. That's not like her.

SOAPY: No, but I'm glad she did. Now I can go to the dockside without having to explain myself. See you.

SIKA: Wait!

(She sighed then climbed to her feet.)

SIKA: I might as well come with you.

SOAPY: Are you sure?

SIKA: Yes! Everyone else has left already. Fuck sitting here by myself.

(She then glanced away innocently.)

SIKA: I don't need this place anymore. Unlike someone, I *have* a job.

SOAPY: You know what, Sika...

SIKA: I'm playing; I'm playing.

(She beamed.)

SIKA: Let's go. If we're lucky, we might get some addresses from cute dockers.

SOAPY: Ooh. I'm in.

(They then hurried out of the door. Little did they know, however, Kasira hadn't left the building at all. She'd been taken into a side room for an interview. As an army general, they'd decided to afford her special treatment. They'd even provided her with a cup of tea. Sadly, the staff had then left her with an interviewer who seemed to have something on his mind other than helping her find employment.)

ADVISOR TIM: So, Miss Ash-Boobs, what can I do for you?

(Kasira furrowed her brow.)

KASIRA: Exactly what you were asked to do. Interview me for the headmistress position.

(The advisor drooled.)

ADVISOR TIM: Mistress, eh?

KASIRA: *Head*mistress. And my face is up here!

(She pointed to her head.)

KASIRA: Ahem?

ADVISOR TIM: Yes?

(He flinched.)

ADVISOR TIM: I do apologise.

(He then stared down at the hem of her skirt and proceeded to drool again.)

KASIRA: Wow.

ADVISOR TIM: My sentiments exactly.

KASIRA: Excuse me?

ADVISOR TIM: Hmm?

(He then glanced up and flinched again.)

ADVISOR TIM: Sorry. How unseemly of me.

(He then glanced at the job description notice.)

ADVISOR TIM: So, you wish to apply for the naughty headmistress position.

KASIRA: Naughty?

ADVISOR TIM: I meant headdress position. Just position! No. Missionary position! Not that! I meant, head.

(He beamed.)

ADVISOR TIM: You can give *me* head any day.

KASIRA: Do you mind?

ADVISOR TIM: Mind? God no. Be my guest!

KASIRA: What?

ADVISOR TIM: What?

(Kasira sighed.)

KASIRA: Look, is there somebody else I could talk to?

ADVISOR TIM: Else?

KASIRA: Someone more professional.

ADVISOR TIM: Right...

(He sighed.)

ADVISOR TIM: Sorry. Look, in my defence, I've been single for a very long time and you're very, very sexy.

KASIRA: That's your defence, is it?

ADVISOR TIM: Sorry? What was that? I was looking at... nothing.

KASIRA: I know what you were looking at. My face is up here.

ADVISOR TIM: Your legs go all the way up there too.

KASIRA: Are you fucking serious?

ADVISOR TIM: You bet I am. They're perfect.

KASIRA: Nope. I'm not tolerating this any...

(Just then there was another loud explosion from the quarry. This one, however, was a hundred times louder than the last. Such was the power of the blast, the entire building shook.)

KASIRA: Holy shit.

(She whimpered.)

KASIRA: It's not safe in here.

ADVISOR TIM: It'll be fine; I doubt the buildings going to fall down.

KASIRA: I mean it's not safe in here with you, you weirdo.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: But also, the whole building shook. So...

(She then took off out of the door. As she did so, she was quick to realise she'd not been the only one who felt they'd be safer outside. Almost everyone else in the entire building was charging for the exits. Eager to get among them, Kasira put her head down and raced away. Before passing through the exit, however, she turned to see if any of her unit-mates were still inside. Seeing nobody she knew, she then drew a sigh of relief and made good her exit.)

Moments later, once she felt she was safely away from the building, she stopped running and joined a throng of townsfolk in staring up into the sky. A dirty grey cloud was billowing up from the quarry site.)

KASIRA: Holy fuck.

TOWNSMAN 01: You can say that again.

TOWNSMAN 02: They must have accidentally cut into the old, abandoned mine.

TOWNSMAN 01: To get an explosion like that; they *must* have, yes. One spark and all the gas inside must have ignited.

(Kasira whimpered.)

KASIRA: They blew up an abandoned mine?

TOWNSMAN 01: It's the only logical explanation.

(Kasira's shoulders slumped.)

KASIRA: How old?

TOWNSMAN 02: That things been abandoned for over two hundred years. Why?

(Kasira spammed her forehead.)

KASIRA: It's going to happen again isn't it? I'm that unlucky. It is, isn't it?

TOWNSMAN 01: What? What's gonna happen?

(Kasira glanced up at the hilltop between themselves and the quarry then groaned.)

KASIRA: That. That's gonna happen.

(Sure enough, just as she'd feared, thousands of trapped wraiths had escaped from the abandoned mine. Growling and snarling, hoards of them were now converging on the town; lured by the scent of human flesh.)

KASIRA: I hate my life, I really do.

(She then delved into her handbag and pulled out her twin blades.)

KASIRA: Oh, well... here we go again.

(She then charged in the direction of the wraiths.)

Just across town, a few minutes later, Cayley and Ambre found themselves embroiled in a battle against a large pack of wraiths alongside a throng of townsfolk. They went about the battle with horrified looks on their faces. Everyone in town was battling in a state of shock, but for the girls of the 123rd Wraith Containment Unit, facing such a thing for a fifth time was truly mortifying.

CAYLEY: How? How has this happened??? Again!

AMBRE: Why does it *keep* happening to us, Cayley? Why?

CAYLEY: We're bloody jinxed.

(Ambre giggled.)

AMBRE: You swore.

CAYLEY: Of course I swore. I had a week off because of that general's meeting and it's been miserable. Sika was a pain in my backside all week then all my friends got fired from their jobs; and now this. Another bleeding wraith infestation! I'm never gonna take time off work ever again!

AMBRE: Poor Cayley!

(Cayley pouted.)

CAYLEY: Poor me.

AMBRE: Yeah.

CAYLEY: This truly sucks, Ambre. If it was going to happen today, why did it have to happen at this very moment? When we're cut off from the rest of our unit. Just us two verses thousands of wraiths.

AMBRE: Us *three*. Fluffy joined in.

CAYLEY: He did?

(She then glanced to where Fluffy was pounding wraiths with his giant, rock fists.)

CAYLEY: Cool.

AMBRE: It's not just us three either. There are lots and lots of townspeople here too.

CAYLEY: Well... true.

AMBRE: There's lots and lots of wraiths too though.

CAYLEY: Then let's step up our game.

AMBRE: Okay.

(She then stood there, motionlessly staring at the fight as Cayley picked up the pace with her magic.)

CAYLEY: Um... Ambre. Are you going to do anything?

AMBRE: I am. This is how I fight, remember? I make the wraiths bish, bosh and bash *each other*.

CAYLEY: Good point. As you were.

(She then blasted her magic into another wraith, before hurrying towards the edge of the group of civilians.)

CAYLEY: Just how many are there?

TOWNSMAN: Don't worry your sexy little head about that, pretty one. You leave it to us menfolk and head to the temple for sanctuary like a pretty lady should.

(He beamed.)

TOWNSMAN: We can handle this. We're tough. *I* was in the army, you know?

CAYLEY: So was every other living person on the planet.

TOWNSMAN: Well...

CAYLEY: And I'm still a serving soldier.

TOWNSMAN: I see.

CAYLEY: So thanks, but I'll stay.

TOWNSMAN: Okay, but don't come running to me if a wraith bites both your legs off.

CAYLEY: I think it's fair to say I won't.

TOWNSMAN: Never say never.

CAYLEY: No, I'm going to say never, seeing as if I have no legs I won't be running anywhere.

TOWNSMAN: I see.

(He nodded.)

TOWNSMAN: You make a valid point.

CAYLEY: Thank you.

TOWNSMAN: I hate it when women do that. I like my women meek and submissive.

CAYLEY: Wow. You sound like a real catch.

TOWNSMAN: I do? Why, thank you.

(He winked at her knowingly.)

TOWNSMAN: Fancy going for a drink after this?

CAYLEY: I'd love to.

TOWNSMAN: Excellent.

CAYLEY: Sadly, not with you.

TOWNSMAN: Why not?

CAYLEY: Because I don't want to.

(She then hurried back towards Ambre, leaving the townsman pouting in her wake.)

TOWNSMAN: Right. Well... I don't care. I didn't fancy you anyway.

(Caring very little for his disdain, Cayley raced to Ambre's side and spoke to her urgently.)

CAYLEY: Okay, this is the situation. It appears we're in the frontline here. The wraiths going *around* the hill, rather than over it, are all coming into town *this* way.

AMBRE: Then why are there so many behind us as well? As far as my eyes can see and I can see really, really far.

CAYLEY: Like I said, they're going *over* the hill as well, love.

(She snarled.)

CAYLEY: That's the sort of numbers we're dealing with here. That mine must have been huge.

AMBRE: Then it's a good thing there's lots of lots of us fighting.

CAYLEY: Yeah. If it was just our unit *this* time, we'd have no chance.

(She nodded.)

CAYLEY: Anyway, now we know the situation, we should go back and inform Kasira. She might not know the scale of the problem being stuck in the town still.

AMBRE: Okay.

CAYLEY: Plus, I don't want to go to the front again, I got hit on.

AMBRE: Do you need healing?

CAYLEY: No, I mean a man hit on me. Wanted to date me.

AMBRE: Oh. That happened to me too.

(She held out her palm.)

AMBRE: Someone gave me his address. He said I could pop over if I need a seeing to.

CAYLEY: Disgraceful. In the middle of a battle?

AMBRE: Yeah.

CAYLEY: Are you gonna go?

AMBRE: No.

(She sighed.)

AMBRE: Finding out I've secretly been in a loving relationship with Sika for six months has put me off love for life.

CAYLEY: I see.

AMBRE: She wanted to touch my...

CAYLEY: Look, never mind that. We need to find Kasira.

AMBRE: Okay.

CAYLEY: Let's go.

(They then raced back towards town with Cayley blasting a path through wraiths for them as they went. Being surrounded by townsfolk, all of whom were once serving soldiers was indeed a blessing. Unfortunately, with such a large number of wraiths pouring into the town, they were far from safe. One slip could be fatal, as many of the townsfolk were tragically finding out. They were extremely outnumbered and unless the kill rate increased dramatically, it'd only be a matter of time before the entire town was overwhelmed.)

Amidst a group of townsfolk battling wraiths in the centre of the town's main square, Sika looked more than a little miffed. As far as she was concerned, this wasn't her town, so this battle wasn't her responsibility. Blasting as many wraiths as she could, she was anxious to get to the edge of the square so she could take refuge in a building and put her feet up until the battle was over. Unfortunately for her, the unit-mate in her company did not share her outlook. Blasting every wraith in sight with extreme ferocity, Soapy couldn't have been more delighted by the sudden enemy invasion.

SOAPY: Eat my power, you creepy zombie thing.

(She then blew a large wolf-like creature to smithereens.)

SOAPY: Ha-ha!

SIKA: Soapy! How many times? We need to get to the edge of the square!

SOAPY: What? Why? I'm enjoying myself.

SIKA: Then you're an idiot.

SOAPY: Excuse me?

SIKA: There are far easier ways to enjoy yourself than this, you know? Like sitting in a bar with your feet up. Or just... not being here, surrounded by deadly things.

SOAPY: Just suck it up and get on with it, will you?

SIKA: Why should I? This is not my fight! I only come to this town for clothes shopping and to watch... um... plays.

(She thrust her hands to her hips.)

SIKA: Point being; this is someone else's fight and we should let them deal with it.

SOAPY: Sika, just go if you're scared; I'll be fine without you. Better, in fact.

(Sika was appalled.)

SIKA: Scared? Scared??? I'm not bloody scared.

(She ruffled her neck.)

SIKA: I'm lazy. I mean, I'm...

SOAPY: Lazy?

SIKA: No. I just don't see the point in risking my life, fighting for a town that has nothing to do with me.

SOAPY: Then fucking go. I already told you, I'll be fine.

SIKA: Right...

(She gave her a distrusting glance.)

SIKA: And you won't tell Kasira I skived off?

SOAPY: I'm not a grass.

SIKA: Good.

SOAPY: I'll will, however, mock your remorselessly for your cowardice for the rest of your life.

SIKA: It's not cowardice.

SOAPY: Just don't blame me if whilst mocking you Kasira overhears and decides to batter you senseless.

SIKA: Like she could.

SOAPY: Right. Good point. I'm pretty sure everyone I've ever met could take her in a fist fight. That was a ridiculous comment. She could, however, kick you out. The army gave the base to *her*, remember? Not all of us. We'll be her house guests and if she finds out you buggered off during a wraith infestation...

SIKA: I get it!

(She sighed.)

SIKA: Fine.

(She then resumed blasting magic at wraiths with a sour expression on her face.)

SIKA: So unfair. I don't even like this town. If it wasn't for their cute shoe shop...

(Just then, a familiar voice rose up from her side.)

NIVEA: Thank fuck. I've finally found you all.

(Given quite a start, Sika clutched her chest.)

SIKA: For fuck sake, Nivea; don't sneak up on people.

NIVEA: I didn't. You're just really easy to scare.

(She rolled her eyes.)

NIVEA: Anyway... um...

(She glanced around the immediate area.)

NIVEA: Sika, Soapy... where are the others?

SOAPY: Don't know; don't care. Come and join me, Nivea; this is great fun.

NIVEA: Is it?

(She grimaced.)

NIVEA: I can think of far better ways of having fun than *that*!

SIKA: See? You're a freak, Soapy.

SOAPY: And you, Sika, are a chicken.

SIKA: I'm not a bloody...

(She then gasped in horror as Nivea set about some wraiths with a sword.)

SIKA: You turncoat.

(She then sighed, resigned to joining in again.)

SIKA: Where did you get that sword from anyway? You didn't have one when we came over.

NIVEA: I swiped it from a dead bloke.

SIKA: Oh.

NIVEA: The people at the edge of town where *I* was didn't even see the fuckers coming. There's corpses everywhere. So I grabbed a sword and cut my way through looking for you guys.

SOAPY: And now you've found us, you can help us cull these bastards.

NIVEA: I am.

(Sika fired off her magic then furrowed her brow.)

SIKA: And so am I. But I want you to know, I'm doing so under protests. Stupid town; why do I have to save it?

NIVEA: Because it's your duty as a soldier to battle wraiths *wherever* you happen to come across them. That's what you agreed to when you signed your level nine certificate.

SIKA: Shit. That's what I get for not reading it first.

(She then blasted a wraith to smithereens and snarled bitterly.)

SIKA: Stupid wraiths; ruining my life! So unfair.

(It was safe to say that at this very moment, it wasn't just Sika's life that wraiths were adversely affecting. Virtually everyone in town had come out to fight. Wraith numbers were so ridiculously high, nobody could afford to slack off. From giant arachnids with deadly pincers to wolves with razor sharp fangs, every variety of wraith was running rampant all over town. As such, many a life was being lost. Some were reacting too slowly and being struck down on the counter attack, and others were simply too old to dodge their attacks anymore. Bloodshed was rife. Determined not to be among the casualties, Nivea was fighting with extra ferocity. This was a town in land-bound human territory, and all those around her were equipped with dual blades; the very kind Kasira fought with. As a result, they were attacking quickly and with a great deal of precision. They made sword users like herself look slow and awkward. She made up for that fact with the effectiveness of her cross-swing. By flashing the sword across herself, she could kill four or five wraiths in one flailing of her blade. Opting for this method, she was cutting through them in considerable style.

Battling at Nivea's side, Soapy hadn't even given the possibility of becoming a tragic statistic on the fatalities list a second thought. She had no self-doubt whatsoever. Killing them in their droves was easy for her and she didn't believe for a moment they'd even come close to getting in a strike of their own. As such, she was battling on with the attitude that these particular wraiths were mere cannon fodder. There to be killed for her pleasure. As if they'd come in town specifically to die by her hand. She was not about to disappoint them. Capable of killing multiple wraiths with each rapid casting of her immensely powerful magic, she was decimating dozens at a time. The townsfolk in the front row were extremely grateful for it. Her actions were preventing them from being swarmed, allowing them the freedom they needed to maximise their own culls.

Battling away on the other side of Nivea, Sika was displaying the very opposite of Soapy's easy-going attitude. She went about her battle with a horrified expression on her face. For her, it was bringing back all too vivid memories of the torrid time her unit had had in the snowy lands to the north. Unlike Soapy, she'd been wide awake and lucid at the end when the battle came on top of them and death seemed inevitable. She remembered that feeling of hopelessness all too well. But for a last second intervention by the local unit that day, her and her friends would have perished. To once again have so many wraiths right there in front of her, therefore, was extremely harrowing. As such, she fought with extreme ferocity. Unleashing spell after spell, she wasn't going to allow the wraiths to come anywhere near her if she could help it. She'd never been so focussed. Naturally, however, despite all her focus and professionalism, Sika would always be Sika. As such, she did nothing but complain all through the fight.)

SIKA: Ridiculous. I could have been at the labour hall right now, napping in that chair. Why did you wake me up, Soapy? That was just rude.

SOAPY: Well, I would say I missed your sunny disposition, but I love you too much to lie.

NIVEA: A purely platonic love, I hope.

SOAPY: Obviously!

NIVEA: Right. So nothing like Sika's lusty infatuation with Ambre then?

SOAPY: God no.

SIKA: That's not funny!

(She growled as she continued to blast her magic into the wraiths.)

SIKA: I was trying to do a nice thing, damn it!

NIVEA: Yeah, right. I think you doth protest too much.

SOAPY: Way too much.

SIKA: Oh, who cares what you think?

(She scowled at Soapy.)

SIKA: Can't you just do that sonic boom thing so we can all go home, Soapy? I don't want to do this anymore.

SOAPY: Of course not. If I did that now, I'd kill hundreds of townsfolk.

SIKA: Yeah, but... I'm sure they'd understand.

NIVEA: Wow!

SOAPY: Also, I'd be so exhausted afterwards, I'd be a sitting duck for the wraiths still coming over the hill.

SIKA: That's okay. We can always contact the army and get a *new* fishy.

NIVEA: A better one.

SIKA: Shouldn't be hard, to be fair.

SOAPY: Oh, piss off. Better? Better??? I'm owning this battle.

SIKA: Hardly.

SOAPY: Sika, when you can kill as many as I do in one hit, then we'll talk, okay?

SIKA: Fine. I will then!

NIVEA: No! Don't try to emulate Soapy. Last time you did that, you almost killed Kasira.

SIKA: Kasira isn't here.

NIVEA: No, but there's plenty of other people here you might accidentally shoot, including me. So don't do it.

SIKA: Whatever.

NIVEA: Thank you.

(Just then, a wolf-like wraith charged over the back of a small arachnid then leapt into the air towards Soapy. Reacting swiftly, Nivea growled then lashed her blade into the air, disintegrating it to dust.)

NIVEA: Got the fucker!

SOAPY: Thanks, Nivea.

NIVEA: Don't thank me, babe. It's what heroes do.

SIKA: You mean deities.

(She exhaled.)

SIKA: The holy dumpling walks among us.

SOAPY: Praise be to Akkeri!

(Nivea growled from side to side.)

NIVEA: Bitches. Next time, I'll let the fuckers have you!

SOAPY: Like you actually would.

NIVEA: Right? I'm way too good to you two twats.

(She nodded.)

NIVEA: Seriously though, we need to keep an eye on that. If they cotton on to the jumping idea, they could breach this frontline and that'd spell chaos.

SIKA: Yeah, that'd suck.

(She nodded.)

SIKA: We should go indoors where we'll be safe.

SOAPY: Sika?

SIKA: What?

SOAPY: No!

NIVEA: What she said.

SIKA: Aw...

(She then groaned in defeat.)

SIKA: So unfair.

Elsewhere in the town at his time, Kasira was also battling away alongside some members of the public. Her face bore a look of extreme urgency. Just like Sika, she remembered her unit's near death experience in the frozen north extremely vividly. She never wanted to face such a horror ever again. As such, her attitude to the battle was extremely simple. Every single wraith needed to be destroyed and they needed to be destroyed now.

Such was the ferocity of her attacks, the men battling on either side of her could barely believe their eyes. They had no idea that a woman could put so much heart and soul into an act of violence.

DAVE: Are you seeing this, Frank?

(The man on the other side of Kasira beamed with delight.)

FRANK: I am! And I love it!

DAVE: Right... I'm not sure what *you're* looking at, mate; I was talking about this woman here. She's a bloody lunatic.

FRANK: I know!

(He shivered with excitement.)

FRANK: I've never seen anything so sexy.

DAVE: Sexy? Are you kidding me?

FRANK: What?

DAVE: Imagine coming home to this psycho after a drunken night at the boozer!

FRANK: Coming home to it? If I was dating a woman like her, I wouldn't be coming home from *anywhere*. I'd never go out. Never leave the bedroom, in fact.

(Kasira gave him a disturbed glance.)

KASIRA: Excuse me?

(Frank's face lit up.)

FRANK: She spoke to me, Dave!

DAVE: Mate...

FRANK: What shall I say?

DAVE: Tell you're needed elsewhere and leg it. She's clearly a nutter.

(Kasira glowered at him.)

KASIRA: Do you mind?

DAVE: Aw, fuck; now she's starting on me.

FRANK: You lucky bastard!

DAVE: Lucky? Mate...

KASIRA: Um... actually, guys; I'm gonna fight further down the line. You two are putting me right off. Bye!

(She then scuttled away.)

FRANK: Nice work, dickhead.

DAVE: I was doing you a favour, mate; trust me.

(Delighted to be away from the two annoyances, Kasira hurried behind the line of fighters, looking for an opportunity to slip among them and continue her battle. With determination etched upon her brow, she ploughed forth in readiness to leap into any gaps that might appear. Before she could quite find one, however, a sizeable gentleman stepped in her path and she charged headlong into him. With a shriek, she then bounced backwards and fell on her backside.)

KASIRA: Sorry!

(She then jumped to her feet again. Having done so, however, she froze in horror. Standing before her was the mountain of a man, Rex. This was the man who'd attempted to beat her senseless during the misogynist coup at the academy six months earlier. Although he wasn't a woman hater himself, he'd used the coup to try to exact a personal revenge on Kasira. His brother had lost his army rank and had been thrown in the brig after she'd had reported him for an attempted assault. He'd held her personally responsible for his brother's downfall, and his part in the coup was driven exclusively by his desire beat her black and blue. Suffice to say, to have him standing there, towering over her again, was not a joyous feeling.)

KASIRA: Uh-oh.

(Rex smiled.)

REX: Alright, Kasira. Nice to see you again.

KASIRA: Right...

(She forced a nervous smile.)

KASIRA: Anyway... bye.

REX: Wait!

(Kasira froze and stared up into his eyes, trembling all over.)

REX: You remember me then, do you?

KASIRA: Of course I do. You tried to batter me senseless.

REX: Yeah...

KASIRA: How are you here? I heard you went to jail.

REX: I did. Now I've served my sentence, and here I am.

KASIRA: What??? You only did a few months??? How did you *not* get sent down forever? You helped staged a coup and tried to assault a superior!

(Rex shrugged.)

REX: I got lucky.

KASIRA: Lucky?

REX: Yeah. I won my appeal, you see?

KASIRA: How???

REX: Remember when I mentioned being lucky? My lawyer was some Akkeri fella, you see? And as it turned out, so was the appeal judge. Well, you know what they're like for doing each other favours. He quashed the verdict.

(He exhaled.)

REX: I'm blessed.

KASIRA: I'm glad one of us is.

REX: Anyway, I'm glad I ran into you, Kasira.

(Kasira whimpered.)

KASIRA: I'll bet you are.

REX: You see, while I was inside, I did some thinking. Some soul searching, you know?

KASIRA: And?

(Rex stood tall.)

REX: And I think you and I need to have words.

(Kasira gulped.)

KASIRA: Words?

REX: Words!

(Kasira whimpered like a nervous puppy.)

KASIRA: Big words?

REX: Just words!

KASIRA: Right... words.

(Her eyes then bulged and she pointed behind Rex.)

KASIRA: Wraith!!!

(At once, he spun around and took up an offensive stance. Seeing no immediate danger he then grimaced to himself and turned around again. Kasira had gone.)

REX: Right...

(He sighed.)

REX: I can't believe I fell for that.

(He then raced away to hunt her down. Desperate to get as far away from him as possible, Kasira charged through a group of townsfolk, mumbling angrily to herself.)

KASIRA: Stupid, violent man. Why did *he* have to show up? Like wraiths aren't dangerous enough on their own, without a seven foot tall cave dweller looking to batter me. So unfair. Oh great; now I sound like Sika. It doesn't get any worse than this.

(She sighed.)

KASIRA: Get a grip, woman. You're a general; act like one.

(She furrowed her brow.)

KASIRA: This whole thing is a mess. That frontline is a free-for-all. There's no organisation whatsoever. It's like everyone has turned up and gone primal. That's not going to end well. Someone needs to take charge.

(She then resumed panicking about Rex.)

KASIRA: Why???

Up ahead of Kasira this time, a group of men had gathered, having been called together by the town's elder. Not happy about being called away from the frontline, they stood there anxiously as he shared his thoughts with them liberally.

ELDER: It's chaos! Chaos out there, men. It's become a brawl rather than a battle and that's not going to end well. We need tactics!

STAN: No. Right now, we need to kill as many wraiths as we can before the fucking town is swimming in the fuckers!

(Everyone cheered.)

KEVIN: He's right!

ELDER: He is, yes. The town will indeed be swimming in the fuckers, even more so if we don't get organised!

STAN: So what do you suggest???

ELDER: We need a leader.

KEVIN: Well... he's not wrong.

ELDER: Of course I'm not.

(He nodded arrogantly.)

ELDER: And that leader should be me!

STAN: I had a feeling you'd say that.

ELDER: Well, am I wrong? I used to be an army major back in the day. I outrank literally all of you.

KEVIN: And that qualifies you to take charge now, does it?

ELDER: Yes!

(He nodded.)

ELDER: Trust me, I know a thing or two about wraith outbreaks. I read about one once.

STAN: Read about one???

(Just then, Kasira charged among them, desperately glancing over her shoulder in desperation to avoid Rex. Having not been looking where she was going, she then charged straight into the elder and fell on her backside.)

KASIRA: Not again!

ELDER: Do you mind, young lady? Us men folk are trying to...

(Kasira leapt to her feet.)

KASIRA: Don't mind me, I'm just...

(At this point, the elder's jaw dropped and he stood to attention.)

ELDER: I apologise profusely for that outburst, ma'am; forgive me!

KASIRA: Done.

ELDER: I concede the floor to you, general.

KASIRA: The floor?

ELDER: Yes, these men need a leader.

(Kasira looked to the assembled men then shrugged.)

KASIRA: Well, you're not wrong.

STAN: Hang on! What's all this bollocks? You're putting some bird in charge?

KEVIN: He's going senile!

ELDER: This bird as you call her, is a fucking general, now show some respect.

(Everyone scoffed for a moment, but upon spotting Kasira's second cuff ring, they all stood to attention and saluted.)

STAN: I apologise, ma'am. I didn't realise female general's were a thing.

KASIRA: Um... okay. Well, I am the only one, to be fair.

KEVIN: So can you lead us? What's the protocol for an infestation nowadays?

STAN: She might not even know, mate. All general's do is sit in their office and eat biscuits.

KEVIN: Yeah, that's true.

(Kasira furrowed her brow.)

KASIRA: Excuse me! I know *exactly* how to handle these infestations; my unit have survived four of the buggers.

(The elder gasped.)

ELDER: So you're the one!

KASIRA: Yes!

ELDER: Then tell us what to do! Quick. The men are anxious to return to battle.

KASIRA: Fine.

(She ruffled her neck.)

KASIRA: What skills does everyone have?

(Literally everyone in the gathering raised dual blades similar to her own.)

KASIRA: Shit.

ELDER: Shit? How is that helpful?

KASIRA: Patience!

(She rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: Look, without tanks or healers, there really is only one way we can do this.

ELDER: With brute force and violence.

KASIRA: Yes. But not just *random* brute force and violence, you need to be methodical.

Keep a strong frontline, but don't utilise *everyone* there. Leave a good twenty percent of your men back to cull those that have broken through already. It's no good keeping the rest a bay while allowing others to run amuck.

ELDER: Okay, that makes sense.

KASIRA: Other than that, just go where you're needed.

ELDER: Excellent advice.

KASIRA: Not really, it's just common sense.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: And where's the healer from the local unit?

(A gentleman then stepped forward wearing an uncomfortable grimace.)

LEWIS: My friend Charles and I are from the local unit. The others didn't come.

KASIRA: What?

LEWIS: The captain barricaded himself in the base, and three others ran away; including the healer.

KASIRA: And what skills do you and Charles have?

LEWIS: Charles got eaten by a wraith already.

KASIRA: Oh, for fuck...

LEWIS: I use dual blades.

KASIRA: Fine.

(She rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: When I find the healer from my own unit, I'll get *her* to fly over the top and heal people. Until then get organised into *those* joining the frontline and *those* clearing the ones who already broke though.

(She bellowed.)

KASIRA: Including that hoard that's charging straight at us!!!

(With a gasp, everyone spun around in horror. Sure enough, a swarm of one hundred wraiths were hurtling right at them.)

KASIRA: Attack!!!

LEWIS: Run away!!!

(As Lewis charged away, straight into the jaws of a marauding wraith, Kasira and the men she'd been advising raced into the hoard of wraiths. Battling with extreme urgency, their hands were virtual blurs. Watching on, the elder nodded with approval.)

ELDER: She's fearless, she's tactically astute... everything a leader ought to be.

(He beamed.)

ELDER: And she has the arse of a fucking goddess.

(As Kasira and the men in her company went to town on the wraiths, a cloud of wraith dust rose into the air. Barely able to see over it, Kasira glanced to the man next to her.)

KASIRA: How many are left?

WILSON: Not many, gorgeous. I mean general!!!

KASIRA: Right...

WILSON: Sorry.

(He beamed.)

WILSON: You are gorgeous though. What say you and I...

KASIRA: Never speak again? I like it.

WILSON: Shit.

(At this point, the cloud of dust started to subside and the wraiths before Kasira simply stopped coming.)

MORRIS: Got the buggers.

KASIRA: Then go! Decide who's hitting the frontline and who's clearing the town then get slaughtering.

(As one, every single man in the group saluted and yelled "Ma'am". They then raced away. Left behind, Kasira beamed to herself.)

KASIRA: Wow. This being a general thing is currency. I can finally make men do what I want without having to take my bra off first.

(She then started to hurry away, only to stop dead again, a few feet further on.)

KASIRA: Aw, crap.

(Standing before her with a rose in his teeth was Lassu, her ex-husband. This was the man who'd left her during their wedding reception, having been informed of the trick Major Miles had played on her. She hadn't seen him since. Nor did she want to. Alas, this seemed to be a day where the exact opposite of what she wanted just kept on happening.)

LASSU: Hello, beautiful. Long time no see.

KASIRA: Not long enough.

LASSU: Don't be like that, my love.

KASIRA: I'm not your love!

LASSU: No. No, you're not.

(He sighed.)

LASSU: I used to be, but I blew it.

KASIRA: Yes, yes you did.

LASSU: I know. I really did! I made a terrible mistake letting you go, darling.

KASIRA: You didn't let *me* go. *I* didn't go anywhere!

LASSU: I...

KASIRA: You ran away, soiling yourself and crying like a baby at the first sign of difficulty.

LASSU: I did not soil myself!

KASIRA: You just cried like a baby then?

LASSU: I did neither.

(He nodded.)

LASSU: But after a while I did start to pine for you. I missed you, you see? I longed for you. Well, no more. Now I've come to put everything right, and I won't leave until you agree to take me back. I love you, Kasira; and I'm here to stay.

KASIRA: Excellent. You stay. Right there on that spot. Forever. I'm off.

(She then took off like a rocket in the opposite direction. Lassu watched her go for a moment then furrowed his brow.)

LASSU: That didn't go as smoothly as I'd hoped.

(He nodded.)

LASSU: Still, nothing worth having ever comes easily, does it? Sometimes you have to fight for the things you love. And fight, I shall.

(He then raced away in pursuit of her. Well aware that he would indeed come after her, Kasira made sure to race around several corners then scampered around the back of the town, zigzagging as often as possible in a bid to make sure he wouldn't find her. For several minutes, she dashed around corners and darted down alleyways until she didn't even know whereabouts in town she was. As long as she was away from Lassu, however, that was okay with her.)

KASIRA: That's it. I must have lost him by now.

(She then raced into a dead end alcove and slowed to a halt before bending to regain her breath.)

KASIRA: I'll give it a few minutes then I'll return to the fight.

(As if fate was mocking the poor woman, a man's voice then rose up from behind her.)

REX: Nice arse!

(With a shriek, Kasira stood tall then spun around. By heading into this alcove she'd completed boxed herself in. There was no way out without getting past this giant of a man.)

KASIRA: Aw, crap.

REX: So... where were we before you were so tragically called away? Oh, that's right...

(His face turned extremely serious.)

REX: You and me need to have words, Kasira!

(Kasira gulped.)

KASIRA: Um... will *sorry* do?

REX: Nope. I don't think so; not this time.

(He then stepped towards her, causing her to reel back and stare up at him in terror.)

REX: It's gonna take a hell of a lot more than a mere apology.

(Convinced she was about to get thumped, Kasira covered her face.)

KASIRA: How much more?

REX: A lot!

(He then stood tall and sighed.)

REX: But it's a good place to start. I'm sorry, Kasira; truly.

(Somewhat flummoxed, Kasira peered past her hands in bewilderment.)

KASIRA: Wait. What?

REX: I said I'm sorry.

KASIRA: Um...

REX: I did some thinking while I was in the brig, you see? Not just thinking; I talked things over with people too. Including my brother.

(He nodded.)

REX: He made me see the error of my ways.

KASIRA: Right...

REX: I was a fool, Kasira, and I'm grateful to you for getting me captured. It made me see the light, it really did.

KASIRA: Okay... um... you're welcome?

REX: The thing is you see, I had it all wrong from the beginning. By getting my brother sent down, you may have ruined his career, but you also saved his life. Had he continued on the way he was going, he'd have been a worthless drunk. Possibly forever. You spared him that.

KASIRA: Cool. Can I go now?

(Rex ignored her and continued.)

REX: He told me everything. I was wrong about all of it. It wasn't even *you* he took a swing at, was it?

KASIRA: Nope.

(She furrowed her brow.)

KASIRA: It was Ambre.

REX: Ambre...

KASIRA: Yes, Ambre. You remember her?

REX: Was she's the... special person?

KASIRA: Yes. Very special. And he was *lucky* he didn't take a swing at me, or she'd have run him through with her horns.

(She ruffled her neck indignantly.)

KASIRA: He was also lucky she didn't see his fist coming at her or the same outcome would have occurred there. Let's just say he was very lucky that day.

REX: Oh, I know. That day ultimately saved his life. Because you didn't stand for his antics.

KASIRA: Damn, right.

(She then blushed.)

KASIRA: Anyway, I'll be off...

REX: Wait.

(He nodded sternly.)

REX: I just want to say something. I can't thank you enough for your actions. They set my brother on the right path and made me wise up to myself. I became a better person that day because of you. Thank you.

(He then looked into her eyes and exhaled.)

REX: I love you, Kasira!

KASIRA: What???

REX: You heard. You're the perfect woman. A woman who lives by doing right. A strong woman with a heart of gold. I need that in my life and I've decided that come what may, I'm going to make you mine.

(Kasira cringed at him for a moment then stepped forwards seductively.)

KASIRA: Rex?
REX: Yes?
KASIRA: Oh, Remy?
(Rex's face lit up.)
REX: Yes?
KASIRA: Bye!
(She then rocketed past him and sprinted away. Not about to be left behind, Rex shrieked then raced after her.)
REX: Come back!!! Don't be shy, my love!
KASIRA: Go away!
REX: Never! I came to win you're heart and I'm going to!
KASIRA: Oh, for fuck sake.
REX: Come back, I said!!!
KASIRA: No!!!
(She then snarled under her breath.)
KASIRA: I should have stayed in fucking bed today.
(She then whizzed around a corner, straight past Lassu.)
LASSU: A-ha!!! There you are!!!
(He then raced after her as well.)
KASIRA: Fuck! Why is this happening to me???
(She threw a desperate glance backwards at the two love struck gentleman in her wake then whimpered. Getting away was extremely unlikely. She was a notoriously slow runner even on a good day, and had only got away from them before because they hadn't expected her to bolt. Now they were both wise to it. All she could do, therefore was to try to outrun them; a nigh on impossible task. A nigh on impossible task that wasn't made any easier by the fact she'd paired the pencil skirt from her uniform with a pair of heel highs. As such, fleeing like she was had an air of inevitable failure about it.)
KASIRA: Why does life keep doing this to me???
(She growled.)
KASIRA: Fuck it. Next group of wraiths I see, I'm jumping into the middle of. They can fucking have me!
(She then bounded on. As futile as running might have been, as long as there was the slightest glimmer of a chance to get away, she was going to try to take it.)

Across town at this time, Cayley was charging forth with Ambre, taking potshots at any wraith that dared get too close. Not capable of using projectile magic, Ambre stuck close to her with her eyes on stalks.
AMBRE: I don't like this, Cayley.
(Cayley blasted a wraith then offered her a consoling smile.)
CAYLEY: I know, love.
AMBRE: They're on all sides of us. It's never been like this before. There's too many. Like lots and lots and lots and lots and...
CAYLEY: Lots?
AMBRE: Yeah. And lots more on top of that.
(She whimpered.)
AMBRE: They've never been on all sides of us before. Kasira's really, really good at making sure that doesn't happen.
CAYLEY: She is, yes.

AMBRE: You're not though, are you?

CAYLEY: What?

AMBRE: They're everywhere. That never happened when Kasira was in charge of me.

CAYLEY: Well, that's hardly my fault, is it?

(Ambre just smiled.)

AMBRE: I'm sure you're trying your best.

CAYLEY: My best?

(She blasted a wraith then furrowed her brow.)

CAYLEY: We've had to come among the wraiths to find your precious Kasira, Ambre.

Before we came to look for her, we weren't surrounded like this.

AMBRE: I know.

CAYLEY: Thank you.

AMBRE: Then *you* decided to come here and look for her. Now we *are* surrounded.

CAYLEY: Ambre...

AMBRE: Yes?

(Cayley sighed.)

CAYLEY: Nothing. It couldn't be helped, okay? Let's just keep going until we find the others, yeah?

AMBRE: Found them!

CAYLEY: What?

(Ambre pointed her towards where Sika, Soapy and Nivea were fighting in the frontline.)

AMBRE: Look.

CAYLEY: Perfect. Come on.

AMBRE: Okay.

(As they hurried towards their three comrades, Ambre beamed with pride.)

AMBRE: You were wrong. I told you Sika wouldn't skive off and claim this isn't her fight.

CAYLEY: Yeah...

AMBRE: I was right. Yay.

CAYLEY: Yes, well. I bet she *would* have skived off if Soapy and Nivea weren't with her.

AMBRE: No. She's a good girl.

CAYLEY: Seriously? You have met Sika, right?

AMBRE: Yeah. She's really nice. Even if she is a creepy pervert who wants to do filthy things to me.

(Cayley couldn't help but grin.)

CAYLEY: You've got her wrong on literally *all* counts, love.

AMBRE: What?

CAYLEY: Nothing. Don't worry about it, sweetie.

AMBRE: Oh. Okay. That I can do.

(Cayley then raced up behind where Nivea was battling hard with her blade.)

CAYLEY: Nivea!

(Taken by surprise, Nivea shrieked then jumped in the air, accidentally casting her sword far into the crowd of wraiths in the process.)

NIVEA: No!!!

(She then rapidly withdrew from the fight, allowing others to fill her gap. Sika and Soapy rapidly followed suit.)

NIVEA: You scared the piss out of me, Cayley.

CAYLEY: Yeah, I...

NIVEA: Now I've lost my sword.

(Ambre beamed then passed her another one.)

NIVEA: The hell?

AMBRE: I was using it, but Cayley said I was too slow and should just follow her instead.

NIVEA: I see...

AMBRE: It's not nice to leave me out, but she did it anyway.

CAYLEY: Ambre...

AMBRE: She's mean.

CAYLEY: We were in a hurry.

(Ambre flexed her shoulders and pouted.)

AMBRE: It's still mean.

CAYLEY: Ambre?

AMBRE: Yes?

CAYLEY: Get over it.

(She then looked to Nivea.)

CAYLEY: Where's Kasira?

NIVEA: I've got no idea.

SIKA: She left the labour hall before we did and we have no idea where she went.

SOAPY: So we came here and joined in the fight.

CAYLEY: I see.

NIVEA: Sika wanted to skive off but we wouldn't let her.

SIKA: It's not my fight!

(Cayley smirked at the rapidly shrinking Ambre then nodded sternly.)

CAYLEY: Okay, here's what we'll do then. Let's stick together like we always do and make sure our flanks are protected on all sides, okay? Then we can get searching for Kasira.

SIKA: Cool. I just hope she's okay.

SOAPY: Yeah, I'm a bit worried actually. I hope she wasn't on her own when the wraiths attacked.

NIVEA: Yeah, that'd suck. There's no way she'd outrun them.

SOAPY: She can't outrun anything!

SIKA: Especially in high heels.

CAYLEY: Yeah...

(She nodded.)

CAYLEY: We need to find her. I mean urgently.

SOAPY: Where do we start?

CAYLEY: I don't know. I just hope she managed to find some people to fight alongside. Or that she's holed up somewhere safe.

NIVEA: It'll definitely be one of those two. Like I said, there's no way she took to her heels and ran for it, not for long anyway.

SIKA: Right? She knows that'd never work.

SOAPY: Uh-huh. Running is so not her thing.

(Just then, Kasira zoomed in between them and out the other side.)

KASIRA: Hi, girls!!!

CAYLEY: What the...

AMBRE: Where's she going, Cayley???

CAYLEY: I don't...

(Just then, Rex and Lassu bundled past them, still in hot pursuit.)

SIKA: That was...

NIVEA: Lassu! Her ex.

SOAPY: The cry baby?

NIVEA: Yeah.

CAYLEY: More worryingly, the other one was the one who tried to kick the crap of her six months ago.

SIKA: Oh, yeah. I knew he looked familiar.
 (They then shared an uncomfortable grimace before charging off after them.)
 NIVEA: Like a million wraiths aren't bad enough, she now has to deal with a vengeful misogynist and an angry ex-husband. This is not Kasira's day, is it?
 AMBRE: She got fired earlier too.
 CAYLEY: After finding out her boyfriend was married.
 SOAPY: Crikey. Someone up there really doesn't like her.
 SIKA: Certainly looks that way, doesn't it?
 NIVEA: Uh-huh.
 (She sneered.)
 NIVEA: It's not all bad news though. At least she's still got us. Come on, girls; let's go and kill those two silly fuckers before they can do any more damage to her day.
 CAYLEY: Agreed. Shoot them to hell, Soapy.
 SOAPY: Now that I can do.
 CAYLEY: Good girl.
 SOAPY: The best some would say.
 SIKA: I wouldn't.
 SOAPY: That's because nobody would ever ask you. You're not qualified to judge.
 SIKA: Oh, fuck off.
 SOAPY: Charming.
 (They then zoomed around a corner into an alley between two buildings and came to a stand still. Lassu and Rex had both raced around this same corner just a few seconds ago, but now they were nowhere to be seen.)
 NIVEA: Fuck!
 SIKA: Which way did they go?
 CAYLEY: Either left, right, straight on or into one of the buildings.
 AMBRE: That's not helpful.
 CAYLEY: I know.
 (They shared a mass groan then all seemed to shrug at the same time.)
 NIVEA: Let's just gamble and hope we get it right.
 CAYLEY: Agreed. No splitting up, there's way too many wraiths around. We'll just have to go together and hope we get lucky.
 (They then raced off down the alley with determination etched upon their brows.)
 NIVEA: So which way?
 SIKA: Right!
 SOAPY: Left!
 AMBRE: Straight on!
 NIVEA: Wow. Thanks, girls.
 CAYLEY: Stuff it. It's purely a guess anyway and Sika answered first, so we'll go right like she said.
 SIKA: Yay!
 CAYLEY: Shut up.
 SIKA: Right...
 CAYLEY: Now come on!
 (They then charged away down the right turning as soon as they reached it, praying they could reach Kasira in time and spare her whatever the two man mountains on her tail had in store for her.)

Having charged down the left turn, the exact opposite to which her unit-mates had gambled on, Kasira was rapidly starting to lose hope. Struggling forth in a restrictive skirt and high heels, her capture was starting to feel inevitable. Inevitable and imminent! Rex was gaining swiftly and Lassu was only a few feet further behind him. Getting away it seemed, would be impossible.

KASIRA: Shit! Shit, shit, shit.

(She then growled determinedly.)

KASIRA: Nope. It's not over yet. There's still hope.

(She nodded sternly.)

KASIRA: The same rule applies; I just need to outsmart them.

(She then ducked down a side alley and immediately threw herself behind a crate that had been left by the side door to a cafe. Crouching to make herself as small as possible, she then winced and closed her eyes. All she could do now was pray that her deception had worked. Unfortunately for her, however, three seconds after she ducked down, the cafe's back door opened and the owner scooped up the crate and took it inside. Utterly exposed, Kasira barely had time to shriek before spotting Rex staring straight at her from only a few feet away.

KASIRA: Shit!

(She then about turned to flee again and her heart sunk. She'd trapped herself in a dead end. Still not about to give up, however, she then attempted to flee through the back door of the cafe instead, only for the owner to slam it shut in her face. Defeated, she stared despondently at the door for a moment, then hung her head and sighed.)

KASIRA: Bollocks.

REX: Why did you run, Kasira? I'm here to tell you I love you; not to hurt you.

(Just then, Lassu arrived at his side.)

LASSU: Really, Kasira? Why flee like that? We weren't done talking.

(Kasira furrowed her brow.)

KASIRA: Look! Can't you two clowns take a hint? I'm not interested! And even if I was, what made you think the best way to woo a woman was to chase her all over town during a wraith infestation!

LASSU: I only chased you because you chose to run away.

REX: Yeah. Running away was *your* choice!

KASIRA: And chasing after me was yours!

REX: Yes, because what I have to say is important!

LASSU: As is what I have to say! Kasira...

(Lassu then furrowed his brow and glowered at Rex.)

LASSU: Wait. Who the hell are you?

REX: I could ask you the same question.

LASSU: I'm Kasira's husband!

KASIRA: No, you're not!

LASSU: *Ex-husband* then. And soon to be her husband again!

KASIRA: I repeat...

LASSU: Now who the hell are you?

REX: I'm the man she loves!

KASIRA: Seriously??? Again; no, you're bloody not!

LASSU: The man she loves???

KASIRA: Nope!

REX: Okay, the man she'll learn to love.

LASSU: She already has a man, chummy! Me!

(Rex scoffed.)

REX: Dream on, fatso!

LASSU: Fatso? This is pure muscle!

REX: Rubbish. Compared to me, you're like a giant tub of lard.

LASSU: Is that so?

REX: Yes. Now sod off.

(He then looked to Kasira.)

REX: I love you, Kasira, and...

LASSU: I love you more!

(The two giants then growled at one another. For a moment, Kasira glowered at them both then a devilish smirk appeared on her brow. Two seconds later, she whimpered then faked a crying motion.)

REX: My god. You made her cry, look.

LASSU: That was you!

(Kasira pouted.)

KASIRA: It was both of you.

REX: Oh.

LASSU: Shit.

KASIRA: Rex, you tried to beat me when I last saw you. I was terrified. Why do that, you big brute?

REX: Yeah... about that...

(By now, Lassu was burning red with rage.)

LASSU: You tried to hit her???

KASIRA: As for you, Lassu, you broke my heart. Crushed my soul even. I cried for days! How could a treat a woman so poorly???

LASSU: Um...

REX: You mistreated her and made her cry???

LASSU: *You* tried to hit her!!!

REX: I was a different person then!

LASSU: So was I!!!

REX: Bullshit. A leopard can't change its spots!!!

LASSU: Then by that logic, *you* haven't changed either!

(Lassu grimaced.)

LASSU: Um... actually, I have. *I'm* not a leopard!

REX: Nor am I!

(He smirked.)

REX: I'm Kasira's future lover!

(Lassu gasped.)

LASSU: That's never going to happen!!!

REX: Oh, no? And why's that?

LASSU: Because *I'm* going to beat you to death!!!

(They then set about battering one another senseless. As they did so, Kasira beamed with joy then casually strolled away, delighted at herself for so spectacularly manipulating them. She knew that nothing emasculates a love struck man *more* than tales of other men who'd hurt her in the past, and she'd exploited it beautifully. And so, while thy two giants clashed like titans, she hurried onwards, gleefully making good her escape without them even noticing she'd gone. Dashing through alleys and between houses en route the centre of town again, she couldn't help but giggle now and again. In her desperation to get away she'd forgotten one simple mantra. With a pout and a tear, she could make men do anything.)

KASIRA: Men are ridiculous.

(She then raced back onto a main thoroughfare and glanced around at the carnage. The wraiths were continuing to pour into town and people were dying in large numbers. The

townsfolk, however, we putting up a determined fight. Not about to abandon them and leave them to it, she nodded then started to stride forth to join them. She only made it few feet, however, when an excited yell caught her attention.)

AMBRE: Kasira!

(Looking greatly relieved, she turned around and much to her delight, she saw all five members of her unit racing towards her. Not about to waste a second, Kasira instantly took to her heels and raced in to join them. A series of hugs ensued.)

AMBRE: You're safe! Yay!

KASIRA: Wow, it's so good to see you guys.

CAYLEY: It awesome to see you too, Kasira.

SIKA: Never mind that. How did you get away from that two brutes?

SOAPY: That's what I want to know.

KASIRA: Let's just say it came to down to a battle of wits and, well, they're men.

NIVEA: Unarmed, huh?

KASIRA: Exactly.

SIKA: Bit sexist that, but yeah. I approve.

(She exhaled.)

SIKA: Thank the gods you're okay.

SOAPY: You mean, praise be to Akkeri!

SIKA: That too.

NIVEA: Fuck off, you two.

CAYLEY: Honestly, Kasira, I genuinely thought you were in for a serious beating when I saw them two chasing you.

(Kasira grimaced.)

KASIRA: Actually, I was *never* in danger of that. They both came to tell me they love me.

SIKA: Then why the fuck did you run away?

KASIRA: I didn't want to talk to them.

SOAPY: Makes sense.

NIVEA: Not really. You should have just rejected them got on with what you were doing.

KASIRA: I *did* reject them. They both said they'd fight for me; whatever it takes. It sounded like they weren't about to take no for an answer.

(She shrugged.)

KASIRA: So I tried to evade them. Turns out they were both really persistent though.

CAYLEY: I hate that.

AMBRE: They've gone now though.

KASIRA: Yeah. For now.

NIVEA: Well, when they come back, don't worry. We'll help them *understand* that you're not interested.

AMBRE: Just be honest and tell them you're in love with Cayley, even if it *is* really creepy.

KASIRA: In love with Cayley???

CAYLEY: Where the hell are you getting that from?

SIKA: She's been saying weird things all day.

AMBRE: No, I haven't!

(Just then, the town's elder came running over to them with a desperate look in his eyes.)

ELDER: General!!! General!!! I need you!!!

SOAPY: Not another one!

NIVEA: Is there any man in this town who doesn't have the hots for you, Kasira?

KASIRA: He doesn't mean it like that!

(She whimpered.)

KASIRA: I hope.

(At this point, the elder reached her and burst into a desperate speech.)

ELDER: General! Over by the mines! We've got a big problem.

KASIRA: What sort of...

ELDER: Three fucking giant wraiths.

(All six girls groaned in defeat.)

KASIRA: Fuck.

ELDER: General, your tactics have been invaluable up to this point, so I'm hoping you know some way to defeat them, because I'm out of ideas. Some men are holding them back for now, but it'll only be a matter of time before the giant bastards kill them all then come and make a meal of the townsfolk. Do something!

SIKA: For fuck sake. Sensible people would refuse and go back to Capsway Island, but we're not going to do that, are we?

KASIRA: Nope.

SIKA: Bugger.

KASIRA: Lead the way, Elder. We've taken down big buggers before, so we'll see what can do.

ELDER: Thank fuck.

(With that, he hurried away. Kasira and her team instantly followed suit.)

NIVEA: I'm not happy about this. *Three* of the buggers.

SOAPY: Yeah, what if we can't defeat them?

SIKA: And don't say we'll die trying. This isn't even our fight.

KASIRA: Yes, but we're making it ours. And no, we won't die trying.

(She cringed.)

KASIRA: If things get *that* bad, I'm getting on the next boat. I don't care if I have to sail it myself.

(Sika exhaled.)

SIKA: Finally. Kasira and I are on the same page at last.

SOAPY: Hardly. If she was on *your* page, we'd be back in Capsway already, sunbathing in the courtyard.

KASIRA: Yes, well, that can wait.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: Focus, ladies. You know all too well what big wraiths are capable of. Let's make sure we stay safe and get the job done.

CAYLEY: Ma'am.

AMBRE: Ma'am.

KASIRA: Thank you.

(The six of them then charged onwards in silence, dreading to think what fresh hell was going to befall them when they arrived.)

On New Capsway Island at this time, the general's meeting had just resumed after a lengthy lunch break. Delighted to have filled his stomach at last, as soon as everyone had taken their seats, the supreme leader immediately moved onto the next item on the agenda.

FORTINGLY: Okay, men, now lunch is over, we can move onto the most *important* item on the agenda. What are we having for dinner?

(Everyone chuckled.)

FORTINGLY: I jest. Seriously, men, we've done brilliantly to this point. We've selected who's staying and who's leaving and earmarked all the surplus bases for the first round of closures. Good stuff. But still, there's much to be done.

(He glanced to his side.)

FORTINGLY: Major General Hasham, I believe you had three proposals for us.

HASHAM: I did, yes. Thank you, sir.

(He glanced around the room.)

HASHAM: There is one *small* issue we need to resolve before we transform our fine army into a global police force, gentlemen. Some areas already *have* a police force. Most *smaller* towns have always left the policing to either the local army unit or allowed the elder to dole out punishments to those involved. In such small areas, a police force will be most welcome. In towns where one already exists, however, there may be friction. What I'm proposing therefore is, in such places we allow their own police to continue their work and our own forces will merely act as back up. Working in collaboration.

(He nodded.)

HASHAM: I submit this proposal for your approval.

(The supreme leader nodded.)

FORTINGLY: All those in favour?

(Every hand went up.)

FORTINGLY: All those against?

(Seeing no raised hands, he exhaled joyfully.)

FORTINGLY: See, Hasham? Our lives are so much easier when there's no bloody women here to get in the way of everything.

HASHAM: Well...

FORTINGLY: Proposal approved.

HASHAM: Thank you.

FORTINGLY: And what was the next point?

(Hasham nodded.)

HASHAM: Ah, yes. I'd like to propose the creation of a special unit, made up of our best men, just in case mass-wraith incidents happen in the future. I...

FORTINGLY: Why would they?

HASHAM: Sorry?

FORTINGLY: Why would they? The war's over.

HASHAM: Well, sir, as we've seen before, wraiths can get trapped in underground bases, mines or caves. It happened on the old Capsway Island. Thousands of wraiths were trapped underground, undiscovered for centuries. The local unit had to destroy them before they could escape and wreak havoc on the island.

FORTINGLY: Hmm... I remember reading the report actually. And didn't something similar happen in that town I can't remember the name of?

HASHAM: It's happened on numerous occasions, sir. The problem is, wraiths remain alive forever unless someone kills them. And that'll still be the case long after the war comes to an end. They could escape these mines or caves at any moment and attack the local towns. That's why I'm proposing we create a special unit to put an end to such infestations as and when they might occur.

FORTINGLY: I like it.

HASHAM: Thank you, sir.

FORTINGLY: And when you say our best men, you mean experts in the field, right?

HASHAM: Well...

FORTINGLY: Well then, that's simple. Assembling such a unit won't be difficult at all. Just appoint that unit that's successfully faced down four wraith infestations already.

(Hasham grimaced at him uncomfortably.)

HASHAM: We can't do that, I'm afraid, sir.

FORTINGLY: What? Why???

HASHAM: We just decided to fire them.

FORTINGLY: We did? Are we stupid? Were we drunk? Why would we do that? And why wasn't I informed???

HASHAM: You were sitting right there, sir.

FORTINGLY: What? I don't remember this. Did I object? I must have. Why would I let you boot out such a heroic unit? I'd have used my veto had I known.

HASHAM: You did know, sir. We voted to get rid of *all* the women.

(Fortingly performed a double take in his direction.)

FORTINGLY: Women did that?

HASHAM: Yes, sir.

FORTINGLY: Well, I never. You learn a new thing every day.

HASHAM: And sometimes you learn the *same* new thing twice in one day, sir.

FORTINGLY: What do you mean?

HASHAM: I mean, I already told you that earlier, sir. You already learned it! General Ashwood was the leader of that unit.

FORTINGLY: Who's he?

HASHAM: Not he, sir. General Ashwood; the woman. You called her General Lovely.

(Fortingly looked enlightened.)

FORTINGLY: Oh... her. She was lovely.

HASHAM: You said, sir.

FORTINGLY: And she was leader of that heroic unit...

(He then looked enlightened.)

FORTINGLY: Ah, yes; you did mention something. Sorry. I'm getting forgetful in my old age. Plus, I was kind of distracted by the rumble in my belly earlier.

HASHAM: It's fine, sir.

(He nodded.)

HASHAM: So, would you like to recall her unit and appoint them as our special force?

FORTINGLY: No, no. Don't get me wrong, I'm grateful for her efforts, but the decision to boot out the women has been made now. Let's just stick with what we've already decided and get on with things. If we're going to do this, we'll create the unit from scratch; utilising our most skilled *male* warriors.

HASHAM: Sir.

FORTINGLY: Speaking of which. All those in favour of the plan?

(Every single hand rose into the air.)

FORTINGLY: And all those against?

(For the second time in a row there were no objections.)

FORTINGLY: Perfect. No objections again. Kicking out that woman was the best thing we ever did.

HASHAM: Quite. Even if she was the most successful leader this army has ever seen.

FORTINGLY: What?

HASHAM: Nothing, sir.

(Fortingly gave him a distrusting glance.)

FORTINGLY: Is that so?

HASHAM: Absolutely.

FORTINGLY: Right...

(He ruffled his neck.)

FORTINGLY: And your third motion?

HASHAM: Yes, sir.

(He nodded.)

HASHAM: I'd like to propose the instant demotion of General Amru, sir.

AMRU: What???

FORTINGLY: Silence!!!

(He rolled his eye then looked to Major General Hasham and gave the same reaction.)

FORTINGLY: What???

HASHAM: I said...

FORTINGLY: I heard what you said, Hasham. Why ever would you propose such a thing???

HASHAM: During the morning session, he gleefully admitted breaching our regulation on sleeping with another general, sir.

(Amru's hair stood on end. Fortingly hadn't heard his smug admission earlier and he thought he'd got away with it.)

AMRU: Um... I can explain.

FORTINGLY: Wait!

(He snarled.)

FORTINGLY: Is this true? Why didn't I hear it?

HASHAM: You were distracted by General Ashwood's legs, sir.

FORTINGLY: I see...

(He beamed.)

FORTINGLY: She was lovely.

HASHAM: We know.

(Fortingly flinched.)

FORTINGLY: But never mind that. Amru!!! You slept with another general?

AMRU: Um...

FORTINGLY: You poof! Who was it? Not General Salas was it?

SALAS: No, it fucking wasn't!

FORTINGLY: Are you sure? I always suspected you might be a little fruity.

SALAS: Yes, I'm sure!!!

HASHAM: It was General Ashwood, sir. The woman.

FORTINGLY: Oh. Well... that's a little bit better, but still. Bad you!

AMRU: Forgive me, sir.

FORTINGLY: Shut up.

(He sneered.)

FORTINGLY: All those in favour of booting him?

(Not a single hand went up.)

FORTINGLY: Nobody??? What gives? General Miller? General Maki? General Argon?

(The three generals he mentioned all ruffled their necks uncomfortably.)

MILLER: Well... she was fit.

MAKI: Yeah... if anything he deserves a medal.

ARGON: I mean... you can hardly blame him... she was fine.

FORTINGLY: I see...

(He then growled.)

FORTINGLY: Allow me to rephrase then. I propose the immediate demotion of General Amru, the man who despite being married to *my daughter* and making a good fucking career out of *my generosity*, decided to slip his pecker into General Lovely!!! Vote! Vote carefully and be prepared to deal with the fallout!

(Unsurprisingly every hand except General Amru's went up.)

FORTINGLY: Motion carried! Now fuck off and leave. Not just this room, but the fucking army. And move out of the house I fucking paid for! Cunt!

HASHAM: Sir, we didn't ask for objections.

FORTINGLY: Fine! Who objects?

(Amru's hand went up alone.)

FORTINGLY: Nobody? Excellent.

HASHAM: No, sir; we must allow him to have his say.

FORTINGLY: Oh, fine. Fucking go on then.

(Amru whimpered.)

AMRU: Please don't kick me out, I've got nowhere to go!

FORTINGLY: Denied! All those who want him gone?

(All the hands went up again with the exception of Amru's.)

FORTINGLY: Excellent. Now fuck off!

(Amru whimpered then took a step back from the table.)

FORTINGLY: Faster!!!

AMRU: But, sir... father-in-law whom I respect and admire...

FORTINGLY: Nope. That's it. I'm going to hit him.

(He then leapt from his seat, defying his age, and charged across the room. With a shriek, Amru took to his heels and fled out of the door. Having seen him go, Fortingly stopped then adjusted his collar.)

FORTINGLY: And don't come back!!!

(He ruffled his neck.)

FORTINGLY: Sorry you had to see that, chaps.

(He then returned to his seat.)

FORTINGLY: Carry on, Hasham.

HASHAM: I was finished, sir.

FORTINGLY: Not as finished as Amru.

HASHAM: Well... no...

FORTINGLY: Right then. On with the meeting. Surplus equipment...

(Suffice to say, the rest of the meeting was held under something of a cloud. The supreme leader was not a happy man. Decisions would still be made, but objectors would not be getting an easy ride.)

On the mainland, at this time, Kasira and her team were racing towards the beach road with the elder. Frantic with worry about the three giant wraiths he'd witnessed, he could barely contain his emotions. Not about to encourage his fearfulness, however, the six girls of the 123rd Wraith Containment Unit remained mostly silent. As always, of course, there was one exception.

SIKA: He's a nervous wreck this fella, isn't he?

NIVEA: Yeah.

SIKA: He should learn to calm down.

SOAPY: Yup.

SIKA: Like me. I'm always calm. Nothing really fazes me, you see? I've always been something of a cool customer. At the academy, they used to me the ice girl.

NIVEA: Because you never put out?

SIKA: No. Because...

SOAPY: That's a lie anyway, isn't it? At your academy they used to pick on you for being the only one who couldn't heal.

NIVEA: No, no, Soapy; that story's only to be used when Sika wants our pity. At all other times she was the best thing since sliced bread.

SOAPY: Oh, yeah. Good point.

(Sika shook her head.)

SIKA: You two suck. Suck, suck, suck.

(Just then, Kasira came to a halt and called for their attention.)

KASIRA: Okay, ladies; this is it.

(She gulped.)

KASIRA: When you said they were big, you weren't exaggerating, were you?

ELDER: Of course not. If anything, I was understating it because I was worried you wouldn't come.

(He whimpered.)

ELDER: Nobody stood a chance. They butchered everyone in their path.

(Glancing to where the three giant wraiths were loitering, almost if taking five before resuming their killing spree, Nivea bit her lip.)

NIVEA: We faced one like this before, on Capsway Island.

ELDER: Did you defeat it?

NIVEA: No, it killed us all horribly.

ELDER: There's no need to be facetious, woman. And besides, for all I knew, you might have simply evaded it.

KASIRA: No, we killed it.

(She glanced up at the three, twenty-foot tall, dog-like wraiths and gulped.)

KASIRA: There was only one of them back then though.

CAYLEY: We ran it into the sea, courtesy of our little swimmer here.

SOAPY: That's me! Always on hand to save the day.

SIKA: Yeah, right.

SOAPY: Accept it, you. *I'm* the awesome one here.

SIKA: Never.

KASIRA: Yes, well, never mind that. Ambre?

AMBRE: Ma'am?

KASIRA: When you take over the mind of a wraith, is it possible to make it walk into the sea by itself?

(Ambre sighed.)

AMBRE: I don't know. That's a confusing one for me.

KASIRA: Oh?

AMBRE: I tried that when we were in the freezing cold sea that time. The first one started to obey and walk into the sea then you killed it with your blades. So I tried it with another one. It kept resisting me.

KASIRA: So it's a maybe then.

CAYLEY: Depends on the individual wraith, I guess.

KASIRA: Yeah. Forget that then. Let's stick with what we know. We'll just do what we did last time we fought one.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: Ambre, can you make one of them attack another one?

AMBRE: Which one?

KASIRA: Anyone you like. If two are then are busy fighting each other, we can lure the third away and run it into the sea.

AMBRE: Easy cheesy.

KASIRA: Good girl.

SIKA: You know the phrase is easy peasy, right?

AMBRE: Not when I say it.

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: You're not the only one who can make up words.

SIKA: Why, you...

AMBRE: Shall I do it now, Kasira?

KASIRA: Not quite, love. I need to think.

CAYLEY: About how to lure the other one away?

KASIRA: Yeah.

CAYLEY: Simple. I can fly up and shoot it in the face. That'll get its attention.

KASIRA: Yes, but I rather you kept guard over Ambre. If she's focussing on making the other two fight, she'll need someone to guard her from a back attack.

NIVEA: Then we'll just have to use our other airborne nuisance, won't we?

(Sika flinched.)

SIKA: Me? You want me to shoot it? It'll chase me!

KASIRA: I know. That's the idea.

SIKA: But what if it eats me?

SOAPY: Meh, it'll be fine. The war's going to end soon anyway; we don't need you.

SIKA: That's not funny.

(She pouted.)

SIKA: Me being eaten is not good comedy material!

NIVEA: You won't get eaten.

SIKA: I know. Because I'm not going.

NIVEA: And maybe it'd be better if you didn't. This is the job for someone cool. Someone awesome. The pick of the bunch. The best.

SIKA: I'm all of those things.

NIVEA: Are you?

SIKA: Yes!

NIVEA: Excellent. Off you go then.

SIKA: What?

NIVEA: If you're awesome you'll do it.

(Sika whimpered.)

SIKA: But...

(She then furrowed her brow and stood tall. Having been well and truly manipulated into submitting to her foolish pride, she nodded sternly.)

SIKA: Fine. Watch and learn, man hands. I'll do it, Kasira.

KASIRA: I know. Those were your orders.

SIKA: Well, you say that. I'd rather look on it as volunteering because I'm awesome.

CAYLEY: And we'll happily allow you that fantasy; now go.

SIKA: Fine. I will. In your face, Nivea.

SOAPY: Blasphemy!

NIVEA: Shut up, you.

KASIRA: Sika?

SIKA: Yes?

KASIRA: Go. Shoot it in the face then fly to the beach. And whatever you do, keep out of reach of its jaws.

SIKA: Right...

(With that, she took to the skies then nodded to those down below.)

SIKA: You mean now, right?

KASIRA: Yup. Fly into position, Sika!

SIKA: Ma'am.

(Kasira looked to Ambre.)

KASIRA: Make two of them fight now, love. And Cayley...

CAYLEY: I've got her back.

KASIRA: Sweet. The rest of you... to the beach.

(With that, Soapy, Nivea, Kasira and the elder raced away for the beach. As they did so, Kasira glanced backwards just in time to see one of the three wraiths attack one of the others. Being savage creatures, the other wraith responded and a fierce battle broke out.)

KASIRA: So far, so good.

(She then glanced up to where Sika was nervously hovering near the dormant giant.)

KASIRA: Come on, girl; you can do it.

SOAPY: She daren't *not* do it; not after what Nivea said.

NIVEA: Right? She's so easy to manipulate.

(Sure enough, Sika then shot the wraith the face. At once, the wraith reared up then charged in her direction, jumping at her in the hope of catching her in its jaws. Not about to even let it get it close to achieving such a goal, Sika shrieked then flew off towards the beach.)

ELDER: Well done. She separated one!

KASIRA: And we've kept the other two busy. We've just got to hope this one is dumb enough to follow her into the sea.

ELDER: That's not likely to happen, is it? Wraiths are terrified of water.

KASIRA: The last one we fought was dumb enough to, so we can only hope.

ELDER: Well, okay...

KASIRA: Chill. If it doesn't follow her in, at least she can keep it busy while we think of another way to kill it.

(Moments later, as they arrived on the beach, Kasira, Soapy, Nivea and the elder all clasped praying hands and watched as Sika flew over the sea with the wraith hot on her heels.)

KASIRA: Follow. Go on.

SOAPY: Please!

KASIRA: Go.

(Much to their dismay, however, the wraith stopped at the shoreline, and opted to bark at her instead.)

KASIRA: Fuck!

(Somewhat unnerved by having the giant dog bark at her like this, Sika whimpered then fired another sortie of magic blasts into its face.)

NIVEA: Well... she's keeping it busy at least.

KASIRA: Yeah. For now.

SOAPY: So what are we gonna do?

NIVEA: Your sonic boom...

SOAPY: Like we discussed earlier, would flatten half the town and kill as many people as it does wraiths.

KASIRA: Yeah... we're not doing that.

SOAPY: I know.

NIVEA: Then what *are* we going to do?

KASIRA: Hmm...

(With that, they all stared hard at the wraith as they pondered ideas.)

SOAPY: That spell I do that knocks me over *might* do it some damage.

NIVEA: Might?

SOAPY: Yeah. I don't know. Those things are absurdly strong.

KASIRA: Then that's a no. *Might* is no good.

NIVEA: All we have is might.

KASIRA: Not physical might, you moron. I mean an attack that *might* damage it is no good. We need one that *will*.

NIVEA: Right... that was obvious really.

(They then resumed thinking over suggestions.)

KASIRA: Nivea?

NIVEA: Ma'am?

KASIRA: Anatomically, those things have a soft underbelly, right?

NIVEA: Most quadrupeds do, yes. Why?

KASIRA: Your spin attack...

NIVEA: Hmm... from underneath it, you mean?

KASIRA: Yeah. What do you reckon?

(Nivea furrowed her brow.)

NIVEA: I reckon you must think I have a death wish. Either that or *you* want me dead. If I go under there, it'll forget all about Sika and eat my face.

KASIRA: Not if she blows her wraith whistle.

NIVEA: When has Sika ever remembered to bring her wraith whistle? She doesn't even remember it when she's on a patrol. There's no way she brought it job hunting.

KASIRA: Shit. Good point.

NIVEA: Cayley will have her whistle, I expect, but she can't fly over and join her because she's busy.

KASIRA: Which just leaves...

(Soapy groaned.)

SOAPY: I knew it! Fine. I'll swim out behind her and blow mine then.

KASIRA: Good girl. Just remember to...

SOAPY: Blow it quietly, so it only attracts that one wraith; I know.

(She then sauntered towards the sea, mumbling under her breath.)

SOAPY: I knew it was only a matter of time before I ended up in the fucking sea again.

(Kasira watched her go then looked to Nivea.)

KASIRA: Once she blows the whistle, you're in business.

(Nivea whimpered.)

NIVEA: Do I have to do this?

KASIRA: You'll be fine. It won't be able to resist her whistle.

NIVEA: You don't *know* that. Only six months ago, a bunch of them ignored Cayley's whistle and charged straight at us.

KASIRA: That was after, like, ten minutes.

NIVEA: Yes, but it's more likely to be *ten seconds* when some cunt with a sword is slicing its belly open.

KASIRA: Well...

NIVEA: And that's only half the problem.

KASIRA: Oh?

NIVEA: It's belly is twelve feet from the ground! Just how tall do you think I am?

KASIRA: Oh.

NIVEA: Yes, oh.

KASIRA: Hmm...

(She then looked enlightened.)

KASIRA: Stand on the groyne!

NIVEA: I'll stand on *your* groin in a minute.

KASIRA: Seriously?

NIVEA: Um...

KASIRA: You could stand on one of the pillars of that groyne over there and Soapy can make the wraith edge sideways until you're underneath it.

NIVEA: Shit. That's actually a good idea.

KASIRA: Shit?

(She sighed.)

KASIRA: Look, if you're too afraid to try it, just tell me straight, okay?

NIVEA: Okay...

KASIRA: I won't chastise you. Soapy and Sika will never let you hear the end of it, of course, but *I* won't say a word.

NIVEA: Kasira...

KASIRA: They'll refer to you as Saint Dumpling, The Holy Chicken of Akkeri forever, but you won't hear a peep out of *me*.

(Nivea looked to her coldly.)

NIVEA: Kasira, if you think you can trick me into doing it by reminding me that those two will rip the piss out of me for all eternity for chickening out, then you're... well...

(She groaned in defeat.)

NIVEA: Actually, you pretty much struck gold there. I'll do it.

KASIRA: That's the spirit.

NIVEA: But if I die, *I'll* come back as a wraith and haunt you forever.

KASIRA: Go nuts. I kill wraiths for a living.

NIVEA: Just let me have my whinge!!!

KASIRA: Right. Sorry.

(Satisfied she'd said her piece, Nivea nodded then glanced towards the giant wraith.)

NIVEA: Okay... this is going to suck.

KASIRA: No, Nivea; it won't. You're going to strike at its weak point with a sword skill so deadly, we can't go within twenty feet of you when you perform it.

NIVEA: I guess.

(At this point, the elder interceded.)

ELDER: Sorry to interrupt you professionals at work, but I couldn't help overhearing...

KASIRA: Of course not, you're standing right next to us. You were actually included in our conversation, you just chose not to speak.

ELDER: Well, yes, that's true, but the point I was going to make is this. I became a biologist after leaving the army and I can indeed confirm that those things have a soft underbelly.

(He nodded.)

ELDER: Wraiths, you see, are creatures moulded into an exaggerated form of an already living species. In this case, a canine. The underbelly of a canine is indeed its weak point.

KASIRA: Yeah, we'd already established *that* much.

NIVEA: Will it be weak *enough* though? That's *my* issue!

ELDER: For a subterranean human's spin attack?

NIVEA: Yes!

(The elder nodded.)

ELDER: Actually, I'd say the likelihood of success with *that* attack is roughly ninety nine percent.

NIVEA: And my hopes of survival if you're wrong?

ELDER: I'm not.

NIVEA: Oh. That's actually reassuring. Almost.

(She whimpered.)

NIVEA: I can't believe I'm gonna do this.

KASIRA: And I can't believe you're doubting yourself. I wouldn't send you if I wasn't absolutely certain it'd work.

NIVEA: Right. Then that's good enough for me. I've delayed for long enough. Let's just get this shit done, shall we?

(With that, she charged off down the beach towards the groyne. The elder and Kasira watched her go and bit their lips nervously.)

ELDER: You're scared you're going to regret sending her now, aren't you?

KASIRA: Kind of. Don't get me wrong, I'm sure the plan will work if she focuses and believes in herself. It's just...

ELDER: Just what?

KASIRA: Fear can lead to mistakes. And if she's not fully focussed because of that fear, she could fall off the groyne and... I don't even want to think about it.

ELDER: Become a meal for a marauding giant wraith!

KASIRA: I said I *don't* want to think about it.

ELDER: Right. Yes. Sorry.

(Kasira rolled her eyes then glanced back at Nivea. Much to her credit, as soon as she reached the groyne, she gave Kasira a stern thumbs up and clambered into place.)

KASIRA: Perfect. She's in the right mindset.

(She then called out to Soapy and Sika.)

KASIRA: Lead the bugger to the groyne!!!

(Being too far away, however, they didn't hear her.)

KASIRA: Shit.

(With that, she charged off to the water's edge and called out again.)

KASIRA: Go sideways and lead it over Nivea.

(Sika shrieked.)

SIKA: We can't kill Nivea, we need her! But never tell her I said that!

KASIRA: We're not *going* to kill her.

(Soapy then yelled out from the water.)

SOAPY: Leave it to me, Kasira.

(She then proceeded to swim in the direction of the groyne, blowing her whistle as she did so. Spotting her coming, Nivea whimpered then stood tall.)

NIVEA: Okay, girl; let's do this right.

(She then proceeded to spin. At first she circled quite slowly, but within seconds her spins had accelerated to the point where she was just a blur. Watching on, Kasira nodded sternly.)

KASIRA: Here we go.

ELDER: You're extremely confident about this, aren't you?

KASIRA: I am. Her spin is immensely powerful. She's got no reason to doubt herself.

ELDER: Fair comment.

KASIRA: As soon as the wraith explodes she's going to get a face full of wraith dust and fall off the groyne, but still. That's a price worth paying for rubbing one of those buggers out.

ELDER: I concur.

(They then watched on as the snarling wraith bounded sideways towards Nivea. At once, Kasira clenched her fist and mouthed to herself.)

KASIRA: Eat cold steel, you giant lump of recycled luncheon meat.

(She then looked to where Nivea was spinning with concentration etched upon her brow.)

NIVEA: Don't fall off the groyne; don't fall off the groyne. Focus and stay in place. Ignore the wraith. Just spin on the spot. Spin on the spot. Spin on the spot.

(She then gulped as the wraith edged ever closer.)

NIVEA: Oh, boy. Here we go. Just don't fall off the groyne.

(In that moment, the wraith's underbelly was sucked towards her blade. Staggering sideways, it was unable to stop itself from thudding into the groyne and receiving a thousand lacerations to its belly. Having been knocked off balance by the giant hitting the groyne, however, Nivea's balance then evaded her and she toppled off of it.)

NIVEA: No!!! Panic!!! Panic!!!

(Fearing the worst, she quickly jumping to her feet, just in time to see the wraith rear up in agony on its hind legs.)

NIVEA: Fuck that! Bye!!!

(She then charged off down the beach. As a result, she didn't see Soapy aim her arm squarely at the beasts exposed undercarriage and let rip with a ferocious blast of magic. With a flash, the magic flew into the beast's already wounded underbelly. Unable to take such a hit, having already been severely damaged, it instantly exploded into dust.)

KASIRA: Yes!!!

SOAPY: Got the bastard!!!

SIKA: I did it!!!

SOAPY: No, you fucking didn't!

SIKA: I fired too!!!

SOAPY: You missed!

(Sika grimaced.)

SIKA: Shit. Didn't think you'd noticed.

(Hearing the joyous celebrations behind her, Nivea glanced over her shoulder then came to a halt. Feeling quite the fool, she then hurried back towards the groyne. As she did so, Kasira, Sika, Soapy and the elder all converged on the other side of it.)

KASIRA: Great work, ladies.

SIKA: Of course. I'm a natural.

SOAPY: You missed!

SIKA: Shut up, you. Credit stealer.

SOAPY: Me???

KASIRA: Enough, girls. I'm really proud of all of you; there's no need for bickering.

SIKA: Yeah, Soapy.

SOAPY: Wow.

(Just then, Nivea raced up to the groyne then clambered over it to join them.)

NIVEA: Well, we did it. Somehow. Time for a break, I reckon.

KASIRA: That was the first of three, Nivea.

NIVEA: Oh, yeah. Fuck.

(Soapy beamed.)

SOAPY: Let's get busy then.

(She then raced away to where they'd left Ambre and Cayley. The others rapidly followed suit.)

NIVEA: I thought for a minute it hadn't worked. It stumbled into the groyne and knocked me off.

SOAPY: Yes, but then it reared up in pain from the wounds you inflicted.

SIKA: So I shot it to death!

SOAPY: No, you didn't!

SIKA: Prove it.

SOAPY: You already admitted it!

SIKA: Prove that too.

SOAPY: Sika, it was a blast powerful enough to kill it. It couldn't have been you.

(Sika gasped and clutched a hand to her chest.)

SIKA: How dare you? I'm an extremely powerful babe, I'll have you know.

SOAPY: Not compared to me.

SIKA: Oh, piss off.

SOAPY: Nope.

KASIRA: Enough!

(She rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: Focus, girls. Once we get there, we need to figure out how to kill the other two.

SOAPY: The same way.

NIVEA: No. If it knocks me off the groyne before I can damage it too badly, I'm toast. I'm never doing that again.

KASIRA: And I'll never ask you to. Don't get me wrong, your spin from directly beneath one would kill it outright, but getting you into that position is too dangerous. In hindsight, we shouldn't have done that.

NIVEA: I concur.

ELDER: I disagree. It was dangerous, yes. Dangerous yet brilliant. It worked a treat in the end.

KASIRA: Yes, but only because Soapy had a clear shot at its already-wounded belly.

SOAPY: Ha! See, Sika?

SIKA: No. No, I do not. I fired too.

KASIRA: You missed.

SIKA: How would you know???

KASIRA: I saw everything!

SIKA: Seriously??? Why were you looking at *me*?

KASIRA: Sika?

SIKA: You want me to shut up, ma'am?

KASIRA: Correct.

(Sika pouted.)

SIKA: Fine.

(Moments later, as they reached the top of the beach they saw Cayley and Ambre standing back to back. There was one giant wraith left. One giant that was wraith running backwards and forwards along the beach road. Baffled by it, they raced up to them with questioning eyebrows.)

KASIRA: Ambre, what gives?

AMBRE: Focussing!

KASIRA: Right. Sorry. Cayley...

(Cayley smiled at her.)

CAYLEY: She made them fight and one of them died. So she made the winner run back and forth while we waited for you to come back.

SIKA: And why are you standing back to back?

NIVEA: So she can keep Ambre safe, dumb arse. That was her job!

SIKA: Yeah, alright, there's no need to be a Nivea.

NIVEA: Excuse me.

SIKA: I said don't be a twat. A Nivea.

NIVEA: Sika...

(Kasira then spoke over them urgently.)

KASIRA: Okay, so we've got one more to kill. The question is, how are we going to do it.

CAYLEY: Actually, Kasira, while I was standing here, I think I found the answer to that.

KASIRA: Oh?

CAYLEY: Look.

(She nodded towards a jetty on the sea front.)

CAYLEY: There's a flatbed merchant boat there.

KASIRA: I see it.

CAYLEY: If we can get the wraith on there, we can cast it off to sea.

NIVEA: And let it float to New Capsway Island? Are you mad??? We live there.

CAYLEY: No, you imbecile. We'll cast it off then Soapy, Sika and I can blast the wraith with magic to our hearts content. At some point, it *will* leap off, either to get out of the firing line or to try to attack us. And when it does... splash!

AMBRE: Wraiths don't like water. It makes them dead.

(Kasira nodded.)

KASIRA: That's brilliant. I love it.

CAYLEY: Thank you. Sika and I will have to fly out to sea a little to shoot it though.

KASIRA: Oh?

CAYLEY: Yeah. I mean, once it's far enough out to be considered stranded, our magic won't reach from dry land.

SOAPY: Mine will.

SIKA: Arrogant, bloody...

(Kasira nodded.)

KASIRA: Okay, let's do that then. Give it hell, ladies.

SOAPY: Affirmative.

CAYLEY: Ma'am.

SIKA: Leave it to me, ma'am.

CAYLEY: Us!

SIKA: That's what I meant.

KASIRA: Question is, how do we get it to go on the little boat in the first place?

(Ambre beamed.)

AMBRE: That's where I come in! I'm a clever clogs. Watch.

(They then watched on wearing approving smiles as Ambre stared hard at the wraith, controlling its every thought. With no fuss whatsoever, the giant menace simply strolled past them in a trance then walked onto the back of the boat itself.)

AMBRE: See?

CAYLEY: Nice work, Ambre. Told you you could do it.

AMBRE: You did, yes. Which was weird, because I already knew that.

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: But still. Your faith in me means lots and lots.

KASIRA: Never mind that, girls; let's get down there and cast it off.

SOAPY: Ma'am!

(Looking forward to peppering such a large target with her powerful magic blasts, Soapy practically sprinted to the jetty. Upon arriving, she then set about trying to untie the rope in a bid to cast off as soon as possible. Much to her annoyance, however, by the time the others had caught up, she still hadn't managed to succeed.)

SOAPY: Who tied this thing? It's impossible to undo.

(The elder laughed.)

ELDER: That's not how you cast off a mooring rope, young lady.

SOAPY: Is it not?

ELDER: No. You...

NIVEA: Don't worry. I'll show her.

(With that, she stepped up to Soapy, nudged her aside then slashed through the rope with her sword.)

NIVEA: Done!

ELDER: You don't do it like that either!!! You just lift the loop over the top of the post!

NIVEA: Oh. Whoops.

(Kasira clapped her palm into her forehead.)

KASIRA: Nice one, Nivea.

NIVEA: I didn't know, did I? I'm not a seafarer.

(Sika giggled then gestured to Soapy.)

SIKA: Unlike little miss penis-fish, here. She who wanted to find work at the docks. You didn't even know how to cast off a boat!

SOAPY: I'd have learned!

CAYLEY: Stop bickering and get ready, you two.

(She gestured to where the boat was gently floating away from the jetty with the passive wraith stranded on board.)

CAYLEY: As soon as it's far enough out, we're gonna set to work.

SOAPY: I can't wait.

(She then stood there nodding with excitement for a few moments before furrowing her brow.)

SOAPY: Actually, I really *can't* wait.

(She then jumped into the sea and proceeded to push the boat further out.)

ELDER: Blimey. She's keen.

KASIRA: Yup. When it comes to killing wraiths, you'll never meet *anyone* as devoted as she is.

ELDER: Then she's a credit to the army.

(He chuckled.)

ELDER: But having seen her attempt to cast off, she's definitely *not* a credit to the navy.

AMBRE: She's not in the navy.

ELDER: I know that, I was just saying... never mind.

(He looked to Kasira.)

ELDER: Is she a bit...

KASIRA: Awesome?

ELDER: Um... doesn't matter.

KASIRA: She is what she is, Major. A damned reliable soldier.

ELDER: Fair enough.

(He then glanced to where Soapy was swimming the boat out, pushing it with all her might.)

ELDER: You know it's a good thing she has the tide in her favour. Otherwise, she'd be here all night.

CAYLEY: I doubt she'd have even tried if that was the case; she's not an idiot.

SIKA: Well...

CAYLEY: Shut it, you.

(Sika pouted.)

SIKA: Really, Cayley? Why are you always biting my head off lately? I can't say *anything* without getting told off recently.

KASIRA: Then try something that doesn't warrant a telling off!

SIKA: Wow. Now you're picking on me too.

(She folded her arms indignantly.)

SIKA: Everyone's a bully.

AMBRE: No, I'm not.

SIKA: Are too. You keep telling everyone I'm in love with you. Do you know how embarrassed that makes me?

AMBRE: You said you wanted to touch my...

KASIRA: Enough! The major doesn't want to hear about that!

ELDER: On the contrary...

KASIRA: I *said* you don't want to hear about it.

ELDER: Right. Sorry, General.

(Just then, Soapy called out from the sea.)

SOAPY: Will this do?

(Kasira nodded.)

KASIRA: I reckon so. Now get your butt back over... right... she's on her way.

NIVEA: She was never going to need telling, was she?

KASIRA: Not when there's something to be shot at, no.

(They then watched on with amused smiles as Soapy zoomed to the shoreline then laid there staring back at her legs, waiting for them to transform back into their human form.)

SOAPY: Come on, dickheads!!!

ELDER: She really is chomping at the bit, isn't she?

CAYLEY: Uh-huh.

(She smiled.)

CAYLEY: As soon as she's ready, she'll be up and firing.

(She nodded.)

CAYLEY: Speaking of which, up we go, Sika.

SIKA: Roger!

(Sika then took to the air and hovered upwards.)

ELDER: She's keen too. Very professional.

CAYLEY: She just wants to get a shot off before Soapy does, so she can rub her nose in it.

KASIRA: Uh-huh.

(Cayley then took off into the air. Seconds later, she found herself hovering at Sika's side, a good twenty feet from the shoreline and fifty feet in the air.)

CAYLEY: Shall we?

(At this point, Soapy leapt to her feet.)

SOAPY: Yeah! Shall we? I've waited too long as it is.

KASIRA: Soapy, calm down.

SOAPY: Kasira, I'm dying over here. Let us start! Please!!!

(Kasira couldn't help but smile.)

KASIRA: Fair enough! Girls! Kill it!

AMBRE: Okay!

(Ambre then instructed the wraith to jump into the ocean, to which it duly obliged. Within seconds, it exploded into wraith dust. Soapy and Cayley didn't even manage to get a shot off.)

SOAPY: Ambre!!!

AMBRE: What?

SOAPY: Why would you *do* that?

AMBRE: Kasira told me to!

KASIRA: Actually, love; I had no idea you could do that. I thought it'd *resist* committing suicide.

AMBRE: I thought it *might* do that too, but it didn't. Yay.

KASIRA: So, you can just tell them to do anything, can you?

AMBRE: Yeah. They might not jump in the water every time, but other than that I can make them sit, rollover, run in circles, lots and lots of things.

KASIRA: Interesting. That gives me an idea for next time.

(She then smiled at the sight of Sika and Cayley coming in to land. Before they could even congratulate Ambre on a job well done, however, Soapy broke from the horrified catatonia she'd slipped into and flapped bitterly.)

SOAPY: Forget next time! Ambre ruined my fun! I didn't even get my shot off.

CAYLEY: Nor did I.

(She then glowered at Sika.)

CAYLEY: Unfortunately, someone was so desperate not to get outdone by Soapy, she *did* get a shot off!

SIKA: I was supposed to!

(She whimpered.)

SIKA: It wasn't my fault it jumped in the sea, making me miss.

(They then looked to the gaping hole she'd blown in the boat.)

ELDER: Whoops.

(He then started to chuckle.)

ELDER: Still, at least she didn't sink it.

(At that very moment, however, water gushed through the hole she'd made and the boat proceeded to go under.)

ELDER: I stand corrected. She's sunk it good and proper.

(Cayley rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: Yup, that's our Sika.

SIKA: Hey! That's not fair. It's *unfair*; that's what it is. I was *told* to shoot it and I tried to do that. It's not right to berate me for being quick off the mark. I was doing as I was told.

NIVEA: Nobody told you to miss!

SOAPY: Or to sink the boat!

SIKA: That was Ambre's fault!

AMBRE: No, it wasn't.

KASIRA: Stop bickering.

(She rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: It was just an unfortunate war-time incident, okay? Nobody's in trouble.

SIKA: Then why did Cayley make that harsh quip about me?

CAYLEY: Because if *anyone* is going to *cause* an unfortunate war-time incident, it's you.

SIKA: I resent that.

CAYLEY: Yeah, you do that. It doesn't make it any less true.

(Sika pouted.)

SIKA: Can you stop being so mean to me all the time, please, Cayley. It's starting to upset me.

CAYLEY: Stop driving me potty all the time and I'll consider it.

SIKA: Fine.

(She nodded.)

SIKA: Fresh slate?

CAYLEY: Nope. You start doing better *then* I'll consider it.

SIKA: Right...

(Just then, an anguished cry rose up from behind them. At once, they spun around to see a desperate townsman charging towards them.)

RALPH: My boat!!! My fucking boat!!!

(He stopped at the shore then glowered at Kasira and her team.)

RALPH: You sunk my boat!!!

NIVEA: That was *her*.

(She then pushed Sika towards him.)

SIKA: Nivea!!!

(She then darted back again.)

RALPH: This is an outrage! I'm ruined. Ruined I tell you!!!

(He growled.)

RALPH: Elder! Arrest them!!!

(The elder raised a condescending eyebrow at him.)

ELDER: Arrest them?

RALPH: Yes! They killed my boat!

ELDER: It was a war-time incident!

RALPH: But...

ELDER: And besides...

(He gestured to Kasira.)

ELDER: She's a serving army general. I have no authority to arrest her!

RALPH: An army general? But she's a woman!

(He then looked her up and down and drooled.)

RALPH: And what a woman!

KASIRA: Don't you start!

RALPH: What?

(He then flinched.)

RALPH: Even so. This is an outrage! I'll sue the army, that's what I'll do.

ELDER: Oh, put a sock in it, you tart!

RALPH: Excuse me???

ELDER: Yes, that boat was your livelihood. So what? The town relied on it and as such, we insured it for you for more than it was worth.

(He gestured to the calm, empty sea where the boat had been.)

ELDER: Thanks to this innocent war-time incident, you're now a very rich man.

RALPH: Yes, but... wait. What? I am?

ELDER: Yes!

RALPH: Oh.

(He then adopted the world's smarmiest grin and winked at Kasira.)

RALPH: Maybe you and I should have dinner some time. I'm a very wealthy man, don't you know?

KASIRA: Please go far, far away.

RALPH: Is that a maybe?

KASIRA: Nope. I'm out of here.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: Come on, girls; we've got wraiths to kill.

SOAPY: Yay!

(They then raced back towards the town. Soapy very much led the way. Left behind the elder nodded.)

ELDER: Those girls...

RALPH: Right? I'd happily bone the lot of them.

ELDER: Actually, I was going to point out that they're immensely talented. Resourceful too. A really clever bunch. They just killed *three* giant wraiths. Three giant wraiths that had just killed hundreds of men without even breaking a sweat. Very impressive.

RALPH: I see.

(He shrugged.)

RALPH: But still... I stand by my statement. Give me half a chance and I bang the lot of them.

ELDER: Ralph?

RALPH: Elder?

ELDER: What hot-blooded man wouldn't?

RALPH: Right?

(They then proceeded to chuckle together. Delighted to be away from Ralph, as soon as the main throng of wraiths in the town centre came into sight, Kasira sneered.)

KASIRA: Let's get busy, ladies. Just thrash the living daylights out of as many as you can and thin the herd a bit.

SOAPY: You don't have to ask *me* twice!

(She then set about blasting her magic with a delighted expression on her face. Not to be outdone, Sika arrived at her side and joined in. Cayley then stepped among them and set about the wraiths with her own magic. Ambre just stood back and did her own thing; controlling the minds of wraiths to set them against each other. Kasira and Nivea instantly raced into the frontline and set about the wraiths with their blades. Determined to cull as

quickly as they could to make life easier for everyone involved, they chopped, slashed and blasted remorselessly for a good five minutes with barely even a pause. They may well have battled for much longer had they been left to get on with it, but Alas, interference was soon to arrive in the shape in a love struck Rex. Racing to Kasira's side, he puffed out his chest then snarled determinedly.)

REX: Don't worry, Kasira, my love; *I'll* save you.

KASIRA: Oh, go away!!!

(Much to her further annoyance, Lassu then barged between her and Nivea.)

LASSU: Ignore *that* fool, my darling. *I'll* save you!

KASIRA: Save me from what???

LASSU: Wraiths!!!

KASIRA: I'm not in any danger from...

REX: Don't be modest, my beautiful angel. I know you need me and I'm here for you.

LASSU: I was here first!!!

REX: No, you weren't!

LASSU: Fucking was. Before we got married I was saving her all the time.

KASIRA: You never saved me once! From anything!

LASSU: Well, no, but I would have!

REX: No, you have died trying, because you're weak. Kasira doesn't need weak, she needs me! A man!

LASSU: Oh, yeah???

REX: Yeah!!!

(The two of them then proceeded to bash one another senseless, completely obstructing Kasira's attempt to do battle. Sick to death of them, Kasira could only step back then groan in defeat.)

KASIRA: Nope. No more.

(She then raced away and left them to it.)

KASIRA: Come on, girls. We've got something we need to do.

(Following her order to withdraw, her five subordinates all raced after her.)

SOAPY: Where are we going?

SIKA: What do we need to do this time?

KASIRA: I'll *tell* you what we need to do!

(She sneered.)

KASIRA: Find a quiet spot and take a fucking break.

AMBRE: Yay! Can we have some cake?

KASIRA: We didn't bring any cakes.

CAYLEY: Ahem.

(She ruffled her neck.)

CAYLEY: Who didn't?

(Kasira beamed.)

KASIRA: Don't tease me. You really brought some cake?

CAYLEY: Yes. Yes, I did.

KASIRA: Cayley, you fucking rule.

CAYLEY: Why, thank you.

SIKA: Yup, Cayley's the best.

(She blushed.)

SIKA: Sorry I've annoyed you so much this week.

CAYLEY: Why? *Why* are you sorry? Because you're worried you won't get any cake?

SIKA: That's only *partly* why.

(Cayley couldn't help but giggle.)

CAYLEY: Wow. Only partly, huh? That's typical you, Sika. As much as you annoy me sometimes, you're just too damned fun to be stay angry at forever.

SIKA: Good to know.

CAYLEY: But that doesn't mean I'm not going to try.

SIKA: But...

CAYLEY: I'm kidding. Relax. There's cake for everyone. I reckon we've earned it.

NIVEA: Amen to that.

KASIRA: Right? Now let's just find a quiet spot and take five in peace, shall we?

Somewhere those two lusty bozos won't find me.

SOAPY: Among the rocks on the beach!

KASIRA: Love it. Lead the way, Soapy.

SOAPY: Ma'am.

KASIRA: The sooner I get to take the weight off my feet, the better.

A few minutes later, having taken themselves out of the melee entirely, Kasira, Cayley, Nivea, Ambre, Sika and Soapy settled amidst some rocks on the seafront to take a well earned break. This opportunity to enjoy a brief rest was most welcome. Having been engaged in combat for several hours, it was just what the doctor had ordered. Just for a few moments, they wouldn't have to worry about battle tactics or enduring lusty wannabe suitors. Sitting down and resting her back against a rock, Kasira was especially relieved to finally be off her feet.

KASIRA: That's better.

NIVEA: You look shattered, girl.

KASIRA: So do you.

NIVEA: I am.

(She looked across Cayley, Sika then Soapy.)

NIVEA: You magic casters are so lucky. You have no idea how exhausting physical fighting is.

SIKA: Yeah, right. It's nothing we couldn't handle if we had to.

SOAPY: Yeah, you two are just old.

KASIRA: Seriously? Do you want to me invoke military Regulation 28, Section 5, you two?

SIKA: No, thanks. I have no idea what it is, but it sounds horrible.

CAYLEY: It's a rule leaders can invoke, stating that under eighteens can only speak when spoken to.

SIKA: Wouldn't bother *me*. I'm eighteen in two weeks.

KASIRA: Then you can shut up for two weeks!

(Everyone burst out laughing.)

SOAPY: Sika can't even be quiet for two hours.

NIVEA: She can barely manage two minutes.

CAYLEY: Two seconds would be a stretch.

SIKA: Hey! Do you mind? I can be as quiet as a mouse when I want to be.

AMBRE: She just never, never ever wants to be.

(Everyone giggled.)

SIKA: Really? You too, Ambre?

AMBRE: I was defending you.

(She ruffled her neck.)

AMBRE: Not that you deserve it.

(She pouted.)

AMBRE: You've made me sad.

SIKA: What? How?

(Ambre rapidly turned red.)

AMBRE: I don't know.

KASIRA: I do.

(She shook her head at Sika.)

KASIRA: By writing to her, you made her think that boy still liked her. Now she knows he doesn't.

SOAPY: You've broken her heart.

SIKA: Um...

SOAPY: Crushed her soul.

SIKA: I...

SOAPY: Ripped out everything that makes her who she is and stamped it into the dirt!

SIKA: Yeah, alright; calm down!

SOAPY: Just saying. You're a rotten friend.

SIKA: Well don't.

(She ruffled her neck indignantly then looked to Ambre.)

SIKA: Ambre...

AMBRE: Sad now.

SIKA: I know. And that's what I was trying to avoid. You were really sad last time, remember? When he stopped writing to you? You were really down and I couldn't stand it. I hate when you're sad. So, I pretended to be him. To *stop* you from feeling sad. And it did. It worked.

(Ambre looked to her emptily for a moment as she processed what she'd just heard.)

AMBRE: So you were just being kind?

SIKA: I was, yes. I realise that was a mistake now though. Because you're sad *again* now. I was just kicking the pain down the road for later. Sorry, Ambre.

(Ambre forced a smile.)

AMBRE: It's okay. It makes me happy that you were being kind.

SIKA: Aw.

AMBRE: So you don't really want to touch my...

SIKA: God, no!

AMBRE: Oh.

(She drew a deep sigh of relief.)

AMBRE: Thank heavens for that.

(She smiled.)

AMBRE: But when I think about it... not that I'm good at thinking, but looking back... I should have known *he* wasn't writing those letters.

SIKA: How could you possibly?

AMBRE: Well, he was always really good at spelling at things. Then all of a sudden, he starting spelling things wrong and using terrible grammar.

(Sika looked most offended.)

SIKA: Excuse me???

AMBRE: He did. And he started making words up. I should have guessed it was you.

SIKA: I do not make words up, Ambre; that's just a rude. It's disrespectment, that's what it is.

KASIRA: Disrespectment???

SIKA: It's a word! You just don't know it.

KASIRA: Right...

SIKA: Honestly, Ambre. You're enough to give a girl a complex.

AMBRE: Yay!

SIKA: That's a bad thing!

AMBRE: Boo!

SIKA: Bad grammar indeed. I'm offended.

SOAPY: You mean embarrassed.

NIVEA: And you should be. Even Ambre noticed your grammar sucks and she can barely read.

AMBRE: Yes, I can! I'm really good at it now, aren't I, Kasira?

KASIRA: Yup. You've come on in leaps and bounds.

CAYLEY: Leaps and bounds! Or much leapitude and boundfulness as Sika would say.

SIKA: Both perfectly good words!

SOAPY: Good god. Sika, did you get expelled from school, or did you simply refuse to go?

SIKA: How dare you?

SOAPY: It's a valid question.

NIVEA: Yeah, that has to be a *reason* for your illiteracy.

SIKA: Illiteracy???

(She growled.)

SIKA: I came here for a peaceful break. To relax for a bit. Not to be insulted and accused of all kinds of crimes against our language by an overgrown sardine and her friend, the holy dumpling of the frozen north. Now leave me alone.

(Seeing Sika pouting indignantly, Soapy smirked at Nivea.)

SOAPY: I can't believe she called you that.

NIVEA: It won't go unavenged, believe me.

SOAPY: Quite right too. You're the *precious* holy dumpling of the frozen north.

NIVEA: That won't go unavenged either.

SOAPY: Shit.

NIVEA: That can wait though. Right now I'm more interested to hear what you plan to do, Kasira.

KASIRA: Keep fighting until the wraiths are all gone, obviously.

NIVEA: I mean, what are you going to do about Rex and Lassu?

(Kasira shrugged.)

KASIRA: What *can* I do?

NIVEA: Well, if I was you...

CAYLEY: We don't even want to know what *you'd* do, Nivea!

NIVEA: No, hear me out. I know exactly what you should do.

KASIRA: I'm not asking them for a threesome!

NIVEA: I wasn't going to say that!

CAYLEY: Yes, you were.

NIVEA: No, I...

CAYLEY: Nivea!

(Nivea groaned in defeat.)

NIVEA: Yeah, alright. But it's a good idea. They won't be randy anymore and you can go home with a smile on your face.

KASIRA: Randy? They're not after a shag; they want to marry me.

NIVEA: Oh.

(She cringed.)

NIVEA: Then a threesome probably wouldn't help.

KASIRA: You think?

NIVEA: It'd be fun though. I mean...

KASIRA: Nivea. Please... just stop talking. I rarely say this, but I'd rather listen to Sika boasting about her delusions than hear about your filthy fantasies.

SIKA: Boasting about my delusions??? You've got me confused with Soapy.

SOAPY: Hey!

SIKA: What?

KASIRA: Look, it's pretty simple really. I just need to get them on their own and make it clear I'm not interested in either of them. Communication, as always, is the answer.

AMBRE: Then why did you run away rather than talking to them?

KASIRA: Because they're annoying! And I was busy.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: But yeah, sooner or later I'll have to talk to them both. It's the *only* way out.

CAYLEY: Agreed.

KASIRA: It's just annoying that I have to take time out of my day to do it. Why can't they just take the hint and bugger off?

SIKA: Men aren't good at that.

KASIRA: I know. And it sucks. And not just because it's those two morons.

(She sighed.)

KASIRA: After what happened with Amru...

NIVEA: Who?

KASIRA: My secret boyfriend, as you called him.

NIVEA: Gotcha.

KASIRA: After what happened there... I'm just not interested in men right now.

SIKA: What? Not *any* man?

KASIRA: Nope!

SIKA: So if the world's sexiest man came up to you and asked if he could buy you a drink, you'd turn him down?

KASIRA: I would, yes. Like I said, I'm not interested in men.

(Ambre smiled at her warmly.)

AMBRE: Is it because you're in love with Cayley?

CAYLEY: What???

KASIRA: Why do you keep saying that?

AMBRE: Because you said...

(She blushed.)

AMBRE: You said a weird thing.

KASIRA: When?

AMBRE: Yesterday.

(She whimpered.)

AMBRE: I didn't even understand it. Not really, anyway. But you *did* say it and it was weird.

CAYLEY: What did she say?

AMBRE: You two did naughty things once.

KASIRA: Who hasn't?

AMBRE: With each other!

(Everyone gasped, none more so than Kasira and Cayley.)

KASIRA: Um...

CAYLEY: Yeah, you see...

NIVEA: Clearly you misunderstood, Ambre.

SOAPY: Definitely.

SIKA: Right?

AMBRE: But...

(Delighted that everyone thought Ambre was mistaken, Kasira interceded.)

KASIRA: Um... you missed the first part of the conversation, love.

CAYLEY: Um, yeah... our old boss, you see... she once accused us of being lovers, just because we were close friends.

KASIRA: That's right. So we joked about it; that's all.

AMBRE: So her floof doesn't *really* smell of Lavender?

KASIRA: That was part of our joke, back in the day.

AMBRE: Oh...

(She smiled.)

AMBRE: I feel better now. I was really worried for a second.

(Kasira and Cayley drew a sigh of relief.)

KASIRA: Well don't be.

AMBRE: I couldn't help it. I thought the world had gone mad. I thought Sika was in love with me and that you two were doing filthy things together. I was so confused!

SIKA: Well now you know better.

CAYLEY: Much better.

AMBRE: Yeah.

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: The world seems normal again now.

(Nivea nodded thoughtfully.)

NIVEA: At least it's normal for *us*. There's thousands of wraiths on the loose. That's *our* normal.

SIKA: Right? I can't believe it's happened again.

SOAPY: We're just lucky, I guess.

SIKA: Oh, shut up. Lucky? This is a nightmare. Fifth time..

(She ruffled her neck indignantly.)

SIKA: Not that *we* had to get involved this time! This isn't even our jurisdiction.

NIVEA: Seriously? Are you still complaining that this isn't our fight?

SIKA: But it *isn't* our fight!!!

(Nivea rolled her eyes.)

NIVEA: She's been whining about that ever since the wraiths appeared.

(Kasira shrugged.)

KASIRA: And she has every right to.

(Sika was astonished.)

SIKA: What?

KASIRA: You heard me. This really *isn't* our fight. I couldn't agree with you more.

(Tears welled in Sika's eyes.)

SIKA: You finally get me.

KASIRA: Let's not get carried away. I just happen to agree with you on that particular issue.

SIKA: And that's good enough for me. Best boss ever.

KASIRA: Like you say, this isn't our fight. It just isn't. And for the army to boot us all out then still expect us to fight it would be out of order.

SIKA: Then why *are* we fighting it?

SOAPY: For fun!

KASIRA: No.

SOAPY: Speak for yourself...

KASIRA: We're fighting it because it's the right thing to do. Not for the army. Forget the army, we don't owe them anything.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: We're doing it for the sake of this town. This town and all the people in it. Human beings like ourselves who need all the help they can get right now. So, it'd be wrong of us not to offer our services. We can't just go home and allow all these people to suffer. That'd be a horrendous thing to do.

(She folded her arms.)

KASIRA: So we fight. To save these people and to save this town. This wonderful town.

(Her eyes then glazed over.)

KASIRA: Especially Lily's Boutique.

(She exhaled.)

KASIRA: With its vast array of gorgeous stilettos; and a collection of cute dresses to die for. Top and skirts of every variety and the most adorable lingerie to be found anywhere. A veritable goldmine of fashions and accessories that brings joy to my heart.

(She smiled the sunniest of smiles.)

KASIRA: This town's boutique is pretty much my reason for living.

(As she exhaled adoringly at the thought of her next shopping spree, her subordinates all smirked at one another then started to chuckle.)

CAYLEY: Wow. You became a parody of yourself there.

NIVEA: Right? She's such a girl.

(Sika mocked a mighty warrior's voice.)

SIKA: We must fight on. For the sake of justice, humanity and that adorable pair of ankle boots with the tassels on that I've got my eye on.

SOAPY: All hail the mighty Kasira, warrior of the wilderness, with her noble steed and matching handbag.

(Everyone then fell about laughing, including Ambre who didn't get the joke.)

AMBRE: Ha... um... so funny.

NIVEA: Right?

(Kasira furrowed her brow at them.)

KASIRA: Really? Really, girls?

CAYLEY: Yup.

KASIRA: Yeah? Cayley, you flatly refused to fly last night because you'd just washed your wings and didn't want to get them dirty!

CAYLEY: Um...

KASIRA: As for you, Nivea, who refused to leave the base two days ago until she found earrings that matched her dress? For a routine patrol, no less!!!

NIVEA: Yeah...

KASIRA: In fact, all of you have delayed us at some point because you weren't happy with your make-up! Why single me out?

SIKA: Because you're worse than all of us put together.

CAYLEY: Yup.

NIVEA: You are!

KASIRA: Oh, fine. So what? There's no shame in being girly. I'm a girl. It's what girls do. (She chuckled.)

KASIRA: So fuck off.

(Everyone chuckled then Kasira glanced upwards.)

KASIRA: We should think about going back to the fray in a minute.

AMBRE: But we haven't had our cake yet.

CAYLEY: Ooh. Good point.

(She then delved her bag and set about grabbing the six pieces of cake she'd packed.)

CAYLEY: Seriously, you lot. How many times? Don't drool at me!

NIVEA: Then wear a less revealing top.

CAYLEY: Shut up.

(She then handed out the pieces of cake and grinned to herself as everyone proceeded to devour them as if they hadn't eaten in days.)

CAYLEY: Pace yourselves, guys. There's no hurry.

(Sika instantly slowed.)

SIKA: She's right. The slower we eat, the longer we can sit on our arses. Small bites, people.

KASIRA: I should yell at you for that, Sika.

SIKA: Harsh!

KASIRA: I said I *should*. I'm not going to. I'm in no hurry either.

CAYLEY: Not even to save the boutique?

KASIRA: No. Don't get me wrong, that is my main motivation, it's just...

(She sighed.)

KASIRA: Fighting sucks. I mean, we're being fired, girls, so it's hard to be enthusiastic, you know?

CAYLEY: I hear that.

KASIRA: My heart's not really in it. In fact, my skills have felt sluggish all day.

SOAPY: Yeah, but that could be down to how you're dressed.

(Cayley chuckled.)

CAYLEY: She might have a point there. I've never seen anyone fight wraiths in a tight pencil skirt and high heels before, Kasira.

NIVEA: You'd never seen a wraith *wearing* a tight pencil skirt and high heels before, that's why.

(Everyone chuckled.)

CAYLEY: Trust you, Nivea.

(Kasira smiled.)

KASIRA: This really isn't ideal for battle, is it?

(She looked down herself.)

KASIRA: My formal uniform, paired with stilettos.

AMBRE: I bet you wish Cayley hadn't said you should wear it now.

CAYLEY: It seemed like a good idea at the time.

KASIRA: It wasn't. You're rubbish.

CAYLEY: Ouch!

KASIRA: I should fire you really.

(Cayley chuckled.)

CAYLEY: Yeah, right. You were going on a job hunt. If you *had* got changed, you'd have just put on a different pencil skirt and different pair of high heels anyway. It's what you do.

(Kasira chuckled.)

KASIRA: Rumbled.

SIKA: Still at least you'll know better next time.

SOAPY: Yeah. Next time, you should borrow Nivea's sacred holy robes; the ones she wore last night when her parents arrived.

SIKA: Definitely! Those clumpy, dowdy shoes would be far easier to move in.

SOAPY: Plus, you'd have the holy precious dumpling on your side.

SIKA: Right? Every battle would be like a holy crusade against evil.

SOAPY: And with her divine guidance, you can't lose.

SIKA: Praise be!

SOAPY: Praise be! Let us pray!

(They then adopted praying hands.)

SOAPY: Our Nivea, who art in Copperwood, Dumpling be they name; 'til ten men come, up minge and bum, she'll never be in heaven.

(As everyone chuckled, she glanced to where Nivea had been sitting, only to find nobody there.)

SOAPY: Nivea?

(Just then, she felt a pair of hands wrap around her breasts from behind.

SOAPY: No!!!

NIVEA: Yes!

(She then yanked her over the back of the rock.)

NIVEA: Time to do your penance, missy!!!

SOAPY: I repent!!!

NIVEA: I'll say when you've repented!

SOAPY: Please!!! I'll say fifty hail Nivea's!!!

(Kasira could only roll her eyes.)

KASIRA: She's only making it worse for herself.

CAYLEY: Yup.

AMBRE: Um...

(She pointed behind the rock.)

AMBRE: Bad things happening.

SIKA: Look away, Ambre. Save yourself!

SOAPY: How about saving *me*???

NIVEA: I *am* saving you! From a life of not being groped!

SOAPY: Not funny!!!

(She growled.)

SOAPY: Get off me, you pervert!!!

NIVEA: Nope.

SOAPY: Nivea!

(She whimpered.)

SOAPY: Fine! I take it back! You're not a god! Sika!!! We've made a false idol of this woman!!!

NIVEA: Yes, yes you did. And now you're getting your retribution!

SOAPY: I'd rather get forgiveness!!!

NIVEA: I can't help you with that. Like you said, I'm *not* a god. And forgiveness is divine.

SOAPY: Just let me go, you freak!!!

NIVEA: Never!

(Kasira rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: Let her up, Nivea; that's enough now!

SOAPY: Ha!

NIVEA: Aw...

(Nivea stood up then smirked as Soapy clambered to her feet, packing her breasts back into her bra as she did so.)

SOAPY: Idiot.

NIVEA: Banking some more credit for later, are we? Good, good. Keep the insults coming.

SOAPY: Honestly, what's wrong with you?

NIVEA: What? Since when was it wrong for a girl to grope her friends boobies?

SOAPY: Since forever! And it's not just your friends. It was the first thing you did when you met me!

NIVEA: Because I knew we'd become friends.

(Soapy ruffled her neck.)

SOAPY: Yes, well... we won't be friends for long if you keep doing things like that.

NIVEA: Rubbish. You'll *say* we're not friends, but the next time Sika says something daft, you'll be right there at my side, mocking her remorselessly.

SIKA: Hey! When do I ever say anything daft?

KASIRA: Does disrespectment ring any bells?

SIKA: Yes. I'm a victim of disrespectment right now. Daft things, indeed.

KASIRA: Right...

(She shook a despairing head.)

KASIRA: Sika?

SIKA: Yes?

KASIRA: Did you wear a long, pointed-hat at school and sit in the corner?

(Sika gave her a baffled glance.)

SIKA: My kind don't wear hats because of our head feathers. Why?

(Everyone stared at her emptily then proceeded to chuckle.)

CAYLEY: That's a yes!

SIKA: What?

NIVEA: She was calling you a dunce.

SIKA: What? What's that?

AMBRE: It's when you get chosen to be the class mascot. They give you a nice pointy hat to wear and you get to sit in a quiet corner.

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: I got picked all the time. I think it was my reward for being so quiet.

SOAPY: Actually, Ambre; they give those hats to the class idiot.

KASIRA: Why would you tell her that???

(Ambre pouted.)

AMBRE: So that's why...

(She sighed.)

AMBRE: Still... I was a worthy winner, I suppose.

SIKA: Never mind that! The class idiot??? Kasira? Are you saying *I'm* the class idiot!

KASIRA: If the pointy-hat fits...

SIKA: Mean!

NIVEA: Oh, relax, Sika. She wasn't calling you the class idiot. She was calling you the official *army* idiot.

SOAPY: *Another* worthy winner.

SIKA: Wow.

(She shook her head.)

SIKA: Is there no limit to your jealous bitterness, you lot? Why pick on me all the time, just because I'm amazing? It's not fair. It's harsh, that's what it is.

(She furrowed her brow.)

SIKA: I can't *help* being the most awesome person here, you know? It's not deliberate. I'm just naturally great at everything. It's not like I make you all feel inadequate on purpose. I'm just being my incredible self; the perfect babe that the gods created. And I shouldn't have to apologise for that!

(She ruffled her neck.)

SIKA: So just stop it. Enough with all this pathetic insecurity. Just learn to accept that I'm magnificent because, to be honest, all this petty jealousy you keep throwing my way doesn't reflect well on any of you!

(She then sat there nodding defiantly.)

SIKA: Sorry, but it had to be said.

KASIRA: Did it?

SIKA: Yes.

KASIRA: I see. Nivea?

NIVEA: Yes?

KASIRA: She's all yours!

NIVEA: Yes!!!

SIKA: No!!!

(She then vanished over the back of a rock with Nivea.)

SOAPY: Wow. You know, I ought to feel sorry for Sika, having been through what *she's* going through right now. And yet... after that rant... nope.

SIKA: Help!!!

NIVEA: Mwahaha!!!

SIKA: Stop it, Nokia!!!

NIVEA: That's right; keep digging!

KASIRA: So... this cake...

CAYLEY: Nice, isn't it?

KASIRA: It's gorgeous. I love black cherries.

(She sighed.)

KASIRA: But we'd better eat up and get back down to business in a minute. The wraiths won't slay themselves, and judging by how disorganised the townsfolk are, nor will they.

AMBRE: We'll just have to show them how. I'm going to kill lots and lots.

KASIRA: That's the spirit. Just remember to stay behind me, so I can shield you. Same for all the magic casters. Safety first. Stand at a safe distance.

SOAPY: We know the drill, ma'am.

KASIRA: Good, good.

(Ambre sighed.)

AMBRE: It's just a shame we haven't got any of that wraith repellent potion.

CAYLEY: That what now?

SOAPY: Wraith repellent potion?

AMBRE: Yeah. I mean, it smelt of wee-wee, but if you're wearing it wraiths won't attack you no matter what.

KASIRA: Seriously? Where are you getting that from?

AMBRE: We had some at my academy. My friends and I used it once.

(Soapy slammed her palm into her own forehead.)

SOAPY: Your friends again...

AMBRE: Yeah. They rubbed it all over me then made me going into the middle of a field and blow my wraith whistle.

(She sighed.)

AMBRE: There weren't any though. I think the morning patrol had wiped them all out already.

SOAPY: Wait. Let me get this straight. Your friends rubbed urine all over you then sent you out in a field to blow a wraith whistle. Leaving you standing there on your own, defenceless, as hoards of wraiths came charging at you.

AMBRE: No. Nothing came charging at me. I just told you, there *were* no wraiths.

SOAPY: Holy Nivea on a bike, Ambre. They were trying to kill you!

AMBRE: No, they weren't!

(She pouted.)

AMBRE: Stop saying that all the time!

SOAPY: But they were!

KASIRA: Uh-huh. And I've said to you a million times already, Ambre, if you ever meet these people again; run. Run like the wind!

AMBRE: But...

(She sighed.)

AMBRE: Fine.

CAYLEY: Oh, another thing, Ambre. If it looks like urine, and smells like urine... it's probably urine.

AMBRE: Unless its wraith repellent potion.

CAYLEY: Um... no...

(She sighed.)

CAYLEY: Never mind.

KASIRA: Anyway, speaking of urine, I'm going to crouch in a bush then we can get going again.

(She glanced over her shoulder.)

KASIRA: Let her up, Nivea!

NIVEA: Aw...

SIKA: You heard her, dumb arse.

(Sika then jumped to her feet and hurried her bare breasts away.)

SIKA: There's something wrong with you.

KASIRA: Yes, well, never mind that. If you need a pee, now's the time. Break time is over.

NIVEA: Shame.

(She beamed.)

NIVEA: That was the best break ever. Two gropings. I think I might be a deity after all, you know? *I feel* kinda blessed, anyway.

SIKA: Blessed, my arse. You're nothing but a weird, twisted oddball.

NIVEA: I'm not weird, Sika; I just move in mysterious ways, that's all.

SIKA: Oh, shut up.

KASIRA: You can all shut up. As soon as I'm done peeing, we're going to war on those damned wraiths and we're not coming back until they're all dead.

(She then strutted away towards a bush. With a shrug, all five of her unit mates followed on.)

In the town centre a short while later, Kasira and Nivea found themselves, once again, battling away in the frontline against the wraiths. They'd raced into the battle on the extreme left of the line and immediately set to work. Ambre stood just behind them, using her mind control tricks. Among the wraiths, Fluffy was charging back and forth, stamping on every single one he came across. For their parts, Cayley, Sika and Soapy were standing back and off to one side, so they could blast the wraiths with an unobstructed view. Going to town on the wraiths with all their might, they were making excellent progress. Cayley's occasional flights overhead to heal everyone's wounds was also a massive help. Kasira, however, wasn't happy with how things were going. Her unit were doing their utmost and were tactically spot on in their endeavours. The same, however, could not be said of the townsfolk.

KASIRA: Nivea, this isn't right. They've bunched.

NIVEA: Amateurs.

KASIRA: Right? You'd never guess that each and every one is a former serving soldier.

NIVEA: I know, right?

KASIRA: That said, I doubt any of them have been embroiled in a wraith infestation before.

NIVEA: True. We learned our tactics from doing; they don't have that luxury.

KASIRA: Yes, but for whatever their reason, they can't carry on like that. They're not spread out enough and wraiths are getting past. Meaning others have to exit the line and chase them. It's a waste of time and energy. Inefficiency like that can get you killed.

NIVEA: I know. You need to say something.

KASIRA: Like they'd listen to a woman.

NIVEA: They might if that woman is a clearly-marked, serving general.

(Kasira bit her lip.)

KASIRA: Actually, yeah; they might. Cover me?

NIVEA: Of course.

KASIRA: Thanks, babe.

(She then darted backwards out of the frontline and rushed behind where the townsfolk had bunched themselves up way too tightly.)

KASIRA: Spread out!!! You're packed together way too tightly, people. Wraiths are getting around the side.

(Much to her annoyance, she received no response. Nobody even looked at her.)

TOWNSMAN 01: Who's that yelling?

TOWNSMAN 02: I dunno. *Some* hysterical tart. You know what woman are like.

TOWNSMAN 01: Unfortunately, yes. I do.

(Kasira furrowed her brow then tried again.)

KASIRA: Guys!!! You're bunching!!! Spread out a bit!!!

(Once again, her words fell on deaf ears.)

KASIRA: For fuck sake.

(Just then, the elder came racing up behind her.)

ELDER: Is there a problem, General? You look flustered.

KASIRA: Yes, there is. They're bunching. They need to spread out. This frontline is way too short and wraiths are getting around the side.

ELDER: Right, yes, I had noticed that actually.

KASIRA: I've tried to tell them but they're not responding.

ELDER: I see.

(He nodded.)

ELDER: They probably think you're some random hysterical woman, nagging them.

(He then flinched.)

ELDER: What's that look for? *I* don't think that, obviously! I was just saying...

(He shrugged.)

ELDER: Most of these are married men. They've got used to *ignoring* nagging.

KASIRA: I wasn't nagging! I was leading.

ELDER: I know. I was just explaining their behaviour, that's all.

KASIRA: Fine. Look, if they won't listen to a woman, you'll have to tell them. Because if they carry on like this, we're going to lose.

(The elder nodded.)

ELDER: Very well. Leave it to me!

(He then called out to the men in front of him.)

ELDER: Chaps! It's the town elder here; a former army major. Listen to me while you fight, okay?

(A blank expression then swept his brow.)

ELDER: What was it again?

KASIRA: Tell them to spread out, so we can create a wider frontline and stop wraiths coming around the side.

ELDER: Ah, yes; that's right!

(He then called out to the men again.)

ELDER: Spread out, men! You're bunching! Make the line wider and stop the wraiths from coming around the sides!!!

TOWNSMAN 01: Fuck. He's right.

TOWNSMAN 02: Yup. Move over, you lot.

TOWNSMAN 03: You heard the elder!

(Kasira then watched on with a furrowed brow as the men obeyed the elder's command and flattened out their line.)

ELDER: Perfect.

KASIRA: And it was just as perfect when *I* told them to do it, but no.

ELDER: Sorry about that, General. But to be fair, you are a stranger in town. It's hard to respect the command of someone they don't know. Especially a woman.

KASIRA: Even if that woman is a general?

ELDER: It's nothing personal, I'm sure. They probably didn't look at you, so they have no idea of your rank. And like I said, these men are henpecked. To them, you were just another woman, telling them what to do.

(He grimaced.)

ELDER: I bet half of them are only fighting because it's giving them precious time away from their nagging wives. They were bound to ignore you, really.

KASIRA: Well, if that's the case, they're going to *keep* ignoring me, aren't they?

ELDER: I expect so.

KASIRA: Then I need you to do me a favour.

ELDER: Anything, ma'am.

(He saluted.)

KASIRA: Can you hang back here and keep an eye on the line. If they start to bunch again...

ELDER: I'll shout them back into place.

(Kasira smiled.)

KASIRA: Thank you. Oh... and order them to stay parallel with the person on their left. You know, to keep the line straight.

ELDER: It'd be my pleasure, ma'am. Serving under you is an honour.

KASIRA: That's kind of you to say. Now to end this thing.

(She then raced back to the far left of the frontline. As she did so, the elder tilted his head to one side and drooled at her backside.)

ELDER: Yes... serving under you is great, but serving you from behind... do I even dare to dream?

(Well aware that the elder was probably staring at her, Kasira hurried back into line then instantly came out fighting. Anything to put the thought of a lusty old man leering at her, well and truly to the back of her mind.)

KASIRA: How are we doing, Nivea?

NIVEA: Much better since they all spread out.

KASIRA: I figured as much.

NIVEA: There's a chance we can get this done soon now.

KASIRA: Perfect.

(Cayley then called to her from behind.)

CAYLEY: There's a lot of walking wounded still though. I'll do another flyover.

KASIRA: Thanks, Cayley.

CAYLEY: Soapy, pick up my slack.

SOAPY: Happy to.

(Cayley then took off and flew over the frontline, pouring healing magic onto the heads of those below. She did so with her knees locked tightly together. Flying over a large group of men while wearing an airy skirt was ill-advised at the best of times, but right now she had little choice if she wanted them all to survive and fight on. Thanks to her intervention, many

of those who'd been fading because of heavy wounds found a second wind. As such the indignity of having to battle to keep men from staring up her skirt was a small price to pay.)

TOWNSMAN 04: Yes! With her up there, we've got a chance, boys.

TOWNSMAN 05: She's like an angel! A giver of life!

TOWNSMAN 06: And we can see right up her skirt!

(Sure enough, keeping her knees locked together wasn't making much difference, as the front of her skirt was hanging straight down, allowing them all a glorious view of the front of her knickers. Having not realised this, she flew onwards, delighting in the mistaken delusion that her healing was boosting morale and putting smiles on the faces of all those below.)

CAYLEY: Yup. Who says this job can't be rewarding?

(Picking up her slack in the battle, at this time, Soapy was the very picture of focus. Blasting off one casting after another, he hands were like pistons. Capable of killing multiple wraiths per blast, she was making a massive difference. The same, however, could not be said of Sika. Since Cayley had taken off, she'd barely fired a shot. Instead she was standing there with her hands on her hips, pouting bitterly.)

SIKA: Pick up my slack, Soapy, she said. Unbelievable! Why just you? Like I'm not capable or something. I've never been so insulted in all my life.

(Soapy replied without breaking from her fight.)

SOAPY: Yes, you have. Only last week I told you you were fat, stink of cheese and have tiny tits.

SIKA: I'm perfectly proportioned!

SOAPY: Yeah... for a pumpkin.

SIKA: Piss off, you. What did I say not half an hour ago about your jealous bullying? Grow up.

(She ruffled her neck.)

SIKA: So rude. Like I'm not capable of upping my game and picking up her slack. Why just ask you to do it?

SOAPY: Because she trusts me.

SIKA: And she doesn't trust *me*???

SOAPY: Sika, right now, I'm picking up *your* slack *as well* as hers, so I think she made the right choice, don't you?

SIKA: No. No, I don't. And who says you're picking up my slack? What slack?

SOAPY: You haven't shot anything since Cayley took off!

SIKA: I have!

SOAPY: Oh, yes. You shot *one*. My bad!

SIKA: Soapy...

SOAPY: Sika, can you just fight your fight, please? We need to get this done. And if you don't fancy it, can you at least shut up and let me get on with mine?

(Sika pouted at her bitterly.)

SIKA: Yeah, alright. There's no need to be snippy.

(She then proceeded to fire off her magic with a sour expression on her face.)

SIKA: Why's everybody so mean lately? Rude.

(Ambre then spoke up from behind her in a soft, kind voice.)

AMBRE: Sika?

SIKA: What?

AMBRE: Can you be more careful, please. You just shot Fluffy by mistake.

SIKA: I did? Oh, shit! Is he okay?

AMBRE: Yeah. And don't worry. I managed to calm him down before he got to you.

SIKA: Got to me?

AMBRE: Yeah. He was not a happy sausage.

SIKA: Shit.

(She nodded.)

SIKA: I need to focus.

AMBRE: Please do. He says he won't be so forgiving next time.

SIKA: Right...

(Sika then gulped and resumed her fight. This time, she did so with concentration etched upon her brow. It was a concentration that very much matched that of her general. With her eyes wide-open for danger as she calculated which wraith to attack next, she'd never been so focussed.)

KASIRA: Back off, you little bastard. Oh, no, you don't, chummy. That's the stuff.

(Her face then lit up.)

KASIRA: Oh, here we go then. Take a step with me, Nivea.

(She then moved a step forwards. Battling at her side, Nivea instantly stepped alongside her.)

NIVEA: We just advanced, Kasira.

KASIRA: I know; I asked you to.

NIVEA: No, not just us two; the entire line.

KASIRA: I know, they have orders to stay parallel with the person to their left.

NIVEA: Ah. *Your* orders, right?

KASIRA: Yeah. I had to pass my orders on through the elder though. They didn't listen to *me* directly because...

NIVEA: You're a woman.

KASIRA: Yeah.

NIVEA: Nothing changes, does it?

KASIRA: Nope. But still, as long as they listen to him, we're in business.

NIVEA: We are, we really are. We just advanced.

KASIRA: I know. The herd is finally thinning out.

NIVEA: No more coming over the hill then.

KASIRA: Yup. We're cutting into the latecomers now, Nivea.

NIVEA: Perfect.

(Just then, Cayley came into land behind them and called out.)

CAYLEY: There's none left on the hill now, Kasira.

KASIRA: I know.

CAYLEY: Meaning once we've despatched what's in front of us, the town is clear.

KASIRA: I know.

CAYLEY: Right...

(She smirked.)

CAYLEY: My Uncle Alan got arrested for molesting a goat once.

KASIRA: I know. Wait! What?

CAYLEY: See? You don't know everything.

(She then chuckled and raced back into line. As she did so, Kasira grinned.)

KASIRA: I get the feeling she's going to regret saying that.

NIVEA: I'll *make sure* she does, don't you worry about that.

KASIRA: She needs to learn. Being flippant doesn't pay.

NIVEA: Right?

(Unfortunately for Cayley, however, this was a lesson she was already learning. Soapy was still battling like a true warrior, but Sika had stopped entirely and was staring at her in dismay.)

SIKA: A goat???

CAYLEY: Sika...

SIKA: A fucking goat???

CAYLEY: I was being flippant!

SIKA: About your perverted uncle?

CAYLEY: He's not real, Sika. I gave Kasira and update and she knew everything already, so for a joke, I told her something she *didn't* know.

SIKA: That you come from a family of sick bastards? You should have kept that to yourself!

CAYLEY: He's not real, you dumb cunt. And if you say that about my family again, I'll ram my fucking shoe ten feet up your arse!

(Sika leapt backwards and whimpered.)

SIKA: *You* don't use language like that!

CAYLEY: I do when people insult my family! How dare you?

(Sika pouted.)

SIKA: I didn't mean it.

CAYLEY: Why say it then?

SIKA: I was in shock.

CAYLEY: Whatever.

(She then resumed her battle.)

SIKA: Cayley...

CAYLEY: Just fight your fight.

(She rolled her eyes then looked to Soapy.)

CAYLEY: Any problems?

SOAPY: Nope. They're going down pretty quickly actually. Oh, here we go; they advanced again.

CAYLEY: Good, good. Not long to go now then.

(Just then, Ambre's nervous voice piped up from behind them.)

AMBRE: Cayley?

CAYLEY: Yes, love?

AMBRE: Sika's crying.

(Cayley furrowed her brow then glanced over her shoulder. Sure enough, Sika was sobbing in Ambre's arms.)

AMBRE: She's really sad.

(Cayley sighed despairingly.)

CAYLEY: Sika?

(Sika looked to her with teary-eyes and a sagging bottom lip.)

CAYLEY: Come here.

(She then opened her arms. Managing a smile, Sika then stepped from Ambre's arms and headed to Cayley. Just as she reached her, however, Cayley, clapped her arms onto Sika's shoulders and stared hard into her eyes.)

CAYLEY: Toughen up, madam; we're in the middle of a battle here.

SIKA: But...

CAYLEY: No, buts. Toughen up. Yes, we had words. An angry exchange; but you're smart enough to know, it doesn't mean I don't love you anymore, okay?

(Sika sighed.)

SIKA: Promise?

CAYLEY: Seriously?

SIKA: Well...

CAYLEY: Okay, I promise.

(She nodded.)

CAYLEY: Let's just get this done, then you and I can have a chat about it? Airborne to airborne, yeah?

SIKA: Okay.

CAYLEY: Good girl.

(She then resumed her fight. Sika, on the other hand, just stood there pouting for a minute before sighing ruefully.)

SIKA: Thanks for the hug, Ambre.

AMBRE: *You hugged me!*

SIKA: Even so.

(She then skulked to the frontline and resumed fighting.)

SIKA: Stupid wraiths. It's all their fault.

SOAPY: That's the spirit.

CAYLEY: Yup. If you've got an anger issues, Sika, take it out on them.

SOAPY: Make *them* suffer.

CAYLEY: For every little thing that's ever gone wrong in your life.

(Sika mused to herself for a moment.)

SIKA: Take it out on them, huh?

(She then snarled and opened fire on the wraiths. With a fixed snarl, she went about her casting with extreme ferocity. With incredible speed, one blast after another crashed into the wraiths decimating them instantly. Such was the extent of her angry onslaught, a few seconds later, Ambre, Soapy and Cayley all stopped what they were doing and stared at her agog.)

SOAPY: Cayley?

CAYLEY: Huh?

SOAPY: Sika's...

AMBRE: She looks like an angry version of you, Soapy.

(Soapy whimpered.)

SOAPY: She's matching me for speed and power!!!

(She then furrowed her brow and instantly resumed her casting. Being matched by Sika was one indignity she wasn't about to endure. Watching them both cast their magic like demons on a mission, Cayley allowed herself a chuckle.)

CAYLEY: I feel kind of redundant now.

AMBRE: So do I. They keep killing my wraith.

CAYLEY: Aw. Well, keep trying, sweetie.

AMBRE: I always do.

CAYLEY: Yup, you're the best.

(Ambre blushed.)

AMBRE: Aw.

CAYLEY: Anyway, seeing as they've got the magic assault covered, I might as well do another round of healing.

AMBRE: Okay. But hold the front of your skirt this time. Everyone was staring at your knickers before.

(Cayley shrieked.)

CAYLEY: They were?

AMBRE: Yeah.

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: It made them really happy.

CAYLEY: Oh good god.

(She spammed her forehead.)

CAYLEY: Forget the healing, I'm staying here.

AMBRE: Okay.

(She glanced away nervously.)

AMBRE: Um... Cayley?

CAYLEY: Yes, love?

AMBRE: Why did your uncle molest a goat?

(Cayley furrowed her brow.)

CAYLEY: On second thoughts, I'll do that flyover after all.

(She then took to the sky and headed away. Left behind, Ambre could only shrug.)

AMBRE: She'll tell us when she's good and ready.

(She then looked to the fight and attempted to take over another wraith. Alas, as soon as she was getting control over one, it was exploding into dust, courtesy of Soapy and Sika. Their combined firepower, thanks to Sika's inner rage and Soapy's desperation not to be outdone was immense. So much so, that before Cayley had even finished flying to the end of the frontline, half the people in it had had to stand down with nothing left to fight. Even Fluffy was out of the game.)

FLUFFY: Ambre safe now. Fluffy go.

(He then vanished. And within another ten seconds, so did the final wraith. Victory had been assured. In that moment, an almighty cheer rose up and all the men folk started to hug one another. A few seconds later, however, when they noticed there was a group of beautiful women among their number, their target for who to hug next changed entirely. All Kasira, Nivea, Ambre, Sika and Soapy could do was backtrack as they were swarmed upon by excited townsfolk. Cayley had never been so glad to be up in the air in all her life.)

SIKA: We're gonna get groped now, aren't we?

KASIRA: Big time.

NIVEA: Bring it on, I say!

SOAPY: Nope. Not on my watch!

(She then yelled at the top of her voice.)

SOAPY: I have genital herpes!!!

TOWNSMAN 05: Me too!

TOWNSMAN 06: He caught it from my wife, the bastard!

SOAPY: Um... help!!!

(Just then, the elder stormed among them and stepped between the townsfolk and the girls.)

ELDER: Control yourselves, men. What's wrong with you?

TOWNSMAN 07: Tasty bits of skirt!

ELDER: I said control yourselves!

(He shook his head.)

ELDER: Show some decorum.

(He then turned to face Kasira.)

ELDER: Thank you for saving our town, General.

KASIRA: I...

TOWNSMAN 01: *She* saved our town? It was *your* orders I was following.

ELDER: I was merely passing on *her* orders. She is a serving general, after all.

(Upon noticing this, the men all gasped then stood to attention and saluted.)

ELDER: Much better. Now as I was saying. We owe you and your unit a debt of gratitude, General.

KASIRA: Not yet, you don't. Yes, the town is clear but there's still likely to be wraiths in and around that mine. We need to go there and finish the job.

ELDER: I see.

(He nodded.)

ELDER: Well, you heard her, men.

TOWNSMAN 01: Well... yeah... we heard, but...

TOWNSMAN 02: Sounds more like a job for a serving unit, to me.

TOWNSMAN 03: Right? Let's go and have a beer. Good luck, ladies!

(A massive cheer then went up and they all hurried away towards the nearest tavern. Left behind, Kasira was aghast.)

KASIRA: Are they fucking serious?

SIKA: They're gonna leave it to us six?

NIVEA: Don't act surprised. People always leave it to us six.

SOAPY: Men are cunts.

NIVEA: Right?

(She pouted.)

NIVEA: I didn't even get my groping.

KASIRA: Yes, well, I'm not going to console you over that.

(She rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: Come on, girls. To the mine.

ELDER: Thanks, ladies.

(He nodded.)

ELDER: I know it might not like feel it, but trust me, this town is extremely grateful for all you've done.

KASIRA: You're right. It *doesn't* feel like it.

(They then groaned and headed off towards the mine.)

Elsewhere in the town, at this time, exhausted from beating the living daylights out of one another, Rex and Lassu were both sat up wooden crates, trying to catch their breath.

Bloodied and bruised, they looked very much the worse for wear. They'd both given everything they'd had to the fight and right now, they were both equally frustrated.

LASSU: Why can't you just quit once you've been defeated?

REX: I've never been defeated.

LASSU: Bullshit. I had you on your fucking knees at one point.

REX: Then I got up again and knocked you flat on your arse.

LASSU: Lucky punch!

REX: Was it fuck.

(They sneered at one another.)

REX: I'm never gonna let you have her, you know?

LASSU: I don't fucking need you to *let me* have her. I'll win her back by myself. And besides, she's not yours to give away.

REX: She aint yours either. And she never will be.

LASSU: Yeah, right...

(He scoffed.)

LASSU: That's comedy gold coming from you.

REX: Yeah, alright, laugh it up while you can, mate. Enjoy it, because I'll be the one having the last laugh.

LASSU: And what are you basing that on? I mean, seriously. What fucking chance have you got? What's the story again? You tried to beat the shit out of her then changed your mind and decided you love her? Fuck off.

REX: There's more to it than that, obviously.

LASSU: No, mate. There really isn't. Once you take a swing at a bird, it's pretty much game over. Now, I don't claim to be an *expert* on women or anything, but I'm pretty sure that number one on any woman's list of turn-offs is a bloke who tries to punch her in the face.

REX: Yeah? Well, they aint overly fond of blokes who marry them, then burst out crying and jump on a ship, never to be seen again.

LASSU: I didn't burst out crying!
REX: So you claim. You did, however, piss off during the wedding reception and never look back.
LASSU: Yeah, well...
(He ruffled his neck.)
LASSU: That was a mistake. Mistakes can be rectified.
REX: Then so can mine.
LASSU: Yours wasn't a mistake! It was attempted assault!
REX: Which was a mistake.
LASSU: Yeah? Who did you mean to assault then? Her parents?
REX: Oh, shut up.
(He sighed.)
REX: Look, mate; I don't care what you think. It's not your decision, it's hers.
LASSU: Yes, it is. So *you* might as well go home now.
REX: I'll go home *later*. With Kasira on my arm.
LASSU: Bollocks, will you.
REX: Just wait and see.
(Lassu shook his head.)
LASSU: Twat.
REX: Wanker.
(They shared a disdainful glance then Rex sighed.)
REX: This isn't solving anything.
LASSU: What isn't?
REX: Us two cunts fighting and arguing about it. If Kasira's gonna make a choice, it won't be based on who kicked the shit out of who.
(Lassu nodded solemnly.)
LASSU: I suppose not.
(He sighed.)
LASSU: We need to talk to her, don't we?
REX: Yup. We need to find out what *she* wants.
LASSU: Yeah.
(He nodded.)
LASSU: Me!
REX: Oh, fucking dream on.
LASSU: It's not a dream, I... nope. We literally just established that arguing about it is fruitless.
REX: Right.
(He shrugged.)
REX: Let's find her and talk to her then.
LASSU: Agreed.
(He then slid off the crate he'd been sitting on.)
LASSU: Let's go.
REX: Let's. Just don't cry when she rejects you.
LASSU: Oh shut up.
(They then headed away in search of Kasira.)

Just outside the entrance to the mine, a short while later, Kasira and her team were busy battling a group of seventy wraiths who'd exited the mine and opted to loiter outside it, rather

than follow the pack. With the entire team present, defeating them was barely even a challenge. Nivea had simply started her spin then blown her wraith whistle. With healing from Cayley to keep her safe, plus the battle skills of Kasira, Soapy, Sika and Ambre to back her up, they started ploughing through them in no time.

KASIRA: Watch that slippery bugger trying to go wide.

SIKA: Mine!

(She then blew the wraith to kingdom come.)

SOAPY: *Stay* wide, Sika; it looked like that one was planning to come at Kasira from behind.

SIKA: It did, yes. That's why I came over here as soon as I spotted it.

SOAPY: Cool.

SIKA: Way before you did.

CAYLEY: It's not a contest, Sika.

SIKA: Isn't it? Isn't it though?

AMBRE: Um... there's five more coming out of the cave!

SOAPY: Mine!

AMBRE: Oh, okay. Never mind, Soapy's got them.

SOAPY: No, I'm saying it's a mine, not a cave.

SIKA: Great. You two bugger about; I'll shoot the wraiths.

(She then set about the newcomers.)

SOAPY: I was not bugging about!

SIKA: Focus, Soapy; we're in the middle of a fight. Show some professionalism.

(Soapy was aghast.)

SOAPY: You, you...

KASIRA: How's it looking now, Nivea.

NIVEA: Pretty fucking awesome, I'd say, ma'am. Not many left. I'm gonna stop spinning now, Cayley.

CAYLEY: I've got you, Nivea; don't worry.

(She then healed her repeatedly, so she could stop spinning without being mauled to death. As she did so, Kasira swooped in and aided her with her blades. The magic casters simply lowered their arms.)

KASIRA: Die!!!

(She then slashed through the final wraith and snarled.)

KASIRA: Fucking thing scratched me.

(A ray of healing energy then engulfed her body.)

KASIRA: You're a legend, Cayley.

CAYLEY: I know.

KASIRA: Now let's get this shit done.

(She then turned and strode towards the mine entrance with her five subordinates in tow.

Upon reaching to within ten feet, they then stopped and peered in the dimly lit underground passageway.)

AMBRE: Um... I don't want to go in there, Kasira.

NIVEA: I'm not exactly thrilled by the idea either.

SIKA: Nor am I. That looks dangerous.

(She nodded.)

SIKA: I'm not risking my life going in there; this isn't even our fight.

SOAPY: Yeah, you may have mentioned that once or twice today, Sika.

KASIRA: And she's right. On both counts. Yes, this isn't our fight; and yes, we're not going in there.

CAYLEY: Really? But there could well be wraiths in there still.

KASIRA: I'd be amazed if there weren't, Cayley, but fumbling about in the darkness for them would be suicidal.

SIKA: Not for Nivea; she can see inside caves. Just send her in on her own.

NIVEA: Fuck off, you.

SIKA: I'm joking, Nivea. Like I'd seriously advocate sending you to your death like that.

SOAPY: Yeah, you've got your holy mission down here to complete before we send you to meet your maker.

SIKA: Amen, sister.

NIVEA: You're gonna pay for that fish face, you know that, right? You too, tiny tits.

SIKA: I'm perfectly...

SOAPY: Stupid!

SIKA: Proportioned! And hey!

(They then heard the daunting sound of Kasira clearing her throat. As one, they all slowly glanced towards her.)

KASIRA: Are you done? Can we carry on being soldiers now?

SIKA: Um... yes, ma'am.

SOAPY: Sorry, ma'am.

NIVEA: Sorry.

KASIRA: Are you sure? Perhaps you'd like to sing us a little song first seeing as you've finished the comedy routine. Play us out with a happy tune. Or maybe do some card tricks. We'll wait. It's not like official army business is important.

NIVEA: You're abusing sarcasm right now, Kasira.

KASIRA: Oh, I'm sorry. Did that hurt your feelings? Would you like Cayley to heal you?

NIVEA: Um... no, ma'am.

KASIRA: Good. Now listen. I have no doubt there are wraiths in there, but there's no way we're going in. That could be fatal. Not just because of wraiths, but because of the gases inside. So that leaves us two options. We can either blow a wraith whistle by the entrance and hope the numbers that come out are manageable...

CAYLEY: Risky.

KASIRA: Or we can find a way to reseal the cave.

CAYLEY: Less risky, but the army might not like it.

AMBRE: Why not?

CAYLEY: The wraiths will still be inside the cave. They like their wraiths dead.

AMBRE: Oh, me too.

SIKA: Kasira? Ma'am? Permission to speak.

KASIRA: I'll allow it.

SIKA: Blowing the wraith whistle in the entrance could be a really bad idea. There might be hundreds upon hundreds in there. And the echo will bring them *all* out!

KASIRA: Indeed. So we're not going to do that.

NIVEA: You want to seal it again.

KASIRA: I do. Having weighed up our options, and factored in the fact that this isn't our fucking fight in the first place, I say we seal it. The town will be safe for now and more importantly, none of us will get hurt.

CAYLEY: I like it. We can just let the army know that the mine entrance collapsed by itself and there might be wraiths underground still.

KASIRA: And let *them* deal with it after we've been fired.

NIVEA: Perfect.

KASIRA: Yes, it is.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: So... what's the best way to seal the entrance?

(Everyone stared at the mine entrance then grimaced. It was a sizeable opening and blocking it would not be easy.)

NIVEA: Hmm... moving rocks is going to suck.

SOAPY: Some of them must weigh a ton.

CAYLEY: I very much doubt I could even *begin* to shift half of them.

(Sika then piped up wearing a thoughtful expression.)

SIKA: A vortex is made of gravity.

AMBRE: What?

(Nivea rolled her eyes.)

NIVEA: Very helpful, Sika.

SOAPY: Right? Where would we be without her?

SIKA: Without me, you'd be shifting rocks all fucking night, that's where. Because *I've* had an idea. One that'll save us having to lift a finger!

KASIRA: Oh? You have?

SIKA: I have, yes. It's very cunning. But that's no surprise. I always was something of an innovator. That's just one of my many fine qualities. Yeah, I'm something of an all-round...

KASIRA: Sika!

SIKA: Sorry, what?

KASIRA: What's the plan?

SIKA: Oh. Right.

(She glanced above the mine entrance.)

SIKA: That rock overhanging the entrance is huge. Bigger than the entrance.

SOAPY: Cool. I'll shoot it down!

SIKA: And blow it to smithereens? What good will that do?

SOAPY: Then what do you suggest?

SIKA: Well, Cayley and I have vortex magic; it uses gravity.

(She nodded.)

SIKA: If we cast it right, we can loosen it then control the fall with that gravity. It'll just slide down and create a massive blockage in the doorway then.

SOAPY: Um... Sika, you're overlooking something there.

SIKA: Yeah, right. I knew you'd find fault.

SOAPY: It's a big fault though! If you try to control it's fall, you'll need be standing beneath it when it falls!

KASIRA: You'll be squashed flat.

SIKA: Yes, but I won't be standing underneath it. Cayley and I both use vortexes, remember?

CAYLEY: Hey, if you think *I'm* going to stand underneath it...

SIKA: Neither of us has to be standing beneath it. If we both cast at the same time, standing one on either side of it, we can control the fall together

(Cayley mused to herself.)

CAYLEY: Actually, that might just work. If there's a weakened area that we can shoot to loosen it, it should just detach from the rest of the cliff. Then we can lower it, by using our magic to hold it up and let it come down slowly.

SIKA: See?

CAYLEY: Do you have that level of control over your casting though, Sika?

(Sika scoffed.)

SIKA: Do I have that level of control??? Back at the academy I left people gasping in awe...

CAYLEY: Yes or no, Sika? Just a simple yes or no.

SIKA: Right.

(Sika nodded.)

SIKA: Yes!

CAYLEY: Thank you.

SIKA: In fact my control is so flawless, my instructor used to call me...

SOAPY: A cunt!

SIKA: No!

NIVEA: Tiny tits, the mouthy gob-shite?

SIKA: Hey! No. If you must know...

KASIRA: We don't. Nor do we want to. Just close the cave and we can all get going.

AMBRE: Yay. I fancy a nap. And some more cake.

KASIRA: We'll have cake as soon as we get back, don't worry.

SIKA: Why didn't you say so then? Come on, Cayley, let's get this done.

(She then hurried to the left of the cave entrance. With a smirk, Cayley then started to head to the other side.)

KASIRA: This is gonna be interesting.

AMBRE: What are they going to do? Their explanation was lost me.

KASIRA: I didn't quite get it either. Something about using their gravity skill to hold the overhang up and lower it gently, so it doesn't smash. Thus, blocking the entrance.

NIVEA: Sounds complicated. Whatever it is, I just hope it works.

SOAPY: Do you? Do you though?

NIVEA: Of course, I do. If this works, we won't have to shift rocks all night.

SOAPY: Yes, but if it does, Sika's going to be boasting about it from now until the end of time. Or until the day one of us decides to kill her, at least.

NIVEA: Shit. Good point. I'm torn now.

SOAPY: Sucks, doesn't it?

KASIRA: You two worry too much. If she boasts about how this was her idea, you can just remind her of the myriad of *bad* ideas she's had over the years, and point out that the law of averages dictated that she had to get *something* right eventually.

NIVEA: A-ha, good point.

SOAPY: I'll make a mental note of that.

NIVEA: Make sure you do. A tsunami of Sika's deluded bullshit might well be heading our way and we need to be prepared.

(Their attention was then drawn by the sound of Cayley calling out to Sika.)

CAYLEY: After three, okay?

SIKA: Wait. We need to be more precise than that.

CAYLEY: Okay. As soon as you hear the T in three.

SIKA: Right.

CAYLEY: Don't anticipate it; wait until you actually *hear* it.

SIKA: Yes, ma'am.

CAYLEY: Okay. Raise your hands.

SIKA: They're ready.

CAYLEY: Here we go then. One. Two. Three.

(In perfect time with one another, they then fired their magic into a crack at the rear of the overhang. At once, the entire overhang loosened then plummeted to the ground, landing with a tremendous thud as it blocked the cave entrance.)

CAYLEY: Eek!

SIKA: Whoops!

(They then shared a troubled glance.)

CAYLEY: So... it turns out gravity magic *can't* hold it aloft. Too heavy.

SIKA: Um... yeah... it just fell down. Soapy could have done that.

CAYLEY: Still, we learned something there.

SIKA: Did we?

CAYLEY: Yes. We learned to *never* stand under falling rocks because our magic really isn't going to help.

(Sika chuckled.)

SIKA: Right. Knowledge is power, I guess.

CAYLEY: Yup. Come on. Let's head back.

(She winked at her.)

CAYLEY: Oh, and well done.

SIKA: What?

CAYLEY: For coming up with a plan. Okay, it didn't work as planned, but you showed initiative there. Good girl.

SIKA: The best, some would say.

CAYLEY: No, no they wouldn't.

(Upon arriving back with their unit mates, Sika smiled.)

SIKA: Done. No need to thank me. It's not like my awesomeness is news.

NIVEA: Awesomeness? What awesomeness? You said you were going to lower it gently over the entrance.

SOAPY: It thundered to the ground like the gods themselves had thrown it!

SIKA: And it worked!

(She furrowed her brow.)

SIKA: The rock didn't smash and the mine is blocked! Job done. Sika one; wraiths nil.

(She ruffled her neck.)

SIKA: Now if you'll excuse me, *I'm* going to get some cake.

(She then strutted away. With a smirk, the others then followed; allowing her to walk on ahead.)

KASIRA: That was a complete accident, wasn't it?

CAYLEY: Pretty much.

KASIRA: The fact it didn't smash was pure luck.

CAYLEY: Yeah, but at least Sika showed initiative. You have to give her credit for that. So no mocking, girls.

(She looked directly at Nivea and Soapy.)

NIVEA: As if we would!

SOAPY: Yeah. We wouldn't dream of it.

KASIRA: You two are rubbish liars.

AMBRE: Even I didn't believe that, and I'm really gullible.

KASIRA: Don't put yourself down, sweetie.

AMBRE: But I am. I'm so gullible, I dated Sika for six months and didn't even know it.

(She spanned her forehead.)

AMBRE: I wouldn't be at all surprised if I found out my name isn't really Ambre.

NIVEA: It isn't. It's Amber, we just didn't know how to tell you.

AMBRE: No!!!

KASIRA: She's joking, Ambre.

AMBRE: What?

(She growled.)

AMBRE: Aw...

(Her face then lit up.)

AMBRE: Still. I think I proved my point. Gullible as anything. I win.

SOAPY: Yes, yes you do.

CAYLEY: Always.

(She nodded.)

CAYLEY: Now, if you don't mind, I need to have a private chat with Sika. Just hang back a bit. It's time me and her cleared the air.

KASIRA: Ah, good idea.

CAYLEY: I know. Me being angry with her all the time isn't good for morale, so...

KASIRA: Go. Get it sorted.

CAYLEY: Will do.

(She then raced ahead. Watching her go, Soapy sucked her teeth.)

SOAPY: Is she going to shout at her?

KASIRA: If she has to.

(She shrugged.)

KASIRA: I doubt it though. This is more about maintaining their friendship and maintaining the good atmosphere at the base.

NIVEA: Shame.

KASIRA: Shame???

NIVEA: Yeah. Sika getting in trouble all the time is hilarious.

SOAPY: I'm definitely with Nokia on this one.

NIVEA: Hey!

SOAPY: Sorry. The holy Nokia.

NIVEA: Not clever!

SOAPY: Point being, her getting in trouble is funny.

KASIRA: Right...

(She sighed.)

KASIRA: Have you two ever considered that you might actually be bad friends?

NIVEA: Nope.

SOAPY: Not once.

KASIRA: No... I don't suppose you have.

(Up ahead at this time, Cayley was pacing at Sika's side. She had much to say. Alas, getting a word in edgeways when Sika was around wasn't always easy.)

SIKA: So, yeah, when you think about it, it's probably a *good* thing that I *don't* have healing powers. I'm already the perfect all-round babe. I'm smart, gorgeous, my body is easily the sexiest of any of us and my magic is immense. If I was an amazing healer as well, people would be *even more* resentful.

CAYLEY: Sika...

SIKA: I mean, Soapy's jealous enough as it is. Could you imagine if I could heal as well? She'd have nothing to pin her desperate hopes on when she tries to put me down.

CAYLEY: Sika...

SIKA: It's kinda sad, really. She should focus on herself rather than trying to compete with me.

CAYLEY: Sika!

SIKA: Hmm?

CAYLEY: When I said we need to talk, I meant about something specific. I wasn't giving you carte blanche to waffle aimlessly about how great you think you are.

SIKA: *Think* I am?

CAYLEY: Just listen for a minute, will you?

SIKA: Oh. Okay.

CAYLEY: Thank you.

(She rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: Oh, and by the way, it's not *her* who tries to compete with *you*. We discussed this six months ago while we were in the frozen north. And you agreed that *you'd* focus on yourself.

SIKA: Actually, I'm pretty sure that didn't happen. You must have imagined it. We were all pretty tired that day though, so don't feel bad.

CAYLEY: Sika!

SIKA: Yes.

CAYLEY: I'm going to talk now and you're going to listen.

SIKA: Okay.

CAYLEY: Don't interrupt.

SIKA: I never do.

(Cayley was most aghast.)

CAYLEY: Never do? Right. Nope. We're gonna start with that very point. I've been short with you all week, as you've noticed.

SIKA: Yeah, you've...

CAYLEY: That's interrupting!

SIKA: Bugger.

CAYLEY: I...

SIKA: Carry on.

CAYLEY: Seriously?

SIKA: Sorry.

CAYLEY: I've been short with you for several reasons. The main one being that you *do* interrupt. Constantly. Even when I'm in the middle of issuing orders, or sharing something important that the unit need to know. If you see an excuse for a silly put down, you leap in there and cut me off. It's annoying.

SIKA: I think you've got me mixed up with Nivea and Soapy.

CAYLEY: Yes, they do it too, but you're by far the worst offender. And besides, even if those two do interrupt, once I've finished explaining what needs to be done, they go and do it. You're always so intent on making a joke of everything, you don't hear what I'm telling you.

SIKA: Doesn't *sound* like me.

CAYLEY: No? Three days ago, I asked everyone to put their clean clothes away, because high-ranking officials would be arriving on the island soon and one of them might pop in. All three of you interrupted to make a silly joke, but once I was done talking, the others went and put their clothes away. You went out in the yard and sunbathed!

SIKA: I think you've got your timeline wrong there, Cayley. I was minding my own business, sunbathing in the yard, when you came out and yelled at me to put me clothes away. Just yelled at me! Out of the blue!

CAYLEY: Because I'd already asked you to do it once!

SIKA: When?

CAYLEY: *Before* you went out to sunbathe! But thanks for proving my point. You didn't hear me tell you the first time because you were busy messing about and thinking up sarcastic comments.

(Sika blushed.)

SIKA: That happened, did it?

CAYLEY: Yes!

SIKA: Right. Sorry.

CAYLEY: It happens a lot. And it's been driving me nuts. It's disrespectful.

(She furrowed her brow.)

CAYLEY: But worse was yet to come, wasn't it? I spent an entire day, working my bum off to make hundreds of biscuits. My best recipe. I wanted them to be perfect.

SIKA: And they were. They were delicious.

CAYLEY: Yes, but you weren't supposed to know that!!! They weren't for you!

SIKA: Um...

CAYLEY: Honestly, after all my hard work, to wake up in the morning and find you'd pigged them all... wow. I've never felt so disrespected in all my life.

SIKA: Um... yeah... but, Soapy...

CAYLEY: Soapy was at least apologetic. Contrite. You weren't. As if my efforts aren't worthy of your consideration, you just said whoops then tried to go about your day as normal. That was about as insulting as it gets.

SIKA: Yeah...

(She whimpered.)

SIKA: In hindsight, that wasn't good.

CAYLEY: No, it wasn't.

SIKA: Sorry. I didn't mean any disrespectment.

CAYLEY: That's not a word!

SIKA: Yes it is!

CAYLEY: Sika...

(She took a deep breath to calm herself.)

CAYLEY: We're having this talk now, because I need you to do better. To start showing me some respect. I'm not asking you to worship me and revere me. I'm just asking for you to treat me with some human dignity, for once. We're gonna be kicked out of the army soon, but we'll all still be living together. For how long is up to you. Because if you continue to talk over me and disrespect my efforts, it'll only be a matter of time before I up and leave.

(Sika whimpered.)

SIKA: Is it that bad?

CAYLEY: Yes!

SIKA: I made you that upset?

CAYLEY: I've been angry with you all week, Sika. And I'm the most placid person you're every likely to meet. So yes!

SIKA: Oh.

(She pouted.)

SIKA: Sorry, Cayley. It'd suck if you moved out. It really would.

CAYLEY: Well, I wouldn't worry too much about that, to be fair.

SIKA: No?

CAYLEY: No.

(She furrowed her brow.)

CAYLEY: If you *were* to upset me to the point where I didn't want to live with you anymore, I'm pretty certain Kasira would kick *you* out!

SIKA: Eek!

CAYLEY: Yes. Eek.

SIKA: Do you think she would? No. Surely not. I'm awesome. She wouldn't do that. She'd never admit it, but she loves me the most. I mean, how could anyone not?

CAYLEY: With extreme ease.

SIKA: Hey! Harsh!

CAYLEY: Look... Sika... what I'm saying is, please be more respectful, that's all. Our unit is great and I want us to stay living together for a very long time, so please. Help us create an atmosphere where everyone feels valued. Can you do that for me?

SIKA: I can.

CAYLEY: Thank you.

(They then shared a brief hug to reaffirm their friendship.)

SIKA: I can do anything I set my mind to. My instructor at the academy said that when it comes to socialising, I'm pretty much the best there is. He was right too. You see...

(As Sika went on to brag majestically about her own self-worth, all Cayley could do was groan in defeat.)

CAYLEY: As soon as we get back, I'm packing a suitcase. Hers!

By the time the girls arrived back at the jetty to catch their ferry, they were all thoroughly exhausted from their day's exertions. It was now late afternoon and but for one small break, they'd been working hard since long before noon. Doing battle for several hours on end was extremely draining. As they watched a ship approach, longing to get on it and go home, however, they were greeted with a fanfare that lifted their spirits no end. The elder and the town mayor had arrived, bringing the local brass band with them. Extremely grateful for everything the 123rd Wraith Containment Unit had done for their town, they'd come to send them off in style.

As the band played a cheery tune, the elder led the mayor to meet the girls then introduced them one by one. Despite the fact he got all their names wrong, they were most grateful for the gesture. With the formalities and greetings complete, the mayor then stepped back to address them.

MAYOR: Ladies. Beautiful ladies. Beautiful ladies with big, round...

ELDER: Albert!!!

MAYOR: What?

(He flinched.)

MAYOR: Sorry. My mind seemed to wander then. Now where was I?

KASIRA: Ladies.

MAYOR: That's as far as I got?

ELDER: Yes. Then your tongue fell out.

MAYOR: Can you blame it?

ELDER: Albert...

MAYOR: Quite. Sorry.

(He stood tall.)

MAYOR: The elder informs me that not only did you despatch three wraiths the size of houses, but you also instigated the tactics that led to this town to victory over the wraith infestation today. On behalf of the people, I can't thank you enough.

(He nodded.)

MAYOR: Tell that band to shut up, will you? I can't hear myself think.

(The elder turned and ran a finger across his neck, gesturing for the band to stop. Almost apologetically, they did as he asked with a few lost and embarrassed toots on their horns.)

MAYOR: That's better. Who's their leader?

ELDER: James from the florist. He has a degree in music, you see.

MAYOR: Not the band! These girls here.

KASIRA: That would be me, sir. General Kasira Ashwood.

MAYOR: General?

KASIRA: Yes.

MAYOR: But you're a woman.

KASIRA: Only at weekends, sir. During the week my name is Kevin.

(She rolled her eyes.)

MAYOR: But it's a weekday today.

(He then looked enlightened.)

MAYOR: A-ha! I get it. That was a joke.

KASIRA: Yes, sir.

MAYOR: Excellent.

(He then sneered bitterly.)

MAYOR: Who told women they could be funny?

ELDER: Albert...

MAYOR: Right, yes.

(He nodded.)

MAYOR: As a thank you for what you've done for us, I'd like to present your unit with this scroll.

KASIRA: Oh.

(He then stepped forward and passed Kasira a rolled up parchment.)

KASIRA: Thank you.

MAYOR: No, no; thank *you*.

(He smiled proudly.)

MAYOR: In recognition of your fine work, that scroll represents the highest accolade this town can bestow. The freedom of Copperwood.

(Kasira, Sika, Soapy, Cayley and Nivea looked most impressed. Ambre, on the other hand, was somewhat lost.)

AMBRE: What does that mean, Kasira? We were free to come here anyway.

KASIRA: It's symbolic, love.

MAYOR: No, no. It's more than that. It means you're *free* to come here and save us any time we're in trouble. At your own expense, of course.

(As five astonished glances came his way, he then started to chuckle.)

MAYOR: You're not the only one who can make jokes, General.

KASIRA: Right...

(The mayor then exhaled with pride.)

MAYOR: Joking aside, it really isn't just symbolic. That document makes you all free citizens of the town. Thus giving you the right to tie up your horses anywhere you please.

SIKA: We haven't got any horses.

MAYOR: I see.

(He winced.)

MAYOR: Then yes, it's purely symbolic.

KASIRA: Well... thank you. We accept.

MAYOR: And I accept your acceptance.

(Nivea smirked.)

NIVEA: And we accept that you accept our acceptance.

MAYOR: And I... am glad. Now what was the other thing?

ELDER: Medals.

MAYOR: Ah, yes.

AMBRE: Yay. I like medals.

MAYOR: Then you'll love these. You're to be awarded with the Copperwood Cross. The ultimate accolade. An accolade so rare, nobody has won one since the founder of the town himself, James Copperwood was alive.

(The girls all looked enlightened.)

KASIRA: So that's why.

MAYOR: Excuse me.

KASIRA: Nothing. We were just curious as to how the town got its name and now we know.

SIKA: Now we just have to figure out how Copperwood became a surname.

MAYOR: His father dealt in treated, copper-coloured wood products.

SIKA: I see.

NIVEA: Yawn!
SOAPY: Well *that* was an anti-climax.
AMBRE: Who cares?
(She beamed.)
AMBRE: We're getting medals. Yay.
MAYOR: Indeed you are.
(His face lit up.)
MAYOR: Now keep still while I pin them to your breasts. Boobs! Tits!
ELDER: Chest, albert!
MAYOR: Yes! That's the one. Boobs.
(He then hung his head in shame.)
MAYOR: Maybe you should hand them out, Elder.
ELDER: Yes... I think that'd be for the best.
(The elder then paced among the girls, handing them medals directly into their palms.)
ELDER: Thank you, young...um...
SIKA: Her name's Nokia.
ELDER: Nokia! That's it.
NIVEA: I'm gonna slap you, Sika.
ELDER: Ah, yes. Sika. Here you go.
(Sika took her medal then smirked.)
SIKA: See? He remembered *my* name!
NIVEA: No, he didn't. I literally just *said* your name!
SIKA: Don't be jealous, Nivea; you're embarrassing yourself.
KASIRA: Cut that out, you two!
(She rolled her eyes then looked to where the mayor was handing Cayley a medal.)
ELDER: Thank you, Miss Cay... lee?
CAYLEY: Spot on.
(He then looked to Soapy.)
ELDER: Ah, now *you* I'll always remember. Thank you for everything, Snowy.
SOAPY: Soapy!
SIKA: Snowy?
NIVEA: Because she's frigid.
SOAPY: Hey!
(As Sika and Nivea giggled, the elder turned to face Ambre.)
ELDER: You know, your name escapes me entirely, but it doesn't matter. I'll never forget that happy face of yours. Here you go, young lady.
AMBRE: Yay! Thank you.
(She beamed.)
AMBRE: Medal!
SIKA: Nice one, Ambre.
AMBRE: You too.
ELDER: And finally, General... Ashwood?
KASIRA: Correct!
ELDER: Score!
(He handed her her medal then stepped back.)
ELDER: You ladies have done this town proud. We'll never forget your efforts today. Thanks to you, life will go on. Yes, some buildings were damaged and lives *were* lost, but thanks to you, this town will now go on to thrive once again, rather than being decimated. You simply can not put a price on that.
(Kasira whimpered.)

KASIRA: When you say buildings were damaged... is Lily's Boutique okay?

ELDER: I should imagine so, all the shops had their shutters down all day.

KASIRA: Score!!!

(As the rest of her unit giggled, the elder then took a bow.)

ELDER: Now your ship is in port, I should imagine you'd like to get going, but before you do, I'd just like to finish by saying...

(His words were then interrupted by the angry mayor.)

MAYOR: Oh, look. Here they come. The big guns. The hard work's been done, so now *they* show up, looking to take all the glory.

(As one, everyone glanced to where the mayor was scowling and stood to attention. The supreme commander, Fortingly was heading towards them with Major General Hasham and his wife, having alighted the boat not ten seconds earlier.)

MAYOR: Well, I've got news for you lot. In this town the credit goes where it's due. To the warriors. The heroes who actually did all the work. The legends who actually saved our town. These young ladies. With the massive boobs!

(He slapped his own forehead.)

MAYOR: What's wrong with me???

(Looking somewhat put out, the supreme commander stepped up to him and furrowed his brow.)

FORTINGLY: Is there a problem here, civilian?

MAYOR: Yes!

(He shook his fist.)

MAYOR: These beauties just led our town against the biggest wraith infestation known to man. Defeating three giants in the process! Thanks to them, and only them, our town has been saved. So if you think you can show up now and steal the credit, you can bugger off again. With your tails between your legs, no less. The elder informs me they weren't even on fucking duty!

ELDER: That's right. So thank the gods they were here, because the six wallies you bloody lot sent us, either ran away or got eaten!

MAYOR: While *trying* to run away!

ELDER: Yes, that!

FORTINGLY: Is this true?

ELDER: Mostly. The *head* of the unit barricaded himself in the base! The others, however; fucking useless.

MAYOR: Who does your recruitment? Harry the hare-brained hamster?

FORTINGLY: We don't recruit. Joining the army is mandatory.

MAYOR: And I realised that as soon as I said it, but the issue remains. No credit for you! These girls are the heroes, so bugger off.

(The supreme commander glanced in Kasira's direction then flinched.)

FORTINGLY: Nagger!!!

KASIRA: Racist!

FORTINGLY: I said nagger!

KASIRA: Oh.

FORTINGLY: Plus, why would I say the other thing? You're white!

KASIRA: Right. My mistake, sir.

FORTINGLY: Yes, it was.

(He then looked to the mayor.)

FORTINGLY: We didn't come to steal anyone's credit. We didn't even know there'd been a wraith infestation.

MAYOR: Well there was.

ELDER: But luckily for us, there was a team of experts on hand.

FORTINGLY: Experts?

ELDER: This is the fourth wraith infestation they've successfully overcome!

KASIRA: Fifth, Major.

ELDER: Yes. Fifth.

KASIRA: Thank you. And it was a pleasure.

(She then smirked.)

KASIRA: It was a shame we couldn't do as well as the men would have, but sadly, girls can't run away that fast.

(As both herself and her unit mates tried not to laugh, she then saluted again.)

KASIRA: It was nice to see you again, sir. We're going to return to our island now.

FORTINGLY: Wait a minute...

(Just then, a deafening howl echoed across the dockside and a wolf-like wraith charged straight for the supreme commander.)

FORTINGLY: Ha-ha! Fool!

(Before he could even begin to attack it, however, it exploded into dust on the end of Kasira's blades. Having seen it coming, she'd leapt straight into action, wiping it out with two powerful lashes across its face. Not about to just stand there and admire her own handiwork, she then raced towards the edge of the dockside with her subordinates in tow. The evening's new spawn had just arrived and she was determined to wipe them out as soon as possible.)

KASIRA: Spread out, girls. Nivea, you can do your spin for this one.

NIVEA: On it! Get some distance, everyone.

(Anxious to get out of harm's way before she started her spin, Kasira, Cayley Ambre, Sika and Soapy all hurried away to take their positions. Most of them did so without complaint. Alas, not all.)

SIKA: So annoying. I really thought we'd killed them all.

KASIRA: We did. This is *this evening's* spawn.

SIKA: Cool. Let's go home and let the local unit handle it.

KASIRA: How? They're either dead or fleeing across the countryside somewhere.

CAYLEY: So it's down to us. The townsfolk have enough to do rebuilding their town.

(Sika pouted.)

SIKA: I suppose.

NIVEA: Are you all in position?

KASIRA: Yup. Blow your whistle when you're ready.

NIVEA: Ma'am.

(She then gave a loud blast on her wraith whistle and proceeded to spin. Slowly, but surely, she gathered momentum until she was spinning so fast, the air created a whooping sound under her blade.)

KASIRA: Perfect. Okay... here they come.

(Sure enough, about one hundred and fifty wraiths were charging their way.)

AMBRE: That's a big spawn!

CAYLEY: It's a big town.

AMBRE: I prefer our island. We hardly ever get that many.

(She then shrugged.)

AMBRE: Oh, well.

(With that, she set about controlling a wraith with her mind, setting it against its fellow wraiths.)

SOAPY: They're almost in range, ma'am.

KASIRA: Fire when ready!

SOAPY: Yay!

(She then proceeded to blast her magic into the oncoming hoard. Not wishing to be outdone, Sika then did likewise. For her part, Cayley cast healing onto Nivea then commenced a sortie of her own. The magic casters wouldn't be able to wipe them all out before they reached Nivea, but there was a good chance they'd get more than half.)

KASIRA: Perfect. Keep going, ladies.

(She then raced to the side and unleashed her blades, making sure to keep herself well away from the magic and well away from Nivea's spinning sword.)

KASIRA: How's it looking over there?

SOAPY: Perfect!

SIKA: Good, but I might need you move soon, ma'am. I need to go sideways and you're going to block my line of sight.

KASIRA: I'll move now then!

SIKA: Thank you.

(She then hurried back towards the dockside, mumbling to herself as she did so.

KASIRA: I know *better* than to stand too close to *her* when she's casting magic.

SIKA: What was that?

KASIRA: I said you're all doing great.

(Very much out of the fight, Kasira bit her lip.)

KASIRA: Comfortable, Nivea?

NIVEA: I have a face full of wraith dust.

SOAPY: I wouldn't worry about that. It's not much of a face anyway.

NIVEA: Why, you little shit.

SOAPY: Would you rather I lied?

NIVEA: No. I'd rather you died!

SOAPY: Ouch!

CAYLEY: Numbers are running low now, Kasira. I'm going to heal Nivea instead, so she can finish them off.

KASIRA: Okay!

(She then called out in a louder voice.)

KASIRA: Desist, casters! Let Nivea spin the last few out.

SOAPY: Damn it!

SIKA: Roger!

AMBRE: Yes, ma'am.

(They all then stepped back and watched on as the last dozen wraiths were decimated by Nivea's blade.)

NIVEA: Eat my blade, bitches! Yes!

(In that moment, the last one died then she proceeded to slow her spin.)

KASIRA: Nice one, girls. Very fast.

CAYLEY: Right? We're great in trios, but as a six, we're blooming unstoppable.

SOAPY: Of course, we are.

SIKA: We have the holy dumpling on our side.

SOAPY: Evil types tremble at the sound of her hallowed name.

NIVEA: Yes, they do. As you two evil little shits will find out later.

SIKA: Soapy started it.

SOAPY: Piss off!

KASIRA: Enough of that, ladies. Let's just...

(She then froze in horror and stared off towards the mine.)

AMBRE: Just what?

KASIRA: Girls...

(She gulped.)

KASIRA: There's another giant wraith coming and it's twice the size of the others!

(At once, everyone shot a glance towards the mine then shrieked in terror.)

SIKA: Big!

AMBRE: Not happy!!!

KASIRA: Calm down!!! If we act fast, we can take that fucker down with ease.

CAYLEY: We can? Cool. What's the plan?

KASIRA: To defeat it...

CAYLEY: Yeah, you might want to elaborate a little there, love.

KASIRA: I hadn't finished. The plan is to defeat it by... fuck it. It'll be upon us by the time I've explained. Just wait.

(She then looked to Ambre urgently.)

KASIRA: Ambre!

AMBRE: I'm scared!

KASIRA: Ambre!!!

(Ambre whimpered.)

AMBRE: Yes?

KASIRA: Calmly control it and tell it not to attack you then. Easy cheesy.

AMBRE: What? Oh. Oh, yeah. Good idea. Sorry. I panicked for a moment.

(She then stared hard at the wraith, taking full control of its mind. At once, it stopped charging and stood perfectly still.)

AMBRE: Now what?

KASIRA: Earlier you said you could make these things do whatever you want them to do.

So can you make it lay on its side with its belly facing us?

AMBRE: I can, yes. Look.

(She then did precisely that.)

KASIRA: Perfect. Soapy and Sika...

SOAPY: You want us to shoot its underbelly, right?

KASIRA: Yes, please.

SIKA: Knowing that if it survives it'll eat us for dinner???

KASIRA: Knowing that if it survives Cayley will be in the sky with her wraith whistle to take its attention away until Ambre can subdue it again.)

SOAPY: Sounds good.

CAYLEY: Indeed. Consider me airborne.

(She then took to the sky and flew towards the wraith, making sure to maintain a safe height.)

KASIRA: Okay, girls; you're up.

SIKA: Really? Is my life that unimportant to you?

SOAPY: Chill, Sika. Don't worry; my superior magic will polish it off.

SIKA: Superior? Superior???

SOAPY: Yes. Superior.

SIKA: Rubbish. My magic is just as good, nay, miles better than your rubbish.

SOAPY: There you go fantasising again. Silly goose.

SIKA: Fantasising???

I'm not having that. Bring it on.

(She then proceeded to stomp away towards the wraith.)

SOAPY: She's so easy to control. Seriously. She's like a little mouse you can bat around with your paw.

KASIRA: Yes, well, never mind that, just get going.

SOAPY: Ma'am.

KASIRA: Oh, and if it your *normal* magic fails and you're in serious danger... yes. Do that!

SOAPY: That?

(Her face then lit up.)

SOAPY: Ah... that.

KASIRA: It'll smash every window in town and probably knock some buildings over, but quite frankly, I don't care. We've done enough for this town; I'm not going to let anyone die for it.

SOAPY: Understood.

(She then hurried after Sika.)

KASIRA: Nivea?

NIVEA: Ma'am?

KASIRA: If she jumps to the floor at any point, fucking duck.

NIVEA: Don't you worry about that, Kasira. I will.

KASIRA: Good girl.

NIVEA: Say, where did that thing spring from anyway? It can't have been part of the evening spawn.

KASIRA: I know, right? I bet the fucker was taking a nap or something earlier.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: But now it has our full attention.

AMBRE: Um... I think Soapy and Sika would like your full attention too, Kasira.

KASIRA: What?

(She then glanced to where Sika and Soapy were shrugging and gesticulating in her direction.)

NIVEA: They're saying they're ready.

KASIRA: I can see that!

(She nodded then yelled out to them.)

KASIRA: Do it!!!

(Standing thirty feet from the wraith's belly, Sika and Soapy shared a determined nod. Then they scowled disdainfully at one another.)

SOAPY: One ridiculously powerful spell coming right up.

SIKA: Courtesy of *me*.

SOAPY: I said powerful.

SIKA: Doubt me at your peril, fish face; I'm bringing this bastard down.

SOAPY: By tickling it with your feeble magic?

SIKA: Feeble???

SOAPY: You heard me, tiny tits!

SIKA: I'm perfectly proportioned, you overgrown haddock! And what's more, my magic is way better than yours, so there!

SOAPY: Yeah? What say we test that theory?

SIKA: Fine by me!

(She ruffled her neck.)

SIKA: I'll prove it by blowing this thing into the middle of next year. And you, fish-head, will be left with egg on you face.

SOAPY: Is that so?

SIKA: Yes! And it's about time, I reckon. All this arguing is getting us nowhere, it's time to put our money where your big, fat mouth is.

SOAPY: Whatever you say, Sika. Fine. Let's *see* who's the better caster.

SIKA: Oh, well will.

SOAPY: I know we will.

SIKA: I know you know...

(Just then, Kasira's voice echoed towards them.)

KASIRA: Stop that, you idiots!!!

(At once, they both winced then shared an uncomfortable grimace.)

SIKA: We'd better do this.

SOAPY: Right...

SIKA: On three. One, two, three!

(They then snarled and opened fire with their magic, propelling several powerful blasts into its body.)

SIKA: Die, you horrible bastard!!!

(Fifteen seconds later, however, when they ceased firing, Sika shrieked in dismay. Despite the sheer power of the blasts they'd aimed at it, the giant wraith was barely scratched.

Growling ferociously, it just opened its eyes and glared at them.)

SIKA: Aw, crap!

(She whimpered.)

SIKA: Permission to soil my knickers, please? We're too weak!

SOAPY: Sika?

SIKA: What?

SOAPY: Wrong. *You're* too weak!

(She then blasted the wraith in the stomach with her most powerful magic bolt. At once, its belly exploded then it disintegrated into dust.)

SIKA: Holy fuck!

SOAPY: Uh-huh.

(She beamed.)

SOAPY: You can soil your knickers now if you like; just don't stand next to me on the ferry.

(She then walked away, chuckling to herself.)

SOAPY: When is she ever going to learn? She'll never be as good as me; not in a million years.

(Looking somewhat baffled, Sika hurried after her.)

SIKA: What just happened? Why didn't it die when you shot it the belly the *first* time?

SOAPY: I *didn't* shoot it in the belly. *You* did that. I just wanted to see if your magic was strong enough to kill it. So I left it *all* to you. You failed!

SIKA: What? Why would you do that???

SOAPY: To show you who's the real emperor of magic in these parts.

SIKA: Are you fucking kidding me??? What if it'd jumped up and attacked us, you idiot???

SOAPY: It couldn't. While you were blasting it's belly and failing to make a mark, I blasted all four of it's legs. I heard them snap. It *couldn't* get up.

SIKA: Idiot! What if its legs were too strong? What would we have done then?

SOAPY: Kasira said I could do my sonic boom. I'd have done that.

(She beamed.)

SOAPY: So, seeing as defeating it was *guaranteed*, I decided to have some fun with it. To let you fail while I disable it, then blast it to kingdom come myself.

(She smirked.)

SOAPY: And watch as you cringe with embarrassment at your humbling defeat.

SIKA: Idiot! You gambled with our lives!

SOAPY: No, I didn't. Like I said, if that had failed, I'd have done my sonic boom anyway.

(She chuckled.)

SOAPY: We were never in danger at *any* point, but yeah... you soil yourself if you need to. I won't judge.

(She then minced away victoriously, leaving Sika shaking her head bitterly.)

SIKA: Wow. Just, wow. She's like some sort of evil super-villain!

(She then shrugged nonchalantly.)

SIKA: But I'm still better looking and infinitely more intelligent than she is, so fuck it. I'm going home.

(She then trotted back to Kasira. If Soapy thought she could bring Sika's ego down a peg or two, she'd seriously underestimated her opponent.)

Once the six members of the 123rd Wraith Containment Unit had reunited, they shared a series of pats on the back then started to head towards their ferry. Before they could even get close to it, however, the supreme commander stepped before them.)

FORTINGLY: Ladies, may I say, what I just witnessed was astonishing.

ELDER: I told you they were awesome.

FORTINGLY: And I told you nobody likes a smart arse.

ELDER: And I told you to shove it up your...

FORTINGLY: We don't need a recap, thank you. I'm trying to talk to my troops.

ELDER: Right...

(Fortingly ruffled his neck.)

FORTINGLY: I have to tell you, in all my years, seldom have I witnessed such skill, professionalism and dedication. When danger rose its ugly head, you charged straight at it without a single hint of fear.

(Soapy smirked then whispered to Sika.)

SOAPY: Except when you wet yourself.

SIKA: I didn't!

FORTINGLY: What? Sorry? Didn't what?

SIKA: Um...

(She fluttered her eyelashes at him innocently.)

SIKA: I didn't... quite catch that, sir. I do apologise.

FORTINGLY: No, no. It's my fault. I tend to speak a little *too* quietly lately. It annoys the chaps at the wine club immensely. But still, you don't care about that.

SIKA: Indeed.

FORTINGLY: I'll recap for you. I was just saying I've never seen such skilfulness and professionalism. I was astonished, quite frankly. You were immense.

(He groaned.)

FORTINGLY: I kind of wish we hadn't sacked you all now.

(An outraged female voice then rose up from behind him.)

LADY HASHAM: You did what???

(Everyone swiftly glanced to where she was glowering at her husband.)

HASHAM: Don't blame me! The generals do the voting; I just advise the supreme commander. And even if I could vote, it wouldn't have done any good. She lost 117-1. The only one who voted to keep women in the army was General Ashwood herself. One more vote from me wouldn't have made the blindest bit of difference.

LADY HASHAM: Didn't you at least *advise* him to keep her???

HASHAM: I did, yes. With sarcasm. Which in hindsight, probably wasn't clever. But I did make it clear that she was probably our best soldier.

LADY HASHAM: I see.

(She then rounded on the supreme commander.)

LADY HASHAM: And you still let her go???

FORTINGLY: Don't you nag me, woman. I'm not your husband.

LADY HASHAM: But letting her go is foolhardy, as you've just witnessed.

FORTINGLY: Yes, but what can I do?

HASHAM: You're the supreme commander. You can do whatever you like. You have a veto for anything the generals vote on.

(Fortingly mused to himself.)

FORTINGLY: I do, don't I? Okay... how about this?

(He then looked to Kasira.)

FORTINGLY: Consider yourself demoted!

KASIRA: What???

FORTINGLY: And then reinstated again!

(He ruffled his neck.)

FORTINGLY: You slept with general Amru! Demoted. Fifth successful wraith infestation. Reinstated. Protocol observed.

(He then shook his head.)

FORTINGLY: Just don't sleep with another general ever again. Naughty you!

(Kasira whimpered.)

KASIRA: Yeah... about that...

FORTINGLY: And he was a married man, no less!

KASIRA: I didn't know that at the time. He lied to me! But as soon as I found out, I kicked him to curb. That's why he bent over backwards to get rid of me at the meeting.

FORTINGLY: Is that so?

KASIRA: Yes!

FORTINGLY: Hmm... and you're sure you didn't know?

KASIRA: Yes! I even made a twat of myself and said I thought he might be the one.

FORTINGLY: Oh, my; how embarrassing.

KASIRA: Tell me about it.

FORTINGLY: Anyway, knowing you didn't intentionally betray my daughter, Amru's wife, I feel a bit better about what I have to say.

(He nodded.)

FORTINGLY: You and your unit will be retained.

AMBRE: But we didn't do anything wrong.

SIKA: Retained, Ambre.

AMBRE: I know what it means, Sika. Thrown in jail.

SIKA: That's *detained*!

CAYLEY: Retained means kept on.

AMBRE: It does?

(Her face then lit up.)

AMBRE: We're listening.

FORTINGLY: Are you?

AMBRE: Um...

(She blushed.)

AMBRE: Carry on.

FORTINGLY: You see, I'm going to create a special unit.

AMBRE: I was in one of them at school.

(The supreme commander gave her a sideways glance then continued.)

FORTINGLY: A special unit, charged with supervising the defeat of any future wraith infestations. Now, it was left to me to choose the men for the job. And I've decided that those men are going to be you six... um... women.

(Everyone shared an interested glance.)

FORTINGLY: What do you think? You'll retain your ranks, of course and continue getting supplies. It'll be like you are now, to be honest. The only difference is, should an infestation arise, you'll be called in to supervise the battle. To help the local police unit and townsfolk.

KASIRA: Interesting.

FORTINGLY: It might not be. You might only get one every five years. It could get really quite boring.

(Kasira glanced at Sika, Soapy and Nivea.)

KASIRA: It'll never be boring at our place, sir.

FORTINGLY: So you'll accept? You'll be given access to one of our speedy boats, obviously. As an emergency service. It'll be based at the academy.

CAYLEY: And can I keep my teaching job?

(She looked at Sika.)

CAYLEY: Sometimes I like to be away from the base.

SIKA: Why did you look at me...

FORTINGLY: Agreed.

(He cringed.)

FORTINGLY: Please? Lady Hasham is terrifying when she's angry, and I have a feeling she really wants you ladies to stay.

(Kasira looked to Lady Hasham, smiled then looked to the supreme commander.)

KASIRA: Where will we be housed?

FORTINGLY: At your base, obviously.

KASIRA: What base? We don't have a base. That's my house. You gave it to me this morning. Signed over the deeds, in fact.

FORTINGLY: I did? I did! Um... you won't hold me to that, will you?

KASIRA: It's really not a big deal, sir. The army rents buildings to house its units all the time. I just want the going rate.

FORTINGLY: Excuse me? You want me to pay you rent???

KASIRA: If the army want to use my house as a base, yes. I'm going to have to insist.

(Lady Hasham smirked.)

LADY HASHAM: Well played.

FORTINGLY: Was it?

LADY HASHAM: Yes. Tell her that her terms are acceptable.

(Fortingly sighed.)

FORTINGLY: Fine...

(He then started to chuckle.)

FORTINGLY: You're a dark one, you are. I like you. It's a deal. Welcome back, General Lovely.

KASIRA: General Ashwood.

FORTINGLY: Her too.

KASIRA: Also...

FORTINGLY: Oh, for fuck sake...

KASIRA: The two other girls from my unit who work in the gatehouse... I'd like them back, please.

(Fortingly rolled his eyes.)

FORTINGLY: Fine. It's a deal. Small price to pay. Happy now?

KASIRA: Yes, sir. Thank you.

NIVEA: Wait, wait, wait. Before I agree to anything, can I keep my job as a stripper?

(Everyone groaned in despair of her.)

FORTINGLY: You have a job as a stripper?

NIVEA: I will have; yes. I haven't started it yet. We're in this town because we were looking for jobs.

(Fortingly shrugged.)

FORTINGLY: As long as you can be reached in case of an emergency, I don't see why not.

NIVEA: Someone will fly over and get me, I expect.

FORTINGLY: Then fine. Take jobs if you like. Just make sure you'll be available to leave at the drop of a hat if an emergency arises.

NIVEA: Result.

HASHAM: You should also know that as a supervisory unit, you'll be getting black status.

SOAPY: Awesome!

CAYLEY: What's that?

SOAPY: Big dog status.

HASHAM: As supervisors called in for specific situations, you'll be in charge. Indisputable. All of you will wield power over every troop or towns-person involved in the fight.

(Ambre glanced from side to side.)

AMBRE: Even me?

HASHAM: Even you. As the experts, your example must be followed. The only people who can tell you what to do are the superiors within your own unit.

SOAPY: So I can still give Sika orders. Good, good.

SIKA: Soapy...

KASIRA: So, we'd have to identify as having black status on arrival at the scene, would we?

LADY HASHAM: Yes. And the black uniforms will confirm it.

HASHAM: You might not like them though. The skirts are, how do I put this...

LADY HASHAM: General Wilson designed them before he was booted out.

KASIRA: So they're short, black, pleated skirts, like school skirts.

LADY HASHAM: Exactly.

(Kasira exhaled.)

KASIRA: They sound adorable.

FORTINGLY: Good grief.

(He rolled his eyes.)

FORTINGLY: Anyway, enough of this dilly-dallying. I want my dinner. To the hotel.

HASHAM: Good idea. And while we're there, I'll arrange for a new unit to take over *this* town. A better one!

FORTINGLY: Yes. Do that. Now let's go. Farewell, ladies.

LADY HASHAM: We'll come to your base tomorrow morning to draw up your contracts before the meeting. Make sure you're up early.

KASIRA: Ma'am!

(Everyone then saluted as the three of them headed away.)

ELDER: I'll be off too. Thanks again, ladies. You're the finest soldiers in the land.

(The elder bowed then raced away and caught up with the others, so he could commend the supreme commander for making a wise decision. Moments later, Kasira lowered her arm then strutted towards the ferry.)

KASIRA: Come on, let's get back to New Capsway Island.

SIKA: Yay. Tea and cake!

AMBRE: And a soak in the bath!

NIVEA: A chance to put our feet up.

KASIRA: Yup. All of those things.

(She then allowed herself a stealthy grin.)

KASIRA: Just as soon as we've wiped out this evening's wraith spawn.)

(She then headed up the gangplank, chuckling at the sound of the growls and groans coming from behind her.)

NIVEA: You can be an evil cow sometimes, Kasira; you really can.

Back on Capsway Island, a few hours later, following a long soak in the bath, the six members of the 123rd Wraith Containment unit gathered around the dining table for tea and cake. As soon as hers was delivered, Sika went to town on it like a savage who hadn't eaten for weeks. Watching her do so, Kasira couldn't help but smirk.

KASIRA: Hungry, Sika?

SIKA: Can't talk; eating.

KASIRA: I'm gonna take that as a yes.

(She then took a sip of her tea and exhaled.)

KASIRA: Ooh, that really hits the spot.

NIVEA: The g-spot, some might say.

(Everyone gave her a sideways glance.)

SOAPY: The g-spot?

CAYLEY: Where are you pouring it, exactly?

NIVEA: I don't mean literally!

(She rolled her eyes.)

NIVEA: I mean, after the long day we've had it tastes almost orgasmic.

KASIRA: And what does orgasmic taste like exactly?

NIVEA: Now you're deliberately being obtuse.

KASIRA: Guilty.

AMBRE: This cake is yummy too.

SOAPY: Truly!

AMBRE: I like today. Today is awesome. We had cake for lunch, cake when we got home and now we're having it again. I could used to this.

CAYLEY: You're not going to though. We only ate cake all day because we were busy and it was there, ready to be eaten.

KASIRA: Yup. Tomorrow it'll be back to things like bacon.

(Everyone's faces lit up.)

SOAPY: Life is great.

NIVEA: Right?

KASIRA: It is. And yet this morning it was all going so shit. We were about to become unemployed. It was pretty terrifying, if I'm honest. Starting anew is really daunting.

NIVEA: We still are starting anew, kind of. I mean, once the wraiths stop coming, it's going to be very different.

CAYLEY: Quieter.

(Sika swallowed down a mouthful then beamed.)

SIKA: Not with me around.

CAYLEY: And that's why I'm glad I'll get to keep my job at the academy.

SIKA: Then you're a bit silly, aren't you?

CAYLEY: Excuse me?

SIKA: We're all going to get an army salary to do nothing all day. We'll just be sitting around waiting for the odd emergency every five years.

CAYLEY: And I'd rather keep busy, thanks.

SIKA: So would most people.

CAYLEY: Then what's your point?

SIKA: We'll *all* be getting army salaries, but the rest of us can go and find outside jobs to earn extra income on top of that. You, on the other hand, just volunteered to keep working at the academy. They don't pay you for that. It's including in your army duties.

(Cayley looked through her blankly for a moment then shrieked.)

CAYLEY: I just volunteered to work for free!!!

AMBRE: What a silly sausage.
(She then hung her head in shame.)
CAYLEY: What was I thinking???
SOAPY: Anything to get away from Sika.
SIKA: Hey!
KASIRA: Relax, Cayley. We didn't sign the new contracts yet. I'm sure we can get you out of it tomorrow.
CAYLEY: Are you?
KASIRA: Absolutely. Lady Hasham said she was coming; she's very receptive to our needs. And the others daren't defy her, judging by what we saw today.
NIVEA: I got that impression too.
KASIRA: See? You'll be fine.
CAYLEY: Right. Good. I'd rather take this opportunity to open a cake shop or something.
(Sika gasped in horror.)
SIKA: And sell all our beautiful cakes to complete strangers?
KASIRA: It doesn't have to be strangers. I'm sure she'll let *you* buy one.
SIKA: Buy it?
CAYLEY: Yes. And no, I don't do store credit.
SIKA: I didn't even ask for any!
SOAPY: Not one person here doesn't think you would at some point though.
CAYLEY: So don't bother, because you'll only be offended by the answer.
SIKA: Wow. Is that how you all see me, is it?
NIVEA: Yup.
SOAPY: Uh-huh.
SIKA: Like some freeloading parasite, leeching of everyone close to me because I'm too pathetic to fend for myself.
SOAPY: Pretty much!
SIKA: Then you're wrong. I'll be more than capable of taking care of myself, thank you. Unlike someone round here, *I* was successful in my job hunt!
CAYLEY: No way.
AMBRE: Really?
SIKA: Why are you all surprised???
NIVEA: Because you're you.
SIKA: Awesome, you mean?
NIVEA: Um... no. No, I do not.
SIKA: Then you're wrong.
(She ruffled her neck.)
SIKA: You all mocked me when we went out. Made out like I was some unemployable idiot. Well now who's the idiot?
NIVEA: Still you!
SIKA: Wrong. Unlike you five, I actually found a job.
AMBRE: No! I got a job too.
NIVEA: So did I!
CAYLEY: And I wasn't even looking for one.
SIKA: Right... well... yeah... but the rest of you look pretty bloody stupid right now, don't you?
(Kasira glowered at her.)
KASIRA: Do I?
(Silence descended as Sika slowly started to sink beneath the table.)
SIKA: Um...

KASIRA: Well?

SIKA: I meant Soapy.

KASIRA: No. *You* said...

(Just then, the doorbell proceeded to chime.)

SIKA: I'll go!!!

(She then sprinted out of the base's main doors and into the yard.)

KASIRA: Nivea!

NIVEA: On it!

(Nivea then raced out after her. Military protocol stated that a single soldier should never attended to a caller alone, just in case of any impropriety. As an all-female unit, Kasira was very much a stickler for adhering to this rule. Safety always came first.)

CAYLEY: Can you believe that? She was going to answer the door by herself.

SOAPY: Irresponsible.

KASIRA: Don't worry. We will be having words about that.

(She furrowed her brow.)

KASIRA: Among other things.

(As the atmosphere soured, everyone shook their head then resumed drinking their tea.

Ambre did so with an uncomfortable expression on her face. Tension in the ranks was something she was extremely sensitive to. She was, however, about to feel ten times more uncomfortable. Having answered to the caller, Nivea and Sika soon returned with a young man in their company. As soon as she saw him, Ambre gasped in astonishment.)

AMBRE: Him!!!

KASIRA: What?

CAYLEY: Wait. He's...

SIKA: Ambre's love monkey.

NIVEA: The one who stopped writing to her.

(She then clouted him around the head.)

ROY: That couldn't be helped!

SIKA: We'll be the judge of that.

NIVEA: And we're not afraid to judge people harshly.

SIKA: And carry out the sentence ourselves!

NIVEA: Harshly!

(Roy gulped at Nivea.)

ROY: Right... yeah... I remember you from my brief spell doing deliveries. You're scary.

NIVEA: Correct.

(Roy then looked to Kasira and flinched.)

ROY: And she's even scarier!

KASIRA: You made Ambre sad!

ROY: Yeah, about that...

KASIRA: Explain!

ROY: I will. I just want to speak to Ambre in private.

AMBRE: I'm eating my cake.

ROY: But...

NIVEA: Listen, chummy, whatever you have to say to Ambre, you can say just as easily in front of *us*.

ROY: But it's embarrassing!

KASIRA: So is being stripped naked and hung from a flagpole, and that's what lies in store for you if don't explain yourself!

(Roy trembled.)

ROY: Right... okay... can I sit down first?

NIVEA: Nope!

KASIRA: What she said!

ROY: Right.

(Feeling quite the fool, Roy whimpered then looked to Ambre.)

ROY: Ambre...

AMBRE: Yes?

ROY: I stopped writing to you...

AMBRE: I know.

ROY: Not because I wanted to, but because...

(He sighed.)

ROY: I got posted and lost your address.

AMBRE: Posted?

(She furrowed her brow then leant closer to Kasira.)

AMBRE: He's lying. They don't make envelopes that big.

KASIRA: No, love. Being posted means being sent somewhere by the army. You were posted here.

AMBRE: Actually, I came by boat.

KASIRA: It's just called being posted, love. Trust me.

(Ambre beamed.)

AMBRE: Okay. If *you* say so then it's good enough for me.

(She then looked to Roy.)

AMBRE: Now where were we?

SOAPY: Chappy-me-lad here was explaining himself.

AMBRE: Oh, yeah. Carry on.

ROY: Right. Well... that was it, you see? I lost your address. I was gutted. I really was. I wanted to keep writing but I didn't know where to.

(He then nodded sternly.)

ROY: It took me a while to find out, but now I have, here I am. I'm back, Ambre. I've come back to love you, to cherish you; to hopefully one day marry you.

KASIRA: You...

CAYLEY: No, Kasira. Ambre's an adult; it's her decision what happens next.

KASIRA: Boo!

CAYLEY: Seriously?

KASIRA: Yes!

(Roy trembled then offered Ambre a warm smile.)

ROY: What do you say, Ambre? Will you be mine?

AMBRE: No, thanks!

KASIRA: Yay!

ROY: Sorry? What? Why not?

AMBRE: Because my address is Capsway Island Military Base. How could anyone forget that?

(She shook her head.)

AMBRE: Sorry, but you're far too dim for me. Even I know the *military base* part was a given. That means you just had to remember two words! One, actually. The *island* bit was obvious.

(She sighed.)

AMBRE: Sorry, but that's no good. I can't be with someone *that* dim-witted. As a couple we'd be a danger to ourselves.

ROY: But... Ambre... really, I'm not dim-witted at all.

(Kasira growled.)

KASIRA: No, you're not, are you? You're not dim; you're lying.
ROY: Lying???
NIVEA: You had to remember one word. Capsway!
KASIRA: Yeah!
AMBRE: Like I said!
SIKA: Fibber!
SOAPY: Why did you *really* stop writing to her?
(Roy whimpered.)
ROY: I'm not lying!
KASIRA: Right. To the flagpole, girls!
ROY: Fine!
(He sighed in defeat.)
ROY: I may have fibbed a little.
CAYLEY: Elaborate!
ROY: Um...
CAYLEY: Elaborate or suffer our wrath!
ROY: Okay, okay...
(He gulped.)
ROY: It's like this. I may have, you know, for a brief period of time, decided to see someone else. And in that time I forgot the name of the island. But I'm back now...
AMBRE: Someone else?
ROY: Um... kind of, yes.
(Ambre grimaced then looked to Kasira.)
AMBRE: Kasira?
KASIRA: Yes, love?
AMBRE: Can you ask him to leave? I would, but I don't like to be rude.
ROY: But, Ambre...
KASIRA: Nivea? Please remove this thing from my base.
NIVEA: It'll be my pleasure, ma'am.
ROY: Thing?
(He then felt a sharp pain in his ear.)
ROY: Ow!!!
NIVEA: Come on, you. Shift.
(She then dragged him out of the door by his ear.)
KASIRA: And don't come back. You're banished!
ROY: But, Ambre, I love you!
(Ambre just rolled her eyes.)
AMBRE: He tells fibs. He's only here now because that someone else didn't want him. I'm nobody's sloppy seconds.
KASIRA: That's right, sweetie.
AMBRE: Stupid him.
(She then looked to Sika.)
AMBRE: Sika?
SIKA: Yeah?
AMBRE: I've been thinking.
SIKA: Did you get a nosebleed?
AMBRE: What? No.
(She then smiled.)
AMBRE: Will you keep writing to me, because I really like getting letters.
(Sika shuddered.)

SIKA: God, no. Now you know it's *me* who's writing them, that'd be seriously twisted.

AMBRE: Oh.

SIKA: Sorry.

AMBRE: Can I write to you then?

SIKA: That's just as twisted!

AMBRE: Why? I just want to tell you about my day?

SIKA: Oh. You mean like, friend letters, not love letters.

AMBRE: Yeah. It's nice to get a letter.

(Sika nodded thoughtfully.)

SIKA: Yeah, that might be nice actually. Let's do that.

AMBRE: Yay!

(She nodded.)

AMBRE: Today is such a good, good day.

KASIRA: Well... it certainly hasn't turned out badly. We've just secured our jobs for the long-term future.

SOAPY: Plus, you now own a large building and will get *paid* to live in it.

KASIRA: Right? Yup, the wraith war is about to end, and we're all going to come out of the other side of it in a really good place.

SIKA: With all our life expenses paid for the foreseeable future.

SOAPY: And with black status.

CAYLEY: Plus time on our hands to do as we please.

AMBRE: Like earn lots and lots of money.

KASIRA: Or just sit on our arses and relax.

(She exhaled.)

KASIRA: Perfect. You know, if anyone asks who won the wraith war, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say mankind sneaked a draw in the end, but the girls of this unit won on points.

SIKA: Winners. I like that.

KASIRA: Well, we are. It all turned out well and we're sitting pretty. Yup, life is pretty great.

(As had happened far too often for Kasira's liking, her moment of happiness was then shattered into a million pieces. She'd barely had the chance to take a victory sip of her tea when arguing rose up from the doorway.)

NIVEA: You can't just barge in here uninvited!!!

REX: Invite us then!

NIVEA: No. You're not welcome.

LASSU: Look, Nivea, this is important, so just step aside.

NIVEA: No. Hey, don't shove me!

(She growled.)

NIVEA: Stupid swift-human men; you're too big to throw out!

REX: Then stop trying!

(The two of them barged their way into the living room. Having heard them coming, Kasira had leapt to her feet in readiness to chastise them. Unfortunately, she didn't even manage a single word before they hurried over to her and proceeded to state their case.)

REX: Kasira, we've come to an agreement.

LASSU: You have a decision to make.

REX: Me or the wrong one.

LASSU: You're the wrong one!

REX: Well, Kasira. Who's it going to be?

LASSU: We agreed that the loser will surrender and leave, so just put us out of our misery.

REX: Which one of us gets to love you forever?
LASSU: Well?
REX: Decide!
LASSU: Now!
REX: No pressure, but hurry up.
LASSU: We need to know.
NIVEA: Then let her speak!
REX: What? Oh, yeah.
LASSU: Sorry! You may speak.
(Kasira furrowed her brow.)
KASIRA: How generous.
LASSU: Of course, love is about sharing.
REX: And caring. Which I do more than him.
LASSU: No, you don't.
NIVEA: Stop it! Like I said, let her speak.
REX: Fine. Speak.
LASSU: Speak well.
(Kasira looked to them blankly then shrugged.)
KASIRA: Actually...
REX: Yes?
LASSU: Go on.
KASIRA: I don't want either of you.
REX: That wasn't one of the options.
LASSU: What he said. Be serious; this is important.
KASIRA: But it's true. I don't want either of you.
REX: I don't believe you.
LASSU: She's lying.
REX: Clearly.
(Realising they weren't about to simply take her word for it, Kasira could only sigh. Satisfied she had little choice but to get creative if she was ever going to convince them, she then offered them an apologetic smile.)
KASIRA: Sorry, but I'm just not into men anymore.
(She then took Nivea's arm.)
KASIRA: I'm a lesbian now. Nivea and I are an item.
NIVEA: What?
(She then looked enlightened.)
NIVEA: Oh. Yeah. We are.
(Worryingly for Kasira, Nivea then developed an evil grin.)
KASIRA: Uh-oh.
NIVEA: She's my little lesbian love bunny.
(She then slammed a flat palm into Kasira's backside.)
NIVEA: People say our public displays of affection are a little excessive sometimes, but we're happy. Right, sugar lump?
KASIRA: Um... ecstatic.
NIVEA: See?
(She then turned Kasira to face her and planted a giant kiss on her lips. At once, Kasira's eyes bulged and she struggled to free herself. Alas, she was no match for Nivea's strength.)
AMBRE: Cayley?
CAYLEY: Yes, love?
AMBRE: Why are they doing that?

(Sika winked at her in a bid to help her understand it was a rouse.)

SIKA: They're in love.

AMBRE: Huh?

(She then allowed her head to plop onto the table.)

AMBRE: Great. Now I'm all confused again.

REX: You're not the only one.

LASSU: Is this for real?

(Nivea then pulled out of the kiss and slipped her arm around Kasira, making sure to grab her boobs as she reached round. Kasira whimpered, looked down at her boob then grimaced at Rex and Lassu.)

KASIRA: Um... yeah... so that's how it is. Sorry. I'm into... this now.

LASSU: Well that sucks.

REX: I'll say. We're never gonna be able to compete with that.

LASSU: Well, no.

(He sighed.)

LASSU: But losing out to her is better than losing to you, I suppose.

REX: Well, there is that, yes.

LASSU: We should go. I need a stiff drink.

REX: Best idea I've heard all day.

(They then about turned and headed out of the door. Inside the base, everyone remained perfectly silent listening for the gate to close. Moments later, when they heard it click shut, Nivea chuckled then glanced at Kasira.)

NIVEA: That was fun.

(A deep sense of foreboding then washed over her. The look in Kasira's eyes suggested it had been anything but fun. It suggested that she'd gone way too far and that Kasira was about to kill her.)

NIVEA: Um...

KASIRA: Let go of my boob right now!

NIVEA: Oh... yeah.

(Nivea relented then gave her a cheesy grin.)

NIVEA: So...

(She then sprinted for the door as fast as she could. Not about to let her get away, Kasira swiftly gave chase.)

KASIRA: Come back here, you subterranean menace; I'm gonna chop your arms off!

NIVEA: I was helping!!!

KASIRA: Nivea!!!

(Sitting at the table, the others watched them race outside then listened on as Nivea fled out of the gates.)

KASIRA: There's nowhere to hide this time, woman!!! Groping me indeed!

NIVEA: I was doing you a favour!

KASIRA: I'm going to kill you!

NIVEA: I'd rather you didn't!

KASIRA: Come here!!!

NIVEA: Aw, crap!

(As Nivea's panicking words echoed off into the distance, Cayley rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: What can I say, girls?

(She chuckled.)

CAYLEY: We always knew she'd end up going way too far *one* day.

SIKA: Right?

(Soapy chuckled.)

SOAPY: Perfect.

(They then set about explaining everything to Ambre; giggling remorselessly as they did so.)

THREE MONTHS LATER...

Any newcomers to New Capsway Island on this fine, sunny morning would have been greeted by quite the bizarre sight. On the beach adjacent to the main jetty, Fluffy was sitting in the sand, sunbathing. Nestled upon his legs, Ambre was sitting quietly, staring out to sea. These humanoid men constructed entirely from rock would normally turn up when summoned, play their part in a battle then vanish when dismissed. Flying in the face of everything mankind understood about these beings, however, Ambre had managed to befriend hers. It had even been known to appear without being asked, just to protect her when she was scared or anxious. Needless to say, she loved him dearly.

As she sat there, relaxing, enjoying the peace and tranquillity of her surroundings, Ambre couldn't help but let her mind wander. Being cursed with a low IQ such moments usually led to her confusing herself by mixing up things she'd heard. On this day, however, one thought was coming through loud and clear.)

AMBRE: I miss wraiths.

FLUFFY: Fluffy not like wraiths. Wraiths try to hurt Ambre.

AMBRE: Yeah... they were horrible. But back then, I used to get to play with you every day. Now I only see you on my days off.

FLUFFY: Fluffy like your days off.

AMBRE: Me too. I just wish I had more of them, so we could play together.

FLUFFY: Ambre not happy anymore?

AMBRE: No, it's not that.

(She smiled.)

AMBRE: I'm having lots and lots of fun. I just miss you, that's all.

FLUFFY: Fluffy want Ambre to be happy.

AMBRE: I am. I'm just very busy. Kasira started a hair and beauty business, you see? And I'm her assistant. I have to clean all her instruments and gather the beetles she needs for her concoctions. She's making lots and lots of money and she pays *me* lots and lots of money too. I even have savings.

FLUFFY: Fluffy not know about money.

AMBRE: It's what humans use to buy things.

FLUFFY: Fluffy still not know.

AMBRE: It doesn't matter. It's just something people need to get by in human worlds.

(She exhaled.)

AMBRE: I never thought I'd have savings. I'm really happy about that. When they turned the academy into a training centre for policemen, they also built lots and lots of houses. The town was quite small before, but now it's getting quite big. There's even a really nice hotel. So there's lots and lots of customers around. The trainees have wives, you see. So do the holidaymakers. And they really like Kasira's beauty salon.

FLUFFY: Ambre sounds happy again.

AMBRE: I am. It's all going so well. For all of us. Soapy goes out and catches a tuna every day then sells it to Sika for lots and lots of money. Then Sika chops it up and sells it to people because she's managed to convince them it's a delicacy; so she makes lots and lots of money too. So does Nivea. She goes to the new club in town three nights a week and comes

home with lots and lots of money. Sometimes in her thong, which is a bit weird. And Cayley has her own cake shop. She gets paid lots and lots of money for them because they really yummy.

FLUFFY: Everyone happy makes Ambre happy.

AMBRE: It does. Even Eksi and Lycia are making money. They work on reception at the hotel. Kasira says the time they spent in the gatehouse was valuable experience.

FLUFFY: Maybe Fluffy should make money.

AMBRE: You should. It's fun.

FLUFFY: Fluffy joke. Fluffy not need.

AMBRE: Oh. Sorry. I'm not good at spotting jokes.

(She then climbed to her feet.)

AMBRE: I should get back soon.

FLUFFY: Fluffy understand.

AMBRE: Yay!

(She then gave Fluffy a hug.)

AMBRE: I'll summon you again soon.

FLUFFY: Fluffy look forward.

(He then vanished into the ether, leaving Ambre alone on the sand.)

AMBRE: He's a rock-man of so few words.

(She then took one step away when she heard yelling from the seafront.)

SOAPY: Ambre!

(Ambre turned to look towards the ocean.)

AMBRE: Hi, Soapy.

(Soapy was marching towards her with a large tuna under her arm.)

SOAPY: What are you doing out here?

AMBRE: I was playing with Fluffy.

SOAPY: Oh? Not catching beetles today?

AMBRE: It's my day off.

SOAPY: Oh yeah.

(Ambre peered under Soapy's arm.)

AMBRE: That's a really, really big fish.

SOAPY: I know, right? I'm gonna be quids in.

(She beamed.)

SOAPY: I charge Sika by the pound.

AMBRE: Ooh.

SOAPY: Kerching.

AMBRE: Sika will be happy too. Lots and lots to sell.

SOAPY: Yup, the system works. How she manages to convince gullible tourists and police wives that tuna is a delicacy, I'll never know, but I'm not complaining. The fact she's a born saleswoman is making us both very rich indeed.

(They shared a chuckle.)

SOAPY: Oh, well. I'd better get this to Sika while it's still soaking wet. Like I said, I charge by the pound and they're heavier when wet.

AMBRE: I'll come with you then.

(They then turned to head for the base, only to find Kasira, Cayley, Nivea and Sika heading towards them.)

SOAPY: What's this?

AMBRE: They're our unit-mates.

SOAPY: I said what's this; not who are they?

AMBRE: Sorry. Thought your brain malfunctioned again.

SOAPY: When has it ever done that?

AMBRE: Like that time in the snow when you forgot you could breath underwater and do magic.

SOAPY: I hadn't actually forgotten, I was being ironic.

AMBRE: Huh?

SOAPY: I was playing.

AMBRE: Are you sure?

SOAPY: Oh, never mind.

(She then glanced up and saw Sika hurrying towards them.)

SIKA: Damn. That's one huge fish!

SOAPY: Yup.

SIKA: And look at the size of the tuna she's carrying.

SOAPY: Seriously? You do that same joke every fucking day!

SIKA: And yet it never stops being hilarious!

SOAPY: Because it never started.

(She rolled her eyes.)

SOAPY: Anyway, let's get back and weigh this thing.

SIKA: No, let's wait for a bit. You charge by the pound, so I'd rather it dried out a bit first.

SOAPY: Fine. We'll wait. But I'll roll it in the sea again before we leave.

SIKA: Why you...

(At this point, Kasira, Cayley and Nivea caught them up.)

KASIRA: Hi, girls.

(She looked to Ambre.)

KASIRA: Thought I'd find you here.

AMBRE: I was playing with Fluffy.

CAYLEY: And how is he?

AMBRE: He's lovely.

NIVEA: Wow. Look at the size of that fish. And look at the size of that tuna she's...

SOAPY: Sika already did that joke!

NIVEA: Shit.

(Kasira chuckled.)

KASIRA: You girls, crack me up.

AMBRE: Um... yeah. They're hilarious.

(She then glanced from side to side innocently.)

AMBRE: So... what brings you to the beach, Kasira?

(Kasira exhaled.)

KASIRA: We decided we'd come down here and have our morning tea. You might as well join us, seeing as we've all got the day off.

SOAPY: Not all of us.

CAYLEY: No?

(Soapy furrowed her brow at her.)

SOAPY: Does it look like my day off?

CAYLEY: Well...

SOAPY: What do you mean, well? Like I'd waste my down time walking around the island with a giant tuna under my arm just for poops and giggles. This is for Sika.

SIKA: Sucks to be you then, this is my day off.

SOAPY: What???

SIKA: Just kidding. We'll go and weigh it as soon as it's dry.

SOAPY: Sika...

KASIRA: Don't bicker; it's too nice a day for that.

(She then stepped forward and stared out to sea.)

KASIRA: This is a rare chance to relax and enjoy some down time together. So let's make the most of it.

CAYLEY: Hear, hear.

SOAPY: Works for me. We've been kinda busy lately, haven't we? So we haven't really spent as much time together as we ought to.

KASIRA: Exactly my thinking. I was going to suggest we set aside one morning a week to have some fun together.

AMBRE: Yay!

SIKA: I'm in.

NIVEA: Your haircut isn't.

SOAPY: Hasn't been for years.

SIKA: Jokes on you, bitches; Kasira did my hair.

(Soapy and Nivea gulped then glanced to where Kasira was glowering at them.)

KASIRA: Her hair is adorable.

SOAPY: Um... yeah.

NIVEA: Agreed.

SIKA: Ha!

KASIRA: Now stop baiting one another and let me enjoy the day.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: Our lives are excellent. We all have jobs we enjoy; a luxurious place to live; all our financial needs are covered before we even start; life doesn't get any better than that. And yet for a moment there, it looked like things were going to end so badly. Booted out of the army and forced to take whatever shitty jobs we could find. I mean, you didn't really want to twiddle that sign and welcome people to that resort, did you, Ambre?

AMBRE: Well... I wouldn't have minded, no. But what I do now is much better.

KASIRA: And you, Sika. Don't tell me you don't prefer what you do now to the thought of going to an office every day.

SIKA: There's no comparison. Soapy and I are making a fortune with our tuna racket.

SOAPY: Amen, sister.

KASIRA: So there you go. We had a hellish time in the army. We really did. General Wilson was a vile monster. And the townspeople before the first haze break... we got abused, assaulted and even raped. Dark times. But we've worked our way out of that. Through the misery of five wraith infestations, we've emerged into a wonderful place. Our lives couldn't be any better this, so let's milk the moment for everything it's worth, shall we?

CAYLEY: Definitely. And brilliantly put, Kasira. Nobody could have foreseen how well things would turn out. Nobody.

NIVEA: Nope. Sometimes, back then, I kind felt like we joked around and laughed all the time just to take our minds off of the hardship.

SIKA: I think you might be right.

AMBRE: It's not like that anymore though.

SOAPY: Everyone's smiles are genuine now.

KASIRA: Exactly. So let's be sure to celebrate that fact together; a lot more often than we have been doing.

AMBRE: I'd love that.

(She smiled.)

AMBRE: Even with the silly bickering, it's fun when we get together. And even when two people fall out, they soon make peace. Even when you gave Nivea that black eye, Kasira.

(Nivea grimaced.)

NIVEA: Why would you bring that up?

KASIRA: Don't worry about it. It's all water under the bridge now.

(She sneered.)

KASIRA: But if you grope me again...

(Nivea chuckled.)

NIVEA: What? You'll take a swing at me and miss again?

KASIRA: I didn't miss the second time.

NIVEA: You didn't swing a second time! You tripped forwards and accidentally headbutted me in the face.

KASIRA: And it was very satisfying.

(They shared an amused grin.)

KASIRA: Now let's have this tea.

(She then sat down and nestled her backside in the sand. The others quickly followed suit.)

KASIRA: Cayley, Nivea, Ambre, Sika, Soapy... you girls are the best friends I've ever had. And the best workmates any one could ever ask for. Being with you girls is an absolute pleasure. And long may it continue.

CAYLEY: Hear, hear!

NIVEA: What she said.

AMBRE: Yay!

SIKA: Love it!

SOAPY: Me too.

KASIRA: Oh, and Sika?

SIKA: Yes?

KASIRA: Before you ask, yes. I did bring some biscuits.

SIKA: Wow, Kasira. You fucking rule.

CAYLEY: Now that we can all agree on.

(Everyone threw her approving smiles.)

KASIRA: Thanks, guys. Say, if you all love me that much, you lot can pour the tea for me. And make mine a large one.

CAYLEY: I'll just...

KASIRA: Now, missy! Get cracking.

CAYLEY: Wow. Even during our time off, she's still a bloody tyrant.

KASIRA: And don't forget it, minion.

CAYLEY: Kasira?

KASIRA: Yes?

CAYLEY: Would you like this tea in a cup or in you lap?

KASIRA: Um... cup, please.

CAYLEY: Then behave.

KASIRA: Yes, ma'am.

(They then sat there giggling together. It was the beginning of a fun morning out. The first of many. After all the misery they'd endured at the hands of wraith hoards, they all agreed on one thing. They'd earned the right to enjoy life and they went on to do so with some considerable aplomb.)

THE END

SIKA: And so concludes my five part biography! The Sika Owsley Chronicles.

SOAPY: How many times? These stories aren't just about *you*!!!

SIKA: Don't kid yourself, fish-girl. I was the star of the show by quite some margin.

SOAPY: The star? Sika; the first part was about *me* coming out of the academy and joining the unit. *You* didn't even appear until page fifteen because were just a secondary character!

SIKA: Secondary character??? How dare you? The second part was all about keeping *me* in the unit! Me!!! Not you!

SOAPY: Yeah, the *second* part. And that's sums you up in a nutshell, doesn't it? You're nothing but an inferior sequel.

SIKA: Sequel??? Inferior??? Hey! Where are you going? Come back! Soapy!!! Hey!!! Oh, what do you know? I'm going to take a nap. Stupid fish.

The Hammer Falls on Capsway Island. The storyline and all characters are a creation of the artist. The artist reserves all rights to this story and everything within.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED – Futile Fantasy Creations.

Completed – 23/11/2022.