

# **The Lesbia Chronicles**

Volume One

By Loki Renard

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## **About This Book**

This is the ebook version of the first twenty-five postings of the free online web series *The Lesbia Chronicles* which runs freely (albeit intermittently,) on <http://sapphosbrats.com/lesbia/> . It has been slightly edited in some places, though for the most part it is the same as the web series.

## **Other books by Loki Renard**

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## Part One

More mud than woman, Atrocious Lex tramped along a rain soaked road, her fur boots glugging into the mire every few steps. Her braids slapped about her face leaving pink trails across her cheeks and her nose was red from the chill of the wind. She liked the outdoors, but she did not particularly care for the way it was trickling into every crevice and seeping into her socks. A more seasoned, better funded traveler might have worn impermeable overclothes, but Atrocious did not have those kind of resources. The sum total of her funds were three gold coins sewn carefully into the lining of her brassiere, emergency money for a rainy day.

"HALT!" The officious tones of an Imperial Guard rang out from what seemed like half a mile away. Atrocious stopped in her tracks, feeling herself sinking slowly into the muddy mess little by little. She squinted into the sun, wondering if it was too late to backtrack and avoid the altercation about to take place.

"NO. COME HERE AND HALT."

Taking one deliberate step backwards, Atrocious disobeyed the order. There was still a chance of getting away. Imperials didn't like getting dirty, it ruined the shine on their armor.

"I SAID HALT!" The soprano note of frustration in the otherwise boomed command denoted the soldier as a female - something of a rarity. The revelation did not make Atrocious feel any better about anything. A female Imperial Guard was likely to be harder than a male after proving herself for years on end.

Atrocious came to another halt. This one was slightly less muddy, though it hardly mattered now that she was covered in the stuff up to her knees anyway. She watched as the guard maneuvered her black mare carefully around the mire, the horse taking the raised edges of the road with a careful, almost prissy, gait.

The pair came to a stop not three feet from Atrocious and the soldier glared down her nose. She was a handsome enough woman, a northerner with a long straight nose, jutting chin and ice blue eyes rimmed by pale lashes. "What is your name, peasant?"

"Atrocious, if it pleases you." Always best to suck up to the lady with the Claymore strapped to her back.

The nose wrinkled in a sneer. "What kind of a name is Atrocious?"

"A pretty one, if my mother was to be believed." Atrocious did her best to smile charmingly. Her white teeth shone through the dark mud that had splattered on her face during her travels.

"Your mother was a fool. A blind fool," the guard sneered cruelly.

It was a mistake to cast aspersions on Atrocious' mother. The woman might not have been educated, she might not have known her alphabet from her elbow, but she had been an honest and loving mother right up until the moment the plague ate her alive. The guard saw Atrocious' anger and guffawed. "Move along peasant, or I'll take you in."

Preferring to move along rather than be taken in, Atrocious proceeded to move along once more through the mire, although this time she moved a mite quicker, eager to escape the attentions of the Imperial. Her speed was her undoing. Somewhere in the boggy mud was a stone and when her foot met with the stone, the stone stayed steadfastly in place, temporarily hobbling her and causing her to plunge face first into the mud.

The first thing audible to her clogged ears when she lifted her head from the mire was the guard's uproarious laughter. Atrocious was forced to shove her anger and frustration down and stand with as much dignity as she could muster, which was not a lot by that point. Having fallen was no small matter, the next town was a long way off and she would be covered in the sludge until she got there.

"You laugh like a jackal," she muttered under her breath.

The laughter abated quickly as the guard wheeled the horse around, blocking Atrocious' path once more. "What did you say, peasant?" As she spoke, the guard removed one of her booted feet from the stirrup and poked it towards Atrocious's chest. Atrocious stood her ground as the boot made contact with her mud covered vest, ignoring the strongly implied physical threat as she glared into the guard's face. Her patience, which had always been limited, was running dangerously low.

With the guard's boot planted above her heart and the maternal slur ringing in her ears, Atrocious made a rash split-second decision. She grasped the limb that had been so generously offered to her and yanked and twisted roughly, putting her entire body into the movement. The sudden momentum caught the guard by surprise and caused her to tumble from the horse with a clattering sound not unlike that of a drawer of cutlery being emptied out. The grin on Atrocious' face as her tormentor slammed heavily into the mud with an impact that sent a crown of dark fetid water splashing around her prone body could not have been wider.

"I will cleave you in twain!" The guard spluttered the threat through a face full of muck, but before she could rouse herself under the weight of mail and sword, Atrocious had sprung up and into the saddle. It was a risky move, if the horse were particularly loyal or well trained, it might refuse to work for her. Fortunately the mare seemed to have no loyalty to its mistress and sprang forward with just the lightest application of heel. Atrocious was hurtling down the road at a grand speed before the unfortunate guard had extricated herself from the mire.

Traveling by horse was a great deal more comfortable than traveling by foot had been. The mare was fast and eager to run, a well bred animal indeed. Atrocious was a fairly decent judge of horse flesh, having spent many happy months as a child working as a stable-hand for the local lord. That was before she'd discovered that work was for fools. You could toil on and on as much as you liked and maybe even save up enough to buy a pretty dress or a new basket for taking goods to grandma's hovel, but you were still a peasant at the end of the day. Atrocious did not like being a peasant. The hours were terrible and the food was worse. She had therefore quite logically decided to take another path and become a thief. The animal thundering along beneath her represented the pinnacle of her thieving career up to that point as she traveled west, a beam of pride firmly affixed to her incongruously cherubic face.

## Part Two

Atrocious sped across the countryside, her dirty blond locks streaming behind her in the wind she and her mount made. When she had first mounted the beast, she had done so only with the intention of making a quick escape, but with every powerful stride, the mare was endearing herself to Atrocious more and more.

"Maybe I'll keep you!" She shouted over the sound of the thundering hoof-beats. The mare's excited whinny and rapidly twitching ears were enough to convince Atrocious that the mare was in agreement with her plan.

Keeping the horse meant doing two things, naming it, for everything needed a name, and removing the quarter sheet proudly emblazoned with the Imperial Fleur de Lis. That was something of a dead giveaway and would be the thing most likely to get her thrown into a dungeon.

At the first available opportunity, Atrocious rode the mare off the main road and up into a wooded glen, where she dismounted and began stripping the horse of her shiny trappings, including saddle and bridle. Every piece of leather on the animal seemed to have been stamped with the Imperial symbol.

"I'm surprised they didn't stamp your ass... oh bugger." As Atrocious removed the quarter sheet from the back of the mare, she saw the Imperial brand marked clear as day, emblazoned on the horse's hindquarters. "Bastards burned your ass," she sighed.

After pondering the problem for some time, Atrocious determined the only way to successfully camouflage her new mount was going to be to find a new saddle, bridle and quarter blanket. Such a thing was much more easily said than done in the middle of the woods. At the bare minimum she was going to need a blanket to cover the Imperial mark. Such an item could probably be purloined at one of the farmsteads or small villages that dotted the landscape.

"Let's go find you something less ostentatious," Atrocious said to the mare. Intending to mount the horse once more she took hold of the base of the mare's mane and launched herself into the air with a mighty leap. The idea was to leap onto the horse's back, but it failed rather abruptly when her momentum took her right over the mare and dumped her on the other side of the horse.

A more skittish animal might have taken considerable offense to being vaulted over, but the mare was entirely unconcerned by the impromptu display of reckless and unsuccessful gymnastics, she was more interested in grazing on the delicate blades of grass plentiful in the glade.

"Oi, I could have been hurt," Atrocious complained. She stood up and gave the horse a reproofing nudge in the ribs. The mare replied with a snort of indifference and continued feeding.

Deciding to leave the mare in the clearing for the moment, Atrocious set out through the woods. There were a few light trails here and there where hardened earth could be seen scuffed through the grass. They were suggestive of humans having passed that way before. She was hoping to come across a home in the forest, something isolated and unguarded. There were too many eyes in a village, it was almost impossible to get away with stealing something without someone noticing you doing it. She'd learned that the hard way at Scroth's Hollow, a village of ten houses, a general trader, a chapel and an apothecary. It was there that she'd been caught trying to steal a few vitality potions and been subjected

to a sound thrashing in the square at the merciless hands of the apothecary herself.

Her rear still stung when she remembered the way the rod had cracked down across her thinned leather britches. The village had turned out in full force to watch the punishment too, she'd been forced to endure her discipline in front of thirty people, some had looked on with grim approval, others had been far more vociferous in their support of her punishment.

A thrashing was better than being turned over to the Imperial Guard and tossed into jail, but only slightly. By the time the apothecary had done belaboring her bottom, Atrocious had been unable to sit for days and sleep had only come after a hefty dose of dream weed. She wasn't going to risk being caught out like that again, that was for sure.

She crept through the undergrowth, keeping an eye and an ear out for any aggressive beasts or bandits. The Imperials were not the most dangerous things in the countryside by a long way. Plenty of travelers met grizzly ends long before their time at the hands of those who made their way in the world by killing anyone who crossed their path.

As she crept forward, she spied what she had hoped to see, a simple shack sitting in a small clearing. It was made of old unseasoned wood and the planks had twisted and warped over the years. With great caution, she approached the edge of the clearing, her senses entirely focused on trying to determine whether or not the occupant was home. A slight creaking sound alerted her to the fact that something was going on in the house. She couldn't work out what it was so she kept slipping forward until she reached the window and peeked in.

The sight that met her made her exhale her held breath in one long woosh. She was staring at a lush bare bottom held up in the air as the owner of the delightful rear knelt on the bed as if presenting herself to be taken. But there was nobody else in the house, the occupant appeared to be entirely alone and entirely lost in pleasuring herself. Atrocious's jaw dropped as the woman reached back, teasing the furry lips of her most intimate areas with an eager touch.

Atrocious watched entranced, her eyes devouring the sight of the curvaceous beauty. She could not see the woman's face, for it was buried in a pillow, but she could see a golden braid trailing down between her shoulder-blades, and the curve of an ample breast. As Atrocious stood there, the woman began penetrating herself, sliding a tentative finger into the pink parting of her nether lips.

"Oh boy," Atrocious whispered to herself. She should have retreated into the forest and waited until the woman left. She should have given the lady her privacy. Instead she stayed by the window and slipped a hand down the front of her britches and teased herself in time with the unnamed woman who was performing for her so unwittingly.

As the blonde neared her climax, Atrocious took cover underneath the window. She could no longer see the frantically thrusting fingers in the slick slit, but she could hear the woman's cries of unbridled pleasure. It was a sweet kind of torture, being so aroused by the wanton stranger but unable to do anything about it without inviting disaster. As it was, she was risking far too much by lurking under the window. The cries reached a climax and stopped, and, whilst Atrocious was still sitting on the ground, a silly grin on her face and her hand stuffed down her pants, the door of the little cottage opened.

"Who are you?" The inquiry was Atrocious' first indication that she'd been caught. She dragged her fingers out from her pants quickly, though not quickly enough. The blonde, who turned out to be a

rather attractive middle aged woman with more than a little elf about her features, evidenced in the high cheekbones and slanted, almost cat like green eyes, saw what Atrocious had been doing immediately. "Peeping Tom!"

It was an accusation, but not an angry one. The woman was smiling and she spoke chidingly, a sexy little smile establishing itself on her thin lips. Atrocious felt a stirring in her nether regions as the lady came forward and offered a hand. She took the proffered appendage and allowed the lady to draw her up from the ground. Standing in front of her, it became clear that the elf-blood in the woman had given her a superior height. Atrocious was forced to take a step back to avoid craning her neck.

"I am Ayla," the part-elf said. "Who are you?"

"I am Atrocious," Atrocious replied.

"A suitable name indeed," Ayla said, her eyes twinkling with amusement.

It was all going rather well, much better than Atrocious had anticipated it going. Usually these sorts of encounters lead to being chased about the woods with a broom if you were lucky, or a sword if you weren't.

"Would you like to come inside?" Ayla extended the invitation quite graciously. A little whisper of common sense tried to tell Atrocious that it was not a good idea to go into the homes of people you'd just watched masturbating, but the more powerful force of her arousal won and she found herself following the tall half-elf into the cottage.

The door closed behind her the moment she stepped through it, perhaps blown by a breeze or, more likely shut by magical means. Elves were well known sorcerers and the half elf, half human who was now smiling at Atrocious with a slightly disturbing intensity probably had some magical powers. Listening to her intuition, Atrocious took a step back and tried the door handle. It refused to budge, and panic welled up in her breast as Ayla came towards her.

"Do come and sit down," Ayla said. There was not much choice to be had in the matter, before Atrocious could reply, Ayla had taken her by the arm and pushed her down quite firmly into a rickety wooden chair. With the tall woman looming over her, Atrocious was certain that she was in trouble. She just didn't know what kind.

Ayla looked down at her captive with a smirk that lacked a certain amount of warmth. As silence stretched out she put her hands on her hips. "Are you always in the habit of spying on people?"

"Sometimes?" Atrocious answered the question with a question as her eyes darted around the room. She was looking for a way out, but Ayla was blocking her way fairly effectively. Sure she could have maybe pushed past her or applied a little more physical force if necessary but Atrocious was not given to outright aggression in most instances, and certainly not against beautiful ladies she'd recently seen in compromising situations. There was also the magic to consider, oh, and the fact that Ayla was bigger than she was. None of those things would help if worst came to worst.

"Someone should teach you a lesson," Ayla purred, reaching out towards Atrocious with her fingers splayed. "A lesson in when to look and when not to look."

"Listen, I..." Atrocious began to apologize, but before she could finish the sentence her vision went black. She uttered a shriek of fear, afraid that Ayla might have killed her and that she was looking into the void of her own non-existence, but a hand on her knee and a voice that was quickly becoming familiar spoke.

"Calm down."

"Calm down?" Atrocious pawed at her eyes, trying to pry away whatever was preventing her from seeing. "I can't see! I'm blind!"

An amused chuckle floated to her as the hand patted her knee. "It's just a spell. It will wear off after a time."

Atrocious could hear a smile in the woman's voice. It did not make her feel any better about her situation. She took a deep breath. She was clearly dealing with a mad witch of one description or another. She was just going to have to play along until she got her sight back, then run like hell.

"Now, what shall we do to teach you a lesson?" Ayla asked. "You're filthy you know. What have you been up to?" It was a rhetorical question hardly requiring an answer and the mud didn't seem to dissuade Ayla as she slowly slid her hand up from Atrocious's knee to her inner thigh.

Atrocious gulped. The outcome of this little interlude appeared to be all too clear as her body instinctively responded to Ayla's touch. The pulsing arousal between her legs returned with a vengeance, reliance on her other senses heightened by her inability to see. She parted her legs slightly and moaned happily when Ayla's fingers slid all the way up her thigh and fingertips pressed gently against her core for a moment.

Unfortunately the pleasant sensation was short lived. The fingers withdrew and the next thing Atrocious felt was a quick slap across her face. It was not hard enough to be truly aggressive, more like the swatting motion of a cat toying with its prey. Caught between desire and fear, Atrocious growled in response.

"Naughty," Ayla noted in the darkness. "Very naughty."

Before Atrocious could curse, the fingers returned between her legs. Ayla stroked through her britches, petting her pussy with a massaging motion that elicited soft moans. It was hard for Atrocious to stay angry when she felt so good, it was hard to be afraid when her hips were lifting off the chair and her mind was consumed with the desire to remove her pants.

Boldly, Atrocious reached down and shoved at the waistband of her britches, forcing them down over her behind. She was forced to clamp her thighs together a motion that ejected Ayla's fingers, but it was the work of a moment to kick her muddied pants off and when she was done she spread her legs hopefully once more.

A delighted burst of laughter met the action. "A miscreant that takes her own pants down, fancy that." Atrocious felt Ayla come closer, her breath soft on her ear. "I'd love to take you my dear, but first..."

Atrocious cringed, expecting pain and recrimination. Maybe she was about to be beaten, or perhaps forced into hard labor.

What Ayla actually said was worse. "You need a bath."

Guided up from the chair still in a pronounced state of blindness, Atrocious was forced to listen to Ayla chide her over and over about all her sins.

"Such a filthy little wretch," Ayla said, tugging Atrocious' pants the rest of the way down her legs. "I can't imagine how you got into such a state. You were up to no good, I'll wager."

Atrocious kept her mouth shut, ignoring Ayla's wagers. She was being undressed piece by piece, her defenses stripped away. Before long she was entirely naked before Ayla who took casual advantage of the situation by running her hands over Atrocious' body, cupping her breasts and squeezing her nipples. When Atrocious made a sound of complaint, Ayla responded with a quick slap to her bottom. "Don't whine, dear," she said, squeezing Atrocious's cheeks.

Atrocious blushed, she was being betrayed by her arousal, that's what was going on. Ordinarily she would have never stood for being treated in such a casual, sexual way. Atrocious had long ago decided that she was the master of her own destiny and all attempts to dominate her since then had failed. But being blind and inordinately aroused was leaving her completely vulnerable to Ayla's will in a way that made her feel prickly and uncomfortable. There was no way of even beginning to pretend that she was in control of the situation.

"You need a nice hot bath," Ayla said. "But first I think you need a nice hot bottom."

Atrocious had no idea what Ayla was talking about. There was the sound of a chair scraping back, then she felt herself being guided over Ayla's skirts. Quite befuddled, she lay there naked as the day she was born and still streaked with mud, feeling the soft fabric of Ayla's apron under her belly.

"So naughty," Ayla said, patting her bottom. "You've not been spanked enough."

"What?" Atrocious turned her head towards Ayla even though the movement was useless to her. "No!"

But it was too late. Ayla had her where she wanted her and Atrocious found herself pinned in place quite neatly indeed by Ayla's strong arm. The spanking began gently with Ayla slapping Atrocious's bare cheeks lightly, stinging her bottom but not really hurting her.

She squirmed in place over Ayla's lap. She had expected a cruel beating, not this caressing warmth that tickled and stung and made her lower belly fizz with excitement and need. She found herself spreading her legs and Ayla immediately took advantage, tickling Atrocious' pussy with the tips of her fingers in between slaps. Atrocious lifted her hips up to the sensation and before long, a searching finger was penetrating her, rubbing between her lips and slipping deep inside.

"This is a nice little cunt you have," Ayla said. "It's a pity you're such a naughty little wench who needs a sore behind." With those words, Ayla began spanking a great deal harder. The sounds of her palm meeting Atrocious' bare bottom echoed off the walls of the little cottage and Atrocious was forced to grab onto the leg of the chair and hang on for dear life as every hard slap threatened to send her sliding forward over Ayla's lap. She was no longer enjoying herself in any way, it hurt, it really hurt and Ayla seemed to be enjoying that fact. "You won't peep in more windows, will you?" Ayla lectured, vigorously laying her palm against Atrocious' vulnerable bare bottom with punitive gusto.

Atrocious did not reply at first, she was far too busy yelping and squealing to form words. The only bright spot on the horizon was the fact that as the spanking went on, her sight slowly began to return. First the dark fog lifted a little, then, as her bottom pulsed with the thudding slaps, she began to make out objects in the room. She was being spanked like a little child and her poor bottom was feeling very hot and tight and sore indeed, but she could see again! She could see!

As Atrocious' eyesight began to return so did her native bravado. Far from cowing her, the pain in her behind only served to fuel a violent rebellion which manifested in her hauling herself completely off Ayla's lap. Her hands had been scrabbling at the floor in front of her the whole time she was being spanked and Ayla, apparently lulled into a false sense of security by Atrocious' acquiescence, had loosened her grip on the young woman enough to allow her to perform a clumsy, albeit effective, forward roll off her lap. The cottage was small and it was but the work of a minute for Atrocious to spring to her feet and wrench the door open.

The last rays of sunlight and blush pink skies met her upon her successful escape. She whooped with glee, feeling very proud of herself indeed. The feeling lasted all of thirty seconds before Ayla appeared in the open doorway, quirking an amused brow. "Forget something?"

It was then that Atrocious remembered that she was not wearing anything at all and was dancing about entirely in the nude. She scowled and folded her arms over her chest. "Give me my clothes."

The witch's expression grew severe. "I see you have learned nothing."

"I do not learn," Atrocious declared proudly.

"I find that eminently plausible," Ayla observed dryly. "Come inside."

Atrocious did not want to go inside, but outside there were no clothes and inside there were clothes. "Toss my clothes out here," she countered.

"No. Come inside." With that, Ayla shut the door, leaving Atrocious to consider her situation without the benefit of clothes whilst the increasingly bracing evening winds whipped about her sore derriere. Deciding that the situation was unfair, she decided to make another attempt at negotiation.

"Hey!" Atrocious called out as she banged on the door. At first there was no response, but she found that sustained knocking eventually got Ayla to answer.

"Yes?"

Atrocious recoiled a step. Ayla looked angry. And tall. Had she always been that tall? Surely not. "Are you..." she tried to frame the question in a way that didn't make her sound weak. "Are you going to hit me if I come in?"

"I don't see what purpose it would serve," Ayla said.

"Does that mean no?"

"Come inside you little idiot." Ayla sighed, stood back and gave Atrocious clear passage into the

cottage.

She slinked indoors, looking for her clothing, which was nowhere to be seen. "Where are my clothes?"

"Boiling in the copper," Ayla explained with admirable patience, pointing towards the only door in the house aside from the front door. "You can have a bath in the meantime."

"Just give me my clothes and let me get out of here." Atrocious was starting to get cold, her ass was throbbing with an after-pain that was not pleasant and all she wanted to do was get back to her horse which had probably wandered off by that time. She scowled at Ayla, expecting the witch to capitulate to her demands. It didn't happen that way. Ayla barely acknowledged that she had spoken.

"Cut the attitude and get in the bath." Ayla pushed open the door to the adjoining room where a copper was boiling with Atrocious' clothing inside. Next to the copper was a small, circular bath filled with steaming water.

"I don't want a bath!" Atrocious stamped her foot. "I want to go..."

Her objection was cut off as Ayla, tiring of the argument, plucked Atrocious up from the ground as if she weighed less than a feather and physically put her into the bath. Either she was very strong indeed or there were magical means at work, Atrocious didn't know which. The water was warm and instantly soothing and though Atrocious wanted to keep fighting, it was easier and far more pleasant to sink down into the tub. She scowled at Ayla with the water up around her chin and made one last ditch effort to save face. "Fine. I'll have a bath. But only because I want to."

Ayla's eyes narrowed as she looked at the wretch in the tub. "You are so very lucky you're cute," she growled. "I will enjoy taking this out on you later."

"No you won't," Atrocious countered lamely.

A not entirely pleasant smile spread over Ayla's face as she knelt down beside the tub, speaking in a low, intimate tone. "I am going to fuck you until you beg for mercy," she said as she brushed a gentle kiss over Atrocious' lips. "And then I'm going to fuck you some more." She reached into her dress and pulled out an ivory phallus about seven inches long and an inch and a half wide. It was inscribed with magical symbols and had a flared, mushroom tip. She pressed the toy against Atrocious' mouth and, being trapped in the tub, Atrocious was compelled to part her lips to allow the phallus to enter. It slid forward over her tongue, filling her mouth as Ayla worked it back and forth with gentle strokes. "This is going to go inside you," Ayla promised, "over and over again."

Twin thrills of arousal and fear coursed through Atrocious' belly. There was nowhere to run so she sank beneath the water line to avoid the further plundering of her mouth. The temporary watery reprieve only served to reinforce the fact that she was no match for Ayla. The witch retreated, allowing her to surface before she drowned, but it didn't feel like much of a victory.

Atrocious was undeniably attracted to Ayla, but there was a peculiar menace to the way the witch was promising sexual congress that she did not care for. She washed herself and watched silently as the buxom blonde witch pulled her clothing out of the copper, wrung it and hung it out to dry before the fire. It would be several more hours before it would be ready and she was at Ayla's mercy until then. Endeavoring to stall for time, Atrocious wallowed about in the tub until the water grew so cold that

even Ayla noticed she was beginning to shiver.

"There's a towel next to the tub," Ayla prompted.

"Yeah," Atrocious agreed, inspecting her prune fingers.

"You should use it."

"It would get wet in the tub," Atrocious replied blithely, sinking beneath the soapy brown water once more. It was not entirely pleasant, but it temporarily adjourned the conversation, which was what she wanted. When she surfaced again, Ayla was gone, presumably into the other room.

Atrocious took the opportunity to scramble out of the bath and wrap herself in the towel that had been placed next to it. Then she padded forward on her tip toes and checked her clothes. They were warm, but still sodden and wet.

"They'll be ready by morning."

Atrocious squeaked, startled at being caught out by Ayla, who apparently moved more silently than she did. The witch smiled. "Are you hungry?"

Shrugging, then nodding, Atrocious admitted that yes, she was pretty hungry.

"Come and have some food."

Atrocious was suspicious at first, after all, she had not been promised food, she had been promised humiliating sex. But there was a loaf of bread on the table as well as some cheese and soup and she soon tucked in, forgetting about Ayla's earlier threats whilst she filled her belly.

"Have you been traveling long?" Ayla sipped at some water whilst Atrocious ate.

"Ages," Atrocious said.

"Where are you headed?"

"Well, er, I don't know," Atrocious admitted. She had no intention of admitting that she was traveling from place to place thieving what she could. Her response earned her a raised brow from Ayla.

"So you are a vagabond," the witch observed. "I would have thought you too young and pretty to be without a home."

"I am not that young," Atrocious frowned.

"I beg your pardon," Ayla smiled. "When you get to be my age, everyone looks young."

"How old are you?"

"I had my two hundred and thirty fourth birthday last month," Ayla's eyes twinkled.

Atrocious nodded. She'd heard of the extended life span of the elvish, so hearing Ayla's age only served to confirm her suspicions about the witch's heritage. "Then I guess I'll always seem young to you," she said.

"It is a pity human years are so short," Ayla sighed. "Not enough time for you to begin to learn what you need to know."

"I know all I need to know," Atrocious objected.

"Is that so?" Ayla smiled indulgently. "Is that how you come to be homeless and spying on people?"

"I have my methods," Atrocious said, slopping up the rest of her soup with a hunk of bread.

"And I mine." Ayla glanced at Atrocious' bowl. "When you are done, we will see about your punishment."

That made Atrocious frown. "Punishment? What for?"

Ayla fixed her with a firm look. "Let me see, rudeness, contrariness, spying. The list goes on."

"You don't have any right to punish me," Atrocious pushed away from the table. "I just wanted to go on my way."

"The fates have seen fit to put you in my path," Ayla said firmly. "And I, in turn, will deal with you as I see fit."

"I don't want to be dealt with," Atrocious whined.

Whining did little good. Before she could attempt another escape Ayla stood and placed her hand on the back of Atrocious' neck. "Come along, girl," she commanded.

Atrocious found herself being walked over to the bed, where Ayla stripped the towel from her, leaving her pink and naked. Atrocious' lips parted as she tried to ask for clemency, but she couldn't make herself do it. Asking for clemency was like admitting that Ayla was in control, and that was not going to happen.

"On your hands and knees," Ayla prompted, pressing Atrocious down onto the bed.

Naked as the day she was born, Atrocious shifted uncomfortably. She did not care for the vulnerable position, nor for the reason she had been put in it.

"I tried spanking you, but you wouldn't take your spanking. So now let's see what happens..."

Atrocious felt the thick tip of the phallus pressing against her nether lips. "No," she moaned softly.

"Oh yes. This you won't escape so easily," Ayla said, her tone rather strict as she pressed the thick shaft slowly into Atrocious' slit.

Atrocious felt tingly and strange as her body stretched to accommodate Ayla's phallus. On the one hand

there was the pleasure that came from having her pussy filled. She had been horny from the moment she'd laid eyes on Ayla. On the other hand it was impossible for Atrocious to pretend to be in control with her pussy wrapped around Ayla's tool, and she didn't like that one bit.

Ayla eased the thick dildo in and out of Atrocious's slit with a smile. "You have a pretty little cunt," she observed. "It's a pity you're in trouble."

"Why is it a pity?" Atrocious asked the question over her shoulder. Ayla did not answer with words, but with the swift application of the tongue end of a leather belt across Atrocious's clit and lips.

Atrocious howled with the sudden pain, but she found herself held in position, her cunt clenching around the shaft whilst Ayla punished her in the most intimate of ways. Over and over, the belt flicked around between Atrocious' legs, smacking her puffy wet lips.

"Please!" Atrocious squealed. "Please no more I promise I will be good, please..." She meant every word. The burning lash was catching her erect clit over and over again, creating thunderous bursts of pain that flashed through her entire body. Ayla certainly knew how to apply pain in a way that got results.

"It hurts, doesn't it," Ayla said tenderly, laying the belt aside and replacing the harsh lash with the soft petting of her fingertips. She stroked Atrocious's marked lips and clit with affection and perhaps even slight regret that such rough treatment was necessary. Atrocious winced and whimpered, even the gentle touch was enough to cause new flashes of pain. The phallus was still seated deep in her pussy, compounding the sensations as Ayla worked her punitive magic.

"Are you going to obey me now, little human?" The question was accompanied with a swift slap across Atrocious' quivering slit and when Atrocious didn't respond immediately, Ayla took hold of the end of the phallus and began plunging it in and out of Atrocious' tender cunt.

Unable to support herself by her arms any longer, Atrocious found herself with her upper body pressed into the bed, her bottom raised high. Her pussy was flushed with arousal, her lips puffy and spread, her clit erect and wet. Shamefully exposed to Ayla, Atrocious submitted to many more thrusts and slaps until she finally gave in.

"Yeesss," she cried out, grinding her hips with a curious combination of arousal and pain.

"Yes what?" Ayla prompted, pinching Atrocious' clit lightly.

"Yes I will do as you say," Atrocious agreed, her voice reaching a squeaky pitch she barely recognized as Ayla slid the phallus slowly out of her dripping pussy, then pushed it all the way back in.

### Part Three

A full day after her horse was stolen out from under her, Imperial Guard Jacey limped into the barracks on the outer rim of Kavden, a large town that sat amongst rich farmlands. The heels of both her feet were a mass of blisters from stomping along in the heavy metal overshoes and her mood was at an all time low. She was twelve hours late back from patrol and she knew her pay would be docked if she did not have a very good excuse for her prolonged absence. The combination of physical discomfort and potential punitive action saw her sidling in the main gate and doing her best to shuffle into the sleeping quarters before she was spotted.

Her attempts to sneak into her quarters without being seen failed. Captain Nelson spied her immediately and came barreling forward, his silver and gold armor shining so brightly she could see her own sorry face reflected in it. "Soldier! Where is your mount?"

Jacey snapped to attention with a salute. "It was stolen, sir."

"Stolen? How?" The captain was a large, imposing man with more scars than hair on his head and a great ginger beard plaited into three thick strands that hung from his mighty jaw. He folded his arms over his chest and glowered down at her. Jacey saw her life flash in front of her eyes. She had to make this good.

"I was attempting to apprehend a..." Jacey paused. She had been about to say a vagabond, but she would be a laughing stock if the rest of the guards found out that she had been bested by a beggar. "Dangerous criminal," she said instead.

"Oh?" The captain tilted his head slightly. He was listening.

"Yes!" She left the affirmative response hanging between them, hoping it would be enough. It wasn't, of course.

With a long sigh, the captain prompted her further. "What crimes had he committed?"

"She. She had committed the very worst crimes!" Jacey glanced about wildly as she tried to think of a terrible crime. "She had killed a nun and stolen her cowl," she lied dramatically.

The captain's eyes lit up with rage. "She killed a nun?"

"She slayed her whilst she was on her knees offering up prayers for sick orphans." Jacey did not wonder if she was perhaps laying it on a little too thickly because she was not the sort of person to indulge in that kind of reflection. "And she set fire to the convent!"

That made the captain frown. "Fire to the convent? Which convent? We have not had reports of fire."

"The little convent at Westfell," Jacey thought quickly and named the most remote town that could conceivably be considered in their jurisdiction. "Reports have not spread widely because she slayed all the witnesses. She only confessed whilst I was grappling with her."

The captain stroked his beard thoughtfully. "A strange sort of criminal that confesses her crimes in the

midst of an arrest.”

“She was taunting me with them, sir,” Jacey said, really getting into the flow of her own narrative. “She said that I would be next, that she would slay me in my sleep and drink my blood.”

The captain shuddered. There was a sect, the Vuvari sect who believed that there was power in the blood of their enemies. They had a fearsome reputation for killing all who stood in their way. If he had been doubtful at the outset, he was doubtful no longer. "This woman who stole your horse is a murderer of the most foul kind," he boomed. "She must be apprehended immediately! By what name is she known?"

"Atrocious."

"Yes, her crimes are atrocious," the captain agreed wholeheartedly. "What is her name?"

"Her name is Atrocious, sir," Jacey said.

"Never mind whether it is a nice name or not, tell me it."

"Sir, her name is Atrocious."

After several more minutes of back and forth in much the same vein, it was eventually understood by both parties that the name of the nun slaying, horse stealing, convent burning, mass murdering criminal was Atrocious. The worthy Captain set forth to issue an arrest warrant for the woman and Jacey was spared the docking of her pay, after all, what could one Imperial Guard hope to do against the machinations of such a vile and violent creature?

## Part Four

Atrocious plucked a pristine white teacup up by its ceramic silver handle and tentatively sipped at the brew within. She was well washed and dressed in her freshly cleaned clothing, her cheeks ruddy red with good health, her eyes sparkling. Whilst she imbibed her liquid refreshment Ayla stood behind her carefully re-braiding her hair.

"I rather enjoyed our intimate congress," Ayla said, her brow furrowed slightly with concentration as she deftly wove Atrocious' blonde strands into tight plaits. Ayla's own hair was swept up into one large braid and wrapped around her head in a style that drew attention to her fine high cheek bones and exquisite eyes. She wore a long beige silk gown cinched just below her bosom and to Atrocious she appeared to be a very vision of celestial femininity.

"Mmm, quite," Atrocious agreed, coloring ever so slightly at Ayla's tawdry choice of words. "But let us not speak of such base things. Let us speak of loftier ideals."

"Very well," the witch agreed amicably. "The weather is pleasantly tolerable today."

"I can only concur," Atrocious nodded. It was true, for the sky was wonderfully blue and barely a cloud dared blemish the sky. Colorful butterflies flitted about in the bushes, flashes of bright red and blue wings against the prickly gorse. "Pray tell me," she said, carefully placing the tea cup back on its saucer. "When will this spell of propriety dissipate? I must confess I find it rather difficult to express myself adequately."

"That is because you wish to say terribly foul things," Ayla smiled smugly. "I tire of the profanity."

A glimmer of anger danced in Atrocious' eyes, the only outward expression of the rage that was boiling in her breast. "Perhaps I would not be so profane if you would be so kind as to allow me to leave. I have matters to attend to."

Preoccupied in the act of tying Atrocious' braid with a thin leather cord, Ayla took a moment to reply. "And what matters are those?"

"They are only of concern to me," Atrocious said, drawing herself up rather stiffly.

"But I have made them my concern," Ayla insisted.

Atrocious was not swayed by the argument in the slightest. "You are not my female progenitor! I demand you let me go!" She had good reason to be so strident in her objections. It was becoming abundantly clear that she had been kidnapped by the witch, who seemed to have no intention at all of letting her go. "I do not care for the effects of this spell," she complained once more.

"Would you care for a hot bottom instead?" Ayla made the inquiry gently as she ran her fingers through Atrocious' hair, scratching her scalp lightly as she went.

Atrocious trembled with the pleasure that accompanied Ayla's touch. "I would not," she said.

"Then you should be thankful for the magical means that keep you out of trouble," Ayla chided her

gently.

"I should not be in trouble," Atrocious pointed out. "If anyone should be in trouble, it should be you."

"And how do you come to that conclusion?"

"I come to that conclusion by recognizing that you are holding me against my will."

Ayla chuckled, a light, incongruous sound. "What makes you think that your will matters?"

Atrocious replied boldly in an attempt to assert herself. "What makes you think that it doesn't?"

"Because I can do with you as I wish," Ayla said. "You are a young woman alone in the forest. Any number of fates could have befallen you. As it happened, I was the fate your footsteps chose for you."

"So you admit then, that you are a predator, no better than a bandit or a rat," Atrocious replied heatedly. The spell was making her work harder to express her disdain, but it was not impossible to do so.

"Careful," Ayla warned. "I will not hesitate to warm your bottom if you insist on displays of temper."

Atrocious scowled. She was not pleased at all. Far from being even slightly ashamed of what she was doing, Ayla was openly taking her like a slave. The witch's sense of entitlement was out of control.

Ayla seemed to sense Atrocious' growing discontent, for she interrupted Atrocious' train of thought with a threat. "If I have to discipline you again, you will not be a happy girl."

"Why is that?"

"Because next time I will use a slipper made of reeds. It stings and welts with every single blow," Ayla turned Atrocious around on the stool and smiled as if she rather enjoyed the idea. "You will be a very tearful and sorry young woman."

Dismay was quickly growing in Atrocious' mind. Her captor was beautiful and sometimes benevolent, but there was a chilling undercurrent of sadism that she was beginning to fear.

"Aw," Ayla said, gently brushing a light kiss over Atrocious' lips. "Don't pout. Your sweet little behind was made to be punished."

"No it wasn't!" Atrocious pulled away and rebelliously wiped her lips with the back of her sleeve.

"Of course it was," Ayla leaned in closer, a ravenous look of arousal in her eye. "Have you seen your behind? You have plump round cheeks like sweet melons. Perfect for being swatted and spanked and punished."

Against all logic and common sense, a tendril of arousal began unfurling in Atrocious' lower belly. Ayla reached out and caressed down her front until her fingertips were at the junction of Atrocious's thighs. "You have a sweet pussy too," Ayla continued, rubbing gently over Atrocious' britches. "The only problem is your cheek and disobedience." She stopped rubbing and patted Atrocious' clothed pussy affectionately. "But I know how to deal with that sort of behavior, don't I?" She winked rather rakishly

and Atrocious emitted a small nervous giggle as she parted her legs, craving more of Ayla's touch. It was hard to stay angry and indignant when all she really wanted was to be fucked again.

"I can make this little pussy feel good," Ayla purred, slapping lightly through leather britches. "Or I can make your bottom sore. Which one do you prefer?"

"Feel good," Atrocious muttered.

"I'm sorry?" Ayla removed her hand from between Atrocious' legs and cupped her ear. "I didn't quite hear that."

"I want my pussy to feel good," Atrocious admitted, blushing.

"I thought so," Ayla smiled. "Why don't you take off your britches and bend over the table for me."

It was an order, but it was one Atrocious wanted to follow. That didn't mean it was any easier to take down her pants in front of Ayla and bend over the table, presenting her bare bottom and pussy. She avoided eye contact with the witch, but she could feel Ayla's eyes on her the entire time, watching as her lightly furred slit came into view. She quickly turned and pressed her cheek onto the cool wood of the table, telling herself that she was playing along in order to escape. Whilst Atrocious tried to rationalize her submission, Ayla was already patting her bare bottom and running her fingers down Atrocious' wet slit

"You see, there are rewards for obeying me," Ayla said, slipping her middle finger inside Atrocious up to the first knuckle. She placed her other hand on Atrocious' lower back, pressing the young thief down into better position. "There are rewards for presenting your pussy for my use."

Atrocious squirmed as Ayla gently pumped two fingers in and out of her tight slit. There was nothing romantic about the act, it was the simple stimulation of a dominant figure demonstrating dominion over a weaker one. She was sure she was being finger fucked by way of being taught a lesson. The feeling was confirmed when Ayla slid her fingers out and pressed them to Atrocious' mouth. "Let me see you clean my fingers," she prompted.

Atrocious found herself opening her mouth, feeling very captive indeed as Ayla's fingers slid over her tongue. "Good girl" Ayla praised very warmly indeed. "Clean your juices off my fingers."

Atrocious moaned, gyrating her hips as Ayla returned her fingers to Atrocious' nether regions and teased and tormented the soft folds of her pussy. It was impossible to be rebellious when she was arching her hips up, silently begging for penetration.

## Part Five

By the third week of her captivity Atrocious was beginning to grow desperate. Escape seemed to be almost impossible. Every time she thought she could sneak out the front door or test a window, Ayla prevented her escape. The witch showed no signs of intending to do Atrocious any harm, but a benign captor is still a captor and Atrocious wanted out of there.

She was sitting on the bed and beginning to despair of ever finding a means of escape when the front door opened and a young female murkblood simply walked in. Atrocious stared at the intruder, she had quite forgotten how simple it was for some people to just go through doorways as they pleased.

The staring served two purposes, for the murkblood was one of the most curious Atrocious had ever seen. Her features were distinctly human, but there was still something 'other' about her. Her eyes were brown and wide with large pupils that put Atrocious in mind of a startled cat. Her dark hair was cropped close to her head and though her features were pleasant enough, one tooth pushed its way out from her upper lip and rested atop the lower. It was less of a tooth than a fang, Atrocious considered, observing the length and pointedness.

In addition to her facial characteristics, the murkblood was rather short indeed and very slight of build. Her skin was a beautiful caramel tone that Atrocious was immediately jealous of. Her clothing was interesting too. She was dressed in a fine silk tunic that bore the image of a rampant lion and her legs were clad in pristine white leggings. Atrocious wondered how on earth the woman had managed to get into the forest without getting at least a little dirty.

The murkblood walked two paces into the cottage with a stiff legged gait before turning to face Atrocious in a snappy angular motion that was belied by smooth grace. She was obviously trying to be formal but no matter how rigid she made her movements she just seemed to flow from one place to another. "Greetings illustrious one," she said in a voice that rumbled like a purr. "I have come to beg for your help."

Atrocious cocked her head to the side. "You have?"

"Only a great spellcaster can help me," the murkblood explained respectfully.

"Ah, I see what's going on here," Atrocious said, surprising herself with her own honesty. "You've mixed me up. I'm not the witch."

"No?" The murkblood still seemed interested. "What are you?"

"Well I suppose I'm her prisoner," Atrocious began explaining. Before the murkblood could become too confounded and scared, Ayla interceded.

"Ignore her," she said, sweeping into the room with magisterial charm. Her arrival had been delayed by the work she was getting on with in the back room. Atrocious did not know quite what the work entailed, she only knew that she was not allowed to look at it, much less understand it.

"I am Ayla," Ayla introduced herself. "How can I help you?"

Atrocious watched as the murkblood's eyes went ever wider still. Clearly she was very much impressed by the witch. She showed her deference by performing a deep bow. Bent over like that she barely came up to Ayla's mid-thigh. "Please, I need your help in lifting a curse," she said when she had straightened up again.

"First things first," Ayla held up her hand. "Do you have a name?"

"Nami," the murkblood said, nervously clasping her hands together in front of herself and then behind herself and then in front of herself again. "My name is Nami."

"What manner of curse is upon you, Nami?"

"The curse to have the great misfortune to ask a sex fiend for help," Atrocious muttered. She was not at all impressed by the deference being shown to Ayla. Magic or no, she was a predatory trickster and no good ever came from having that sort of person on your side.

"Hush, or you'll lose the use of your tongue," Ayla promptly threatened Atrocious.

"This is what she does, she..." Atrocious finished the sentence but nobody heard it. Her lips were moving, but no sound was coming out. Finding herself suddenly gagged, she threw her hands in the air and stomped across the room to the table that served both as a place to dine and a work surface for Ayla's less secret experiments.

Nami was wildly impressed by Ayla's display of magic. "You truly are as powerful as they say you are," she breathed.

Ayla smiled her benevolent smile as she brushed the compliment aside. "What curse is upon you?"

"There is a sorcerer in our village who has cursed me..." Nami paused to make a soft sound of sadness that sounded something like a cross between a cry and a mewl. "Never to find love."

"Never to find love," Ayla said gravely. "That is a great tragedy. That is..."

BANG!

Ayla and Nami turned at the sudden noise, both ready to do battle in their own way. They were not forced to do battle however for the source of the commotion turned out to merely be a chair Atrocious had kicked into the wall for the purposes of getting their attention. When she was certain both Ayla and Nami were looking, she held up a piece of parchment upon which she had scrawled a message:

THaT is StuPID.

Before anyone could respond, Atrocious held up a finger as if she'd had another thought. Taking the quill, she added a little ^ symbol and added an extra word. The message then read:

BLOOdY  
THaT is ^ StuPID.

"Please, ignore my apprentice," Ayla said, frowning direly at Atrocious. "I do believe she is going soft

in the head."

Atrocious made a muffled squeak, the only sound she could manage and started scribbling again.

NOT hEr ApRentice!  
IT'S a TrAP!

Nami was beginning to look very concerned indeed, which was just as well as far as Atrocious was concerned. Everybody should be concerned when in Ayla's presence. She was about to alarm Nami further but her plan for revealing what was really going on in the witch's cottage was foiled when Ayla calmly plucked the quill from her fingers and ushered her out the front door.

"You can wait out here until you manage to behave yourself," she chided Atrocious in much the same manner as one might chide a cat that has insisted in pooping in one's best shoes.

## Part Six

Having been put outside, Atrocious did the logical thing and made a cautious attempt at escape. Her cautious enthusiasm at the prospect of getting free was tempered by a strong sense of skepticism. She doubted that Ayla would simply let her walk away, and it turned out that she was right. As soon as she reached the front gate, she felt a force pressing her back towards the house. She opened the gate and tried to walk out anyway, but the more she tried to leave, the more the force pushed back.

Making a muffled sound of frustration, Atrocious tried harder still. It was a mistake. The force, which had been a nebulous, wall type feeling suddenly became quite discrete. She felt as though she was being manhandled back to the cottage, carried by unseen hands. Fighting against them didn't work, she tried struggling harder and was rewarded with a hard slap across her ass.

Spinning around, Atrocious slapped back at thin air and was pleased when she made contact with something solid and fleshy. There was a muffled sound of pain then she was taken hold of very firmly indeed, yanked forward and pressed against a chest that boasted the finest pair of invisible breasts she'd ever felt. A deep female voice rolled through her. "Stop fighting, disobedient little brat."

"Let me go," Atrocious whispered hoarsely, forcing her vocal cords to work against Ayla's spell.

"Behave yourself."

Atrocious could barely make it out, but she thought she saw the outline of a strong, muscular woman holding her. The image shimmered and faded, leaving her caught up in the invisible woman's grasp. "Why can't I see you?"

"Because you're not meant to," the voice informed her. "Now go and sit down before I use you."

"Before you *use* me?"

"It's been a long time since I had pretty pussy like you." There was unbridled lechery in the voice. Atrocious pulled free and took a step back and took stock of her situation. She now found herself stuck between an amorous witch and a rough talking invisible genie of some kind.

"Are you working for Ayla?"

The voice rumbled with dark laughter. "No I trade with Ayla, but I see she's busy now."

"What do you trade in?"

The voice came from behind Atrocious this time and a hand snaked around to cup between her legs. "Flesh."

Having spent an extended period of time with Ayla, Atrocious had pretty much hit her limit of tolerance for being groped. Without any regard for the consequences, she lashed out at the invisible woman, pushing her away. "Leave me alone," she growled.

"Feisty," the voice noted. "But you better settle down. Ayla won't mind me trying the merchandise."

"I'm not merchandise."

"Oh but you are."

"Well if I was," Atrocious said, growing deeply irritated, "I wouldn't be for sale to invisible cowards."

"Call me a coward?" The voice was in front of her now and Atrocious stumbled backwards as the woman came into view properly. She'd removed a ring from her finger and in doing so blinked into real existence. She was very broad and tall for a woman, almost as tall as Ayla. Her long black hair was plaited and wound around her head and she had a vicious scar running across the bridge of her nose amidst a sea of freckles. She was wearing high quality reinforced leather armor and she looked big, and mean and mad.

"Are you..." Atrocious shook her head, unable to believe what she was seeing. "Are you a..."

"Spit it out," the warrior prompted.

"Are you a Valkyrie?"

The warrior burst out laughing and slapped her knee. "You're priceless. I wish I was a Valkyrie. No, I'm just your regular warrior mercenary."

"Huh," Atrocious said, squinting at the woman suspiciously. "Well look, I'm actually not for sale, so I'm going to get going."

She tried to step around the woman, but the warrior blocked her path easily. "Ayla hasn't done a very good job training you," she frowned. "She usually does better."

"Ayla hasn't been training me," Atrocious sighed. "I'm not for sale."

"You sure match the description, cute ass, smart mouth, pretty eyes."

"So what, you came here to buy a sex slave?" Atrocious' lip curled in disgust.

"I came here to get someone to carry my gear and do as she's told."

"Well then lady, even if I was for sale, I wouldn't be what you're looking for."

"You just need to be broken in properly." The warrior leered. "I'd probably enjoy that. A couple cuts of the cane and you'd lose that smart mouth of yours."

"Don't bet on it," Atrocious said. She'd had enough. Kidnapped by a witch and now maybe sold to someone who was going to cane her, that wasn't her idea of fun. It was time to throw caution to the wind and make a break for it. She took to her heels and vaulted over the garden fence, high tailing it into the forest beyond as quick as she could. She expected to be followed but she couldn't hear anything over the sound of her own pounding heart and when she stopped, the forest was silent. She leaned back against a tree, panting for breath.

"And I'm supposed to be the coward." The warrior's voice came mocking through the leaves. Atrocious looked around in terror, but she couldn't see anyone.

"There's no point running," the voice said, chuckling. "Boy, I don't know whether to kiss you or paddle you."

Atrocious covered her bottom quickly, prompting another burst of laughter.

"Okay, okay," the warrior said, becoming visible once more. "I'm Kira, what's your name?"

"Atrocious," Atrocious said.

Kira smiled. "That's a good name for a girl like you. I'm sorry I scared you back there, I get carried away when I see a pretty brat."

Atrocious was not convinced. "Look, I just want to go, okay? Please let me go."

"No can do," Kira shook her head. "These forests are dangerous and that bottom of yours is begging for a spanking."

"No!" Atrocious wailed in dismay. "I don't want a spanking. I've had a million of them and none of them do anything but piss me off."

"Is that so," Kira smiled indulgently. "I have to tell you, I'm starting to feel sorry for you."

"You are?"

"Oh yeah," Kira folded her arms over her chest. "You've gone and gotten yourself caught up in something well beyond your control."

"Well will you help me get out, please?" Atrocious figured it couldn't hurt to ask.

"Here's your problem," Kira said. "You're cute, you're funny as hell and you're worth at least a couple thousand gold. Why should I help you get away?" She took a step towards Atrocious, her eyes dark with lust. "Why shouldn't I just take you for my own?"

Kira's dark, lustful gaze ran hot over Atrocious, but Atrocious was rendered immune to its charms by a growing anger rooted in the realization that she had been very close to being sold like a pig.

"One moment please." Atrocious held up a finger at Kira, turned on her heel and marched back towards the witch's cottage with determination written all over her face. The warrior watched her go with something of a smirk, then followed at a distance.

Atrocious stormed through the forest, bounded over the garden fence and kicked the wooden cottage door open with enough force to shatter the lock. Without waiting to see if she was in trouble, she stepped inside the cottage fuming with barely controllable fury. "You." She pointed a shaky finger at Ayla. "You were going to SELL me!"

She'd half feared that she'd walk in on Ayla fucking her latest guest, but she'd interrupted nothing but a

scene of quiet domesticity. Ayla was in the middle of composing a letter, her quill dipped in a small bottle of ink as she sat at the table. Nami was curled up on the bed, apparently asleep. She barely moved when Atrocious stormed in. She opened one eye and, apparently deciding that the shouting and noise had nothing to do with her, shut it again.

"Not now," Ayla waved Atrocious away, dismissing her anger out of hand.

"You are a devious, horrible woman," Atrocious declared. "Why I outghta..." She did not finish her sentence, electing not to give Ayla warning. Instead she clutched her fingers into a fist and brought it crashing down into Ayla's jaw. The witch went sprawling, knocking over the ink which cascaded up into the air in a fountain of black liquid and fell back to the table, spoiling everything it touched. Ayla's chair tipped over and the witch crashed onto the floor, completely insensate. A loud screeching noise filled the air. Fearing she might be next for a knuckle sandwich, Nami yowled at the scene unfolding before her, hissed at Atrocious and skedaddled out of the cottage with a curious four legged gait.

"Woah kitty," Kira's deep voice came from the garden as Nami sped by her in a panic. "Woah girl," she echoed herself when she made it to the doorway and saw the scene inside the cottage. "Did you kill her?"

Atrocious stood over Ayla's unconscious body, breathing heavily. "I don't know."

Kira knelt beside Ayla and pressed two fingers to the witch's neck. "She'll be fine," she said. "Still has a pulse." Her gaze flicked back up to Atrocious. "You're lucky."

"I'm lucky? She's lucky. She tried to sell me," Atrocious said, her pretty eyes still filled with rage as the warrior stood and turned to face her. "You asked me a question in the woods. You wanted to know why you shouldn't just take me for your own," she snarled up at Kira. "Here's why. I'll destroy you if you so much as lay a finger on me, that's why."

For a long moment, Kira searched Atrocious' gaze, her own handsome face drawn and closed to scrutiny. Then she smiled with a warm grin that made her freckles get all close and snugly with one another. She clapped Atrocious on the shoulder and gave her a piece of advice. "You might be angry, but saying things like that to the wrong person is likely to get you hacked to pieces, girl. I'll let it slide this time, but mind yourself in the future."

Turning away from Atrocious, Kira scooped Ayla up and deposited the witch gently on her own bed. She was very still, her face pale, her golden hair knocked loose from its bindings by the blow. In spite of the trauma she looked very beautiful indeed. Atrocious felt inexplicably guilty as she watched the warrior attend to Ayla with tender care, rousing her slowly back to the world of the living with some salts that she took from one of her many pockets.

After a few minutes, Ayla groaned and slowly opened her eyes. "What happened?" She mumbled through a very swollen jaw.

"You got what you deserved for once, that's what happened," Kira replied dryly, pressing Ayla back down onto the bed when she tried to rise up. "Stay still, you're going to have a pretty bad headache."

Atrocious lurked in the corner of the room whilst Ayla recovered. She'd tried making for the door again, but a look from Kira had been enough to make her reconsider that course of action. The warrior

had a certain understated authority about her, and Atrocious was wary of crossing anybody else that day. Her knuckles were aching from the blow she'd inflicted on the witch and the uncomfortable feeling of guilt had settled in her stomach to stay. No matter how many times she told herself that Ayla had totally deserved what she'd gotten, she still wasn't used to hitting people and seeing them hurt. Once the initial rush of besting Ayla abated, there was nothing but a sick feeling left behind.

"Okay, sit up slow, I'll get you one of your potions," Kira was saying whilst Atrocious inspected her metaphorical navel.

Ayla sat up slowly, a dark reddish bruise blooming on her jaw. The look she gave Atrocious was devoid of emotion, which was scarier than if she'd been obviously angry. Atrocious wanted to run, but there was nowhere to go, nowhere she wouldn't be hunted down. She shrank into the corner, hoping that whatever Ayla did, it wasn't too bad.

"Fetch my lash whilst you're at it," Ayla was speaking to Kira, but her eyes were locked on Atrocious.

Kira returned from the adjoining room shaking her head. "I don't think so." She smiled and handed Ayla a little red vial. "Drink this and feel better."

Uncorking the bottle, Ayla downed the brew quickly. The effect was almost immediate. Color returned to her face and the blossoming redness on her jaw began to recede as the potion worked its magic, rejuvenating the damaged tissues. "Fine, I'll get it myself," she said, rising from the bed with her customary grace.

Kira planted herself in the way, blocking Ayla's passage. "Just sit down before you make this worse," she said, her voice firm with a touch of steel.

With nervous butterflies beating around in her belly, Atrocious watched Kira and Ayla size one another up. They seemed fairly evenly matched, physically Kira was much more solid and equipped for struggle with powerful limbs and a toned torso revealed under the undershirt that had become untucked whilst she was attending to her friend. In contrast Ayla looked almost waif like, but Atrocious knew all too well that she was far more dangerous than she appeared to be.

The pair locked eyes for a long minute then, without a word, Ayla nodded and sat back down. It looked like she was backing down, but Atrocious didn't trust her apparent surrender. The ice cold expression still hung in Ayla's eyes. She was biding her time and when Kira left Atrocious knew she would be at her mercy.

"Let's talk business," Kira said cheerfully, blithely oblivious to the tension in the room. "You had a girl for sale, didn't you?"

"I was mistaken," Ayla said frostily. "There's no-one suitable here."

"Was she the one you had in mind?" Kira pointed at Atrocious.

"She's not suitable," Ayla replied. "She lacks discipline."

"I'm not for sale," Atrocious interjected, earning herself hard looks from both women. "I'm just saying, I'm not," she said with an overly casual shrug given the gravity of the situation.

"You'll be whatever we tell you to be," Ayla said imperiously.

Atrocious suddenly felt much better about having hit her, but she pushed down the urge to gloat in favor of yet another attempt at talking the problem away. "Look," she said, her voice coming out all squeaky and strange as she tried to be rational in the face of almost insurmountable odds. "I'm not a slave, I'm a...."

"Thief," Ayla interjected.

"Traveler," Atrocious finished her sentence. "This has all been one big misunderstanding. Can't we just let it go? Call it even?"

Kira's low chuckle told her that her little speech had failed. "She genuinely believes what she's saying, doesn't she?"

"Oh yes, she has no comprehension of the situation she finds herself in," Ayla replied.

"Well at least I know when people are in a room and I don't talk about them like they're not there," Atrocious snapped. Unwelcome tears were beginning to prick behind her eyelids. She just wanted to be free, but all she got was trouble, trouble and more trouble. Why wouldn't they just let her go? She wiped her eyes roughly with the back of her sleeve, trying to hide her emotion. She was tired, so tired, she wanted to lie down in a bed of her own and not be lectured or punished. But that clearly wasn't going to happen anytime soon. Kira and Ayla were still discussing her as if she weren't even there.

"She will slow you down, be a liability, I cannot sell her in good conscience," Ayla was saying.

"She can carry some gear. She might be less trouble if she's properly worn out by real work," Kira replied.

Listening to Kira's argument, Ayla sat bolt upright on the bed, glaring at Atrocious in a menacing fashion. Atrocious remained slouched down against the far wall, her arms wrapped around her knees. Eyes filled with uncertainty flicked watchfully between Ayla and Kira as she chewed on a ragged fingernail. Only the warrior seemed unaffected by all the drama. She lounged in the chair she'd rescued after its tumble with Ayla, smiling quite merrily. "Oh cheer up," she said eventually. "You both look like someone told you the sky is falling."

"I will be much better the moment I switch her behind red," Ayla said, her voice as crisp and cold as the winter wind.

"Easy there," Kira said, holding a hand up. "It's not going to improve matters."

"It will improve matters for me," Ayla insisted.

"Will it? If you beat her for hitting you, what will she do next? You think she will suddenly become obedient?" Kira laughed a short laugh, letting the dimples in her cheeks come out to play. "Ayla, you have to know better than that."

"I will not stand to be hit," Ayla replied indignantly. She drew her elegant frame up from the bed,

precipitating a brisk shuffle across the wall to the corner on Atrocious' part.

"Nor apparently, will Atrocious," Kira said with a flicker of a wink at Atrocious. The little thief smiled a small, tentative smile in response. Her hands were on the floor beside her, ready to propel her up if she had to make a quick break for it. Kira was holding Ayla off, but only just.

"You know you don't have a leg to stand on Ayla, you've kidnapped her," Kira continued the argument.

"The fates..."

"Oh don't give me that nonsense," the warrior waved her strong hand in a gesture of light dismissal. "You and your fates. Funny how the fates always seem to want what you want, isn't it?"

Ayla's eyes narrowed at Kira. "So I'm supposed to let her go with you am I? Are you going to give her freedom?"

Atrocious remained silent, but her gaze was focused on Kira equally as intently.

"I might," Kira shrugged.

"You will not," Ayla laughed a bitter laugh. "You forget, I know you as well as you know me. What happened to the last wench you took away from here?"

"Well," Kira said, looking rather cagey. "She, er, found other employment."

Ayla cocked her head and smirked unpleasantly. "You sold her."

"I had mead debts," Kira shrugged again.

Atrocious' mouth fell open at the revelation. Really, either one of them was just as bad as the other. She was caught between a rock and a hard place, between the frying pan and the fire. The slim hope of freedom was growing smaller by the moment, giving her little to cling to.

"Oh yes pretty one," Ayla said with more than a little spite. "You think Kira argues for you because she cares. She's just taking advantage of an opportunity, as she always does."

"Keep talking like that and I might get offended." Kira spoke lightly, but there was steel in her voice, a steel Atrocious recognized and recoiled from. The warrior was toned from shoulders to calves, her musculature sleek but powerful. Atrocious didn't want to know what havoc would be wreaked if Kira lost her temper.

Ayla was not nearly so concerned. "I think you should take your leave," she said with icy politeness. "I have a disobedient apprentice to deal with."

Kira raised a skeptical brow. "Are you truly offering her an apprenticeship?"

"I am," Ayla said. "I give my word."

"What if I were to do the same?"

"Then she would have a choice, wouldn't she," Ayla said. "Apprenticeships are not forced."

Ayla and Kira turned to Atrocious, each with an expectant look in their eyes. "Well girl, it is time to choose your Mistress," Kira said. "You should bear in mind, Mistress Ayla will most certainly whip you if you choose her."

"And Mistress Kira will probably swap you for a chicken meal at her earliest convenience," Ayla replied with a spiteful glare at Kira.

With her belly churning, Atrocious looked first at one woman, then the other. It seemed inevitable that she would fall under the control of one of them, but which one? "I... want to be free," she whimpered.

"Eh, freedom is overrated," Kira winked.

Ayla did not reply, she just rolled her eyes and shook her head. She stood with her arms folded under her bosom, an elegant long finger tapping an impatient tattoo on her arm.

"I don't think so," Atrocious argued bravely. "I don't see what claim either of you have to me."

"You're getting a chance to have a say in your destiny," Ayla cut in abruptly. "Don't talk your way out of it."

Atrocious didn't know whether to cry or beg or yell. The situation she found herself in was so untenable, so unfair she could barely stand it. Neither of the two women seemed to be a particularly good choice, Ayla was an oversexed witch with control issues and Kira, well Atrocious was pretty sure Kira's charm would soon fade.

"Tick tock, little girl," Kira said, glancing over Atrocious' head out the window. Her eyes narrowed slightly, as if she saw something she didn't like at all.

"Fine," Atrocious glowered. "I choose ..."

"Shhhh!" Kira's hiss cut Atrocious' announcement short. The warrior held a finger up to her lips and pointed out the window. Ayla followed her line of sight, but Atrocious was unable to see what was going on at all.

"Soldiers," Ayla noted in icy tones. "Friends of yours Kira?"

"Not mine," Kira whispered. "Those are Imperials."

"Imperials?" The word squeaked out of Atrocious, drawing malevolent looks from both Ayla and Kira.

"Of course this has something to do with you," Ayla sighed before closing her eyes and muttering words far too fast and foreign for Atrocious to understand. The air in the cottage seemed to shimmer for a second, then cleared as Ayla opened her eyes once more. "We have two minutes, maybe less if they have a mage with them."

"Imperials don't use mages," Kira said, still glowering at Atrocious. "What do they want you for?"

"Nothing," Atrocious lied.

Kira moved fast. One moment she was standing several feet away, the next she had Atrocious grabbed up by the front of her tunic as she hauled her off the ground. "Don't lie to me," she ground out, her dark eyes boring into Atrocious. "Not over this."

Caught up like a kitten, Atrocious whimpered. "I didn't do anything. I promise."

"You're lying," Kira growled. "You're going to regret that."

"Kira. Stop. We don't have time to deal with her." Ayla was moving about the room, packing items into a small brown satchel. Still caught in Kira's grip, Atrocious watched with wonder as Ayla put scrolls, potions, even a pan into a bag no bigger than a man's head. No matter how much Ayla stuffed inside the receptacle, the sides never bulged and it never became full.

Kira released Atrocious, letting her fall the few inches she'd dragged her up back to the floor. "Get up," she ordered in harsh, clipped tones. The easy going facade had fallen away entirely and in its place was the demeanor of someone who expected to be obeyed immediately and without question.

Atrocious heeded the warning and scrambled to her feet. Without another word being spoken the trio made their way out the back door at a quick run. They were still within earshot of the cottage when the soldiers began shouting and demanding entry to the now empty cottage. The angry voices spurred all three of the women on as they made good their escape, quickly distancing themselves from Ayla's forest home.

Atrocious quickly realized that an opportunity for escape was upon her too. Ayla and Kira were far more spooked by the soldiers than she was, maybe they wouldn't care if she made a break for it. At the next fork in the forest trail she darted down the opposite path from Ayla and Kira. It didn't work out. The moment she deviated from the path, Kira's hand grabbed the back of her tunic and hauled her back none too gently, making her feet skim across the dirt.

"Don't."

It was one word, one little word and yet there was so much menace in it. Atrocious swallowed, nodded and didn't make the smallest sound of complaint when Kira pushed her ahead, making her run in the middle of the group.

## Part Seven

Kira's palm came down hard across a bouncing red rear amidst incoherent yowls that could have been pleas for clemency, dire threats or anything in between. She was sitting on a fallen tree and she had Atrocious held firmly over her lap, one iron banded arm wrapped around the young thief's waist as she belabored her bottom with impressive punitive enthusiasm.

Taking no part in the punishment, Ayla stood a short distance away, scanning the surrounding area for soldiers, bandits and other nasties that inhabited the region. Her expression was impassive, in spite of the blow she'd taken to the jaw earlier she seemed to be taking no joy in what was happening to Atrocious.

"You do not lie to me!" Kira emphasized every word with another slap to the bright red rear caught over her thigh. Whether the lesson was taking was debatable, but whether she was making an impression was not. Atrocious was wailing, a steady cry that had started several minutes earlier and showed no signs of stopping.

"You could have gotten us all killed, you know that?" The warrior's muscular arm swept down in a punitive arc, catching the lower rise of Atrocious' round rear with a loud cracking blow that echoed around the clearing. Atrocious' shrieks rose to a new pitch as she kicked her legs frantically.

"Kira..." Ayla's voice floated low on the twilight breeze. "She's had enough."

"She's had enough when I say she's had enough," Kira replied, grimly, applying another slap to Atrocious' behind.

"Kira..."

The witch and the warrior's eyes met, Kira's flashing with anger, Ayla's cool and collected. A silent argument was conducted in their gazes, an argument Atrocious weighed in on with inconsolable sobs.

"Fine," Kira growled, setting Atrocious on her feet. "Let her get away with it then."

Suddenly freed, Atrocious stumbled away from the warrior clutching her bare bottom. Her britches were around her knees and she was entirely exposed to both Ayla and Kira, but she didn't care about that, she only cared about rubbing the unholy sting out of her behind. Tears continued to rush down her cheeks, tears she hated but could not control. Kira hadn't even given her a chance to explain. The moment they'd been sure the soldiers had not followed them, Kira had grabbed her and started whacking away.

What Kira probably hadn't counted on was the fact that Atrocious wasn't cowed by what had happened to her, on the contrary the assault on her bottom had done nothing but enrage her. When she regained a modicum of self-possession she yanked her pants up roughly, wincing as the rough material slid over her swollen behind. "How dare you?" She bit the words out when the tears abated enough to allow her to do so.

Kira smirked unpleasantly. "Easily. Open your mouth again and I'll show you exactly how much I dare."

Atrocious began to reply, but Ayla cut in. "Enough," she said, taking Atrocious by the hand and drawing her away from the warrior. "Enough from both of you."

"She still hasn't told us why they wanted her," Kira pointed out.

"I don't have to tell you anything," Atrocious said, her eyes glistening with tears and rage. "I told you to let me go. I told you. But no, you wanted to keep me like a pet and now there's trouble you're blaming me. Well it's your own stupid fault."

There was a heavy silence as Atrocious glared at Ayla and Kira. They made no reply. What reply could they make? She was right, they had treated her as less than human and they had paid the price for doing so.

"Does anyone have any objection to me leaving now?" Atrocious growled the sentence as she yanked her hand out of Ayla's grasp. "No? I didn't think so." With as much dignity as she could muster, Atrocious pulled herself up to her full height and strode out of the clearing without a second look back at the two women who'd squabbled over her like two overgrown brats fighting for a prize doll only to turn tail and run at the first sign of danger. So much for Mistresses.

Atrocious strode into the forest, rendered fearless with festering anger that had finally burst free. Her captivity had gone on long enough, it was time to continue making her mark in the world. Unfortunately, her freedom was very short lived indeed. There was a loud noise, then the ground suddenly rushed towards her as she fell, tackled around the waist by a large, muscular mass of woman. She got a mouthful of moss before she was yanked over onto her back and pinned by Kira. "Listen whelp," the warrior growled. "You don't walk away from me. Not ever."

"I'll walk away from you if I want to," Atrocious said rebelliously. "I don't care if you hit me. I'm tired of this shit."

"Oh you're tired of it are you?" Kira's smirk was dark. "If you think you're tired of it now, think about this." She leaned forwards until her sensual lips were just inches away from Atrocious' face. "I haven't even begun to torment you. Tell me why those soldiers were after you."

"I don't know."

"You know."

"I don't know."

"Tell me."

"No."

"Will this be going somewhere anytime soon?" Ayla could not be seen in the shadows, but her voice carried easily in the clear night.

Kira sat back up and looked over her shoulder in the direction of the voice. "She's going to tell me."

"No I'm not."

Kira glared down at Atrocious. "Yes you are."

"I ask," Ayla said quite calmly, "because there are several bandits headed this way."

Kira was off Atrocious in an instant and Atrocious could only watch wide-eyed as the warrior drew the short sword at her side and crouched down in the dark shadow of a nearby tree. The brigands were close enough to be heard, their stolen armor clanking as they rushed towards the three women.

"You picked a bad night to get lost in the woods!" The bandit leader snarled as he burst through the undergrowth, already prepared for attack.

Paralyzed with fear, Atrocious gasped. He was a fearsome man, large and broad, his bare chest covered with hair so dark it could almost have been called a pelt. He was wielding a war axe, the blade already stained with dull blood. Ayla was the most obvious target standing tall and pale in the moonlight, her beautiful face impassive and he made for her with an awful cry, a brutal barbaric sound that made Atrocious shiver where she still lay.

Everything seemed to happen in slow motion. The curved blade swung down towards Ayla's head, propelled by burly arms. It seemed as though the blade would surely split her skull, but the witch raised her hand towards the brigand and something sparked into life on her skin. It quickly grew into a ball of fire, rolling and boiling against her palm. The brigand saw the flame, but it was too late, he had committed to the attack and his momentum carried him into the path of the fireball. It burst against his chest, hurling him backwards into the air. His cry of pain was as short lived as he was. A moment later he landed heavily in the scrub and lay unmoving as the hair on his chest blackened and burned.

Three other brigands still remained, one woman and two men. They did not seem perturbed by their leader's demise. "Die spellcaster," the female shrieked, rushing Ayla with a large curved knife. She was wild with rage, foaming spittle at the corners of her mouth as she waved the blade in a repetitive stabbing motion.

Ayla did not have to defend herself, for Kira was on the woman before she got into range. Her blade sliced through the air, catching the woman's shoulder and cutting down towards her midsection. Atrocious shut her eyes and covered her ears, trying to drown out the screams as the brigand died at Kira's hand. It was all so quick, so bloody, so utterly brutal and inhumane.

Seeing the fate that had befallen their comrades and realizing that they were now outnumbered, the two remaining brigands turned tail and fled into the depths of the forest. Atrocious missed their retreat because she was curled over on her side, vomiting into the bushes and shivering in shock.

She'd never seen anything like it before. Her sheltered life in the village had kept her safe from the sight of violence which Kira and Ayla seemed to be able to take part in almost casually. Neither of them had so much as flinched during the attack, they'd certainly not shown the slightest sign of fear. They killed without thought, without mercy.

When there was nothing left in her tummy, Atrocious emerged from the bushes to find the witch and the warrior deep in muttered conversation. They turned as one when she drew within earshot. "Will you be leaving now, then?" Ayla asked the question with a hint of a dry smile.

There was no way Atrocious was heading into the forest on her own. If she'd been caught alone with those brigands she would have been diced and sliced in less than a minute. She thought she'd known fear before, but the fear she now felt was an entirely different beast, a real one that lived and breathed and wanted to kill her for no reason at all. "I might stick around," she said, shrugging offhandedly as if she weren't making a massive concession.

"Then you're going to have to tell us why the Imperials want you," Kira said sternly.

Atrocious looked at her quickly, then looked away again. She'd been giving Kira a lot of attitude, but having seen her cut someone down made her feel much less like mouthing off. "It was nothing," she mumbled towards the foliage. "I stole a horse from one of their soldiers."

"But you were caught? How did you escape?"

"On the horse," Atrocious admitted. "When I went to Ayla's place I was looking for a saddle blanket or something."

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

Kira made a low warning growl. "You're lying."

"I'm not!" Atrocious' voice rose high in a shivery wail.

"They would not send soldiers after a horse thief," Kira insisted. "Certainly they would not bother to track a horse thief down. There's something you're not telling us."

"There's not! I promise!"

"She could be telling the truth," Ayla cut into the conversation. Atrocious smiled at her in relief. Ayla really was so nice, and so beautiful too. In all the tumult of battle she had remained entirely untouched, not so much as a hair had come out of place.

"What are the odds of a thief telling the truth," Kira sneered.

Atrocious bit her tongue. She very much wanted to tell Kira to go boil her head, but the image of the brigand being sliced in two was still fresh in her mind. "I choose Ayla," she said.

Kira snorted. "What are you talking about?"

"For my mistress," Atrocious looked at Ayla with new-found respect and awe. "I choose Ayla."

Ayla smiled, but gave Atrocious no answer in response to the declaration of her choice. "Come, we need to find better shelter for the evening," she said, changing the subject to something of more practical weight.

The trio eventually took refuge in a little inn a few miles away. It was a simple establishment so there

were no rooms to be had, just the hearth which provided a limited amount of comfort in the form of animal skins laid on the stone surrounding. Atrocious huddled to the side of the fire by herself, keeping silent and distant from Ayla and Kira. She tried to get some rest, but sleep was not an option. When she gazed into the fire visions of blood and violence danced constantly before her eyes. If she closed her eyes the visions became worse, more gruesome, more realistic. But in spite of her torment sleep would not be denied. As the hour grew later and her fatigue increased she started to nod off, tipping dangerously towards the flames.

"Hey, careful!" Kira took her by the arm and pulled her back from the fire. Startled into full consciousness, Atrocious emitted a small involuntary shriek of distress.

"What's eating you?" The warrior frowned slightly and let go of her.

"Nothing," Atrocious lied as she curled her knees up to her chest and wrapped her arms around them.

"She's afraid of you," Ayla surmised. The witch had wrapped herself in her hooded robe and only the very tip of her nose could be seen catching the light of the fire.

"Of me? Why?" Kira's brow furrowed. "I haven't done anything to her."

The witch turned her magnetic gaze on Kira. "You killed a woman in front of her."

"You killed a man, why wouldn't she be afraid of you too?"

"Maybe she is."

"Stop it!" Atrocious piped up. "I'm not afraid!"

That was a lie nobody bought. "It's okay to be afraid," Kira said. "Especially if you've never seen a man die before. But..." She reached over and took Atrocious' chin between her thumb and forefinger, holding the young thief's gaze with her own solemn eyes. "Do not fear me. I acted in your defense."

Atrocious knew all too well that without Kira and Ayla, both of whom had acted with extreme violence, she would have been at the mercy of the bandits and they had absolutely no mercy at all. Still, the same fingers that now held her face with a gentle tenderness had been used to bring quick and bloody death. That was not something easily overcome.

"Take comfort in the fact that they deserved it," Kira advised her. "Take comfort in the fact that they will not slaughter any more innocent travelers. Take comfort that they did not suffer at the end - and do not make yourself suffer either." There was something very heavy and very old in Kira's voice, a wisdom with the weight of ages behind it.

## Part Eight

That night when sleep finally came, Atrocious had a dream. In her dream she was back in the forest, bent over and pushed across a rough log. Her britches were around her knees, her bottom exposed. A strong hand ran up her back and grabbed the hair at the back of her head, tugging her head back so that she was forced to arch her hips up, offering her secret places like a cat in heat.

For once she was not being spanked, instead something much more pleasurable was happening. Something hard and smooth and round was tracing up and down her pussy lips and pressing against the entrance of her body. It was firm and insistent, but not rough. She looked back over her shoulder and couldn't see anyone, but she knew in that queer way one has of knowing in dreams that it was Kira.

Ayla was there too, she could sense her presence, but it wasn't until Kira's phallus pressed Atrocious' pussy lips apart and sought entrance to her slick channel that Ayla became visible. She stood in front of Atrocious wearing the same cloak she had been wearing when Atrocious fell asleep. But now she was not clothed under it. As Kira's phallus slowly sank into her pussy, stretching, filling and claiming her, Atrocious' eyes feasted on the golden down at the 'V' of Ayla's thighs.

"She's fucking me, Mistress," Atrocious whispered in the dream.

"Give her your pussy," Ayla said. "Let her fuck you."

Atrocious obeyed, moaning softly as Kira began to thrust the phallus in and out of her pussy. It was a gentle fucking and she could feel the ridges of the device as they slipped in and out of her most secret place. The grip on her hair loosened and Kira's strong hands slid down her back in a languid massage that ended with the warrior gripping Atrocious by the hips and tipping her up slightly so the phallus, which appeared to have been secured to Kira's body, could slide deeper into Atrocious' pussy.

It was strange to be watched whilst she was fucked but in the dream it also seemed natural. Ayla was standing guard, making sure no harm came to her whilst Kira pleased her in the most intimate of ways.

Slowly but surely, Kira picked up pace and soon Atrocious was being slammed over the log, her breasts bouncing with every thrust. "Naughty thieves get their pussies fucked. Naughty thieves get their bottoms spanked," Ayla was saying the words like a chant or a mantra. Atrocious wanted to climax, but she couldn't. The dream wouldn't let her. All she could do was whimper and beg for release from her captors.

Then the dream changed. She was indoors somewhere and she was no longer being fucked by Kira, but Ayla had her sitting on her lap and was playing with her wet pussy. The witch's fingers skillfully teased the nub of her clitoris out from its little hood and began spanking it lightly whilst Atrocious squirmed halfway between ecstasy and pain.

"Your pussy is mine," Ayla murmured in her ear. "Your clit, your cunt, it's all mine." Fierce possession was evident in the way she wrapped her arm around Atrocious's waist, holding her still on her lap whilst she punished her apprentice's clit.

"Is this real?" Atrocious squealed the question. "Is this real life?"

"It's going to be," Ayla said. "Just as soon as you find me the juggling fish..."

"Huh?"

"I'm going to spank your... blueberry pie."

The dream was fading, losing coherency, but the very real pool of wetness between Atrocious' thighs remained a testament to the potency of her imaginings.

## Part Nine

"Stick 'em up!"

Atrocious came to consciousness slowly and reluctantly. She had not slept at all well. The stone hearth was uncomfortable and her dreams had been... disturbing. It appeared that morning was not going to bring any relief from her ongoing woes. As sleep fog faded from her mind Atrocious became aware that she was being robbed before she'd so much as opened her eyes for the day. It was almost enough to convince her not to bother getting up at all.

"Stick 'em up," a strident and enthusiastic voice demanded.

"I do not think so." Kira spoke to Atrocious' left.

"Nor do I," Ayla chimed in on her right.

Atrocious risked opening one eye. The sight that greeted her surprised her into opening the other eye too. They were being robbed by a young woman about the same age as her, a woman who seemed to have fashioned her attire according to entirely fanciful whim. Her bright blue pants were wide and baggy, after the fashion of a pirate. The leather vest she wore looked sturdy enough, but the gaudy yellow shirt underneath it was bright enough to qualify as an assault on the eyes in its own right. In addition to the blue and yellow attire, she was adorned with colored bangles clattering up and down her arms and wide gold loops that had been stuck through her earlobes.

She was pretty. Very pretty actually. Her eyes were almond shaped, vaguely exotic and her skin had a natural native tan that would have needed no sun to maintain. Her lips were full and sensual, smeared with red berry juice. Atrocious might have been tempted to think that she was a sweet sort of person, but the fact that she was threatening the three of them with a curved scimitar and the sort of broad grin that suggested she enjoyed what she was doing rather a lot, could not be ignored.

"Stick what up?" Atrocious inquired, endeavoring to be more helpful than Ayla and Kira. Their flat refusal to stick things up would hardly be improving the situation.

"Oh sorry. Your hands. Stick your hands up," the robber clarified.

"Nobody is sticking anything up," Kira interrupted rather crossly. "Run along, little girl. You do not want to start trouble with us."

The robber took umbrage to Kira's dismissal. Her brow furrowed deeply and she took a step towards the warrior. "Listen, *crone*," she sneered. "I'm the one saying what's going on here."

Atrocious' tummy rumbled. "I'm hungry," she said, sitting up. She was not overly concerned by the robber. Why should she be? Ayla and Kira had demonstrated that they were more than capable of dealing with brigands and bandits of all kinds. A sole robber dressed in outlandish clothing was hardly going to do any of them harm.

"Give me all your gold," the robber demanded. "And in return I shall spare your lives."

Kira growled and started moving forward but at a sign from Ayla, she stopped. Where Kira was irritated and Atrocious hungry, Ayla seemed faintly amused by the situation. "What a fearsome robber you are, and what a generous offer you make us," Ayla said, trying and failing to keep a patronizing note out of her voice.

"I see what the problem is," the robber declared. "You aren't taking me seriously."

"They don't take me seriously either," Atrocious commiserated.

"Have you tried poking them with something sharp?" The pretty robber made the inquiry with genuine interest. It seemed that Atrocious had found something of a kindred spirit.

"I haven't actually," Atrocious said.

"She wouldn't be silly enough to try," Kira interjected. "She knows the consequences would be unpleasant."

"You should definitely poke them with something sharp. Especially the old one." The robber ignored Kira entirely and addressed Atrocious. Whilst Atrocious was giggling at the way the robber had so very neatly found a button of Kira's to press, Kira was losing her temper and lunging at the robber. She came rushing by Atrocious in a mass of feminine flesh and rage, her fine musculature being employed to one end: capturing the robber.

"You'll learn a lesson today my girl!" The warrior declared in a snarl. Thankfully she had not unsheathed any weapon, but Atrocious knew well enough it would not be pleasant for the robber if Kira managed to get a hold of her.

She needn't have worried. When Kira got to the spot where the robber was standing, she wasn't standing there anymore. She'd taken a leaping jump backwards, leaving Kira to fall forwards. Whilst the warrior was a victim of her own momentum the robber took a running step and jumped, using Kira's back as a spring board. She landed on the hearth next to Atrocious, who applauded her acrobatics with great vigor.

"Ladies, you are having the pleasure of being robbed by the great Rogette," the robber announced as she took a dramatic bow. "Please place your valuables in front of you and take your leave through the front door."

Kira stumbled up to her feet, her face beet red with embarrassment. "Get out of here," she said to Rogette. "Get out of here while I'll still let you live."

Rogette smirked. "You can't touch me, let alone kill me," she taunted Kira.

Atrocious was rather enjoying the showdown between the robber and the warrior, but Ayla had to go and ruin it all by casting a spell. Rogette had been thoroughly distracted by Kira, so she didn't see the paralysis spell coming. Atrocious didn't see it coming either, but she knew what had happened the moment the robber's eyes went wide and her muscles strained against invisible bonds. Suddenly unable to keep her balance, Rogette began to tip forward and would probably have smashed her face into the stone surrounding if not for Atrocious, who caught her and guided her down safely. "That was a dirty trick," she scowled at Ayla over the fallen robber.

"You would have preferred being robbed?" Ayla's amusement was very much in evidence, her cheeks were dimpling with the humor of it all.

Before Atrocious could make any reply, Kira came forward and stood over the robber with a gloating smirk on her face. "Well what shall we do with her? How shall we teach her a lesson?"

"You're not going to do anything," Atrocious insisted. She felt quite bad for Rogette, who appeared to be quite a good robber, if not for a certain lack of magical resistance.

"You don't have any say in this," Kira snapped.

"The hell I don't," Atrocious replied, drawing on all her courage as she stood up to the warrior. She shuffled around to place herself in front of the prone robber, making sure Kira couldn't get all grabby with Rogette.

Kira looked down her nose imperiously at Atrocious. "Do you want to share in this robber's punishment?"

"Do you want my foot in your ass?" Atrocious wasn't sure where the threat had come from, but she liked it, it sounded good, strong.

What didn't sound nearly as good or strong was the squeal that she emitted when Kira picked her up by the front of her shirt in one swift, strong movement and fixed her with a glower. "I like you. You're cute most of the time," she said, her voice sonorous and low. "But if you push me, I will whip your ass."

Atrocious and Kira stared each other down whilst Atrocious dangled from the warrior's grasp. It was all dreadfully impressive, but Atrocious just couldn't get into the spirit of the thing. "I'm hungry," she said. She was more than hungry, her stomach was growling and also somewhat unpleasantly sore in a familiar, unwanted way.

Taking Atrocious' words as some kind of acknowledgment of her authority, Kira lowered her down to the floor. "Then eat something and stay out of my way whilst I deal with this robber."

"Just leave her alone," Atrocious snapped testily. "Can't you go five blasted minutes without starting a fight with someone?" She turned away from Kira and started going through Ayla's bag. She was pretty sure the witch had packed some food in there. She was craving sweet satisfying goodness, something derived from the cocoa bean if at all possible. She went through the bag tossing out dried meats, dried fruits, cheeses, even the fine bread she usually enjoyed greatly. "Why isn't there any proper bloody food in here?"

"What are you looking for?" Ayla made the inquiry patiently even as Atrocious made an unholy mess out of their provisions.

"Something worth bloody eating," Atrocious growled.

"Who do you think you're speaking to that way?" Kira interjected, saving Ayla the trouble.

"This doesn't concern you." Atrocious was feeling grumpy. Not the sort of grumpy you feel when you

stub your toe, or the sort of grumpy you feel when someone bumps into you when they should have been paying more attention, she was feeling the deep chemical grumpiness that periodically floods the female mind. The longer she was awake, the worse it got.

Kira laid a hand on her shoulder and turned her around. "It does concern me. You're being very rude."

"Oh no! The person who chops people in two thinks I'm rude!" Atrocious rolled her eyes and turned back to her search.

Almost speechless, Kira turned to Ayla. "I thought you said she was scared of me?"

Ayla did her best to hide her growing amusement. "Maybe she got over her fear in her sleep."

"Maybe I should put some of it back into her," Kira said, scowling at the back of Atrocious' head. Kira was not accustomed to being dismissed and it was happening twice in one morning. That was almost too much for her ego to bear.

"Yes!" Atrocious made a grunt of happiness as she laid hands on a large block of chocolate. She stuffed the edge of it unceremoniously into her mouth. The rich treat melted against her tongue and as the first traces of the candy slid down her throat she made a soft moan of pure contentment.

Her eyes narrowed, Kira seemed to be back at the edge of her tether. "At least pay attention if you're going to insult me," she growled, snatching the chocolate out of Atrocious' hand.

It was a mistake.

Atrocious turned with a feral expression on her face. Her eyes burned with a primal rage and her upper lip curled in a snarl. "Mine!" She lunged for the chocolate with such speed and fury that Kira couldn't stop her. Atrocious wrenched the chocolate out of the warrior's hand, gave her a swift bite for her troubles and retired back to the hearth where she started stuffing the candy into her mouth for all she was worth, leaving Kira nursing her hand, which now sported a chocolate and red ring of teeth marks.

No longer able to contain herself, Ayla burst into peals of laughter. Kira looked utterly bewildered, as if she'd just been attacked by something so small and insignificant she still couldn't bring herself to believe that it had happened. "Never come between a woman and her chocolate," she advised Kira. "Especially at that time of the month."

"Mnpghf fring," Atrocious muttered through a mouthful of candy.

Determined to save face any way possible, Kira drew herself up to her full height. "I'll deal with the robber, then I'll deal with the biter," she declared, turning to the place Rogette lay. There was just one problem. Rogette wasn't there anymore.

Kira turned back to Ayla, who was still smiling a broad smile. "Where is she?"

"The spell wore off two minutes ago. She slipped out whilst you two were arguing," Ayla informed her.

"Well why didn't you do something about it?" Kira threw her hands in the air and glared at Ayla.

"She wasn't trying to rob us anymore, so I rather thought I had done something about it." Ayla still sounded calm, but there was a slight edge to her voice and her smile had faded.

Kira snorted aggressively. "So you let robbers escape and have a servant who bites. Charming. What ever happened to keeping order?"

"I still know how to keep order," Ayla said crisply. "Would you like a demonstration?"

Atrocious was still stuffing her mouth, but her eyes went a little wider as she caught the gist of Ayla's threat. The witch was looking at the warrior with a steady, almost imperious look on her face. Kira on the other hand looked almost petulant. Hoping against hope, Atrocious prayed she was about to see Kira get her just desserts.

There had been a few instances in the past where they had butted heads, but none of them had the quiet intensity of that moment. Ayla sat cross legged and perfectly still whilst Kira shuffled uncomfortably. Atrocious could sense that Kira had already lost before they'd even begun, but why? She was strong, incredibly powerful in her own right. Now that Atrocious' temper had settled she was amazed she'd had the nerve to go after the warrior at all. Overnight Kira had shed some of the weight of her armor and was wearing a simple leather tunic and pants. Her arms were free and bare and covered from shoulder to elbow in curling tattoos that Atrocious knew must have hurt like hell to get. Underneath the tattoos, toned muscles rippled with even the slightest movement of her arms.

In comparison, Ayla seemed weak. She was not quite delicate in appearance, but the naturally refined set of her features did not lend themselves to violence. By all rights, Kira should have been able to dominate Ayla easily, and yet she did not. For all her bluster and insistence on order, Kira came second to Ayla.

Nibbling at her chocolate, Atrocious noted that Kira wasn't pleased by the fact. Her handsome features were slipping ever closer to a full blown pout, making her look incongruously childish.

"Are we going to need a demonstration?" Ayla pressed the question softly.

"No," Kira muttered. She moved away from the witch and sat at a bench that was set against the far wall. "Are we going to get going?"

"I think we'll stay a few days," Ayla said.

"Here? In this little shit hole where we get robbed in our sleep? Why?"

"Atrocious isn't going to be feeling well."

"How can you possibly know that?" Kira scowled at Atrocious, as if it were her fault that Ayla wanted them to stay.

"Call it instinct," Ayla sighed.

Atrocious said nothing, but was silently very grateful. Ayla was right. The next few days were not going to be pleasant for her. Each and every month held a certain hell for her, a two full days of crippling cramps if she was lucky, more if she was not.

"We should move on," Kira insisted. "We need to find out why the Imperials are after us."

"There is no great rush," Ayla said reasonably. "This place is fairly remote, it is unlikely they will find us here any time soon. Besides, the less we travel, the lower the chance that we will be seen by someone who reports us."

"You're wasting time," Kira insisted.

"You're beginning to try my patience."

The warrior grumbled and scuffed her foot on the floor. Impatience was in every line of her frame as they all sat in silence. "Fine," she said, pushing up off the bench. "Then I'm going to track down that robber. If I can't find her, I'll find the innkeeper who bugged off and left us to her tender mercies. They must all be in on it."

"Sit down," Ayla said firmly.

"You don't give me orders, witch."

"Kira." Ayla said the warrior's name very quietly. "I will deal with you if necessary."

Pressed by temper, Kira started visibly appraising Ayla once more. "It has been a very long time since you last laid hands on me," she pointed out. "I'm not a little apprentice anymore."

"It makes no difference to me," Ayla replied.

"Your spells won't work on me," Kira reminded her.

Again Ayla was unmoved. "I don't need spells to deal with you."

Kira sniggered. "Then how are you going to do anything?"

"You'll present yourself for discipline if I tell you to."

"Why would I do that?"

"Because you know as well as I do that you need it. Because you know what happens when you don't do as I tell you."

Kira's shoulders slumped in defeat and Atrocious' curiosity was thoroughly piqued. What did Ayla have on Kira? She looked at Ayla very intently, but couldn't see any sign of threat from the witch. With nothing to go on there, she thought about her own experiences with Ayla. The witch dominated through a mixture of raw sexuality and magic, so if magic didn't work on Kira, Atrocious could only conclude that Ayla must have something sexual on the warrior.

"Pussy whipped," she muttered under her breath to nobody in particular.

Across the room, Kira's head snapped up. "What did you say?"

"Nothing," Atrocious lied. She could barely keep the smirk off her face. So it was something sexual.

Kira stood up and walked over to the hearth where Atrocious sat finishing the last little bit of candy. "Don't think that the witch will protect you from your actions forever," she warned.

"I'm not intending on protecting her from any of them," Ayla said mildly.

The warrior turned towards the witch. "So you've no objection to me taking her to task for biting me?"

Ayla's gaze settled on Atrocious. "None at all."

Atrocious squeaked as a dark smile spread over Kira's face. The warrior had found an outlet for her frustrations, and it was her rear end. "Come here, little thief," Kira said, beckoning Atrocious with a crooked finger.

"No way," Atrocious refused.

"I'm giving you a chance to make it easy on yourself," Kira said. But Atrocious was staring at her powerful arms and she remembered all too well what it had been felt like to be thrashed by Kira and there was no way she was going to have the warrior's power and rage unleashed on her bottom if she had anything to do with it.

When it became clear that Atrocious wasn't going to come along quietly, Kira made a grab for her. It failed and started a grand chase around the room with Atrocious jumping over chairs and diving under tables and Kira in hot pursuit.

"You can't keep this up forever," Kira called out. She was running too, but unlike Atrocious, she had no trouble speaking. She was not so unfit that a few turns around the room turned her into a puffing, panting mess. Atrocious knew all she was really doing was tiring herself out and making herself easier prey for the warrior, but she couldn't just stop running, no matter how out of breath she got. She needed a miracle, and she prayed for one feverishly even as her last reserves of speed petered out.

Just when it seemed she would have to stop there was a loud noise from above, a pool of bright sunlight lit the floor around her and she found herself rising skywards at an impressive rate. As she rose up through the top of the inn she saw that the roof had been kicked in and that she had been lassoed by a familiar person. With feet still running in mid-air, she was hauled up onto the roof of the inn and dumped on the thatch. "Rogette," she gasped, breathing heavily. "Thank you."

"At your service," the pretty robber smiled and took a bow, bracelets clattering as she did. "One good turn deserves another."

"Atrocious, come down here this instant!" Kira shouted from below.

Rogette smirked and kicked some loose thatch over the hole she'd made, obscuring the warrior's view. "Out of sight, out of mind," she quipped mischievously. Atrocious giggled with pure glee and turned over on her back, feeling the sun warm her face as she reveled in her escape. With a friend like Rogette on her side, things were looking up.

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