Chapter 1

At the end of the day, Zyntris always enjoyed her work. That’s what kept her coming back day after day, year after year to the dangerous profession. But work was where she felt alive, where she truly got to express herself. She considered herself a virtuoso of her craft and was eager to prove it at any opportunity. Even better when it was for a just cause, her moral righteousness pushing her efforts beyond what the standard person might think reasonable. All of this would make Zyntris the model employee at any company, firm, or institution. Unfortunately, Zyn didn’t work at any normal business. Instead, she was a thief and right now, she was robbing the manor of Lord Bradford, the fourth richest man in the Kingdom.

Creeping through quiet hallways Zyntris checked her hand drawn map in the darkness. She was close to the item’s main holding chamber, but still had the rest of the corridor and two new rooms to go. The map was marked with all sorts of symbols, a window into how Zyntris thought about her current job. Either helpful or hurtful, any detail that could impact having a successful toast to victory at home, or a miserable night in a dungeon was accounted for. A hall with a heavy carpet, a back corner shrouded in shadows, a window grate that a lithe body could slip in and out of all were potential tools to be used. She smiled; the route she planned had the least amount of risk.

Zyntris entered the next room slowly, easing each padded foot down one after the other. Normally there would be two guards in this room, but tonight was special. Lord Bradford had decided to hold a party that evening and by all accounts it was a banger. But the guests had filtered out and the exhausted staff were asleep in their beds. After a night of watching everyone else drink, the guards were “relaxing” with their own amusements, potential danger gone. Ol’ Barny was on the best of days unlikely to catch a master burglar, but half a flask in and running off twelve hours of being on his feet left him asleep in the corner desk. His partner, William, also was busy. Busy inspecting the wood of the desk with his face, slight drool leaking out from his open, snoring mouth onto the tabletop.

To a casual viewer, Zyntris’s movement past the two watchmen must have seemed agonizingly tense, but she was more relaxed than ever. She even paused to pickpocket a key off sleepy William to save herself the trouble of having to force open the door. This job was going off exactly as planned. And she planned it perfectly. That being said, there were always some unknowns. After all, it wasn’t her house and she only had just a few minutes to case the place a few days ago when she visited as a “new maid”. And the biggest unknown still left was the final challenge, the vault door. What she could find from the street was that the only person who held the key was Lord Bradford himself, and there was no chance to pickpocket the master of the manor tonight; he had left for the countryside right after the party. No, Zyntris would need to pick the lock herself or figure out another way in.

The vault door looked completely impenetrable. At first glance, it didn’t even appear to have a keyhole at all to even be picked! But that did not deter the master thief who took out her tools. Very fine files, tiny scalpels, and pointed picks all laid out in a row, protected from jostling from the soft leather case. Selecting one, she slid her hands over to where she understood the best place mechanically for the lock to be. A gentle touch and many years of experience revealed two holes disguised to look like a natural part of the mechanism. A probing scalpel inserted and then gently twisted confirmed Zyn’s suspicions. She smiled, it was going to be a fun one.

Methodical, but daring would be the best way to describe how Zyntris worked the lock. She operated on feeling, not bothering to use a listening device to hear her progress. She was a creature of instinct, letting her experience and gut lead her to victory. Keep in mind, it was near pitch black in the vault room, so she had little else to go on as she worked her magic. Tumbler by tumbler she clicked her way through the catch. If progress was reset with a misplaced poke, Zyn didn’t show any annoyance, understanding it was part of the game. But as she got closer, her heart beat increased. It was almost impossible not to get excited. She had done it again, broke into the house, beat the guards and now was beating what the best money could buy.

Only one last tumbler remained and she could feel it. Biting her lip in anticipation she tried several directions. Up was too strong, down too weak, right was solid, but left… left had that bit of play. But just how much force was needed? Her gut told her that a hard push would do it, but a hard push might make some noise. A quick scan around the lightless room indicated little risk and she went for it. **Crrruuuhhhh CLICK.** She was in.

The vault door swung open easily, hinges well-greased to not even make a squeak. Somehow, inside the container seemed even darker, sucking whatever traces of light fluttered in the main room. For just a second Zyntris hesitated. This was in her mind the point of no return. From here on, the owners would know they had been robbed from the physical damage on the vault and would take precautions to stop it next time. Anything she did now was heightened. But… was that why she paused? Shrugging, she moved in, eyes adjusting to the darkness.

The vault was filled with valuables, as one would expect from the fourth richest household in one of the richest lands in the world. But Zyntris was not here for wealth. She passed by the gold, the gems, even the bonds and deeds to various holdings throughout the Kingdom were not worthy of her attention. Well, to be fair, those valuables were extremely worthy of her attention, but the job tonight was highly specific. The instructions were explicitly clear on what she was allowed to take. Out of everything in the vault there was one item above all else she needed to procure. The relic.

In the back of the vault there was a larger purpose-built container that appeared out of place. It looked like a chest, but nothing like the other strongboxes that contained the significant Bradford wealth. To Zyn’s confusion, it didn’t look to be a lock box at all, just something to shroud the item from any exposure to light. Opening up what was revealed to be mirrored paneling, the container held a wrapped pouch. After checking for further traps, the thief undid the rope knot allowing for the cloth of the pouch to fall away and reveal the prize inside.

What it was, Zyntris was not sure. Oh, she knew the location where it would be and was told it would not look conventionally valuable. She was given several options of what it could be made of, and a rough size. She even knew what it looked like, a mask of simple wood with a confusing expression that either showed pain or… surprise? But what it WAS to who wanted it, Zyn had simply no clue. She didn’t even know why Lord Bradford, by all accounts a respectable businessman of the Kingdom, would even have it. It wasn’t like he had some massive art collection to go alongside with it. To Zyn though, the score never really mattered, it was the pride that she could do it. Re-wrapping the mask and stowing it securely on her person, the thief turned around and prepared to make her escape. Afterall, one cannot claim success until at home safe and sound. It should be relatively simple, back out the way she came. Shutting the vault door, Zyntris felt a little smug. Again, she essentially pulled off the perfect crime. Nobody would ever know it was her. It was going to be her little secret between herself, the seeker of the relic, and apparently the ten guards who suddenly jumped out behind the false panel wall screaming STOP THIEF.

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Zyntris weighed her options. On one hand, she could try and run for it and probably die getting stabbed and shot by bolts in a horrifically painful way. On the other hand, she could surrender and probably die after getting tortured and executed by a very vengeful Lord Bradford. Men of his caliber and wealth were known to take justice into their own hands to more directly deter thievery and the large amount of money shared with local guards made sure to sweep the matter under the rug. So, in conclusion, Zyntris did not have any good options. From her standpoint, she actually only had bad options, which made her very sad.

“Ahah! Think you can steal from me, you little minx?” Lord Bradford smugly sneered. “Oh, you thought you had the perfect day. The ever-watchful Lord Bradford was going to be an easy mark when he was not around. Well, I WON’T HAVE IT!”

Zyntris could barely contain her disgust for the wealthy man. It did not help that his appearance matched his personality. He wore his wealth on his body, as if he was terrified of ever being mistaken for poor. Insecurity and fat oozed out of him in equal measure. His chubby jowls shaking with every word spit out as he rambled on and on. As the thief reasoned she was already effectively dead, she decided to spend her mental efforts on figuring out how the job went south. It was so strange, she had just arrived in this town and only found out about needing to steal the artifact a month ago at most. Who could have tipped the bastard off? No chance it was the artifact buyer, she wanted that mask more than anything and getting caught would only push it further out of her hands. She didn’t really talk to anybody when she was casing the location. There was zero percent chance this fat pheasant outsmarted her… Zyntris looked past the buffoonery of the Lord’s to notice the odd man out in the group.

The guards defending Lord Bradford all looked like your usual mix of hired muscle. Dumb, slow, big, barely a full thought between the nine of them. Perfect for being a slab of meat to enforce will. But behind them all off to the side was a man out of place. Well dressed in a black coat with a black hat, he was quietly observing the scene in front of him. Lord Bradford was running out of steam, his monologue about exterminating the parasitic lower classes concluding neatly with proposals for casual genocide and/or shipping people out of the country being offered as the only long-term solution for thieves.

“-it’s the only sensible thing to do after all. Clean this place right up, it will! And I see no better place to start than the disgrace in front of me. Chester, Boris, take this whelp to the dungeon to teach her some-“

“Actually, Lord Bradford, this is under my jurisdiction. She will be coming with me.” The black wearing man calmly stated, stepping forward. Lord Bradford spun in place, his fat not getting the memo it was only a 180 degree turn, causing the hefty rich man to sway off balance.

“W-what? What do you mean, your jurisdiction? THIS IS MY MANOR! SHE IS STEALING FROM ME!”

“And your manor is squarely located within my jurisdiction. In fact, you only knew about this robbery due to our involvement. You were going to leave tonight for the country with most of your guards if not for me, correct?”

“Er, maybe! B-but, I-“

“And you didn’t think she would get this far. I believe the phrase was, “impossible to even approach the grounds”, correct?”

“Well, I do pay for top of the line-“

“And you and your men didn’t even notice the vault open in the darkness until I pointed it out, correct?”

“I-it was hard to see! I said we needed to turn on the lights! How can you catch a thief in the darkness?”

“I will leave that for you to figure out for next time. Now, Miss, come along or there will be… trouble.”

Zyntris stared at the surprise third option. It was much better than the other two, that was clear, but what was this guy’s angle? How did he know what was going on? With only one way to find out, Zyntris moved to follow the mystery man out of the room. Behind her, Lord Bradford was turning beet red. He wasn’t used to being upstaged ever, especially not in his own home in front of his underlings. Rage bubbling up to the surface, spittle forming outside his lips like magma about to explode out of a volcano, he prepared his ultimate attack.

“Do you even know who I am? Do you know what I could do to you?” the Lord exploded.

The mystery man didn’t even bother to turn around, calmly explaining as he walked away, “If you have any complaints, please take them up with the Lord Inquisitor. I am sure we could schedule a personal chat between you two.” Suddenly the raging volcano stopped. Zyntris turned around shocked to see legitimate fear in the fat man’s eyes. Quiet and contemplative, he didn’t even bother to watch them leave, instead electing to stare at the ground. Lord Inquisitor? Who the hell was that? What kind of man was this Lord Inquisitor who could shut up literally one of the most powerful men in the Kingdom with just the threat of meeting? Zyntris pondered what this all meant. She was from Lantrum, an island technically in the domain of the Kingdom, but ran really more as an autonomous province. Many of the Kingdom’s agents don’t hold sway there so things like a scary Inquisition meant nothing. This was a new experience for her.

Making their way outside of the manor onto the city’s cobblestone streets, a group of men stood ready at attention next to a carriage. They all wore the same exact uniform as the original man, black hats and black coats. Opening the door, they motioned for Zyntris to enter. While they did not display any aggression from their posture, they exuded a terrible capacity for violence. Zyn, who normally considered herself a fast runner, reasoned that there was no way she could escape if she made a break for it. Inside the carriage, the entire party entered and one of the men produced a blindfold and sack. If he wanted approval, he did not ask for it, covering the thief’s eyes and plunging her into a darkness that even she could not see through.

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Zyntris didn’t bother to try and track her location through her blindfold, guessing that an operation like this would know how to discombobulate her to make the practice pointless. Still, there were some important clues learned during the journey. One, it was quite short, meaning that she was probably still in the city, which was good to know. Second, it definitely felt like she was underground. What those two tidbits of information would do for her, she wasn’t sure, but when your life feels like it’s running on borrowed time, anything to help keep the mind busy was welcome. Oh, there was also the intimidation stuff too, like walking by somebody screaming about their broken arm, the sharpening of some weapon, or hounds snapping and barking loudly. But Zyntris didn’t pay that mind, wasn’t worth the brain power getting tripped up in mind games. They even confirmed to her that wherever they were taking her, it was close. And soon enough, she was sat in a chair and blindfold removed.

The sudden radiance stung her eyes causing several rapid blinks to avoid the brightness. The room was cold, mostly stone with no windows. Furniture was a single desk in the middle and gas lamps on the walls provided lighting. There was some humanity added, however, with several plants and artwork hung up to make it all feel somewhat less drab. Her wooden chair was simple, ie not very comfortable, but also not a torture device. In front of her was a sturdy, practical desk well made of oak. And behind that desk was a beautiful woman.

If you had to make a girl that would make Zyntris’s heart flutter, you would get an A+ grade if you made the lady sitting in front of our thief. First, the hair was short, black, and well maintained with a lovely shine. She had sharp facial features and green eyes. From her posture, either she had a long torso or, more likely, was quite tall. Age must have been late 20s, early 30s, and the confidence emanating outward made her feel even older. But, most importantly, she had absolutely giant tits. Whatever this woman had been eating fueled those bombshells to an enormous size that outpaced the rest of her body. What made the matter worse (aka better) was that the knockers were straining against their captive clothing, which had to be a size or two too small. Why this woman of means had decided to wear clothing that did not fit her, Zyntris could not say, but the effect was powerful, causing visible sweat on the thief’s forehead. The absolute strangest thing of all was that this lady looked familiar!

“Where do I know her from?”, thought Zyntris, racking her brain. Zyn wasn’t exactly a people person, but a perfect body like that should never be forgotten. Was it on a job? No, that would have made it easier to recall. Was it walking down the street? No way, she would have nudged Esse and had a chat about it. The sweating and stress-wracked face of Zyntris amused the woman across the desk, who interpreted the situation as if the intimidation tactics were having their intended effect. This caused her to smile and lean back in her chair, crossing her arms slightly jiggling the jugs to Zyntris’s horror. “Even the slightest movement causes THAT?” Her mind screamed, possibilities expanding in her mind to a variety of scenarios she would never dare utter in public.

“Thief,” the woman began, snapping Zyntris back to reality. “Do you know why you are here before me?”

“Udderly-ahem, utterly mystified, ma’am” Zyntris stammered out, cursing her mouth. If the stern woman heard the mispronunciation, she didn’t let it show.

“Really? You have no idea, despite being caught red handed breaking into the Bradford manor, why you are in front of me?”

“Er, right, I got the “getting caught breaking in” thing, but I don’t know why I am here in particular compared to a usual… uh, Watch dungeon or prison.”

Now it was the opposing woman’s time to be confused. “You don’t know where you are? Who I am?” Zyntris shook her head no. It was the truth. She could guess something about the Inquisitors, going off what she heard leaving the manor, but that was not really something she knew in general. The hot woman’s face went from confusion to annoyance. Somebody had missed a step.

“Special Agent Johnson, please come in here.” The original man from the ambush entered in through a door behind Zyntris. “Yes, ma’am?”

“Why doesn’t the thief know where she is?”

“She was blindfolded, as per standard operation, ma’am.”

“Right, but she should have some idea of what is going on in order for… THIS to have its effect!” The older woman expressed, exasperated.

“I… I mentioned I worked with the Inquisition at the manor ma’am, that should have been enough, I thought. I’m wearing the uniform. Used an official Inquisition carriage. I’ve done everything by the book.”

“The book clearly failed, Special Agent Johnson. You can’t just treat every situation the same!”

“Maybe it’s because I’m not from around here?” Zyntris offered helpfully to try and quell the argument between the two captors. The woman behind the desk’s eyes refocused toward her and narrowed into a sharp glare.

“Clearly that is the case. Special Agent Johnson, you may leave. And no interruptions, please.”

“Yes, Lord Inquisitor.” And as quickly as he entered, he was gone. But you know what stuck around? His final words hung in the air, bouncing around between Zyntris’s ears. Did she hear that right? LORD INQUISITOR? That was the woman in front of her? The title Lord Inquisitor conjured up some insane fanatical old man who got his rocks off to burning people’s feet, not this beautiful work of art sitting across from her.

The senior Inquisitor was thrown off from the earlier distraction and she was keen to get back the initiative.“Ahem, to clarify, you are being held in my care. I am the Lord Inquisitor of his Majesty’s Royal Inquisition. You are not known to our records, please state your name.”

“Call me Zyntris, ma’am, Zyntris Le Guen.” On hearing the thief’s name, the Lord Inquisitor tilted her head in thought. Zyn saw the flash of recognition and confusion. “So she remembers my name, but not me, and I remember her, but not who she was… Where the hell did we meet before?” Zyntris wondered. The fact that neither woman could place each other was beyond frustrating for both. But again, the Lord Inquisitor seized the initiative, eager to keep some form of momentum up.

“Thief Zyntris, did you know that over the past two weeks we had three major break-ins in the city where old relics and historical artifacts were stolen? One from the art museum, another two from esteemed citizens’ private collections. Strangely, the break-ins took nothing else besides the old items, despite having an easy opportunity to seize significant wealth. Nobody even noticed signs of the crime until; the missing objects were discovered. As a matter of fact, all the previous break-ins identically matched what you pulled tonight. ” Zyntris, accused of many things in her life, betrayed nothing on her face. The Lord Inquisitor continued, “Now, some might ask, why is our Inquisition involved in arguably petty crime? Don’t they have more important tasks? But when extremely rare and ancient artifacts all go missing at the same time, that to me sounds like a potential disaster and that is exactly what this institution is for. I quickly reviewed all available information and set a trap on the next relic I assumed to be targeted.” She paused, making sure Zyntris was following along. Coming to her conclusion, the Lord Inquisitor leaned forward in a serious manner. Unfortunately that just meant her breasts hung down magnificently, drawing Zyn’s eyes and attention straight to them.

“So I ask you, nicely, thief Zyntris. Why were you stealing these items and who were you stealing them for?” A pause. “Miss Le Guen, are you paying attention to me?”

“Y-yes! Sorry, yes. Uh, was deep in thought. Sorry. Ahem, won’t happen again.” Zyn apologized, tearing her eyes away from the dense gravity wells hanging in front of her face. “To tell you the truth, I have no idea what I stole ton-”

“Let us skip the semantics, I know you stole the other objects. I know every thief in this town. You are the only one who isn’t from here. Do not test my patience further.”

“Okay, I have no idea what I stole the past couple weeks. I was asked to grab them and nothing else, so I did. It’s what I do, take jobs.”

“Who is the buyer?”

“I don’t know! I never met them! I was contacted through some unusual channels and payment was done through intermediaries!” A lie, but one that Zyntris could easily tell. It made sense for weird buyers to remain anonymous, so she hoped the Inquisitor would just take it at face value. Sadly, she did not. The Lord Inquisitor in a rage stood up and reached far across the desk putting herself right in front of Zyntris’s face. This also meant the Inquisitor’s two very large gals were inches from Zyntris’s face. Whatever the Inquisitor Lord was saying, Zyn could not hear, all noise drowned out. Drowned out from what? Well, you know when you are on the edge of a cliff and somewhere deep in your subconscious you hear a little voice saying to jump? That same voice in Zyntris was saying, “Hey, they are right there. Give ‘em a squeeze.” However, two hands grabbed her shirt and literally shook her out of the trance.

“DON’T YOU IGNORE ME, YOU BOTTOM FEEDER! WHO ARE YOU WORKING FOR? IF YOU DON’T TELL ME I’LL CUT YO-”

A knock on the door. The Inquisitor stopped mid shake and death stared at the offending noise. Another knock and the Inquisitor’s eye twitched. Whoever was interrupting her, specifically after being asked to not interrupt her, was going to be in a world of hurt if they didn’t have a very, very good reason. “Come. In.” She uttered, contempt dripping from each word. Zyntris was still mid-shake and practically pressed up against the boobs, the forehead sweat becoming a river. If this was how she was going to die, she accepted it. The door opened and in it stood a very nervous Special Agent Johnson.

“Ahem, I am deeply sorry, Ma’am, but-”

“Special. Agent. Johnson. Why are you here in front of me?” Each word causing a painful reaction in the lower ranking Inquisitor’s face.

“T-the Princess is here. She wants to see you now.” The Lord Inquisitor immediately straightened out, mouth slightly agape.

“The… princess? Eleanor? This time of night? What in… are you sure?”

“Positive ma’am. She walked in with legal counsel and demanded to see the thief we captured.”

“Princess Eleanor? The daughter of the King?”

“Yes, ma’am. I assure you, it’s her.”

“THE PRINCESS? REALLY?”

“Yes, ma’am. I… thought it would be prudent to avoid an… incident.”

The Lord Inquisitor was already composing herself, fixing her hair, cleaning up the mess she made on the desk after she dove across it. She took a deep breath, chest rising and falling noticeably, and waved her hand, ““Yes, yes, send her in.” Special Agent Johnson curtly turned away to fetch the VIP. An awkward silence filled the room, both women not really sure what to do next. Thankfully, before either of them would have to debase themselves with small talk, the door opened again.,

“Yes, thank you Mister Inquisitor-Man, I can take it fro- OH MAN IS THAT CLARA? CLARAAAAA!!!” screamed the princess who rushed into the room to launch the ultimate hug on the Lord Inquisitor. It was a full on glomp with the noblewoman achieving airtime and solidly latching onto her target. Feet were off the ground and everything. The princess was a young woman, very early twenties max, with long flowing blonde hair, blue eyes, and an adorable face. The hug-ee didn’t even react, arms trapped at her side, face frozen in that unamused, “oh, this bullshit again” look that told the entire story.

“Hello, Emmie, how good to see you. It has been some time. Can you please get off of me?” The Lord Inquisitor asked calmly, angling to free herself from the deathgrip entrapping her. Her efforts were not going well. The young blonde woman called Emmie was not going to let her escape that easily. In all the commotion, the other new arrival walked in, the legal counsel. The lawyer was probably of a similar age to the Inquisitor Lord, but also had that same quality of giving off that much older vibe. Hair in a tight bun, and professional clothes told the story of a serious woman. She strolled right up to Zyntris who was still watching the Inquisitor Lord try and pry herself out of the hug.

“Heya, Zyn, holding up okay?” The lawyer asked tenderly, placing her hand on the thief’s shoulder.

“Hey, Esse. Just uh, you know, really fucking confused at whatever this is,” Zyn responded. “The lawyer,” Esse, was well known to her, as she was actually Zyntris’s girlfriend. How she got into this madhouse situation she wasn’t really sure, but having her by her side was at least a comfort. Esse acted, and often was, in control at all times. She must have had a plan B of some sorts to bail Zyntris out of trouble when the job went south. Of all the things Esse could come up with, lawyer was a pretty good excuse. The serious lady did know, through great experience, much of the Kingdom’s ancient legal system. All Zyntris would have to do is follow whatever Esse said and this should all blow over with no issue. The thief’s body posture relaxed, tension released.

Meanwhile, Special Agent Johnson was absorbing all that newly freed stress like a sponge. It was a very bad sign when the Lord Inquisitor went from frothing rage to calm. Others in the department compared it to being in the eye of a hurricane. Sure, the whole princess thing was an unexpected curveball for him. Why WAS she here? Special Agent Johnson had met Princess Eleanor before, and this girl absolutely looked identical to her. Sounded like her too. Even knew very specific details that only the Princess would know, proven after several tests and questions! He was sure he made the right call. But why oh why was the Lord Inquisitor calling her Emmie and embraced in a death grip hug?

“Clara! I’ve got some much to tell you! Pro and Heidi had their baby! I learned loads of new spells! I got permission to adventure with ETV and Zyntris!” gushed out of Emmie like a firehouse. She was rapidly firing off sentences with barely a breath between them while still hanging off the Inquisitor Lord. Finally finding some purchase with one angle, the senior Inquisitor started to pry the other girl off of her bit by bit, before accidentally slipping and being engulfed into an even deeper hug like rubber band snapping back together with force.

“That’s wonderful. Now will you please get off before I pass out?” said the trapped Inquisitor, muffled under the softness of Emmie. Reprieve finally came when Esse tapped the back of the Emmie, who promptly popped off, still wearing the same massive smile when she first saw the Inquisitor Lord “Clara”. Clara did her best to straight up and enforce her authority in light of the embarrassing display of affection she was subject to. She motioned to her underling Johnson to grab several more chairs and sat down herself. The command was followed instantly and soon everyone was seated. Protected behind her desk, Clara opened up the discussion with a reasonable fact finding question to try and set the tone of normalcy.

“Emmie, Esse, can you please tell me what you are doing here?”

“Clara, how come you never visit us?! It’s been way too long!” Emmie said, completely ignoring the question with a cute pout.

“I don’t visit? I wanted to, er, that is to say, work’s been difficult. There was that big case, then the weather was poor for travel and I sent a card for the birth, and… Hey, wait a second, I am asking the questions around here!” blustered out Clara. Thought striking her, she riposted Emmie’s question. “If YOU were at the Capital, why didn’t you let me know?”

“I thought you didn’t work in the Capital though…”

“I got promoted after the war to number two in command, remember? For services rendered during the crisis?”

This sentence finally jostled Zyntris’s memory of where she had met the Inquisitor before and she sat right up. “THAT’S WHERE I KNOW YOU! YOU WORKED WITH TAGGART’S PARTY TO GET ME TO OPEN THE TOWER DOOR!” she blurted out, overly excited for finally answering that mystery connection that was on the tip of her tongue for the past ten minutes. Recognition in the Inquisitor's face confirmed it too. It had been an awkward meeting, as Zyn very much failed to seduce the hot Inquisitor who didn’t even seem aware she was being hit on in the first place.

“Ah, yes, that explains why you looked familiar, you were Taggart’s arch nemesis on the island. He refused to even deal with you so I had to step in and use my diplomatic prowess to secure your skill set to sneak into the madman’s lair.” Clara recalled, as if she knew this all along. Both women clearly happy that neither would experience a social faux pas of forgetting a name sat there in mutual agreement. But then Clara remembered that this situation was still absurd.

“T-this doesn’t matter! Emmie, Esse, and… thief woman Zyntris! What are you doing here? Why are you robbing magical artifacts in my city?”

“Because I needed them and had no other alternative to get them,” Esse said casually. “It was a regrettable outcome, but Zyntris had the right skills to pull it off.” Zyntris flipped a concerned look over to Esse. The thief had proposed earlier she didn’t know the “buyer” and lying to somebody like the Inquisitor could have major consequences.

Clara snapped her fingers, “I KNEW those cases were too impressive to be done by regular criminals! The guards of the Di Trella Estate said the robber had to have used magic to get past them! You two were in on this the whole time!”

“Uh, no Clara, I didn’t use any magic to help Zyntris. She said she didn’t need it. Got all mad when I offered,” Emmie explained. Zyn’s worried face switched to take on the form of “shit eating grin”, happy that her skills were compared to literal supernatural powers.

“Actually impressive, but not really the point. Esse, you can’t just steal ancient artifacts! Or rob them from esteemed citizens of the Kingdom!”

“Oh please, Clara, those pompous morons don’t even know what they hold in half their vaults. Besides, those artifacts technically belong to me! That’s the real story, they stole that from me!” Esse grunted out in annoyance.

“Did you make these artifacts?”

“Er, no… But I found them at the start of my reign and was in the process of studying them before the downfall happened. It is important to my new major project.”

Special Agent Johnson following along in the corner was a little bit lost. The princess isn’t the princess and has magic? The lawyer had a reign? She found the artifacts? Venturing out on a limb he asked a question. “Reign, what reign? Inquisitor Lord, what is this mad woman talking about?”

Inquisitor Lord Clara turned to the poor man, clearly surprised he was still there after the extra chairs were delivered. “Do you recall during the crisis there was a demonic entity that was defeated? This woman, Esse, is actually a corpse puppeted by another demon. In fact, she is the original demonic Empress of the Empire from two thousand years ago. She was the catalyst for the whole situation.”

“Clara, that’s really rude to call ETV a corpse! She only looks dead in the mornings before she has her coffee!” Emmie defended, with Esse stealing Clara’s “Unamused” Face for herself for all the shade coming her way.

If Special Agent Johnson heard anybody else say those words he probably would have locked them up for public lunacy. But it wasn’t a tin foil hat wearing madman saying it, it was the extremely serious and professional Lord Inquisitor. “A-and the princess doppelganger? Does she look that way due to magic?”

“Actually, Emmie is Emilia Von Schluese, the adopted daughter of the Governor of Lantrum. She is Princess Eleanor's Identical twin sister hence the resemblance. She also happens to have magical powers due to the events of the political crisis. Didn’t you review the primer post event on what happened? It was on the required reading list, Johnson.” Clara lectured like a teacher questioning a student. Now getting in trouble for skipping homework, Johnson looked for an escape plan.

“Ah, understood Lord Inquisitor, I think I will go review that now. Until you need me.” and he was out the door. Clara looked at the others with eyes that said “Underlings, what can you do?”

“Now that the BASIC questions are out of the way, I’m going to have for you to give me all four artifacts so I can return them to their rightful owners. Due to… past services and no real harm committed we can pardon the crimes of breaking and entering-”

 “No. I am keeping the artifacts.”

Clara slammed her fist on the desk in frustration, “Damn it, Esse, why? Why are you making this difficult? What do these things even do?”

“I suppose a demonstration might make things more clear.” Esse sighed, reaching into her bag to pull out several three strange carved circular icons. One was made of wood, another was bone, and the third was rock. The icons had strange etchings completely separated from any obvious modern alphabet. Laying them out on the table, all watchers leaned in to see what they would do. No reaction. Disappointed and confused faces looked back towards Esse.

“What? I need the final mask.”

“Right! Forgot I still had it, hah…” Zyntris sheepishly said, pulling out her stolen prize from earlier in the night. In the gas lamp light of the room, the wooden mask took on a sickly dark green color. The expression, even in better visibility, was still ambiguous. Somewhere between surprise, pain or maybe something else. What was clear were the slots cut on the outside of the mask. Esse gingerly picked up the artifact and started inserting the carved icons into their positions. Still, there was no real reaction.

“That’s it? You are going to cause a scene with many important families over stupid mask?” Clara said, indignantly.

“Oh, excuse me, I am sorry, are you the expert of ancient potentially magical relics, Clara or am I? Can you let me finish?” Esse snarked back like a school kid, inspecting the mask closely. Zyntris noticed that the normally stern and aloof woman was being much more casual and friendly with this Inquisitor Lord Clara. The only other person she acted that way was with Emmie. The revelation made Zyn feel a pang of jealousy. These women had a history together.

“See, it isn’t a reactive style magical item. It requires the right setting and words. It came from one of the cultures I wiped out along the coast. I think ethnically they are similar to those degenerate Lantrum druids, but I didn’t care enough to dig into it.”

“Lantrum druids, they are the ones who killed you, right?” Clara slyly asked, mostly to annoy Esse as any reference to her ancient downfall made her feel insecure. The death glare from Esse and grunt meant mission accomplished.

“Either way, with these pieces assembled and the mask worn, one can activate the mask and take advantage of its properties of viewing, controlling, and potentially altering the human soul.” Esse went on, slipping the mask onto her face. Both Zyntris and Clara sat a little further back in their seats at the phrase “altering the soul.” Zyntris was always told her soul was damaged from her crimes anyway, but that was her doing. Some crazy magic mask changing her and who she was sounded dystopian.

Now fully donned, Esse looked pretty horrifying, entire face and hair hidden behind the expression of pain/ surprise. The icons slotted into the mask on the human face had the appearance of holes into Esse’s head, like it was a pathway into the mind. Still, nothing was happening.

“Yeah, this is essentially where I got to back then. I was thinking of using it to mind control people to make them do my bidding easier, but you know how it is with fun side projects. You always keep having to push them back.” That elicited some very nervous laughs from Clara and Zyntris. “Ah, a completely different use case now, though! Only for research purposes to help my studies in the human soul, aha,” Esse sheepishly added, seeing her friends’ discomfort.

The only person who was not cowed was Emmie, who was looking at one of the icons embedded closest to her. Deep in thought, she looked as if she wanted to ask a question, then paused and cycled through those expressions a few times. Clara noticed the act.

“You’ve been unusually quiet, Emmie. What’s on your mind?”

“Ah, just that, some of these symbols I’ve seen before. In the basement of the manor where I practice my spells sometimes they are etched into the ground. They normally don’t do anything, but they react if you heat them up.”

Esse dismissed that with an eye roll. “Emmie, those runes were written by that dumb kid for the demon summoning event during the crisis. Hence Hygge, remember? And besides all of my research never pointed towards heat being the activation. This thing is made of wood! If you heat it up too much it will burst into flames and burn the user.”

“Aw, ETV (Emmie’s nickname for Esse), come on! You never go in the basement because you said it makes you feel super gross,” Emmie whined. “You don’t need that much heat to do it either, look!”

The young girl summoned a small flame at the tip of her pointer finger and touched the stone icon in the mask. The heat instantly began turning lines in the stone orange. They radiated outward revealing the carvings as pathways. It didn’t just stop there either, the power criss-crossing to the other two embedded icons. The entire mask soon was lit up, pulsing orange lines covering the relic. The contrast between the orange and dark green made the mask’s expression even more confusing.

“Emmie, please stop messing with the mask. It isn’t good to touch things you don’t know” Esse said, casually, completely unaware of what was happening on her face.

“Babe, she activated it! It’s all orange and scary looking,” Zyntris whispered. Magic was still extremely new to her and her gut feeling, which was ignored once already tonight, was again sounding the alarm.

“What? It is? Let me take it off…”

Esse’s hands reached up to remove the mask, but the second she touched it, all three icons flipped dark, orange color flipping into a deep blue. It pulsed three times, the inner ears of those watching physically feeling a pressure change with each throb. Esse had no notice of this, eyes still behind the mask, but for some strange reason the mask was stuck. It took a couple of yanks before it popped off, irritating the skin of her face. When she flipped it over to see the front, the mask was completely dark, no orange, no light, no purple, no nothing.

“Emmie, I keep telling you to not touch magical stuff if you don’t know anything about it.” Esse grumbled, frustrated.

“But I didn’t even touch it, ETV, I just warmed it up a little bit!” Clara blustered out, trying to make an excuse for her actions. “It was… it… huh. Why do I sound funny?” The Inquisitor Lord looked down at herself confused, poking her huge boobs as to see if they were real. Esse looked over at Emmie who was wearing a very uncharacteristically horrified face, eyes flashing all over trying to get their bearings. And Zyntris just started yelling at the top of her lungs.

“AAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHH! TRICKERY! MAGICAL TRICKERY! I HATE MAGICAL FUCKING TRICKERY! AND IT ALWAYS IMPACTS MEEEEEEEE,” the thief yelled, also completely out of character for a person whose main focus is avoiding being seen at all times.

Clara seemed to be the most put together and turned toward Esse, having discovered that the boobs were indeed real. “Hey, ETV, I think the mask did something to my body. I’m now sitting where Clara was and I look like her.” Clara looked up at Emmie and gave a very, very wide smile. “Oh! Oh! Look, I’m sitting over there! Neheh, I’m pretty cute. Wait…Aw, come on guys, why didn’t anybody tell me my shirt had a stain?”

Zyntris grabbed Esse by the shirt and shook the woman yelling, “FIX IT! FIX IT! FIX IT! YOU DID THIS ON PURPOSE, I KNOW YOU DID! FIX IT!” All that noise woke Emmie from her shocked stupor and started to wail out phrases like “Am I dead?” or “What’s going on?” and “Why am I so hungry?”

Esse, still being shaken violently, had enough of all this commotion. “Relax! Relax! I SAID **RELAX**!” the final word in the sentence reverberating differently in the human ears of the occupants. Sometimes Esse broke out the demonic authority when she wanted to make a point. There were probably three people on the planet that wouldn’t back away from that command. Sadly, one of them was currently in the body of Zyntris, who still held on to Esse’s shirt, but at least ceased the violence.

“Clearly the mask has done something. Now let’s all just RELAX, take a seat, and figure out what it did,” Esse explained slowly, pointing toward the seat. Zyntris released her with a “feh” and sat back down, still clearly pissed off. “Now using my incredible powers of deduction, Clara, you are currently in Zyntris’s body?” An angry growl confirmed, yes, that was indeed the case. “Emmie, you are clearly in Clara’s body?” The Inquisitor Lord nodded excitedly. “And Zyntris, you are in Emmie’s body.” No response. Zyntris turned to look at the poor confused woman and touched her gingerly.

The young blonde looked over the Esse with pleading eyes. “Babe… Esse… why do I feel so funny? S-something is off!” Esse touched her thigh warmly with concern. “Look, Zyn, trust me when I say this, I get it. I know what you mean. It will be okay, we will get through it together.”

“H-hey!? What do you mean my body is funny! My body is perfectly normal!” The Emmie in Clara responded indignantly. Hands were at her hips, and a very cute looking pout appeared on her face. For those who knew Clara, it was unsettling to see the stern woman make such a childish face.

“Emmie, your body is weird. All that magic and… double soul nonsense gives people the willies.” Esse stated frankly. “Right now Zyn is realizing that she can alter reality with just a thought. It takes a moment to understand that connection.”

“Oh. Is that why Clara’s body feels boring and old?”

“WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT THIS?” Clara in Zyntris yelled out in frustration. “This discussion is pointless. We instead should just return to normal. If our bodies can be switched, that means they can be switched back. And I’m not old.” Point made, the angry woman sat in her chair, arms crossed, staring at Esse for the solution to materialize. The other two followed suit, staring expectantly at the woman. Esse responded by looking at the mask with a slight grimace on her face and rubbing the back of her head.

“Yeah… about that. This is some pretty crazy soul magic and… well I’m not sure how it even did that.” The silence in the room was palpable as each woman processed those words. Zyntris was the first to make a sound, a deep inhale and sigh of somebody who was just told their favorite restaurant just burned to the group. Both Emmie and Esse grimaced at each other, knowing their actions had caused their friend mental anguish. Both moved to comfort.

“Zyn, it’s only temporary at best! I’ll figure it out, no reason to be sad.”

“Y-eah, it isn’t the end of the world, Zyntris. My body is really cool, plus you are like a princess and stuff. Oh! And magic is really fun! You’ll see!”

“Honestly, I don’t even see why you are upset. You get to eat anything and everything you want for the high cost of near unlimited magical power. You could be me, stuck in some wanted criminal’s body.” Clara jumped in, callously insulting the sad woman.

“Come on, Clara, don’t be mean. Your body isn’t that great either. Like, my shoulders and back are really sore. I’ve got a headache. I’m all old and wrinkly. And to top it all off none of these clothes feel like they even fit! It’s really tight! Especially around the waist. I mean, what waist size are you wearing?”

 “I AM A TWENTY-EIGHT. TWO EIGHT!”

“You sure? With how much this belt is digging in it feels more like a thirty-three plus…”

“JUST WHAT ARE YOU IMPLYING?”

 “You left me a chubby body.”

“YOUR LIFE IS OVER!”

Clara jumped at Emmie to put her in some sort of chokehold, a common punishment she deployed in the past, only to realize:

1.   Emmie was not in her 5’6 petite, doughy, adorable body.

2.     Emmie was in Clara’s 5’10, very large, broad shouldered, thick thighed, muscled body.

3.     Zyntris’s body was small, compact, flexible, and thin.

4.     Clara was in Zyntris’s body

These facts lead to a complete failure of a grapple. Emmie, normally used to losing the physical contest, laughed and reversed the attack. But Clara, using that lithe body, slipped out of the clumsy grab. As their frankly embarrassing wrestling match went back and forth, Esse continued to angrily inspect the mask.

“I just don’t know what even caused this magic to occur. These druid devices are so stupid, like they didn’t even understand the physical properties they are swapping around with the magic. Take for example these three carvings. If they are meant to balance the magical load, they did it in the stupidest way possible. With this set up, you would need another one slotted at the bottom to keep it from overloading but there isn’t one! Why the hell would they even design it that way!?”

Clara, trying to work Emmie into an armbar, gruffly replied “Probably because you are missing the last relic thing to slot in.”

“Wait, what “last relic”? When I looted this mask off those stupid druids two thousand years ago, it had the three carvings slotted in like I have it here. There wasn’t another thing attached.”

Clara, now trying to escape a bear hug, responded with a voice muffled by the massive boobs engulfing her, “I don’t know about that, but when I was setting the traps for the thief tonight, I had to place two. One for the mask and one for the fourth carving. I was not sure which would be targeted first.”

 “What? You’re joking. How the fuck do you know there is a fourth carving that fits into this thing?”

Before any questions could be answered, the door to the room creaked open again. Special Agent Johnson cautiously entered the room to find that the thief he pulled in tonight was currently grappling with his boss. His gasp of surprise caused both ladies to stop and stare at him, midfight.

“Ma’am, do you need assistance?” He asked, stepping forward with an intent of action.

“No, no, no need Johnson, no issue here. Return to your duties, all fine.” Clara said, arms tangled up with Emmie. Unfortunately, that came out of Zyntris’s body’s mouth. Special Agent Johnson took a step forward, glaring at the woman. Clara, realizing what was happening elbowed Emmie in the gut to try and get her on the same page.

“Ow! Hey, what was that for- OH RIGHT! Uh, Mr. Inquisitor man, we are all fine. Just, you know, tussling a bit, having a bit of fun with my friends.”

Special Agent Johnson was confused. All the words were in a language he could understand, but hearing them, in that order, coming from his boss, Inquisitor Lord Van Damm was something he would have bet money on never happening in his entire life. Friends? Fun? This sounded suspicious.

“Yes, just a bit of fun with the highly respected and intelligent Inquisitor Lord. However, due to it being very late at night, she said she will take us all back to her home and will ask for a carriage to be prepared for that task,” The thief said, again elbowing the second in command of the entire Inquisition in the gut.

“Uh, what she said,” concurred the Inquisitor Lord. “Get us a carriage right now… and make it snappy!” Her final command was shaky as if she never told anyone ever to be snappy in her entire life.

“Ma’am, are you asking for me to get a carriage to take the prisoner and… demon woman to your home?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“For a super fun sleepover, duh.”

Special Agent Johnson was taken aback. Not only was his boss going to have a rockin’ sleepover with these three other women, one of which was a wanted criminal, but the fact she was going to do it was apparently obvious this whole time. The wanted criminal, for her part, seemed to not even be on board with this plan, face in the palm muttering about how death couldn’t come soon enough. The blonde not-princess was confused too. The only lady who seemed to be enjoying this was the demon lawyer. She was doing her best to not laugh and failing horribly. None of his training prepared him for this situation.

“What are you waiting for, Mr. Inquisitor Johnson man? Go get the carriage before I call you a silly goose!”

Just then a loud growl emitted from the Inquisitor Lord’s stomach. It was primal. It was loud. It’s cry for food lasted a good 15 seconds. Everyone looked at it, as if waiting for it to speak.

“And get some snacks for the ride too! Some of us are hungry.”

“Watch out! She’s gone mad with power,” sniggered Esse, barely holding in a full belly laugh.

“Ma’am, are you sure? I recall you recently talking about the new diet you were trying? The intermittent fasting?”

“I’m on a diet?! Well, with how tight these clothes are, that makes sense. Did I just start or something because it doesn’t seem to be work- OOF”

The thief socked the Inquisitor Lord in the stomach, as if both to shut the woman and the organ up. If looks could kill, the thief would be rated as one of the most dangerous in the country. It held pure, unfiltered hatred. The eye’s signaled a fight or flight response was in full effect.

“Johnson, get the fucking carriage. Please.” Each word out of the thief’s mouth was strained, as if it was barely holding back a storm of other, much more unpleasant words. The Inquisitor Lord, doubled over in pain from the punch, waved her hand to indicate she agreed. Johnson’s mind raced with all the ways that this strange situation could end badly for him. There seemed to be a lot! But the most obvious negative outcome would be ignoring the request.

“Right away ma’am, a carriage will be prepared along with your usual.” Just like that, he was out the door to make the arrangements. No use in questioning the Inquisitor Lord when she got into one of her hungry moods. It was well known at the department things got a little loopy when the boss went hungry for too long.

“Wait, Clara, why are we leaving to go to your place?” Emmie asked innocently.

“Because I am not going to risk any more outside interactions with people who think you are me! The reputational damage you could do to me and my career is astronomical. Until we get this resolved you will be staying out of sight at my home. I suggest Zyntris joins you in laying low to also avoid any confusion. Now, please follow me to the stables so we can escape this social nightmare.”

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Zyntris, having been blindfolded on the way in, was surprised to see just how large the Inquisitorial compound actually was. Rooms and rooms of all sorts of things, ranging from the bureaucratic necessities of running a large operation, to more insidious rooms with chains and other scary devices designed to make people like her talk. It was strange seeing her own body lead the way, taking on a confident posture she would never walk with. Even worse, Emmie’s ruse about being the princess spread around and despite the late hour, people made time to “see the princess.” The stares unnerved her as somebody who preferred to remain in the shadows. Emmie, in Clara’s body, on the flip side couldn’t help but comment on everything and say hello to everyone. It drew a lot of fearful looks. Seems Clara had the iron lady reputation.

Finally they were off in the carriage, another black one like the vehicle that took Zyntris in the first place, on the way to Clara’s abode. Spacious enough for all the girls, there was a package left inside.

“Oh, why did they go and do that? This is ridiculous.” Clara said flippantly. “You ask for it one time, and suddenly everybody knows your “usual” and it becomes a “Thing”. Asskissers, the lot of them.”

Emmie, not one to wait to open a present, tore off the packaging to reveal a hefty chocolate cake, apparently freshly baked. The Inquisitor Lord’s stomach loudly growled its hunger again. It wanted that cake. It wanted that cake real bad. Clara’s one, well known weakness was her crippling love of sweets. The poor Inquisitor led a life of few joys, dedicated to her work and her country. Sweets were essentially the one exception in that frugal life with chocolate crowned king of all dessert for the woman. Sadly, this meant that Clara was always in a push and pull where she would end up eating too much and chonking up. Then a dedicated period of dieting and increased exercise to slim down to her preferred weight. Right now she was in the depths of a cut, consuming no sweets for at least a month. But the body did not forget. And now it was in control of a girl who loved to eat everything and anything.

There was only one plate and fork and knife provided, apparently the underlings did not think Clara was ever going to share. But before the young girl inhabiting the older woman’s body could even pick up a napkin, the entire cake was snatched away by Clara.

“Emmie, if you think you are going to get a piece of that cake, you have another thing coming.”

“What?! WHY? I’m hungry! They gave us the cake because I asked for a snack. It’s only fair if I get a piece.”

“You are on a diet.”

“But I’m not on a diet! I’m in great shape.” Hearing that, Zyntris looked down and pinched the love handles of the blonde girl’s body. It was very soft.

“YOU are in MY body, which is currently on an intermittent fasting diet. That means no cake or really any food until eight o’clock in the morning.”

“WHAT? But I’m so hungry! This body feels like it’s wasting away! When was the last time you even ate?”

“5 o’clock for dinner. A chicken salad with minimal dressing.”

“T-t-t-that’s… that’s… you mean… over twelve hours without eating? I’ll starve to death if I do that.” Emmie stammered out. The thought of not eating any food for half a day terrified her. To be a tiny bit fair, all of her magic was powered through calories and regular large meals were required to keep fully charged for spell casting.

“Yes, Emmie. You have to wait. You are in my body, and therefore you must respect it. It’s only fair in these trying times.” Clara haughtily lectured  holding the chocolate cake away behind her head where Emmie couldn’t reach it. “In fact, I think this is a perfect time for you to realize self control, restraint, discipline, and… and…” She trailed off, finally realizing what she was holding in her hands. Other important facts struck here as well, namely that Zyntris’s body, lithe, thin, with defined muscles, was NOT on a diet. Suddenly Clara took on a conspiratorial posture, glancing between the chocolate cake and the other occupants of the carriage. A plan was hatched.

“Weeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeelll, I mean, it is a beautifully made chocolate cake, and it was TECHNICALLY meant for me… so I might sneak a little bite, eheh.”

“You can’t.” Said a voice. Clara’s head snapped to the offending person who said “CAN’T” when it came to chocolate. Who said no? Esse? No… wait, it was Emmie! THAT SMUG BLONDE BITCH! ABLE TO EAT WHATEVER WHENEVER AND GAIN NO WEIGHT! SHE WANTED THE CHOCOLATE ALL TO HERSELF! THE ONLY SOLUTION WAS TO DEVOUR IT BEFO-

“You can’t eat that chocolate cake. I’m lactose intolerant. It will really mess up my stomach which you are using.” Zyntris, currently in Emmie’s body, explained.

“W-what?”

“It’s dairy chocolate right? And the cake is made with some milk. That’s something you really shouldn’t eat in my body.”

“N-no chocolate? Even now when I’m not on a diet?”

“I’m afraid not, Inquisitor.”

“Which means, this cake should go to the only two people in the carriage who can actually eat it. Me and Zyntris. We are not on a diet, and not lactose intolerant.” Esse said, smugly removing the chocolate cake packaging from the shell shocked Clara, frozen solid from the mental trauma. “Come on Zyn, you out of everyone here should eat this.”

“What? Why? It’s past midnight. Who wants to eat cake so late?” Zyntris questioned. She never was one to enjoy eating. It was something that had to be done, like brushing your teeth, or saying gesundheit to that annoying person who just sneezed. Both Clara and Emmie recoiled in disgust at Zyntris’s words. The visceral reaction did not stop there, with Emmie yelling out in frustration and Clara simply wailing about the injustices in life.

“What the hell did I say?”

“What DIDN’T you say, Zyntris? Not eating at night? Might as well not eat during the day! And then you are just starving and the whole thing is pointless.” Emmie complained, Clara’s indiscernible moaning getting louder in the background.

“Emmie, it’s completely different. If you eat right before bed you get stomach problems.”

“Nobody ever told me that! My tummy works just fine if I am asleep.”

“YOU CAN SWALLOW A PIZZA WHOLE, EMMIE! YOUR STOMACH DOESN’T COUNT!”

“And right now, Zyn, that stomach is yours. So you should really eat this cake.” Esse pointed out, holding the slice of cake out for the woman to take.

“FINE, fuck, it’s just a piece of chocolate cake. You guys act like it’s a miracle medicine or something…” Zyntris grabbed the slice from Esse and took a bite. The flavor was a bit unfamiliar, with Zyntris normally never eating chocolate due to the previously mentioned intolerance. But otherwise, yeah, it was a chocolate cake. Perfectly fine. She took another bite, this time larger, and then another. Slice defeated.

“There. You happy? It’s cake. Not like I was… was… um… huh?” Zyntris’s sentence trailed off as the woman tried to understand some differences. First, she ate that slice of cake really fast. It was a rich heavy chocolate and she gobbled it down in three bites. Second, it didn’t even feel like she ate anything at all. A decadent dessert like that would easily be felt in her old body, but apparently not in Emmie’s. Lastly, and probably most significantly, Zyntris felt more powerful. She couldn’t really put it into words, but eating had the immediate effect of… SOMETHING. Like a shot of espresso waking you up when tired, but more obvious and throughout the entire body. It felt good.

“~Ah, finding your sweet tooth, are we? Here, have another slice” said Esse, slyly offering another giant chunk of cake. Without even thinking Zyntris grabbed it and started shoveling it inside her mouth, cheeks puffing out wide filled with pastry. An impressively powerful swallow sent all of it down her gullet in one go. This felt **really** good. Esse didn’t even ask if she wanted more cake, simply holding it out in front of her was enough. The blonde’s stomach gurgled happily, finally happy to process something, ANYTHING. But still, the cake did not fully satisfy Zyntris. She wanted more. However, during all this euphoria, a voice deep within her subconscious asked the important question of “what the hell do you think you are doing? Shape up, it’s just cake. You’re embarrassing us in front of people.” That woke Zyntris up.

“Oh… hey, thanks for the cake and all, but no more. I’m good. I think.” Zyntris said, one hand on her stomach and the other held up like a defender’s stiff arm. Better stop herself now before she looks foolish. Esse smiled, and flipped the cake packaging upside down. Zyntris had already eaten all of it.

“W-what? I barely had any! Where did it go?”

“Zyn, you ate it, dummy. All ended up right in here.” Flirted Esse, sliding up to her girl and poking her in the tummy. The cake was hefty and heavy, but not large enough to cause any visible bump. But the potential was there. Elsewhere, not all was well in the carriage, however. Clara’s fragile state couldn’t handle this latest information (IE she didn’t even get one bite of cake) and she broke into full-out ugly crying; great heaving sobs and an outpouring of water works.

“A BLOO WHOO, SHE DOESN’T… SHE DOESN’T EVEN… BLOO WHOO WHOO, SHE DOESN’T REMEMBER EATING IT WAAAAAAAHHHHH!”

“What is going on? I just had some cake.” Zyntris looked around for support nervously. This reaction from the Inquisitor was very unexpected.

Emmie, still pouting something fierce, responded dismissively, “That’s just Clara. She’s always like this when she doesn’t get her way around dessert.” Her stomach also growled angrily. You can take Clara out of her body, but the body does not forget the need for cocoa bean.

“Yeah, don’t worry Zyn. She will be fine. Though, I will say, your crying face? Pretty cute!”

“Thanks? I guess? Should I be offended if you think my body is cute even if I’m not in it?”

All three mentally available girls pondered that question, Clara’s tantrum providing good background noise. Before any reasoned conclusion could be debated, the carriage door opened and the driver announced they had arrived. Clara’s crying stopped instantly, and her face reset to the standard intense hawkish look she always wore like she flipped a switch. Zyntris found it funny, seeing her own face fully composed and serious, but with tears and snot streaks running down her face.

“Thank you for the ride, Mr.Higgins. The Lord Inquisitor will now tip you, as she always does, and we will head inside.”

“I do?”

“Yes, you do always tip. Also, you will be taking off work tomorrow, as you told me in the ride over. Isn’t that right, Inquisitor Van Damm? You are taking tomorrow off so you can rest up? You need to let Mr. Higgins know so he can inform the rest of your department as this is a recent decision.”

“I’m actually feeling pretty goo- OOF. Hey! Quit hitting me like that! It’s mean. I get it, relax. Yeah, Mister Mr. Higgins, I’m not working tomorrow because I’m busy being a BUM who hits people when they are not expecting it when they didn’t do anything wrong. So tell everybody I’m taking the day off.”

Higgins stood there and nodded. Senior Inquisitors all were insane to some level. Generally he preferred the Van Damm route despite the late hours because putting up with her minor quirks was way easier than the usual psychopaths. A random pit stop at a bakery or ice cream parlor is way better than a shady gentlemen’s club or carrying some unfortunate citizen home after the Inquisition was “done” with them. Those sound proof carriages were as much a blessing to the occupants inside as the driver. Was the Lord Inquisitor acting weird tonight? Yeah. Did that bother Higgins? No. Smile, wave, collect the tip, get home safe.

“We are lucky Higgins didn’t say anything. Man is sharp as a tack, that one.” Clara muttered, walking up to her front door patting herself down looking for her keys. After checking a couple pockets she pulled out a small bag and looked at it in confusion.

“Wait, wait! Be careful with that, it’s very delicate!” Zyntris cautioned. “Flash powder, exposed to air and it could blind you.” Clara looked at the item with new found disgust.

“Flash powder? It’s a crime to be caught out in public with this equipment!  And what about this other pocket? Are these lock picking tools? What is this? I look like a criminal!”

“That’s because I was doing crime tonight. You guys arrested me, remember?”

“Who gives a shit about that, I’m cold. Emmie, give Clara the keys already so we can get inside, it’s chilly and I’m not standing around to be lectured about minor possession laws.” Esse commanded, rubbing her shoulders in the chill wind.

Emmie made a show of checking all her pockets for a pair of keys, but failed to produce anything. Clara, rolling her eyes, walked up and plunged her hands down her body’s massive cleavage. Emmie, not expecting the aggressive move, yelped out in surprise at the sudden invasion. Before she could do anything, Clara pulled out a pair of keys hidden from within the secret pocket. Zyntris found herself in the unique position of being incredibly envious of her own body, wondering just how soft everything must have felt. The Inquisitor in thief didn’t care, unlocking the door and waving everyone inside.

The Inquisitor’s home must have been professionally designed. The group spread out around the main kitchen/ living room area to explore the place. The art on the walls, the arrangement of the furniture and plants, the designs of the lights all pointed to a well thought out space that was sleek, modern, and functional. Furthermore, it was nearly spotless. Not a plate was in the sink, not a speck of dust could be seen or a pillow out of place. Zyntris mused to herself what that might mean with a professional’s eye. Clara wasn’t expecting guests yet the place still looked perfect. That told the thief that the apartment was brand new or barely lived in.

“How long have you been here, Inquisitor?” Zyntris asked, curious if her theory was correct

“Oh, you know, five years or so.”

“WHAT? You lived here back when we were adventuring?!” gasped Emmie, who was currently exploring the contents of a kitchen cabinet. “How come I never saw it? Pro, you, and I always stayed at the inns around town when we were in the Capital.”

“Ahah… well often times when we stayed in the inn it was post an… activity where I may have over indulged a tiny bit. And the neighbors would have seen… Ahem. Anyway, it was just easier to stick with the party. Besides, it wasn’t like you or Taggart even asked.”

“I didn’t know you had an apartment here!”

“Where did you think I lived, on the street?”

Emmie paused her rummaging through the cupboards to really think through that question. Real brain cells were being put to work to reason out the response. Mind firing on all cylinders. And after the pause, she held up her finger to finally reveal her point.

 “Yes.”

“Well, news for you, I don’t! And why are you rummaging through my kitchen?”

“Looking for food. Snacks, chips, candy. You know.”

“You can’t ruin my diet! And I don’t keep any food here, especially not any “snacks”!”

Now it was Emmie’s turn to be horrified and disgusted. “No snacks? How do you make it through the night? What about the eternity between lunch and dinner? Or when you finish breakfast, but it was kind of like a brunch and you got breakfast food and the other person got lunch and you ended up wanting to have sandwiches too even though you just had pancakes because the turkey and cheese looked really good and-. ”

And with that, Clara was done talking about that topic, responding with a “Feh” and walking away in frustration as Emmie continued to list out scenarios where you might want a snack. She moved to the fridge, which was a sad bachelorette fridge containing very little except quick to eat items, and took out the milk carton. Before she could even pour it though, Zyntris “ahem’d” to remind about the dairy and Clara threw it back in the fridge, yelling and losing her mind.

“ARRGH! More importantly than my stupid apartment, which I barely live in, is this stupid body swap! Esse, you caused this mess. Get ME out of it!”

“Hey, you are the one who apparently knows more than me about this piece of shit ancient magical relic. Four carvings? Different slots? Where did you get all this information?” Esse countered, waving the mask around dismissively.

“It isn’t complicated, Esse. When I heard of these special burglaries and what was stolen, I went to the foremost expert on druidic magic, Chief Archivist Leo. He did some research and was kind enough to point out what other two items were included in the set that had not yet been taken. The mask and the last carving that slotted into the bottom of the mask.”

Emmie perked up at the mention of the archivist. “Oh, oh, you saw Leo? How is he doing, Clara? Is he still with Hygge? Do they live at the-”

“Who cares about all that shit? That kid found out there was another piece of this thing! Fuck me, I hate being upstaged by him. He doesn’t even know magic, just reads all that bullshit druidic rune lore and thinks he is better than me.” Esse fumed. The chief archivist Leo was a young prodigy at the castle and assisted the group on their previous adventure. His expertise was on the culture that managed to defeat Esse and her reign 2,000 years ago. So not only did he know their language, culture, and society, but all that knowledge was pretty much put together to stop Esse. What really infuriated Esse though, was that he managed to learn all these things, things even she could not figure it out herself, before the age of 25. And to top it all off, he was such a nice, young boy he wasn’t even aware it was a competition.

“Come on, ETV, Leo isn’t like that. He isn’t trying to compete with you.”

“Yeah, well I’m trying to compete with him, how about that?! Ugh, I bet he even knows how this thing works…”

Zyntris, who had been quietly watching the back and forth in front of her, had a thought. “Maybe it acted weird because it was missing the last piece. Esse, you said the mask overloaded due to poor balance. Maybe it will work properly with balance restored?”

“Uh, I mean, that would PROBABLY work? Certainly, would fix the flow between these two conduits here… Would still need to understand this transform command here too, and… well… If I had somebody who could read these symbols here and here, I could know for sure.”

“Leo can read those symbols, ETV! Afterall, he drew a bunch like it back at home. Why don’t you go see him?”

“Ugh, do I have to?” Esse groaned, not interested in looking like a fool in front of her perceived rival.

“Yes, you will! If there is any chance of us reverting this mess, we WILL do it. The sun will be rising in seven hours and we will head to the castle first thing to meet with him. Damn your pride, I want my body back.”

“But, even if we go there, we don’t have the last piece. I’m not going to look dumb for no reason.”

Again Zyntris, listening quietly, spoke up. “The Inquisitor lady mentioned that she knows where the last piece is found. Why don’t we just go get it and meet you at the castle?”

“Thievery? Absolutely not! An Inquisitor does not steal.” Clara said, arms crossed in a huff, indignant even at the suggestion of her committing a crime.

 “Okay, what about if we asked for it? That guy tonight was pretty afraid of angering you in particular, can you use that influence to borrow the artifact?”

“Ah… You see the fourth item is currently in the hands of Lord Carrington. He has some significant friends throughout the Kingdom… namely in the Inquisition and court system. My threats would simply fall on deaf ears.”

“Which leaves us one option. We steal it. Unless you actually want to remain in my body forever.”

Clara sat back, deep in thought going through the different scenarios. “How long would it take to plan out the theft?”

“How complex is his security system? I can only answer that question if I know the details of the job. Would need to figure out guard patterns, layout of the grounds, a way inside…”

“Lord Carrington probably has the most secure compound in the entire Kingdom. Highly sophisticated. He didn’t just plan it himself like some pompous noble who thinks he knows it all, he had outside consultants from the thieves guild help construct it. The same people who helped me plan out the trap that caught you. Experts in thief psychology. I can provide the layouts of the manor from the city files, but any alterations that have been made I cannot say”

“Layouts would make this not impossible… but even still, I’m saying two weeks, probably.”

“Two weeks?! I don’t have that sort of time! I’m a busy woman! Even ignoring my work, my mother’s birthday is coming up in 3 days! We are traveling to visit Nordenhaven, and I cannot under any circumstances miss this trip.”

“Is there no way to speed it up, Zyntris? Can’t we help you?” Emmie asked, innocently popping up from a bunch of coats in a closet she was searching through. She was very determined to find some sort of secret snack stash Clara surely must have stored away.

The thief, stress of body swapping gone, was purely in business mode. Planning a job was almost as much fun as executing it. “Well, if I had backup on site that could run interference, ideally in a way that was not suspicious, I could probably muddle through and skip a lot of the steps. Could at least help me in casing the place so I could come back the next day. But I don’t know how I would get one of you inside without any issues.”

It was Clara’s turn to rub her head from behind from embarrassment. “Would an invitation to a dinner party at the compound tomorrow night work?”

“Would that help? It would be amazing! You have that great of an in?” Zyntris yelled out with glee. She loved fooling rich bastards. A high skill infiltration mission like this was her favorite type of work. It wasn’t that she was stealing. It was that she was stealing from somebody who thought that they couldn’t be stolen from. And who didn’t like proving people wrong?

“As I mentioned before, Lord Carrington has many friends in the Inquisition and has been trying to add me to that list for some time. My loyalty would be a feather in his cap. However, I don’t bother with the petty corruption that some of my colleagues do for their work, so I have always turned him down. That being said, it doesn’t stop people from  trying. I have been told that these monthly dinner events are an open invitation for me and a guest or two no matter the circumstances.”

“That’s amazing. You head in, integrate with the party scene, feed me information that you extract carefully from the mark, and I scout out everything. Bam. Two week period can be cut down to a day or two. Hell, I bet I could pull it off SAME night. I’m getting excited!”

“Not to burst everyone’s bubble, but Clara has not been invited. Inquisitor Lord Van Damm has been invited and that body is currently occupied by one Emilia Von Schleuse.” Esse said, pointing at the woman who was on her hands and knees searching under a desk, butt high in the air bouncing back and forth. “Whatever social grace, political intrigue, and grand scheme you plan on putting forth will need to happen with this girl as the main point of contact.” Emmie, hearing her name, tried to stand up, but did it too early, smacking her head loudly against the underside of the wood. She made an adorable squeak that would never come out of the Inquisitor’s mouth.

Realization of the situation hit Clara. All sorts of scenarios flashed through her head of what damage Emmie could do to her image at this elite party. Swallowing food whole, infantile humor, crudely belching after chugging an expensive bottle of wine, asking silly questions like why buildings were called buildings even after they have already been built, having an obscene belly related wardrobe malfunction, having the wrong opinions on the topics of the day… it would be a disaster.

“Esse is correct. We cannot go to this dinner party under any circumstances. Emmie cannot be allowed out in public.” Clara said, treble of fear in her voice.

“Aw, come on, Clara! I know how to do dinner parties, I have been properly educated and all that. It will be fiiiiine.” Emmie mustered, throwing her arm around Clara.

“Yes, you may know how to act, but you certainly don’t follow them! If anything, your knowledge only helps you in breaking more rules!”

Seeing her super fun heist plan potentially falling apart, Zyntris scrambled to put things into perspective. “If I don’t have an inside assist, breaking into a place will be incredibly challenging.” She warned. “I say we do it, we can figure out the solution to the Emmie problem later.”

“Hm, I think the Emmie problem is a lot bigger than you think, Zyn! You are forgetting that you also are in a new body, too. Emmie’s body to be specific. There is no way she can pull off the tricks you subject yourself to during a heist. I don’t think you could even do a pull up!” Esse continued, trying to avoid any plan that could make her look stupid in front of Leo.

“W-who needs pull ups when she can cast all sorts of super cool magic, ETV? Ever think of that! She could be all “Zap!” and “Poof!” and the item will just be in her hands like magic… because it is!” Emmie jumped in, attempting to defend herself and excuse her easy-going lifestyle. “Or, or, she could use a whisper spell to talk to us remotely as we get information from the Lord guy we are talking to! That way she could be an even better thief with my body, just you see!”

As the light bickering went back and forth between the girls, Clara’s mood sank. She knew what had to be done. It wouldn’t be fun. It wouldn’t be easy. But it had to be done. She stood up straight and prepared herself to face the challenge head on, like she has done with every other difficult decision in her life.

“Alright, here is what we are going to do. After a good night’s rest, Emmie and I will accept the invitation to the dinner party. I know I get a plus one pretty easily so we will both go and assist Emmie with navigating the political landscape. Thief Zyntris, you will sneak into the party using your usual methods. I am sure a person of your skill can figure out how to manage with that body. Emmie will teach you some basic spells tomorrow to help out. Esse, you will go straight to the castle and you WILL sit down with the Chief Archivist to figure out this mask thing. I will not take no for an answer, do not test me on this. Is everyone clear on the plan?” All three women opened their mouths to ask questions, but Clara bulldozed ahead. “Good. Glad everyone understands. Now if you don’t mind, it’s late. I am going to bed. The guest bedroom allows allows for two and the couch is-”

“Oh, oh! Clara, let’s sleep together like old times! SUPER SLEEPOVER GOOOOOO!” Emmie exclaimed, rushing to the master bedroom to claim her favorite side. Clara was about to say something before just giving up. She knew she would lose that battle. Esse put an understanding hand on Clara’s shoulder.

“Hey, if it helps, when you get your body back, you would rather have had it get a couple of good nights sleep in your own bed rather than the couch, right?”

“Ah… I suppose. My back has been particularly sore recently after all. As I was saying, the guest bedroom is just through that doorway, bed fully made. Figure it out between you and the thief.” And Clara made her way to her bedroom to settle in for the night, leaving just Zyntris and Esse alone. Zyntris’s eyes met with Esse and gave her “The Look”. Even though she was technically caught, the heist went off successfully with the item acquired and that usually meant a celebration of some sort.

“So, babe, a fancy new bedroom, never used, all to ourselves. Wanna…?” Zyntris coyly left hanging. To her shock and horror, instead of eagerly taking charge like she normally did, Esse instead awkwardly looked at her feet.

“Sorry Zyn, ah… it’s just, you’re in Emmie right now. And… well, I saw that girl grow up from being a baby. It’s like a… younger sister thing,” the normally confident Esse eked out. She knew that it wasn’t really Emmie, but it was simply too weird with that body. “Uh, now, if you want to gobble up more food, that I can work with you on.” Zyntris grabbed Esse by the shoulders and looked deep into her eyes, creating a very rare serious look on the face of Emmie. It unsettled Esse to see the normally carefree girl have that expression.

“Babe, we NEED to fix this tomorrow.”

“We will, Zyn. It will work out. I promise.”

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The night passed by uneventfully giving rise to the morning. Clara, diligent as always, woke up early and set the stage in the motion for the heist. First, a proper RSVP was returned marking that the Inquisitor Lord and a guest would be attending the festivities tonight. Clara considered it low-class and tacky for a same day RSVP, but concessions had to be made for the circumstances. Second, letters went out to those in the city government for details on the manor. Layouts, designs, engineering concepts all were requested; anything Zyntris might need.

Thirdly, and more importantly for the rest of the party, Clara procured groceries for breakfast, coming back from her morning constitutional fully stocked up with bacon, eggs, toasts, cheeses, sausage, and other goodies like pancake mix. Her rationale was that today was going to be a high stress, action packed adventure and a proper meal would set everybody straight. It had nothing to do with the fact that she was in a body that could have significant amounts of bacon, eggs, toasts, cheeses, sausage and other goodies without any fear of breaking a diet. Only problem was that she needed somebody to help cook.

Zyntris, up second as cuddling also seemed to be off limits reducing the amount of fun sleeping in could provide, took on the mantle of chef. Experienced cooking for herself and Esse, the thief looked at the feast and rolled up her sleeves to get to work. At first, everything was all normal. Sure it was more material that Zyntris normally handled, but at the end of the day the process was the same. The only issue was the smell.

See right as the bacon started crisping up in the pan that delicious grilled fatty, meaty flavor hit Zyntris like a punch in the face. It was the most beautiful smell she had ever sniffed in her entire life. But that wasn’t all, the scent of toast with fresh butter, the aroma of the eggs over easy… Everything looked good. Everything looked delicious. Zyntris found herself taste testing her creations. One slice here, one quick bite there but it was starting to add up. Significant damage was being done to the meal. In a blink of an eye, almost the entire first half was already gobbled down and Zyntris had not even served the rest of the party yet. Looking down, her stomach bulged out with the contents, gurgling away happily. That visible sign of gluttony kicked her brain back into control of the situation. Zyntris finished cooking, plated the food, and called the others in for breakfast.

“Ah Zyn, you have outdone yourself again. This smells delicious.” Esse said, seeing the feast. Clara and Emmie followed in from their room, already in an argument of sorts.

“-which is why my body sleeps on its side with at least two pillows between the legs, Emmie! Not one, not three, TWO! Proper spine structure is key for-”

“Yeah, yeah, Clara, go be old somewhere else. It’s breakfast time! Who can get mad when there is this super awesome tasty meal for everyone to enjoy?” Emmie argued, knowing the answer is nobody. Nobody can be that upset at a freshly cooked breakfast. Rubbing her hands at the veritable buffet in front of her, Emmie hesitated between all the options, unsure which one to grab. “Oh man Zyntris, you should quit stealing stuff and become a chef, cause this is awesome looking. I don’t know which one to gobble down first! The bacon? No, the eggs? No, the toast? Wait, what about all three via a sandwich combined with-”

“You will be having this, Emmie.” Clara said, pulling a new item out of the cupboard. It was a box of cereal. Emmie nervously grabbed the box from Clara to review what exactly was in store for her, the brown packaging indicating that it was not for children.

“Heart healthy Bran Flakes? Extra fiber? Heart Healthy? With REDUCED SUGAR? THEY TOOK SUGAR OUT OF IT!? Clara, you can’t be serious! This is the oldest person food in the history of old people! Pro eats this stuff!”

“And it is part of your diet.”

“You mean YOUR diet, Clara! I’m not beholden to this!”

“Emmie, you are using my body, I simply ask that you treat it how I’ve been treating it the past few months.”

“What about how you have been treating it the past year? I looked in the mirror! Your muffin top is like one of those fancy bakeries where they make novelty large sized extra big versions to be cut up like a cake!”

“That’s incredibly specific and also WRONG Emmie. You are thinking of “Baked By Melissa” Bakery on 42nd street which makes cakes in the appearance of extra large cupcakes in a variety of flavors including, double chocolate chunk, fudge brownie, cake batter crumble, and chocolate caramel! Not muffins! Get it right. And it’s just a tiny bit of heft to work off meaning every bit helps. Hence the diet. It is only fair.” Clara fell back to that line. If there was a way to get Emmie to do something, it was to point out the fairness of the situation. The girl at her heart, while having a very selfish side in very specific circumstances, was a paragon of fairness. Sharing was caring after all.

Esse, listening to this amusing argument with nostalgia, noticed that the chef was not sitting with the rest of the group at the table. Turning around she saw a pretty nervous Zyntris on the living room couch playing fiddling with a lock pick, a centering exercise, hunched over trying to hide something.

“Zyn, honey, everything okay? Why are you sitting over there?” Esse asked. Looking up from her lock, Zyntris grunted out a reply, “Already ate.” This sparked some idea in Clara, who started counting up how much food was left on the table. Sure it was a feast, but the Inquisitor had bought a lot of groceries and there wasn’t any left in the packaging in the kitchen.

“Hey, where is the rest of the food? I bought at least a dozen big sausages and I am only counting-” Clara started asking before a huge belch lazily rolled out of Zyntris interrupting the question. The size of the burp must have surprised the young woman, eyes wide open to the force she just unleashed. Her face turned beet red in embarrassment, noticing everybody staring at her. She never was good at being the center of attention.

“As I, er, said, already ate. I’m good over here.” Zyntris replied, trying to make it sound like no big deal. But the body she was in betrayed her, stomach growling loudly indicating it wanted much more. The noise made hiding the pot bellied tummy nearly impossible. The feast she consumed was revealed in its gurgling ginormity whether she wanted it or not. Pops, growls, and rumbles echoed loudly in the room, showcasing a belly in need of more attention. Zyn swore she could feel it physically move from just how bad it needed more food.

“Oh, Zyn, sounds like a second breakfast might be necessary for that grumbly tummy. Come over and sit, eat with us.”

“I’d rather not. The smell and taste is… overpowering. I barely was able to stop myself from eating everything when I was cooking! I don’t know why, but food is extra delicious right now and I don’t think I can have any more. I mean, I ate triple what I normally would!” Esse listened to her girlfriend’s logic and nodded along knowingly.

“Magical conversion euphoria. A textbook case if I am hearing it correctly. Zyn, you don’t need to worry. It’s simply your body converting the food you have in power, which releases endorphins into your brain and stress relief throughout the body. It feels good as a natural consequence, like making children, or the feeling you get post exercise.” Esse rattled off casually, as if eating a third of a buffet was normal. Sensing an opportunity for something devious, the demon smiled evilly. “Or, you know what really feels good is one of my patented belly massages. It’s been awhile since I gave Emmie’s body one of them. It will launch you into orbit.”

“No way, babe! I’m not messing with something that feels like that! It’s too weird. Addictive. No more food and belly, please.” Zyntris said, worried face indicating that she wasn’t going to play along.

“Fine, more for me, then,” Clara said, inhaling a sausage wrapped in a pancake, moaning out in pleasure from the taste. See, Clara was true to her word. For the past month she had been keeping to that difficult diet to correct what is only known at the Serendipity Sweets Shop as “The Culling Incident.” Since then, it has only been bran cereal, salads, and grilled chicken breakfast lunch and dinner for the girl. These fatty meats, syrup drenched carbs, and sugary drinks were absolute heaven for her. Eating quickly, fearful that Zyntris would change her mind, Clara ended up with a particularly large mouthful of food and was struggling to get it down when Esse thoughtfully held up a large glass of juice which the hunger Inquisitor gratefully guzzled down. The diet-free woman didn’t even notice that Esse had already consolidated a lot of the food right in front of Clara’s plate, making the upcoming feat of gluttony even easier to achieve.

But Zyntris was a small woman, and her body was not used to the massive meals that Clara, “““ALLEGEDLY”””, consumed in the past. Already the Inquisitor was slowing down, the next couple of bites being extra difficult, and some indigestion causing a couple smaller belches to pause additional swallowing. But Esse was on the scene, holding up a fork filled with delicious syrupy pancake with the perfect bite of sausage combined on top. Clara pushed past her discomfort of feeling full and opened up allowing Esse to feed her directly. One bite after the other.

“HEY! What’s all this? Esse, what are you doing?” Zyntris asked, suspicious of how intimate a feeding was taking place between her girlfriend and somebody who was not her.

Esse spun around, breathing and heart rate increased, face all red but genuinely confused. “Huh, what? What’s wrong?”

“I think the Inquisitor can feed herself. She doesn’t need you to help, Esse.” Zyntris said with a hurt tone. In Emmie’s body, that line of emotion produced a powerful pout. Esse stared blankly at the girl, and then back toward Clara. The Inquisitor was almost done eating, having consumed nearly the entire second half of the breakfast all by herself. While Zyntris in Emmie’s body breezed through the whole thing and was left wanting more, Clara in Zyntris’s body was in an indigestion food coma. Haggard breathing and a very visible belly bump stretching the thief’s belt. Esse turned back around to her actual girlfriend confused.

“Eh, what’s the problem? It’s just a littling feeding between friends. I’m just helping Clara in your body deal with her cravings.”

“What do you mean, what’s the problem? You are getting all hot and bothered with her! By her! Right in front of me! I’m your girlfriend!”

Emmie, crunching through a mouth full of bran-flakes, interjected to save Esse’s life. “Zyntris, ETV likes when girls eat a lot. She finds it very cute when they do. She probably wanted to see what you look like cause you normally don’t eat anything.”

“Exactly, Emmie, exactly. If SOMEBODY agreed to let me feed them more often, then I wouldn’t have to take advantage of this scenario. I wouldn’t NEED to find out how cute they look stuffed with a balanced breakfast. I asked you, and you refused.” Esse tutted, turning back to airplane another mouthful of food into the near comatose Inquisitor. For some mystery that Zyntris couldn’t figure out, the proud Inquisitor opened her mouth again. Tongue out and panting, the woman flicked her eyes toward the fork with more food and managed to extend her maw just a bit wider to allow the massive bite inside. Esse’s face was flushed, a grin ear to ear at the sight. This is what she was missing.

Zyntris at her heart understood what was happening. Her girlfriend, being a demon of gluttony, generally preferred girls eating a lot. It was kind of her whole reason for existence. Hell, the first time she met, Esse bamboozled Zyn to eat an entire cake on top of a full meal. Further stuffing sessions have been more rare since then, as Zyntris really wasn’t into it herself and the job necessitated a thin, active body. She couldn’t be pigging out every other day! She would never be able to pull off her stunts with meals the size Esse wanted her to gobble down. Of course, on special occasions the meal could be extra big, but… it was a lot of calories and work!

Meanwhile, during this rapid train of thought cruising through Zyntris’s head, Esse helped Clara polish off the final swallows of the meal and was helping massage her gut. The organ protruded outward significantly, a greater showing on the tiny body compared to Zyntris’s own bulge. Somehow it made the thief feel inadequate.

There was a loud knock at the door that made everyone in the room turn. Who on earth would be bothering Inquisitor Lord Clara on her day off? The knock rang out again, louder this time.

“Miss Van Damm, you know what today is~! Come on out, you know the rules.” A sing-song male voice pattered behind the door. “If you don’t open up, I’ll use the key you gave me~”

“Clara! Who is that?” Emmie exclaimed with glee. A male voice visiting Clara? A suitor? A friend? Something else that Emmie could gossip about? A loud belch rolled out of the nearly incapacitated Inquisitor, waking her up from her self induced itis nap.

“It’s my **BeeLLccHH**, ugh, fitness instructor, Kyle.”

Cuh-lick went the front door and an older, extremely fit man clothed in workout gear bounded inside the apartment, like a dancer leaping across a stage in ballet. He was toned, oiled up and probably had infinite energy. Even when standing still, he was grooving to some invisible beat. Seeing the full group and feast, he put his hands to his mouth and chest in shock.

“Miss Van Damm! I wasn’t expecting you to have guests! And what is this, a little cheat day? I thought we made the deal that this would be a full effort diet with no short cuts~”

Emmie’s delight at Clara being caught red handed could not be contained, and the woman burst out laughing. For whatever reason, Emmie’s normal high pitched girly laugh was translated by Clara’s body into a haughty “Oh oh oh”, booming around the room. Imagine it, Clara’s own fitness guru seeing her like the greedy pig she was at the core. Pro would have been loving this.

“Oh ho ho! You are so screwed, OH HO HO!” Emmie taunted, barely able to get words out between the chortles. But Clara weakly smiled in response. She knew what was coming.

“Oh, come now, Miss Van Damm. Your little friend here with the tummy trouble is not the focus. Remember, we work on ourselves. We don’t worry about what others are doing, right? And what WE are doing today is our half marathon. It’s been on the calendar and a “sick day” at work is no excuse.”

“What.”

“Now, get that fat bum outta that seat and into gear! Come on, we can change at the gym. You paid me a large sum to not take no for an answer, girl, and I won’t let you escape!” The extremely fit man twirled over to where Emmie was sitting, who was completely frozen in fear, hefted the woman out of her seat and carried her off out the door like a child misbehaving. The door slammed shut behind leaving only the three women left in the apartment.

A gross guttural laugh came out of Clara, eye’s half lidded, belly shaking and gurgling as if it too enjoyed the delicious irony. The movement proved too much for the belt, breaking the stretched leather which was just barely containing the full continental breakfast consumed. An audible slosh was heard, the digested contents surging forward, free of any constraint followed by a moan of relief. With great difficulty, the Inquisitor lurched out of her seat and started her way to the bedroom, chuckling darkly to herself.

“Aha… aha… Kyle will set her straight. Teach her a thing or two about my life. Now for you two, I’m going to go take a nap. When I wake up, we are going to review the plans and floor layouts that should be delivered in about two hours. You, thief. Go get whatever you need to conduct the mission. Money is no object here, I’m going to get out of this body. Esse, grow the fuck up, and go see the Chief Archivist in the castle. I don’t care that you look stupid in front of the kid. Tell the guards I sent you. Figure out your mistake. Now if you’ll excuse me-” She paused to unleash a massive belch, not even pretending to try and mitigate the force or noise. “I’m sleeping off this haul.”

And with that, the Inquisitor was gone, leaving the two quarreling lovers alone. Both of them glanced at each other, unsure if they should go back to the argument earlier. Zyntris shook her head no. An important job was coming up, and a real disagreement would throw her off her game. “Well. I’m off to the slums to get some gear. We’ll… talk later, Esse.”

Esse turned away, uncomfortable at the situation. She knows she did something wrong, but her stubbornness wasn’t going to let her admit it anytime soon. In fact, Zyntris was ignoring her demonic nature! She couldn’t help it! It was literally part of her! Zyn being upset though, not an ideal outcome. That and the fact she was already going to “debase” herself in front of somebody today asking questions on things she felt she was the expert in, weighed on her mind. “Alright, I’ll see you soon, Zyn.”

With that, the thief walked out the door, leaving the uncomfortable situation behind.

**Chapter 1 complete.**