

FUTILE FANTASY CREATIONS PRESENT...

THE LOST FORTRESS OF CAPSWAY ISLAND.

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

Capsway Island on a dry night was a joy to behold. A true feast for the senses. The blanket of stars above made for a glorious sight, as did the moon's reflection, shimmering brightly upon the sea. Set to a soundtrack of the waves gently lapping the shore, it truly was a wonderful place to be. Everything about it felt right. The air was warm, but after dark, a slight breeze would hang in the air, creating a refreshing feel upon the skin.

Many believed that Capsway Island on a dry night was the perfect place to spend an evening outdoors. On this particular night, however, the second youngest member of the island's wraith containment unit, Sika, may have begged to differ.

Upon the hilltop at the centre of Capsway Island, which overlooked the entire island, an angry wraith with teeth like daggers and an appetite for death, charged headlong towards her. With no other thought other than to devour its winged-human prey, it growled and snarled as it hurtled forth. Standing facing it, almost waiting to see the whites of its eyes before she reacted, Sika stared hard at its face and barely even flinched. Almost as if she was trying to frighten it off with nothing more than a stare, she stood firm with her arms in a relaxed position. As the foul creature reached within ten feet of her, however, she threw out her arms and blasted it with her vortex-like magic. At once, the wraith exploded into dust leaving her smirking arrogantly at herself.

SIKA: Next!

(As she stood there bobbing her head arrogantly, Cayley, second in command of her unit, stepped up to her and smiled.)

CAYLEY: You're done.

SIKA: That was ten, was it? Felt more like six or seven. It's so easy I don't even count them anymore.

(She nodded.)

SIKA: In fact, I think its safe to say I've got this exercise down, Cayley. Let's say I passed and stop wasting your time bringing me up here every night.

(Cayley gave her a condescending glance.)

CAYLEY: You know I can't do that, Sika. You'll be up here every night doing this until your punishment period is over.

SIKA: That's not fair. It's never going to be over.

CAYLEY: Of course it will.

SIKA: No it won't. It's up to Kasira how long I have to keep doing this punishment for and she's *never* going to let me off. Ever. Never ever.

(Cayley turned and glanced to the sky.)

CAYLEY: Yeah, well, you brought this on yourself, Sika.

SIKA: Cayley, I made one simple mistake; that's all.

(Cayley gave her an exasperated glance.)

CAYLEY: One? Simple? You made several outrageous ones!!!

SIKA: Oh, come on; it wasn't that bad.

CAYLEY: Wasn't that bad? Sika, you stopped concentrating in the middle of a battle. As a result you missed all the wraiths and accidentally blew Kasira, your commanding officer, fifty feet into the air!

SIKA: Fifty feet? Hardly.

CAYLEY: Sika, she almost head-butted the clouds.

(Sika furrowed her brow.)

SIKA: That is *such* an exaggeration.

CAYLEY: Even so! She took off into the sky, Sika. Blown up there by your magic.

SIKA: Yeah, but...

CAYLEY: You were busy nattering, lost focus and hit Kasira with your magic instead of the wraiths. Land-bound humans aren't supposed to see the world from up there.

SIKA: Yeah, but no harm was done; I mean, not really.

CAYLEY: Only because I was on hand to throw healing magic at her. What if I hadn't decided to get some fresh air? I wasn't even *on* that patrol officially. The fact I was there was an outrageous stroke of good fortune.

SIKA: Yeah, but you *were* there, so everything worked out fine; there's no need to keep punishing me. I do *know* I made a mistake, Cayley.

CAYLEY: Yeah, well, maybe it wouldn't have been so bad if your mistake had ended there, but no. While I was busy healing her in mid air, you panicked and ran around in circles screaming, "Oh no, oh no, I've killed Kasira."

SIKA: Well... I thought I had.

CAYLEY: Instead of killing the wraiths quickly so she could get proper help, you ran about panicking, which in turn made Ambre panic. She heard you'd killed Kasira and lost control of Fluffy completely. He disappeared and next thing the poor girl knew, she had a hoard of fifty wraiths stampeding in her direction.

(She sighed.)

CAYLEY: Luckily for you, she's a fast little thing and managed to run back to base before they could eat her face.

SIKA: It's not my fault Ambre panicked! She panics all the time!

CAYLEY: Yes it is. *You* made her panic; you told her Kasira was dead!

SIKA: But...

CAYLEY: No! No more buts from you, Sika. It's bad enough that you lost focus and made Kasira take off into the sky like a human firework, but to panic like that was unforgivable. In that situation, all you had to do was kill off the wraiths so Kasira could get medical attention, but no, you panicked and almost got Ambre lynched as well. There's no excuses for that. If I hadn't been there, Kasira may well have died on impact when she came back to earth. And if Ambre wasn't such a fast runner... I don't even want to think about that. It was a complete and utter debacle thanks to you.

(Sika kicked the dirt bitterly.)

SIKA: I think you're being overly harsh there.

CAYLEY: I don't! The three of you went up there to kill the wraiths, *I* just went for a walk. And none of you even came *close* to polishing off the wraiths because of *your* actions. It was Soapy's night off and *she* ended up killing most of them outside the base while Ambre hid in a cupboard trembling. It took us three hours to talk her out!

SIKA: Maybe she really liked it in that cupboard.

CAYLEY: Sika, no!

SIKA: Oh, whatever. Fine. Look, I admit I could have done things differently...

CAYLEY: You mean better!

SIKA: That too, but in the end, nobody was hurt and punishing me for it is just mean.

CAYLEY: Wow! Sika, when are you going to start accepting responsibility for you actions and grow up? Nobody was amused by what you did. And the fact you won't just accept the consequences and *admit* you messed up is starting to annoy everyone. You need to shape up, girl. Kasira isn't going to tolerate it much longer.

(Sika glanced away nervously.)

SIKA: Kasira's not *really* angry at me, Cayley. I mean, she only issued this punishment out of a sense of duty. She's just playing the boss card.

CAYLEY: Not angry at you? Sika, she took her three week vacation early because she feared she'd kill you if she stayed here on the island. Trust me, she's pretty blooming angry.

SIKA: Then maybe she needs to learn to chill out.

CAYLEY: If some idiot blew you into the sky, would *you* chill out?

SIKA: Yeah. It wouldn't worry me in the slightest. I can fly.

(Cayley spammed herself on the forehead.)

CAYLEY: No, wait.

(She then spammed Sika on the forehead instead.)

SIKA: Hey!

CAYLEY: Listen. You've been given this extra training to heighten your focus. Once you've perfected it and Kasira thinks you're up to it, only then will you be allowed back on patrol. Until then you'll just have to put up with the indignity of being on probation, okay?

SIKA: Fine. It's your loss. If you're all so jealous of my awesomeness that you have to treat me like a child, so be it. I don't care. I shall rise above it.

(With that, she folded her arms and pouted like a schoolgirl.)

SIKA: So there.

CAYLEY: Fine! When Kasira comes back from her vacation tomorrow, I'll pass that onto her.

(Sika's eyes immediately bulged.)

SIKA: Don't! I'll be good. I promise. Sorry, Cayley. That debacle was totally my fault. I admit it now, okay? Don't tell Kasira I said otherwise. Last time I saw her, I genuinely thought she was going to strangle me.

(She whimpered.)

SIKA: I've seen her angry a few times now, mostly at me, but I've never seen her in a fit of rage, on the verge of exploding before. It was terrifying.

(Cayley gave a stifled laugh.)

CAYLEY: Fine. I'll tell her you admitted liability and that you've done well with the training. What she does with that information, you'll find out tomorrow, I guess.

SIKA: Thanks, Cayley.

CAYLEY: Now come on, let's go and grab a cup of tea.

SIKA: Yay!

(With that, they headed off back towards the base.)

SIKA: So, Kasira's coming back tomorrow morning, right?

CAYLEY: Yeah.

SIKA: And those hunky guys are due to deliver our supplies tomorrow *night*, right?

CAYLEY: That's right.

SIKA: Co-incidence?

(Cayley smirked.)

CAYLEY: *She'll* claim it is, I expect.

SIKA: Right? Who does she think she's fooling?

(Just then, the loud cry of a wraith echoed across the sky. At once, Cayley and Sika stopped walking and glanced all about themselves.)

SIKA: What the fuck was that?

(Glancing across the sky, Cayley bit her lip.)

CAYLEY: I don't know. It happens every few months or so.

SIKA: I know, but what is it?

CAYLEY: I just told you, I don't know. First time we heard it, we scoured the entire island. There was nothing.

SIKA: It has to come from somewhere.

CAYLEY: I think it must be sound carried from miles away. There's an abandoned island forty miles from here, it must come from there.

SIKA: Do you reckon?

CAYLEY: It's the only explanation. That first time, half the island went looking for it. Nobody found a thing.

(She grimaced.)

CAYLEY: We got a lot of abuse that night.

SIKA: I can imagine.

(She shrugged.)

SIKA: Still, those days are behind us. The locals love us now.

CAYLEY: Good thing too.

(She smiled.)

CAYLEY: Anyway, come on. Let's get back to base. Whatever that noise is, there's nothing *we* can do about it.

SIKA: Righto.

(With that, they continued on to the base.)

Little did they know, however, as they headed on down the hill, in a large concrete room fifty feet below where they were walking, a plethora of giant wraiths were scrapping violently. Three times the size of the average wraith and twice as vicious, they were ripping into a group of smaller wraiths that had spawned that evening. Having no idea that any such dwelling existed, however, the two airborne-humans returned to their base, satisfied that the island was once again free of wraiths; at least for the night.)

A few minutes later, having returned from the hilltop, Cayley and Sika strolled into the base's mess room and found the youngest and newest member of their unit, Soapy, standing in the corner, with her face to the wall. Sitting at the large dining table, the third in command, Nivea, was grinning at her fiendishly. To Nivea's side, Ambre sat drawing a picture. She looked most uncomfortable. Taking it as read that the fun loving Nivea was playing a prank on the unfortunate newcomer, Cayley rolled her eyes.

CAYLEY: Really, Nivea?

(Nivea winked at Cayley then nodded.)

NIVEA: Yes, Cayley, really!

(She sighed ruefully.)

NIVEA: Madam here needs to learn some respect.

SIKA: What did she do?

CAYLEY: Nothing, I expect. Nivea, you can't make her stand in the corner just for the fun of it; that's abusing your rank.

NIVEA: It's not just for the fun of it! She said, being blonde, how long did it take me to learn which end of my sword to hold. That's blondism!

(Soapy shook her head.)

SOAPY: It was a joke! And there's no such thing as blondism!

(Cayley smirked.)

CAYLEY: Oh, but there is.

(Cayley didn't normally take part in pranks, but being blonde herself, she couldn't resist the urge to play along.)

CAYLEY: Blondism is a serious problem in airborne-human lands!

SIKA: No it isn't!

CAYLEY: Be quiet, Sika! Yes it is. I suffered a lot as a kid.

(She nodded.)

CAYLEY: We can't have that. When Kasira's here there's five races under this roof and that means there's no room for discrimination. This is going on your record, Soapy.

SOAPY: But...

SIKA: That's a bit harsh!

(Cayley glowered at Sika then continued.)

CAYLEY: Now drop and give us fifty push-ups!

SOAPY: Fifty?

CAYLEY: Did I mumble, soldier? I said fifty!

(Soapy pouted then got down on the floor.)

SOAPY: For pity's sake. It was only a joke!

(She then proceeded to start doing push-ups. As she did so, Nivea and Cayley shared an amused grin. Spotting their grin, Sika looked enlightened.)

SIKA: Oh, I get it. You're playing a prank!

(At once, Soapy froze and glowered at Cayley. In that moment, both Cayley and Nivea burst out laughing. Soapy was not amused.)

SOAPY: Oh, very funny!!!

NIVEA: It was!

(As Soapy climbed to her feet, Sika smirked at her playfully.)

SIKA: I can't believe they got you again.

CAYLEY: And I can't believe you gave the game away, Sika!

SIKA: My bad!

NIVEA: Now we have to punish *you*! Bring her over here so I give her boobs a squeeze.

CAYLEY: I won't be doing that, Nivea.

(Sika covered her boobs and scowled.)

SIKA: Yeah, you can leave my boobies alone.

NIVEA: We'll see.

(With that, Cayley smiled then headed for the kitchen.)

CAYLEY: I'll bring us tea and cake.

(Ambre beamed excitedly.)

AMBRE: Yay! Is it chocolate cake? I like chocolate cake!

CAYLEY: It's vanilla and strawberry!

AMBRE: I like that too!

(As Cayley disappeared into the kitchen, Ambre exhaled then returned to her drawing.)

AMBRE: Yay. Cake.

Ten minutes later, the coffee was served and the five of them were sat around the table, enjoying a slice of cake. As they did so, Sika glanced at Ambre's drawing and raised a curious eyebrow.)

SIKA: What's that black stick thing?

AMBRE: That's Kasira.

SIKA: Kasira? Kasira isn't black.

AMBRE: What?

SIKA: That stick person; Kasira apparently; she's black.
AMBRE: I always draw people like that.
SIKA: But Kasira's white. Do her in white.
(Ambre looked most bewildered.)
AMBRE: But... the paper's white. How would I...
CAYLEY: Leave the poor girl alone, Sika.
SIKA: I was only saying. Kasira's white.
AMBRE: Her hair's black!
SIKA: Her arms and legs aren't.
NIVEA: Sika, stop it!
(She rolled her eyes.)
NIVEA: Your picture's lovely, Ambre. I'm sure Kasira will love it.
AMBRE: No she won't. I'm not going to show it to her.
CAYLEY: Why not?
AMBRE: I'm twenty three years old and I draw like a six-year old. It's embarrassing. I was only doing it to pass the time. Now I'm eating cake and that's much more fun.
SOAPY: She's adorable.
AMBRE: Patronising!
(She beamed.)
AMBRE: But thanks.
NIVEA: I think you should show her. Kasira will be overjoyed to know you were thinking of her while she was away.
(Ambre looked thoughtful.)
AMBRE: Maybe.
(Nivea grinned.)
NIVEA: Speaking of Kasira. It's delivery day tomorrow. And she's timed her return just so she can be here when those six hunky blokes arrive with our stuff. What a surprise.
SIKA: We were just talking about that.
AMBRE: Well, she needs to be here to supervise everything.
NIVEA: Yeah, so she says. We all know the *real* reason though.
AMBRE: That *is* the real reason. Kasira doesn't lie.
(Marvelling at Ambre's innocence, Cayley smiled.)
CAYLEY: It's not her only reason, Ambre. Kasira's rather fond of their leader. She thinks we haven't noticed that though.
AMBRE: We haven't.
SIKA: You mean *you* haven't!
AMBRE: I have actually. They always disappear into her office.
(She then turned red and looked away.)
AMBRE: So you've noticed that as well?
NIVEA: Of course. She's not as subtle as she thinks she is.
(Ambre pouted.)
AMBRE: We shouldn't be mean about Kasira behind her back.
SIKA: Actually, that's the best place to do it. Do it to her face and she'll kill us.
AMBRE: That's not what I meant!
CAYLEY: Relax, Ambre, nobody's being mean about her. We love her too, remember?
(She shrugged.)
CAYLEY: We're just discussing her endearing quirks, that's all.
(Ambre smiled.)
AMBRE: I don't know what that means, but okay.
SOAPY: Too adorable.

SIKA: That's our Ambre.

AMBRE: Oh, stop. But thanks. Again.

(Soapy then looked to Sika and bit her lip.)

SOAPY: Are you nervous about Kasira coming back? When she left, she couldn't even look at you without clenching her fists.

NIVEA: And her buttocks.

(Sika threw out a hand dismissively.)

SIKA: It'll be fine. I've done my punishment every night and I just told Cayley how repentant I am.

SOAPY: And she believed you?

SIKA: Hey! I meant it. Even if the punishment has been overly harsh.

CAYLEY: Sika, the punishment was perfectly...

(She rolled her eyes then looked to the ceiling.)

CAYLEY: I'm sick of saying it. Let's talk about something else.

SOAPY: Or not. I'm hoping Kasira forgives you tomorrow, Sika. It's annoying having to catch ten wraiths for your extra training everyday. We have to do that before we can get busy culling the others. Every day! We basically have to do extra work just so you can be punished!

SIKA: Take it up with Kasira! I didn't choose that punishment. If it was down to me, I'd have forgiven me straight away. There'd *be* no punishment.

(She shrugged.)

SIKA: Also, if she'd have just let it go, you wouldn't have had to do all those patrols between the four of you while she's been away. I could have done some too. And I would have.

Happily. So yeah, take it up with her.

NIVEA: Wow.

SIKA: Anyway, that's enough about me. Let's talk about Ambre's picture again. Kasira isn't black.

AMBRE: Leave me alone!

CAYLEY: Yes, leave her alone.

(She rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: You should watch what you say to Kasira tomorrow, Sika. If *she* hears you complaining about being on probation, she might actually deck you.

NIVEA: As might I.

SOAPY: And me.

SIKA: Yeah, right. You'd never do that. You love me too much. And besides, Kasira's going to have too much to do tomorrow to worry about me. Delivery remember?

(She grinned.)

SIKA: That Booboo bloke will come in and she'll go all doughy-eyed and forget all about me.

(Cayley shook her head.)

CAYLEY: Sika, your attitude never ceases to amaze me.

(She grinned.)

CAYLEY: You're right though. She does go all doughy-eyed when Lassu comes in.

SIKA: Lassu?

CAYLEY: Yeah. Not Booboo.

SIKA: Are you sure?

AMBRE: It's Lassu, even I know that.

(Nivea grinned.)

NIVEA: Gotta love delivery day. Tomorrow, we'll go through the same routine we go through *every* time our supplies are delivered.

SOAPY: Starting with the lecture?

NIVEA: Yeah.

(She grinned.)

NIVEA: Cover up. No short skirts or low cut tops. Don't wear anything revealing.

(Sika grinned.)

SIKA: Then she'll put on the tightest leather outfit she can find.

NIVEA: And she has many!

CAYLEY: To be fair, she *has* to tell you that. It's her job.

NIVEA: I know. It's just funny, that's all. She tells us to dress down then spends two hours making herself look sexy.

AMBRE: That doesn't take two hours. Kasira's already sexy.

NIVEA: Fine. One hour and fifty nine minutes then.

SOAPY: Then when the delivery turns up, she pretends she's got important matters to discuss with Lassu and they disappear into her office.

CAYLEY: And she comes out again half an hour later with her hair looking totally different.

NIVEA: She came out once with her skirt on sideways and her top inside out.

(Cayley grinned.)

CAYLEY: I remember that. God love her.

AMBRE: And she's always in a really good mood.

SOAPY: A really, *really* good mood.

AMBRE: He makes her happy. I'm *glad* she has a boyfriend.

NIVEA: Boyfriend? Hardly. She's just sowing her wild oats.

AMBRE: What?

NIVEA: They're just shagging.

(She smirked.)

NIVEA: Which is the best thing about delivery day. We can all have a shag if we want one. And I do.

CAYLEY: You're terrible.

NIVEA: Yeah, right. Like you haven't enjoyed one of the delivery crew from time to time.

CAYLEY: I don't deny I've dabbled. But only one at a time. Unlike you. You go through men like Ambre goes through crayons.

NIVEA: What can I say? Men find me...

SIKA: Easy?

NIVEA: Irresistible!

(She grinned.)

NIVEA: I'm gonna clout you in a minute.

SIKA: Go ahead, that's better than your usual form of torture.

NIVEA: And besides, Sika, on the last delivery, you and that airborne fellow...

SIKA: Troy. Troy Farkuit. Stupid name.

NIVEA: Yeah, him. You two disappeared for a while.

SIKA: I'm a woman. I have needs. I make no apology for that.

(Nivea grinned fiendishly then looked to Soapy.)

NIVEA: Soapy, *you're* a woman. You should take care of *your* needs too.

SOAPY: You leave me out of this!

SIKA: It's a good point. You have to break your duck sooner or later.

SOAPY: I'm fifteen! I'm not ready to do that yet. And besides, I'm not the only one.

Ambre's never had any either.

NIVEA: She had General Wilson.

(Ambre immediately turned red and looked away.)

AMBRE: That wasn't by choice. I've *never* done it by choice. Not even with that nice man who found me when I fell off that cliff. I don't want to. Yet. I don't know. Go away.

SIKA: But, Ambre...

AMBRE: Leave me alone.

SIKA: Ambre...

CAYLEY: Leave the poor bugger alone, you're embarrassing her.

SIKA: I'm *trying* to!

CAYLEY: Well don't. She'll have sex with someone when she chooses too. Same with Soapy.

NIVEA: Maybe we should set them up with dates.

CAYLEY: Nivea. No!

(She rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: If you want to spend all your free evenings jumping on men, that's your business. Leave these two out of it.

NIVEA: I don't spend all my free evenings doing that. Sometimes I let them jump on *me*.

CAYLEY: Yes well, you shouldn't really. Doing it with the townsfolk is poor form.

SIKA: I know, right? She's such a slut!

CAYLEY: You're no better!

SIKA: Lies. We have to go out in pairs, so I just escort her.

CAYLEY: And you're saying you've never...

SIKA: Not once. Though I won't say I haven't been tempted...

CAYLEY: You two are awful.

NIVEA: No. We're women. And as has already been said, women have needs.

SIKA: Damn right.

(They shared a fist bump then started to chuckle.)

NIVEA: Cayley, you look appalled.

(Cayley smiled.)

CAYLEY: Look at these two then.

(She then nodded at Soapy before nodding towards Ambre. They'd both turned red and were staring at the floor.)

NIVEA: Talking about sex clearly makes them uncomfortable.

(She smirked.)

NIVEA: Let me tell you about my first orgasm.

SOAPY: I'm going to have a bath!

AMBRE: I'll come with you!

(With that, the two of them exited the room as fast as their legs would allow. Watching them race away, Nivea couldn't help but laugh.)

NIVEA: Priceless.

CAYLEY: You're an evil woman, Nivea. Funny, but evil.

(She smiled then stepped to her feet.)

CAYLEY: Can you help me clear the table, Sika? I'm gonna clean up then head to bed.

SIKA: Why do *I* have to help?

CAYLEY: Because your superior officer asked you to.

NIVEA: Seriously, you've got to lose that attitude, Sika. If you start answering back when Kasira returns tomorrow, she's probably going to thump you.

(Sika groaned.)

SIKA: Fine!

(With that, she clumped all the plates together and stormed into the kitchen. Left behind, Cayley grimaced at Nivea.)

CAYLEY: I can't believe she did that.

NIVEA: I can. And I'm worried, Cayley. After her string of fuck ups that night, if Kasira doesn't see an improvement in her attitude, it's not going to end well. Her days of

swaggering about, making jokes and doing a half-arsed job need to end. It used to be amusing, endearing even. Having made that fuck up because of it though...

(Cayley sucked her teeth.)

CAYLEY: I know. She needs to shape up. And soon.

By eleven o'clock on the following morning, the sun was high and the heat was stifling. Dressed in thin, skimpy outfits to combat the heat, Ambre, Cayley, Sika and Soapy were all assembled around the mess room table. The reason for their gathering being the upcoming daytime wraith patrol. Addressing her colleagues, Cayley spoke up with a serious tone in her voice.

CAYLEY: Well, seeing as Kasira isn't back to tell us otherwise, we'll need to catch another ten wraiths for Sika's training.

(Ambre and Soapy immediately glowered at Sika.)

SIKA: Don't look at me! I'm not happy about it either!

CAYLEY: It's no big deal. We've done the same thing everyday for the last three weeks.

SOAPY: And it's a pain.

CAYLEY: What do you want me to say? I thought Kasira would be back by now. If she was, I could give her my report on how Sika got on and she might tell us not to bother, but she isn't here. So until she tells us otherwise, we carry on as normal, okay?

AMBRE: Okay.

SOAPY: Sure.

CAYLEY: Good. Any questions?

SIKA: Yeah. Can I come? It's boring hanging around here by myself.

CAYLEY: No. Aside from the fact you're on probation and not allowed on patrols, someone should stay here and greet Kasira if she comes.

SOAPY: And you're not by yourself. Nivea's here.

SIKA: She's asleep in bed!

SOAPY: Just how we like her!

(They shared a giggle then grimaced at Cayley.)

CAYLEY: Are you done?

SOAPY: Sorry.

SIKA: Sorry.

CAYLEY: Okay, then when you're ready...

(Sika shuddered.)

SIKA: So you're just gonna leave me here then, are you?

CAYLEY: Yes. Why?

SIKA: It's just... I'd rather you didn't.

AMBRE: Don't be scared, Nivea won't grope you in her sleep.

SIKA: I'm not worried about that, you silly sod.

AMBRE: Rude!

CAYLEY: What then? You've been left alone everyday for the last three weeks.

SIKA: Yeah, but... this time, Kasira's due back.

(She gulped.)

SIKA: What if she's still mad at me and decides to thump me? She might. Left alone with me, she might decide to exact revenge. I blew her a hundred feet in the air remember.

CAYLEY: I said fifty feet yesterday and you had a go at me for exaggerating.

SIKA: That's hardly the issue here, Cayley. She might clobber me. Can't I come with you and...

CAYLEY: No!

SIKA: Then just two of you should do the patrol and the other one should stay here with me.

SOAPY: You shameless coward, Sika.

SIKA: You'd be a coward too, if the woman you blew a thousand feet in the air was about to walk back in the room.

CAYLEY: A thousand now, is it?

SIKA: She's gonna punch my beautiful face! She might even kill me. Or worse!

AMBRE: Worse?

CAYLEY: Sika, don't be such a numpty. She's not going to...

(Just then, they heard the sound of the main door to the base opening and footsteps coming into the hallway. At once, they all turned to face the hallway door and Sika hid behind Soapy. For her part, Ambre bounced with anticipation and stared at the door like an over-excited puppy. She adored Kasira and had missed her terribly. Not about to make an exhibition of herself, however, she tried to keep her excitement hidden. She didn't hide it well. As she stood there grinning from ear to ear, almost whimpering with the suspense, Kasira stepped into the mess room with two suitcases. At once, she placed them both down then Ambre zoomed in to hug her.)

AMBRE: You're back!!! Welcome home.

(Kasira smiled.)

KASIRA: Thanks, Ambre. Did you miss me?

(Remembering that she was supposed to be keeping her excitement contained, Ambre then stepped back from the hug and glanced away, trying to look aloof.)

AMBRE: No!

KASIRA: No?

AMBRE: That's a lie. I missed you heaps.

(She then threw her arms around her again.)

KASIRA: I missed you too.

(As Ambre clung onto her lovingly, Kasira smiled at Soapy and Cayley.)

KASIRA: Hiya, Cayley; Soapy.

CAYLEY: Welcome back, Kasira.

SOAPY: How was your trip?

KASIRA: Lovely, thanks.

(She then peered around Soapy.)

KASIRA: Morning, Sika.

(Sika grimaced at her nervously.)

SIKA: I wasn't hiding!

KASIRA: I should hope not.

(Her brow then furrowed.)

KASIRA: Why? Did you have a *reason* to hide?

SIKA: Me? No. Not me.

(Kasira looked to Cayley uneasily.)

KASIRA: Did she?

CAYLEY: Not really, no. She did her extra training; did it well actually. And she took responsibility for her mistake, at last.

KASIRA: Good.

CAYLEY: But not without complaint.

SOAPY: A lot of complaint!

SIKA: Don't tell her that!

(Sika gulped then looked to Kasira.)

SIKA: You know me. I like to complain. Not about you though. I'd never do that! Not now, anyway. Not when you're standing right there.

(She looked horrified at herself.)

SIKA: Or even when you're not. I just complained that it was hot that's all. It's been hot while you've been away.

KASIRA: It's hot *every* day. This is a tropical island.

SIKA: True. Silly me. But the point is, I *did* accept my punishment; and I did take the blame. *And* I was well-behaved.

KASIRA: You're waffling.

AMBRE: She's frightened that you're going to hit her.

(Kasira furrowed her brow.)

KASIRA: I'm not going to hit you, Sika. I've never hit you, even when you deserved it.

SIKA: So you're not angry with me anymore?

KASIRA: I didn't say that.

(She then smiled warmly.)

KASIRA: Listen, I've had a relaxing break and I've done some thinking. Getting angry was poor form. Instead of doing that, I'm going to do what I do best, and that's make you a better soldier. Then you'll be too professional to make me angry, okay?

SIKA: Sounds like hard work.

KASIRA: It will be. But you'll either do it or face the consequences.

SIKA: Consequences being?

KASIRA: *I* might accidentally attack *you* by mistake.

CAYLEY: And she used razor-sharp blades.

SIKA: Hard work it is then!

KASIRA: Good girl.

(Just then, Ambre looked to Kasira with a baffled expression on her face.)

AMBRE: Why have you got two suitcases?

KASIRA: Shouldn't I have?

AMBRE: You only had one when you left!

(Kasira glanced away and scratched her head nervously.)

KASIRA: Yeah... I may have done some clothes shopping.

SIKA: A whole suitcase worth?

KASIRA: I like clothes, okay?

(Cayley grinned.)

CAYLEY: That's our Kasira.

KASIRA: I can't help myself. I see clothes and I want them.

CAYLEY: You don't have to explain yourself to us.

(She nodded.)

CAYLEY: We were just going to do the day time patrol, but seeing as you're back, let's put that on hold for a bit. I'll make us all some tea.

KASIRA: Cayley, you rule.

A short while later, Kasira, Cayley, Sika, Soapy and Ambre were all seated around the mess table with a cup of tea and some biscuits. As they sat and relaxed together, Kasira then proceeded to tell them all about her trip. Interested to know where she'd been and what she'd seen while she was away, the others all sat and listening intently.)

KASIRA: The views were amazing. The lake, the pine forest, the quaint town; it was wonderful.

(She looked to Sika then to Cayley.)

KASIRA: You two would have loved it. I'd imagine the views from the sky were phenomenal. I'm definitely going back there some day.

(She smiled at Ambre.)

KASIRA: We can go next year if you like, Ambre.

AMBRE: Yay. Fun. I've never seen a pine forest.

SOAPY: My family had a floating home near a pine forest once. Very pretty.

KASIRA: Best thing was, during the day, it was warm but there was a cool breeze. A bit like here at night. I certainly didn't miss this scorching daytime heat we get here.

SOAPY: I'll bet.

CAYLEY: So, how was it at night? Chilly?

KASIRA: Not too bad. It wasn't exactly cold. I was glad to have my coat though.

(Ambre looked most perplexed.)

AMBRE: What coat?

(She took Kasira's arm and stared hard at it.)

AMBRE: You don't have a coat!

SIKA: You numpty, Ambre.

AMBRE: What?

KASIRA: I didn't mean that kind of coat. Not fur. I mean a coat to put on over your clothes.

(Ambre stared through her blankly.)

AMBRE: I don't get it.

SOAPY: A coat, Ambre. The thing you wear when it's cold outside.

AMBRE: It's *never* cold outside!

(Kasira looked thoughtful.)

KASIRA: You've never been anywhere except swift-human land and here, have you?

AMBRE: I have. I was on a boat once.

KASIRA: Yeah, from swift-human land *to* here.

AMBRE: Oh, yeah.

CAYLEY: So you've never been anywhere that isn't boiling hot all the time?

AMBRE: I don't know. Probably. I've never known it to be cold outside.

SOAPY: You'd love it. You don't die of exhaustion from the simplest task and your body never feels like it's on fire.

KASIRA: That'd be heaven right now.

CAYLEY: Yup, the grass is always greener on the other side.

(She smiled.)

CAYLEY: Right now, the thought of cool weather is heavenly, yes. It's a different story when you're out in cold weather though.

SIKA: That's true, actually. When you go out all wrapped up in several layers, and it's so cold your face feels like it's going to fall off, you don't half miss the hot weather.

CAYLEY: Exactly. We have changeable weather in airborne-human territories. We spend all winter moaning it's too cold and all summer moaning it's too warm.

AMBRE: But winter's really hot still.

KASIRA: Where you're from it is. Where we're from it's cold in winter.

AMBRE: Weird.

CAYLEY: That's how it is, Ambre. Different parts of the world have different climates. Where Nivea comes from, summer is still cold. She's from a very icy part of the world.

AMBRE: Icy?

KASIRA: Covered in ice.

AMBRE: I don't know what that is.

SIKA: Ambre, you don't know what most things are. Just take our word for it.

AMBRE: Okay.

(Kasira nodded.)

KASIRA: Yeah, so I had a great time. It was lovely. What about you guys? Was everything okay while I was away?

CAYLEY: Yeah, it was fine. Catching wraiths was a pain, but other than that it was all plain sailing. The extra shifts to cover you and Sika just gave us something to do.

(Kasira nodded.)

KASIRA: Speaking of Sika...

(She looked to Sika, causing her to shrink in her seat and grimace uncomfortably.)

KASIRA: Your training went well, you say?

SIKA: My training?

(Given the chance to brag, she sat up straight and beamed.)

SIKA: I aced it! I was awesome. I was all over those wraiths. Blew them all to smithereens, I did. You should have seen me. I was really focussed. And fast! And I looked really good doing it. I'm a credit to this unit, I really am.

(She nodded.)

SIKA: Now I'm completely rehabilitated. Totally back to my best. With that in mind, I'd recommend letting me off my punishment and getting me back in the team as soon as possible. We're a better team with *me* in it.

(Kasira just glanced at Cayley.)

KASIRA: Are you hearing this?

CAYLEY: That's our Sika. She's her own biggest fan.

SIKA: I'm just self aware, that's all.

KASIRA: What are your thoughts on the matter, Cayley?

CAYLEY: She did ace the training, it has to be said.

SIKA: See? Skills!

(Cayley then grimaced at Sika apologetically.)

CAYLEY: Sorry to say it though, Sika, your attitude still needs work. All you did was moan that the punishment was harsh. And last night you answered me back when I asked you clear the table. You're not rehabilitated yet, missy. You're a work in progress.

SIKA: But I answered back in a fun way. You know me. I'm Sika, the cheeky, fun one. Without that, I'm just another empty clone with no personality. I'm Soapy!

SOAPY: Hey!

SIKA: See? I joke. It's how I am.

(She then looked to Kasira and shrunk back into her seat.)

SIKA: You're going to throw something at me now, aren't you?

KASIRA: I *will* make a soldier out of you, Sika. You'll see.

SIKA: But...

KASIRA: Don't interrupt.

(She rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: I stopped by regional army HQ on my trip and reported the incident.

SIKA: What incident?

(Kasira was livid.)

KASIRA: What incident??? When you stopped paying attention and blew me a mile into the sky!!!

CAYLEY: A mile?

AMBRE: It's gets higher every time.

KASIRA: *What* incident indeed.

(Sika whimpered.)

SIKA: You reported me to HQ? That's too harsh. I said I was sorry.

KASIRA: You say a lot of things!

SIKA: But... I can't believe you did that. That's going to look really bad on my record. Why would you do that?

(Kasira furrowed her brow.)

KASIRA: Nivea and Cayley asked me to.

SIKA: They did? Mean! Everybody hates me.

CAYLEY: We don't hate you, Sika. We're just worried.

SIKA: If you're worried about me, why grass me up to the army?

CAYLEY: We're not worried about *you*, you silly person! We're worried about *us*. One day it might be one of us you blow into the sky.

(Sika pouted.)

SIKA: Oh, like I'll make the same mistake again.

KASIRA: How do we know you won't? When I left you said sorry, sure, but all you wanted was for everyone to forget all about it and let you off.

CAYLEY: She still does.

KASIRA: Well, it doesn't work like that. Sika, we need you to be repentant and determined to focus on becoming a better soldier. After a mistake like that, we need you to change your ways.

SIKA: But why alter perfection?

(Kasira growled.)

KASIRA: I'm gonna slap you in a minute.

SIKA: You said you'd never do that!

KASIRA: I said I hadn't yet!

(Sika whimpered.)

SIKA: Please don't start now.

KASIRA: Then stop with all this bullshit about you being perfect, awesome and the greatest thing that ever happened to Capsway Island. Right now, you're a flaky, highly unprofessional, low-ranking soldier with delusions of grandeur. Nothing more.

SIKA: Harsh!

KASIRA: It's not...

(She looked to Cayley.)

KASIRA: It goes in one ear and out the other.

CAYLEY: I know.

KASIRA: Bottom line is, Sika, you need to shape up. These girls love you to bits, but right now they're scared to go on a patrol with you and rightly so. When you go out to kill those wraiths, your life and those of the people in your unit are at risk. If you're focussed and on top of your game, that risk is virtually eliminated. If you treat it like a joke, as you do, however, you could get someone killed.

CAYLEY: If I hadn't been there that night, Kasira *would* have been killed.

KASIRA: And if Ambre wasn't such a fast runner, she'd have copped it too.

(Sika just stared at her feet.)

SIKA: I *do* know it was a bad mistake.

KASIRA: Then make sure it never happens again. You've got nine years of this army life ahead of you. You can't spend all that time being a danger to your unit mates. They *will* start hating you.

(Sika pouted.)

SIKA: Do *you* hate me?

KASIRA: If I did, I'd have had you transferred. I'm not going to do that though. I'm going to make you a soldier. If that means I have to shout at you, punish you or punch you in the face then I will. It might just save a life.

(She smiled.)

KASIRA: I love this unit and everyone in it. Including you! And to keep it together, I'll do whatever it takes. Ambre and I may only have a little while left before we leave the army, but I want to spend that time in the company of you girls. And I want to enjoy it. I can only do that if you start acting responsible when in the field. You can joke as much as you like during downtime, but out there, I want you fully focussed. Okay?

(Sika forced a weak smile.)

SIKA: Okay.

KASIRA: Good girl. Anyway, like I said, I reported it to HQ and they said they'd send someone to give you a written test next time we have a delivery.

SIKA: A written test?

KASIRA: Yes. To make sure you know what you're doing.

SIKA: What kind of written test?

KASIRA: The basics. Stuff that we all know you know. If you concentrate when you take it, you'll breeze it.

SIKA: But if I fail?

KASIRA: You'll be returned to an academy for retraining.

AMBRE: But that's not fair! I don't want Sika to get sent away.

SIKA: Nor does Sika!

KASIRA: It'll be fine. It's all basic stuff.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: Just make sure you focus on the test. It really is basic stuff.

SIKA: Okay.

KASIRA: Sorry to report you an' all, but if it happens again, the army need to know they've got a dangerous, poorly-skilled soldier in the field.

(Sika pouted.)

SIKA: I understand.

(Ambre swiftly gave her a hug.)

AMBRE: Make sure you pass!

SIKA: I will.

SOAPY: So, this tester is coming with the next delivery?

KASIRA: Yeah.

SOAPY: Packed in a crate with the sausages?

KASIRA: No, you silly...

(Spotting Soapy's grin, Kasira smiled.)

KASIRA: I thought you were serious for a moment.

SOAPY: But he's coming with this evening's delivery, yeah?

KASIRA: Unless there's been a delay, I'd expect so.

SOAPY: Cool.

(Soapy glowered at Sika.)

SOAPY: Make sure you pass.

SIKA: I will!

(A knowing smirk then appeared on her lips.)

SIKA: They've yet to invent a written test that I can't breeze though. Did I mention I was awesome?

CAYLEY: Once or twice, yes.

SIKA: I'll pass that test with flying colours then be best the damned soldier ever. You'll see.

KASIRA: That's what I want to hear.

SIKA: Then I'll bag myself a hot delivery guy. Sika needs some loving.

KASIRA: That, however, isn't. They're not coming to pleasure us, they're coming to deliver our stuff.

(She bit her lip.)

KASIRA: Don't go thinking of the delivery as a chance to get your leg over, girls.

(She shrugged.)

KASIRA: If you happen to share a mutual attraction with one of them, fine. Do what you want. They are, however, men, don't forget. We need to take the usual precautions. We need to minimise their temptation to go all General Wilson and force themselves on us.

(Unaware of the stealthy grins and smirks her four comrades were sharing, Kasira then made her usual speech.)

KASIRA: Remember to get changed after the morning wraith hunt, girls. No Bikinis, no low cut tops and no mini-skirts.

(Well aware that Kasira would change into a tight leather outfit, Soapy glanced away innocently.)

SOAPY: And no leather, right?

(Kasira looked to her uneasily.)

KASIRA: Leather is fine, just don't reveal too much skin.

SOAPY: Oh. Okay. But nothing tight, right?

(Kasira mumbled empty words for a moment then furrowed her brow.)

KASIRA: There's nothing wrong with tight clothes, Soapy. Just make sure you're covered.

SOAPY: Right. So I can wear a leather dress then? A tight one?

KASIRA: If you like.

SOAPY: One that fits like a glove and hugs my body in all the right places? You know, accentuating my natural curves?

KASIRA: Well...

SOAPY: Sounds kinda sexy to me. Wearing that would be asking for trouble.

(Upon noticing the highly amused expressions on Cayley and Sika's faces, Kasira raised a suspicious eyebrow.)

KASIRA: What's the joke?

(Ambre chuckled.)

AMBRE: You tell us not to look sexy then wear the sexiest thing you can find.

(Kasira glowered at her.)

KASIRA: Do I now?

(Ambre sunk in her seat.)

AMBRE: I don't know.

SIKA: That's a terrible thing to say, Ambre.

AMBRE: But...

SOAPY: I'm surprised at you, Ambre.

AMBRE: But you all said...

CAYLEY: Anyway, enough of this procrastinating. We should do that patrol.

KASIRA: Yes, you should.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: While you're doing that, I'll go and unpack my suitcases.

CAYLEY: Should we catch wraiths for Sika's training still?

KASIRA: No, no. If you say she aces it, there's no need. It's just her attitude we need to work on.

(She then looked to Sika and smiled.)

KASIRA: You're gonna ace that too, right?

SIKA: If anyone can ace it, it's me.

KASIRA: Good girl.

SIKA: Can I go on the patrol now then?

KASIRA: No. You can go on tonight's patrol with *me*. I'm gonna be supervising you for a while, okay?

SIKA: Sure, okay.

(With that, Kasira upped and headed for her suitcases.)

KASIRA: Look lively then, girls. Busy day ahead.

(She then scowled at Ambre.)

KASIRA: I'm just gonna go and change into the sexiest thing I can find, apparently.

(As Kasira grabbed her cases and headed off towards her quarters, Ambre pouted at her three colleagues.)

AMBRE: She's all angry at me now.

CAYLEY: She won't stay angry at you for long, don't worry.

(She then climbed to her feet, prompting her colleagues to do the same.)

AMBRE: I shouldn't have said anything.

SOAPY: Obviously. Why did you?

AMBRE: She asked and I don't like telling lies.

(Cayley smiled then placed her arm around her.)

CAYLEY: Let's have a little chat, Ambre. It's time you learned the difference between lying and saying nothing.

(With that, they headed for the door.)

Early that evening, just before dusk, on the Capsway Island quayside, six male military personnel were unloading the hold of their ship and placing all the goods in the back of a cart. Pacing back and forth from the hold to the quayside as they gathered a large number of boxes together, they chatted boisterously.

Their routine was to make deliveries for 72 hours straight then stop off for the night before returning to base in the morning. They'd then head off again to deliver elsewhere. Every stop off was a welcome break for the hardworking men of the supplies unit. Stopping at Capsway Island, however, was their favourite part of the job. Spending the evening in the company of six beautiful women brought them much joy. On this particular evening, however, one of the men was far from enthused. In his first week on the job, fifteen year old aqua-human, Colum, went about the task of unloading with a distrustful look on his face. Spotting this, as Colum carried a box out from the ship, the unit leader, Lassu, looked to him and smirked.

LASSU: Cheer up, son. You're about to enter paradise. What's wrong with you?

(Colum furrowed his brow.)

COLUM: You lot must think I was born yesterday.

LASSU: Not yesterday. Recently, but not yesterday.

COLUM: Whatever. I wasn't born *two* days ago either. There's no way on earth there's six tasty women at this place. One or two I could believe, but there's no way all six are tasty.

(He shrugged.)

COLUM: And I'm not that much younger than you lot. Troy's only 18.

LASSU: Three years older than you, mate.

COLUM: Even so.

(Lassu grinned.)

LASSU: Mate, you're in for a pleasant surprise.

COLUM: I'm not falling for it.

LASSU: Straight up. Three blondes, two brunettes and a black haired babe. Faces like angels, tits like goddesses and bodies to die for.

(Another of the men then joined in their conversation as he headed to the cart with a heavy box.)

TROY: He's right. Not a troll among them.

COLUM: Bollocks. I bet they're all trolls.

TROY: Far from it.

(He nodded knowingly.)

TROY: They've got two fit airborne girls. I know I'm biased being airborne myself, but airborne girls are the fittest in the world. Last time we were here, I had my way with the younger of the two. All over me, she was. Blinding.

COLUM: You know I'm not believing a word of it, right?

TROY: Suit yourself.

COLUM: I will.

(With that, he deposited his box in the cart then headed back to the ship.)

COLUM: You've played pranks on me all week. You've teased me and wound me up since the day I joined. I'm not going to *keep* falling for it, you know? I'm not an idiot.

LASSU: And we're glad to hear it.

(With that, Lassu stopped and called out.)

LASSU: How many more boxes, lads?

(A voice then yelled out from the hold.)

ZERK: This is the last one.

LASSU: Hurry it out here then.

(He watched as his men hurried from the hold of the ship then raised his voice.)

LASSU: Okay, so we're moored securely, the hold is empty and we're ready to go as soon as we've grabbed our stuff and locked up. Nice work, as always. Very efficient.

(He watched the last few boxes being loaded onto the cart then stood tall.)

LASSU: Right, listen up. I say this every time but you randy little fuckers need to hear it. We're not just going to an army base full of good looking women, we're going into their home. Treat *them* and their base with respect. If I catch any of you disrespecting them or getting overly amorous against their wishes, I'll take you outside and batter the living crap out of you. Got it?

(His five subordinates all gulped at his bulky frame and saluted immediately.)

LASSU: Good. Look but don't touch unless they invite you to. And hands off the leader.

(He smirked knowingly.)

LASSU: *That* goddess is mine.

ZERK: Trust you to snag the best looking one.

TROY: Sika's the best looking one.

HAMPTON: I like the cute, dopey one.

PRODI: I like Nivea. That women is seriously naughty.

COLUM: And you're all full of shit.

(He shook his head.)

COLUM: Nice effort. But I aint having it.

LASSU: Yeah well, you'll see.

(He nodded.)

LASSU: Right, let's get this show on the road. Go and grab his lordship will you, Prodi.

PRODI: Sir!

LASSU: And get your personal belongings while you're there. The rest of you go and get your stuff too. I'll guard the cart. Someone grab my bag from my quarters.

ZERK: I'll get it.

LASSU: Thanks, Zerk.

(With that, the rest of the unit headed back onto the deck. As they did so, however, a stocky gentleman wearing a smart suit, Miles, paced past them, making his way onto the quayside from the side of the ship. Carrying a briefcase in his hand, he looked very much the bureaucrat.)

MILES: No need to get his lordship. He's here.

(Lassu cringed.)

LASSU: Heard that, did you?

MILES: Yes.

(He nodded.)

MILES: Ready to go then, are we?

LASSU: The lads are just grabbing their essentials.

MILES: I see. And if they play their cards right, later this evening, maybe those six fine fillies will grab their essentials too.

(Lassu smirked.)

LASSU: With any luck.

MILES: Indeed.

(He grinned.)

MILES: And who knows, I may even get lucky myself.

LASSU: Have you *seen* yourself?

MILES: Touché.

(He nodded.)

MILES: Kindly go and have sex with yourself, Captain.

LASSU: Thanks.

Fifteen minutes later, the moment the ladies of the wraith containment unit had been waiting for arrived. The delivery cart was led into the compound and six strapping gentlemen proceeded to carry the boxes into their mess room. There were no greetings; they simply arrived and set to work. Not a word was spoken.

Watching them graft, Sika was agape with lust. Matching her lust, Troy could barely contain himself. Having already shared eye-contact they both knew how they'd be spending their night. Ambre and Soapy, however, just sat at the table and watched on nervously; trying their hardest not to be noticed. Cayley and Kasira, on the other hand, were a lot more collected. Dressed in a tight, red leather, knee-length skirt and matching tight top, Kasira just watched on patiently. Having already had a good snigger about Kasira's figure-hugging outfit, Cayley stood at her side, matching her calmness.

As they continued to quietly watch, determined to set a good example for the others, Cayley bit her lip and mused out loud.

CAYLEY: I hope they remembered to bring the chocolate I ordered. I want to make a cake later.

KASIRA: Right. A group of hot guys are grafting before your very eyes and *that's* what you're thinking?

CAYLEY: I like baking. Shoot me.

KASIRA: Fetch me a crossbow and I just might. Enjoy the show, woman.

CAYLEY: Fine, I will.

(Kasira smiled.)

KASIRA: You know I'm pulling your leg, right?

CAYLEY: Of course. You're not Sika. Merely watching a man work isn't enough to get *your* juices flowing.

KASIRA: Indeed. Sika's quite the pervert.

(They then shared a stealthy giggle.)

KASIRA: Still, she's not quite as bad as Nivea.

CAYLEY: She's nowhere near as bad. Nivea's in a class of her own.

(She grimaced.)

CAYLEY: It's dusk, so she'll be up any minute now. The room will be awash with smutty comments and double entendres.

KASIRA: As always.

CAYLEY: Yup.

KASIRA: I say we enjoy the show in peace while we still can.

CAYLEY: Might as well. I can certainly think of worse things to do.

(A minute or so later, once the last box has been brought in, Lassu handed Kasira an inventory on a clipboard then saluted her. Kasira and Cayley both returned his salute. Before a word could be spoken between them however, a cry of exasperation rose up from where Colum was standing among his unit-mates. Having been immersed in the task of unloading the cart, it was only now that'd he'd noticed the women in his company. They were every bit as beautiful as he'd been told they were.)

COLUM: Holy fuck, they're well sexy!

(He then shrunk to the back of the pack, humiliated by the mocking laughter that came his way.)

LASSU: You'll have to excuse him, he's new.

KASIRA: I see.

(She grimaced.)

KASIRA: Not subtle, is he?

LASSU: Indeed. Would you like me to strike him?

CAYLEY: There's no need for that.

KASIRA: He's had the talk, has he?

LASSU: The hands-off speech?

KASIRA: That's the one.

LASSU: Yes, he has. Sadly, I forgot to give him the speech about not making a tit of himself.

(Kasira grinned then looked to Lassu's unit-mates.)

KASIRA: Welcome to our base, gentlemen. Please, feel free to take a break.

(She then looked to Cayley.)

KASIRA: Would you make coffee for everyone, please, Cayley?

CAYLEY: Happily, ma'am.

KASIRA: Thank you.

(As Cayley headed for the kitchen, Kasira looked towards the mess room table.)

KASIRA: Ambre, Sika, Soapy, take the boxes to the store room and unpack them please. If there's anything you don't know what to do with, just ask Cayley.

(At once, Ambre, Sika and Soapy proceeded to do as they were told.)

KASIRA: No complaints, Sika?

SIKA: No, ma'am.

KASIRA: Good girl.

(She then gestured to the table.)

KASIRA: Take a seat, gents. Your coffee will be with you shortly.

(With that, the five men from Lassu's unit immediately headed for the table. As they did so, however, yet another gentleman strolled in through the door.)

MILES: Evening all.

(Wholly unaware that he'd arrived with the others and had merely been outside stowing the cart in a corner of the courtyard, Kasira immediately strode up to him.)

KASIRA: I'm sorry, this base is for military personnel only!

MILES: I'm well aware of that. I'm here in my capacity as a military training supervisor. I've come to give Private Owsley her written exam. Idiot!

(Sika's hair almost stood on end.)

SIKA: Me?

MILES: Are you Private Owsley?

SIKA: Yeah.

MILES: Then yes!

(He rolled his eyes.)

MILES: Is everyone here an idiot?

KASIRA: According to you, yes.

MILES: I'm just calling it as I see it.

KASIRA: Well don't. You've no right to come in here disrespecting my unit.

MILES: Actually, I have every right.

KASIRA: No...

(At this point, Lassu quickly intervened.)

LASSU: Let's not get off on the wrong foot. Kasira, this is...

KASIRA: I know who he is, he's come to test Sika.

LASSU: Yes, but...

KASIRA: He can wait. She's doing a job at the moment. Once she's finished, then she can take the test.

MILES: Fine by me.

(He then headed for the table.)

MILES: Make me a coffee, would you, Captain?

KASIRA: Whatever.

(Kasira then called towards the kitchen.)

KASIRA: One more for coffee, Sergeant.

(Cayley's voice then echoed from the kitchen.)

CAYLEY: Ma'am.

(Sneering at Miles as he took a seat at the table, Kasira furrowed her brow then looked to Lassu. In that moment, her frown turned upside down.)

KASIRA: Right, Lassu, let's go to my office and discuss matters in hand.

MILES: Matters? You've got a delivery and an inventory, you check one against the other, what 'matters' are there to discuss?

(Midway through shifting boxes, Ambre looked up.)

AMBRE: I've always wondered that.

SOAPY: Me too.

MILES: I'll bet you have. What matters do you need to discuss exactly?

(Kasira scowled at Miles.)

KASIRA: That's between us captains! You do your job and I'll do mine.

(She sneered.)

KASIRA: Coming in here in that stupid suit, telling me what to do. I've got a good mind to...

(Looking somewhat alarmed, Lassu started to usher her away towards her office.)

LASSU: Let's not start arguing now. It's bad for morale.

KASIRA: *He's* bad for morale!

(Just then, a voice rose up from the door at the end of the room.)

NIVEA: I timed that perfectly.

(At once, they all looked up and saw Nivea standing in the doorway, dressed in a long, figure-hugging cheongsam. Her hair and make up were perfect.)

NIVEA: Hello, boys.

(At once, a chorus of lusty greetings rose from the table.)

NIVEA: Mind if I join you?

PRODI: Absolutely not.

MILES: You can join us any day of the week, my dear.

KASIRA: No, she bloody can't. Nivea, get storing the delivery with the others!

(Nivea's entire body seemed to slump in that moment.)

NIVEA: Damn. Didn't time it as well as I thought I had. Now my dress is gonna get filthy.

KASIRA: You should have thought about that.

(As Nivea headed for the piles of boxes, Kasira rolled her eyes then looked towards the corridor which lead to her office.)

KASIRA: Let's go, Lassu.

LASSU: Yes, captain.

(As they headed away, Nivea smirked then whispered to Sika.)

NIVEA: She went with the skin-tight, red-leather ensemble today, I see.

SIKA: Yeah. She knows how men hate that kind of thing.

NIVEA: Oh, don't they just?

(They then shared a cheeky chuckle and continued about their task.)

Just down the corridor at this time, Kasira led Lassu into her office, then closed the door behind her. As soon as it was shut, she locked it then pivoted half-circle on the spot and leant her back against the door.

KASIRA: Finally!

(Without another word, Lassu then stepped up to her and placed his sizeable hands around her tiny waist. In return, Kasira reached up to wrap her arms around his neck and allowed him to lift her so their faces were at the same height. They then proceeded to kiss passionately.

Moments later, their kiss came to an end and he gently placed her down again.)

LASSU: How have you been, darling?

(Kasira sighed.)

KASIRA: Frustrated!

LASSU: How come?

KASIRA: Spending a week of my break with you was heaven; the best week of my life.

Those three days I was there on my own after you left though... it was horrible.

LASSU: Yeah?

KASIRA: It sucked.

LASSU: I hear that, actually. The journey back to work, knowing you were there by yourself wasn't pleasant. I actually pined for you like a lost puppy. Pathetic, I was.

KASIRA: I did the same.

(With that, she headed across her office and sat upon her desk.)

KASIRA: I won't lie to you. I thought us sneaking off together would just be a naughty week of fun, you know? We get on well and I thought, why not enjoy a week with a sexy guy whose company I enjoy? But it's more than that, isn't it? It is to me anyway.

LASSU: And me. I can't stop thinking about you.

KASIRA: I love you. There I said it.

LASSU: I love you too.

(Kasira smiled then shook her head.)

KASIRA: I'm land-bound and you're a swift-human. It's not gonna be easy, you know? People are funny about interracial relationships, Lassu. We're gonna be pariahs in a lot of people's eyes.

(Lassu shrugged.)

LASSU: Fuck 'em. I'm past caring about that. It's you I want, so if people don't like it they can go and have crazy, naked sex with themselves. They're irrelevant. It's you I love, not their opinion.

(Kasira exhaled lovingly, then a devious expression crossed her brow.)

KASIRA: You love me, yeah? What about me in particular?

LASSU: That old chestnut, eh?

(Lassu smiled and paced up to the desk, slipping his hands onto her waist as he did so.)

LASSU: Kasira, you're perfect in every way. Every way that matters, at least.

(He looked deep into her eyes.)

LASSU: Yes, you've got an amazing body, world class jugs and eyes a man could lose his soul in, but it's more than that. Your looks are just the tip of the iceberg.

KASIRA: Oh?

LASSU: Do you know how many captains and unit-leaders I meet in my job?

KASIRA: Hundreds!

LASSU: Literally. And they all think they're popular. They all think they have the respect and support of their unit. They *all* think that.

(He nodded.)

LASSU: But you're the only one who actually has. Those girls out there love you. They don't just think you're okay and like working for you; they love you to bits. And you love them back. Even the screw ups. You make them into soldiers and they love you for it. And at the same time, you manage to remain human. You manage to be their friend *and* their boss. That's a rare quality.

KASIRA: Well, thing is... actually, I'll shut up and let you carry on. I'm enjoying hearing this.

LASSU: And I'm enjoying telling you. You exude kindness and love. You've got understanding oozing from every pore. I mean look what you did for little Ambre.

KASIRA: Little?

LASSU: Makes her sound even cuter. Helps my story. Artistic licence.

KASIRA: Oh, carry on.

LASSU: That poor thing was sent here to as a disposal nuisance. Sent here to die. You weren't having that. You made her a competent warrior, a soldier. And you gave her a friend, for the first time in her life. You gave her life a purpose, you made her into a citizen of the world; someone who laughs, smiles and looks forward to every day. Your instinct to love did that.

(He shrugged.)

LASSU: Call me selfish, but I want that love for me. Not all of it. You've got too much for one person to handle; I just want part of it. Kasira, beautiful, the man who ends up with your love, really does have the love of a fucking good woman. The only men who don't crave that are either gay or have given up looking. Well, I've found it now and I damn well intend on keeping it.

(Kasira exhaled. She had tears in her eyes and didn't quite know what to say.)

KASIRA: That's was beautiful.

LASSU: From the heart, babe.

KASIRA: You've earned yourself a world class blowjob at the very least, you know that?

LASSU: And the reasons to love you keep on coming!

(Kasira chuckled.)

KASIRA: You make me smile. You make me happy.

(She then looked him in the eye.)

KASIRA: I like who I am around you and you make me feel safe. I know that's not as in-depth as what you said, but that's everything I want in a guy.

LASSU: I also have a massive dong.

KASIRA: I won't lie, that *is* the clincher.

(They chuckled together then Kasira sat back a little.)

KASIRA: So, boyfriend, what do we tell our units?

LASSU: Fuck all! This is ours; it's none of their business. We're not allowed to have relationships in this stupid army and I don't want to risk the authorities finding out. They might make me join a different unit; one that doesn't come here. Neither of us have long left in the army, so let's keep everything under our hats. When we leave, we can tell them then. No risks.

KASIRA: Makes sense.

LASSU: We can tell them on the last day then the three of us can head off into the sunset together.

KASIRA: Yeah, you, me and Ambre.

LASSU: Not Ambre. We're going to live with my mother!

(Kasira looked horrified.)

KASIRA: What?

(Lassu started to laugh.)

LASSU: I'm kidding. Of course I mean Ambre.

KASIRA: Good. Ambre is very much part of the deal.

LASSU: We'll need a bigger bed for the three of us though.

(Kasira's eyes bulged.)

KASIRA: Excuse me???

LASSU: I'm joking, darling.

(Kasira shook her head and giggled.)

KASIRA: You're an evil sod sometimes. And you're talking yourself right out of that blowjob.

LASSU: Then I'd be a fool to continue.

KASIRA: Yes, you would.

(Lassu nodded then stepped back from the desk.)

LASSU: Speaking of which, back to business. Captain, I have one last package for you. I thought I'd deliver it personally.

(With that, he cast his trousers down to his ankles and gestured to his penis.)

LASSU: It's rather large. You may have trouble lifting it.

(Kasira stared down at his manhood and scoffed.)

KASIRA: Rubbish. I could lift that with my *tongue*.

LASSU: Challenged accepted.

KASIRA: Fine. Watch and learn.

(With that, she sunk to her knees and used her tongue to slip his manhood in her mouth. She then proceeded to fellate him. Staring down as she looked up into his eyes, Lassu groaned with ecstasy.)

LASSU: Did I mention you were the perfect woman? Holy fuck!

Later that evening, fresh from doing the daily flag ceremony, the six ladies of the wraith containment unit, remained in their uniforms. Well aware that the uniform had been designed by a man for the purposes of looking extremely sexy, Nivea was very much playing on it. Standing by the exit, she was flirting shamelessly with Prodi and Zerk. Highly amused by Nivea's behaviour, Kasira, Cayley and Lassu were watching her from a sofa with wide grins on their faces. The new boy, Colum, however, just sat upon an armchair, too nervous to join in any conversations. He'd taken a shine to Soapy but simply wasn't brave enough to approach her. Even though she was a fellow aqua-human, the same age as him, he was far too shy to even say hello. He could only curse himself. Several minutes before hand, she'd headed out into the courtyard on her own; it was the perfect opportunity but he was simply too nervous to follow her out and talk to her.

For his part, Troy would've loved to flirt with Sika. Unfortunately, she was sitting her written test at the table under Miles' watchful eye and he wasn't allowed to approach her. Instead, he went and headed to Prodi's side where he was swiftly included in Nivea's outrageous flirting; much to Sika's annoyance.

Across the table from Sika, Ambre sat quietly, drawing a picture. She had no interest in flirting. In the past, whenever she'd spoken to men, she'd said things that'd made them laugh at her and she wasn't about to put herself in that position again. As a result, she'd opted to spend her evening drawing with a view to getting an early night. One of the male soldiers, Hampton, however, had different ideas. Finding Ambre more than a little irresistible, he'd brushed his hair and doused himself with aftershave on her behalf. Satisfied he was ready to woo her, he then placed himself down at her side and glanced at her drawing. Confident he could impress her with his art knowledge, he then nodded thoughtfully.

HAMPTON: How clever. A deliciously satirical statement about the status quo.

(Ambre glanced around the table to see who he was speaking to then raised a curious eyebrow.)

AMBRE: What?

HAMPTON: Your drawing. Very subtle. To the layman, it looks like a child's drawing, but it's actually a sarcastic swipe at the establishment.

(Ambre stared at her drawing in bewilderment then pointed to one of the stickmen.)

AMBRE: That one's Kasira.

HAMPTON: Okay.

(He nodded to affirm his thinking then tried again.)

HAMPTON: Still, it's very clever. It highlights the fact that we're all adults here and yet due to the military regime, we're all placed in boxes, sorted by rank and ordered around like children. You've captured that beautifully.

(At this moment in time, Ambre was more baffled than she'd ever been in her entire life.

Finding his words ridiculously impossible to absorb, she scratched her head; her eyes fixed solely on her drawing.)

AMBRE: Okay. I'm going to draw a tree now.

(As she reached for the green crayon, Hampton sighed inwardly, resolving himself to using a far more traditional approach.)

HAMPTON: You're very pretty and I like your drawing.

(Ambre looked to him and smiled.)

AMBRE: Thank you. That was a nice thing to say. It was a lie though. I'm rubbish at drawing.

HAMPTON: Well... you won't be if you keep practicing.

AMBRE: Do you want to help me? You can draw the sky. There's a blue crayon in the box.

(Hampton shrugged.)

HAMPTON: Sure. Okay.

(As Ambre turned the sheet of paper towards Hampton, so he could help her finish her picture, Sika glanced up from her exam and furrowed her brow. Even Ambre was getting male attention! More than a little miffed by this, she then glanced to where Nivea was flirting with three men, including Troy. At once, her nostrils flared and she couldn't resist the urge to growl under her breath.)

SIKA: Trollop! When I'm done here, I'm gonna slap you.

MILES: Private Owsley!!! Focus!

(As all eyes turned her way, Sika swiftly knuckled down and scribbled an answer on her exam sheet. To say she was miffed would be quite the understatement. Nivea was quite the harlot and she genuinely believed she'd go off with Troy any moment now. As such, she was struggling to concentrate. All she could think about was finishing her exam as quickly as possible then hurrying across the room to steal him back. Little did she know, however, Nivea had no intention of running off with Troy. Not about to lead him on, she was, in fact, in the process of letting him know where he stood. Leaning against the wall, she stroked his chest and smiled seductively.)

NIVEA: You know, Troy, as hot as you are, you're seriously off the menu.

PRODI: Sucks to be you, mate.

ZERK: Big time.

NIVEA: Oh, I don't know. You're only off *my* menu because Sika has you down for her starter, main course *and* dessert.

TROY: Yeah?

NIVEA: Oh, like you don't know. Once she's done with that exam, she's going to devour you whole.

(Troy beamed.)

TROY: Nice to know. She can pull my wishbone any time.

(He then turned red.)

TROY: Wishbone? Mock me, I earned it.

NIVEA: Yes, yes you did. But I can't be bothered right now. I'm working on pulling *these* two wishbones.

PRODI: Both of us?

NIVEA: Of course. There's no need to compete, boys. I'm hungry for double helpings.

ZERK: Is that so?

NIVEA: Yes, it is. I'm really quite the slut. Two's company, three's a party.

(She grinned.)

NIVEA: I'm a party girl.

(Prodi and Zerk immediately shared a fist bump.)

PRODI: I look forward to working with you.

ZERK: Likewise.

NIVEA: And I'm looking forward to being worked on!

(Across the room at this time, Kasira was glaring at Hampton with a distrusting scowl on her face. Sat either side of her, Cayley and Lassu could only try to pacify her.)

CAYLEY: Remember what we said, Kasira, she's an adult now. If she wants to make love to a guy, you have to let her.

LASSU: What Cayley said. And besides, Hampton is a nice bloke. A bit of a softy actually. He won't mistreat her.

KASIRA: He'd better not. If he does, I'll break his face.

LASSU: Not if I break it first.

KASIRA: Wrong! Even if you *do* break it first, I'll break it more.

(She pouted.)

KASIRA: Men can't be trusted!

LASSU: Thanks.

KASIRA: With Ambre, I mean.

CAYLEY: She's perfectly safe, Kasira. If he treats her mean, she'll transform into a gazelle and run away. She might even run him through with her horns.

(She shuddered.)

CAYLEY: Which is gross.

LASSU: Yes, and a worry. Hampton doesn't deserve that.

KASIRA: I beg to differ.

LASSU: Kasira...

KASIRA: Fine, I know. Too harsh.

(She sneered.)

KASIRA: Still... I'm watching him.

(Blissfully unaware that he'd evoked Kasira's wrath, Hampton continued to chat to Ambre, colouring the top of her sheet of paper blue as he did so. Wearing a warm smile, he looked to her and exhaled.)

HAMPTON: You know, this is actually kind of therapeutic.

AMBRE: Soapy says that too. She helps me sometimes.

HAMPTON: Draw a lot then, do you?

AMBRE: Yeah. I like it. And colouring in. It passes the time.

HAMPTON: It's good to have something to do. I like to read.

AMBRE: I can read. Sort of. Kasira's teaching me. I'm doing really well.

(Hampton bit his lip.)

HAMPTON: You're still learning?

AMBRE: Rubbish, aren't I? I'm slow, you see.

HAMPTON: You're not rubbish, Ambre. I think you're awesome.

AMBRE: You do?

(Ambre bit her lip.)

AMBRE: Why? You don't really know me. I could be an even bigger idiot than I look for all you know.

HAMPTON: Right. Well... I get the feeling you're awesome, anyway.

(Ambre raised an eyebrow at him.)

AMBRE: Kasira says men will say anything when they want to get into a girl's knickers.

HAMPTON: What???

AMBRE: Is that what *you're* doing?

(As Kasira, Cayley and Lassu watched on, silently crying with laughter, Hampton gaped like a fish.)

HAMPTON: No! That's not... I mean... I'm not doing that! I'm just trying to be nice.

AMBRE: It's okay if you *are* trying to get in my knickers. Nivea says men can't help themselves. It's natural.

HAMPTON: Ambre, I really am just trying to be nice.

AMBRE: Okay.

(With that, they carried on drawing for a moment, then Ambre looked to him enquiringly.)

AMBRE: Do you want to have sex with me?

(Hampton's jaw fell open and he whimpered excitedly.)

HAMPTON: I really, really do.

AMBRE: I thought so.

(She then looked to Kasira.)

AMBRE: He wants to have sex with me, Kasira. How do I tell him I'm not interested without hurting his feelings?

(Kasira beamed.)

KASIRA: You just have, sweetheart.

AMBRE: I have? Oh!

(She looked to Hampton and smiled.)

AMBRE: Do you still want to help me with my picture?

(Hampton looked to the giggling trio on the sofa and burned red.)

HAMPTON: With those three pointing and laughing at me? No, thanks.

(With that, he upped and headed to the door at the back of the room.)

HAMPTON: The guest sleeping quarters are at the end of the corridor, you say?

CAYLEY: That's right.

HAMPTON: Good. I need to lay down.

(As Hampton headed away, Ambre beamed at Kasira.)

AMBRE: He was nice.

KASIRA: He was okay.

(Ambre bit her lip.)

AMBRE: Maybe I should have had sex with him. I kind of want to in a way. With someone, anyway. I don't know.

CAYLEY: Why did you say no then?

AMBRE: Because if I did it with him, you'd all tease me.

CAYLEY: *I* wouldn't. Kasira wouldn't either. She'd sit in the corner and cry.

KASIRA: I actually would.

AMBRE: But I'm twenty three, not five. Even if my bad drawing suggests otherwise.

(She then nodded defiantly.)

AMBRE: I might change my mind later.

(She then mumbled to herself bitterly.)

AMBRE: I'm not going to tell you lot though.

(This was the last straw for Sika. Having been sitting there and witnessed the whole thing, she could only growl under her breath. There were men everywhere and even Ambre was free to give in to her temptations if she wanted to. The only one not allowed to enjoy the company of men was her. Finding it all horribly unfair, she then glanced across to where Nivea was keeping Troy, Prodi and Zerk company. At once, her feelings of injustice doubled and she thumped the table in frustration.)

SIKA: Life sucks!

(At once, Miles sat forward and bellowed at her.)

MILES: Focus on the test, you little shit. I'm not sitting here for the good of my health, for pity's sake. Get on with it!

(Sika immediately did as she was told, albeit not without complaint.)

SIKA: Not fair. I hate this stupid army.

(As she set about writing again, Cayley and Kasira shared a nervous glance. Showing such insubordination before a tester was not a good sign.)

CAYLEY: Her attitude...

KASIRA: I know.

(Just across the room at this time, Nivea stood watching Sika as the men around her continued to chat. Sucking her teeth anxiously, she sighed then looked to Prodi.)

NIVEA: That tester? He's not the type to mark someone down for their attitude is he?

PRODI: How would I know?

NIVEA: He came on your ship.

PRODI: Yeah, but he didn't give us all tests.

ZERK: He gave us all headaches with his boring stories of wraith battles instead. He's not an interesting man.

NIVEA: I see.

(She then shrugged it off.)

NIVEA: Well, with any luck she'll be fine.

(She then stopped and grinned at the sight before her. Suddenly feeling brave, Colum had climbed from his armchair and was heading for the door to the courtyard. Well aware that Soapy was out there, she grinned from ear to ear.)

NIVEA: Looks like he's finally making his move.

ZERK: About bloody time.

NIVEA: Don't tease him; not yet! Let him go. I want to see how it goes.

(She grinned.)

NIVEA: We'll go out there later and spy on them.

PRODI: Nivea, you're evil.

(He beamed.)

PRODI: I like that!

A few moments later, Colum made his way out into the courtyard. Seeing nobody there, he sighed in defeat then glanced skywards. As he did so, however, he caught a glimpse of something in the corner of his eye. At once, he spun around and saw Soapy sitting on the roof with her legs dangling down. She was staring out at the ocean and hadn't even noticed him there. At once, he clenched his fists to psych himself up then attempted to speak to her. Unfortunately for him, however, nerves got the better of him. At once, his throat dried up and not a single sound came out.

COLUM: Aw, bollocks.

(Thrown from her train of thought by his profanity, Soapy glanced down at him.)

SOAPY: What's the matter?

(Colum gulped and tried to think of something cool to say.)

COLUM: Nothing. Just felt like saying bollocks.

SOAPY: Right. Weird.

(Soapy then stared out to sea again. Desperate to redeem himself, Colum chastised himself inwardly then spoke up.)

COLUM: So, what are you doing up there?

SOAPY: Playing cricket.

COLUM: Right. Fair enough. Ask a stupid question, get a stupid answer.

(He sighed.)

COLUM: Are you watching the ocean?

SOAPY: Yeah.

COLUM: Cool. Can I join you?

(Soapy shrugged.)

SOAPY: Sure! Climb up via the bench in the corner.

COLUM: Okay. Cool.

(Delighted to be getting somewhere, Colum scrambled up onto the roof of the base then paced to Soapy's side.)

COLUM: Mind if I sit down?

SOAPY: Of course not. Why would I?

COLUM: Good point.

(With that, he sat down a foot away from her side and nodded to himself.)

COLUM: Nice view.

(He then looked to Soapy.)

COLUM: So, do you come here often?

SOAPY: I live here!

COLUM: I mean up here.

(Soapy shrugged.)

SOAPY: Once or twice a week, I guess. Why?

COLUM: Just making conversation.

(They then stared out at the ocean silently. Soapy was enjoying the serene calm. Colum on the other hand, was desperately trying to think of something cool to say.)

COLUM: My name's Colum, by the way.

SOAPY: Soapy.

COLUM: Cool. That's a sexy name.

(Soapy furrowed her brow.)

SOAPY: Don't! Don't bother.

COLUM: What?

SOAPY: I'm not interested, okay?

COLUM: In what? I was just saying.

SOAPY: We both know that's not true. You came up here to hit on me, well I'm not interested, okay?

COLUM: Right. Fair enough.

(A wide smile then crossed his lips.)

COLUM: That's a relief actually. I'm glad you shot me down.

SOAPY: Me too.

COLUM: When I think there's a chance, I get really jittery and almost everything I say is bloody stupid. I can relax now though. Thanks for being forthright.

SOAPY: You're welcome. Thanks for not being my type.

COLUM: Any time.

(He smiled then looked to the sky.)

COLUM: So how are you enjoying army life? Not much fun being the newbie, is it?

SOAPY: Actually, I'm really enjoying it.

COLUM: Yeah?

SOAPY: Yeah!

COLUM: I'm not. I'm the butt of every joke, the fall guy for every mistake and the volunteer for every minor task. And my leader is a dick.

(Soapy smiled at him.)

SOAPY: I felt like that at first.

COLUM: Yeah?

SOAPY: Yeah. Then I got over myself.

COLUM: Oh.

SOAPY: Your leader isn't being a dick. He's trying to turn you into a soldier. Wraiths can kill you, you know?

COLUM: Well...

SOAPY: My leader, Kasira, she lost a newbie once. The girl before me. She died.

(Colum bit his lip and said nothing.)

SOAPY: Wraiths got her.

COLUM: That's awful.

SOAPY: I know.

(She shrugged.)

SOAPY: That's why your leader is tough on you. Kasira was hard on me at first. I came in here thinking I knew everything and she gave me a really hard time. Then I found out why.

She lost one new recruit and she wasn't about to let it happen it again. She made me understand how serious this war on wraiths is, you know? She made me understand why I need to focus on my job and be professional.

COLUM: I see.

SOAPY: She's pretty amazing. I love Kasira; I love all my unit-mates. Best group of girls ever, you know? Everyone is so together. As a unit. It'll be the same for you before long. (Colum sighed.)

COLUM: Maybe. I mean, they are a tight bunch. I just feel a bit, I dunno... detached from them. Like I'm on the outside looking in.

SOAPY: And you'll feel like that until you accept your leader as someone you can follow. It's not *them* keeping *you* on the outside, it's you resisting. Just fall in line, make it easier for yourself.

(Colum nodded.)

COLUM: That makes sense I guess.

SOAPY: It does. I saw Kasira as a tyrant at first. Like she existed just to make me feel small.

COLUM: That's exactly how *I* feel!

SOAPY: Now, I look at her like she's... I dunno. As lame as this sounds, it's like we're a family and she's my dad. That sounds silly, but it's the best way of putting it.

COLUM: Wouldn't it make more sense if she was like a big sister?

SOAPY: I stand corrected. Yeah, exactly like that. Yes, she can be bossy but she's got my back; one hundred percent. As soon as I accepted that, I felt like I belonged here. That's what you should do; accept your squad as your brothers. Make yourself a part of it.

(Colum nodded.)

COLUM: That's good advice.

SOAPY: It's great advice.

COLUM: Thanks, Soapy.

SOAPY: Happy to help. Anything to help a fellow fishy.

(Colum smiled.)

COLUM: Fishy. They have no idea how racist that is, do they?

SOAPY: Not a clue. I wouldn't dare call Sika or Cayley bird-women.

COLUM: Or call Ambre antler-head.

SOAPY: Exactly.

(Colum then bit his lip.)

COLUM: Soapy?

SOAPY: Yes?

COLUM: Is Ambre...

(Soapy glowered at him.)

SOAPY: Is Ambre what?

COLUM: Nothing!

SOAPY: No, come on, if you've something to say, say it.

COLUM: Right. I just wondered. Is she... simple?

(Soapy shook her head.)

SOAPY: Ambre is a beautiful human being.

COLUM: I know she is. She's really nice. Always smiling an' all. I just wondered. I didn't mean anything by it.

(Soapy sighed.)

SOAPY: Sorry. I didn't mean to snap. It's just, I hate that that's the first thing people notice.

(Colum grimaced.)

COLUM: Actually, I noticed two other things first.

SOAPY: Pervert.

COLUM: Her antlers!
(Soapy looked enlightened.)
SOAPY: My bad.
(She smiled.)
SOAPY: They're horns though, just so you know.
COLUM: Gotcha. Horns.
(He smiled.)
COLUM: I like Ambre. She has a happy face.
SOAPY: She's a happy person.
(Colum nodded.)
COLUM: And so will I be, once I get over myself, right?
SOAPY: Right.
COLUM: No more being a dick.
SOAPY: Absolutely.
COLUM: Soapy says, shape up, asshole.
SOAPY: She sure does.
(They then shared a laugh.)
COLUM: You're alright.
SOAPY: You're adequate too. Just.
COLUM: Thanks.
SOAPY: You're welcome.
(Colum nodded.)
COLUM: So, what is there to do around here? It must get boring, just staring at the sea.
SOAPY: It does. We should do something.
COLUM: Like what?
(Soapy shrugged.)
SOAPY: Make out?
COLUM: I thought you'd never ask.
(With that, Soapy laid on her back and Colum pulled himself next to her. Moments later, their mouths opened and their tongues entwined. Colum was literally singing inside. For her part, Soapy just relaxed and enjoyed the moment. She hadn't kissed a boy for quite a while and felt she deserved a little action. Unfortunately, however, Colum had a very different kind of action in mind. As they lay there kissing, his hand soon started to wander up her skirt. At once, her eyes bulged and she cast him off of her with all her might.)
SOAPY: Stop that!!!
(With a screech, Colum tumbled off the roof and thudded into the courtyard.)
COLUM: Careful!!! You could have killed me!!!
(Glowering down from the rooftop, Soapy snarled.)
SOAPY: I still might!!! I said we could make out, not make babies!
(Just then, Cayley and Nivea paced out of the base and into the courtyard. At once, Colum stood to attention and saluted. Sensing tension in the air, Nivea bit her lip.)
NIVEA: I detect animosity.
(She glanced up at the fuming Soapy then nodded to herself.)
NIVEA: I see. Someone was a bad little fishy.
(Colum furrowed his brow.)
COLUM: I'm not a bloody fish!
(He then stormed indoors.)
NIVEA: Ooh, touchy.
CAYLEY: You called him a fish, you big racist.
NIVEA: Am I not supposed to then?

(Cayley rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: No, you're not.

(She then smiled up at Soapy.)

CAYLEY: Come down here, missy. Us three are doing the evening patrol.

SOAPY: Ma'am.

(She then clambered down from the roof.)

SOAPY: I thought Kasira was going to take Sika.

CAYLEY: Sika's doing her exam, so Kasira chose us there.

SOAPY: Cool. I love killing wraiths.

(The three of them then headed for the gate.)

NIVEA: So, what did fish boy do to upset you?

SOAPY: He tried to put his hand up my skirt.

(Nivea nodded.)

NIVEA: That's right, you don't like it when boys touch you. You only like it when I grope your boobies.

SOAPY: Don't flatter yourself, bat-girl.

NIVEA: Bat girl? Did you just call me bat-girl?

SOAPY: Yeah, not because your kind live in caves and sleep all day, but because you're a dozy old bat.

NIVEA: You're gonna regret that, girly.

(With that, Nivea chased Soapy from the compound, the pair of them laughing like demented hyenas. Watching them go, Cayley just shook her head.)

CAYLEY: It's like baby-sitting at the zoo.

At just gone midnight, all was quiet within the base. Nivea was locked in her room with Prodi and Zerk; Sika was in a bath, having just finished entertaining Troy; and Ambre had disappeared somewhere with Hampton. Everyone else, except Kasira and Miles, had gone to bed. The living room was in darkened silence. In Kasira's office, however, the lights still burned brightly. Miles had just finishing marking Sika's exam and was giving Kasira his assessment. Sitting there with a deep furrow on his brow, he spoke down to her with exasperation in his voice.)

MILES: Captain, do you realise that it's my job to report on *all* aspects of life in this base? I'm not just a tester, you know? I'm a trusted pair of eyes with a remit to report everything back to the army.

KASIRA: And? This base runs perfectly well, thank you.

MILES: Is that so?

KASIRA: That *is* so, yes.

MILES: From what I've seen this evening, this base is no more than a knocking shop, full of horny women. Do your unit not know how to control their urges?

KASIRA: Those urges have no bearing on how well they battle wraiths.

MILES: Well, you say that...

KASIRA: I *know* that. Providing they don't make the army look bad, how they behave in their downtime is their own business.

MILES: Maybe so, but all I can judge them on is what I've seen and I must say, I'm not impressed by their professionalism.

KASIRA: You've never seen them in battle.

MILES: Indeed. And the thought of doing so troubles me.

KASIRA: Well it'd needn't. Those girls are all top class soldiers.

MILES: Even Sika?

(Kasira nodded sternly.)

KASIRA: She's young but she's getting there. And with my help she will.

MILES: I'm not so sure.

(With that, he lifted Sika's exam paper onto his lap.)

MILES: On her exam, in the section about understanding other races, she wrote the following. (He cleared his throat then began.)

MILES: The subterranean race is a promiscuous idiot.

KASIRA: She wrote that???

MILES: Yes. And there's more. I underlined the best ones.

KASIRA: She must have been distracted.

MILES: You're not joking. She also wrote, the male of the swift-human race shave large bodies.

KASIRA: Shave?

MILES: Shave!

KASIRA: Oh come on, that's just a mistake, she meant 'have', surely.

MILES: She wrote shave. Probably based on the fact that they *do* tend to shave off all their excess hair to impress women of other races; women like you. This Sika is obsessed with sex, clearly.

KASIRA: She...

MILES: Another of her comments was, and I do enjoy this one, my leader is a land-bounce human, her race are known for their dexterity and tight skirt.

KASIRA: She wrote that?

MILES: Yes. She also wrote, I have wings that enable me to Troy. Troy's one of the delivery men!

KASIRA: Yeah, but...

MILES: She references him again here. It says, you must always Troy to be respectful of other races, even Nivea.

(Kasira grimaced.)

KASIRA: Look, there was a strange atmosphere last night, there always is on delivery day. It can be sexually charged with men around. It's only natural, right?

(She sighed.)

KASIRA: Sitting her exam among all that has distracted her to the point where she's been unable to focus and she's made mistakes.

MILES: Captain Ashwood, even if was going to accept that as an excuse, it's merely the tip of the iceberg. As well as writing stupid things because she wasn't focussing on her paper, she's got several simple things wrong as well. She referred to Aqua humans as fish people!

KASIRA: Well...

MILES: She also said swift-human women summon fluffy creatures in battle. *And* claimed that some airborne folk can't heal but are blessed with being awesome at everything else. Neither are true!

KASIRA: I can explain both of those. Ambre's summon is *called* Fluffy, you see? That's its name. And *she's* airborne but she has no healing powers; one of her parents is land-bound.

MILES: I see. Still, she's *not* awesome at everything else and she *did* write that swift-humans summon fluffy creatures. Wrong on both counts.

(He sighed.)

MILES: She was given a simple task this evening. She just had to answer several simple questions then put together an essay covering the very basics. And she failed! I'm sorry, Captain, Private Owsley is unfit to serve as a soldier. I'm going to recommend she be sent back to her academy to redo level nine.

(Kasira looked mortified.)

KASIRA: You can't do that!

MILES: I can and I will!

KASIRA: That's pointless. She's a great kid. She is! I can make her a soldier, I can. There's no need to do that to her. To *us*. We have a solid unit here!

MILES: No, you have an under-qualified liability. Her lack of focus almost killed you, did it not?

KASIRA: Yes, but I'm working with her to solve her issues. Just trust me to make her a soldier, that *is* what you pay me for!

MILES: No, we pay to do as you're told.

(He nodded firmly.)

MILES: She'll be sent to the mainland for retraining and you'll be assigned a replacement forthwith. If Private Owsley should pass her retraining, she'll be assigned to the next available unit where there's a space available.

KASIRA: Please, I can make her a soldier. I know I can! I'd never have reported her in the first place if I'd known you'd do this! We love her here and it makes no sense to remove her. If anyone can get through to her it's us. Taking her away is just unnecessary!

(She pouted.)

KASIRA: Just, trust me with her rehabilitation, I beg you.

MILES: Sorry, I can't. My hands are tied. I tested her and she failed. Failures go back to training. Rules are rules, I'm afraid. We'll take her back with us in the morning.

(He nodded.)

MILES: Don't tell her though. She's a flight risk and I mean that literally.

KASIRA: Don't tell her? So we don't even get to say goodbye?

MILES: Yes, she's your colleague, not your friend. We're fighting a war, not running a day centre for bimbos.

KASIRA: Hey! That's out of order!

MILES: Quite, I went too far. How's this? Rules are rules and you'll do as you're ordered. This is the army, not school!

KASIRA: Then why do our army uniforms look like school ones?

MILES: Nothing to do with me. They were assigned to you by your former general. I can request different ones if you like.

KASIRA: Yes please. You can do that instead of re-entering Sika in an academy.

MILES: Nice try. No, I can't. Sorry, captain, the decision is made.

(Outside Kasira's door at this time, Sika stood with a horrified expression on her face. Having been passing on her way to the toilet, she'd stopped and listened to the entire conversation. Truly heartbroken, she whimpered then rushed away to her bedroom in tears. Entirely oblivious to the fact she'd even been there, Kasira hung her head and sighed in defeat.)

KASIRA: You're just cruel. This is *so* wrong.

MILES: And yet *so* in compliance with regulation 15, sub-section 23 of the military's code of procedure.

(He nodded.)

MILES: Now if you'll excuse me, I'm off to bed.

(With that, he upped and headed for the door, leaving Kasira shaking her head.)

KASIRA: Shit.

One hour later, having woken Cayley from her slumber, Kasira was still in her office. The two of them were searching through every codebook and list of regulations they could get their hands on. Anything to find a way of keeping Sika on the island, even if it was only a

temporary stay of execution. Scanning the pages of a thick book at Kasira's desk, Cayley sucked her teeth.

CAYLEY: This thing is way overwritten.

(Kasira nodded to the law book in front of her and sighed.)

KASIRA: So's *this* book. There's hardly any punctuation either. Get a load of this.

(She sighed then proceeded to read out loud.)

KASIRA: The subject of the court-martial shall be granted legal assistance provided the subject of the court-martial is unable to provide one for themselves regardless of their circumstances which may include but is not exclusive to a lack of finance, incarceration or mental capability which includes but is not exclusive to shock, psychosis or imbecile status.

(She grimaced.)

KASIRA: It goes on like that for several pages.

CAYLEY: Thank god Sika's not up for a court-martial then.

KASIRA: Even so, I'm sure they're all like that.

CAYLEY: The law books probably are. This procedure guidebook isn't like that, thank heavens. It's over-written but it's not gibberish.

(Kasira glanced to her enquiringly.)

KASIRA: How far have you got through that thing?

CAYLEY: About a tenth of the way.

KASIRA: Fuck. We're gonna be up all night.

(She pouted.)

KASIRA: That bureaucrat bastard has well and truly stitched us up, Cayley. I bet he's only doing it to justify his stupid position. He probably thinks that if he messes a few units up and shifts people around, the higher-ups will think he's doing important work.

CAYLEY: Probably. What pisses me off is, he's only messing with *us* because we're women. If he messed with Lassu's unit, Lassu would deck him.

KASIRA: Definitely.

(She paused and looked to the ceiling.)

KASIRA: Maybe I...

CAYLEY: *You* can't deck him, Kasira.

KASIRA: Why not?

CAYLEY: You're five foot six and weigh 115 pounds.

KASIRA: What's that in my language?

CAYLEY: Eight stone. Sorry, babe, you're a terrifying prospect to wraiths with those blades in your hands, but you're no match for a man in a fist fight.

KASIRA: I should attack him with my blades then.

CAYLEY: Now you're fantasising.

KASIRA: Yeah, but...

(She sighed.)

KASIRA: You make me sound pathetic. I'm not a weakling, Cayley.

CAYLEY: I know, I'm just saying you're a woman with a slim build, Kasira. You have a tiny waste and thin arms. He wouldn't even feel *your* punch, but one punch from him and you'll fold like a deck of cards. Don't put yourself in that position.

(Kasira sighed reluctantly.)

KASIRA: Yeah, okay.

CAYLEY: Good. It was horrible watching General Wilson knock you around; don't give that horrible man an excuse to do the same thing.

(She nodded.)

CAYLEY: We might be popular with the islanders here but to some people in this army, we're still *just* women; there to be bullied and abused. One of these days someone might go too far and I can't heal the dead. Just don't risk it.

KASIRA: I won't.

CAYLEY: Make sure you don't.

(Kasira sighed then looked at her book again.)

KASIRA: I can fantasise about setting fire to his bunk though, right?

CAYLEY: You can fantasise about what you like, just make sure it remains a fantasy.

KASIRA: Spoilsport.

(They shared a wry smile then Kasira sighed in frustration.)

KASIRA: We're getting nowhere here. Sika's going to get taken from us and there's nothing we can do. All because that sexist pig sees us as a soft target. Like you said, this wouldn't happen to Lassu's unit.

(Cayley nodded to absorb her words, then swiftly glanced up with an enlightened expression on her brow.)

CAYLEY: Sexism!

KASIRA: What?

CAYLEY: Gender issues.

KASIRA: What about them?

CAYLEY: Kasira, I think I've got something. Bear with me.

(At once, Cayley proceeded to rifle through the procedure book. As she did so, Kasira hurried to her side and peered over her shoulder.)

KASIRA: What is it, Cayley?

CAYLEY: You said Sika was going to be taken away on Lassu's ship tomorrow, right?

KASIRA: Yeah.

CAYLEY: I don't think that's allowed.

(Hope returned to Kasira's eyes.)

KASIRA: I think you might be right.

CAYLEY: I need the section on female posting and deployment.

(Just then, Cayley stopped flicking through the book and ran her finger down a page.)

CAYLEY: Found it. We need the bit about transport. Nope.

(She then flicked over the page and proceeded to run her finger down that one.)

CAYLEY: There has to be something.

(Her finger then stopped moving and she quickly scanned the text with her eyes.)

CAYLEY: This is the one. I knew it!

(Nodding with satisfaction, she then laid the book flat on the desk before her.)

CAYLEY: Look. Regulation 63, sub section 6.

(Kasira stared at the page and read it out loud.)

KASIRA: For safety purposes, female soldiers are forbidden from being transported in a ship or vehicle if outnumbered by male crew members or personnel. In cases of emergency, including evacuation and sea rescue, this rule is not to be enforced. In all non-emergency cases, however, female soldiers must be transported in a ship or vehicle with a female majority crew.

(At once, Cayley sat back and puffed out. Kasira for her part, leant on the desk and drew a sigh of relief.)

KASIRA: It's a stay of execution at least.

CAYLEY: Yeah, it buys us time. To do what, I don't know.

KASIRA: Something. Anything.

(Cayley nodded.)

CAYLEY: Thank heavens for regulation 63, sub-section 6. I had a feeling there was a rule like that. When I was brought here there were only 2 male crew members, my training captain and a maintenance engineer.

KASIRA: Same here.

(She then forced a smile.)

KASIRA: I'm looking forward to throwing this rule in Miles' face tomorrow. He's a stickler for rules and regulations it seems. See how he likes this one.

CAYLEY: Not much, I'll bet.

(Kasira nodded.)

KASIRA: Okay, so we've done all we can for now. It's late, Cayley. Let's call it a night.

CAYLEY: Happily.

KASIRA: Sleep well. I'll see you in the morning.

(A cold sneer then crossed her brow.)

KASIRA: When we stick that tosspot with a taste of his own bureaucratic medicine.

At breakfast the following morning, the atmosphere was extremely sour. All but Nivea were present yet nobody was saying a word. Twelve persons, male and female were seated around the table, but not a single syllable passed between them. Kasira was yet to drop her bombshell regarding regulation 63 but she was very much ready and poised to do so. For her part, Sika picked at her food with the world's most miserable expression on her face. Because of her sadness and Kasira's simmering anger, tension hung in the air. Everyone at the table could sense it. Deeply troubled by it, Ambre took tiny nibbles at her food then hid her face. She could tell a storm was brewing and it was making her extremely nervous.

Whimpering, she took another nibble at her breakfast then glanced around the table at everyone's faces. Upon spotting Sika, looking doomed and miserable in the seat next to hers, she grimaced then plucked up the courage to say something. In the world's smallest voice, she leant to her and spoke in little more than a whisper.

AMBRE: You have a sad face.

(Sika could only pout at her in the most sorrowful fashion.)

AMBRE: Why do you have a sad face, Sika?

(She grimaced then leant to the other side and whispered to Soapy.)

AMBRE: Sika looks really sad.

(Just then, Sika spoke up in a heartbroken voice.)

SIKA: I am sad, Ambre.

(She looked to Kasira.)

SIKA: I *know*. I overheard *everything*. I failed my exam and I'm being taken back to redo my training. I'll never see you guys ever again.

AMBRE: What?

SOAPY: No way!

SIKA: They're taking me with them when they leave this morning!

AMBRE: Kasira won't let that happen!

(Miles rolled his eyes.)

MILES: Actually, she will. She has no choice.

(Kasira snarled at him.)

KASIRA: Actually, you're wrong. She's going nowhere.

MILES: Is that so?

KASIRA: Yes!

MILES: May I remind you of regulation 15, sub-section 23 of the military's code of procedure?

KASIRA: Only If I can remind you of regulation 63, sub-section 6.

(Miles looked stumped for a moment then sighed in defeat.)

MILES: Damn. Good point.

KASIRA: Yes, it is. And like you said, rules are rules. She's going nowhere.

(Sika looked stumped.)

SIKA: What's going on?

KASIRA: He wanted to take you away on their ship this morning but he's not allowed.

There's too many men on the ship.

MILES: You can only be transported with a female majority crew. It's a pointless and stupid safety regulation.

(He groaned.)

MILES: Stupid women and their needs!

SIKA: So I'm off the hook?

MILES: Far from it.

KASIRA: How can you call a woman's safety pointless and stupid?

MILES: With great ease. Pointless; she'd be perfectly safe on that ship and you know it.

And stupid; that rule is offensive to men. We're not *all* rapists, you know? Honestly, you women and your ridiculous rights; such a bunch of cry babies.

(Soapy shook her head.)

SOAPY: What a complete wanker.

MILES: Thank you.

SIKA: Wait! What does this mean exactly? If I'm not going this morning...

(Miles looked to her and furrowed his brow.)

MILES: Once your failure to pass that exam has been reported to HQ, I should imagine they'll send a ship for you.

SIKA: So how long...

MILES: A week at the most, I'd expect.

(Much to everyone's astonishment, Ambre growled at Miles.)

AMBRE: You can't send Sika away! I'm going to stab you with my antlers, you mean person!

(As she started to climb to her feet, Kasira swiftly raised her voice.)

KASIRA: No, Ambre!!! Sit down!

(Ambre quickly obliged.)

KASIRA: As much as I'd like to see that, I don't want you getting in trouble because of some pathetic bureaucrat.

MILES: Two things. I'm far from pathetic and secondly, Ambre, you have horns; not antlers.

AMBRE: I don't like you. Sika's my friend. You're not nice.

SOAPY: He doesn't care, Ambre.

MILES: Dopey here is right.

SOAPY: It's Soapy!

MILES: I was talking about Ambre.

KASIRA: Hey!

CAYLEY: No!

MILES: She said I'm not nice. I was agreeing. I'm *not* nice. I'm not here to be nice, I'm here to make effective changes and see to it that the army runs smoothly.

KASIRA: This part of the army *does* run smoothly. This unit is fine. You wouldn't be messing with us if we were an all male unit.

(She sneered.)

KASIRA: I bet you've *never* messed with a male unit, have you? You just interfere with female ones because you know you won't get hit.

MILES: On the contrary, I've been hit by lots of women!

KASIRA: But have you ever altered a *male* unit? Well?

MILES: No. But then males units rarely need the tweak. Men are just... better.

(He then shrugged.)

MILES: Besides, your argument is irrelevant. Fact is, Sika failed her exam. It's not about me being sexist. She failed. The rules state than her failure requires her to return to training. It's as simple as that. Now get down off your ridiculously high, feminist-horse and fetch me more coffee.

KASIRA: Bollocks. Fetch your own. If a male soldier had failed the exam, I bet you'd work with the leader to sort something out.

MILES: Possibly, but not if I knew the soldier in question was inadequate. Trust me, I've a keen eye for crap soldiers and that's precisely what Sika is.

SIKA: No, I'm not. I made one mistake! One really bad mistake that lead to a series of other bad mistakes.

(Soapy winced.)

SOAPY: That's not gonna help your case, Sika.

SIKA: But it is! I've been punished for my mistakes and I'm ready to become a better soldier. And I can because I've got the best teacher.

(She gestured to Kasira.)

SIKA: She can make a soldier out of anyone.

SOAPY: She made one out of *me* in less than a day!

MILES: Yes, but you're not an incompetent screw up!

KASIRA: Don't talk about her like that!

(She shook her head.)

KASIRA: I'm good at what I do, damn it. I *can* make her a soldier and the fact some bureaucrat can stop me from doing so... it's wrong. What's the point? I'm a leader, let me lead. Why even bother giving me the job if you won't trust me to do it?

(Miles shook his head.)

MILES: I'm not going to argue with you any further, Captain. Now can someone fetch me a bloody coffee?

CAYLEY: You know where the kitchen is.

MILES: Like that, is it?

CAYLEY: Yes.

(Silence then descended and an uncomfortable atmosphere loomed over the table.)

KASIRA: Lassu?

LASSU: Captain?

KASIRA: How long will it take you to get fuck face here back to HQ?

LASSU: Just over two days.

MILES: Actually, fuck face is going nowhere. Fuck face is going to stay in a hotel in town. I'll travel back with Sika when her ship arrives. She *is* my reason for being here after all.

I'm going to escort her back to her training academy. Nobody can say I don't do a thorough job. Lassu, before you leave here, I'll give you a letter to hand in to HQ when you get back.

(Kasira looked to Lassu, wearing a deadpan expression.)

KASIRA: Letters sometimes get mislaid.

(She then stared into his eyes forcefully.)

KASIRA: Don't they?

(Lassu grimaced.)

LASSU: Yeah, it has been known, but I'm not sure losing this one would be wise.

(Kasira was far from impressed.)

KASIRA: Is that so?

LASSU: Yeah! I could be court-martialled, Kasira!

(He bit his lip.)

LASSU: Defying a superior officer is a serious offence.

KASIRA: Superior? He's a pencil pusher!

LASSU: He's Major Gordon Miles of the high command.

(Once again silence descended. Sensing they might all be in deep trouble, Kasira gaped for a moment then rounded on Lassu.)

KASIRA: And you just sat there while we insulted him? Soapy even called him a wanker!

SOAPY: I was talking about Ambre!!!

AMBRE: Why, Soapy?

LASSU: Kasira, don't blame *me*, darling.

CAYLEY: Darling?

AMBRE: Darling?

SOAPY: He called her darling?

SIKA: Interesting!

LASSU: I call *all* women darling.

TROY: No you don't.

PRODI: You've never said that to *anyone* before!

LASSU: Shut up! Point is, it's not my fault.

(Kasira grimaced then looked to Miles. As soon as she saw his face smirking back at her however, she immediately stopped caring about his rank and furrowed her brow.)

KASIRA: It alters nothing. You're still a misogynist and I hate you.

MILES: You hide it well. Now make me a coffee.

(His smirk then widened.)

MILES: That's an order!

(Just then, his entire body tensed up and he cried out in pain. Kasira looked overjoyed.)

KASIRA: Fatal heart attack?

MILES: Wraith!!!

(At once, Zerk leapt to his feet and unleashed his magic at a wraith by Miles' chair. Troy then hurried over to heal Miles' wound while the others looked around for more wraiths.)

KASIRA: Go and check the bath and sleeping areas, Soapy. Cayley, check the kitchen and offices.

SOAPY: Ma'am!

CAYLEY: Ma'am!

(As the two of them hurried away, Miles looked down at where Troy was healing him then grinned at Sika.)

MILES: Healing is such a wonderful skill, you must be so proud... oh, that's right. You can't even do your race's most basic skill, can you?

SIKA: It's not my fault I'm half land-bound.

MILES: Yes, you're half-arsed at everything.

(He then glowered at Kasira.)

MILES: I'll give you a fatal heart attack, you cheeky witch.

KASIRA: Yeah, at this rate, you just might.

(With that, she climbed to her feet and watched anxiously for Cayley and Soapy to return. As she did so, Miles resumed eating his breakfast.)

MILES: I still haven't got that coffee.

(Kasira just ignored him and stood waiting. Moments later, Cayley returned and confirmed the offices and kitchen were clear. Acknowledging her, Kasira nodded then looked to the

doorway through which Soapy had departed. A short while later, Soapy returned and saluted her.)

SOAPY: All clear, ma'am.

KASIRA: Good girl. Thank you.

(She then glanced to the table and sneered at Miles.)

KASIRA: The wraiths are early this morning, which is a good thing. Any excuse to get outside and away from you.

(With that, she headed from the door.)

KASIRA: Sika, Cayley, Soapy, Ambre, come on. We're *all* going on *this* patrol.

MILES: Leave Sika here! She's grounded. And she's a flight risk.

(Kasira glowered at him.)

KASIRA: I'll take full responsibility for her! At least allow me that one concession, you pencil pushing bastard.

(Miles thought for a moment then shrugged.)

MILES: Fine; go. It'll be nice to get a break from your whiney voices. Go on, storm off.

KASIRA: We will!

(With that, the five of them paced out of the door into the courtyard. Left behind, Lassu bit his lip then looked to Miles.)

LASSU: Is that wise? I mean shouldn't one of them stay back and watch the base?

(Miles shrugged.)

MILES: That Nivea person is still here.

LASSU: She's asleep. She's hardly watching the base.

MILES: True, but they don't *have* to leave one person behind. They *are* allowed to go out, you know?

LASSU: Fine. Okay, I just thought...

MILES: I know. It does seem a bit irregular to clear off and leave your guests behind, but I'm okay with it.

LASSU: You are, are you? I'm surprised.

MILES: Don't be! That Kasira is bloody livid and scorned women are evil! I think I've upset her enough for one day, don't you? I'll allow it. We're already well beyond the point where my testicles are fair game for her pointed stilettos.

(His face then straightened.)

MILES: Not only that but, if Sika should fly away then I'll be proven right about her unsuitability as a soldier. To drop her captain in it would be wholly irresponsible. So, yes, letting them go is a good thing.

LASSU: Fair enough.

(Miles then sighed and looked to the ceiling.)

MILES: It's a shame Kasira and I had to meet like this. Clashing, I mean. I'd much rather be on her good side.

(He smirked.)

MILES: And by that I mean on top of her, slipping her my length.

(At once, Lassu's nostrils flared. Oblivious to this, Miles continued.)

MILES: She's fucking tasty, that woman. Awesome body, perfect tits, fantastic. You blokes are so lucky. I've bet you've *all* taken her for a spin, haven't you? She looks the type. She dresses like it anyway.

(Lassu immediately jumped to his feet.)

LASSU: One more fucking word out of you, Major and I'll rip your fucking bollocks off.

(Miles leaned back and flinched.)

MILES: Steady on!

LASSU: Fuck off! Kasira's a good person and if you think I'm gonna sit here and...

(He then noticed his comrades laughing.)

LASSU: What's so fucking funny?

PRODI: Someone's a bit protective of his darling.

ZERK: He's in love!

LASSU: Fuck off!

(He shook his head.)

LASSU: It's just a matter of respect that's all. I don't like hearing someone I respect being bad-mouthed.

MILES: Good for you, Captain.

(He nodded to Troy.)

MILES: You should teach *this* chap a thing or two. I've been slagging off the girl he likes all day and he hasn't batted an eyelid.

TROY: That doesn't mean I don't think you're a compete bastard.

MILES: It probably doesn't. It *does* mean Sika knows you're not man enough to defend her corner though. Let me tell you, you've blown it there, son. You really have.

(He rolled his eyes.)

MILES: Some men simply have no idea when it comes to the opposite sex.

(With that, he resumed eating his breakfast, oblivious to the disbelieving looks he was receiving.)

Outside at this time, Kasira, Cayley, Sika, Soapy and Ambre were making their way up the hill at the centre of the island. Despite the early hour, the sun was already high and it was extremely humid. Trying not to let the heat bother her, Kasira lead Sika forth, holding her hand. Fully expecting Kasira to explode into an angry rant any moment now, the others just followed on silently, waiting for her to get her rage off her chest. They didn't have to wait long.

KASIRA: Fucking bloke. I hate him. Major Miles; more like major tosspot. If all men were like him, I'd become a lesbian.

AMBRE: You look like you already have, Kasira.

KASIRA: What?

AMBRE: You're holding Sika's hand.

(Sika pouted.)

SIKA: Why *are* you doing that, Kasira? Are you afraid I'll fly off?

(Kasira shrugged uneasily.)

KASIRA: Well, yeah, kind of. It had crossed my mind.

(Sika immediately stopped and snatched her hand free, bringing their entire party to a halt. She then glowered at Kasira through tearful eyes.)

SIKA: Fucking hell, Kasira! Do you really think that little of me?

KASIRA: Sika...

SIKA: Do you honestly think I'd do that? You took responsibility for me, Kasira. How could you think I'd drop you in the shit like that?

(Kasira looked most uncomfortable and shuffled her feet uneasily.)

KASIRA: I didn't exactly think you *would*. I just... I don't know.

SIKA: I made a mistake, okay? I did, I fucked up. I didn't try to kill you on purpose, you know? Now all of a sudden you don't even trust me to walk up a hill.

(She then burst into tears.)

SIKA: I want things to go back to how they were! When you all liked me; when we had fun together!

(At once, everyone's bottom lips drooped and they had to fight back tears of their own.)

SIKA: Everything used to be *so* awesome, I was *so* happy. I want that back.

KASIRA: That's what we *all* want, Sika.

SIKA: Then make it so.

(Unable to keep her sorrow hidden any longer, Kasira replied in a tearful voice.)

KASIRA: I'm trying to, Sika. I really am.

SIKA: I don't want to be sent away. I want to stay here with you guys. I love it here. Please don't let them send me away. I love it here. I'm really sorry I blew you into the sky, Kasira!!! I'll try really hard from now on. Just... help me!!!

(Not quite sure how to console their crying colleague, Soapy, Ambre and Cayley slowly stepped towards her wearing sorrowful expressions. Kasira, on the other hand, zoomed forwards and took Sika in her arms. Allowing her own tears to fall, she held her tight and spoke through gritted teeth.)

KASIRA: Don't you even think for a minute that I'm not going to fight to keep you, Sika. You hear me? I'll do everything in my power.

SIKA: Thank you.

KASIRA: Now get over here and hug us, you three!

(With that, Cayley, Soapy and Ambre rushed towards them and a group hug commenced.)

AMBRE: I love you, Sika. You're like my sister. I don't want you to go.

SOAPY: None of us do!

CAYLEY: We're all in your corner, Sika.

SIKA: I love you guys.

(Despite all the arms that were wrapped around her, Sika managed to free her arms and wipe the tears from her eyes.)

SIKA: I mean it, Kasira. I'll be so professional from now on, you won't even recognise me.

KASIRA: I know you have it in you, Sika.

SIKA: I'll really concentrate. I will. I was so scared when I thought I'd killed you. I'll never make that mistake again, I swear. I'm not stupid, I really have learned my lesson. (She sighed.)

SIKA: Or have I? I'm kidding myself, aren't I? If I knew *how* to concentrate, I'd have passed that stupid exam.

(Pulling out of the hug, prompting the others to follow suit, Kasira looked deep into Sika's eyes.)

KASIRA: You *will* be focussed in battle, Sika. I believe that. And I want you to be given the chance to prove it. A written exam doesn't mean anything. Or it shouldn't.

SOAPY: I'd have failed it. I suck at written exams and I don't know the first thing about history. I blagged my tests, every single one. And *I'm* not a bad soldier.

SIKA: Is this really the time for boasting, Soapy? I mean really?

SOAPY: I wasn't boasting, I was just building on what Kasira said. A written test shouldn't even be relevant. You should only be judged on what happens in the field.

AMBRE: But she blew up Kasira in the field.

SOAPY: I mean, she should be given the chance to prove she's learned her lesson in the field.

AMBRE: Oh.

(Finally, Sika managed a smile.)

SIKA: I'm gonna miss your silly comments when I go, Ambre.

AMBRE: And I'll miss you being mean about them.

(Ambre then burst into tears.)

AMBRE: I don't want you to go, Sika!!!

(At once, Soapy, Cayley and Kasira all rushed to hug her. Watching on, Sika's brow immediately furrowed.)

SIKA: Oh, I see. You weren't *that* quick to hug *me*.

(Cayley just winked at her.)

CAYLEY: That's because we like Ambre more.

(Sika just shook her head and smiled.)

SIKA: Well, you're not the only ones.

(She then stepped forth and joined in the hug.)

A good ten minutes later, having composed themselves, Kasira and her four subordinates finally made it to the top of the hill. At this moment in time, their camaraderie had never been stronger. They were very much together in both word and thought. Every word spoken was based on the idea that their unit was great and Major Miles was the devil incarnate. At this moment in time, they didn't need Kasira's leadership to bring them together, their hatred for the major had made them more united than ever.

Having given the major a severe roasting all the way to the top of the hill, once they arrived, Kasira ordered them to stop then set about her task, making sure to take one final swipe at the major as she did so. Placing her hands on her hips, she glanced down at the other side of the island and sneered coldly.)

KASIRA: Okay, ladies, we're here; though Major Fuck Face would probably tell us to do it elsewhere.

CAYLEY: No doubt about it. We're women. To blokes like him, everything we do is wrong.

SOAPY: Right? He even *admitted* he probably wouldn't mess with a male unit.

(She snarled.)

SOAPY: I'm half tempted to take him out to sea and drown him.

KASIRA: Yeah well, you're not the only one tempted to bump him off.

CAYLEY: Even Ambre wanted to and she likes everybody!

AMBRE: Not anymore I don't. And I didn't like General Wilson either.

SIKA: Both high-ranking officers! Seems to me, if you give a man a rank and a title, he becomes a complete knob.

KASIRA: Complete and utter.

(She then rubbed her hands together sternly.)

KASIRA: Enough about him though, let's get this show on the road.

(At once, Sika stood tall and a look of deep concentration crossed her brow.)

SIKA: Ready, ma'am.

KASIRA: Good girl. Ambre?

AMBRE: Yes, Ka... ma'am?

KASIRA: Summon Fluffy please, sweetheart.

AMBRE: Okay.

(Kasira then looked to Soapy.)

KASIRA: You got the wraith whistle, Soapy?

SOAPY: Ma'am.

(She held up the wraith whistle and nodded sternly.)

SOAPY: Ready when you are.

KASIRA: Good girl. Let us know when you're ready, Ambre?

(Just then, Ambre's solid rock, human-shaped familiar, Fluffy, appeared at her side.)

AMBRE: I'm ready.

(Kasira nodded then looked across at Sika, Soapy and Cayley. Seeing a focussed glint in their eyes, she smiled knowingly.)

KASIRA: You guys are awesome, you know that? Major Twat might not think so, but he can go and have sex with himself.

(She then looked to Ambre.)

KASIRA: Position yourself, darling.

AMBRE: Okay.

(With that, Ambre hurried to the peak of the hill, followed by Fluffy, then nodded to Kasira.)

AMBRE: Now?

KASIRA: Now!

(At once, Ambre started to focus hard. As she did so, a blue light emanated around Fluffy.)

KASIRA: Perfect.

(With that, Kasira hurried to Ambre's side then slowly started to guide her back from where Fluffy was standing. Once she was a good twenty feet back, she then nodded to Soapy.)

KASIRA: Blow the whistle please, Soapy.

SOAPY: Yes, ma'am!

(With that, Soapy placed the whistle to her lips and blew it with all her might.)

KASIRA: Perfect.

(In that moment, the wait began. With extreme focus in their eyes, Sika, Cayley and Soapy all sunk into fighting positions, in readiness for the swarm of wraiths that would soon be coming their way. For her part, Ambre focussed hard on making Fluffy stay put while she kept him healed. She also had to make sure he kept emanating a whistle to attract the attention of the wraiths once they arrived. As always, they didn't have to wait long. Within twenty seconds, sure enough, a hoard of wraiths came screaming up the hillside towards them.)

KASIRA: Okay, ladies, you're up.

(Seconds later, the first few wraiths charged onto the peak of the hill and made a beeline for Fluffy. As they did so, Sika, Soapy and Cayley immediately opened fire. For her part, however, Kasira simply stood back and observed Sika's form.)

KASIRA: Interesting.

(She then spoke softly to Ambre.)

KASIRA: Good girl, you're doing brilliantly, Ambre.

(With everyone in such a determined mood, the cull that morning was over in no time. Sika and Cayley's vortex-like magic was spot on and Soapy was quicker than ever with her casting of energy bolts. Such was the speed of their cull, Ambre was actually taken a little by surprise when Kasira told her she could stop healing Fluffy. The cull had been ruthlessly efficient.)

KASIRA: Brilliant, you girls fucking rule.

AMBRE: That was fast.

(She then paced over to Fluffy.)

KASIRA: It *was* fast. Everyone was right on it today. I just hope knob features, Miles, was watching.

CAYLEY: If he was, he saw everyone on top form.

(Ambre then threw her arms around Fluffy's rocky-midriff.)

AMBRE: Even Fluffy. I love Fluffy.

(Just then, Fluffy hoisted Ambre into the air and held her above his head.)

AMBRE: I don't like it up here!!!

KASIRA: Why has he...

(She then noticed a straggling wraith charging towards where Ambre had been standing.)

KASIRA: Wraith! Leave it to...

(Just then, the wraith exploded into dust.)

KASIRA: Me...

SOAPY: Sorry.

(Much to their astonishment, Fluffy then placed Ambre down and spoke in a deep, barely intelligent voice.)

FLUFFY: Fluffy love Ambre!

(Everyone was astonished.)

CAYLEY: He can talk?

SOAPY: Since when?

KASIRA: I didn't think they *could*.

AMBRE: Nor did I.

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: He loves me.

KASIRA: Evidently. He moved you out of that wraith's way!

SOAPY: Not that he needed to.

KASIRA: No, but still. He did.

SIKA: I'm astonished. All this time we thought it was just a weird creature with a rock for a brain.

AMBRE: Well I'm not! That's just mean!

SIKA: I was talking about Fluffy!

(She shrugged.)

SIKA: Though I can see why you'd make that mistake.

AMBRE: What?

SIKA: Doesn't matter.

KASIRA: Indeed.

(She smiled.)

KASIRA: Job done, ladies. Let's go back to the base.

(She sneered.)

KASIRA: The long way! I'm in no mood to see that cock, Miles, any time soon.

CAYLEY: The long way it is then.

(With that, Kasira, Cayley, Sika and Soapy headed off down the side of the mountain towards the township. Watching them go, Ambre bit her lip then looked to Fluffy.)

AMBRE: How about saving me a walk, Fluffy?

(Much to her delight, Fluffy scooped her up into his arms then started to head down the hill after the rest of her unit.)

AMBRE: Yay! Look at me!!!

(At once, everyone glanced around and started to chuckle. Ambre was laying in Fluffy's rocky arms, looking extremely comfortable.)

KASIRA: Ambre, darling, that's extremely lazy.

AMBRE: It's awesome.

SIKA: It *looks* it. I need to get myself a Hexham now.

CAYLEY: It's called a Saxum.

SIKA: It is?

(She grimaced.)

SIKA: I think I just identified where I might have lost some points on that exam.

SOAPY: You called it a Hexham?

SIKA: Yeah, several times.

CAYLEY: The rest of the points you lost were probably as a result of staring at the men!

KASIRA: And growling at Nivea. I've heard some of the highlights, Sika, you were seriously distracted.

(Sika pouted.)

SIKA: I know. I couldn't focus at all!

(Suddenly, there was a deafening, metallic crash from behind them and Ambre yelled out in distress.)

AMBRE: Help.

(At once, they all spun around to see Fluffy disappear down a giant hole. Mercifully, he'd managed to cast Ambre to safety before he disappeared from view.)

SIKA: What the fuck?

CAYLEY: Fluffy!!!

(Ambre pouted at her from where she'd landed.)

AMBRE: It's okay. I dismissed him.

SOAPY: I was gonna say. He fell down that hole and we didn't hear him hit the bottom. How deep *is* it?

(Slowly, they all gathered around the hole then stared down it.)

KASIRA: That's deep.

(Just then, they heard the unmistakeable cry of a wraith from below them.)

SOAPY: There are wraiths down there.

SIKA: I know, you can see them.

KASIRA: What is it then, some sort of cave?

CAYLEY: No, the floor seems to be made of concrete. It's man-made!

(She then squinted and stared harder.)

CAYLEY: At least I *think* it is.

KASIRA: Whatever it is, it's full of wraiths.

AMBRE: That means we have to kill them, doesn't it?

(Kasira nodded.)

KASIRA: Yeah, it does.

AMBRE: Damn. Hoped I was wrong.

(Kasira shook her head.)

KASIRA: I think you're right, Cayley. It's too well lit to be a cave. A cave would be in total darkness.

SOAPY: Which begs the question, where the hell is the light coming from?

CAYLEY: Sigel Crystals.

SOAPY: What are they?

KASIRA: Never mind that. That can wait for another time. Right now we need to...

(Just then, another wraith cried out and Sika immediately looked to Cayley.)

SIKA: That's the noise we heard the other night.

CAYLEY: Yup, no mistaking *that* horrible sound.

KASIRA: Creepy.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: Anyway, as I was about to say, we need to cover this hole as soon as possible.

Soapy, Cayley, you two stay here and guard it. Don't fall down it!

CAYLEY: Really, Kasira? Like you need to tell us that.

KASIRA: Fair point.

(She then looked to Sika and Ambre.)

KASIRA: Let's get back to base and find something to cover the hole with.

(With that, they started to head towards the base.)

SIKA: Are you going to tell the Major about this?

KASIRA: Fuck the major. This is our island, we'll deal with it.

AMBRE: What do we say if he asks what we're doing though?

KASIRA: Oh, you can tell him, but if he thinks I'm letting him interfere with our duties, he's very much mistaken.

Back at the site of the hole, some twenty minutes later, Kasira stood with her arms folded, wearing a vexed expression. Having been told about the hole, the major had immediately assumed full control of the situation. To say Kasira's nose had been well and truly put out of joint would be quite the understatement. Not only had he assumed control but he'd invited Lassu's unit to help him investigate. Kasira and her subordinates had coldly been shoved to one side as if they weren't worthy of his time.

MILES: A definite wraith infestation. No doubt about it.

(He puffed out.)

MILES: Those wraiths will have been down there undiscovered for... well, how *long* is anybody's guess.

LASSU: But, what is it?

MILES: I have no idea. An enclosed underground bunker or something, I'd wager.

(He then nodded to affirm his thinking.)

MILES: Yes, it's enclosed for certain. Otherwise the wraiths would have come when the ladies blew the whistle. Unless they didn't blow it loud enough, you know what women are like.

LASSU: They're perfectly capable of blowing whistles, Major.

MILES: Fair comment. Then yes, it's enclosed.

(With that, he stood tall then finally engaged Kasira in conversation.)

MILES: You'll need to get down there and kill them somehow.

KASIRA: How?

MILES: You'll think of something. Let the winged one *fly* down there or something.

SIKA: Winged *ones*! There's two of us.

MILES: You're on probation.

KASIRA: That wouldn't work anyway. The hole isn't wide enough to fly into.

(She looked to Cayley.)

KASIRA: Your wingspan is what? Fifteen feet? That hole is three foot square.

MILES: Fine. Then like I said, think of something.

(Kasira nodded.)

KASIRA: Look, the way I see it is, that place could be huge and if wraiths have been spawning down there for hundreds of years, there's going to be thousands of them. We can't go unprepared. I say we all sit down together and think of a way in. Then, once we have a plan, the twelve of us can...

MILES: Twelve? You're merely a five.

KASIRA: What?

MILES: I'm retired from active duty. I'm a pencil pushing bastard, as you so quaintly put it. And Lassu and his men need to return to their base. If they don't, other units won't get their supplies. This one is down to you five. And by five, I'm including the sleepy one. The nocturnal girl. Nibbler.

CAYLEY: Nivea.

MILES: Her too. Until she comes, you're a four. Private Owsley is unfit to do the job.

KASIRA: Private Owsley is a bloody good soldier in the making. She's one of us and she's very much included.

MILES: Fine. On your head be it. If you use her and she gets hurt, *you'll* be in the shit.

KASIRA: Fine.

(Miles rolled his eyes then looked to Lassu.)

MILES: Get a metal crate lid from your ship. We'll fasten it down over the hole for now.

Once that's done, you'd better be on your way.

LASSU: Sir! Follow me, men! Don't fall down the hole.

(With that, Lassu and his unit headed away. Watching them go, Miles nodded sternly then looked to Kasira.)

MILES: While they're doing that, I'm going to book into a local hotel. Not just to wait for that female unit to collect Sika, but because I've decided to oversee this entire operation.

KASIRA: What?

MILES: You can plan it. I just want to observe.

KASIRA: Whatever.

MILES: You might not like it, captain, but seeing as you have an attitude, I've decided to assess *you* as well. I'm starting to suspect you're no more than a mouthy, clueless whinging - machine; unworthy of leading a unit. And if I'm right, I'll have you busted back down to private before you even know what hit you.

(He nodded sternly.)

MILES: I'm going to grab my stuff from your base then go to the hotel. You and your girls can wait for Lassu and his men to get back and cover that hole. Oh, and don't fall down it. I trust you can carry out this simple order, can you?

(Kasira replied through gritted teeth.)

KASIRA: Yes.

MILES: Good. Farewell for now.

(With that, he headed off towards the base. As he did so, Kasira shook her head then looked to Cayley.)

KASIRA: Can you believe that man?

CAYLEY: He stopped surprising me ages ago, Kasira.

KASIRA: He's a cun... pleat bastard.

(She then looked across at her subordinates and offered them all a rueful smile.)

KASIRA: Chin up, girls. At least things can't get any worse.

(She then glanced skywards and checked for a rain cloud.)

KASIRA: Nope. This is pretty much rock bottom.

Fifteen minutes after leaving the hillside, Lassu and his unit mates returned with a heavy iron crate lid. Having fitted it squarely over the hole, they then set about fixing it to the ground with thick bolts. As his men went about the task, Lassu watched them closely then glanced to Kasira. Feeling somewhat uneasy, he then sidled over to her.

LASSU: You probably want to set fire to me right now, don't you?

(Kasira shook her head.)

KASIRA: Don't be silly. None of this is your fault. I'm sorry if I've been short with you.

LASSU: It's fine. And if it makes you feel any better, *I* reckon Miles is a prick too. You've every right to be miffed. He *is* only picking on you because he sees you as a soft target.

KASIRA: I hate him, Lassu. I really do. And I don't use that word easily.

LASSU: I know, babe.

(At once, everyone stared in their direction.)

ZERK: Babe?

SIKA: Babe?

AMBRE: He called her babe!

LASSU: I call *all* women babe!

PRODI: No you don't!

LASSU: Shut it!!!

(With that, he threw his hands to his hips and growled.)

LASSU: Another word out of you lot and I'll kick you all the way down the fucking hillside!

(At once, his men clammed up and doubled their efforts on the task in hand.)

LASSU: Good!

(With that, he paced over to help them. As he did so, Cayley sidled up next to Kasira and whispered closely to her.)

CAYLEY: He's your boyfriend, isn't he?

KASIRA: Cayley?

CAYLEY: Yes?

KASIRA: Fuck off.

(With a flinch, Cayley immediately sidled away again. Kasira had never spoken to her like that before and she was more than a little shocked.)

CAYLEY: Mean.

Within half an hour of the hole being covered, Lassu and his men set sail for their base. Standing on the dockside, Kasira, Cayley, Sika, Soapy and Ambre waved them off. For her part, Kasira was struggling to maintain her composure. Lassu's leaving was hurting her heart and not crying took quite the effort. Having noticed she was struggling, Cayley placed a loving arm around her. The others simply pretended not to notice as they knew Kasira didn't want to make a scene. Her denial of their relationship had fooled nobody, but they all respected her wish for privacy on the matter.

Once the ship became a small speck on the horizon, Kasira took a deep breath to gather herself then looked to her unit-mates.

KASIRA: Okay, now we've got some thinking to do.

AMBRE: I'm not very good at that.

(Everyone chuckled at her comment.)

SIKA: You're priceless.

AMBRE: I'm not for sale.

SIKA: Right.

KASIRA: Listen, girls. We need to find a way to kill those wraiths. The hole is covered so that's not an issue anymore. We need to think solely of a way to destroy what's inside.

(Soapy looked thoughtful.)

SOAPY: Water kills wraiths. We could fill the bunker with water.

KASIRA: Like how?

SOAPY: With a pump!

CAYLEY: Nobody has a pump *that* powerful!

KASIRA: Yeah, that won't work. Points for thinking though.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: The main problem is getting down there. We can't get in through the hole, it's way too far down.

CAYLEY: We'd probably have trouble opening the hole again anyway, it took five of them to do up those bolts with that giant wrench. And they took the wrench with them.

KASIRA: We have a wrench of our own.

CAYLEY: Not that big we don't.

KASIRA: True. Then what? How are we going to get in there?

(Cayley bit her lip thoughtfully.)

CAYLEY: I'm thinking there's probably another way in.

KASIRA: Yeah?

CAYLEY: Yeah. What I'm thinking is, that place is definitely man made. It looked to be made of concrete and the light was definitely coming from Sigel Crystals.

SOAPY: You mentioned them earlier. What are they?

CAYLEY: Glowing rocks. In my country, we use them to illuminate mines. They can shine for hundreds of years.

KASIRA: Really? How can that be?

CAYLEY: I don't know. Apparently if they're exposed to sunlight for just one day, they'll glow for hundreds of years. Almost as if they store the light. I'm not sure exactly how it works, I'm no scientist.

(She shrugged.)

CAYLEY: Point is. It's not a natural cave down there; it's man made for people to access. Now, I very much doubt people used to gain access via that hole. Like you say, even people with wings can't fly down it and jumping down it would be fatal. So there's must be another way in.

SOAPY: Sounds logical.

AMBRE: But if there's another way in, we'd have seen it. We've been round this island lots and lots of times.

SIKA: We've covered every inch.

AMBRE: Lots and lots of times.

CAYLEY: Yeah, we have.

KASIRA: Which begs the question, if there is another way in, where the hell is it?

SIKA: Knowing our luck, that hole is the only way in and there used to come kind of pulley-system to lower people into it.

(Kasira shuddered.)

KASIRA: Bloody hell, I hope not. If that is the only way in, we're going to have build something and let's face it, ladies, we're not engineers.

SIKA: Oh, I dunno. Nivea's pretty good with her hands.

(At once, Soapy and Ambre covered their breasts with their hands.)

SOAPY: We know!

SIKA: I mean she can use a wrench.

KASIRA: She did fix the water pump once.

SIKA: See?

KASIRA: It fell apart again two days later.

(She sighed in defeat.)

KASIRA: If we have to build something, we're screwed.

AMBRE: No, we can always get Tony the carpenter to do it. He likes you, Kasira.

KASIRA: I noticed. That's why I've been avoiding him.

CAYLEY: I'll ask him if you like.

KASIRA: If it comes to that, sure.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: Right now, I'd rather focus on the idea of another way in.

CAYLEY: Where would it be though?

(At once they all paused for thought.)

AMBRE: We should ask someone who knows the answer!

SIKA: Really, Ambre? That's dumb even for you!

AMBRE: Why is it?

SOAPY: Like who, Ambre? Who should we ask?

AMBRE: I don't know. Maybe we should *ask* someone who we should ask.

SIKA: Good grief.

KASIRA: Wind your neck in, Sika. Ambre's actually onto something there.

AMBRE: Yay!

KASIRA: If anyone knows what that underground bunker is, it'll be the elder. We should ask him. He's something of a historian, by all accounts.

CAYLEY: Sounds like a plan.

KASIRA: Let's go then.

(And with that, they all headed off towards the township.)

KASIRA: I really hope the elder can help. He *should* be able to really. I mean, somebody has to know what that place is. I don't believe for a minute it's been down there for hundreds of years and nobody knew anything about it.

CAYLEY: Does sound a bit far-fetched, doesn't it?

SIKA: Well you say that. Those weird wraith noises came from down there, and you said, first time you heard them, everyone searched the entire island for them. Clearly nobody assumed it was the wraiths in the underground bunker because nobody knew it was there.

KASIRA: True. Maybe he won't be able to help then.

SOAPY: I hope he can. Life will be so much easier with a second entrance.

SIKA: But if he can't?

KASIRA: Then it's back to the drawing board.

(Everyone released a simultaneous sigh.)

CAYLEY: Oh well, look on the bright side. At least we've solved the mystery of Capsway Island's phantom wraith noises.

KASIRA: Scant consolation.

(Sika grinned.)

SIKA: Indeed. Especially as we have a new mystery.

SOAPY: We do?

SIKA: Yeah! Where did Ambre disappear to last night and why was that lad, Hampton, also nowhere to be found?

(At once Ambre's eyes bulged and she looked to Kasira desperately.)

AMBRE: Nothing happened!

KASIRA: Wait, what's this?

SIKA: She disappeared with Hampton last night.

SOAPY: Couldn't find her anywhere.

SIKA: Or him!

SOAPY: Co-incidence?

SIKA: I think not!

AMBRE: Yes it was! I went to sleep, that's all. Leave me alone.

(Kasira pouted at her sorrowfully.)

KASIRA: Ambre, be honest. Did you... with a boy?

AMBRE: No, I didn't! Not guilty!

(Soapy chuckled.)

SOAPY: We're only teasing, Ambre. We know you didn't do anything.

SIKA: Yeah. You wouldn't know how. You think a blowjob is working outdoors on a windy day.

SOAPY: Foreplay comes before five play.

SIKA: Intercourse as opposed to outer course.

KASIRA: Stop being cruel you lot.

AMBRE: Yeah. I *would* know how!

(She pouted defiantly.)

AMBRE: And I do. Because I did it. With Hampton! So there.

KASIRA: You slut!

AMBRE: No, I'm not.

CAYLEY: Kasira, she's a grown woman. Good for her!

KASIRA: No, it isn't!

SIKA: Relax, Kasira. She didn't *really* do it. She was denying everything until we teased her. She's just saying she did it to shut us up.

AMBRE: No, I'm not!

SIKA: No? Then how many position did you do?

(Ambre stared through her with wide-eyes then mumbled a reply.)

AMBRE: Lots and lots.

SIKA: How many?

AMBRE: All of them.

(Sika started to laugh.)

SIKA: All of them?

AMBRE: No! Just fifty.

SIKA: Fifty?

(Kasira grinned from ear to ear.)

KASIRA: You didn't *really* do it, did you?

AMBRE: No!

SIKA: See?

AMBRE: Actually, I did. He put his thingy in my jiggy-wiggy and bounced on me. All night!

KASIRA: Ambre, please!

(Ambre looked torn for a moment then stamped her feet and threw her arms about in a dither.)

AMBRE: Fine, I didn't!

KASIRA: Then why say you did?

AMBRE: They were teasing me so I said I did it. I don't know. I got all confused. I don't like it when they do that.

SIKA: You know we love you, Ambre.

AMBRE: Don't tease me then.

(She sighed.)

AMBRE: I wanted to do it. We went back to my room, but Sika and Troy were in there.

They were groaning and talking to someone called god. She said his name a lot. So we went in the store room instead.

(An enormous pout then formed on her lips.)

AMBRE: He tried to kiss me.

KASIRA: Bastard!

AMBRE: No, he was nice! I tried to kiss him back but I missed.

SIKA: You missed?

AMBRE: Yeah.

(She grimaced.)

AMBRE: We were standing by the wall, you see. I leant forward to kiss him but I slipped and accidentally head-butted him with my antlers.

(In that moment, both Sika and Soapy fell about laughing. Soapy literally fell to the ground and was rolling around in hysterics.)

AMBRE: It's not funny! He was out cold! Troy had to heal him. He still thinks I did it on purpose. That's why he didn't speak to me at breakfast.

(She pouted at Kasira then furrowed her brow.)

AMBRE: It's not funny, Kasira.

KASIRA: Darling, I'm not laughing at that...

(She wiped tears of laughter then forced a grin.)

KASIRA: See?

AMBRE: I'm rubbish. I'm never going to do it with someone I like at this rate.

SIKA: You're really not. Men find being head-butted quite the turn off.

(Staggering to her feet, Soapy was still helpless with laughter.)

SOAPY: When I retire from the army, I'm going to move in next door to you, Ambre, just so I don't miss out on moments like this.

AMBRE: Stop laughing at me!!!

CAYLEY: Come on, girls. Give poor Ambre a break.

(Cayley slipped her arm around her.)

CAYLEY: You'll meet the right man, one day, Ambre. A good-looking thing like you isn't going to have any trouble on that score, darling.

AMBRE: Are you just saying that to make me feel better? It's okay if you are.

CAYLEY: No, I'm not. Ambre, you're gorgeous.

KASIRA: I second that. And don't let it bother you, love. We've all made idiots of ourselves with men before.

SIKA: Yup.

SOAPY: Not me.

SIKA: Shut it, virgin, this isn't about you.

SOAPY: Since when was keeping my chastity a crime?

SIKA: Since forever. Get laid, then you can join in conversations like this.

SOAPY: Wow.

KASIRA: Wow, indeed. Don't listen to that nonsense, Soapy. Keep it as long as you can girl. Virginity is like a balloon...

SIKA: One prick and it's gone, yeah. Oldest joke in the world.

KASIRA: It's true though. As soon as you lose it, you open yourself up to a world of picking the wrong men and making a fool of yourself.

(Ambre looked to Kasira and raised a suspicious eyebrow.)

AMBRE: I don't believe you've ever made a fool of yourself with a man, Kasira. You're way too cool.

(Kasira beamed.)

KASIRA: I'll never tire of hearing that!

(She then grimaced.)

KASIRA: I've made a fool of myself several times though.

(She chuckled.)

KASIRA: Just before leaving my academy, I had sex with this boy. He sneaked me into the boy's dormitory after lights out. The sex was amazing. He then went to the toilet and said we should do it again when he got back. I was up for that, so when he returned, I went to the washroom to freshen up so we could go again. Anyway, the bathroom was at the end of this long dark corridor. I was really scared I might get caught actually, which made it all the more exciting. I made it though, so I freshened up then sneaked back down the corridor and crept into his room. Anyway, I was all excited, what with the thrill of getting caught and all. So, I fumbled through the darkness, climbed on top of him, planted my tongue in his mouth then we got down to it. Three positions later, I told him he was an amazing fuck.

(She grimaced.)

KASIRA: He replied, "I've no idea who you are, but you're no slouch either." I was in the wrong bloody room. I just screamed and ran out of the door. To this day, I've no idea who he was.

(As everyone chuckled at Kasira's story, Ambre looked to her thoughtfully.)

AMBRE: Is that how you got that nickname, Kasira the penis cosy?

(Kasira glowered at her.)

KASIRA: No. That came about because of a mean, vicious rumour. The fact I had a different boyfriend every week didn't help, but I didn't sleep with *all* of them, damn it!

SIKA: I went through several boyfriends too. One of them kept stealing my underwear.

CAYLEY: I dated a boy like that! A few in fact.
SOAPY: Wow. Remaining a virgin just sounds more and more appealing.
KASIRA: Yeah well, like I said, keep hold of it, girl.
CAYLEY: Definitely.
(She sighed ruefully.)
CAYLEY: Men are the bane of our existence.

A short while later, Kasira and her four subordinates arrived at the home of the elder. A wise and friendly gentleman, he immediately invited them into his living room and asked his wife to make them coffee. A request to which she dutifully obliged. As his wife headed to the kitchen, he then looked to Kasira and smiled.)

ELDER: So, to what do I owe the pleasure?

KASIRA: Well...

ELDER: Wait, where are my manners?

(He then gestured to his sofas.)

ELDER: Please, take a seat.

KASIRA: Oh, thank you.

(With that, they all took a seat then the elder repeated his question.)

ELDER: So, anyway, to what do I owe the pleasure?

KASIRA: We're looking for information, Elder.

ELDER: Regarding?

KASIRA: We've discovered a large bunker beneath the hillside. It's infested with wraiths.

ELDER: Oh, my.

KASIRA: Indeed. We were wondering if anyone knows what it is. And more importantly if there's a way in.

(The elder bit his lip.)

ELDER: I had no idea such a thing existed.

(As the girls all looked to one another in disappointment, the elder then glanced to the ceiling.)

ELDER: I might be able to find out though.

KASIRA: Really?

ELDER: Indeed. I've detailed records of this island's history, dating back hundreds of years. There's far too many to read through though. I'd have to live to be 150 to get through them all. I've been perusing some of them in my spare time, actually. I've never read anything about...

(He then paused and raised a curious eyebrow.)

ELDER: Wait a minute. I wonder...

AMBRE: What about?

ELDER: I'm coming to that. The wife dusted in my study a few years back and knocked some books off the shelf. Pages went everywhere, including a detailed map of a large building. I had no idea what it was. I wonder if that's your underground bunker.

KASIRA: If it is, that would be wonderful.

ELDER: Outrageously fortunate too.

CAYLEY: To be fair, we're due some luck.

ELDER: Then fingers crossed, ladies. I'll go and grab it for you.

(With that, he upped and headed for a door at the back of the room.)

ELDER: I won't be long.

(He then disappeared through the door.)

KASIRA: I so hope that map's the thing we're looking for.

SIKA: And if it isn't?

KASIRA: We're going to have to ask him if we can go through all his books.

SOAPY: The ones he said he'd have to live to 150 to get through?

(Kasira grimaced.)

KASIRA: It won't be easy, but it's either that or go back to the base and construct a pulley system to lower us down that hole.

AMBRE: That hole we probably can't even open!

KASIRA: Yeah.

CAYLEY: Then we'll go through the books. At the risk of sounding like a tart, I did my nails this morning and heavy manual labour is the last thing I fancy doing.

SIKA: Like we'd even have a clue how to.

SOAPY: I welded two bits of metal together once. It's not that hard.

KASIRA: We'd need to do a bit more than weld two bits of metal, Soapy.

SOAPY: I know, but we're super soldiers; women of substance. I'm sure we could do it if we tried.

AMBRE: I couldn't. I'm rubbish with my hands.

KASIRA: Folding sheets is about the limit of my creative abilities.

CAYLEY: And making cakes is mine.

(Soapy shook her head.)

SOAPY: You're all so defeatist. None of us knew how to hoist a flag at one time, but now we do it everyday as part of our duties. We can learn by doing.

SIKA: I agree with Soapy. And knocking something together would be twice as much fun as reading books. Books are boring.

SOAPY: That's what *all* the dipshits say.

SIKA: Soapy, you smell.

(Ambre grinned.)

AMBRE: She smells soapy.

SIKA: Only if you use poo as soap.

SOAPY: Very mature, Sika.

SIKA: Actually, it was immensely childish but I'm okay with it.

SOAPY: Naturally.

(Kasira rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: If you two have quite finished with your comedy routine, maybe the adults can carry on their conversation.

(Sika and Soapy just grinned at her innocently.)

KASIRA: Thank you. Look, the problem is, constructing a pulley-system isn't something we're cut out to do. Thanks to General Wilson, this unit consists entirely of girly girls and nobody with any construction skills; never mind inventive talents. We can all put make-up on like true professionals, but asking us to construct something that's both ingenious and safe to use is ridiculous.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: If it comes to that, we're going to have to ask the village folk.

AMBRE: Yay! Asking people was *my* idea. Tony the carpenter, right?

KASIRA: To build it, perhaps. We'll need to get someone to design it first.

CAYLEY: Tony the carpenter then.

KASIRA: Or someone else.

AMBRE: You really don't like him do you?

KASIRA: His hands wander.

CAYLEY: Like I said before, if it comes to that, *I'll* ask him.

KASIRA: Good. I'll stand nearby.

CAYLEY: Okay.

KASIRA: Out of sight.

CAYLEY: Right.

KASIRA: A few streets away probably.

CAYLEY: Gotcha.

(Just then, the elder returned with a large, rolled-up sheet of paper under his arm.)

ELDER: Here it is. I hope it's what you were looking for.

KASIRA: So do we, Elder.

AMBRE: She hates Tony the carpenter.

ELDER: I see. Not sure how that's even relevant, but thanks for sharing.

AMBRE: You're welcome.

(With that, the elder laid the rolled-up map on the coffee table then glanced to the kitchen door.)

ELDER: Haven't you served that coffee yet, dear?

(At once, an angry reply echoed out from the kitchen.)

WIFE: Of course not! The physics behind boiling water is just as relevant on *our* stove as it is on anyone else's! It takes time!

(The elder just rolled his eyes then looked to Kasira.)

ELDER: Never marry a physicist.

KASIRA: I was going to!

AMBRE: Yeah. Her boyfriend's a soldier!

(At once, everyone glowered at Ambre. As a result she shrunk down then spoke in a small voice.)

AMBRE: I meant *secret* boyfriend.

(With Kasira continuing to glower at her, she then sunk behind Soapy.)

AMBRE: Ignore me.

KASIRA: Good idea.

(With that, she unfurled the map then pinned the four corners down with table mats.)

KASIRA: Right... this is... what *is* this?

CAYLEY: I think that jagged outline is the coast of the island.

(The elder then leant forward and pointed to the map.)

ELDER: It is. Kasira, where you're sitting is the very south point where the quayside is.

KASIRA: Okay.

(She then looked to some lines drawn in the middle which were identified in a language she'd never seen before.)

KASIRA: It's all in gibberish.

ELDER: That Romanden.

SOAPY: My friend is Romanden. Pepsi. She talks funny.

ELDER: Yes, they have a very nasal accent.

SOAPY: That's the one.

KASIRA: Great. Very useful information that, Soapy.

(Soapy blushed.)

SOAPY: Sorry.

KASIRA: Problem now is, we need to find someone who speaks Romanden.

AMBRE: We should ask someone.

SIKA: I knew you'd say that.

ELDER: It's not a problem, ladies. I speak fluent Romanden. I was posted in Romanda during my time in the service.

KASIRA: Cool. What does it say then?

(The elder scrutinised the map and bit his lip.)

ELDER: It's called Fort Capsway. The full name seems to be Romanden Military Intelligence Installation Twelve: Fort Capsway. The military codename being FC.
(He nodded.)

ELDER: Interesting. You see, before the wraith wars, Romanda was at war with this country. We're going back hundreds of years now. It seems they built a military bunker here, a hidden base.

SIKA: That's interesting, is it?

ELDER: Maybe not you, but to intelligent folk, yes.

SOAPY: See? Even the elder thinks you're a dipshit.

SIKA: I'm going to cut your hair while you're asleep.

(Soapy glowered at her.)

SOAPY: Don't even joke about...

KASIRA: Girls! Stop it!

(She rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: Carry on, Elder. What else does it say?

CAYLEY: Anything about how you get in?

(The elder looked to the map then nodded slowly.)

ELDER: There are *two* ways actually.

AMBRE: What's the easiest one? We can't get down through the hole in the top!

ELDER: Hole in the top?

(He glanced at the map then looked enlightened.)

ELDER: Oh, you must mean this air vent.

(He point to the map.)

ELDER: That would be on the side of the hill, if I'm reading this right.

KASIRA: Yeah, we found it this morning.

ELDER: I see.

(He nodded.)

ELDER: Don't worry about that, like I said, that's an air vent. There's a front entrance located on the other side of the island. And there appears to be a way in by boat.

KASIRA: Really?

ELDER: Yes.

(He grimaced.)

ELDER: How odd. I've been around the other side of the island a million times. I've never seen an entrance to *this* place. It must have been hidden.

CAYLEY: And the chances are that after all these years it's overgrown.

ELDER: Indeed. Leaving no trace.

(He nodded.)

ELDER: If that's a bust, however, the other entrance seems encouraging. It's a secret entrance for boats, from the looks of things.

AMBRE: *We* have a boat! Well, the army does. Just a little one though.

ELDER: Little is better. According to this map, there seems to be a small inlet, like a cave that leads to a quayside inside the bunker.

KASIRA: But if it was still there, someone would have seen it.

ELDER: Maybe not. The inlet is in the cliff face to the west. The army vessels always come from the east and the fishing boats from the island head straight to the fisheries south of here. Nobody ever sails round that side of the island.

CAYLEY: That's encouraging.

ELDER: Indeed. I see no reason why that wouldn't still be accessible. It's a natural inlet, after all.

(Kasira drew a sigh of relief.)

KASIRA: Then we're in the game. If we can't gain access via the main entrance, we'll just row round to the inlet.

(She smirked.)

KASIRA: I'll do the rowing; can't have Cayley chipping a nail.

CAYLEY: You're joking but I'd actually appreciate that.

KASIRA: Spoken like a true warrior.

(They shared a smile then Kasira looked to the elder.)

KASIRA: Thanks for this, you've been a great help. Do you mind if we take the map with us?

ELDER: Be my guest. And there's no need to thank me. It was my pleasure. I'll never get tired of being in the company of pretty ladies.

KASIRA: How very kind of you to say.

ELDER: Think nothing of it. The wife used to be pretty too, you know? Things change; that's ancient history now.

(He sighed then looked to Kasira's face. Seeing her grimace, he gulped then bit his lip.)

ELDER: She's standing in the doorway, isn't she?

KASIRA: With a tray full of cups and the eyes of a psycho.

ELDER: Uh-oh.

(He sighed in defeat then glanced over his shoulder.)

ELDER: One moment, dear. You can kill me in a minute.

(He then looked to Kasira.)

ELDER: Listen, before I go to meet my maker, there's something you need to understand. Inside that cave there's corridors and room, inside which, wraiths will have spawned for hundreds of years. They don't have to eat to live and yet they crave food. When you go in there, you'll be like a group of willing tasty snacks, waiting to be devoured. And I mean devoured. Those wraiths will be the biggest and nastiest bastards you've ever encountered. Having been down in that environment for so long, natural selection will have taken place.

KASIRA: Meaning?

ELDER: Survival of the fittest. By their very nature, the bigger ones will have attacked and killed all the smaller ones, leaving you to face a plethora of giant wraiths with a burning desire to bite you in two. If you *do* go in there, be careful!

KASIRA: We will, thank you.

AMBRE: I don't want to be eaten.

SIKA: You won't be. *We'll* take care of you.

SOAPY: We'll have each other's backs, as always.

ELDER: Just make sure you do.

(He nodded.)

ELDER: Now would you mind skipping coffee and running along? My wife would like to shout at me. And throw things.

KASIRA: Of course. And thanks again.

(With that, Kasira picked up the map then climbed to her feet. As she did so, Cayley, Sika, Soapy and Ambre also alighted their seats. They then headed for the door.)

KASIRA: Nice to see you again, ma'am.

WIFE: Likewise. Now go.

KASIRA: We're gone.

(They then hurried out of the door, closing it behind them. As soon as the door clicked shut, an unholy cacophony rose up from inside the house. Cups smashed, the elder screamed and his wife tore into him with a torrent of verbal abuse. Grimacing, the girls swiftly scuttled away.)

A short while later, the girls returned to the base and Sika was ordered to make everyone a coffee. Without complaint, she immediately headed into the kitchen, provoking and impressed eyebrow from the others. Sadly, she was then heard to mumble indignantly about being a slave, forcing a roll of the eyes from Kasira.

Once the coffee was served, Sika then joined the others in sitting around the table to discuss their options.

KASIRA: The more I think about it, the more I get the feeling the sea entrance is going to be our way in.

AMBRE: But, if there's a land entrance...

KASIRA: Yeah, *if*. If, Ambre. I'm sure someone would have found it by now if it was accessible.

CAYLEY: There's a lot of rocks on that side of the island. I bet it's buried under several tonnes of stone.

SOAPY: And if there was a metal door, it's probably rusted shut by now.

SIKA: Rusted shut, is that a thing?

SOAPY: Yeah. Rusty locks and bolts are a big problem where I come from.

CAYLEY: Yeah, under the sea. I hate to state the obvious but it's very wet down there.

SOAPY: It still happens on land, Cayley.

KASIRA: She's right. And that's my concern. Even if we do find the land entrance, we might not be able to get in.

(Soapy smiled gleefully.)

SOAPY: Doesn't worry me, I'd prefer to go in by sea anyway. I haven't had a good swim in ages.

(With that, she took a sip of her coffee then grimaced in horror.)

SOAPY: Bloody hell, Sika, this coffee is disgusting! Did you even stir it?

SIKA: Of course I did?

SOAPY: You didn't stir it very *well* then. What did you hold the spoon with, your vagina?

SIKA: That's a stupid thing to say!

(She smirked.)

SIKA: Although, some of the *water* came from my vagina, yes.

(Ambre immediately spat hers back into the cup.)

AMBRE: You did a wee in the coffee!

SIKA: Ambre, the fact you think I'd *actually* do that is extremely insulting.

SOAPY: It's understandable given the taste. Are you sure you didn't stir it with your vagina?

SIKA: I think I'd remember if I did!

(Kasira furrowed her brow.)

KASIRA: Will you two shut up about vaginas?

SIKA: At least I *have* a vagina, Soapy. I bet the *real* reason you did want that boy putting his hand up your skirt was in case he found your penis.

KASIRA: What did I *literally* just say?

SOAPY: Just because I don't flash *my* vagina at any boy who takes a shine to me...

(Kasira growled.)

KASIRA: Next person who says vagina is getting a kick in the face! That goes for all of you.

AMBRE: I wasn't going to say it anyway.

SIKA: Say what?

AMBRE: Vagina.

SIKA: Quick! Kick her in the face, Kasira!

(Kasira glowered at her for a moment then started to chuckle.)

KASIRA: You girls are nutters.

(Her face then clouded over.)

KASIRA: Now shut up!

(She shook her head.)

KASIRA: Now where were we?

AMBRE: Discussing rusty locks and drinking wee.

KASIRA: There's no wee in your coffee, Ambre.

AMBRE: Even so...

(She then pushed her cup away from herself.)

AMBRE: I don't want it now.

KASIRA: Suit yourself. Okay, here's what I'm proposing. Tonight we should go to the other side of the island to find that land entrance; once Nivea's awake and we've got a full compliment.

SIKA: Tonight?

(She grimaced.)

SIKA: I'm not questioning you, ma'am. Or being insubordinate. It's just, finding a hidden entrance would be easier during the day, surely.

KASIRA: We have a map, Sika. Finding it won't be an issue. Day or night, we'll be able to tell whether we can gain access or not. If we get to the spot and find nothing but a giant pile of rocks that we haven't got a hope in hell of shifting, then we'll know we have to go by sea. Sunlight or moonlight is irrelevant to that.

SIKA: Oh, okay.

KASIRA: Good girl. Don't ever be slow in asking sensible questions, you don't need to apologise for that. It's just when you interrupt me to talk about vaginas that I get cranky.

AMBRE: Now you're saying it.

KASIRA: I'm allowed.

(She shook her head.)

KASIRA: Anyway, point is, if we leave it until nightfall, and find the land entrance but can't get to it, we can head straight off to the boat and get cracking on finding the sea entrance instead. The six of us can then get killing stuff.

CAYLEY: Makes sense. So what about the giant wraiths the elder was telling us about? Are we worried?

KASIRA: *You* needn't be, your magic will still kill them in one blast.

SOAPY: Yeah, but *you* don't have that luxury, Kasira. They might have long pincers that can stab you from a distance.

KASIRA: Yeah, trust me, I have thought of that. Fighting close up like I do, I'm reliant on having superior reach.

(She bit her lip.)

KASIRA: What can I do though? I don't have magic. I guess it's just a risk I'm going to have to take.

CAYLEY: I don't like that idea, babe. You could be out of the fight and in serious danger from the off. We need to think of a way to bring you into the fight safely.

KASIRA: If you think of one, let me know.

(She sighed.)

KASIRA: Even if it's dangerous, there's no way I can shy away from the fight. Not this one. Not while fuck face is assessing me. We can't have him reporting that I stood off and let you girls do all the work.

CAYLEY: Yes we can. I'd rather that than see my best friend butchered right before my eyes.

AMBRE: I second that! Kasira, you wanted to leave me out off the fight when the haze broke because you said I wasn't equipped for that battle. Now you're in the same situation.

KASIRA: And I'm going to do what you did. Protest and stamp my feet until you back down. I'm going to fight, Ambre. And who knows, they might not even have pincers. Let's not assess the fight until we've seen the enemy, okay?

CAYLEY: Okay, but for pity's sake be careful. You're paranoid about losing one of us to wraiths and we feel the same way about you. If it's too dangerous, I beg you, step back and let us deal with it.

SOAPY: Yeah! I mean, I can take up your slack anyway. I'm seriously powerful. And fast. (She grinned.)

SOAPY: And bloody good looking.

SIKA: Me too.

SOAPY: In your wildest fantasies, I suppose you are.

SIKA: I'm quickly going off you, Soapy.

SOAPY: Don't be like that; you know I'm marginally joking. (Sika chuckled.)

SIKA: You know I'm going to get you back for that, don't you?

SOAPY: We'll see.

(They shared an amused grin then Soapy looked to Kasira.)

SOAPY: All kidding aside, if you can't fight, Kasira, it's okay. Trust us to do what you trained us to do. A world class job. We're soldiers now, thanks to you. You can leave it to us.

CAYLEY: She's right.

KASIRA: Thanks, girls.

(She grimaced.)

KASIRA: You realise you're kind of saying you don't need me anymore though, right?

(Ambre leant her head on Kasira's shoulder.)

AMBRE: That day will never come, Kasira. I'll always need you. You're stuck with me forever.

(Kasira smiled and put her arm around her.)

KASIRA: You're adorable.

AMBRE: No, I'm very needy. Seriously, Kasira, I really need you alive, so don't take any silly risks just to spite Major poo head. If you die, I'll be all alone again. Who'll look after me?

CAYLEY: Every single one of us.

(She nodded.)

CAYLEY: But that won't be an issue, right, Kasira? You're not going to do anything silly...

(She then looked her hard in the eyes.)

CAYLEY: Are you?

KASIRA: Okay, agreed. We'll assess the situation and if it's not conducive to close combat, I'll back off and supervise.

CAYLEY: Good. I feel much better about it all now.

SOAPY: Me too. Your safety is paramount, Kasira.

(She shuddered.)

SOAPY: Cayley's already said she doesn't want to be leader, that means if you die, we'll have Nivea in charge. My boobies are afraid.

SIKA: Oh, god. Imagine.

CAYLEY: Suck it up, girls. When Kasira leaves, she's going to be your new boss anyway.

SIKA: And yours.

CAYLEY: Holy sausages... I hadn't thought of that. Maybe it'd be best if I took the leadership after all then.

SOAPY: Obviously!

SIKA: Duh!
(She sighed.)
SIKA: If Nivea took over, we'd have daily boob mashing drills.
SOAPY: Every mistake would result in a boob mashing too.
CAYLEY: I think you exaggerate.
KASIRA: Do they?
CAYLEY: Let's never find out. I'll take the lead then. But once, I leave...
(She grinned fiendishly.)
CAYLEY: May the gods have mercy on your boobies.
(At once, everyone started to chuckle.)
KASIRA: Poor, Nivea.
SIKA: She's a gem; I love Nivea.
SOAPY: It's impossible not to.
(Delighted to see the merriment among her subordinates, Kasira smiled.)
KASIRA: Anyway, let's rest up for this afternoon, ladies. Chill out, take a nap if you have to. Just like with the haze break, we'll need all our energy for tonight, okay?
AMBRE: Okay.
KASIRA: In the meantime, I'll make us all coffee.
(She then glowered at Sika.)
KASIRA: After tonight, you're on kitchen duty until you learn how to make it properly.
(Sika pouted.)
SIKA: It wasn't that bad! Was it?
(At once, everyone glared at her.)
SOAPY: Yes it was!
CAYLEY: It tasted like sweaty armpits.
AMBRE: It was horrible.
(Sika could only nod acceptingly.)
SIKA: Maybe it was then.

A short while later, Cayley, Kasira and Sika all headed out into the courtyard to enjoy a relaxing laze in the sun. The only one of the three susceptible to sunburn, Kasira took a parasol out with her. Soapy and Ambre, however, opted to remain in the living room. Ambre started another drawing and Soapy laid herself on the sofa hoping for a quick nap. Just as she was starting to doze off, however, Ambre's voice rose up from the table.

AMBRE: Soapy?
(Soapy looked to her and yawned.)
SOAPY: Yeah?
AMBRE: I don't want Sika to leave.
(Soapy sat up and looked to her blankly for a moment then sighed.)
SOAPY: No. Nor do I. She makes me laugh.
AMBRE: Will she come and visit us?
SOAPY: I don't know. I hope so. But then, I hope she won't have to. With any luck Kasira can find a way to convince that major to let her stay.
AMBRE: Do you think she can?
SOAPY: I'm not confident.
(She sighed once again.)
SOAPY: That major strikes me as a stubborn bugger. It won't be easy to make him back down.
(Ambre shook her head.)

AMBRE: I don't understand any of it, Soapy. Making her leave is just cruel. There's no need for it. That major's just being horrible.

(She grimaced.)

AMBRE: Or am I reading it wrong?

SOAPY: No, you're pretty much spot on. He could easily let her take the test again when she's not distracted; and if he wasn't so determined to be horrible, he probably would.

AMBRE: That's what I thought.

(They then shared a simultaneous sigh.)

AMBRE: Why do people have to be mean? Not everyone, but some. Well, most.

SOAPY: Because some people are so pathetic, they have put others down to feel big about themselves.

AMBRE: Lame!

SOAPY: Yup. We had a few people like that at my academy. It didn't really affect me though; I was popular so nobody bullied *me*. Some of the others though...

(She shook her head.)

SOAPY: Looking back, I kind of wish I'd stood up for them.

(Ambre nodded.)

AMBRE: Nearly everyone at my academy was mean.

SOAPY: Yeah?

AMBRE: I didn't have many friends. Not until I came here. And even then I thought Kasira and Nivea were mean at first.

(Soapy looked astonished.)

SOAPY: Really?

AMBRE: Yeah. Kasira told me to do things that I didn't know how to do then furrowed her brow at me when I did them wrong. And Nivea used to mock me because I was nineteen and I'd only just passed level nine. She was seventeen and just like Sika is now.

(She smiled.)

AMBRE: By the end of the day though, Kasira started being nice to me. I think she'd realised I was stupid by then.

SOAPY: Don't call yourself that!

AMBRE: Why? It's not like I don't know I'm slow!

(She smiled.)

AMBRE: I've accepted it and so should you.

SOAPY: Well, yeah, okay.

AMBRE: So, anyway, yeah, she was nice to me after that. She let me watch rather than making me take part in patrols. I think she realised I'd been stuck at the academy until the age of nineteen for a reason.

(She grimaced.)

AMBRE: The only thing she couldn't figure out was how I passed the level nine exam to become a qualified soldier. Nor could I.

SOAPY: You had help, right?

AMBRE: Yeah, I did all my tests in a pair with another girl. She did all the work but we both passed.

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: I could pass it easily now. All she had to do was summon her familiar and heal while a male students killed all the wraiths with axes.

SOAPY: You do that everyday.

AMBRE: Exactly. Thanks to Kasira. After a few weeks of letting me watch, she made me promise to try my hardest then started to train me. She didn't shout at me for making

mistakes and made me feel really confident. I learned so much, so fast. Now I can do my job, easy peasy.

(Soapy smiled.)

SOAPY: And you learned a new skill recently. Controlling a wraith with your mind.

AMBRE: Yup. And yet I learned nothing at the academy.

(She grimaced.)

AMBRE: I feel really sorry for Sika if she has to go back to one of them.

SOAPY: Yeah, me too. Once she gets assigned to a new unit, the leader will want to know why she was kicked out of this one. She'll give her a really hard time.

AMBRE: That'll still be better than being at an academy where everyone is mean for no reason.

(She then sucked her teeth and corrected herself.)

AMBRE: Actually, not *everyone* was mean. I did have a *few* friends.

SOAPY: Well that's something.

AMBRE: They didn't play with me very often; just sometimes. And when they did, bad things kept happening. We were cursed with bad luck, I think.

SOAPY: What do you mean?

AMBRE: Well, this one time, they asked me if I wanted to have a picnic with them in the countryside. I'd never had a picnic before. It was really exciting. They hired a cheap trailer and horses and we went far, far, far into the woods. We were virtually in the middle of nowhere. We travelled for like six or seven hours, going really, really fast. It was awesome.

(She sighed.)

AMBRE: Then we came across this inn. It was the last stop for a toilet break for miles, they said. I didn't need to go but it made sense to try seeing as there wouldn't be another one for miles.

(She pouted.)

AMBRE: I went to the toilet, but when I came out they'd gone.

SOAPY: They took you out in the middle of nowhere and dumped you?

AMBRE: Not deliberately. Apparently, while I was in the toilet, some bad people scared the horses and they bolted. All the way back to the academy with my friends on board.

SOAPY: That's what they told you, is it?

AMBRE: Yeah. But at the time I had no idea where they went and I was really scared. I didn't know how to get back and if I was late to training on the next day I'd have been in big, big trouble.

SOAPY: That's *why* they did it.

AMBRE: No, it was just bad luck. Like I said, the horses bolted. That's what they told me. And the academy head.

SOAPY: Ambre, bolting horses don't run forever, you know? They could have calmed them down and come back for you within ten minutes. Bolting horses *certainly* don't set off with a destination in mind! If it took them back to the academy they'd have had to guide it there.

AMBRE: What are you saying, Soapy?

SOAPY: They took you out into the middle of nowhere and dumped you for the fun of it!

AMBRE: Don't be silly, they were my friends.

(Soapy shook her head.)

SOAPY: So, what happened? Did you get in trouble?

AMBRE: No. Luckily, one of the academy staff was at the inn. She was coming back from visiting family. She gave me a ride back, so no harm was done. They got told off by the academy head for leaving me behind but I vouched for them, so it was okay.

SOAPY: You vouched for the bullies?

AMBRE: No, my friends.

(She sighed.)

AMBRE: We never had any luck. One of them had an uncle who lived in town; he had a whisky shop.

(Soapy bit her lip.)

SOAPY: Right...

AMBRE: Well, she was supposed to go there and get a bottle for the headmaster during the day, but she forgot to do it. So we went after dark but her uncle was out. So we had to break in.

(Shuddering to think where the story was going, Soapy grimaced.)

SOAPY: Okay...

AMBRE: I waited in the shop while they went out the back to get the right bottle from the storeroom. They took ages. Next thing I knew, the shop owner pinned me to the floor and told his wife to get the police.

(She sighed.)

AMBRE: Turns out we were in the wrong shop. My friends realised that while they were out the back and went to the *right* one instead. They were gonna come and get me afterwards but I'd already been arrested.

(Soapy shook her head.)

SOAPY: They got you arrested for burglary?

AMBRE: Not on purpose.

SOAPY: Actually, Ambre...

AMBRE: And this other time...

SOAPY: There's more?

AMBRE: Yeah. They asked me to meet them in a classroom but when I got there it'd been smashed up. Broken windows, broken tables, holes in the walls; it was really bad. They were already there. Vandals must have done it. Anyway, we found the hammer the vandals used so we decided I should hold it while they get a teacher.

SOAPY: *Who* decided you should hold it?

AMBRE: They did.

SOAPY: Thought so.

AMBRE: Anyway, before they'd told a teacher what happened, another teacher came and saw me with the hammer. He thought *I* did it. And my friends couldn't vouch for me because on the way to get a teacher they'd bumped heads and lost their memories.

SOAPY: That's what they told you, is it?

AMBRE: Yeah. And I felt really bad about that.

(She sighed.)

AMBRE: They got sent to an academy for unruly students a short while later; then I had *no* friends.

(Soapy nodded.)

SOAPY: So basically, they took you out into the wilderness and left you for dead, fitted you up for a burglary then vandalised a classroom and tried to saddle you with the blame!

AMBRE: No! That's what the headmaster thought, but they were nice. They never called me "thick girl" or "idiot face" like everyone else did. I explained to the headmaster how we'd all been so unlucky but he jumped to the same conclusion as you.

(She pouted.)

AMBRE: He said I was too thick to have planned a burglary. He blamed them for everything, like it was all deliberate.

(She sighed.)

AMBRE: Anyway, I kept myself to myself after they were gone. Or I tried to. It's not easy when people keep picking on you though.

SOAPY: No, I don't suppose it is.

(She smiled.)

SOAPY: I feel sorry for them in a way. By picking on you, they never got to know the amazing person you really are.

AMBRE: People say that a lot. I'm not amazing.

SOAPY: Yes, you are.

AMBRE: I'm proud of how well I've done. I'm not amazing though. I'm just me. I like me!

SOAPY: We all do.

AMBRE: Yay!

(Soapy then nodded to herself to affirm her thinking. In this instance, indulging Ambre was far kinder than correcting her.)

SOAPY: Well, I'm glad you had some friends, Ambre. Even if they were unlucky. You deserve lots of friends. And yes, you *are* amazing!

AMBRE: You're amazing too then.

SOAPY: Thanks, babes.

AMBRE: Now make me a coffee.

(Soapy looked most astonished.)

SOAPY: What?

AMBRE: That was my impersonation of the major.

SOAPY: Oh.

(She chuckled.)

SOAPY: I thought you were serious for a minute.

(They then shared a smile.)

AMBRE: Let's never talk about the past again. I don't like the past. I like now; having lots and lots of cool friends.

SOAPY: Yeah. Me too.

AMBRE: Now make me a sodding coffee.

(They then sat there chuckling together.)

Outside in the courtyard at this time, Cayley and Sika were sunbathing topless on hammocks. Down at their side, beneath her large parasol, Kasira was laying on a fluffy sheet wearing nothing but make-up and a smile. Watching her laying there, Sika raised a curious eyebrow then glanced at Cayley. Seeing Cayley relaxing with her eyes shut, she then glanced at Kasira again.)

SIKA: Kasira?

KASIRA: Yeah?

SIKA: What's the point in sunbathing if you're not going to lay in the sun?

KASIRA: I don't want to get burnt.

SIKA: But still... you're naked.

KASIRA: And? I want an all over tan!

SIKA: Which brings me back to my original question. If you want an all over tan, shouldn't you be in the sun?

(She grimaced.)

SIKA: Sorry, but you do that a lot and I've always wondered why.

(Kasira glanced across at her.)

KASIRA: It's not difficult to figure out, Sika. I just don't want to have to keep changing in and out of my bikini.

SIKA: I don't follow.

KASIRA: I'm going to move the parasol to one side now and again to catch some sun, then put it back over me again when it gets too hot, okay? It makes more sense to move the parasol slightly than it does to keep moving my sheet into the sun and changing my clothes. If I move the parasol, I can start tanning. When I'm done, I can put the parasol back over me until I'm ready to do it again.

SIKA: Fair enough. I guess it would be insane to keep moving and changing.

KASIRA: Exactly. And besides, lazing naked under a parasol is nice.

(Sika nodded.)

SIKA: Fair enough.

KASIRA: Can I ask *you* a question now?

(Sika gulped.)

SIKA: Okay...

KASIRA: If you can't get sunburnt or suntanned, why do you even bother going topless?

SIKA: Same reason you like lazing naked in the shade. It's nice.

(She then cupped her boobs and grinned.)

SIKA: Plus, I like giving the girls an airing.

KASIRA: Right.

SIKA: I'm kidding. Who said I can't tan? I can tan! Look at me! I'm so brown, I look like one of Cayley's chocolate biscuits.

KASIRA: That's a tan, is it? I thought you were just... that colour.

SIKA: Nope. I've got the best of both worlds. My airborne half means I can't get burnt, but my land-bound half means I can tan. It's perfect. Unlike Cayley here, I don't have to go through life looking pale and sickly.

CAYLEY: I don't look pale *or* sickly!

KASIRA: Oh, I don't know, babe. You are very pale.

CAYLEY: I'm a white airborne Caucasian. If that's a crime, arrest me.

KASIRA: That's not a crime. But, sticking with the theme, if you can't tan or burn, why do *you* go topless.

CAYLEY: It's comfortable. The question should be, why do I keep my bikini bottoms *on*.

KASIRA: Okay, let's make that the question.

CAYLEY: I don't know actually. Habit.

SIKA: Yeah, me too. Makes no sense really.

(She then nodded sternly.)

SIKA: Screw it. Off they come.

(With that, she cast her bikini bottoms down herself then dropped them from the side of the hammock.)

SIKA: There.

(Cayley glanced at her blankly for a moment then shrugged.)

CAYLEY: Stuff it; why not?

(She then yanked her bottoms off and hung them over the side of the hammock with the top half.)

CAYLEY: Now we're all naked.

(At this point, Kasira pushed her parasol to one side and exhaled.)

KASIRA: Time to catch some rays, I think.

SIKA: Always.

CAYLEY: Lucky buggers.

SIKA: I thought you were happy looking like a ghost.

CAYLEY: A ghost?

(She grinned.)

CAYLEY: Your slice of cake is going to be very thin this evening.

SIKA: Did I say ghost? I meant goddess.

CAYLEY: I thought you did.

(Sika chuckled then sighed heavily.)

SIKA: I'm gonna miss laying out here with you guys.

KASIRA: Not if we can help it.

SIKA: Yeah, but if you can't. Kasira, I trust you, I really do. Normally you can work miracles and I know you've got my back completely. Thing is, there might not be anything you can do this time. That major seems to have made up his mind.

CAYLEY: Even so, we still have to try to change it.

SIKA: I know. And I appreciate that.

(She sighed.)

SIKA: I was just wondering if my next unit will be as chilled out as this one. I mean the three of us are laying here in the sun as naked as the day we were born. As cool as you like. Minges on display to the world.

KASIRA: Nicely put. Sika, our minges, as you put it, aren't on display to anyone; there's a giant wall surrounding us, not to mention a solid iron gate.

SIKA: Exactly, a gate. And our naughty bits are pointing right at it. If someone came in...

KASIRA: I locked it! I always lock it.

SIKA: Okay, but a passing airborne could...

KASIRA: A passing airborne? The only two airborne folk on the island are you two.

CAYLEY: And besides, the only people who are legally allowed to fly over this base is us two, Sika. It's forbidden to fly into or over an army base you're not affiliated to.

SIKA: Is it? I don't recall covering that at the academy!

CAYLEY: You didn't. They teach you that at school. Just like Kasira can't stroll into another base whenever she feels like it, we're not allowed to fly into, or over one.

SIKA: I rarely paid attention at school.

KASIRA: It shows!

SIKA: Harsh!

(Kasira chuckled.)

KASIRA: I'm kidding, darling.

SIKA: I know. We joke a lot here. We have fun. That's why I keep worrying about being posted elsewhere. I'm used to enjoying army life thanks to you, Kasira.

CAYLEY: That we *did* notice. Your trouble is, you try to enjoy yourself when you should be focussing on work. That's why you're in this mess.

(Sika pouted.)

SIKA: I know.

(She then sighed sorrowfully.)

SIKA: I will work on that. I promise. If I get to stay, I'm never going to risk being kicked out ever again. I moaned about being a slave earlier, but I waited until you couldn't hear me.

KASIRA: We heard you.

SIKA: I also need to work on keeping my voice down.

CAYLEY: Yes, you do.

SIKA: Point is, I've learned my lesson. I just hope I get the chance to prove it.

(She puffed out.)

SIKA: But if I don't, I guess it'll be okay. I'll remember everything you taught me, Kasira. I'll use it to improve myself as a soldier. I just want you to know, I'm not a screw up and having me here wasn't a waste of time. I really am a better person because of you.

(Kasira looked to her with her bottom lip quivering and tears welling in her eyes.)

KASIRA: I'm not gonna give up on you, Sika, I'm not.

(She then turned away and tried to compose herself.)

KASIRA: Sorry, weak moment.

CAYLEY: She started me off too.

(She wiped her eyes then looked to Sika.)

CAYLEY: We know you're not a screw up, girl. Don't even think that for a minute.

KASIRA: What she said. And don't start making plans for moving to a new unit either. I'm not giving up on you, Sika. No matter how futile it seems, I'm gonna try everything in my power to keep you here, okay?

(Sika exhaled.)

SIKA: You guys fucking rule.

(Just then, the iron gate cranked open and Major Miles strolled in, whistling to himself. At once, Kasira, Cayley and Sika froze where they lay and stared at him in horror. As they did so, the major stopped whistling and stared in astonishment at the exposed genitalia before him.)

MILES: I see. Are those vaginas loaded? Should I be surrendering?

(At once, a mass scream rose into the air and Sika and Cayley leapt from their hammocks before charging into the building. For her part, Kasira jumped to her feet then covered herself with her hands.)

KASIRA: Pervert!

MILES: Says the woman who greeted me with a warm smile on her crotch.

KASIRA: That was an accident. I thought I'd locked the gate.

MILES: Never mind that. Go back in the base! I'll give you two minutes then I'm coming inside. No pun intended.

KASIRA: You...

(With that, Kasira about turned and raced inside. Watching her go, the major beamed with joy at the sight of her backside.)

MAJOR: I love this army life, I really do.

A short while later, surrounded by snarling women, the major sat himself down at the table then demanded a fruit juice. With no option other to comply, Cayley swiftly fetched him one then joined the others in sitting around the table with him.

Having taken a long swig of the refreshing juice, the major exhaled then looked to Kasira. Wasting no time whatsoever, he then got down to business.

MILES: Right, if you're done flashing your beaver at anyone who happens to pass, I'd like to know what the plan is.

KASIRA: Nobody flashed you. I...

MILES: I'm sorry, was I not clear? I want to know what you intend to do about that bunker we found. I didn't ask for back chat or rudeness; I want to know what you've got planned. Was that simple enough for you?

(Kasira sighed.)

KASIRA: Fine. We've discovered that the bunker, as you call it, used to be a Romanden secret army base. It's been abandoned for centuries obviously.

MILES: Right...

KASIRA: As such, it's probably infested with giant wraiths.

MILES: Giant?

KASIRA: Yeah. There's limited space down there obviously so the bigger ones will have killed the smaller ones.

MILES: I see. So you found an infestation of giant wraiths and thought the best way to combat it would be to come back here, strip naked and laze about in the sunshine, did you?

KASIRA: No, I...

MILES: Is that how you cleared the island after that haze break?

(He then mocked Kasira's voice.)

MILES: Look, girls, wraiths! Quick, lay on your backs and spread you legs, that'll show 'em!
(Kasira was most offended.)

KASIRA: How dare you? That haze break was our finest hour; we were bloody brilliant that night. And while we're on the subject of you being wrong, *nobody* had their legs spread when you came in just now!

MILES: *Nobody* was out killing wraiths either.

(He furrowed his brow.)

MILES: You all got commendations after the haze break; it was massive news back at HQ. We all thought you must be some kind of super unit, nothing like the collective of bimbos that General Wilson alluded too.

(He shrugged.)

MILES: Seems the General was right. You've found a cavern full of wraiths and yet you've done bugger all about it.

KASIRA: The General was right??? He was nothing but a complete bastard! This is a first class unit, Major!

MILES: Is that so? Then why aren't the wraiths in that underground bunker dying in pain as we speak?

KASIRA: Because we're going to go tonight. When Nivea is awake. We'll need her.

MILES: Wake her up then. I saw inside that place, it was lit with Sigel Crystals. They're not a problem for subterranean folk. She'll be able to see perfectly well down there!

KASIRA: Major, I...

(The major rolled his eyes.)

MILES: Enough! Stop bullshitting me, Captain. We both know why you've come back and sat on your arses! Bare arses, at that. Just tell me the truth. I already know why you haven't got started yet, so just own up.

CAYLEY: Own up to what?

MILES: The fact that you're well and truly clueless. Defeated! Unable to proceed. For one, you're too weak to get the lid off of that hole, aren't you?

KASIRA: Actually...

MILES: And even if you could get it open, you'd still be stuck. Being a bunch of girly little things, you've *no idea* how to make a device for lowering yourselves into it, have you?

(He nodded.)

MILES: I'm right, aren't I? This is man's work. You're first class at giving each other pedicures, I'm sure, but this kind of thing... you don't have a clue. Admit it.

KASIRA: Actually, smart arse, we're not going to be using that hole!

MILES: Is that so?

KASIRA: Yes! We did our homework and consulted an expert.

MILES: An expert?

KASIRA: Yes. That hole was merely an air vent. There are two *proper* entrances.

MILES: You saw the elder, didn't you?

KASIRA: Does it matter? We needed advice so we asked for it. Now we know how to proceed. We even have a map of the bunker!

MILES: I see. Then if you know how to proceed, enlighten me.

KASIRA: There are two ways in, like I said. One via land, the other by sea. Trouble is, the entrance on land is probably going to be inaccessible. Hidden and buried. If it wasn't, somebody would have seen it long before now. We're going to use the map to locate it. I

mean once Nivea's awake and we're at full strength, of course. If we can't get in that way, we're going to row around the coast and get in that way.

MILES: Interesting.

(He nodded sternly.)

MILES: I say we go now!

KASIRA: Oh, do you? May I remind you this is *my* unit and *I* say we go when Nivea's awake?

MILES: Only if *I* can remind *you* that I'm a major and you're merely a captain.

KASIRA: Deal. Reminder heard and acknowledged. We go tonight.

MILES: I'm sorry, that was my fault. I didn't make myself clear. I wasn't just reminding you of the *difference* in our rank, I was pulling it.

KASIRA: Yeah, you probably pull it a lot.

SOAPY: Nobody else is likely to.

SIKA: General Wilson might.

CAYLEY: Yeah, go and ask *him*.

MILES: That's the trouble with female comedians; they're not funny. It's just small penis jokes and quips about their periods.

KASIRA: We never said anything about a small penis, that's just your insecurity talking.

MILES: See?

(He shook his head.)

MILES: Such insubordination. Disappointing to see.

KASIRA: You're trying to rip apart our unit, what did you expect? Kisses and a cup of tea?

MILES: No, I expected professionalism.

(He nodded sternly.)

MILES: Now, as I was saying, seeing as I'm a major and you're merely a captain, three ranks higher than you'll be this time next week, Kasira, who do you think is in charge here?

KASIRA: Don't you threaten my rank, you...

MILES: I asked you a question!

(Kasira looked to him then sighed.)

KASIRA: Fine. You!

MILES: Then we'll go now. If that land entrance is accessible, you can get killing straight away.

KASIRA: Without Nivea?

MILES: Bring her. Blindfold her or something. She'll be fine once we're inside the bunker.

AMBRE: How's she going to get to the bunker if she can't see?

MILES: With a little help from her friends, obviously. Guide her!

KASIRA: Major, if we open the land entrance and wraiths come running out into the daylight, Nivea's going to be defenceless. She'll die!

MILES: Not if you're there to help her.

KASIRA: If we go after dark, I won't have to.

(Miles shrugged.)

MILES: Yes, but we're not going after dark. Now stop fucking arguing and wake her up!

That's an order, Captain!

(Kasira sighed in defeat then looked to Soapy.)

KASIRA: Wake Nivea up would you, please, Soapy?

(Soapy gulped.)

SOAPY: Last time I woke her up, she stole my dress and...

KASIRA: That's because you woke her up and told her to get some rest.

CAYLEY: Even so, you know what Nivea's like. I'll get her, if that's okay. She won't do anything to me.

KASIRA: Fair enough.

(As Cayley headed away, Miles shook his head at Kasira.)

MILES: Do they always argue with your orders, Captain?

KASIRA: I don't give orders, I ask nicely and things get done.

MILES: Weak. You're a weak leader.

AMBRE: And you're a big, mean, horrible man!

KASIRA: Don't, Ambre; don't get yourself in trouble.

AMBRE: But you're *not* a weak leader, Kasira.

KASIRA: I know that, darling.

(She then looked to Miles, disdainfully.)

KASIRA: He's just letting his hatred of women cloud his judgment.

MILES: I don't hate women! On the contrary, being greeted by a trio of gaping gashes when I came in, thoroughly made my day.

KASIRA: Gaping???

MILES: It's certainly not a welcome I'll forget in a hurry. I've half a mind to insist you greet me like that *every* time!

KASIRA: You...

MILES: Oh, like I actually would.

(He nodded sternly.)

MILES: Though I might do it purely out of spite if you keep on.

(He then looked to Sika.)

MILES: While we're out this afternoon, you might want to brush up on your basic knowledge of army etiquette. You'll need to know these things once you go back to the academy.

SIKA: While you're out?

KASIRA: She's coming with us!

MILES: She's on probation!

KASIRA: Says who?

MILES: The highest ranking person here, me!

KASIRA: No. Doing this is dangerous enough. Nivea could be left blind and defenceless, as I said; and you want us to leave Sika here just because of your petty vendetta against her?

MILES: I don't have a petty vendetta against her.

KASIRA: Okay, against this unit in general then. Major, Sika is a good soldier and she deserves the chance to prove herself in battle. We'll all feel a lot safer with her along.

MILES: Did you feel safe when she blew you into the sky?

KASIRA: She won't lose focus like that again! I have her word for that and I trust her!

MILES: Then on your head be it. Fine, she can come. But if she fucks up, you'll be going back to training too, Captain.

KASIRA: Fine. I've no worries on that score.

(Sika nodded firmly.)

SIKA: I won't let you down, ma'am!

(She then stepped back from the table and smiled warmly to herself. Kasira's willingness to defend her had lifted her heart greatly. Determined to repay that faith, she folded her arms and stood tall, looking forward to proving herself.)

MILES: Right, now that's sorted, make me a sandwich, Captain.

(He then grinned knowingly.)

MILES: And yes, you guessed it. That *was* an order!

A short while later, a somewhat baffled Nivea found herself standing inside the door to the courtyard with a blindfold in her hand. With the others assembled around her in readiness to head out, she couldn't have looked more bewildered.

NIVEA: What on earth have you got yourselves into since I last saw you, guys? Everything was fine when I kicked Prodi and Zerk out of bed this morning. Now all of a sudden, Sika's being sent back to an academy, there's a mysterious dungeon full of wraiths and we've got a high ranking official calling the shots!

CAYLEY: It all happened really fast, Nivea.

NIVEA: You're not kidding.

KASIRA: You *could* have known about Sika last night, but you were busy.

NIVEA: Indeed.

(She cast her mind back to the night before and beamed.)

NIVEA: Best night ever.

(She then grimaced at Kasira.)

NIVEA: How's it all gone so wrong?

MILES: Bad leadership!

NIVEA: We should let Kasira lead then.

MILES: I was *talking* about her! But then you knew that. Another bloody female comedian.

(He then rolled his eyes and snatched the map from Kasira.)

KASIRA: Hey!

MILES: Silence, you! Right, Nivea, put the blindfold over your eyes. And one over your mouth, if you have one. It's time to get going.

NIVEA: Fine.

(She then glowered at Soapy.)

NIVEA: Guide me well!

(Soapy couldn't help but give her an evil grin.)

SOAPY: Of course.

(With that, Nivea tied the blindfold over her eyes then grimaced uneasily.)

NIVEA: Go.

(They then headed out of the base, Soapy holding tightly to Nivea's arm.)

SOAPY: Okay, step... and step... and step...

NIVEA: Stop that! I'm just gonna walk normally, Soapy. Keep hold of me and it'll be fine. I'll just go at your pace.

SOAPY: Okay.

(And with that, they all headed off across the courtyard towards the iron gate. Once there, Kasira opened it then watched in despair as a grinning Soapy walked Nivea straight into the wall on the other side.)

NIVEA: Ouch!!! Soapy!!!

SOAPY: Classic!

(Kasira glowered at her.)

KASIRA: Soapy!!! Get over here! Sika, *you* guide her!

NIVEA: Sika? She'll be even worse!!!

SIKA: No, I won't. I'm done messing around, Nivea. I'm gonna be a good soldier from now on.

NIVEA: Fine. Make sure you are! If you walk me into anything, I'm going to kill you.

(She snarled.)

NIVEA: You'd better sleep with one eye open from now on, Soapy.

SOAPY: Whatever. It was worth it.

(Kasira very much disagreed.)

KASIRA: I'm gonna throttle you, you little shit.

SOAPY: Oh, come on; it had to be done!

KASIRA: No, it didn't!

MILES: It really didn't. Shocking behaviour!

NIVEA: Calm down, old dude. It's over.

(She grinned.)

NIVEA: I'm still going to make her pay though.

SOAPY: My boobies aren't afraid of you!

NIVEA: They will be!

KASIRA: Enough, guys. Just be quiet and focus on what we're doing. I'm getting annoyed now.

(In that moment, silence descended and they set off out of the base.

As they headed off around the side of the island, it wasn't long before Sika and Nivea started lagging behind. With Nivea blindfolded, the two of them were simply unable to match the pace of the others.

Fifteen minutes into the walk, Sika hadn't put a foot wrong in guiding Nivea forth. She'd been extremely professional. She was, however, a sucker for temptation and soon found the lure of playing a prank on her impossible to ignore.)

SIKA: Careful, there's a rock. Step up.

(Nivea lifted her foot forward then dropped it down again expecting to step up. As her foot came down again, however, there was nothing there and she tripped forwards slightly.)

NIVEA: Where?

SIKA: It's gone now.

(Nivea snarled.)

NIVEA: There was no rock, was there?

SIKA: Prove it.

NIVEA: Sika, rocks just don't go! You have to move them!

SIKA: Maybe I moved it!

NIVEA: I'm gonna slap you.

(Sika beamed.)

SIKA: Be nice, Nivea. The quality of my guiding you is wholly dependent on you being very, very nice to me.

(Nivea sighed.)

NIVEA: I'm completely at your mercy now, aren't I?

SIKA: Yup!

NIVEA: You're going to milk it for all you're worth, aren't you?

SIKA: Yup!

NIVEA: You're going to regret it later though, aren't you?

SIKA: I expect so.

NIVEA: You don't care about that right now though, do you?

SIKA: Nope, not one bit.

NIVEA: I see. Roll on tonight.

(Up ahead at this time, Kasira was walking at Miles' side being subjected to his opinion on her as a leader. All she could do was listen with a bitter expression on her face. Pacing forth with the map tucked under his arm, to say he was being ruthless in his assessment would be quite the understatement.)

MILES: I can certainly see where your unit get their indiscipline from. I'm a high-ranking officer but you talk to me like I'm lower than pond scum. If you were professional, you'd set

your personal feelings of disdain to one side, but no. You say exactly what you're thinking, and let me tell you, it's highly inappropriate. No wonder Sika is a failure.

KASIRA: She's not a failure.

MILES: There you go again! Butting in. I hadn't finished. As soon as I mention one of your beloved unit members, your jaw has to flap. Why is that?

(He sighed.)

MILES: Don't answer that. It's a woman thing, isn't it? You're emotional creatures, you lot. You really are. Some would say *hyper*-emotional. *You* definitely are! Well, let me tell you, that kind of thing is unbecoming of a unit leader. Now, as I was saying, Sika *is* a failure, Captain. And she gets it from you.

KASIRA: Excuse me?

MILES: *She* has no discipline because *you* don't! You've been talking to me like a piece of crap and your unit members have all started doing the same. Now wonder they're all such screw ups.

KASIRA: They're not screw ups.

MILES: Well, they're certainly not disciplined soldiers. Not only have they inherited your big mouth, they've adopted your slack attitude too. And they can get away with it because you're *far* too lenient with them. That's why Sika feels like she can mouth off and never concentrates. You let her get away with it.

(He shook his head.)

MILES: And all because you want her to like you. Which is ridiculous, by the way. Your unit are supposed to fear you, not like you. Sika's failure is entirely your own fault, Captain. Nobody else's. You're supposed to be her leader not her mother. And that Soapy is no better.

KASIRA: Now, come on.

MILES: Captain, she just walked her unit-mate into a wall for the fun of it.

KASIRA: I know, she did. I was annoyed about that too, but male units get up to pranks and hi-jinx too.

MILES: Not right under the nose of a major from the high command they don't! And certainly not when they know their leader is being assessed. She thought it'd be okay though as she doesn't have any fear of you. Either that or she doesn't care if you get replaced. I can't say which but neither reflect well on you. I have to say, this is the most dysfunctional unit I've ever had the displeasure of witnessing.

(He nodded sternly.)

MILES: You leave in a few months, don't you?

KASIRA: And?

MILES: And I'll be recommending that a strong disciplinarian takes your place. That's if I don't decide to bust you down to private *before* then. How you've managed to keep the position as long as you have, I just don't know.

(Kasira glowered at him.)

KASIRA: I'm good at my job. And so are all my girls.

MILES: They're not *your* girls, they're the army's girls. And I *will* be reporting what a shocking job you've done of supervising them.

(He nodded sternly.)

MILES: I know you're probably clinging on to some ridiculous dream that you can change my mind about sending Sika away, but let me tell you, I'm resolved on that one. The only question now is whether you get to stay on as leader or get busted down to private again.

(Kasira shook her head.)

KASIRA: We're about to take on a bunker full of giant wraiths and this is how you choose to talk to me? Have you ever heard of a thing called morale, Major?

MILES: You're a professional, forget morale. I expect you to rely on talent, experience and training. If you're feeling a bit shit, I don't care.

KASIRA: Yeah... evidently.

(At the back of the pack at this time, blissfully unaware that Kasira was getting a grilling from the major, Sika continued to lead Nivea forth with a sly grin on her face. Having made Nivea step over several things that weren't there and let her trip on things that were, she was enjoying herself immensely. Nivea, however, was far from amused.)

NIVEA: If I trip once more, I swear, I'm gonna punch you in the face.

SIKA: It's not *my* fault. You wanted to walk normally so I'm letting you.

NIVEA: You still have look where I'm going!

SIKA: I am. How do you think I made you walk into that tree stump? I saw it there and guided you into like a pro!

(Nivea chuckled.)

NIVEA: Oh, Sika, this does not end well for you.

SIKA: I know, but I'm having too much fun to think about the consequences.

NIVEA: Yeah, well, it's thinking about the consequences that's keeping me going. You're going to beg me to kill you once I'm finished.

(Sika grinned.)

SIKA: Actually, I might just lay back and pretend you're Troy, then you can grope me as much as you like.

NIVEA: Thanks, I will.

SIKA: Shit. Shouldn't have said that!

NIVEA: Yes, but you did.

(She smirked.)

NIVEA: That's later though. For now, I'll settle for hitting you with the next thing I trip on! (Just then, she felt an almighty squelch beneath her foot.)

NIVEA: What was that?

(At once, she stopped walking and pulled Sika to one side. Sika could only gulp.)

SIKA: Um, nothing to worry about. Just some mud.

NIVEA: Mud? It's been bone dry for weeks, Sika!

(She then started to sniff.)

NIVEA: I can smell it! We're in that cow field! Sika!!!

SIKA: I didn't see it, I swear!

NIVEA: I'm going to kill you!

SIKA: It wasn't *my* fault.

NIVEA: As soon as we get inside that bunker, I'm going to wipe my shoe on your dress!

SIKA: Don't be like that! Look, I'll make it up to you. I'll make you coffee all week.

NIVEA: Are you threatening me?

SIKA: Threatening you?

(She pouted.)

SIKA: My coffee can't be *that* bad!

NIVEA: Yes, it can. Now guide me properly, will you? Any more mishaps and I swear, every dress you own is going to meet the same fate as my shoe. And I'm not joking.

(Sika shuddered.)

SIKA: Okay, I'll be extra careful. It really was an accident, Nivea; I swear.

NIVEA: Yeah? Well, any more of them and *you* 'll meet with an accident!

(Sika grinned.)

SIKA: We've already met, silly.

NIVEA: You just don't learn, do you?

SIKA: Nope.

NIVEA: Sika?

SIKA: Yes?

NIVEA: As soon as this blindfold comes off, darling, you'd better run!

A short while later, once Miles and Kasira reached the point on the map where the entrance to the underground base was supposed to be, Miles called out over his shoulder to signal their success. At once, Cayley, Soapy and Ambre hurried to catch them up. Still some way behind, Sika and Nivea made no effort to hurry. Not about to wait for them, Miles glanced about himself then bit his lip.

MILES: Well, this is definitely the place. Nothing stands out though.

(Sure enough, they were standing on a grassy slope with rocks and trees strewn all about the area.)

MILES: Have a look around, ladies. See if you can spot anything.

(At once, Kasira, Cayley and Soapy started to head up the slope. For her part, Ambre stayed put and literally looked around herself, obeying the order to the letter.)

AMBRE: I can't see anything!

MILES: Well look then!

AMBRE: I am!

MILES: Don't just look, walk around! Are you really that stupid?

KASIRA: Hey! Leave her alone. There's no need for that.

MILES: I didn't ask your opinion, Captain. Go on, Private, get moving.

AMBRE: Okay.

(With that, Ambre headed up the slope to join in the search.)

MILES: There has to be a sign. There must be.

(Kasira glanced back at him as she walked.)

KASIRA: Not necessarily. If they dug into the hillside to build the entrance in the first place, they could have filled it back in again with the same earth when they decided to abandon it.

MILES: Technically yes, but why bother to *hide* a base you're about to abandon? They'd just leave surely.

KASIRA: Maybe the two sides agreed a ceasefire.

MILES: How is that relevant?

KASIRA: It's a Romanden base, right?

MILES: And?

KASIRA: Well, maybe they agreed a ceasefire with *this* nation but maintained a hidden base here to spy from. Then when it was over, they hid the base to destroy all trace of their deceitful espionage.

(Miles bit his lip.)

MILES: That's plausible, I suppose.

(Having just arrived, Nivea shrugged.)

NIVEA: Does any of that really matter? If there's an entrance around here that we can *use*, there has to be a sign of it somewhere. What can you see, guys?

(Cayley called down from the trees someway up the slope.)

CAYLEY: Nothing unusual.

NIVEA: No rocks that look out of place among the others?

SOAPY: No.

NIVEA: Any deviation in the slope?

KASIRA: Nothing unnatural that I can see.

NIVEA: Any trees or flora that look like they don't belong?

AMBRE: What does that even mean?

NIVEA: Like, is there a thin birch tree among a group of old oaks or something.

SIKA: No. The trees are all the same type and they all look roughly the same age.

(Nivea nodded to herself.)

NIVEA: Are you sure this is the right place, Major?

MILES: It's where the map says we should be, yes.

NIVEA: Are you sure?

MILES: Yes, I'm sure.

NIVEA: How sure? You can *read* a map, right?

MILES: Of course I bloody can, I'm not a woman!

NIVEA: Are you sure?

MILES: Yes, I...

(He then furrowed his brow at her.)

MILES: Stop it!

(He shook his head then glanced up the slope to Kasira.)

MILES: Nothing?

(Kasira shrugged.)

KASIRA: If the entrance was here, it must have been filled in. There's not even a hint of *anything* ever being here.

MILES: Well that sucks. For you, I mean. You'll have to start digging until you find it.

(At once, five angry pairs of eyes and a blindfold, glowered in his direction.)

SOAPY: Digging?

CAYLEY: That would take weeks!

(Miles nodded.)

MILES: Then you'd better get started!

AMBRE: Yay. I like digging. I dug a *big* hole once. Six feet deep, it was. My friends at the academy asked me to do it. They wanted to bury something. I never did find out what though; they got kicked out before they could tell me.

(Soapy grimaced.)

SOAPY: Ambre, those girls were not good people.

AMBRE: Yes, they were. I don't care what the staff and doctors said, they weren't out to get me. They were always nice to me. That rumour about them planning to murder me was such a lie.

KASIRA: Wait, what?

NIVEA: Never mind that. If you think I'm going to spend the next few weeks digging, you must be insane.

MILES: No, not insane. Joking!

(He then beamed with pride.)

MILES: Like I'd actually make you dig, for pity's sake. Your faces were a picture. We'll stick to what we agreed. Seeing as there's no way to gain entry here, we'll head for the sea entrance.

(Kasira and Cayley shared a sigh of relief.)

CAYLEY: Thank heavens for that. My nails would never recover from two week's digging.

KASIRA: I know, right?

(Just then, Soapy intervened.)

SOAPY: Great, glad we've decided that. Great joke too, major. Now, about this murder plot, Ambre...

AMBRE: There *was* no murder plot. The teacher just found a murder mystery they were writing, that's all. They'd named the victim Ambre, but they only did *that* because they thought I had a cute name. That's all it was, but everyone got the wrong idea.

SOAPY: Holy shit!

(She puffed out.)

SOAPY: Ambre, if you happen to ever see those girls again, do yourself a favour; don't wave and call them over.

AMBRE: I won't.

SOAPY: Good girl.

AMBRE: I mean I won't *see* them ever again. Unless I get sent to prison. At their new academy, they murdered the class idiot and buried her in a grave that she'd dug herself.

(She pouted.)

AMBRE: I was really sad. They never did anything that mean when *I* knew them.

(Kasira stared through her in dismay.)

KASIRA: I'm not quite sure what I just heard, Ambre, but...

AMBRE: Don't worry, I was just... something.

SIKA: Reminiscing?

AMBRE: Yeah.

(The major rolled his eyes.)

MAJOR: Right, well never mind that, we should...

(He then felt a drop of rain on his cheek and glanced skywards.)

MAJOR: Rain?

(Sure enough, clouds were gathering and spots of rain started to fall around them.)

MAJOR: Aw, crap. I hate rain.

(He furrowed his brow.)

MAJOR: I'm certainly not rowing in the rain. I'm going back to my hotel. How long do showers last here normally?

KASIRA: No more than an hour.

MAJOR: Right. Well, its gone four now... factor in dinner and a relaxing cognac in the bar...

(He then nodded sternly.)

MAJOR: Met me at the quayside at 7pm. Unless it's raining. Make sure you've done the flag ceremony first, of course. I'm off.

(With that, he charged off across the island with his head bowed in the rain. Watching him go with squinting-eyes, Kasira puffed out.)

KASIRA: He's scared of a little rain, bless him. Bloody sissy.

CAYLEY: Yes well, let's make like sissies and get indoors. I don't like rain either.

SOAPY: Plan!

KASIRA: Okay. Come on!

(With that, Sika, Cayley, Soapy, Kasira and Ambre all started to jog back towards the base. As they did so, however, Nivea bellowed out from behind them.)

NIVEA: Girls!!! That's not even funny!!!

(At once, Kasira screeched to a halt then grabbed Sika's arm.)

KASIRA: You brought her, you take her back.

SIKA: Me?

SOAPY: Sucks to be you!

KASIRA: Soapy will help.

SOAPY: What?

SIKA: Ha!

KASIRA: Come on, Ambre; Cayley.

(At once, Cayley, Ambre and Kasira rushed off through the rain leaving Soapy and Sika glowering at them bitterly.)

SIKA: Mean!

SOAPY: I know right?

(They then glanced back at Nivea before sharing a devious smirk.)

SIKA: Oh, I don't know.

SOAPY: I have a feeling we're going to enjoy this.

(Having heard everything, Nivea furrowed her brow.)

NIVEA: Sika, Soapy, I swear... if you do anything to me, you *will* live to regret it! And when I say live, I mean exist. In pain!

(Pacing back to get her, Sika grinned.)

SIKA: Us, Nivea?

SOAPY: As if we would.

(Nivea could only gulp.)

NIVEA: Oh, boy.

Thirty minutes later, having got out of the rain and enjoyed a hot drink, the six ladies of the wraith containment unit headed for the base's luxurious bath. As soon as she'd climbed into it, Kasira immediately felt a lot calmer. The naturally warm spring water was extremely soothing. Ambre also allowed herself a sigh of delight as soon as she sat down. Cayley, on the other hand, just sat on the side, dunking her toes while she waited for the others to get in. Nivea did so with a sly grin on her face. Sika and Soapy, however, did so whilst pouting like bitter schoolgirls. Once they were all in, Cayley then slipped into the water with them. Loving the feel of the water on her skin, she exhaled then looked to where Ambre was washing herself with a large bar of soap.

CAYLEY: I needed this. We didn't exactly get a soaking but still, it's nice to get in here after you've been caught in the rain.

AMBRE: I agree.

(Sika pouted at Nivea.)

SIKA: And now we're in here, Soapy and I need to wash the stench of Nivea off ourselves.

SOAPY: Yeah!

(Nivea made herself comfortable then shrugged.)

NIVEA: Between you, you walked me into walls, made me trip over numerous rocks and you made me step in cow shit. Then to be really funny, you both lead me to the beach and made me trip over face first and fall in the sea. I think you got off lightly.

SIKA: Lightly? That was a mega-groping!

SOAPY: And as for the other thing...

KASIRA: Other thing?

(Nivea beamed.)

NIVEA: I introduced them to the Nivea special. The ultra-wedgie.

KASIRA: Dare I ask?

SIKA: No!

SOAPY: I don't want to talk about it.

NIVEA: I gave them both an enormous wedgie, that's all.

(She then smirked knowingly.)

NIVEA: And when I say enormous, I mean I held the back of their thongs and twisted them until they begged me to stop.

SIKA: It was horrible!

SOAPY: You went too far!

NIVEA: I disagree. Making you kiss each other before I let go, maybe that was excessive, but fuck me, it was funny.

(Sika and Soapy immediately looked away, blushing with embarrassment.)

KASIRA: You made them kiss?

NIVEA: Not with tongues.

KASIRA: I was gonna say.

SIKA: Out of order, Nivea!

SOAPY: You're a bad person!!!

(Kasira growled at her.)

KASIRA: No, you're a bad person, Soapy!

SOAPY: Me???

(Kasira rolled her eyes sarcastically.)

KASIRA: No, the *other* Soapy!

(Holding a bar of soap in her hand, Ambre pouted at her.)

AMBRE: Me?

KASIRA: No, why would you think that?

AMBRE: I'm all soapy.

KASIRA: I was talking about this little shit.

(She pointed at Soapy.)

AMBRE: But you said the *other* Soapy.

KASIRA: I was being sarcastic!

AMBRE: Oh. Okay.

(Kasira glowered at the grimacing Soapy.)

KASIRA: When you're asked to guide Nivea, I expect you to guide her sensibly.

NIVEA: Yeah!

KASIRA: I don't expect you to walk her straight into the nearest wall.

NIVEA: You tell her, Kasira.

KASIRA: You just don't do that sort of thing in front of superior officers; especially when you know *I'm* being assessed.

SOAPY: Sorry.

NIVEA: Wait. What? No, you don't do *that* sort of thing *ever*. Superior officers present or not, you just don't do it!

KASIRA: Well, you *say* that. If *he* wasn't there, even *I* might have...

NIVEA: You wouldn't!

KASIRA: I kind of would. It looked like fun.

SOAPY: It really was.

NIVEA: Evil woman!

(Kasira then glowered at Soapy again.)

KASIRA: But never in front of a superior officer. You deserved Nivea's punishment. I might even get her to relive the moment so I can see it for myself.

SOAPY: No!!!

SIKA: Anything but that!!!

KASIRA: Then be on your best behaviour! I mean it! You as well, Sika!

SOAPY: We'll be good!

SIKA: We really will.

(She then smiled warmly.)

SIKA: No more getting told off for me. I don't know how much longer I've got with you guys, but I really want to enjoy every last minute of it.

(She then smiled at Nivea.)

SIKA: Sorry, Nivea.

NIVEA: You don't need to apologise. I had as much fun punishing you as *you* did committing the crime.

SIKA: You had a little *too* much fun, if you ask me.

NIVEA: You can never have too much fun, darling.

SOAPY: *You* can!

NIVEA: I disagree!

SIKA: Point being, when I leave here, I want you all to...

(Her bottom lip then started to droop.)

SIKA: I want you all to remember me as your friend. Not just a cocky pain in the arse. And I kind of hope... I hope you'll miss me as much as I'm going to miss you guys.

(She then forced a smile.)

SIKA: I'm not gonna cry again. Done that. I want the next few days to be happy ones, ones you'll always remember and think of me. With a smile.

(At this point, she received the five most forced smiles she'd ever seen.)

SIKA: Guys, your lips say "yay" but your eyes say...

(Kasira looked to her and pouted.)

KASIRA: We can't pretend we're not sad right now, Sika. We really, really love you.

Knowing we're gonna lose you is breaking our hearts.

(At this point, Sika's spirit seemed to soar.)

SIKA: I knew it would. I won't be easy to replace. Nobody is going to be even half as much fun as me. I actually feel really sorry for my replacement; she's got a really tough act to follow. There's no way she'll be as cute as me, or as witty. And if she's airborne, she's gonna be all slow at magic like Cayley is. She won't have my awesome dexterity.

(Just then, Ambre burst into tears and threw her arms around her.)

AMBRE: I don't want you to go!!! Who's going to hug me when I get scared at night?

SIKA: Ambre, I...

(Unable to say anything reassuring, Sika just held her and cried her eyes out with her.

Pouting sorrowfully, Nivea immediately wrapped her arms around them both.)

NIVEA: This sucks.

(Watching on, Kasira's shoulders slumped.)

KASIRA: I should be able to do something about this. I've never felt so impotent.

CAYLEY: Impotent?

KASIRA: Powerless, Cayley; get your head out of the gutter.

CAYLEY: My head isn't *in* the gutter. I was just going to say, you're not impotent. There is something you can do; you can keep trying. Only when you stop trying are you impotent.

KASIRA: Cayley, that major doesn't care what I have to say. He's not listening.

CAYLEY: That doesn't mean you stop trying to *make* him listen.

(Kasira pondered her words then nodded.)

KASIRA: I know you're right. I'm just a little deflated, that's all.

CAYLEY: Then snap out of it, babes.

(She nodded sternly.)

CAYLEY: We're gonna enjoy this soak in the bath then I'm gonna whip up a nice bacon wrap for dinner.

(At once, she had everyone's attention.)

AMBRE: I like bacon!

SIKA: Bacon is good, bacon is your friend!

NIVEA: But what's a bacon wrap?

CAYLEY: Bacon stuffed in a bread wrap with chilli sauce and salad.

NIVEA: A bacon kebab?

CAYLEY: If you like.

NIVEA: Cayley, you're a fucking legend.

SIKA: I'm going to turn gay and marry you, Cayley.

CAYLEY: No, you're not.

SIKA: I stand corrected.

SOAPY: It wouldn't work unless *she* turned gay too.

CAYLEY: Enough about turning gay!

(She rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: Point is, we're going to enjoy this bath then we're going to enjoy a nice dinner together. And tonight, after we've done the flag ceremony, we're gonna head off to the quayside with our heads held high. That major's not going to defeat us, girls. We'll go out tonight and do the best damned job of killing wraiths that anyone has even seen! Goddesses again, like we were when the haze broke.

KASIRA: Cayley, I love you. We may not be able to make that horrible old git change his mind, but we can show him how united we are, how well we work together and more importantly, that his constant belittling isn't going to break us.

SIKA: Yeah! In your face, Major.

NIVEA: Love it. Show him we mean business. That he can throw what he likes as us, but he'll never get under our skin.

AMBRE: But accepting everything he throws at us means giving up hope of keeping Sika, doesn't it?

SOAPY: No way. It means that, for all his belittling of Sika, she's still a great soldier and we're all one hundred percent behind her.

AMBRE: Oh. I like that idea.

(Kasira nodded then looked to Sika.)

KASIRA: We are, by the way. One hundred percent behind you. I'm willing to bet everything on you never making a stupid fuck up ever again.

SIKA: I can't promise that, Kasira. Mistakes happen.

KASIRA: Not through a lack of concentration. You almost killed me and I believe... no, I know you love me too much to ever let *that* happen again.

SIKA: Finally! The penny drops!

(She then sunk under the water until only her head was visible.)

SIKA: Please don't kill me.

KASIRA: I wasn't going to.

(She shook her head.)

KASIRA: The way I see it is, you're going to be a mouthy little shit for a while, but I'm willing to work on that if you are. You're a crap soldier in that respect but in the field, I believe in you. I trust you.

SIKA: Thanks, Kasira.

KASIRA: You're welcome.

(She nodded sternly.)

KASIRA: Be focussed tonight girls; showing that major how good we are when the shit hits the fan is Sika's only hope of staying in this unit. Even then it's a long shot, but if we don't do everything in our power then shame on us.

(She then glanced around at the five determined expressions on the faces on her subordinates.)

KASIRA: Girls?

CAYLEY: Yeah?

KASIRA: I've psyched myself up so much for tonight, I don't think I *can* enjoy a relaxing bath now.

SIKA: Me either.

SOAPY: I can. I don't need to be pumped up to do an awesome job in battle. I'm just naturally good at it.

AMBRE: Me too.

(She then started to chuckle.)

AMBRE: Just kidding.

SOAPY: I wasn't. Killing wraiths is what I was born to do. I could probably clear that underground base on my own. With my eyes closed.

SIKA: Wow, talk about conceited.

SOAPY: No, *you're* conceited; *I'm* just telling it as it is.

KASIRA: Right, well... you relax then. I'm going to dry off then help Cayley with dinner.
(At once, a gasp of horror arose from all around her.)

CAYLEY: Please don't, Kasira.

SOAPY: Not that!

KASIRA: Excuse me?

NIVEA: You suck at cooking, Kasira!

KASIRA: Not this again!

CAYLEY: Yes, this again! Kasira, I love you, but as soon as you walk into the kitchen, the food cupboards clench their buttocks in terror.

KASIRA: Hey!

CAYLEY: And besides, you've got something else you could be doing.

KASIRA: Oh?

CAYLEY: You fight with blades, close up.

KASIRA: Yeah, and I already agreed, if it's dangerous, I'll hang back and supervise.

CAYLEY: I know, but I was thinking. Maybe Nivea could give you a few lessons in how to use a sword.
(Kasira looked stumped.)

KASIRA: A sword?

CAYLEY: Yeah. You'll still be at close range, but a sword will increase your reach; maybe even put you back in the game.

SIKA: Sounds like an idea to me.

KASIRA: Nobody asked you. Cayley, I've never used a sword in battle before.

CAYLEY: Fair enough. If you're not confident then don't. It was just a suggestion.
(Kasira bit her lip.)

KASIRA: That *might* be an idea...
(She looked to Nivea.)

KASIRA: What do you reckon?

NIVEA: If you're willing to learn, I'm willing to teach. God knows you've taught *me* enough over the years.

KASIRA: Fair enough. I'll do that while you make dinner, Cayley.
(A sigh of relief then rose up from all around her.)

KASIRA: Thanks a bunch, you lot. I mean really.
(She then sat there shaking her head. As she did so, however, Ambre started to run a brush through her hair. For some reason, she always insisted on doing so when they were in the bath together.)

KASIRA: Thanks, Ambre.

AMBRE: You're welcome. Now make me a coffee.

KASIRA: What?

AMBRE: Just kidding.
(She beamed.)

AMBRE: Impersonating the major is fun.

KASIRA: Not as much fun as throwing him off a cliff, I'd wager.
(At once, her five subordinates all nodded in agreement.)

CAYLEY: There'd be no shortage of volunteers for that mission; that's for certain!

Twenty minutes later, while Cayley was in the kitchen and Sika, Ambre and Soapy remained in the bath, Nivea and Kasira paced into the base's windowless exercise room with swords in their hands. Clearly nervous, Kasira glanced down at herself then gave Nivea a troubled glance.)

KASIRA: I'm not sure about this, Nivea.

NIVEA: Relax, Kasira. I'm just going to show you a few basic sword moves, that's all.

KASIRA: I know that, I'm just worried.

NIVEA: Don't be. I promise I'll be extremely careful.

KASIRA: Good. Only this is a new skirt and I don't want it ripped.

(Nivea grinned.)

NIVEA: Most people would be more worried about getting stabbed.

KASIRA: Yeah well, most people don't spend as much on clothes as I do.

NIVEA: *Nobody* spends as much as you do.

KASIRA: If they don't want to look nice, that's their own malfunction.

(Nivea smiled.)

NIVEA: Fair comment. Anyway...

(She then stepped to one side and sunk into a fighting stance, facing Kasira.)

NIVEA: Let's get started. Sink down; best foot forward. Both legs bent so you're comfortable but can rock back and forth.

(Kasira immediately turned to face her then copied her stance.)

KASIRA: I do this when I fight with my blades anyway.

NIVEA: I know. It's the same principle. You're on the balls of your feet, ready to move.

KASIRA: Exactly.

NIVEA: Then you're half way there. Like you say, this is what you do anyway.

(She nodded.)

NIVEA: The difference with a sword is, you're very much dependent on your control of a third party object. With your blades, you're basically using your hands as knives, it's not like that with a sword. Think of what you do as playing the bongos. Using a sword is more like beating a snare with drumsticks.

KASIRA: What I do is nothing like playing the bongos!

(She then paused to think.)

KASIRA: Actually, you're right. I basically play the bongos on wraith's heads.

NIVEA: See? Well a sword is far more cumbersome. It's not as quick and you often find yourself backing off against a pack of wraiths to keep your range constant.

KASIRA: Okay. It's all common sense so far.

NIVEA: Exactly. Well, the trick is to use a sword you feel comfortable swinging. The weight is important. Thankfully, you look comfortable with that one; I reckon we have a match.

KASIRA: Okay.

NIVEA: Now, here's the all important part. Focus, be aware of your blade but don't watch it while you're fighting. Watch the enemy, not your sword.

KASIRA: Gotcha.

NIVEA: Right. Now attack my blade, left then right. You can only do it if you're looking at what you're hitting. If you're looking at your sword, you'll miss.

KASIRA: Right.

(With that, Kasira swiftly lashed her sword, left then right. Connecting perfectly, she then nodded to herself.)

KASIRA: Simple.

NIVEA: Now try doing it *without* looking at what you're hitting.

KASIRA: Okay, not sure why though. Looking at your target and not your weapon is a very basic thing. Level 1 stuff.

(Nivea bit her lip.)

NIVEA: Skip that then.

(She then stood tall.)

NIVEA: There's not really much I can teach you, Kasira.

(Kasira also stepped from her fighting stance.)

KASIRA: There has to be something, surely.

NIVEA: You're land-bound, you master using blades from a very young age, anything I say you'll probably already know.

KASIRA: Oh, I don't know. Swords really are new to me.

NIVEA: Yeah, but they're not much different to your short blades.

(She shrugged.)

NIVEA: The only real difference is, swords can be used to defend.

KASIRA: That's a massive difference. My blades are for offense only.

(Nivea nodded.)

NIVEA: Then let's teach you to parry my blade.

KASIRA: Okay. Just don't rip my skirt!

(Nivea rolled her eyes.)

NIVEA: I won't.

(She then sunk into a battle stance again; a move swiftly emulated by Kasira.)

NIVEA: I'm going to bring my sword towards you, okay? All you have to is block it with your sword, pushing *my* sword back.

KASIRA: Okay.

(With that, Nivea stepped back then slowly brought her sword towards Kasira. Almost instinctively, Kasira then lashed her arm sideways, knocking Nivea's sword out of her hand.)

KASIRA: Like that?

(Nivea grimaced at her sword.)

NIVEA: No, actually. That was much better than I expected.

KASIRA: Oh. Cool.

(Nivea shrugged.)

NIVEA: You're a natural, Kasira. Like I said, there's not much I can teach you.

(She smiled.)

NIVEA: You know the stance and you know not to look at your weapon. There's little else to it. All you need to do is keep low, focus and be prepared to back up as well as moving forward. And be patient, it *is* much slower than what you're used to.

KASIRA: Okay.

NIVEA: I reckon you'll be have mastered it after a few minutes. It's not really much of a departure from your short blades. The only real difference is, rather than hack and slashing, you have to be patient and know when to back off. Oh, and aiming is different obviously. Like I said, drumstick on a drum rather than hands to bongos. With your natural talent and dexterity, that's not even going to be a challenge though.

KASIRA: Good to hear.

(She bit her lip.)

KASIRA: So if you and I were to duel...

NIVEA: I'd kill you stone dead in under ten seconds.

KASIRA: What? But you said I was a natural.

NIVEA: Babes, killing wraiths is poles apart from fighting someone else with a sword. Duelling takes years of practice, it's a different thing entirely. You're fighting another intelligent creature for one.

(She shrugged.)

NIVEA: Battering wraiths, on the other hand, you just need to evade their far from subtle attacks then chop at them and they die.

(Kasira nodded.)

KASIRA: Well, that's true, I suppose.

NIVEA: Besides, if we duelled, I might accidentally snag your precious skirt. You'd have me busted down to private and back in training with Sika in a heartbeat.

KASIRA: Possibly sooner.

(They then shared a smile.)

KASIRA: Okay, thanks for the lesson, Nivea. I'll take a sword with me later. Hopefully, I won't need it.

NIVEA: Yeah; it's good to have one for back up though.

KASIRA: Definitely.

(She smiled.)

KASIRA: Let's go and see how Cayley's getting on with our food, shall we?

NIVEA: We shall. I'm looking forward to that. The thought of a bacon kebab has made getting up early feel worth it.

KASIRA: I'll bet.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: We can scoff that down, then as soon as it's dark we can do the flag ceremony.

With any luck we'll have plenty of time to change before we go to the quayside then. I don't fancy going into the bunker in five-inch high-heels.

NIVEA: Damned right. I'd rather go in bare feet.

KASIRA: And if there isn't time to change, that's exactly what we'll be doing.

The next hour or so seemed to fly past for the girls of the wraith containment unit. Content from a soak in the bath, they'd sat down together and enjoyed the finest meal Cayley had ever cooked. The bacon kebab was a delight. So much so, silence descended over the dinner table as soon as they all started to eat. Cayley couldn't have been happier. It took next to no time to cook it and yet she'd never received so many compliments.

Despite their heavy hearts, it had indeed been an enjoyable few hours. No major to order them around, good food and excellent company. It was exactly how Sika had envisaged it when she'd mentioned enjoying her remaining time at the base. Their unity had never been stronger. As such, when they went off to do the flag ceremony, just after dark, dressed in their regimental uniforms, they were all in good spirits.

They marched to the flag pole that evening then set about their task with a proud glint in their eyes. While the others saluted the flag, Nivea lowered it while Ambre stood waiting. As soon as it was down, she took the flag then waited for Nivea to unhook it. Once that was done, she then stepped to one side and allowed Cayley to affix the clean one. Seconds later, Nivea hoisted the new flag to the top of the pole and the ceremony was over. Unlike times gone by however, they did so without a crowd of jeering, hatefully townsfolk, mocking their every move. Since their success in ending the haze break, the few who turned out to watch, applauded them.

On this particular night, having saluted the new flag, Kasira nodded sternly then looked to her unit-mates.

KASIRA: Company... formation!

(At once, they all fell in line then Kasira strode to the front.)

KASIRA: Company... march!!!

(They then proceeded to march back. As they did so, however, a twenty-something year-old townsman raced past them all and charged to Kasira's side. Grimacing uncomfortably, he then engaged her in conversation.)

DEREK: Look, I know you're not allowed to speak right now...

KASIRA: That's news to me.

DEREK: Oh, you can. Cool. My unit leader told us we couldn't back when I was in the army.

KASIRA: Some are like that. The ceremony's done now, it's fine.

DEREK: Great. Good. Only...

(He bit his lip then nodded sternly to psyche himself up.)

DEREK: You're really pretty, you are. I've always thought so.

(Kasira grimaced.)

KASIRA: Aw, crap.

DEREK: I don't normally accost women in the street like this but I think about you every night. You're beautiful you are. So I was wondering, maybe we could have dinner some time?

KASIRA: Sorry, um...

DEREK: It's Derek.

KASIRA: Derek. I'm not really looking for...

(As Sika, Soapy, Nivea, Cayley and Ambre watched on with highly amused looks on their faces, Derek swiftly intervened.)

DEREK: Before you say no, I own several horses and a really expensive cart. And my dad owns a vineyard.

(He grimaced.)

DEREK: Not on *this* island obviously, somewhere else. I really am a well-to-do bloke though.

KASIRA: Sorry. I'm not looking for a relationship right now.

(Derek pouted.)

DEREK: Oh.

(His face then lit up.)

DEREK: Just a shag then! I'll pay you!

(Kasira glowered at him.)

KASIRA: Go away!

DEREK: Right. Fuck.

(He then clicked his fingers in disappoint before sinking back to march alongside Soapy.)

DEREK: Alright, babe?

CAYLEY: She's fifteen!

DEREK: Better not then.

(He then jogged around them and stepped up next to Nivea.)

DEREK: Hello, gorgeous. You're really pretty, you are. I've always thought so. I don't normally accost women in the street like this but I think about you every night. You're beautiful you are. So I was wondering, maybe we could have dinner some time.

NIVEA: Just dinner? You offered Kasira cash!

DEREK: Well, if you'd prefer cash...

NIVEA: Depends how much.

KASIRA: Nivea!!!

(Nivea pouted.)

NIVEA: I was only asking.

DEREK: Ignore her. I never *did* like her. Have we got a date then?

NIVEA: Were you born without shame or did you slowly lose it over time?

DEREK: I fail to see how that's relevant.

(Just then, another man roughly the same age, raced up behind Derek and started to drag him away.)

STAN: Stop it, Derek!

(As his friend dragged him away, he protested vehemently)

DEREK: You bet me I couldn't get one of them to go out with me!

STAN: It was a flippant remark; you don't have to prove me right!

DEREK: I was proving you *wrong*! I think the blonde with evil eyes likes me!

STAN: I'm sure she doesn't. Especially now! It was a throw away comment, let it go, you're embarrassing yourself.

DEREK: But I haven't tried the other three yet!

STAN: Derek!!!

(At this point, Stan managed to drag Derek out of earshot and a series of chuckles rose up from among the ladies.)

SOAPY: Nivea has evil eyes.

SIKA: Hardly news.

NIVEA: One wedgie token for Sika!

SIKA: I mean she has gorgeous eyes.

NIVEA: I do? Why, thank you. Token still stands. Three and you get a free wedgie.

SIKA: Fuck!

(Still chuckling, Kasira glanced over her shoulder.)

KASIRA: I really wasn't expecting that, girls.

(Ambre sighed.)

AMBRE: I wish he'd asked me.

(At once, her five companions all gave her a sideways glance.)

SIKA: Ambre, he was a dick. And probably drunk.

CAYLEY: You can't be that desperate for a leg over, can you?

(Hating the attention, Ambre pouted then grinned the widest of grins.)

AMBRE: Make me a coffee!

SOAPY: No, Ambre, you can't chuckle-monkey your way out of this one.

SIKA: Seriously, Ambre, I know you're a little frustrated, but *that* guy?

KASIRA: Never go with some weirdo who accosts you in the street! Especially one who's already tried and failed with most of your friends.

CAYLEY: Yeah, never be *that* desperate.

(Ambre glanced at the ground and whimpered.)

AMBRE: Can we talk about something else now?

KASIRA: Fine. As long as you understand.

AMBRE: I do. Don't go with anyone unless *you* approve.

KASIRA: I didn't say that, but yes. I like that.

AMBRE: Will you *ever* approve?

KASIRA: Stranger things have happened.

CAYLEY: All she's saying is, no matter how desperate you feel, Ambre, make good choices. *He* wasn't one.

AMBRE: Right. So when are we changing the subject then?

KASIRA: Now. It's edging closer to seven o'clock. Don't be slow getting changed once we get back. We'll have about ten minutes to change then meet the major. Let's not be late. We need to show him how professional we are.

CAYLEY: Ma'am.

SIKA: Okay.

AMBRE: What shall I change into?

SOAPY: Anything but a gazelle, sweetheart.

AMBRE: I mean should we dress smartly for the major's sake or wear stuff we don't mind getting ripped? We're going to fight lots and lots of wraiths remember?

KASIRA: Wear whatever you feel comfortable in.

(She grimaced.)

KASIRA: Besides, I don't own anything I could bear see ripped.

AMBRE: Not even that one with...

(Cayley looked alarmed.)

CAYLEY: No, Ambre...

(Alas, she was too late.)

KASIRA: Not even what, Ambre? What do you mean? Have I got an outfit you don't like?

(At once, they all grimaced at Ambre. If she mentioned any specific outfit, they all knew Kasira would spend the next few hours defending it with a hard-done-by pout on her face. Her clothes were like her children.)

AMBRE: I like all your outfits. I just thought you wouldn't mind ripping that dress that's got a hole in it already. The one you were wearing when Sika blew you up.

(At once, everyone drew a sigh of relief, except Sika.)

SIKA: Yeah, thanks, Ambre; I'm glad you brought that up.

KASIRA: Actually, I had that one mended, Ambre.

AMBRE: Oh!

(Kasira then glowered at Sika.)

KASIRA: Why do you think Sika still has all her limbs?

SIKA: Yeah, which reminds me. That was a lovely kebab tonight, Cayley.

(Much to her relief, thoughts of the bacon kebab immediately switched everyone's attention away from her, even Kasira's.)

KASIRA: That bacon was incredible.

AMBRE: It even made the salad taste nice.

SOAPY: It actually did.

AMBRE: I hate salad.

(Nivea smirked.)

NIVEA: Next time you blow Kasira up and have to pacify her, Sika, you know what to do. Make her a bacon kebab.

(With that, Kasira immediately furrowed her brow at Sika again.)

SIKA: Thanks, Nivea, you're a pal.

(Nivea beamed.)

NIVEA: You're very welcome, darling.

Ten minutes later, having changed in a hurry, egged on by Kasira, the six ladies of the wraith containment unit, locked up the base then headed out again. As they headed into town, on route to the quayside, they all looked extremely focussed. As far as they were concerned, their time to shine had arrived. They were resolved to making the giant wraiths in the underground bunker wish they'd never spawned. On this night, they were determined to show the major their worth. To prove themselves and send out a message to the army that women were just as capable as men.

As her unit colleagues paced forth with a stern glint in their eyes, Kasira looked to them then bit her lip. A firm believer that being relaxed before a battle was far healthier than marching

towards it with clenched fists, she nodded to herself then spoke up in a bid to lighten the mood. As much as the focus on their faces pleased her, she was eager to ease their tension and send them into battle focussed but calm.)

KASIRA: I was torn between which dress to wear tonight.

(Nivea looked her up and down then grimaced.)

NIVEA: That's a top and skirt, Kasira.

KASIRA: Sometimes the easiest choice is neither.

(She shrugged.)

KASIRA: Besides a dress looks wrong with a belt, and I needed a belt for this scabbard.

(She then attempted to tap the hilt of the sword at her side. At once, her eyes bulged then she glared at her hip.)

KASIRA: This *empty* scabbard!

NIVEA: Empty?

(Kasira grimaced.)

KASIRA: Yeah. I kind of forgot to put the sword in it before we left.

(Nivea chuckled.)

NIVEA: You brought your short blades though, right?

KASIRA: Yup.

(She chuckled.)

KASIRA: I guess a sword and I really weren't meant to be.

NIVEA: Looks that way.

KASIRA: Never mind. I shouldn't really use swords anyway. I only had one lesson and my teacher was rubbish.

NIVEA: Hot though, I hear.

KASIRA: You heard wrong.

(Nivea grinned.)

NIVEA: Harsh. You should definitely give swords a go sometime though. Maybe on a normal patrol. And if you like them, you should get an over-shoulder scabbard like mine. No belt and dress issues that way.

(Kasira glanced to the sword on Nivea's back then shrugged.)

KASIRA: I'll give it miss, actually. I'm not going to change my fighting style now. And besides, whichever way you wear a scabbard there's going to be fashion issues; brown leather really doesn't go with anything.

(Sika snarled.)

SIKA: No such problems for me. I just threw these shorts on. Tonight isn't about fashion, it's about killing stuff.

SOAPY: Sika, you didn't just *throw* anything on. For a start, you can't *throw* shorts on when they're that tight! Putting them on requires a colossal effort. *And* you picked a matching top.

SIKA: It was the first matching outfit I came across!

AMBRE: No it wasn't. You threw half your wardrobe on the bed then said, "Ambre, help me, I can't decide."

NIVEA: And you helped her choose *that*? You really don't like her, do you?

SIKA: Hey!

AMBRE: I didn't help her choose that. *I* suggested her yellow dress.

CAYLEY: The one *you're* now wearing?

AMBRE: Yeah. Turns out it was mine.

SIKA: There must have been a mix up when we did laundry.

KASIRA: Was the mix up when you borrowed it and forgot to give it back?

(Sika grimaced at Ambre.)

SIKA: Pretty much. Sorry, Ambre.

AMBRE: Don't be sorry. I like it when you borrow my clothes, it means they're not rubbish. I'm not good at picking clothes.

KASIRA: Oh, I don't know, you've got much better lately.

AMBRE: Since I started letting you do it?

(Kasira grimaced.)

KASIRA: Yeah.

(She then glanced ahead and spotted Major Miles heading across the cobbles towards the quayside. At once, Kasira's brow tightened.)

KASIRA: There's arse face. Or as we'll call him from now on, Major Miles! We're going to be dead on professional tonight, remember?

(At once, she received five positive replies.)

KASIRA: Okay, game faces, ladies. Don't stress out, whatever you do, but make sure you're focussed. It's time.

(With that, she paced up to Major Miles; her five subordinates hot on her heels. As soon as she reached him, she saluted; a move swiftly emulated by the others.)

KASIRA: 123rd Regiment - Wraith containment unit, reporting for duty, Major.

(Miles raised an impressed eyebrow.)

MILES: Blimey. You almost sounded like a soldier then.

KASIRA: I *am* a soldier, sir.

MILES: Then shut up while I give you my orders.

KASIRA: Yes, sir!

MILES: Get used to taking orders, Captain. You leave the army in a few months, so you'll no doubt be taking orders everyday. You know, in whatever restaurant you end up working in as a waitress.

(He smirked.)

MILES: Unless you plan to have babies with that Lassu fellow. I don't really care. I'm just glad *I'm* not a woman, because let's face it, motherhood and waitressing are all you're good for.

(Much to his annoyance, Kasira merely nodded.)

KASIRA: Yes, sir.

MILES: That said, I reckon *you'd* do pretty well as a prostitute. You already dress like one.

KASIRA: Thank you, sir.

MILES: Not biting, eh?

KASIRA: No, sir.

MILES: I see. Very well.

(He then stood tall.)

MILES: The army issued you with a rowing boat I assume?

KASIRA: Yes, sir.

MILES: And you know where it is?

KASIRA: Yes, sir.

MILES: Then go and get in it. And take your unit with you.

(He then looked to Soapy.)

MILES: Not you, fish-head. You can swim after the boat.

(Soapy looked down at her dress then pouted.)

SOAPY: Yes, sir.

MILES: It's not that I don't like you, it's just that you don't *need* to be in the boat. The less weight the better.

(He then grinned knowingly.)

MILES: Once you ladies are in the boat, I'll get in after you. Cayley, Sika, you can row. And I make no apology if you chip a nail.

(He rolled his eyes.)

MILES: Women! Now go!

(With that, they all headed off down a jetty towards where the army's small wooden rowing boat was moored. Once at the end, Soapy leapt into the sea then Kasira climbed into the boat and held it still for her comrades. As soon as they were all inside, the major then climbed in and nodded sternly.)

MILES: So, didn't fancy untying the boat from the mooring first then, Kasira.

(Well aware that the last one in, Miles, should have untied it, Kasira fought against her urge to insult him then climbed to her feet and clambered back onto the jetty. A few moments later, once the boat was free, she clambered back in then sat down again.)

MILES: Okay...

(He then leant backwards and pushed the boat away from the jetty. Having let it drift a good five feet, he then nodded sternly.)

MILES: And row!

(Upon his command, Sika and Cayley then proceeded to pull the oars back and forth. Unfortunately, they'd never rowed a boat before and did so entirely randomly; without paying attention to what the other one was doing. As a result, the boat immediately started going round in circles. Kasira could only spam her forehead in despair. Matching her despair, Miles furrowed his brow.)

MILES: Perfect, yes. Round and round we go. Exactly what we need.

SIKA: Why is it doing that?

CAYLEY: I don't know!

MILES: Don't worry, you're doing great. You two should join the army rowing team.

(Kasira grimaced at Cayley.)

KASIRA: You're supposed to lift the oar forwards then pull it back through the water in time with each other.

(Treading water, just behind the boat, Soapy rolled her eyes.)

SOAPY: Can I swim ahead?

MILES: Yes, do that. Go and find the entrance. Then come back. This is going to take a while, I feel.

SOAPY: Sir!

(With that, Soapy swum off ahead. Miles watched her go then looked to Sika and Cayley, still pulling randomly at the oars.)

MILES: That's right, keep doing it like that. You never know, if you can get us spinning round in circles quickly enough, we might be able to drill for oil.

SIKA: What do you mean?

MILES: What do I mean? That was my roundabout way of saying, why the hell are you still bugging about? Stop it!

(At once, Cayley and Sika stopped what they were doing and grinned at him.)

MILES: Honestly; I've never seen such a shambles.

CAYLEY: We've never rowed before, sir.

MILES: Really? I'd never have guessed.

(He nodded.)

MILES: Don't worry, you just need someone to help with your timing. I'll be your Cox.

AMBRE: I don't understand that sentence, Kasira.

(Miles glowered at her.)

MILES: Excuse me?

KASIRA: Cox is short for coxswain, Ambre; nothing perverted.

AMBRE: Okay. What's a coxswain?

MILES: Be quiet, Private. You never know, you may learn something.

AMBRE: Yes, ma'am. Sir, even. Sorry.

MILES: Idiot.

(He then looked to Sika and Cayley.)

MILES: Raise your oars from the water, ladies.

(Sika and Cayley did just that.)

MILES: Now push forward then lower them into water.

(He watched their oars then nodded.)

MILES: Now when I say pull, I want you to drag the oars through the water. Keep doing it until I say push, at which point, you lift them out of the water again and push you hands forward in readiness for me to say pull again. Understand?

SIKA: I think so. Pull means row, push means lift the oars up.

MILES: Yes, and pull when I say pull, push when I say push.

CAYLEY: Simple.

MILES: Indeed, but then most women are.

(He glanced at Kasira, hoping for a reaction. With none forthcoming, he sighed then looked to Sika and Cayley.)

MILES: Right. Pull!

(At last the boat moved forward and their journey was underway. Progress was slow and far from smooth, but little by little, Sika and Cayley's technique slowly started to improve. After sixty seconds had past, they finally felt they were making progress.)

MILES: Push! This is much better. You *can* be taught! Who knew? Now, Pull!

(At this point, Soapy swum up to the side of the boat, out of reach of the oars and called to Kasira.)

SOAPY: Ma'am, I found it. It's literally just around the headland. The boat will just about fit.

MILES: Push!

KASIRA: You went in there?

SOAPY: Briefly. There's a jetty and...

(She gulped.)

SOAPY: Big wraiths. I mean really big.

MILES: Pull!

KASIRA: Okay, thank you, Soapy.

SOAPY: Shall I go and wait by the inlet? Only it's really small and you'd never see if you weren't looking for it.

MILES: We *will* be looking for it! Push!

KASIRA: Even so, having her there will help. She can call our attention to it.

(She then looked to Soapy.)

KASIRA: Good idea, Soapy. Go and wait by the inlet. We'll see you in bit, sweetheart.

MILES: Pull!

(Miles then glowered at Kasira.)

MILES: Sweetheart? Really? It's either soldier, private or her name.

KASIRA: Yes, sir. Sorry, sir.

MILES: Push! So you should be.

KASIRA: I was trying to keep her morale up, sir. Won't happen again.

MILES: Good. Pull!

(Kasira then glanced to one side and mumbled under her breath.)

KASIRA: Prick.

(A few minutes later, having successfully rowed around the headland, Soapy called out to them and alerted them to the presence of a small inlet in the cliff face, just big enough for the

boat to fit through. Following the major's instructions, they immediately veered towards it then promptly rowed inside.

Having passed through the small break in the rocks, nervous about what lay ahead, they emerged into a long, thin watery cavern. At the side of the cavern was a man-made port, upon which, wraiths three times the size of those they were used to fighting, were snarling back at them. Sensing food, they growled and snarled from the quayside, eager to devour the seven humans as soon as possible. Such was their aggressive behaviour, two of them fell from the quay and evaporated into dust as soon as they sunk into the water. Watching on, Miles gulped then barked at Soapy and Sika.)

MILES: Stop!!!

SIKA: How???

MILES: Row backwards!!! Do what you've been doing but in reverse.

(In something of panic, Cayley and Sika did just that. Moments later, the boat came to a halt upon the water.)

MILES: Thank fuck!

AMBRE: Now what?

MILES: Don't look at me.

(He pointed to Kasira.)

MILES: She's the leader; I'm here to observe, not give orders.

(Half-tempted to point out how he'd bossed her around ever since they set out, Kasira clenched her fists to gather herself. Managing to avoid the temptation to speak out, she took a deep breath then smiled at Sika and Cayley.)

KASIRA: When I give the word, let loose with the magic, ladies.

(She then looked to where Soapy was treading water.)

KASIRA: You too, if you can.

SOAPY: I can!

KASIRA: Good. We'll have to clear the quayside from here; there's no way we can get up there with *them* in the way.

MILES: Wait! Are you sure that's wise?

KASIRA: No, but what else are we going to do?

MILES: Look, woman, if you fire magic from the boat...

KASIRA: I thought you were only here to supervise, sir.

MILES: I am, but...

KASIRA: Then please excuse me while I press on with the job the army are paying me to do. Fire when ready.

(With that, Cayley, Sika and Soapy all proceeded to fire off their magic. From the water next to the boat, Soapy was in a world of delight. She loved killing things and this was her idea of heaven. For their parts, Cayley and Sika went about the job with determined expressions on their faces. Flailing their arms about with every casting of their vortex-like magic, they were extremely focussed. Unfortunately, all their activity was doing little for the stability of their boat. With each casting, the boat rocked from side to side, causing those inside it to hold onto both sides in a bid to stabilise it.)

MILES: As I was trying to say before you stupidly gave them the order to fire, casting magic from inside the boat is a bloody stupid thing to do!

KASIRA: With all due respect, sir, what else could we have done? Let Soapy do it all?

MILES: Yes! Any minute now they might just turn the boat over!!!

(Just then, courtesy of the momentum caused by Sika and Cayley's powerful magic casting, the boat rocked violently to one side and tipped everyone out.)

SIKA: Whoops!!!

AMBRE: Not happy!!!

(Splashing about in the water, the major managed to grab the side of the boat then glowered at where Kasira was treading water.)

MILES: See? Stupid woman!!!

KASIRA: I know it was bound to happen, but it was worth it while it lasted!

MILES: Oh, was it?

KASIRA: Yes, sir, it was!

MILES: No, Captain, it wasn't. They should have got out of the boat before they started casting magic. They can do it just as easily in the water.

CAYLEY: No we can't. Treading water and firing magic is virtually impossible unless you're an aqua-human.

SIKA: I know. Look!

(Sika then cast magic at a wraith and blew it to pieces. As she did so, however, her arms shot over her head and she sunk beneath the surface. Moments later, she splashed back up again and glowered at the major; her soaking wet hair stuck to her face.)

SIKA: See? That'll happen every time. I need my arms to stay afloat.

MILES: Fly upwards then, you tit! You're an airborne!!!

CAYLEY: We can't sprout wings in water, sir. They'll get waterlogged and we'll drown.

MILES: And I'm okay with that.

CAYLEY: Sir?

MILES: It was joke. Sort of.

(He rolled his eyes.)

MILES: You know, you *could* just get back in the boat and sprout wings from there.

CAYLEY: No we can't. We have to be standing up. As soon as we sprout them, the boat will tip and we'll fall in before we can even take flight.

(She grimaced.)

CAYLEY: I found that out the hard way when I went to visit my grandmother by Lake Odem.

SIKA: Same thing happened to me when my friends and I made a raft as kids.

MILES: Okay, fine, you couldn't then. But you could have just flown in here in the first place.

NIVEA: Their wings would never fit through that gap, sir.

MILES: Right... yes...

KASIRA: So, really, sir, I did the right thing. Firing magic from the boat was doomed to fail eventually, but it was the only way for them to contribute. Now Soapy has to do it by herself. (Miles looked to her and growled.)

MILES: Fine, you have point, I suppose. Let's leave it all to Soapy then.

(Entirely oblivious to the mishap with the boat, Soapy continued her task with a decidedly evil grin on her face. Every wraith that exploded on the end of her spells was making her sing inside. This was a girl who could happily kill wraiths all day long and never tire of doing so. Right now, the others were grateful for that fact. Sika and Cayley couldn't cast magic without sinking and Kasira, Miles and Nivea had no long range magic to cast in the first place. Ambre, however, was back in the game; and delighted to be so. Clinging to Kasira's back as she trod water, she was grinning at a wraith; enjoying her power over its mind. Completely under her thrall, it had turned on the other wraiths. The major couldn't believe his eyes.)

MILES: Am I seeing things? That wraith has turned on its own kind!

(Just then, the wraith in question disintegrated into dust.)

AMBRE: Soapy!

SOAPY: Sorry, Ambre!

AMBRE: It's okay, I'll use another one.

(As a second wraith turned on the other ones, Miles raised a curious eyebrow.)

MILES: Am I missing something? Ambre's doing that?

KASIRA: Yes, sir.

NIVEA: It's her special skill.

MILES: I didn't know swift-monkeys could do that.

AMBRE: I'm not a monkey!

MILES: Sorry, I meant idiot.

AMBRE: Not nice, sir.

MILES: I wasn't trying to be.

(Still clinging to the boat, he puffed out in awe.)

MILES: Still, that's impressive.

(With that, he started to clamber back into the boat. Rolling her eyes, Nivea quickly grabbed the other side of it, using her full weight to stop it flipping over while he climbed in. Offering her nothing by way of gratitude, as soon as he was in, he then made himself comfortable and looked to Kasira.)

MILES: Once the edge of the quay is clear, get up there. There's a ramp at the side, look. Swim over there and get onto it. I'll wait here.

KASIRA: Of course you will, sir.

MILES: Excuse me?

KASIRA: You're here to supervise, that's all I was saying, sir.

(Miles furrowed his brow at her.)

MILES: Cheeky witch.

(Not about to float there and be insulted, Kasira looked to Nivea.)

KASIRA: Let's get started. I'll get Soapy to finish off the area near the ramp then you can get up there and do your spin.

NIVEA: Sounds like a plan.

KASIRA: Careful though, they're big fuckers.

NIVEA: I'll be okay, they don't scare me, ma'am.

(Kasira nodded then looked to Cayley.)

KASIRA: Keep Nivea healed when she goes over there, Cayley.

CAYLEY: How? I'll sink.

KASIRA: You're going with her.

CAYLEY: Oh, gotcha. Yes, ma'am.

(Kasira then looked to Soapy.)

KASIRA: Soapy, clear the area by the ramp, darling.

SOAPY: Ma'am!

MILES: Her name isn't darling!

KASIRA: And mine isn't woman, sir.

MILES: I don't care, woman!

KASIRA: Understood, sir.

MILES: I hope so, Captain. You see, rank matters in the army. You'll call her what I *tell* you to call her and I shouldn't have to repeat myself! Ever!

KASIRA: Sir. Sorry, sir.

MILES: Stupid old boot.

(Kasira glowered at him then glanced away, shaking her head.)

MILES: That upset you did it?

KASIRA: No, sir.

MILES: Good! See, I can call you what I like, shit face. There's no *limit* to it. Monkey tits, sausage jockey, sword swallower, moose features, sperm sock, the possibilities are endless. As a major, your superior, what I call you doesn't matter. It's my privilege to call you

whatever takes my fancy. Slut, wench, whore, bitch, slapper, slag, I can call you any of those. Maybe even all of them. It's all perfectly acceptable. And you, as my inferior, my subordinate, a lowly maggot, will fucking well learn to live with it! Got it?

KASIRA: Sir.

MILES: Good. I'm glad we understand each other.

(He sneered.)

MILES: You sour-faced battleaxe.

(Just then Soapy spoke up.)

SOAPY: Ramp area is clear, ma'am.

KASIRA: Already?

(Much to her amazement, the ramp up to the quay and the area at the top of it were already clear.)

KASIRA: Soapy you're a star.

SOAPY: Just doing my job, ma'am. Albeit it brilliantly.

KASIRA: Agreed. Go, Nivea. Follow her Cayley. Nivea, make sure Cayley's at a safe distance before you start.

NIVEA: Ma'am!

CAYLEY: Let's go, Nivea.

KASIRA: Keep them covered, Soapy.

SOAPY: On it, ma'am.

(With that, Soapy continued to go to town on any wraith foolish enough to approach the area near the ramp. Making the most of her superb work, Nivea and Cayley immediately swum over it to. Once out of the water, they then hurried to the top of the ramp. Upon arrival, Cayley stopped and watched as Nivea ran several metres across the quayside in readiness to start doing her spinning skill. As she did so, however, every wraith on the entire quayside stormed towards her.)

NIVEA: Soapy!!!

SOAPY: I'm doing the best I can!!!

(Sure enough, Soapy was firing off magic with one hand after the other in a bid to cull the wraiths. Only having one pair of hands, however, there was no way she could stop all of them.)

KASIRA: That's far enough!!! Spin, Nivea. Do it!!!

NIVEA: I am, I am!!!

(Knowing the wraiths had an insatiable craving for flesh, and would rip her apart in seconds given the chance, Nivea immediately started to spin. Watching on from behind her, Cayley snarled then set her healing spells into action. Within seconds, the whoosh of air caught beneath Nivea's blade started to echo around the cavern. She'd gone from standing still to spinning around at five revolutions per second in the blinking of an eye.)

MILES: I love it when they do that. Such an impressive skill. Even when a woman does it. (Kasira growled under her breath.)

KASIRA: Cock.

MILES: Excuse me?

KASIRA: I was agreeing with you, sir

(Watching on as Nivea spun, Kasira allowed herself a smirk. Wraith after wraith ploughed into her blade and all were disintegrated into a rain of dust. It was like a swarm of locusts hurtling into the blades of a helicopter. They didn't even come close to attacking her.)

KASIRA: Superb work, Nivea. Not bad for a woman!

NIVEA: Thank you, ma'am. I just hope I don't chip a nail.

KASIRA: If you do, I'll make you coffee later to cheer you up. Good practice for when I become a waitress.

CAYLEY: She doesn't normally spin this fast. She must be extra angry with the wraiths today. She's probably on her period.

(Delighted that they were having a lend at the major's sexist attitude, Sika grinned.)

SIKA: I'm bored watching this, I'm gonna paint my fingernails.

SOAPY: I'm too busy killing to worry about my nails. Besides, I already chipped them yesterday when I was knitting a hat.

AMBRE: Make me a coffee, woman!!!

(At once, everyone chuckled at Ambre's comment.)

KASIRA: God love her.

(Not quite cottoning on, Miles glowered at them all suspiciously.)

MILES: This is what passes for conversation in woman-land, is it?

KASIRA: Don't let it faze you, sir. We're just about done here. In a moment we'll get clearing the rest of the place and you can put your feet up. I just wish I could fetch you some slippers.

(As everyone giggled, Miles shook his head.)

MILES: And there I was thinking you might show a professional attitude this evening.

KASIRA: We are, sir. Look. Done.

(Sure enough, the wraiths on the quayside had all been obliterated and Nivea was slowing her spin. Moments later, her spin ended and she glanced across the empty quay.)

NIVEA: Sorted.

MILES: Good. The rest of you get up there.

KASIRA: Sir.

(With that, Sika and Soapy swum to the ramp then headed up it. Kasira, however, paddled forth slowly with Ambre clinging to her back.)

MILES: What the hell are you doing?

SIKA: Ambre can't swim, sir.

MILES: Why does that not surprise me? Useless woman.

(He rolled his eyes then watched as Kasira and Ambre finally reached the ramp. As soon as they were on the quayside, he then nodded sternly.)

MILES: Right. From here I can see two ways off this quayside, left and right. You'd better split up.

KASIRA: Sir, I...

MILES: Let me rephrase that. There are two ways, so split up. That's an order.

(Kasira could only sigh.)

KASIRA: Yes, sir.

MILES: Sika, Nivea, Cayley, you go to the right. Kasira, take Soapy and Ambre and go left. Let's see how well you do with only a newbie and a halfwit for back up.

AMBRE: I'm not a newbie!

MILES: I never said *you* were.

(Ambre sighed.)

AMBRE: I thought so, I was just hoping...

(She pouted.)

AMBRE: He's mean.

MILES: I am mean. And I'll get even meaner if you don't get cracking. Go!

KASIRA: Sir. You heard him, ladies. Let's get going.

CAYLEY: Ma'am. See you girls later.

AMBRE: Bye!

(And with that, they all shared a series of nods then headed off in their designated directions. Left behind, Miles nodded to himself sternly then spoke up in the hope they could still hear him.)

MILES: Finally they're under way. A more hopeless bunch of bimbos I couldn't even imagine.

(He then beamed to himself.)

MILES: Great tits though!

Heading down the thin yet high, concrete passage to the left side of the quay, Kasira, Ambre and Soapy advanced with caution; their faces lit up by The Sigel crystals in the wall. Ahead of them, they could see a pack of oversized wraiths and all were eager to set to work, especially Soapy.

SOAPY: Awesome. More wraiths. Watching Nivea have all the fun just now was soul destroying.

KASIRA: Yeah well, never mind that, right now we've got Ambre to think about.

AMBRE: Don't leave me out!

KASIRA: I wasn't going to.

AMBRE: You tried to once before, remember?

KASIRA: Yes, but that was different.

(She nodded ahead.)

KASIRA: There's a lot of wraiths up there and dick-head made us split up. That's madness against wraiths this big. We're going to need you, darling. This is a job for Fluffy.

AMBRE: Yay!

SOAPY: Can Fluffy handle that many?

AMBRE: Of course. My healing holds him together.

SOAPY: Yeah? I was *wondering* what it did actually. I mean it's not like wraith-bites hurt a rock.

KASIRA: Yes, well, never mind that. This corridor is kind of thin, so I reckon Fluffy should whistle from here. That way, you can stand behind him, Ambre and the wraiths won't be able to get you without getting past *us*.

AMBRE: Oh. So when you said you had me to think about, you meant where to make me stand?

KASIRA: Yeah.

AMBRE: Aces. I thought you were going to leave me out.

KASIRA: And see that heartbroken look in your eyes again? No chance.

SOAPY: Cool. So where do *we* stand?

(Kasira grimaced.)

KASIRA: Next to Fluffy.

SOAPY: That close to the wraiths?

KASIRA: Yeah, you can't kill them from behind Fluffy, the corridor's too thin.

SOAPY: Good point.

(She puffed out.)

SOAPY: So they're gonna get really close to us then?

KASIRA: Yeah; which I'm used to.

SOAPY: *I'm* not. And with wraiths that big... it's gonna be a bit scary.

KASIRA: It'll be fine; Ambre will see to it that Fluffy takes all the hits. You just have to trust in her ability.

(Soapy glanced around at the grinning Ambre then nodded firmly.)

SOAPY: I trust her.

(She then glowered at her sternly.)

SOAPY: Make sure you focus!

AMBRE: I always do.

KASIRA: Okay then. Let's begin.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: Summon Fluffy, darling.

AMBRE: On it.

(Soapy and Kasira watched for a few moments then Fluffy appeared behind Ambre.)

AMBRE: Hi, Fluffy.

FLUFFY: Ambre Fluffy's friend!

AMBRE: Yay.

KASIRA: Okay, let's get him in place, get you started with the heals, then I can lead you back from him.

(Ambre beamed.)

AMBRE: Actually, you won't *have to* guide me backwards anymore, Kasira. Watch.

(She then looked to Fluffy.)

AMBRE: Can you stand next to Kasira, please, Fluffy.

(Much to Kasira's amazement, Fluffy obliged.)

AMBRE: Stand there and don't move, please.

FLUFFY: Fluffy do.

AMBRE: See? Fluffy and me are a team now.

(Ambre then paced back a few more yards.)

SOAPY: Hang on; how did you *know* he'd obey?

AMBRE: Instinct. I just knew. We have an affinity, you see? I think ours is high level now.

SOAPY: But... how could you just know? I don't understand...

KASIRA: Of course you don't. Affinity with a familiar is a swift-human trait. We don't understand how your gills work either. It's instinctive to her kind.

SOAPY: Fair enough. That's actually pretty cool.

KASIRA: I know, right?

(She then nodded.)

KASIRA: Okay then, seeing as we're in position, Ambre, can you start Fluffy whistling and get your heals on the go, sweetheart?

AMBRE: Yup.

(With that, Ambre nodded then took a deep breath. Moments later, she closed her eyes to focus and Fluffy started to emit a blue light. A whistling sound then started to emanate around then.)

KASIRA: Okay, well, I just hope that's loud enough to...

(Her jaw then dropped and she raised her short blades.)

KASIRA: Incoming!!!

(Sure enough, a vast hoard of giant wraiths were charging towards them. Standing the other side of Fluffy, Soapy gulped then sunk into a fighting position.)

KASIRA: Ready, Soapy?

SOAPY: Yes, ma'am.

KASIRA: Then fire at will.

SOAPY: Which one's Will?

KASIRA: Soapy!!!

SOAPY: Just kidding.

(With that, she proceeded to unleash unholy hell on the incoming wraiths. Kasira on the other hand, had to wait until they were in close proximity. Gritting her teeth, she bounced impatiently on the balls of her feet, then as soon as the wraiths reached Fluffy, she came out fighting.)

KASIRA: Go nuts, Soapy! Don't savour the moment, go as fast as you can!

SOAPY: Ma'am!

(Wearing a scowl that redefined the word fury, Kasira was lashing out with extreme ferocity. She had no idea how long Ambre's magic reserves would last and at the back of her mind, she knew there could be thousands of wraiths heading their way. She was not about to risk taking her time. Each one of the wraiths towered over them all. Should Ambre tire, Fluffy would fall apart and stop whistling, leaving them staring into the salivating mouths of merciless, hungry killers. Death would be a certainty. As such, she was chopping and slashing at them relentlessly, not about to let them take any more than one bite or swing at Fluffy. Standing on the other side of Fluffy, Soapy was also battling with everything she had; the only difference being, her lips were firmly curled upwards. To her, the bigger the explosion of wraith dust, the better. She may not have been getting the satisfaction of a perfect shot from range, but it was still gratifying. She *had* feared that shooting them close up while they were attacking something else, might get a little dull, but with every rain of dust her enjoyment soared. For her part, Ambre stood behind them focussed solely on keeping Fluffy healed so he'd remain in one piece. As she did so, however, she opened one-eye and raised an astonished eyebrow.)

AMBRE: I didn't know you could do that, Fluffy.

(She then minced up behind Kasira and tapped her on the shoulder. At once, Kasira screamed and spun around.)

KASIRA: What the fucking...

(Her hair then stood on end.)

KASIRA: Ambre!!! Heal Fluffy!!!

AMBRE: No need. I was just telling him to heal *himself*, over and over; you know, with my mind.

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: He just told me he can do that himself and asked me to kill some wraiths instead.

KASIRA: What?

AMBRE: I know. I was surprised too.

(She then glanced to the biggest wraith, somewhere in the middle of the advancing hoard and set it upon the others.)

AMBRE: This is much more fun.

KASIRA: Ambre...

AMBRE: Are you not going to kill any, Kasira?

KASIRA: I...

(Taking an exasperated breath, Kasira then turned around and resumed killing.)

KASIRA: I can't keep up with you and your ever changing skills.

AMBRE: They're not changing; I'm just learning to use them better. Fluffy's learning too. Now he's all grown up and can do things without me.

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: Mummy's proud of her little boy.

KASIRA: Right.

(For the next two minutes, with Fluffy taking all the hits and keeping himself healed, Kasira, Soapy and Ambre continued about their battle with fierce determination. As a result, it wasn't long before the group of wraiths they'd been facing were completely wiped out. As she killed the last one with a powerful blast of her magic, Soapy drew a sigh of relief then glowered at Ambre.)

SOAPY: Ambre, you moron!!! Don't experiment with your skills in the middle of a fight!!!

(She then stomped towards her. As she did so, however, Fluffy stamped in her path.)

FLUFFY: Stop!

(Ambre then peered around him.)

AMBRE: She's okay, Fluffy. She doesn't understand, that's all.

(She smiled.)

AMBRE: I didn't experiment. Fluffy told me he could heal himself and asked me to fight.

KASIRA: He's evolving, it seems.

AMBRE: No, we just understand each other better.

(Soapy shook her head.)

SOAPY: Fine, whatever. You scared me, that's all. I saw you talking to Kasira and almost wet myself. If Fluffy had fallen apart...

AMBRE: He wasn't going to. The healing comes from him, I just used to focus on making him do it. Now he knows what to do without me telling him. Fluffy's awesome.

FLUFFY: Fluffy loves Ambre.

AMBRE: Yay!

(She then hugged Fluffy.)

KASIRA: Okay, anyway, that's that lot done. Now we move on.

SOAPY: Can Fluffy do that every time, Ambre?

AMBRE: Yeah. And he won't run out of magic.

KASIRA: Then it's like having another member on the team.

(She then puffed out ruefully.)

KASIRA: Which is a good thing too. There's a lot of them and they're big fuckers.

SOAPY: They still die with one hit though, so it's no different really.

(She beamed.)

SOAPY: It just looks more impressive when they explode.

KASIRA: Right. On which note, let's move on.

(With that, they headed onwards down the thin concrete corridor.)

(In a corridor on the other side of the bunker, a short while later, Nivea was pacing forth spinning furiously. As she did so, wraith after wraith exploded on her blade. Backing her up from the air, Cayley spammed her with healing magic. Flying just above Cayley, taking out wraiths with her magic, Sika looked somewhat bored. Not about to keep her boredom to herself, she sighed inwardly then spoke up.)

SIKA: Why do I always have to be on Nivea's team?

(Able to see and hear perfectly, even when spinning, Nivea furrowed her brow.)

NIVEA: I love you too.

SIKA: But it's boring. What I'm doing is a token gesture. Between you two, you have it covered.

CAYLEY: Just keep killing, Sika, there's never going to be a day when every wraith killed isn't a bonus.

SIKA: I *am* killing. I was just saying. It's boring.

NIVEA: Do it faster then. That way you'll be too busy to be bored.

SIKA: You *can* be bored *and* busy, you know?

(She sighed then spoke up again.)

SIKA: My shorts keep going up my bum, it's really annoying. They're too tight.

NIVEA: Those shorts you apparently just threw on?

CAYLEY: Focus, guys.

SIKA: We are. I'm just saying it'd be easier if I didn't have a wedgie.

NIVEA: You should have thought of that before you spent five minutes squeezing into them. Just threw them on indeed.

SIKA: I did!

CAYLEY: Guys!

SIKA: They weren't this tight before. They must have shrunk when we were in the water.

NIVEA: Bullshit, you've been eating too many cakes, that's what it is. Piling on the pounds.

SIKA: Hey!

CAYLEY: Can you focus on what we're doing please???

SIKA: I'm as focussed as ever, Cayley.

NIVEA: That's what she's afraid of.

SIKA: Mean!!!

(She furrowed her brow)

SIKA: I'm focussed, damn it. I've been killing while talking. And I haven't missed a single target.

CAYLEY: Make sure you don't! I'm right below you and if you hit *me* with your magic...

SIKA: I'm not about to.

(She pointed ahead.)

SIKA: I'm aiming way over there.

NIVEA: She's below you, dipshit, pointing isn't going to help.

SIKA: Fine, I'm firing ahead.

(She nodded.)

SIKA: I've been right at the top of my game. We've been down three corridors in this maze so far and I've been awesome. None of the bigger wraiths have even got close to you, Nivea.

NIVEA: Good to hear.

SIKA: If that major could see me, he'd definitely change his mind. He might even let me take the test again. I've been that awesome.

CAYLEY: You always think you've been awesome.

SIKA: And I'm usually right.

(She then looked greatly encouraged.)

SIKA: Let's go even faster. If we can finish our bit before the other three, the major's bound to be impressed. Onwards, guys. Let's win this thing!

NIVEA: Win what?

CAYLEY: It's not a contest, Sika. Why do you always have to...

SIKA: It *is* a contest, Cayley. And being able to stay in this unit might be the prize. He didn't split us up for no reason, he's testing me.

NIVEA: No, he's testing Kasira, he's long forgotten about your problems.

SIKA: Then let's remind him.

CAYLEY: Of your problems?

SIKA: No!

(She sighed.)

SIKA: You're not even taking me seriously.

CAYLEY: We never do, darling. Now stop blowing hot air and focus.

(Sika pouted.)

SIKA: Fine. But after we've cleared this batch of wraiths, I'm taking a moment to pull these shorts out of my arse.

NIVEA: Fine. Then you might want to think about laying off the cakes and biscuits for a while.

SIKA: Shut up. I'm not putting on weight.

CAYLEY: You're not focussing on your job either.

SIKA: Yes I am. Or I would be if the phantom groper down there didn't keep saying mean things.

NIVEA: The phantom groper? I like that.

CAYLEY: Look, Sika, just take a moment now, okay? Sort out your shorts then come back focussed.

NIVEA: Not that a wedgie should be a problem for you, Sika. After receiving the Nivea special earlier, I amazed you even noticed it.

CAYLEY: Stop antagonising her, Nivea.

SIKA: Yeah. If she does it again, stop healing her.

NIVEA: Like she would.

SIKA: It'd be funny if she did.

NIVEA: Oh, would it now? Big mistake, Sika.

(Sika gulped.)

SIKA: You leave my boobies alone!

NIVEA: Nope!

SIKA: Damn it.

(She then stopped flying forwards and hovered on the spot. As she did so, she used both hands to pull the fabric of her shorts from her backside. She then stuffed her hand down the back to reposition her underwear.)

SIKA: Much better.

(With that, she flew back over Cayley's head and let loose on the wraiths again.)

SIKA: I love you, Nivea.

NIVEA: Too late.

SIKA: Fuck.

(She snarled.)

SIKA: I'm glad I made you step in cow shit.

NIVEA: Keep digging, I don't care.

SIKA: Whatever.

(Cayley could only sigh dejectedly at this point.)

CAYLEY: Why won't you two just focus?

NIVEA: We are!

SIKA: We are!

CAYLEY: Yeah... and I'm an elephant.

NIVEA: Sika's like an elephant. It's all those cakes...

SIKA: Shut up!

CAYLEY: You can both shut up! Or neither of you will get any cake ever again!

(In that moment, silence descended. Cayley had at last found the magic formula.)

CAYLEY: Thank you!

(Half an hour later, having culled what felt like a million wraiths, Kasira, Ambre, Fluffy and Soapy paced towards the end of a thin corridor. As they did so, they could make out a vast room ahead of them. The roof was extremely high and the concrete floor was strewn with giant wraiths. At once, they all felt a deep sense of foreboding.)

KASIRA: I doubt Fluffy can handle that many!

SOAPY: There has to be a thousand of them, easily.

(Ambre glanced up at Fluffy.)

AMBRE: I agree.

(She then looked to Kasira.)

AMBRE: He says there's too many.

KASIRA: No he didn't.

SOAPY: He didn't say a word.

AMBRE: No, but I know what he's thinking. He thinks there's too many.

(Kasira and Soapy stared at her in astonishment for a moment then looked back at the wraiths.)

KASIRA: And I'd agree with him.

SOAPY: Yup.

KASIRA: But, it won't be so bad if we stay in this corridor.

AMBRE: What do you mean?

KASIRA: This corridor is thin, they can't all come down here and converge on us at once. It's wide enough for like 4 at a time, at a squeeze.

SOAPY: Good point. If we fight from here, they'll have to queue up and we can't get attacked from behind.

AMBRE: Fluffy likes that idea.

(Kasira gave her a sideways glance.)

KASIRA: Are you sure?

AMBRE: Ask him!

KASIRA: I'm not going to consult a rock on battle tactics.

AMBRE: Why not? He's the *only* one who knows how many wraith attacks he can take at once.

SOAPY: She's got a point.

(Kasira hung her head.)

KASIRA: Fine.

(She then looked to Fluffy.)

KASIRA: Are you able to handle the wraiths if we fight them from here.

FLUFFY: Fluffy can!

AMBRE: See?

KASIRA: Fine.

(She then ruffled her neck uneasily.)

KASIRA: Nobody likes a smartarse, Ambre.

(Ambre pouted.)

AMBRE: You don't like me?

(Kasira was instantly overcome with guilt and hugged her.)

KASIRA: Of course I do; I love you, Ambre.

AMBRE: Yay! I was gonna cry then.

KASIRA: Well, don't. You ought to *know* I love you.

AMBRE: I do. Or I *did* until you said nobody likes me.

SOAPY: She was being flippant, Ambre, don't take everything literally.

AMBRE: I can't help that. You ought to know by now, I'm not very bright.

KASIRA: And you ought to know that we love you anyway.

(Ambre beamed.)

AMBRE: Happy!

KASIRA: Anyway, let's get started, ladies.

(She looked to Soapy then to Ambre.)

KASIRA: Focus now; let's get through them as quickly as possible, okay?

SOAPY: Agreed. Itching to start already.

KASIRA: Good to hear. Ambre, can you ask Fluffy to stand between Soapy and I?

AMBRE: Okay. Fluffy, stand between Soapy and Kasira.

FLUFFY: Fluffy do.

(Moments later, once they were all in position, Kasira nodded.)

KASIRA: Okay, whistle and heal, please, Ambre.

AMBRE: Fluffy, begin.

(She then beamed with joy as Fluffy proceeded to heal himself and whistle.)

AMBRE: Done.

(Her eyes then bulged and she ducked behind Fluffy.)

AMBRE: Incoming!!!

(Sure enough, a myriad of wraiths were bashing into one other, determined to charge down the corridor at them first.)

KASIRA: All yours, Soapy.

SOAPY: Score!!!

(Soapy then unleashed her powerful magic with a delighted grin her face. As she did so, the first few started to rush down the corridor and attack Fluffy. At this point, Kasira leapt into the fray and Ambre started to use her mind control skill. The fight had begun.

Little did Ambre, Soapy and Kasira know, while *they* were battling in the corridor at one side of the large chamber, Sika, Cayley and Nivea were approaching the chamber from a different corridor. Baffled as to why they could hear so many spitting and snarling wraiths but couldn't see any, they shared a confused glance then hurried forth. Upon reaching the vast chamber, their jaws dropped. All the wraiths had converged on a second corridor and were trying to get down it at the same time.)

NIVEA: That's just weird.

SIKA: Not really. We're so awesome they're trying to escape, that's all.

(Cayley gave her a sideways glance.)

CAYLEY: Yeah, either that or Kasira, Soapy and Ambre are down that corridor and the wraiths are all trying to attack Fluffy.

(Sika grimaced.)

SIKA: That would make more sense.

NIVEA: As in *some*.

CAYLEY: Anyway, I think our next move is obvious.

NIVEA: Kill the fuck out of them?

CAYLEY: You read my mind. Spin, Nivea.

(Sika grinned.)

SIKA: Yeah, sit on it and spin, bitch.

NIVEA: You'll keep.

(With that, Nivea raced forth then proceeded to spin her way into the back of the hoard of wraiths. Swift to back her up, Cayley and Sika took to the air again then raced after her, both of them firing off their magic. With the wraiths focussed on Fluffy, Cayley was free to attack. No healing required.

Staring down the corridor which the wraiths were so desperate to get down, Sika beamed.)

SIKA: I can see them. Soapy, Kasira and Ambre.

CAYLEY: Me too. Fluffy is being healed but Ambre's got her eyes wide open!

SIKA: She's not concentrating?

CAYLEY: That's what it looks like.

NIVEA: I wonder where she gets that from.

SIKA: I have no idea! Probably the clowns that were here when she joined.

CAYLEY: Clowns???

NIVEA: Cheeky shit.

SIKA: And proud of it.

CAYLEY: Look, just get on with it. I'll help Nivea punish you for that later.

SIKA: Help her?

CAYLEY: Sika, focus!

SIKA: Fine.

(As the fight raged on inside the corridor, Kasira allowed herself a smirk. Despite their size, with Fluffy taking all the hits, killing these wraiths was no harder than it was with ordinary

ones. The major would undoubtedly be shocked to find out how well they'd done. Looking forward to ramming his lack of faith back down his throat, she continued to battle on determinedly. As she did so, however, Ambre bounced excitedly.)

AMBRE: Yay. Look, Cayley and the others are in the big room.

KASIRA: They are?

(Soapy glanced up and saw Sika and Cayley in the air above the wraiths.)

SOAPY: They're attacking from the rear by the looks of things.

KASIRA: Perfect.

AMBRE: They can only do that because Fluffy is taking the wraith's attention with his whistle. Good thing you didn't leave me out again!

KASIRA: I was never going to. I didn't last time either.

SOAPY: Wow. The thought of being left out really upsets you, doesn't it?

AMBRE: Yes. I'm a good soldier. Me and Fluffy could kill them all on our own if I had a sword to polish off the last one. I could get them to attack themselves.

KASIRA: We're not going to let you do that, Ambre. Ever!

AMBRE: I'm just saying I could. So leaving me out would be silly.

KASIRA: And we won't, okay? I considered it once, briefly, that was all. There's no need to keep worrying about it.

SOAPY: Yeah. Now make her a coffee.

(Ambre chuckled.)

AMBRE: I like that joke.

KASIRA: We noticed.

(With Sika and Cayley in view, marking where the back of their wraith enemies were, Kasira, Soapy and Ambre were greatly encouraged. With every passing minute, Sika and Cayley edged closer, confirming that an end to the battle was in sight. From their lofty position, slowly edging closer to Fluffy, the airborne duo of Sika and Cayley shared the same sense of encouragement. Unable to see anything other than wraiths in front of her, however, Nivea had no idea much longer she'd be spinning for; a point she soon raised with Cayley.)

NIVEA: How many more are there, Cayley?

SIKA: Not that many!

NIVEA: You're not Cayley.

SIKA: I surpassed Cayley years ago.

CAYLEY: I'm going to clout you!

NIVEA: And so will I! Can I have a sensible answer, please?

CAYLEY: We're almost at the other corridor, babe. It's not far now.

NIVEA: Really?

CAYLEY: Yup!

NIVEA: In that case, I might pick up the pace.

CAYLEY: Go for it, we're talking less than a hundred now. Any minute now you'll enter the corridor.

NIVEA: Cool. Make sure I don't hit the wall with my sword while I spin. Line me up with the corridor.

SIKA: We will.

NIVEA: Straight forward, right? From here?

CAYLEY: Right, a bit.

(With that, Nivea took a step to her right.)

NIVEA: Like that?

SIKA: Perfect. Go on. Surge.

NIVEA: Surging!!!!

(With that, Nivea put her head down and advanced at full speed into the wraiths.)

CAYLEY: No!!! Right a bit more!!!

(Alas, Cayley's warning came too late. Nivea charged forth with wraiths exploding on her blade until she was two feet from the corridor, at which point her sword thudded straight into the corridor's concrete wall. At once, she let out a shriek then tumbled backwards and landed in a heap, with a painful vibration shooting up her arm. Sika was in hysterics.)

SIKA: Brilliant!!! I'd pay money to see that again!!!

NIVEA: I'm gonna kill you, little shit! You told me I was lined up!!!

SIKA: Hey!!! It wasn't *my* fault!!!

CAYLEY: Stop it, you two! We're not in the playground at school. Keep killing!!!

(Nivea immediately jumped to her feet.)

NIVEA: Oh, I'll be killing alright. First the wraiths then that little fucker.

SIKA: Oh, lighten up, it was funny.

NIVEA: You won't think so in a minute.

(With that, she went into overdrive, slashing and chopping at the wraiths. With assistance from overhead, she soon entered the corridor. As she did so, she heard Ambre call out to Kasira.)

AMBRE: Almost done, I can see Nivea!

KASIRA: Thank fuck, I'm exhausted.

(Sure enough, what once constituted a room full of wraiths, all fighting to get down the corridor at the same time, was now less than a dozen. With everyone going to town on them, that dozen soon became zero. As the last one petered out on Nivea's blade, they all drew a mighty sigh of relief.)

CAYLEY: Nice work, ladies.

(With that, she dropped down from the sky and paced up to Kasira.)

CAYLEY: You okay? Any problems?

KASIRA: Other than being knackered, no. It was actually an education. Fluffy is now doing his own thing!

CAYLEY: Yeah?

AMBRE: Leaving me free to do my thing!

SOAPY: Is that all of them, do you reckon? I hope not. I was just getting started.

KASIRA: Well if there *are* any more they can wait. I'm taking five.

SOAPY: Already?

KASIRA: Yes! I need to get my breath back, okay?

SOAPY: Oh. My bad; I keep forgetting you're old.

KASIRA: Old???

(Just then, they heard shouting from the large room. At once, they all rushed in there to see Nivea pacing furiously beneath Sika, with a murderous look on her face.)

NIVEA: I said get down here, you little shit!

SIKA: No chance; you'll hit me!

NIVEA: And then some. Now get down here, that's an order!

SIKA: You're not the boss of me!

NIVEA: Yes, I fucking am!!!

(Kasira snarled.)

KASIRA: And I'm the boss of both of you. Nivea, calm down! And Sika, get the fuck down here!!!

(Sika gulped.)

SIKA: Yes, ma'am.

(With that, she quickly flew behind Fluffy then sunk down from the air.)

KASIRA: What's the meaning of this?

NIVEA: That little shit deliberately made me spin into the wall.

KASIRA: Did she now?

(Kasira glared at where Sika was hiding behind Fluffy then looked to Ambre.)

KASIRA: Can you dismiss Fluffy for a moment, please, Ambre?

AMBRE: Okay.

(Ambre then did just that, much to Sika's horror.)

SIKA: No!!!

(Snarling furiously, Kasira paced up to Sika then grabbed her by her arm.)

KASIRA: What happened to you being professional? What happened to you being the best damn soldier you can be?

NIVEA: She was! That's as good as she gets!

SIKA: I actually was! I didn't do it on purpose, Nivea. You were lined up from where I was hovering then you veered left when you advanced.

NIVEA: Bullshit!

CAYLEY: Actually, Nivea, you did. You stepped to your right and you were lined up, then you walked a little to your left when you surged.

(Nivea bit her lip.)

NIVEA: I did?

CAYLEY: Yes.

NIVEA: Oh.

(At once, Kasira let go of Sika's arm and Nivea stepped towards her with her arms out.)

NIVEA: Sorry, Sika; I was wrong.

SIKA: It's fine.

NIVEA: No, it's not.

(She then wrapped her arms around her.)

AMBRE: Yay, a hug. I want in.

NIVEA: Actually, you really don't.

(With that, Nivea reached down Sika's shorts and grabbed the back of her thong. She then proceeded to twist.)

SIKA: Nivea!!!

NIVEA: Not so bloody funny now, is it?

SIKA: I repent!!! I repent!!!

(Nivea then let her go; opting to squeeze her boobs instead.)

SIKA: Get off!

NIVEA: Consider that a lesson.

(Kasira grinned then called them together.)

KASIRA: Come here, guys. I've got a few things to say.

(At once, they all gathered round.)

KASIRA: Firstly...

(She then clumped Sika around the head.)

SIKA: Hey!

KASIRA: Nivea *is* the boss of you, do as you're told!

SIKA: Ma'am.

(Much to everyone's astonishment, Cayley then clouted her in the same way.)

SIKA: Why???

CAYLEY: For calling Kasira, Nivea and I a bunch of clowns!

(She then received two more clouts, one from Kasira and another from Nivea.)

SIKA: This is bullying.

(Soapy couldn't help but chuckle.)

SOAPY: That's funny.

(Kasira then clouted *her* as well.)

SOAPY: Ow!!!

KASIRA: That's for calling me old.

SIKA: You're right, it *is* funny when it's someone else.

SOAPY: Right? Someone should clout Ambre too.

AMBRE: Hey!

(Kasira then slapped Soapy around the head again.)

KASIRA: That's for suggesting it.

AMBRE: Serves you right.

SOAPY: I was joking!

KASIRA: Yes, well, enough jokes, ladies. We'll take five then move on.

CAYLEY: How?

(She gestured around the room.)

CAYLEY: There's only two ways in and we cleared both ways. That just leaves that door.

(She then pointed to a vast cast iron door at the other end of the room.)

CAYLEY: How are we going to open that?

(Kasira looked to the giant door and bit her lip.)

KASIRA: Good question. We'd need a herd of elephants to push *that* aside.

NIVEA: Did you see any choices of ways in the corridor you came down?

KASIRA: None, it lead straight here. A few corners, but it was a direct path.

CAYLEY: So was the other corridor. Well, apart from one dead end. I've got a feeling that used to be the land entrance.

KASIRA: So it's all clear in both directions?

NIVEA: Apparently so.

KASIRA: Then somehow we need to shift that door.

(At once, a loud disheartened groan rose into the air.)

SOAPY: I hate to sound defeatist, but that's impossible.

AMBRE: What if I charge at it with my antlers?

CAYLEY: They'll get smashed to pieces and you'll knock yourself out.

SIKA: Sounds like fun; give it a go.

AMBRE: Mean!

SIKA: You know I'm joking, babe.

(Ambre giggled.)

AMBRE: I'm a babe.

KASIRA: Yes, you are, but that doesn't help right now.

(She then shrugged and sat down, cross-legged on the floor.)

KASIRA: Take five everyone.

SOAPY: Will the major mind us taking a break?

KASIRA: Go back and wake him up, then you can ask him.

SOAPY: Wake him up?

KASIRA: Yeah, I bet he's napping in the boat.

NIVEA: No doubt about it.

KASIRA: And besides, *I* say when we take a break and we're taking one. We've earned one.

(Nodding to her sentiments, they all sat down in a circle on the ground.)

KASIRA: So, Cayley...

(She gestured towards Sika.)

KASIRA: Clown comment aside, how was she?

SIKA: I was awesome!

KASIRA: I was asking Cayley.

CAYLEY: She was no worse than Nivea.

NIVEA: What's that supposed to mean?

SIKA: It was a compliment.

CAYLEY: It means, the pair of you never stop bickering.

NIVEA: It's good natured bickering though; we're keeping our spirits up.

SIKA: Yeah. We're enjoying army life, that's all. And we *did* do a good job until Clumsy Tits there spun her sword into the wall.

CAYLEY: Fair comment. They fought well, if not quietly.

KASIRA: Okay.

NIVEA: Clumsy tits?

SIKA: It suits you.

NIVEA: You've got such an almighty groping coming, Sika, you really have.

(Cayley grinned.)

CAYLEY: See? They're at it again.

KASIRA: So I see. They're great entertainment if nothing else.

(Sika chuckled.)

SIKA: Of course we're entertaining. Nivea *is* a trained clown, after all.

KASIRA: And you wonder why you get groped.

NIVEA: Another offence to add to the list.

SIKA: Aw, crap!

(Just then, Ambre spoke up while starting at the wall opposite her.)

AMBRE: Bolts. Lots and lots of bolts.

SOAPY: Bolts?

AMBRE: Yeah, look!

(She pointed to the wall.)

AMBRE: They go all the way up that wall, then across it towards those two levers, way up there.

KASIRA: Levers?

(At once, they all looked to where Ambre was looking then glanced to one another.)

CAYLEY: Those two levers up there...

KASIRA: Looks like the bolts going up the wall were holding a ladder in place, and the bolts going across the wall were propping up some kind of platform.

NIVEA: A platform with levers on it.

SOAPY: Do you reckon they open that door?

AMBRE: I do!

SOAPY: Based on what?

AMBRE: Guessing!

SOAPY: Right; very scientific.

(Kasira grimaced.)

KASIRA: I hate this. I want to rest, I really do. At the same time, I really want to know what those levers do. And if they *do* open that door, our rest will be over, big time.

CAYLEY: We should leave it then. Just for a few minutes.

KASIRA: I know that, Cayley, but they're up there staring back at me, taunting me. I have to know.

AMBRE: But how would we get up there? They're really high.

SIKA: Take a guess.

AMBRE: I don't know.

SIKA: Let me give you a clue; Cayley and I have wings.

(Ambre glowered at her.)

AMBRE: You could have just said flying.

SIKA: I could have, but that would be too easy. A bit like Nivea.

NIVEA: I'm not ashamed of that. I'm as easy as they come and proud of it.

AMBRE: Not as easy as me. The major said I'm the most simple person he's ever met.

(Kasira pouted and put an arm around her.)

KASIRA: Different meaning, darling.

AMBRE: He's right though. I *am* easy going.

KASIRA: Yes, you are. But still not what he meant.

(She sighed then looked up at the levers again.)

KASIRA: Nope. It has to be done. I can't stand it any longer. Can you fly up there and pull them levers please, girls.

CAYLEY: Are you sure?

KASIRA: Positive.

CAYLEY: Fair enough. Come on, Sika.

SIKA: Okay.

(With that, the pair of them took off into the air and headed for the levers. As they did so, the others all climbed to their feet and watched.)

KASIRA: Brace yourselves, ladies, if those doors fly open we need to be ready.

NIVEA: I'm *always* ready.

KASIRA: No, you're not. You need to be a good twenty five feet away to do your spin.

NIVEA: I stand corrected. Rephrase; I'm *sometimes* ready.

(With that, Nivea stepped a good twenty feet to one side and Ambre summoned Fluffy.)

KASIRA: Ambre, you'd better summon...

AMBRE: Already have.

KASIRA: Oh. Good girl.

(She then stared up at Cayley and Sika and bit her lip.)

KASIRA: They're there.

(Just then, Cayley called down.)

CAYLEY: Ready?

KASIRA: Go!

CAYLEY: Okay!

(With that, Cayley and Sika pulled a lever each then proceeded to fly back. As they did so, the cast iron doors slowly started to crank open.)

KASIRA: Mystery solved.

NIVEA: Yup!

KASIRA: Okay, brace yourselves. Any minute now, some wraiths might...

(Suddenly, the doors thrashed open wide and a hoard of extremely muscular wraiths came screeching towards them. Having never seen such a stampede, Kasira screamed.)

KASIRA: There's no way we can handle that many!!! Retreat!!! Go, go, go!!!

(With that, they all shot off down the nearest corridor with terror in their eyes. Ambre was so scared she'd transformed into a gazelle and was out of sight within seconds. The others, however, had to sprint for their lives, staring back in horror over their shoulders. Cayley and Sika had never been so happy to have wings in all their lives. Flying above the fleeing trio of Nivea, Kasira and Soapy, they stuck as close to the ceiling as possible.)

SIKA: We're safe up here, right? Are we?

CAYLEY: Yes! But what about those guys?

(Sika stared down at her fleeing friends and whimpered.)

SIKA: They'd *better* be okay.

CAYLEY: They should be, they had a pretty good head start.

SIKA: But what if it's not good *enough*? Kasira's a really slow runner!

(She pouted.)

SIKA: Those wraiths are fast! I don't like it, Cayley.

(Sika's sentiments were very much shared by the terrified trio in question.)

KASIRA: Next time I ask anyone to find out what a lever does, slap me!

NIVEA: Noted!

(Soapy glanced back and screeched.)

SOAPY: I never seen wraiths like *that* before!!!

NIVEA: I know!

(She bit her lip.)

NIVEA: We might be okay though; now we're in this corridor, the same rule applies as before. They can't swamp us all at once. We should stop and fight.

KASIRA: No! We should keep running. They're different to the last lot. Look at the length of the pincers on some of them!!! And they're massive! They'll out-reach you; take your head clean off in one go. Cayley can't heal that! Same if they hammer you into the floor! (Nivea glanced back and gulped.)

NIVEA: Good point.

KASIRA: I wouldn't risk it even with Fluffy. Too many hits at once might well take *his* head off too. And if Fluffy died, we'd all die.

SOAPY: So the plan is?

KASIRA: Get the fuck out of here until we can think of another way!

SOAPY: I like that plan!!!

(Before long, having ducked and darted around several corners in the thin corridor, sprinting with all their might, Kasira, Nivea and Soapy reached the quayside and immediately dived into the water. As they did so, a plethora of wraiths raced up to the edge, snarling and growling ferociously. Sat in the boat, Miles growled furiously at where Cayley and Sika were hovering above him.)

MILES: What's the meaning of this? I was just taking forty winks... I mean having forty thinks, when a gazelle came zooming around the corner and leapt into the water!

(He gestured to where Ambre was clinging to the side of the boat.)

MILES: Next thing I know, you lot come charging back and all of a sudden the quayside is full of wraiths again!!! You were supposed to *kill* the wraith population, not replenish it!

CAYLEY: Yeah, well... see... we'll have to go back to the drawing board on this one.

MILES: Meaning?

CAYLEY: Meaning to kill wraiths in large numbers you need someone to take the hits.

MILES: I do know how to kill wraiths, Sergeant.

CAYLEY: Then take a look. Our tanks are Fluffy and Nivea and neither can handle wraiths like that!

AMBRE: Fluffy *might* be able to!

CAYLEY: Might? Might isn't good enough. *Might* could lead to *can't* and *can't* will get us killed.

(Miles looked to the quayside then rolled his eyes.)

MILES: So basically you're ill-equipped to do the job.

CAYLEY: No, we just need to find another way.

(Soapy beamed from the water below.)

SOAPY: Or you could just leave me to it. I could float here firing off magic all night, quite happily. I've got my wraith whistle.

(Treading water next to her, Kasira shook her head.)

KASIRA: No. We'll do this as a team. We'll go back to the base and have a think.

(Miles shook his head.)

MILES: Yes, you do that.

(He sighed.)

MILES: Get in the boat then.

KASIRA: Sir.

(She looked to Soapy.)

KASIRA: We'll meet you back at port, okay?

SOAPY: Ma'am.

(With that, Soapy swum off out of the inlet. As she did so, Kasira swum to the side of the rowing boat then sighed in despair.)

KASIRA: This isn't going to be easy.

(A short while later, the rowing boat arrived back at the jetty from where they'd first set off. Waiting for them, Soapy tied the boat up then they all clambered out of it. Last to alight the boat, Miles snarled bitterly then glowered at Kasira.)

MILES: Well that was a waste of time.

KASIRA: I disagree, sir. We killed a lot of wraiths, and at least now we know what we're up against.

MILES: A lot of wraiths? How far did you get?

KASIRA: We cleared two long, winding corridors then a massive room. We then opened a door into a second room and those bigger ones charged at us.

MILES: I see.

(He nodded.)

MILES: Then you've got your work cut out, haven't you? According to the map, there were two passages leading into a room. Beyond that room was another one, five times the size. It seems you've barely scraped the surface.

(He then stormed off.)

MILES: Hopeless! I'm going back to my hotel. You have until morning to kill them off.

KASIRA: Morning?

MILES: You heard me! Fail and your assessment won't make good reading.

(He then paced away from the jetty and across the portside cobbles. Watching him go, Kasira shook her head.)

KASIRA: Wanker.

SIKA: Yup!

CAYLEY: If he's right and that second room was five times the size of the one we cleared, there must be thousands of wraiths still.

(Kasira's shoulders slumped.)

KASIRA: And we've only got until morning.

(She shook her head.)

KASIRA: That wanker expects miracles. Bin the uniform and we're just six ordinary women, for fuck sake.

AMBRE: And Fluffy.

KASIRA: Yeah, and Fluffy. Point is, this would be a difficult job for *any* unit.

SOAPY: I have to disagree with you a bit there, Kasira.

KASIRA: Oh?

SOAPY: We're not ordinary women; we're super soldiers.

AMBRE: Yay!

KASIRA: Yes, well, as much as I admire your faith in everyone, Soapy, let's face facts here. We're human beings like everyone else and expecting us to perform miracles isn't fair.

(Cayley grimaced.)

CAYLEY: It's not like you to be downbeat, Kasira. You usually tell us we can achieve anything.

KASIRA: We can when it's humanly possible.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: I'm not being defeatist, I'm pointing out a reality. When you take on large groups of wraiths, you need a capable tank to take the hits. That's a fact. That major, however, has given us until morning to clear a bunker full of giant wraiths without one.

AMBRE: I still think Fluffy could do it. He's really strong.

NIVEA: Ambre, darling, those wraiths are different. Some of them have long, hammer-like pincers. From the looks of things, they're capable of smashing a rock in two.

CAYLEY: Or cutting through one.

NIVEA: That too. And I'm out of the game as a tank for the same reason. They could reach past my spinning sword and cut my head off; maybe splat me into the ground.

AMBRE: You're not made from rocks though.

NIVEA: Even so. Point is, Ambre, yes, Fluffy might be able to do it. He might. His healing may well be enough to piece himself back together no matter what they throw at him. We don't know though. It's 50/50. And what happens if he can't do it?

AMBRE: He'll get smashed to bits.

NIVEA: And then the wraiths will attack who?

(Ambre's eyes bulged.)

AMBRE: Us! I don't think we should use Fluffy!

KASIRA: Exactly. Nivea's out of the question, Fluffy is too much of a risk, leaving us what? What are our options here?

SOAPY: I really am quite happy to float by the quayside and attack them from there, Kasira. Even if it takes all night.

KASIRA: Let's call that plan B.

(She nodded.)

KASIRA: I'd rather go with plan A.

SIKA: Which is?

KASIRA: I haven't got a fucking clue. I just know that leaving Soapy to do it all by herself won't go down well with Major Shithead.

CAYLEY: I agree. So it's back to the drawing board. We need to think of a way to kill every single wraith in that bunker safely without a tank.

SIKA: Crossbows? We have loads of them at the base. We could sit in the rowing boat and fire off endless waves of bolts.

SOAPY: Chances are you'd tip the boat over again.

KASIRA: And we may have loads of crossbows but we've only got about 50 bolts.

AMBRE: That nice man with the weapon stall might have more. We could ask him.

NIVEA: He only sells swords and armour.

SIKA: Armour? That might work. If we were to deck Nivea from head to toe in armour...

KASIRA: They'd still be able to squash her into the floor.

SIKA: See, there's no downside.

(In that moment, a pair of hands cupped Sika's breasts and proceeded to squeeze them.)

SIKA: Stop it!!!

NIVEA: Apologise!

SIKA: Never!!!

(As the two of them writhed and battled playfully, Kasira furrowed her brow.)

KASIRA: Really, you two? You're picking *now* to piss about?

(At once, they both stopped and grinned at her.)

SIKA: That was *her* fault.

NIVEA: It was. But in my defence, I wanted to get it over with quickly. Unfortunately it took a while to find your tiny boobs.

SIKA: Cayley's are smaller!

CAYLEY: Really, Sika?

SIKA: Yeah, they are.

CAYLEY: I mean why bring *me* into this?

(Kasira started to chuckle.)

KASIRA: As much as I should be shouting at you two right now, I can't bring myself to do it. Your silliness makes stressful moments like this easier to bear.

(She then nodded defiantly.)

KASIRA: Now fucking stop it. Let's put our heads together and think!

(She then reached out and placed a hand on Ambre's shoulder to stop her advancing.)

KASIRA: Not literally!

AMBRE: Oh. Okay. It did seem a little weird. I tend to knock people out when I do that.

KASIRA: Problem; we need to clear a dungeon full of wraiths with no tank. Solution...

(She then glanced around at the faces of her comrades.)

KASIRA: Any ideas?

(Silence immediately descended. Desperate for ideas, everyone stood there upon the jetty wracking their brains for well over a minute. Just when Kasira was on the verge of giving up and going with plan B, however, Sika looked enlightened.)

SIKA: Well, there is one idea...

KASIRA: Go on.

SIKA: I was just thinking, maybe... maybe we could just... tell the major we did it and hope he doesn't go and check.

(At once, several pairs of disdainful eyes stared towards her.)

SIKA: It was just a suggestion.

NIVEA: It's not entirely ridiculous.

KASIRA: It is! For a start, he's *bound* to check.

SIKA: Not if we block the inlet.

KASIRA: With what? Toilet roll?

SIKA: No. Rocks.

AMBRE: How would we get rocks all the way over there?

SIKA: In the boat.

CAYLEY: The boat would sink.

SIKA: Okay, then maybe we could take them to the cliff above and drop them off.

NIVEA: Yeah, because heavy-lifting is what we're good at. Shifting a few hundred rocks up a steep hill would be a doddle.

SIKA: At least it's an idea. You've come up with nothing.

NIVEA: And so have you! Anyone can come up with *stupid* ideas. I could suggest we all sit in a circle and *wish* the wraiths away. Or maybe we could try making them a cake and lacing it with arsenic.

(Sika looked enthused.)

SIKA: That's not bad actually. Poison might work.

CAYLEY: Great idea. I'll just go to the secret poison laboratory under the base and get some.

SIKA: We have a secret poison laboratory?

CAYLEY: Of course not, you idiot! I was just saying, where are supposed to get that much poison from?

SOAPY: Are wraiths even susceptible to poison?

NIVEA: I doubt it.

(She rolled her eyes.)

NIVEA: Let's try to come up with a *sensible* idea, shall we?

(Just then, Kasira started to smirk knowingly.)

KASIRA: Actually, there's no need. Sika already did!

(Sika looked astonished.)

SIKA: I did?

(She then beamed arrogantly.)

SIKA: Like I'm surprised. Of course, I did. My awesomeness is limitless.

KASIRA: We'll go with the rock idea.

CAYLEY: Kasira, if he finds out we didn't do the mission and blocked the way in so he couldn't check, we'll all end up in the brig. Defying an order then covering it up is a serious offence.

KASIRA: We're not going to defy his order. We're going to kill all the wraiths, just like he demands.

NIVEA: *That* wasn't Sika's idea.

KASIRA: No, but I've had an idea of my own based on what she said.

SOAPY: Blocking the entrance with rocks? I don't see how that's gonna help kill the wraiths.

KASIRA: It wouldn't. The entrance being blocked by rocks will merely be a consequence of our actions.

AMBRE: I don't get it.

SIKA: Nor do I.

KASIRA: You will. Now come on. Fuck face is assessing my leadership, guys, so I'm going to show him exactly what I'm made of!

(With that, she marched away towards the town with a determined expression on her face. Somewhat baffled, the others all shared a shrug then paced after her. Dying to know what she had planned, they quizzed her liberally as she strutted through the main thoroughfare towards the inn. Not about to keep them in the dark, she explained her thinking as she headed forth. Clued in to her idea, the others all smirked knowingly. They very much liked her thinking. Not only did her plan tick all the boxes whereas killing wraiths were concerned, but it'd show Major Miles exactly how capable their unit was. This mission required them to think outside of the box and make use of all their resources. One of those resources being the respect and support of the local population.)

With the support of the people in mind, Kasira strutted across the cobbles then paced into the inn with her five colleagues right behind her. As soon as they stepped inside, a loud roar of approval rose into the air.)

TOWNSMAN 01: Fuck me, they're *all* here! Bonus!

TOWNSMAN 02: Pull up a chair, ladies.

TOWNSMAN 03: Let me buy you a drink, girls.

(Trying not to be put off by the lusting looks they were receiving, Kasira stood tall and projected her voice.)

KASIRA: Guys, we're in the middle of an important mission here and we could use your help.

(The landlord called over to her.)

LANDLORD: Whatever you need, Kasira!

(Kasira beamed with joy.)

KASIRA: Excellent.

In a corridor inside the island's plushiest hotel, Major Miles strolled forth whistling to himself. Looking forward to a nap, he exhaled then glanced down at the room key in his hand. As he looked up, however, he saw a familiar looking gentleman stepping from the room next his. At once, his jaw dropped.)

MILES: Well, as I live and breathe, it's Major Bagshot.

(The gentleman looked to him and gasped in astonishment.)

BAGSHOT: Major Miles! Well this *is* a surprise.

(Miles then paced up to him and the two shook hands sternly.)

BAGSHOT: What on earth brings you to Capsway Island, old boy?

MILES: Business, unfortunately.

BAGSHOT: Business?

(He bit his lip.)

BAGSHOT: Are you still an assessor?

MILES: I am indeed.

BAGSHOT: Assessing the unit here then, are you?

MILES: Yes. I was sent to test one of them after a mishap. She hit her commanding officer with magic by accident.

BAGSHOT: I see. And how are they? I've heard nothing but good things.

MILES: Aesthetically, they're first class. Knockers like goddesses.

BAGSHOT: And professionally?

MILES: Women do not make good soldiers.

(Bagshot smiled.)

BAGSHOT: Giving them grief, are you?

MILES: I wouldn't say that.

BAGSHOT: No? But you're notorious back at HQ for winding up the female units.

MILES: Seems a little unfair. I just won't take being female as an excuse for not having the balls to do what needs to be done.

(He then groaned at himself.)

MILES: I said that entirely wrong. Of course they don't have balls! Trust me on that, I've seen three of them naked. What I meant is, women need to be aggressive in battle, like the men are; and I won't accept anything less.

BAGSHOT: No, no, that's fair. Treat the ladies and you would the gents.

MILES: Not exactly. If they were men I'd have punched a few of them by now. They're very lippy.

BAGSHOT: Well that's not good.

MILES: It's nothing unusual though. Women object to any minor criticism.

(He sighed.)

MILES: Although I have to say, I was with them just now on a mission. We've found an underground infestation. They fucked it up. I'm seriously not impressed. I've given them until morning to do it again and get it right.

BAGSHOT: I see. So you'll be off out later then.

MILES: I will?

BAGSHOT: To oversee it. Or to observe.

MILES: Actually, I was just planning on checking they'd done it in the morning.

(Bagshot looked thoughtful.)

BAGSHOT: Far be it for me to tell you how to do your job, but if I was you, I'd go along and watch.

MILES: Is that so?

BAGSHOT: Yes, from what I've heard the unit here are extremely competent. If they fucked things up, they'll probably do it very differently second time around. Who knows, they may even impress you.

(Miles looked thoughtful.)

MILES: Actually, you might be right. I can't really assess them properly if I didn't see them do the deed.

BAGSHOT: Don't get me wrong. If it was any other unit I'd suggest relaxing for the evening and checking back in the morning, but these girls... they're not like other units.

They took out a ten thousand wraith haze break in one evening. They have something about them and it'd be interesting to find out what.

MILES: Indeed.

BAGSHOT: Go and enlighten yourself. Let me know what happens. It'd be interesting to know what sets them apart.

(Miles looked thoughtful.)

MILES: I guess it wouldn't hurt to wash and freshen up, get a warm cognac down my neck then pop along to watch. Some dry clothing wouldn't go amiss either. We went into the underground bunker where the infestation is by boat. The silly fuckers cast magic from it.

BAGSHOT: The kick from their magic tipped everyone out, did it?

MILES: Yes, I'm soaked.

BAGSHOT: Rookie mistake.

MILES: Or indeed a female one.

BAGSHOT: Quite! Still, look me up in the morning. If you can figure out what quality they possess, the quality that helped them defeat such a large haze break, maybe we can bottle it and feed it to the other units.

MILES: Maybe.

BAGSHOT: It really is imperative you go back. There's definitely something.

(He nodded sternly.)

BAGSHOT: Anyway, speaking of nauseating women, the wife is waiting for me in the bar. I'd better go.

MILES: Here on holiday, are you?

BAGSHOT: In a way. General Wilson is selling his house here on the island. I've come to give it the once over.

(Major Miles sneered.)

MILES: Wilson? That piece of shit?

BAGSHOT: Yes. Horrible fucker.

MILES: Indeed. I hope you get a good price.

BAGSHOT: I won't buy it if I don't.

MILES: Quite.

BAGSHOT: Anyway, farewell.

(With that, Major Bagshot headed away down the corridor. As he did so, Miles headed for the door to his room, nodding to himself.)

MILES: Cognac first, I think.

At the island's dockside, one hour later, Kasira, Cayley, Nivea, Ambre, Sika, Soapy and several townsfolk were loading up two rowing boats. A cart was parked on the dockside and the girls and the townsfolk were passing boxes down the jetty in a chain. Next to Kasira in the chain, the landlord of the inn was extremely chatty. The fact he had an almighty crush on Kasira wasn't lost on anyone.

LANDLORD: No, no, there's no need to thank me. I'd do anything for you girls. You saved this island that time and we'll never be able to repay you.

KASIRA: Actually, you're repaying us right now.

LANDLORD: Oh, this is nothing.

(He gave her a knowing glance.)

LANDLORD: Helping you is a pleasure, Kasira.

KASIRA: Very kind of you to say so.

LANDLORD: And it really is no big deal.

(He nodded at the box he was passing to Kasira.)

LANDLORD: I honestly thought I was getting a bargain for this cheap whisky. I figured it was probably knocked off, you know? Stolen.

(He grimaced.)

LANDLORD: I had no idea it was toxic. Luckily the poor fucker who tasted it survived.

KASIRA: He's okay, is he?

LANDLORD: Yeah. He won't volunteer to test new batches ever again though, that's for sure.

(He nodded.)

LANDLORD: By taking all this dodgy whisky off my hands, you're doing me a huge favour.

(He then grinned at her nervously.)

LANDLORD: So, yeah, maybe I can repay the favour sometime by, I don't know, buying you dinner?

(Ambre's voice then piped up from the other side of Kasira.)

AMBRE: She has a boyfriend.

KASIRA: Will you stop saying that?

AMBRE: But you have!

KASIRA: No, I haven't.

AMBRE: That's not what the others are saying.

(Kasira furrowed her brow.)

KASIRA: Ignore them!

(She then looked to the landlord.)

KASIRA: Dinner would be great, but I'm really not looking to date anyone. Nothing romantic. Dinner as friends would be perfect.

(The landlord scoffed.)

LANDLORD: Fuck off. I want a candlelit dinner for two followed by a long, hard shag. If that's off the table then sod off; I'll take my whisky back.

KASIRA: What?

LANDLORD: I'm joking.

(He chuckled then passed her another box.)

LANDLORD: Dinner as friends, it is.

KASIRA: I thought you were serious for a moment.

(She then took another box from the landlord and performed a double-take at it.)

KASIRA: This one's lighter than the others.

LANDLORD: Yeah, we've unloaded the whisky. This is from Gavin's cart.

KASIRA: Oh.

(She then passed it to Ambre.)

KASIRA: Tell everyone this is from Gavin's cart.

AMBRE: Okay.

(Sure enough, the message was passed down the line and the lighter boxes started being loaded in a second rowing boat, one of two they'd borrowed from the villagers. Standing in the second boat, taking the boxes from Nivea on the jetty, Soapy looked somewhat concerned.)

SOAPY: These are safe, right?

NIVEA: That's the third time you've asked me that.

SOAPY: And you keep avoiding the question. You're starting to scare me.

NIVEA: I wouldn't worry about it, if they're not then your death will be quick and relatively painless, I'd expect.

SOAPY: That's not funny, Nivea.

NIVEA: Relax. Gavin assured Kasira that they've been properly stored and the risk is minimal. They guy is a professional, you're in no danger.

SOAPY: Wanna swap jobs then?

NIVEA: You can fuck right off. What if he's lying?

(Soapy scowled at her.)

SOAPY: I hate you sometimes.

(Five minutes later, once all the boxes had been loaded up, Cayley, Nivea, Ambre, Soapy and Sika stood discussing the impending mission at the end of the jetty. For her part, Kasira was standing on the dockside with a lit torch in her hand, thanking the townsfolk who'd come to help them.)

KASIRA: Thanks, guys. You've been amazing.

TOWNSMAN 01: It's the least we can do. You're doing this for us, after all.

TOWNSMAN 02: And the offer still stands, we'll happily come and give you a hand.

KASIRA: Thanks, but I'd be in deep shit if I let civilians come on a mission; you know how it is.

LANDLORD: The army are funny about that kind of thing.

KASIRA: Exactly. Anyway, thanks again. I mean for the help and the supplies. And the loans of the two boats, you've been most kind, all of you. And can someone thank Gavin for me when they see him?

TOWNSMAN 03: I will.

KASIRA: Thank you.

(She smiled.)

KASIRA: Anyway, best be off.

(With that, she headed off towards the end of the jetty where the others were waiting. As she did so, every single one of the townsmen tipped their heads to check out her legs, drooling as her skirt rose up slightly in the wind.)

TOWNSMAN 04: How much would you give for five minutes with that?

LANDLORD: Everything I own, mate!

(As she reached the end of the jetty, Kasira nodded to her unit-mates then grimaced uncomfortably. They were all staring back at her wearing deeply troubled expressions.)

KASIRA: What, what's wrong?

SIKA: Those boxes you got from Gavin...

KASIRA: The dynamite?

SIKA: Yeah! Are they safe?

SOAPY: I heard dynamite can be unstable and go off any time.

(Kasira rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: Gavin is a mining expert. He knows how to look after dynamite.

NIVEA: Yeah, but is it dangerous?

KASIRA: In the hands of a numpty, yes.

(At once, they all gulped.)

KASIRA: Wow. Low self-esteem or what?

CAYLEY: We're not experts, Kasira; when it comes to dynamite, we *are* numpties!

KASIRA: Relax. Look, what I mean is, dynamite when not stored properly *can* be dangerous. Gavin stores it properly.

NIVEA: And you know this for certain?

SOAPY: He might have given us an old batch he wasn't sure about.

KASIRA: He stores it in his basement. He wouldn't keep it there if it was dangerous.

AMBRE: Are you really, really sure?

KASIRA: Yes! Look, dynamite has a nitro-glycerine base, right? That stuff *is* deadly. Very volatile. But in dynamite form it's only dangerous if it's left lying around and starts to sweat. Gavin assured me that it's not done that. Like I said, he kept it in his house. So relax, okay?

SIKA: Easier said than done.

KASIRA: Look, enough of this silliness. Here's what we're going to do.

(At once, her five subordinates cranked their necks forward nervously.)

KASIRA: Ambre, you can hold this torch and Nivea and I will row you to the inlet.

NIVEA: Yes!

(Ambre took the torch and beamed.)

AMBRE: Yay!

KASIRA: Cayley, you can fly over the boat with the whisky in it and push it along.

CAYLEY: Yes!!!

KASIRA: Sika, you can push the other boat!

SIKA: No way! No, no, no! Why do I have to push the dynamite?

SOAPY: Sucks to be you, Sika!

KASIRA: I don't know why *you're* laughing, you're going to have to help her get in through the inlet; she can't fly through the gap.

SOAPY: What???

KASIRA: You'll have to help Cayley too.

SOAPY: I don't *mind* helping with the whisky! Dynamite, Kasira!

SIKA: It's not fair.

(She looked to Soapy.)

SIKA: I'm getting kicked out and you're the newbie; that makes us expendable.

SOAPY: I know, right.

KASIRA: For pity's sake, you two. It's perfectly safe!

SIKA: Why don't you do it then?

KASIRA: I can't fly and I can't swim very well! How am I supposed to get any leverage to push the boats?

SOAPY: You *can* swim though, I've seen you.

NIVEA: She's right. And Sika made you fly once!

(Kasira furrowed her brow.)

KASIRA: Guys, I'm just assigning the jobs to the most qualified person, okay?

AMBRE: I'm only qualified to hold a torch?

KASIRA: Oh, for heaven's sake!!!

(She clenched her fists then spoke through gritted teeth.)

KASIRA: We need to get the dynamite to the cave. Soapy can push the boat but someone needs to steer it. Now there's no more room inside the boat, so we can't row it, that means one of you two airborne-folk has to fly above and guide it.

SIKA: Get Cayley to do it!

KASIRA: I chose you!

SIKA: That's favouritism!

KASIRA: I'm going to lose my temper in a minute, guys. All of a sudden you've turned into a bunch of cry babies. Do you honestly think I'd have accepted dangerous dynamite? Do you think I value your lives that little? Do you honestly think passing this mission and setting that major straight means more to me than your safety?

(Everyone shuffled uneasily where they stood.)

KASIRA: Well?

SIKA: No, ma'am.

SOAPY: Sorry, Kasira.

KASIRA: Thank you. Now let's get going, shall we?

(Sika sighed.)

SIKA: So it's perfectly safe then?

KASIRA: I really am going to clump you, Sika.

SIKA: No need!

(With that, she sprouted wings and flew into the air.)

SIKA: Let's go.

(Moments later, much to Kasira's relief, the three boats headed off on their short trip around the headland. Holding the torch while Kasira and Nivea rowed, Ambre felt very much like a queen and beamed with delight all the way there. Sika and Soapy, on the other hand, endured the entire trip with terror in their eyes. The five minute journey felt more like an hour to them. For all Kasira's reassurances, the stories they'd heard about dynamite going off for no reason had chilled them to the bone.)

Upon arriving inside the wraith-infested underground cavern, Soapy and Sika stopped the dynamite-laden boat then swiftly swum away from it. Also in the water, having had to drop into the sea to fit through the inlet, Cayley looked to them and grimaced.)

CAYLEY: You okay?

SIKA: I am now I'm away from the dynamite.

SOAPY: Yeah.

CAYLEY: Well, I wouldn't get too excited, Soapy, you're going to be reunited with it soon.

SOAPY: What???

CAYLEY: You heard me.

(Just then, Kasira spoke up from the rowing boat.)

KASIRA: Cayley, Sika, listen up. In a minute, I want you to fly over the top of the wraiths, okay? Sika, you take one corridor, Cayley you take the other. Gather them all up then take them to the very back of the bunker. You can keep the wraiths busy while the rest of us lay the dynamite, okay?

(Cayley winked at Soapy.)

CAYLEY: See?

SOAPY: Fuck!

NIVEA: When you say the rest of us lay the dynamite...

KASIRA: Yes, that includes you. Everyone except Ambre.

AMBRE: Yay!

SOAPY: Why is *she* getting a free pass?

KASIRA: Someone has to hold the torch. Or would you rather she helped with the dynamite while carrying that flame?

SOAPY: No, no. Your way makes sense.

KASIRA: Thank you.

(She then nodded sternly.)

KASIRA: Okay, listen up, girls. Do your jobs well and concentrate. Don't fly too low you two, and the rest of you stop being quivering morons. The dynamite is safe, okay? We'll carry a box each. Let's just get the job done then get the fuck out, okay?

(She looked to Cayley.)

KASIRA: Keep them back there for a good twenty minutes if you can, that should give us plenty of time.

CAYLEY: Yes, ma'am!

KASIRA: Okay, go!

(With that, Sika and Cayley flew to the top of the cavern then zoomed over the top of the wraiths, Sika taking the left corridor, Cayley taking the right. As they did so, the quayside immediately cleared. Every single wraith was on their tails.)

KASIRA: Okay, we're up. Soapy, push the dynamite to the quayside. And then the whisky. We'll load ourselves up then get started.

(Soapy gulped.)

SOAPY: Yes, ma'am.

(A few minutes later, Kasira, Soapy, Nivea and Ambre assembled on the quayside. Ambre was holding the torch and the other three were holding boxes. Nivea was holding a crate of dodgy whisky and Kasira and Soapy were holding boxes of dynamite.)

SOAPY: You really don't like me, do you?

KASIRA: Put a sock in it. That dynamite is dry. It's only dangerous if it sweats, now stop whining.

(She then looked to Ambre.)

KASIRA: Ambre, walk along the wall to our left. We'll lay the dynamite to the right.

AMBRE: You want me to walk along the opposite wall?

KASIRA: Yeah, we've got dynamite and you've got fire! Keep away.

AMBRE: I understand!

KASIRA: Good girl.

AMBRE: You don't trust me near dynamite.

KASIRA: I'm trusting you with fire, Ambre. While *we* 've got dynamite. That really *is* trust.

AMBRE: Yay! For a minute I thought you'd given me a rubbish job just so I didn't feel left out.

KASIRA: Well, I haven't. I'm trusting you to keep the fire away from the dynamite.

(Ambre beamed. She was overjoyed at the responsibility she'd been afforded.)

AMBRE: I won't let you down, Kasira.

KASIRA: I know. Now let's do this.

(With that, they headed to the start of the nearest corridor then Kasira laid a stick of dynamite down against the wall.)

KASIRA: Okay, Nivea, make a trail of alcohol between this stick of dynamite and the next one I lay down.

NIVEA: Gotcha.

(Kasira then hurried ahead to lay the next stick down. As she did so, Soapy stared at the box in her hands and whimpered.)

SOAPY: I'm scared!

KASIRA: Shut up! Whisky, Nivea.

NIVEA: On it!

(Nivea then laid a trail of alcohol between the two sticks.)

KASIRA: Come to think of it, you'd better lay a trail of alcohol from the quayside to the first stick.

(Nivea chuckled.)

NIVEA: Yeah that might help.

KASIRA: Right?

(With that, Nivea started to pour a trail of whisky from the first stick of dynamite to the end of the Quayside. As she did so, Kasira paced onwards and laid another stick down. She then glowered back at where Ambre and Soapy were watching Nivea.)

KASIRA: Are you coming or what?

(Just then, much to their absolute dismay, the major rowed in through the inlet. At once, they all sighed in dismay. Staring at them, the major called out from his boat.)

MAJOR: Ignore me. I'm only here to observe!

(Kasira mumbled under her breath.)

KASIRA: Yeah, I've heard that before.

(She then continued onwards.)

KASIRA: As quick as you can, Nivea.

NIVEA: Coming.

(Nivea rushed back from laying the trail of alcohol to the quayside then started to pour the whisky between the sticks.)

NIVEA: We need two pourers really, Kasira. You're laying them quicker than I can go.

(Kasira looked to her and nodded.)

KASIRA: Fair point. Pass me a bottle then.

(Nivea grabbed a whisky bottle from the crate then passed it to her.)

NIVEA: There you go.

KASIRA: Thanks.

(She then glanced to Ambre.)

KASIRA: Stick to that wall, darling. Good girl.

AMBRE: Yes, ma'am.

KASIRA: Now let's get a move on.

(As they continued on, laying down sticks of dynamite then creating a trail of highly inflammable spirit, Miles paced down the corridor towards them. Observing what they were planning on doing, he nodded sternly.)

MILES: I see. If you can't beat them blow them to smithereens. You're going to need far more explosives than that though.

KASIRA: We've got a boat load, sir; we'll be making more than one trip, I assure you.

MILES: Very well. And where are the wraiths at this moment in time?

KASIRA: Cayley and Sika have lead them away, sir.

MILES: And you trust Sika with that, do you?

(Kasira laid another stick of dynamite as she replied.)

KASIRA: I wouldn't have let her go if I didn't.

MILES: Fair comment.

(He then looked to the box of dynamite in Soapy's arms.)

MILES: Interesting.

(With that, he lifted the lid and took a peek inside. Raising an impressed eyebrow he then felt the sticks with his finger before lowering the lid again.)

MILES: Well, well. Those are good quality explosives you have there. Army issue?

KASIRA: No, sir. The townspeople volunteered them to us.

AMBRE: It was Gavin. He's a nice man. And the landlord of the inn gave us all this whisky. He's secretly in love with Kasira.

KASIRA: I don't think the major needs the details, Ambre.

MILES: Indeed I don't.

(Miles then raised a baffled eyebrow at Soapy.)

MILES: Are you unwell?

SOAPY: No.

MILES: You're as white as a sheet and you're sweating profusely.

KASIRA: She seems to have got it into her head that the dynamite could go off any minute.

MILES: Has she indeed?

(He then smirked menacingly.)

MILES: She's right too. It's very volatile.

(He then threw his neck towards her and yelled.)

MILES: Bang!!!

(At once, Soapy screamed and threw the box of dynamite upwards. Mercifully, the major managed to catch it.)

MILES: Careful.

(Trembling all over, Soapy then passed out.)

MILES: Superb. This unit truly is a shining example of courage and military might.

KASIRA: You scared the piss out of her! I hope not literally! Why would you do that?

MILES: I thought it was funny.

KASIRA: You were wrong.

MILES: Yes, well, never mind that. You three carry on with what you're doing. I'll revive her then bring her to you in a minute.

KASIRA: Fine.

NIVEA: Don't do perverted things to her while we're gone.

MILES: Do you really think I'd do that?

NIVEA: You might. *I* would!

AMBRE: Like what?

NIVEA: I was joking, Ambre.

KASIRA: Yes, well, stop pissing about and let's get this done.

NIVEA: We *are* getting this done.

KASIRA: And let's keep doing it.

(As they headed onwards to the end of the corridor, laying sticks of dynamite and a trail of alcohol, Miles rolled his eyes then looked to Soapy. With a frown, he then reached in his pocket for his water bottle.

MILES: This is wasted on you.

(He then threw some in her face and shook her awake. Somewhat disorientated she opened her eyes then whimpered.)

SOAPY: Where am I?

MILES: At the circus!

SOAPY: What?

(Finally coming to her senses, she glanced about herself then glowered at Miles.)

SOAPY: You scared me half to death.

MILES: Yes, well, that's entirely your *own* fault.

SOAPY: How is it?

MILES: You were carrying high quality, dry dynamite. It's not even remotely dangerous.

SOAPY: But you said...

MILES: It was a joke. Dynamite's only dangerous when it's sweating. Unlike you, it wasn't.
(Soapy grimaced.)

SOAPY: That's what Kasira said.

MILES: And you should have listened.

SOAPY: Sorry.

MILES: Now get up.

(Soapy obliged then looked to him nervously.)

SOAPY: It's not Kasira's fault I fucked up.

MILES: Just pick up the box.

SOAPY: Box?

MILES: The dynamite!

(Looking enlightened, she ducked down then picked the box up.)

SOAPY: It's safe, yes?

MILES: Absolutely. Now come on.

SOAPY: Okay.

(As they started to head away, Soapy grimaced.)

SOAPY: How long was I out for?

MILES: Not long. I sent the others ahead while I revived you.

SOAPY: I see. *You* sent them away?

MILES: I just said so, didn't I?

(Soapy furrowed her brow at him.)

SOAPY: You'd better not have done perverted things to me while I was out!
MILES: Good god, is that what you girls think of men? Like we're *all* filthy deviants.
SOAPY: Aren't you?
MILES: No. I'm the consummate professional. And besides, you're fifteen, for fuck sake.
Give me *some* credit.
(Soapy blushed.)
SOAPY: I apologise, sir.
MILES: As you well might. I did nothing of the sort.
(He smirked.)
MILES: For one, you're not my type. I only like *pretty* girls!
SOAPY: I see. Ambitious.
MILES: Quite.
(He then nodded sternly.)
MILES: Kindly go and jump into a volcano, private.
SOAPY: Right...
(They then started to hurry up in a bid to catch up with the others.)

Deeper inside the cave, at the very back of the massive room, beyond the cast iron doors, Cayley and Sika were flying about above the wraiths. Cayley was intermittently blowing her whistle to keep the wraiths interested. Below them, the entire wraith population were snarling and jumping up at them, desperate to savage them both. Staring down, Sika bit her lip.)

SIKA: I know this job is the easy bit, but it aint half scary. Look at them all!

CAYLEY: I'd still rather be doing this than lugging dynamite about. For all Kasira's reassurances, I'm still not comfortable being around that stuff.

SIKA: Me either. I've heard stories.

CAYLEY: So have I.

(She sighed.)

CAYLEY: I'll just be glad when all this is over and we can go back to base for a cup of tea.

SIKA: You make awesome tea.

CAYLEY: Thanks, Sika.

(Cayley then flew off in a circle and blew her wraith whistle again.)

CAYLEY: I wonder what it is about a wraith whistle that makes them so focussed on whoever's blowing it.

(She nodded.)

CAYLEY: It really is a miraculous invention. Or would you call it a discovery? I know they're man-made, but who thought to make a whistle from this material then blow it at wraiths?

(She shrugged.)

CAYLEY: I might look that up when we get back.

(Hearing no reply, she glanced to Sika then her bottom lip dropped. Sika was staring downwards wearing an empty expression, a tear rolling down her cheek.)

CAYLEY: Sika, are you okay?

(Sika looked to her briefly then hung her head again.)

SIKA: I won't be able to drink your tea for much longer, Cayley.

(Cayley sighed sorrowfully.)

CAYLEY: I know.

SIKA: All I had to do focus on that test. A really, really easy test. That was all. Instead I got distracted by a boy. A stupid boy. A stupid boy who didn't even stick up for me when the major was being a dick. I've thrown all this away for a shag basically.

CAYLEY: Sika...

(Sika then burst into tears.)

SIKA: I've tried to be myself today, I really have. Laughing, joking, poking fun at Nivea, but it's been breaking my heart all day. Being taken away from you guys is like being torn away from my family. The only difference is, I love you guys. My family suck. I've never been happier than I have since I came to this island. It's the first time I've felt truly at home.

(Cayley pouted.)

CAYLEY: I wish I could hug you and stay in the air at the same time.

SIKA: My parents couldn't wait to get rid of me, Cayley. And I couldn't wait to go. They were ashamed of me, the only kid in the entire country who needed someone else to heal her. At the time, I didn't know life could be this good. And now I've blown it because I was distracted by some stupid boy.

(Cayley replied to her tearfully.)

CAYLEY: Sika, don't give up hope. As soon as you do that, it's really over. As long as the major is on the island we can try to make him change his mind.

SIKA: He's not going to, Cayley. He's resolved on my fate; it's no longer open for debate. Now he's picking on Kasira instead, just to give himself something to do.

CAYLEY: But we have to try, Sika.

SIKA: I will. I mean, I'm going to. I know it won't work though; I just know it.

(Cayley blew her whistle again then sighed emptyly.)

CAYLEY: I know it's not much of a consolation, sweetheart, but this is breaking our hearts too. This place *does* feel like home and everyone at our base feels *exactly* like family, like you said. We all feel the same about that. And to lose you...

(She fought back more tears then hung her head.)

CAYLEY: You're always going to be in our hearts, even if you're not around.

(She then forced a smile.)

CAYLEY: And you know, you'll be happy wherever you end up. You're so awesome, your new unit are bound to love you. How can they not?

(Sika looked to her for a moment then forced a smile.)

SIKA: I am pretty awesome, aren't I?

CAYLEY: So, I've been told. By you. On a daily basis.

SIKA: And it's true. You know I wouldn't lie to you, Cayley.

(They then shared a warm smile.)

CAYLEY: You gonna be okay?

SIKA: Nope, but I'm gonna pretend I am for your sake.

CAYLEY: That's my girl.

(She then blew her wraith whistle again and the tip at the end fell off, rendering it silent.

Watching the tip fall into the waiting mouth of one of the many wraiths, Cayley grimaced.)

CAYLEY: Whoops!

SIKA: Cayley, that's not good!

CAYLEY: It's fine. You'll just have to use yours.

SIKA: Kasira confiscated mine after I blew her two hundred miles into the air. It's in her office still.

CAYLEY: Damn! In that case, we'd better get busy.

SIKA: Should we fly back and warn the others?

CAYLEY: With a thousand giant wraiths on our tail?

SIKA: Good point.

CAYLEY: We'll just have to make an exhibition of ourselves to keep their attention.
SIKA: Show them our boobies you mean?
CAYLEY: No, you silly sausage. Like this!
(With that, she flew in a circle above the wraiths singing randomly in a bid to keep them focussed on her.)
CAYLEY: Join in. Fly closer to the ceiling though, so we don't collide.
SIKA: On it!!!
(With that, Sika started to perform the same moves, singing loudly as she did so.)
SIKA: Do you think this'll work?
(Cayley gulped.)
CAYLEY: It'd had better. If they lose interest and wander back into the other room, the others are gonna be screwed!!!

Some fifteen minutes later, Kasira found herself in the room outside the large cast iron doors, laying sticks of dynamite around all the walls, then pouring alcohol between each stick. She'd sent Soapy and Nivea to collect as much dynamite as they could carry. Miles had volunteered to give them a hand carrying it. They were currently on their third trip. With so much dynamite around, the torcher-wielder, Ambre had been made to stand on the quayside all by herself; something she wasn't at all happy about. Having called Fluffy forth to pick her up and keep her company, however, she soon calmed down.

As she laid dynamite in front of the large cast iron doors, Kasira paused then peered inside the vast room beyond it. Spying Cayley and Sika flying in circles, singing their hearts out while every single wraith snarled up at them, she bit her lip then raced across the open doorway and started laying dynamite on the other side. Since Soapy had re-joined them, Kasira had made sure everyone worked flat out, rigging both corridors with dynamite and building a massive stack of it next to the cast iron doors. She was now in the throws of connecting it all up into a circuit. The chain of dynamite ran both ways from the quayside and converged in a big pile of it, having gone around all sides of the room in which she was now working.

Having applied the last few sticks to finish the circuit, she grabbed a bottle of whisky then proceeded to connect it all up. As she did so, Nivea, Soapy and Miles came hurrying back to her from one of the corridors. Speaking in a lowered voice as she'd been instructed to, Soapy placed her boxes on the pile then saluted.)

SOAPY: That's all of it, ma'am.

KASIRA: Good girl.

(Nivea and Miles then placed *their* boxes down among the others too.)

NIVEA: All finished.

MILES: Quite, that's all of it.

KASIRA: Thanks, girls.

MILES: Fuck you too.

KASIRA: I've got the dynamite running all around the walls in here, now I just need to lay whisky across the front of that doorway.

(She pointed to the gap between the cast iron doors.)

SOAPY: That's gonna suck. What if they spot you?

KASIRA: I darted across it just now, they were too focussed on Cayley and Sika to see me.

NIVEA: Yeah, but this time you're going to be much slower if you're pouring an alcohol trail.

KASIRA: No, I won't. You two are giving me a hand.

NIVEA: Bugger.

SOAPY: I had a horrible feeling you'd say that.

MILES: Don't be such a bunch of girls...

(At once, he received three bitter glances.)

MILES: What?

KASIRA: We *are* girls!

MILES: No.

(He nodded towards Soapy.)

MILES: That's a girl. You two are women.

SOAPY: That? I'm a that now, am I?

MILES: For all I care, yes.

KASIRA: Look never mind that. We've got work to do.

(She then grimaced at Nivea.)

KASIRA: Is Ambre okay, by the way?

NIVEA: Yeah, she's sitting in Fluffy's arms. She was miffed at first but she's calm now. Expect a lecture on not leaving her out when we get back though. She really didn't like it.

KASIRA: What could I do? There's no torch rack so someone had to hold it. And they couldn't be around all this dynamite.

NIVEA: I know that, Kasira, but this is Ambre we're talking about. You know how paranoid she is about not being included.

MILES: Is she insane as well as stupid? Most people would love to be left out of rigging a building with dynamite.

SOAPY: Not when they think they're being left out because they're incapable.

MILES: Is she incapable?

KASIRA: Far from it.

MILES: Tell her to belt up then.

(He nodded.)

MILES: Speaking of which, shut up and get on with your jobs.

KASIRA: I agree. Grab some whisky, ladies.

SOAPY: Ma'am.

NIVEA: On it.

(At once, they both grabbed a bottle from the crate then Kasira nodded sternly.)

KASIRA: Okay, let's go.

(With that, they sneaked up to the side of the first cast iron door. As they did so, Kasira pointed to a stick of dynamite on the floor in front of them.)

KASIRA: From this one to that one by the other door. I've done the rest.

NIVEA: Damn, you *were* a busy beaver.

KASIRA: Do you mind? We're not going to discuss my beaver in front of the major!

NIVEA: I said you were a *busy* beaver.

(Kasira looked most offended.)

KASIRA: I know. You called me a slut!

SOAPY: I get the feeling she's never heard that phrase before.

KASIRA: Yes, I have. At the academy they used to taunt me for having the busiest beaver in our class. It was bloody rude. And inaccurate!

NIVEA: It means you worked hard, Kasira.

KASIRA: What?

SOAPY: It does!

(Kasira grimaced.)

KASIRA: Oh! In that case I owe a few people an apology. That won't bring Elsa's teeth back though...

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

KASIRA: Forget that, let's get on with it. I'll run across and pour the far side. Nivea, you do this side; Soapy, you do the middle.

SOAPY: What? The bit where I'm right in the view of all the wraiths? Why do you hate me?

KASIRA: Quit whining. Let's go!

(With that, they all set to work. Soapy and Kasira charged across the open doorway and Nivea bent to pour alcohol by the nearest stick of dynamite. Wasting no time whatsoever, they swiftly drew a line of whisky across the open gap then Kasira nodded to where Miles was standing.)

KASIRA: Perfect. Let's...

(Just then, she heard a wraith cry out and looked up.)

KASIRA: Run!!!

(At once, Nivea and Soapy glanced into the large room before screaming then turning on their heels and fleeing. Needing no further clues as to what was happening, Miles instinctively knew to run. The wraiths had spotted Kasira, Nivea and Soapy in the doorway and were now charging towards them. Unlike last time, however, they didn't have much of a head start. Without a wraith whistle, Sika and Cayley could do nothing about it. Flying above the charging wraiths, they shared a terrified glance.)

SIKA: This is bad!!!

CAYLEY: This is a disaster!!!

(Fleeing down a corridor with a plethora of wraiths on their tail, Kasira, Miles, Soapy and Nivea couldn't have agreed more.)

MILES: Why aren't those two airborne idiots blowing their wraith whistles???

NIVEA: I'm sure they would if they could!

KASIRA: Sika can't. I confiscated hers when she was on probation!!!

SOAPY: Maybe Cayley accidentally swallowed hers or something!!!

KASIRA: Or it broke!!!

SOAPY: Yeah, that's far more likely!

(Glancing back over her shoulder as she thundered forth, Nivea whimpered in terror.)

NIVEA: These are fast little fuckers!!!

(Charging onwards at the front, Miles called out without looking back.)

MILES: Just keep sprinting!!! If we look in any danger though, you should sacrifice the one at the back to save the others!

(He puffed out.)

MILES: Which won't be me. Thank fuck women are slow.

KASIRA: We're not sacrificing the one at the back!!!

SOAPY: And she's not just saying that because *she's* at the back!!!

NIVEA: You'll be fine, Kasira, just give it everything!

KASIRA: I'm trying to!!!

(She snarled.)

KASIRA: Why do I have to be such a slow runner???

SOAPY: Old age?

KASIRA: I'm twenty fucking five!!!

MILES: And slow! If they gain too close, Nivea, trip her up!

KASIRA: Fuck off!!!

MILES: You'll be buying time for the rest of us. A captain should be proud to take one for her team!

(Glancing backwards, Soapy looked to Kasira then gulped. For all her efforts to run, she'd now fallen a good two feet behind. To make matters worse, the wraiths were gaining swiftly and it was very much touch and go whether she'd make it.)

SOAPY: Run, Kasira!!! They'll tear you apart!!!

KASIRA: I am running!!!

SOAPY: I know, but...

(She then had a brainwave and nodded sternly.)

SOAPY: If they catch you, it's not just *you* they'll tear apart; they'll shred your outfit too!

(Kasira just glowered at her.)

KASIRA: Well obviously!!!

SOAPY: I was just trying to give you a second wind! And you love your outfits, so...

KASIRA: There *is* no second wind, this as fast as my legs go!

(At this point they all sprinted around a sharp corner then almost immediately had to dart around a second one. As they did so, the sound of the wraiths grew ever louder.)

NIVEA: I'm not sure we're gonna make it!

MILES: Sucks to be you!!! I can go much faster than this but as long as you three are back there, I don't have to.

NIVEA: If it looks like we're not gonna make it, I'm gonna stop and spin!

KASIRA: No you're not. Keep sprinting! Don't even think about slowing down, even if they get me. Just keep going and get yourself in the water.

NIVEA: Kasira...

KASIRA: That's an order. If you stop to spin, they *will* kill you.

(Soapy released a terrified whimper.)

SOAPY: Nobody has to die, guys!!! Just fucking hurry up, Kasira!!!

KASIRA: I told you, Soapy, I'm going as fast as I can! Do you think I *want* to be eaten alive?

MILES: Well if it's any consolation, you probably won't be alive after the first bite. They'll probably start with your head!

KASIRA: Fuck off!

MILES: Charming!!!

(Bounding on determinedly, they then raced around another a corner which lead into a long straight; at the end of which was the quayside.)

NIVEA: Home straight, girls!!!

SOAPY: And no more corners to slow the wraiths down!

KASIRA: We can do it, I know we can.

(She then glanced behind her and her eyes bulged. The wraiths were now only a few feet behind her.)

KASIRA: I'm not gonna make it!!!

SOAPY: Yes, you fucking are!!!

NIVEA: Give it everything!

KASIRA: I'm going to but it won't be enough!!!

NIVEA: Find the energy Kasira, for fuck sake!!!

KASIRA: I'm trying!!!

(Just then, the shadow of a marauding wraith towered over her. The giant wraith at the front of pack was now literally inches away from her. In that moment, she realised that any second now, her desperate run was doomed to end in her demise.)

KASIRA: Never forget how much you meant to me, okay?

SOAPY: Kasira, no!!!

KASIRA: Take care of Ambre for me!!!

(Just then, the lead wraith swooped down to snatch her in its jaws. Before it could complete the move, however, it shattered into dust. The group of wraiths around it then met the same fate. Overjoyed at the reprieve, Kasira yelled out.)

KASIRA: What the hell happened?

(Soapy charged onwards, glancing up over her shoulder.)

SOAPY: Sika and Cayley happened.

KASIRA: I fucking love those girls.

(Much to everyone's delight, with Sika and Cayley taking out the front running wraiths with their magic, the gap between themselves and mortal danger started to increase.)

SOAPY: We're gonna make it!

MILES: That was never in doubt in my case!

NIVEA: You're a horrible bugger, do you know that?

MILES: I do, yes.

(Soapy then cried out.)

SOAPY: Almost there!!! I can see Ambre!

(Kasira's eyes bulged.)

KASIRA: Tell her get out of Fluffy's arms and get in the boat!!!

(At once, Nivea and Soapy proceeded to shout at Ambre.)

SOAPY: Boat, Ambre!!!

NIVEA: Get in a boat!!!

(Hearing the commotion from the end of the quay, Ambre looked up and her jaw immediately dropped. Seeing her unit mates charging towards her with a pack of giant wraiths hot on their heels, she immediately dismissed Fluffy and sprinted for the ramp. Within seconds she'd clambered inside a boat, still holding the burning torch.)

KASIRA: Thank fuck.

(She then glanced over her shoulder and nodded.)

KASIRA: Girls, don't hesitate, don't stop and think, just jump in the water at the first available opportunity. As soon you reach it, get in it!!!

NIVEA: You don't have to tell *me* twice, Kasira.

SOAPY: Nor me!

(Kasira then rolled her eyes.)

KASIRA: I normally bloody do.

(Moments later, they raced onto the quayside and Soapy and Nivea immediately dived into the sea. A split second later, Kasira did the same. Miles, however, raced onwards. Having brought his own rowing boat, he was determined to jump in it rather than getting wet. Flying above him, Sika and Cayley yelled at him furiously.)

CAYLEY: Just jump in the water, you idiot!!!

SIKA: Now!!!

(Ignoring them, Miles raced aside his boat then glanced back to see where the wraiths were. Much to his distress, they'd gained rapidly and were bearing down on him fast. In that moment, his entire body froze up in terror. Death was staring him in the eyes and his body refused to do anything about it.)

CAYLEY: Move, you idiot!!!

(Still frozen to the spot, the major could only gape as the wraiths gained to within a few feet of him. Before they could make a snack out of him, however, Sika swooped down and pushed him as hard as she could. As Sika flew safely up again, Miles toppled off the quayside and fell towards his rowing boat, putting his arms and legs out to stop himself. Upon hitting the bottom of the boat, however, the wood shattered into tiny fragments and he crashed straight through it, into the water.)

SIKA: Whoops.

(Flying above the snarling wraiths on the dockside, Cayley and Sika shared a giggle then flew over towards Kasira. Hovering over her head, Cayley spoke up urgently.)

CAYLEY: Ready for the next part of the plan?

KASIRA: Definitely. The sooner this is over, the better.

(Just then, the major splashed up through the water and started to thrash about.)

MILES: Help!!!

(In that moment, it became abundantly clear that he couldn't swim.)

SIKA: Leave it to me.

(With that, she flew over his head then reached down and grabbed his arms, holding him out of the water.)

MILES: Now take to me a boat!!!

SIKA: Before I do that, sir. Can I please take the test again? Only my hands are very slippery, you see?

MILES: Yes!

SIKA: Promise?

MILES: You have my word!!!

SIKA: Awesome.

(As everyone shared a knowing smile, Sika then lead him to the side of a boat. At once, he grabbed onto it and clung on tight with a terrified look on his face.)

MILES: Help me get in.!

(Having already climbed inside the boat, Nivea proceeded to do just that. Once he was in, he glowered at Sika.)

MILES: That was a nasty trick.

SIKA: That's the army for you; it's a hard knock life. Good thing women are tough.

MILES: Insubordinate little shit!

CAYLEY: That's the thanks she gets for saving you? Twice.

MILES: I said she could take the test again, didn't I? My word is my bond.

(He then scowled.)

MILES: Let's just get the fuck out of here.

(Clambering into an empty boat, Kasira glanced over her shoulder.)

KASIRA: Okay. You guys all row outside. And by all, I mean everyone except Soapy and I.

SOAPY: *Me* again? Seriously, why do you hate me?

KASIRA: Soapy, I picked you because you're a fast swimmer. I just need you to clear the dockside while I light the alcohol trail with the torch. Once that's done, we'll need to swim like fuck.

(She then looked to where Ambre was sitting in a row boat.)

KASIRA: Torch please, sweetheart. Once they quayside's clear, I'll row over there, light the trail then swim for it.

(Ambre growled at her.)

AMBRE: *I'm* torch girl!

KASIRA: Ambre...

AMBRE: All I've done is wait here with the torch so I can do my bit. Now you want to take *that* from me too. Am I part of this unit or aren't I? Stop leaving me out!

(Kasira furrowed her brow.)

KASIRA: Ambre, will you pass me the sodding torch?

AMBRE: Why? Do you think I'm so stupid I can't light a trail of whisky by putting a torch to it? Why won't you even trust me with a job so simple an idiot can do it?

KASIRA: Ambre, once you light the fucking thing you'll need to swim out of here as soon as possible. You can't swim!

(Ambre blushed.)

AMBRE: Good point.

KASIRA: Well then. Give me the torch.

(Just then, Soapy spoke up.)

SOAPY: Actually, Kasira, once it's lit *I* can swim out easily...

KASIRA: I know. That's why I want *you* here to clear the wraiths for me.

SOAPY: Trouble is, *you're* not going to have time to get out. The flame should take what...ten seconds to reach the first stick of dynamite? You're not going to make it.

KASIRA: Then what do you suggest?

SOAPY: Well, I can't hold a flaming torch and clear the quayside at the same time, so someone else needs to do it. The problem is getting them out again, right?

KASIRA: And?

SOAPY: I can swim pretty fast with someone on my back. Doesn't matter who. They can ride me like a dolphin and I'll have them out in seconds.

NIVEA: Ride you like a dolphin?

SOAPY: Yeah!

(She smiled to Ambre.)

SOAPY: I can clear the dockside then nudge Ambre's boat over there once it's clear. As long as she's quick to jump on my back once she's done it, I'll have us both out in a jiffy.

AMBRE: Let's do that! Please, Kasira. I'll make sure the trail is properly lit, honest. I'll do a really good job. And you did tell me I was capable of doing anything, let me prove it.

Please, please. Please, Kasira. Let me do it.

(Kasira sighed.)

KASIRA: And you promise to do a proper job?

AMBRE: I promise.

(She smiled.)

AMBRE: I won't mess it up. It's easy. I just need to keep the flame dry then make sure the trail is lit. Then I need to escape really, really fast on Soapy's back. Just let me do this one task and I won't moan about being left out ever again. Never ever.

KASIRA: Well...

(Nivea smiled.)

NIVEA: I reckon she'll do a superb job.

SIKA: Definitely.

CAYLEY: Of course she will

(Kasira sighed.)

KASIRA: Do it well, Ambre. And get the fuck out quickly, you know I worry about you getting hurt.

AMBRE: I will!

(She beamed.)

AMBRE: Thanks, Kasira. I won't let you down.

KASIRA: You never do, darling.

(Miles rolled his eyes.)

MILES: Great. Can we go now?

KASIRA: We can.

MILES: Good.

(He then glared at Nivea.)

MILES: Row!

NIVEA: You've got it.

(In that moment, Cayley and Sika plopped into the sea then climbed into the rowing boat with Kasira.)

KASIRA: Let's go. Take care of her, Soapy.

SOAPY: Yes, ma'am.

AMBRE: I'll be fine!

(A few moments later, both rowing boats exited the inlet; Miles and Nivea in one, and Kasira, Sika and Cayley in the other.)

SIKA: Ambre will be fine, Kasira. She will.

CAYLEY: She won't screw up, she knows what to do.

KASIRA: I know she won't screw up. I'm just worried she won't get out quickly enough.

SIKA: Soapy won't let her get hurt. You'll see.

(Back inside the cavern, a minute or so later, Soapy watched the rowing boats get a good distance away then looked to where Ambre was sitting in a boat with the torch.)

SOAPY: Okay, we're up. As soon as it's clear, I'll nudge you to the quayside.

AMBRE: Okay.

SOAPY: For pity's sake don't drop the torch!

AMBRE: I'm not a clumsy moron, Soapy; I'm just a bit slow at thinking and stuff.

SOAPY: I know. I was just saying.

(She nodded.)

SOAPY: Anyway, let the fun commence.

(With that, she opened fire on the wraiths, releasing one powerful blast after another. As she did so, her lips curled upwards. Right now, she was as happy as a clam. Watching wraith after wraith explode she was half tempted to attack those not in Ambre's way, just to prolong the moment. Knowing how much playing her part meant to Ambre, however, she set her temptation aside and focussed on the task in hand.)

Two minutes later, once the area where the trail started was clear, Soapy kicked Ambre's boat towards the ramp up to the quayside. She then resumed killing the wraiths to keep it clear. As soon as her boat met the concrete, Ambre then clambered from it and raced up the ramp.)

AMBRE: I see it!

(At once, she charged to the end of the alcohol trail and dipped the torch in it. Not once did she check for wraiths. Trusting Soapy entirely, she simply bent and watched the trail light up.)

AMBRE: Done!

SOAPY: Perfect! Go!!!

(With a flinch, Ambre then jumped towards Soapy. Having landed in the water, she then thrashed about for a few moments before rising up in a seated position on Soapy's back.)

AMBRE: You can go...

(She then screamed her next word and clung on tightly to Soapy's shoulders as she proceeded to swim for the exit and great speed.)

AMBRE: Now!!!

(Moments later, Soapy zoomed out of the inlet and headed straight on as fast as she could go. Clinging onto her still, Ambre beamed.)

AMBRE: This is fun!!!

(Just then, a loud explosion erupted behind them, forcing Ambre to glance back in horror. Moments later, a second explosion followed, then a third. One after the other, the trail of dynamite was exploding, causing rocks to tumble from the cliffs.)

SOAPY: Looks like it worked, Ambre.

AMBRE: Yay! We rule.

SOAPY: Sure do. Now let's go and find the others.

(With that, she veered off towards the dockside. A few moments later, they started to approach where the others were still rowing towards the jetty. Passing them at quite the pace, Ambre yelled out and waved.)

AMBRE: Kasira!!! Kasira!!! Look at me, Kasira!!! This is awesome!!!

(She then beamed at Soapy.)

AMBRE: I want to ride you like a dolphin everyday!

SOAPY: That sounds so wrong!
AMBRE: No it doesn't. This is great fun!
(She beamed.)
AMBRE: I love it!

A short while later, when Kasira and the others arrived back at the dockside, they found Ambre and Soapy waiting. Clambering from the boats, they all looked thoroughly exhausted. Ambre on the other hand, was glowing with excitement.

AMBRE: Did you see me, Kasira? I was on Soapy's back going really, really fast. She really is a fishy. I know we're not meant to say that, but she was amazing in the sea. Did you see me ride past?

(Kasira smiled.)

KASIRA: Ambre, you were like a blur, darling. For a minute...

(Just then, there was a loud explosion that rocked the entire island. The jetty literally shook and one of the rowing boats they'd borrowed, was tipped over by the ensuing high waves. Almost thrown off her feet, Cayley grabbed hold of a post and grimaced.)

CAYLEY: Holy poo!

SIKA: That'd be the big pile of dynamite exploding!

NIVEA: Do you think we got them all?

MILES: Of course not.

(Kasira sighed.)

KASIRA: You're going to tell us we're incompetent now, aren't you?

MILES: Would you care if I did?

KASIRA: Yes. Your constant criticism is bad for morale.

MILES: I'm a critic, sue me.

KASIRA: Look, the plan was a good one. We had no way of tanking the buggers so we did the next best thing. You can't criticise us for that.

MILES: Actually, I wasn't going to.

(Kasira was generally astonished.)

KASIRA: But you criticise us for everything.

MILES: Yes, but I'd look a bit of a tit if I was to criticise you for a plan I helped you carry out.

(He shrugged.)

MILES: The plan was fine. I'll just have to stick to criticising your conduct and results instead.

CAYLEY: Results?

KASIRA: Conduct?

MILES: Did I just stumble into a parrot sanctuary?

NIVEA: How can you still be dissatisfied with us after tonight?

MILES: I never said I was.

SOAPY: You're not denying it either.

MILES: Indeed. I don't have to justify *anything* I do to the rank and file.

(Kasira gave him an exasperated glance.)

KASIRA: Look, I admit it wasn't perfect. Some wraiths will have survived and now we've blown up the only way in, there's no way of getting to them. Under the circumstances, however, we did the best we could and we can be proud of ourselves.

MILES: That's your take on it, is it?

KASIRA: Yes.

MILES: Would you like to hear mine?

KASIRA: No!

CAYLEY: Absolutely not.

MILES: Suit yourselves.

(Just then, Ambre pointed to the hill in the centre of the island.)

AMBRE: There's wraiths up there. Big ones.

CAYLEY: I see them. That's not the evening spawn. Those are from the bunker.

KASIRA: We must have blown open the old land entrance!

CAYLEY: Perfect! If we've blown open a way in, in future the wraiths will come running when we blow a wraith whistle. No future infestation.

KASIRA: That's the future...

(She then glanced at her unit mates.)

KASIRA: Right now, we get to polish off the rest of the wraiths from that bunker. Let's get 'em, ladies.

(With that, Kasira and her five subordinates raced off towards the hillside.)

KASIRA: There *looks* to be about a hundred of them from here but we're not going to risk guessing. Cayley, do a scan from the air; let me know how many we're up against. Same rule applies; we can't tank these big fuckers. We'll have to cull them individually.

(As they charged onwards, Miles allowed himself a chuckle.)

MILES: It's been an interesting trip, to say the least.

(With that, he started to amble after them, walking at his own pace. Smiling to himself, enjoying the warm evening air, he strolled across the cobbles towards the hillside, when he spotted Major Bagshot taking an evening stroll with his wife.)

MILES: Major!

BAGSHOT: Major! How did it go?

MILES: Success was had, old chap. Naturally. *I* was there.

BAGSHOT: Excellent. I'd love to hear more but we're heading to bed.

MILES: Another time perhaps.

BAGSHOT: Definitely.

(He then looked thoughtful.)

BAGSHOT: A ship is coming to pick me up tomorrow at noon. Can I offer you a ride back to HQ?

(Miles nodded.)

MILES: I might just take you up on that. I'll let you know.

BAGSHOT: Top hole.

(With that, Major Bagshot and his wife continued on. Nodding to himself, Major Miles then resumed his journey too. Ambling forth, he paced onwards up the hill grinning at the sight before him. The giant wraiths that had escaped the bunker were tasting fresh air for the first time ever only to be blown to smithereens. Ahead of him, Soapy and Sika were blasting every wraith in their path as they headed up the hill. On land, the wraiths were spread out and easy to pick off. They weren't being swarmed by dozens at a time and could pick them off before they even got close.

As he continued to pace slowly behind, observing the girls at work, Cayley landed next to Kasira and started to explain something to her with exaggerated hand gestures. Kasira replied with a clenched, triumphant fist. The girls then raced to the top of the hill.)

MILES: What are they so excited about?

(At this point, he spotted Soapy blowing a wraith whistle. Realising Kasira must have been excited about the lack of wraiths, he then picked up the pace. As he did so, he watched a large group of wraiths charge towards the girls. Thanks to their combined skills, they didn't even reach Fluffy, never mind get the chance to attack him. Watching on, he nodded to

himself then his jaw dropped and he stopped walking. Fluffy was healing himself and Ambre was focussing on controlling other wraiths instead. Having never seen a swift-human capable of leaving her Saxum to self-heal, he raised an eyebrow then continued on. A minute or so later, just as he was approaching the peak, a loud cheer rose up from the girls. Grinning with delight, Sika high-fived Nivea then beamed at him.)

SIKA: I now declare this island clean.

(Miles nodded emotionlessly then stepped up to the peak and glanced around the island. As he did so, the girls all congratulated one another excitedly.)

KASIRA: Girls, you were first class. Noisy and annoying, but bloody brilliant.

SIKA: Noisy and annoying? I find that hard to believe.

SOAPY: She meant classy and impressive, I think.

KASIRA: I *meant* noisy and annoying, but in the most loveable ways. I wouldn't change you girls for the world.

(She shrugged.)

KASIRA: Well, maybe Sika.

(As everyone laughed, Sika pouted.)

SIKA: Harsh.

KASIRA: You're still a work in progress, girl. But it's work I'm happy to do. I love this unit.

CAYLEY: So do I.

NIVEA: What's not to love? Again, except Sika.

SIKA: Nivea!

(She then started to laugh.)

SIKA: You're so mean.

(Kasira smiled then allowed herself a satisfied sigh.)

KASIRA: I don't care what anyone else thinks, girls. We might not always be orthodox, but we get shit done. I'm bloody proud of you lot.

(Just then, Miles turned to face her.)

MILES: Are you now?

KASIRA: Yes!

MILES: I see. Want to know what *I* think?

(Kasira sighed.)

KASIRA: Fine, go on. Ruin the mood, if you must.

MILES: Very well. Kasira...

(He then smiled to her respectfully.)

MILES: Your assessment is going to be positively glowing.

(At once, everyone's jaw's dropped.)

MILES: What? What are you looking at me like that for?

SIKA: You gave her a compliment.

MILES: Damn right I did. I gave her a task to perform and she did it. Despite being severely handicapped, I might add.

AMBRE: She's not severely handicapped. She's just a slow runner.

MILES: I didn't mean it like that, you buffoon!

AMBRE: What did you mean then?

MILES: Obviously, I meant the fact you had a bunker to clear with no way of using a tank. It required the ability to improvise, to think outside the box. Kasira, it has to be said, you made great use of your resources.

(Kasira was astonished.)

KASIRA: Thank you.

MILES: I'm not finished.

KASIRA: There's more?

MILES: Yes. You could only do what you did tonight because your resources included the full support of the local people. Female units rarely have that. To be in the position where the townsfolk will back you in anything you do, means you must be doing *something* right. (He then shrugged.)

MILES: Obviously, a pretty face and big tits help, but it's clearly more than that.

AMBRE: The locals have been nice to us since we cleared the haze break.

SIKA: They were wankers before that.

KASIRA: Yeah. To be honest, we owe our popularity to being unfortunate enough to have a haze break. Without that, they'd still think we're incompetent bimbos.

AMBRE: And General Wilson would still be sticking his ding-dong in our...

MILES: Yes, well, enough about that.

(He nodded sternly.)

MILES: We've got business to attend to, ladies. We should return to the base.

(He then looked to Sika.)

MILES: This cheeky bugger has an exam to take.

(Much to his disbelief, everyone then round on Sika.)

NIVEA: Concentrate this time.

SOAPY: Do it right!

CAYLEY: Take your time, focus and double check every answer.

(Kasira then grabbed her by the throat.)

KASIRA: You've got a second chance now, Sika, don't you dare fuck it up.

AMBRE: Yeah. If you love us you'll make sure you do it properly.

SIKA: Kasira, you're hurting me.

(Kasira let her go then grimaced.)

KASIRA: Sorry, I got carried away. I just don't want to lose you. Not many people get a second chance, make the most of it.

CAYLEY: We've all worked really hard tonight to earn you this opportunity, don't let us down.

SIKA: I won't!

KASIRA: Good girl.

(With that, that all proceeded to march towards the base.)

KASIRA: You did good work tonight, girls. I thought I'd had it for a minute there.

CAYLEY: So did I. Luckily Sika has land-bound reflexes and managed to take out that wraith before it got you.

(Sika beamed.)

SIKA: Told you I was awesome.

AMBRE: You are. You saved the major too.

MILES: Yes well, enough of that!

SIKA: Don't worry, I don't want gratitude.

NIVEA: You want compliments, don't you?

SIKA: Well it is nice when *other people* notice my awesomeness.

KASIRA: Fair enough, you earned it tonight. Sika, you told me you'd work hard and focus when the shit hit the fan. You did that. Thank you.

SIKA: Well, you know how it is. When it comes to battle nobody can match my...

KASIRA: Shut up!

SIKA: Mean!

(Kasira rolled her eyes then looked to the major.)

KASIRA: Soldiers learn from their mistakes, Major. She won't miss her target and hit a fellow soldier again. She's learned her lesson on that one.

MILES: And you're certain of that, are you?

KASIRA: I am! She was in denial about how bad her error was at first. She just wanted it to go away, you see? She wanted to pretend it didn't happen and carry on being her fun-loving self. She's learned now though. There's a time and place for that. She won't make the same mistake again.

SIKA: I really won't.

(She pouted.)

SIKA: At the time, I made half-arsed apologies in the hope it'd all go away. I didn't want to accept how bad my mistake was.

MILES: You almost killed her! How can you not think *that* was a massive cock-up?

SIKA: I'm talking about afterwards. At the time, when I thought I'd killed her, I was devastated. Once I realised she was okay though, I wanted everyone to just move on.

(She looked to the others and forced a smile.)

SIKA: Sorry, guys. That was dumb.

NIVEA: Really dumb.

SOAPY: Thoughtless.

SIKA: Yeah, alright, there's no need to rub it in.

CAYLEY: Yes, there is. You'd shown yourself to be a liability then acted like you couldn't give a damn. That wasn't cool.

SIKA: Fair comment. But I *do* give a shit. You know I do. I always did. I was just acting like a dick.

CAYLEY: Yeah, and now you've *admitted* that, and started to work on it, now we *can* move on.

MILES: No, you can't. She still needs to pass that exam.

(Again, they all glowered at Sika.)

NIVEA: Pass it!

SOAPY: Focus!

AMBRE: Make sure you do. I love you, Sika.

CAYLEY: Don't let anything distract you.

(In this moment, Sika couldn't help but smile.)

SIKA: I'll pass, guys. You can rely on me. When I'm focussed, I'm like an exam-taking goddess. I breezed through every exam at the academy. These things come easily to me because I'm brilliant, you see? This one time...

(At once, everyone groaned and continued on ahead. Having been given free reign to discuss her favourite subject, herself, there'd be no stopping her.)

Upon returning to the base, Kasira immediately despatched Cayley, Nivea, Ambre and Soapy to the bath. Despite the late hour, none of them were willing to head to bed. They all wanted to see how Sika performed on her exam. Not about to have them sitting around staring at her while she retook it, Kasira had then banished from the mess room. With a choice of either going to their rooms or luxuriating in the bath, they'd chosen the latter. Praying she'd pass, they all headed off, leaving Sika sitting alone at the mess room table with her exam paper. The only others present being Kasira and Miles. Sitting at the sofa furthest from the table, Miles was reading a book and Kasira was tapping her leg nervously. Finding the tension unbearable, she bit her lip then spoke quietly to Miles.)

KASIRA: Tell me something.

(Miles peered over the book.)

MILES: Anything specific? Or just any random fact?

KASIRA: If Sika hadn't saved you, would she still be getting a second chance?

(Miles shrugged.)

MILES: I did give her my word.

KASIRA: So, if she hadn't saved you...

MILES: Captain, I can't tell you what I might have done if circumstances were different. Circumstances weren't different. We're here now as a result of what *did* happen.

KASIRA: That's a no, isn't it?

MILES: That's an 'I don't know'.

(Somewhat unsettled, Kasira crossed her legs and sighed. As she did so, Miles looked down at the hem of her skirt and sucked his teeth lustfully. Pretending he hadn't been looking, he then returned to his book.)

KASIRA: She's a lot more focussed this time. She hasn't looked up from the page once. She is, isn't she? More focussed I mean.

MILES: I haven't been looking. Probably. She's only been doing it for five minutes, give her time.

KASIRA: Time to what?

MILES: Let her mind wander.

KASIRA: That won't happen. Will it? No. She's an intelligent girl. Nobody as quick-witted as she is can possibly be an idiot. Only idiots let their mind wander.

MILES: Actually, intelligent people get bored quickly. If she finds it too easy, she may stop concentrating and fill all the answers in the wrong column, rendering them *all* wrong.

KASIRA: Really?

MILES: No, I just let my arse say what it likes.

KASIRA: True, but I'll make her double check it before she hands it in, just in case.

(Miles furrowed his brow at her.)

MILES: Cheeky wench.

KASIRA: Wench?

MILES: You heard me.

KASIRA: Can I ask you something else?

(Miles rolled his eyes.)

MILES: Like I could stop you.

KASIRA: Are you married?

MILES: Yes, why?

KASIRA: You don't like women one bit.

MILES: That's because I've been married to one for fifteen years.

KASIRA: Are you horrible to her too?

(Miles glowered at her.)

MILES: Captain...

(Noticing her watching Sika carefully, he looked her up and down, his eyes pausing on her chest, then her hem.)

MILES: Are all your clothes skimpy, tight and revealing?

(Kasira glanced at him.)

KASIRA: No. You know they're not. You saw my red leather outfit.

MILES: I did indeed, it was extremely slutty.

KASIRA: Excuse me?

MILES: It wasn't exactly revealing, but it was hardly conservative.

KASIRA: How did we get from the subject of your wife to what I choose to wear?

MILES: That'd be the fact my wife is none of your business.

KASIRA: And my wardrobe is none of yours.

MILES: Fine.

KASIRA: Fine. Let's just sit here in silence then.

MILES: Like we were before you started yapping, you mean?

KASIRA: If you like.

MILES: Good. I'm trying to read.

(He then rolled his eyes and resumed perusing his book.)

KASIRA: Yeah, Sika's definitely more focussed than last time.

MILES: Oh, for pity's sake. This is exactly why I dislike women. Do you people *never* shut up?

KASIRA: I was only saying.

MILES: You never *stop* saying. Now be quiet. That, Captain, is an order.

KASIRA: Fine!

MILES: What part of my order confused you?

(Kasira just sneered at him.)

MILES: Much better. Now *keep* it shut.

(For the next hour, silence reigned in the mess room. The only sounds were the tip of Sika's pencil scribbling on the page and the major turning pages in his book. Kasira was especially tense. All that stood between her and the stability of her unit was Sika's success. In this moment she was caught in a paradox. The sooner Sika finished, the sooner she'd get her answer. The longer she had to wait, however, the better the chances of Sika being successful. She wanted Sika to finish as soon as possible but at the same time, she wanted her to take her time. It was a most uncomfortable feeling.

Not about to hurry Sika along, she sat and bit her nails nervously. Sika had been on the verge of being sent away and Kasira had been to hell and back in the last day or so. She'd vouched for Sika's character, taken responsibility for her in the field despite her probation, refused to accept any criticism of her and even showed a high-ranking officer much in the way of insubordination to support her. Having gone through so much, to now be on the verge of securing Sika's place in the unit was torture. Knowing that Sika could fail the exam was also hard to take. After everything she'd done, to fall at the last hurdle would be soul destroying. As such, the tension was slowly driving her mad. Just when she thought she couldn't stand it any longer, however, Sika glanced up from her paper.)

SIKA: Finished.

KASIRA: Yes!

MILES: Are you sure?

(Sika flinched.)

SIKA: No! Let me read it through again and check everything.

MILES: Very well.

(Kasira grimaced with annoyance then sat back. She knew Sika taking the time to check everything was a good thing, but it was still frustrating. Mercifully, she didn't have to wait long. Five minutes later, Sika glanced up again and bit her lip.)

SIKA: Finished.

KASIRA: Yeah? How did you do? Do you think you passed? How was it?

SIKA: I did my best, Kasira.

KASIRA: Good girl.

(At this point, Miles climbed to his feet and headed towards her.)

MILES: Pass me the paper, young lady.

(He then took the paper and headed away.)

MILES: Your office, Captain.

KASIRA: Sir.

(Kasira smiled to Sika.)

KASIRA: Grab a bath or something, darling. I'll come as soon I've got the result.

SIKA: Ma'am.

(Kasira then gave her a reassuring pat on the shoulder and headed for her office.)

Inside Kasira's office, a short while later, Miles was reading through Sika's exam while Kasira sat at her desk opposite him, twiddling her fingers nervously. Any moment now, she'd have her answer. Sika's future was on the verge of being decided. Barely able to contain her tension she puffed out nervously, when Miles glanced up from Sika's paper.)

MILES: She passed.

(Kasira was awash with relief.)

KASIRA: Thank fuck.

MILES: Passed well actually. Easily in the high-nineties.

KASIRA: Perfect, so she can stay then?

(Miles bit his lip.)

MILES: Actually, that's not a given.

KASIRA: What?

MILES: She's done her bit, the rest is down to you.

(Kasira was utterly stumped.)

KASIRA: What do you mean?

MILES: I already sent that Lassu fellow to HQ with her failed exam paper and an order to have her replaced.

KASIRA: So? You *can* cancel your own order, Major.

(Miles smirked devilishly.)

MILES: Yes, I can, but whether I do or not depends on you.

KASIRA: I don't follow. She passed her exam. All you have to do now is cancel that request to...

MILES: I'm aware of my options, Captain.

KASIRA: Then what's the problem?

MILES: Letting her take a second exam, cancelling a prior order... I think that's being overly generous. I don't like it. I'd be doing you a huge favour.

KASIRA: Well...

MILES: Let me finish! Captain, if I'm going to do you this favour, you need to do something for me in return.

KASIRA: Like what?

MILES: Well, let's put things in perspective here. You want me to cancel my own order and ignore her failed exam, replacing it with latest one. That's a big deal. Now what can you do for me?

(He then grinned the widest of grins and stood up.)

MILES: I know.

(With that, he slid his trousers and underpants down to his ankles.)

MILES: What say you get on your knees and sample the cheese?

(Staring in horror at his erection, Kasira whimpered.)

KASIRA: What?

MILES: Get your gums around my plums! Do some amateur sword-swallowing. Suck my cock, for pity's sake.

(Kasira glowered at him.)

KASIRA: You must be out of your mind! I'm not...

MILES: Before you say anything, let me remind you of something. Sika's future with this unit hinges on whether or not you please me. You've got five unit-mates out there waiting on the good news. Are you going to give them any?

KASIRA: Not like this, I'm not!

MILES: Foolish. After all you've been through. You've risked many a dissent charge in the last few days to stand up for that girl. You've bent over backwards to support her and for what? Are you really willing to sacrifice it all? Are you really going to undo all your good work, rather than perform one more little task? A simple, easy task? Are you really going to let Sika down?

(Kasira stared at him through nervous eyes. He'd struck a chord with her and he knew it. Kasira wanted Sika to stay more than anything else in the world and getting what she craved was one uncomfortable task away. As she pondered the thought nervously, Miles then made her mind up for her.)

MILES: Do you want Sika to stay or not?

(Furrowing her brow, Kasira then climbed to her feet and headed around the desk.)

KASIRA: For the record, I really fucking hate you.

MILES: I don't care. Just don't bite it. If you do, they'll *all* be getting transferred. And do it well, I want a good five minutes at least.

KASIRA: Whatever.

(With that, she sunk to her knees and proceeded to fellate him with an angry look on her face. Absolutely revelling in the sensation, Miles let out a slow groan of delight then beamed with joy.)

MILES: Perfect.

In the bath at this time, Sika was sitting in the water, surrounded by her anxious unit-mates. Dying to know how the exam went, they were grilling her extensively. It wasn't easy to get a sensible answer, however. Thanks to her deep-rooted love for herself, Sika's replies were overblown to say the least.

SIKA: The essay questions were far too easy. For me, anyway. My vocabulary is awesome. I was using words most people don't even know about.

NIVEA: As long as you didn't use words that haven't been invented yet. There's a phrase for that, it's called making shit up. You always do that.

SIKA: No, I only use proper words. You might not know them though, Nivea, you don't have my level of brilliance.

CAYLEY: How *can* she know them when you've make them up?

SIKA: What? I don't make up words!

CAYLEY: Sika, only last week you told Ambre that this unit owes a lot to your awesomegevity.

SOAPY: And apparently my attacks lack variety.

NIVEA: She told me to cut the clownitude once.

SIKA: All great words.

AMBRE: She said she'd disembodied a wraith once.

CAYLEY: That *is* a word, Ambre.

AMBRE: It is? It's a silly one then.

SIKA: They're all words, you just don't know them. At my academy people used to remark on my clever word use all the time. Don't feel bad, *most* people don't know about these words.

(She exhaled.)

SIKA: Yeah, I'm pretty special.

(Cayley rolled her eyes.)

CAYLEY: Okay, cut the specifics. How do you think it went?

SIKA: Awesomely, of course.

CAYLEY: And how did you think the first exam went?

(Sika grimaced.)

SIKA: I thought that one was okay too.

NIVEA: Sika, if you failed this one...

SIKA: I haven't. I'm sure of it. As sure as I can be anyway. The only way I can be marked down is if the major isn't familiar with my brilliant word use.

SOAPY: For pity's sake, Sika. I was confident before, but having heard you mention your word use...

CAYLEY: I know, right? I'm not confident anymore either.

SIKA: Guys, come on. I passed okay. I can feel it.

(She then whimpered.)

SIKA: I have to have passed. If I didn't I'll never see any of you again.

AMBRE: I don't want that to happen.

NIVEA: None of us do. Who the hell would give me grief if you weren't here? I love arguing with you, Sika.

CAYLEY: Yeah, we'd spotted that.

SIKA: It's just a bit of fun, Cayley. Well, until she gropes me with her big, ape hands.

NIVEA: You love it!

SIKA: I do not.

SOAPY: Nobody does. You're a weird, twisted oddball.

NIVEA: Bollocks. If you didn't secretly love it, you'd stop giving me so many excuses.

CAYLEY: Like you *need* an excuse.

NIVEA: True.

(She then grinned at Soapy.)

NIVEA: Weird, twisted oddball, was it? That one's gonna cost you later. If only I was allowed to grope you in here.

(Soapy whimpered and pointed to Sika.)

SOAPY: She said you have ape hands.

SIKA: Soapy!

NIVEA: Oh it was noted. There's quite the backlog at the moment. You two are in a heap of trouble.

AMBRE: Why doesn't Kasira let you grope us in here?

CAYLEY: Bath time is for relaxing, not for worrying where Nivea is.

AMBRE: No, I mean, why doesn't she stop you groping us in the base as well!

SIKA: Maybe she secretly enjoys it.

NIVEA: She doesn't. I tried once and she punched me in the face. I haven't groped her since.

SOAPY: Lucky sod.

CAYLEY: That's your answer then, girls, punch her.

AMBRE: No, that's not nice.

SIKA: Guys, look, never mind that...

NIVEA: Punch me and I'll punch you back!

SOAPY: Yeah? Then when *you* grope *us*, we'll grope *you* back.

(Nivea immediately pushed her chest towards Soapy.)

NIVEA: Go for it. I'm a twisted oddball, I enjoy it.

CAYLEY: Gross.

SIKA: Seriously, guys. Never mind that; let's talk about me again! The multiple choice questions were easy. Well, easy for me, at least.

(Cayley furrowed her brow.)

CAYLEY: Stop it, Sika. All we want to know is how well you did. We need you to pass, but if you thought the last exam also went well, we can't even tell.

NIVEA: Yeah, we're no wiser now than we were before you got in the bath.

AMBRE: It's unsettling.

SOAPY: It is.

SIKA: Guys, please.

(She sighed.)

SIKA: I can't do anything about it now. I checked it thoroughly and I really did do my best. Waiting for the result is torture enough without you four pouting at me. Please, let's just have some fun. If you don't want to listen to me telling you about my greatness, can we at least talk about something else? The uncertainty is hard enough without you sitting there reminding me of it.

(Cayley nodded.)

CAYLEY: That's fair.

AMBRE: Let's talk about those bacon kebabs again.

SIKA: I want them everyday!

CAYLEY: We can't afford to have them everyday.

SIKA: Then the army need to increase our budget.

AMBRE: We should write to them.

NIVEA: Yeah, I can imagine how the response would read.

SOAPY: A long list of expletives.

(As her four unit-mates continued to chat, Sika smiled along with them then sighed inwardly. The stress of not knowing how she'd fared, was killing her.)

Back in Kasira's office, some ten minutes later, the major was cringing with ecstasy. Still enjoying his favour from Kasira, he went cross-eyed then released a loud, lingering groan. In that moment, he'd let go of his load and a deep relaxing sensation spread through his body.)

MILES: I won't lie. That was the best blow-job I ever had.

(He then sat down and looked to where Kasira was still on her knees snarling at him hatefully.)

MILES: You might want to wipe that off your face, Captain.

(Kasira immediately jumped to her feet, grabbed a towel from the side then proceeded to wipe her face.)

KASIRA: Are we done? Can I give Sika the good news now? If so, please leave.

(Miles sat down and smirked at her.)

MILES: Captain, she can stay.

KASIRA: So you'll submit her second exam?

MILES: About that...

(His face then lit up.)

MILES: Sit down, Captain, I have something to tell you.

(Glowering at him still, Kasira obliged.)

MILES: It's been fun watching you jump through hoops for me. It really has. There was no need for it though. Had you been aware of the army handbook, you'd have known that her first exam was invalid.

(Kasira was livid.)

KASIRA: What?

MILES: Before you jump up and hit me, I order you to stay seated.

KASIRA: You...

MILES: Had you been aware of regulation 37, sub-section 1, you'd have known that exams must be taken under exam conditions with only her tester and captain allowed to be present.

KASIRA: Then why did you...

MILES: Hear me out. She needed seventy percent to pass. On that second exam, which I perused briefly, she easily made over ninety percent as I said. On the first, she only got seventy-one percent. That was a pass too.

KASIRA: What??? Then why did you say otherwise?

MILES: Why? There's a simple explanation for that. First, you need to know, Sika was never in danger of being removed. That was never going to happen.

KASIRA: But you sent a letter with Lassu requesting she be replaced.

MILES: Actually, that was a request for your new uniforms. You said you wanted some.

KASIRA: Are you serious??? Then why the hell have you stuck around, threatening Sika's future and getting on everyone's tits?

MILES: Simple. I wanted to wind you up.

KASIRA: Excuse me??? All this was just for poops and giggles???

MILES: Oh, god no. I was winding you up for a reason. I needed you to think Sika's transfer to the academy was a forgone conclusion. I needed you think all hope was lost. As you did.

KASIRA: Yes, I did!

MILES: I then made you jump through hoops to defend her, knowing you were getting more and more wound up.

KASIRA: Why the fuck would you do that?

MILES: Because I knew you'd end up working so hard to keep her that before long, you'd do anything to make it so. If I offered you the chance, you'd grab it. And it worked. Having worked so hard to keep her, when given an opportunity, you were so determined to succeed, you did exactly what I wanted.

(He beamed.)

MILES: You sucked my knob.

(Kasira's jaw dropped.)

MILES: That's right, you let me stick it in there.

(He then glanced to the ceiling.)

MILES: If I'd known you'd be *that* accommodating I'd have asked for a shag too. Still, it was a blow-job I needed. You see, I made a bet with that young lad, Prodi. He said you were really sexy and I stood no chance. So I bet him a pint you'd give me a blow-job. You know, voluntarily. Without any force, verbal or physical required.

(Glowering at him bitterly, Kasira replied through gritted teeth.)

KASIRA: You put me through the mill, virtually to hell and back for a blow-job???

MILES: No! Don't you listen? A pint. I bet him a pint or beer.

KASIRA: You complete bastard!

MILES: I'm not actually, but I can definitely see why you'd think so. I was extremely devious. I let you think I was going take Sika on that ship with Lassu at first, but I was never going to. I always intended to stick around for a blowjob. Thankfully you pointed out the regulation saying I couldn't. Saved me from pretending to remember it before we set out. You see, I thought such an elaborate scheme would take at least a week. Thankfully you found that bunker. That gave me the perfect opportunity to piss you off in half the time. All in all, I'd say it went perfectly.

KASIRA: You low down piece of shit, how could you?

MILES: With astonishing ease as it turned out.

(He then climbed to his feet.)

MILES: Watching you kneel before me with that disgusted look on your face, satisfied that sucking me off was a price worth paying for Sika's future, I was literally singing inside. I love it when a plan turns out perfectly. Then when you got started, well... turns out, women *are* good for something after all.

(Kasira growled at him.)

KASIRA: Get out! Get out of my base.

MILES: It's the army's base, Kasira.

KASIRA: Get out!

MILES: Will do. I fancy a brandy in the hotel bar before I turn in.

(He then headed for the door.)

MILES: Oh, I'll be heading home at noon tomorrow. But before I go I need to give you my professional assessment. That *is* why I came here, after all. Well, that and Sika's exam. Make sure everyone is attendance in the mess room by 9 am, including Nivea. Full uniform, of course.

KASIRA: Just fucking leave!!!

MILES: I'm going, I'm going. I meant what I said though. 9 am. Official army business. Set your rage aside when I get here. No lip. I'm your superior, don't you forget. You can call me what you like once I've gone, but tomorrow is an official military meeting.

Understand?

KASIRA: Yes!

MILES: Yes, what?

KASIRA: Yes, I fucking do.

MILES: Right. I'll let that slide, but in the morning you'll address me as 'sir'.

(With that, he marched out of the door. Moments later, the door shut behind him and Kasira sat there growling.)

KASIRA: Bastard. That fucking bastard.

(Her angry expression then turned to one of bewilderment.)

KASIRA: And all for a pint of beer? Wanker!

Shortly after Miles had left, Kasira went outside and bolted the gates before heading back into the building. She then headed for the bath. Fully dressed, she made her way to the edge of the bath wearing a bitter expression. Watching her snarl, her five subordinates all feared the worst.

SIKA: Well that can't be good!

CAYLEY: Just tell us, Kasira.

(Kasira yanked her top off then proceeded to unhook her bra.)

KASIRA: Sika's staying!

SIKA: I am?

KASIRA: Yes!

(At once, a loud cheer rose up and Nivea, Soapy, Cayley and Ambre all rushed to hug Sika at the same time. Throwing their arms around her, they all huddled tightly together.)

NIVEA: Best news ever!

SIKA: I know!

AMBRE: I'm really happy now.

CAYLEY: Congratulations, Sika, that's fantastic.

SOAPY: Damn right it is.

SIKA: I really thought I'd blown it then.

(As they continued to hug, Sika then grimaced at Nivea.)

SIKA: Um, Nivea... our nipples are touching.

NIVEA: I know, right? Are you as aroused as I am?

(At once, the group hug immediately broke away.)

SIKA: Nivea!!!

CAYLEY: You really *are* a twisted oddball!

NIVEA: You know me too well.

(Soapy smiled.)

SOAPY: Despite being in a bath with a weirdo, I'm really happy, Sika.

AMBRE: Me too. I really, really happy you're staying.

(Sika smiled at her then grimaced at Kasira.)

SIKA: Kasira doesn't look very happy about it.

(At once, they all looked to Kasira.)

NIVEA: I see what you mean.

(Sure enough, at the side of the bath, Kasira threw her knickers down to her ankles then kicked them over to where she'd thrown the rest of her clothes. The look on her face was that of a very angry woman indeed. Snarling, she then climbed into the bath.)

CAYLEY: What's the matter, Kasira?

NIVEA: You look positively livid.

KASIRA: I am!

AMBRE: Kasira, you've got white goo in your hair.

(Kasira just growled then sunk under the water. When she emerged a few seconds later, she swept her hair back then pouted.)

KASIRA: Has it gone?

AMBRE: I think so. What was it?

KASIRA: What was it? It was the *reason* I'm positively livid.

(Sika and Soapy shared a sideways glance.)

SOAPY: What do you mean?

KASIRA: Major Miles; Major fuck-face Miles. He had no intention of sending Sika back to the academy.

SIKA: What?

KASIRA: You passed that exam first time. Only just, but you passed.

NIVEA: What the fuck?

CAYLEY: He said she failed!

KASIRA: I know he did! That was all part of his elaborate scheme.

AMBRE: I don't get it.

KASIRA: No, but I did. Right in the face.

SIKA: He hit you?

KASIRA: No, you idiot.

(Sika pouted.)

SIKA: I only asked, there was no need to snap at me.

(Kasira took a breath to calm herself then smiled.)

KASIRA: Sorry, Sika.

CAYLEY: Kasira, what happened?

KASIRA: I'll tell you what happened. Sika was never going to be kicked out, that was a lie. He deliberately let us think that then started to wind me up on purpose.

NIVEA: Why?

KASIRA: Messing with my head. He let us all think Sika was definitely going, like there was no chance we could stop it. Then he made us jump through hoops to annoy us before letting us think there was a chance Sika could stay. It was all a scam to get me in a position where I'm thinking I'd do anything to keep Sika.

(Nivea grimaced.)

NIVEA: When you say anything, you mean *that* right.

KASIRA: Yes! After the second exam he said she could stay but only if I returned the favour. Well after all we'd been through, it seemed logical to do this one last chore. Like doing it would mean we'd won.

(She pouted.)

KASIRA: So I... so I...

NIVEA: You shagged him!

KASIRA: I sucked his dong!

(She then hung her head in shame.)

KASIRA: I'm so fucking embarrassed.

(She sighed.)

KASIRA: He then admitted Sika was never going to be kicked out. He was messing with my head so I'd be so desperate I'd do anything. And the worst part is, it was for a bet. He bet Prodi he could get me to suck him off voluntarily.

SOAPY: It was all about money?

KASIRA: No. One pint of beer. We've had a trip to hell and back over a bet for one fucking pint of beer.

(In that moment, silence descended. Everyone just stared at one another in complete bewilderment.)

SIKA: Wait, wait... he had me in tears, pulling my hair out and fearing for what my life would become... for a bet?

KASIRA: Yes.

NIVEA: That's insane. If all he wanted was a blowjob, surely all he had to do was ask you.

(Kasira glowered at her.)

KASIRA: Yeah, I'm that easy, Nivea. Sometimes they don't even have to ask; I just pop into the inn and offer free blowjobs to one and all.

NIVEA: I didn't mean that. As our superior, he could have just explained the situation and asked you for a favour.

KASIRA: I don't give those kind of favours.

NIVEA: That's not what I heard.

KASIRA: What???

(Nivea's face then started to crack and she burst out laughing.)

NIVEA: I'm so pulling your leg.

KASIRA: It's not funny, Nivea.

(Sika chuckled.)

SIKA: It kind of is, in a way.

KASIRA: In what way???

SIKA: The major is so ugly, he had to concoct a complicated and elaborate plan, just to get a blowjob. He says it was a bet for a pint of beer, but nobody's *that* thirsty.

CAYLEY: Yeah, but someone with his face *is* that desperate for female contact.

(Kasira grinned.)

KASIRA: Actually, it *is* kinda funny when you think of it like that.

SOAPY: He's the world's most desperate man.

AMBRE: It was a compliment in a way, Kasira.

KASIRA: Hardly, Ambre.

AMBRE: It is. He chose you, because you're pretty.

(Kasira smiled.)

KASIRA: Thanks, Ambre, but I think it had more to do with *his* loneliness than me being pretty.

SIKA: Codename, Major No-mates; the loneliest soldier in the army.

KASIRA: Thank fuck he's going home tomorrow.

CAYLEY: I have to ask, Kasira, weren't you tempted to bite it?

KASIRA: You have no idea. But he said Sika would definitely be out if I did.

CAYLEY: He already thought of that, huh?

KASIRA: Yeah. So I tried to get it over with as quickly as possible.

(She frowned.)

KASIRA: It took forever. I was thinking, just ejaculate, you bastard. Took over ten minutes in the end; he only asked for five.

NIVEA: What an asshole. At least tell us it was tiny, so we can laugh at him next time he comes in.

KASIRA: I'd be lying if I did.

NIVEA: Okay. Scabrous then?

KASIRA: I wouldn't have done it if it was. I'm not you!

NIVEA: Hey. I have standards too, you know?

SIKA: Could have fooled us!

SOAPY: Yeah, right. Standards? You?

(Nivea chuckled.)

NIVEA: Yes! I just set them very low.

(She then smirked at Sika and Soapy.)

NIVEA: By the way, that's more fuel for the fire.

SIKA: Fuck!

(Kasira smiled.)

KASIRA: Anyway, let's just forget it about if for now. We have to see him once more tomorrow for a proper assessment; in full uniform. Then we can forget about him. It's done. Even though Sika was never in danger of being kicked out, as far as I'm concerned, we can be bloody proud of ourselves. We fought for her, we showed how much she matters to us and I'm going to consider that a victory.

SOAPY: Yeah! I like that. It *was* a victory. We had a shit of a day today; that bunker was extremely dangerous.

CAYLEY: And we conquered it.

NIVEA: Kicked its arse.

AMBRE: We were awesome.

KASIRA: I've said it before and I'll say it again; you girl's are fucking incredible.

(Just then, Sika spoke up in a tearful voice.)

SIKA: You know...

(She took a breath to compose herself then spoke up.)

SIKA: Kasira, I blew you five hundred miles into the air not so long ago. And you were really angry; who wouldn't be? I thought I'd ruined everything at the time, like you hated me. Then today you... forgive me, I'm such a baby.

(She wiped some tears, forcing the others to well up too.)

SIKA: Just now, you said you were so desperate to keep me here, you'd do anything. You even sucked off that perverted, middle-aged tosspot, just so I could stay. You didn't know he was bluffing at the time. I never thought *anybody* would go to such lengths just for me.

(Kasira looked to her with quivering lips.)

KASIRA: Sika, I just... fuck it, come here.

(She then threw her arms around her and allowed Sika to cry her happy tears on her shoulder.)

KASIRA: You're worth it, sweetheart.

SIKA: I know, but most people would never go out on a limb for me. Most people are jealous of my awesomeness and want shot of me, not you. You recognise greatness when you see it...

(Kasira then pushed her out of the hug.)

KASIRA: You're so full of crap.

SIKA: Hey, don't ruin the moment.

KASIRA: I never said you were full of crap in a bad way.

SIKA: What?

KASIRA: Just never stop being you. Any of you. Seriously, never change.

AMBRE: Does that mean I can't be a gazelle anymore?

KASIRA: When we're in the bath, yes!

AMBRE: Okay. But will you still take me for a frolic on the hillside when I'm bored?

KASIRA: Yes. Ambre, I meant don't change your *personality*. You girls are bloody brilliant as you are.

AMBRE: Soapy's even better as a fish.

SOAPY: What?

AMBRE: Fishy.

SOAPY: Right.

KASIRA: See? Without your silly conversations, the world would be a duller place by far.

(She then nodded sternly.)

KASIRA: Fuck it. Let's have a girly moment. We deserve one. Sika's staying, guys!

(At once, they all cheered again then swarmed Sika for a group hug again.)

SIKA: Keep your nipples at a safe distance, Nivea!!!

NIVEA: I'm promising nothing!!!

SOAPY: See, this is why I hate boobs! They get in the way of a good hug, every time.

SIKA: No, they don't

NIVEA: Yours don't. She was referring to *big* boobs.

SIKA: Mine *are* big. And they're in proportion!

NIVEA: They would be if you were four-foot, six-inches tall.

SIKA: Besides, mine aren't the smallest. Cayley's...

CAYLEY: Really, Sika? Every blooming time!

SIKA: Sorry. She was winding me up. And now her nipples are touching mine again.

NIVEA: It's quite deliberate, you know that, right?

SIKA: Animal!

KASIRA: Girls, can we just have a nice, girly moment for once without you two starting?

SIKA: Sorry.

(Silenced then descended as they continued to hug.)

NIVEA: Just to counter this girly moment, does anyone mind if I have a manly moment?

KASIRA: Don't fart in the bath!

NIVEA: Too late.

(With that, they all pulled back from the hug and started to laugh.)

SIKA: Nivea, you suck!

NIVEA: No, Kasira sucks, ask Major Miles.

(Kasira immediately glowered at her, forcing her to sink backwards uncomfortably.)

NIVEA: What? Too soon.

(As the glower continued to come, she then glanced away innocently.)

NIVEA: Yup, way too soon.

The next morning at nine o'clock, as instructed, the ladies of the 123rd regiment - wraith containment unit, were all present in the mess room. To accommodate Nivea, some of the windows and the skylight had been covered over.

Dressed in their uniforms, they were all standing in a line with Major Miles pacing in front of them. Despite the fact he knew they were all clued in about his deception, he didn't even feel the slightest bit uncomfortable. He could tell Kasira was still miffed as were some of the others, but he was entirely unfazed by it. As far as he was concerned, this was official army business and nothing other than their full compliance would be tolerated. Kasira, was also keen for the occasion to be as formal as possible. As such, she'd unlocked the gate an hour early and had everyone standing to attention as soon as they heard it crank open. She simply wanted the major to say his piece and leave. With this in mind, she'd ordered the girls to be on their best behaviour, just so they could get rid of him quicker. Much to her annoyance, however, he'd been with them for a full minute and had done nothing but pace up and down before them with his hands behind his back. Starting to think he may never speak, she furrowed her brow, when suddenly, he stopped pacing and stood tall.)

MILES: Well done, ladies. The uniforms are immaculate.

(He looked to Cayley.)

MILES: Your doing?

CAYLEY: We all do the washing, sir.

MILES: But mostly it's you, right?

(Cayley blushed.)

CAYLEY: Yes, sir.

MILES: I thought so. You're such a housewife.

CAYLEY: Thank you, sir.

MILES: You're welcome.

(He then started to pace again.)

MILES: Despite the silliness of those uniforms, you're exceptionally well-turned out. That's good. A little bewildering though. You're all considerably taller than you were yesterday.

(He puffed out.)

MILES: How you walk in those shoes, I will never know.

(He then stepped up to Nivea.)

MILES: Let's start with you, shall we?

NIVEA: Me, sir? Start what, sir?

MILES: The assessment.

(He nodded.)

MILES: Corporal, you've impressed me. You're fearless in battle from what I've seen. I'm most impressed.

(Hearing compliments, they all leant forwards and looked along the line wearing baffled expressions.)

MILES: No, I haven't gone mad. I've given you grief these last few days for a reason. It's my job to make you work, not to nurse you. If you think I was harsh, I don't care. It's the military way.

(Not about to remind him that his harshness had nothing to do with the military way and was all a means to winning a bet for a pint of beer, Nivea stood tall and said nothing.)

MILES: Just because I was tough with you, doesn't mean I wasn't assessing you fairly, based on what I saw. Nivea, you came here to be a soldier and you very much are one. You enjoy a joke but when it matters you're right on your game. I like that. When I get back to HQ, I'm recommending you for promotion to sergeant.

(Nivea was astonished.)

NIVEA: Thank you, sir.

MILES: Don't thank me, it's my job to reward talent.

(He then stepped to one side and looked to Soapy.)

MILES: You're fifteen.

SOAPY: I know, sir!

MILES: Then how come you have the fighting ability of a seasoned, thirty-year-old veteran?
(Soapy beamed.)

SOAPY: I don't know, sir.

MILES: I do. You're a natural. You've got a brilliant future ahead of you, and I mean brilliant. You're a true military asset.

(He nodded.)

MILES: I take it you haven't done your level 10 test yet.

SOAPY: No, sir.

MILES: And you never will. What you did in the underground bunker was harder than the level 10 test. Consider yourself a level 10. The certificate will follow. As will your promotion to corporal.

(Everyone gasped.)

MILES: Don't be surprised. This one will be a commander or lieutenant by the time she's twenty. I've never seen potential like it.

(He then stepped sideways and looked to Cayley.)

MILES: Sergeant, or Captain as you're about to become, not only are you a great support to your leader, but you have your unit very much at heart. Every unit needs that one person they can lean on from time to time and you perform that role better than anyone.

CAYLEY: Thank you, sir. I really don't need the promotion though, sir. I'm extremely happy with how things are.

MILES: And that modesty makes you what you are. Don't worry, it's just a change in title and wages, nothing will change.

CAYLEY: Then I accept. Thank you, sir.

MILES: You're very welcome.

(He then stepped sideways and stood before Ambre.)

AMBRE: Morning, sir.

(Miles grinned.)

MILES: Morning, Private.

(He then bit his lip.)

MILES: Where do I even begin? Ambre, you're what the army cruelly call an expendable. Someone they can't train then ship off to a unit, simply to get rid of. Most expendables die on their first wraith patrol. Some run away and live on the street, others are lucky enough to be kept, unused in battle until they retire.

(Ambre hung her head.)

AMBRE: I did try in training, sir.

MILES: Yes, I know. I read your file. You failed miserably then were rushed through the tests, as expendables are, and sent here, full in the expectation that you wouldn't last five minutes.

(He puffed out.)

MILES: Now look at you. What your kind do to pass level nine, you could do in your sleep. An expendable? It's almost impossible to believe. Private, I've never seen a swift-human with so much control. You can even make your Saxum heal itself! And I've never seen anybody capable of controlling the minds of the wraiths before either. You've surpassed everything I've seen your race do.

(He then gave her a sorrowful smile.)

MILES: I can't give you a promotion though, I'm afraid. It makes no sense to put you in a position where you may outrank someone, as giving orders wouldn't be something you'd be good at.

(Ambre pouted.)

AMBRE: I understand, sir.

MILES: I tell you what though, you'll be getting your level 10 certificate for certain.

(At once, her jaw dropped and tears welled in her eyes. The level 10 certificate was something she'd only ever dreamed of having. It had always seemed an impossibility, something she'd never even come *close* to receiving. It was something she'd thought was beyond her reach, something only other people could achieve. Miles had no idea, but in that moment, he'd made her happy beyond words. She could only reply in a tearful voice.)

AMBRE: Thank you. Thank you, sir.

MILES: Like I said before, don't thank me for recognising your work. You've overcome immense hardness in your life, private, you've had an uphill struggle since the day you were born. I read it in your file. It's a truly harrowing read. But now look at you.

(He then placed a firm hand on her shoulder.)

MILES: You, Ambre, are an inspiration. When I'm not assessing units, I do lectures at headquarters. I teach the trainers everything they know. Next time, I'm telling them your story. The no-hoper, sent to a unit as an expendable, who despite her difficulties, mastered her fighting style beyond that of anybody else in her entire race. You're a fucking hero. And in recognition of this, I'm recommending you for an outstanding military achievement award, one of the highest accolades a soldier can't get.

(At once, the faces of everyone around Ambre lit up and they beamed at her joyously. They then pouted and started to well-up. Ambre was so overcome with emotion, tears were rolling down her face and she could barely speak. To have everything she'd achieved recognised by a high-ranking officer had validated her very existence. In that moment, he'd washed away any nagging doubts she had about herself and had proven once and for all that she was an important member of society; not the screw up she'd been raised to believe she was.)

SIKA: Permission to hug Ambre, sir?

MILES: Denied!

(Ambre then managed to squeak out a reply.)

AMBRE: Thank you, sir.

(At once, a loud cry of "aw" filled the air from Ambre's five unit-mates. Miles rolled his eyes.)

MILES: Yes, yes, she's very cute. Let's move on, shall we?

(He then stepped in front of Sika.)

MILES: Ah, yes, you. The screw up.

SIKA: Sir?

MILES: You blew up your commanding officer!

SIKA: She blew you too, I heard.

(In that moment, her shoulders slumped.)

SIKA: I can't help myself, sir. Shall I pack my bags now?

MILES: God no. If Kasira wants you, she can keep you. I don't see why another unit should have to suffer.

SIKA: Thank you, sir.

MILES: You, Private Owsley, are loud, conceited and annoying.

(Miles then started to chuckle.)

MILES: But you're bloody amusing. You remind me off a chap I was posted with when I was your age. A barely adequate soldier, but he always had us in stitches. Believe it not, I like you. For that reason alone, you can have a level 10 certificate too. I can't criticise you for what I saw of you in that bunker. You earned it. You can forget getting a promotion though.

(Sika was horrified.)

SIKA: But sir, if you don't promote me, Soapy will outrank me. I won't hear the last of it. She's the boastful sort, you see?

MILES: Good for her, she has a lot to boast about.

(He then nodded sternly.)

MILES: No promotion this time, Sika, sorry. But if you keep working on your behaviour and lose some of the attitude, I'm sure you'll get one in time.

SIKA: Sir! Okay, no promotion. Can I get a pay-rise though?

MILES: And still you're making jokes.

SIKA: I wasn't.

(Miles furrowed his brow at her.)

MILES: Put a sock in it. Seriously, Private, you have potential. You just need to work on that attitude of yours! Okay?

(Sika pouted.)

SIKA: Sir.

MILES: Good.

(He then stepped before Kasira. Receiving a stern glance in return, he then furrowed his brow.)

MILES: Problem, Captain?

KASIRA: No, sir.

MILES: Good.

(He nodded.)

MILES: When I get back on the lecture circuit, Captain, I'm going to tell people about *you* as well.

(Kasira snarled at him.)

MILES: No, I'm not going to tell them about *that*! Well, maybe some of the lads. I'm going to tell people about your technique. I'll tell them how you've never once tried to dominate your unit. Never tried to rule it with an iron fist. Then I can tell them why I approve. You give your unit the freedom to be themselves, to take part in this war, not as a number, but as someone who matters. A lot of leaders don't understand the wisdom in that. What you've achieved by being a human being before a leader, is an environment where your soldiers are happy. They're happy in their everyday lives and happy to follow you into battle. Battles during which they're extremely competent, largely because of your faith in them.

(He nodded.)

MILES: You retire in a few months, Kasira, and if the head of the army doesn't come here in person to beg you to stay on, he's a fucking wombat. A complete arse-clown. This unit is what it is because of your leadership style. To that end, I'm promoting you beyond brigadier to commander. Two promotions, double the pay, almost.

(Kasira's mouth fell open.)

KASIRA: Thank you, Major.

MILES: I'm not doing it for you. I'm doing it for the army. Anything that may convince you to stay on. Kasira, the job you're doing is immense.

(He then stepped back to address them all.)

MILES: Ladies of the 123rd regiment, wraith containment unit, in my brief time observing you, despite my behaviour to the contrary, I've been extremely impressed. In battle, you're united and fight for each other. Away from battle, you're like a family. Your leader is a genius.

(He then looked to Sika.)

MILES: Enough pissing about. You're the weak link. Work on it. Stop bragging about being great and strive to become it.

SIKA: Sir.

(He then looked to the beaming Ambre.)

MILES: You're a fucking star, you are, Ambre. To have that level of control over your Saxum is truly unprecedented.

(He grinned.)

MILES: Maybe I shouldn't be overly surprised that you can connect with a rock on an intellectual level but even so. Impressive.

AMBRE: Yay! I mean thank you, Mr Miles.

MILES: Right.

(He then nodded sternly.)

MILES: I shall now take my leave. My suitcase won't pack itself.

(He then saluted, prompting everyone to do the same.)

MILES: Dismiss!!!

(With that, he headed straight for the door. As he did so, everyone stood perfectly still and watched him go. Before passing through the door the major then paused and turned round.)

MILES: Oh, and by the way. I'd just like to say thank you. It's not often a unit greets me with a three vagina salute and I thoroughly appreciated that.

(He then left the building, chuckling to himself. As he did so, everyone immediately rushed around Ambre.)

SIKA: Babe, that's a huge deal that medal.

SOAPY: They don't give many out.

KASIRA: See, Ambre? You never have to worry about being left out. If you are, it's only a co-incidence. You, sweetheart, are a bloody good soldier. You heard the major.

NIVEA: Yeah, from now on, if anyone is mean about you being slow, ignore them. The army know better.

(Ambre beamed.)

AMBRE: I'm level ten now.

SIKA: Me too. How awesome is that?

SOAPY: Sika, you got yours purely because you made him chuckle.

SIKA: No, I didn't, you idiot.

SOAPY: Don't call me an idiot!

SIKA: Sorry, I meant dickhead.

(Soapy then smirked knowingly.)

SOAPY: Stop that right now, private. That's an order!

(Sika was aghast.)

SIKA: You... don't you... she pulled rank.

SOAPY: Because I can.

(Just then, she felt an almighty clump around the head.)

KASIRA: So can I. Now pack it in.

(Soapy pouted at Sika.)

SOAPY: That was your fault.

SIKA: Oh, shut up was it.

NIVEA: I think she should have clouted both of you.

SIKA: Why me?

SOAPY: Because you're a numpty.

SIKA: How dare you?

(As they stood there arguing, Cayley chuckled then looked to Kasira.)

CAYLEY: So that's your secret, is it? The thing that makes you such a good leader.

KASIRA: What is?

CAYLEY: The way you've fostered an atmosphere of peace and harmony among the ranks.

(Watching them all argue, Kasira chuckled.)

KASIRA: Apparently so.

THE END

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Completed – 12/02/2016.