

Chapter One Hundred and Four—Monkey Business

“Are you unwell, your highness?” the monkey asked, concern in his voice. “Guard, go find the healer at once!”

“I’m fine,” I quickly said, looking up. “Just confused. Why am I your queen, again?”

“Our goddess, Brook, foretold your coming and urged us to place you in power. Of course we obeyed her.”

That name instantly set off alarms in my head. “Brook? What does she look like?”

“Who are we to look upon a goddess, my queen? Her voice is pleasing and kind. She is a loving goddess and looked over us as the spiders rose in power. We have survived and thrived with her teachings. And of course, shadowdancing and other magics have helped as well.”

“...You’re going to explain most of that later. Where are my companions? And why did you kidnap me?”

“We did not kidnap you, my queen. We saved you! That monstrous lizard sought to eat you. His scales are currently eluding us, but when we find a way to pierce them, he’ll be punished for what he almost did.”

My eyes opened wide. “No! Take me to him right now!”

The guards shared a look behind the older one’s back. The one also seemed taken aback. “Are you sure, my queen? He is dangerous and already broke free from two cells. We had to chain him to the floor using some of our precious metal supplies.”

“Take me to him,” I said again, putting an edge in my voice.

He looked rather down, but nodded and turned to one of the guards. “Run ahead. Tell them the queen wants to inspect the prisoner.”

“Yes, vizier,” the guard said with a nod. Then he turned to me and bowed before scrambling down the hall to our right.

“This is definitely going to cut into our schedule,” the older dude sighed, starting to walk down the hall. I followed, since I didn’t know the way at all.

“It’s my first day. I’m sure they’ll understand.”

“You haven’t even eaten yet, your highness! Or met with suitors, or your advisors, or spoke to the commoners... I understand that it is your first day, but you should set a good example for the coming years!”

“I will, don’t you worry.” *Break Spike out and fly the fuck away from here. Get my ship and crew, come back and get my stuff and the water elemental. And of course, find out why the fuck Flo isn’t talking to me.* “So how long was I asleep?”

“Two or three days, my queen. We suspected you would be asleep longer. Most of those that hit with our poisons are asleep for at least a week.”

“You said you have the dra—Er, lizard. What about the rest? All the ponies?”

“Our shadowdancers were ordered to secure only you, my queen. The lizard already had you in his grasp, so he was carried as well.”

“Hm. What about my belongings? What I was wearing when you brought me here?”

“They were hardly fit for a queen, but we decided to save them in case you had any sentimental value on them. We left them in the chamber of our goddess, as she requested.”

“As good a place as any, I suppose. Though I’d much rather have them on me. Better than this... dress.”

“Would you prefer skirts, your majesty?” he asked. “We weren’t certain, so we had plenty of both made.”

“I’d prefer steel. Armor. Something protective. And pants. I mean, I like showing off as much as the next guy, but I really don’t want all of you trying to peek up my dress.”

“We would never disrespect you so, my queen!” the guy said.

“I’m sure. The point remains that I want my armor back. And my weapons.”

“You will never need such instruments of violence again, my queen. We are here to guard you and die for you, if need be.”

“I’d prefer you live for me, thank you. How far away is this prison? I don’t want Spike getting hurt.”

“We would not keep the prison next to the royal chambers, my queen.”

“That’s actually really comforting. What about the armory and the barracks?”

“Those are kept well away from anywhere an escaping prisoner might run. Well, most escaping prisoners. This lizard is proving very resilient. It took us nearly an hour to corner him the second time he broke free.”

“Hm.”

“You needn’t fear, your majesty,” the vizier quickly said. “We will not let him harm you.”

“I imagine that I could probably protect myself against Spike better than ten of your soldiers ever could,” I said. “Even without my weapons and armor.”

“...A bold boast. One that will never need to be proven, as he will not harm you. He is well muzzled, after all.”

“If he’s muzzled, how are you feeding him?” I asked, dreading the answer.

“We aren’t, of course.” *God fucking dammit. I’m so sorry, Spike...* “He’s hardly been cooperative. But I hasten to assure you, aside from a few beatings that I honestly don’t think he really felt through his scales, his torture hasn’t truly begun. You will be free to watch, if you desire.”

I’m starting to seriously dislike these fucking monkeys. I held my displeasure in check, though; no reason to risk turning them hostile or trying to imprison me for ‘my own good.’ I’d play their little game for some time, see who the players were and what was going on.

Still, I decided to stop talking so these things didn’t push me too far. I’d hate to explode on them in raw rage. So the rest of the walk to Spike’s cell was in silence.

When we got to a large stone door—most of everything in that place was made of wood, by the way—the vizier stopped me. “Are you sure you want to see him, your majesty? There are more pleasant things we could be doing.”

“Open the door, vizier, or you will be joining him in his cell.”

He sighed and shrugged, then waved the guard to the door. “So be it, your majesty.” The guard walked up and used the butt of his spear to knock on the door. A few seconds later, it opened inward. “Is the prisoner well-contained?”

“Yes, grand vi—My queen!” The guard within immediately bowed low. I rolled my eyes and pushed past them both, entering the prison.

Two of the cells (with wooden bars) were blackened and destroyed, looking like a bomb went off within them. And only one of them was occupied, with a number of guards standing outside the cell, whispering and looking in. None were looking my way as I walked over, though the vizier fellow quickly fixed that by saying, “Stand aside for your queen!”

They all looked over with wide eyes, then slowly looked to me. And of course, then they all started bowing and shoving each other to get out of my way. Since most of them came up to my knee or so, I just stepped over them, not caring if they were looking or not. I stopped in front of the cell, sighing when I saw Spike.

He was lying on his side, facing away from the cell door. Some of his spines seemed to have been broken or damaged. His tail was limp, stuck on the ground. He was very dirty and seemed to have some blood on him. The scales that normally shined currently lacked their luster, dull in the poor light of the cell. And there was a collar around his neck, chaining him to the floor.

“Open the door,” I said.

“Your majesty?” the guard closest to me slowly said.

I looked down at him and saw that he had a key ring and was presumably the jailor. “Did I stutter? Open this door.”

“Y-yes, your majesty.” Spike seemed to shift when he heard my voice, but didn’t move that much. The monkey quickly picked out the correct key and pushed the door open. Two guards immediately entered before me, their spears raised.

“Do not touch him,” I said, stepping in. The guards stopped, but warily watched Spike’s immobile form. I gently put a bare foot on his side and rolled him onto his back. He looked up at me with eyes full of fear. As soon as he saw it was me, what I could see of his mouth turned up in a smile. “Remove his collar and his muzzle at once,” I said.

“It’s not safe!” the jailor quickly said.

I whirled on him, my eyes narrowed, my fists clenched, and my wings shooting out. The jailor backed up, eyes wide in fear. “I am not a princess, to be coddled and led around on a leash! I am your *queen*, to be respected and obeyed! You will release this dragon at once or so help me, I will take one of these spears and put you on display as a wall ornament!”

“It’s just... he escaped twice already, your majesty!” the vizier said. “He’s dangerous!”

“He. Is my. Bodyguard. He escaped because he thought you kidnapped me! He wasn’t behind me to eat me, he was behind me to protect me! He was trying to save me, you stupid fucking monkeys! Now release him!”

The vizier visibly paled and nodded so quickly I thought he might break his neck. “Do as she commands!” The jailor practically jumped to obey, removing the collar first and then the muzzle.

I knelt down next to Spike when he didn’t move. “How you feelin’, man?” I asked, putting my hand on his shoulder.

“Not... not too good, Nav,” he croaked.

“Be respectful,” one of the guards said, poking him with the spear butt.

“You touch him with that again, I’m jamming it up your ass,” I growled, narrowing my eyes at the guard. He immediately backed up, all the way to the wall. “Can you walk?” I asked Spike.

“Don’t know...”

I nodded and gently grabbed him, lifting him up. The monkeys all gasped as I stood, carrying him. “Don’t exert yourself, your majesty!” the vizier shouted. Several guards stepped up, trying to grab the dragon from my grasp.

“Get away from him!” I shouted. They all jumped back as if stung as I turned to the vizier. “It’s time your goddess and I had a talk. Lead the way to her chamber.”

“You... you aren’t scheduled to meet with her for another few hours, your majesty!”

“I’m rescheduling to right now. Lead. The. Way.”

He gulped and nodded. “Right this way, your highness...” He started walking out. I followed, carrying Spike. All the guards clustered around me, ready to act in case Spike tried pulling anything. Personally, I had a feeling that none of them were expecting the day to go as it had. After all, queens are supposed to be demure and rule through kindness and gentleness, right? Not threats of violence.

“What’s going on?” Spike asked, his voice hoarse from too much fire and not enough water.

“Save your strength,” I told him. “Just rest.”

“Sounds... good,” he sighed, resting his head against my chest.

I looked down to some of the guards. “You two. Go to the kitchens. Have food and water sent to the room of your goddess. Spike and I shall eat breakfast with her, I believe.”

“Yes, your highness,” they both said, bowing and then running off.

“Gonna get you fed, Spike. And you better believe that water elemental’s gonna fix you right up. Then answer several fucking questions.” He didn’t reply. Sadly, I couldn’t really talk too much about plans with the monkeys all around us, because most of my plans involved getting Spike fixed, getting my shit, and then leaving. Even if I could talk about them, though, he didn’t seem to be paying too much attention.

After about a minute of walking, the vizier said, “This creature is your... bodyguard, majesty?”

“Yes. He broke out of your prison so he could find me and protect me.”

“...I see. I... apologize for keeping him from you. Had we known...”

“Now you do. And it isn’t me you need to apologize to.”

“Hm. We will need to inform your suitors. Some might be less interested if they are aware your personal guard is a beast of such power.”

“First, suitors are unnecessary. Second, Spike’s probably more cultured than you are. Third, how many suitors do I even have?”

“I believe the last count was around thirty, your highness. And of course they’re necessary! How else will you learn our customs? Mingle with our people? And of course, you will need someone to warm your bed, will you not?”

“I already have a lover.”

“But he is not here, is he? Your old life of hardship is left behind, your highness. You are our queen, now. There is no need for you to hold onto the past.”

Man, fuck this shit. Time for a gamble. “No, my lover is definitely here. I’m holding him in my arms.” Everyone in the hall immediately stopped, staring at me. Most had wide-open mouths. “Yes, Spike is my partner. I suggest you remember very carefully what you did to him, vizier. Because if he’s feeling vindictive, I feel sorry for you.”

“Y-yes, your m-m-majesty...”

“Now, did I tell you to stop? Lead the way. And the next chance you get, tell those suitors that I am taken.”

“...Yes, my queen.” We continued walking in silence until he finally asked, seeming slightly less depressed, “My queen, I have a question, and my apologies if I offend. But I just realized that we don’t even know your name. Would you please grace us with it?”

“My name is Navarone, vizier. I will learn all the names of my advisors later, when my mind is not filled with concern.”

“Of course, your highness.” Thankfully, he shut up then and didn’t speak again until we were before an extremely ornate door with two guards in silk armor that watched us approach warily. “Our queen wishes to approach the goddess for a miracle,” the vizier said.

“Goddess Brook is not accepting—” I walked up and kicked the flimsy doors open, nearly off their hinges, and strode inside. Both of the guards jumped in front of me before I could get too far, holding their spears up as high as they could get them.

“I will beat you to death with a dragon if you do not get those motherfucking spears out of my goddamn face!”

“Guards, leave us,” the gentle voice of a water elemental said. “I believe Queen Navarone and I have things to discuss.”

“Yes, goddess,” one of them said before they both left, looking down.

I waited until they closed the broken doors as best they could before saying, “Come out, elemental, and heal Spike.”

Brook slowly slid out of some kind of enclosure at the far end of the room before forming into a humanoid water elemental. “I suspected you knew what I was,” she commented as we moved toward each other.

“Gee, I wonder if the water elemental in my head had anything to do with that.”

“...Yes, that was my first hint. Flo is very protective of you. I was unable to expel her from your body, but I believe I made her too weary to interfere for some time.”

“Help Spike and then explain yourself,” I said, setting the poor dragon on the floor.

She made no move toward him. “If you have an elemental in your mind, I suspect you know that we can’t help others for free.”

“What do you want, sex? That was Flo’s price. If that’s what you desire, so be it.”

“No, I have no need of companionship,” she said, slowly sliding up to me, skirting around Spike. “I have questions. Questions I believe that you might be able to answer. And of course, I will require that you be a proper queen to these monkeys.”

“I will answer your questions, elemental. But do not think for a moment I will stay here when my crew comes for me. Because they *will* be coming. Honestly, I’m surprised they haven’t teleported here already, but they have another water elemental host, so they can track you. We’re here for you, Brook. And we aren’t planning on leaving without you.”

“We shall see about that. *I* keep these poor monkeys alive in this hostile realm. It was *I* that based their society off ancient human customs. And it was I that sent them for you, human. I have questions and you will answer them, and I may answer yours.” She turned her head down to Spike. “I suppose that is fair pay for now. I despise allowing others to suffer.” With that, she broke her form, landing on top of Spike. Seconds later, she was fully absorbed into his body, also cleaning all the dirt and blood off him. In no time at all, the damage present on his body fixed itself, restoring him to mostly pristine condition, minus the lack of food or water.

I knelt down next to him again as the water elemental seeped out and he sat up, rubbing at his head. “How you feelin’, Spike?” I asked, putting a hand on his shoulder.

He blinked a few times, then remembered where he was. When he looked up and saw me, both of his arms immediately wrapped around me. “Oh thank Celestia, you’re okay!”

“Don’t thank Celestia,” I said, hugging him back.

“I was so scared, Nav...”

“You did just fine, Spike,” I said.

“They... they hurt me so much...”

Man, if he’s whining about a few beatings, it’s good they didn’t figure out how to get through his scales. “You’re safe now,” I said. “I won’t let them hurt you.”

“I know. I... I saw you scaring them off. Thank you so much, Nav.”

“You’d do the same.” *And I got you into this mess anyway...* I gently pushed him back. He seemed very reluctant to let me go, but did so anyway. When he saw what I was wearing, he blinked. “We’re in a bit of a mess here,” I said.

“Nav, why are you wearing a dress?”

“Because I don’t know where my armor is and this is all these fucking monkeys are giving me. They think I’m a queen.”

“...Huh. You look... pretty.”

“Shut the fuck up or the water elemental will have to heal you again.” He giggled. “Yeah, laugh it up all you want. When we get back, I’ll get Rarity to make you a maid outfit and you can practice with the naga in that.”

“...I bet I’d be pretty, too.”

I just sighed, shaking my head. “Go open the door and see if there’s any food out there. If there is, grab it and bring it in here.”

His eyes lit up at the mention of food. “You got it! They haven’t given me anything in *days*.” That said, he jumped off the floor and walked over the door, tail wagging excitedly.

“Always so easy to please,” I muttered, turning back to the elemental. “Where’s my stuff? My armor and my weapons?” *And more importantly, my radio.*

“You will get them back after our talk,” she said. “Come, sit.” She waved a hand over to a small lounge area that looked like it was made for me. I shrugged and walked over, with her following me. She couldn’t sit, but I could, and did. “That’s not very... ladylike,” she commented, looking down to where I was probably flashing my parts to anyone that felt like looking.

“Give me my armor and it won’t be a problem,” I said, not moving.

“*You* are not in a position of power here, human. I gave you the status of queen. You will either act like it or I will take over once more, treating you as even more of a figurehead than was planned. Which will involve marrying a suitor, of course. I will allow you to pretend that this dragon is your lover for now, but should you misbehave, he will be taken from you. And you better be ready to back up your claims that he’s your lover, or he will be taken anyway.”

“I will not let him be tortured, elemental. And neither would you, if Flo was telling the truth about water elementals.” That didn’t stop me from adjusting my position to a more proper one, though.

“The past is dead, Navarone. Which brings me to my first question. Why are you here? Why, after so many years, does a human return to us?”

“Does the name Anonymous ring any bells to you?”

Her color went from blue to orange instantly. “I haven’t heard it in some time, but yes. It is familiar. Wait...” Her body surged forward so she could stare better at me. “...Navarone. I know that name. There were records of you.” She slowly pulled back to her original position. “But Navarone is not female.”

“Yeah, I’m not. But I have some magic stones that change gender. It just so happens that those spider bastards hate men. It was advantageous for me to be a woman, so I used the stones. Since we have spiders on board now and I don’t want them betraying me, I stayed this way. All this talk of me being a queen should be me as a king.”

“But you are *not*, so a queen you shall be.”

“You have to realize that I’m not going to stay here. As I said, my crew is coming for me. And they might well be teleporting to me, as soon as they realize I’m awake.”

“Impossible. These monkeys have... some manner of magic. It’s a fickle thing, but it

allows for kinds of enchantments. You will not be teleported for some time, Navarone. Long enough for them to assume you're dead."

"Either way, *they're coming for me*. Because they know where you are. We're on a quest to free the elementals, and you're the one we're here to pick up. So you can stop them from teleporting here, but don't think you'll stop them from getting here."

"I feared as much. I felt one of my sisters moving more than any have in years. I will not leave. And neither will you. Your friends may visit, but you are not allowed to leave with them."

My eyes narrowed slightly. "We'll see about that."

"If you value your dragon friend, there is no option here. I left a certain parting gift in him. If you attempt to leave, or misbehave too much, I will shut down his brain."

My face paled in horror. "You... A water elemental wouldn't do that! You're supposed to be kind, loving, a friend to all life!"

"I am a friend to these monkeys, Navarone. They need a ruler. Preferably a human one, so they can learn their history and the greatness of humans properly. And you will demonstrate that greatness."

Before I could reply, Spike walked back over with a large platter of fruits and two pitchers of water. "These bananas are pretty good," he said, talking with his mouth full. "You should try some, Nav."

"...I'm not hungry. Sit, Spike." He shrugged and walked over to the couch, plopping down next to me. Since there was a table in front of us, he sat the platter and the water on it. "Alright, I got some strange news for you," I said.

"I'm listening."

"We're pretending to be lovers."

He blinked a few times before shrugging. "Alright, whatever. Not like we have to kiss or anything."

"Incorrect, dragon," the elemental said. "The two of you will do many romantic things together."

"Hold on, now," I said. "I'm okay with doing a lot of things. Kissing, sure. Hugging, eh. Sucking him off, if he buys me dinner first. But I have a girlfriend that would probably kill us both if we fucked."

"How many monkeys do you think will be watching whatever you do in your room, Navarone?" she asked. "As long as you make noises and mess up the sheets, who are they to know?"

"Good."

Spike shrugged and turned to me. "What does 'sucking off' mean?"

"Your penis in my mouth."

"Oh. Wait, what?!" His face was lit up a bright red and his little ear spine things drooped low.

"Not important, because you don't have any money. Basically, sounds like we're just

gonna be kissing occasionally, maybe holding hands. Little stuff.”

“...Oh. Well, I guess I *did* need some practice. Just... don’t tell Kumani.”

“You’re okay with this?” I asked, somewhat shocked.

“Well, it’ll be weird. I mean, you’re my best friend. But you’re a girl now, so it’s okay. And holding hands isn’t so bad, so it shouldn’t be too bad.”

“Bah. We’ve had your talk, water. Where are my belongings? And Spike’s?”

“In a moment. Should you not join your lover in eating? It has been days since you last ate, has it not?”

“I don’t need to eat that much.”

“That was not an offer, Navarone,” Brook said. “Prove to me that you can behave as lovers do.”

My eyes narrowed slightly. “There are different kind of lovers. Those that are playful and full of life. Those that are reserved and more laid back. Why would we need to be playful, to do all those silly things couples do?”

“Because it is expected, Navarone. Monkey couples are close. They feed each other. They help each other. They’re almost always touching. To deprive a lover of his partner is considered a great injustice. And if a couple is hands-off and as reserved as the two of you, it will be a sign that there is a great strain on your relationship. A strain that a possible suitor might attempt to worsen.”

“This is just getting ridiculous, water. I’m a *queen*. If I tell them to jump, they will be in the air before they ask how high. Why is all of this necessary?”

“To set a good example. And remember who holds your fate.”

I grit my teeth and turned to the platter, grabbing a slice of cut melon. “Open wide, *dear*,” I forced out, turning to Spike. He seemed to flinch when he saw the look on my face, but opened his mouth. As I moved the melon in close, his tongue snaked out and snatched the fruit away. “I gotta say this, at least: I will never get over how cool dragon tongues are.”

“Doppel always seemed to like it, at least,” he answered with a shrug. “So do I just... put one of these to your mouth?” he asked, grabbing a slice of fruit.

“Yeah.” He shrugged and did so, feeding it to me. We did that and got slightly more inventive until the platter was empty. I didn’t feel any more full, but he seemed content, at least. And he seemed even better when he drained one of the pitchers down. “Now can we get our things?” I asked the water.

“Very well. But you are not to carry any of your weapons or wear your armor, Navarone. You are a queen. You have a bodyguard and soldiers. You do not need to protect yourself.” *What, no assassins?*

“Whatever. Spike still needs his shit if he wants to protect me.”

“Indeed he does. Come, both of you.” I sighed and stood, popping my neck. “That behavior is unbecoming of a queen.”

Eat a dick, bitch. “I’ll try to remember that,” I lied.

“See that you do.” She started leading us to one of the corners. When she got there, she stuck a pole of water through a hole. A few seconds later, a secret wall clicked open, revealing all of our things on shelves.

I smiled darkly upon seeing my things and immediately considered testing Excalibur on an elemental, but decided against it. After all, Spike’s life was on the line. So instead, I passed the ancient sword to Spike. “If I can’t use this right now, you can,” I said. “And I’d rather have someone wielding it than it collecting dust.”

“Uh. Alright. But I do have more practice with that one you gave me...”

“Doesn’t matter too much. You can also hold onto the gun and the mags, since you don’t have your crossbow. But you better not damage it, you hear?”

“I’ll be careful, I promise.” I nodded and pulled out my armor, completely undamaged. In the pockets were the magazines, some human weapons, the radio, and a few other items. I decided not to go through that, in case Brook didn’t know what it contained. Since I couldn’t wear it at the moment, I tossed it over a shoulder and grabbed Spike’s sword and shield.

“Hm.” When I touched Spike’s sword, I started thinking back. “Did I ever tell you how I got this thing?” I asked, pulling the blade slightly out of the sheath.

“I don’t think so.”

“Well, it’s not really important. But the ship we have used to be owned by pirates, as I think I told you. One of them had this on them. I think it was one of the ones I killed, actually. Either way, the dead hardly need their belongings, so I relieved him of it.”

“That’s kinda morbid,” he said, looking at the sword with distaste.

“Yeah,” I said with a shrug, handing it to him. He just hooked the belt over a shoulder, since Excalibur was on his side. Then I gave him the shield, which he put over his back. “You ready?” I asked.

“Well, if I’m your... lover, shouldn’t I be carrying your burdens?”

“Yes, he should,” Brook said. “Give him your armor, Navarone.”

I sighed and handed the carbon suit to him. “I suppose we better get back to my room to drop this shit off, huh?”

“Indeed you should, queen,” Brook said. “And you need to change into something more respectable. That outfit is fine for meeting with friends and things of low importance. You must make a good impression upon those you are to meet today.”

Fuck. “Fine. I’m gonna need someone to guide me back to my room, too.”

“There are plenty of guards out there, I believe. One can do so. After all, a queen should never go unguarded.”

“That’s what Spike is for,” I said. *And why I gave him Excalibur and my gun. If things get ugly, I’m taking one of those and defending myself.*

“It always pays to be safe. Now go.”

“One more question. What did you do to Flo?”

“I just exhausted her. She will return to strength in a few days. As long as you continue

behaving, I will allow her to remain free.”

“So gracious,” I sarcastically said.

“Remember that. You are dismissed.”

I’m going to find a way to make you regret this. But the time for revenge wasn’t then, so I just grit my teeth and left, yanking the mostly broken doors open and walking out. Spike followed, rattling with all the shit he was carrying. “Vizier, I am going to get changed. Meet me in my room in half an hour. I will begin attending to my duties at that time.”

“Yes, your majesty!” he happily answered, bowing. “I shall go reschedule your appointments.”

“Great. You, lead me to my chambers,” I said to one random guard. He saluted and started walking off, carrying his spear. Spike and I followed him. Two more of the guards tagged along behind us, while one went with the vizier. The rest just sort of wandered off.

Thankfully, it didn’t take us long to get to my rooms. When I did, I closed and locked the doors as Spike set all the shit on the bed. “So how are we breakin’ out?” he asked.

“We’re not. We’re going to play along and act nice and be the perfect little couple in public. Cover your ears and close your eyes.”

“Uh...” My eyes narrowed slightly and he shrugged, doing as I said. I walked up, grabbed the radio, and walked into what I was hoping was the bathroom. Turns out, it was.

I turned the radio on. “Nav, anyone. Is anyone there?” After fifteen seconds of radio silence, I said, “Someone, please respond.” I waited a full minute before sighing and turning the thing off. “Fuck!” Since there wasn’t anything else I could do, I just went back out and put the radio back into one of my suit pockets, then tapped Spike on the shoulder.

“What was the point of that?”

“I’ll tell you in a few days,” I said, turning and walking to the closet where most of the fancy dresses were. I crossed my arms as I looked them over, wondering what the minimum required dress would be. “Shit, I hate dresses,” I finally sighed.

“Do... do you want any help?” Spike asked.

“If you can help me pick which one of these would be the plainest one I can get away with, I’d be grateful.”

He hopped up and walked to the closet, looking the dresses over. About two seconds later, he picked out a dark blue one that was heavily embroidered and slightly shiny from the silk. “Hm... No.” He pushed it back in and grabbed a green one. “Ah, there we go. Yeah, wear this one. Matches your eyes. Good for first impressions.” I slowly looked from the dress to him. “What? Do you know how long I helped Rarity with this stuff?”

“Oh yeah.” I shrugged and slipped the dress I was wearing off, letting it fall to the floor. Spike immediately blushed, struggling not to look down at my body. “Spike, I don’t care if you look. We’re going to be living in the same room for a little while. You’re going to see it all eventually. Especially since I don’t think there are any panties here.”

“Are... are you sure you don’t mind?”

"I'm sure. Now help me get this thing on. I have no idea how dresses work."

He lowered it slightly for me and said, "Step into this," while opening the top. I did so, noting how his eyes quickly traveled up my legs. The blush on his face went even deeper. When both legs were in, he slowly began pulling it up, running the soft fabric over my body and making sure nothing got caught. He lingered right before the breasts, presumably not wanting to cover them up, but finally put the covers over my shoulders. "Now turn around."

I did as he said and he drew the back zipper up, enclosing me within the dress. It was a frumpy old thing, the kind you'd expect to see in a 19th century party. The hips were exaggerated with those strange ruffles, making me feel much fatter than I should have been. And of course, it restricted movement like crazy.

"Hey, do you think she'd mind if I wore my boots? I mean, there aren't any other shoes here..."

"There were some in there, actually."

"So... do you think she'd mind?" Spike's eyes flashed blue and then red, giving me a hint.

"I dunno," Spike answered with a shrug.

"...Let's not risk it." I looked in the closet and found... heels. Not very high ones, thankfully, but still fucking heels. "Oh boy. Check the drawers for socks. I'd rather go barefoot than tear up my feet with heels and no socks." He nodded and we started looking around.

A minute later, he asked, "Hey Nav, what are these?"

I looked over to find that he was holding something I didn't quite want to see. "Turns out they *do* have panties," I said, blinking. "Put them back. I already got this dress on and I don't feel like taking it off to put other stuff on. Just look for socks." He shrugged and did so. Not so thankfully, I found some thigh-high stockings a few seconds later. "God fucking dammit," I sighed, holding them up.

"What's wrong?" he asked, looking over. "Oh hey, you found socks!"

"...Yeah. Now let's see if I can get them on without taking this dress off." I tried lifting a leg up to realize I couldn't even see it under the dress. Then I tried kneeling down, only to realize I couldn't get all the way down and I *still* couldn't see my legs. "God dammit. Spike, help me get this off."

"Nav, I can just help you with the socks..."

I just sighed and held them out. "Go for it. Just be careful."

"Don't worry about it," he said, taking one and kneeling down. I lifted a foot for him and he gently took it in his claws, guiding the sock onto it. Then he realized just how long the sock was and continued pushing... and pushing... and pushing. Until finally I jumped, feeling his knuckles brushing across something they shouldn't be touching. He fell back, his face so hot I thought it might catch fire. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean—"

"Don't," I said, also blushing slightly. "It was an accident. Just put the other one on."

"Are... are you sure?"

“Yes.” He sighed and took my other foot in his claw, once again very gently lifting the sock up. This time, he was more careful, and managed to not brush against my lips. When he was sure it was snug and in place, he quickly pulled away. “There, easy enough.”

“Yeah...”

I nodded and walked over to the closet, glaring at the heels. “Well, which pair should I wear?” I asked.

“Green, to match your dress,” he said. I shrugged and pulled the green pair out.

“I’ve never worn heels in my life,” I said, putting them on. “So if you think I might be tripping, make sure to catch me.”

“I’ll be sure to stand close, I guess.”

“Good. That’s where I want you anyway. I don’t trust any of these monkey bastards and that psycho bitch won’t let me use any weapons. You *are* a weapon, so I’ll keep you on hand.”

“Uh. Thanks, I guess?”

“I do what I can.” I finished putting the shoes on and took a deep breath before nodding and taking a slow step. It was... interesting. But I kept my balance and managed to make a circuit around the room. “Why do I have the feeling that this is just going to be miserable?”

“Hey, at least they don’t have to wear makeup.”

“Don’t tempt fate. Here, let me see my rifle.” He passed it my way. Since it had been pumped for so long, I opened the pressure valve, letting the air shoot out with a quick hiss. Then I pulled out the mag and popped the round from the chamber, making sure the damn monkeys didn’t damage it. “Far as I can tell, it’ll shoot just fine. We’ll have to make a range or something to test it later. Doesn’t need to hold pressure for that long.” I clicked the round back into the mag and reloaded it, handing it back to Spike. “Here’s hoping we won’t need it, eh?”

“Yeah.” He slung it around his shoulder. “It’s... really weird to see you in a dress, Nav.”

“It’s weird to be wearing one. Now let’s go.”

“Hold on, don’t you want to work on your posture?”

I blinked, looking down at myself. “What do you mean?” I asked, looking back up.

“Well... you walk like a guy, Nav. A soldier, at that. Your hands are to the side, clenched. Your head is jutting forward slightly, ready to turn as soon as you see a threat. Your shoulders are loose, ready to move your arms instantly. Shouldn’t a queen... and a girl be more... I don’t know, calm?”

Shit, he’s right. God, this just got harder. I thought back to Princess Celestia in her social situations, when we were surrounded by a lot of others. She was a horse, but I could use her as a basic guideline. So I slowly stood up to my full height, holding my head high with my neck straight. I lifted my shoulders, unballing my hands. And finally, I put on a thousand-yard smile, one that wouldn’t leave my face without a lot of work. “Better?” I asked in what I was hoping was a pleasant voice.

“Hm...” He walked around behind me and gently pulled at my hair. A few seconds later, the rubber band pulled out and my hair let itself go. “I can’t do too much with it, but...” I felt his

scaly hands rubbing through it, using his claws as a form of hair brush to flatten it out. "You really need a shower and some proper time with a manebrush, but this should hold you until then," he said with a nod, walking back in front of me. "At least if they force you to use makeup later, I can help with that, too. Rarity used to get me to... to model sometimes."

"...Thank you for all of this, Spike," I sighed, my shoulders slumping for a moment. "This is just... not how I was expecting this week to go, you know?"

"Yeah, I know that feeling. Let's just meet it head on, alright? Together."

"Together. Now, just one more thing," I said as he walked back in front of me.

"What's that?" he asked. Instead of answering by words, I motioned him forward. He stepped forward, somewhat confused. I took his claws and put them on my shoulder, then wrapped mine around his back. "...Nav?" And then I kissed him, pressing my body into his. His eyes went wide and he tried to back off, but I forced him to stay there with my hands around his back.

After a few seconds, I pulled back. "Spike, we're pretending to be lovers. Lovers kiss. And in most places, the guy takes the active role in the kiss. So hold me tight, press my body against yours, and kiss me." He seemed to have a small internal struggle before pulling me tight and properly kissing me, his long, forked tongue going into my mouth slightly.

Then immediately pulled away a second later. "It's... it's okay if I put my tongue in your mouth, right?" he asked. "Doppel liked that..."

"It's okay, Spike. And when we're in public, don't ask permission. Just do it. You're my masculine bodyguard, strong and handsome. I'd be a fool to say no, so don't give me the option." He blushed and looked away before darting back in to continue the kiss, his tongue entering me once more. This time, I broke the kiss off about fifteen seconds later. "Alright, that's enough practice. I think you can manage."

He blinked a few times, a strange smile on his face. Then he shook his head, the smile disappearing. "R-right."

"...You can let me go, Spike." His claws jerked away from me and he smiled sheepishly, backing off. "Let's go, shall we?"

"Alright... my love."

I nodded. "Then lead the way, bodyguard. Make sure there are no threats to my being in the hall."

He blinked before walking to the door, opening it up and sticking his head out. "It's safe," he said, looking back. I nodded graciously and slowly stepped forward, trying not to fall on the heels in front of the two guards and the vizier.

Speaking of the vizier, he gasped when he saw how different I looked. "My queen, you're... stunning!"

My false smile deepened. "Thank you, vizier. I'm feeling much better now that my love has been returned," I said, tenderly placing a hand on Spike's shoulder. "Now please, I've kept my subjects waiting for too long."

“Of course, your majesty. Right this way.” He began leading the way down the hall, a smile on his face for the first time since I first stepped out of my room that morning. “After hearing about humans for so long from our goddess, it’s wonderful to finally meet one and to be ruled over by her,” he said as we walked.

“Doesn’t it seem strange to you, though?” I asked. “Waiting for so long to give rulership away to someone that knows nothing of your customs?”

“I’ll admit that it does,” he said. “But many of our customs were based around human things anyway, according to Brook. It should not take you long to adjust. And since your wisdom and knowledge is unparalleled, surely you shall lead us to greatness and triumph over the spiders!”

Until I figure out how to get rid of the water in Spike and get the fuck out of here. “I’m flattered by your confidence in me. I’ll do my best to live up to your expectations.”

“You’ll do perfectly, your majesty,” he happily said.

I certainly hope I do well enough that the elemental won’t be upset. I left that concern unsaid, of course. Making Spike panic wouldn’t help anyone, after all.

A few meetings later, I was considering letting Spike’s brain just get fried anyway. Being a queen was absolutely exhausting. Faking politeness, pretending to care, and actually doing work was hell. There were several times I actually suggested improvements to things, though, so maybe I’d be able to do some good for the monkeys before I left them up shit creek.

I also learned that we were in a tree castle, which was sort of like a treehouse, but... Well, you know where this is going. There was an entire city out in the trees, all of which was filled by monkeys. The population wasn’t overly large, just a few thousand, but it was definitely a decent sized city for something built mostly in the trees.

It was at the first social party thing that I saw the problems beginning to show up. Spike and I were meeting some nobles, both male and female. From what little I had seen, the society seemed almost strictly patriarchal, which raised some concerns in my mind. But they had been respecting me regardless, so I didn’t think I’d have many problems.

One day, I’ll learn my lesson about that pesky ‘thinking’ business.

I was greeting some of my esteemed guests, a mix of male and female, when one of the guys asked, “My queen, why does that overgrown lizard follow you so closely?”

Bait. “Spike is my bodyguard,” I neutrally said.

“Oh? Did your chief advisor not also say he was your consort?”

“Yes, he is that as well.”

“Why *him*, then? What does that lizard have that we lack?”

A penis larger than two inches. “I am not a lizard, monkey,” Spike answered without my prompting. “I am a dragon.”

“Oh, a *dragon*? Where are your wings, then? You look more like a mutant alligator.”

“They’ll grow one day!” Spike answered. “They only come when you truly need them.”

The monkey snorted. “Then I guess you haven’t needed to save our queen’s life, have you?”

I jumped back in, thinking it would be a good idea to nip this in the bud. “Or he’s so well trained that he never truly needed them.” The monkey’s eyes narrowed. “Do you doubt his prowess? Would *you* like to duel him, perhaps?”

And of course, there went the backpedaling. “N-no, my queen,” he hastily assured me. “I just... I’m not certain I like the idea of having him as a ... as a king.”

“I am the ruler here,” I said. “Should Spike and I marry, he would be king-consort, not king. And of course, we are together out of love, not out of politics. Surely you don’t think anything bad could come from love?”

He looked away, hopefully rethinking any ideas of breaking us apart. However, I didn’t think of one possible outcome of that statement. “How did you two become an item?” one of the chicks asked.

Oh, fuck me. I took one of Spike’s claws in mine and smiled sweetly at him, trying to give myself time to think of a lie. He nervously smiled back. By that time, I already had a good one ready, so I looked back at the monkey. “Spike has been my guard for a few years now. After two years of faithful service, he saved my life against one that sought to kill me. I asked of any reward he might want for saving me, anything I could possibly grant... He begged of me a single kiss, a kiss that changed both our lives for the better. We’ve been together ever since.”

All of the monkey ladies were smiling at the adorableness of the story, while all the men were smiling at Spike’s audacity. And of course, Spike decided—correctly, probably—that it would be a perfect time to kiss me. So he pulled me in close and gently pressed his scaly face against mine, doing just as I had trained him to do. So my smooth, lithe body ended up pressed against his strong, masculine one in a display that made many of the monkeys say their ‘awwws’ and their ‘oohs’. As an added measure that I’m sure many of them found even better, I wrapped my wings around him.

Thankfully, the sappy moment didn’t take long to get over. And even more thankfully, we didn’t run into any more overt problems. Well, aside from the general awkwardness that was dinner, but it was just us feeding each other again, with a lot more cutesy and annoying lovey-dovey stuff tossed in.

“That wasn’t... too bad,” Spike said when we were alone in my room.

“Not too bad my ass,” I groaned, kicking my heels off and across the fucking room. “Sure, we acted well, but *fuck* those heels. God, my feet are killing me. Unzip me, will you?” He jumped to obey, pulling the zipper off the dress. I just pulled it down straight away, not bothering to catch it or fold it up. “At least that dress is slightly comfortable, once you realize the range of motion you have in it, but God, my feet...” I walked over to the bed, limping slightly, and just fell into it.

Honestly, I wouldn’t have minded just falling asleep, but it seemed that Spike had other

plans. I felt him gently tugging one of the socks off, but I didn't bother looking back. Then he began massaging the aching foot, gently kneading the sensitive flesh. It quickly made me very relaxed, my wings slumping down and my body stretching out to take up more of the large bed.

"Feels so good," I whispered as he started taking my other sock off to treat that foot as well.

"I knew this massage stuff would be useful eventually," he said. "Would you believe you're probably the only pon—er, person I got to ever use it on?"

"Not gonna hear me complain," I sighed as he started working on my other foot. It felt like I melted into the bed as he worked on the abused instruments.

After a few minutes, he deemed them done. "Want me to work on the rest of you?" he asked. "I know this is pretty stressful for you..."

"If you wouldn't mind... It's not like we have anything else to do."

"This'll be my first time with a human," he warned. "So let me know what you think." That said, he hopped onto the bed and straddled me before starting to slowly massage my back, working his way down. I grew more and more relaxed as he went on... And then kept going past the back, massaging a place I probably should have told him not to be massaging. But he didn't seem to mind massaging my butt and honestly, it felt really good, so I just let him. Well, until... "Nav, why do you smell sweet again?" he asked as he started working on my thighs.

That woke me from my reverie and I almost immediately realized how turned on and wet I was. My wings shot straight up and I tried pushing away, but he held me in place. "I... I think I need a shower!" I tried getting up, but once again, he held me in place.

"Not until you explain why you smell like that," he said. "Really, what is it?"

I sighed and tried to think of how to explain it best. "Alright, female humans have... different triggers than guys. Different things that turn them on, you could say. I didn't realize that massages might be one of those triggers for some. And..." I opened my legs slightly, letting him get a hint at how... aroused I had become.

"Did... did I do that?" Spike asked, honestly seeming surprised.

"I'm sorry, Spike. I didn't realize it would happen. Now, I think I'm just gonna go take a shower." He didn't make any attempts to stop me as I left that time, though my body definitely didn't want to leave him. It ached for any kind of touch, especially a touch on or in my aching loins. *God, fuck this girly body. And fuck my girly mind for craving a dick. Where's Flo or Kumani when I need them?*

Thankfully, the showerhead was detachable, so I was able to take care of my... urges in there. When I got out, Spike was cleaning the weapons we had between us. The silence felt really awkward, but I didn't know how to break it. Instead, I walked over to the drawers and started looking for something to sleep in.

After I opened them all, I sighed. "God, I don't know which of these things are supposed to be for night and which are for day..."

"Don't you usually sleep naked anyway?" Spike asked.

“Yeah. But do you really want to sleep in the same bed while I’m naked?”

“Uh... Well I mean, haven’t we... done it before? I mean, a few weeks ago, on the ship, I slept in your room...”

“I was a guy, then. Look, I’ll just wear some panties or something. Less constricting than a dress anyway...” I walked over to the drawer with them and sighed as I opened it. There were a variety of colors and styles, each presumably for a different situation. My eyes opened wide as I found one that was *definitely* not for innocent sleeping, and I quickly pushed that one back.

In the end, I grabbed a simple white pair that fit me snugly, hiding all the holes I didn’t really want to risk much happening to while we were sleeping. I didn’t bother with a bra, because I always heard girls complaining about how uncomfortable they were. And since I had a feeling my feet might get cold, I went ahead and found another pair of thigh-highs, pulling them up.

“There. Now at least we can retain some modicum of modesty,” I said, turning back to find him staring at me. “...What?”

He quickly shook himself. “N-nothing,” he said, going back to the weapons. “So when are we going to sleep?”

“Right now, for me. You can go to bed whenever you want. Just keep one weapon by the bed whenever you finish.”

“Alright, Nav,” he said, sheathing all of them and standing up to move them aside. He left Excalibur next to the bed and got in as I was getting under the covers.

Much to my surprise, he grabbed my body and pulled me over to him, holding me against him. “What are you doing?” I asked.

“We’re lovers, Nav,” he said. “Won’t they... I don’t know, get suspicious if they open the door and we’re on opposites sides of the bed?”

“...Good thinking. Just be careful with how tight you hold me. I have problems sleeping with Kumani because she can grip me so tight it’s hard to breathe at night.”

“I’ll try to be careful,” he said, wrapping his warm arms around me. “Just as long as you watch your wings.”

“Right.”

Soon enough, we were both reasonably settled. “Good night, Nav,” Spike sighed, his hot breath a caress against my neck.

“Sleep... sleep well,” I answered, suddenly somewhat uncomfortable, dreading what I might learn in the morning about dragon anatomy concerning morning wood. Thankfully, if he did have it, I wouldn’t be as surprised as when Smiles did.

The next morning was saved from being too awkward by three female monkeys letting themselves in without warning and presumably standing there until I woke up. Yes, Spike’s spiky erection was poking into my back, but I didn’t have time to worry about that because I was too worried about the three little monkeys that noticed me waking up.

“Your highness, we are here to serve you however you need,” one of them said as they all

three bowed low.

I sat up quickly, pulling away from Spike's grasp. He let out a cute little grunt when my warm body moved away from his, but didn't wake up. "Who are you three?" I asked.

"We're your handmaidens," the one that spoke before said. "We did not know when you would be waking up, so we were not here to attend to you yesterday. So today, we are here, and will assist you with whatever you need."

Before I could tell them to fuck off, Spike made some noise in his sleep and I realized I could use them as some form of buffer from awkwardness. After all, he wouldn't have to keep touching me or things like that if I had the servants to help me instead.

"...Alright," I cautiously said, pushing the blanket away and standing up. At least two of them looked at Spike's form and lightly gasped then giggled when they saw his pride standing at attention, but silenced themselves when I pulled the blanket back up around him.

"Do... do you kiss and tell, my queen?" one of the ladies asked.

"I might," I replied, trying to keep my voice even.

"How... how big is it?" she asked.

"Easily nine inches. And he uses every inch of it masterfully." They all giggled again and I knew Spike would probably be getting a number of looks from all the girls in the castle soon, even though he was way too big for any of them. "So what's first?" I asked, stretching. "I'm not used to... to being a queen."

"First, we help you bathe," one of them said.

"I took a shower last night," I answered without thinking.

"That was before your night with your *masterful* lover," one of them said. "We shall clean you right back up!"

"...Very well. Though will it really take all three of you to clean me?"

"Of course not, your highness," one said. "One of us will be playing you the song of our people."

Oh God, how horrifying. "Alrighty then. Let's get started, I guess."

Thankfully, the 'song of their people' was a gentle melody played on some nice stringed instrument reminiscent of a harp. And the two monkeys that washed me did a very professional job, with one taking extra care with my hair and the other taking most of my body. Still, with the way they fussed and made sure their work was perfect, it took them nearly half an hour to finish. I was very relieved to have them gently patting me down with towels to dry me off, though I'd prefer to do that myself.

Soon, I was dry and back in my room, with Spike still asleep. "You must have really worn him out, your highness," one of the maids said, giggling coquettishly.

"Dragons do sleep a lot," I said. Since I wanted his lazy ass up, though, I grabbed a hair brush from the shelf and chucked it at him. "Spike, get up!"

It bounced right off his scales, of course, but he shot up, looking left and right. "Waz wrong?" he sleepily asked when he finally saw me. "Uh. What do you need, Nav?"

“Stop being lazy and go take a shower,” I said.

“Uh...” He finally saw the three monkeys and his head spines flinched. “Who are they?” he asked.

“My handmaidens,” I answered. “Now, take a shower. And brush your teeth, if possible. I would kiss you good morning, but I don’t want your morning breath in my mouth.”

“Um. Okay... dear?” I nodded in approval as he pushed the blanket off, his dragonhood thankfully sheathed once more. Without waiting for any instruction, he entered the bathroom, pulling the door closed.

“Seems everywhere you look, males are the same,” one of the monkeys sighed. “Can’t live with ‘em...”

“But good luck living without them,” one of the others said with a smile. “Now let’s get you dressed, your majesty.”

“Alright. I don’t suppose one of you happens to know my schedule?”

“You’ll be meeting with more nobles today,” one of them said. “So you need to look your best!”

Dammit. “I’m not really... good with dressing fancily. What would you suggest?”

I instantly regretted my decision when two of them looked at each other with large grins and the other just stared at me with a look of pure *joy*. “Don’t you worry, your grace! We won’t let you down!” *God help me.*

First, they started with an extremely frilly pair of knickers, pulling them up my legs without letting me help at all. And despite my protests, they hooked a matching bra behind my back, the thing easily inflating my bust size by a full letter just by all the fluffy shit on it. Next went on the hose, stretched up each leg with a tender delicacy and held in place by a garter, with a strap going from the garter to the panties.

If they had their way, they would have put a corset around me. But I threatened to throw them in the dungeon if they got it anywhere near me, so they abstained.

In revenge, though, they picked out a pink dress for me. Thank God, it didn’t have any frills, but it did have one of those waist expander things. In the center of my chest, they placed some kind of blue stone to draw attention down there. “Oh, you’re so beautiful,” one of them sighed as they sat me down to begin playing with my long white hair.

“...Thank you,” I answered. One retrieved the brush I threw at Spike and began running it through my hair, counting quietly.

“Make sure you put in a full hundred strokes, now,” one of the other maids said as she started lacquering my fingernails.

“I know, I know. Such long hair... How many years has it been since you cut it, majesty?”

“Several,” I answered, my voice muffled by the monkey in front of my face applying makeup.

“Look up, please,” the monkey said. I tilted my head up, but she grabbed it and pulled it

back down. “No, *look* up. Just your eyes.” I did so and she started applying something to me.

“And how long has it been since you put on makeup like this?” one asked.

“Never.” They all gasped, moving to a place where I could see the surprise on their faces. “I’ve uh... never had anything like this before.”

They all started smiling again. “It’s okay, your majesty,” one said. “Now you do, and you never have to go without again. Trust me, you won’t even recognize yourself when we’re through with you!”

I wish I could take that out of context and just let them beat me so hard they rearrange my face, instead. It would make me feel better. Unfortunately, that wasn’t an option. They continued applying things for another fifteen minutes until they finally all pulled back, smiling their annoying little monkey hearts out. I think one of them was on the edge of tears.

When I looked in the mirror, I almost understood why. One of my hands reached unbidden to my reflection, my eyes open wide. “Holy...” I was... I don’t know if I’d say *beautiful*, but I had the kind of looks that would definitely turn heads back home.

“Do you like it?” one of them asked.

“I *love* it,” I said, turning to them and smiling. It was mostly a lie, but I wanted to keep the people taking care of me happy. That got them all to burst into happy tears and hug each other. And then since I knew I had no choice, I knelt down and picked them up in a bundle, hugging them all.

About five minutes later, Spike walked out of the shower to hear the three ladies gossiping to me about events in the court and things to look out for. When he saw how different I looked, he stopped dead in his tracks. “Whoa.”

I grinned and stood. “What do you think?” I asked, doing a little spin for him.

“You’re... beautiful,” he said, nearly speechless.

“And I have these three lovely ladies to thank for it,” I said, smiling down at them. They each blushed and said some inane comments. “And as fun as it’s been, would you mind leaving me and my lover alone for a few minutes? I would like to spend some time with him before we start the day.”

“Of course, your majesty,” one said as they all jumped up and bowed. “We will be in the hall waiting, if you need anything.”

“Thank you. All of you,” I said, nodding. They all scampered out, in really good moods. As soon as the door closed behind them, my smile dropped. “This week just got even worse,” I sighed, falling to the bed.

“Nav, what... what did they *do*?”

“Put makeup on me, spent a lot of time on my hair and on cleaning me, and dressed me. Now close your eyes and cover your ears again.” He shrugged and did so, sitting on the bed.

I walked over to where I had left my armor and pulled the radio out once again, walking to the bathroom. When I flicked it on, I was greeted with silence. “Nav to anyone listening. Is anyone on the channel?” No response. I waited a minute before sighing and shutting it back off,

then went back out. I slid the radio into the armor and walked back over to Spike, putting a hand on his shoulder. He looked up, removing his claws. "Get ready. We have another day ahead of us."

"Alright, Nav. Oh, and... you weren't mad about that kiss yesterday at the party, were you? I was hoping you wouldn't be..."

"It was perfect timing," I said. "Keep that up and we might just make it through this."

"I'll try," he said, smiling.

And so two days went by. Spike and I would put on our show, pretending to be the perfect loving couple. I dealt easily with the monkeys, for their court was a simple thing, not one full of intrigue. Or at least, the intrigue they *did* have was comical at best and easily waylaid and turned on its head. I made a few vital improvements on certain areas of their society, enough that the damn water elemental couldn't call me out.

Of course, absolutely nothing good lasts... Well, this wasn't a *good* situation, but it was a tolerable situation. So I suppose absolutely nothing tolerable at best lasts forever. I was on my fancy throne listening to some commoner when one of my soldiers burst in the throne room. "Your majesty, a force of spiders is approaching!"

I was instantly on my feet, plans already ticking in my head. "How many? What direction? How far away?"

"At least fifty, approaching from the west. They should be here in ten minutes!"

Shit, I knew I should have met with my officers sooner! "Muster the guard! Get all the civilians inside and have them bar the doors. Spike, get ready."

The soldier saluted and started running, as did one of the other guards from my throne room. "What do you mean, Nav?" Spike asked. "We need to get you to a safe room!"

"Like hell. Those soldiers need to see me, Spike. It'll give 'em confidence, something to fight for. And it's not like I have anything to worry about. You'll be right there next to me, right?"

"...Right. I'll protect you!"

"Damn right you will. Now let's go. We'll need to hurry if we want to go with them to the staging area." We both started hurrying off. I want to say I was running, but that was extremely hard to do in heels. And also in tight, frilly panties, a long dress that dragged at your feet, and hose. Eventually I just pulled the dress up slightly so I could move faster. "Man, fuck dresses," I said when there weren't many monkeys running around us.

"I know, right? I don't know how Rarity can stand them."

I was tempted to remind him that he modeled for her a number of times, but I think he was still sore about it, so I didn't. Thankfully, we got to the battlements where we expected the spiders to show up quickly enough. Although 'battlements' wasn't the right word, since it wasn't a wall. But it was a form of defensive position up in the trees where the monkeys could shoot their darts and try to hold off the spiders.

Honestly, I don't know how they could even fight back against the things. Most of their weapons were made of stone and they were so small compared to the spiders. I was definitely looking forward to seeing how they did it.

Much to my surprise, the vizier was also up at the front. "What are you doing here, your majesty? It's not safe!" he practically yelled.

"I have the utmost confidence that you all will protect me," I said. "I am here to see how you fight." *After all, if I'm to have any chance of escaping, I'll have to know how to beat you.* "And to give our troops something to fight for, of course."

"...Yes, your highness. Just please, for your sake, stay behind the troops and near me, if you could."

"No offense, but I didn't think you were a soldier."

"I'm not," he said, holding out one of his hands. "I am a magus." With that, his furry little hand erupted in a ball of green flame. "We are the main line of defense against the spiders, with our more mundane troops doing little more than harrying them and keeping them grouped together."

"Ah, that makes sense. Show me how you work, then. Spike shall keep me safe."

The vizier nodded, a relieved smile on his face, then turned back to face the spiders that we could just now see climbing through the trees, shooting web as they came. *That explains where all the web came from.* One of Spike's claws came to my shoulder and pulled me away from the edge, making sure the soldiers were in front of us.

When I figured we were far enough away, I shrugged him off and stood, watching. "Spike, you can see the enemy," I said. "Why aren't you shooting?"

"Huh? Oh yeah!" He pulled the rifle up and pulled the trigger. Nothing happened.

No time for this. Fuck you, elemental. "Dammit, Spike." I yanked the rifle out of his hands. "Watch my back." After checking to make sure there was one up the spout, I pumped it twice and aimed, taking a quick shot and slamming a spike into one of the spiders. It dropped to the forest floor. Seven more quickly joined it, with two misses. I ejected the spent mag and was reaching for another when I realized they were way too close.

So instead, I racked the slide, making it slam shut, and set it to shotgun mode. *Come at me, motherfuckers. I'm sick and tired of this queen bullshit and I'm looking to take my anger out on something. Just try me!*

Try me they did, that's for sure. But the vizier was apparently a better mage than I gave him credit for, scattering many of the spiders and turning others into ash. Spike plied his pretend trade well, making sure none of the spiders got near me with a mix of dragon fire and his sword. I didn't have to use the shotgun at all. Things were going great, it seemed.

Well, up until the survivors all shot a line of web at the battlements. Most of them immediately retreated, but an adventuresome group took careful aim with their webbing and shot directly at me, slamming their hot, sticky white stuff right on my chest and yanking me off my feet. I dropped the rifle in surprise as they pulled me from my troops. I thought I heard Spike

yelling something behind me, but I was a little too busy at the time to pay attention to him.

The spiders dragged my struggling form up and quickly rolled me over, binding my wrists and my wings behind my back. “No time to bind the rest,” one hissed. “Just bite her and let’s go!” I felt two white-hot lances of pain ripping into my side, my back arching as I tried very unsuccessfully to pull away.

Then the pain withdrew and they started pulling back into the forest, cutting their losses and just fleeing. Of course, I struggled as best I could, but they had both of my arms bound tightly and I was stuck onto one of their backs.

Oh Jesus, they’re going to enslave me and rape me! God, why couldn’t they just kill me!? Not like this! Taya, Twilight, Celestia... even Luna! Someone teleport me!

My silent entreaties went unheard by all... except, perhaps, some strange twist of fate or some higher power that was still smiling upon me. The very last sight I expected to see came hurtling toward me at a speed that might well rival Rainbow Dash: Spike, wreathed in a purple flame, two leathery wings jutting out from his back. And by God, he looked *pissed*!

The dragon slammed into the spider carrying me, using his claws to tear the spider’s entire head messily off. The flames around Spike died off and he grabbed me as the spider started to fall from the trees. One of the other spiders tried attacking us, but Spike grabbed it by one of its legs and slammed the fucker into a tree, crushing half of its body. When Spike let the leg go, he shot up, getting out of the trees so no more could attack us. Finally, we were clear, and he began angling back toward the tree city.

“I told you that I’d protect you,” he said with a grin as we flew.

“You... you definitely did that,” I said, surprised out of my mind. I was still reeling from being so suddenly kidnapped, extremely panicked, and then saved.

“You alright?” he asked when he landed, setting me down and using a claw to cut the bindings on my wrist. I tried standing up to my full height to thank him, but flinched, clutching at my side. When he saw my hand come away with my signature amber blood, he gasped. “You’re hurt!”

That took the mood on the fighting deck from victorious to worried almost instantly. Monkeys crowded around me, trying to see how they could help their precious queen. The vizier instantly appeared on Spike’s head. “Stand aside, all of you!” he called. They backed away hesitantly. “We must take her to our medics. Dragon, carry her. Someone else, grab his weapons.”

I zoned out a little as Spike gently picked me up to carry me as I had done so many times for him. “Where to?” he asked, lifting his wings.

“Into the air,” the head monkey said. “I will guide your wings.” Spike nodded and took off, the vizier presumably holding onto some of the spines on Spike’s head.

“We’re gonna get you help, Nav,” Spike whispered, not looking down as he flew. “You’re gonna be just fine...”

I didn’t reply, because I could feel the poison kicking in. The pain around where I had

been bitten was flaring like crazy, burning me. My entire body felt oddly sensitive, the caresses of wind across my body coming across as sensual touches. The feel of the panties hugging my most precious of locations was enough to make me nearly pant in pleasure. The other clothing I was wearing didn't help either, each article finding some way to drive me crazy.

The poison hit me deeper and deeper as we flew. The pain I was feeling increased immeasurably, but so did the pleasure, to the point where any movement was like nearly orgasmic and yet blindingly painful at the same time. There was no way I could possibly pay attention to anything like that.

And yet, one thought wracked my mind: *I need release. Something, anything, inside of me. Holy sweet hell, this is torture!*

I don't know how long it took until sweet unconsciousness took me. But when it did, I saw the most beautiful thing I had seen in a very long time: Flo's watery form in the middle of her glade. My feet moved me forward, though it felt like I could barely control the actions. Truly, the place felt like a dream, more so than ever before.

And Flo didn't seem as concrete, either. More transparent than usual, I mean. The entire place didn't feel stable at all. "It's not," Flo said, her voice weary and weak. "Brook took much out of me. I'm still recovering. I just wanted to tell you how proud of you I am, Nav. You've handled yourself well this week."

"I... I try," I said. "When will you be back at full capacity?"

"Soon. Eat more, if you can. That'll help. The second reason I brought you here is so you can go into the dream world and tell the others where you are and what's going on. I don't know why they haven't gotten here yet, but there has to be a reason. Find Watcher's dream and talk to him."

"Alright, I can do that," I said. "And man oh man, have I ever told you how great it feels to have a penis?"

"Multiple times. Usually right after you had sex. Now go. It's hard to hold this dreamspace up."

"You got it." I easily escaped the dream, then looked around for Watcher's. Whatever time it was when I finally passed out, it was obviously night now. I saw a cluster of dreams over in one direction, while the rest of the area around me was almost completely empty. I drifted that way and looked around. Taya was having one hell of a nightmare, so I decided to head to her dream after Watcher's.

I could see Twilight's dream, but it was so dark that I couldn't tell what color it was aside from not black. If I had to guess, I'd say she was still under the influence of whatever drug the monkeys hit us with, as well as having her dreams protected by Aqua. Applejack, Dash, three of the soldiers, and Zecora were the same, so I figured that was definitely it.

When I got done looking around, I found Watcher's dream. It was a simple one, just white. I peeled back the smoke and looked in, seeing him leading some troops. Since it didn't look important or dangerous, I just pushed my way in, appearing in front of him. "Watcher, we

need to talk.”

He blinked a few times before realization hit him. “You’re alive!” The soldiers behind him disappeared and he seemed to age thirty years in front of me, becoming the curmudgeonly Watcher we all tolerated and dealt with.

“Indeed I am. Alive and hella pissed. Spike and I got kidnapped by a bunch of fuckin’ monkeys led by the elemental, who turned out to be a psychopathic bitch. Long story short, they turned me into a queen and the elemental pushed into Spike’s head and is threatening to kill him if I don’t cooperate. Find a way to get that damn poison out of Twilight so Aqua can lead you here. And ask her how I can exorcise an elemental.”

“Uh. Yes sir. How long should the poison last?”

“The monkeys told me it normally lasts a week. I think they hit us with a lot of it, though. I did look at a map, so I can probably get you close to us. Maybe the monkeys have an antidote they can use on them.”

“Well, show me where you are, then. I’ll try to make some plans and talk with the others. We can start heading your way, at least. And I believe Aqua is active in Twilight.”

“Put my laptop next to her and tell her to get her ass inside. She can talk through it.”

“...That’s a good idea, actually. Alright, just show us where you are and we’ll be on our way.”

I pulled out a world map and put an X over our location. “We’re right around here or so. Shouldn’t miss it, since it’s a fairly large city in the trees. Be very careful, because these monkey bastards have magic. I’ll tell them to expect you, but they’ll be wary anyway. Just turn on your damn radio or something when you get close so I can guide you in.”

“You got it.”

“Oh, and keep the spiders out of sight when you get here. Monkeys hate them and it seems the feeling is mutual, given that I nearly got captured by them in a raid today.”

“Yes sir.”

“And remember to can that sir shit when you get there. The monkeys are very defensive about their queen. I’ll be very happy to get the fuck away from them.”

“Any other orders?”

“Nah, not that I can think of.”

He nodded. “Then I’ll be sure to...” He looked down at me, confused. “Sir?”

I looked down as well, and realized that I was going transparent. Before I could say anything else, I was ripped awake.

“...And there’s the antivenom,” a monkey medic said, a smile evident in his voice. “Good to have you back with us, your majesty.”

“Good to be back,” I said, trying to sit up.

Spike stopped me, putting a claw on my shoulder. “Relax, Nav. You don’t want to aggravate those bites.”

“Spike, I’ve been professionally tortured. I can handle this just fine.”

“You weren’t my patient, then,” the medic said. “Now, you need to be careful and stay in bed for at least twenty-four hours, until those bites have time to close properly.”

I sighed and rolled my eyes. “Fine.” The medic nodded and back away, letting me see the vizier. “What were our losses?”

“Negligible, your highness. It seemed having you there truly did inspire them! And of course, Spike did his fair share of the work. You chose your lover well, your highness. His battle prowess and loyalty are unmatched!”

I smiled and gently took one of Spike’s claws in my hand. “Indeed I did, vizier. But now that I’ve had time to wake up, I find that I’m rather weary. Is there anything important I need to know?”

“No, your majesty,” he said, shaking his head. “I will take care of everything and allow you to rest. Would you like your handmaidens here, or would you like to be alone with your consort?”

“Spike will take care of me,” I said with a nod. “Thank you, all of you. Be sure to tell the people that I will make a full recovery.”

“Of course, your highness,” he said. “Come, let us leave the queen to rest.” All the monkeys bowed and quietly left, trying not to make too much undue noise.

As soon as the last one was out, I tossed Spike’s claw aside and started to stand. Strangely, though, he jumped up and pushed me back down, which is when I realized that he was now about six inches taller than he had been, putting him eye-to-eye with me. “No, Nav. You really did get hurt. You need to rest.”

“Come on, Spike. Don’t do this to me, man.”

He shook his head. “I’m sorry, Nav. I almost lost you out there and I’m not going to lose you in here. Whatever you need, I can get for you.”

I sighed and stopped fighting against him. “Fine. Bring me my armor.”

He blinked a few times before shrugging and doing so. I held it between me and him and pulled out the radio, turning it on and sliding it under the blankets so Brook couldn’t see it through his eyes.

Then I handed the armor back. “Thank you.”

“Nav, what is your obsession with this armor?” he asked as he walked back over to put it away.

“Don’t worry about it. How are you feeling, though?” I asked. “Those wings treating you well?”

“Nav, they’re *awesome*. I mean, folding them’s kinda weird and they get in the way sometimes, but I can fly now! You don’t have to carry me anymore! And hey, I can even carry you now, if you want me to.” I furrowed my brow in confusion, wondering why I’d ever want that. “...You know, in case you want me to pay you back?” He seemed kinda unsure of himself, but I didn’t care.

“Whatever. They didn’t hurt when they came out?”

“Nope. Felt like something ripped back there, but it didn’t hurt at all. And man, the fire was insane! Covered my entire body, inside and out. For some reason, I thought I heard a scream of pain when it just happened, but none of the monkeys were burned and it cut off right after, so it’s not like—”

“Scream of pain?” I broke in. “Was it feminine?”

“Yeah. It wasn’t you, was it? I mean, it sounded like it was right in my head!” *Holy fuck, he vaporized Brook!* “What’s wrong?” *I can’t take the chance, though. Not without being sure.*

“Nothing. It wasn’t me. Keep going. How’d you like flying?”

“It was amazing! And it felt even better to give those spiders what-for! I won’t let anything hurt my friends! Especially you, Nav.”

“That’s really good to hear,” I said, nodding. “So how strong are they?”

“I dunno. The only things they’ve lifted so far have been me and you. I’m sure the naga’s gonna be happy to find out, though.”

“Yeah. Hey, you hungry?”

“Now that you mention it... Yeah, I am. Think we can get some food here?”

“Spike, I’m a fucking queen. Step outside and politely ask one of the handmaidens listening at the door to bring us both something filling.”

“You got it,” he said with a nod, hopping up and walking over. As he walked, I just relaxed into the bed, feeling... better. Brook was gone, Spike had his wings, I had contact with my crew, and Flo was building up her strength again.

It was only a matter of time before Spike and I were free again and the quest could continue. I couldn’t wait.