

## Salvation

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# Salvation

by [fereldenpeach](#)

## Summary

Evelia Trevelyan never thought her life would change. Why would it? She was just a lowly mage working as an archivist under the constant scrutiny of the templars at Haven Solutions, Inc. So, why should she expect there to be any risk in attending a mandatory meeting? Surely a different sort of life wouldn't be waiting for her at the Conclave Convention Center?

*Thrust into turmoil, betrayals, and civil war--with a strange mark granting her god-like power--what will she do now that she's the Herald of Andraste destined to save all of Thedas?*

The corporate Modern!AU no one asked for. All NSFW chapters have an (X) in the title.

## Notes

I will preface this insane thing with this:

This fic is intentionally canon divergent. I am taking liberties where I see fit to play with the characters from Thedas that we all know and love. There may be some deviance in character where I deem appropriate, just FYI.

This will eventually turn smutty, though probably not how you expect. ;)

Enjoy.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

# Nothing is Written in the Stars

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It would be an inexplicably gross understatement to say that no one hated the pencil-pushing, grinding grunt work at Haven Solutions, Inc. more than Evelia Trevelyan.

It wasn't that she didn't *love* staying buried up to her elbows in piles upon piles of hardcopy company files. Or that she wasn't *thrilled* by the seemingly endless and mindless monotony of scanning, archiving, and double-checking her work all in the name of preservation and document control. And it wasn't that she didn't *enjoy* spending her days shut up within a windowless room of Haven's basement near the cold servers of the IT department and the scrutiny of security.

Except—

Deep down in her heart, down underneath her light, yet half-hearted smile, she *hated* it.

Or rather...she hated knowing that part of her life was lacking. Lacking in excitement—adventure—mystery. What she would give to be able to break free of her entrapment, release herself to the wild unknown and take the world as it happened. Day in and day out she lived and breathed predictability—from badge scans to paper scans, cold lunches and cold glances—from her greeting with Officer Barris in the morning to her evening wishes to Officer Threnn, every single bit of her life was stale with familiarity. One that made her crave a different kind of fulfillment other than satisfying her limited interests as an archivist.

But her drudgery would continue as Evelia stepped into the empty elevator one *very* typical workday and pressed for the tenth floor to the executive suites, having been summoned to gather the newly discovered files sent to Ms. Pentaghost. Why they couldn't just have a courier or intern deliver them directly to the archives was beyond her reasoning, yet the rarity of this particular task was one she was all too eager to accept.

There were always new faces in the hallways—temps and interns and part-time hands exchanging shifts—most of them hardly batting an eye at who she was or from what department she had come. Yet the journey to Pentaghost's office invariably seemed to put her in the pathway of that *one* particular colleague who never ceased to intrigue and intimidate the ever living shit out of her.

The elevator rose to the ground floor and with a *ding*, the doors slid opened. Like clockwork, Haven's Commander—Cullen Rutherford—strolled inside, deeply engrossed in some sort of work email or obnoxiously wordy text message on his phone. His golden curls had been relaxed—combed into a neat coif that swept away from the defined bone structure of his face, save for the drooping curl that brushed his brow.

Never one to adhere to the dress code, Cullen had either left his coat jacket behind or had stowed it away in his office, for he was wearing his typical, crisp, white button-down that

annoyingly teased the tops of his collar bones and revealed the bulging veins of his forearms where his sleeves had been meticulously folded upward. His dress pants—while still leaving a bit to the imagination—fit his form perfectly, the company badge clipped to his belt loop hanging closely to the place between his thighs where Evelia’s sight lingered for a *tiny* moment longer before letting her gaze drop downward. His shoes were spotless, glimmering from the refraction of the light and mirrored interior of the elevator walls. And it was the reflection of herself starting back at her from between his feet that caused her to glance back up to his face.

Cullen’s brow was rumpled, mouth clenched—the muscle in his jaw seizing momentarily just before hitting *send* on whatever it was he had found himself so engrossed. The elevator doors closed with a hiss, finally catching his attention that he had *indeed* stepped aboard the elevator, and those amber eyes flicked up to meet Evelia’s. His free hand instinctually went to the back of his neck to pull at his bunching muscles.

“Err—good morning, Lady Trevelyan.” Cullen stood there in front of her, looking down into her gray-green eyes and watching as a peachy hue peaked within her cheeks.

“Good morning, Commander,” said Evelia, her breath barely carrying her words. She swallowed, thickly.

If only he could hear her thoughts. If only he could feel the thrashing of her heart as she exchanged his gaze. If only he knew how charming he was in his awkwardness, or how wobbly he sent her knees just from smelling his fresh and masculine fragrance, or how her mouth watered at the fanciful image of his strong, sweaty body completely and perfectly naked...

*Ugh, thank the Maker he could not.*

“Erm—going up?” Evelia managed, motioning to the control panel.

“Yes, I—uh—ten, yes—thank you.” Cullen leaned back against the railing and glanced away, a coy smile tugging the curious scar of his upper lip.

Evelia stepped away from the doors, huddling into her corner of the lift and silently prayed a thanks to the Maker that she hadn’t yet made a fool of herself.

But the elevator only rose one floor, opened, and quickly filled with other Haven employees, leaving Evelia to find herself squished into close quarters with her Commander. Her body nearly pressed alongside his front—his hot and sweet breath hitching momentarily before swirling down to caress the part of her neck exposed to his gaze. Just a single shift in posture would brush their proximity into completely uncharted territory—and the thought alone sent a jolting shiver along Evelia’s spine.

Absent chatter flitted among the men and women, unaware of the heat permeating behind them, and Evelia almost would have missed it had she not been acutely listening for that warm and sultry baritone she had grown to recognize through company meetings and quick exchanges in hallways or break rooms or...elevators.

“I had hoped one day we would have a moment to get to know one another—” whispered Cullen, a gentle laugh slipping between his words, “—though I must say this is a bit more intimate than I had anticipated.”

Evelia rolled her eyes with a scoff to hide her near hyperventilation. “Oh, I’m *sorry*, Commander. Had I known—”

“No need for apologies, Trevelyan,” he said with a chuckle.

Afraid to read too much into his words and afraid to say anything further that could possibly make her sound like a completely bumbling fool, she swallowed hard and nibbled at her bottom lip. Their previous acquaintances had been nothing more than that—awkward nods and shy smiles in greeting, yet there was a strange sense of sincerity in his voice, a finality that dominated the air and affirmed that there was most *definitely something* there in this tense and public moment despite the odds of their position. Floor after floor they ascended, the crowded room dwindling with each stop, yet Evelia did not move.

And neither did Cullen.

They reached the ninth floor and the final passengers filed out, leaving Evelia to finally step away from her superior. She glanced over at him for half a second, just long enough to catch a warm flush drifting down his neck. The doors opened on the tenth floor and Cullen motioned toward the exit.

*Ladies first. Of course, ladies first—the damn gentleman.*

Evelia stepped from the lift and briskly headed toward Pentaghash’s office, but skidded to a halt upon hearing her name.

“Trevelyan—” Cullen shouted again from down the hall.

She tossed a glance over her shoulder, brow lifting with genuine intrigue.

“See you at the all-hands?”

“Err—yeah, it’s mandatory, right?”

“Yes...” said Cullen.

*Yes...but...*

There was something unsaid, something he so desperately wanted to relay yet refrained for whatever reason. He watched her from down the hall, waiting for her response.

“Uhh—yeah, see you there!”

*See you there? Ughhh. What the fuck is wrong with you, Trevelyan? Stupid. Stupid.*

Evelia all but sprinted down toward Pentaghash’s, nearly slipping on the freshly waxed floor, yet when she arrived at the CEO’s office, she came face to face with a hastily scrawled note

instructing her to take the crate of papers sitting atop the table and close the door behind her.

*Ugh. Excitement over.*

With a groan, she opened the door and grabbed the crate, dreading the busywork that would undoubtedly occupy her time for the next week and a half. And the time-consuming all-hands meeting was just going to delay her work further.

There were rumors of a merger and rumors of a spin-out, all completely unfounded yet somehow still incredibly plausible. Why else would Haven's executives need the entire company on hand? Surely there wasn't any concern with their stock or everyone would have already heard it by now. Granted, there were rival companies that had increased their competitive tactics—did it have something to do with that?

Taking the elevator back down to her department, Evelia mused on why she—a lowly archivist—would even be needed at a company meeting at all unless something drastic was happening, indeed. But once she'd found herself back in the hole of the basement, she heaved the crate on top of the clearest surface and scanned the room for her assistant.

"Pentaghost's got me on these for the next week," she shouted. "Will you pick up where I left off on Geniviti's old tomes, Lyra?"

Poking out from a neighboring room, Lyra sniffed—her ears giving a minuscule twitch.

"Yeah, I guess. I'm gonna go grab lunch first."

Before Evelia could even protest, Lyra had left for the break room, leaving her alone with the painfully quiet tomes and their dusty and exhausting secrets. With a huff, she began the archiving process, slipping on a pair of gloves to sort and scan, convert and read, confirm and catalog the entirety of this new and important trove of information that Pentaghost just *had* to have done as quickly as possible.

But a knock sounded to her left and Evelia looked up, meeting eye to eye with her favorite elusive and enigmatic man.

Smokey, grey eyes studied her from underneath hooded lids and furrowed brows, the olive complexion of his skin appearing darker in the cheap incandescent lighting of the archives.

His dark and braided hair was swept back in a half bun to reveal an undercut fading down to his ears and nape of his neck—the longer pieces flowing over the thick of his scarf. His muscled chest peeked from beneath the almost-too-deep neckline of his *mostly* buttoned white shirt (which stayed strangely unwrinkled under his familiar black leather jacket). Black slacks hung on his lean and toned legs in all the right places, drifting down into the pointed, hard-worn boots that somehow complimented his look more than if they had been fresh and well-kept.

"What are you doing down here?" Evelia asked, her smile traveling along the tone of her voice.

Solas half lingered in the doorway, chancing a glance at the cameras overhead before stepping in enough to lean against the frame. He extended his hand to offer her a coffee cup from the company café, steam twirling from the opening in the lid. With a gasp and hearty grin, Evelia wrapped her fingers around it—the heat of the drink already warming her hands through the cardboard sleeve. She lifted it to her lips and inhaled the fragrance of her favorite coffee concoction before taking a long drink that fell hard into her empty stomach.

“I assumed you would have yet to take your lunch,” he said matter-of-factly, his never-quite-there smile of amusement glinting in his eye.

“Nope. Too much to do before the all-hands.”

Solas quirked a brow and ran a slender finger over the top sheet of the nearest stack of paper.

“Perhaps you should skip the meeting today,” he said, examining the dust between his fingers. “The Singing Maiden just opened down the street. The sushi is rumored to be the best in town.” Solas glanced up at her.

“We’re *all* supposed to attend. But I suppose *you’re* exempt, being a consultant and all.”

“I am.” Solas crossed his arms, the leather of his jacket creaking ever so slightly. “You could still have lunch with me instead. Who would miss Haven’s *only* archivist?”

Evelia laughed, turning her attention back to her computer. “Believe it or not, *Solas*, I am good at what I do. And what I do is important.”

“I didn’t say otherwise, Evelia. I merely asked—” But his words were cut off—for silently sliding into the room to walk past him was another Haven employee.

A woman.

An *elf*.

She paused with the slightest hesitation, tossing him an assessing scowl. And Solas *absorbed* her.

Her thick, dark hair cascaded down her back, still doing very little to conceal her long yet dainty ears. The deep, gray rings of her eyes lightened toward the pupil, spiraling into a curious hazel that nearly unseated his cool and collected composure. And she was gone to the other side of the archive before he even had a chance to study her vallaslin, assess her powers, or even ask for her name.

Evelia smirked, watching as he ogled her new co-worker.

“I thought you were alone,” he whispered, still gazing down the hall where she had disappeared.

“I was. Pentaghost assigned her down here about—”

But Solas clasped her wrist, encouraging her to make eye contact as a serious tone pulsed throughout the room. “Evelia,” he said, his voice reaching to desperation. “Whatever you do today, *do not* go to the company meeting.”

## Chapter End Notes

Chapter title inspired by [Nothing is Written in the Stars by Bloodgroup](#)



# Welcome to Mayhem

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Haven employees filed toward the Conclave Convention Center just next-door to headquarters—the majority taking the tube-ways connecting one building to the other for the fastest route.

But the day was too beautiful, the breeze too refreshing, and the crisp air and sunlight were things of which Evelia had always been deprived in her dark, lonesome little Archive. She stepped out onto the sidewalk and squinted up to the sky between the wisps of auburn flitting about her face, watching puffs of clouds mosey lackadaisically in front of the sun to cast shadows over both Haven and the convention center.

This outing *should* have been refreshing. It *should* have filled her lungs with a calming renewal. One that sent her a reinvigorating jolt to encourage her to finish out what *should* be the remainder of a very monotonous day.

But Solas' words had been foreboding—seeping down and nagging at that spot at the back of her mind that whispered at her subconscious, prompting her to consider whether or not she should listen and obey.

Solas' words resounded—his voice rich, teasing, warning.

*Who would miss Haven's only archivist?*

Evelia cracked a half-smile at the thought—thanks to Lyra, she wasn't the *only* archivist any longer. Not that that mattered. But it did feel good momentarily—knowing that Solas was *finally* wrong about something for once—even if it was due to his own legitimate ignorance simply because he had no prior knowledge of an increase in staff.

She hugged her arms across her chest and shivered before trekking down the sidewalk, crossing the street, and heading to the left toward the convention center side door.

It swung open on rusty hinges—completely in contrast to the rest of the pristine structure—and it slammed shut with a gust of wind once she entered. The hallway was deathly quiet—only the buzzing fluorescents cutting through the silence with an unnerving, crackling hum.

But a curious noise sounded down the hall, almost a muffled cry. And before Evelia could turn to investigate, her phone vibrated in her back pocket.

Nearly jumping out of her skin, she yanked it out swiped her thumb across the surface to stare at three unread text messages—one from Lyra, one from Solas, and the other from an unknown number.

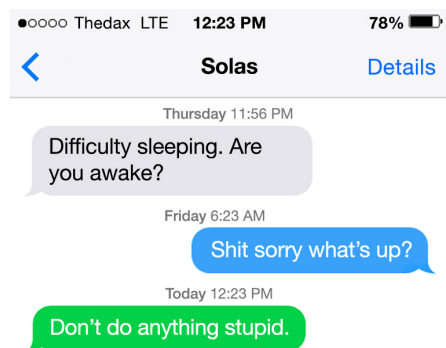
*Ugh...shitty fucking service.*

She opened the first:



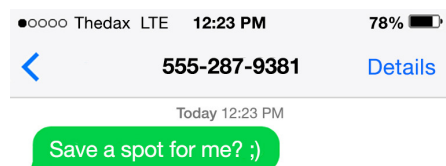
*Maker's fucking tits, Lyra. Can you not ever be reliable?*

Evelia rolled her eyes and thumbed at the next text message:



*Well, gee thanks, Solas. Thanks a lot for thinking that I can fuck up sitting at a boring ass meeting.*

But the last text—the one from a number she didn't recognize—sent her heart aflutter:



*Is that...? But how did he get my number?*

They had only shared a small spot of a crowded elevator, but all of the lingering moments when arriving early and leaving late from group meetings and the many fleeting glances as they passed through the hall—it was a wonder neither had plucked up the courage to ask the other out for an evening alone. Or lunch. Lunch would have been good. So why now?

She stood there for longer than necessary—the backlight of her phone illuminating her face with that single, solitary question staring up at her, prompting her to obsess and contemplate the meaning or intention of that stupid fucking winking emoji. But just as she was about to head down the hall to the main auditorium, a low and rumbling voice erupted to her right.

*“Now is our victory.”*

Evelia started, her wandering thoughts now fixed on the source of the voice. It was foreboding, threatening—an unnerving command sounding as if it were tied to a matter of life or death. She crept toward the closest door leading to an interior room and pulled it open, listening for a shout or a scuffle or...a scream.

More voices—chanting vaguely familiar spells—and that booming voice sounded again:

*“Keep still.”*

Evelia stalked toward it, the hallway leading her into the basement and beneath the main auditorium. And the basement was dark save a sliver of flickering light twisting from underneath a closed door, and it teased and coaxed at her interest. She glanced down at her phone and nibbled her lower lip, contemplating whether or not she should alert security and have the Templars sent down to investigate—or continue on alone. But wouldn’t the Templars have already seen this strange commotion on the security feed? She thumbed to Officer Barris’ number, her finger hesitating above his name—

*“Help! Help me!”*

It was a woman, and the urgency in her cry was not one Evelia could ignore. She grasped at the door handle and tugged, her body faltering on the lack of give—so she quickly muttered a spell and with the wave of her hand, the tumbler aligned and unlocked the door with a click. She eased it open and stepped inside, slowly stepping around the corner to gaze at the chaos unfolding before her.

Warden Agents had taken some woman hostage—her body bound by magic, her voice breaking through an agonizing and painful screech. She writhed against their spells and muttered the chant between howls and desperate calls to the Maker.

“I said... *Keep. Her. Still!*” shouted the deep, threatening voice from before.

Evelia followed the commotion and the direction of command, spotting a towering figure in a crisp black suit—his tie hanging slack around his neck, glimmering shoes reflecting the magical light binding the woman to her spot. But he was disfigured—his face and neck and hands revealing the tell-tale signs of prolonged exposure and abuse to red lyrium. Whoever he was, he *oozed* a malevolent energy, one that shook Evelia down to her core as she hesitated in both awestruck terror and confusion at the events unfolding before her.

*What*

*the*

*fuck???*

And suddenly, the man whipped his head toward her, his ruined teeth and lyrium diseased face revealing a multitude of thoughts this side of complete and utter abhorrence.

*Wait...did I say that out loud?*

His sight hadn't latched onto her for more than a second before the woman shouted, hurling her body toward him and knocking some strange device from his boney, claw-like hands. It tumbled to the floor and rolled across with alarming speed, faster than the reflexes of the man standing there and growling his rage.

The object clicked at Evelia's boot, bringing with it a roiling turmoil crackling throughout the atmosphere. Every inch of her told her not to pick it up—told her to kick it or leave it or simply sprint to safety in search of help from experts and soldiers who should have prevented this sort of infiltration of Maker knows what to begin with. Yet still she bent to scoop it up, her fingers flexing then curling to clasp around the ridged and textured surface.

The man lunged forward, his ribboned face riddled with hateful curses spilling from bared and rotten teeth. He outstretched his hand, those finger-claws reaching, reaching, *reaching*...

And the object *exploded* in a blinding white light, almost as bright as the unimaginable pain surging through Evelia's veins, wrapping around her bones, bursting through the even the very cells of her flesh.

And then there was nothing but darkness.

## Chapter End Notes

Aaaand goodbye Canon! Divergence from here on out.

Sorry these are short. I hope it's better than a super long wait. <3

Also, sorry for any grammatical errors. I'll correct later. Cause now I'm hella tired.

Chapter title inspired by: [PhaseOne - Welcome To Mayhem \(ft. In Hearts Wake\)](#)

# The Beast With Many Names

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Cullen stood outside Cassandra's office with iPad in hand, scrolling through pages and pages of countless emails, attempting to parse through only the necessary messages. *Why* he needed to be copied on so many different menial discussions that always seemed to spiral into pointless drudgery and off-topic threads was completely beyond his reasoning—and despite desperately wanting to filter out his conversations to the bare minimum, that of which *truly* boiled down to hard, immediate, and relevant action, he knew there was no point whatsoever in creating a bulletin announcement to encourage otherwise.

Reports of continued unrest with the merger trickled through complaints about the lack of resources in satellite offices and the hastily planned business trip to Val Royeaux. Each swipe of his hand revealed more and more of the same, and he desperately wished his assistant was competent enough to vet and forward only the most pertinent of messages.

Cullen frowned—his never-ending mass of correspondence and responsibility illuminating up at him, both with backlighting and a shrouded dread. For he knew that despite his best efforts—he would never be able to comfort his charges from their worries and fears, and their anger-laced frustration that accompanied a longing for some sort of normalcy. He was responsible for so many men and women away from their families on long and arduous assignments, and yet despite his own irritation and near-impossible burden of message upon message—he knew this was something he needed to see—needed to be directly involved and kept informed.

Their *lives* were in his hands. There was little he could do or say to ease their minds, and it tugged at his heart more than he hoped his expression could relay.

He dug through the length of his hair—sweeping it from his brow and back into its neat position—and continued down until he could pull at the tension in his neck. But as soon as he managed to knead at one particularly tight knot, Cassandra's door opened and she greeted him with an equally inlaid scowl.

“Ready?” she asked, shrugging on her blazer to hide the shoulder holster for her concealed weapon.

Cullen nodded and swiped the email app closed.

“As I'll ever be.”

Cassandra closed her office and strolled down the hall—boots booming with intention—and her chief operating officer followed, his normally-focused eye wandering to gaze outward through the floor-length windows.

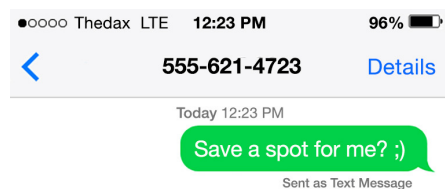
Thedas was burning.

Puffs of smoke billowed in the far distance—towers of consequence from so many fallen efforts to manage and unite and quell the turmoil shaking their world to the core. And he knew that it wouldn't be long before Haven would be called to serve in full force.

It was inevitable. Teeming and roiling and vastly de-emphasized not unlike the brooding, calculative demeanor of his superior. But it wasn't the impending doom shadowing miles from Haven's headquarters that had caught his eye—it was a woman. A woman standing on the sidewalk so many floors below. Her hair whipping about her face as she stared wistfully into the sky.

Evelia.

The deep wrinkles between his brows softened, the tension in his jaw slackened, and without fully thinking, he closed the leather cover on his iPad and tucked it beneath his arm to retrieve his phone. And he pulled it from his pocket—fingers working frantically to send a quick text while following Cassandra into the elevator, completely oblivious to the world about him.



His heart raced as he waited in the mere milliseconds for the text to send. Why was he so nervous? It was a simple question from colleague to colleague. Nothing out of the ordinary. Nothing untoward. And definitely not something he wouldn't ask of anyone else in the company. Granted, under *normal* circumstances, he probably wouldn't have been so forward as to even request for such a thing. He was fully capable of finding his own seating at the all-hands.

But just seeing her there, standing alone in the wind with that faraway stare that had locked away her thoughts—thoughts he very much wished he could learn....

And that moment—*oh, that moment*—the undeniable and electrical *heat* they had shared earlier in the morning—

Cullen grinned—a small, closed-mouth smile nearly hidden from view—but a grin nonetheless.

“What are you smirking about, Commander?” came a lilting accent.

Cullen glanced up from his phone, coming face-to-face with Haven's chief of information, Leliana, and their chief financial officer, Josephine, as they boarded the elevator. The doors closed with a hiss and Cassandra groaned—quickly pressing a button to continue their descent with enough fervor that it was almost as if she were trying to *will* the elevator faster by sheer force alone.

“Erm—*What?*” Cullen sputtered, stowing his phone away into his pocket.

Leliana cocked a brow and cleared her throat. “I do believe I have seen that look before.”

Cullen placed his hands behind his back as if standing at attention, reverting to a neutral composure to thwart her prying eyes.

“I’m afraid it’s *nothing*, Leliana.”

Leliana chuckled behind a breath. “If you insist, Commander.”

*Ding!*

The elevator doors opened and Cassandra scuffled out, followed quickly by Josephine whose thumbs worked across her phone—her voice fading as she attempted to converse with Cassandra over whether or not they should meet with the local chantry to discuss donations and the prospects of joint ventures.

Cullen glanced out of the elevator window and spotted Evelia on the sidewalk, making her way to the convention center. The thudding in his chest resounded against his eardrums.

“Though, I must confess, Cullen,” said Leliana, rapping her nails on the railing before exiting. “Lying has never been a look you’ve worn well.”

Cullen glowered at the redhead and stormed past, rounding the corner to proceed down the steps to the front of the building and shouldered through wave after wave of employees. The entirety of the company seemed to be headed to the tube-ways connecting headquarters to the convention center—

*Maker, no wonder Evelia had taken a different route.*

But as soon as he’d stepped out onto the sidewalk to hopefully “bump into” the redhead he *actually* desired, Evelia had disappeared. Cullen pulled out his phone once again to check whether or not he had received a response, but that blasted text bubble was green instead of blue. No read receipt telling when she'd actually received it or if she had received it at all.

*Why does Haven have to be a cellular dead zone? This is ridiculous. I must speak with the person in charge of ensuring proper communications can be made in and around the facility. Surely they—*

*Oh.*

With an irritated realization and disappointed huff, Cullen drew in a deep breath and shrugged on an exhale, melting away his pointed and nagging agitation in favor of a renewed

determination. Yet still, the ever-present doubt living in the back of his mind like a demon reared its ugly head—poking and prodding until eliciting the desired deprecation.

*Aren't you being too forward, Rutherford? You're clearly not good enough for her, didn't you know? Why would she ever want you anyway? How can anyone desire someone so broken, so volatile, so u n w o r t h y?*

Cullen pinched the bridge of his nose and repeated his mindfulness mantras he had learned in therapy. Focusing on his positivity and desire for better, he willed down the remnants of the lyrium magic *craving* for activation as they coursed throughout his veins. He plunged his hand into his other pocket to retrieve a blister of pills and quickly dispensed two into his hand before popping them into his mouth with a hard and dry swallow.

But it was enough. And before he knew it, the taunting voice had quieted, allowing him to refocus without guilt or shame or self-degradation. His thoughts wandered to the scent of Evelia's hair when she had stood just inches away from him—the yearning glint in her eye when she glanced as if to say more than her words could relay—the glisten of wet atop her bottom lip when she had nibbled it in nervousness. *It was nervousness, right?*

He glanced down at his phone again.

No response.

*By all that is holy—Maker, please let this not all be one-sided.*

Cullen righted his posture and cleared his throat, finally moving his feet in the direction of the convention center. Perhaps she hadn't gotten too far away, and he could actually *speak* to her in more than just a few passing phrases or flirtatious quips. Would it be so—

*B O O M.*

A massive plume of smoke churned from what *should* have been the roof of the conclave. Cullen instinctively ducked and skidded to the nearest wall to avoid the splintering shards of glass pricking at his skin like tiny razorblades—narrowly avoiding the shockwave blast shooting over him in a wave of force and wind. Debris pelted all around him—smattering to the ground in crumbled heaps of carbon-charred metal, wood, and rebar. And the sky had darkened around a rip in the sky—a swirling hell-fire green as veridium and all too similar to the Fade—and with it came the screeches of demons, the shrieks of his people, and an earth-shaking rumble that nearly stopped Cullen's heart altogether.

He stuffed his phone in his pocket and dropped the iPad, bending to lift the hem of his pants leg above his right ankle and withdraw his concealed weapon. Clicking the safety off his pistol, he eased across the road and toward the conclave, slipping through the side door that had been blown from its hinges.

The hallway was dark and the floor had been littered with rubble in places where it hadn't been caved in or smashed from impact beneath the weight of concrete and heavy debris. He scrambled toward the center of the blast, eyes wide as he passed charred bodies frozen in the



last few terror-riddled moments of their lives. He could hear the distress, could hear the cacophony of voices and gunfire and magic mixing with the roar of—

But then he heard it—a male voice shouting, concealing a frantic panic—

*“Evelia!”*

Cullen bolted toward the sound of the voice, crawling over collapsed walls and half-supported door frames, finally spotting Cassandra and Leliana, and both templars and mages fighting off every imaginable evil.

And at the heart of it all was Evelia, her lifeless body crumpled on the ground and cradled in Solas’s arms as he blasted one demon after another to fend them away from taking her. *From taking her?* But they were surrounded, demon upon demon descending from the rip in the Fade to converge on them.

Cullen rushed forward and took aim at the demons surging in on Solas’s back—

*Pop! Pop! — Pop! Pop!*

Solas immediately glanced up to Cullen—the fear-racked look in his face relaxing for only a moment in favor of temporary relief. He lifted Evelia and transferred her into Cullen’s arms, her head lolling onto his chest. And Solas gazed down into her face—his hand moving to swipe the hair from her bloodied cheek and course his strongest healing spell throughout her mangled body.

“Ma garas mir renan,” he whispered with a pained crack in his voice.

He locked those deep gray eyes onto Cullen’s amber ones—a look Cullen knew said more than Solas had intended.

But he tore his sight away from the elf just as a behemoth descended upon them, and he clutched Evelia to his body as tightly as he could manage.

“Cullen, go!” Solas shouted. “Take her—*now!* And keep her safe!”

Solas spun on his heel and raised his hands, preparing to unleash hell.

## Chapter End Notes

A/N: I’m sure anyone who reads my ish knows I’m very musically and thematically driven. And most of you know I always accompany my works with the songs that helped fuel them. I often use music or lyrics to drive my prose, and I usually end up on loops upon loops of the same song so many times that it drives my husband and cats crazy.

Anyway, Spotify figured I'd like HEALTH's remix of "He Is" by Ghost and holy shit my dudes, it is literally THE EPITOME of my Cullen x Evelia and Lyra x Solas ships in this fic. Read the full lyrics [here](#) if you fancy. They're a b s o l u t e l y perfect. Here's the video if you want a listen: [He Is by Ghost \(HEALTH Remix\)](#).

And as always, kudos and comments are much appreciated--especially if you enjoyed.

# Blind Trust

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Solas riffled through Evelia's desk, scattering pens, tossing papers—his magic glowing along the length of long and slender fingers as they scanned throughout his mad and frantic search.

The others would be coming round any moment, and he knew Haven's executives would rush to find him, bringing their anxiety-stricken faces into his to offer a flurry of gratitude accompanied with an acutely scrutinized eye to inquire on *just exactly how* he had known to both *save* Evelia and *destroy* the tear in the Fade along with its terrorizing behemoth. And he was neither willing to answer such questions at the moment nor did he have the time to entertain any sort third degree from people who clearly had no idea what they had gotten themselves into.

Spotting the stack of papers he had seen Evelia archiving before the explosion, he paused—hesitated—and slowly approached her unfinished work. Lines of scattered elvish stared up at him from the once-bound loose leaf, catching his attention and piquing his interest moreso than it normally would.

That language—*his* language. It had been scribbled and scrawled across the faded vellum in a hurried, leftward leaning hand—the weight of which had smeared through ink not nearly drying fast enough to retain the best legibility.

But there it was bearing words too familiar, too revealing, too *wrong*.

And as soon as he reached out a hand to run his fingers along the blotchy ink stains and over the tender fibers struggling to keep the parchment together, a sound erupted to his right and Solas turned, coming face to face with—Lyra, was it?

She stood there, wearing an expensive-looking pair of headphones and that previous scowl—her plump lips hanging open, dark eyes ringed with caramel—completely boring into him as if she wished to light him aflame and scorch him from existence.

The thought of parchment drifted from his mind and Solas' heart paused momentarily—eyes meeting hers—his knitted brows relaxed for a fraction of a second before resuming an *I don't have time for this* demeanor.

“What are you doing down here?” Lyra asked, her voice half an octave lower than he'd expected, but *just* as mellifluous.

Solas grumbled and continued his search. “I could ask the same of you.”

She eased the headphones over her pointed ears and let the band rest around her neck. “I don't understand—I *work* here. *What* are *you* doing here?”

Miffed by her persistence in continuing conversation, Solas righted his stance and turned toward her, allowing her to *see* the droplets of sweat staining his crisp button-down, the burn marks marring his favorite leather jacket, the tear in his slacks across a knee ripped from jagged concrete, and the dust scattered across every inch of which had remained untarnished.

“Where were *you* when the conclave exploded?” His voice was biting, if not downright cruel. “Clearly, *you* had more important things to do than to help your colleagues fight off the demons spilling from the Fade. Tell me, what music were you listening to drown out the screams?”

The deeply inlaid frown melted from her face.

“There was an explosion? I thought that was another earthquake.” Lyra’s gruff exterior softened. “*Wait—demons...what?!?*”

Solas rolled his eyes and turned away from her.

“Where’s Evelia?” she asked, mild panic upticking her voice.

“Nearly dead,” said Solas matter-of-factly, his disdain and despondency apparent in both delivery and expression. Finally, he pulled back the front cover of a manilla folder—his eyes danced wildly across the text and then he quickly snapped it shut, tucking the thing beneath his arm and proceeding toward the door.

“Wait!”

Solas ignored her and simply continued.

“I said, *wait*.”

Starting from the ground and climbing toward the ceiling, a wall of blue flames burst to life, creating a barrier between Solas and his exit. He stopped and slowly spun around—teeth glinting between split lips that did very little to hide his interest. He locked eyes with Lyra—the angry mage whose temper fumed to reality and whose tantalizing aura did nothing to stifle Solas’ kindled curiosity.

*What is she doing?*

The flexed fingers of her out-stretched hand curled inward ever so slightly, and the flame behind him flashed with heat and light.

“What do you want, Lyra?” he asked, the tone of his voice controlled despite the battle of irritation and intrigue roaring behind his narrowed eyes.

“Answers,” she said.

The stoic disposition of which typically left hardly any emotion to Solas’ face was slow to return. Yet there was something strange, something different transpiring—a feeling that prompted a yearning to engage with her—and it was leaving him increasingly perplexed. This woman was powerful—no question—but there was a hidden notion, a secret motive

deep beneath the layers of her actions that sparked his attention unlike any he had felt in quite some time.

“Lyra, you can sit at your little desk until Haven is swarming with templars and you are held for questioning on your whereabouts during the explosion—or you can leave. I have disabled the cameras throughout Haven. No one will know you failed to attend the conclave unless they find you. But you will *not* keep me here.”

His voice was steady, controlled, despite the vein in his forehead twitching and the muscle in his jaw tightening—but the glimmer sparking across his eyes revealed a hint of something unspoken, betraying the near-hateful tone carrying his words.

“Release me, Lyra. I won’t ask again.”

The silence between them was nearly tangible—crushing against his shoulders, his heart, his teeth—an ineffable presence he knew would define whatever it was transpiring in this short and heated exchange. And while the elf before him was beautiful, *no—intriguing*, indeed—she wasn’t enough to risk getting caught and held for questioning.

As if she could read his thoughts, she wrinkled her nose with a sniff and dropped her hand, quelling the raging blue fire preventing his escape. Solas ran an almost shaking hand down a charred leather sleeve, dusting off the heat from her magic before turning and leaving the archives.

“Where are you going?” shouted that rich and confident feminine voice behind him.

The corner of Solas’ mouth quirked against his better intentions, yet he continued through the front doors nonetheless.

“To find Evelia.” His voice was barely a whisper, but he ensured his words were heard.

Lyra appeared at his side and he cast a glance in her direction, watching as she stuffed something within a backpack before zipping and shrugging it on. She turned those dark eyes up at his, her frown knitting her thick brows and dimpling her chin.

“Take me with you,” she said.

It wasn’t a request.

He halted on the sidewalk in front of the building—causing Lyra to nearly misstep—and he faced her directly. The wind from the churning rift above tossed the thin wisps around her ears and carried flecks of ash between them. Sirens blared as an approaching templar car flew past toward the conclave, stirring up concrete dust and the smell of burning rubber. Shouts and sobbing screams echoed against the tall spanse of their headquarters, breaking through the thunderous roar bearing down on his hastily un-made decision of exactly *what* to do with this incessantly persistent creature.

There was nothing he could do.

And he was running out of time.

“No,” Solas replied, waiting only half a second before leaving to make his way to his bike parked across the street.

“Take me with you!” she shouted again—her boots scuffling through rubble behind him. “Take me with you to find Evelia or I’ll be sure Pentaghast knows you’ve stolen from the archive.”

Solas halted, letting her catch up and walk around to stare up into his anger-twisted face.

“You may have taken Haven’s cameras offline and left no trace of your theft,” she breathed, “but I *watched* you do it.”

How dare she threaten him. Didn’t she know who he was?

Of course she didn’t—this girl who appeared hardly older than twenty couldn’t even comprehend what she held before her.

He could...*take care of her*...but the small window where he could easily dispose of her and remain unseen was diminishing by the second. And Evelia could be dying—no telling how long she could survive in that templar’s hands.

Miffed to the Fade and back, Solas stalked toward his custom, matte black BMW and slung his leg over to sit. He glared at Lyra.

“Coming?”

Without hesitation, she quickly joined him and took her seat directly behind—wrapping her arms around his warm, firm, and slender body, holding on for dear life as he fired up the engine and tore away from the crumbling convention center in search of his dying friend.

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Cullen could do nothing but stare through the window at his city burning in the distance. Dark plumes shifted into thick and baleful clouds on their ascent through the sky, inevitably from some new and sudden explosion—and Cullen pondered on just how safe his apartment was. Could it withstand a forceful magical blast? Or a rift bursting through the support beams? How long would it be before the demons and shades reached his building to trap him and leave him nothing else but to fight for his very life?

*For their lives.*

He lifted his mug to his lips and pulled in a long dram of piping hot tea—letting the heat burn his throat before stealing a glance at the woman in his bed. Her wild, red hair spilled over his pillow, mixing with the brownish-green stains of dried blood and elfroot salve.

He had removed Evelia’s boots, cut away her blood-soaked shirt and ripped up leggings, and cleaned her limbs with a washcloth as best as he could manage without causing further injury. He had dressed the worst of her wounds, and dressed her body in one of his old t-shirts—an old heather-blue, Kirkwall pub tee he had won during trivia night back when he had been stationed there.

And it draped over her body as elegantly as if she were in a cocktail gown cut and formed just for her—and he thought her just as beautiful, regardless of all the healing cuts and purplish bruises marking her silky flesh. The woman he had so hoped to simply *sit* next to during an all-hands meeting was now in *his* care slowly recovering from whatever had happened back at the conclave...

*Lying in his bed...*

*Wearing his clothes...*

*Maker...*

He struggled to shake the disbelief that Evelia Trevelyan was there with him, had spent the last seven hours asleep in his apartment—the longest they'd ever been in each other's presence—and she had been unconscious through every single minute. What would he say to her when she finally woke?

*Err....sorry about your hand? No.*

*Welcome to Chateau de Rutherford? Ugh, Maker, no...*

*I'm so glad you're not dead I've been sort of in love with you for months but never knew what to say are you feeling okay—wait please don't leave!...*

Cullen's cheeks pinked and he tugged at the muscles in his neck.

*Maybe I shouldn't say anything at all. Maybe I should just...*

But the sheets ruffled and a croaky, sleep-adled groan drifted through the room. “Cuh—Cullen?”

## Chapter End Notes

Would love to know where you think this is going! ;)

Leave kudos if you liked it, comment if you really enjoyed it!

Chapter and title inspired by [Blind Trust by Cabaret Nocturne](#)

# Felt a Love

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

*Holy*

*fucking*

*shit.*

A fiercely throbbing pain surged throughout Evelia's body, pumping and aching with every lively thud of her heart. The smell of blood and elfroot—and a strangely familiar masculine scent—flooded her rousing senses, and she squinted through dampened lashes into the dimly lit room.

An eerily pleasant dusk flowed in from the long, floor-length windows, shrouding an apparent male figure against a hazy, gray glow. His contemplative stance both intense and oblivious shaped into muscular arms and a hardened torso—the locks of his golden curls falling to his brow—and she stumbled over his name before she knew the word had even left her lips.

Cullen started and collected himself, turning toward her. All traces of sheepishness he had had prior to this moment were bereft of his features, leaving nothing but a contorted expression of what appeared to be a mix of concern, intrigue, and wariness.

She watched as he softly padded across the carpet, bare feet silent like a slinking cat, and he set his mug atop a coaster on the bedside table before taking a seat on the bed next to her—the mattress sinking in and drawing them closer together than what was probably intended.

“How do you feel?” he asked, reaching his mug-warmed palm to the side of her face—touching her with the heat radiating from his skin yet still not quite cradling his fingers to her cheek.

Evelia groaned with a wince and turned inward to accept his touch.

“Like ass,” she said, to which she received a nervous chuckle of relief from Cullen. “What happened?”

He thumbed across her smooth skin, but remained silent as if contemplating how to explain the bizarre events that had transpired. It was awkward and comforting—their silence—and yet her heart skipped a beat through the strangely intimate and familiar quiet, realizing that she was lying in an unfamiliar bed in a foreign room, wearing...

She looked down.

*Is this—is this Cullen's shirt? Did he? Did he take off my clothes? Am I still? ...*



Evelia squirmed to see if she could still feel the band of her underwear and the wires of her bra, and she immediately regretted the action. Her adrenaline-wracked limbs ached and protested each movement—soreness seizing her muscles to make a mockery of her poor fitness.

And the pain sparked visions of hours just before—visions of churning ash and concrete rubble, unimaginable sounds and indescribable figures—fuzzy images muddled and swirling like a smoke-filled wine glass of which you could never clear enough to taste the wine upon your tongue.

A wave of panic gripped her beyond embarrassment, discarding any shame she would have felt—for that shame was *before*, and she knew this was *new*—something *different*—

This was the *after*.

Frustrated and lightheaded from the overwhelming lack of memory, Evelia bolted upright on the bed next to Cullen and demanded his break of silence.

“*Maker*, Cullen—tell me what happened!”

Cullen pulled his hand away to rest his forearms atop his knees. He hunched over and spoke low as if defeated—or perhaps to prevent any unsuspecting ears from hearing his words. He told of the events that had transpired only hours before—events that had thrust the world into a new sort of turmoil and had invariably changed their lives forever.

She listened as the tone in his voice changed once he relayed what had happened to her, watched as his lips carefully framed each purposefully chosen word. She glanced to the center of her palm, and it glinted and sparked to life as if realizing that it finally had her attention.

It stung, ached, burned—all within a split second before calming as she relented that attention back to Cullen who had once again grown silent in his watch of her reaction.

What was she to do? What *could* she do? She now had a fucking hole in her hand that what?—Opened into the Fade? Would it kill off her hand? Would it spread and eat her whole?

Would it *heal*?

Ugh, she needed to talk to Solas.

Evelia smoothed her hands through the sheets and comforter—*Cullen's sheets and comforter*, she remembered with a nervous jolt in the pit of her empty stomach—hoping to feel cool glass against her fingers.

“Er—Did I have my phone?” she asked, swatting at the bed.

Cullen shook his head, stood, and pulled a phone from his pants pocket.

“Here, use mine.”

He extended his hand to Evelia and she reached to take it—but his touch grazed along her fingers, that electric pulse surfacing and surging between them once again. A feeling Evelia couldn't quite rule out as actually being from this new tear in her palm...but it certainly *wasn't* a spark of static from his short stride across the room.

She looked up at him—breath hitching as her fingers curled around his phone—and the scar of his lip lifted with a nervous smile, his weight shifting from one foot to the other while his newly free hand searched to scratch a phantom itch at the back of his neck.

“Sorry your phone didn't make it,” he said awkwardly.

Evelia shrugged—but damn did she suddenly have a gaping phone-sized hole in her soul to go along with the crackled green one that had torn apart her palm.

Leaving her to a bit of privacy, Cullen turned to head toward the kitchen of his large apartment. “We’ll get you another as soon as we can leave,” he said, “But feel free to use mine in the meantime. I am waiting on a call from Cassandra, however—so if she calls, go ahead and answer it.”

He rifled through the kitchen, clattering mugs and spoons to the counter. And Evelia slid her thumb across the glass, opening to the home screen and clicking into his text messages expecting to see her own. But the sparse, mostly unnamed messages were all unfamiliar and synced to his *own* connections—save for the text bearing her number.

An awkwardness pooled into her chest from the memory of seeing his text message on her own phone before the explosion. What would have happened had she saved him a seat? Would he have asked her for drinks somewhere later in the evening? Would they have hit it off with their strangely compatible awkwardness and enigmatic demeanors wrapped tightly in an undeniable heat? Would he have asked for a kiss? Would she?

Would she have wound up in his bed anyway?

Pink surfaced within Evelia’s cheeks as she nibbled at her lower lip nervously, refocusing on her search for more answers.

*Umm...what was Solas’ number? Ah, fuck.*

From all the useless Archive entries she could practically recite from memory, she'd somehow run out of storage in her brain for phone numbers, email addresses, and all the easily recordable information that could be dumped to her phone for convenient access. Even having texted him over the course of her friendship, she had never bothered to memorize Solas’ number since it was always available on her phone. And he didn’t keep any social networking sites and hardly checked his emails—much to Cassandra’s chagrin. How in the hell would she talk to him?

*Would Cullen somehow know how to contact Solas? Cullen’s the COO afterall. Or is that ‘was’?*

Evelia groaned, swinging her stark-naked legs to the side of the bed to stand. And without even giving it a second of thought, she closed her eyes and quickly pulled a healing spell down throughout her body. Throbbings eased and the pain lessened, enough so she could walk into the kitchen to sit at the pristine island in the middle of the kitchen. Not bad for a mage with just the basic fundamentals of healing magic.

She set Cullen's phone to the countertop next to her reflection staring up at her from the polished, perfectly smooth, cool surface—leaving her to wonder if Cullen had ever eaten in the kitchen or if he had always taken his meals in his office here at home just as he did back at headquarters. And under normal small-talk circumstances, she may have asked him about just that.

*But oh, who am I kidding, being in Cullen's apartment and wearing his clothes would never have fared as normal circumstances.*

So, instead, her thoughts returned to Solas.

“You wouldn't happen to have—or know—Solas' phone number, would you?”

Cullen turned from the counter with a fresh mug of tea in hand, which clinked pleasantly as he set it down before her.

“Solas?” he said. It was a question, but his tone denoted something different entirely. Something reserved and hidden, yet seemingly almost...hostile? “No, I'm afraid not. He's one of Leliana's contractors. Never offered a card and I never bothered to ask.”

“Ah, okay,” said Evelia stupidly. She picked up the mug and took in a *much larger* gulp than she would have normally—completely forgetting that it was *absolutely piping hot*—and yet their shared awkwardness was a *bit more* discomfoting suddenly than the insanely hot liquid burning her tongue—and *by the Maker* she was now committed to drinking *that damn tea* just to keep from being weird and now she was making it weird and everything was weird. *Ugh.*

The wrinkle between Cullen's brows twitched, yet he said nothing as she scalded her throat with a large swallow, licked her lips, and set down the half-full mug of tea with a warm and steamy sigh.

“Leliana, you said?” she croaked.

“Indeed.” Cullen propped his hands upon the counter and leaned toward her. He blinked his curiosity, titling his head with an expression of intrigue that caused the loose curls of his hair to bend toward his cheekbone. “Though I would have figured you would already know Solas' number considering your close relationship.”

Evelia cleared her throat and opened her mouth to answer, but the phone before her illuminated, vibrated, and the scowling photo of Haven's CEO appeared on the screen—the entirety of her name emblazoned from top to bottom. Evelia slid the phone toward Cullen so he could answer, but his eyes held Evelia's—as if attempting to bore down into her soul and unlock the deepest of her thoughts and desires.

“Er—” stammered Evelia, “I’m—is it alright if I use your shower?”

Cullen snapped out of the strange and hypnotic trance of which he had suddenly found himself lost and picked up the phone as he righted of his posture. “Ah, yes, first door on the left. Make yourself at home—I mean...help yourself to whatever you need.”

The phone in his palm went dark with a missed call notification. “Maker...*fuck*,” he whispered. He thumbed across the screen to open the notification and give Cassandra a return call. But before he could say anything further to Evelia, he had glanced up in time to see the bathroom door pulled closed.

## Chapter End Notes

Chapter and title inspired by [Felt A Love by Hundred in the Hands](#).

# Then Suddenly, Everything Changed

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“What?!”

Are you certain?

Yes.

She has.

Right.

You know I am always armed. She won’t...

...Yes.

No.

Understood.”

Cullen ended the call and tossed the phone to the nearest surface, bringing his hands to his forehead and dragging fingers back through the length of his hair.

Scores of demons were headed his way, Cassandra had said, and he was needed—Haven’s Commander. Needed to lead and advise and manage the entire corporation while Cassandra sought out answers for this atrocity. And he had been...distracted. Nearly all but abandoning his eyes and ears and boots on the ground who had been strategically stationed across all of Thedas and had now been leaning to Cassandra and her other executives for support. He needed to resume his duty, but now?

Now he was responsible for...

*The prisoner.*

There had been biting disdain in her voice when Cassandra had relayed her instruction—disdain overlapping frustration while hiding exhaustion. Yet, he understood. Evelia was now a catalyst in...*whatever this was*...and now he was responsible for getting her to Cassandra for interrogation. And getting her there *alive*.

It wasn't something of which he wasn't familiar. It wasn't something that he hadn't exacted by his own hand. But *the prisoner*? Evelia? She had a name, she had *more* than a name. She was a Haven employee, a field expert, his colleague. She had her own life and desires, her own family and those who cared for her, and who knows—maybe she even had pets at home who needed her? He hadn't had an opportunity to learn her as properly as he would have liked. And yet...she had unknowingly bewitched him, capturing his attention beyond any he would

have expected, and had ensnared his emotions with a simple glance and her intoxicating scent and the warmth of her touch and...

It was a conflict of interest.

That's what this was now.

And he knew as soon as he reached their temporary headquarters, he would have to confide everything to Leliana and she would make him complete the necessary paperwork and carry out the necessary change in protocol to prevent this conflicting interest.

Whatever they had here, whatever little kindling there was before, he knew it was over before it had even really begun.

Cullen closed his eyes with a swallow, inhaled deeply through his nostrils and exhaled through his slightly opened lips before snapping into the Commander he was expected to be. He immediately retrieved his hidden emergency cache of weapons, ammunition, protective armor, petty cash, and spare clothing. He shoved a few items of sustenance and several bottles of water into another, smaller bag, and gathered an old t-shirt and a pair of leggings of his youngest sister's that he just hadn't the heart to throw away.

Cullen approached the bathroom and rapped his knuckles on the wooden door.

"Sorry for the rush, my lady," he said, "but I've received orders for us to travel to a safer location."

The water turned off abruptly and there was a long moment of silence as he assumed she scrambled to dry herself. And when the door finally opened to the smallest sliver without revealing her nakedness, he caught glimpse of her wet hair spiderwebbing along her shoulder and curling against her freshly scrubbed, heat-flushed cheek. She peeked through the crack in the door as if to formally acknowledge Cullen, who then swallowed thickly as he stared at her plump and glinting lips before glancing up into her gray-green eyes.

"You wouldn't happen to have any other clothes, would you?" Evelia asked, her voice lowered to a whisper as if the impending urgency itself could overhear her words. "Mine seem to have been ripped to shreds."

"Er—yes," said Cullen, lifting the bundle of crumpled clothing to the door for her to take.

Evelia stretched through the opening, the feminine curves of her side appearing just enough to hint at Cullen's imagination, and he quickly averted his gaze. She retreated back into the bathroom and closed the door—not a minute later reopening it to reveal herself fully clothed.

"So, where are we going?" she asked, running a spell through her hair that left it both dry and simply styled. She rubbed her hands over her face and swiped a finger over each eyelid—her magic painting on a hint of makeup. Evelia turned to Cullen who finally glanced back up at her, and his heart fluttered as it sunk.

“It's a temporary safe zone until we can regroup,” he said, watching as she stepped out toward his bedroom with such a casual, comfortable air that he nearly scolded himself for being so caught up in wishing they had more time for...who was he kidding? They had nothing for him to cling to—just a simple flirtation. And now she was in his care. She was his charge.

He cleared his throat and resumed packing, casting her a quick glance as she tugged on her boots, stood, and inspected her feet with a noise of disgust and disappointment.

“Ugh, these were my favorite pair...” Evelia said, turning her foot to show Cullen the blood and demon ooze that had dried and crusted in long ugly stripes.

Cullen chuckled to himself as he shrugged on his leather jacket and slipped his arms through the straps of his pack. “Seems like you'll need new everything before this is over.”

Evelia stepped closer to him, a soft smile lifting the corners of her mouth. “Seems like it. New clothes, new shoes, new phone. New life?” She nibbled at her lower lip, fingers of one hand intertwining with the other, shifting her weight, and seeming to leave that question unanswered on her own behalf—almost as if she was giving him room to answer it himself.

And in that moment, Cullen so, so badly wanted to kiss her. Wanted to taste her mouth and press his tongue against hers, to feel the soft and plump lips he had watched every time she had spoken to him. He had absorbed her words and listened to everything she had to say, every time her musical voice had filled his ears. And oh, how he wanted to meet her mouth with his, had wanted to kiss her—wanted to kiss her forehead when she had been fitfully asleep from the trauma at the conclave—wanted to kiss her hand when he gave her his phone, simply for knowing that she was awake and everything would be alright—wanted to kiss her lips at this very moment in the face of possibly never having the opportunity ever again.

Cullen stepped closer—towering over her and slowly lowering down, giving a moment to ensure he hadn't read her intentions in the completely wrong way.

“Nothing will be the same as soon as we step through my door,” he said, his voice deep and rumbling.

Evelia grinned slightly. “Aside from my hand, I think I can live with that.”

A swipe of her tongue quickly wet her lips and Cullen's heart nearly stopped. But instead, he lifted his hand and cradled her jaw, tilting her face up and lowering his mouth until their lips met in that electrical pulse of desire and want—that insatiable feeling of which he was quickly becoming familiar and learning to absolutely crave.

She placed her hand upon his chest and slid up to his neck until stopping to glide her thumb through the stubble of his cheek. And before he knew it, her tongue darted into his mouth, brushing along his and quickly flitting across his perfectly smooth teeth.

And Cullen had to restrain himself. Wanted to press his body against hers, pull her in and crush her to him in a fury of touches and gropes and grinding hips—wanted to lose himself in his passion and sudden need to quench his thirst of her. But he settled for caressing her

tongue with his, forming his want upon her lips with a kiss unlike anything he had experienced in all of his life.

His heart thrashed inside his chest, disparate emotions waging war until he finally pulled away and left her staring up at him with a dazed yet guilty expression. Cullen quickly grabbed the spare pack and retrieved his phone, pocketing it and discreetly readjusting the bulge in his trousers with a soft blush of his cheeks.

He returned to where she stood and extended his hand.

“Come,” he said. “We have to go.”

Evelia glanced down, hesitated for half a moment, and placed her shaking fingers into his strong and steady palm. And Cullen lifted her hand to his lips, pressing a kiss to her knuckles, to which he received a warm and nearly bashful smile of approval.

With her hand in his, Cullen opened the door and led her outside into the world that had forever changed. A world with so many new dangers and strange unknowns. A world that could rip her from him and forbid what he very much wanted.

But he had wanted to kiss her—and so he did.

## Chapter End Notes

Chapter title inspired by Then Suddenly, Everything Changed by Alaskan Tapes.



# Pen Ultimatum

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Light finally illuminated the dark kitchen when Lyra opened the fridge. The cool air from inside, however, felt almost warm in comparison to the meat-locker temperature within Solas' house. She took a quick glance at the trays inside the French doors and furrowed her brows, agitation welling up inside both her chest *and* empty stomach at the sight of bare glass shelves.

“Ugh, does he not eat?”

She released the door and it closed on its own, taking the only light in the room along with it and letting off a small, squelching noise from the suction that sounding strangely defiant.

It had been hours since the destruction at the conclave, and she had already eaten through her spare stash of junk food she often carried in her backpack to work. And her shortened patience was growing increasingly thin by the minute—patience that could easily be kept in check if she didn't have to scrounge for food in Solas' cold ass house.

With a huff, she rummaged through the handleless cupboards and drawers, searching for literally anything that could give off *some* sort of notion that a living, breathing person could actually claim full-time residence in such an empty place. An object crinkled from deep within one of the upper shelves and her fingers *at last* clamped onto it—retrieving a pack of saltines—saltines she immediately sampled and then sputtered back out again in disgust.

Stale. *Beyond* stale.

*Well, that's it. This isn't really his house. He's literally taken me to some random person's empty home.*

She gasped.

*What if he killed the owner and hid their body in the basement or in the walls or out in the garden?*

Lyra walked to the double glass doors leading out of the kitchen toward the back deck and inspected the sprawling yard. Even though it was barely into the late afternoon hours, the outside was dark—the rip in the sky still churning and seeming to brew furious storm after Fade-storm, draping the entire city and its outskirts to the point the even the lamplights on street posts had been fooled into thinking it was already night. Their luminance from overhead cast his lawn in a somber orangish-yellow, highlighting the well-groomed landscape and the fact that there was neither a haphazardly planted garden nor any curious overturned spots of earth of any sort in sight.

*They're in the basement then,* she decided.

“If you were hungry,” came Solas’ gentle timbre, causing Lyra to start and turn to face him. “You should have just said.”

He picked up the old pack of crackers and gave a quick twist of his wrist—the box and all its contents disappearing with a nice resounding *pop*.

Lyra frowned. “*Yeah*. I’m a *bit* hungry.” Sarcasm dripped from every syllable before she sighed heavily and pulled out her phone, thumbs moving madly across the screen. “I’m just...I’m gonna order a pizza. You want?”

“No, thank you.”

Lyra rolled her eyes and stepped toward the furthest countertop in the kitchen, which held a small tray of unopened, pre-approved credit card applications and booklets of unused coupons for the local shops and merchants. She typed his address into the pizza app and pressed send without asking if he minded a delivery service to call upon his residence.

“Should be here in about fifteen,” she said. “It’s kind of a good thing you’ve got a completely empty fridge...care to join me when it arrives, *then*? Maybe?”

She glanced up at Solas to find his gaze transfixed on something unseen in the distance. “I have other matters to attend.”

“You mean other than *eating*?! And *still*? What have you been doing this whole time?”

Solas finally returned her his attention—the tiniest smirk lifting his lips and just barely crinkling his eyes. Yet he said nothing...like he had been doing for the past four hours they had been holed up in his frigid, foodless, house.

She couldn’t quite tell if his smile was a smile of amusement or if this particular action in this particular moment was one of mockery. Or perhaps he meant it to be threatening. Regardless, he said nothing to leave any real impression of his intentions, so Lyra rolled her eyes once more and proceeded back to his obnoxiously large library where she had spent the majority of her time.

“Well, I’m glad you gave Ev to Cullen,” she shouted from down the hall. “At least he’s hospitable and will make sure she gets food. She probably would have starved with *you*.”

The library welcomed her return once again, warming her bones from the magical fire in a great, modern stone hearth—making her feel a bit less like she was being held hostage despite her growing impatience of not doing a good goddamned thing to find Evelia Trevelyan. Wasn’t that why she had gone with him? ‘*Solas*’ was going to find Evelia, and Lyra was going to go with him? Yet there she sat on a squashy sofa with her boots kicked up on the armrest, reading a crumbly old tome—one of many she was surprised to have found written in the Elvish language—waiting on pizza to arrive at this strange man’s house.

She had thought about requesting a ride share, had thought about calling her old roommate to come pick her up, had thought about hoofing it and catching a ride from a different, more

relatable stranger. But there was something keeping her there despite her impatience, and she couldn't quite put her finger on it.

Was it the sense of adventure? Maybe. Was it intrigue? Certainly. Was it simply because the man—*who seemed to just now appear out of thin air to stand directly front of her*—was so... unnaturally attractive? *Hell. Fucking. No.*

Lyra's heart jumped into her throat, but she did everything in her power to look unperturbed.

"I thought you had matters to tend? Or whatever," she asked Solas, snapping her book shut with a puff of dust and giving him her attention of which he'd never really asked. But maybe that was it—he never asked for her attention—didn't even *want* her there—yet somehow he had annoyingly captivated her and she very much both desired and hated his attention.

Solas' hint of a smile from before had hardened into a serious frown—the scar upon his forehead more pronounced as his brows wrinkled.

"What was that about Evelia?" he asked.

"What? That she'd have food? Food's kind of important, you know..."

Solas bristled slightly. "No—the part where you said *I gave* her to Cullen. I did not *give* her to Cullen Rutherford—"

Lyra blinked and sat a little straighter.

*What is he getting at?*

"—She is not mine to give."

*Ohhhh.*

Lyra stared at him, perplexed that a man such as he would even bother to stake or refute a claim. She hadn't previously asked Evelia about their history—she didn't even know he had existed before today anyway—and she hadn't asked Solas about it in the whole time they had spent together 'searching for her.'

"I think I *will* join you," said Solas, and he turned from her to approach one of the bookshelves. He pressed an unseen button underneath a shelf that housed old maps and a giant, digital globe, releasing a small hidden door below that contained a collection of vials and bottles filled with varying colors of liquid. A shelf within the liquor cabinet held delicate and intricate crystal tumblers, goblets, and shot glasses.

Solas' slender fingers gracefully plucked two short tumblers and a bottle with a gemstone stopper, and he proceeded to fill both with a deep amber liquid—liquid that nearly sparkled and glimmered despite the angles of refraction as if it had a life of its very own. He returned the bottle to the cabinet and offered a drink to Lyra.

She accepted his offer with skepticism, but gratefully took the drink nonetheless—lifting it to her nose to inhale a warm, charred scent mixed with a hint of caramel and the sweetness of

honey, leaving the floral notes of witherstalk to peak when all other fragrances had subsided. Lyra lifted the whiskey to her lips to taste and had to keep her eyes from rolling in enjoyment once it had reached her tongue.

The smile on Solas' face was *nearly* apparent when she caught him sinking down into the winged-back leather chair opposite her sofa. He crossed one leg over his knee before lifting his glass to drink, and then lowered it with a soft lick of his lips.

"It is a delightful thing, is it not?"

Lyra took another sip, feeling fire and magic glide down her throat and she had to *quite literally* resist downing the entirety of it and asking for another. Warmth traveled from the empty pit of her belly, slithering into her muscles and extending throughout her extremities until she nearly felt like both her toes and fingertips were glowing with light.

"God, where did you get this? What is it?"

Solas' brow quirked with amusement. "A magician never reveals his secrets," he said, and was immediately met with an overly-comical expression of irritation from Lyra. He chuckled.

"It was a gift," he said. "The magical properties simply enhance the common senses for most non-magical creatures, but innervate the abilities of mages. Do you enjoy it?"

For once, Lyra was nearly speechless—afraid to voice the absolute *delight* she was experiencing. It was—euphoric, calming, *arousing*—and how would she be able to relay exactly how she was feeling to this stranger? This feeling that buzzed and tingled in all the right places and straddled a high orgasmic frequency? She took another sip and stupidly mumbled, "Mmhmm," over the lip of the glass.

Solas stared at her. Those deep gray eyes bore into her for a long and hard moment—one laced with resigned decisiveness and calculated intention. And he breathed in a deep, full breath and sighed.

"Evelia is safe, Lyra. Perhaps only for the moment, but she is indeed safe."

"*What?!*" asked Lyra. She pulled out her phone to ensure she hadn't somehow missed any calls or texts or social media messages, but found nothing. "How do you..."

"I have been keeping watch over her," he said casually. "The spirits I've met throughout my travels are relaying her status and well-being from the Fade—upon request." He took another dram from his glass. "And while she remains stable, I intend to continue learning about this Breach until a change in order is made." He propped his elbow on the armrest of his chair and rested his chin atop the knuckles of his free hand while watching for Lyra's reaction.

*So, he's known where she was all this time, and simply kept it from me? Why didn't he just tell me? This really can't be why we've been sitting here doing nothing. Does he think this is some sort of game?*

“Do you find my actions disappointing? Or perhaps cruel?” asked Solas, the tone in his voice sounding as if he was genuinely...interested?

Lyra cleared her throat and shook off her bewilderment. “I think...I think it's a bit creepy, if I'm totally honest.”

And to that, Solas laughed—a deeper rumble than the careful tone of his speaking voice—and his laugh revealed a first, genuine smile spreading his lips to show perfectly straight and white teeth. Teeth that glimmered in the lowlight of the library—and for half a second, Lyra wondered how those teeth would feel hovering over her own in a deep and hungry kiss. Or how it would feel if he sunk those teeth down into the meat of her shoulder in a passionate, love-making frenzy. Or how much she would squirm if those teeth dangerously grazed along her most delicate and sensitive parts.

*No, that's the alcohol talking.* She cleared her throat again.

“So, why didn't you just tell me what you had been doing? That you've known she was safe all this time? Would have been kinda nice to not be wandering around in the dark. Literally.”

The smile lingered in the corner of his eyes. “I was preoccupied. Forgive me if you feel I have intentionally deceived you.”

*Deception? Maybe.*

But the biggest question hanging over her head: how could he be both so infuriating and so unnervingly...charming? His cool demeanor oozed toward her, and as much as she wanted to be frustrated with him, as much as she *should* be frustrated with him, she very much wanted to learn what made him tick, to learn exactly what kind of magic was at work behind his closed door where he had been these last few hours. To learn what kind of magic was transpiring there between them—the intensity proliferating and permeating in the library air.

But deception? And an apology for such alleged deception that seemed both light and...hollow? Perhaps it was the fact that he was so difficult to read to begin with—an enigmatic persona wrapped in distance and solitude and cold. And never before had she struggled to poke and prod into someone else's motivations until they were unwittingly revealed. She had tried in the Archives at Haven—had tried to slither into his consciousness and glean whatever it was he was searching for and discover his real objective.

She had tried, but the heat of it all—the utter chaos ensuing—she had simply attributed it to just not enough time, not enough concentration, too much distraction.

But now? Now her magic was alight, burning along her glowing fingertips—a heat crawling beneath her flesh and flushing warmth within her face. The attempt to read his mind, however, simply wouldn't take.

Was it the alcohol? Did he suspect just how powerful her magic was in comparison to his own? Did he intentionally deprive her of her greatest skills, tampering her magic with alcohol that...but he said it enhanced magic... Was that simply another lie? Another deception?

Lyra's straining frustration nearly lined her lashes with tears. She blinked her bleary sight, glimpsing flashes of green flame and smoky shadow. And as soon as her vision refocused, she found Solas staring at her with that nearly-there smile that glimmered in his eye.

"You know, Lyra—" he began, his voice low, but her name on his voice gripped her chest like an open palm caressing and groping at her flesh.

"—Nothing is keeping you here. You can stay...or you can leave."

She could stay. Or she could leave.

But she already knew this. He already knew this. But merely speaking it into existence, conjuring it into reality made it that much more real. Beyond the walls of this cold and ultra modern home was a crumbling world spliced with the Fade. A tear releasing an impending doom. And she sat facing possibly the most powerful mage she had ever known—and yet she could not read his mind.

She closed her eyes and pulled in a deep breath, opening her mouth just as the doorbell chimed overhead. She released every single bit of air from her lungs until they burned, attempting to expel the fuzziness and irritation from the whiskey.

"Er...I'll get it," she said, jumping from the sofa and escaping the awkwardness for the long and dark hallway. Wringing the heightened tension and buzzing magic from her hands, she turned to the left toward the foyer and glimpsed the delivery guy peaking in through the panel windows.

"One large veggie pizza for Lyra?" he asked as soon as she had opened the door.

"Yep." She scrawled her name on the screen of his device and selected a tip in exchange for the obnoxiously large pizza box. Closing the door with her hip, she made her way back to the library, wondering whether or not Solas would actually *eat* her pizza, since he seemed to not be interested in any food at all. Or maybe he didn't seem to be interested in eating food with *her*.

She rounded the corner, prepared to give him some sort of playfully snide quip, but found the room once again...empty. Solas' seat was vacant, appearing untouched and the glass from his drink absent—almost as if she had imagined their curious encounter altogether. A pang suddenly settled in her chest, one that burned hot beneath her cheeks and reddened the tips of her ears. Foolish. Foolish for thinking it was even possibly the slightest bit of worth investing anything in this man.

Lyra sunk to the floor in front of the hearth and opened her box, devouring two massive slices of pizza without much other thought than how fucking delicious it was. She sighed a heavy and near-contented sigh, yet her piqued curiosity was far too high to ignore. Scrambling to stand from her cross-legged position there on the floor, Lyra stood—impatience and irritation getting the better of her.

She stalked down the hall toward the side of the house where Solas had appeared in the kitchen, marching toward a door at the end which emitted a haunting white glow from

beneath. She listened.

Nothing.

And so she lifted her hand, knocking once—twice.

Nothing.

The glass knob was cold against her palm and her heart thrashed against her every being. Was it nervousness? Excitement? The thrill of defying his privacy and approaching the unknown?

Was it *fear*?

Lyra turned the knob, eased open the door, and froze—for the sight she beheld was fully unexpected.

Solas sat on the edge of his bed—if she could even call it sitting. His legs were crossed, one foot over a knee and one beneath, fingers gripping his thighs to the point that every muscle and every tendon was visible beneath his skin. But he was *floating*, hovering above the mattress and calling upon some strange magic unlike any she had ever seen.

His long hair slid down his back and over his shoulder as he glanced up—turning bright and glowing, solid white eyes up at her. His knitted brows remained rigid. A harsh wind flew in through closed windows and out through the door of which she stood. And instead of floating back down to sit atop his bed, Solas stepped out, his limbs reaching and lunging as if manifesting into this side of the Veil.

Lyra could do nothing but stare as white faded back to dark gray. Solas' jaw clenched as he refocused on her.

“Lyra,” he said—a tone masking intention once again. “It’s time to go.”

## Chapter End Notes

Maybe now I can get these four assholes in the same room. ;)

Chapter title inspired by [Pen Ultimatum by Blonde Redhead \(Slumberland Remix\)](#).

A/N: I understand that some people who read this fic strictly for Solas may not enjoy my interpretation of him. The very first note on the very first chapter of this fic mentions how this is a transformative work that intentionally deviates from the main story. It's a loose translation and deliberate reinterpretation of DAI. If you feel my depiction of Solas or Cullen is OOC...that's because it very well may be...and is intentional. That's what a transformative work is. I by no means have to obey anyone's rules on how to write them.

There are a ton of Solas/Lavellan fics out there that are true to the main story. You're welcome to read those if you're bothered by the angle in which I approach these characters.

Peace, babes.

<3<3



# Under Solid Black Skies

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The city was crumbling.

With each swarm of demons and shades bursting from the Fade, the Breach continued to crackle open—toppling buildings with earthquakes, swallowing vehicles into fissures, and smashing glass from each shockwave. And even though Cullen and Evelia had sped onward far from the city, the near-black storm still churned above them—a vortex of lightning and swirling green—the Fade so close to drifting downward to unleash wave after wave of unimaginable horrors. And despite there being no nearby Fade rift in sight, the road ahead teemed with wraiths and shades and terror demons, flitting between the rubble of collapsed buildings to attack anything and everything in sight.

Cullen whipped the steering wheel to the left and floored the gas—his Jeep speeding off road and around their enemies, away from the seething of the Breach. Evelia stood with one knee in the seat—her grip tightening to the edge of the opened roof as she braced against the sharp turn.

The wind was hot and cold and piercingly violent—slashing through the loose strands of hair around her face, blistering pink the flesh of her cheeks, thrashing against her eardrums as it mixed with the sound of the engine, the shrieks of harrowing creatures, and the growling of the sky. She stole half a glance back to the Breach before turning toward their unnamed destination, wind cutting through her lashes as she squinted at far-off buildings in the distance.

Evelia glanced down to Cullen, watching as he shifted gears and maneuvered around rock after fallen Fade rock, taking care not to jerk the vehicle too hard and send her flying toward the ground. His jaw was tight, brow knitted in concentration, hair wind-swept from his face, muscles flexed beneath his leather jacket.

As if he could feel her gaze, Cullen looked up at her—those amber eyes locking instantly with her gray-green ones.

*Careful*, they said.

And yet they lingered as if to relay something more than just a warning in his hot and fleeting glimpse. The look was charged and magnetic and heart-racing *heat*, saying everything and more than what had been said in all of their lingering hesitations or stolen moments alone in the *before*, and even more still than the tiny moment earlier when their lips and tongues had briefly touched.

But the moment was simply that—a moment—nothing more than a solitary opportunity to speak beyond words despite the fact that they were faced with unpredictable danger.

And dangerous it was, *indeed*.

Evelia reluctantly tore away from him only to feel her adrenaline hitch into overdrive. A Fade rift twisted and glinted—forming dead ahead—right before their very eyes. The rip in her palm involuntarily flashed a bright and violent green, immediately sparking to life with a sharp pain. She instinctively thrust it toward the rift, feeling both a push and give as the bursting light connected her to the Fade.

But it was too late.

A shade slid from within the rift to advance on her. It screamed—stretching out its arms with intention to thrash at her until she was unconscious or dead or far, far worse.

Yet in her peripheral she saw it—Cullen loosed the wheel and withdrew his pistol, pointing to his right, directly between her and the windshield in aim of the shade's head.

*Pop-pop!*

Blackened blood splattered the side of her face and Evelia's ears sang with a high-pitched ring just as the rift finally imploded with a light-scattering crash. She tossed a glance over her shoulder to find the shade lying dead on the side of the road—its body glimmered for half a second before it disappeared back to the Fade.

Fingers wrapped around the meat of her calf and Evelia looked back to Cullen who urged her to sit, his shout lost to the whine against her eardrums. Once she finally collapsed to the seat, he instantly gripped her hand, holding onto her tightly both as if to keep from losing her and like he already had.

She coursed a healing spell throughout her body and the ringing ceased, just in time to hear a deep and rolling thunder.

The day had been beautiful before the explosion at the Conclave Convention Center—all sunshine and scattered clouds accompanied by a gentle breeze. Yet now, hours after the Breach had formed, the storm that had been constantly churning finally unleashed, pelting them with heavy rain and turning into a full-fledged rainstorm that prevented any visibility beyond just a few feet ahead.

Cullen's Jeep slowed as he approached the nearest building, pulling behind a collection over overgrown brush and trees to hide from any enemies or curious passers-by. He jumped from the vehicle and dashed to the back, pulling his pack of weapons and supplies to sling over his shoulder before offering his hand to Evelia.

Without thinking too much of how she was *willfully* holding the hand of one of the most powerful men in the country, she let him lead her toward the seemingly abandoned building.

It was a Chantry, they discovered the closer they stepped, and Cullen turned the handle only to find it locked. Evelia released his hand and touched the lock, coursing her magic through her fingers and rotating the tumblers inside.

The wooden doors groaned on their hinges, welcoming them into a dark foyer lit only by electric candles in gilded wall sconces. And what breeze coming in from their entrance met a damp and still air nearly frozen in time—the smell of which was much less musty than Evelia would have thought for a seemingly abandoned place. Cobwebs glittered in the uppermost corners. Tiny flecks of chipped wall paint lined the dusty baseboards like a ward from evil spirits.

Benches rested against both left and right walls next to extremely narrow doors where sinners could confessed their transgressions to a Revered Mother. And directly in front of them was *another* set of heavy—but unlocked—wooden doors.

Cullen pushed through with Evelia quickly following, meeting rows upon rows of church benches split with an aisle down the center, all facing an ornate pulpit with a marble statue of Andraste herself.

The chantry was elaborate—stained glass windows depicted religious and historical tableaux, porcelain tile checkered the floor in various, sprawling patterns. The dark green wall behind the solid gold dais bore a hand-painted Chant of Light in a delicate script—its words glimmering silver across the cracking and crumbling concrete, almost as if bound by a haunting magic of none-too-benevolent forces. And despite Andraste’s gaze turned upward toward both the Maker and the heavens, it appeared as if her marbly eyes glared down and followed Evelia with judgment and disdain. Not unlike those stupid portrait haunted house gags in movies and TV shows.

Having never really been a religious kind of any sort—and especially having not stepped foot within a chantry since before she had been sent to the Circle—Evelia’s already-knotted stomach churned at the sight, and for half a moment she forgot how wet and cold she was beneath her borrowed clothing.

She started at the sounds of Cullen’s bag and leather jacket hitting the floor, and she turned her back on the statue of Andraste to study him, watching as he secured the windows and doors. His rain-drenched shirt clung to every curve of his hardened physique, every ripple of muscle wrapped around his torso. And once the building was secure enough to his liking, Cullen looked over at her and caught her lewd gawking.

Evelia laughed unexpectedly, a soft laugh beneath her breath—one of which she wasn’t convinced had truly left her own lips or why it had happened at all. But she smiled sheepishly at him, ran her Fade-split hand through the shortest layers of her hair, and then desperately fumbled for pockets that didn’t exist.

Cullen approached her, his gait careful and calculated just as it had been in his apartment, and Evelia wondered for half a moment if such attention to his walk was from his years of military training, or if somehow he viewed her as fragile and could frighten easily with quick movements, like she was some sort of prey. But he finally stood before her—gazing down into her blood-splotched face, and she could feel the warmth rising beneath her skin.

*Will that ever stop?* she wondered.

Rain dripped from stray locks of hair gliding down his temple, and she followed a shimmering trail across his cheek and down his neck where it nestled into the shallow valley of his collarbone. His flesh was alive with goosebumps and veins protruded through his tense muscles, but it was the jump of his Adam's apple that pulled her attention back from admiration as he softly cleared his throat.

"You've got—" Cullen moved as if to lift his hand, but reached for the hem of his shirt instead.

He tore away a small patch of cloth and lifted it to Evelia's cheek—his eyes casting a quick and awkward glance to connect with hers before he gently wiped the black, curdled blood the rain hadn't completely washed away.

The shade from before flashed across her memory for half a second.

"Oh," she said, but it wasn't the blood that sparked her sudden exclamation—it was the touch from the man in front of her, the rough pads of his fingers gingerly cradling her now clean face for half a moment longer than necessary that prompted the delicious recollection of their shared intimacy not two hours ago.

...his hand cupping her face...their lips touching...

He was now her protector, her guide—Haven's Commander meant to get her to safety and standing at the ready to kill for her or worse. And now woven in between all the new and different labels they were to one another, the curious and unnamed territory they shared was completely aflame, flickering hot and solid. And she absolutely *craved* it.

And she could tell he craved it, too.

She stood there, staring up into the warm and golden eyes tinged with a darkness desiring some other carnality to sate whatever beast that had ignited within. And Evelia shivered—teeth chattering from the cool of the rain and fate's intense velocity—a sudden fear, a dread, or—

*Is this what it's like?* Evelia wondered. *Is this it?*

Adrenaline continued its course throughout her veins, changing and morphing into something else—a liquid *need* for something—*anything*—to sate the trembling traveling along her nerves, firing synapses, igniting impulses—the cognitions that should have prevented a defiance of restraint tossed aside for the *need* that instinctually drew her toward him.

She took a step closer, her heart thrashing like never before, eyes flicking back and forth between his own, wishing she could glimpse his thoughts for only this moment.

And without warning, Cullen brushed his palm past her cheek, snaking it through wet hair until it clasped to the nape of her neck to tug her toward him—gratefully, *finally* colliding his body with hers to meet her lips in a hungry flash of nips, tongues, and teeth.

## Chapter End Notes

Chapter title inspired by [Keep it Low by Hundred in the Hands](#)

I promised Belado some Cullen nasty for Chapter 8 but OMG I had to split it up so I'll post it in the next few days when it doesn't read like shit please don't kill me I promise it's hot and spicy! <3 <3

# Eye of God (X)

## Chapter Notes

NSFW

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Never before had a kiss been so intoxicating, so desperate.

The one they had shared just hours earlier had been chaste in comparison and had awakened his often subdued fire. But *this* kiss...*this* kiss fed his long-forgot craving for intimacy and touch—igniting the raw space within him that held onto all of his restraint, insecurities, and painful reminiscence of past transgressions to burst into emotion. Transforming it unlike anything he'd ever experienced. His heart slowed and raced in time with the pulse of their teasing tongues, welcoming the heat of her body and the sureness of her touch.

And Cullen *breathed* her—the taste of her mouth, her fragrance mingling with the scent of rain. His fingers pressed into the meat of her hips, pulling her forward so she could *feel* how badly he wanted this, how badly he had wanted *her*, and he was nearly undone when she rolled into him to grind against his rigid length. A soft moan escaped his lips, carrying along her name with a yearning ache.

“Cullen,” she answered.

Her hands slithered from groping his strong and rain-slick back toward his front, carefully and hesitantly working downward as if leery of his receptiveness to her touch.

“Yes,” he said between a deep and hungry kiss—less of inquiry and more of affirmation.

Evelia fumbled with the buckle on his belt and once his jeans were enough unzipped, she plunged in her hand with a confidence he hadn't expected, and Cullen gasped into her mouth as she stroked upward with a squeeze.

His muscles tensed for half a moment, reeling from her brazen act, his breath pausing in his lungs as she trailed nibbling kisses up the column of his throat until her words and tongue pressed hot against his ear.

“I want you.”

It was a whine, a whisper, a cry. And an electric tingle surged from his neck to the base of his spine with a quick shudder—his cock responding before he could catch up to his thoughts, twitching and hardening further right there in her grasp.

*Maker.*

Even though she was indeed touching him *most* intimately, and it was very much Evelia Trevelyan's hand wrapped around the thick base of his cock—it was beyond anything he could have imagined. And *oh*, had he *imagined*. What fantasy he had conjured prior to this moment had already paled in comparison, for he had no notion of exactly how he would *feel* when it was her soft and delicate hand working him instead of his rough and familiar strokes, or how his chest would flutter as she nipped and lapped at his lower lip, or how intense her actions and urgency would be—enough that it matched his very own.

His thumbs caressed the exposed skin between her shirt and the band of her leggings, softly gliding over hipbone peaks in contrast to the burning need of his fingers gripping at her backside, and for half a moment he had forgotten this was entirely new with her—for something felt so familiar, so natural with her body pressed against his.

“Ahh, Ev—Evelia—I want you,” Cullen confessed, his hands gliding up along her sides and momentarily brushing her chest until his hands could cup her jaw. “I've *wanted* you.”

He crushed her lips with a fierce kiss—acceptance and relief paired with heightened desire flooding his heart with the realization that those longing looks and playful quips had *never* been for nothing and were *very much* requited. Cullen sucked her lower lip into his mouth, his teeth grazing with a bite before he reluctantly loosed her.

Reaching behind to pull at his collar, Cullen removed his shirt—all the while trying his damndest to conceal his smirk of enjoyment from the wide-eyed and ravenous look upon Evelia's face at the sight of his half naked body. And as soon as she noticed the indulgently smug expression he was wearing, she met his actions in kind—lifting away his old gym t-shirt to reveal her tanned, slender, yet toned body and deceptively full chest beneath a lacy, black bra.

And Cullen took his turn, absorbing her almost-naked beauty.

“Maker,” he whispered, “you're so—”

“Take off your shoes,” Evelia demanded, cutting off his profession of near worship.

Obediently, Cullen fumbled with his boots and Evelia knelt before him—her nimble fingers working out loops and pulling strings until his bare feet were able to step from the heap of jeans around his ankles—revealing his hardened, half-exposed cock through the top of his boxer briefs. And he watched as she skimmed her nails through dark, sparse hair to trail up his legs—learning his limbs, his freckles, his goosebumps. And once she reached his muscled thighs, she flicked her sight from his throbbing bulge to his hungry and curious gaze.

Without really thinking, Cullen reached out—a delicate touch to the side of her face, thumbing his growing affection across her flushing cheek.

*How had it come to this?* This moment of which he never thought would *ever* be within his grasp, but had *so* hopelessly wanted? To share in as much of his heart as he did his body with this positively incredible woman?

As if blessed by the Maker or perhaps cursed for indulging himself before the eyes of Andraste, lightning cracked white outside the nearest window—thunder booming shortly thereafter—illuminating the lightest flecks of gray and the wild abandon in Evelia's eyes.

He wasn't sure when she had tugged down his underwear during the split-second moment of his reverie, wasn't sure when she had clasped his hand, but he found himself lowering atop Evelia Trevelyan—hands steady against the floor and hips nestled between her open thighs.

And in that next instant it was her mouth, her tongue—hands gripping, nails dragging up his naked back to rake toward his scalp. The line of his length grinding into her with every roll of his hips, his fingers pinching apart the clasp of her bra. He paused for a moment to take her in once she had tossed it aside—studying the freckles decorating her chest, the firmness resisting his tight squeeze, the feeling of his tongue flicking across a pink and hardened peak.

“Unhh, yes,” she mewled, lifting her chest as if to press further into his mouth where he sucked and nipped with fervor.

But, *Maker*, he wanted more.

His lips caressed her, teeth dragging over skin every now and then—*trying* to will restraint—as he worked his way down her belly until he was kneeling between her shaking legs. And he could smell her arousal, her mouth-watering scent—a slightly musky fragrance mixed with a sweet aroma that drove him mad with want. Cullen pressed his face against her leggings, nuzzling into her and inhaling deeply to exhale on a low and dangerous moan.

“*Unnnhhh. Maker. You smell...so...good.*”

He wet his lips and opened his mouth to run his tongue over the dampened cloth preventing their heated touch. He could nearly *taste* her. Could nearly feel the warmth of her body directly upon his face. His fingers moved from her outer thighs to the band of her leggings, sitting up to tug them down from her limbs.

The ache building within his body throbbed at the sight of her beautiful nakedness, hardening him even further, and he slid his touch up her calves, smoothing between her knees to gently part them and spread her legs so that she opened for him once again.

“Cull—*oh!*”

He latched onto her—throwing aside all restraint—for this was what he had wanted. And from Evelia's hips lifting to his mouth, he knew she wanted it, too.

Cullen tasted her, drank her—his tongue gliding through slick, exploring within her body, committing her bright and sweet flavor to memory and locking away the sounds of her panting begs for more, and more, and *more*. Her skin was smooth as he traveled upward, like silk against his rough stubble, and he latched onto her clit with a suck—moaning and shaking vibrations into every single nerve until her writhing became erratic and the desperation in her voice broke into a silent cry.

Evelia grasped at him—and he *knew* what she wanted.



“Cullen,” she whimpered, “I *need* you.”

Leaving the brush of his lips against her lower abdomen, Cullen scaled her body, working his hips between hers once again and immediately caught her panting breath with a kiss. He rested his weight onto one forearm and grasped his cock with the other, gliding his head through her dripping folds to rub up against her swollen clit and back down once more.

“Are you...” he whispered hesitantly, “Are you on—”

“Yeah, magic. We’re good.”

Cullen hummed into her mouth, kissed her cheek, her jaw. “You want this?” he teased, nuzzling into her neck, her ear.

A crack of lightning and the booming thunder nearly answered for her. “Maker, *yes*, Cullen.”

He stilled his motions, positioning himself just right and pushed forward with a groan—for he slipped inside perfectly, parting her body as if she was made *just* for him. Evelia frantically gripped at his shoulders and Cullen nestled into the wet strands of hair clinging to her throat as he cradled the back of her head against the hard floor—for his slow and steady motions accelerated in pace.

Her cunt was exquisite, hot and tight and welcoming. But it was her touch, his name on her lips, the moans on her breath from the pleasure *he* was giving *her*. *Maker*, it was more than he could have dreamt. And she was his. In this moment, *she was his*.

Cullen braced his hands against the floor, his muscles rippling and back flexing, thrusting hard and deep as if he were competing with the pummeling of the thunderstorm. He glanced up, making eye contact with the Bride of the Maker in all her marbled glory, and a shudder traveled down his spine at the thought of their blasphemous act in such a sacred place beneath the eyes of both Andraste and the Maker.

Yet, he didn’t care. He was with her, *within* her—filling her over and over again as her cries swelled emotion within his chest. She held his gaze once he finally returned her his attention, and he watched as a wrinkle formed between her brows, her chin lifting to the ceiling, her back arching against his chest.

He could feel the pull of her center working him. Could feel her nails biting into his flesh. And Cullen pounded into her, pushing her over the precipice into an intensely beating orgasm—the tight clench and unclench of her cunt squeezing him beyond anything he’d ever felt—enough that he could no longer restrain himself.

His groans and grunts morphed into a gravelly roar, his teeth grazing dangerously along her cheekbone until he found her swollen lips. And he kissed her, pouring his heart and soul into her mouth along with a guttural moan just shy of ecstasy.

Cullen finally pulled out, fisting himself once, twice, until long and hot spurts splattered across her lower belly to pool with their glimmering sweat. And they both watched as he

stroked the last of his pleasure, Evelia raking her hands down his heaving, golden chest—her eyes filled with something more than lust.

“Mmm,” she said, wiggling her hips in satisfaction. “That...was amazing.”

Cullen kissed her once more before sitting back on the heels of his feet, his softening cock hanging between his legs. “Are you alright?”

“Mmhmm. That was even better than I had imagined.” She let out another blissful hum and placed her hands behind her head.

And Cullen’s cheeks flushed as he was hit with the sudden realization that she had just *watched* him come—and he had come *on her body. Maker.*

A sheepish smile split his mouth, his hand kneading nervously at the nape of his neck, and he moved to stand, searching for his already torn shirt so Evelia could clean herself of his sin. He dug out a fresh pair of underwear and two shirts from his pack, handing one to Evelia along with the shirt to dry herself.

She nibbled at her lower lip and accepted his offer, wiping his spend from her belly and pulling the clean shirt over her head. She sat there, staring up at him—a glowing aura shimmering in the last of her sweat and the near love-struck glint in her eye. Cullen’s heart skipped a beat as he returned her gaze, bending down to kiss her once more.

“I’m going to check the perimeter. We’ll stay here for the time being and leave at first light.”

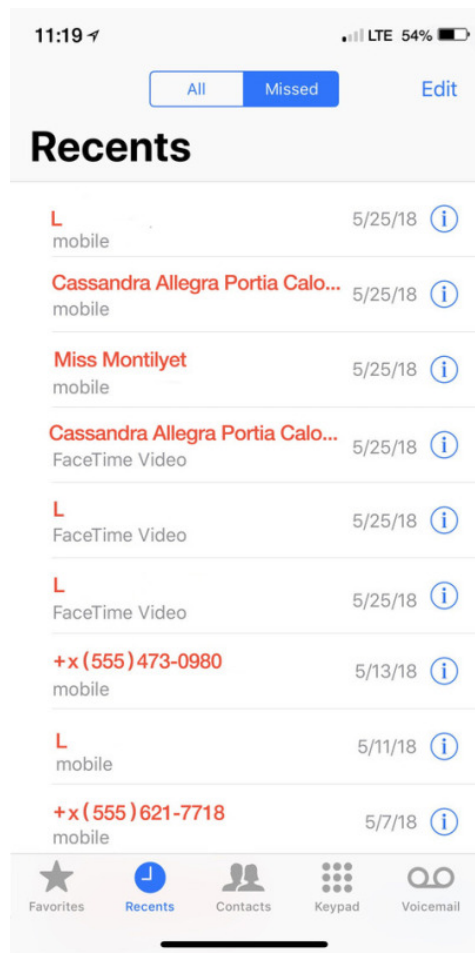
Evelia moved to stand.

“Do you need some help?”

Cullen chuckled, a warm and contented sound almost foreign to his own ears. “I’ll be fine.”

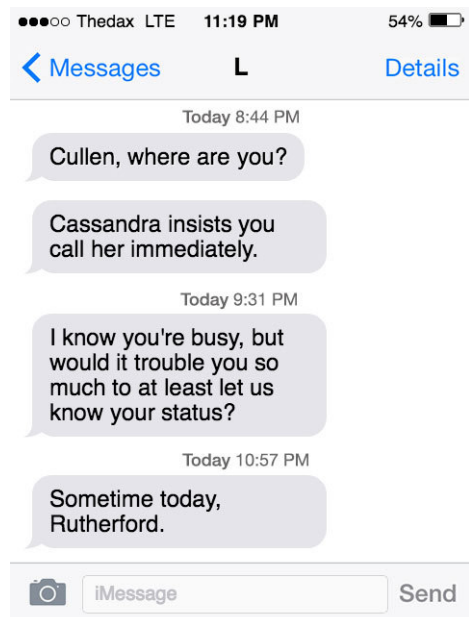
She nodded and stood to pull on her leggings, watching as he tugged on his shoes and picked up both his phone and his pistol.

His phone lit up almost instantly.



Fuck.

“I’ll be back in a minute,” he said, turning for the door and thumbing open his messages from Leliana.



Every single hesitation, every single restraint he had had prior to the last hour came flooding into his consciousness. He had forgotten, if only for those aching, fleeting moments that Evelia Trevelyan, the woman with the Fade in her hand, was his prisoner. He was to turn her over to his superiors for interrogation or worse. And he'd forgotten—had been lost in his desire—their desire. What betrayal had he *not* exacted from carrying out the wants of his heart?

How could he tell her?

What would he say to Leliana or Cassandra?

*Oh, Maker, no. Oh, fuck.*

*Maker.*

*Fuck.*

Chapter End Notes

Chapter title inspired by [Eye of God by Øfdream](#)

# Dream State Outro

## Chapter Notes

Sorry it's been like...two years...

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The Fade was boring the last time Evelia had dreamt. Or at least the last dream she could remember, anyway. All work and *more* work with strange, mundane things slightly amiss—like a dog loping through the Archives, Lyra’s voice softly drifting into a quiet and unnerving mute, and the climate-controlled storage room opening into an unknown land. It was curious, sure, but entirely uneventful.

She hadn't chased after the dog, hadn't inquired further as to why she could no longer hear her co-worker’s voice. Hadn't traveled through the strange portal to leave her office in search of something beyond the intricacies of the familiar. In fact, its presence had been irksome—she’d needed a vital document from the vault and couldn't get to it with that annoyingly beautiful gateway revealing a world of floating land masses and trees with purple leaves shivering against the breeze from some strange, unfamiliar magic.

But that last dream was nothing like the middle of the dark and cold yet humid, *nowhere* forest where she currently found herself standing—staring into a wall of gnarled roots and twisted vines lifting and sighing with what seemed like a passive malcontent.

“Evelia,” a voice called from the distance.

“Who’s there?” She turned around, peering down a rocky pathway shadowed by a canopy of green. A gentle fog rolled in toward her.

“Evelia.”

It was behind her now—his voice clear as a bell. She spun around, intent on running toward the direction of his voice. But instead, she found herself face to face with the wall of vines and roots once again. And if she wasn’t mistaken, they seemed to tighten before her—a giant, wooden knot barring passage like laced fingers attempting to trap water.

“Evelia.”

Behind her again.

Frustration-laced fear erupted across her flesh, heating her cheeks with embarrassment and rage. Should she call back? But call...to whom? It sounded like *his* voice—but surely that

was impossible. There was no else with her on this side of the Fade—no other creature, no shade, no spirit—nothing beside the roots seeming to close in around her.

The anxiety was suffocating, pushing her closer and closer to the ominous blockade while unseen droplets freckled her cheeks from the swirling mist. She squinted into the distance, staring down the disappearing pathway and pulled a gulp of wet air into her lungs, nearly choking on a sharp and painful gasp. For there, stalking toward her—barefoot and haunting—was the all-too familiar figure of Solas approaching through the thick of the fog.

“Evelia,” he said once again.

“Solas?!” She ran toward him, heart pounding with excitement and dread.

Never before had she encountered Solas in the Fade—not even once had he crossed her path—but there he was, opening his arms to welcome her into a tight and protective embrace.

“Where did you go?” she whispered into his neck. “Why did you leave me?”

“I’m coming to you, ma falon,” he said, watching as the tangled trees weaved into a canopy above them, preparing to squeeze out the light and the life beneath.

“You’re heading into a terrible unknown, Evelia—be careful of whom you trust. Know that your life will never be the same.”

Solas slid his right hand down her arm, fingers caressing her unbroken flesh completely absent of the deep bruises and scratches from her waking body, until his thumb landed at the palm of her left hand. For there, glinting and sparking in its marred and furious glory was the green mark from the Conclave.

Evelia watched as his interest focused on her palm, turning it this way and that—his normally passive gaze wild with intrigue.

“Fascinating…” he whispered to himself, the point of his thumb intimately outlining the tear, completely lost in his faraway thoughts.

And no sooner had he released her did the surrounding woods move in closer, snuffing out the light and pressing down upon them. Solas enveloped her, wrapping himself around her and shielding her from the impact—his deep and foreboding cry echoing for miles.

Evelia jerked awake, her heart thrashing within her chest. The room she found herself in was foreign, but a hazy recollection of rain and shades, pain and pleasure, stretching muscles and crumbling cities flashed across her memory.

It was only a dream. She was safe. And breathing. And *alive*.

The pain within her hand twitched.

It was only a dream.

Warm, early morning sunshine poured in through various shapes and in various shades of the stained glass windows, blanketing them in a patchwork vision of yellows, blues, and greens. And Evelia pulled herself up to sit, looking down at the man sprawled on his back next to her—his normally tensed muscles relaxed, the wrinkle between his brows smooth in unbridled slumber. This man—her Commander—the man she had longed for and had shared her fleeting glances in hallways and elevators, whose scent had intoxicated her with each movement of his body—*that* man was now lying beside her—his warm musky fragrance still lingering on her skin from their tryst only hours before.

She reached out to brush a lock of hair away from his brow, feeling for half a moment that things would be alright. For half a moment, the world seemed still. Her fingers moved to caress his face, her touch so close she could feel the heat from his skin—but instead she recoiled.

The tear in her palm flashed violent and green, ripping from within and burning with an electrical charge. Her voice cracked as she cried out in pain.

Cullen bolted upright—his instincts shifting into overdrive and he leapt to his feet, withdrawing a hidden firearm and preparing to defend against whatever malevolence may appear.

“Cullen, no—it’s—*ahhhh*—it’s just this,” said Evelia, clutching her hand to her chest.

Relief washed over his face and he ran his fingers through the length of his hair to rest at the base of his neck. He let out a heavy sigh.

“Are you alright?” he asked, holstering his weapon and offering a hand to help her to her feet.

“It stings.” Evelia opened her fist to reveal her palm—an angry red border lined the sparkling green.

“I...” stammered Cullen, pulling her into a tight embrace, “I’m so sorry. I know it’s nearly pointless to ask, but is there anything I can do?”

Evelia shrugged as he pulled away, a small wince still twisting her face. “I still don’t even know what it is. Hopefully someone somewhere knows *something* about it.”

She flicked her gaze up into Cullen’s eyes, watching as the guard he had let down the night before slowly moved back into place.

It wasn’t *disinterest*.

It wasn’t *anger*.

But something else had slipped between them—a strange shift behind his golden stare, and Evelia watched his lips move into a hesitant, mismatched smile. It was still warm, his smile, but the elation she had felt—the requited desire and longing they had shared now felt as if a spike had cleaved them back in two.

Could he tell that she had seen it?

Cullen cleared his throat. “Come,” he said, “We need to go.” He slipped his fingers into her unmarked hand and guided her back through the abandoned chantry toward their vehicle.

Evelia welcomed the wind drowning out their strained silence as they drove further away from the city toward...*wherever* they were headed. Above, the clouds and rain and demons had cleared, leaving only the rip in the sky from that day at the Conclave to still loom dark and foreboding behind them.

The drive seemed to last for *hours*, with twists and turns up an unfamiliar mountain range that Evelia had never taken the time to notice in all her years living in Ferelden. And every now and then during their dangerous ascent, Cullen would clasp her hand or protectively rest his arm behind her headrest. And it was only when they had slowed to a crawl in front of what seemed to be a dead-end of gnarled and impregnable trees did Cullen finally speak.

“Evelia,” he said softly, gazing into her gray-green eyes, “Everything’s going to be alright.”

He reached for the Jeep’s two-way walkie. “Pulling up. Over,” Cullen said into the mic.

Almost as soon as the static cracked through the speakers, a light flash before them and the trees and roots disappeared completely. A towering fortress blinked into existence along with the pungent, sulfur-like scent of magic.

It was terrifying and magnificent—a cold, dark, nondescript building surrounded by a towering barrier wall with a look and design that was more warning and functional than welcoming, surrounded yet still by an invisible, magical veil.

A mage outfitted in armor and elemental enhancements stood near the gate’s entrance—staff in hand. Templars and mages alike perched from their vantage above—composures heightened and alert for whatever may attempt to break through the blockade. The foot mage glared warily at the pair in the Jeep and placed a finger against his ear. He murmured something beneath his breath, nodded, and granted them entrance.

Evelia shivered.

*Did that? Was—was that mage wielding a staff? In PUBLIC? What—in THE hell—is going on?*

And then something shifted. Despite the fact that the warm and familiar atmosphere that Cullen and Evelia had shared between them had indeed waned—it finally turned stiff, flinty—*withdrawn*. He stared straight ahead, muscles tensed and jaw clinched—his walkie held so tightly within his left fist that it was a wonder it hadn’t begun to crack.

And as if her coma, the crumbling city, an unusual wound in her hand, and the fight against shades and demons were not enough, the realization that life itself would never be the same came crashing down upon Evelia as soon as the magical cloak sparked up and over the fortress once again. Her stomach churned into a tight and painful knot—shivers transitioning into visible trembles. What existence she had known until this moment was now a long and distant past. The unknown towered above her. Unparalleled fear marched out into a line of



helmets and weapons before her. This new reality unfolding against her will—*unprecedented* was not a strong enough word.

Cullen rolled the Jeep onto a paved parking lot at the front of the building where a small army of men and women and templars and mages stood before a set of heavy stone doors. He shifted into park.

Adrenaline and panic pumped through Evelia's veins, her heart thrashing to the point that it could burst.

"We're here," he said into the walkie.

And the soldiers moved toward them.

*What in Andraste's name is going on?!*

"Cullen..." She whispered, watching as they closed in.

Cullen immediately turned toward her, grasping her face with both his hands, forcing her to look him in the eye.

"It's protocol, Evelia. I'll have you back to me in no time, just trust me."

"What? *What's going on?!?*"

Without answering, he pulled her in for a soft and cursory kiss—an action so quick that it may as well not have happened at all. "It's protocol—you're going to be fine. Evelia, I swear on my life, everything is going to be okay. It's just protocol. It's protocol."

And Cullen released her, unbuckling to step from the Jeep. He raised his empty hands and instructed the soldiers to check his weapons, surrendering to them all forms of materiel in his possession.

"Cullen!" Evelia shouted.

"Step outside the vehicle!" a deep and gruff female voice demanded.

"Cullen—look at me!"

He stared forward, averting her pleading gaze.

"I'm sorry. Please, trust me. I'm sorry," he whispered.

Hands reached in to remove Evelia from the vehicle, ripping her seatbelt and grasping beneath her arms. Their grip was firm, bruising—a force that would leave behind broken bones and disjointed limbs if met with too much resistance. But a palm quickly clasped Evelia's neck, digging into the base of her skull with strong, broad fingertips that sent a jolt of electricity down the length of her spine.

Her vision swam—fuzzy, hazy, dark—her senses growing numb and her magic fading into submission.

And there was nothing she could do but give in—*and let go*.

## Chapter End Notes

Title inspired by ["Dream State" from Son Lux](#) and ["Outro" from WDL](#)

# Run From the Light

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The drive would have been better alone.

It was always better alone.

Rides in the crisp bite of morning or during the dusky golden evenings when the heat was so thick the breeze rolled droplets of sweat over dust-covered skin and offered no reprieve despite the setting sun—those were the moments he relished most when his thoughts and worries were his sole company.

His bike was always his excuse and in it his escape—an exultation in contented solitude. It moved with his body and his alone, allowing only himself within its space.

But now—for the second time in recent memory, a passenger had hitched along against his better desires. A passenger he tolerated simply because he knew that appeasing her was the quickest way to get rid of her.

This time, the weight on his bike was *different*—it shifted differently, handled differently, reacted differently. Normally he would have invited the change as a thrilling challenge, but this wasn't that moment. This was a moment he just needed to power through until they parted ways and he could finally be alone again.

Because every single second he shared with her on that bike, she was all he could think about.

How her legs straddled alongside his, her chest pressed firmly into his back while her hands clasped against his abdomen. It was only cotton and leather and denim that separated their touch. And whenever he pressed the brake to roll to a halt at an intersection or to hug a sharp turn, he could smell her—that warm, earthy sandalwood mixed with something spritely—citrus maybe? It slithered along his senses and nestled onto his prefrontal cortex, lingering in his thoughts even after speeding forward into the wind.

Clinging onto him with a trust and faith to get her safely to their destination, Lyra had not a single clue what she had done to him.

She had unknowingly *consumed* him.

And it was driving him mad with frustration and impatience.

He had to get away from her.

Solas let out a heavy sigh of relief when they closed in on the side entrance to the heavily guarded fortress, opting to ease off the gas and cruise in until the bike rolled forward and to a stop on its own—finally arriving at a lone soldier standing guard before the invisible gate.

“Solas!” the man exclaimed, thrusting his hand to over-enthusiastically shake in greeting. “Barris has been trying to reach you—give him a shout when you get inside, will you?”

Barris?

He could feel Lyra shifting her weight uneasily on the bike behind him.

“Certainly,” said Solas.

The side entrance gate blinked into existence and the large, heavy doors swung open. Solas gave a nod and revved the bike back to life, rolling on into the fortress. They passed soldiers in various stages of armament—both mage and templar—some of whom were engaged in a training simulation out on the asphalt between the barracks and the main hall. Solas’s brow quirked with interest momentarily, though his attention diverted once again to the presence of the woman behind him when she released his waist.

A strange pang hit him in the chest—one he didn’t quite understand.

He rolled to a final stop and killed the ignition, kicking out to park his bike with such a finality that he may as well have simply told Lyra, “This is the end—fuck off,” because she did just that.

Lyra placed her helmet on the back seat of the bike and tore off toward the fortress without a word—no “see you later,” no “thanks for the ride,” not even a stolen glance over her shoulder before she disappeared through the main hall entrance.

*Could—could she have heard his thoughts? Surely not.*

Even if she could have, it was really no matter—there were more pressing things than whether or not he could have offended someone so inconsequential—a nuisance—someone so...*intruding* that she hindered and interfered with the priorities he placed above all else.

Finding Evelia and the Anchor.

He knew Cassandra could be harsh with her judgments, potentially even harming people to get whatever information she needed. But he’d left Evelia with Rutherford and told him to protect her. Undoubtedly she was—

But there, across the grounds tucked in a shadowy corner in deep conversation with a small group of people stood *that* Templar. Solas’ chest swelled with a heavy breath, a deep pull forming from within his throat down into his stomach. The discovery of Rutherford’s abandonment burned for a fraction of a moment longer before he found himself completely startled to have had the emotion course through him in the first place.

But it was the Anchor, *wasn’t it?* Wasn’t *that* the reason?

His hateful stare seemed to have been enough, however, as Rutherford drew his attention away from his associates—meeting Solas’ gaze from across the field. As calmly as possible, Solas stepped from his bike and stowed the helmets underneath the seat. His motions were calculated, mannerisms typical, but beneath his denim and leather, his muscles roiled with

tension and disquiet. Magic tingled just beneath his skin, crackling like electricity up his spine and pulsing with the beat of his heart. He once again clapped his eyes on Rutherford—who was approaching with a sort of apprehensiveness the like of which he had never seen.

Feeling the vein within his forehead bulging with anger, Solas swallowed hard.

“What did you do with her?” he asked—his voice no louder than the volume he used for casual conversation.

The Templar stopped his advance—one hand moving to clutch at the nape of his neck, the other instinctively settling on his holstered pistol.

“Solas, Evelia is with Cassandra. She’s invoked Article 120 of the Seeker Accord.”

Solas frowned. “So, you abandoned her.”

“I—no, she’s perfectly safe. She’s remained unharmed—”

“And how should you *know* she is safe if you are out here wasting precious time instead of keeping a watchful eye on her like I had asked? We do not know what that thing could do to her.”

Without entertaining the possibility for retort, Solas turned on the Templar and headed straight into the fortress. He tuned *in* to the vibrating wavelength of the Anchor’s curious magic, and tuned *out* Rutherford’s relentless quips and justifications as he marched this way and that down stairways and corridors, following the Anchor’s beckoning pull directly to Evelia.

He approached a set of guards standing on either side of a heavy metal door at the end of the last hallway and cleared his throat.

“Inform Cassandra Pentaghost that I have arrived and require an audience.”

“About time you’ve arrived,” came a deep feminine voice from the other side of the door, which opened to reveal the disheveled CEO of Haven Solutions, Inc.

Cassandra stepped aside to allow Solas entry. Sitting cross-legged on a medic bed and sipping something from a mug in her non-Anchored hand was Evelia Trevelyan. Her left arm was outstretched on the bed, a couple of medics and mages poking and prodding at her glimmering injury. Evelia looked up and he caught her gaze—her eyes sparkling in recognition and illuminating her pallid and sleep-deprived face.

“Holy fucking Andraste, I’m so glad you’re here,” she said.

Solas sighed with both relief and annoyance as he approached—the throng of interested parties separating to allow him to approach. He gently wrapped her arms around Evelia, his lids closing momentarily as he inhaled deeply—catching elements of ozone and jasmine, blood and elfroot, sulphur and honeysuckle, iron and sandalwood. The Anchor called to all of his senses, and it silently flickered in a brilliant emerald green—begging him to open his eyes in an attempt to engage his attention away from Evelia.

Solas finally released her and took a seat next to the bed so he could examine her himself. He gingerly cradled her Anchored hand within his, softly outlining the mark with the pads of his thumbs.

“Does this hurt?”

Evelia shook her head. “You’d think it would, but the pain mostly comes from within.”

Solas nodded, the indentation between his brows furrowing deeper into his skin.

“Fascinating...” he whispered to himself, turning her hand over in his, completely lost in his faraway thoughts. “Tell me everything.”

Evelia recounted the events at the convention center, her strange and fitful dreams, the pain and strange sensations of the mark in her flesh, the journey from Cullen’s apartment to the fortress.

“I was stupid and panicked when we got here. They had to fucking subdue me, but no one would tell me what was going on—not even...”

Her voice cracked momentarily and Solas couldn’t help but detect she was withholding a large amount of information—what that information was and its relevance to sorting out the Anchor was one he’d have to press on later. For now, he needed to make sure she wouldn’t fucking die from this absolutely abhorrent accident.

He stood, quickly remembering where he was and that he had an unwanted audience. The medics and mages stood with him, and Cassandra approached him, hand on her weapon.

“So—what do you make of it?”

Solas glanced around the room, watchful eyes and the magnificent weight of responsibility bearing down on him. “I’ll need a few more days to study the mark before I can make a full assessment, but it appears it’s currently stable. You should release her but maintain observation. I’d prefer my own room to be nearby.”

Cassandra shrugged. “Whatever it is you need, you will get” she said. “Now, we must strategize. Meet me in the war room in half an hour. I’ll have one of my assistants show you to your accommodations.”

Just as Cassandra turned to take her leave, he spied Lyra hovering on the other side of the doorway engrossed in hushed conversation with Cullen fucking Rutherford. Ignoring them both, Solas clasped his hand upon Evelia’s shoulder and leaned in closely until his lips were just above her ear.

“You’re safe now, Evelia. You’re safe. But be careful of whom you trust.”

Chapter title inspired by [Us - Tiny Deaths](#)

## End Notes

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