

FUTILE FANTASY CREATIONS PRESENT...

THE LAST RITES OF CAPSWAY ISLAND.

(Capsway Island. Two months after the victorious end to the underground wraith infestation that had seen the girls of the wraith containment unit decorated for their bravery and fortitude for a second time.)

Fifteen minutes after darkness had descended, a soothing breeze swept across Capsway Island. It was just what the doctor had ordered. The night remained warm, but the breeze was gloriously cooling. It was the perfect evening to be out and about beneath the starry sky. All was calm. All was peaceful. But for the sound of birdsong and the sea lapping the shore, all was silent.

Suddenly, in a cacophony of high-pitched panicked screams, the silence was shattered into a million fragments. Looking tortured and terrified, Sika and Soapy, the two youngest members of the island's wraith containment unit came racing down the hill towards their base. Carrying the third in command, Nivea, upon a makeshift stretcher, they were extremely distressed.

SIKA: How could this have happened???

SOAPY: I don't know!!!

(Lying across the plank of wood that her two subordinates were carrying, Nivea whimpered.)

NIVEA: How bad is it? Is it bad? It is really bad?

SOAPY: You saw it!

NIVEA: I know, but maybe it looks worse than it is.

SIKA: Nivea, trust me, it's really bad, okay?

(Turning paler by the second, Nivea winced.)

NIVEA: Do you think... do you think Cayley can...

SOAPY: Yes! We just have to get you there first.

SIKA: Just take deep breaths and don't look at it, okay? Think of happy things if you can.

SOAPY: What *she* said. Just try not to panic, Nivea. We'll get you to Cayley as fast as we can.

(Nivea bit her lip then closed her eyes in anguish.)

NIVEA: I'm so fucking stupid. It was my own sword!

(She then opened her eyes again.)

NIVEA: It's really deep, isn't it? I cut into it really deep, didn't I? I can feel it.

SIKA: Nivea, stop that. Like I said, try to think of happy things. Be positive!

NIVEA: How can I be? This could be the end.

(Tears then welled in her eyes.)

NIVEA: And I had such plans. The posh dinner tonight; Kasira's wedding in the morning... Now I might not... I may never...

(Soapy growled.)

SOAPY: Shut up, Nivea. It's not over yet! It's bad; the worse cut I've ever seen, but Cayley is a miracle worker, remember?

SIKA: Yeah, there's nothing she can't fix...

(She then looked back at Nivea and winced.)

SIKA: Even that.

SOAPY: Exactly. Now relax; we'll get you there, okay? You'll see. Cayley will work her magic and everything will be fine.

(Starting to feel somewhat woozy, Nivea pouted.)

NIVEA: God, I hope so.

(She sighed.)

NIVEA: My own sword, for fuck sake.

(She then snarled and thumped the stretcher in frustration, causing Sika and Soapy to drop it and send her rolling down the hill.)

NIVEA: Hey!!!

SIKA: Nivea!!!

SOAPY: Well that aint gonna help!

SIKA: Get her back on it!

SOAPY: You think?

(With that, they rushed up to Nivea, cast her back onto the plank then picked it up and raced away with her again.)

SIKA: Don't thump it this time.

SOAPY: Yeah, you could have done even *more* damage now.

NIVEA: Sorry, girls.

(As they raced on urgently, Nivea shook her head then forced a rueful smile.)

NIVEA: I love to tease you girls, you know that? And you love teasing me. But now I'm in trouble, you're working so damned hard to save me. I love you guys.

(Sika and Soapy's eyes immediately welled up.)

SIKA: We love you too.

SOAPY: Yeah, we...

(She then snarled determinedly.)

SOAPY: No! That's how losers talk! Well, we're not gonna lose *this* one. We're gonna get you back to Cayley and everything will be fine, you'll see!

SIKA: Yeah! Just relax, Nivea. We've got you.

(Moments later, they arrived back at the base, cast the plank to one side then carried Nivea inside by hand. As they bundled through the doors in a panic, Sika immediately yelled to where their unit mate, Ambre, was colouring in a picture at the table.)

SIKA: Where's Cayley???

(Ambre jumped to her feet in a dither.)

AMBRE: In the bath. Why, what's wrong?

(Offering up no answer, Sika and Soapy deposited Nivea on the table, then Soapy sprinted towards the bath.)

AMBRE: What's wrong, Nivea? You're all pale.

(She then looked down Nivea's body and gasped in horror.)

AMBRE: You sliced yourself down the leg!

(Nivea looked up at her through weary eyes.)

NIVEA: It'll be fine, darling. Cayley will be here soon.

SIKA: Yeah. Just try to relax.

(Not good at hiding her feelings, Ambre pouted sorrowfully.)

AMBRE: I'm sad now!

SIKA: Don't upset yourself, Ambre.

NIVEA: Yeah, it'll be fine.

AMBRE: But how did it happen? Did the wraiths get you?

(Nivea sighed in frustration.)

NIVEA: If only. I did it myself while I was spinning.

AMBRE: But how could...

SIKA: Ambre, she can explain later. Don't make her relive it right now.

AMBRE: Okay.

(With that, both Soapy and Ambre glanced at the door urgently, praying for Cayley to come quickly. As they did so, Nivea tried to sit up and take a closer look at herself. Not about to let her torture herself, Sika immediately pushed her chest back down.)

SIKA: Don't.

(Nivea pouted at her for a moment then forced a grin.)

NIVEA: You touched my boob.

SIKA: No, I didn't!

NIVEA: Yeah, you did. We should make out.

SIKA: Nivea!!!

(Nivea chuckled then started to cough.)

NIVEA: Sorry.

(She then laid her head back and spoke in a weak voice.)

NIVEA: Girls? I'm cold.

(At once, Sika's eyes bulged and she bellowed at the door.)

SIKA: Hurry up!!!

AMBRE: I'll get you a blanket.

SIKA: Stuff the blanket!

AMBRE: With what?

SIKA: What? Nothing! I'm saying she doesn't need a blanket, she needs Cayley! Like now!!! Cayley can make it right!

(She then looked at Nivea's face and saw her eyes were firmly closed.)

SIKA: Nivea???

(Just then, Cayley, the unit's second in command, rushed into the room, pulling a t-shirt over her naked body. Soapy raced in behind her.)

CAYLEY: Relax, Nivea, I'm here now.

(She then glanced at Nivea's legs and whimpered.)

CAYLEY: Holy poop!!!

(Wasting no time, she then rushed to Nivea's side and glanced her up and down. In that moment her heart sunk. Devastated, she looked at Nivea's eyes closed eyes then shook her head in sorrow.)

CAYLEY: Sorry, guys. I'm so sorry. There's nothing I can do.

SOAPY: You mean...

(Cayley nodded tearfully.)

CAYLEY: Yes. Her dress is ruined.

(Nivea immediately sat up and pouted at her in distress.)

NIVEA: Please don't say that, Cayley. Tell me you can do something. Kasira's rehearsal dinner is in just over an hour! She'll kill me if I don't turn up in this!

CAYLEY: Which begs the question, why did you go wraith killing in your bridesmaid's dress anyway?

NIVEA: Because it looks awesome on me.

(Sika sneered at Cayley.)

SIKA: Seriously? You can't fix it??? So, we carried this fat lump all the way down the hill for nothing?

NIVEA: Fat lump??? You cheeky git, you're gonna pay for that!

CAYLEY: Wait. What? You carried her?

SOAPY: Yeah. On a makeshift stretcher. She's got high heels on and we needed to get here quickly.

CAYLEY: She could have taken them off.

NIVEA: I didn't want to get my feet dirty!

SIKA: Plus, she was freaking out and panicking. It just made sense.

CAYLEY: Right. Well, sorry. I can't do anything. I've never seen such a massive cut. You've slashed it all down the leg. There's material missing and a great, big splatter of dirt on the midriff. There's nothing I can do! Certainly not with an hour's notice.

(She sighed.)

CAYLEY: How the hell did you manage to ruin it so badly, anyway?

NIVEA: Well...

(She grimaced.)

NIVEA: I started to spin like I always do. You know? Faster and faster. And the quicker I went, the more it rose up my body until the hem got sucked onto my blade.

(She shrugged.)

NIVEA: I wasn't expecting that, you see? I've never worn an ankle length dress when fighting wraiths before.

(She then laid her head back.)

NIVEA: I feel really sick now.

AMBRE: You're all pale.

NIVEA: I'm anxious, Ambre. Kasira is going to be fucking livid. She bought us five matching dresses. Nice ones. And I've destroyed mine before we've even got started!

CAYLEY: Yeah. Torn the bottom to pieces and got mud all over your stomach. How did that happen?

(Nivea pouted.)

NIVEA: Those two morons dropped the stretcher.

SIKA: That was *your* fault!

SOAPY: You thumped it! We could barely lift your fat arse as it was.

NIVEA: You too, Soapy? This does not end well for either of you.

CAYLEY: It ends better for them than it does for you. Kasira is going to murder you in cold blood. Like she's not stressed enough about her wedding as it is.

(She sucked her teeth.)

CAYLEY: Not good.

NIVEA: I might just get in a rowing boat later and see where the tide takes me. Even if I die, it'll be better than showing Kasira this dress.

AMBRE: Are you sure there's nothing we can do, Cayley?

SIKA: There has to be something.

SOAPY: There *has* to be. Kasira wants us to match, guys. If we can't match in the dresses she bought, she might make us all wear our army uniforms.

(At once, they all shuddered.)

AMBRE: I quite like the new uniforms they supplied but I want to wear my bridesmaid dress.

SIKA: So do I.

NIVEA: Are you absolutely sure there's nothing you can do, Cayley?

CAYLEY: Yes! Other than...

(In that moment, she froze and a thoughtful expression crossed her brow.)

SIKA: What is it, Cayley?

SOAPY: Have you thought of something?

NIVEA: Tell me you've had an idea.

CAYLEY: Actually, there *might* be something we can do. We don't have to meet Kasira at the rehearsal dinner for about an hour, right?

NIVEA: Right.

CAYLEY: So, maybe I can...

(In that moment, Cayley looked extremely lively.)

CAYLEY: Nivea, take that dress off. Slowly. Make sure you don't rip it any further than it is.

NIVEA: Ma'am.

CAYLEY: The rest of you, go and get your bridesmaid dresses. Hurry! Soapy, get mine.

SOAPY: Ma'am.

(With that, Ambre, Soapy and Sika charged from the room.)

CAYLEY: Bring yours to my room when you're done, Nivea. That's where I keep my seamstress utensils.

(She then turned to go.)

CAYLEY: I'll also put some underwear on while I'm there. I'm wondering about with no knickers on and everyone can see my girly garden.

(As she headed away, Nivea spied her naked backside and grinned.)

NIVEA: Nice arse.

CAYLEY: Some of my stitching needles are extremely long and sharp, Nivea...

NIVEA: My bad. Forget I said anything.

CAYLEY: Agreed.

A short while later, Cayley stood before the table in her bedroom with concentration etched in her eyes. Keeping her hand perfectly steady, she drew a pencil line down a dress then puffed out anxiously. Without even looking, she then held her palm towards where Soapy was standing at her side.)

CAYLEY: Scalpel.

(Soapy immediately passed her a sharp knife and she cut along the material. Taking extreme care, she licked her lips nervously, determined to keep a steady hand. Once the cut had been made, she then handed the dress to Soapy.)

CAYLEY: Give that to Nivea, please. Tell her stitch it exactly as I explained earlier. Just like the one she's working on.

(Soapy nodded firmly.)

SOAPY: Ma'am.

(She then passed Nivea the dress.)

SOAPY: Cayley said...

NIVEA: I heard her.

SOAPY: Right.

(Just then, Cayley held out her hand again.)

CAYLEY: Pencil!

(At once, Soapy glanced around for the pencil then rushed it into her hand.)

SOAPY: Sorry.

CAYLEY: It's fine. We're doing well.

(She then looked to Nivea.)

CAYLEY: How's the patient?

(Nivea looked to the dress she was stitching and nodded.)

NIVEA: All the vital signs are stable.

CAYLEY: Good. Then we might just get this done in time.

(In the main living quarters at this time, Ambre and Sika were pacing up and down impatiently, like expectant fathers in a waiting room.)

SIKA: I can't stand this wait, Ambre. I just wish one of them would give us a sign.

AMBRE: I just wish I'd been allowed to help.

SIKA: You don't know how to stitch. Nor do I, that's why they left us out here.

AMBRE: But Cayley said you...

SIKA: She was joking! She didn't *really* leave me out here because I'm noisy, prone to panic and get on her nerves when I'm stressed.

AMBRE: Actually...

SIKA: Shut up, Ambre!

AMBRE: Mean!

SIKA: Besides, you're more prone to panic than I am.

(Ambre blushed.)

AMBRE: I turn into a gazelle.

SIKA: Yeah.

AMBRE: You can't have a gazelle running about when you're trying to concentrate.

SIKA: Well, no.

AMBRE: That'd put your right off.

SIKA: And then some.

AMBRE: It's best that I wait out here really.

SIKA: Still. Some news would be nice. Waiting is so stressful.

AMBRE: I know. If this all goes in the poo bin, it's gonna be so bad. Kasira's gonna be so angry. She bought us five nice dresses and if Cayley can't make them all match, all that money she spent will be wasted. And it's too late to replace them; she gets married tomorrow.

SIKA: I know.

(She trembled.)

SIKA: Kasira will go nuts. Literally mental. I'm scared.

AMBRE: So am I.

SIKA: She'll be even angrier than that time I blew her into orbit by mistake.

AMBRE: No. She'll never be *that* angry again.

SIKA: She will! At Nivea! I'll make damn sure the blame ends up where it belongs. I'm not facing *her* wrath again. She's scary when she's angry.

AMBRE: I wouldn't know.

(She then glanced to the ceiling.)

AMBRE: You would though. You're always making her angry. Sometimes I think you do it on purpose.

SIKA: Hey! Mean. I've been really good these few weeks. I only answered back once. And that was justified. It really *wasn't* my turn to take the dishes out.

AMBRE: There was *one* dish.

SIKA: Dish then.

AMBRE: And it was yours.

SIKA: But...

AMBRE: You had a snack.

SIKA: Oh, be quiet.

(As Ambre pouted at her, Sika sighed then continued to pace up and down.)

SIKA: I'm so nervous, Ambre. Cayley has one shot at this and if she doesn't succeed, well... it doesn't bear thinking about.

Over at the Island's civic hall at this time, Kasira, the 123rd wraith containment unit's leader, was deep in conversation with her intended, Lassu. On either side of them were long tables, adorned with plates and cutlery. Behind them was a long table where they'd be sitting with several uninvited guests. These uninvited guests being the topic of their discussion.

KASIRA: So far I've seen a general, two majors and a commandant. Seriously high-ranking officers.

LASSU: I know. Not exactly being subtle, are they? They army, I mean.

KASIRA: Not even slightly. They must think we're stupid.

LASSU: Clearly.

KASIRA: Well, tough. I don't care how many members of the high command they send, I'm not staying on. I agreed to stay for another week to help the two replacements settle in, then I'm out of the army forever.

(Lassu sighed.)

LASSU: Or as they'd see it, they've got a whole week longer to convince you to stay.

KASIRA: I know, right?

(She then shrugged.)

KASIRA: I won't complain though. They're so desperate to keep me, they paid for this plush wedding. And I get to hold it here on the island with all my friends. I couldn't be happier about that. They're wasting their time though, my mind's made up. One week from now, Ambre and I will sail off to meet you and we won't even look back.

(She then blushed.)

KASIRA: Actually, we will. We'll wave like crazy, bawling our eyes out probably. Leaving won't be easy.

(Lassu chuckled.)

LASSU: It wasn't like that for me when I left the army yesterday. I said a quick farewell then buggered off.

KASIRA: Really? So, you're not even gonna miss the boys?

LASSU: I'll miss the camaraderie, of course. I'm swapping that for boning you every night though, so trust me, no complaints.

(Kasira grimaced.)

KASIRA: You say the sweetest things.

LASSU: What can I say? I'm an incurable romantic.

KASIRA: Right.

(They shared an amused grin then Kasira glanced to where the army general was sipping from a wine glass.)

KASIRA: A general, Lassu. Serious top brass. Can you believe it?

LASSU: They're pulling out the stops, darling.

KASIRA: I'll say.

(She allowed herself a stifled laugh.)

KASIRA: They might have at least tried to come up with a convincing lie though. Like we're supposed to believe there was a training exercise in the area and they're just popping in on their way back.

LASSU: Only an idiot would believe that.

KASIRA: Right? Even Ambre was sceptical.

(She then hurried to qualify her comment.)

KASIRA: Not that she's an idiot. She just has difficulties. I love Ambre.

LASSU: You don't have to convince me, Kasira.

(He smiled.)

LASSU: So, is Ambre okay with leaving the army before her military terms finishes?

KASIRA: Of course. She'll miss the others, Sika mostly, but yeah. The army sent her to me to be killed, Lassu. She doesn't owe them any favours.

(She shrugged.)

KASIRA: So, yeah, seeing as she has the right to leave by law if her legal guardian is willing to take her in, she's happy to do that. She's always happy. She's going to brighten our lives, that's for sure. I wouldn't be without her.

LASSU: Where you go, she goes, I know. And what *you* want, *I* want. So, in case you were ever in doubt, don't be. I'm glad she's going to be sharing our lives. If it makes you happy then it's fine by me.

KASIRA: That's so sweet. You're a great guy, Lassu. I...

(Just then, one of the officers, Major Miles, paced past Lassu's back and made a blowjob gesture at Kasira by putting his fist to his mouth and poking his tongue into his cheek. At once, Kasira's eyes bulged and she glanced away. He'd tricked Kasira into giving him a blowjob last time he was on the island and as such, he was the last person she wanted to see at her wedding.)

KASIRA: I can't believe Major Miles is here.

LASSU: Nor can I. After all the grief he gave you over Sika a few months ago, he's got a nerve coming here.

KASIRA: Exactly.

(She then glanced away innocently. As she did so, however, she spotted Lassu's army buddy, Prodi, glowering at her. At once, she stood perfectly rigid and grinned at Lassu.)

KASIRA: Nothing!

LASSU: What?

(Kasira's heart was racing right now. Prodi was the one who'd bet Major Miles that he couldn't trick her into fellating him. In this moment, she'd just realised that Major Miles would have told Prodi all about it when he went to collect his winnings. Suddenly, the high-ranking officers were the last of her worries. Prodi knew her dark secret; one she'd kept from Lassu for obvious reasons. Trembling, she gulped then scratched her head nervously.)

KASIRA: So, had any interesting conversations lately? You know, with... I don't know... Prodi, perhaps?

LASSU: No, not really, why?

KASIRA: I just wondered.

(Kasira then drew a sigh of relief, satisfied that Prodi hadn't told him.)

LASSU: Prodi and I haven't been on the best terms lately actually. That bloody Major Miles told everyone you sucked his dong and Prodi believed him.

(Kasira's hair immediately stood on end.)

KASIRA: What???

LASSU: I told him he was a lying bastard and chinned him.

(He then sighed.)

LASSU: Still, we kinda made peace last week, so I let him come to the wedding, seeing as he was on leave.

KASIRA: Right, well... yeah. Let's not talk to him. Or Major Miles. Let's just ignore them both all night.

LASSU: Happily.

(He smiled.)

LASSU: This is supposed to be a happy time, Kasira. Not a time for arguing with morons who like to make up silly rumours. This is our day. We're both out of the army, free to do what we like. So let's enjoy ourselves.

KASIRA: Well, I'm *almost* out of the army. I officially left yesterday like you did, but seeing as I agreed to stay on for a week, I'm kind of half in and half out.

LASSU: I'd say out mostly. Serving soldiers are forbidden to get married, yet here we are.

KASIRA: I insisted on that actually. I said I'd stay for a week but only if I could still get married as planned.

(She sighed.)

KASIRA: They agreed then suggested paying for it; and they've been on my case ever since. (She rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: I wish they'd stop badgering me. You and I are gonna be enjoying civilian life together from next week and they need to get used to that idea.

Back at the base a short while later, Ambre and Sika continued to pace back and forth looking extremely worried. They had no idea how Cayley, Soapy and Nivea were getting on with the dress repairs and it was driving them to distraction. Just when Sika started to think she couldn't take it any longer, however, Cayley burst into the room with three dresses in her arms.

CAYLEY: I only went and did it!

(At once, Ambre and Sika bounced for joy and performed a little dance together.)

AMBRE: Cayley's a clever clogs!

SIKA: She's a genius!

AMBRE: That's what I said.

(Cayley grinned.)

CAYLEY: It's not perfect, of course. Kasira will know they were altered; they're far sluttier than they were, obviously, but they *do* look nice and they *do* match.

SIKA: Works for me. Slutty dresses are my thing anyway.

(Just then, Soapy emerged from behind Cayley having just changed into her dress. Her cheeks were burning red.)

SOAPY: I look like such a slut!

(Sika's eyes lit up.)

SIKA: You really, really do. Are they *all* that slutty?

CAYLEY: I just told you; they match!

SIKA: Bonus!

(She beamed.)

SIKA: I have to put mine on right now!

SOAPY: Of course you do; you're a slut.

SIKA: And you're a prude.

SOAPY: Am not!

AMBRE: You are a bit.

CAYLEY: Quite a big bit.

SOAPY: Hey! I'm just not a slut, that's all.

SIKA: Wanna bet? You are what you wear, and tonight you're wearing that slutty dress.

SOAPY: Oh, shut up.

(Sika then beamed and held her hand out to Cayley.)

SIKA: Can I have mine, please?

(Cayley passed her dress to her then passed Ambre hers.)

CAYLEY: Right, let's all get changed as fast as we can. If you want to do your hair and makeup, you've got like five minutes. We can't be late for Kasira's rehearsal dinner. And after all the work I put in fixing those dresses, anyone taking too long is gonna get thumped. (At once, Sika and Ambre sprinted from the room. Watching them go, Cayley then smiled at where Soapy was fixing her makeup in the mirror.)

CAYLEY: Kids, eh?

SOAPY: They're both older than me.

CAYLEY: Good point.

(Just then, Nivea stepped into the room with her dress on.)

NIVEA: Perfect. Thanks to my stupidity, we all get to wear inordinately slutty dresses tonight. I should screw up more often. Like Sika!

SOAPY: She's in her room.

NIVEA: Bugger. Total waste of a cheap shot.

(She shrugged.)

NIVEA: Still, who cares? All's well that ends well. Kasira's gonna love these dresses.

CAYLEY: No, she's going to be glad we managed to turn up in *matching* dresses, but when she sees the exposed midriff and giant slit down the leg, she's probably going to have a lot of questions. Those questions will be redirected at *you*.

(Nivea bit her lip.)

NIVEA: I'm in trouble, aren't I?

SOAPY: Definitely.

CAYLEY: But not as much trouble as you might have been.

NIVEA: Then it's a victory.

CAYLEY: No, let's call it a draw.

(She nodded.)

CAYLEY: Now hurry up and do your hair, we've got to go in a minute.

(Nivea just pouted at her, tears welling in her eyes.)

NIVEA: I already *did* my hair! What are you saying exactly?

(Cayley just gaped at her then offered her a cheesy grin.)

CAYLEY: It looks nice.

SOAPY: Yeah, it's perfect. I mean, if you're planning on standing in a field with your arms out all night, it's ideal.

NIVEA: You're gonna get such a groping later.

SOAPY: Damn it.

NIVEA: Bloody cheek.

(She then raced out of the room. As she did so, Cayley yelled after her.)

CAYLEY: Be quick!

(She then looked to Soapy.)

CAYLEY: I meant what I said. I really will thump anyone who makes us late. I worked hard to get them dresses done in time. Not only that, but this is Kasira's big night. We can't mess it up.

(She nodded sternly then a look of horror crossed her brow.)

CAYLEY: No!!! I haven't done *my* makeup!!!

(She then sprinted out of the room, leaving Soapy rolling her eyes.)

SOAPY: Adults!

Twenty minutes later, Ambre, Cayley, Nivea, Sika and Soapy arrived at the town's civic centre. Having timed it perfectly, they immediately assembled at their table and sat down. As they did so, Kasira spied their dresses where she was sat at the main table. At once, she raised a baffled eyebrow. Happy to see them, she then offered them a friendly wave. Just as they all started to wave back at her innocently, however, the general to her side stood up and blocked her view of them. Eager to get the ball rolling, he tapped his glass to silence all those in attendance. At once, the fifty or so guests all looked his way. All the important people of the island were present, along with several ordinary townsfolk and few other army dignitaries. As they all stared back at him, the general lowered his glass then spoke up to address everyone.

GENERAL: Welcome, everyone. Welcome to this, the rehearsal dinner before Commander Kasira Ashwood and... someone, get married on the morrow.

(As Kasira and Lassu shared an embittered glance, the general continued.)

GENERAL: You know, marriage truly is a wonderful thing. When two people find each other and decide to share the rest of their lives, what better way is there to seal their bond? Before they eyes of the gods, they'll make their pledge to dedicate themselves to one another. And all of us will have the joy of witnessing their pledge.

(He nodded.)

GENERAL: These two, Kasira and... her intended, met whilst serving in the army. He has now left. Kasira, however, will be with us for another week. And though marriage is forbidden when a soldier is serving their *mandatory* military term, the army has sanctioned this union. Kasira, is after all, only still with us because she agreed to stay on for a week to smooth the transition when two *new* members join her unit tomorrow. I think that deserves a round of applause, don't you?

(At once, everyone started to clap and cheer. Moments later, when the clapping died down, the general continued.)

GENERAL: Much deserved applause. Kasira truly has done right by the army. And I always knew she would. She's a professional. And she's an asset. Her skill when it comes to commanding her unit is second to none and we'll be sorry to lose her.

(He then glanced at Lassu.)

GENERAL: Especially to... never mind.

LASSU: Excuse me?

GENERAL: I said never mind. Fact is, Commander Ashwood has such a brilliant flare for leadership, we'll be devastated to see her go. There army is *better* with her in it. And so we're going to do all our power to beg her to stay.

(Kasira's shoulders slumped.)

KASIRA: I knew it.

GENERAL: With this in mind, Commander Ashwood, I'd be delighted if you'd do the army the honour of reconsidering. Don't think of it as staying in the army, think of it as leaving and getting a job. A job with superb pay. And a high rank. Major perhaps?

(At once, Ambre turned and whispered to Cayley.)

AMBRE: Can girls *be* majors? I thought the word was majorette?

CAYLEY: That's a baton twirler, you silly sod.

AMBRE: Oh.

(As Cayley hid her grin, the general continued, looking at Kasira as he made his speech.)

GENERAL: And so, on this special evening for these two starry-eyed lovers, I propose a toast. A toast to Kasira staying in the army for the next ten years.

(Having heard enough, Kasira stood up and placed her hands on her hips.)

KASIRA: Or indeed, a toast to our marriage, like you're supposed to be making. None of that speech was anything like the one you showed me.

GENERAL: So, I ad-libbed a little. It's a rehearsal. I can do the proper speech tomorrow.

KASIRA: Make sure you do. And try to learn my fiancé's name.

GENERAL: I did know his name, it just slipped my mind. Gordon or something.

LASSU: Lassu!

GENERAL: Lassu? That's a name?

(Kasira sighed.)

KASIRA: Why now, General? Why are you trying to ruin my wedding?

GENERAL: I'm not ruining your wedding. I'm ruining your rehearsal dinner.

(He was then swift to clarify his comment.)

GENERAL: I mean, I'm trying to stop you from ruining your career prospects. Get married, be my guest. In fact, seeing as the army paid for this, you *are* being my guest. Go ahead, enjoy it. Then stay. Become someone. Be the best you can be. Better than your mother. Be a soldier. The pay's awesome and like I said, a high rank is all yours if you want it.

KASIRA: Just make the sodding toast. To our wedding!

(The general sighed.)

GENERAL: Fine. Talk to me afterwards though. I'm sure we can come to some sort of arrangement.

KASIRA: No we can't.

GENERAL: We'll see.

KASIRA: Toast!

GENERAL: Fine!

(He then held his glass in the air.)

GENERAL: Here's to the happy couple. Kasira and... the other one.

LASSU: Lassu! I just told you.

GENERAL: I know. It's just such a stupid name, I couldn't bring myself to say it.

(At this point Kasira's head flopped onto the table.)

KASIRA: I give up.

GENERAL: That's the spirit. Now give up on the idea of quitting the army and we're in business.

KASIRA: Just... go away.

One hour later, once dinner had been served and enjoyed, Lassu headed over to talk to Prodi while Kasira joined her unit mates at their table.

Watching Kasira from across the room, Lassu exhaled then nodded joyfully.

LASSU: There's no getting away from it, mate. I've bagged a fit one.

(Prodi shook his head solemnly.)

PRODI: Well, I can't deny she's fit.

LASSU: She's fun too.

PRODI: A party girl, some might say.

LASSU: Well...

PRODI: Always up for it, in fact. With anyone! Not the type you'd marry then take home to meet your mother, that's for sure.

(Lassu looked to him then shook his head.)

LASSU: Mate, I thought we were past this.

PRODI: We are.

LASSU: Are we? You just said my fiancée's unfit for marriage!

(Prodi sighed.)

PRODI: Lassu, you're a mate. My *best* mate. I know that's kind of a gay thing to have these days but you are.

LASSU: I'm a gay?

PRODI: No. My best mate!

LASSU: Right!

PRODI: And as your best mate, I'm worried. I think you're making a huge mistake.

LASSU: Do you now?

PRODI: Yes! When I told you what Major Miles told me, you dismissed it out of hand. Refused to even discuss it. Well, what if he was telling the truth?

LASSU: I trust her, Prodi. I don't trust Miles though, not for a minute.

PRODI: Yeah, and it might turn out to be a huge mistake.

(He shook his head.)

PRODI: Look, I don't want to fall out with you again. All I'm saying is, at least ask Kasira about it. Get the truth from her. If you talk to her about it and she denies it, and you're happy with what she tells you, I'll let it go. I'll turn up tomorrow, do my best man duties to the best of my ability and never say another word about it. Just, please, look into it. Talk to her.

(Lassu scoffed.)

LASSU: There's no need. She wouldn't *do* something like that, Prodi. There's no way she sucked off Major Miles, not while she was in a relationship with me, anyway.

PRODI: Yeah, so you assume. Ask her.

LASSU: No. There's no need. And how would I even go about it if there was? What would I say? "Hi, Kasira, your hair looks nice tonight. Very sexy. Speaking of sex, have you sucked off any high-ranking army officials lately?"

PRODI: Of course not. Just tell her about the rumour that's been going around. Act as if you're as appalled as she is and see how she reacts. Surely you can tell if she's lying or not.

LASSU: I already told her about the rumour earlier.

PRODI: You did? And she denied it?

LASSU: She didn't have to. I *told* her about it; I didn't *accuse* her of it or *ask* her about it, because I know it's not true.

PRODI: I see.

(He sighed in defeat.)

PRODI: You trust her implicitly, don't you?

LASSU: Yes!

(Prodi nodded.)

PRODI: Fair enough. Then I wish you both good luck.

(He then mumbled under his breath.)

PRODI: I fear *you're* gonna need it.

Across the room at this time, Kasira was deep in discussion with Ambre, Cayley, Soapy, Nivea and Sika. The topic of their conversation being the obvious one.)

KASIRA: It freaked me out actually. I saw you heading for the table and I couldn't believe my eyes. I was thinking 'those definitely aren't the dresses I supplied them with.'

CAYLEY: Well they are.

SIKA: Only sexier.

KASIRA: Sexier is *one* way of looking at it. Sluttier being the *honest* way.

(Ambre whimpered.)

AMBRE: Too slutty?

KASIRA: No way. I want one.

(She shrugged.)

KASIRA: So why did you decided to alter them?

(Not about to tell Kasira that Nivea had butchered hers and that she'd *had* to alter them, Cayley, Soapy and Sika all glanced away innocently.)

CAYLEY: Well, you know...

AMBRE: Nivea wore hers when she did her patrol and...

(Desperate not to get Nivea in trouble, Cayley quickly intervened.)

CAYLEY: And I thought it made her bum look big!

NIVEA: Cayley!!!

CAYLEY: Sorry.

SIKA: It's true. Her arse looked so fat in it, Cayley decided to change them all so she didn't get embarrassed.

NIVEA: Sika, you're dead.

SIKA: I will be if you sit on me.

NIVEA: You...

CAYLEY: So, anyway, yeah. That's what happened.

KASIRA: But how would putting a whole in the midriff and a slit down the leg make her arse look any slimmer?

CAYLEY: It just did.

NIVEA: Can we change the subject now please?

KASIRA: Fine. Fair enough. It worked. From what I've seen of your bums, they look great.
(She cringed.)

KASIRA: Let's pretend I didn't say that.

(Just then, Kasira caught sight of Lassu, chatting to Prodi against the wall. As she sat and watched him lovingly, Cayley quickly leant towards Ambre.)

CAYLEY: What were you told, Ambre? What did Sika tell you before we came out?

AMBRE: That I'm a flaky dipshit?

CAYLEY: No, she told you not to tell Kasira why we had to alter the dresses.

AMBRE: No she didn't.

(Sika glanced away and whistled innocently.)

CAYLEY: Sika!

(Sika grimaced.)

SIKA: I forgot!

CAYLEY: Moron.

(She then looked to Ambre again.)

CAYLEY: Okay, now *I'm* telling you. Keep it a secret.

AMBRE: But I don't like keeping secrets from Kasira.

CAYLEY: If you tell her, she'll be cross. Do you like upsetting her?

(Ambre pouted.)

AMBRE: No.

CAYLEY: Then be quiet. It's not a bad lie. It's a white lie. We discussed this before.

(Ambre nodded solemnly.)

AMBRE: Okay.

(She then made a gesture of zipping her lip.)

CAYLEY: Good girl.

(Just then, Kasira turned to face them again.)

KASIRA: Sorry. I was distracted. Lassu has such a cute behind.

NIVEA: Amen to that.

KASIRA: You were looking?

NIVEA: Yeah. And I approve.

(She gave Kasira a thumbs-up.)

NIVEA: Firm ones are always the best.

(Kasira then started to chuckle.)

KASIRA: You're a pervert, Nivea.

NIVEA: And proud.

(She then smirked at Sika.)

NIVEA: And as madam there is about to find out, there really is no end to my depravity.

Insulting my butt was a huge mistake!

(Sika's eyes bulged.)

SIKA: I repent! You have an *awesome* butt.

SOAPY: Gay!

SIKA: Shut up, you.

SOAPY: My bad. Did you want to be left in peace to hit on Nivea?

SIKA: I wasn't.

NIVEA: She was! And she's pulled. Tonight I'll take her back to my room and... you don't wanna know.

CAYLEY: Nobody wants to know!

AMBRE: Actually, I'm curious.

NIVEA: Let's just say it'll go way beyond the usual fondling and groping.

KASIRA: She really doesn't need to hear that, Nivea.

AMBRE: I don't get it, Kasira. She says she'll do deprave things to her, but how? If it's not just groping, what can she do? She can't do the dirty thing to her; she doesn't have a willy.

KASIRA: Oh, good god. Can we change the subject please?

NIVEA: Fine by me.

(She then winked at Sika knowingly.)

NIVEA: Later, darling.

SIKA: I'm scared.

NIVEA: Wise.

KASIRA: Enough!

(She rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: Is this the kind of example you're going to set the two new girls when they arrive tomorrow?

NIVEA: Oh, definitely. I'll welcome them to the fold with a damn good groping.

KASIRA: No, you won't.

SOAPY: They may not have anything to grope. Now that perverted general isn't choosing who joins the unit, the two new girls might be flat-chested.

SOAPY: Tiny boobs won't stop Nivea.

(She shrugged.)

SOAPY: Well, they didn't in your case, Sika.

SIKA: Hey! Mine are...

KASIRA: Perfectly formed and in proportion, we know. So you keep saying. Seriously, girls, please. Let them two new girls settle in before you reveal your insanity. At least allow them five minutes.

CAYLEY: You're asking for miracles, I feel.

KASIRA: I know.

AMBRE: So, are the new girls coming to your wedding, Kasira?

KASIRA: Yeah. They can sit at the back and watch. And there's bound to be enough food to go round afterwards.

SOAPY: So they'll turn on their first day and have a party and some cake. All I got was a telling off and a haze break when I first arrived.

SIKA: Sucks to be you.

(Glancing across at the smirking Nivea, Sika then hung her head.)

SIKA: But not as much as it sucks to be me.

(At this point, Lassu and Prodi headed over to join them. In that moment, Nivea forgot all about teasing Sika and proceeded to flirt unashamedly with Prodi. Sika had never looked so relieved. Half an hour later, Nivea and Prodi disappeared somewhere together. Nobody even had to guess why. Remaining at the table, the others laughed and joked together for the rest of the night. The only downside to their fine evening being interference from high-ranking officials every now and again as they tried to badger Kasira into staying in the army.)

The following morning at 10 am, the girls of the 123rd wraith containment unit convened in the living quarters of their base. They were all dressed and ready to go. Nivea was wearing blacked out goggles, the army's latest invention. Now she could see in the daylight. Despite how odd she looked, however, nobody was paying any attention to her. They'd all spent the last ten minutes helping Kasira look resplendent in her wedding dress and she was the focus of all their attention.

AMBRE: You look amazing, Kasira. I love you lots and lots.

(Kasira beamed.)

KASIRA: I love you too, sweetheart. I love *all* you girls.

(She exhaled.)

KASIRA: My wedding day. I'm so excited.

NIVEA: And so you should be. Big day, Kasira. And you look stunning.

KASIRA: Thank you.

NIVEA: No. Thank *you!* I look a right tit in these goggles but thanks to you looking so lovely, nobody's even noticed.

SOAPY: Oh, we noticed.

SIKA: Why do you think it took us so long to get ready? It's not easy to put lipstick on when you're laughing.

NIVEA: Why not? You have a massive target to aim at, fat lips.

SIKA: That was desperate, Nivea.

NIVEA: Yeah, it wasn't my best. In my defence though, I'm going to hurt you later.

SIKA: Another empty threat? You promised me the same thing yesterday.

(Nivea beamed.)

NIVEA: I haven't forgotten.

SIKA: Fuck!

CAYLEY: Can you two put a sock in it? Today isn't about you. It's about this lovely lady.

(She gestured to Ambre.)

AMBRE: Me?

(Cayley flinched then gestured to Kasira.)

CAYLEY: My bad, she moved. Kasira, you look amazing. And you look so happy. Girl, I'm really happy for you.

AMBRE: Yay! Me too.

NIVEA: We're *all* happy for you, Kasira.

SIKA: Yeah, we are.

SOAPY: Totally.

KASIRA: Thanks, guys. I can't wait.

CAYLEY: Then don't. Let's go.

KASIRA: We can't. They're sending a carriage for us, remember?

CAYLEY: Oh, yeah.

(Ambre beamed.)

AMBRE: You forgot.

CAYLEY: Yup. My bad. I'm excited for Kasira.

AMBRE: So am I. And I'm excited for me.

(She giggled.)

AMBRE: Because Kasira adopted me legally, I'm getting a new daddy.

(Everyone started to chuckle.)

CAYLEY: Make sure he carries you up on his shoulders at town festivals and things.

NIVEA: And takes you to the park to play on the swings.

SOAPY: Demand pocket money.

SIKA: And when he sneaks in your room at night, remember you can't tell mummy what he does. It's your little secret.

(At once, everyone sneered in Sika's direction.)

KASIRA: Sika's that's not even funny!

CAYLEY: How can you joke about *that*?

(Sika seemed to shrink.)

SIKA: I wasn't joking, that's what dads do, isn't it?

(Everyone glanced away uncomfortably.)

CAYLEY: Oh, boy.

SOAPY: Um... actually, Sika... no.

SIKA: So your dads didn't sneak into your rooms and read you horror stories at night?

NIVEA: Horror stories?

SIKA: Yeah. They scared the crap out me. They were fun though. My mum would have killed him if she'd known.

(Kasira giggled.)

KASIRA: Right. Horror stories. That's a relief.

SIKA: Why, what did you think I meant?

(As everyone clammed up and glanced away, Sika replayed the conversation in her head then growled.)

SIKA: That's disgusting!!!

KASIRA: Right, yes. Moving on. I can't believe those two newbies haven't shown up yet.

SIKA: Don't change the subject, how could you think...

KASIRA: The subject has been changed! That's an order!

SIKA: Wow.

KASIRA: Not wow. Newbies. Where are they?

CAYLEY: The boat bringing them here must have been delayed.

KASIRA: I guess. Well, they'll just have to stand outside the base until we get back then.

I'm not being late for my wedding and nor are any of you. Once that carriage arrives, we're out of here. I'm ready to go and...

(She then blushed and hid her face.)

KASIRA: I left my bouquet in my room.

(With that, she hurried off towards her bedroom. Left behind, Cayley glanced across at the others.)

CAYLEY: You've all got everything you need, haven't you?

SOAPY: I just need to get a thick black pen.

CAYLEY: Why?

SOAPY: So I can paint over Nivea's lenses, of course.

SIKA: Good thinking. It's no fun now she can see in the light. I enjoyed guiding her into trees.

NIVEA: Keep it up, girls. Judgement day is coming and you *will* be made to pay.

(Just then, there was a nervous coughing sound in the doorway. At once, they all turned around and saw two wide-eyed, trembling, fifteen year old girls standing there, staring back at them in terror. One was a land-bound human like Kasira, the other was a swift human, like Ambre. It didn't take a genius to figure out that they were Kasira and Ambre's replacements.)

NIVEA: Ah, yes, the terrified face of a newbie.

SIKA: You mean the face of Kasira. One of them looks just like her.

(Cayley scoffed at her.)

CAYLEY: Never mind that. Welcome to the 123rd wraith containment unit, ladies.

(Her jaw then dropped.)

CAYLEY: Wow, she really does look like her.

(She then shook her head to clear her thoughts.)

CAYLEY: Come in. Please. Come over here.

NIVEA: Yes, do. We need to assess your boob size.

CAYLEY: Nivea! Stop that.

(As the two girls slowly advanced, Cayley smiled and shook their hands.)

CAYLEY: Hello there, I'm Cayley, second in command.

(She then introduced everyone.)

CAYLEY: This is Nivea, she's the third in command. This is Ambre, this is Sika and that's Soapy.

NIVEA: Morning.

AMBRE: Hiya!

SIKA: Welcome.

SOAPY: Welcome.

CAYLEY: And you are?

(One of the girls, a nervous looking blonde, couldn't reply through fear. The other one, however, stood tall and beamed.)

EKSI: I'm Eksi. Nice to meet you.

(Finally, the blonde one managed to squeak her reply.)

LYCIA: I'm Lycia.

NIVEA: Welcome, ladies. You'll fit right in. I *was* worried you'd have tiny boobs, but now I see my worries on that score were unfounded.

EKSI: Boobs?

NIVEA: Yeah, tits.

LYCIA: But, why?

NIVEA: You'll see.

CAYLEY: Pack it in, Nivea.

(She rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: So, did you have a pleasant trip?

EKSI: The sea was really rough. Lycia threw up twice.

(Ambre puffed out.)

AMBRE: Wow. You really, really look like our leader. I mean, really, really.

EKSI: Well, yeah, there's a good reason for that.

(Just then, Kasira paced back into the room with her bouquet. At once, her face lit up.)

KASIRA: Eksi!!! You made it!

(Eksi beamed then rushed to meet her. At once, they threw their arms around one another and held each other tight.)

KASIRA: I didn't think you'd be able to get time off from the academy. I'm so happy.

EKSI: Like I'd miss my big sister's wedding.

CAYLEY: Wait. What? She's your sister? I was thought she was one of the two newbies.

KASIRA: No, she's come to see me get married.

EKSI: Actually, Kasira, it's both. They posted me here. I knew I was going to arrive on your wedding day so I kept it as a surprise.

(Kasira's jaw dropped.)

KASIRA: You've been posted here?

EKSI: Yup!

(Kasira immediately glowered at Nivea.)

KASIRA: Hands off!!!

NIVEA: I didn't do anything!

(Cayley then glanced to Lycia.)

CAYLEY: That's Kasira, by the way. Your new boss.

KASIRA: For one week. Then you'll answer to Cayley.

(Lycia managed to squeak her reply.)

LYCIA: Okay.

KASIRA: Wow. This is amazing. Fancy you getting posted here, Eksi. That's such a crazy coincidence.

(Her brow then furrowed deeply.)

KASIRA: Or is it?

(Her brow then furrowed even deeper and she glowered at Cayley.)

KASIRA: They've done this on purpose! The army think I'll stay if my little sister's here so I can look after her!

CAYLEY: Probably.

SIKA: How would that work? There's only supposed to be six people in a unit.

SOAPY: Yeah, if you stay, Ambre has to stay. She's only allowed to leave early if her legal guardian leaves. Well, if that happens there'll be no room. So these two will have to be reposted. Either that or one of *us* will be reposted!

KASIRA: I'd never agree to that. There's no way I'd stay if that was the offer. Not that I'm going to anyway.

(She sneered.)

KASIRA: I'll tell you how it'll go, shall I? They'll offer me a house here on the island and a job at a nearby academy, so I can commute back and forth at weekends.

SOAPY: The nearest academy is a hundred miles away on the mainland.

KASIRA: Yeah, and I bet that's where they offer to send me.

AMBRE: Why would they send you to an academy, Kasira? You already know everything.

KASIRA: As a tutor, Ambre.

AMBRE: Oh!

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: I'd love to be in *that* class.

NIVEA: I'm not so sure about that, Kasira. If they wanted to use your little sister as blackmail, surely they'd send her where they intend to post you. Not a hundred miles away.

(She shrugged.)

NIVEA: Maybe they plan to build an academy on this island and get you to work there.

KASIRA: Either way, you just wait. I bet I get an offer later on that involves being near Eksi. Well they can fuck off. Eksi can look after herself, I'm leaving.

EKSI: It's so nice to feel wanted.

KASIRA: I didn't mean it in a bad way.

EKSI: I know.

(She then beamed with joy.)

EKSI: You're getting married.

(Kasira also beamed.)

KASIRA: I know.

EKSI: You look beautiful. Mum and dad would be so proud if they didn't hate your guts.

KASIRA: Right?

(They then stood there giggling together.)

CAYLEY: Anyway, are we just gonna stand around giggling or are we gonna get going?

KASIRA: We're still waiting for the carriage, Cayley, that hasn't changed.

CAYLEY: Oh yeah. What's wrong with me today?

SOAPY: Maid of honour nerves?

CAYLEY: Either that or I'm going senile.

SIKA: Maybe you've spend too much time with Ambre and her stupidity is rubbing off on you.

AMBRE: Meany!

SIKA: I'm only kidding, darling.

AMBRE: Fine. Just don't hug me. I heard small booby syndrome might be contagious.

SIKA: Hey!

(Ambre whimpered.)

AMBRE: Sorry. Kasira said I should say that next time you were mean to me!

SIKA: Did she now? Well, it's not funny. My boobies are awesome. I'm the perfect size and shape, you lot are all deformed. Except Cayley, she's underdeveloped.

CAYLEY: Really, Sika? You drag me into it every time!

SIKA: Then stop saying bad things about my boobies!

CAYLEY: I didn't!

SIKA: Collective responsible, Cayley. You're *all* in on it!

KASIRA: Sika?

SIKA: Yes?

KASIRA: Shut up.

SIKA: But...

KASIRA: Now!

(Sika pouted.)

SIKA: So unfair.

(Kasira rolled her eyes then smiled to Eksi and Lycia.)

KASIRA: Welcome to the 123rd wraith containment unit. You'll get used to this kind of thing. Just stick closely to Cayley, the others are a bit mental.

NIVEA: Yup. Sika's trouble, Soapy's a sarcastic little shit, Ambre's clueless and I'm a groper. Good luck.

AMBRE: Mean. I'm not clueless. I have a medal for being awesome. Look.

(She pointed to the medal she'd received for outstanding military achievement, proudly pinned to her chest as it had been ever since she'd received it.)

AMBRE: See?

KASIRA: And besides, Ambre and I are leaving soon. I'm just here to supervise for a week then we're out of here.

(She snarled.)

KASIRA: I don't care what the army are planning, come next week, Lassu, Ambre and I are getting on a boat and we won't be coming back.

SOAPY: Not even to visit?

KASIRA: Except to visit.

(Her brow then furrowed over.)

KASIRA: Of course we'll visit, Soapy! I was trying to make a dramatic point!

(She shook her head.)

KASIRA: Anyway, Eksi, Lycia, put your bags on that long sofa for now. When they come to pick us up in the carriage, follow it. You can sit in on the wedding and you're welcome to stay for the after party.

SIKA: The wake.

CAYLEY: The reception. You have a wake after a funeral.

SIKA: Sure, I knew that.

AMBRE: And you call *me* dumb!

KASIRA: Yes, well, never mind that.

(She watched as Lycia and Eksi placed their bags down then nodded sternly.)

KASIRA: Okay, girls. I'm ready to get married now.

(She then trembled excitedly.)

KASIRA: Oh my god, it's really happening. Girly time, ladies!!!

(With that, Soapy, Sika, Ambre, Cayley and Nivea, joined her in bouncing up and down, screaming excitedly whilst trying to perform a group hug. It was an extremely girly moment which left the two new recruits staring at them as if they were insane. This had *not* been what they'd expected. They'd just joined the army in readiness for the war on wraiths, but it looked more like they'd walked into a princess's birthday party. Everyone was in nice

dresses and the air was thick with perfume. Moments later, however, Eksi shrugged off her bewilderment then raced over to them and joined in.)

EKSI: Yay!

(Watching on agape, Lycia shook her head.)

LYCIA: Fuck it.

(She then hurried over and joined them.)

Fifteen minutes later, the moment Kasira had dreamt of since she was a little girl arrived. Her time to walk down the aisle, blushing like a rose, had come. As she slowly made her way forth along the stone floor in the centre of the local temple, Ambre sprinkled petals in front of her and Cayley held the train of her dress from behind. Sika, Soapy and Nivea walked behind Cayley, beaming with delight.

In Kasira's dreams, it had always been her father giving her away, but that was not to be. Instead, at the last minute she'd asked her little sister to do it. Having found her a nice dress to wear, she was now in the process of doing so. Kasira couldn't stop smiling. As she headed onwards down the aisle, everyone was smiling warmly in her direction. Best of all, the man she loved was waiting for her at the altar.

Moments later, once she reached the front of the temple, her five bridesmaids and her sister took a seat then watched on as Kasira stepped up to Lassu. Smiling, Lassu then removed her veil for her and they stared lovingly into one another's eyes. Seconds later, the holy man addressed them and the ceremony begun.

As the two lovers exchanged rings, Soapy, Sika, Nivea, Ambre, Cayley and Eksi watched on, pouting adoringly, desperately trying not to cry. Seeing their beloved friend get married, moved them greatly. At the back of the temple at this time, however, there were tears of a different kind. The landlord of the local inn and a man known locally as Tony the carpenter were both very much in love with Kasira and watching her get married was like a dagger to the heart for both of them. Crestfallen, as the ceremony continued, they sat and spoke in hushed, saddened voices.)

LANDLORD: It should have been me!

TONY: No, it should have been me. And it could have been. If only I hadn't groped her butt that time when she bent over, she wouldn't have started avoiding me.

LANDLORD: You copped a feel?

TONY: Yeah. It was glorious at the time, but now... it's cost me dear, mate.

(The landlord sighed.)

LANDLORD: At least you'll always have that memory, I don't even have that.

(He then looked all starry-eyed and exhaled.)

LANDLORD: To caress those hips, to lay your hands on her smooth posterior. The glory.

TONY: Imagine fondling her tits then!

LANDLORD: When she used to walk out of the inn, her hips captivated me, mate. She's got such a sexy, feminine gait.

TONY: And an arse that won't quit.

LANDLORD: Everything about her is perfect. That sweet, feminine voice; those round, perfectly formed breasts; her long, flowing hair. She's a goddess.

TONY: I'd fuck it, for sure.

LANDLORD: I could stare into her eyes for days. And the thought of kissing those full, pouty lips of hers.

TONY: Yeah, they'd look great wrapped around my knob.

(The landlord furrowed his brow at him.)

LANDLORD: I'm gonna stop talking to you now. You're disgusting.

TONY: I'm just being honest, mate. I really want to do her.

LANDLORD: Whereas I want to lay her down gently, kiss her like a woman longs to be kissed, then...

TONY: Do her?

LANDLORD: Um... yeah. Shut up.

At the front of the temple, the wedding ceremony continued. Before a temple full of smiles, Lassu and Kasira had exchanged rings and Kasira had spoken her vows. They were vows she'd delivered lovingly, in a cute, shy voice. Right now, she was nothing like the woman Nivea had once described as the father of their unit. Gone was her aura of authority and she looked very much like an ordinary young woman in love.

As Lassu set about delivering his vows, Kasira stared into his eyes, tightly clutching her bouquet to her heart. She was cherishing every moment. Sharing her joy, Lassu stared lovingly into her eyes, speaking in a strong, sincere tone.)

LASSU: You're so much more than just an outstanding beauty, Kasira. You're buzzing with life and being in your company is infectious; it makes *me* feel alive too. I love you with all my heart and soul, and I promise to do whatever it takes to make you as happy as you make me.

(Kasira whimpered adoringly and tried desperately not to swoon as he continued)

LASSU: I can't believe how lucky I am, Kasira. Someone as loving and beautiful as you could have chosen any man in the entire world. Only a fool could fail to love you. And yet, you chose me. I'm blessed. Truly blessed. And I'm gonna move heaven on earth to make sure you never regret a day.

(He then looked to the holy man.)

LASSU: Was that long enough?

HOLY MAN: That was perfect. You made her cry, look.

(As Lassu smiled down at where Kasira was wiping a tear, the holy man glanced out to those in attendance.)

HOLY MAN: Now before I join these two in holy matrimony, does anyone know of any lawful impediment as to why these two should not be wed? Please speak now or forever hold your peace.

(At once, Ambre leant towards Cayley.)

AMBRE: Do *I* know...

CAYLEY: No.

(Ambre nodded then beamed at the holy man.)

AMBRE: No! Carry on.

(As everyone chuckled, the holy man smiled then looked between Kasira and Lassu.)

HOLY MAN: Very well. By the power vested in me by the state, I now pronounce you man and wife. You may kiss the bride.

(At once, Lassu lifted Kasira into his arms and they embarked on a passionate kiss. As they did so, the guests jumped to their feet and erupted into a chorus of applause; with the exception of two. Tony and the Landlord hugged each other and burst out crying; wallowing in the depths of despair. Blissfully unaware of the two heartbroken souls in the temple, Lassu placed Kasira down then beamed at her.)

LASSU: Shall we, dear wife?

KASIRA: We shall, dear husband.

(With that, they strutted off back down the aisle together being showered with confetti.)

One hour later, at the wedding reception in the civic hall, Lassu and Kasira were called together to perform the first dance. As they did so, Soapy, Sika, Ambre, Cayley, Nivea, Eksi and Lycia watched on from the side, smiling warmly.)

LYCIA: I'm going to love it here, I can tell. I expected the leader to be bossy and authoritarian. She's nothing like that.

(She then looked to Cayley.)

LYCIA: Nor is the new boss that's gonna take over.

NIVEA: Boy, are you in for a surprise.

LYCIA: I'm not a boy.

SIKA: You're still in for a surprise. Kasira's actually really bossy. God knows what today was about.

AMBRE: She isn't *that* bossy!

SIKA: She is if you're me!

LYCIA: I can't picture it. She seems too girly to be bossy.

NIVEA: That's all an act for her new husband. Boy, is *he* in for a shock when she reveals her true self.

LYCIA: Stop calling me a boy!

NIVEA: I wasn't! But now I know it annoys you, I'm going to start.

CAYLEY: Girls, you've got it all wrong. Kasira's bossy because she's the boss. Hence the term. She's a good leader and good leaders need to be authoritarian. *I'm* not bossy right now, but once Kasira goes, you'll see a new side of me. It's called being professional.

NIVEA: I'm struggling to picture you being bossy, Cayley.

CAYLEY: You don't have to picture it, you'll *see* it soon enough. Being bossy comes with the job. And once Kasira's no longer got a unit to run, you'll see a new side of *her* too. The girly side you saw today. Her real self.

LYCIA: You're making me nervous now. I hate bossy people.

AMBRE: Don't be nervous. Kasira's awesome. If you're a good girl, she'll be nice to you.

LYCIA: A good girl? What am I? Twelve?

AMBRE: I'm just saying. Cayley will be the same. You're gonna love it here. Everyone's lovely.

SIKA: Lycia, meet Ambre, she loves everyone and everything.

LYCIA: She's retarded.

SIKA: Yes. Yes, she is.

AMBRE: That's not very nice.

EKSI: So, what are we saying? I don't get it. Is Kasira a good boss or what? I've always pictured her being like, the best boss ever.

NIVEA: Well, put it this way, we're her subordinates and we love her.

AMBRE: Lots and lots.

SOAPY: *And* the army are desperate to keep her. So yeah, your sister's pretty special.

(Eksi beamed.)

EKSI: I knew it.

(Just then, Kasira paced over to them having finished her dance. Beaming, she sat down then looked to her grinning unit mates.)

KASIRA: Stop that. You look like a bunch of... whoa!!!

(She then reeled back in horror as Ambre and Eksi swarmed on her for a hug. Grinning, Cayley looked to Nivea then stepped towards the dance floor.)

CAYLEY: I'm going to loiter until a man asks me to dance.

NIVEA: I'll be in that.

(The two of them then headed away.)

At the other side of the dance floor at this time, Lassu paced over to where Prodi was standing and nodded to him manfully.)

LASSU: Mate.

PRODI: Dude.

LASSU: I tell you. All that girly love talk gets a bit much after a while. As for dancing, well...

(He grinned.)

LASSU: Let's talk about beer.

PRODI: Okay. What about it?

LASSU: Fucking fetch me one. Lazy git. What sort of best man are you?

PRODI: Yeah well, a reluctant one, as you already know.

(Lassu just hung his head.)

LASSU: This again. When are you gonna let it go?

PRODI: After the divorce, I expect. And I'll try not to say I told you so.

LASSU: Cock.

(He shook his head.)

LASSU: Bollock to you then. I love that woman. If you can't respect that, why don't you just...

(Just then, Nivea tapped on his shoulder and grinned at him.)

NIVEA: Kasira says you're a terrible dancer. I've come to find out *how* bad.

LASSU: She said that?

NIVEA: No, you idiot. I just want to dance.

(Lassu offered her a weak smile.)

LASSU: In a minute, maybe. Right now, I need to set my alleged friend straight on something.

NIVEA: Like what?

(Prodi scoffed at her.)

PRODI: Major Miles and Kasira, that's what.

LASSU: For fucks sake.

PRODI: Mate, that wife of yours sucked another man's dong behind your back. How can that not bother you?

(Quick to defend Kasira, Nivea thrust her hands to her hips.)

NIVEA: Hey, that's not fair. He tricked her into it!

(At once, Lassu shot a horrified glance in her direction.)

LASSU: What?

PRODI: Tricked her?

NIVEA: Yeah, she felt really bad about it. It's not like she wanted to do it!

(Having been standing in earshot of the whole thing, Cayley then joined in.)

CAYLEY: Yeah, she was really upset about it actually. He made her feel she had no choice. He played her.

(Prodi nodded then looked to Lassu arrogantly.)

PRODI: Yeah, there's a lot of it about.

(He then paced away leaving a crestfallen Lassu behind.)

LASSU: She sucked off Major Miles?

NIVEA: She...

LASSU: So the rumour's true?

(Cayley looked highly alarmed.)

CAYLEY: You didn't know?

LASSU: I thought it was a lie.

NIVEA: But when Prodi mentioned it, I assumed you knew.

LASSU: I didn't know *any* fucking thing. I refused to believe it. I thought she was better than that!

CAYLEY: She is. She'd never...

LASSU: I need some air.

(With that, Lassu headed for the door. Left behind, Cayley and Nivea shared a horrified glance.)

CAYLEY: I think this would be a good time to take up swearing, Nivea.

NIVEA: Go for it.

CAYLEY: Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck.

NIVEA: And fuck again. What have we done?

CAYLEY: Crucified Kasira on her wedding day, that's what we've done.

NIVEA: We should tell her Prodi told him. Or that Miles did, he's here somewhere.

CAYLEY: Or we should creep away quietly and pretend it never happened.

NIVEA: Like that'd work. When Kasira finds out, she's going to kill us.

CAYLEY: I know!

(They shared a whimper then glanced to where Kasira was laughing with Soapy and Sika.)

CAYLEY: We're gonna decimate that smile.

NIVEA: Well, yeah... maybe. But then, maybe they'll just talk about it, you know? She'll get to explain herself and he'll forgive her.

CAYLEY: Do you think he will?

NIVEA: He loves her, doesn't he?

CAYLEY: That's true. So what now then? Say nothing and hope they sort it out?

NIVEA: Or we could tell her what we did and watch our friend crumble to pieces before our very eyes.

CAYLEY: Right, yeah. Plan 'A' sounds much more like it.

NIVEA: We'll go with that then. Right?

CAYLEY: Agreed.

(With that, they paced away in opposite directions, whistling innocently.)

Outside at this time, Lassu trudged across the dockside with his hands in his pockets, cursing under his breath. Hearing how his beloved Kasira had performed a sex act on another man while they were together had rocked his entire world. All he could think about was how he'd mentioned the rumour to her the day before and how she'd failed to come clean. Her only comment on it was to avoid talking to Prodi or Major Miles. At the time, he'd thought it was because she was offended by the rumour. Now he knew it was because she was hiding the truth from him. Having been convinced that dishonesty was beyond her, he was struggling to get his head around it. To him, that was worse than the infidelity itself.

Pacing onwards, rapidly beginning to regret becoming betrothed to a woman who'd happily harbour such a dark secret, his heart sunk. Whenever he pictured Kasira's face right now, he pictured her sniggering. He felt like she'd taking him for a fool. Growling to himself, he then glanced up and spotted a ship on the dockside. The army had just delivered several crates of beer and cases of wine for the reception and now the ship was ready to leave. At once, he started to pace towards it. As he did so, however, he was accosted by the landlord of the inn. Somewhat half-cut, he paced up to him and sneered.)

LANDLORD: Well, I hope you're happy. You've ruined everything. You've got the best woman in the world and the rest of us have been left with nothing. I hate you, bloke whose name I don't even know.

(Lassu just sighed.)

LASSU: I've got fuck all, mate. Do me a favour. Tell Kasira I'm going far, far away and she shouldn't try to find me. You can have her, mate. I don't fucking want her.

LANDLORD: Eh? What? You're leaving her?

(Lassu said nothing and just paced off onto the jetty before jumping onto the side of the ship as it started to set sail. Having left the army the day before, he still had his credentials on him and was allowed to sail off with them. Standing on the dockside, the landlord couldn't believe his eyes. This was like a dream come true. Watching the ship sail further and further away, he bit his lip then nodded to himself.)

LANDLORD: I should tell Kasira right away! And I will. Just as soon as the ship gets far enough away.

(He then beamed with delight for a few minutes, watching as the ship became a speck on the horizon. At this point, he about turned and charged towards the civic centre.)

Inside the civic centre at this time, Kasira was deep in conversation with Ambre. There were a few aspects of the ceremony that had confused her and Kasira was helping to clear them up.

KASIRA: Of course I'm not pregnant.

AMBRE: Are you sure?

KASIRA: Yes. Like I said, the ring symbolises eternity not *maternity*.

AMBRE: But Sika said...

KASIRA: Yes, I know and you can help me throttle her later.

AMBRE: She said I'd have to share a room with your *other* baby. That was really mean.

KASIRA: Yes, it was. Where is that little shit, anyway?

SOAPY: Dancing probably. Well, not that you can call what she does dancing.

KASIRA: Right? Jigging about like a slut more like.

(Soapy grinned.)

SOAPY: That girl does love attention.

(Sure enough, Sika was up on the dance floor, thrusting her hips around, disgusting the women and arousing the men.)

AMBRE: That's our Sika.

(Just then, the landlord hurried over to her wearing a delighted expression on his face.)

LANDLORD: Kasira! Terrible news!!!

(Moments later, the entire wedding party raced outside and made a beeline for the dockside. Sure enough, just as the landlord had stated, there was a tiny ship on the horizon.)

KASIRA: Soapy, swim after it!

SOAPY: In *this* dress???

KASIRA: Soapy!!!

(Soapy furrowed her brow.)

SOAPY: Oh, fine.

(With that, she raced to the dockside then dived into the ocean.)

NIVEA: Don't worry, Kasira. It's probably just some horrible mistake.

(She then shared a thousand yard stare with Cayley, well aware of why Lassu had absconded.)

KASIRA: I hope you're right, Nivea. I really do.

AMBRE: I don't understand. You literally just got married. And five minutes ago he was happy about it.

(Tears then welled in Kasira's eyes.)

KASIRA: Why? Why has he left me?

NIVEA: Well... men can be fickle creatures.

CAYLEY: Yeah, you know what they're like. I doubt there was a catalyst, babes. It's probably just one of those things. There's no need for an inquest.

(She nodded sternly.)

CAYLEY: We should just accept that he's gone. Why is irrelevant.

NIVEA: I agree with Cayley. It's probably best not to delve too deep into *why* he's run off. (Kasira was mortified.)

KASIRA: Are you two insane? He's just taken off on our wedding day! I have to know why!

SIKA: It makes no sense. He loves you, Kasira, I could see it in his eyes.

AMBRE: It was obvious.

KASIRA: Then why has he left me? Right after the wedding?

CAYLEY: Cold feet?

KASIRA: *After* the wedding???

NIVEA: Men have big feet.

KASIRA: What the hell has that got to do with anything???

(As Kasira stood there despairing, Cayley nodded to Nivea and the two of them stepped back to talk privately; not to mention quietly.)

CAYLEY: I can't do this, Nivea. I hate deceiving her like this, she's my best friend.

NIVEA: Yeah, but if you tell her the *truth* she won't be. She'll be your *worst* friend. She'll be your enemy. She'll kick you right in the minge, that's what she'll do.

CAYLEY: I don't care. I'm dying here, Nivea; I've never felt so guilty.

NIVEA: And telling Kasira you fucked up her marriage will make you feel better, will it? It certainly won't help Kasira. She'll lose a husband and a best friend all in a few minutes.

CAYLEY: Well... true.

NIVEA: Plus, if you drop me in it, *I'll* kick you in the minge too. I don't care if you outrank me.

CAYLEY: Fine. Whatever.

NIVEA: Look, just act innocent and be there to console Kasira when she needs you.

CAYLEY: Yeah, that's probably for the best.

(They then looked to where Kasira was crying in her sisters arms and their shoulders sunk.)

CAYLEY: We suck!

NIVEA: We really, really do.

Some way out at sea, a short while later, Soapy popped up through the water then glanced about herself urgently. As she did so, she caught sight of the boat Lassu had left on, just ahead of her. At once, she put her head down then swam onwards. Moments later, she re-emerged again, right in front of where Lassu was staring overboard with a glum look on his face. At once, Soapy's brow furrowed and she called up to him.)

SOAPY: Hey, dumb arse!

(Lassu raised a baffled eyebrow then glanced all about himself.)

SOAPY: Down here! In the water.

(Lassu then glanced over the edge and frowned at her.)

LASSU: What do *you* want?

SOAPY: I was just out for a swim for my favourite dress and thought I'd say hello. What do you think I want?

LASSU: I don't fucking know, do I?

SOAPY: Obviously, I want to know what you're doing!

LASSU: What does it look like I'm doing? I'm getting away from the biggest mistake I ever made.

SOAPY: Mistake?

LASSU: Yes, Kasira!

SOAPY: You've crushed her, you know! I could see it in her eyes. The least you could do is come back and explain, you coward.

LASSU: I'm the coward?

SOAPY: Yeah, you're the one running away, chicken shit.

LASSU: I'm not running, I'm sailing. Sailing where she'll never find me.

SOAPY: But why?

LASSU: Because I don't want to be married to a slut!

SOAPY: Kasira's not a slut. Nivea, yes, but not Kasira.

LASSU: Don't flannel me, fish girl.

SOAPY: Racist!

LASSU: She *is* a slut. I know all about the blowjob she gave Major Miles. A blowjob she didn't even feel guilty about. If she had, she'd have admitted it when she had the chance.

SOAPY: She only did that because...

LASSU: I don't care for her reasons. She shouldn't have done it, full stop. And she certainly shouldn't have tried to keep it from me. I don't want to be with a bitch like that.

(Soapy sighed.)

SOAPY: Lassu?

LASSU: What?

SOAPY: Don't do this to her. At least let her explain.

LASSU: Bollocks. She had the chance to do that and chose to keep me in the dark instead.

SOAPY: So you're gonna be a petty, vengeful little prick and walk out on her without an explanation, just to get her back?

LASSU: She'll have her explanation as soon as you get back.

SOAPY: What if I refuse to tell her?

LASSU: Then you're a really bad friend.

SOAPY: Good point.

LASSU: Look. She's dishonest. I fucking hate that. And she's a slut. Stop making excuses. Sucking that bloke's cock was her own choice. I don't want to be stuck with someone like that for the rest of my life, so I'm leaving. End of story.

(Soapy shook her head.)

SOAPY: You're such a baby.

LASSU: Am not.

SOAPY: Yes, you are. You're running away because your delicate little feelings got hurt.

LASSU: I'm....

SOAPY: Pansy!

LASSU: Shut up!

SOAPY: Such a wimp.

LASSU: I'll jump in there and deck you in a minute.

SOAPY: Come on then, jump in. I dare you.

LASSU: Like I'm that stupid! I'd drown.

SOAPY: No, I'd save you then swim you back to Kasira.

LASSU: Even more reason *not* to jump in.

SOAPY: Oh, grow up. Just come back, will you?

LASSU: No!

SOAPY: Please!

LASSU: Piss off.

SOAPY: Aw, go on!

LASSU: No!!!

SOAPY: If you don't, I'll tell everyone you left because you realised you couldn't keep living the lie.

LASSU: What lie?

SOAPY: Your big gay lie!

LASSU: What???

SOAPY: You heard! I'll tell them you're a big gay and you were only with Kasira so people wouldn't find out. Then you realised you were only going to hurt her, and you respect her too much to do that. So instead you've sailed off to begin your big gay voyage into the crack of your boyfriends bum.

LASSU: You're an idiot.

SOAPY: I think I *will* tell her that, actually. It'll hurt less.

LASSU: You wouldn't do that.

SOAPY: I would and I will. The tale of Lassu the gay will doing the rounds at academies and army bases all over the world by the end of the week.

LASSU: Don't you dare.

SOAPY: Come back then!

LASSU: No!

SOAPY: I'll shame you.

LASSU: Oh, do what you like. I'm done with you now.

(With that, he about turned and stormed back inside the ship. Left treading water, Soapy sighed.)

SOAPY: What an asshole.

(She then proceeded to swim back to the island.)

It was over. Within an hour of it beginning, Kasira's marriage was over. Without a bye or leave it'd had taken flight never to return. It had all happened in what felt like the blinking of an eye. One minute they were the happy couple, the next, Kasira was an estrange spouse, abandoned and heartbroken. For Kasira, the suddenness of it all was impossible to comprehend. Her future, standing side by side with the man she loved, had been snatched away before it could even begin. Their marriage was meant to be eternal. He was meant to love her forever. From that day forth they were supposed to grow old together. Instead, what was supposed to have lasted forever, had barely lasted until lunchtime.

Unsurprisingly, Kasira was devastated. Without warning, the bright future she'd been holding in her grasp had been snatched away. She couldn't make sense of it. It all seemed too cruel to be real. One minute she'd been laughing and sharing romantic moments with her new husband, the next, he'd walked out of her life forever without even saying a word to her.

As a result of Lassu's decision to abandon his wife during the reception, the festivities were immediately cancelled. The girls returned to their base and the guests either went home or to their hotels. To the army's credit, they didn't use Kasira's personal disaster as an excuse to badger her to stay. That could wait. For today, they were happy to sympathise then leave her to be consoled by her friends.

Once Soapy had returned and told Kasira what Lassu had said, Kasira had burst into tears. A few minutes later, however, she'd fallen silent. In that moment, she became somewhat catatonic. She didn't speak for the next few hours and simply went where her unit-mates guided her. She was somewhat broken. For Cayley and Nivea, this was an extremely awkward time. Any moment now, they expected Kasira to put two and two together and demand to know who told Lassu about the incident with Major Miles. Fortunately for them, the moment never came. When she finally snapped out of her trance, she simply raised her head and commented on how Prodi must have convinced Lassu the rumour was true. She then mentioned how he'd been talking to Prodi the last time she saw him. Satisfied they were off the hook, Cayley and Nivea drew a deep sigh of relief.

That evening, shortly after sunset, in a bid to cheer Kasira up, the six regular girls of the unit and the two new recruits convened in their base's luxury bath. Kasira always enjoyed a long soak in the warm, natural spring and they thought it might help.

As Kasira sat in the bath, cuddled on either side by Eksi and Ambre, tears started to well in her eyes. This had very much been a feature of the day. (Instead of getting upset about Lassu leaving her, however, she started to smile.)

KASIRA: I'm so glad I have you guys right now. Today's been fucking horrible. I don't know what I'd have done without you girls.

(She then kissed Ambre and Eksi on the head in turn. As she did so, Ambre beamed. Eksi, however, looked to Ambre with a twitching eye. As far as she was concerned, consoling her sister was her job and Ambre was overstepping her boundaries. The fact Kasira had legally adopted her was neither here nor there. For several years now, Eksi had been Kasira's biggest fan and she resented Ambre horning in on her territory. As such, she sat and glowered at her while the others remarked on Kasira's comment.)

CAYLEY: You don't need to worry about that, Kasira. We'll always be there for you, darling.

NIVEA: Always.

SIKA: Yup. You can rely on us. Me especially. I'm great at being a friend. I excel at most things though, to be fair. If you need anything, just ask me, Kasira.

KASIRA: Cool. Can you help me with the dishes later?

SIKA: It's not my turn! Why don't you ask Soapy for a change?

(As Kasira glowered at her, she then dunked half her face under the water and trembled.)

SOAPY: She's so...

KASIRA: Yes, she is.

CAYLEY: Don't worry about the dishes anyway. We'll do that.

KASIRA: It's my turn, Cayley. I'm not gonna shirk my duties.

(Just then, Sika rose back out of the water.)

SIKA: Then why did you ask me to do it?

KASIRA: I asked you to help, that was all. You don't even have to help, I just wouldn't mind some company.

CAYLEY: With Ambre and Eksi glued to you, I don't think that's going to be an issue, Kasira.

SIKA: Fine, I'll do it. In my capacity as an awesome friend, I'll keep you company while *you* do it.

KASIRA: Don't do me any favours, will you?

SIKA: Cool. I'll go to my room and read instead.

(She then grinned and glanced away. As she did so, Kasira allowed herself a chuckle.)

KASIRA: You girls do cheer me up, you know that?

AMBRE: Do you feel a bit better then?

KASIRA: A little, yeah.

(She then smiled at Eksi's head before glancing at Lycia.)

KASIRA: So how are you settling in, girls? Everything okay? Do you like it here, so far?

EKSI: It's great. Really sad for you, but it's pretty cool here. Everyone seems nice. Getting in the bath naked with you all was a bit weird, but I'll get used to it.

NIVEA: Did you two never share a bath together as kids then?

KASIRA: No! I'm ten years older than she is, you silly sod.

NIVEA: Right, good point.

(Kasira rolled her eyes then looked to Lycia.)

KASIRA: How's it been for you?

(Lycia replied in a shy voice.)

LYCIA: It's been good, thank you. Not sure I understand what's going on, but... yeah.

KASIRA: What don't you understand?

LYCIA: Well. I thought we did flag ceremonies and killed wraiths every day.

KASIRA: We do, but today was a special day.

(She grimaced.)

KASIRA: At least it was meant to be. Don't worry. It'll all be back to normal tomorrow and we'll start showing you the ropes. Consider this a rest day.

LYCIA: Okay.

KASIRA: Anything else you don't understand?

LYCIA: Well...

NIVEA: Don't be shy, boy.

(Lycia gave Nivea a sour glance, then looked to Kasira.)

LYCIA: Okay. How come Ambre has a hairbrush in the bath with her?

(Ambre beamed.)

AMBRE: I'm weird. You'll get used to me.

SIKA: She likes to brush Kasira's hair when we're in the bath for some reason.

LYCIA: Right. Okay.

CAYLEY: Anything else?

LYCIA: Um... yeah...

(She gestured to Soapy.)

LYCIA: Why does *she* have a tape measure?

(At once, Cayley, Sika, Soapy and Nivea all shared a devilish grin.)

EKSI: Well that can't be good!

LYCIA: No, it...

(Just then, Cayley and Sika pounced on Lycia. As they did so, Soapy and Nivea pounced on Eksi.)

LYCIA: What are you doing???

EKSI: Get off me!!! Kasira!

(Watching as Nivea pinned Eksi's arms back, allowing Soapy to measure her bust, Kasira chuckled.)

KASIRA: Sorry, sweetheart. It's a rite of passage.

EKSI: What?

AMBRE: I just hope they're not both bigger than Sika or we won't hear the last of it.

KASIRA: God, that's true.

(Just then, Nivea beamed and let go of Eksi.)

NIVEA: Well, Soapy?

SOAPY: Not bad, same size as you, Nivea.

NIVEA: Cool. That's the perfect size!

EKSI: Why the hell did you do that?

(Soapy passed the tape measure to Cayley, avoiding Sika's attempt to grasp it, then beamed.)

SOAPY: Like Kasira said, it's a rite of passage.

(She then looked to where Cayley was measuring Lycia's chest.)

SIKA: Why do *you* get to measure her?

CAYLEY: One, because you're already busy holding her. And two, because you tried to cheat last time.

SIKA: Did not.

KASIRA: We all saw you!

SIKA: Whatever.

(Cayley then beamed.)

CAYLEY: Nice, this girl's in your league, Soapy.

SIKA: A top heavy freak?

SOAPY: Such bitterness and jealousy; it's not pretty, Sika.

(Sika released Lycia then furrowed her brow.)

SIKA: You suck.

(Free from Sika's clutches, Lycia glowered at Cayley.)

LYCIA: What was the purpose of that?

CAYLEY: Unit tradition. Or at least it is now.

(She gestured to Sika.)

CAYLEY: Madam here once boasted about having the biggest breasts. It caused an argument, so when we got back, we all measured them.

KASIRA: She came fifth out of six.

NIVEA: Now we like to measure the new blood just to see how they compare. Not that we'll ever find anyone with boobs smaller than Sika.

SIKA: We already *did* find someone smaller.

CAYLEY: Here we go again.

SIKA: Cayley's are smaller than mine. Too small. Mine, however, are perfect for my height, not to mention the fact that they perfectly complement my sexy, thin waist. I have the ideal figure as defined in the book of something or other.

(Everyone gave her a condescending glance.)

SIKA: It's true! I read about it! I'm the perfect example of the body beautiful. I'm not like you lot with boobs that don't suit me. I'm the very embodiment of... um...

SOAPY: Boditude?

SIKA: That's the word!

SOAPY: It's *not* a word, Sika! I made it up.

SIKA: It *is* a word, actually. You don't know! You don't have my brilliant vocabulary.

EKSI: Wow, she really likes to boast.

SIKA: You mean Soapy, right?

SOAPY: She was talking about *you*.

SIKA: Me???

(Just then, Kasira started to laugh, immediately attracting the attention of the seven girls around her.)

EKSI: What's so funny?

KASIRA: You girls are insane, do you realise that?

LYCIA: I didn't do anything amusing. I just sat here and got molested.

NIVEA: That wasn't being molested. That was nothing like being molested. You'll find out what being molested is later.

(Lycia turned pale.)

LYCIA: I will?

NIVEA: Yup, seeing as Eksi is out of bounds, I'm going to have to molest you twice. Consider it taking one for your team-mate, like a good boy.

(Lycia forced an uncomfortable laugh.)

LYCIA: You're like, kidding, right?

(Much to her despair, Nivea grinned and shook her head while everyone else offered her pitying glances.)

LYCIA: I want to go home.

KASIRA: Don't worry, Lycia, I'd never let her get carried away. She...

(Just then, her eyes bulged and she screamed out.)

KASIRA: It burns!!!

(With that, she upped and raced to the edge of the bath before scrambling out in a desperate hurry. As she did so, everyone watched her in bewilderment for a moment then let out screams of their own. The bath water had become unbearably hot.)

SIKA: Hot, hot, hot!!!

SOAPY: Ouch, ouch, ouch...

(A mass exodus, accompanied by screams of agony, ensued. Moments later, once everyone had dived out of the bath, Cayley healed her own burns then raced among the others to heal theirs.)

SIKA: It stings!!!

CAYLEY: What the hell's going on?

(She healed Sika then hurried over to Soapy.)

SIKA: The bath attacked us!

KASIRA: How in the hell did that happen? I've been bathing here for the last ten years and it's never done *that* before!

NIVEA: I feel like I'm on fire!!!

(Having finished healing Soapy, Cayley then swooped down next to her.)

CAYLEY: Don't worry, I...

(Her brow then furrowed over.)

CAYLEY: I already healed you!

NIVEA: I know, I just like it when you touch me.

CAYLEY: Idiot! Other people need healing.

(Cayley then raced off and healed Eksi.)

KASIRA: I don't understand. Look at the steam!

(Sure enough, the water was so hot, the steam was becoming extremely thick.)

AMBRE: It's like being in a cloud.

SIKA: A cloud that's on fire, you mean. It's bloody sweltering in here.

SOAPY: Like clouds can catch fire!

AMBRE: They can. Cotton burns really easily.

EKSI: Cotton?

AMBRE: Yeah. Clouds are made of cotton.

EKSI: You're an idiot!

AMBRE: Mean!

(Just then, the water in the bath started to boil. Having already healed everyone, Cayley stood up and bit her lip.)

CAYLEY: Um, girls... I think we should...

(Just then, a geyser shot up from the middle of the bath and smashed through the ceiling.)

KASIRA: Run! Get back to your rooms and get dressed. Hurry! If this gets too much we're gonna have to evacuate the base!!!

(With that, they all raced out of the exit, Ambre protesting as she went.)

AMBRE: Clouds *are* made of cotton. My mum wouldn't lie to me.

SIKA: Put a sock in it.

AMBRE: Socks are made of cotton too.

SIKA: Right.

EKSI: She's a grade 'A' numpty!

KASIRA: Hey, be nice!!!

A few moments later, Sika and Ambre raced into the room they shared and immediately set about putting their clothes on. Panicking somewhat, Ambre grabbed her dress then immediately tried to force it over her head. Moments later, she heard a ripping sound.)

AMBRE: Oh, poo!

SIKA: You know you can't hurry like that, Ambre. You have horns!

AMBRE: Antlers!

SIKA: Whatever. Just grab another dress and put it on carefully.

AMBRE: Okay!

(With that, Ambre opened her wardrobe door and furrowed her brow.)

AMBRE: Did you steal my red one?

(Sika swiftly threw a red dress on Ambre's bed then scoffed at her.)

SIKA: It's on your bed, you blind sod.

AMBRE: Oh, yeah. My bad.

(With that, Ambre slipped her on dress cautiously over her horns. Once they were in, she then pulled it down tightly over her body. She then beamed with delight.)

AMBRE: I did it!

SIKA: What do you want, a medal?

AMBRE: No, thanks; I've already got one.

(With that, she removed her medal from the torn dress and placed it on her new one.)

AMBRE: Right, I'm good to go.

SIKA: You have nothing on your feet.

AMBRE: Oh, yeah.

(Suddenly, the entire room started to shake extremely violently. With a scream, both Ambre and Sika were both cast to the floor.)

AMBRE: The room wobbled.

SIKA: It's an earthquake!!!

(For several moments, the room continued to shake before eventually, the vibrations petered out. In that moment, Sika jumped up and pulled Ambre to her feet.)

SIKA: Slip your shoes on, we're out of here.

AMBRE: Agreed.

(Ambre did just that then the two of them charged out of the room. Looking more than a little terrified, they headed out of the corridor, charged around a corner then sprinted onwards until they reached the main living quarters. Much to their surprise, Nivea, Cayley, Soapy, Kasira, Eksi and Lycia were already there.)

NIVEA: You took your time.

SIKA: Ambre ripped her dress.

AMBRE: I put my antler through it.

NIVEA: Your horn!

AMBRE: Antler.

LYCIA: We have horns, not antlers.

EKSI: She's so dim.

LYCIA: I know, right?

NIVEA: Hey! Be nice, mini-Kasira. You too, boy!

LYCIA: Stop calling me that!

(Just then, a second earthquake struck. The entire room vibrated extremely violently and everyone was thrown to the floor.)

KASIRA: It's a bigger one this time!!!

(Sure enough, everything was being thrown from the shelves and the table was edging its way across the room. Convinced that staying in there was far too dangerous, Kasira immediately pointed to the exit.)

KASIRA: Get outside. Go!!!

AMBRE: How? I can hardly stand up!!!

KASIRA: Crawl if you have to!!!

NIVEA: Go!!! If that roof comes down on us...

(Spooked by Nivea's words, Ambre immediately leapt to her feet and sprinted outside.)

SOAPY: Fuck, she's quick.

(Just then, the earthquake seemed to stop in the blinking of an eye. There was no vibration and it all fell silent.)

KASIRA: I hope that was...

(Her words were then interrupted by a deafening boom from outside. It sounded like the entire world had exploded. At once, they all shared a horrified glance then sprinted outside, very much matching Ambre's pace in their desperation to get out there. Once they were there, they all spotted Ambre in the courtyard staring at the top of the hill with a look of horror on her face. Set on edge by her expression, they then glanced to see what was upsetting her. Much to everyone's despair, the top of the hill had gone and there was a giant grey cloud rising high into the air. To make matters worse, lava was slowly trickling down the hillside. Reacting swiftly, Kasira immediately bellowed at her subordinates.)

KASIRA: Girls!!! Grab your essentials and get back out here!!! You've got sixty seconds. Go!!!

(Nobody moved. They all just stared at her in horror.)

CAYLEY: Capsway Island is a volcano?

KASIRA: Yes! As you can plainly fucking see, it's an *erupting* volcano!!! Now do as I fucking asked! Grab your essentials and get back out here!!! Now! Quick! Essentials only!!! We're getting the fuck out of here!!!

(Reacting to her words, they all then charged back inside. With a nod, Kasira then raced in after them.)

Outside on the island's moonlit dockside a short while later, the army General was busy ordering an evacuation of the island. The ship on which the army personal had arrived was rapidly being filled with panicking townsfolk. It was chaos. Urging calmness, he was doing his utmost to make everyone file onto the ship in an orderly manner.

GENERAL: Don't panic, people! There's plenty of time, it's a slow moving spew of lava, so you don't have to run!

(Just then, Major Miles stepped up to his side.)

MILES: You know, General, there's not going to be enough room on that ship for everyone.

GENERAL: I realise that. That's why we're only evacuating civilians.

MILES: What? Are you mad?

GENERAL: Suck it up, Major. Our job is to protect the people. Their needs come first.

MILES: So, if it's non-military personnel only, how come that chap, Prodi, just went on board?

GENERAL: He's on leave. He's not here in a military capacity.

MILES: I see.

GENERAL: Plus, I didn't notice.

MILES: Right. So, if you're in the mood for turning a blind eye...

GENERAL: I'll notice if *you* go on the ship. And I'll be issuing a severe punishment, so don't even think about it.

MILES: Bugger.

GENERAL: Now make yourself useful.

MILES: How?

GENERAL: Use your initiative, man, just don't get on that ship.

(Just then, Kasira, Cayley, Nivea, Ambre, Sika, Soapy, Eksi and Lycia came running over to him. They were all carrying two large bags. Kasira also had a small handbag with her dual blades in it. Ambre had her framed level ten certificate tucked under her arm; it was one of her prized possessions. Having reached the general, Kasira dropped her bags then saluted.)

KASIRA: General. I'd like to suggest an immediate evacuation of...

GENERAL: I've already ordered it, Commander.

MILES: Unlike you, he was on the ball.

GENERAL: On the contrary, I just happened to be near the ship when the volcano erupted.

(He glanced up at the lava slowing making its way down the hillside and sucked his teeth.)

GENERAL: There's not going to be an island left.

KASIRA: Indeed, sir.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: Allow us to assist with the evacuation, sir.

GENERAL: Gladly. Leave your bags here with me, they'll be perfectly safe.

KASIRA: Thank you, sir.

GENERAL: I'm trying to get as many civilians as possible onto that ship. Military personnel such as ourselves can find our own way off the island once they're gone.

KASIRA: Okay. Bags down, girls.

(As her unit-mates placed their bags down near the general, Kasira looked to Cayley.)

KASIRA: Go with Nivea and knock door to door. Take the left side of town.

CAYLEY: Ma'am.

(Cayley and Nivea then raced away.)

KASIRA: Soapy and Sika, you take the centre of town.

SOAPY: Ma'am!

(Soapy and Sika then charged towards the centre of town.)

KASIRA: Eksi, Lycia, I want you two to go to that green house...

(She pointed to a green house, detached from the rest of the town.)

KASIRA: Hurry. Knock hard several times. If nobody answers, hurry back.

EKSI: And if they do?

KASIRA: Tell them to evacuate, their house is going to disappear under a river of molten lava. Go!

LYCIA: Yes, ma'am.

(With that, Lycia and Eksi charged away.)

KASIRA: You and I can take the right side of town, Ambre.

AMBRE: Ma'am.

KASIRA: Let's go.

(As Kasira and Ambre charged away, the general gave Miles a sideways glance.)

GENERAL: Some people are born soldiers, Major. They know what to do in a crisis.

Others stand behind their general, pulling faces.

MILES: I did nothing of the sort!

GENERAL: You did! When instead, you should have been doing what Commander Ashwood is doing. Using her initiative!

(Miles snarled then glanced at Kasira. Much to his delight, she was scowling back at him. At once, he beamed then made the blowjob gesture at her again. Much to his horror, however, Kasira came charging at him with her fists clenched.)

KASIRA: I'm gonna kill you!!! That bet of yours ruined my marriage!!!

MILES: Whoops. You know, under the circumstances, maybe this wasn't the best time to tease her about that.

(The general looked extremely confused.)

GENERAL: What the hell's going on?

(He then furrowed his brow.)

GENERAL: Commander Ashwood, calm down!!! That's an order!

(At once, Kasira slowed to a walk then snarled bitterly.)

KASIRA: Fine. He'll keep.

(She then about turned and headed back to where Ambre was waiting. As she did so, the general raised a suspicious eyebrow.)

GENERAL: Miles?

MILES: Sir?

GENERAL: Her husband just left her because he believed a rumour that's going round. A rumour that she sucked your dong. Everyone's talking about it. And you just made a blowjob gesture at her. What sort of cunt are you?

(Miles furrowed his brow.)

MILES: Well...

GENERAL: I bet it was you who *started* the rumour as well, wasn't it? You're pretty well known for winding-up the female soldiers.

MILES: For their own good of course.

GENERAL: So did you? Make up the rumour, I mean.

(Miles beamed.)

MILES: It wasn't just a rumour, sir. She *did* suck my dong.

GENERAL: She did? No way! Really? I mean seriously?

MILES: Don't sound so surprised, General.

GENERAL: How can I *not* be surprised? She's a good looking woman, and you... well, look at you.

MILES: Excuse me?

GENERAL: You heard me. So how did you wangle that one? Was she drunk? She must have been? Or did you trick her into it?

MILES: Is it really so hard to believe that she may just have been turned on by my manliness?

GENERAL: Yes. Yes, it is. Very much so.

MILES: Right.

GENERAL: Anyway, enough silliness. Send up a firework, will you? We'll need a second ship if we're to get off this island alive. With any luck, there'll be another ship passing nearby and it'll see it.

MILES: Sir.

(As Miles raced away, the general then tipped his head to watch Kasira's backside as she hurried off the dockside.)

GENERAL: What a superb looking filly. Lassu, you're a twat.

In the centre of town a short while later, Soapy and Sika stood hammering on a door, calling out to anyone who may have been inside.

SOAPY: Hello??? Is anyone home?

SIKA: If there is, come out here!!!

SOAPY: Hello???

SIKA: There's a fuck load of lava pouring down the hill, hurry!

(Just then, the door to the house next door flew open and an old man stuck his head out.)

VILLAGER: There is???

SIKA: Yes!

VILLAGER: And you weren't gonna tell me???

SOAPY: We were coming to you next!

VILLAGER: Oh. My bad. Shall I go back inside and wait then?

SOAPY: No, you tit. Evacuate!

VILLAGER: I don't think I like your tone, young lady!

SIKA: I'll handle this.

SOAPY: Be my guest.

SIKA: Molten lava, mate. Spewing down the hill. Run!

VILLAGER: Right. Good point.

(With that, he raced out of the house, stark naked, heading for the dockside.)

SIKA: He was...

SOAPY: I saw.

SIKA: I saw his...

SOAPY: Let's never discuss it ever again.

SIKA: It was all shrivelled and...

SOAPY: Sika; shut up.

SIKA: Right. Good point.

(She nodded.)

SIKA: Anyway, that's one villager rescued, let's hurry this up. I want to sneak onto the civilian ship before anyone notices I'm missing.

(As she headed down the road, Soapy shook her head.)

SOAPY: Why do I keep getting paired with you?

SIKA: You're just lucky, I guess.

SOAPY: Yeah, right.

SIKA: And besides, why *shouldn't* we be on that ship? We're young and pretty. Most of them are old. They've had their lives. I don't see why we should give up ours early when they'll all be dead soon anyway.

SOAPY: Wow. Look, Sika, if you stowaway on that ship, you'll be court-marshalled whipped and sent to the brig for ten years. Don't be a numpty.

SIKA: I wouldn't be dead though; that'll be a bonus.

SOAPY: *We* won't die, anyway, you silly sod. I can swim to safety and you can fly. Kasira, Ambre and Nivea are the only ones who need to worry.

SIKA: And the two newbies.

SOAPY: Yeah, but not us two, so put such silly ideas out of your mind.

SIKA: Fine. Yeah, makes sense.

(She nodded.)

SIKA: Anyway, let's get this done.

(On the left side of town at this time, Nivea and Cayley were heading swiftly up the hill, watching as the lava trickled its way down towards them. Suffice to say, they were somewhat nervous.)

NIVEA: What idiot would build a house this far up a volcano?

CAYLEY: Someone who *didn't know* it was a volcano obviously.

NIVEA: Right, good point.

(She sucked her teeth.)

NIVEA: I wonder if the people who built that underground base knew they were digging into the side of a volcano.

CAYLEY: Probably not, I'd wager.

NIVEA: Wager? You never do wagers.

CAYLEY: Actually, Kasira and I had a wager once.

(She then grimaced and glanced away.)

NIVEA: Why the horrified expression, Cayley?

(She then gasped in horror.)

NIVEA: It was about *me*, wasn't it?

CAYLEY: No!

NIVEA: Cayley!

CAYLEY: Fine. It was.

(She grimaced.)

CAYLEY: Kasira thought you were, you know, a bit on the lesbian side...

NIVEA: What?

CAYLEY: I bet her you weren't.

NIVEA: Why would she think that?

(Cayley gave her a sideways glance.)

CAYLEY: You have a boob fetish!

NIVEA: Right... fair shout. But...

CAYLEY: Look. Until the week after the haze break, the delivery guys used to come to us during the day time, so you never got to see them. And the townsmen hated us, so we'd never seen you around men. Only around women. So, Kasira just assumed you were... that way. After all, all the evidence suggested you may have been.

NIVEA: I didn't know she thought that.

CAYLEY: Don't get the hump.

NIVEA: I haven't got the hump.

CAYLEY: It was a perfectly logical assumption on her part.

NIVEA: Logical? Just because I like pinning girls down and groping their... right, I see what you mean. Look; whatever. Let's just forget it and move on.

CAYLEY: Good idea.

NIVEA: I know.

(Then then hurried on for a moment before Cayley offered her a smile.)

CAYLEY: If you were wondering, Kasira paid up.

NIVEA: What?

CAYLEY: When we found out you weren't... like that.

NIVEA: Cayley, stop talking about it or you'll be my next victim.

CAYLEY: I was only saying.

NIVEA: Well don't.

(She then grinned.)

NIVEA: Still, knowing she thought I was a lesbo helps ease my guilt. I've been feeling awful about ruining Kasira's marriage all day. Now I'm so miffed about that bet, I kind of feel we're even.

CAYLEY: Even? We killed her marriage within an hour of the wedding!

NIVEA: Well yeah, but the fact Lassu is a big, over-sensitive pansy didn't help her cause. In fact, I'm happy to blame him entirely.

CAYLEY: Has to be said. He did react like a big, flowery sissy, didn't he?

NIVEA: Weak.

CAYLEY: Pathetic.

NIVEA: Agreed. My conscious is clear.

CAYLEY: Mine isn't.

NIVEA: No?

(She sighed.)

NIVEA: No, nor is mine. In fact, what we did is gonna haunt me forever.

CAYLEY: Yes, well, let's...

(Just then, they heard two children screaming from up ahead. At once, they glanced forth and saw two children racing between a pair of houses with a stream of lava, hot on their heels.)

NIVEA: Fuck!

CAYLEY: Go! Run as fast as you can!!!

(At once, they both charged towards the girls.)

CAYLEY: Thank heavens it's *you* I'm with. Sika would have run the other way.

NIVEA: Oh, no doubt about it.

(With that, they grabbed the two children then proceeded to flee down the hill, calling out at their top of their voices for everyone to abandon the town immediately.)

In the meantime, somewhere near the bottom of the hill, Kasira and Ambre were having trouble with a stubborn resident. Standing on his porch, they were having no luck whatsoever in making him leave the house.)

KASIRA: Sir, I implore you.

OLD MAN: No. Now bugger off.

KASIRA: Please. Look, if you stay...

OLD MAN: It's not a question of "if", young lady. I'm staying.

AMBRE: You're silly!

(The old man furrowed his brow at Kasira.)

OLD MAN: Who's your friend? She's quite the diplomat.

KASIRA: She's not wrong though. Staying here means certain death!

OLD MAN: I'm not afraid of death. All my friends have already died. And none of them are complaining.

(Kasira looked most bewildered.)

KASIRA: How... how *could* they complain?

OLD MAN: It was a joke, young lady. Now, go on, bugger off. You're a pretty little thing and you've got your whole life ahead of you. Don't waste it talking to a miserable old git like me.

AMBRE: Okay. Let's go, Kasira.

KASIRA: No. Not until this old fool sees sense!

OLD MAN: Old fool?

(He snarled.)

OLD MAN: Look here, monkey tits, I built this house with my own bare hands. Just me! Just me and a team of twenty master builders. Mostly I just supervised. Actually, I wasn't even on the island when it was built; I was working on the mainland, but that's not the point. This house is mine. I was *born* in this house and I'm gonna *die* in this house.

KASIRA: Wait, what? You just said you were working on the mainland when this house was built, now you're claiming you were born in it!

(The old man grimaced.)

OLD MAN: Spotted that, huh?

KASIRA: Yes.

OLD MAN: Bugger. You're a smart one.

(He then nodded sternly.)

OLD MAN: Still. I'm not moving. If my time's up, my time's up.

AMBRE: He's made his mind up, Kasira.

KASIRA: But...

AMBRE: We need to go. That lava is coming and we've got more houses to visit.

(She whimpered.)

AMBRE: I don't want to get caught up in that lava, that'd really, really hurt.

(The old man looked to her in horror.)

OLD MAN: Wait. What? It would?

KASIRA: Of course it would.

OLD MAN: How much? How much would it hurt?

AMBRE: Lots and lots.

(The old man bit his lip.)

OLD MAN: I see. Fuck that then.

(With that, he took off towards the dockside like a man half his age.)

KASIRA: Right. What a weirdo.

AMBRE: Job done though.

KASIRA: Yeah, thanks to you. Good girl.

(Ambre beamed.)

AMBRE: Yay.

KASIRA: Now let's hurry on.

(With that, they raced onwards to the next house.

In the meantime, Eksi and Lycia were jogging back to the dockside from the green house they'd been ordered to attend. Having found nobody home, they were now eager to get back to the dockside to find out how they'd be getting off the island.)

EKSI: I can't believe this, can you?

LYCIA: What part?

EKSI: Any of it. We came here to fight wraiths, not a volcano.

LYCIA: Yeah, the whole thing has been bewildering. I wasn't expecting to end up at a wedding and I certainly wasn't expecting this.

(Just then, a drunk, male villager staggered up to them from ahead. Barely able to stand, he waved at Eksi.)

DRUNK: Kasira! Alright, love?

EKSI: I'm not Kasira!

DRUNK: Well that's a lie.

(As the two girls raced on, he furrowed his brow then charged after them, running in a drunken zigzag.)

DRUNK: You look gorgeous today. What do you use on your skin, you look ten years younger.

LYCIA: Go away!

DRUNK: Can't! My eyes are hypnotised by Kasira's butt. Must follow.

LYCIA: Look, pal...

EKSI: Let him follow, that way he'll make it to the dockside and we'll look like we rescued someone.

LYCIA: Right, yeah. Good plan.

EKSI: Kasira will be really pleased with us.

LYCIA: That's important to you, isn't it?

EKSI: Of course, it is.

LYCIA: Fair enough. I like Kasira, actually. She seems really nice.
EKSI: They all seem nice, actually. Even if that Nivea person is a bit weird.
LYCIA: Yeah, she scares me a bit. I don't think much of the retard either.
(Eksi's brow immediately furrowed.)
EKSI: Don't get me started. She's all over my sister like a barnacle.
LYCIA: It's almost like *she's* her sister!
EKSI: Exactly.
LYCIA: And she's so stupid.
EKSI: Really, really stupid.
LYCIA: And she's a suck up. I hate that.
EKSI: A total kiss arse.
LYCIA: She's annoying.
EKSI: To the extreme.
LYCIA: I wish I was as cute as her.
EKSI: And she's really pretty too.
LYCIA: Bitch.
EKSI: Total bitch!
LYCIA: It's wrong to hate someone just for that. We're being silly, aren't we?
EKSI: Nope.
LYCIA: Right.
EKSI: Besides, I really do hate the way she clings to my sister.
LYCIA: I can understand that. And as your friend, it'd be remiss if I didn't hate her for that too.
EKSI: Thanks, babe.
LYCIA: You're welcome.
(Just then, the drunken voice rose up from behind again.)
DRUNK: Swing, you sexy skirt. So naughty.
(Eksi grimaced.)
EKSI: The sooner we get back and ditch this guy, the better.
LYCIA: Agreed.

A few minutes later, the eight girls of the 123rd wraith containment unit, found themselves standing on the dockside with a group of twelve army officials. Just behind them, the army's ship, packed full of distressed civilians was heading out to sea. Each and everyone one of the passengers was lamenting the loss of their home and all their worldly belongings. Their sorrow, however, was the least of the military folk's worries. As they stood there on the dockside the lava continued to roll forth towards them. It had now engulfed much of the town and it'd only be a matter of minutes before it reached the dockside.

KASIRA: Okay, so that's one mission accomplished. The townsfolk are safe. Now what?
(The general bit his lip.)

GENERAL: We should get off this dockside and into the sea.

CAYLEY: Will the sea stop the lava?

GENERAL: I genuinely don't know. But that's not even the biggest worry. The volcano might erupt again and bury us all under a tonne of ash.

(He then nodded sternly.)

GENERAL: Okay, here's the plan. There's twenty of us and there's four rowing boats moored on that jetty behind us. That's five people in each. We'll have to wait just off the coast and hope a ship passes by. I won't lie to you. We're in deep shit here, ladies and gentleman. Deep, steamy, putrid, rancid shit.

(Just then, they heard a scream from the township. At once they all turned and stared in horror at the sight of a little girl, running from the lava.)

GENERAL: Fuck!

SIKA: She's not gonna make it!

GENERAL: Leave it to me, I'll...

(He then fell silent and joined the others in watching on in bewilderment as a gazelle charged from their ranks, in the direction of the panicking child.)

MILES: Is that...

KASIRA: Yup!

(As Kasira watched on with pride, Ambre bounded up to the little girl then transformed back into her human self. She then scooped the girl up and charged back to them. Even without her gazelle form, she was an immensely fast runner.)

GENERAL: I have to say, Commander Ashwood, I'm impressed.

MILES: And now you know why I gave her such a glowing report.

KASIRA: Right, well, how about telling *her* that.

GENERAL: Very well, I will.

(Moments later, when Ambre returned with the little girl in her arms, the general nodded sternly.)

GENERAL: Outstanding bravery, Private. You're a credit to your unit.

(Ambre put the girl down and beamed.)

AMBRE: Yay. Thank you. So are you.

GENERAL: You're a hero. This little girl owes you her life.

AMBRE: I did well then?

GENERAL: You most certainly did.

KASIRA: Good girl, Ambre.

SOAPY: You're a star.

SIKA: Of course, it may turn out to be a futile gesture.

AMBRE: What?

SIKA: We're standing here with nowhere to go and there's a shit load of red hot sludge pissing down the hill in our direction.

GENERAL: A good point. To the rowing boats, people.

SIKA: Great. Out of the volcano and into the shark infested ocean.

NIVEA: You can get into the shark infested ocean if you like, we're getting in the boats.

SOAPY: Don't worry, there aren't any sharks in the rowing boats. I checked. There were no alligators, dragons or man-eating plants either.

SIKA: You're not funny, you realise that, right?

GENERAL: Stop arguing and go, people!

KASIRA: You heard the general. Shift your buttocks, ladies. Come on.

(Obeying Kasira's demand, everyone then hurried down the jetty, glancing back at where the lava flow had started to encroach onto the dockside. Behind it, the town lay devastated. It may have been a slow moving flow, but it stopped for nothing and nobody.)

GENERAL: It doesn't matter who gets on which boat. Once we get there, five of you should get on each, as simple as that.

SIKA: That doesn't add up. There's an extra person now.

GENERAL: Right, yes, the little girl. Major Miles?

MILES: Sir?

GENERAL: Babysit the girl.

MILES: Me? We're surrounded by women and you want *me* to do it???

GENERAL: Good point. Kasira, you do it.

(Kasira glowered at him sarcastically.)

KASIRA: Right, yeah, that's not at all sexist.

(Somewhat miffed about being the centre of the argument, the little girl furrowed her brow.)

GIRL: Fuck you then; if none of you want me, I'll just run back and jump in the lava.

AMBRE: Don't do that. I'll look after her.

GENERAL: I asked Kasira to do it.

KASIRA: And I've decided to delegate it to Ambre. Problem solved.

GIRL: Oh, so I'm a problem now, am I? Wankers.

(Just then, one of the female army officials spoke up.)

ALICIA: Actually, leave it to me, sir. Once we get to safety, I'll use our connections to trace her parents.

GENERAL: Even better! Thank you, Alicia.

ALICIA: You're welcome, sir.

(Moments later, just as they reached the four rowing boats, Cayley glanced up then gasped.)

CAYLEY: Ship!!!

GENERAL: What happened?

KASIRA: She said ship, with a P.

GENERAL: Oh, my bad.

(He then joined everyone in staring out to sea. Sure enough there was a large ship out on the horizon.)

GENERAL: Well, I'll be blown.

MILES: Yeah? If you want to be blown, I highly recommend getting Kasira to do it.

GENERAL: Major!!!

(Kasira snarled at him then glanced to Soapy.)

KASIRA: Soapy. That ship.

(Soapy nodded.)

SOAPY: Ma'am!

(With that, she dived into the ocean and proceeded to swim away. Having watched her go, Kasira then growled at Major Miles.)

KASIRA: I don't care what rank you are, I'm going to drown you in the sea!

GENERAL: No you won't!

KASIRA: Apparently I won't.

GENERAL: Everyone get in the boats. And don't forget all our bags! Kasira, stay away from the Major.

KASIRA: Fine.

(With that, they all started to board the little rowing boats; Ambre still clutching her framed level 10 certificate. As they did so, Sika glanced back at the lava and groaned.)

SIKA: Knowing our luck that ship that Soapy's heading to is full of pirates and rapists. I should have flown away and boarded that *civilian* ship while I had that chance.

NIVEA: And end up spending ten years in the army brig for desertion? Surrounded by thugs and rapists? Yeah, that'd be sensible.

SIKA: At least I'd be alive. You seem to be overlooking the importance of that factor, Nivea.

NIVEA: We're gonna be fine. Soapy will get that ship to wait for us, you'll see.

SIKA: I hope so.

(She sat down in a boat then sighed.)

SIKA: Of course, that's assuming they even see Soapy bobbing about in the sea next to their ship. It's night time! Sending me or Cayley would have made more sense, we could have landed on board.

(Kasira looked to her then bit her lip.)

KASIRA: That's a good point actually.

SIKA: I know, right. I should be leader really. My ideas are awesome.

KASIRA: Sending Cayley would have been a great idea.
(She shrugged.)
KASIRA: Still, Soapy's gone now.
SIKA: If she has no luck getting the crew's attention, I'll go.
NIVEA: No. Cayley should go.
AMBRE: *You'd* land on the ship then forgot all about us.
NIVEA: Yeah, I can picture you sunbathing on deck several hours later, wondering what it was you forgot to do.
KASIRA: Then saying it couldn't have been that important and going to sleep.
(Sika gaped at them in disgust.)
SIKA: Is that how you see me?
KASIRA: Pretty much!
NIVEA: Yup!
SIKA: Mean!
(With that, she shook her head in annoyance then glanced to where the lava was spreading out across the dockside.)
SIKA: Guys? The entire island's disappeared.
NIVEA: Yeah. It's just a red and grey mess.
(She then sighed in despair.)
NIVEA: We had a nice base and the townsfolk loved us. We went to hell and back that night, earning the respect of the people, and now...
CAYLEY: Yup, wherever they post us it's gonna be back to square one. Hated by all.
SIKA: That's if they even post us all as a unit. They might just split us all up!
AMBRE: Oh no; I hadn't thought of that!
(She then beamed with delight.)
AMBRE: Not that it affects *me*, I'm leaving next week!
(She then noticed the scowls she was receiving from Sika, Cayley and Nivea.)
AMBRE: That was insensitive. Sorry.
(She then offered them a cheesy grin before glancing away innocently.)

A few minutes later, out on the ocean, Soapy swam up next to the vessel they'd spotted from the island. It was a large military ship and the deck was quite a way up. Undeterred, she called up to it urgently. At first she received no reply. Determined not to give up, she then tried again, yelling at the top of her voice. Much to her delight, the ship's first mate then popped his head over the side of the ship and squinted down through the darkness.

FIRST MATE: Hello???

(Soapy waved her arms about and yelled up at him.)

SOAPY: Hey!!! Down here in the ocean!!! Over here!!!

(The first mate scoured the water closer then gasped.)

FIRST MATE: Oh my god, a woman!!!

(Relieved to have got his attention, Soapy called up to him.)

SOAPY: We need help!!! Several army personnel, including high-ranking officers are over by that volcano; we need rescuing!!!

FIRST MATE: What volcano?

SOAPY: What do you mean, what volcano??? That bright-red, glowing island that's dominating the bloody skyline!

(She rolled her eyes.)

SOAPY: Please drop anchor and help!

(Much to her dismay, however, the sailor just snarled at her.)

FIRST MATE: You must think I'm an idiot!

SOAPY: No, I think you're a bit blind, not an idiot.

FIRST MATE: Soldiers indeed! There's no soldiers! I've heard tales of your sort. Sirens!

SOAPY: What?

FIRST MATE: Don't deny it! You want to lure us to your little enclave where you'll devour us all! Sea beast!!!

SOAPY: I'm not a sea beast, you pillock! My name is Corporal Soapy of the 123rd wraith containment unit. I'm not a siren, a mermaid or a kraken. I'm a serving soldier and I've come to ask for your assistance!

FIRST MATE: I'll assist you alright. I'll assist you in pissing off away from my ship!
(He then ducked out of view.)

SOAPY: Hello??? Hey!!! Talk to me!!! Actually, get someone else to; you've clearly been at sea way too long, you loony! Hello???

(Just then, the first mate reappeared with a crossbow.)

FIRST MATE: This is how we treat sirens in the navy, bitch!!!

SOAPY: Uh-oh!!!

FIRST MATE: Not so cocky now, are you?

(With that, he unleashed a crossbow bolt in her direction. At once Soapy about turned, desperate to swim away.)

FIRST MATE: Bugger. Missed!

(He then reloaded and had another go, this time firing a bolt into Soapy's thigh. At once, she cried out in pain.)

SOAPY: You fucking asshole!!!

FIRST MATE: There's plenty more where that came from, evil sea thing!

(Just then, the ship's captain bundled him out of the way and yelled at him.)

CAPTAIN: Idiot!!! Go to the bridge! Now!

FIRST MATE: But sir, sea beast!!!

CAPTAIN: That's an aqua-human! Like you, you tit!

FIRST MATE: It is?

CAPTAIN: Go!!!

(As the first mate scampered away, the captain yelled over the side at where Soapy was treading water with a pained look on her face.)

CAPTAIN: Sorry about him. He's a little overly fond of the rum. What can I do for you?
(Soapy winced with pain then called out.)

SOAPY: Near that volcano!!! There's about twenty army personnel need rescuing. Help!

CAPTAIN: Righto. We'll drop anchor and row over there.

SOAPY: They can row to you, they have boats.

CAPTAIN: Even better. I'll drop anchor and wait then.

SOAPY: I'll let them know.

(With that, she about turned and swam off. As she did so, however, she started to sense a disturbance in the water. At once, she ducked beneath the waves to get a better look. Having smelt blood, sharks were starting to gather.)

SOAPY: Uh-oh.

(With that, she unleashed several blasts of magic in their direction then swam away with everything she had. Sharks feared the smell of magic energy and she could only hope it'd be enough. With terror etched in her eyes, she never looked back once. Such was her terror, upon arriving back at the rowing boats, she sprung up out of the water and like a salmon swimming upstream and landed on Cayley's lap.)

SOAPY: Heal me!!!

(Having given everyone quiet the heart attack, they all stared at her in horror, except Eksi who hit her on the head with her bag.)

EKSI: Creature!!!

SOAPY: Hey!!!

(Mercifully, she was restrained before she could hit her again and Cayley managed to heal her wound.)

CAYLEY: You okay? What the hell's going on?

SOAPY: I was bleeding and sharks appeared.

AMBRE: You said sharks were afraid of your magic and didn't attack aqua humans.

SOAPY: They do when we're bleeding because some idiot shot us with a crossbow.

GENERAL: So the ship was hostile?

SOAPY: No. It's a military ship. He's going to drop anchor and wait for us.

MILES: Then who shot you?

SOAPY: Some idiot thought I was a siren.

(Miles and the general both rolled their eyes.)

GENERAL: That's the navy for you. Either insane or drunk.

MILES: Quite.

GENERAL: Anyway. Grab the oars, people. Let's get ourselves out of here.

KASIRA: Not a moment too soon either. That lava's pouring off the dockside now, it's never-ending.

MILES: For us it is. For us it ends now. Now row.

Once the general had given orders to row, three of the boats had beaten a hasty retreat from the dockside. The fourth one, however, the one with the general in it, was going nowhere. This boat contained Ambre, Kasira, Eksi and Lycia. Kasira had grabbed one oar and Eksi had grabbed the other. Unfortunately, Eksi had never rowed a boat before and was countering every stroke Kasira made.

GENERAL: You know, you two are a carbon copy of one another. You look alike, you sound alike, you dress the same way and you're equally shit at rowing. It's a bloody good thing there isn't an erupting volcano nearby that we need to get away from, only we're going absolutely nowhere.

(Kasira furrowed her brow.)

KASIRA: Eksi, stop. Don't just flail the oars. Copy me. Lift the oar then push it forwards and drop into the water.

(Eksi was consummately baffled.)

EKSI: Drop it in the water? What, like, the whole thing? But we need it, don't we?

(Kasira just blinked at her nonchalantly then spoke in her calmest voice.)

KASIRA: Give the oar to the general.

EKSI: But...

KASIRA: Give!

(Eksi blushed then passed the oar to the general. Moments later, they were on their way. Watching the general and her sister row in harmony, Eksi looked enlightened.)

EKSI: Oh, now I get it.

(She chuckled.)

EKSI: That was a seriously blonde moment.

(She then looked at Ambre's blonde hair and nodded.)

EKSI: Blondes are really dumb.

(Ambre didn't hear the insult, however. She was sitting at the back of the boat, pouting back at the island.)

AMBRE: Bye, Capsway Island. I'll miss you.
(She then sighed to herself.)
AMBRE: We had lots and lots of fun on that island. I feel sad now.
(Lycia grimaced.)
LYCIA: Eksi and I had a great time there too. We arrived in the morning, watched a wedding go south, got singed by a boiling hot bath then the whole place blew up.
EKSI: At least it wasn't dull.
(Ambre offered them a kind smile.)
AMBRE: Don't worry; army life isn't always like that. I mean, bases very rarely blow up. Or do they? I'm worried now.
KASIRA: No, Ambre, they don't.
(She looked to the general.)
KASIRA: Did you know that island was a volcano?
GENERAL: Of course. We didn't know it was active though.
KASIRA: You might have told *us*.
GENERAL: Was the hot spring not a clue?
(Kasira glanced away innocently.)
KASIRA: Geology isn't my strong point.
EKSI: So are hot springs only present on a volcano then?
GENERAL: They don't have to be *on* a volcano. Close to one though.
(He nodded.)
GENERAL: And before you ask, Kasira, a volcano doesn't have to be active to create hot springs. If it's been active in the past, hot springs still occur. Well, we all assumed its days of activity were over. It was completely covered in grass and that made us believe it was dormant. Seems we were mistaken.
KASIRA: Big time.
GENERAL: Indeed. Still, nobody died. Let's look on the bright side, shall we?
(At once, a massive pout formed on Kasira's lips.)
KASIRA: Easier said than done, General. There *is* no bright side, not after today.
(Tears then welled in her eyes.)
GENERAL: Oh, no. Don't cry, Kasira. Lassu isn't worth it.
KASIRA: I'm not crying about him. I loved him and lost him, but he's the least of my worries right now. I had to leave over fifty outfits behind.
(She then burst into tears.)
KASIRA: And twenty pairs of shoes.
(As she continued to row, crying her eyes out in despair, the general sucked his teeth.)
GENERAL: At least you have your priorities straight. Bollocks to my husband, I miss my shoes.
EKSI: Damn right. Clothes before bro's.
LYCIA: Yeah! Skirts before idiots in shirts.
AMBRE: Bras before...
(She then looked horribly stumped and whimpered.)
AMBRE: I don't know.
EKSI: Useless.
AMBRE: I tried.
(Kasira then fought back her tears and forced a smile.)
KASIRA: Girls, you know...
(She then burst into tears again. Watching her, Eksi sucked her teeth.)
EKSI: She won't be getting over it for a while, I reckon.
(The general grimaced.)

GENERAL: I fear you might be right.

Some fifteen minutes later, once they reached the ship, a series of ladders were thrown down for everyone to climb up. Wasting no time in doing so, everyone was soon safely up on the deck. Satisfied that nobody was injured, the captain then set about offering them all a warm welcome while his predominantly female crew hoisted the rowing boats on board.

Watching on as the captain made his welcome speech, Cayley had her arm wrapped around Kasira's shoulder. Mourning the loss of her wardrobe, she was extremely pale. Ready to take up Kasira's slack and allow her the time she needed to compose herself, Cayley listened well on her behalf.)

CAPTAIN: Welcome to the UMS Fortitude, everyone.

AMBRE: I don't know what that means, Kasira.

(Soapy whispered to her.)

SOAPY: UMS is United Military Ship and the ship is called Fortitude.

AMBRE: Oh. Thanks Soapy.

EKSI: What a dipshit.

LYCIA: Right?

CAPTAIN: We're a transport vessel and we're heading from the Orland Nation to West Hagerstown. We have a crew of twelve and we're currently also carrying thirty female passengers.

(He nodded.)

CAPTAIN: The girls are being transferred to new units. All part of the army's initiative to close unproductive bases and open new ones where they'll be more useful. This does, however, pose a problem. There are twenty-one of you and we may not have enough supplies on board with so many extra mouths to feed.

SIKA: Throw Nivea overboard; that should help.

(Everyone immediately started to chuckle. Sika's own chuckle, however, came an abrupt halt when Nivea cupped her breasts from behind.)

NIVEA: What was that?

SIKA: I said I love you and you can have my share of the food!

NIVEA: I thought so.

(Nivea then stepped back and winked at Lycia.)

NIVEA: Soon, boy, soon.

(As Lycia gasped and covered her chest with her hands, the captain continued.)

CAPTAIN: Don't worry, we won't be throwing anyone overboard. I just needed to warn you. To get everyone back to safely, we may have to ration the food.

(The general nodded.)

GENERAL: We can discuss that in a minute, captain.

(He then headed to the captain's side and stood facing everybody.)

GENERAL: Firstly, I need to congratulate all of you on a job well done. The evacuation of Capsway Island was first class. Lives may have been lost if everyone hadn't been so efficient, but as far as I can tell, we got everyone off the island. Outstanding. The time from eruption to full evacuation was under ten minutes. Bravo.

CAPTAIN: I take it, it was a slow lava flow. A volcano can swamp an island in seconds. Blow it to smithereens, in fact.

GENERAL: Oh, absolutely. It wasn't the biggest eruption the world will ever know, but it's done for Capsway Island. We should be grateful it was a slow flow, but mostly, we should be proud of our hard work in clearing the island. Well done, everyone.

(Everyone gave themselves a round of applause, then the general looked to the captain.)

GENERAL: I'd like to hold a meeting with you, if that's okay.

CAPTAIN: Of course, sir. I'd like to get the ship moving first though, if you don't mind. If that volcano erupts again...

GENERAL: Say no more. Ten minutes?

CAPTAIN: Ten minutes, my quarters. Upper deck, you can't miss it. It's the only suite with double doors.

GENERAL: Perfect.

(He then looked to the assembled troops.)

GENERAL: Anyone of the rank, Captain...

CAPTAIN: Me, sir?

GENERAL: Not the naval rank, the military rank.

CAPTAIN: Right. Sorry.

GENERAL: Anyone of the military rank Captain or higher, come with me. We're going to meet in the *ship* captain's quarters. The rest of you...

(He looked to the captain.)

GENERAL: Are they free to roam the ship?

CAPTAIN: Yes, but they should stay out of the living quarters until we've decided what to do.

GENERAL: Very well. The rest of you can feel free to roam the ship. Just stay out of people's private quarters.

(At once, everyone saluted.)

GENERAL: At ease, everyone. Those not coming with me, dismiss. The rest of you, follow me.

(As the general headed away, Cayley looked to Kasira urgently.)

CAYLEY: Did you catch that?

KASIRA: Yeah. We're going with the general.

CAYLEY: Cool, just checking.

(Kasira then looked to her subordinates.)

KASIRA: Okay, girls, behave yourselves, okay?

SIKA: Why did you look at me when you said that?

KASIRA: Because you're the only one who needs telling!

SIKA: That's a bit harsh.

(She rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: Anyway, we'll see you later, okay.

(As Kasira and Cayley headed away, a group of crew members raced among them and started to take their bags.)

AMBRE: Thief!

CAPTAIN: They're the crew, young lady. They're going to store your stuff in the hold.

(Ambre pulled her framed certificate close to herself.)

AMBRE: Not everything.

CAPTAIN: Just your bags. Relax.

(He then nodded sternly.)

CAPTAIN: Right. Now to get the ship moving!

(With that, they marched away purposefully. Left behind, Ambre, Sika, Soapy, Nivea, Eksi and Lycia converged in a group.)

SIKA: Okay, now what?

NIVEA: Now what? What do you think? Sailors are seriously sexy. I'm off to bag me a hot one.

SOAPY: Good luck with that. They're transporting female soldiers; that means there's a female majority crew.

NIVEA: Majority, not female only. And besides, I like a challenge.

(With that, she strode off down the deck, swaying her hips in a sexy manner.)

SOAPY: I should have seen that one coming.

AMBRE: Nivea really, really likes male attention, doesn't she?

SOAPY: To put it mildly.

EKSI: But, I thought she was a lesbian.

SIKA: No, she's just a pervert with a warped sense of humour. Playing with our boobs is purely for her entertainment, not her titillation.

SOAPY: At least we choose to think so.

SIKA: Yeah.

(Soapy and Sika both shuddered.)

EKSI: Right. Bored now. Come on, Lycia, let's go and search the ship.

LYCIA: For boys?

EKSI: Maybe. Let's just find something to do.

LYCIA: Cool. That works.

(The two of them headed away.)

SIKA: What shall *we* do?

AMBRE: I want to stand here and watch the sea.

SIKA: Boring!

SOAPY: She's old now, old people like to do that kind of thing.

AMBRE: Mean! I'm not old I'm...

(She then started to count on her fingers.)

SIKA: Let me stop you *now*, Ambre. Seeing as you don't have twenty-three fingers, you're never going to get there.

AMBRE: I was counting weeks. I'm twenty four in six weeks. And I do have six fingers.

SOAPY: On each hand?

(Ambre furrowed her brow at her sarcastically.)

AMBRE: You're being silly now.

SOAPY: Yup, there's no flies on you.

(Ambre looked most bewildered.)

AMBRE: Flies?

SIKA: Wow.

(She rolled her eyes.)

SIKA: It's just a phrase, Ambre.

AMBRE: I don't get it.

SOAPY: Doesn't matter, darling.

(She smiled.)

SOAPY: Look, seeing as we're on a boat, let's see if there's a game of quoits going on.

SIKA: Let's. I love quoits. I'm awesome at it.

(Soapy rolled her eyes sarcastically.)

SOAPY: Of course, you are.

SIKA: I am! You'll see. You coming, Ambre?

AMBRE: No. I want to watch the sea in the moonlight.

SOAPY: Lame!

AMBRE: Be nice.

SIKA: Oh well. Laters, Ambre.

(Ambre beamed at them and gave them both an enthusiastic wave before nestling herself against the ship's railing to relax. She then glanced to where Sika and Soapy were heading away.)

AMBRE: Bye!

(She then glanced the other side of her and saw the rest of the military personnel they'd arrived with, heading off the other way.)

AMBRE: Peace and quiet. Yay.

(As Ambre took a soothing breath of fresh sea air, Soapy and Sika continued to head away, deep in discussion. A discussion that soon became very one sided.)

SIKA: And as I keep having to remind everyone, sport is my thing. Quoits being my speciality. Not that I *only* excel at sport. My writing skills are second to none, as well. You know, what with my enormous...

SOAPY: Head?

SIKA: Vocabulary!

(She rolled her eyes.)

SIKA: You could at least *try* to hide your jealousy, Soapy.

SOAPY: Jealousy? Why would I be jealous of *you*?

SIKA: Why *wouldn't* you?

SOAPY: Well, for one, I've been in the army for less than six months, and I've *already* been promoted above you.

SIKA: That was luck!

(Soapy gave her an astonished glance.)

SOAPY: Wow. According to you, *everything* I do well is down to luck. And yet, everything *you* do, no matter how poorly, you declare a complete success, then brag about your skills.

SIKA: I didn't say *every* good thing you do is down to luck. You do have *some* strong points. You're not bad at magic for one.

SOAPY: Not bad? Not bad???

SIKA: Yeah, you're reasonably good actually. You're not bad at a *few* things. That why I want to play quoits with *you*. I doubt anyone else could give me a contest. Even though I'm pretty much better than you at everything, you do come close sometimes.

(She shrugged.)

SIKA: I guess that makes you my rival.

SOAPY: Rival?

SIKA: Yeah! Almost.

SOAPY: We're not even *close* to being rivals!

SIKA: Don't put yourself down, Soapy.

SOAPY: I wasn't! Sika, I outrank you; I have bigger boobs than you; my magic is the strongest of *any* of us; and you've *never* beaten me at anything we've ever played. Ever!

How are we rivals?

(Sika pouted at her.)

SIKA: Wow, you really like to boast, don't you?

SOAPY: Me?

(Sika sighed despairingly.)

SIKA: Why you can't just accept the truth, I don't know. There's no shame in coming second to *me*, you know?

SOAPY: Sika, the only thing you have over me is age. You're a year older, and even that will start counting in my favour when we're older. You know, when I'm rich and successful and you're living in my basement.

SIKA: Wow. Mean. It's so on. I'm going to smash you at quoits. I was going to go easy on you, but not now. As soon as we find the quoits equipment, I'm going to read the rules then thrash you at it.

SOAPY: You don't know how to play it? You just said it was your strong point.

SIKA: It's a sport. Trust me, it's my strong point.

SOAPY: Then you're on.

SIKA: Good!

SOAPY: Good.

SIKA: You're going down, girly.

SOAPY: To your level? That's quite the fall.

SIKA: Shut up. Words are for losers; let's sort this out on the quoits pitch.

SOAPY: Deck.

SIKA: Whatever! I was being generous before when I said we were rivals. We're not. I'm way better than you. You can only dream of being my rival.

SOAPY: Yeah, right, if I had a stroke and lost the use of all my limbs, I'd still be better than you at everything. Fact!

SIKA: Oh, it is so on.

SOAPY: Yes. It is!

(They then headed off around the corner, snarling at each other.)

Inside the captain's quarters a short while later, a meeting between the higher ranks was getting underway. Sat around the captain's table were the general and four high ranking officials including Major Miles. Kasira and Cayley were also present. The ship's captain was also in attendance, having just arrived back from setting the ship on its course again.

With an urgent matter to discuss, as soon as the ship captain took his seat at the table, the general leant forward and began.

GENERAL: Okay, everyone, listen up. The captain and I didn't want to make a fuss in front of the rank and file, but we have a serious problem here. Without enough food rations on board, our unexpected presence on this ship could be disastrous. Illness and insanity are already a risk on long voyages, and if you add starvation to the mix, there's a real danger of people dying or turning violent. We need to decide what's to be done about it.

(Cayley raised her hand.)

GENERAL: One moment, you'll get your chance to speak in a minute.

(He then looked to the ship's captain.)

GENERAL: Captain, how understocked are we?

(As a captain by rank, Cayley assumed he was talking to her and started to reply.)

CAYLEY: I don't know, sir. But...

(The general furrowed his brow.)

GENERAL: Not you, captain. I was talking to the captain. Ship captain, I mean.

CAYLEY: Oh, my bad.

GENERAL: Well, Captain? How understocked is this ship?

CAPTAIN: It's not too bad actually. We were well overstocked when we set out so we can probably cater for fifteen extra mouths. That's if we ration things to the minimum.

GENERAL: So we've got six people too many on board?

CAPTAIN: That would be my estimate, yes.

(The general then nodded sternly.)

GENERAL: Superb. In that case, I think I have the answer.

(Again, Cayley raised her hand.)

CAYLEY: I...

GENERAL: Patience. Don't interrupt.

CAYLEY: Sorry.

GENERAL: As I was saying, I have the answer. There's an abandoned island some forty miles to the east of Capsway Island. I know this because I was based there when I first joined the army. They abandoned it five years ago. You see, the population decreased to the point where it was no longer viable to keep a unit there. And once the army left, the rest of the population moved to the mainland.

(At once, a suspicious expression raced onto Kasira's brow.)

KASIRA: Why are you telling us this?

GENERAL: I'm coming to that.

(He then nodded sternly.)

GENERAL: I was thinking we could drop the 123rd wraith containment unit off there as we pass by.

KASIRA: I knew it.

GENERAL: That's eight less mouths to feed. Problem solved.

KASIRA: Problem solved??? Dumping us on an abandoned island, that's no doubt infested with wraiths, with no food or water is your idea of solving the problem???

MILES: I'd say it solves the problem wonderfully well.

KASIRA: That's because you're not the one being asked to go there.

GENERAL: Commander Ashwood, calm down.

(Kasira growled at him as he continued.)

GENERAL: Yes, when you first make landfall, you will have to clear the island of wraiths. It won't be easy, but if any unit can do it, yours can. Your unit cleared a massive haze break in record time and Major Miles here wrote a glowing report on how you cleared that underground bunker. It should be a doddle for a unit with your ability.

KASIRA: Not without food or water, it won't be.

GENERAL: Well, yes, admittedly, you won't have any supplies, but the island was well known for its multitude of orchards. It also has a river stocked with fish, so you won't go hungry or thirsty.

KASIRA: Damn right, because we're not going.

(The general furrowed his brow at her then looked at Cayley.)

GENERAL: Sorry, what were you trying to say earlier?

(Cayley just smiled politely.)

CAYLEY: Doesn't matter now.

GENERAL: Fine.

(He then glowered at Kasira.)

GENERAL: Now commander, seeing as you're still a soldier, bound by law, I'm going to give you an order and I'd like you to say, "Yes, sir". I also expect you to salute, okay?

KASIRA: Go on then.

GENERAL: Very well. I order you to lead your unit onto that island.

(Kasira shook her head and sighed in defeat.)

KASIRA: And if I refuse?

GENERAL: Should you survive this voyage, you'll serve ten years in the brig.

(Kasira shook her head.)

KASIRA: Then I have no choice. I'm not spending ten years in the brig. You'd better send a ship to come and collect us once you get to wherever you're headed though.

GENERAL: If that's what you want, that's what I'll do.

KASIRA: Why *wouldn't* I want that?

(The general nodded then stood up.)

GENERAL: Because I have a proposal for you.

KASIRA: No, thanks. The last guy that proposed to me fucked off an hour after the wedding.

GENERAL: Indeed, he did. Now you have no husband and no future.

(Kasira pouted at him.)

KASIRA: Mean!

GENERAL: Hardly. I'm *offering* you a new future. You see, the army has been looking for a place to build a new academy and I'm thinking that island might be ideal. Of course, it'll need a unit to protect it. You and your girls would be perfect.

KASIRA: I'm leaving in a week.

GENERAL: To do what? Become a waitress? A dancing girl? A prostitute? What?

(Kasira pouted at Cayley.)

KASIRA: Why do people assume that's all I'm fit for?

CAYLEY: Your guess is as good as mine, darling.

GENERAL: Kasira, listen to me. I won't lie to you. When Lassu ran away crying like a eunuch who'd lost his favourite teddy bear, I couldn't have been happier. You were leaving because of that giant sissy. Now the giant sissy is gone. That's good news for the army. We want you to stay, Kasira. That's why I'm making this offer. You can run the unit on that island; your current unit, plus you can keep the newbies if you like. You can supervise your sister.

KASIRA: As you planned all along.

GENERAL: I won't deny it. I was looking for a way to use your sister as leverage to keep you, yes.

KASIRA: I knew it.

GENERAL: Clear the wraiths on that island, Kasira. Once this ship comes ashore, we'll send you some builders and some food supplies. They can build you a base, then repair the old school building, that'll be the new academy. All you'll have to do is what you've *been* doing. (He then grinned.)

GENERAL: Plus give a few lessons at the new academy when it's finished. You're a great leader and I want you to teach future generations your secret of leadership. And, that cute one, what's her name?

MILES: Ambre, sir?

GENERAL: That's the one. *She* can help demonstrate her special skills with that Saxum too. Oh, and if you stay on, she can stay on with you. She's due to leave in six years, I'm informed, when she's twenty nine. Apparently she only left the academy at the age of nineteen. Well, don't worry. I know she relies on you, so she can stay on, under your command until you leave, if you so wish.

(He nodded.)

GENERAL: Going to that island will mean slumming it for a good few weeks. Sleeping rough on the upper levels of broken down buildings and catching your own food, but once we've built the island up, you'll be in charge of the base there and have a second job as a highly-rated academic. What do you say?

(Kasira smiled and stood up.)

KASIRA: I don't want to spend ten years in the brig; that would be disastrous for Ambre. I've got no choice but to go to the island. If you think I'm gonna stay on in this woman-hating, manipulative army of yours any longer than I have to, however, you can forget it. (The general nodded.)

GENERAL: Maybe I should ask a different way then. Would you *please* do the army this service, Major Ashwood?

KASIRA: No, I... wait, what? Major?

CAYLEY: You're offering her the position of major?

GENERAL: That's right, commander.

CAYLEY: Commander?

GENERAL: You heard me. There'll be a promotion in it for the rest of the girls too. Not the newbies, the other four.

MILES: Accept the offer. After the lengths you went to in order to keep that unit together, I'd be insane not to. I'm sure young Sika will appreciate it.

(Kasira sat down again then looked to Cayley and bit her lip.)

KASIRA: What do you think?

CAYLEY: I think it's your decision. You'll have my support either way.

KASIRA: So, what are our choices here, Cayley? I mean really.

CAYLEY: Stay on this ship and risk there being death through illness or starvation, then get thrown in the brig for ten years if we survive...

KASIRA: Right. Let's not go with that one.

CAYLEY: Alternatively, we can go to the island and survive until they pick us up.

KASIRA: Okay.

CAYLEY: Or go to the island and survive then stay there as the military unit.

(Kasira sighed as she mulled over Cayley's words.)

KASIRA: We have to go to the island, that's a given.

CAYLEY: Definitely.

KASIRA: And what then? We can wait to be rescued or decide to stay there?

CAYLEY: Yeah. The pluses being, if we wait to be rescued, you get to leave the army.

KASIRA: The downside being you guys getting split up.

CAYLEY: Or we can stay on there. We get to stay together then.

KASIRA: Earning big wages.

(They looked into one another eye's for a moment then Kasira nodded.)

KASIRA: Okay, leave it to me.

(She then turned to face the general.)

KASIRA: General. Before I commit to anything, I'd like to consult my unit.

GENERAL: What for? You're the leader! Decide.

(Major Miles nodded.)

MILES: Actually, General, I say we let her talk to them. This is what she does. This is why she's a good leader.

GENERAL: That's your take, is it?

MILES: I assessed her only a few months ago, sir. She has an affinity with them. They'll follow her to the end of the earth and back, and it's because she's not afraid to listen to their input. This is exactly the kind of thing we'll be encouraging her to teach if she agrees to stay.

GENERAL: I see.

(He nodded to Kasira.)

GENERAL: Very well. Talk to your unit. Come and find me when you're done.

(He looked to the captain.)

GENERAL: How long until we pass that island?

CAPTAIN: Fifteen minutes, but I'll happily drop anchor.

GENERAL: Good. If I haven't seen you by then, do that.

CAPTAIN: Sir.

(The general then nodded sternly.)

GENERAL: Okay, everyone, dismiss. I'll see you soon, Kasira. I hope you have positive news.

(Kasira and Cayley saluted.)

KASIRA: That all depends on *them*, sir.

Outside on the deck at this time, Ambre was staring down at where the moonlight was reflecting on the water. Stood there against the side of the ship, a joyful smile was emblazoned across her face.

AMBRE: Pretty!

(She then glanced at where Capsway Island was glowing red in the distance.)

AMBRE: That's pretty too.

(Just then, there was a deafening boom and the whole of Capsway Island disappeared under a cloud of dust. So loud, was the explosion, it actually rocked the boat, causing Ambre to grab tightly to the rail and shriek.)

AMBRE: Eek!

(She then stood tall and gaped towards the island.)

AMBRE: It erupted again!

(As she stood there staring in horror, a group of girls rushed out onto the deck, some fifteen feet away, to see what all the noise was about. For several moments, they joined Ambre in staring at the island in a shocked silence. Moments later, however, one of them broke the silence with a stunned exclamation.)

MORAG: That was so loud. Oh my god, it almost deafened me!

(One of the other girls nodded.)

JANET: I know, right. I've never heard anything so...

MORAG: Never heard anything so, what?

JANET: Shush a minute.

(She then nodded towards Ambre.)

JANET: Do my eyes deceive me, or is that who I think it is?

(Morag turned to glance at Ambre then gasped.)

MORAG: It is.

(One of the other girls furrowed her brow.)

REBECCA: Who is it?

JANET: She went to our academy.

MORAG: Yeah, she's as dumb as fuck.

JANET: Our friend, Barbara, got transferred for picking on her.

MORAG: Yeah. I hate that bitch. The academy wasn't the same after Babs was kicked out.

JANET: We should have words. You know, seeing as she's on her own.

(One of the other girls, scoffed.)

AMY: You left your academy years ago; who cares about that now?

MORAG: I do. And I definitely think some kind of revenge is in order.

AMY: Count me out.

MORAG: Fine.

JANET: Count me *in*. We've been on this ship for three days and I'm bored, I reckon we're overdue some fun.

AMY: Bullying is fun, is it?

MORAG: Compared to sitting about on this ship wondering when we might eventually get to our new base, yes; yes it is.

JANET: Agreed. Come on, girls, let's have some fun.

(With that, Janet and Morag headed towards Ambre with six other girls. The rest of their group headed back inside with Amy, wanting nothing to do with it. With her eyes transfixed on the island, Ambre didn't ever hear them approach her.)

JANET: Well, well, look who it is. It's thick girl.

MORAG: Dum-Bray.

(Recognising them immediately as bullies from her old academy, Ambre stepped back and whimpered.)

AMBRE: Leave me alone.

MORAG: Make us, Dum-bray!

AMBRE: That's not my name.

JANET: Yes it is.

MORAG: Do you remember us from the academy, thick girl?

AMBRE: Go away.

(Ambre continued to back away but they continued advancing, determined to get in her face.)

MORAG: I asked you a question, bitch! Do you remember us?

AMBRE: Yes.

JANET: And do you remember Babs? She got transferred because of you. She locked you in a cupboard all weekend, remember? We never did you get back for that!

AMBRE: But it wasn't my fault.

MORAG: We disagree.

JANET: We blame you entirely and we think you should be punished.

(Ambre pouted at them.)

AMBRE: Leave me alone. I'm a soldier now, you're not allowed to pick on me.

(Janet, Morag and their hangers-on all laughed at her.)

MORAG: Such a child.

(With that, Morag pushed Ambre backwards, causing her to shriek. She then grabbed her upper arms and pushed her into the wall of the ship. Clinging tightly to her level ten certificate, Ambre whimpered.)

AMBRE: Stop being mean! I didn't do anything to you. Leave me alone.

JANET: Make us.

MORAG: Yeah, come on. Let's see what you've got.

AMBRE: I haven't got *anything*.

MORAG: Well, that's not true. You've got this.

(With that, she ripped Ambre's treasured certificate from her grasp.)

AMBRE: That's mine.

(As Ambre stretched to grab it back, Morag threw it to Janet. They then commenced tossing it to one another while Ambre frantically scrambled among them to get it back, tears welling in her eyes.)

AMBRE: Give it back!!! It's mine!!! Please!!!

(Just then, Janet snarled and charged at Ambre, thrusting her back into the wall.)

JANET: Don't tell us what to do!!!

AMBRE: But it's mine. It's my certificate!

JANET: So? You don't deserve certificates.

(She then looked to the medal on Ambre's dress and smirked.)

JANET: You don't deserve a medal either.

(She then ripped it off her chest and tossed it to Morag. Ambre was devastated.)

AMBRE: No!!! Stop it. Please, that's mine. Give it back to me!!!

MORAG: Just punch her, Janet.

JANET: Sounds like a plan.

(Just then, Sika and Soapy appeared at Ambre's side as if from nowhere. Having seen her when they came around the corner, they'd come running.)

SIKA: Leave her alone!!!

SOAPY: Yeah. Give her stuff back to her and get lost.

(Morag smirked.)

MORAG: Dum-bray has friends?

JANET: Cool. Eight against three sounds like fun.

MORAG: Eight against two. Fish belong in the sea. Girls, chuck her in!

(At once, all Morag's friends gave each other troubled glances.)

BRENDA: We can't throw her overboard, we'd be court-marshalled.

VERA: Slung in the brig.

MORAG: Fair enough. Maybe throwing someone overboard is a bit much. We can throw their stuff though.

(With that, she charged to the side of the ship and cast Ambre's medal and framed certificate overboard. Ambre screamed in anguish. They were her most prized possessions in the entire world. To her, they validated her as a human being. They were proof she wasn't the pointless halfwit people always made her out to be. Well aware of this, Soapy immediately scrambled to the side of the ship then dived into the sea after them. Morag was astonished.)

MORAG: Oh. Well that was easy. Eight onto two it is then.

SIKA: Wanna bet? I'm gonna fly away!

(She then noticed Ambre crying her heart out and stood firm.)

SIKA: Actually, not I'm not. You made my friend cry, now you have to pay.

(With that, she raised her fists and snarled.)

SIKA: Who's first?

(Moments later, she thundered to the deck, floored by Janet's left hook.)

AMBRE: Sika!!!

JANET: Army boxing champion three year running. Get up so I can deck you again.

AMBRE: Leave her alone you big bully. I hate you!!!

JANET: Sounds like *you* want to be next! Very well!

(As Ambre gasped in horror, expecting to be punched in the face, her stone familiar, known as 'Fluffy' appeared at her side and pushed Janet back into her friends, knocking several of them onto the floor.)

MORAG: You summoned your Saxum?

(Ambre patted Fluffy's arm and pouted at Morag.)

AMBRE: No. He sensed I was scared and came to help me.

MORAG: That's not how Saxums work! They can only heal and whistle.

AMBRE: Fluffy's different.

(Much to the girl's horror, Fluffy then spoke up.)

FLUFFY: Fluffy protect Ambre. Fluffy kill mean girls.

(The giant stone man then took a step forward towards them. At once, Janet, Morag and all her friends immediately took to their heels and scarpered. Watching them go, Sika climbed to her feet and puffed out.)

SIKA: Thank fuck for that. I thought we were gonna get a pummelling then, Ambre.

(At this point, she noticed Ambre standing there, quietly crying on the spot.)

SIKA: Ambre?

AMBRE: My medal. My certificate.

(Sika's bottom lip rapidly drooped.)

SIKA: Oh, babes. I'm so sorry.

FLUFFY: Ambre sad. Fluffy angry.

SIKA: Don't worry, Fluffy. I'll look after her.

(Just then, they heard yelling from over the side of the ship.)

SOAPY: Someone!!!

SIKA: Soapy!

(At once, Ambre, Fluffy and Sika raced to the side of the ship and peered into the sea. At once, Ambre's face lit up. Soapy was swimming along next to them holding Ambre's certificate in her hand.)

SOAPY: I need a ladder!!!

(Sika immediately glanced about herself then saw two of the rope ladders that had been thrown down earlier when they boarded the ship. At once, she grabbed the nearest one then cast it overboard. Moments later, however, a troubled grimaced washed onto her face.)

SIKA: Whoops.

AMBRE: You were supposed to attach the other end to the ship first, Sika.

(Watching Soapy grab the ladder she'd thrown overboard, Sika grimaced.)

SIKA: I realise that now.

(With that, she grabbed the other rope ladder then made sure to fix it to the boat before casting it overboard.)

AMBRE: That's much better.

SIKA: Don't patronise me, Ambre.

AMBRE: I wasn't.

(She then peered over the side of the ship to where Soapy was starting to ascend the ladder with her prized certificate and the ladder Sika had thrown.)

AMBRE: Yay.

SIKA: You're so lucky, Ambre. It's really dark down there. I'm amazed she found it.

(Just then, Fluffy spoke up.)

FLUFFY: Ambre is safe now. Fluffy go.

AMBRE: Okay. Thank you, Fluffy. I love you.

FLUFFY: Fluffy love Ambre.

(He then disappeared.)

AMBRE: Fluffy's awesome.

SIKA: He certainly saved our arses. That bitch has a hard punch.

AMBRE: I don't like her. She used to pick on me all the time at the academy. She's a big, fat poo face.

(Just then, Soapy scrambled over the side of the ship and chucked the rope ladder down. As Sika reeled in the one she'd climbed up with, Soapy then passed Ambre her certificate.)

AMBRE: Yay! Soapy, you're so awesome. I love you, I love you, I love you.

(Soapy beamed.)

SOAPY: I love you too, Ambre.

(She then sighed ruefully.)

SOAPY: If only I'd found your medal too.

(Ambre sighed.)

AMBRE: At least you tried.

(She forced a smile.)

AMBRE: Thanks to you, I still have my certificate. I thought that'd gone forever too. And it's not even water damaged. Kasira sealed it good and proper.

(Sika shook her head.)

SIKA: You should still have that medal was well. Why the hell would anyone do that to somebody? That was beyond cruel. I fucking hate bullies.

(Ambre's bottom lip protruded.)

AMBRE: I loved that medal.

SOAPY: I know, darling. And if I could do anything to replace it I would.

SIKA: So would I.

(She nodded.)

SIKA: Tell the general what happened. Or Major Miles. They might send you a replacement.

SOAPY: That's a good idea. In the meantime, though...

(With that, she reached inside her top and pulled Ambre's medal from her bra.)

SOAPY: You could always make do with this one.

(Ambre's face immediately started to glow with joy then she fainted. Watching her land, Sika bit her lip.)

SIKA: Wow. You've literally made her so happy, she passed out.

SOAPY: Apparently so.

SIKA: Impressive. Maybe you *are* awesome enough to be considered my rival, after all.

SOAPY: Well, I did beat you at quoits.

SIKA: No you didn't. We didn't even finish the game.

SOAPY: Of course we didn't. You got annoyed and stormed off because you were losing.

SIKA: I stormed off because it's a stupid game.

SOAPY: Whatever. Look, help me get Ambre back on her feet, will you?

SIKA: Fine.

(With that, they stooped to Ambre's side and started to lift her. As they did so, she opened her arms and beamed.)

AMBRE: Back now!

SOAPY: You okay?

(Ambre's smile then doubled in size.)

AMBRE: You saved my things!

(She then looked to Sika.)

AMBRE: And you tried to fight that mean girl for me.

SIKA: Yeah. She battered me!

AMBRE: Yeah, but you tried. For me. I have the best friends ever.

(She then threw her arms around them.)

AMBRE: Happy.

Somewhere on the other side of the ship at this time, inside the cabin of a crewman, Nivea was laying on her back in bed, staring at the ceiling gasping for breath. Laying at her side, one of the crewman was doing the same. Puffing out in awe, he then glanced at her sideways.)

CREWMAN: That was beyond doubt, the most monumental fuck I've ever had.

NIVEA: Me too. And I've had more than a few!

CREWMAN: It showed!

(Nivea grinned.)

NIVEA: I'll take that as a compliment. Speaking of which, you're far from inexperienced yourself, I noticed.

CREWMAN: I get my fair share of action, yes.

NIVEA: Slut.

CREWMAN: Easy. Less of that. I don't leap into bed with *every* female soldier who makes a pass at me!

(He shrugged.)

CREWMAN: It just so happens that you made a very convincing argument.

NIVEA: Yeah?

CREWMAN: Yeah. When you stepped up to me and said, "Let's go to your room and fuck", I was touched by the sentiment. Something in those words moved me.

NIVEA: I knew it would. I know how to speak to a man's heart, you see? I'm pretty much a romantic poet. I like to woo a man using warm and tender phrases such as, "Do you want a blowjob?" or "Fuck me; I'm horny".

CREWMAN: Wow, you really *are* a poet!

NIVEA: See?

(The crewman smiled.)

CREWMAN: I like you, Nivea. We should do this again.

NIVEA: Now? Cool.

CREWMAN: No, not now. I'm shattered! I mean I'd like to see you again.

(He smiled.)

CREWMAN: Maybe I could get your address or your military number, so I can write to you.

(Nivea shrugged.)

NIVEA: Well, you could, I guess. I'd be pointless though. I wouldn't write back. Actually, I probably wouldn't even bother reading it.

CREWMAN: But...

NIVEA: I mean, be honest. What would you write about? What you did all day at work? I don't even *know* you, so why would I care about *that*? And why would I waste time reading about it?

(The crewman pouted.)

CREWMAN: That's a bit harsh. I thought we had a connection.

NIVEA: We did. We were connected via our genitals and it was bloody brilliant. That was the only connection though.

CREWMAN: Right.

NIVEA: Don't be downhearted. You're not the first bloke I've rejected a relationship with. I don't want a relationship. Ever! I'm a slut, you see? I shag lots of men.

(She shrugged.)

NIVEA: You were just another notch in my metaphorical headboard.

(The crewman started to chuckle.)

CREWMAN: How wonderfully honest.

NIVEA: Right?

CREWMAN: Yes. I loved hearing it, actually. You see, I'm a slut too. I only said all that sappy stuff because women usually like to hear it.

NIVEA: Not this one.

CREWMAN: Nope. You're a slut like me. We're two a kind.

NIVEA: Yes, we are. And like all dirty sluts, now I'm done shagging, I'm gonna be on my way.

CREWMAN: Just how I like it. No cuddling. Shag her then kick her out.

NIVEA: Amen.

(With that, Nivea jumped out of bed, threw her underwear on then slipped into her dress.)

NIVEA: Done.

(The crewman then smiled at her playfully.)

CREWMAN: Good. Now get out of my room, conquest.

NIVEA: Will do, bloke I have no interest in seeing ever again.

CREWMAN: Good, hurry up, you no good one night stand, you.

NIVEA: I'm hurrying.

(She then paced to the door offering him a smile.)

NIVEA: That was fun. Take care.

CREWMAN: You too, Nivea.

NIVEA: Bye.

(She then pulled open the door and paced through it, making sure to peer back at him as she did so.)

NIVEA: Here's to ships that fuck in the night.

CREWMAN: To meaningless sex!

NIVEA: Amen!

(Nivea then paced through the door and closed it behind her.)

NIVEA: Awesome.

(Just then, the sound of the crewman crying rose up from behind the door. At once, an uncomfortable grimace appeared on Nivea's face then she scuttled away innocently.)

On the other side of the ship, at this time, Sika, Soapy and Ambre were sitting against the wall of the lower cabins, relaxing in the moonlight. They were certain the bullies wouldn't be returning through fear of Fluffy, so allowed themselves to enjoy some peace and quiet.

SIKA: You're right, Ambre. Watching the moonlit ocean is nice. We shouldn't have said it was lame.

AMBRE: Or teased me about being old.

SIKA: Oh, I'll never stopping doing that, grandma.

(Ambre pouted at her then started to chuckle.)

AMBRE: You're a silly sausage.

SIKA: So they say.

(Just then, Soapy started to chuckle.)

AMBRE: What's funny?

(Soapy glanced to her and smiled.)

SOAPY: I was just thinking. I should wear a bikini from now on. All the time! I've had to jump in the sea three times today. First I had to chase Lassu, then I had to swim to this ship, then I had to dive overboard for your stuff, Ambre.

SIKA: A bikini is definitely the answer then. That way you'll always be prepared.

SOAPY: Exactly. And it's not just today. Remember that underground bunker with the sea entrance? We had loads of rowing boats but I still had to swim; every time!

(She grinned.)

SOAPY: It happens so often now, Kasira doesn't even tell me anymore, she just says my name and points to the sea.

AMBRE: Definitely go with the bikini idea then. Jumping in the sea is bad for your clothes.

SOAPY: Yeah, but on the other hand, wearing a bikini is easy access for Nivea's wandering hands.

(Ambre chuckled.)

AMBRE: Smear poo on the bikini before you put it on. Then when she gropes you, she'll get a nasty surprise.

SOAPY: I'd have to walk about with poo on my clothes though, Ambre.

AMBRE: Oh yeah.

(She blushed.)

AMBRE: I didn't think that one through, did I?

SOAPY: You really didn't.

SIKA: Now who's a silly sausage?

(Ambre beamed.)

AMBRE: Me!

SIKA: Yup.

(The three of them then stared at the ocean again. As they did so, Ambre looked to her certificate then stroked her medal, back in pride of place on her chest.)

AMBRE: Thanks for getting my stuff back, girls. I really, really mean it.

SOAPY: We know, darling. You don't have to *keep* thanking us.

SIKA: That's the hundredth time.

AMBRE: But not the last.

(She smiled at the framed document adoringly.)

AMBRE: You have no idea what these things mean to me.

(She looked to Soapy then to Sika before glancing out to sea again.)

AMBRE: When people tell you you're useless all the time, you really start to believe it, you know? That's what the academy was like for me. Before I went there, life was nice. My mum and dad looked after me and they taught me things so I could understand them.

SIKA: Slowly, you mean?

AMBRE: Yeah.

SIKA: Right. I was actually being mean there, Ambre.

AMBRE: You failed then. That was what they did. Then I turned fourteen and wasn't allowed to live with them anymore. I had to go to an academy.

(She grimaced.)

AMBRE: Nobody took care of me there. Nobody tried to help me understand things. They just said things that made no sense then shouted at me a lot. It was scary. Everyone was so mean. And they all said the same thing. They all said I was useless.

(Sika placed a loving arm around her as she continued.)

AMBRE: I thought they were right. I'd failed at everything they'd tried to teach me, so it just made sense that I *must* be really, really useless.

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: Then I came to Capsway Island. Kasira told me I *wasn't* useless; *that* was a first! She made me feel good about myself. Then one day, she came in and told me she'd adopted me. That was weird. I cried actually. She genuinely wanted me in her life. I wasn't expecting that. I felt like I mattered to someone because of that. I knew that I'd leave the army one day and have somewhere to go. I was so happy.

(Soapy wiped a tear then cuddled into her from the other side.)

SOAPY: Such a nice story.

AMBRE: It's not finished yet.

(She sighed.)

AMBRE: Thing is, despite Kasira's kindness, I still had doubts about myself. Kasira's really nice, you see, and she'd be kind to me even if I *was* useless. She'd praise me even if I failed. She's so lovely, but when you get praised by someone who's always nice to you, it's hard to know if they're just being kind or not. So I wasn't sure if I was doing well or not.

(She pouted.)

AMBRE: I really wanted to be good at stuff like everyone else. I wanted to actually be capable of things. I didn't want to be bad at it but get a pat on the back anyway. I wanted to succeed. So I tried really, really hard to become a good soldier.

SOAPY: And now you *are* one.

AMBRE: I wasn't sure though, that's the point. People said I was but everyone's always kind to me no matter how much I screw up. So how could I know?

(A wide smile then appeared on her lips.)

AMBRE: Then I got this certificate and this medal from Major Miles. Awards from a cold man who doesn't do nice things for the sake of it. He'd never tell me I was good soldier if I wasn't.

SOAPY: Damn right, he wouldn't.

SIKA: Yup.

AMBRE: Well, he told me I was a credit to the army. And he gave me awards so everyone would know it. That's why I love my medal and certificate so much. Having them is proof that I'm not useless after all. I *am* a good soldier. I'm the opposite of a failure; I'm a success.

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: I'm Ambre the soldier, not Ambre the retard.

SIKA: You're kinda both. Ambre the retarded soldier.

AMBRE: And yet I'm the same rank as you, Sika.

(Soapy chuckled.)

SOAPY: She's got you there.

SIKA: And then some. I must plan my revenge.

(Soapy giggled behind her hand then looked to Ambre.)

SOAPY: I get what you're saying, Ambre. When Miles, the world's *least* sensitive man, a man who wouldn't know *how* to be tactful or kind, tells you're a credit to the army, you know he's not bullshitting.

AMBRE: Exactly. So I wear my medal with pride. It's basically a big badge that says, "Yay, Ambre wins."

(Sika smiled at her warmly then her face clouded over and an evil grin appeared. Smirking, she then glanced away innocently.)

SIKA: That's a lovely story, Ambre. You should tell Kasira. I'm sure she'll love to hear how her love and kindness isn't enough for you. How after years of telling you that you matter, you're not useless and that you should be proud of yourself, you didn't believe it until some tit you barely know gave you a sheet of paper and a tiny metal disc.

AMBRE: I explained that. If I was useless, Kasira would tell me I wasn't. She cares about me and would never say something to hurt me. So, I couldn't be sure until I heard it from someone who doesn't care about my feelings one way or the other.

SIKA: So you value his word over hers? After all she's done for you? I'm shocked.

AMBRE: But...

SOAPY: She's winding you up, Ambre.

AMBRE: What? Mean!

(Sika beamed.)

SIKA: Sucks to be you. We're certainly not in the same rank when it comes to pranks.

AMBRE: Or bra size.

SIKA: Hey!!!

(As Soapy rolled about laughing, Sika shook her head solemnly.)

SIKA: You're a mean old woman, Ambre. A mean old woman.

(Just then, a green bag flew over their heads and splashed in the ocean. At once, Sika, Soapy and Ambre all jumped to their feet and peered up at the deck above. Much to their bewilderment, Janet and Morag were up there, snarling down at them.)

JANET: We've found your bags, bitches.

MORAG: We're gonna teach them to swim!

(They then cast a second bag over their heads.)

SIKA: Don't do that!!!

SOAPY: Are you insane?

AMBRE: That's too mean!

(Sika then paused and raised a baffled eyebrow.)

SIKA: Wait? Do any of us even own a green bag like that?

(Soapy mused to herself.)

SOAPY: Come to think of it, no. Those are army issue; we all had our own bags at the base.

(Just then, a third bag whizzed overhead.)

JANET: This is what you get for messing with my unit!

MORAG: And mine!

(Just then, a door near to where they'd been sitting swung open and Nivea stepped out.)

NIVEA: Evening, ladies. Did you miss me?

(Another bag whizzed over their heads.)

JANET: Go on, fish girl. Swim after them!

SOAPY: What for? They're not even ours.

MORAG: Yeah, right!

(Nivea bit her lip.)

NIVEA: Um, girls? Why are they throwing army supplies overboard and taunting *you* about it?

AMBRE: They think them bags are ours.

NIVEA: Okay. And they hate you because?

AMBRE: Fluffy.

NIVEA: What?

SIKA: It's a long story.

(At this point, yet another bag flew over their heads and splashed into the sea. As it did so, however, a furious yell came from the deck to their right. At once, Sika, Soapy, Nivea and Ambre turned to see the general running towards them, staring furiously at the deck above.)

GENERAL: My bags!!! What the hell are you doing???

(At once, Janet and Morag froze as if trapped in time.)

GENERAL: Get down here, you two! Now!!!

(He then turned and glared at Soapy.)

GENERAL: Go and get my bags, fish girl. Quick.

(At once, Soapy's shoulders slumped and she mumbled under her breath.)

SOAPY: For pity's sake.

(She then dived overboard once again.)

GENERAL: I don't believe this.

(He then glanced to where Cayley and Kasira were heading along the deck towards him.)

GENERAL: Did you see that?

AMBRE: Hi, Kasira!

KASIRA: Hi, Ambre. No, General, I didn't.

GENERAL: Those two thugs up there were throwing army supplies into the sea. Including my bloody kitbag!

KASIRA: Why?

GENERAL: That's what I want to know.

(He then paced away to where Janet and Morag were sheepishly heading down the deck to see him.)

SIKA: Result.

AMBRE: They're in big, big trouble.

KASIRA: Yes, well, never mind that. I need to gather everyone together.

SIKA: What? The entire ship?

KASIRA: No, you buffoon. Our unit. You guys are here, Soapy's in the sea again, that just leaves my sister and the other one.

(She grimaced.)

KASIRA: I've forgotten her name already.

NIVEA: Just call her "Boy", she likes that.

CAYLEY: Her name's Lycia.

KASIRA: Lycia, that's right.

(Just then, Eksi and Lycia came charging around the corner being pursued by three somewhat overweight girls. They looked absolutely terrified. Mercifully, as soon as they raced past the general, he yelled at their pursuers furiously.)

GENERAL: Leave those girls alone!!!

(At once, the three girls stopped and hung their heads.)

GENERAL: For the love of god, what sort of ship is the captain running? It's a vessel full of hooligans!

(He then proceeded to read the riot act to the five shamed girls in his company. As he did so, Eksi and Lycia jogged up to Kasira, grinning gleefully.)

EKSI: Fun. We started it and now they're getting told off.

KASIRA: You started it?

EKSI: We had to. They're fat and they were eating cake; we couldn't just say nothing!

(Much to their astonishment, Kasira then clouted them both about the head.)

LYCIA: Ouch!

EKSI: Kasira! What did you do that for?

KASIRA: Don't be an unruly little shit in front of a general.

SIKA: Yeah, that's just asking for trouble.

NIVEA: What she's saying is, you're in the army now, bitches! Play time is over.

KASIRA: Exactly.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: Anyway, once Soapy gets back, the eight of us needed to have a little chat.

AMBRE: What about?

KASIRA: I just need to consult you all about something, that's all.

SIKA: Is it about what we're having for dinner? Only, I choose bacon.

KASIRA: Actually, it's partly about *where* we're having dinner. And you might not like it.

A short while later, once Soapy had returned from retrieving all the bags from the sea, Kasira led everyone to the empty deck at the front of the ship. Once there, she sat everyone down in a circle then proceeded to tell them what the army had requested.

KASIRA: I'll need your full attention here, girls. Please don't interrupt until you've heard me out. What I have to say is important.

(At once, all eyes turned to Sika.)

SIKA: Hey! Stop that! Like I'm incapable of being silent for a few minutes.

KASIRA: Sika?

SIKA: Yeah?

KASIRA: Be quiet, please!

SIKA: I *was* being quiet! Then they all stared at me.

KASIRA: Yeah, well...

SIKA: Which was a bit harsh, if you ask me.

KASIRA: I *did* ask you! I asked you for silence and you haven't shut up since.

SIKA: That's because...

(Kasira growled at her.)

KASIRA: Do I have to gag you, Private?

(Seeing anger in Kasira's eyes, Sika shrunk.)

SIKA: No, ma'am. Sorry, ma'am.

(She then offered her a cheesy grin.)

KASIRA: Good. That's better. Now listen up. I need to consult you girls on that meeting Cayley and I had with the top brass just now. So, I'll tell you what they said and ask for your thoughts, okay? And listen well, because this concerns your futures.

(At once, Sika and Ambre gave her stern thumbs-ups.)

KASIRA: The general gave me three options. I have to choose one.

CAYLEY: *Three* options, Kasira?

KASIRA: Well, there *are* three options; one of them just happens to be really, really bad.

CAYLEY: I guess.

(Sika furrowed her brow.)

SIKA: How come *she's* allowed to talk?

(Treating Sika's question with the utmost disdain, Kasira nodded to Nivea.)

KASIRA: If Sika talks again, Nivea, you have my permission to tie her up, strip her naked then make merry with her boobies until your heart's content. In full view of everyone!

(At once, Sika gasped and forced her hand over her mouth. Sitting at her side, Nivea beamed and rubbed her hands together with delight. Satisfied that she'd get no further interruptions, Kasira then continued.)

KASIRA: Now where was I?

CAYLEY: Options.

KASIRA: That's right. There are three. Now, before I tell you what they are, you need to understand *this*. There aren't enough supplies for everyone on this ship; therefore, if we continue on with this many passengers, people might get sick, or even die. As such, I've been given an order. The general has demanded that the eight of us be dropped off on a nearby uninhabited island.

(Looks of horror filled the faces of everyone before her. Sika was desperate to speak and struggling extremely hard not to. Mercifully, Nivea's looming hands were all the deterrent she needed and she managed to contain herself.)

KASIRA: Now, before you go nuts and explode, girls, we *will* be able to feed ourselves. The island is apparently rich in resources; apples and fish mostly. We will have to clear the wraiths, however. But don't panic, there *are* buildings with upper floors we can bed down in. (She then nodded sternly.)

KASIRA: This leads me to our options. Option one. We could ignore the order and stay on the ship. If we do, however, the outcome could be horrendous. Not only might people starve to death or get seriously ill, but once we get back on land, you guys will be split up into different units and I'll be sent to the brig for ten years.

(Ambre immediately put her hand up.)

KASIRA: Yes, Ambre?

AMBRE: We're not choosing that one.

KASIRA: Ambre...

AMBRE: If you go in the brig, I'll have nowhere to go when I leave the army. Not only that, but if I go to a new unit, it might be full of bullies.

(Soapy also raised her hand.)

KASIRA: Soapy?

SOAPY: If we're complicit in disobeying his order, won't we go to the brig too?

CAYLEY: The captain specifically singled out Kasira for the brig. And he made it clear that we'd all be sent to different units.

KASIRA: Exactly. Now no more interruptions until you've heard the other two options. (She then glowered at Sika.)

KASIRA: Though kudos for putting your hands up and not just butting in. Unlike someone.

SIKA: Harsh!

(At once, Sika covered her mouth and gasped at horror at Nivea. Much to her further despair, Nivea was grinning back at her, flexing her fingers with an evil grin on her face. Terrified to the core, she turned to Kasira and adopted desperate praying hands, silently imploring her to give her another chance.)

KASIRA: One more word and you're Nivea's plaything, right?

(Sika nodded vehemently.)

NIVEA: So close.

KASIRA: Anyway, back to the options. Option two, is this. We go to this island and clear the wraiths. We then survive off the land for a few weeks until they send another boat to take us back to army HQ. At which point, Ambre and I will leave the army and you four will be sent to new units.

(She immediately received several saddened glances. Opting not to comment on them, she then continued.)

KASIRA: Option three, goes like this. We can go to the island and clear the wraiths. Once we've done that, we'll need to wait for a boat with supplies and builders aboard. The army want to open their new academy there and they want us to be local army unit. An eight person unit, myself included; I'd be staying on. Everyone except Eksi and Lycia, will also receive a promotion, and of course, that comes with a pay rise.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: You girls need to decide which option to choose. Only a numpty would pick the first one though, so...

(She then looked thoughtful.)

KASIRA: Actually, forget the first one. If you choose that, I'm just going to overrule you. You need to consider the last two options. Girls, one way or another, we're going to the island. You just need to decide whether or not you want to recreate our unit there.

(She then smiled at Ambre.)

KASIRA: I know you were looking forward to *leaving* the army, sweetheart, so...

AMBRE: No, I wasn't. I want to stay in the army with you five forever and ever. I love being with you guys lots and lots. I want option three.

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: That way we all get to be together still.

CAYLEY: I vote for that too.

(She shrugged.)

CAYLEY: For the same reasons. Even if *do* leave a year from now.

(Kasira nodded then looked to Sika.)

KASIRA: You can talk now.

(Sika looked most relieved.)

SIKA: Thank god for that. Being silent sucks.

KASIRA: Well? What's your choice?

SIKA: Option three. I like the idea of us all staying together. Can't say I'm happy about living on apples and fish for weeks on end though.

(Cayley started to chuckle.)

CAYLEY: Actually, we'll be okay. When you said we should pack our essentials, Kasira, I filled *my* two bags with food for us all.

KASIRA: You did?

SIKA: Wow. You really *are* a mum.

CAYLEY: Hey!

(She then chuckled and looked to Kasira.)

CAYLEY: I tried to tell that general I had extra food but he wouldn't let me speak. Then when he started to talk about dumping us on that island, I figured it was best to keep my mouth shut.

(She shrugged.)

CAYLEY: I reckon, the lack of rations is just an excuse, to be honest. As soon as he mentioned that island, I just knew that one way or another, we were going to end up on it. He came here to keep you in the army, and dumping you on that island was the perfect opportunity to make it happen. There was no way he was gonna pass *that* up. So I thought, forget him, we'll keep the food for ourselves.

KASIRA: And how much is there exactly?

CAYLEY: It's not a *lot*. Not even a day's rations for a ship this big, but it should last the eight of us a good few days.

AMBRE: And give us a break from eating apples and fish?

CAYLEY: Yes.

KASIRA: Cayley, you're a star.

AMBRE: She is.

(Ambre then beamed with joy.)

AMBRE: So are we decided then? I want option three.

(Nivea scoffed.)

NIVEA: Option three every time. I didn't even know why you had to ask.

KASIRA: Because it's a big decision.

NIVEA: Yeah, but it's not a difficult one. You basically said we have to go to the island, no matter what.

KASIRA: Right. And?

NIVEA: *We* just have to decide whether to *stay* on the island with you and keep this unit together or *leave* the island after a few weeks and face god knows what kind of future elsewhere. It's not even a contest.

SOAPY: She's right. You just asked if we want to serve with you in the best unit ever, or get split up. It's the easiest decision ever.

(She grinned playfully.)

SOAPY: I want to get split up into a *new* unit, one without Nivea.

(Nivea glowered at her.)

NIVEA: What?

SOAPY: I'm joking, man-hands. It's option three, of course.

EKSI: Option three! I want to serve under you, Kasira.

LYCIA: Has to be option three. For us, it's just a choice of staying or being reposted.

NIVEA: Yeah, like I said, Kasira, it's not a contest. Not for us, anyway. We want to stay together and option three is the only one offering us that.

CAYLEY: She's right. If you want to quit the army though, Kasira, we understand. You've earned the right to choose option two. But I won't lie, we're all hoping you'll stay, so we can be kept together.

(Kasira nodded thoughtfully for a moment then grimaced.)

KASIRA: I never thought of that. Option two and option three are only a *tough* choice for *me*. If I take option two, I get to leave the army, which appeals to me. And if I choose option three, I get to stay with the best friends a girl could ever ask for. That *also* appeals to me.

(Her brow then furrowed.)

KASIRA: If I choose option two, releasing myself into the wild, I'll end up being a waitress with sixteen cats and an Ambre to feed. That's what civilian life would hold for me now! I'll never find a *man* to share my life with. I'm already married. That makes me soiled goods.

SIKA: Yup, even if you get divorced, you'll *still* be screwed. Blokes aren't gonna want a relationship with a woman whose first husband didn't even stick around to cut the cake.

(Kasira glowered at her.)

KASIRA: Shut up.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: I should choose option three. A damned good career and being with the people I love!

SIKA: Until we all leave, you mean?

KASIRA: Excuse me?

SIKA: Just saying. *We're* not soiled goods! One day, we'll all leave and get *proper* husbands.

KASIRA: I see. Like that, is it, Sika?

(With that, Kasira looked to Nivea and nodded.)

KASIRA: Go nuts. You've got until the captain drops anchor.

NIVEA: Score!!!

SIKA: What???

(At once, Sika jumped to her feet and ran away. Grinning fiendishly, Nivea gave chase. Chuckling to herself, Kasira smiled then opened her arms.)

KASIRA: Option three it is then. Now give me a hug, ladies.

(At once, Eksi, Lycia, Ambre, Soapy and Cayley all converged for a group hug, delighted with her decision.)

A few minutes later, Kasira headed off around the side of the ship with her unit-mates in tow, with the exception of Sika and Nivea. Hoping she'd find the general quickly, she was delighted to see him in the same place he'd been when she last saw him. Wearing an angry expression, he was standing over Janet and Morag as they swabbed the deck with tiny brushes. Messing with his bags had been a huge mistake and he was determined to punish them to the fullest.

GENERAL: Worms. Fat, ugly worms. Look at you.

(He snarled.)

GENERAL: Scrub harder!!! Put your backs into it!!!

(As he stood there snarling, Kasira sheepishly stepped up behind him and coughed softly. At once, the general turned and smiled at her.)

GENERAL: Commander!

KASIRA: General.

GENERAL: You have good news, I hope.

AMBRE: She has awesome news.

GENERAL: You're a commander are you, Private?

AMBRE: No, I...

(She then sunk backwards nervously.)

AMBRE: Sorry.

GENERAL: Well, commander?

KASIRA: We've decided to go with option three.

GENERAL: Which means?

KASIRA: We'll run your new unit on the island.

(The general clenched a triumphant fist.)

GENERAL: Superb. The major-general *will* be pleased.

KASIRA: I'd like to seek some assurances first though, if you don't mind.

GENERAL: Such as?

KASIRA: I want your word that the eight of us will be allowed to stay together. Units usually consist of six people and I don't want to find out you're taking two of them back, six months from now.

GENERAL: Okay. Anything else?

KASIRA: Yes. When our base is built we want a luxurious bath. Our old one had a superb bath, built on a hot spring. We'd like something similar this time, with a heating system. And eight bedrooms so nobody has to share.

AMBRE: But I like sharing.

KASIRA: Not now, Ambre, I'm negotiating.

GENERAL: You are, aren't you? Anything else?

KASIRA: Yes. I lost most of my clothes and shoes to that volcano...

(Tears then welled in her eyes and she had to stop talking.)

KASIRA: Sorry, it's still a bit raw.

(She puffed out to compose herself then continued.)

KASIRA: Anyway, I want the opportunity to buy more outfits. I'm not due any leave for months and I need more clothes.

SOAPY: Actually, we all do.

CAYLEY: Yeah. I only have what I'm wearing now. And my uniform, of course.

(The general nodded.)

GENERAL: Okay; well how's this? You can have your bath. And the eight bedrooms. When the builders come, their architect will have strict instructions to include those two features.

KASIRA: Not *just* those two features though.

GENERAL: Of course not. Obviously you'll need offices, toilets, a mess room and a kitchen. Not to mention a yard. You'll have a first class base.

(He nodded.)

GENERAL: As for your clothes, I'll arrange for a fashion merchant to visit the island as soon as I get back to my base.

AMBRE: How will we pay the merchant though? All our money was in the bank on Capsway Island.

KASIRA: Good point.

GENERAL: Your money is protected by the banking system. As long as you have bank books, you'll be fine.

KASIRA: Yeah, but we won't have a bank on the new island to withdraw the money from.

GENERAL: One will be built. There'll also be shops and houses given time. Academy staff have to live somewhere. In the meantime, you can order what you like from the merchant and the army will afford you credit. You'll have to pay it back once you get a bank though.

KASIRA: Okay. Agreed.

(She beamed for a moment then her face flat-lined.)

KASIRA: And what about the main concern? Keeping our unit together.

(The general bit his lip.)

GENERAL: Well, I can't promise you the army won't close that academy after a few years; changes happen all the time. They may decide to close your unit too. I can't guarantee otherwise.

(He then stood tall.)

GENERAL: How about this? In your capacity as a major, you're entitled to a staff. If I put in your contract that you're entitled to seven members of staff of your own choosing, you can keep everyone together that way. The army never breach contracts, after all, they've been sued too many times.

(Kasira looked thoughtful.)

KASIRA: Okay. In that case, as long as you honour your promise to give my girls that promotion you mentioned, we have a deal.

GENERAL: I'll fill in the forms as soon as I return to base, backdated to today.

KASIRA: And I have your word on that, do I?

GENERAL: Yes.

(With that, he raised his palm and saluted.)

GENERAL: You have my word as a general in the united military!

(He then lowered his palm and nodded.)

GENERAL: Kasira, the very top men at HQ are desperate to keep you. Major Miles' report on your methods was glowing. It sent shockwaves around the building, if you'll excuse the hyperbole. They want to keep you enlisted and they want you to teach. I was sent here with clear instructions to make that happen. If those are your demands, therefore, I'm happy to meet them. You just have to agree to sign on for another ten years.

(Kasira's jaw dropped.)

KASIRA: Ten? Ten???

SOAPY: Ten isn't so bad, Kasira.

KASIRA: But everyone else will have left when I get out!

SOAPY: Only just. I have almost ten years left and Sika has nine, you'll be stuck with us two right until the end.

KASIRA: Not if I hang myself first.

SOAPY: What?

KASIRA: I'm joking.

AMBRE: And I'm happy to stay on for all ten years! Where else would I go?

(Kasira nodded thoughtfully then smiled.)

KASIRA: That's true. You have a deal, General.

(At once, the general's face lit up.)

GENERAL: Excellent.

(He then shook Kasira's hand sternly.)

KASIRA: Ouch!!!

GENERAL: Sorry!

(He grimaced then nodded to her affirmatively.)

GENERAL: So, are you ready? It's time to get off this ship and start clearing the island of wraiths!

KASIRA: Well... as ready as I'll ever be. Mass culls are not my favourite task, that's for sure.

(Soapy beamed.)

SOAPY: It'll be easy. I can just do my powerful skill like that time we cleared the haze break.

KASIRA: That's true. They'll be dead in no time.

SOAPY: Yup. I'm that good.

CAYLEY: She's modest too.

KASIRA: Oh, to a fault.

SOAPY: Fault? As Sika would say...

(She then copied Sika's voice.)

SOAPY: I don't have any of those.

(Ambre giggled.)

AMBRE: That sounded just like her.

GENERAL: It actually did.

(He smiled.)

GENERAL: Okay then, before you go, two things you need to know. According to the captain, the time it'll take for us to reach our destination on this ship, return to HQ then send out another ship to you, will be about four weeks.

EKSI: You can't send a ship for four weeks?

GENERAL: No, it should be *with you* in four weeks, and fuck me, you look just like your sister! It's uncanny.

LYCIA: She really does. You could pretend you're her and make that Nivea person do all your chores.

EKSI: I had thought of that!

GENERAL: Yes, but then you quickly realised it was a bad idea, didn't you?

(At once, Lycia and Eksi hung their heads.)

LYCIA: Sir.

EKSI: Yes, sir.

KASIRA: Don't worry, sir. They won't do that. At least not twice!

GENERAL: Good.

KASIRA: So what was the second thing?

GENERAL: Ah yes, that. The name of the island you're going to.

KASIRA: Oh yeah? What is it?

GENERAL: New Capsway Island. As renamed by me, just now.

AMBRE: I like that name!

GENERAL: I'm happy for you.

EKSI: Kiss arse.

KASIRA: Enough.

(The general then rubbed his hands together gleefully.)

GENERAL: Right then. Are you ready to go off and begin your new adventure, soon-to-be *Major* Ashwood?

(He then looked stumped and spoke up before Kasira could reply.)

GENERAL: Wait. It's not Ashwood now, is it? You got married.

(Kasira glowered at him.)

KASIRA: It *is* Ashwood! I don't want to be associated with that whimpering sissy I married. If I'd known he was that much of a wimp, I'd never have got involved with him. First sign of a crisis and he ran away crying for his mummy. He didn't even talk to me.

(She snarled.)

KASIRA: I thought he was a man, for fuck sake. Turns out, he was a bed-wetting pansy. I hope his knob falls off.

SOAPY: His testicles already did!

KASIRA: Right? I was supposed to be the girly one in our relationship; me! I don't care if I never see that quivering chicken-shit ever again.

(The general looked most uncomfortable.)

GENERAL: Right, yes. Sorry, I mentioned it then.

(Kasira grimaced.)

KASIRA: Sorry. Had some rage to let go of.

GENERAL: I noticed.

(He then looked her in the eye.)

GENERAL: Anyway, are you ready to go?

KASIRA: Pretty much. We just need to find Sika and Nivea.

GENERAL: And where are they?

KASIRA: Good question.

(Remembering how she'd given Nivea permission to tie Sika up and grope her, Kasira could only shudder.)

KASIRA: Actually... I dread to think!

On the deck at the back of the ship at this time, Nivea was pacing up and down with a sadistic expression on her face. Above her, Sika was hovering in the air, refusing to come down. Holding a length of rope she'd found on the deck, Nivea looked at her and smirked.)

NIVEA: I met a crewman earlier, you know? A winged numpty like you. He'd happily fly up there and get you for me if I asked him to.

(She shrugged.)

NIVEA: Of course, if I have to use extra effort to fetch him, your punishment will be ten times worse. You know how I hate being made to exert myself. You might as well make it easier on yourself and come down here of your own accord. Just face your punishment like an adult. I promise I'll go easy on you.

(Sika pouted back at her.)

SIKA: Yeah, right. I'm *never* coming down. Never ever.

NIVEA: I've heard that before. You'll have to come down sooner or later, Sika.

SIKA: No, I won't. And besides, you've only got until the ship drops anchor to catch me. I just have to hover here until then. So there.

(She then poked her tongue out.)

NIVEA: Keep digging, I don't mind. Yes, I've only got until we drop anchor, but that doesn't mean I can't carry this on once we're on the island. Kasira can't watch over you twenty fours a day, you know? So, you might as well come down now. I promise you, making me wait is just gonna make it worse in the long run.

SIKA: Go away, you weird, nocturnal freak. Stupid owl-woman.

NIVEA: Owl woman?

SIKA: Yeah! And you have hands bigger than my dad!

(Nivea looked at her hands and grimaced.)

NIVEA: Then you have a seriously tiny dad.

SIKA: I meant, your hands are bigger than his!

NIVEA: All the better for mashing your boobies. Now come down!

SIKA: No!

(Just then, Major Miles happened past, giving them sideways glances.)

MILES: What are you two up to?

(Delighted to see a high-ranking officer, Sika exhaled.)

SIKA: Thank god, *you're* here! She's trying to make me come down so she can strip me, tie me to a post then grope me!

MILES: She is?

SIKA: Yes!

MILES: Why?

(Nivea shrugged.)

NIVEA: Why not?

MILES: Good point. I'd actually like to see that.

(He then furrowed his brow at Sika.)

MILES: Fly down here this instant, Private. That's an order!

(Sika gaped at him in horror.)

SIKA: But, sir...

MILES: Do I have to repeat myself???

(Not about to defy a member of the high command while the general was nearby, especially with *her* long list of prior offences, Sika gulped.)

SIKA: Mean!

(With that, she sunk to the ground then dismissed her wings, before taking to her heels and fleeing. Nivea was, of course, straight on her tail.)

NIVEA: Thank you, sir.

MILES: Oh, that was nothing.

(He then bellowed at Sika.)

MILES: No running on deck, Private!!!

SIKA: What??? That's not fair.

MILES: I gave you an order!!!

(Slowing to a walk, Sika pouted at him sorrowfully.)

SIKA: Mean. Really, really mean.

(Rushing in to grab her, Nivea beamed.)

NIVEA: Thanks, Major.

MAJOR: You're welcome. Now make sure you put on a good show.

NIVEA: Oh, I will. Trust me.

(Standing on the spot with her arms wrapped tightly across her chest, Sika sneered.)

SIKA: I'm not gonna make this easy for you!

NIVEA: No?

(With that, Nivea threw her hand up Sika's skirt and twisted the back of her thong. At once, Sika shrieked then instinctively threw her hands behind herself to stop her.)

SIKA: Don't!!!

NIVEA: A-ha!!!

(Nivea immediately grabbed Sika's wrists and beamed.)

NIVEA: Gotcha!

SIKA: No!!!

NIVEA: Yes!

SIKA: Get off me! Let me go!

NIVEA: Not a hope in hell.

(She beamed.)

NIVEA: I *told* you judgment day was coming, didn't I? You should have listened.

(Sika pouted.)

SIKA: I'm sorry, Nivea. Please, forgive me.

NIVEA: Of course I'll forgive you.

SIKA: You will?

NIVEA: Yes. Right after I've punished you.

SIKA: Nivea!!!

(Just then, much to Sika's absolute delight, Kasira paced around the corner.)

KASIRA: There you are! Let her go, Nivea; the captain just dropped anchor.

(Nivea was devastated.)

NIVEA: So soon?

SIKA: Yes, so soon. Sucks to be you, shovel hands; now get off me.

(Nivea let her go then sighed despairingly.)

NIVEA: So close.

MILES: I share your disappointment.

(He shrugged.)

MILES: Still, I'm sure you'll get her at some point. I only wish I could be there to see it.

NIVEA: Oh, don't worry. I *will* get her eventually. And Soapy! Between them, they've earned the punishment from hell.

(She then gave Sika a sadistic glance.)

NIVEA: And it's coming like a speeding arrow.

SIKA: Go away, fruitcake.

KASIRA: Come on, girls. Hurry up. It's time to go.

(Sika immediately hurried to Kasira's side.)

SIKA: Keep that freak away from me.

KASIRA: Fine.

(With that, she led Sika away. Nivea trudged ruefully behind.)

KASIRA: Did she catch you then?

SIKA: Yes, but thankfully you arrived before she could get started.

(She pouted.)

SIKA: Why did you tell her she could do that? That was *too* mean!

KASIRA: You wouldn't shut up then you said some really tactless things, that's why. You deserved it.

SIKA: Nobody deserves that! Nivea's punishments are horrible.

(Kasira gave a stifled laugh.)

KASIRA: Then why do you and Soapy insist on winding her up?

SIKA: Well...

KASIRA: When she gets hold of you, she's going to punish you big time and you can't even *pretend* you didn't earn it. And yet, as soon as she's finished, you'll start earning another one.

(Sika grinned.)

SIKA: Yeah, probably.

KASIRA: Well then, stop complaining. If the punishment bothered you that much, you wouldn't keep committing the crime.

(Sika allowed herself a chuckle.)

SIKA: Fair comment.

(She shrugged.)

SIKA: We're just having fun, Kasira. Nivea enjoys punishing us and we enjoy antagonising her. It's a laugh.

KASIRA: I know, darling. That's why I allow it. Playful pranks and banter when everyone is on board is good for morale. It brings people closer, actually.

SIKA: I agree.

KASIRA: Good. Then don't whine when Nivea gets you back. And fair warning; if you talk over me next time I'm trying to make a point, I may be tempted to help her.

(Sika gulped.)

SIKA: You wouldn't?

KASIRA: Wanna try me?

(Having heard everything, Nivea spoke up from behind them.)

NIVEA: Let's give her a taster! Right now.

KASIRA: Let's not. We're about to start a mission and I want everyone focussed. Messing around can wait until we've finished.

NIVEA: Fair enough. We'll complete the mission *then* tie her up and molest her.

KASIRA: Agreed!

SIKA: What???

KASIRA: I'm joking, Sika; relax.

NIVEA: *I* wasn't.

SIKA: Oh, like your fat arse could even catch me.

KASIRA: Wow.

NIVEA: Keep them coming, Sika. You might as well. You're past the point of redemption now, after all. You might as well make hay while the sun shines. Just remember, when judgment comes, it *will* be harsh!

KASIRA: She thinks everything's harsh.

NIVEA: That's true.

SIKA: Harsh!

KASIRA: See?

(Sika grimaced.)

SIKA: I say that a lot, don't I?

NIVEA: Yes, you do.

(They all then headed onwards to where two rowing boats were being prepared for them, sharing a chuckle as they did so.)

A few minutes later, Kasira, Cayley, Nivea, Ambre, Sika, Soapy, Eksi and Lycia found themselves standing at the edge of the ship, peering down at two rowing boats. All their bags had been lowered down with the boats and now all that remained was for them to climb down the rope ladders then row ashore. As the general watched on, Kasira stood tall and commenced supervising the operation.

KASIRA: Okay, ladies, let's get this done. Nivea, you go first.

NIVEA: Ma'am.

(Kasira nodded then looked to Soapy and pointed at a second ladder.)

KASIRA: Soapy, do your stuff, darling.

(At once, Soapy furrowed her brow.)

SOAPY: Oh, for pity's sake. Not again.

(With that, she dived overboard and proceeded to swim towards the darkened island in the distance. Watching her go, Kasira grimaced in bewilderment.)

KASIRA: Why is she doing that? She was supposed to go down the other ladder and get in the other boat!

CAYLEY: I think she just assumed you wanted her to swim.

SIKA: She does get asked to do that a lot, to be fair. So when you said, "her stuff", she probably thought you meant swimming.

KASIRA: But I pointed at the ladder!

CAYLEY: You're also pointing in the direction of the island.

KASIRA: Right. Misunderstanding then.

(She then shrugged it off.)

KASIRA: Who wants to go next then?

(Ambre beamed.)

AMBRE: Me!

KASIRA: Okay. You gonna be alright?

AMBRE: I'm slow, Kasira, not physically incapable.

KASIRA: I know, darling. Off you go then.

AMBRE: Yay!

(With that, Ambre proceeded to climb down the ladder with her framed certificate held firmly in her teeth.)

KASIRA: Sika, Cayley, climb down or fly, it's your choice.

CAYLEY: Fly!

SIKA: Fly!

KASIRA: Off you go then. I'll row one boat, Nivea can row the other one.

CAYLEY: Yes, ma'am.

SIKA: Ma'am.

(With that, Cayley and Sika took to the air.)

KASIRA: Eksi, Lycia, you climb into the boat with Nivea; I'll get in the other one. Careful on the ladder, okay?

LYCIA: Yes, ma'am.

EKSI: Ma'am.

(She chuckled.)

EKSI: Seems weird calling you that.

KASIRA: Yeah, well, get used to it. Off you go.

(With that, she turned and saluted the general.)

KASIRA: Farewell, sir.

GENERAL: Good luck, Commander.

KASIRA: Don't forget. Luxury bath and eight bedrooms in our base; a visit from a clothing merchant; a guarantee of seven staff of my choice; promotions for the girls.

GENERAL: I gave you my word, did I not?

KASIRA: Yes, but you never wrote it down.

GENERAL: True, but if you don't get what you demanded, you won't have to sign your new ten year contract. I'd be a fool to forget.

(He pointed to his head.)

GENERAL: Don't worry, it's all up here.

KASIRA: Superb. And you're right. I won't sign that deal without those things.

GENERAL: In your shoes, nor would I. A deal is a deal, Kasira, and I despise those who refuse to keep up their end. Don't worry, you'll get everything we agreed.

KASIRA: Thank you, sir.

(With that, she stepped up and held out her hand.)

KASIRA: Goodbye, sir.

(The general shook her hand firmly and smiled.)

GENERAL: Farewell.

KASIRA: Ouch!!! Really? Again?

(Kasira shook her paining hand.)

KASIRA: Next time, I'll just curtsy. It's like having your hand crushed between two rocks.

GENERAL: Sorry about that. I'm not used to shaking hands with women.

KASIRA: Evidently.

(She then gave him a respectful smile before clambering over the side of the ship. Watching her ascend, the general nodded then turned and walked away, mumbling to himself as he did so.)

GENERAL: Like it's *my* fault you have such ridiculously girly hands. Women!

(He then rolled his eyes and snarled.)

GENERAL: Time to make those bag-hurling little shits do a thousand press-ups, I think.

(With that, he bellowed at the top of his voice.)

GENERAL: Morag, Janet... get here!!!

A short while later, as Kasira rowed towards the island with Ambre grinning at her excitedly, a deep sense of foreboding washed over her. In that moment, she stopped rowing and gaped into space nervously.)

AMBRE: What's wrong, Kasira?

(Kasira whimpered.)

KASIRA: Did I just agree to stay in the army until I'm thirty five?

AMBRE: Yup. And I agreed to say with you. I'll be thirty three by then. Cayley helped me add it up. Twenty three plus ten. I used my fingers.

KASIRA: Ambre, I'll have wrinkles by then. No man will look at me twice because I'll be old and already married to someone else.

AMBRE: Men will always look at you, Kasira.

KASIRA: Not when I'm old.

(She trembled.)

KASIRA: I knew all this when I agreed, but now it's really sinking in. I'm gonna be a career army hag, Ambre. I wanted to be so much more. I'll be too *old* for waitressing when I leave! I'll have to stay on forever. I wouldn't even get a job as a prostitute.

AMBRE: That's not *all* you're fit for.

KASIRA: Actually, it probably is.

(She then took several deep breaths.)

KASIRA: Sorry, sorry; I was having a panic attack.

AMBRE: There's no need to panic, Kasira. You'll get lots and lots of boyfriends; you're pretty. And we *are* going to have lots of fun while we're on that island, we always do.

(Kasira puffed out then nodded.)

KASIRA: Yeah, you're right, of course.

AMBRE: I am? Yay!

KASIRA: It's all about fun, really.

(A wry smile then crept onto her lips.)

KASIRA: Speaking of which, I know we like to shy away from contests but if Nivea thinks she's beating me to the island, she can forget it.

(She then glanced at where Nivea was rowing the other boat and doubled her speed.)

AMBRE: Yay, we're gonna win!

KASIRA: Hopefully. But if we don't, it wasn't a contest, okay?

(Ambre chuckled.)

AMBRE: Okay.

Ten minutes later, once Nivea and Kasira had rowed their boats to the beach where Soapy, Sika and Cayley were waiting, the eight girls of the 123rd containment unit, lined up in the shallow sea, staring across the island. Ambre did so with a big smile on her face.

AMBRE: We won.

NIVEA: It wasn't a contest.

AMBRE: Yes it was. *We* won. It was only not a contest if *you* won! Kasira said.

NIVEA: Oh, did she now?

(Kasira scoffed.)

KASIRA: No.

(She then ruffled her neck.)

KASIRA: Anyway, never mind that. Feast your eyes, ladies. This is our new home.

(At once, everyone stared into the darkness before them. The island was bigger but much less hilly than the one they'd fled that lunchtime. To their left, there was a flat land, across which they could make out a plethora of wraiths. To their right, there was a hill. It wasn't as steep as the one on Capsway Island, however. It seemed to go up in stages, almost in a series of shelves. And at the peak was a thirty foot tall, concrete watchtower, with ladders running up the sides. At the foot of the hill was a group of derelict buildings, one of which was a three storey school building. In the darkness, it all looked somewhat uninviting.

As she glanced around, Kasira bit her lip.)

KASIRA: It's a bit... barren.

CAYLEY: It certainly looks that way from here. There's a forested area behind that hill though; it's actually quite pretty.

AMBRE: How do you know, Cayley?

CAYLEY: I saw it from the air, darling.

AMBRE: Oh, yeah. Silly me.

LYCIA: Duh.

SIKA: I'm not really worried about the scenery right now. For one, it's dark and you can't see it. Mostly though, I'm more concerned about the fuck load of wraiths.

EKSI: They're everywhere!

KASIRA: I know. That's why we're still standing in the sea. As soon as we hit the beach, we're gonna be in a battle.

SOAPY: Before we even get to stash our bags anywhere!

NIVEA: And the boats.

KASIRA: Actually, I've had an idea about the bags.

(She glanced at Sika then Cayley.)

KASIRA: Can you fly the bags up to the roof of the tall building? Bury yours under the others, Cayley. Seeing as they have food in.

CAYLEY: Good idea. We don't want to attract birds or rats.

SIKA: If there's rats on that roof, I aint going!

KASIRA: You're going.

SIKA: Okay, I am then. I'm not gonna like it though.

KASIRA: Shoot them if you see any.

SIKA: Oh, I will.

KASIRA: Right, good. Take as many trips as you need. Once you're done, our work can begin in earnest.

CAYLEY: Ma'am.

(Cayley looked to Sika.)

CAYLEY: Take two at a time, we'll make four trips.

SIKA: I can take more than two at a time.

CAYLEY: And be shattered after the first run? I know you, Sika. Don't try to impress everyone with how many you can carry then kill yourself in the process, let's do this sensibly.

SIKA: Fine.

(She then looked to Kasira and nodded to her handbag.)

SIKA: Shall we take your handbag too?

KASIRA: I keep my blades in there!

SIKA: That'd be a no then.

(With that, Sika and Cayley grabbed two bags each then took off towards the school building. Having watched them go for a moment, Kasira then smiled at Soapy.)

KASIRA: Soapy?

(Soapy's shoulder sunk.)

SOAPY: You're going to ask me to swim the rowing boats round to the abandoned jetty, aren't you?

KASIRA: There's an abandoned jetty?

(Soapy glanced away innocently.)

SOAPY: Um, no.

KASIRA: Soapy???

SOAPY: Fine. There is. Cayley and Sika saw it from above.

KASIRA: Cool. I *was* just going to tell you, back on that ship, I was pointing to a rope ladder, not telling you to swim ahead. You seemed to misunderstand. Let's not bother discussing that though. Taking the rowing boats to the jetty is a far better use of your time and talents.

SOAPY: Damn it! Me and my big mouth.

KASIRA: We'll just grab the bags out of them, then you can go. Look lively, girls.

(At once, everyone delved into the rowing boats and plucked out the bags.)

LYCIA: Heavy!

EKSI: Just don't drop it in the sea! That's Kasira's and she's lost enough outfits for one day.

KASIRA: Damn right!

LYCIA: It's fine. I was just a bit surprised by the weight, that's all.

KASIRA: I packed my clothes in tight; there's a lot in there.

(She then nodded to Soapy.)

KASIRA: All yours now, Soapy.

SOAPY: Ma'am.

(With that, she grabbed the ropes at the front of the rowing boats then paced into the sea and swam off, pulling them along behind her.)

KASIRA: Not a bad start. We'll soon have the bags and boats stashed.

NIVEA: Leaving us free to kill or be killed.

(She then looked to Lycia and sucked her teeth.)

NIVEA: Killed in your case, I reckon.

LYCIA: What?

NIVEA: Wraith infestation on your first day? That's always fatal. Let's face it, with your lack of experience at this kind of thing, you and Eksi will both get in trouble at some point. And who do you think we'll come to rescue first? The leader's beloved sister or you? I wouldn't want to be in your shoes right now, boy, I really wouldn't.

(Lycia just stared at her through terrified eyes.)

LYCIA: I...

KASIRA: Don't listen to her, Lycia. We're gonna do this sensibly and carefully. You're not gonna die tonight! Unless you do something stupid, of course. Killing this many wraiths requires concentration and focus. Keep your mind on the job and everything will be fine.

LYCIA: Right. Will do.

(She then glowered at Nivea.)

LYCIA: You scared the piss out of me then!

NIVEA: Objective achieved.

LYCIA: And stop calling me a boy!

NIVEA: Nope.

(With a roll of the eyes, Kasira then looked to Eksi and Lycia.)

KASIRA: Listen up, you two. I don't mean to frighten you, but as some point more wraiths than you've ever seen in your entire lives are going to come charging at you. It's terrifying. There's no other way of putting it; you're in for a baptism of fire tonight. Not quite as bad as the one Soapy faced, but it's going to scare the piss out of you at first, okay. Be prepared.

EKSI: Ma'am.

LYCIA: Yes, ma'am.

KASIRA: Eksi, you fight like I do, of course. Dual blades, close range. You're going to be right in the thick of it.

(Eksi grimaced.)

EKSI: Good point that. I need to get my blades from my bag before the two bird-women come back.

(She then proceeded to fish inside her bag.)

KASIRA: When we get started, you can shadow me, okay?

EKSI: Okay.

KASIRA: If you step in front of me, or go off on your own, I'll kick you *right* up the arse! I mean it.

EKSI: I won't.

KASIRA: Make sure you don't.

(She nodded then looked to Lycia.)

KASIRA: As for you, Lycia, I'm no expert on swift-human skills. You should consult Ambre here.

(Lycia grimaced nervously.)

LYCIA: Are you sure about that? She's... special.

AMBRE: Yay. She likes me.

LYCIA: I never said that.

KASIRA: Lycia!

LYCIA: Fine.

(She grimaced at Ambre uncomfortably.)

LYCIA: What should I do?

AMBRE: Whatever Kasira tells you to do.

LYCIA: Thanks. You've been very informative.

KASIRA: Ambre, tell her what *you* do in battle.

AMBRE: That *is* what I do. I follow your instructions.

KASIRA: And what do I usually ask you to do?

AMBRE: Focus on my job and ignore Sika's mean comments.

(Kasira's shoulders slumped.)

KASIRA: Ambre, she needs to know how to go about battling all these wraiths. Just give her some advice. From you own experience.

AMBRE: Oh. I'll try.

(She bit her lip thoughtfully for a moment then beamed.)

AMBRE: If there are lots and lots of wraiths up ahead, too many for your Saxum, don't use it. It can be really dangerous if you overdo it.

LYCIA: But summoning a Saxum is all I *can* do. I heal it while other people kill the wraiths it attracts.

AMBRE: Yeah, but if there's too many and your Saxum gets smashed up, the wraiths will chase *you* instead. That's not good. You have to become a gazelle and run really, really fast.

KASIRA: I think what she's saying is, know your Saxum's limitations.

LYCIA: How can I? I've never tested it in the field before.

(She sighed.)

LYCIA: I'm gonna be a bit redundant if there's too many wraiths, aren't I?

AMBRE: No, you just have to learn to control the minds of the other wraiths instead, like I did.

(Lycia's jaw dropped.)

LYCIA: What?

KASIRA: It's true. What do you think her medal's for? Her skills have surpassed every other female of her race.

LYCIA: So *you're* the one? There was a rumour going around my academy that someone had done that. I'd never have guessed it was... her.

KASIRA: Well, now you know. Her Saxum self-heals now while she gets on with controlling the minds of wraiths. Pretty impressive, right?

LYCIA: I... I'm astonished.

KASIRA: Yeah, well, maybe if you hadn't been looking at her through prejudiced eyes, you wouldn't be. Lycia, this girl is head and shoulders above the rest of your kind when it comes to battle. She can even communicate with her Saxum. If you can emulate her, you'll go far.

AMBRE: What does emulate mean?

KASIRA: Of course, you don't have to copy everything she does.

LYCIA: That's a relief.

AMBRE: What? I'm lost.

KASIRA: Doesn't matter, darling.

(She smiled at Lycia.)

KASIRA: You were right, by the way, you might be redundant tonight. There's a lot of wraiths in a wide open space so using your Saxum could be too risky. Just stick close to Ambre and try to copy what she does. It doesn't matter if you can't. Your chance to shine will just have to come another day, okay?

LYCIA: Ma'am.

KASIRA: Good girl.

(Just then, Sika and Cayley came swooping down from the sky behind them. Having not seen them, Ambre was given quite a start.)

AMBRE: Jibber jabber!!!

NIVEA: What???

AMBRE: Scared me!

CAYLEY: Yeah, sorry to come at you from behind like that. We dropped off the first four bags then had to fly out to sea. There were hundreds of wraiths chasing us from below and we didn't want to lead them here.

KASIRA: Good thinking.

SIKA: It was *my* idea.

NIVEA: Really? But it's a *good* one.

SIKA: Harsh!

(She then stared ahead in bewilderment.)

SIKA: Wow, I really *do* say that a lot. Still, I'm right. That was just rude. I have loads of great ideas. The trouble with you is, Nivea, you're as stupid as you are blind; great ideas are lost on you.

KASIRA: Yeah, well, never mind that. Get going, Sika. Cayley's already left with more bags.

(Sika was horrified.)

SIKA: No!!! She's gonna beat me!

(With that, she grabbed Nivea's bags then took to the sky.)

SIKA: I'm not gonna lose this one!!!

KASIRA: It's not a contest!

NIVEA: What she said! If you get carried away and drop my stuff, I'll...

KASIRA: Just let her go, Nivea; she's got a job to do.

NIVEA: Fine. I swear, if she drops my stuff, she's gonna learn a new meaning to the word humiliation.

LYCIA: Not pain?

NIVEA: Not *physical* pain, no. That's not my style.

AMBRE: Nivea's scary when she's feeling vengeful.

(Nivea smirked knowingly.)

NIVEA: I'm creative too. As Sika and Soapy will soon find out. As soon as we get some down time...

(She then laughed an evil laugh.)

NIVEA: You'll see.

AMBRE: See? Scary.

KASIRA: Right. Look, never mind that. Ambre, put your certificate and medal in your bag, will you? They'll be safer there. Unless you don't mind them being destroyed in a wraith fight, of course.

(At once, Ambre hurriedly set about putting her prized possessions away, ably assisted by Nivea.)

AMBRE: That would make me sad. I don't want to be sad!

(Slipping them into the middle of her bag, she then nodded to affirm her thinking.)

AMBRE: This is a *good* idea. It's better to be safe than silly, after all.

NIVEA: Yes. That's the phrase.

Ten minutes later, once the bag drops had been made and Soapy had returned from mooring the rowing boats, Kasira turned her attention to battle tactics. Confident they could clear the island quickly, she stepped before her seven subordinates, still standing in the shallow sea water, and addressed them accordingly.)

KASIRA: Okay, listen up, ladies. It's time. Here's the plan. We're going to head to the highest point on the hill from where Soapy is going to use her special skill.

NIVEA: The one that finished off the wraiths in the haze break?

KASIRA: That's the one.

(Soapy beamed.)

SOAPY: Piece of piss.

KASIRA: Of course, we have to get up there first. You can see it from here, the entire hillside is swarming with massive wraiths. It looks like there's been the same sort of natural selection going on here that went on in that underground bunker we cleared a few months ago. This island provides a finite amount of space, so the bigger ones have killed the smaller ones.

SIKA: It's nowhere near as extreme though.

KASIRA: Sorry?

SIKA: I mean these are big wraiths, yeah. They're not the gigantic beasts we faced back then though.

KASIRA: That's true. Thanks for interrupting. Very helpful.

SIKA: I was just saying.

KASIRA: Yeah, you were just saying what I was *about* to say when you interrupted.

SIKA: Well *I* wasn't to know that.

(She rolled her eyes, invoking a furrowed brow from Kasira.)

KASIRA: Sika?

SIKA: Yes?

KASIRA: Have you ever been attacked by an angry woman with razor-sharp blades?

SIKA: No.

KASIRA: Would you like to be?

(Sika immediately hung her head and glanced away.)

KASIRA: I thought not.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: Right, here's what we're going to do. We're going to edge forwards, cautiously. We'll fight what sees us and comes running. No whistles, okay? If large groups come, back away from Nivea and let her spin. Eksi, Lycia, I want you with me. Stay close. Pay attention and do as you're told.

EKSI: Yes, ma'am!

LYCIA: Ma'am.

KASIRA: Good. The first *rule* of wraith fighting is to do as you're told. The *second* rule is to keep well away from a subterranean when they start to spin with their sword. So stick close to me and retreat when I say, then you'll be fine.

(She smiled.)

KASIRA: I think that's everything. Any questions?

(Cayley nodded.)

CAYLEY: I have one.

KASIRA: Okay.

CAYLEY: You've had the worst day of your entire life, Kasira, and I'm worried. It's been really traumatic for you. This was meant to be your wedding day; the happiest day of your life. It all went so, so wrong.

KASIRA: That's not a question!

CAYLEY: No, *this* is a question. Will you be able to fight with a clear head after all that's happened today? You might lose it and end up taking your frustrations out on the wraiths; and that's how mistakes are made.

(Kasira furrowed her brow at her.)

KASIRA: You think I'm that unprofessional?

CAYLEY: No. I think you're a human being with emotions; and what happened to you today was soul destroying. Any woman would be traumatised by it. It must have left you with a lot of pent up aggression, Kasira, and I'm worried you might get carried away and take your eye off the ball; killing everything in sight in a fit of undiluted rage.

NIVEA: I was thinking the same thing.

SOAPY: It crossed *my* mind too.

(Kasira looked to them uneasily for a moment then sighed.)

KASIRA: Fine. If you want the truth, here it is. I don't feel frustrated. Not one bit. I'm actually really fucking embarrassed.

AMBRE: Why?

KASIRA: Why do you think?

AMBRE: I don't know.

KASIRA: I fell in love with a complete knob, that's why!

(She scoffed bitterly.)

KASIRA: I honestly believed that if he ever found out what happened with Major Miles, he'd shout at me for a bit then let me explain once he'd calmed down. I thought he'd be angry for a while then get over it. You know, punch a few walls; maybe even threaten the major. I thought he'd act like men do when they're hurt. Shout and stuff; get annoyed then calm down once it was out of his system.

(She hung her head.)

KASIRA: I thought he was *so* manly. Really tough, but with a kind, sensitive side. The perfect man. A swing and a miss for me, I guess.

(She looked to Cayley.)

KASIRA: When I first met you, you told me your hobbies were baking and sewing. I remember thinking you were the girliest person I've ever met. I don't think that anymore. As it turns out, you're twice the man Lassu is. And yet I fell in love with him! I fell in love with a big girl!

(She snarled.)

KASIRA: I swear, if that's the level of manliness I'm attracted to, I might as well become a lesbian.

(She sighed.)

KASIRA: Honestly, I've never misjudged someone so badly in all my life. I thought he was gonna be my soul mate. I feel like such an idiot. I didn't know him at all. And clearly he didn't know me either.

(Her shoulders then slumped and she stared down at the sea around her feet.)

KASIRA: And *that's* why I'm embarrassed. I've made a fool of myself.

(As she stood there staring downwards, everyone watched on wearing sorrowful pouts.

Kasira's shoulders were starting to shake and she looked very much like a broken woman. Desperate to console her, Ambre then reached out her arm to her. As she did so, however, Cayley gently tapped Ambre's arm and whispered to her.)

CAYLEY: Leave her alone for a moment, darling. She needs to get it out of her system. We can hug her in a minute.

(Ambre replied in a small voice.)

AMBRE: But she's crying.

CAYLEY: I know, love.

(Just then, Kasira raised her head. Tears were indeed streaming down her cheeks, but she had a highly amused expression on her face.)

KASIRA: Can you imagine what life would have been like for me as that big sissy's wife? Imagine his reaction if I'd cooked something he didn't like! He'd have come home, took one bite then walked out of the house to roam the nearby valleys, crying his eyes out.

CAYLEY: He'd be gone for weeks, pining for a bacon sandwich.

SOAPY: Pining for his mummy, you mean.

KASIRA: He'd be so distraught he'd end up crying on a cliff edge while a team of well-meaning locals try to convince him not to jump.

(Sika chuckled.)

SIKA: Imagine what would have happened during your monthlies if you weren't in the mood for sex.

KASIRA: I'd have found him curled up, crying in the basement in the foetal position, I expect.

CAYLEY: To be fair, most men are like that.

(Nivea threw out a dismissive hand.)

NIVEA: Meh. Monthlies aren't a problem if you let them do you up the bum!

SIKA: Nivea!

SOAPY: For fuck sake!

NIVEA: What?

CAYLEY: Trust you!

(Kasira continued to chuckle. By now, all she could picture was the disastrous marriage she'd avoided and exaggerating it was amusing her greatly.)

KASIRA: Think. I came within inches of spending the rest of my life raising a full grown baby.

AMBRE: That's hurtful, Kasira. I can do *most* things by myself, and I *am* trying...

KASIRA: Not *you*, silly. Lassu!

AMBRE: Oh. I feel silly now.

KASIRA: You're not silly. *I'm* silly. I fell in love with the world's most pathetic man and despite only knowing him for five minutes, I agreed to marry him. He basically said "I do" then "I'm off" in the same sentence. What the hell was I thinking?

(She chuckled some more then smiled warmly at Cayley.)

KASIRA: Thanks for helping me get that out of my system, babe.

CAYLEY: You're welcome.

KASIRA: I'm not gonna cry about it. Or regret anything. I'm going to own my mistake. I made a cataclysmic misjudgement; I really did. I thought I was in love with him when in truth, I think it's hard to deny that I didn't even know the twat. If I'd known he was a sulking little sissy boy, I'd have run a mile. I'm fucking glad he left. I dodged a crossbow bolt there. I could have been starting a life with that flowery mummy's boy tonight. I planned to, at least. Now the very thought of it is sending a chill down my spine.

(She beamed.)

KASIRA: Things have worked out pretty well, when you think about it. Now I get to spend the coming years with my family and friends. Who could ask for more?

(In that moment, everyone except Lycia swarmed on Kasira for a hug.)

AMBRE: I love you!!!

EKSI: I loved her first!

NIVEA: Yeah? Well *I* think of her when I masturbate!

(At once, everyone backed off of Kasira and glowered at the giggling Nivea.)

SIKA: You're one sick pup, you know that?

KASIRA: Seriously.

NIVEA: You know I'm kidding. I only have eyes for Soapy.

SOAPY: Get fucked!

NIVEA: Classy.

SOAPY: Like you know anything about class!

NIVEA: Touché.

(Kasira smiled.)

KASIRA: Right, anyway. Back to the task in hand. Eksi, Lycia, stay close to me, remember? It's time to destroy some wraiths.

(She smiled at Cayley.)

KASIRA: And relax. I'm fine. I'm not frustrated, I'm relieved.

CAYLEY: Good to know.

KASIRA: Now let's stop procrastinating and kill some shit.

(With that, she started to pace from the shallows, towards the beach, with her team of ready and willing soldiers at her side.)

Proceeding with caution, as she'd told her troops she'd do in their tactical briefing, Kasira stepped slowly onto the beach with her dual blades at the ready. At her side were Eksi and Lycia. Walking just behind her Soapy, Sika, Ambre, Nivea and Cayley were all visibly psyched up and ready. Having twice culled large numbers of wraiths, they weren't even remotely fazed. As a result, when they stepped from the beach, onto the grass beyond, and were immediately set upon by a group of fifty wraiths, everyone immediately leapt into action. Nivea appeared at Kasira's side to fight at close quarters and those with magic set about unleashing it.

It was an easy start to proceedings. Eksi and Lycia had backed off and allowed the experienced girls to do what they did best. Ambre had set one wraith against the others while Soapy, Cayley and Sika had blasted them with magic. Those that reached Kasira and Nivea were then dispatched on their swift blades. It had all been extremely easy. The two new girls however, thought it was the coolest thing they'd ever seen. They'd only ever faced two or three at a time at the training academy and couldn't believe what they'd just witnessed.

EKSI: Wow! That was like... wow.

LYCIA: You girls are amazing!

SIKA: We know.

EKSI: I always knew you were cool, Kasira, but that was extreme.

(Kasira grimaced.)

KASIRA: Yeah... that was actually nothing.

(She then smiled.)

KASIRA: Come and fight at my side for the next group. Eksi. Lycia, hang back there with the magic users for now, love. Your time will come though, don't worry.

LYCIA: Yes, ma'am.

(As Lycia stepped among the line of magic users, Ambre beamed.)

AMBRE: Hiya!

LYCIA: Yeah.

AMBRE: Don't worry about feeling left out. I used to feel left out sometimes too.

SIKA: Even when you *weren't* being left out.

AMBRE: Yeah, I'm sort of paranoid about it, actually. But don't worry, Kasira will find you something to do sooner or later. She's really nice.

(Lycia gave her a sideways glance.)

LYCIA: Okay then.

(As they headed onwards towards the next group of wraiths, Kasira smiled at her little sister.)

KASIRA: Ready?

EKSI: I can't wait.

KASIRA: Nervous?

EKSI: You have no idea.

KASIRA: Then take a deep breath and try to relax. When the wraiths come, focus and make your number one priority the nearest wraith, okay? The nearest one is the one most likely to hurt you. *Don't* get hurt!

EKSI: Right. Gotcha.

KASIRA: Good girl.

(In that moment, a group of wraiths, twice the size of the last one, charged in towards them.)

EKSI: Crap! There's loads of them!

KASIRA: All the more reason to focus then.

(At once, Eksi sank into a fighting stance to await the incoming hoard. Much to her frustration, however, the group at the front were immediately blown to smithereens by Soapy, Sika and Cayley. Thankfully, she managed to maintain her focus. Just a few brief moments later, the second row were upon her. Unfortunately for her, however, getting to hit one wasn't as easy as she'd anticipated. Kasira and Nivea had lightning fast reactions. Each time she reached for one, her sister would destroy it before she even got close. Not about to give up, however, she took a single step to the side and slashed out at the nearest wraith. At once, it disintegrated into dust on her blade.)

EKSI: That was awesome!!!

(Instantly developing a taste for it, she then picked up the pace. Within seconds, she'd killed three more.)

EKSI: This is the best fun ever!!!

(She then felt a tight grip on the back of her skirt, pulling her backwards.)

KASIRA: Stay close, remember?

EKSI: Sorry!

(Once again, thanks to the skill and determination of all involved, the fight was over in no time. Eksi was overjoyed.)

EKSI: That was incredible! Did you see me? Wow!

KASIRA: We saw you.

NIVEA: You did really well.

KASIRA: Just make sure you stay within five feet of me, okay? Not because I want to keep an eye on you, but because that's how a front row works. I always stay within five feet of Nivea when we work like this. Not that we do this a lot.

EKSI: I thought I *had* stayed within five feet.

CAYLEY: You started to veer away to the side without realising it.

EKSI: I did?

KASIRA: Don't worry, it's very easily done.

(She grimaced.)

KASIRA: I used to get yelled at all the time for veering off when I first joined this unit. The leader was a bitch. She expected you to have mastered everything, straight out of the academy. Idiot. It took me a few months to learn to stay in one place.

NIVEA: Yeah, it's not easy to keep your feet moving without veering off to the side.

KASIRA: It really isn't.

SOAPY: *I* manage it!

SIKA: Me too.

SOAPY: Non-magic users are so lame.

CAYLEY: We don't need to use *footwork* though, we just stand at ease and blast things.

SIKA: Don't make excuses for them, Cayley.

SOAPY: Yeah. They'll never learn if we don't make them accept their shortcomings.

(Kasira grinned.)

KASIRA: Cheeky little shits. Next time, one you can borrow Eksi's blades and we'll see how well you do.

SIKA: Sounds like a job for Ambre.

AMBRE: No it doesn't!

SOAPY: But you love a challenge.

AMBRE: No, I don't. I'd be terrible at that. I can't even stand still when I'm making wraiths attack each other.

CAYLEY: She really can't. It's so cute; she's such a fidget.

KASIRA: Yup, but she does an awesome job. You all do.

NIVEA: Except the new boy. The new boy isn't doing *anything*.

LYCIA: Stop calling me that!

KASIRA: Leave her alone, Nivea. All she can do is come with us and observe right now, which she's doing without complaint.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: Now, come on. We've got more wraiths to cull.

As the girls headed on up the hill at the side of the island, the oddness of the gradient wasn't lost on any of them. They could see it rise in shelves from where they'd eyed it from the beach, but only now was its uniformity becoming apparent. Almost as if it was man made, every twenty feet there was a flat plateau, above which was a slope leading up to another one. This however, suited them fine. The wraiths were loitering on the plateaus, and the slopes between them were clear. Because of this, they were making great progress, clearing one plateau at a time. Marvelling at this good fortune as they headed up a slope, Kasira exhaled.

KASIRA: This is great. I couldn't have *planned* a better cull. We know exactly where the next wraith attack is coming from. And what's more, each slope gives us a nice breather.

SIKA: I'm certainly not complaining.

NIVEA: Let's just marvel at that concept for a moment. Sika not complaining.

SIKA: Hey! I hardly *ever* complain. Being perfectly formed in both body and mind, I have nothing to complain *about*.

CAYLEY: And yet you usually find *something*.

SIKA: No I don't.

KASIRA: Sika, you complain all the time. I can't remember the last time you were given a task and didn't moan about it.

AMBRE: You were moaning that these slopes were too steep a minute ago.

SOAPY: She moans about everything, Ambre.

SIKA: I don't *moan*. I offer my critique on things. Sometimes negatively. If you lot don't want to hear my well-thought-out take on things, then that's your loss.

(Eksi leant to Kasira and whispered.)

EKSI: Is she joking or does she genuinely believe she's as great as she makes out?

(Kasira replied, making no effort to keep her voice down.)

KASIRA: I wish I could tell you she was kidding, I really do, but no. Our Sika is, how do I put this? Not lacking in self-esteem.

(She grinned.)

KASIRA: If she could sculpt, she'd make a statue of herself and give it pride of place on the hill, overlooking the town.

SOAPY: Birds would fly from miles around just to crap on it.

NIVEA: And within weeks it'd be as full of shit as the real thing.

SIKA: Harsh! I really need to stop saying that! I meant mean!

CAYLEY: Ambre owns that; chose another word.

SIKA: No. Most of my words are too complicated for your feeble minds and I'm not gonna waste my time.

(She then pouted bitterly and folded her arms.)

AMBRE: You've upset her now.

SIKA: No they haven't. I'm rising above your petty criticism by...

NIVEA: Sulking?

SIKA: No! By ignoring you.

KASIRA: Right, you do that. Just make sure you fight at the same time, we're almost on the next plateau.

SIKA: Have I ever let you down?

SOAPY: You didn't *let* her down. Gravity *made* her come back down; you know, after you blasted her into the sky that time.

SIKA: I'm quickly going off you, Soapy.

KASIRA: You'll both be *going off* the side of this hill, if you don't shut up. With one of my blades up your arse! We've got a battle to fight, now come on.

(With that, Nivea, Kasira and Eksi paced onto the plateau and were immediately set upon by the wraiths up there. As always, Cayley, Sika and Soapy backed them up with magic and Ambre used her special mind-control skill. Lycia could only watch on, wishing she had the skill to get involved. As always, the battle was brief. The combination of physical and magic attacks were simply too much for the wraiths to cope with. Those that weren't obliterated by a spell were reduced to dust by blades in no time at all.)

With every plateau offering up wraiths in bite-sized portions, the walk to the top of the hill was over in no time. It'd be no exaggeration to say that the girls of the 123rd wraith containment unit had cut a swathe through the wraiths, like a scythe through corn. Kasira couldn't believe their luck. Walking to the top of the hill on Capsway Island when that was infested due to the haze break, had been a living hell. They'd been swarmed at from all sides and hadn't known where the next fight was coming from. Thanks to the layout of this hill, however, they'd make it to the peak in no time.

Upon arriving at the peak, the girls immediately set about culling the wraiths up there, making short work of them once again. As the last one exploded on the end of a magic blast from Soapy, Ambre exhaled.)

AMBRE: Yay, we did it.

KASIRA: And fast. Gotta love these plateaus.

EKSI: Yup. Our ancestors were smart people.

KASIRA: What?

EKSI: Our ancestors. The ones who made these plateaus.

(Everyone gave her a baffled glance.)

EKSI: You know, so they could farm on hills. They made flat plateaus all the way up them.

AMBRE: I didn't know that.

SIKA: You don't know your own surname!

AMBRE: I do. I just forget it sometimes.

LYCIA: Wow.

KASIRA: Look, never mind all that, you lot. We're here now, so Soapy can do her stuff. These wraiths are as good as dead already.

SOAPY: Yup.

(Kasira then peered up the concrete watchtower which was looming over them, then glanced over the other side of the hill.)

KASIRA: Good thing too, because the other side of the island is seriously crawling with the buggers.

CAYLEY: It really is. Looking at it, I'd say it's like the haze break all over again, numbers wise.

KASIRA: I agree.

(She beamed.)

KASIRA: And just like with the haze break, Soapy's about to end it.

SOAPY: Just call me the uber-mage, girls.

SIKA: Stop boasting!

KASIRA: Agreed. Let's get this done then we can think about getting some kip. It must be midnight by now.

NIVEA: Easily.

KASIRA: Before you start though, Soapy. Your spell isn't likely to topple that giant watchtower, is it? Only you don't want that thing falling on your head!

(Soapy glanced up at the watchtower and shook her head.)

SOAPY: It doesn't really affect concrete, to be honest. Makes a mess of wooden doors and obliterates windows, but concrete will be fine.

KASIRA: Right. Good. Just make sure you're far enough away that you won't get crushed if it *does* fall down.

SOAPY: Ma'am.

(Nivea beamed.)

NIVEA: I'm so glad Soapy has this skill, you know? If she didn't, clearing this lot would take us until midday tomorrow at least, and I look a right twat in those day-vision goggles. I hate those things.

KASIRA: You kept them though, right? You didn't leave them at the mercy of that volcano did you? Only you might need them one day.

NIVEA: Kept them?

(She grinned then turned side on to Kasira.)

NIVEA: I'm wearing them.

KASIRA: No you're not.

NIVEA: Yes, I am. They're holding up my ponytail. Turns out they make an awesome scrunchy.

(Kasira couldn't help but smile.)

KASIRA: That's actually kinda clever.

NIVEA: Not really.

KASIRA: No, but it's resourceful. I mean, if you need them...

NIVEA: I can put them on then steal Soapy's scrunchy to keep my hair up.

SOAPY: You stay away from my... all of me.

KASIRA: Yes, well, anyway. Let's get to work. You need us lying face down on a slope, right, Soapy?

SOAPY: Yeah, thirty feet away, at least. Then come and get me, because any survivors will charge at me and I won't have the energy to run.

NIVEA: I'll go. I'm the strongest one here. I can carry her.

SIKA: Well, you *say* you're the strongest. I'm...

KASIRA: Sika, shut the fuck up. Last time you started a debate about who's the best, we ended up having a boob measuring session. We're not going to argue about who's the strongest or it'll end up with us all doing weight-lifting.

NIVEA: Afraid you'll come last, Kasira?

(Kasira grimaced.)

KASIRA: Yes.

CAYLEY: No, *I'd* come last and never hear the last of it from Sika.

KASIRA: Either way, it's not happening. When Soapy has done her skill, Nivea, go and get her.

NIVEA: Yes, ma'am.

KASIRA: Thank you.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: Right, let's go and lay face down, girls. As soon as we're in position, do your stuff, Soapy.

SOAPY: Yes, ma'am.

(Looking forward to creating a sonic blast of energy with enough power to disintegrate every wraith within a two mile radius, Soapy beamed with delight. She was psyched up and ready to go. As far as she was concerned, her seven allies couldn't get into position quickly enough. Watching as they hurried down the nearby slope, she bounced excitedly on the balls of her feet.)

SOAPY: Come on. Hurry up. Hurry up!

(Taking no chances, whatsoever, Kasira led Cayley, Nivea, Sika, Ambre, Eksi and Lycia down the nearest slope, then raced across the plateau below. Only when they made it to the next slope did she feel they were safe enough. Last time Soapy had performed this spell, several of them had been blown back down the hill and she was taking no chances this time. Finally satisfied that they were far enough away, Kasira came to a screeching halt then pointed to the grass beneath them.)

KASIRA: Lay down here and whatever you do, don't look up. Bury your faces in the grass. (With that, she jumped down on the grass. The others swiftly did the same.)

EKSI: Now w...

(Eksi's words were then cut off by Kasira pushing her head into the grass. She did the same to Ambre on the other side of her. The others needed no such prompting. Watching on from the top of the hill, Soapy clenched a triumphant fist.)

SOAPY: Finally!

(With that, she took several deep breaths then stared ahead of herself, concentrating hard. Moments later, she sunk into a crouched position then leapt up again, unleashing as much power from her being as she could muster. Within a split second, her prostate allies felt the force of the blast gushing over their heads. In that moment, several hundred wraiths on the far side of the hill were blown to smithereens. Unfortunately, however, several thousand others weren't even remotely harmed. Having sensed her magic on the wind, every single one of them came charging up the hillside, screeching and howling. Soapy's magic had failed to do the trick and now she was in trouble. This spell always left her entirely drained of energy and she could barely find the strength to crawl away.

Well aware that thousands of wraiths were rampaging in her direction, she whimpered in terror and tried her utmost to climb to her feet. She was so devoid of energy, however, she could barely move. She didn't even have the strength to curse her misfortune. Convinced, she was going to die, tears started to pour down her face and she found the energy to mutter one last word.)

SOAPY: No.

(Just then, as the sounds of the incoming hoard grew louder, Nivea's voice rose up from above her.)

NIVEA: You fucked that *right* up, didn't you? Nice work, dipshit!

(Soapy then felt herself rise into the air in Nivea's arms.)

NIVEA: Knob.

(With that, Nivea charged off down the hill with her. Laying in Nivea's arms she could see her allies charging down the hill before her, blasting at the multitude of wraiths that were converging on them from all over the island. Thanks to the failed spell, every single wraith on the island had been made aware of their presence and they were all charging in their direction, howling for blood.

Leading the way, with her blades permanently flailing at the plethora of wraiths that were homing in on them from the side, Kasira gritted her teeth.)

KASIRA: Just keep running!!! Don't stop until you get in the sea!

(Blasting at wraiths as she powered forth, Cayley snarled.)

CAYLEY: We're gonna get swamped if we're not careful!

KASIRA: We can't *afford* to be careful!!!

(Sure enough, the path they'd made for themselves as they headed up the hill, was rapidly being blocked by more and more wraiths.)

CAYLEY: We can't just plough through them all!!!

KASIRA: We can't stop and fight them either!

SIKA: Nivea's spin attack would really help right now!

(Gaining on them from behind, Nivea furrowed her brow.)

NIVEA: I've got my hands full with Soapy right now!

SIKA: Just drop her! She won't exactly be difficult to replace! There's plenty more fish in the sea!

AMBRE: That's a horrible thing to say!!!

SIKA: I was joking!

KASIRA: You're joking at a time like this??? Sika, we're in deep shit here!

(As more and more wraiths gathered, charging towards them from up ahead, she gulped fearfully.)

KASIRA: Not good!!! Cayley, if this gets too much, fly up and heal the fuck out of us from above, okay? It might be our only hope.

AMBRE: Actually, I have a better idea.

LYCIA: Now this I have to hear.

SIKA: Right?

AMBRE: Don't be mean at me. I can be a clever girl sometimes! I'll *show* you.

(Just then, Fluffy appeared at Ambre's side.)

AMBRE: Let's go, Fluffy!

(Fluffy then picked Ambre up and bounded down the hill towards the wraiths.)

KASIRA: Ambre???

AMBRE: See you at the bottom!

SIKA: Cheeky bitch! She's buggered off and left us to it!!!

(She snarled.)

SIKA: Two can play at that game; I'm flying down there!

(A wide smile then appeared on Cayley's lips.)

CAYLEY: She hasn't left us to it, you silly person. Fluffy's whistling look. She's saved us.

(Sure enough, as Fluffy charged through the wraiths, he was emanating the whistling sound he always used to attract the aggression of wraiths. As a result, the wraiths immediately became focussed solely on him. Forgetting all about the others, every single wraith chased after Fluffy instead.)

KASIRA: Next person who decides it's okay to be cruel about Ambre, remember this. You owe her your life!

(Well aware that Kasira was talking about her, Lycia grimaced.)

LYCIA: Sorry.

KASIRA: Tell Ambre that.

(She then glanced ahead and snarled.)

KASIRA: Come on, ladies. Ambre's opened the door for us, let's make the most of it. Sprint!

(With that, Cayley, Sika, Eksi, Lycia and Kasira all charged onwards as quickly as their legs would allow, determined to get into the shallow sea as soon as possible.)

SIKA: There's a giant pack of wraiths in front of us; a pack too big for us to fight in one go. And yet we're running after it.

CAYLEY: Feels really odd, doesn't it? We're running after a pack of wraiths we were terrified of taking on.

EKSI: It doesn't feel odd to me. They're chasing that rock thing and we're sprinting for the sea. We just happened to be running in the same direction.

(Up ahead at this time, held high in Fluffy's arms, Ambre was beaming with delight. She knew she'd done a good thing for everyone, and she knew she'd get lots of hugs. She loved hugs. Right now, she couldn't have been more pleased with herself. Gnashing and biting at Fluffy's rock legs as he bounded through them, all the wraiths were doing was smashing their fangs. It was perfect. Unless Fluffy dropped her or stopped running for some reason, he'd soon lead her to the safety of the sea, where he could continue to keep the attention of the wraiths until her unit-mates had also made it to safety.)

AMBRE: Yay. Keep going Fluffy, not far now.

(Racing forth with everything she had, determined to reach the sea as soon as possible, Kasira snarled to herself.)

KASIRA: For fuck sake.

(She sighed.)

KASIRA: Even my little sister's showing me a clean pair of heels.

(Sure enough, Cayley, Sika, Eksi and Lycia were quite some way ahead of her.)

KASIRA: I'm so slow!

(Just then, Nivea jogged to her side with an unimpressed looking Soapy in her arms.)

NIVEA: That's sprinting is it, Kasira?

KASIRA: Shut up!

NIVEA: I'm jogging with *this* fat lump in my arms and I'm about to overtake you!

(Soapy pouted at her.)

SOAPY: Fat? Fat??? You... I'm too tired to fight back.

NIVEA: And yet you'd *still* be faster than Kasira here.

(Kasira pouted at her sorrowfully.)

KASIRA: I don't get it, Nivea. I'm quite a sporty person. I have great hand-to-eye coordination and I'm really good at ball games. And yet I can't run for shit! I'm slower than a snail in cement!

NIVEA: That's because you run funny.

KASIRA: What?

NIVEA: You run like a girl!

KASIRA: I *am* a girl!

NIVEA: Kasira, you run like you're shuffling down a catwalk in high heels. Bend your arms and lift your knees.

(Kasira growled at her.)

KASIRA: Be gone! I'll get there when I get there!

NIVEA: Suit yourself.

KASIRA: I will. Now go. You can give me lessons tomorrow.

(Nivea grinned then charged onwards.)

NIVEA: Yes, ma'am.

(Way ahead at this time, Fluffy was racing onto the beach. The end of the run was in sight. Once, he was in the sea, any wraith that followed would be killed by the water. Delighted by this, Ambre beamed.)

AMBRE: Just a little more.

(Much to her dismay, however, Fluffy then stopped dead.)

FLUFFY: Fluffy no like water. Fluffy not go.

(Ambre trembled.)

AMBRE: Fluffy?

(Much to her dismay, several hundred wraiths were rampaging towards them; far too many for Fluffy to handle, especially standing still.)

AMBRE: F-Fluffy, if you don't go in the sea, the wraiths will kill you, then they'll kill *me*. Fluffy! Fluffy?

FLUFFY: Fluffy save Ambre!!!

(With that, he threw her towards the sea.)

AMBRE: Not cool, Fluffy!!! I can't swim!!!

(Moments later, she splashed into the water, then thrashed around desperately.)

AMBRE: Help!

(She then released she was only in one foot of water and stood up.)

AMBRE: Silly me!

(At this point, she noticed hundreds of wraiths converging on Fluffy. At once, she gasped in horror.)

AMBRE: Heal, Fluffy, heal!!!

(She then burst into tears. Fluffy's whistle was keeping the wraiths away from the others and if she dismissed him, they'd all be in trouble. If she *didn't* dismiss him, however, he'd be torn asunder, dismantled by the wraiths. She now had to choose between his life and that of her friends.)

AMBRE: I don't know what to do!!!

(Just then, much to her relief, Cayley plopped down in the sea next to her.)

CAYLEY: I do.

(Cayley then pulled out a wraith whistle and blew on it. In that moment, the wraiths all rushed closer to the shoreline, determined to attack Cayley instead.)

AMBRE: You saved Fluffy!

CAYLEY: Fluffy saved *me*. It's called karma.

AMBRE: I thought karma was a type of curry.

CAYLEY: I know, darling. You call it that every time.

(Beaming with delight, Ambre then waved at Fluffy and dismissed him.)

AMBRE: Bye, Fluffy!

FLUFFY: Bye, Ambre!

CAYLEY: The others should be here soon.

AMBRE: Yay.

CAYLEY: I quickly flew ahead when I saw Fluffy refuse to go in the water.

AMBRE: You're a really, really kind person.

CAYLEY: I just didn't want him to die.

(Ambre smiled at her warmly. Cayley returned her smile; neglecting to inform Ambre that her actions had been solely for the benefit of her unit. Had Ambre panicked and dismissed him, they'd have been in serious trouble; left at the mercy of the wraiths. She couldn't take that risk. The same would have applied had Fluffy been torn apart. Realising this, she'd taken action to save her unit. Fluffy's survival was merely a consequence.)

CAYLEY: So, Fluffy's afraid of water, is he?

AMBRE: Yeah. I didn't know that though. I thought he'd stand in the sea until everyone was safe.

CAYLEY: If he had, that would have been the perfect plan.

(As this point, Sika, Eksi and Lycia raced past the wraiths and into the sea with them.)

SIKA: Finally. That run went on forever.

EKSI: It felt like it.

(She beamed.)

EKSI: Thanks for saving us, Ambre. I like you now.

(Ambre pouted.)

AMBRE: You didn't before?

EKSI: Um...

LYCIA: Seriously, Ambre, how do you make your Saxum do that? Mine just stands there and gets hit! It's useless. I named it Dumb Arse.

AMBRE: You shouldn't be mean to it. It won't be your friend if you are.

CAYLEY: She loves hers and it responds in kind.

AMBRE: Fluffy loves me.

(She grimaced.)

AMBRE: He doesn't love water though.

LYCIA: Of course not. They teach you that at the academy. If you *could* summon them in water, where wraiths can't get at them, you'd never need to heal them.

CAYLEY: Good point.

AMBRE: I didn't learn that. I didn't learn anything at my academy really.

(She shrugged.)

AMBRE: Learning things is hard for me. I'm stupid, you see?

EKSI: Stupid? You just saved everyone!

CAYLEY: Not yet she hasn't. We're still waiting for Nivea, Soapy and Kasira.

(She then blew her wraith whistle again, to keep the focus of the snarling wraiths on the beach.)

CAYLEY: We might be here a while, ladies.

SIKA: Yup. Might as well get comfortable. Sorry, Eksi, but your sister is *not* quick on her feet. She runs like a penguin.

(Eksi glowered at her briefly then sighed in defeat.)

EKSI: I can't even pretend that's not true. It's the one thing she's not good at.

AMBRE: She can't cook either.

EKSI: Yeah. That too.

CAYLEY: Hey, show some respect. She's not here to bake cakes and do the hundred metres, she's here to show you lot how to kill wraiths.

(Sika glanced at the plethora of wraiths on the shoreline and grimaced.)

SIKA: It's a good thing she's pretty then.

CAYLEY: Sika...

(She started to giggle.)

CAYLEY: You're a little devil, you are.

(Just then, Nivea raced through the wraiths with Soapy in her arms. As soon as she reached them, she then came to a halt and nonchalantly tossed Soapy into the water.)

SOAPY: Hey!!!

NIVEA: You're a fish! I was just throwing you back where you belong; now stop complaining.

(Sitting in the shallows, Soapy glowered up at her coldly.)

SOAPY: *You're* a fish!

NIVEA: Good come back.

(She then looked to Cayley.)

NIVEA: We're just waiting for Kasira now.

(She grinned.)

NIVEA: Normally we'd have tea and biscuits then a quick nap while waiting for Kasira to finish running, but we don't have that option today.

CAYLEY: No, but we *do* have the option of killing some of these little so and so's before she gets here.

(With that, she flew up into the air then glanced up the hill to gauge Kasira's whereabouts.)

CAYLEY: Blimey. She's miles away still.

(She then sunk to the ground again.)

CAYLEY: Sika?

SIKA: Yeah?

CAYLEY: Let's start blasting those wraiths way over to our right, okay? That way, we won't hit Kasira when she comes down.

SIKA: Ma'am. You too, Soapy.

SOAPY: I have no energy left!

SIKA: Lazy, bloody...

CAYLEY: Sika!

SIKA: Oh, fine.

(With that, the two of them proceeded to blast their magic into the wraiths on the shoreline to their right.)

CAYLEY: The least we can do is thin the herd a little.

SIKA: Definitely.

CAYLEY: Not that it's going to make much difference in the great scheme of things.

LYCIA: Oh, I don't know. Every dead wraith is an improvement.

CAYLEY: That's true actually.

(With so many wraiths queuing up on the shoreline to get at them, it was like shooting fish in a barrel. They couldn't miss. The mass gathering however, didn't seem to get any smaller. For the next minute, they continued to blast the nearest wraiths, but with each wraith they disintegrated, even more arrived at the back of the throng. The fact that Cayley had blown her whistle again to keep the wraiths interested hadn't helped. They were coming from quite some way across the island. Not about to slow down, however, Cayley and Sika continued to cull them. Releasing one vortex like casting after another, they soon found themselves doing so almost as a reflex, rather than a conscious act. This lack of concentration, soon cost them dear, however.

As the two airborne soldiers continued to fire off one casual blast after another, Kasira came charging through the wraiths to their right, desperate to reach the sea and put an end to her run. As she did so, however, her eyes bulged and she screamed in terror. Sika hadn't seen her in time. In a carbon-copy of the incident that had caused them all so much grief only a few months before hand, Kasira was immediately blown thirty feet into the air on the end of Sika's vortex-like casting.)

KASIRA: Why???

(Sika shrieked.)

SIKA: Why???

AMBRE: Kasira!!!

(Reacting swiftly, Cayley cast her most intense dose of healing magic into Kasira's flying torso then yelled at Nivea.)

CAYLEY: Blow your wraith whistle so I can go and get her!!!

(Wasting no time, whatsoever, Nivea did just that. At once, the wraiths turned their attention to her instead, allowing Cayley to charge onto the beach to find Kasira.)

CAYLEY: Ambre, Sika, Eksi, come on!!!

(Needing no second invitation, the three of them charged among the wraiths, desperate to find their stricken leader. Worn out and barely able to move, Soapy could only gape nervously, hoping she hadn't been trampled. Moments later, however, Eksi, Sika and Ambre dragged Kasira back out of the pack and into the shallows, while Cayley spammed her with magic continually. Ignoring the snarling pack of wraiths on the beach nearby, everyone then swarmed around where Kasira was sitting in the water looking extremely fed up.)

SIKA: Are you okay? Please be okay? I can't believe it happened again!!!

(Kasira growled.)

KASIRA: Am I okay? Am I okay?

SIKA: Please don't kill me!

CAYLEY: Relax, Sika, it was just unfortunate this time. You're not in any trouble.

(Kasira's nostril's twitched.)

KASIRA: Isn't she?

CAYLEY: No. It really was just poor timing this time, Kasira; purely an accident, not a lack of concentration. Plus, we expected you to emerge from the wraiths directly in front of us. You must have veered right somewhere on the way down.

(Much to Sika's relief, Kasira then puffed out and released her anger.)

KASIRA: Fine. Accidents happen, I guess.

SIKA: They do! They really do!

CAYLEY: See? Calm yourself, Sika, love. *You're* not to blame. If anything it was *my* fault. In hindsight, shooting at the wraiths before Kasira came back was a stupid thing to suggest. What the hell was I thinking?

NIVEA: You did check her whereabouts before deciding *where* to shoot though.

CAYLEY: Yeah, but it was idiotic to assume she'd simply continue in a straight line.

(She sighed.)

CAYLEY: Sorry, Kasira. Sorry, Sika. That was poor, poor leadership on my part. I must be even more tired that I realised.

SIKA: It's fine. I'm more worried about Kasira.

(She looked to where Kasira was sitting quietly in the shallows and whimpered.)

SIKA: Are you okay? I didn't hurt you, did I?

CAYLEY: Relax, I healed her. She's fine.

(She grimaced.)

CAYLEY: Physically.

AMBRE: I was so scared.

EKSI: So was I!

NIVEA: We all were. Thank fuck you're okay!

SIKA: You *are* okay, right?

(Kasira scoffed sarcastically and started slapping at the water like a child playing in the bath.)

KASIRA: I'm more than okay! I'm bloody ecstatic. Can't you see? I'm having a whale of a time. This is great! I'm loving every second! Why wouldn't I be? This is my wedding day! The happiest day of my life, remember?

(She then sat back and exhaled at the moonlight.)

KASIRA: I'm so glad I signed on for another ten years of this.

(Her shoulders then sunk and she started to cry.)

KASIRA: Go away. I need a moment on my own.

(Grimacing, everyone then stepped back from her and shared a series of troubled glances.)

AMBRE: I think you broke her, Sika.

SIKA: It was an accident!

(Sika then burst into tears as well.)

NIVEA: Oh for pity's sake.

(At this point, Ambre joined in the wailing.)

AMBRE: I thought she was gonna die.

EKSI: So did I.

(As the two of them wailed in each other's arms, Nivea puffed out and looked to the heavens.)

NIVEA: Oh, boy.

LYCIA: What now?

NIVEA: I wasn't talking to you!

(Having seen enough, Cayley placed her hands on her hips.)

CAYLEY: Enough! Everyone snap out of it!

(At once, everyone glanced in her direction.)

CAYLEY: Not you, Kasira.

KASIRA: Thank you.

(Kasira then resumed crying.)

CAYLEY: The rest of you, pull yourselves together. Let's give Kasira a moment to vent, shall we? And Soapy needs a little more time to recuperate. The water's warm, so take a seat and chill out for a bit. Pretty soon we're gonna have to go again and we need to be focussed.

(In that moment, Kasira stopped crying and glanced up at her.)

KASIRA: Where did I leave my violin?

CAYLEY: Violin?

KASIRA: I had it a minute ago.

(Cayley grimaced.)

CAYLEY: That's not a good sign.

(Nivea grimaced.)

NIVEA: Head injury.

CAYLEY: Yeah, concussion's setting in, I think.

NIVEA: Can you heal her?

CAYLEY: I don't have to. She just needs to rest for a bit, that's all. There's no need for me to fiddle with her.

(Nivea grinned.)

NIVEA: You can't fiddle with her anyway, not until she finds her violin.

EKSI: That's in poor taste!

NIVEA: Oh, chill out. I was joking!

KASIRA: She was. All she does is joke. *She's* a joke.

(She then climbed to her feet angrily.)

KASIRA: You're *all* a joke to me. Each and every one of you.

AMBRE: Even me?

KASIRA: Especially you! But mostly her.

(She pointed at Sika.)

SIKA: Harsh!

AMBRE: Mean!

KASIRA: That's nothing. You're all ugly too. Now fuck off! I'm going home.

(With that, she started to stride deeper into the sea. Watching her go, Cayley sucked her teeth.)

CAYLEY: Uh-oh.

(Soapy glanced up from the shallows and grimaced.)

SOAPY: You're gonna have to stop her before she walks too far, you know? *I* can't do it!

NIVEA: I'll go.

CAYLEY: Do that. *Drag* her back if you have to. Even if she tries to fight you. She has no idea what she's doing.

(She patted Ambre on the back.)

CAYLEY: That's why she was mean to you; she has no idea who you are.

(Ambre burst into tears.)

CAYLEY: It's temporary, Ambre; relax. Anyway, go and get her, Nivea.

NIVEA: On it.

(With that, Nivea started to hurry after her. Watching her go, Eksi bit her lip.)

EKSI: Let *me* try something as well. She's delirious and I sound just like my mum, apparently. I might be able to trick her.

(She then placed her hands on her hips and bellowed at Kasira.)

EKSI: Kasira, get back here right now, young lady!!!

(Kasira turned and stamped her feet angrily.)

KASIRA: No! Why should I?

EKSI: Because I'm your mother and I say so!!!

KASIRA: No. Not coming!

EKSI: I'll tell daddy!!!

KASIRA: Then I'll tell daddy about you and the man next door!

(Eksi's jaw dropped and she could only whimper in a quiet voice.)

EKSI: My mum had an affair with the man next door?

(She then started to sob uncontrollably. Watching on, Sika bit her lip.)

SIKA: That went well.

(She then glanced to where Nivea was pacing up behind Kasira.)

SIKA: A-ha. Hopefully, Nivea will have better luck.

(She then winced and spammed her forehead.)

SIKA: Nope. That's far worse.

(Sure enough, some way out in the blackened shallows, Kasira had started throwing punches at a ducking and swerving Nivea.)

NIVEA: What are you doing, Kasira???

KASIRA: Hitting you!!!

NIVEA: Kasira!!!

KASIRA: How do you know my name???

NIVEA: Does it even matter??? You're strolling out to sea; what do you expect to find out there?

(Kasira stopped throwing punches and bit her lip.)

KASIRA: That's a good point. Where am I going?

NIVEA: I don't know.

KASIRA: What is this place? And who are you?

NIVEA: I've come to help.

KASIRA: I don't feel well. And I'm hungry.

NIVEA: Kasira...

KASIRA: I don't know you and I want you to go away. Now!

NIVEA: Let me take you back to...

(At this point, Kasira resumed trying to punch her. Mercifully, Nivea had grown up duelling and knew how to dodge. She also knew how to counter. As a result, moments later, having avoided three attempted punches, Nivea managed to chin her and knock her out. Watching on from the shallows, Cayley's shoulders sunk.)

CAYLEY: Perfect, Nivea. Just great. Just what a person with a head injury needs; a punch in the face.

EKSI: It's better than letting her walk out to sea like she was trying to.

CAYLEY: Maybe.

(She sighed.)

CAYLEY: And with any luck one blow will counter the other; it has been known. It might even make her lucid again.

SOAPY: If it doesn't we might have to clear this island without her.

CAYLEY: So, frustrating. Temporary plot loss is the one thing I can't heal. There's nothing physically wrong with her, you see? It's just a case of waiting for the bits and pieces in her brain to fall back into the right place.

SIKA: Just what we need. Lycia's already out of the game completely, Soapy's gonna be fighting way below her best until she gets her strength back and now we might lose Kasira as well.

SOAPY: Yup. Things are pretty shit, right now.

CAYLEY: And that's putting it mildly.

(With that, they all grimaced uncomfortably then turned to watch as Nivea carried Kasira back over to them. In that moment, things seemed pretty bleak.)

A few moments later, the girls of the 123rd wraith containment unit set about trying to revive Kasira, while wraiths continued to growl and snarl at them from the sandy beach. Sitting propped up against Ambre, she was very much out for the count. Desperate to change that, they were all shaking her, calling her name and flicking sea water at her. Somewhat alarmed by their behaviour, Cayley furrowed her brow.

CAYLEY: Stop it! There's no need for everyone to do it. Give the poor thing some air.

(Heeding her words, Sika, Eksi and Lycia stepped back a little.)

CAYLEY: That's better. Now leave it to me.

(With that, she gently tapped Kasira's cheek and spoke her name softly.)

CAYLEY: Come back to us, Kasira. Come on.

(She then grabbed a scoop of water in her hand and poured it onto Kasira's face.)

CAYLEY: Kasira?

(With a dazed groan, Kasira then opened her eyes.)

KASIRA: What? What is it? What's Sika broken now?

SIKA: Charming!

(Coming to, Kasira then sat up and glowered at Nivea.)

KASIRA: What the fuck did you punch me for, Nivea???

NIVEA: Um...

AMBRE: Yay, she knows us!

KASIRA: Of course, I know you, Ambre.

(She then performed a double take at Eksi.)

KASIRA: Eksi! Oh my god, what are you doing here?

EKSI: Um, hi.

KASIRA: Come and give me a hug, I haven't see you in ages.

(Not about to defy her, Eksi knelt down and hugged her.)

KASIRA: It's so good to see you.

(She then spotted Lycia staring down at her.)

KASIRA: Who's your friend?

EKSI: That's Lycia. You already met her.

KASIRA: When?

(Just then, a suspicious expression crossed her brow.)

KASIRA: Why am I sitting in the sea with all my clothes on?

(She then scrambled to her feet and glanced about at her surroundings.)

KASIRA: Is it me, or has the hill shrunk? And why is nobody attacking those wraiths? We need to look lively, girls. We can't piss about, I'm getting married tomorrow.

CAYLEY: Right. Yeah. Kasira?

KASIRA: Yeah?

CAYLEY: You've got short-term memory loss, love.

KASIRA: No, I haven't.

AMBRE: You have, Kasira.

KASIRA: Since when?

SIKA: Since you bumped your head.

KASIRA: Bumped my head? I don't remember bumping my head.

CAYLEY: That's why it's called memory loss, Kasira.

KASIRA: Good point.

(She grimaced.)

KASIRA: How did it happen?

AMBRE: Sika blew you...

SIKA: A kiss!!!

KASIRA: What?

SIKA: Yeah, I was joking around. Like I do, you know? Then you fell over, all by yourself. Nothing to do with me!

(Kasira gave her a doubting glance then looked to Cayley.)

KASIRA: What did she do?

CAYLEY: It wasn't her fault, Kasira.

KASIRA: Cayley! The truth!

CAYLEY: Fine. She was clearing wraiths and you jumped into her magic. Without warning. It was entirely *your own* fault this time. Is that honest enough for you?

(Kasira grimaced.)

KASIRA: Too honest. I did something that dumb?

CAYLEY: No, you were being chased. It was purely an accident; no blame needs to be attached to anyone.

KASIRA: Fine. Okay.

(She then cringed.)

KASIRA: Then why did she blow me a kiss?

SOAPY: She never could resist you with your hair down.

SIKA: Shut up.

(She glanced away nervously.)

SIKA: Look, the main thing is, Kasira's fine. Shall we start culling these wraiths now?

NIVEA: Yeah. Time's ticking onwards, guys. I'm tired and I just want to get this done.

KASIRA: I agree. You should do your patrol then head to bed. I want everyone to look their best for the ceremony tomorrow.

(Cayley sighed.)

CAYLEY: Kasira, you're missing time.

KASIRA: Missing time?

SOAPY: Most of today.

CAYLEY: We're not on Capsway Island. That blew up.

KASIRA: What? The island blew up?

AMBRE: It was a volcano.

CAYLEY: Yeah, the whole place got swallowed up by lava.

(Kasira looked into Cayley's eyes in astonishment for a moment then shuddered all over.)

KASIRA: Holy crap! Are you serious? My fiancé was on the island!

CAYLEY: I'm deadly serious.

(Kasira gulped.)

KASIRA: I'm gonna ask you something now, Cayley. Please don't lie to me. I need the honest truth. Promise me you won't lie.

CAYLEY: I promise.

KASIRA: I need to know what happened to my fiancé. The truth, Cayley. Is he okay?

CAYLEY: Right. Well... the truth is, Kasira... he's alive and well. Everyone was evacuated, you see? Civilians on a different ship. He's wherever his ship went.

KASIRA: Cool. Thank heavens for that. He's coming for me in a week when I leave the army though, right?

(Having promised her the truth, Cayley forced a smile and gave her the most honest answer she could.)

CAYLEY: You don't need to worry about that, Kasira. Before he left he told Soapy exactly how he feels about you. His feelings run deep.

(Kasira exhaled.)

KASIRA: That's my Lassu.

(She then looked panic-stricken and grabbed Cayley's arm.)

KASIRA: Oh my god. The volcano! Are my outfits okay?

CAYLEY: Relax, everything you own is safely stashed in bags, okay?

KASIRA: Phew. That's a relief. The truth, right?

CAYLEY: Yes. Every word.

(Kasira drew another sigh of relief then glanced about the island again.)

KASIRA: Where the hell are we and why?

SIKA: Two good questions.

SOAPY: This is the nearest island to Capsway.

KASIRA: Why?

SOAPY: The army want us to clear it of wraiths.

AMBRE: Then live here forever.

KASIRA: Like that'll happen. I leave in a week.

(She rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: Anyway, let's...

(Just then, she froze on the spot and stared ahead of herself in an almost catatonic trance.)

SOAPY: Let's what?

AMBRE: Kasira?

(She pouted.)

AMBRE: She's broken again!

CAYLEY: Actually, this might be a good sign.

NIVEA: You think she's remembering stuff?

CAYLEY: Yeah, she's probably having flashbacks.

SOAPY: That's not good news for you after all the lies you told her.

CAYLEY: Everything I told her was true, actually.

SIKA: You still misled her.

CAYLEY: For the right reasons!

EKSI: Who cares about that? I just want her to snap out of it and be okay.

SIKA: I think we all want that, Eksi.

NIVEA: Damned right we do.

(Just then, Kasira made a whimpering sound, then turned to face Cayley with tears pouring down her face.)

KASIRA: I remember everything! Most of my outfits were lost to the volcano! Why would you lie to me???

CAYLEY: I didn't. I said everything you own is stashed in bags.

KASIRA: You misled me!

CAYLEY: I was trying not to upset you.

(Kasira whimpered.)

KASIRA: You failed! I just had a flashback of everything I'd forgotten. It was like losing them a second time!

SIKA: So your memory came back completely?

(Kasira glowered at her.)

KASIRA: Yes! You blew me up!

SIKA: It was an accident!

(Kasira then beamed with joy.)

KASIRA: On the bright side, Lassu left me.

(She scoffed.)

KASIRA: What was I thinking, marrying *that* self-pissing whinge-bag? I bet his mother will turn up in a few weeks to tell me off for upsetting her little boy.

SIKA: Probably. You're so much better off without him.

SOAPY: She's right. He really was a grade 'A' bell-end!

CAYLEY: He was such a child.

AMBRE: Yeah. I draw stick people and read like a five year old, but even I'm more grown up than him.

NIVEA: He was a complete twat, quite frankly.

EKSI: He certainly wasn't good enough for *you*, Kasira.

LYCIA: What they all said!

(Kasira smiled.)

KASIRA: Thanks, girls. Your support means everything to me.

(She then puffed out ruefully.)

KASIRA: There is one downside to getting my memory back though.

CAYLEY: What's that?

KASIRA: I have my memory back!

(She grimaced.)

KASIRA: We have to clear this island of wraiths or we'll have nowhere to sleep tonight.

SIKA: We could nap in the rowing boats.

KASIRA: We might have to if it all goes tits up. It's gone midnight and we've got a whole island still to clear.

NIVEA: We wouldn't have if Soapy here hadn't fucked up her spell.

(Finally feeling strong enough to stand, Soapy clambered to her feet then thrust her hand to her hips.)

SOAPY: I'd like to see *you* do better!

NIVEA: If I'd bragged about my amazing powers as much as *you* did, I'd like to see me do better too. You were shite.

AMBRE: You only killed a few.

(Soapy sighed.)

SOAPY: Yeah well, blame the gradient of the hill.

NIVEA: I'd rather blame *you*. You know, for fun purposes.

KASIRA: What do you mean, you blame the gradient of the hill?

SOAPY: Shelves, ma'am. My magic radiates outwards like a sonic wave. It would have hit the shelf and deflected over the wraiths heads. That didn't happen on the old island; it just radiated down the steep hillsides and killed everything.

(Kasira nodded.)

KASIRA: Sounds plausible.

NIVEA: I prefer *my* theory. She fucked up.

KASIRA: *Your* theory is denied.

NIVEA: Damn.

KASIRA: Still, the reason for Soapy's spell going awry makes no difference. Our task now is to clear the island somehow.

(Ambre looked thoughtful.)

AMBRE: Maybe we could get some use whisky and dynamite like we did in that underground bunker.

(She then whimpered and shied away.)

AMBRE: Why is everyone staring at me like that?

NIVEA: We were just wondering whose arse to pull the dynamite from.

SIKA: It's a tricky one. I could easily shit a crate of whisky, but dynamite is another matter.

SOAPY: Damn you, dynamite!

(Ambre pouted.)

AMBRE: Yeah, alright. There's no need to be like that. I was only trying to help.

(Sika placed her arm around her.)

SIKA: We're just playing.

AMBRE: You were sniggering at me. Mean. I'm going off you. When they make the new base, I'm gonna share a room with Soapy instead.

(Sika scoffed, her eyes welling up with tears.)

SIKA: See if I care!

(She then turned away so nobody could see her crying.)

AMBRE: I went too far.

SIKA: Yes, you did.

(The two of them then shared a hug. As they did so, Kasira watched them, shaking her head in disdainful astonishment.)

KASIRA: Girls? When you're ready, we've got official army business to attend to.

SIKA: Give us a minute!

KASIRA: Right. Take as many as you need. Maybe you'd like Cayley to bring you some tea while we wait.

(Ambre and Sika immediately pulled from the hug and grimaced at one another.)

SIKA: Sarcasm!

AMBRE: Never a good sign.

(With that, they both turned to face Kasira and saluted.)

SIKA: Ma'am, sorry, ma'am!

AMBRE: Sorry.

KASIRA: Thank you. Now gather round everyone; here's what we're gonna do.

Once everyone was gathered around her in the shallows, Kasira looked across all their faces then nodded sternly. Satisfied she had their full attention, she then began.

KASIRA: We've got a beach full of wraiths snarling at us from a few feet away. I think it's safe to say, they're our priority. We'll clear them first then start on the rest of the island.

Now, last time we had to clear an island like this, we went our separate ways, remember?

We cleared the edges then met up on the other side. I think we should do the same again.

SIKA: So, the usual method?

KASIRA: I'd hardly call it usual. We've done it once.

NIVEA: True, but seeing as we're about to do it again, I'd say it's now become the norm.

SIKA: She's right.

KASIRA: Whatever. Look, we'll split into two teams of four then meet on the other side.

After we've cleared the edge, we'll go through the centre as an eight.

SIKA: Like we always do.

KASIRA: Shut up!

AMBRE: We don't always go as an eight! We've *never* gone as an eight before.

NIVEA: She means as a complete group.

KASIRA: Will you lot be quiet and let me explain?

(Silence ensued.)

KASIRA: Thank you!

(She rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: Now, as for the teams of four, I want to take the two newbies with me.

EKSI: Score.

KASIRA: It's a risk, so I think you should join us, Cayley. For heals.

CAYLEY: Makes sense.

KASIRA: The rest of you will go in the opposite direction.

(Ambre's bottom lip protruded and she twiddled her forefingers nervously.)

AMBRE: I usually go with *you*.

KASIRA: Not this time, sweetheart. I'll meet up with you on the other side.

(Ambre sighed heavily.)

AMBRE: Okay.

KASIRA: We'll go left; you girls can go right.

SOAPY: Sounds good to me.

SIKA: I like it. Seeing as I'm on Soapy's team, she can't boast at me if her side wins.

SOAPY: Why would I? It's not even a contest.

SIKA: That didn't stop you last time!

KASIRA: It wasn't a contest *then* either!

(Sika beamed.)

SIKA: It rarely *is* a contest when I'm around, to be honest. Thanks to my land-bound dexterity and powerful airborne magic, I'm like a machine. You have to go some to defeat me when it comes to the combination of speed and power.

SOAPY: And *I'm* the boaster?

SIKA: Yes. I wasn't boasting, I was merely stating a fact.

SOAPY: That you have to go some to beat you for speed and power?

SIKA: Yup.

SOAPY: Even though Nivea can run faster than you, even while she's spinning her sword, taking out dozens at a time?

SIKA: That's...

NIVEA: Not to mention the fact that Soapy's quicker *and* more powerful than you! She's the quickest and most powerful one here!

SIKA: Rubbish!

SOAPY: And let's not overlook the fact that Ambre can tank large groups *and* set them against each other. At the same time! She's way more efficient than you.

NIVEA: Yeah. Seems to me, you're the weak link in our team, Sika!

SIKA: Mean! Why would you do that? Why would you go out of your way to crucify my morale on the eve of a battle? Why? And besides, *I'm* not the weak link.

(She pointed at Lycia.)

SIKA: *She* can't do anything!

LYCIA: Hey!

NIVEA: *She's* not on our team!

KASIRA: That's great, girls. You stand there and bicker. Let's not bother clearing the island. Fighting among ourselves is so much more productive.

NIVEA: Right, yeah. Sorry.

(Kasira nodded then reached in her handbag for her dual blades, only to find they weren't there.)

KASIRA: Okay then. As soon as I remember where I put my blades, we can get started.

(She then glanced at Cayley.)

KASIRA: Did I put them down somewhere?

LYCIA: I think you dropped them when Sika blew you up.
SIKA: By accident!
(Lycia smirked at her, delighted at getting her back for saying she couldn't do anything.)
SIKA: She's a trouble maker!
NIVEA: I like her.
SOAPY: She's gonna fit right in.
KASIRA: Look, never mind that. If my blades are on the beach somewhere, you lot need to get clearing. I'm hopeless without them.
NIVEA: Should I blow my wraith whistle again, ma'am? So you can go and have a look.
KASIRA: Sure, okay. That sounds like a plan. But while I'm among them, don't you dare start firing magic.
SIKA: I wasn't going to!
KASIRA: I was talking to everyone.
SIKA: But looking at *me*!
KASIRA: Nobody else has ever blown me up!
(She looked to Nivea.)
KASIRA: Come to think of it, Nivea, you have good night sight, you can help me look. Sika, you can blow *your* whistle.
SIKA: I haven't got one.
KASIRA: Yes, you have. I gave you a new one last month.
SIKA: Yeah, but I didn't bring it.
KASIRA: What?
SIKA: You told us to bring our essentials only.
KASIRA: Your army equipment *is* an essential!
SIKA: It is?
KASIRA: Yes! You're in the army! Of course it is!
(Sika grimaced.)
SIKA: Uniform as well?
(Kasira furrowed her brow.)
KASIRA: Private, are you telling me you didn't pack your uniform?
SIKA: I didn't realise it was classed as an essential.
KASIRA: No?
(She glanced around the rest of the unit.)
KASIRA: Who here packed her uniform before we evacuated?
(At once, seven hands went up, including Kasira's.)
KASIRA: Just you then, Sika. And who here brought their wraith whistle?
(Again, everyone's hand except Sika's rose into the air.)
EKSI: It's in my bag, but I brought it; yes.
LYCIA: Same.
AMBRE: I packed mine in my bag too.
KASIRA: So only Sika. Again!!!
(Sika could only offer her a cheesy grin.)
KASIRA: You promised you'd be the consummate professional after that debacle a few months ago. You knelt before me in tears, swearing you'd be the best damned soldier you *could* be. Well, if that's the best you can be, I'm shocked. As soon as we get a long drop, you're on cleaning duties for the entire first year.
SIKA: A whole year? You're gonna make me clean the toilet for a whole year?
KASIRA: Wanna make it two?
SIKA: No!
KASIRA: What?

SIKA: No, ma'am.

KASIRA: Shut up then. This is the army. If you're a twat, you get punished.

(She shook her head.)

KASIRA: Blow your wraith whistle, Soapy. Just loud enough to get the attention of this lot, not the entire island, okay?

SOAPY: Ma'am.

(With that, Soapy put her wraith whistle to her lips and blew softly into it.)

KASIRA: Thank you. Sika, Eksi, Nivea, come with me.

(With the wraiths snarling and growling at Soapy, desperate to rip her apart, Kasira then led Sika, Eksi and Nivea among them. Searching frantically on the ground for Kasira's blades, they were ever mindful of getting snagged on stray pincers. Mercifully, Nivea's incredible night vision paid dividends. Within thirty seconds, she scooped them up from the sand then they all raced back into the shallows again. Smiling, Kasira took her blades from Nivea then nodded.)

KASIRA: Thank you, Sergeant.

NIVEA: You're welcome, Commander.

KASIRA: Now we can get cracking.

SOAPY: Permission to make a suggestion, ma'am?

KASIRA: Granted.

SOAPY: My powerful spell failed because of the gradient. If someone else blows the whistle, however, I can get among this lot and despatch them easily. I may be knackered, therefore unable to fight anything afterwards though.

KASIRA: Denied then. We'll need you, Corporal. We'll have to do this the old-fashioned way.

(Eksi beamed then whispered to Lycia.)

EKSI: She's taking charge now. A proper leader. She's so cool.

LYCIA: Not that you're biased.

KASIRA: Silence in the ranks. Girls, let's go about this sensibly. Magic users, stay at a safe distance and attack the wraiths on the right of the pack. Nivea, Eksi and I will attack from the left side, standing in the sea. We'll allow *them* to come onto *us*. No risks. Lycia, step back and keep an eye on the extreme left side, I want to know if more join from that side, okay?

LYCIA: Ma'am.

KASIRA: Good girl. Ambre, you know what to do, right?

AMBRE: Stand with the magic casters and do my mind thing?

KASIRA: Exactly.

(She nodded sternly.)

KASIRA: Right then. Company, attack!

(With that, Nivea, Eksi and Kasira raced over to the wraiths on the left of the pack and commenced their assault. With the wraiths focussed solely on Soapy still, they faced nothing in the way of a response. Taking her part extremely seriously, Lycia, kept a watchful eye on their left flank. At the same time, Soapy, Cayley and Sika unleashed one powerful spell after another into the wraiths on the right. Soapy did so with a wide grin on her face. She lived to kill things. For her part, Ambre focussed hard on setting one of the wraiths against the others. In this moment, they were in no danger whatsoever. The wraiths would be obliterated by the sea water if they dared to venture in far enough, making it an effective barrier.

Had using the sea as a shield been a viable way to clear the entire island, Kasira would have been happy to stay there all night. Unfortunately, a lot of wraiths were terrified of water and

would never venture into killing range. Well aware of this, she fought on, knowing that sooner or later, they'd have to step from the shallows to finish off their cull. She did so with a determined snarl on her face. Not only did she want to get the cull finished but she needed to set a good example to her sister and Lycia. At the back of her mind, she knew it'd been a strange day and her unit may have come over as undisciplined. As a result, she was determined to show them that, when it came to the fighting, they were extremely professional.

Matching Kasira's attitude, the spell casters of the unit, Soapy, Sika and Cayley were the epitome of focus and steely resolve. With determination etched upon their brows, they were blasting spell after spell into the wraiths. As a result, it wasn't long before Kasira, Eksi and Nivea found themselves stepping onto the beach; the remaining wraiths unwilling to get too close to the water.)

KASIRA: Easy now. Remember to kill the nearest one to you, Eksi.

EKSI: Ma'am.

(Eager to make sure they didn't accidentally attack one of the three close combat fighters by mistake, Soapy, Cayley and Sika all edged forwards, taking a few paces to their right. The advance was cautious, but it was working. Within five minutes of starting, very few wraiths remained. Spotting this, Kasira made Eksi and Nivea back off, leaving the magic casters to polish them off.

Delighted with how well they'd worked, Kasira puffed out then glanced to where the others remained in the shallows and smiled.)

KASIRA: That's this bit of beach sorted. Now we can start for real.

(Lycia looked to her uneasily.)

LYCIA: That was really smooth. Perfect actually. Surely it makes sense to attack them *all* from the sea.

NIVEA: We would if we could, Lycia.

CAYLEY: Most of them won't come within fifty feet of water, unfortunately.

(Soapy beamed.)

SOAPY: *I* could pick them off from that far. Further even!

(She then grimaced uncomfortably.)

SOAPY: At least I could if I had all my strength.

KASIRA: It'd take forever leaving you to do it by yourself, Soapy. That'd be ridiculous.

(She then looked to Lycia.)

KASIRA: If we could just blow a wraith whistle in the sea then kill them while they prowl the beach, we would. That'd be so easy. Sadly, it doesn't work that way.

NIVEA: If it did, there'd be no need for female swift-humans. Your race can't do anything in the sea.

AMBRE: I can!

NIVEA: You're different. Most female swift humans only have their skill to summon and heal a Saxum, that's useless in the sea.

AMBRE: I know. I found that out the hard way just now.

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: That can be my next project. Trying to get Fluffy to stand in the sea.

KASIRA: That's great, Ambre. You can do that tomorrow maybe. Right now, we've work to do, however. Eksi, Lycia, Cayley, let's go.

(She smiled at Nivea.)

KASIRA: See you round the other side.

NIVEA: Will do.

KASIRA: Lead them well.

NIVEA: Of course.

KASIRA: And behave!

(Nivea looked most offended.)

NIVEA: Of course, I will.

KASIRA: Make sure you do.

(She then winked at Ambre before heading up the beach, followed by Eksi, Lycia and Cayley. Watching them go, Ambre's bottom lip slid down her face. Not being in Kasira's squad for the first time ever, was breaking her heart. Well aware that she'd be saddened by it, Sika placed her arm around her.)

SIKA: Come on, Ambre. Let's get killing stuff, yeah? We'll be back with Kasira before you know it, darling.

(Ambre could only reply in a sombre voice.)

AMBRE: Okay.

A short while later, as Soapy, Sika, Nivea and Ambre headed up the beach, culling wraiths along the way, Ambre continually glanced behind her, silently hoping Kasira would come back and get her. Spying the fact she was obviously distracted, Nivea bit her lip.

NIVEA: Ambre? Are you okay over there?

(Ambre pouted at her miserably.)

AMBRE: I'm fine.

NIVEA: Your sad face says otherwise.

SIKA: I think she's a bit put out because Kasira didn't choose her.

SOAPY: She's not the only one. I can't believe she's sent me with you two.

(She nodded to Sika and Nivea.)

SOAPY: And I can't believe she took Cayley. Without her, you two just bicker and I end up getting led astray. You two are a terrible influence on me.

SIKA: Yeah, right. Blame us, why don't you?

SOAPY: I do. She picked god awful teams this time.

NIVEA: I take offence at that, Soapy. When the shit hits the fan, I'm really professional. I didn't become a sergeant by being a useless waste of space, you know?

(She shrugged.)

NIVEA: My only problem with her choice of teams is that I can kill a lot more in one go if Cayley's healing me. We're going to have to be a lot more cautious without her around.

SOAPY: Fair enough. As long as you and Sika don't start pissing about, we'll be fine then.

NIVEA: I make no promises.

(Soapy sighed.)

SOAPY: This is gonna suck.

AMBRE: It does suck.

(She sighed and hung her head.)

AMBRE: Now Kasira's sister's here, she's going to choose *her* all the time. I'll get put on the shelf and forgotten about.

SIKA: Don't be silly.

AMBRE: I'm not. It's already started.

(Nivea looked thoughtful for a while, then glanced away nonchalantly.)

NIVEA: Silly girl.

AMBRE: What?

NIVEA: Kasira said to me earlier that you're so good at being a soldier now, you don't need any more training or supervision. I told her she was wrong. I think you do.

AMBRE: No, I don't. I'm a good soldier!

NIVEA: That's what Kasira said. She said she'd prove it too. That's why she's sent you with me; so you can show *me* how awesome you are.

(With that, she glanced away then glanced back to see if Ambre had bought her lie. Much to her delight, Ambre was grinning happily.)

AMBRE: I'm gonna kill lots and lots of wraiths. You'll see.

NIVEA: It'll be cool if you do. And of course, if you do well, I'll tell Kasira all about it.

AMBRE: Yay.

(In that moment, Ambre was well and truly pacified. Her pace picked up and her whole demeanour changed.)

AMBRE: If we get to the other side first, Kasira will be so pleased. If we try really, really hard, we can beat them there.

SOAPY: It's not a contest.

SIKA: Oh, it is.

NIVEA: It so is!

SOAPY: Pity's sake.

(Nivea then pointed to a group of wraiths up ahead.)

NIVEA: There's a group of about hundred up next. Fluffy can handle that many, right?

AMBRE: Easy cheesy.

NIVEA: Good. He can be our tank. Summon him, Ambre.

AMBRE: Ma'am.

NIVEA: Okay, girls, let's get cracking.

(Just then, Fluffy appeared at her side.)

AMBRE: Shall I make him whistle now?

NIVEA: Yup. Soapy?

SOAPY: Yes?

NIVEA: Fire when ready?

SIKA: And me?

NIVEA: Strip naked and pose like a statue. What do you think?

SIKA: I only asked. Nivea, you're...

(Just then, Soapy blasted her magic into the pack of wraiths and they all came charging over.)

SIKA: Hey, I wasn't done complaining.

SOAPY: You are now! It's called nipping it in the bud.

SIKA: Some friend you are.

(As the wraiths charged towards Soapy, Nivea bounced on the balls of her feet ready to take them on from close up. Focussing hard on their magic, Sika and Soapy continued to blast them from a distance. Moments later, they came into the range of Fluffy's whistle then set about him instead. In that moment, Fluffy started to glow blue from his self-healing.

Concentrating hard on making the wraiths attack each other, Ambre beamed with delight.)

AMBRE: My wraith has killed five so far.

(Nivea slashed her sword through a wraith then spoke up.)

NIVEA: We're not going to keep a count, Ambre.

AMBRE: Okay. Just remember I'm killing lots of them. It just *looks* like I'm doing nothing.

SIKA: Like five is a lot anyway.

SOAPY: It's more than you've killed.

SIKA: Shut up. No it's not.

(Capable of casting magic from her left hand then her right, one after the other, Soapy grinned.)

SOAPY: You've killed a lot less than me. You vortex casters are so slow.

SIKA: I'm not biting, Soapy.

SOAPY: Yeah, right.

SIKA: Actually, yes I am.

SOAPY: I knew you would.

SIKA: I'm far from slow, I have awesome dexterity!

SOAPY: Yeah, it's not bad. I, however, have awesome *ambidexterity*. You'll never be able to compete with me.

(Sika furrowed her brow.)

SIKA: Shut up.

NIVEA: You can *both* shut up. And Soapy, next time you claim Sika and I are a bad influence on you, remember what just happened. *You* started that!

SOAPY: Yes, because *you two* are here! You bring out the worst in me.

NIVEA: I'm gonna squidge your boobies so hard when this is over.

SOAPY: I'll be quiet!

NIVEA: Make sure you are!

(With that, she ploughed into some more wraiths then turned her head and flicked their dusty remains from her face.)

NIVEA: I might attack the next lot with a spin if the pack is small enough. They're all exploding in front of me and it's annoying.

SIKA: They all explode in front of you when you spin, don't they?

NIVEA: Yeah, but my spin disperses the dust.

AMBRE: You weren't complaining earlier when we were on the beach.

NIVEA: Kasira was there, so was Eksi, they flail their arms about and disperse the dust that way. This time, it's just me and I'm getting it all in my face. I hate fighting like this.

(Nonchalantly throwing out blasts of magic, Soapy shrugged.)

SOAPY: Put the goggles on then; they'll spare your eyes.

NIVEA: They have darkened lenses in, you idiot. I wouldn't be able to see a thing.

SIKA: You'll feel right at home then.

(Nivea smirked.)

NIVEA: Keep it up, you two. Judgement day is coming, remember?

(Sika and Soapy shared a troubled glance.)

SIKA: She's bluffing, right?

SOAPY: I hope so.

(Just then, Ambre spoke up.)

AMBRE: Not many left now. I killed lots and lots, remember? I'd have killed more but these two keep killing the wraith I'm controlling.

NIVEA: Ambre, you don't have to keep reminding me, I can see you're doing an awesome job.

AMBRE: Yay.

NIVEA: Now keep doing it.

AMBRE: Ma'am.

(As the fight continued, it wasn't long before wraith numbers dwindled. As they did so, Nivea stood tall and allowed her three companions to finish them off. Wiping dust from her eyes, she then puffed out uneasily.)

NIVEA: Girls, I don't know about you, but I'm fucking tired. It's been the longest day ever and I could have done without all this.

SIKA: You're not the only one.

SOAPY: I'd kill to be able to take a nap right now.

AMBRE: Yeah, but that'd be naughty and we'd get told off. We should keep going.

(With that, Ambre paced ahead. As she did so, Sika, Nivea and Soapy grinned.)

NIVEA: You heard the girl. Let's go.

(They then paced after her, impressed by her enthusiasm. They hadn't got very far, however, before Nivea made a mortifying discovery.)

NIVEA: What the hell? Where's...

SOAPY: Where's what?

NIVEA: Shit! Girls? I think I must have dropped my wraith whistle.

SIKA: You twat.

NIVEA: Excuse me?

SIKA: Well fancy doing that.

SOAPY: Let's just go back and find it.

AMBRE: Okay.

(Ambre then hurried back to where Nivea had been fighting. The others rushed after her.)

NIVEA: Anything?

AMBRE: No.

NIVEA: Shit.

(They all scanned the ground with their eyes for a moment then Soapy bent down.)

SOAPY: Um...

NIVEA: What? What is it?

SOAPY: I've found half of it.

SIKA: Sweet. Now let's find the other half.

SOAPY: No. Sorry, but I refuse to believe anyone's that dim.

SIKA: Dim??? Me???

NIVEA: Yes; dim!

(She took half a broken whistle from Soapy then furrowed her brow.)

NIVEA: What good is two halves of a broken whistle?

SIKA: Oh.

NIVEA: Yes. Oh.

AMBRE: Nivea?

NIVEA: Yes?

AMBRE: That's not gonna work.

NIVEA: I know that, Ambre.

(She groaned in defeat.)

NIVEA: I need a whistle if I'm going to do my spins.

SOAPY: Here.

(She then passed Nivea hers.)

SOAPY: Sika would have let you borrow hers, but she left it in a volcano. She didn't realise essential army kit was essential kit in the army, you see?

NIVEA: Right? And why should she? It's not like the clue is in the name or anything.

SIKA: Oh, ha-bloody-ha.

(Nivea smirked.)

NIVEA: Come on. Let's get going. The sooner were clear this island the better.

AMBRE: Yay!

(Ambre then hurried forwards again. Watching her go, the others couldn't help but smile.)

On a beach elsewhere on the island, a short time later, Kasira, Eksi and Cayley had just finished polishing off a small group of wraiths. As the last one exploded courtesy of Cayley's magic, Kasira stood tall and nodded sternly.)

KASIRA: Good work, girls. I know everyone's tired but we're doing well.

EKSI: I'm having too much fun to be tired.

KASIRA: Good. I'm glad someone is.

(She then beckoned Lycia over from where she'd been watching.)

KASIRA: Thanks for being so patient, Lycia. It can't be easy having to watch.

LYCIA: It's cool, ma'am.

KASIRA: I'll let you try your Saxum later, okay? When we find a small group, that is.

LYCIA: I'd appreciate that.

KASIRA: So, how do you feel, girls? Wanna carry on, or do you need a moment?

(Cayley bit her lip.)

CAYLEY: Honestly?

KASIRA: Of course.

CAYLEY: I know this is a ridiculous request, but I'd love to take a moment to fly across the island and see how the others are doing.

KASIRA: What for?

CAYLEY: Sika, Nivea and Soapy. Out there. Unsupervised!

KASIRA: And?

CAYLEY: They'll bugger about, you know that, right? And what about poor Ambre? She needs a calming influence; not three lunatics who think the war is all poops and giggles.

KASIRA: I think you're doing Nivea a disservice there. She can very responsible when she needs to be.

CAYLEY: She can also be extremely mischievous when Sika and Soapy are around.

(She grimaced.)

CAYLEY: I wouldn't be at all surprised if Ambre and Fluffy are over there taking on hundreds of wraiths on their own while Nivea, Sika and Soapy are rolling about on the grass, giggling and groping each other's boobies.

KASIRA: Do you honestly think Nivea's that irresponsible?

CAYLEY: Don't you?

KASIRA: I wouldn't have let them go if I did!

CAYLEY: No? Well, I'm worried.

(She sighed.)

CAYLEY: I felt uneasy when we set out and the longer we go on, the more I'm starting to worry.

(Kasira looked to her then nodded acceptingly.)

KASIRA: If you need to check on them to set your mind at rest, go for it. But if they see you, it's nothing to do with me. I won't have Nivea thinking I don't trust her and sent you to spy on her.

CAYLEY: That's fair; I'll take full responsibility.

KASIRA: Okay. If we're not here when you get back, we'll be fighting the next lot of wraiths.

CAYLEY: Righto. I won't be long.

(With that, Cayley took to the skies and flew off. Left behind, Kasira smiled to Eksi and Lycia.)

KASIRA: Cayley worries.

EKSI: Why?

KASIRA: That's how she is. She cares, you know?

(She shrugged.)

KASIRA: She's the nice one.

LYCIA: Are you saying the others *aren't* nice?

KASIRA: No, not at all. But being nice is her thing, you know? She's the nice one; Nivea's the prankster; Sika's the cocky one; Soapy's the talented one; Ambre's our miracle.

EKSI: And you?

(Kasira grinned.)

KASIRA: I'm the pretty one; can't you tell?

EKSI: Seeing as we look alike, I'm happy to accept that answer.

LYCIA: What do you mean Ambre's your miracle?

(Kasira glanced her way for a moment then smiled.)

KASIRA: She was sent to us as an expendable stop gap. The army basically sent her to us expecting her to get killed in battle. She has difficulties you see?

LYCIA: Like being retarded?

(Kasira grimaced.)

KASIRA: Yeah. She was scared of her own shadow and we couldn't do a thing with her at first. But she worked really hard, I mean *really* hard. And she overcame it. Now she has a medal for outstanding achievement. We're all extremely proud of her.

EKSI: I don't doubt her achievements, Kasira. She saved our arse earlier, so she's definitely got something about her. But...

KASIRA: But?

EKSI: I don't know. She's a bit odd. I think she might be awkward to get along with.

LYCIA: I thought that too.

KASIRA: Ambre? Awkward to get along with? That girl likes virtually *everything* and *everyone*! She's extremely *easy* to get along with! She's a ray of sunshine. You'll never meet a happier person. If you can't get along with her, there's something wrong with *you*.

LYCIA: Fair enough. I will try with her, obviously. It's just, she says cringe-worthy things.

EKSI: Like clouds are made from cotton.

KASIRA: Yeah, and that's fine. Imagine if your brain was incapable of processing ordinary logic. Your cognitive reasoning would be entirely different. Your brain would have its own concept of common sense. In Ambre's case, common sense to her, dictates that clouds are made from cotton. They *look* like cotton and someone she trusts *told* her they were. Her mother. That's as deep a logic as she can grasp. She's not *trying* to annoy you by saying silly things.

EKSI: I guess.

LYCIA: You've thought about that a lot, haven't you?

KASIRA: I have. And having worked with her for many years now I understand how her mind works. I know how she thinks.

(She smirked.)

KASIRA: And I know how girls like *you* think when they first meet her too. You're not fooling anyone. Sika and Soapy were exactly the same. Awkward to get along with, my arse. Ambre's cute, pretty and loved by everyone; that puts people's backs up. She's well-liked by all, therefore she must be a bitch. Am I right? I am, aren't I? I could see in your eyes when you first looked at her.

EKSI: Guilty.

LYCIA: Yeah, pretty much.

EKSI: Sorry.

KASIRA: Don't be. Just do yourselves a favour and forget that kind of thinking. Talk to her, get to know her a little. You're gonna love her to bits by the end of the week. Guaranteed.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: In the meantime, there's six wraiths up ahead. Let's go and play bongos on their heads.

EKSI: Plan!

(With that, the three of them strolled on ahead.)

For the next minute or so, Kasira and Eksi paced onwards, taking out tiny groups of wraiths. Lycia simply followed on. Upon this stretch of beach, the wraiths were extremely sparse. This suited Kasira fine right now. Without Cayley to throw heals their way, taking on large groups would have been foolhardy.

Laying into three wraiths that had the audacity to be in her way, Kasira polished them off in no time then looked to Eksi.

KASIRA: I'm not sad that there's only small groups round here, Eksi, but I can't help thinking that means there's going to be a massive group further down.

(She then looked to Lycia.)

KASIRA: I'm not going to insult you by making you summon your Saxum for half a dozen wraiths either. Once we get a reasonable sized group, then we can try it.

LYCIA: Okay.

(Just then, Cayley floated down from the sky and arrived at Kasira's side.)

KASIRA: You're back!

CAYLEY: What gave it away?

KASIRA: You being here.

CAYLEY: Ah. Nothing gets past you, does it?

KASIRA: Nope.

(They shared a chuckle then Kasira smiled.)

KASIRA: Happy now?

CAYLEY: Yeah, they were fighting hard actually. They've got a lot further than we have too.

KASIRA: Good thing it's not a contest then.

CAYLEY: *They'll* say it is; they're winning.

KASIRA: Yes well, that's a very immature attitude to take, if you ask me.

CAYLEY: Didn't you take the same attitude to rowing against Nivea?

KASIRA: I admit nothing.

(She smirked then looked to Eksi.)

KASIRA: Ready?

EKSI: Always.

KASIRA: Good girl. There's two small groups just in front and a bigger one further down. If it's not *too* big we can bring Lycia into the game.

LYCIA: Cool.

KASIRA: Anyway, let's get killing.

(With that, Kasira and Eksi rushed forth into a group of ten wraiths. At once, two of them were disintegrated by Kasira's blade. Eksi, however, wasn't so accurate. Having aimed for a wraith that Kasira had just disintegrated, she flailed into dust and ended up getting stabbed in the arm by a sharp claw. At once, she jumped back, screaming. Taking up her slack, Cayley aided Kasira in polishing them off then rushed over to heal her.)

EKSI: So much blood!!! I'm gonna die.

CAYLEY: You sound like Sika!

(With that, she placed her hand on Eksi and healed her. Astonished to have seen her skin grow back before her very eyes, Eksi's jaw dropped.)

EKSI: That's...

CAYLEY: You're welcome.

EKSI: Thank you.

KASIRA: Be careful, Eksi, okay? That time you were too close to me and we went for the same one. That's never good news for the one who misses.

EKSI: Okay.

KASIRA: Right. Next batch.

(With that, Kasira charged into the next pack of eight wraiths. Attacking with immense speed, she'd killed all eight before Eksi even caught up.)

KASIRA: Didn't fancy that one then?

CAYLEY: Give the girl a chance, Kasira. You took off like a rocket.

KASIRA: Fair comment.

EKSI: Actually, I reacted a bit slowly there.

(She grimaced uneasily.)

EKSI: Getting clawed at has rattled me a bit.

KASIRA: Good. Getting hurt is how you realise this war isn't a game. It all feels really easy until you get bitten or stabbed. Consider that an important lesson learned.

EKSI: Ma'am.

(She then looked to Kasira uneasily.)

EKSI: I'm doing okay though, right? I mean, I *am* good at this, aren't I?

KASIRA: Honestly?

EKSI: Not if it's bad news.

KASIRA: It's not. You're great with your hands. Your footwork is a bit off, but that'll come with experience.

EKSI: Footwork?

KASIRA: Yeah. Did you not learn any footwork at the academy?

EKSI: Not really. Not in any depth.

KASIRA: It'll come, Eksi. Especially now you've experienced getting clawed at. Your feet need to be ready to go in any direction at any time, including backwards to avoid getting hit. Watch.

(Kasira then danced on the balls of her feet, as she would if she was engaged in combat.)

EKSI: Oh, okay.

KASIRA: I'm amazed they didn't teach you that at the academy.

EKSI: They discussed footwork for all of thirty seconds then moved on.

KASIRA: Really? They wouldn't let us take on wraiths until we'd mastered it when *I* was there.

CAYLEY: Cutbacks. Teachers are barely qualified these days. Academy standards have gone downhill a bit since our day, Kasira.

KASIRA: Our day? That's makes us sound really old.

LYCIA: There's a good reason for that.

(Cayley and Kasira chuckled.)

CAYLEY: Oh, she's gonna fit right in.

KASIRA: I know, right? Cheeky shit.

(She smiled then glanced at the next group of wraiths.)

KASIRA: Okay, looks like about forty or so.

(She nodded to Lycia.)

KASIRA: You're up, Lycia. Show us old timers how it's done.

(Lycia gulped nervously.)

LYCIA: Where shall I stand?

KASIRA: Leave your Saxum where *we're* standing then back off. Will you need guiding backwards?

LYCIA: No, thanks.

KASIRA: Okay, cool. Begin.

LYCIA: Right.

(Desperate not to make a mistake, Lycia summoned her Saxum then led it to where Kasira was standing.)

LYCIA: Now?

KASIRA: Yes, please.

LYCIA: Ma'am.

(With that, Lycia made her Saxum start healing then slowly paced backwards away from it with concentration etched up on her brow. Once she was a safe distance, Kasira then nodded to her.)

KASIRA: Make it whistle, please. Just loud enough to attract that group.

LYCIA: Ma'am.

(In that moment, Lycia's Saxum started to emanate a soft whistle. As it did so, the entire pack of wraiths charged towards it.)

KASIRA: Right. Let's get busy, ladies.

(At once, Cayley unleashed her magic at the wraiths. As she did so, Eksi and Kasira set about them with their blades. With the wraiths fully focussed on attacking Lycia's Saxum, they faced no resistance whatsoever. For Eksi, this was like a dream come true; free reign to batter and bludgeon with no danger to herself. For Lycia however, it was a tense time. This was her first time using her Saxum in battle and she desperately wanted it to go well. With this in mind, she focussed to her utmost.

Setting about the wraiths as they tried to savage the Saxum, Eksi allowed herself a grin. Being able to cull the wraiths so freely as they tried to savage something else was great fun. Eager to share this information with her sister, she glanced sideways and grinned.)

EKSI: This is...

(She then screamed out in agony. Having not been concentrating, she hadn't noticed a wraith sneak in from the side. As a result, she'd been unable to stop the wraith inadvertently impaling her foot with its clawed hoof.)

EKSI: My foot!

(Without even pausing for a moment, Kasira called over her shoulder.)

KASIRA: Cayley, injury!

CAYLEY: On it.

(With that, Cayley stopped what she was doing and hurried to heal, Eksi.)

CAYLEY: Keep still.

EKSI: I can't. It hurts!

CAYLEY: And it'll hurt until you keep still.

(In that moment, Eksi stopped hopping about in pain and allowed Cayley to lay her hands on the wound.)

CAYLEY: Better?

EKSI: Yes. Thank you.

CAYLEY: You're welcome. Now get back to...

(She then glanced up and noticed Kasira finishing off the last wraith.)

CAYLEY: Never mind.

(With this mini battle complete, Kasira nodded then paced towards Lycia.)

KASIRA: Nice work. Dismiss the Saxum now, please.

LYCIA: Ma'am.

(Kasira then looked to Eksi.)

KASIRA: You okay?

EKSI: Yeah. Stupid wraith stood on my foot. I felt its claw go straight through.

(Kasira grinned.)

KASIRA: Hurts, doesn't it?

EKSI: It's not funny!

KASIRA: I never said it was, darling.

(She then looked to Lycia.)

KASIRA: How do you think you did?

(Lycia turned red.)

LYCIA: I thought it went well.

KASIRA: You thought right. That was excellent. Concentrate like that every time and you'll have a trouble free time in the army, Lycia. Well done.

(She then looked to Eksi.)

KASIRA: Lose concentration like Eksi did just now, however, you'll need healing every five minutes.

(Eksi pouted.)

EKSI: Sorry.

KASIRA: As long as you learned something, Eksi, it's fine.

(She smiled.)

KASIRA: Ready to go again? The next bunch seem to be similar in size.

LYCIA: Define ready.

(With that, she held her hand up in front of herself. She was shaking like a leaf.)

LYCIA: That was nerve-wracking.

CAYLEY: Worried you'd make a mess of it, were you?

LYCIA: Terrified.

CAYLEY: And now you know you can do it?

LYCIA: Excited. Still nervous though. It feels so real now.

KASIRA: You're trying to clear an entire island of wraiths; it doesn't get any more real.

(She then nodded sternly.)

KASIRA: I tell you what, we'll take a breather for a moment then we can go again. Let it sink in, Lycia. You're in the game and you're good at it.

LYCIA: Ma'am.

(With that, Kasira paced across the sand then placed herself down on a rock. As she did so, Eksi paced to her side then sat beside her.)

EKSI: Damn it.

KASIRA: What's wrong?

EKSI: I can't believe I lost focus and got hurt. Twice I've needed healing now.

KASIRA: It's your first day, Eksi, don't torture yourself over that.

EKSI: But I want to fight to your level, Kasira.

KASIRA: And you will; in time. When I first joined I got bitten and clawed like it was going out of fashion. And the leader was a right cock about it. She was an airborne, the only airborne, so I had to go to her for her heals and every time I needed one, she'd insult me. She used to put me down with some really cruel jibes. She hated me. One time I got clawed across my face and she refused to heal me. She said the scar would remind me to be more careful.

EKSI: She left you scarred? Where?

KASIRA: It's gone now. Luckily, she left a year after I joined. The second in command took over and we got a new healer. Cayley here. She healed it for me.

CAYLEY: On my first morning.

KASIRA: I knew then we'd be friends for life. I had that scar on my face for months and it was hideous. I couldn't even look in the mirror.

CAYLEY: And you know how Kasira loves looking in the mirror.

KASIRA: What are you saying, Cayley?

EKSI: That she knows you well.

(Cayley and Eksi then chuckled together and Kasira shook a disdainful head.)

KASIRA: Everyone's a comedienne.

(She then joined in for a moment before smiling at Eksi.)

KASIRA: So anyway, don't worry about matching me. You're doing fine.

EKSI: But I do worry about it. I want to be like you.

CAYLEY: Well you can't. You can only be like you. You have to find your own level, Eksi.

KASIRA: She's right.

EKSI: But you don't understand, Kasira. I've *always* wanted to be just like you. You went off to the academy when I was four, remember?

KASIRA: I remember.

EKSI: You'd come back like, every two years on leave. And every time you were more and more awesome. My sister the corporal; my sister the sergeant; my sister the captain; my sister the leader; each time you came back, you'd become even better. I grew up wanting that for myself too.

(She smiled.)

EKSI: I hardly saw you growing up, Kasira, but what I *did* see was amazing. You're kind of my idol, really.

(Kasira grimaced.)

KASIRA: I *know* you've always looked up to me, Eksi. I could see in your eyes. So I was happy to play the role of cool older sister. As you've seen today though, I'm just like anyone else, only the army gave me a title. I cry and make mistakes like everyone else.

EKSI: Today has been a weird day, Kasira; I'm not going to judge you on anything that happens today.

KASIRA: Thank you. Having cried like a baby on several occasions and had a brain meltdown, I really don't want today to be any kind of reference.

EKSI: It's not. You'll always be the girl who came back to the house two years ago; the leader of a unit. I told all my friends about you. I knew then, I had to do everything I can to be just like you. So I started to act like you and dress like you; flirt like you too. Mum and dad hated it. They said I was growing up too fast. And they blamed *you*!

KASIRA: I know. They made that clear in their letters.

EKSI: I tell you, they were so furious when I started to *socialise* like you; bringing boys back to my room for sex.

KASIRA: Sex??? Eksi, you're fifteen!

EKSI: I wasn't at the time.

KASIRA: Oh, right. Fair point.

(She then flinched in horror.)

KASIRA: Wait, that's even worse!

EKSI: I was an early starter, Kasira, just like you.

KASIRA: Fuck. I'm a terrible influence.

EKSI: No, you were amazing. Mum and dad weren't being fair when they blamed you for my behaviour. I was just trying to be the best I can be; like you. I reckon I'm gonna be pretty awesome too if I keep following your example.

KASIRA: Does agreeing with that make me conceited?

CAYLEY: Beyond words.

KASIRA: I'll say nothing then.

(She smiled.)

KASIRA: Well, seeing as we're on the topic; I was *deliberately* trying to impress you, Eksi. I care what you think of me. Or at least I did. That has to stop now though. We're soldiers. We have to be unit mates. I can't treat you like my sister while we here. I have to treat everyone like equals. That means you getting punished or told off when you're insubordinate, just like anyone else.

EKSI: That's fair. I understand that.

KASIRA: All I can promise is that I'll try to set a good example.

EKSI: Good enough for me.

(Kasira smiled.)

KASIRA: Good girl. So, just out of interest, are mum and dad *still* angry with me?

EKSI: Last time I saw them, they were referring to you as "That other thing we raised".

KASIRA: Wow. *You* go off the rails, so they dub *me* the trouble child.

EKSI: Pretty much.

KASIRA: Parents are dumb.

EKSI: Yup.

(They shared a chuckle then Kasira looked to Lycia.)

KASIRA: How are you feeling? Ready to go again yet?

LYCIA: Actually, yeah. I can't wait actually.

KASIRA: Good.

(She then stood up and flexed her neck muscles.)

KASIRA: We've not set a good pace so far, so we've got work to do. No more breaks until we reach the others. We've got a fuck load of wraiths still to cull and it's time we put in a long, hard shift.

CAYLEY: I couldn't agree more.

KASIRA: Let's go then.

(With that, they all headed off towards the next batch of wraiths with a determined spring in their step.)

Across the other side of the island, a short while later, Nivea was performing her high speed spinning attack on a large group of wraiths. They'd been working tirelessly and were showing no sign of slowing down. Having been left in charge, Nivea was determined to do a first class job. Taking out wraiths from range, Sika and Soapy were also extremely focussed. At their side, Ambre was determinedly manipulating wraiths into attacking each other. Cayley's worries about them slacking off had proved wholly unfounded to this point.

Able to see and hear everything, even during a spin, Nivea snarled as wraith after wraith was obliterated by her sword.

NIVEA: Let's keep this up, girls. I know it's not a contest, but if we make it half way before the others, it'll bode well for all of us.

(Ambre beamed.)

AMBRE: Kasira will be pleased.

SIKA: Leader's pet.

AMBRE: No, I'm not.

SIKA: I reckon we should take a break after this, we've been working solidly for hours.

SOAPY: It's been about forty minutes, you lazy sod.

SIKA: Feels like longer.

NIVEA: Well it's not. No breaks; not yet.

(Sika pouted.)

SIKA: You're no fun.

NIVEA: We're not here to have fun, we've got an island full of wraiths to cull.

SIKA: Boring! You're not usually this boring.

NIVEA: Sika, I've been given a responsibility and I'm living up to it. Kasira asked me to lead, so I'm gonna lead. I'm sorry if that means I can't be buggering about, playing with you two.

SOAPY: *Two? I wasn't complaining.*

SIKA: Well you should be. This is so boring. Boring, boring, boring.

SOAPY: Killing wraiths will *never* be boring!

(Unleashing her magic into the wraiths that were swarming towards Nivea, baiting for her blood, Soapy grinned. Her actions very much matched her words. She gained extreme pleasure from blowing wraiths to smithereens. Such was her enthusiasm for it, she'd happily have done so in her spare time. To her, being in the army wasn't just a job, it was a delight. The contrast between her expression and that of Sika's couldn't have been more apparent. Blasting her magic into the wraiths, Sika had an embittered pout on her face. To her, killing wraiths was a chore; and she hated chores with a fiery passion.

Standing beside Sika, focussing hard on making a wraith attack its own kind, Ambre's face bore no expression whatsoever. Having been given a task, she was doing it to the best of her ability without any fuss. This was Ambre in a nutshell. Motivated by the respect of her peers, she always tried her hardest. Being a valued member of the team meant everything to her. Right now, Nivea was grateful for her attitude. Spinning as fast as she could go to avoid being savaged, the speed and dedication of her team was essential. If they didn't kill them all quickly, she'd inevitably get tired and slow down. This could be fatal.

Delighted by the sight of wraiths exploding all around her, Nivea smiled. Before her, there was a cloud of thick wraith-dust of her own creation. Behind the cloud, she could just about see the wraiths at the back, exploding one after the other. The vast number they'd encountered was rapidly decreasing.)

NIVEA: Keep it up, girls. Not many more now.

SIKA: Good. Once these are done, we should take a break.

NIVEA: For fuck sake, Sika.

SIKA: What?

NIVEA: Left to you, we'd kill one a time!

SOAPY: And have tea and cake between each kill.

SIKA: That is such an exaggeration!

SOAPY: Seriously, Sika. If you hate killing wraiths so much, why did you even join the army?

AMBRE: It's the law.

SIKA: Yeah, it's compulsory, you tit. Even Ambre knows that.

SOAPY: Shut up, I realised that as soon as I said it.

NIVEA: Well here's an idea; stop saying shit and keep fighting.

SIKA: Only if...

NIVEA: We're not taking a break!!!

AMBRE: Why did you say "Even Ambre knows that"? I know lots and lots of things.

SIKA: Such as?

AMBRE: I know you're mean!

NIVEA: Seriously! Less talking, more killing!!!

(Just then, she noticed the cloud of dust before her subsiding. Feeling nothing against her blade she then noticed her three subordinates grinning at her.)

NIVEA: They're all dead now.

SIKA: Yup.

NIVEA: I should stop spinning.

SOAPY: Uh-huh.

NIVEA: Right.

SIKA: Someone wasn't concentrating.

(Nivea slowed to a halt then glowered at her.)

NIVEA: My job is to keep spinning until they're all dead. I don't count them and whinge because there's too many and I want to take a nap.

SIKA: Excuses!

NIVEA: It's not an excuse. You three were nattering, so I was looking at *you*. Like I said, I don't need to look at the wraiths.

SIKA: Well, you say that. Clearly you were tired and lost focus.

NIVEA: Is that so.

SIKA: Yup.

SOAPY: I'd stop talking right now if I was you, Sika.

SIKA: Why? I'm not being obtuse. Clearly we all deserve a little rest. Five minutes ought to do it. Possibly ten. Preferably half an hour.

NIVEA: Sika!

SIKA: Yeah?

NIVEA: Shut up! We're carrying on.

(Sika placed her hands on her hips.)

SIKA: Seriously? I need a rest.

SOAPY: You don't *need* a rest, you *want* one.

NIVEA: Either way, it's tough shit. We're carrying on.

SIKA: Really? What happened to you, Nivea? You used to be such fun. Now you're just Kasira's puppet. A slave to the machine. Where did your fun side go?

(Nivea paced up to her, smiling.)

NIVEA: Sika, darling, let me share something with you.

SOAPY: I did warn you, Sika.

SIKA: What?

NIVEA: The morale of my troops means a lot to me, you see? I can't have you feeling hard done by.

SIKA: So we can take a rest?

NIVEA: I can do better than that. Seeing as you miss my fun side, I can show it to you.

(With that, she pulled her towards her, turned her around then groped her breasts from behind. Sika's eyes bulged and she struggled like crazy.)

SIKA: Nivea!!!

NIVEA: What? Isn't this fun enough for you?

SIKA: Get off me!!!

NIVEA: That's a no. Maybe I should grope you lower down instead. That'd be interesting.

(Sika's efforts to free herself doubled at this point.)

SIKA: You're a twisted freak; get off me!!!

NIVEA: Nope!

SIKA: I repent!!! I hate your fun side! I prefer the new, boring-dipshit you.

NIVEA: Wow, you just don't know when to give up, do you?

SIKA: Get off, Nivea.

NIVEA: Nope. Not until my hands have wandered downstairs!

SIKA: No!!!

(Much to Sika's relief, she managed to break free from Nivea's grasp at this point. Looking extremely miffed, she charged a good twenty feet or so then turned to face her.)

SIKA: Keep your gorilla mitts away from me.

NIVEA: Gorilla mitts? Big mistake, tiny tits!

(With that, she proceeded to chase Sika in circles around the beach.)

NIVEA: Come here, you little shit!

SIKA: Yeah, right.

(Watching them giggle as they raced around on the sand, Soapy sighed despondently.)

SOAPY: I knew this would happen.

(Ambre grimaced.)

AMBRE: We're gonna get in trouble if they keep doing that. We're supposed to be working.

SOAPY: Try telling *them* that.

(Ambre glanced to her for a moment then shrugged.)

AMBRE: Okay.

(With that, she looked to Nivea and pouted.)

AMBRE: We're supposed to be working!

(Sika called out to her as she continued to evade Nivea.)

SIKA: Work is for donkeys and housewives.

SOAPY: Fine. You two piss about, Ambre and I will go on alone.

AMBRE: Yeah!

(She looked horrified.)

AMBRE: Wait. What?

SOAPY: We won't really, Ambre. I was being flippant.

(Ambre stared at her blankly.)

AMBRE: Flippers?

SOAPY: Flippant! I was suggesting something outrageous just to make a point.

AMBRE: Oh. Okay. I can do that too.

(She then pouted at Nivea with annoyance.)

AMBRE: Fine. We'll go on without you then. Which one of us should be in charge? The retard or the fifteen year old?

(At this point, Nivea stopped chasing after Sika and glanced at Ambre uneasily.)

NIVEA: Right. Yeah. Good point. We're being shown up by a child and a... special person, Sika.

SIKA: I don't care.

NIVEA: I do.

(With that, she paced back towards Ambre then patted her on the shoulder.)

NIVEA: That's for wake up call, Ambre.

AMBRE: You're...

(Nivea then reached under Ambre's arms and groped her breasts.)

AMBRE: No!!!

NIVEA: That's for being cheeky!

(Ambre desperately tried to wriggle free.)

AMBRE: Get off me!!!

NIVEA: Only if you say sorry.

AMBRE: Sorry!!!

(Nivea let her go then smirked at where Soapy was standing with her hands across her chest, glowering defiantly back at her.)

SOAPY: Come near *me* and I'll blast you with magic.

NIVEA: Adorable. Like you'd dare.

SOAPY: Wanna try me?

NIVEA: Sure.

(Soapy gasped and stepped back.)

SOAPY: Well don't! We've got work to do.

(Nivea chuckled.)

NIVEA: I do believe I just called your bluff.

AMBRE: You're a mean woman, Nivea.

NIVEA: And yet you love me anyway.

(Ambre beamed.)

AMBRE: I do!

SOAPY: You're so easily pleased.

AMBRE: I won't apologise for being a happy person.

(Stepping up behind her, Sika patted Ambre on the shoulder.)

SIKA: Nor should you.

NIVEA: Absolutely.

(She nodded.)

NIVEA: Anyway. Back to the mission. Come on, girls. These wraiths aren't going to cull themselves.

SIKA: I agree. We should get right into it after a brief five minute break.

SOAPY: You just had a break!

SIKA: Hardly. Nivea was chasing me!

AMBRE: Sika, please don't be lazy. If we don't do a good job, Kasira and Cayley will be angry at us.

SOAPY: Not only that, but if we keep taking breaks, the other four will beat us to the other side of the island and we won't hear the last of it. Kasira reckons Eksi is the boastful sort.

(Sika immediately gasped in horror.)

SIKA: I'm not losing to *her*. Let's go, girls.

(With that, she stomped off towards the next pack of wraiths.)

SIKA: Come on!

NIVEA: Wow.

AMBRE: Now she's all fired up and ready to go.

SOAPY: And all it took was a tiny white lie.

NIVEA: So Eksi isn't the boastful sort?

SOAPY: Sika doesn't need to know that.

(With that, they shared a grin then hurried forth to catch Sika up.)

Elsewhere on the island, a short time later, Kasira, Eksi and Cayley were going to town on a large pack of wraiths. In the centre of the wraith pack, stood Lycia's Saxum. The two new girls had learned a lot in a short time and as such, their approach to battle had changed. In Lycia's case, she'd grown in confidence and was no longer afraid of failing. Convinced she could keep the Saxum healed and maintain its whistle, she had no fears whatsoever.

Having been hurt twice in quick succession, Eksi had learned to fight with increased awareness of her own safety. As a result, she'd stopped lashing out mindlessly. Her focus was no longer just on the next wraith in her eye-line; she was now thinking several wraiths ahead. This increased focus helped her understand when to step back or lunge forwards; essential knowledge if she was to remain safe. It also made her a faster killer. When one wraith died, she knew exactly where her next target was.

At Eksi's side, Kasira was fighting with everything she had. Having her little sister at her side was spurring her on greatly. Not only did she want to set a good example, but she feared her getting hurt again. This was all the inspiration she needed to give the battle her all. For her part, Cayley attacked the wraiths with her usual trademark calmness. Keeping up an unrelenting assault on the wraiths, she was very much at ease. She was, however, mindful that she may be called to heal someone at any moment. Not about to let that fact throw her off her game, however, she remained entirely unflustered.

After a good couple of minutes of solid fighting, once the last wraith disintegrated on Kasira's blade, she stood tall then puffed out.

KASIRA: Well, well, that was our best performance yet, ladies. Well done.

EKSI: That was so intense. Fun too.

CAYLEY: Fun?

EKSI: Yeah, I had to put more thought into this time and it was really cool.

CAYLEY: That's fair. How was it for you, Lycia?

LYCIA: I enjoyed that.

(She then gestured to her Saxum.)

LYCIA: I think I've got the hang of manipulating Dumb Arse now.

KASIRA: Yeah well, I thought that too then he left me shortly after the wedding.

(They shared a chuckle then Kasira exhaled.)

KASIRA: Are we being too cruel to Lassu?

CAYLEY: No!

EKSI: Not at all!

LYCIA: Far from it.

KASIRA: You're right, he's a twat. Nivea's good at drawing; we should get her to draw his face on the bottom of the long drop.

CAYLEY: I hope he never finds out. He'd *never* stop crying.

EKSI: He'd dehydrate.

KASIRA: I'm amazed he hasn't already, to be honest.

(They shared a chuckle once more then Kasira glanced ahead at the next pack of wraiths.)

KASIRA: Okay, what's the best plan of attack here, Cayley?

CAYLEY: Good question. There looks to be a lot more than last time.

KASIRA: Too many for a Saxum to handle?

CAYLEY: Could be.

KASIRA: Yeah, I'm not sure.

CAYLEY: Just to be on the safe side, I think I should spam heal you instead.

KASIRA: Shit. I knew you'd say that.

(She sighed.)

KASIRA: Don't forget to throw in pain relief.

CAYLEY: The healing *is* pain relief.

KASIRA: Well you say that. I still get a series of short, sharp stings.

CAYLEY: Would you rather use the Saxum then? If you do, and it fails, Lycia could be in deep shit. It'll go for her instead.

KASIRA: I'm well aware of that, Cayley.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: I think we should use the old fashioned, 'I hit; you heal' method.

CAYLEY: Agreed.

(Just then, much to everyone's horror, including Lycia's, the Saxum took it upon itself to emulate the sound of a wraith whistle. At once, the entire pack of wraiths charged towards them.)

LYCIA: I didn't do that, I swear!!!

KASIRA: Never mind that, focus on keeping it healed.

CAYLEY: Go nuts everyone. Kill!

KASIRA: Just be ready to switch to heals if the Saxum can't cope, Cayley.

CAYLEY: I will. And make sure you have a wraith whistle ready.

(Kasira pulled the wraith whistle from a chain around her neck and nodded.)

KASIRA: I never leave home without it.

(With that, she charged into the wraiths.)

KASIRA: Come on, Eksi!!!

EKSI: On it!

KASIRA: And keep that Saxum healed as best you can, Lycia.

(Lycia replied in a panicked voice.)

LYCIA: Yes, ma'am!

(Moments later, as the sizeable pack of wraiths converged on the Saxum; Kasira, Cayley and Eksi unleashed their aggression.)

KASIRA: Whatever you do, don't panic! Once we've whittled this lot down to a manageable amount, it'll just be another ordinary cull!

EKSI: Ma'am!

(Lashing at wraiths with a determined expression on her face, Eksi was very much in the zone. She had a taste for fighting now and every wraith that met its end on her blades was extremely gratifying. Kasira felt the same way. She was, however, very much conscious of the overwhelming size of this pack. Time was of the essence. They needed to thin the herd as soon as possible, lessening the risk of the Saxum being overwhelmed. This urgency wasn't lost on Cayley either. Unleashing spell after spell, she'd never been so focussed in all her life. Keeping her Saxum healed, Lycia was also determined to do a first class job. The thought of someone getting hurt because she'd failed to control her Saxum was chilling her to the bone. With this in mind, her focus couldn't have been greater.)

KASIRA: Keep this up, ladies, you're doing great.

(Sure enough, thanks to their intensity, they'd destroyed a third of the wraith pack in no time whatsoever. Starting to believe they might just get the job done with the Saxum still intact, Kasira allowed herself a smile. Having lost a unit member to wraiths once, her greatest fear was witnessing a repeat. With this now less likely, her smile was very much a sign of her relief. It had, however, been a premature gesture. As she battled on, the Saxum suddenly growled then dismissed itself. At once, Lycia screamed in terror.)

LYCIA: No!!!

(With the Saxum no longer there, the aggression it had accrued from its whistle was immediately transferred onto her. As a result, within seconds, the wraiths were swarming in her direction. Before she could even turn and flee, however, a wraith whistle sounded from behind her. At once, every single wraith in the pack, turned and swarmed at Kasira instead. Standing there with her wraith whistle in her hand, Kasira shrieked.)

KASIRA: Heal me!!!

CAYLEY: I am, I am!!!

(As Lycia looked on with sweat pouring down her forehead, Kasira then set upon the wraiths while Cayley stood behind her, saturating her with a healing light. Kasira's swift actions had quite literally saved her life. Now, she could only watch on and chastise herself as Eksi and Kasira went to town on the wraiths with their blades.)

KASIRA: It stings!

CAYLEY: It's the best I can do.

KASIRA: Nivea never has this problem when you heal *her* like this!

CAYLEY: She does, she just keeps it to herself. You great big sissy, you.

KASIRA: You're a cold woman sometimes, Cayley.

CAYLEY: And you're a sissy.

KASIRA: Bullshit. I know all about sissies; I married one, remember? I'm nothing like him!

CAYLEY: He was the uber-sissy. You're just a common, garden-variety wimp.

(Kasira then giggled.)

KASIRA: Too mean, Cayley.

CAYLEY: Nonsense; I'm the nice one, remember?

KASIRA: That's a myth!

(She then shrieked in dismay.)

KASIRA: My whistle!!!

CAYLEY: What?

KASIRA: It just slid off my neck!

CAYLEY: Relax; you can pick it up again once we're done.

KASIRA: A wraith swallowed it!

EKSI: Yeah, you're not getting that back.

KASIRA: I know! Fucking great, isn't it? Life sucks. Abandoned on my wedding day then our island exploded! Now we're stranded on a different island, things keep scratching and biting me, and now I've lost my fucking whistle!

CAYLEY: Calm down, Kasira, it's not the end of the world. You can use mine when you need to, okay?

(She chuckled.)

CAYLEY: I didn't lose mine, you see? I'm not a clumsy buffoon.

(Kasira furrowed her brow for a moment then allowed herself a chuckle.)

KASIRA: The nice one, my arse. You're a monster!

(Watching on, Lycia gaped in bewilderment. How they could joke at a time like this, she had no idea. Her mistake had almost been catastrophic and she'd expected them to be furious. As the cull continued before her very eyes, she then made a troubling realisation. They probably would be furious once it was over. Furious at *her*! Fully expecting a thunderous lecture when it was over, she then hung her head. This was a horrible moment. She wanted them to cull the wraiths and rectify her mistake successfully, but as soon as it was done, she knew she'd be in deep trouble.)

Several minutes later, once Kasira despatched the last of the wraiths, Cayley doused her with a few more healing spells then stood off. At once, they all bent double to catch their breath.)

KASIRA: Wow. That was unpleasant.

CAYLEY: Does it really sting that much?

KASIRA: It's not a nice feeling, put it that way. I wasn't talking about that though. We've fought like that a million times. What wasn't pleasant was having to change fighting styles mid-battle. I thought Lycia was plant food for a minute. It scared the crap out of me!

(Lycia pouted.)

LYCIA: I'm really, really sorry. My Saxum dismissed itself. First it whistled on its own, then it dismissed itself. It never did that in training. I don't know what happened. I'm so, so sorry.

(Tears were by now, pouring down her face.)

LYCIA: I'm such a screw up.

(Kasira looked to her then shrugged.)

KASIRA: We all make fuck ups, Lycia.

(Astonished that Kasira hadn't yelled, Lycia glanced to her agape.)

LYCIA: What?

KASIRA: You heard me. If you were a screw up, you wouldn't have passed your level nine exam.

LYCIA: My Saxum didn't dismiss itself during my exam.

KASIRA: Well it did today. You need to look into that. Talk to Ambre again. Fluffy would never do that.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: Find out how Ambre got such a close affinity with *her* Saxum and try to do the same, okay?

(Lycia grimaced.)

LYCIA: That's it? You're not gonna yell at me?

KASIRA: Lycia, you made a rookie mistake. I'm not going to chastise you for that. Like I said, talk to Ambre and find out how you can improve your affinity with your Saxum, okay? (Lycia nodded firmly.)

LYCIA: I will!

KASIRA: Good girl.

EKSI: What? No telling off? Wow. You're like, so cool.

KASIRA: Telling people off for genuine mistakes gets you nowhere. I don't do that. If they refuse to learn from their mistakes and refuse to work on them, however, then it's a different story. I'll unleash a rain of holy hell on them.

CAYLEY: And by that, she means she'll squash their cake and make them cry.

KASIRA: With my bare hands, no less.

(As Kasira and Cayley giggled, Eksi glanced to Lycia.)

EKSI: I assume that's a private joke.

LYCIA: Must be.

(Just then, Eksi's face lit up.)

EKSI: I can see the others!

(She then grimaced.)

EKSI: Unless those four people coming towards us are a tribe of cannibalistic huntresses, native to the island.

KASIRA: You have a vivid imagination, Eksi, you know that?

(Kasira then glanced down the beach. Sure enough, Sika, Soapy, Ambre and Nivea had just polished off the pack of wraiths they'd planned to head to next and were now, jogging towards them.)

KASIRA: Outstanding. Let's go.

(With that, Kasira, Cayley, Eksi and Lycia hurried forth to greet them. At once, Ambre raced up to Kasira and beamed.)

AMBRE: We did really well, Kasira. I worked really, really hard and killed lots and lots of wraiths. And at no point did I stop to squeeze anyone's boobies.

KASIRA: Good girl, Ambre. I knew I could rely on you.

NIVEA: She was brilliant. They all were.

KASIRA: Even Sika?

SIKA: Yes! Even Sika, indeed. I was brilliant. I always am. You ought to know by now...

(Not about to let her stand there and brag about herself, Soapy intervened.)

SOAPY: She was determined to make it half way before you did.

SIKA: Which we did.

CAYLEY: I should hope so too. We had two new girls with us; we had to take our time.

SIKA: Losers excuses, Cayley!

KASIRA: It wasn't a contest!

AMBRE: Because they lost.

KASIRA: Excuse me?

(Ambre quickly shrunk backwards and grinned innocently.)

AMBRE: Make me a coffee.

(Kasira chuckled at her cuteness then took a deep breath.)

KASIRA: Okay, ladies. We've made it this far. What say we take a quick break? It's late, we're all tired and let's be honest; we've earned it.

SIKA: Amen to that. Finally, someone who appreciates the importance of rest.

(She smirked.)

SIKA: See, Nivea? This is why *she's* the leader and you're nothing but mid-ranked boob-fondling deviant.

NIVEA: And the list gets longer. Judgement day, Sika; it's not a myth, you know? It's coming.

KASIRA: Yes, well, enough of that. We've got a long way to go before we can call it a day, so get as much rest as you can. Everyone sit down and chill out for a bit. This isn't over by a long chalk.

As they sat resting on the moonlit beach, none of the eight members of the 123rd Wraith containment unit said a word. It had been a tiring night to this point and there was still a lot of work to be done. Knowing this, they were anxious to save their energy. The silence was, however, short-lived. Having too much energy for her own good, Sika soon sat up and grimaced at Kasira.

SIKA: This is boring.

KASIRA: What?

SIKA: Resting. It's boring.

NIVEA: Seriously? You did nothing but bitch and whine earlier because *fighting wraiths* was boring! You kept banging on about having a rest. Now you're having one, *that's* boring too!

(Sika shrugged.)

SIKA: Intelligent people like me have a low tolerance of sitting about doing nothing. I make no apology for that.

SOAPY: You've also got a low tolerance of doing work.

SIKA: That's because we just do the same thing over and over again. Cast spell, watch wraith explode, cast spell, watch wraith explode...

SOAPY: My perfect night out.

SIKA: You have seriously low expectations, Soapy.

SOAPY: What?

SIKA: The perfect night out should involve dancing, wine and men.

NIVEA: I never thought I'd say this, but I agree with Sika.

SIKA: Me too.

SOAPY: You *are* Sika.

SIKA: Yes, and Sika's right.

SOAPY: Wow. Look, if you find killing wraiths boring, you're obviously doing it wrong.

(Sika glowered at her.)

SIKA: The only one doing it wrong today is you!

SOAPY: Me?

SIKA: Yes!

(She wobbled her head from side and mocked Soapy's voice.)

SIKA: Look at me, I'm Soapy the uber-mage. I can kill every single wraith on the island in one hit.

SOAPY: I explained that. The trajectory of the hill was such that my spell hit the ridge and ricocheted away.

SIKA: Yeah, right. Like we're gonna believe that. You were probably just knackered from all that swimming. You'll never admit that though because you want us to think you're super fit.

SOAPY: Sika, you're an idiot.

NIVEA: This time I agree with Soapy.

SIKA: Nobody asked you, sausage fingers.

NIVEA: Sausage fingers?

SIKA: You heard me.

(Sick to death of hearing them bicker, Kasira furrowed her brow.)

KASIRA: Enough! Soapy explained why her spell failed and it makes perfect sense.

SOAPY: Thank you.

KASIRA: Now can we just have a few minutes of peace and quiet?

(In that moment silence descended.)

KASIRA: Thank you.

SIKA: Killing wraiths *is* boring though.

KASIRA: For fuck sake.

SIKA: What? It is!

KASIRA: Sika, you're already down for a year of long drop cleaning duties; now you're a stone's throw away from doing it without gloves on! That's right; bare hands.

(Sika pouted.)

SIKA: You're not allowed to make me do that. The army handbook says so.

CAYLEY: You've read the handbook?

NIVEA: You can read?

SIKA: Of course I've read the handbook. Some of it, at least.

(She flexed her shoulders nonchalantly then glanced at Kasira.)

SIKA: Specifically, the section on which punishments you're allowed to dish out.

(Kasira gave her a sideways glance.)

KASIRA: What? Why would feel the need to look *that* up? I mean specifically *that*!

CAYLEY: Sika, have you been looking up the penalties for offences with a view to cherry picking which offences are worth committing?

SIKA: Don't be silly. I looked up the penalties to see which offences *aren't* worth committing. That way I know how to avoid the worst punishments.

AMBRE: Isn't behaving the best the way to avoid punishment?

SIKA: In an ideal world, maybe.

KASIRA: Well, fuck me!

(She puffed out.)

KASIRA: Sika, I'm genuinely astonished.

SIKA: At my forward thinking?

KASIRA: At how much you suck!

(Sika glowered at her then mumbled under her breath.)

SIKA: No, *you* suck. Major Miles will testify to that.

(In that moment, silence descended. As if an air of doom was hanging over the island, everyone leant away and grimaced. Realising she'd mumbled too loudly, Sika gulped then looked to Kasira. Seeing a face of thunder staring back at her, she shrunk down and spoke in a terrified whimper.)

SIKA: The handbook says you're not allowed to kill me.

(Kasira growled.)

KASIRA: The handbook also says I get to choose the dress code for the unit. Well from now on, anyone whose name starts with 'S' has to do their patrols in their underwear!

SOAPY: That's not fair!

SIKA: No, no, that's fair. I don't mind doing that.

SOAPY: I do! Why am *I* being punished for her crime???

KASIRA: Fine, I'll think of something else. Anyone whose name ends with an 'A' has to...

CAYLEY: Your name ends with an 'A', Kasira.

LYCIA: So does mine.

NIVEA: And mine.

KASIRA: Right, scratch that.

(A devilish look then appeared on her face.)

KASIRA: From now on, airborne members of the unit...

CAYLEY: Steady on!

KASIRA: ...below the rank of Captain...

CAYLEY: Perfect.

KASIRA: ...have to wear white knickers.

(Sika beamed.)

SIKA: Punishment accepted.

KASIRA: On their head! At all times!

(Sika's jaw dropped.)

SIKA: That's way too harsh!!!

KASIRA: Starting now.

SIKA: But... I don't own any!

NIVEA: You can have the ones *I'm* wearing.

SIKA: Gross!!!

KASIRA: Sika, you have white knickers on *right now*.

SIKA: No, I don't!

KASIRA: Sika, you may not have noticed this but your skirt has ridden up and we can all see them from here.

(Sika immediately shrieked and slammed her knees together.)

SIKA: They're not white, they just look it in this light.

KASIRA: Put them on your head, Sika.

SIKA: No!

KASIRA: Put them on your head or we'll pin you down and give Nivea free rein to do as she likes.

NIVEA: Let's do that anyway!

SIKA: No!!!

(She then jumped to her feet and ran behind Cayley.)

SIKA: Leave me alone!

KASIRA: Sit down, you idiot; I'm not really going to let Nivea do that.

SIKA: You're not?

NIVEA: Disappointed.

KASIRA: Of course not.

(She smiled.)

KASIRA: As for your punishment, I'll be kind. From tomorrow onwards, you'll be wearing knickers on your head for a week.

SIKA: But that's not fair, I'll look like a right Nivea.

NIVEA: What?

SIKA: A weird pervert.

NIVEA: Oh, fair comment.

SIKA: That's too mean, Kasira.

KASIRA: Fair enough. We're both familiar with the army handbook, pick a punishment from that.

(Sika swiftly wracked her brains.)

SIKA: Smaller food portions; no. Confined to barracks; no way, not when there's likely to be loads of sexy builders coming. Loss of bathing privileges; nope.

(She grimaced.)

SIKA: They're all *far* worse!

KASIRA: Still think I'm being harsh?

(Sika sighed.)

SIKA: Fine. I accept.

(Kasira nodded then furrowed her brow at her.)

KASIRA: In all seriousness though, Sika, this insubordinate shit of yours has to end. I fought tooth and nail to keep you in this unit; I did whatever was in my power. Okay, you're place was never actually under threat, but I didn't know that at the time. I worked hard for you, Sika. I even...

(She glanced at Eksi then grimaced.)

KASIRA: You know how far I went, there's no need to discuss it in front of Eksi.

EKSI: You sucked off Major Miles, it's no secret, Kasira; you've been discussing it in front of me all day.

KASIRA: Right. Well... shut up. The point is, Sika, you saw me go to extraordinary lengths for you and you promised me your attitude would improve. I'd now like to see you keep up your end of the bargain. Basically, stop being a twat and shape up.

(Sika hung her head and pouted.)

SIKA: Sorry, ma'am. I'll try harder.

KASIRA: Yeah, so you keep saying.

SIKA: I just get carried away.

KASIRA: I don't want excuses, Sika. Just do better!

SIKA: Yes, ma'am.

(Silence then descended and everyone looked away, feeling somewhat awkward. As they did so, Ambre sighed sorrowfully.)

AMBRE: Sika, you're so silly. All you had to do was sit quietly and have a rest.

NIVEA: That would have been too easy.

CAYLEY: Right? Instead, she sits there digging then wonders why she ends up falling down a hole.

SOAPY: For an intelligent person, you're kind of dumb, Sika.

AMBRE: I'm all uncomfortable now. I don't like it when you get in trouble, Sika.

SIKA: Nor do I. Sorry, girls. I'm such a plum.

KASIRA: Hey, don't be downhearted. I've said my piece and it's over, okay? Don't let it fester. Chin up, okay?

(She smiled.)

KASIRA: Sika, I have to make you a better soldier. I know you don't always like it, but that's the way it is. Don't think for a minute that your punishments mean I don't love you, because I do. I love *all* you guys.

SIKA: I know. And... thanks, Kasira.

CAYLEY: That was sweet.

(Ambre beamed.)

AMBRE: Kasira loves us lots and lots.

(Kasira grinned then glanced away.)

KASIRA: It's true! I have a thing for losers, you see? I mean, look at the bell-end I married. I tend to reserve my love for the lame and pointless.

(Everyone looked to her wearing amused smirks, except Ambre who was absolutely crestfallen.)

NIVEA: That was *so* cruel.

SOAPY: You're a mean women, ma'am.

CAYLEY: The worst.

LYCIA: Um... why is Ambre crying?

AMBRE: I not lame and pointless!!! I work really, really hard!!!

SIKA: I think she missed the joke.

SOAPY: Wow, Sika, you're like lightning sometimes.

(Kasira grimaced.)

KASIRA: Ambre, I was joking, darling.

AMBRE: What?

(She grimaced.)

AMBRE: How was that funny? Lame and pointless, you said. That was what my report at the academy said about me.

KASIRA: Sweetheart, it was a joke. Obviously. You know how you can tell?

AMBRE: How?

KASIRA: Because you're neither. Anyone who says that about you is either joking or lying.

SIKA: Or being mean!

KASIRA: I wasn't being mean; I'd never do that.

SIKA: You do it to me all the time.

KASIRA: I'm quite literally going to kill you in a minute, Sika.

AMBRE: No need.

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: I think I get the joke now. No, I don't. I don't get it at all. I just know Kasira wouldn't be mean about me.

KASIRA: Good. Now let's have a group hug, shall we? Then we can think about getting on with the cull.

AMBRE: Yay, group hug!

(With that, they all climbed to their feet and gathered for a hug.)

SOAPY: Nivea, get your hand off my butt!!!

NIVEA: Nope!

(Kasira then started to chuckle.)

KASIRA: Never change, girls. Except you, Sika. Change a lot.

SIKA: Mean!

Having gathered their breath, the girls of the 123rd wraith containment unit, resumed their battle against the wraiths. Having cleared the beach area, they were now heading inland to cross the island, killing everything in their path. This meant heading up at an incline to the foot of the hill, then back to the beach on the other side of the island. Well aware that they'd need to cross the island several times before they were finished, nobody was deluding themselves that it was going to be easy. The island was still infested and they'd barely scraped the surface. Nothing drove this fact home quite like the pack of one hundred of fifty wraiths they encountered thirty seconds into resuming their walk.

Sticking to a tried and trusted culling method, Nivea spun with her sword, having taken the aggression of the hoard courtesy of Soapy's wraith whistle. Cayley healed her rigorously. Soapy and Sika went to town on the wraiths from a distance with their magic, Ambre used her mind control and the two land-bound humans, Eksi and Kasira attacked the wraiths that were still advancing towards Nivea. Lycia could only watch.

NIVEA: Didn't get far, did we?

KASIRA: We were never going to, to be honest. There's wraiths as far as the eyes can see. (Sika sighed.)

SIKA: We're not gonna get any sleep until long after lunchtime at this rate.

KASIRA: I fear you might be right. It's gonna be a shit of a long day, but on the bright side, once it's done, it's done.

SOAPY: Why do I get the feeling I'm the only one enjoying this?

EKSI: Because only an idiot would enjoy it.

NIVEA: She's got *you* all figured out, Soapy.

SOAPY: Yeah, right. Like I'm the *only* idiot.

(She snarled.)

SOAPY: I mean, I'm *not* an idiot!

(Unable to take her eyes off the wraith she was controlling, Ambre spoke up in a suspicious voice.)

AMBRE: You'd better not be talking about *me*.

SOAPY: We're not.

AMBRE: Good. Being mean is mean.

(Battering the living daylight out of the wraiths before her, Kasira snarled.)

KASIRA: Let's save our meanness for the wraiths, shall we?

NIVEA: Don't worry, ma'am; we are.

KASIRA: That's what I like to hear.

EKSI: You like to hear people call you "ma'am"?

KASIRA: I like people saving their bile for the wraiths.

SOAPY: You must be loving this then. With seven us doing it, this lot are almost toast.

KASIRA: I *do* love hearing that.

SOAPY: I don't. With everyone fighting so hard, there's less for *me* to kill.

KASIRA: Sika?

SIKA: Yes?

KASIRA: Soapy's attitude.

SIKA: What?

KASIRA: Copy it.

(Sika snarled at the grinning Soapy.)

SIKA: Yes, ma'am. I won't be copying her terrible hairstyle though.

SOAPY: Hey!

KASIRA: Nobody expects you to, Sika. That'd be too cruel.

SOAPY: Oh, come on!

KASIRA: We're joking.

SIKA: *I* wasn't.

KASIRA: No, nor was I.

SOAPY: Seriously?

(As Sika and Kasira chuckled, still battering wraiths as they did so, Soapy shook her head.)

SOAPY: Very funny.

SIKA: We weren't joking, we just told you that.

SOAPY: Still not funny, Sika!

(Having demolished the last few wraiths with a bitter snarl on her face, Soapy glowered at Sika.)

SOAPY: Like your hair is so wonderful!

(She then looked to Kasira.)

SOAPY: And yours is...

(She then sighed in defeat.)

SOAPY: Who am I kidding, your hair is perfect. It always is. I have no idea how you do it.

(Kasira glanced around for wraiths then nodded. With none nearby, she stepped closer to Soapy and smiled.)

KASIRA: If you're interested, I'll order you some of the cream I use for my hair. It comes from the sap of a rare tree, you see? It's quite expensive, but oh, my god; you won't believe the lift and hold you get. It volumises too. And I like to use another cream for extra shine. I use just the right amount so it compliments my lip gloss. Get it right and it can really bring out the colour in your eyes too. The secret to beauty is all in coordinating your sparkle, you see?

(Nivea started to chuckle.)

KASIRA: What's so funny?

NIVEA: You are *such* a girl!

KASIRA: No, I'm not!

NIVEA: Oh, my bad.

(She then stood akimbo and adopted a manly voice.)

NIVEA: Please, give us *more* hair and beauty tips, oh mighty warrior!

(Eksi chuckled then joined in.)

EKSI: Kasira, bane of the wraiths, master of the blade, please enlighten us to the way of moisturiser.

SIKA: Teach us how to use eye-liner so that we might smite our enemies.

(Kasira gaped for a moment then started to laugh.)

KASIRA: When this is over, I'm gonna slap all three of you.

(She then glanced across the island and nodded firmly.)

KASIRA: Come on, we've got work to do.

(She grinned.)

KASIRA: Hair and beauty tips are wasted on you lot anyway; I can't perform miracles.

SIKA: Ouch!

NIVEA: Damn, Kasira. Why do you need blades when you've got nails that sharp?

KASIRA: I don't want to risk chipping them.

(With that, they headed off towards the next pack of wraiths, grinning to each other.)

CAYLEY: The next lot are quite some way ahead. I wasn't expecting that.

SOAPY: Me either. After that first lot, I thought they'd be packed much tighter together.

CAYLEY: Yeah. Still, I'm not complaining.

AMBRE: Does that mean there's less of them?

CAYLEY: Not that it's easy to see that far, but they do look less compact now we've despatched that first group.

AMBRE: Yay. I like that thought. The fewer the better. I'm really, really tired.

KASIRA: We all are, darling.

(Having trudged forth another thirty or so metres, Cayley then came to a halt and grimaced. Suddenly, the reason for the gap between the last pack of wraiths and the next one became abundantly clear. As the general had mentioned, there was indeed a large body of fresh water on the island. And it was stretching across the land before them. He'd referred to it as a river, but it was in fact, a long, thin lake.

Far from happy to have such an obstacle in their path, they all stepped to the edge and stared across to the other side, some twenty metres away.)

AMBRE: Is it deep?

SIKA: Now, how would we know that?

AMBRE: I was only asking. I hope it's not deep. I can't swim.

KASIRA: I'm not brilliant in the water either.

SIKA: I am. I'm awesome in any environment. Swimming, flying, walking, I've got all angles covered. Not many people can say that.

KASIRA: Yeah, right. Look, never mind that. Soapy, can you see how deep it is, please?

SOAPY: Sure.

(With that, Soapy took a quick step to the water's edge then jumped backwards.)

SOAPY: Nope, no way. I'm not fucking going in there!

KASIRA: Why not?

SOAPY: There's piranha in there!

AMBRE: What are they?

SOAPY: Fish!

NIVEA: Like you?

SOAPY: No, you idiot.

KASIRA: She's talking about deadly, human-eating fish.

SOAPY: Exactly.

(She grimaced then glanced about beneath her feet.)

SOAPY: If there's...

(She then noticed a worm and picked it up.)

AMBRE: Don't throw it at me!!!

SOAPY: I wasn't going to. Look.

(She then cast it into the river. As she did so, dozens of fish came to the surface and battled to devour it.)

SOAPY: Imagine if that was your flesh!

NIVEA: Damn.

CAYLEY: You could have just told us, Soapy. That poor worm.

SOAPY: Sorry.

(She grimaced.)

SOAPY: Point is though, if we go in there, we die. We'll have to walk around it.

NIVEA: Aw, crap. Like we're not knackered enough.

(Just then, much to everyone's horror, the sounds of hundreds of stampeding feet rose up from behind them. At once, they all turned and gasped in horror. A pack of wraiths, easily four hundred strong was charging straight at them.)

KASIRA: Whistle then fly, Cayley!!!

CAYLEY: I gave *you* my whistle!!!

KASIRA: Oh, yeah!!!

(She then reached in her bag for it and shrieked.)

KASIRA: Fuck!!! It's not in here!!!

CAYLEY: Kasira!!!

KASIRA: It must have fallen out while we were resting!

CAYLEY: Soapy, give me yours!

SOAPY: Nivea's got it!

NIVEA: I have?

(She then looked enlightened.)

NIVEA: I have!

(With that, she delved inside her top to fish it out of her bra.)

SOAPY: You kept it in your bra???

NIVEA: Of course.

SOAPY: I don't think I want it back now.

NIVEA: Don't be so...

(Her face then lit up.)

NIVEA: A-ha. Found it!

(She then yanked it out of her bra. Unfortunately, she pulled it out with such a force, it shot out of her grasp then flew into the river.)

NIVEA: No!!!

CAYLEY: Can someone just give me a wraith whistle???

AMBRE: It's in my bag.

EKSI: So's mine.

LYCIA: And mine!

SOAPY: Nivea broke hers and now's she thrown mine in the fucking river!

KASIRA: I've lost two and Sika didn't have one!

(She screamed.)

KASIRA: Nobody's got one!!!

SIKA: What are we gonna do then?

NIVEA: Fight!

LYCIA: Maybe a Saxum can...

AMBRE: They'd kill Fluffy in two seconds flat. Too many!

NIVEA: Meaning *I'd* have to be the tank???

(Kasira looked at the massive hoard then gulped.)

KASIRA: Nope. No chance! That's way too many!!! Swim for it!!!

(They all then stared at the water and gulped, mindful of Soapy's demonstration.)

KASIRA: Or not!

AMBRE: What now???

KASIRA: Cayley, Sika, chair lift people over the river! Go! Take Ambre first, she's most likely to panic!

SIKA: On it!!!

AMBRE: On what?

(Moments later, Cayley and Sika cast open their wings then lifted her into the air, one on each side of her.)

SIKA: Keep calm, Ambre, we'll have you over there in just a second.

(With that, they flew her across the lake. Having watched them go, Kasira nodded sternly.)

KASIRA: Give it everything you've got, okay? I just wanted Ambre over there so she wouldn't panic and run into the river.

NIVEA: You know we'll do our best, Kasira.

(With that, she ran forwards and started to spin with all her might.)

NIVEA: Don't worry about healing me, get as many people across the river as you can, Cayley!

(Returning from transporting Ambre over the water, Cayley replied urgently.)

CAYLEY: On it!

(With that, Cayley and Sika sunk down from the sky and scooped up Lycia.)

LYCIA: Don't drop me!

SIKA: As if we would!

(They then flew her to safety. As they did so, the lead wraiths reached Nivea and started to explode on her sword. Dozens of others, however, bypassed her and charged at Kasira and Eksi.)

KASIRA: Fight with everything you've got, Eksi!

(Eksi trembled.)

EKSI: Okay!

(With that, she came out fighting at Kasira's side, her eyes a picture of terror.)

KASIRA: Self-preservation, remember? Don't let them get close!!!

EKSI: I'm trying!!!

(Standing just along the lake from them, casting her magic frantically, Soapy whimpered.)

SOAPY: Bad. Bad. Very bad. I'll never moan about fighting too few wraiths ever again!

(Just across the river at this time, Sika and Cayley deposited Lycia next to Ambre then shared a determined nod. With that, they zoomed back over the water again.)

SIKA: Soapy next?

CAYLEY: Eksi.

SIKA: Right.

(With that, they flew down from above then grabbed Eksi in mid swing of her blade.)

EKSI: They've got me!!!

(She then drew a deep sigh of relief when she realised what was happening.)

EKSI: You scared the piss out of me then!!!

(Left behind, Kasira gulped. Eksi's assistance had been invaluable and now she was being swamped.)

KASIRA: Too many! Too many!!!

NIVEA: Far too fucking many! I'm being bitten to fuck!!!

(Realising they were all in extremely deep trouble, Soapy snarled then turned to face the lake. With a face like thunder she then set about blasting the water with magic.)

KASIRA: We could use a hand here, Soapy!

SOAPY: I'm blasting as many piranha as I can!!!

NIVEA: What the fuck for???

SOAPY: So we can swim across!!!

NIVEA: It's full of man-eating fish!

SOAPY: And this side of the river is full of man-eating wraiths.

NIVEA: Good point!

SOAPY: Kasira, jump on my back and I'll swim you across.

NIVEA: Wait. What about me???

SOAPY: You're a good swimmer.

NIVEA: Good point!!!

(Continuing her assault on the river, Soapy then snarled determinedly.)

SOAPY: Are you ready?

NIVEA: Yes, I'm in fucking agony!!!

SOAPY: Then go!!! Kasira, jump on my back!!!

(Needing no second invitation to do just that, Kasira immediately turned and jumped at Soapy. Catching her perfectly on her back, Soapy then jumped into the river. Matching their determination to get away, Nivea then dived in after them. At once, the piranhas were on them, biting and snarling as they swam across the surface. Mercifully, Cayley was hovering above them spamming healing magic on them with extreme determination.)

NIVEA: This fucking hurts!!!

SOAPY: I know!!!

KASIRA: This was a fucking stupid idea!!!

SOAPY: No; staying there and dying was a fucking stupid idea!!!

NIVEA: Stupider than getting eaten alive???

SOAPY: Yes!!!

(Moments later, Soapy and Kasira scrambled out the water with piranha still attached to their bodies. Nivea followed seconds later, screaming in agony. Desperate to end their suffering, Cayley continued with her constant healing while Sika slapped the piranhas off their torsos.

Moments later, once the fish had been knocked away and everyone was healed, Kasira, Soapy and Nivea lay staring at the sky above panting for breath. It had been a mortifying ordeal.)

NIVEA: I'm *never* going swimming *ever* again.

KASIRA: What she said.

AMBRE: That was scary.

SOAPY: It was.

AMBRE: Needless too. I was going to get Fluffy to whistle from *this* side of the river, but you all jumped in. If you'd just stayed there, you could have killed the wraiths easy peasy. They wouldn't be able to get at Fluffy because of the water.

(Realising Ambre's plan would have worked out brilliantly, Kasira and Nivea glowered at Soapy.)

NIVEA: Idiot!

SOAPY: Me?

KASIRA: From now on we'll leave the strategy to Ambre!

(Ambre whimpered.)

AMBRE: Too much!!!

KASIRA: Yeah, what the hell am I saying? Still...

(She then climbed to her feet and shook her fist at Soapy.)

KASIRA: Pillock.

SOAPY: Harsh.

SIKA: Ha. You got told.

KASIRA: Never mind that. Look, we're all alive and in good health so let's move on shall we? Now we know there's a bloody great river in the way, we can factor it into our plans.

CAYLEY: Don't you want to take a breather first, Kasira?

(Kasira paused for a moment then nodded.)

KASIRA: Actually, that's not a bad idea. Let's take five then we can get going.

(No sooner had she spoken however, a pack of wraiths twice the size of the last one came charging towards them.)

KASIRA: Aw, fuck! Run!!!

(With that, they all took off in the opposite direction, heading for the base of the hill.)

KASIRA: You know, in hindsight, coming inland was a huge fucking mistake.

CAYLEY: Right now, coming here in general feels like a huge mistake!

KASIRA: I miss option one!

SOAPY: You'd rather spend ten years in the brig???

(Glancing over her shoulder at the advancing hoards, Kasira bit her lip.)

KASIRA: Right now, the brig sounds like paradise!

As they scrambled forth with an ever-increasing swarm of wraiths screeching for blood in their wake, Kasira and her subordinates could be excused for feeling like they'd died and gone to hell. There was no clear escape route. All they could do was take the path of least resistance and hope they made it to the sea alive. At this moment in time, that meant heading up the hill again. They'd cleared one side of the hill earlier and as a result, it was reasonably clear. It wasn't *without* wraiths, however. As such, they found themselves charging forth, attacking small groups on the move. They had no other choice. There were wraiths in *every* direction. This was the least wraith infested route and their only hope of survival.

LYCIA: I hate this island!!!

NIVEA: I think you speak for everyone, boy!

KASIRA: This place is a fucking disaster!

(She then snarled determinedly.)

KASIRA: Cayley!

CAYLEY: Ma'am?

KASIRA: There's no point in you and Sika fleeing! Fly up and try to take out the front runners!

CAYLEY: Ma'am! Come on, Sika!

SIKA: On it!

KASIRA: The rest of you, run like fuck!!!

(She snarled.)

KASIRA: I should have been laying on my back right now, thanking the gods for making me a woman! I should have been deep in the throes of filthy, filthy sex. Instead I'm here! This

is not how I planned to spend my wedding night! Even if my betrothed *was* a quivering pansy, I'd rather be somewhere doing *him* than here doing *this*!

(Unable to sprint ahead at her usual breakneck speed, thanks to the wraiths up ahead, Ambre whimpered.)

AMBRE: They're really, really quick, Kasira. They're gaining.

(Flashing her blades through two wraiths in her path, Kasira grimaced.)

KASIRA: I know, darling.

AMBRE: What are we gonna do?

KASIRA: I...

(Just then, she noticed the ladders leading up into the watchtower at the top of the hill. At once, hope returned to her eyes.)

KASIRA: Head for the watchtower! Unless wraiths have learned to climb, we should be safe up there for now.

(Liking Kasira's idea, everyone nodded then bowed their heads and charged onwards.)

KASIRA: Once there are no wraiths between us and the tower, Ambre, I want you and Lycia to go full pelt, okay? Sprint like fuck.

AMBRE: Yes, ma'am!

KASIRA: I can see two ladders from here. When you get up there, one of you needs to get your Saxum to whistle; that way the rest of us should be able to get up there unhindered.

LYCIA: Ma'am!

NIVEA: Loving the plan so far, Kasira. Much better than Soapy's!

SOAPY: Shut up. If we *hadn't* swum across the river, we'd have been butchered by the wraiths we were fighting. These fuckers behind us would have killed Fluffy by now and they'd be chasing Ambre, Eksi and Lycia all over the island. It would have been a complete disaster.

KASIRA: She's right.

NIVEA: She's never right.

SOAPY: Shut up.

KASIRA: It's irrelevant now anyway. As long as we get to the watchtower, we'll be fine.

NIVEA: Yup. The only thing problem with that is those wraiths.

(She whimpered.)

NIVEA: They're gaining fucking fast!

KASIRA: Cayley and Sika are doing the best they can, I'm sure.

(Sure enough, flying overhead, Cayley and Sika were blasting at the lead wraiths with all the firepower they could muster. With so many wraiths in the pack, however, they were making minimal difference.)

KASIRA: I hate wraiths, I really fucking do.

(As they surged onwards, running up the hill with everything they had, sweat poured from their foreheads. The steep gradient on the slopes was torture for their aching limbs. Having to take out wraiths on the way also wasn't helping. Mercifully, they were only small groups. Each cull, however, was slowing them down and the wraiths on their tails continued to gain ground. Right now, their only saving grace was Cayley and Sika. With each steep incline, the wraiths were also slowed down, giving them a chance to taken out dozens at a time. With hundreds more still chasing forth, however, it remained touch and go whether the girls would make it to the watchtower or not.

Moments later, as they all raced up the final slope, Kasira gritted her teeth. She could see the way ahead was clear and now it was time for her plan to be put into action. Without delay, she yelled to Ambre and Lycia urgently.)

KASIRA: Ambre, Lycia, go!!! Get a Saxum to whistle when you get up there!!!

AMBRE: Ma'am!

LYCIA: Ma'am.

(With that, the two of them put their heads down and charged. Swift humans had immense running speed, even in their human form. In a matter of moments, they'd arrived at the foot of the ladders and proceeded to climb. Desperate to save everyone, Lycia scrambled up the thirty foot ladder with determination etched on her brow. In no time at all, she reached the top then poured herself over the edge, into the cup at the top. Without even bothering to stand, she then summoned her Saxum back and made it blow its whistle extremely loudly. Mercifully, this time it obeyed her command. Just climbing into the cup at the time, Ambre shrieked, set on edge by the noise. Before she could quite tumble back off the wall, however, Lycia grabbed her arm then pulled her into the cup.)

LYCIA: Sorry, Ambre.

AMBRE: My fault. I'm easily spooked.

(With that, the two of them swiftly stood up and peered over the edge.)

AMBRE: Scary!

LYCIA: Yeah, but we made it in the nick of time from the looks of things.

(Sure enough, down below them, the wraiths were charging past Kasira, Soapy, Eksi and Nivea, on route to the base of the tower. Had Lycia not been so quick to summon her Saxum, they'd no doubt have been savaged at this point. To say Ambre was most relieved would be quite the understatement.)

AMBRE: That was really, really close.

LYCIA: You're not kidding.

(At this point, Soapy and Nivea reached the ladders below then proceeded to climb. As they did so, they both looked down and gulped. The sheer number of wraiths that were amassing at the base was terrifying. Desperate to get away from them, they completed the climb in no time whatsoever. Once inside the cup at the top of the watchtower, they then joined Ambre and Lycia in staring down to see where the others were. Much to their relief, Eksi was starting to scale a ladder. Kasira, however, was still a good fifteen feet away and was entirely surrounded by wraiths.)

AMBRE: She'll never get through that lot.

SOAPY: We seriously need to teach her to run properly.

NIVEA: I was just thinking that.

AMBRE: I'm scared, how will she reach the ladders?

(Her face then lit up.)

AMBRE: Oh yeah, like that!

(Beaming merrily, she watched Kasira cut her way through the wraiths with her blades then bounced excitedly.)

AMBRE: She's gonna make it!

(Sure enough, within seconds, Kasira reached the ladder and proceeded to ascend.)

AMBRE: Yay!

(Moments later, Kasira clambered into the top of the watchtower and sunk to her knees. As she did so, Eksi and Ambre stooped to hug her. Drawing a sigh of relief, Lycia then dismissed her Saxum.)

AMBRE: You did it!

EKSI: You're so slow!

AMBRE: That's not *my* fault!

EKSI: I didn't mean you.

AMBRE: Right. Sorry. Reflex.

(Panting for breath, Kasira patted Eksi and Ambre on the arms then climbed to her feet. As she did so, Cayley and Sika dropped from the sky to join them all atop the watchtower.)

SIKA: Cramped in here, isn't it?

KASIRA: Yeah, but at least there's no fucking wraiths.

AMBRE: And it was even worse when there was a Saxum in here with us.

KASIRA: Right?

(Able to see the entire island from this lofty position, Kasira sighed heavily.)

KASIRA: Look at them all! Wraiths as far as the eye can see.

SIKA: Well, technically you can mostly see ocean. No wraiths there.

KASIRA: Shut up, you pedantic little twat.

SIKA: Harsh!

KASIRA: You know damn well what I meant. Where's there's land, there's wraiths!

(She rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: Clearing these will take forever. I think we need to accept the fact that we're gonna be sharing this island with them for a while. We'll get rid of them all eventually, but it's not gonna be quick and it's not gonna be easy.

SOAPY: True, but on the bright side, at least we're safe for now. I was fearing the worst on the way up here.

NIVEA: So was I.

CAYLEY: So was Sika. She was so convinced you were gonna die, she started to cry.

SIKA: No, I didn't!

CAYLEY: You did!

(Kasira pulled Sika to her for a hug.)

KASIRA: You soft lump.

SIKA: I had something in my eye.

CAYLEY: Yeah, tears!

KASIRA: Don't worry, Sika. We've got a knack of surviving, you should know that by now. It takes a lot to...

(Just then, a deafening boom rose into the air, twice as loud as the initial volcano blast they'd heard from their inside their old base. Such was the power of the blast, for a moment it felt like the entire world shook.)

SOAPY: What the fuck?

AMBRE: Not again!!! Now *this* island's blown up!!!

KASIRA: No it hasn't! If it had, we'd be dead already, we're right on the hill!

AMBRE: What was that noise then?

NIVEA: Capsway Island.

(At once, everyone shared a nervous grimace.)

KASIRA: That explosion was louder than the one we heard earlier. And we're forty miles away now!

CAYLEY: The entire place must have blown to smithereens.

(For a moment, everyone pondered that thought in silence, when suddenly, they heard a series of thuds from down below.)

KASIRA: What the fuck?

(Peering down over the edge of the watchtower, Kasira shuddered.)

KASIRA: The little bastards and ramming the tower!

NIVEA: Are they stupid or something? It's solid concrete!

SOAPY: It'll hold, won't it?

KASIRA: Let's not wait to find out. Cayley, can you go and collect Ambre's wraith whistle then lure these fucking wraiths away with it, please?

CAYLEY: Sure.

KASIRA: Just get them off our case.

(She sighed.)

KASIRA: I should have made everyone get their wraith whistles from their bags *before* we started this, really.

(She shook her head.)

KASIRA: I'm not on form today. Poor leadership, that's what it is. I'm tired and I'm not making good choices.

CAYLEY: You're being really harsh on yourself there, Kasira.

SOAPY: Yeah. *Any* one of us could have suggested making sure we *all* had wraith whistles but nobody even gave it a second thought. Not one of us.

AMBRE: Um... *I* did, but I was too shy to say anything.

KASIRA: Don't worry about that, love; it's not your *job* to say anything.

(She shook her head.)

KASIRA: Anyway, off you go, Cayley.

CAYLEY: Ma'am. See you in...

(Just then, her jaw dropped and she stared out in the direction of Capsway Island.)

KASIRA: What's wrong?

CAYLEY: Girls? There's a white wave heading for the coastline over there and it's travelling at a ridiculous speed!

(At once, everyone swiftly raced to the edge of the watchtower and glanced out to sea.)

SIKA: That *is* fast!

(Soapy gulped.)

SOAPY: There's a good reason for that; it's a fucking tsunami!

AMBRE: A what?

SOAPY: A tidal wave! Capsway Island must have blown to pieces, sending a massive wave our way! It's gonna hit the shoreline and keep on fucking going.

KASIRA: Are you sure?

SOAPY: I'm a fish; of course I'm sure!

(Sika giggled.)

SIKA: You called yourself a fish!

SOAPY: Yeah, you stand there and giggle; that'll save you.

(With that, she jumped to the floor and covered her head. As she did so, everyone looked at her as if she was insane.)

SOAPY: You might want to join me, guys.

SIKA: If you think I'm bending over like that when Nivea's around...

NIVEA: You can shut the fuck up, Sika. When a fish is afraid of water, you know something's very wrong.

(She then jumped down and emulated Soapy's move.)

KASIRA: I'm not...

(Just then, the wave hit the shoreline and water gushed across the island as if there wasn't even land there to stop it. At once, Cayley and Sika took to the air while the others ducked and covered.)

EKSI: Holy crap!!!

LYCIA: We're gonna get washed away!!!

AMBRE: I'm scared!!!

KASIRA: It won't affect us up here, will it?

SOAPY: God, I hope not!

(Such was the ferocity of the wave, within seconds, it gushed across the land, surging powerfully up the hill, blanketing the entire island with water. Thundering forth, it created a deafening cacophony as it washed away the wraiths at the foot of the watchtower before passing on its way out to sea again. It all happened in a matter of seconds. Like a speeding

arrow, the sea water gushed across the entire island in the blinking of an eye and then was gone.

Once the gushing sound of the powerful wave subsided, Kasira slowly climbed to her feet then peered over the edge of the watchtower. As she did so, the rest of her unit slowly emulated her move. At once, an amused grin appeared on all their faces. There wasn't a single wraith in sight.)

KASIRA: And that, girls, is how you clear an island of wraiths.

NIVEA: Duck and cover and hope a tsunami comes to save you?

(She smirked.)

KASIRA: Exactly. Let nature take care of it.

SIKA: The 123rd Wraith Containment Unit, fluking its way to glory since... um...

SOAPY: You have no idea when the unit was formed, do you?

SIKA: Well, who does?

SOAPY: We all do. It said so on the sign outside the base.

NIVEA: She's bloody useless.

SIKA: Hey!

KASIRA: Don't bicker!

(She rolled her eyes then looked at Eksi.)

KASIRA: Eksi, I need you to know we're not *always* this way. We're usually good at this kind of thing. Tonight, however; not so much. Coming inland was a ridiculous decision; it was way to soon for that. My mistake. I'm tired and I fucked up there.

(She drew a sigh of relief.)

KASIRA: And yet, thanks to that tired mistake, we ended up here in this watchtower, the only place safe from the tsunami. If we'd been our usual efficient selves, we'd have been down there just now.

EKSI: We'd have been washed away.

KASIRA: Exactly.

AMBRE: Maybe the gods were looking out for us.

NIVEA: Maybe we're just jammy buggers.

(Just then, Cayley called out from above.)

CAYLEY: Jammy would be right. Some of the buildings were flattened by the wave, but the one with our bags on the roof is fine.

AMBRE: Yay!

SOAPY: Best part is, tidal waves tend to destroy all the life rivers and lakes. So no more piranhas!

(Kasira grimaced.)

KASIRA: What about the apples trees? If they're destroyed we're gonna starve to death!

We were relying on the fish to eat!

NIVEA: Soapy's a giant fish, we can just eat her.

(Soapy furrowed her brow.)

SOAPY: Shut it.

KASIRA: Girls, this is serious! We're gonna starve to death!

SOAPY: No we're not. I can harpoon fish with my magic from well far. It's not a question of whether I can catch them, it's a question of how many you want me to catch.

(Ambre peered over the edge then beamed.)

AMBRE: Not that you need to go far. The sea left us a massive tuna fish, look.

(Sure enough, the island was strewn with fish, deposited by the sea.)

KASIRA: Oh, thank fuck.

SIKA: We're gonna be living on fish forever! I hate fish! No offence, Soapy.

SOAPY: I hate idiots. No offence, Sika.

SIKA: Hey!

(She then allowed herself a grin.)

SIKA: Not that food will be an issue. I can see the mainland from up here. There's a town over there. We can fly over there and do some shopping tomorrow.

(Kasira immediately raced to the edge and whimpered excitedly.)

KASIRA: Maybe they have a clothing merchant!

CAYLEY: Things just got better, didn't they?

KASIRA: You know what, Cayley? They really did.

(With that, those in the watchtower all shared a victorious hug. Watching on, Sika and Cayley just smiled with satisfaction.)

A short while later, worn out and struggling, the girls headed into the island's abandoned township. All around them stood the broken, empty shells of buildings. It was extremely eerie.

As they headed onwards, all Kasira could think about was getting to the old school building and finding a place to sleep on the top floor. The others, however, were fascinated by what they were seeing. Heading through what clearly used to be the town's shopping area, Soapy couldn't help wondering what it used to look like back when the island was populated.

SOAPY: The smell of fresh bread from the bakery in the morning; the smell of beer from the pub in the evening; it was probably so alive. Now look at it.

NIVEA: I am looking at it, Soapy. It's ugly.

SOAPY: It is now, yeah. Imagine what it used to be like.

EKSI: Ugly and busy.

SOAPY: It probably wasn't ugly back then!

SIKA: I disagree. All the buildings are made of solid concrete, Soapy. That's always ugly.

AMBRE: Our old base was made of solid concrete.

NIVEA: And it was ugly.

AMBRE: No it wasn't. It was nice.

CAYLEY: Ambre, it was the ugliest building on the island. I wouldn't be at all surprised if the woodland around it was put there just to hide it from view.

AMBRE: Maybe it *was* ugly then. But it was nice on the inside.

SIKA: Bit like Nivea.

NIVEA: You cheeky shit!

SOAPY: Yeah, *Nivea's* not nice on the inside.

NIVEA: You *pair* of cheeky shits! Judgment day is getting ever closer, you know that right?

SIKA: Yeah, so you keep saying.

(Just then, Nivea was distracted by a faded, painted sign above the door of a shop.)

NIVEA: Wine, beer and spirits, huh? I wonder if they left any stock behind.

(She then made a beeline for the doorway. Before she could make it inside, however, Kasira called out to her.)

KASIRA: Stop, Nivea. It's possible that some wraiths were inside these buildings and managed to survive the tsunami.

SOAPY: Should I blow my whistle and find out, ma'am?

SIKA: You don't have one. Nivea threw it in the river for a laugh.

NIVEA: It was an accident!

SIKA: So you claim.

NIVEA: Listen, you...

KASIRA: Stop bickering, for fuck sake.

(She rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: Seeing as we don't have a whistle, we'll just have to come back later.

AMBRE: Or I could just get Fluffy to do it.

(Kasira nodded.)

KASIRA: Good idea. I mean, *really* good idea.

NIVEA: Right? There might be booze in there!

KASIRA: I mean blowing a whistle is a good idea in general. Checking for surviving wraiths just makes sense. After what we've been through, I'd hate for one of us to get jumped by a *hidden* one.

(She smiled.)

KASIRA: Go for it, Ambre.

AMBRE: Ma'am.

KASIRA: Be ready to attack, girls.

SOAPY: I always am!

AMBRE: I'm doing it now.

(With that, Ambre summoned Fluffy forth.)

AMBRE: Hi, Fluffy.

FLUFFY: Fluffy happy to see Ambre.

AMBRE: Aw. I'm happy to see you too.

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: Can you do something for me, Fluffy?

FLUFFY: Fluffy will.

AMBRE: Can you whistle really loudly for me?

FLUFFY: Fluffy do.

(Fluffy then proceeded to whistle as loudly as he could. Silence ensued. Praying nothing would come running at them, everyone looked around themselves nervously. Soapy was, of course, the exception. Willing there to be at least one straggling wraith, she clenched her fists in anticipation. Unfortunately for her, nothing was forthcoming.)

SOAPY: Aw, crap.

KASIRA: Thank heavens for that. You can dismiss Fluffy now, love.

AMBRE: Okay.

FLUFFY: Bye, Ambre,

AMBRE: Bye, Fluffy!

(She then sent Fluffy on his way.)

AMBRE: Fluffy's lovely.

NIVEA: Never mind that, Ambre. It's time to plunder the stock.

(With that, she hurried into the abandoned shop; one of the few establishments that still had a door on it. As she did so, everyone stopped to wait for her. Their legs were so tired, any excuse to stop was a welcome one.)

CAYLEY: I had visions of hundreds of wraiths charging towards us when Soapy blew that whistle just now.

KASIRA: If they had, I'd have let them kill me.

EKSI: Me too.

(Kasira smirked.)

KASIRA: You'd have let them kill me? Thanks a lot, sis.

EKSI: Well, you know how it is. When the shit hits the fan, it's every bitch for herself.

KASIRA: Noted.

AMBRE: I'm glad no wraiths came out. I've had enough of wraiths.

SOAPY: Be grateful for that tsunami then. Without that, there'd be thousands on the loose still.

AMBRE: I *am* grateful for the tsunami.

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: It did our job for us.

(She then grimaced.)

AMBRE: We still get paid for it though, right?

KASIRA: Of course.

(She then nodded sternly.)

KASIRA: Though if anyone ever asks, Ambre, there was no tsunami.

AMBRE: There wasn't?

KASIRA: That's right.

AMBRE: But I saw it.

KASIRA: What I'm saying is, never mention the tsunami to anyone outside this unit.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: Let everyone believe *we* cleared the island using our skills.

AMBRE: Tell lies, you mean?

KASIRA: No, just don't tell them the truth; there's a big difference.

(Ambre looked thoughtful.)

AMBRE: Like a white lie, you mean?

KASIRA: You know about them, do you?

AMBRE: Yeah, we told *you* a white lie about why Cayley had to alter the bridesmaid dresses.

(At once, Kasira's brow furrowed deeply and Ambre whimpered in distress.)

AMBRE: I don't know.

KASIRA: Why *did* she have to alter the dresses then?

(She looked to Cayley.)

KASIRA: The truth please.

(Cayley grimaced.)

CAYLEY: Nivea wore hers on her wraith patrol and it got ripped.

KASIRA: Why would she do that?

CAYLEY: That's what we all said to her.

KASIRA: Wow.

(Sika chuckled.)

SIKA: The best part is, we told you it was because Nivea's bum looked big and you didn't even question it.

SOAPY: Goes to show what a fat arse she's got.

(Nivea's voice then rose up from inside the adjacent building.)

NIVEA: I can hear every word you two are saying!

SOAPY: We know!

SIKA: Why do you think we said it, baboon bum?

NIVEA: Carry on, girls. Just don't bother pleading for mercy when judgement cometh.

(Just then, Nivea emerged from the shop with a crate of wine.)

NIVEA: A nice ten year old white wine. And there are two more crates.

(Kasira looked to Sika and Soapy urgently.)

KASIRA: Go and get them!

SIKA: Why do *I* have to do everything?

SOAPY: Let's just do what we were asked, Sika. This is why you get in the shit all the time.

KASIRA: That's good advice.

SIKA: Yeah, alright.

(With that, they both headed past Nivea and paced into the shop. As they did so, Nivea rapidly developed an evil smirk. Rubbing her hands together gleefully, she then looked to Kasira.)

NIVEA: We'll catch you up.

(With that, she stepped back into the building and pushed the door closed.)

NIVEA: Let judgment be upon ye!!!

(At once, Sika and Soapy screamed the most blood curdling of screams. Kasira flinched then strutted off down the thoroughfare.)

KASIRA: Let's go!

AMBRE: But Sika and Soapy are...

KASIRA: Getting their just desserts, Ambre. We don't need to stick around for that. Hurry up.

AMBRE: Okay.

(With that, they all hurried on after her. As they did so, Eksi looked to Lycia and shuddered.)

EKSI: Remind me never to cross that Nivea, okay?

LYCIA: I don't think you'll *need* reminding.

(They then hurried onwards, desperately trying to block out the sounds of Sika and Soapy crying and begging.)

A short while later, having arrived at the old school building, Kasira, Cayley, Ambre, Eksi and Lycia were greeted with a glorious sight. The gate across the stairwell was still intact. Wraiths only spawned at ground level, therefore wraith-gates, as they were known, were essential for ensuring those sleeping on upper levels weren't the victims of a fresh spawn in the night. Overjoyed to see it, they shared a delighted grin then headed upwards to the top level of the building, the third storey. Much to their delight, despite being dusty, it was in relatively good condition. Best of all, in one of the rooms, there were several sofas. Assuming this must have been the staff room, they all stared at the sofas with loving eyes. Having expected to be sleeping on the floor for several weeks, they were indeed a sight for sore eyes.

More than a little satisfied with her surroundings, Kasira nodded then glanced to where Ambre was staring from the window.

KASIRA: What do you think, Ambre?

AMBRE: I like it!

EKSI: Silly question. Ambre likes everything.

AMBRE: Only nice things.

(Just across the room from them, Cayley rattled a sofa then grimaced at Kasira.)

CAYLEY: There could still be rats, you know?

LYCIA: Is that why you keep shaking everything?

CAYLEY: Yes. And it's why I haven't checked that cupboard over there.

(She nodded to a door in the wall.)

AMBRE: Sika hates rats too. Is it an airborne thing?

KASIRA: No.

LYCIA: Hell no.

CAYLEY: Rats are vicious, disease-ridden things.

KASIRA: Vicious?

CAYLEY: The rats where I come from are. They're big poo-holes and they're attracted to head-feathers.

(Ambre beamed.)

AMBRE: I don't have any of those.

LYCIA: Nope. No rat attack worries for us, right, Ambre? We just have to worry about lightning.

AMBRE: I don't like lightning.

EKSI: There's something you *don't* like?

AMBRE: I don't like a lot of things. Wraiths, bullies, lightning, Nivea's wandering hands, General Wilson's massive doodah...

LYCIA: What?

KASIRA: That's a story for later.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: Right now, we need to allay Cayley's fears about that cupboard.

(With that, she strode over to the door in the wall then yanked it open. With a shriek, she then slammed it shut again.)

CAYLEY: What? What's wrong?

KASIRA: Hundreds of the bloody things!

CAYLEY: Rats?

(Kasira then grinned playfully.)

KASIRA: Nope. Cushions!

(She then cast the door open again.)

KASIRA: See?

CAYLEY: No, I don't see. Until the cushions are all out here and I know there's no rats among them, I'm not going to sleep a wink.

KASIRA: Fine. Bloody scaredy-cat.

(With that, she pulled a cushion from the cupboard. As she did so, Cayley cringed in horror.)

CAYLEY: Well?

KASIRA: Nothing.

(She then pulled the rest of the cushions out of the cupboard. As she yanked out the last one, however, a tiny mouse charged out of door and scampered across the floor. At once, Kasira screamed and jumped on a table.)

KASIRA: Mouse!!!

(Watching it race out of the door on the other side, Cayley smirked.)

CAYLEY: What was it you called me, Kasira? Scaredy-cat, was it?

KASIRA: Never mind that. Where did it go?

CAYLEY: It's gone. And don't worry, fearless leader, if it comes back, I'll save you.

KASIRA: That's not funny, Cayley.

CAYLEY: It's *kinda* funny.

KASIRA: It's not even remotely funny!

CAYLEY: No? Then how come you're the only member of your family not laughing?

(Sure enough, Eksi was giggling behind her hand.)

KASIRA: Fine. I'm an adult, I can admit it. I'm afraid of mice, okay. They creep me out.

EKSI: I can't stand them either; it's just that your reaction was so over the top, I forgot to be scared.

CAYLEY: Look, let's not panic, okay? There's no sign of rats, that's the main thing. Mice, yes, but they're harmless.

LYCIA: You needn't worry about rats anyway. I'd imagine if there were any, they met their end in the tsunami.

KASIRA: Not if they were on an upper floor like that mouse.

LYCIA: Maybe. But I get the feeling that if there were rats, they'd have killed all the mice.

KASIRA: They do that, do they?

LYCIA: I don't know. Possibly. Sounds like something they'd do.

KASIRA: That's not enough. When you fly to the mainland tomorrow, Cayley, bring a cat back with you.

CAYLEY: Are you sure that's wise? Nivea's people eat cats, you know?

KASIRA: So do Soapy's. They eat fish too, which is weird.

(She then shook her head.)

KASIRA: That's not even relevant. Point is, I want a resident rat catcher.

LYCIA: You know, certain types of dogs are just as efficient when it comes to catching rodents.

CAYLEY: Nivea's people eat *them* too.

KASIRA: Nivea's not going to eat it!

(She rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: Let's just get a cat, okay?

(Just then Ambre spoke up from the window.)

AMBRE: There's a cat outside, actually. Can we keep it?

KASIRA: What?

AMBRE: It's down there doing a poo next to that steamy fish pond.

(At once, everyone hurried to the window. Upon getting there, Kasira's face lit up. Sure enough, there was cat sitting some fifty metres away, licking its paws.)

KASIRA: Is that what I think it is?

AMBRE: Do you think it's a cat?

KASIRA: Not the cat, Ambre. Next to it.

AMBRE: The fish pond?

CAYLEY: That's not a fish pond, darling. That's a hot spring!

(Ambre's face lit up.)

AMBRE: Like our old bath?

KASIRA: Exactly.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: Girls. I know exactly where our new base is going to be located.

AMBRE: Where?

KASIRA: Around that spa!

AMBRE: Oh yeah. That was obvious really.

EKSI: She's adorable.

AMBRE: Patronising!

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: Nice though.

KASIRA: Girls, this is perfect. We have a rodent catcher and a hot bath nearby. I don't know how the cat survived the tsunami, and who cares. All we need now is something to eat and a bloody long sleep on these comfy sofas. I reckon this island is gonna work out perfectly, I really do.

EKSI: I reckon the cat must have been up here when the tsunami came though.

LYCIA: Does that set your mind at rest about the rats?

CAYLEY: Actually, it does. All in all, I'd say things are turning out pretty well.

(She nodded.)

CAYLEY: Now let's prepare something to eat then get a good night's sleep.

KASIRA: Agreed. And tomorrow, I'm getting in that hot spring.

AMBRE: We'll have to wear bikinis though, seeing as it's outdoors.

KASIRA: Bollocks to that. We're going to be alone on this island for a good few weeks, I'm going as nature intended.

(Ambre grimaced.)

AMBRE: You're all gonna be wandering about naked lots and lots for the next few weeks, aren't you?

(Kasira beamed gleefully.)

KASIRA: Count on it!

Forty minutes later, all eight members of the 123rd wraith containment unit were all seated on school chairs around a fire, just outside the old school building. Kasira, Cayley, Ambre, Eksi and Lycia all looked extremely relaxed. They'd been exceptionally hungry, but having just had their way through large helpings of tuna, adorned with Cayley's special fish sauce, all they needed now was a good long nap. They couldn't have looked more at ease. Sika and Soapy, however, were far from relaxed. Sitting there glowering at Nivea, they were extremely cheesed off. Nivea, on the other hand, couldn't stop smiling.

NIVEA: Priceless. What a night. It started off so badly, now all is good with the world. The temporary base is comfortable, we've got good food, we've got a hot spring, there's an island nearby for shopping and best of all, I finally got my revenge on these two cheeky fuckers.

(Sika and Soapy just gnashed their teeth at her.)

KASIRA: Do I dare ask what you did?

SOAPY: No!

SIKA: Never!

SOAPY: It never happened!

(Soapy and Sika then glanced at each other before swiftly hiding their faces in shame.)

KASIRA: What did you do? They can't even look at each other!

NIVEA: I can't tell you that, ma'am. As my superior, you'd be duty bound to reprimand me. Thankfully, I have the right to remain silent, therefore not incriminating myself.

CAYLEY: It was bad, wasn't it?

NIVEA: No comment. But yes.

KASIRA: Wow. Half of me wants to know, the other half is scared to even imagine it.

NIVEA: Oh, relax. It's not like I *made* them do anything.

SIKA: You did!

SOAPY: I hate you.

NIVEA: Liars. I merely caught you by the thongs, twisted them until you screamed then made a few innocent suggestions.

(She shrugged.)

NIVEA: It's not like I *forced* you to massage each other's boobs.

(Sika and Soapy's heads had never hung so low.)

KASIRA: You made them do that???

NIVEA: Nope, I just gave them both an almighty wedgie then suggested it.

(She exhaled.)

NIVEA: And I thought *I* was good at fondling boobies! I tell you, these two made me look like an amateur.

(She then gushed excitedly.)

NIVEA: I think they're a match, you know.

SIKA: Shut up. That was humiliating!

SOAPY: I've never been so embarrassed.

NIVEA: You mean aroused, right?

SOAPY: No!

SIKA: You suck, Nivea!

NIVEA: No, I don't. But next time, you two might.

(At once, Sika and Soapy resumed staring at the ground in embarrassment.)

NIVEA: Priceless.

(She winked at Lycia.)

NIVEA: Now you know what happens when you're a cheeky little shit. Be warned.

(Lycia scoffed.)

LYCIA: I'm not afraid of you.

SIKA: Be afraid!

SOAPY: Be very afraid.

LYCIA: Why? I've massaged lots of girl's boobies. That doesn't bother me in the slightest.

I'm a lesbian.

(At once, seven pairs of nervous eyes slowly peered towards her.)

KASIRA: You are?

LYCIA: Yeah. Why?

KASIRA: Maybe I'll wear a bikini in the hot spring tomorrow after all.

LYCIA: Oh, don't be like that. I'm not attracted to you.

(She then smiled at Nivea.)

LYCIA: I like the boisterous type.

(At once, Nivea's jaw dropped and she gaped in horror.)

NIVEA: I... I... time for bed!

(With that, she upped and sprinted back into the old school building. Having watched her go, Lycia exhaled then sat back.)

LYCIA: That nipped that nonsense in the bud. And no, by the way, I'm not a lesbian.

(At once, everyone grinned highly amused grins.)

KASIRA: Lycia, you're a star.

SIKA: You're a legend!

SOAPY: You are. I wish I'd thought of that. Keep that lie up and she'll never bother you ever again.

LYCIA: That's the plan.

SIKA: Wow. You're my hero. I've never seen Nivea scared before.

SOAPY: I could kiss you.

(She grimaced.)

SOAPY: I won't though. It was bad enough kissing Sika.

SIKA: Stop mentioning it all the time!!!

SOAPY: That was the first time!

SIKA: Still too many!

(Noticing the others giggling, they then hung their heads again.)

KASIRA: You two should get your own show at the theatre.

(Ambre looked greatly enthused.)

AMBRE: Do you think they'll make a theatre in the new town?

CAYLEY: It's unlikely, Ambre.

AMBRE: Oh. Shame. I like watching plays. I saw one at my academy. It was really, really good. Afterwards, me and some of the other girls went to play in a nearby field.

(She pouted.)

AMBRE: They threw me in a compost heap and left me there.

SIKA: You had a crap time at your academy, didn't you?

AMBRE: It was really, really horrible.

(She shrugged.)

AMBRE: I don't care about that though. Now I have lots and lots of friend and I'm really, really happy.

LYCIA: You have two new friends now, Ambre.

EKSI: Yeah.

AMBRE: Who?

EKSI: Us two.

AMBRE: I was already including you two. You're both really nice.

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: So many friends. And I thought I was gonna get bullied again when I first came to join this unit. How silly was I?

(Kasira smiled.)

KASIRA: Honestly, Ambre, on your first day, you were so scared you could barely speak. And you looked at me with big, terrified eyes.

CAYLEY: Yeah, you were shaking so much, we actually thought you might be ill.

AMBRE: I remember. It was so weird. I was expecting you to shout but you kept being nice. I got all confused.

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: I'm not like that anymore.

KASIRA: You're not even slightly similar. Nowadays you're a confident decorated soldier. Soon to be a corporal.

AMBRE: A corporal? Like Soapy?

KASIRA: Yeah. The six of us original unit members are getting promoted for this; I told you that.

AMBRE: I know. I thought you meant everyone else. Am I *really* getting promoted?

KASIRA: Yeah. You and Sika will both be corporals.

SIKA: About damn time, I reckon. I should have got one after we cleared that bunker.

CAYLEY: Only you thought that, Sika.

SIKA: Then only I was right. I deserve to be a corporal at least.

(She nodded firmly.)

SIKA: And now I am.

SOAPY: Yeah, but I'll be a sergeant. Sucks to be you; always beneath me.

(Kasira grinned.)

KASIRA: Beneath you? Nivea made you do it laying down?

(At once, Sika and Soapy both furrowed their brows at her.)

SOAPY: Not funny!

SIKA: Yeah!

KASIRA: Oh, lighten up, girls. Life is good, don't waste it pouting.

(She smiled.)

KASIRA: Life is *really* good actually. Things have turned out really well. We fell right in the shit earlier but we've and come out smelling of expensive perfume. I could easily have ended up living the rest of my life married to the biggest twat the human race ever cobbled together; I avoided it. We could have ended up being slaughtered by wraiths; we overcame them. We could have been split up; it didn't happen. Instead we've got an amazing opportunity ahead of us with island now. It's ours. And we've all got promotions to boot. Add to that the fact I get to spend time with my little sister and I reckon it's all turned out bloody brilliantly.

CAYLEY: Has to be said, when you think how bleak things looked when we first came to this island, what we've got now is the best we could have hoped for by far. I feel positive about this place, I really do.

SIKA: Actually, so do I. That hot spring is really big, I have a feeling I'll be lounging in there a lot once it's been built around.

SOAPY: When you're not on the mainland looking for talent, you mean?

SIKA: That comes *after* I've bathed, naturally.

(Everyone shared a chuckle then Ambre exhaled.)

AMBRE: I'm so happy that everyone's happy. Yay. I like it when everyone's in a good mood.

KASIRA: On which note, I think I'll go to bed. Our work is done for now, and we've eaten. Now all that remains is to sleep. Finally.

(She then smirked menacingly before offering Sika and Soapy a kind smile.)

KASIRA: Before I go, will you two love birds be wanting your own room tonight, or...

(As Cayley, Eksi, Ambre and Lycia fell about laughing, Sika and Soapy snarled at her bitterly.)

SIKA: Are we ever gonna hear the last of that?

(Kasira could only grin.)

KASIRA: You know what, girls? I very much doubt it.

SIX MONTHS LATER...

Once the new academy on the island was finally built and ready for use, the united nation's army put a plan into action, based entirely on Kasira's success with Ambre. This new academy would be used as a training camp for unit leaders. Before assuming the role of unit leader, candidates would be sent there to learn how to get the most out of soldiers with learning difficulties. Kasira was installed as headmistress and given a class to teach. Cayley was given the role of her deputy. They both remained with the wraith containment unit at the same time. When they were busy with teaching duties, however, leadership had been delegated by the army to Nivea. Soapy was given the role of her second in command and also promoted further up the ladder to captain. Sika then protested to the high command that if Soapy deserved a double promotion, so did she. Her complaint was ignored.

The island had changed beyond all recognition in the last six months. It had literally been transformed. Not only had the school building been renovated throughout and converted into an academy, but all the old houses had been knocked down and rebuilt. They were now inhabited by academy staff and workers from the new row of shops which had been built. Best of all, a large army base had been built to Kasira's specifications around the hot spring. Kasira and her subordinates couldn't have been happier with the changes. There was even a ferry service to the mainland, run by the son of one of the shop owners.

As for the rest of the island, the lake had been cleaned and was now teeming with fish again; not a deadly piranha in sight. The orchard had recovered and a small hotel was now being built on the far side, to attract tourists. The watchtower at the top of the hill had also been renovated. The army had initially wanted it to be knocked down, but Kasira was hearing none of it. That tower had been her unit's salvation, so instead, she made the builders transform it into a beacon. She then got them to install the island's flag pole a safe distance along the peak from it. Every night, at dusk, the girls would now march up the hill to do their flag ceremony then light the beacon. It was quite a glorious sight and would forever be something of a landmark.

Having started her dual role as unit leader and academy headmistress, Kasira couldn't have been happier. Having something extra to keep her busy was quite the blessing. Serving as a soldier had always left her with vast amounts of downtime and she often got bored. That was no longer the case. Every two weeks, she'd get a new intake of potential future unit leaders and she enjoyed sharing her philosophy with them. Best of all, she didn't have to tell them if

they'd passed or failed her course. Only the army were privileged to that information. She never had to look someone in the eye and tell them they'd failed.

All in all, life was rosy on the island and the girls of the 123rd wraith containment unit truly believed they'd landed on their feet. They couldn't have been happier with their lot.

One particular Monday morning, Kasira strode into the busy main assembly hall within the academy. Pacing purposefully forth, she then stepped up onto a raised platform to address those in attendance. A new two week cycle had begun and she was welcoming the new intake to the academy. Heeding Cayley's advice to dress down whilst on teaching duty, she'd chosen a skirt that came down below her knees. Her previous classes had all been somewhat distracted by her legs and it was somewhat annoying. And so, she'd opted to wear something longer, to stop them drooling. The skirt she'd opted to wear this time was so tight, however, it immediately had the adverse effect. At once, all the male students started to wolf whistle and drool. The females growled. Mercifully, Kasira knew exactly how to stop them. Staring out from the stage, she simply folded her arms and introduced herself.

KASIRA: Morning everyone. I'm *Major* Kasira Ashwood.

(Upon realising she was a high-ranking officer and not a mere academic, everyone immediately fell silent and grimaced at her nervously.)

KASIRA: That's better.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: Welcome to New Capsway Island Academy. Before I split you up into your classes, I'm going to tell you a little about why you're here. Things are changing! The army are sick of wasting their resources. For years now, they've been wasting time and money training young people they can't get through to. People who can't keep up with the tried and trusted training methods. People who have difficulties understand things and learning. They're not going to do that anymore. Those who find training too difficult are going to be sent to units to learn on the job.

(Acknowledging the baffled looks on everyone's faces, Kasira stood at ease.)

KASIRA: Sounds a little odd, doesn't it?

(She then started to pace back and forth slowly along the platform, staring out at the audience as she did so.)

KASIRA: You see, the army have decided that their training works. And it does. It works for most people. Most of us go off to units at least knowing the basics of the job. Changing that would be foolhardy. There are, however, people who for no fault of their own, can't cope with the training regime. The mentally retarded, you may call them. Some cruelly dub them idiots. I call them special cases.

(She then stopped and placed her hands on her hips, evoking a lusty gasp from the males.)

KASIRA: It'll be down to unit leaders to teach them from now on. We're here to show you how.

(She then started to pace again.)

KASIRA: Military units do two patrols a day. One hour's work between six people. Some say six to a squad is too many. Wait until they get a haze break then see if they still feel the same way. It's six to a squad for a reason. And that gives everyone a lot of down time. Down time that can easily be used giving a special case the time and attention he or she needs to learn their skills. To learn their skills in a friendly environment. A friendly environment that you, as a leader, will be expected to nurture.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: Over the next two weeks, you're going to learn how to do that. Special cases arrive at their units scared witless of what's to come. You're going to learn how to reassure them and how to make sure the rest of your unit treat them with respect. And you will be judged on how well you do that. The army is going to keep records of how well each special case performs. You *will* be assessed.

(She smiled.)

KASIRA: Those of you of a humane disposition, will find it easy. Those of you without one, will fail this course and never become a leader. It's as simple as that.

(She then stopped pacing and stood at ease again.)

KASIRA: My unit had a special case arrive just four years ago. She was terrified of her own shadow. She had no self-belief and expected to be shouted at constantly. Instead, my unit and I took the time to get to know her and trained her at her own pace during our down time.

(She smiled.)

KASIRA: She's now a decorated soldier. An asset to the team. She even received a medal for outstanding achievement. And it wasn't a sympathy medal either. She literally has skills that go above and beyond the rest of her race. You may have heard about her, actually. She's a swift-human. And she can communicate with her Saxum to the point where it heals itself. She can even control the minds of wraiths and make them attack each other. Her existence isn't a myth, like some say. She's real and you'll meet her later in the week. The academy taught her nothing; she was there for five years. The kindness and patience of her unit, however, has seen her flourish. The army want more of that.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: And that's why you're here.

(She then resumed pacing.)

KASIRA: Okay, now let me introduce you to your form teachers.

(She nodded to the left side of the room.)

KASIRA: The lovely blonde lady to your left is Brigadier Cayley Avanti. I've worked with her for the past nine years. As you can see, she's an airborne human. She was instrumental in nurturing our special case.

(She smiled.)

KASIRA: Next to her is Brigadier James Mortimer. He's a swift-human as you can see from his height. He had two special cases in his old unit, both of whom have reached the rank of sergeant having become competent in battle. And next to him, we have Brigadier Lucy Smith. She campaigned for special training such as this for several years and finally managed to convince the high command to open this academy.

(She grinned.)

KASIRA: So to any of you sergeants and captains who thought this would be an easy ride, your teacher *does* outrank you! And yes, insubordination will be reported back to the high command.

(She then pointed to the back of the hall.)

KASIRA: Waiting patiently at the back, we have the rest of the staff from the physical education department, the dorms, the canteen and the support department.

(She nodded to acknowledge them then stood tall.)

KASIRA: Now all that remains is to split you into classes. If a teacher reads your name, please go and stand by them. Cayley?

CAYLEY: Ma'am.

(With that, Cayley read the names of twenty students. One by one, they all stood up and sheepishly made their way towards her. This process was then repeated by James and Lucy. Once the three of them had finished, Kasira then nodded from the platform.)

KASIRA: Good luck, everyone. If your name wasn't read out, bad luck; you've got me as your teacher. The rest of you can now follow your teacher to your classroom. Dismiss.
(With that, Cayley, James and Lucy led their students from the hall. Left behind, Kasira glanced across the faces of her class and smiled.)

KASIRA: Any questions before we go to class?

(Nobody moved.)

KASIRA: Nobody?

(She could see one of the males in her class desperately wanted to say something, so she looked his way and smiled warmly.)

KASIRA: Don't be shy. Say what's on your mind.

(Trembling, he then blurted out exactly what he was thinking.)

ERIC: I love you!

(Kasira grimaced.)

KASIRA: Right...

(Just then, one of the females spoke up.)

ELLA: Where did you get that skirt, ma'am? It's so slutty, I have to have one.

KASIRA: Slutty? It's calf length.

(Eric drooled.)

ERIC: But so tight.

ELLA: See? It reduced all the guys to salivating halfwits, I must have one.

JADE: Me too.

(Kasira grimaced.)

KASIRA: This is no good. I'll have to change into a different one at lunchtime.

ERIC: A shorter one!

KEN: Please do. Really, really short.

KASIRA: Hey!

(She sneered.)

KASIRA: I'm your superior and your tutor; stop being perverts.

JADE: All men are perverts, ma'am.

KASIRA: That's true.

(She sighed.)

KASIRA: This happens every sodding time. No matter what I wear!

(She then nodded sternly.)

KASIRA: Even so, show some decorum. Now come one. Let's get to class.

(With that, she strutted away, followed by her pupils; half of them drooling at her skirt clinging tightly to her legs. As she did so, she allowed herself a satisfied grin then mumbled under her breath.)

KASIRA: Still got it.

That lunchtime, Kasira and Cayley headed from the academy en route to the base. Looking forward to having lunch with their unit-mates, they couldn't wait to get there. Pacing forth, they chatted about Kasira's choice of skirt; the consensus being that men who'd been stuck in a base with other men for years on end would probably drool no matter what she wore. Cayley had had the same problem.

Inside the base at this time, Ambre, Nivea, Sika, Soapy, Eksi and Lycia were all drinking tea around the dining table. Nivea had taken to wearing her darkened goggles all the time and sleeping at night like everyone else did. Being the only nocturnal member of the unit had given her too many lonely nights and she'd had enough of it.

As she sipped at her tea, Ambre exhaled merrily then looked to Eksi.

AMBRE: You make really nice tea, Eksi.

EKSI: Thank you.

NIVEA: She can cook too.

EKSI: My mum taught me.

SIKA: Shame she didn't teach Kasira while she was at it.

EKSI: She did. I don't know what happened there.

NIVEA: I'll never forget the first time Kasira made us a meal. I mean, the horror.

LYCIA: What was it?

NIVEA: That's the thing. We couldn't figure it out. We just stared at our plates in terror.
(She shuddered.)

NIVEA: It tasted like badger droppings.

AMBRE: Did you eat it?

NIVEA: You were there, Ambre. We all faked a bout of sickness then met up later in the kitchen after she'd gone to bed to make some sandwiches.

(Ambre chuckled.)

AMBRE: Oh, yeah.

NIVEA: Cayley took over *all* the cooking duties after that. She wasn't willing to risk a repeat.

SIKA: Can you imagine if Kasira had gone off to start married life with Lassu.

SOAPY: He'd have eaten *out* every day.

NIVEA: And eaten *her* out every day, lucky bitch.

(Everyone groaned in disgust.)

NIVEA: What? He might have been a bell-end, but he was fit. Don't even try telling me you wouldn't like to bag a guy like that.

SIKA: Yeah, but...

NIVEA: But nothing. If any of you had a fit boyfriend and he was willing to go down there every day, not one of you would stop him. If you say otherwise, you're a liar.

(Everyone just shrugged and mumbled incoherently.)

NIVEA: See? Acting all shocked. Whatever next?

AMBRE: I'm uncomfortable now.

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: Tell us that story again, Nivea.

NIVEA: About cunnilingus?

AMBRE: I don't know what that is.

NIVEA: Oh you will one day, and you'll enjoy finding out.

SIKA: Nivea; behave. What story, Ambre?

AMBRE: The one about Kasira and that builder. That always makes me giggle.

(At once, they all started to chuckle.)

NIVEA: You sure you want to hear it again?

AMBRE: Yes.

SIKA: So do I, actually.

AMBRE: You tell it really well.

NIVEA: Fair enough.

(She sat back then began.)

NIVEA: Well, as you know, after several weeks that ship finally turned up with our supplies, accompanied by another ship full of builders and building materials. You lot unloaded our supplies and Kasira and I went to meet the building foreman.

SOAPY: You can skip that bit.

LYCIA: Yeah, get to the funny part.

NIVEA: Who's telling this, me or you?

AMBRE: Carry on, Nivea.

NIVEA: Thank you.

(She grinned.)

NIVEA: He was a right stuffy twat, he was. The foreman I mean. Clearly never done a day's building in his life. He was there to supervise and throw his weight around while all the real men did the work, you could tell that just from looking at him.

SIKA: Wake me up when she gets to the good bit.

AMBRE: Don't be mean, Sika. I want to hear this.

SIKA: Whatever.

NIVEA: Anyway, as I was saying, Kasira and I stepped up to him and Kasira held out her hand to greet him. He just sneered at her. He refused her handshake and looked her up and down like she was pond scum. Naturally, we both assumed he didn't realise who she was, so Kasira tried to introduce herself. She got as far as saying "I'm Kasira Ash".

AMBRE: Rude!

NIVEA: Right? Anyway, he cut over her with this belittling snarl on his face. "It doesn't matter who *you* are, he said. "I'm Commander Brian Pratt; 6th building and maintenance division." He said he wasn't there to make friends or be civil, then ordered her and her 'silly band of troops' to stay out of his builder's way.

(She grinned.)

NIVEA: I thought Kasira might react, you know? Instead she calmly said, "Fine, I'll show you where to build the base then get out of your hair." You should have seen his face. He was livid.

(She chuckled.)

NIVEA: His cheeks went all red and he told her in no uncertain terms that he was going to build the base where he saw fit, and if she got in his way there'd be severe consequences. He then bawled in her face. "Do I make myself clear, Captain?"

(She shook her head with amusement.)

NIVEA: Kasira was so calm. That's what made it so funny. If she'd pouted or got annoyed, it wouldn't be funny. Instead she was as cool as cool gets. She just smiled and said, "Actually, we have very specific plans for where to put the base, and I think you should honour them."

(She chuckled once again.)

NIVEA: I thought he was going to explode, I really did. He stepped closer to her and growled at her though gritted teeth. He said, "Now listen here, Captain..." He then started fishing for her name and checked his records. I swear, he turned as white as a sheet. His bottom lip started to quiver then he read from his notes, trembling.

AMBRE: I like this bit.

NIVEA: He seemed to lose a foot in height and whimpered, "*Major* Kasira Ashwood?" And the best part is, Kasira just smiled at him like he was an old friend. "That's right, Commander", she said. "*Major* Kasira Ashwood."

(As Ambre chuckled heartedly, Nivea continued.)

NIVEA: She then offered him a warm smile and gestured towards the hot spring. "Shall I show you where we want the base now, *Commander*?" she said. It was so funny. She then swaggered away swinging her hips in the cockiest way possible. All he could do was follow her with his shoulders slumped. He was so humiliated. I don't think the fact Kasira and I could stop giggling helped his cause much. It was brilliant.

AMBRE: So funny. I wish I'd been there.

SOAPY: Brilliant.

SIKA: She learned from the master, I reckon.

NIVEA: The master?

SIKA: Yeah, Major Miles. He did a similar thing to *her*, remember? She kept calling him a pencil pusher, when she met him. He didn't correct her or pull rank; he let her find out his rank the hard way then sat there grinning while she squirmed.

NIVEA: Good point. Still, it was funny. He kissed her arse big time after that. I reckon he was scared she'd report his insubordination to the high command.

LYCIA: That's probably why we ended up with a massive base made from all the finest materials.

NIVEA: Probably.

(She then sighed sorrowfully.)

NIVEA: Those were happy times, but now all those hunky builders have moved on.

SIKA: Slut. How many did you sleep with?

NIVEA: I forget.

LYCIA: You're hardly one to talk, Sika. You banged a few.

SIKA: A few, yeah. She must have banged all of them!

NIVEA: Probably.

SIKA: And besides, only Lycia and Soapy abstained from the action.

(Eksi grimaced.)

EKSI: Don't tell Kasira that.

AMBRE: I was going to say that.

SIKA: Shame on you, Ambre.

AMBRE: Shut up. I only did it with one. And he still writes to me.

(At once, she had everyone's full attention.)

NIVEA: What did he say?

AMBRE: I'm not sure. I can't read all of it. He used long words.

NIVEA: I'll read it to you later, if you like.

(Ambre pouted and shook her head.)

AMBRE: Private! I'll read it when I've got better at reading.

NIVEA: He might lose interest if you wait.

SOAPY: I'll read it to you, if you like.

(She glowered at Nivea.)

SOAPY: That way the contents won't be all round the island five minutes later.

AMBRE: Yay. Thanks, Soapy.

NIVEA: Like that, is it?

(Just then, Kasira and Cayley paced into the room to join them. At once, Ambre shrieked in terror.)

AMBRE: Change the subject!!!

KASIRA: What?

CAYLEY: What subject?

NIVEA: Ambre's boyfriend!

AMBRE: Nivea!!!

KASIRA: Behave. Ambre's a good girl. She wouldn't hide something like that.

AMBRE: Actually...

CAYLEY: Is there any tea in the pot, girls?

KASIRA: If not, can you make some while I knock us up some sandwiches.

(Cayley's eyes bulged in terror.)

CAYLEY: No!!! I'll make the sandwiches!

(Kasira furrowed her brow at her.)

KASIRA: I can make sandwiches, Cayley! It's not like you have to cook them.

CAYLEY: Sorry. It's a reflex reaction to you going in the kitchen.

(Kasira pouted at her for a moment then started to chuckle.)

KASIRA: I need a new best friend.

CAYLEY: You'd only be trading down, darling.

KASIRA: That's true.

NIVEA: We already made sandwiches anyway, just come and sit down. And yes, there's fresh tea in the pot.

AMBRE: Eksi made it. It's yummy.

(Delighted that lunch was already made, Cayley and Kasira paced over to the large table then joined them.)

KASIRA: Many wraiths on the morning patrol?

SOAPY: About a hundred.

KASIRA: That's a lot.

NIVEA: This place is bigger than the old island, Kasira. We've been getting that many quite a lot.

SIKA: Some of them take a while to reach us too, they have to go round the lake. I'd fill that thing in if it was left to me.

AMBRE: I like that lake. It's pretty.

SOAPY: They don't all come at once because of that thing, which actually makes the culls easier.

SIKA: Longer too. So annoying.

LYCIA: Maddening, right? Now you have to do ten minutes work a day rather than six.

SIKA: Exactly. Stupid lake.

KASIRA: I might join you tonight, actually. It's been a while since I did a patrol.

CAYLEY: Do you miss it?

KASIRA: A little bit, yeah.

(She shrugged.)

KASIRA: Mostly, I miss working alongside you lot. It's never dull.

AMBRE: Don't you like the teaching job then?

KASIRA: I love it. Don't get me wrong. I just miss patrols, that's all. Teaching is fun, even if do spend half my time chastising lusty, sex-starved male soldiers.

NIVEA: You're surrounded by sex starved men and you're complaining?

KASIRA: They stare, Nivea. And they're not subtle either. It's seriously off-putting.

NIVEA: You say that, but it can't be bad for your ego, right? Admit it.

(Kasira smirked.)

KASIRA: I don't deny that I've enjoyed a little flirt from time to time, Nivea.

(Cayley grinned.)

CAYLEY: You do that too, huh?

KASIRA: Yup. But mostly the men just annoy me.

CAYLEY: Oh, me too. Very annoying.

(They then shared a stealthy fist bump under the table.)

AMBRE: Your job sounds like fun. I wish I could go there more often.

SIKA: We don't get to go there at all.

SOAPY: We're not interesting apparently.

KASIRA: I meant that in a nice way. Ambre and her successes are what that academy are all about; so we bring her in for a Q and A once a fortnight.

(Ambre beamed.)

AMBRE: Everyone thinks I'm really, really amazing.

KASIRA: They drool over *your* legs too.

AMBRE: They think I'm sexy too. Yay.

(Kasira then nodded.)

KASIRA: Yeah, I'll definitely come on the night patrol, I think. Why not? I might as well maximise the fun I'm having.

(Sika looked thoughtful.)

SIKA: We *are* having fun, aren't we?

SOAPY: We are!

SIKA: Yeah. This island is pleasant to walk around, the base absolutely rocks, there's no townspeople looking to kick our heads in... being here is great.

NIVEA: You're right actually. Nothing feels like a chore here.

EKSI: I'm loving it.

LYCIA: So am I.

AMBRE: I'm having lots and lots of fun too. This island is better than the old one for certain.

KASIRA: I couldn't agree more.

(She grinned.)

KASIRA: And it's written into my contract that I get to choose my staff, so you can stay here for your entire careers.

CAYLEY: Four months in my case.

(Kasira pouted.)

KASIRA: It's gonna suck when you leave.

CAYLEY: I don't think I will actually. Like you say, this place is fun. I'd be a fool not to stay on and get paid for the privilege.

KASIRA: I hope you do. That'd make everything pretty much perfect.

(Ambre smiled.)

AMBRE: I hope you stay too, Cayley. I love you to bits.

NIVEA: We all do.

(At once, everyone nodded in full agreement.)

CAYLEY: Are you all genuinely being nice or are you just fishing for bacon kebabs for dinner tonight?

SIKA: Bacon kebabs!

CAYLEY: Thought so.

(They all shared a chuckle then Ambre glanced away thoughtfully.)

AMBRE: So happy. We get to stay here for the rest of our army careers. Mine was going to be cut short. I was going to leave with you, Kasira. Now I get to do my whole ten years.

And more. I'm happy about that. If I'd left early, people would ask me about it. I'd have to tell them it's because I'm really stupid and can't do things.

KASIRA: Ambre, you're not stupid and you can do things.

AMBRE: Yeah, but that's what they'd think.

KASIRA: Fuck what other people think.

(She nodded sternly.)

KASIRA: Ambre, you're a fine soldier, darling. And you're part of the best damned unit this army will ever see. Every single one of you, brings something to the table. Power, skill, kindness, leadership, wit; every attribute a unit needs to thrive is seated around this table right now.

(She smiled.)

KASIRA: It's no fluke that we're in this privileged position now, girls. Each and every one of you has earned it.

NIVEA: Except Eksi and Lycia, those two little shits just got lucky.

EKSI: Fair point.

LYCIA: Yeah.

KASIRA: Fine, if that's how you choose to look at it, go ahead. The fact remains though, that we're a group of highly-skilled soldiers who *deserve* this happiness. And what's more... (She then grinned playfully.)

KASIRA: We're all seriously sexy babes!

(At once, a cheer rose up then they all started to chuckle. Kasira's words, had struck a chord with them all. They had a lot to be happy about. Best of all, their joy was set to remain for the rest of the entire army careers.)

THE END

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Completed – 28/09/2016.