

Dragon Age Camp NaNoWriMo April Edition 2018

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by [SerenityFalconNormandy](#)

Summary

A collection of one-shots featuring my canon characters and pairings.

Gwyneth Surana/King Alistair

Marian Hawke/Fenris

Fen'lath Lavellan/Solas

There will be angst, feels, laughter, and tags will be added as more gets written from the list of 30 1-word prompts I have.

Thank you to IncreasingLight for beta-ing for me!

Notes

Gwyneth Surana waits with Alistair while Elissa Cousland gives birth to his first child

Camp NaNo Day 1 Prompt - First

Gwyneth held Alistair's hand as they stared at the door to Elissa's chamber, ensuring she stood at what was considered an appropriate distance from him all the same. She'd been shooed out by Solona not ten minutes prior to have the official, approved witnesses escorted in. When the preparations for the birth had begun, Gwyn had insisted that she not be on the list. For this first child with Elissa, she couldn't trust herself not to keep the impartial, unaffected mask on in front of others.

What she had actually said to Alistair was that they needed witnesses that couldn't be accused of undue bias towards the royal couple. Bann Alfstanna, Arlessa Isolde, the Grand Cleric, Bann Ceorlic's wife and Delilah Howe were the ladies in attendance to see the birth of the royal heir that Elissa was laboring to bring into the world. Gwyn's heart hurt. She held onto the fact that this was not in fact Alistair's *first* child, but the jealousy and envy still ate at her. This was one of the times she was happy that the Blightsong from the Taint drowned out demon whispers, because Maker, would she be tempted right now.

Growing up in the Circle, she'd come to expect that she'd never have children of her own. She knew this. Even joining the Wardens, she knew there was little chance of it happening well before Alistair had told her of the Warden issues with having children. Sweet Maker, that didn't stop her from wanting to be the one who had him shifting from foot to foot, twitching, and trying to keep himself from pacing while worry pinched his brows.

With the hand Alistair didn't have in a death grip, Gwyn covered her mouth to yawn. She had been woken by a maid shortly before first bell to come attend Elissa, so she was still in her nightrail and robe, and her hair was down in a braid over one shoulder, propriety relaxed in the face of the importance of what was happening. Sixth bell had sounded not long before Alistair had arrived, and she had only got to bed shortly after ten bells the night prior.

Her duties throughout the night had been to wipe Elissa's brow, and help her walk up and down the hall of the royal wing until her contractions were at the stage where Solona was needed. Much of their walk had consisted of Gwyn consoling Elissa. She had cried with her friend and agreed that Lady Eleanor should have been the one to walk with her to help, as well as Lady Oriana. Although she had never met Fergus's wife, from what Elissa had told her, she had been a fine woman and it would have been a comfort for her to have her mother and sister-in-law there to offer advice and support.

The first fingers of dawn were creeping into the hall, and Elissa's groans and cries were becoming louder and more urgent through the door. Alistair was starting to shake. "Maker, how much longer will this be? What if... what if Elissa dies like my mother?"

"She won't, Ali. Elissa is strong, and Solona won't let her go without a fight." Gwyn rubbed the back of his hand in reassurance, "Sit down before you fall over, you're shaking like a leaf."

"I'm not ready for this, Gwyn." He let her guide him to the bench opposite Elissa's chamber door, and almost collapsed onto it. "I don't know anything about being a father. What do I do?"

"Your best, Ali. It'll be just like learning to be king. Elissa has the most experience, but you'll figure out how to do things your own way." She settled next to him on the bench and nodded to the guard who walked past on his patrol.

"I just want to be a better father than mine." It was almost a whisper, and Gwyn had to strain to hear it over the raising cry coming from Elissa's room.

"I can guarantee you will be. You'll be there for your child, and you won't let them question their place or whether you love them or not."

Alistair gave her a small, panicky grin. "You're hired as my personal pep-talker."

"Accepted." Gwyn smiled, then turned to the door with wide eyes as the cries of a newborn child came, muffled, through the wood.

Alistair shot up, and was across the hall in three strides. He threw open the door and let out a terrified and lost bark of, "How is the queen?"

A flustered Isolde tried to shoo him out before Bann Alfstanna snapped, "Shut it, Isolde. He's worried about his wife and his babe. Let him come in and meet his daughter."

Daughter.

Alistair had a little girl. Gwyn stayed on the bench. She could not leave and return to bed until she was dismissed by either the Queen, or more likely in this case, Alistair. She watched the sunlight creep across the carpet, then looked up when she heard Alistair softly call, “Gwyn.”

He emerged from Elissa’s chamber with a small bundle of blankets in his arms, and a look of complete awe and adoration on his face. Even as the ache in her chest grew, and the envy made it harder for her not to weep, she covered her lips with her fingers, because it was a beautiful moment. The early morning sunlight caught in his hair, and lit the blanket so it glowed in his arms. It still did not compare to the light in his eyes as he gazed on his daughter’s face.

She stood when he stopped in front of her. He looked up and smiled at her, tears sparkling in the corners of his eyes, “I’d like for you to meet someone, Gwyn. This is Moira Eleanor Theirin. My daughter.”

Gwyn moved the fold of fabric shielding the baby’s face from her out of the way with careful fingers, and breathed out, “She’s beautiful, Ali.”

A soft tuft of Elissa’s auburn hair topped Moira’s head, but the shape of her little chin and her ears, and the little frown on her face, that was Alistair through and through. Alistair stepped just a bit closer, looking up from the baby, voice low, “I’m so sorry we couldn’t have this together, Gwyn.”

“I know, Ali.” The exhaustion was wearing her control thin, and she knew she needed to get to her chambers if she hoped to make it before she broke down.

“Do you want to hold her?” He adjusted the baby, preparing to hand her over.

“I’ve been up since first bell, Ali-love. I’m afraid I’d drop her. Do you mind if I retire?”

“Of course, Gwyn. I’d best get Moira to her cradle and check with Solona to see what needs to be done for Elissa.”

Gwyn stepped back to the proper distance, and curtsied. With all the titles piled onto her as Chancellor, Hero, Warden-Commander, Teyrna, and Arlessa, her own chambers were in the royal wing of the palace, so the walk was not far. The Chantry bells had just started clanging in celebration when she entered her rooms. Holding on with the last threads of her self-control, she shooed her maids out. “The King bade me to sleep since I was up with the Queen all night. I’m still in my nightclothes, and won’t require you until later. Go, celebrate! We have a princess.”

The smile stayed plastered in place until the door to her bedchamber shut. She threw the bolt, then pressed her forehead to the smooth, polished wood. All that she had held in before came rushing to the surface and pouring down her cheeks, shaking her slim shoulders with racking sobs.

Camp NaNo Day 2 Prompt - Flight

Chapter Summary

The Last Straw

Marian has to take the greatest leap of faith: That Fenris will stay with her if she decides to defend the mages from the Right of Annulment.

[Varric took a sip of his water, and continued with his story, hearing Hawke telling him what she'd been thinking on that awful day as if it were yesterday .]

We stand upon the precipice of change. The world fears the inevitable plummet into the abyss. Watch for that moment... and when it comes, do not hesitate to leap. It is only when you fall that you learn whether you can fly.

Marian remembered Flemeth saying that to her so many years ago on the Sundermount as she watched the rubble from the Chantry fly through the air. She watched one chunk arc gracefully overhead before slamming through the roof of one of the Lowtown tenements, screams of fear audible even from a distance. Sebastian was on his knees behind her, screaming something, but all she could see and hear with clarity were the plumes of smoke that signalled fires starting in both High and Lowtown, and the screams of the people whose life had quite literally started coming down around their ears.

“Why? Why would you *do* such a thing?”

“I removed the chance of compromise because there *is no compromise.* ”

Meredith's hiss jangled on Marian's nerves, made every hair on her body stand on end. The delight and vindictiveness in it made her want to vomit.

“The Grand Cleric has been slain by magic. The Chantry destroyed.” Meredith spun, an unholy glee lighting her bright blue eyes. “As Knight-Commander of Kirkwall, I hereby invoke the Right of Annulment! Every mage in the Circle is to be executed! Immediately!”

[*The Seeker made a noise in the back of her throat. Seems even she didn't believe that the Circle should pay for the actions of a lone apostate.*]

The declaration hit Marian like a punch in the stomach. *Maker-dammit, Anders!* His stupidity was getting all the innocent mages in the Gallows killed! Her fingers clenched around her staff, and she flicked her eyes to Orsino.

“The Circle didn't even do this! Champion, you can't let her! Help us stop this madness!”

“And I demand you stand with *us*. ” Meredith's smug little smirk was grating on Marian. She knew she had her backed into a corner. “Even *you* must see that this outrage cannot be tolerated!”

From her left, Sebastian snarled, “Why are we debating the Right of Annulment when the monster who did this is right here?”

[*Wanting to keep the Seeker and her Templar lackeys as far away from Starkhaven as possible, Varric decided to leave out Broody's part in restraining Choir Boy during his outburst.*]

The archer lunged at Anders, and to Marian's surprise, Fenris caught him by the arm. Wrapping his arms around his friend's shoulders, the elf held him back as he struggled to get free, and hissed, “I swear to you, I will kill him.”

Anders ignored Sebastian, turning to Marian with that glimmer she recognized from his nights at the mansion ranting about his manifesto. “It can't be stopped now, you have to choose.”

Marian swallowed, feeling her stomach drop. She couldn't let Meredith slaughter all those innocent men, women, and children she'd defended time and again. If it hadn't been for being named Champion, *she* would be in there with them. But Fenris... "I don't want to get involved in this--"

"You are already involved!" Meredith cut off her weak protest with a hard slash of her hand, "You are the Champion of Kirkwall! Do your duty, or fall with these mages! It is your choice!"

Trying to avoid the leap of faith she didn't want to force, she rounded on Anders, "Was this your plan, Anders? I could have stopped you!"

"No, this had to happen! The Circle is an injustice. In many places, beyond Kirkwall. The world needs to see!"

Writhing against Fenris's arms, Sebastian ground out, "Elthina is not the Circle! She was a good woman, and you murdered her!"

[*Varric stopped, wondering if telling the Seeker about what Hawke had said next would get her into more trouble.*]

Marian snapped at Sebastian, "One who ignored our pleas for her to do something time and again, but she did nothing! Don't act like she was innocent and pure, Sebastian, you were there when I practically got on my knees and begged her to do something about Meredith blocking the appointment of a new Viscount, and the Tranquilizing of Harrowed mages, and she just prattled about neutrality! I don't know about you, but that doesn't seem like the actions of a good woman."

Sebastian stopped struggling, lips pinched together. She could see the image of the woman who had been motherly to him and the Grand Cleric who had neglected her duties warring in him.

[*Instead, Varric decided to focus on Orsino and Anders. If they noticed no one reacted to Choir Boy's outburst, so what?*]

Orsino turned on Anders, shoving an accusing finger in his face. “You fool, you’ve doomed us all!”

Anders knocked his hand away, “We were already doomed; a quick death now, or a slow one later. I’d rather die fighting!”

You don’t get to make that choice for everyone else! Balling up a fist, Marian punched Anders. “You’re a murderer! The Grand Cleric, the mages! Their blood is on your hands!”

Holding his bleeding nose, Anders wheezed, “I know.”

“It doesn’t matter. Even if I wished to, I could not stay my hand.” The self-righteous smirk on Meredith’s face said exactly what she wished. “The people will demand blood.”

Taking a deep breath, and closing her eyes, Marian said a quick prayer. *Maker, Andraste, whomever is listening... please, PLEASE let Fenris understand. Let him see that they’re innocent and deserve to be protected from this madwoman.*

“It won’t be easy, but I’ll defend you.” Her stomach dropped in a free-fall as she leapt.

“But what of Anders?!”

“Hawke, if you do this, I don’t know if I can follow.”

“And so you would defend these mages, after all they have done? Throw yourself at a hopeless cause?” Marian’s heart joined her stomach in the free-fall.

“You sure about this? Even you might not win this fight.”

“I know we can do this. I believe in you, Hawke.” Merrill’s unquestioning belief in her brought tears to Marian’s eyes.

“See reason, sister. I don’t want to fight you.” Carver was pale under his tan, fear pinching his face.

“Think carefully, Champion,” Marian really wanted to punch the smug look off of Meredith’s face. “Stand with them and you share their fate.”

“I already made my choice.” She straightened her spine and stood tall in her Champion’s armor. “I can live with that.”

“Thank the Maker.” Varric... was rooting for her?

Marian started to shake when she heard Fenris sigh behind her.

“It is a mistake,” Marian inhaled a sob, but stopped when she heard what came next, “but I will not abandon you.”

Marian’s heart took flight and *soared*.

[*The Seeker let out a soft sigh. Varric raised a brow. Did she have a romantic side? Damn, he definitely should have played that up more earlier.*]

Camp NaNo Day 3 Prompt - Muscle

Chapter Summary

Solas creates a dream for Fen'lath to help her relax.

Fen'lath slumped down next to Solas in their tent. The Emerald Graves were beautiful, and they broke her heart while angering her at the same time. She buried her face in Solas's shoulder, shuddering and trying not to weep.

“*Ma'theneras?*”

“The tomb. Din'an Hanin. Lost and forgotten, and then occupied by *them*.” She spat the word. “And now I know the truth of Red Crossing, how the war in the Dales started. I don't want to think about it anymore, and what it means, but I can't make my mind stop.”

Solas shifted and brought his hand up to her face. “If you would allow me?”

“Just sleep, or my dreams as well?” They had reached the point where they didn't need to ask full questions to understand what the other was saying. Fen fiddled with his jawbone amulet, then whispered, “I don't want to see terrible things in my dreams, *vhenan*. Show me something beautiful, something you love and that I will love as well.”

“Ah, then we must dream of of you, it seems.” He chuckled as she smacked his chest.

“You know what I mean.”

“I do, *ma'theneras*.” His long, slim fingers traced the arches of her brows then ran down her nose. Fen felt the soothing tendrils of his magic curling around her, pulling her down into sleep and across the Veil into the Fade.

Bits of memories, bazaars and markets, celebrations and songs from his wanderings and his own life wove together in the Fade. Exotic spices filled the air with their perfume, baked in the sun. It was warm, as it was in the Free Marches. His heart didn't complain like Dorian did, but he knew that she was cold most of the time as well. Solas could tell from the way she would burrow against him in her sleep, putting frosty toes on his calves or shins and a cold nose into his neck to warm herself.

Smiling to himself, Solas pulled more of the Fade around his body. Fen would get to see some of how he looked in his younger days. His hair grew and twisted into the locks he'd favored in his youth, though shaved at the sides, and held at the back of his head in a bronze clasp. The tan his wandering had bronzed his skin with deepened his skin, the freckles his heart adored spread further. Simple wraps and dark forest green leggings encased his legs, and his favorite tan leather vest was the only cover for his upper body. The only other adornment he wore was his jawbone amulet.

He gently pulled Fen's dream-self in, keeping her asleep so he could shape things around her. A hammock cradled her while an awning protected her from the sun overhead and fluttered in the perfumed breeze. Her lovely hair, dark as a raven's wing, twisted back in loose tendrils to a silver clasp at the back of her head. The garments he made were simple, a short-sleeved top the Dalish around Rivain favored that simply tied on at the neck and under the bust in the back, a rich emerald that matched her leggings and simple wraps. Around her waist, an embroidered belt decorated with rings made from shed halla antler.

As a last touch, he added the people. Elves from Arlathan and Elvhenan, conglomerates of memory and fact. The musicians he added played melodies not heard since before the humans' second Exalted March. Solas laid a gentle hand on Fen's face. He hoped to see her dance, to have her dance with him and lighten some of what laid heavy on her heart.

The strains of music 'woke' Fen'lath, and she stretched, giving a contented smile to Solas. In the dreams he created for her, there were no sore muscles, no worries, just plenty of time to relax with her beloved.

"You look even more beautiful than normal, *ma'vhenan* ." She took his offered hand and climbed off of the hammock. She ran her fingers through the strands of copper at the base of his neck, and traced a fingertip over the freckles on one bare arm. Stepping closer, Fen pulled his head down and gently brushed her nose against his. "And you still smell like forests and magic."

He chuckled, “And you still have elfroot and embrium scenting your hair.”

Fen took Solas’s hand, and pulled him out into the sunlight. “I want to find the musicians, *vhenan*. It’s been too long since I danced for my own enjoyment.”

He followed along, watching the play of muscles in her shoulders through the window made by her top, alternately hidden and shown by the fall of her hair swishing across her back. The rings of halla antler clattered with the roll of her hips, and Solas smiled to himself when he realized that she had started walking in time to the rhythm of the music unconsciously.

The market square was moderately filled with other dancers, and Fen dropped his hand, bouncing on the balls of her feet with her eyes closed for a few beats to catch the count of the music. Her arms swept overhead, her chest lifting and dropping gracefully to the beat as she rocked forward and backward on the balls of her feet. Head canting to the side, she turned in the movement, and seeing him just standing in the mass of moving bodies, she said, “Dance, *vhenan* . I’m not the only one who should enjoy this.”

He threw his head back and laughed, then took up the same movement while opposite her. Fen’s eyes widened, surprised he knew what she thought was Dalish dancing, then let out a delighted, breathless exclamation when he dropped his arms, lifted them, then dropped one to spin. He lead her around and around, combining moves, layering them, wanting to see just how much of their dance she actually knew. Even when the music moved to a slower song, and the movements became longer, more drawn out and elegant, his heart, his dream was right there with him. In one turn, again he was able to admire the graceful lines that she had earned with what he now knew were years of dedication to dancing. The muscles in her shoulders and arms sculpted not only by her staff, but the precise roll and hold of tension before the dramatic sweep of arms in a turn. The tone and grace of her legs honed by this craft she delighted in.

The music slowed, winding down to stop, and Solas cued Fen to turn back to back in a sweeping spin that took them around each other, and ended with them facing, palm to palm as the last notes drifted away into the Fadescape, as did the other dancers.

Alone in the middle of the market square, heady exotic spices perfuming the air around them, Solas dug his fingers into the midnight fall of Fen’lath’s hair, and growled, “In all my

dreams, I could never craft such perfection as you.”

Whatever she had to say was lost as their mouths crashed together.

Camp NaNo Day 4 Prompt - Echo

Chapter Summary

Like father, like son. Sometimes, Gwyneth Surana wishes it was a little less so.

A long day of listening to the members of the Bannorn argue over, Gwyneth left the Landsmeet chambers and rolled her stiff shoulders. The one thing that had kept her from tearing her hair out and screaming at the spoiled, entitled nobles of the Bannorn was knowing she had to keep their goodwill for her son. It was only a matter of time until one of them figured out he was Alistair's. There was already resentment that the Teyrn of Gwaren was going to be elf-blooded.

Grand Cleric Elemina and Bann Ceorlic had petitioned Divine Justinia to repeal her writ allowing any heirs of her body to inherit the teyrnir regardless of her being a mage when Duncan was born because he was elf-blooded. Thankfully, Leliana had been there to intercede, and the Divine had reaffirmed her writ instead of repealing it. Every few months, they renewed their petition. Gwyn was beginning to suspect Justinia had her reaffirmation written out en-masse to send back at this point.

She paused in the door of the nursery, looking at her little boy playing with the little Grey Warden hand puppet she had given to Alistair during the Blight. He was getting close to three, growing so fast. He had his hair cut recently, and insisted on having it done in the same way as 'King Stair'. It had been her bright red when he was born, but as he was getting older, it was starting to lighten to strawberry blonde. Between that and his amber eyes, and the jawline, nose, and ears he shared with Maric and Bryce, it was becoming too obvious that Alistair was his father. Would those echoes of his royal blood be what could persuade the Divine to rescind her writ?

"Mumma! I goed to see the horsie! King Stair took me!" The rambunctious boy wrapped himself around her knees, getting lost as her skirt and petticoat billowed out around him. She laughed at her beloved boy as he tried to talk so fast he tripped over his words. "I got to name it! Her name is Carrot. I feeded her an apple, though. She has a soft nose! And her hairs is red like mine! Her hoofs make a crunchy sound when she walks. It's why I named her Carrot!"

“A horse who has red hair like yours! It sounds like you had a very exciting day going to the stables to feed the horse with King Alistair, my darling. Was Carrot a good horse for you and the King?” She knelt down and hugged her boy tight after he nodded so hard he nearly fell over. Soon he would be old enough, and she would tell him Alistair was his father. While he wasn’t nearly this chatty with anyone else, the risk of him blurting out that he was Alistair’s was a real one.

Ceorlic and Elemina would certainly take advantage of it and cast her in a bad light, a blood mage whore who had tempted the King away from his Queen. Thank the Maker Anora was no longer a threat, ash scattered in the wind along with a treacherous midwife and that sly elven maidservant. Gwyn shivered at the thought of what the former Queen would have done if she had solid proof that Duncan was Alistair’s.

“It’s almost time for dinner, Duncan, we should go get washed up.”

Duncan groaned, “Whyyyyyyyyy?”

‘You don’t want horse hair in your dinner, do you?’

While Duncan paused to give the question the serious consideration it deserved, Gwyn signalled her son’s nanny, Viola, to go fetch a finger bowl and a bar of soap. He was deep in thought while Gwyn straightened his little jacket and pulled some straw that was stuck in the back of his breeches out, then gently ruffled his hair. Viola set down the bowl of water, and the sliver of soap and a soft towel with a curtsy. “Wash up, my love.”

“Okaaaaaaaaay.”

Washing up with Duncan invariably involved splashing and blowing at least one bubble through a ring he made with his fingers, but it was worth it to Gwyn to have him smiling and giggling when they arrived in the private chamber they dined in with Alistair, Fergus, Caterina, Solona, Moira, and the twins. Moira was seated properly in her boosted chair, hands folded primly in her lap and speaking to Caterina in Antivan to practice. The twins were standing on the seats of their chairs and watching as Solona chilled their beverages for them, their fascination with her magic as strong as ever. Alistair and Fergus had their heads together over something, which involved Alistair arranging his utensils to show Fergus the layout of whatever they were discussing.

Duncan climbed up into his chair next to Caterina, and nodded, saying seriously, “Hello, Lady Cat.”

“Good evening, Lord Duncan.” She gave him a kind smile and a nod, Teyrna to future Teyrn. The Antivan ‘tradition’ of bastards, as Zevran had put it, meant that she had accepted Duncan quickly, despite him being elf-blooded. Would that all of Ferelden’s nobility were thus. Caterina turned back to Moira, helping her with her pronunciation.

“Your Majesty, if we could have everyone properly seated, we will bring in the meal.” The head server bowed in the door of the kitchen entrance.

“Right, yes. Of course, Geoff.” Alistair gave a sheepish grin to the server and quickly rearranged his silver. Fergus chuckled and shook his head.

Geoff disappeared, then reappeared a few minutes later with a large serving platter that he carefully set in the empty space where Elissa would have been, once upon a time. “We have druffalo slow-roasted and served in an Antivan red reduction with mushrooms.”

“Serve the ladies first, if you would, Geoff.”

“Of course, Your Majesty.” Geoff moved around the table with an assistant following him holding the platter, cutting off bits of the roast and placing it on each lady’s plate, Moira first, then Caterina, Gwyn, and Solona. Gwyn allowed her mind to drift when the next course, steamed vegetables in herbed butter, was being served. Even in private like this, certain formalities had to be observed. The head chef had nearly had a heart attack when she found out Alistair had taken over her kitchen to bake one time when Moira was still a baby. It wasn’t the first time she longed for the informality of the camp during the Blight, everyone huddled around the fire and relaxing while they ate.

She would even risk death by Alistair’s lamb and pea stew for that simple joy once again. Although, a meal in private with Alistair and the children had its own simple joys. Gwyn covered her mouth to hide her grin as Duncan tried to sneak a bit of buttered squash to Moira’s mabari, Smoke. Duncan didn’t like the vegetable, and if the loud snort that Smoke let out was any indication, he didn’t care for it either. Leaning over, Gwyn whispered, “You don’t have to eat the squash as long as you eat the carrots and the broccoli, okay?”

“Okay, Mumma.” Duncan set the offending bit of vegetable off to the side of his plate.

“Your Majesty, the next dish is whipped potatoes with cream and-”

“CHEESE!” Alistair, Duncan, Moira, Maric, and Bryce all cheered at the same time, in the same tone, with the exact same look of delight on their faces.

As the echo bounced off the walls, Gwyn smiled at her son’s delight weakly. He wouldn’t be able to eat with his sisters and brothers publicly until he was old enough to hide behind a mask. There was no doubt he was his father’s son.

Camp NaNo Day 5 Prompt - Crown

Chapter Summary

Does Knight-Commander Meredith's Andraste cosplay bother anyone else?

Moreover, why does no one comment on it?

Marian remembered the first time she'd seen Knight-Commander Meredith striding across Hightown. She'd been in Kirkwall long enough to know that the Templars' ability to sense mages was so badly affected by the weakened Veil and the design of the city that she'd have to actually cast in front of them to be identified, and so had stood straight and tall, unconcerned. The Knight-Commander and the Templars in Kirkwall expected a mage to cower and hide from them, and that's what usually gave them away.

The Knight-Commander was intimidating, with her cold blue eyes, the harsh squint that said she was judging everyone her gaze fell on and finding them wanting, the pale skin and hair that only intensified the iciness she projected. And the crown, the ridiculous crown. It was a replica of Andraste's.

As a mage, and more importantly, an apostate, Marian knew a lot about Templars. She didn't know of any other female Templar, Knight-Commander or no, that wore a crown like Meredith did. At the time, after Meredith had passed, Marian had elbowed Carver and muttered, "She thinks highly of herself, doesn't she?"

"Eh what?" Carver looked up from whatever he was being distracted by and looked over the Knight-Commander.

"She's wearing Andraste's crown. Must think highly of herself if she thinks she's up there with the Bride of the Maker."

Carver had snorted, thinking nothing of it.

Three years later, Marian was talking to Sebastian when she asked, “Is it normal for female Templars to dress like Knight-Commander Meredith?”

“Well, no.” The Chantry prince looked uncomfortable at the question. “It is a well-known fact that the Knight-Commander is an exceptionally devout Templar, however.”

“So it doesn’t strike anyone as odd that she’s got Andraste’s crown on every day?”

“I believe the Grand Cleric has mentioned the unusual choice of Meredith’s accessories.”

“And she still swans around in costume as Andraste?”

“It’s... it’s complicated, Hawke.”

“Translation: the Grand Cleric is terrified of her and won’t say anything more.”

Sebastian sighed. “Hawke, don’t you have someone else to frustrate endlessly?”

“Not today! Today I’m all yours!” He groaned and put his head in his hands

In the Gallows courtyard, Meredith shoved Cullen aside and charged for Marian. Templars still loyal to the insane Knight-Commander charged at her companions, leaving the two of them to square off against each other.

The familiar weight of her halberd in her hands was reassuring to Marian. Meredith was used to the Circle mages, cowering and flinching away from a shout or upraised hand. The shock on her face when the butt end of the halberd smashed into her jaw was satisfying on a soul-deep level. Even more so, the clatter as the crown and veil flew free and rolled across the pavement. “How does it feel to be reminded you’re no holy being, Meredith? You’re no Andraste.”

The Knight-Commander screamed and lifted the red lyrium blade, charging at Marian again.
“Filthy mage!”

“And *proud of it* .”

Camp NaNo Day 6 Prompt - Mask

Chapter Summary

Vivienne's been hiding something behind that cool, detached mask of hers.

Vivienne glided through the Grand Cathedral towards the confessionals. Her face was bare, as one did not hide when presenting themselves before the Maker in confession. Even though she presented the calm and collected Madame de Fer, Grand Enchanter of the Reformed Circle, on the inside she was distraught. Vivienne prayed that Grand Cleric Araya was available. Araya was, most importantly, one of the old guard, not one sympathetic to Leliana's mongrel charity cases. Her family had ties to the Chantry going back to before the Second Exalted March.

Secondly, she had been confessing with Araya for so long, she could be absolutely sure that the sanctity of the confessional would be maintained, and that she would understand her need for secrecy.

The letter on her desk in her quarters at the Circle weighed heavily on her mind. Rarely did one of her moves in The Game make her feel as unsettled as she did right now. The Chantry Initiate outside the rows of confessionals bowed to her, "Grand Enchanter, you are welcome here."

"Of course. Is Grand Cleric Araya available today, my dear?" Vivienne stared forward, keeping her gaze off the girl. The Initiate was an elf, not worthy of her consideration.

"Yes, Grand Enchanter. She is not currently taking a confession, would you like for me to go fetch her for you?"

"Indeed."

"I'll be just a moment, Grand Enchanter."

Vivienne just nodded. No need to waste words on the girl. The gigantic statue of Andraste that dominated the cathedral interior was normally something to be admired. Today, the blank stone eyes seemed to stare at her in disapproval. It was discomfiting to think that the Bride of the Maker might think ill of her. Vivienne was not particularly religious, she attended services and made confession to maintain proper decorum and appearances. Most of her ‘confessions’ with Araya were exchanges of gossip and bits of information for better playing of The Game.

“Vivienne, *mi amiga* , it is good to see you.” Araya, a tall and elegant Antivan woman, held out both hands to the waiting mage.

“Your Grace, you look well.”

They clasped hands and bussed each others’ cheeks carefully, ever mindful of their headwear. “Come, I will take your confession in the private chambers.”

With a mental sigh of relief, Vivienne followed Araya past the confessional booths, which were thin-walled and almost useless for keeping transgressions between the Mother and the penitent. The stone-walled private chambers, with a locking door of imported Brecilian oak, were where those who could afford to donate generously to the Chantry were taken. Their transgressions, and their dirty secrets, were kept out of the ears of the other players in The Game.

Once the lock slid home, Vivienne carefully arranged her skirts and knelt at the prie-dieu as Araya sat across from her. “What troubles you, my child?”

“Absolve me, Your Grace, for I carry a great burden on my heart. I made a move in The Game that had a cost I did not anticipate.”

“Please explain, Vivienne. I must know the details so you may purge your soul and be exonerated by Andraste and the Maker.” Araya sat forward, a disconcerted frown on her face.

“When the Inquisitor returned from the Emprise, she had a cough that lingered, and the healers at Skyhold agreed that it was best to let her body take care of it, rather than use magic. Mistress Poulin’s family was grateful that the Inquisitor did not execute Alban, but privately they expressed outrage that their relative was being reduced to hard labor like a Fereldan farmer.”

“I heard of that even here. Poor Alban, being reduced to that by a common elf.”

“Quite. They sent a cough syrup for her under the guise of thanks, a four-month supply and the recipe. The recipe was correct, but the ready-made supply was not. It had an herb added that tastes the same, but renders witherstalk ineffective for certain purposes, if you take my meaning.”

“I do.”

“I knew about it, and that Leliana’s people would only check to ensure it wasn’t poison. What could be more embarrassing than making it appear that the Inquisitor was ‘wasting time’ fooling around with the apostate instead of doing what she was supposed to? Indeed, getting herself in a position where she really shouldn’t be endangering herself or her child by going into battle against Corypheus at all. The Inquisitor’s cough came and went, and she would take the syrup as needed.”

“So you believed all that was needed was time. Go on.”

“When the apostate broke things off with the Inquisitor, Corypheus fell, and the unwashed hobo vanished, it appeared that the move they had made was all for naught.”

“It was not so, I take it?”

“No. She was a month gone, though no-one knew until her pet demon informed her when she was close to three months gone. It also said that the Anchor was hurting the child and killing it. Injuring the child was never part of the plan, though it should have been a concern. The Anchor nearly killed the Inquisitor before the apostate balanced it or did whatever he did to stabilize it.”

“We... certainly did not hear about that. All anyone outside the Inquisition knew was that she had a divine mark in her hand granted to her in order to close the Breach and end the chaos.”

“Lady Montilyet and Leliana are very good at The Game, you know this well. I have spent the past three months poring over every book I had at my disposal, sending what information I thought would be useful to Skyhold to help save the child.”

“How are the child and the Inquisitor doing?”

“I received a raven this morning. She lost her boy three days ago.” Vivienne bowed her head, taking a moment to compose herself.

“Ah, and this is why you came to me.” Araya’s face smoothed, calm and serene once again.

“Yes, Your Grace.”

“I don’t believe I need to absolve you of anything. You are not the one who gave the Inquisitor the syrup that neutralized her witherstalk, nor are you responsible for the Anchor in her palm. Indeed, you are not responsible for her lewd behavior that led to her being in a situation where she could become pregnant.”

“Your Grace, I was the one who told the Poulins which herb to use, and that the syrup would only be tested for poison. There is some responsibility on my part. I only wanted to humiliate the Inquisitor, I never meant for the child to be harmed in any way.” Vivienne looked up at Araya.

“Ah, Vivienne.” Araya stood and took Vivienne’s hands. “I absolve you completely. It was a move in The Game, and your intent was not to harm. Besides, it was just an elven bastard, and they reproduce quickly enough as it is, yes? What is one elf in the grand scheme of the Maker’s plan?”

Vivienne stood, receiving Araya's blessing. Her cool, dignified mask slipped back on as they made their way back out into the Grand Cathedral proper. Striding to her carriage, she was handed in and it lurched away, making for the new Circle Tower.

She had been absolved by one of the Maker's own representatives, one who understood the way the world should work. Why did she still feel so utterly wretched?

Camp NaNo Day 7 Prompt - Cry

Chapter Summary

Gwyneth becomes a mother.

“I don’t care *how* cold it is outside, Sol, I need air! I’ve been at this for nine hours, and you won’t let me push yet!” Gwyneth panted as Keeper Lanaya guided her to hold onto the post of her bed. The band of pain around her middle eased, and she leaned her forehead against the polished oak. “I don’t think I ever want to do this again.”

Lanaya nodded at the human mage. Gwyn had requested that she give birth in the most Dalish way she possibly could as a city-elf raised, Circle-trained Teyrna. Solona pushed one of the heavy curtains back, and eyed the mid-morning sun. Pushing the window open a scant few inches, she said in a placating tone, “You’re fortunate to have this one, Gwyn. I hear that you forget what it’s like, though.”

“All the mothers in the clan say that you forget after awhile,” Lanaya murmured as she rubbed an ointment that smelled strongly of elfroot across the small of Gwyn’s back. When the next contraction hit, it wasn’t as intense, and Gwyn sighed. “Better?”

“Much better, thank you Lanaya. The Dalish could make a fortune off that ointment, you know.”

Lanaya gave her a small smile. “You have done much for the clan and the Dalish, Teyrna. We normally don’t share secrets such as this, but you’re a special case.”

“How-” She cut off, breathing her way through another contraction, “How many times must I remind you to call me Gwyneth or Gwyn, Lanaya?”

“Probably until Falon’Din takes me, Gwyn.” The Dalish woman stepped aside, letting Solona take her place.

Touching the small of Gwyn's back and placing the opposite palm on her belly, Solona checked the baby. Her magic flowed through and around as she hummed softly to herself. "We're getting close, Gwyn. I give it about five more minutes, then we'll want to bring Leliana and Alfstanna in."

"And King Alistair, right?" Lanaya looked up from the cloths and heated water.

"What?" Solona and Gwyn spoke in unison.

"You *don't* have the father present for the birth?"

"You *do*?"

"Of course! A child is a gift and a blessing from the Creators, and both parents should be there to receive it! There's no more mess than there is in a hunter or warrior's normal day, and considering it's his bondmate and child, he's definitely seen the woman's-"

"Thank you, Lanaya," Gwyn strained out after she rode through another contraction, "I get the idea."

"It's not really our way, Lanaya, but..." Solona looked at Gwyn.

Flipping a sweat-soaked rope of red hair over her shoulder, Gwyn leaned her forehead against the bedpost again. "Just ask him if he wants to when it's time. Warn him I might try to murder him for doing this to me if Lanaya's ointment wears off."

The sandy-haired elf held up a large earthenware pot. "I brought enough for five women."

They fell into silence, only broken when Gwyn groaned and breathed through another contraction. She was terrified, this was something she had never expected to go through. Even feeling her baby move, being so done and ready to *not* be pregnant anymore, the thought of being able to see her feet and *not* have an elbow forcing her to the privy every twenty minutes, looking forward to a day where she would be blessedly free of heartburn, hadn't really prepared her for this moment.

Tears filled her eyes, and she took in a gasp of air. All the fears of the previous months started coming back. What if Elemina figured out a way to take her baby away? Would the people of Gwaren accept that their next Teyrn or Teyrna was going to be elf-blooded? Sweet Maker, what if her baby ended up being a mage, or someone in the Bannorn besides Alfstanna and Fergus figured out Alistair was the father? And why wouldn't they just let her *push* ?

"Oh, Gwyn," Lanaya patted her face with a cool, wet cloth, "Let it all out. It will be worth it when you have your baby in your arms."

A sob hiccuped out of her as the tears let loose, cutting off through the next contraction. "Lanaya, Sol, I need to push. *NOW*."

After a quick check with magic, Solona nodded to Lanaya and dashed to the door while Gwyn bore down. "Bann Alfstanna, Sister, it's time. Your Majesty... it's Dalish tradition to have the father attend the birth. Would you like to come in?"

Met with silence, Gwyn looked up from the bedpost to see Alistair edging into the room behind Alfstanna and Leliana, anxiety drawing his features tight. He gave her a nervous grin, "So, it's happening?"

"Your Majesty, come stand here and have her brace her back against your chest." Lanaya gestured for him to stand on the oiled canvas she'd laid down on the floor under Gwyn when her labor had started.

"What?" His voice went high. "I'm participating too?"

“You participated in the child getting in there, you participate in the child coming out,” The Keeper patted him on the shoulder. “Now stand just so, right, and put your arms here.”

Gwyn was enfolded in Alistair’s arms and leaned her head back against his chest. The logic behind this was sound, she decided, feeling the weight of the baby pulling down, almost guiding it without her. “Hello, Ali.”

“Hello, Gwyn. So, you’re going to be a mother in a few minutes.”

“Seems so. I must look a fright.” She stopped, moving down in his grasp and groaning through her teeth as she pushed. Lanaya and Sol were at her feet with towels, a blanket, and a basin of water, and Gwyn wanted to scream and cry and possibly throw something when they told her to stop pushing while they checked on the baby.

Alistair leaned in to her pointed ear, and whispered, voice thick with unspoken emotions while she pushed again, “You’ve never been more beautiful, Gwyn. I am still a lucky, lucky man. Maker knows I don’t deserve this on my own.”

“Flatterer,” she gasped as she stopped pushing, gulping in the lungfuls of air she’d neglected in her single-minded determination to get the baby out.

“No, honest.”

Gwyn bore down again, feeling a great stretching pressure building. Pausing for a moment to draw in a few rushed breaths, she moved into a deeper squat, not able to stop herself from crying out as the pressure grew greater.

“Good, Gwyn, now push again,” Solona said from between her knees and under her bunched-up nightrail.

“*I am pushing!*” she screamed in response right before bearing down again, as the pressure reached its peak. All her focus was on that blinding spot, and everything else was drowned

out as she pushed, and pushed, and pushed.

When Gwyn thought there would be no end, there was a sudden rush, and the loud, wailing cry of a newborn child. *Her child*. Slumping back against Alistair, Gwyn rasped, “Is my baby all right?”

Lanaya smiled and said, “Just a moment so we can clean him and cut the cord, and then you can see him.”

“A boy. I have another boy. Thank you, Gwyn. Thank you so much.” Alistair pressed kisses to the top of her head while Alfstanna and Leliana bowed out of the room to sign the official papers that Gilmore would have for them as witnesses to the birth.

“What are you going to name him, Gwyn?” Solona asked as she wrapped up the baby, who had quieted to little mewling noises now that he was clean and warm. Lanaya gestured to Alistair to place Gwyneth on her bed as she cleaned up afterbirth and the soiled towels and water.

“Duncan. If not for him, my son would never have been born.” Holding her arms out, Gwyn took her baby and got her first look at him. Her bright red hair was plastered flat to his little head, still damp from being cleaned. “He’s so perfect.”

Alistair sat next to her on the mattress, swiping at the tears falling freely down his cheeks, “Thank you, Gwyn. I couldn’t name Maric or Bryce for Duncan, but now...”

She placed a hand on his cheek, her own tears falling as he leaned down to place his forehead on hers. “I know, Ali. I know.”

Camp NaNo Day 8 Prompt - Read

Chapter Summary

Fenris goes shopping for more books

Chapter Notes

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

Running the claws of his gauntlet over his bookshelf, Fenris growled in frustration. He was out of reading material. Every single tome, no matter how dry or difficult, had been read through at least three times now. The Book of Shartan Hawke had given him, at least six or seven. He would have to leave the mansion for new reading material. Scooping up his coin pouch, he grumbled to himself. The Hightown market would only have the mindless driveling romances that were considered ‘appropriate’ for highborn ladies, so he’d have to go to Lowtown.

He paused outside Hawke’s estate, then went and rang the bell. Bodhan answered the door, and was relentlessly cheerful as ever. “Messere Fenris! Always a pleasure to see you, ser! I’m afraid if you’re looking for the Mistress, she’s not in right now. Orana dragged her to the seamstress to get some new garments, and they don’t expect to be back until close to dinner.”

“Ah. I see. I will go, then.” Fenris turned to leave.

“Shall I tell Mistress Hawke to expect you for dinner?”

Fenris considered for a moment. Things were... better between him and Hawke in the past year. The year after the Qunari invasion had been even worse than their first year of acquaintance in terms of awkwardness. The following year had been good. They were more comfortable, and his continuing reading lessons and subsequent writing lessons seemed to have helped them become close again. “Yes, please do.”

Bodhan beamed. “Very well, Messere Fenris! I’ll send a runner to the vintner and the cheesemonger for the wine and cheese you and the mistress prefer.”

“Thank you, Bodhan.”

His pace quick, but not hurried, he made his way from Hightown to Lowtown, the Chantry ringing two bells. Fenris believed his twice weekly visits to Sebastian were also helping. He had been dedicated to working through the tangle of his rage and hatred, and the complicated knot of his feelings for Marian. It wasn't just because she nearly died fighting the Arishok. It was also that night she, in a drunken moment, had revealed that Lady Leandra had called Marian a man with a woman's parts. He still resented Leandra's implication that he had left Hawke after their one night together because she wasn't feminine enough.

Fenris counted the days off on his fingers as he took the Lowtown steps two at a time. He would be seeing Sebastian again in two days. The Chantry prince had commented the last time that they had met that he seemed calmer than before since he was no longer drinking to excess, and his thoughts more organized and centered. Marian's help teaching him to read had a great hand in that.

The books she, Sebastian, and Varric leant to him on a regular basis gave him something to do to occupy his time when he was not gaming with them at the Hanged Man or out on a job. Sitting alone in the silence of the mansion was enough to drive one mad if they had nothing else to do. He wouldn't clean, since keeping the manse appearing abandoned allowed him to live there. There were no skills he could hone in his free time, like the witch with her knitting or Varric and his writing. Of course, he'd been practicing his own handwriting, and he no longer had the frustrating, shaky lettering of a young child. Marian's handwriting was scratchy and quick, like her hand was unable to keep up with her mind. She told him his was some of the most beautiful she'd ever seen.

Feeling the tips of his ears burn even at the memory, Fenris ducked into the small used book shop in Lowtown where Marian, Varric, Sebastian, Aveline, and Donnic spent most of their allotted 'literary' income. The dry, musty scent of parchment, book glue, and leather bindings filled the shop and welcomed him like an old friend.

The owner popped up from behind a stack of books, ready to shoo out the elf that dared enter his shop. A growl and the realization that Fenris was one of the Champion's elven companions had him drawing back with wide eyes and a quick bow.

Most of the books in the stacks were the histories and treatises to be found in any similar bookshop. In one stack, he found a treasure trove of Brother Genitivi's works that he hadn't read yet. The History of Kirkwall, The First Blight, The History of Soldier's Peak, In Pursuit of Knowledge, and a three volume collection on the highlights of Fifth Blight, meaning one about King Alistair, one on Gwyneth Surana, the Hero of Ferelden, and one on finding the Sacred Ashes of Andraste, were stacked at the front with the still wide-eyed owner.

As he searched the books in a shelf on the back wall, one book, the spine simply reading 'Catullus', caught his eye. It was a Tevinter name, but Fenris remembered hearing Danarius sneer it dismissively. If Danarius had hated this Catullus, he wanted to see what they had to say.

He pulled the slim book free, and thumbed through the pages. Of all the things he had expected, poetry was not one of them. On each page, in the trade alphabet instead of Arcanum runes, was a poem in the original Old Tevene, and the translation.

The page he read made him chuckle, as the poem was scolding a guest for stealing one of his napkins. Flipping the pages again, he stopped at one that had only four lines on it.

Odi et amo. quare id faciam, fortasse requiris?

nescio. sed fieri sentio et excrucior.

I hate and I love. Why do I, you may ask?

I don't know. But I feel it, and I am tormented.

He wanted to fling the book away, or tear out the page and rip it to pieces before burning it. But he couldn't. His feet carried him to the front, and his mouth haggled over the price of the books while in his mind, the poem repeated over and over again. All the books were tucked into the satchel he had brought along specifically for that purpose by hands acting of their own accord, and his feet turned back to Hightown.

I hate and I love. Why do I, you may ask? I don't know. But I feel it, and I am tormented.

I hate.

Hadriana at his feet, begging for her life before he tore her heart from her chest.

I love.

Marian, looking at him through her absurdly thick lashes with eyes that made him feel like it was spring no matter the season, before taking his hand and leading him into her bedchamber.

I am tormented.

Wanting to let go of his past even as it dogged him, seeing the painful hope in Marian's eyes as the damnable woman waited for him with the patience of a deity.

He stopped, gasping breaths as he stared at the shambles of a mansion he lived in.

I hate.

Turning back, he looked in the direction of the Amell estate. His clawed gauntlet picked at the red scrap of fabric around his wrist, and he felt the weight of her house crest on his belt.

I love.

A brief hole in the guard rotation allowed Fenris to get into the manse. He dumped the satchel of books as soon as the door shut and locked, and he raced to the wine cellar. Grabbing a bottle blindly, he charged up to rooms he had claimed as his own. The cork was out and the wine had just kissed his lips, and he stopped. The bottle lowered, and he stared at it. Drunken oblivion or sober awareness.

The bottle shattered against the wall as he let out a roar, spraying wine and glass shards.

I am tormented.

Chapter End Notes

The poet in this chapter is, of course, Gaius Valerius Catullus. I borrowed his name and his poetry for an ancient Tevinter poet.

From my first playthrough of Dragon Age II, Catullus 85, colloquially known as 'Odi et Amo', reminded me very much of the hate-filled, loving, tormented elf I romanced.

The other poem in the book is an actual poem of Catullus's, Catullus 12, if you wish to give it a read.

Camp NaNo Day 9 Prompt - Empty

Chapter Summary

Solas reacts to information he discovered while checking in on Fen'lath.

Takes place between main game and Trespasser

****Warnings- Mentions of late-term miscarriage/stillbirth****

Chapter Notes

This may make more sense if you read the following in order:

<https://archiveofourown.org/works/12669939/chapters/28881984>

<https://archiveofourown.org/works/11512398/chapters/26598636>

<https://archiveofourown.org/works/12669939/chapters/30220008>

He went through the motions, but Solas had no heart or desire for his work. It had been lost two terrible weeks before, when he had gone through one of his Eluvians to check on his *vhenan* for the first time since Corypheus fell. When he had left Skyhold, he had been so sure, so certain, that simply reassuring himself that she was alive and well through his spies was the only thing to be done. It would have been a weakness and a distraction to check on her himself by using the hidden fortress Eluvian, he thought.

What tragedies his pride had wrought, over and over. He ran his hands over his scalp, looking at the maps and letters from his spies that he was meant to be reviewing for his next move, but he couldn't muster any motivation to keep going. All he could hear and see was Fen'lath sobbing as their son was wrapped in the blanket that would be his shroud, and the heartrending pleas for their child to move or breathe.

His beautiful, wonderful, brave, *vhenan* had gone through it all without him. He had ordered his scouts to leave the letters she left at the ruins where they lay. He was Solas and Fen'Harel. Of course he knew *so much better* than his heart, didn't he? It would be better for her to have

no contact, no chance that his presence or the magics he was weaving would destabilize the Anchor before he could find a way to remove it without killing her.

A paltry excuse. He couldn't trust himself to see her again, that her pleas might turn him from the path he must take as she almost had before. How every plan of his turned to ash at his touch... it had deprived their son of the chance to be saved from his father's folly. Feeling it all well up in him, Solas snarled and swept all off the table. Maps, letters, orders, sketches of Fen he'd hidden in the piles all scattered like a flock of parchment birds.

He moved quickly around the table, gathering up the sketches. They stretched from when he first joined the Inquisition and got her permission to draw her to the present. Small moments that weren't fitting for his frescoes, both in style and content.

A loving finger traced over one he'd done sometime between Redcliffe and closing the Breach, when Fen and Dorian were becoming closer. Her face had been unmarred then, though the scars earned by her bravery in Haven had done nothing to detract from the beauty he saw in her. It had been the free, open joy he had captured, her face turned up to the sun as she and her Tevinter mage had debated some mundane thing or another, likely Dorian's opinions on her 'appalling' footwear.

Shuffling parchment, he focused on another, done in the moonlight of Orlais at Halamshiral. Fen wanted to be under the stars to dream with him, and had fallen asleep before he completed his evening ablutions. Head turned to the side, hair a dark tumble around head and shoulders with one lovely little pointed ear peeping through the locks trailing down her face and neck. The curl of a delicate hand nudged up against her cheek, and full lips parted in the absence of tension. She was the very image of relaxed and untroubled. The sleep couch dragged onto her balcony wasn't truly meant for two people, but they had made it work.

Parchment rustled again, and the sketch done from memory after Crestwood moved to the top of the pile. That beautiful, terrible moment after their last kiss, when Fen had been gazing into his eyes with such adoration, the smile for him pulling the corners of her mouth up, freckles and scars no longer hidden by the markings of an unwitting slave. He had ruined her happiness and his moments later, even as he set himself back on the path he was duty-bound to take for her and The People.

Solas set the stack of parchment down, not trusting that he wouldn't crush the precious drawings. Palms spread flat on the table, for the first time in many, many ages, tears slipped

down his cheeks. He wept for the son he would never know, for his beloved, for the future that might have been slipping away through his own arrogance, history repeating. When the tears stopped, he dried them with the scarf Fen had knit him. The rich royal blue halla wool absorbed them all, like they had never been.

He moved around the table to start picking up everything else. Inside, he was hollow and empty.

Camp NaNo Day 10 Prompt - Malicious

Chapter Summary

When you're the Chancellor of Ferelden, an elf, a mage, and a Grey Warden, there's always going to be talk.

“Did you hear? The arl’s guest at his estate is an *elf*. She’s there as a guest! What is this world coming to?”

“I heard she’s a mage. Maybe she’s using blood magic?”

“That Grey Warden knife-ear has no business acting like she has any authority in Denerim!”

“I lay five sovereigns that the knife-ear used blood magic to get the Bastard on the throne.”

“Elissa Cousland had better keep an eye on the mage rabbit, or she’ll end up cursed, mark my words.”

“Do you ever wonder if the Lady Chancellor, you know, used *magic* to influence the Landsmeet? Bann Ceorlic says that Loghain shouldn’t have been beaten that easily by a green Warden recruit.”

“It’s just not *natural*, letting an elf take precedence over people. Hero or no, the king should never have granted her Gwaren, or allowed elves onto his council!”

“Do you think the Lady Chancellor will ever wear anything other than that hideous armor to court?”

“Look, Louis! *Père* was right, they do have a rabbit attending the queen for the wedding! Henriette and Marceline will never believe me when I tell them!”

“Have you heard the rumors coming out of Amaranthine? Supposedly, that mage executed Bann Esmerelle and put Delilah Howe up in her place. Can you believe that? Delilah married a *shopkeep* of all things!”

“Ugh. Apparently the king is summoning an Enchanter from Kinloch Hold, a spirit healer, to serve as a go-between for the Circle and the royal court. She’s also slated to be personal healer to the king and queen, and will be chief attendant when the queen gives birth. As if the rabbit mage isn’t enough.”

“Did you hear? That knife-ear calling herself a Teyrna claimed the whole of the Brecilian Forest for the Dalish knife-ears, and if anyone wishes to get wood from the forest, they have to negotiate with them! I shouldn’t have to deal with *them* to get oak panelling!”

“I heard from my maid that she heard from Susanna’s maid that Susanna said Mairead said that Liane’s maid who knows a maid in the royal palace said that the king is *involved* with the Lady Chancellor. Of course I scolded her for spreading gossip, the king and queen are fond of each other and if the king were looking for a mistress, he’d choose someone better than a skinny knife-ear.”

“Do you think the Lady Chancellor will be dismissed now that there’s a princess and two princes in the royal nursery? After all the boys will need something to inherit. Amaranthine and Gwaren would be better served by them than her.”

“Oh sweet MAKER, did you hear? The Grand Cleric stormed the Lady Chancellor’s quarters earlier this evening. Apparently, Lady Prim and Proper is *with child*. ...Do you think she even knows who the father is?”

“A messenger left for Val Royeaux yesterday. It seems the Lady Chancellor is appealing to the Divine to keep her bastard safe.”

“They’ve got a book going at the Gnawed Noble. The majority have bets down that it’s that elf from Antiva or the king’s spymaster. What was his name, Taris, Tabard? Tabris, right. I can’t remember, they all look the same to me. Others they have bets on are Teagan Guerrin, Fergus Cousland, Ser Gilmore, and Nathaniel Howe. Someone tried to put coin down on the king, but that’s ridiculous.”

“She’s leaving for Gwaren today, I’m told. Keeping to the tradition of having the heir born in the teyrnir. I can’t believe the Divine is actually allowing her to keep it.”

“I hear she’s issued an edict in the king’s name to protect the elves in the Edgehall alienage. Who cares what Arl Gell is doing to them? They need to shut up and thank the Maker they’re even allowed to live in proper cities.”

“It’s elf-blooded. Maker, what’s next? At least it’s not fully elven, those poor people in Gwaren are going to have a hard enough time as it is when that... child... becomes Teyrn.”

“The whole settlement was forced to up and leave! She said it was ‘illegal’ because it was inside the Brecilian Forest! The knife-ears don’t even use all that lumber, what do they need a whole forest for?”

“Do you think the Lady Chancellor set up Anora for Queen Elissa’s death?”

“I hear that *mage* that blew up the Kirkwall Chantry was one of the Wardens the Lady Chancellor Joined right after the Blight. I’m amazed the king is letting her keep her position, since her decision-making skills are obviously lacking.”

“Her bastard is starting to resemble the king, isn’t he? You don’t think...”

“The king looks a bit peaked, don’t you think? With the queen gone, I wonder if she’s ‘coercing’ him to get her skinny rabbit behind on the throne with him.”

“Supposedly she’s going to be stepping down soon and leaving for parts unknown. Ser Gilmore is keeping Gwaren running, and her bastard will be Teyrn.”

“Something about a cure? Without her around, I’m sure I’ll finally be able to convince the king to marry my daughter. We’ve been too long without a queen.”

“Just three days, and then I’m petitioning the king to be given Gwaren. It’s not right to leave it in the hands of a three-year-old bastard elf-blood.”

“They... look so sad saying goodbye to each other. Do you think the rumors that they were lovers during the Blight were true?”

Camp NaNo Day 11 Prompt - Age

Chapter Summary

Fenris has concerns about getting older.

“Fenris?” Marian called from her balcony. He was in the estate somewhere, and she knew that recently, his favorite places to sit and ponder were on the roof, or in the garden. Pondering, he insisted, was different than brooding, and Fenris would be able to hear her in either place from her balcony.

There was scuffling above her, and she moved around to look up at the roof edge. Fenris stuck his head over, silver hair in a wild puff from the early evening sea breeze, “You called?”

“Orana said dinner is ready, if you’re hungry.” She never said he had to come and eat, it was always up to him. After seeing Danarius in person, and hearing how he’d talked to Fenris, she never wanted to make him think she was commanding him.

He nodded, and his head disappeared. There was more scuffling, and then his feet and legs dangled over the edge. Marian smiled to herself and admired his rear as deft feet found the little nooks on the outer wall that he used to climb up, and lowered himself down enough to jump onto the balcony next to her. Fenris raised an inky brow.

“Just admiring the view is all. This balcony has more of them than I had realized.” He snorted at her and Marian gave him a cheeky smile. “Anything you feel like talking about?”

A pensive look crossed his face, “Perhaps while we dine.”

She nodded, smiling to let him know she wouldn’t push. He returned it with the little half-smile she loved, and took her hand to escort her down to the dining room.

“So what did Orana panic over today?” Fenris knew that the elven servant still had issues believing that she wouldn’t be punished for serving dinner or supper late, or if it didn’t taste perfect.

Marian turned to respond, only to have her foot slide off the runner on the stairs. “She made so-OOSHIT!”

Fenris grabbed the bannister and used his grip on Marian’s hand to haul her up and keep her from tumbling down. It wrenched on his shoulders, making her worry that it would aggravate an old ache in one that had been dislocated before. He grunted in pain, “Fast vass, woman. When will you move to the ground floor?”

Marian huffed, righting herself and leaving her dignity on the ground, “I am exceedingly stubborn and I am determined to prove I can overcome at least *my* stairs.”

He gave her a flat look and rolled the bad shoulder, muttering. She held a hand over the shoulder, not touching and cocked her head in question. After a hesitant moment, he nodded and allowed her to settle the hand on it, letting out a discomfited grunt as the one Heal Marian knew washed through it. Feeling the tingling fade, he rolled it again, letting out a sigh. They both looked at the rest of the flight of stairs, twelve steps. Marian shook her head, “Oh no, no you don’t.”

Before she could dash away, Fenris hiked her up onto his shoulder and proceeded down the staircase as she wriggled and grunted, holding her across the legs and patting her rump. At the bottom, he set her down, “There, safe.”

Marian huffed, puffing the long bangs away from her forehead. “You enjoy that far too much.”

“Perhaps I do.” He smirked, then guided her to the dining room. “And dinner is?”

“Orana made soup, fresh bread, and roast goose with vegetables.”

Orana had set out the meal and departed to the kitchen to eat with Bodhan and Sandal when Fenris finally spoke again, “I was thinking. About Varania.”

“Oh?” Marian dropped her spoon, splashing soup onto the table.

“Yes. I let my temper get the better of me. Again.”

“I can’t really blame you, Fenris. Saying freedom was no boon after all you went through to be free of Danarius...”

“Yet, she was my only family. Now so much is lost to me. My nameday, any questions I might have had. Gone.” Marian watched him fiddle with his spoon, “I don’t know how long I will be of use to you before my body betrays me. Even with the abomination’s healing, it cannot stop me from getting older.”

“Is that what this is about? Getting older? I’m no spring chicken myself, you know. Thirty-two, unmarried, no children. Practically a spinster! If my mother were still around, she’d have stopped suggesting and started ordering me to marry by now, if only for grandchildren.”

Frustration crossed his face, “It’s not just that, Marian. I must- I feel- What good am I to you if I am not by your side, protecting you?”

Her heart wrenched. “Fenris... I will never stop loving you or needing you, even when neither of us can walk three feet without canes. You are so much more to me than your sword arm. I meant it when I said I’m here for you.”

She stood up and walked over to him, and squished herself into the chair with him, “I’m here for *you*, forever and always.”

Fenris hugged her and pressed a kiss to her head. Marian smiled, and tried to stand up, failing miserably. “We may also be trapped in this chair now.”

Camp NaNo Day 12 Prompt - Lock

Chapter Summary

Fen'lath writes to Dorian between end-game and Trespasser.

Dorian, brother ma'vhenan,

I know you barely arrived in Tevinter a month ago, but I am already going stir-crazy here in Skyhold without you. And I'll bet Bull's already told you the big news, but I'll tell you myself anyway. No, he- he hasn't come back. Cole just decided to spring it on me that I am pregnant with his child. It's a boy. I'm thinking of naming him Dorian. Not that your ego needs any more help, my wonderful peacock, but perhaps it would annoy him into coming back.

Josephine is horrified, of course. She knows elves bond, we don't marry, but she's still all aflutter about the scandal of an 'un-wed' Inquisitor having a child. Leliana, excuse me, Divine Victoria, already assured me that he will be considered legitimate by the Chantry. I can hear you rolling your eyes from here, my dear, and I agree. You know as well as I how much I care about what the Chantry thinks of me or my baby. But, since I am obviously now an invalid who cannot make decisions of my own, Cassandra, Bull, and Cullen want me to stay within Skyhold's walls until he's born. For once, I do think it's a good idea, as the Anchor seems to be hurting him. Leaving would mean a chance of encountering rifts...

Cullen's been an awful grump since Solona departed for Denerim, by the by. She's coming back in a few weeks, but I'd rather be chased by one of the bears we kept stumbling on in the Hinterlands again. Cass is pretending not to miss Varric. She blushes and glares every time I bring him up. Entertainment!

To keep Josephine from hyperventilating, and make it easier for Cullen and the rest to ensure I'm secure, I'm staying within the keep proper, essentially out of sight. Josie is spreading rumors that the past two and a half months have been taxing on me, and I need to rest. More like being kept under lock and key. To prevent more rumors. Rumors are the social death of every political figure if they're not carefully controlled. I'm allowed into the gardens after Cass and Josie clear them out, and that's about it. Grand Enchanter Fiona has stayed in the keep to attend me, and maintain correspondence with the fledgeling College of Enchanters to investigate ways to protect the baby.

You're not going to believe this, but Vivienne offered to help. Offered. She didn't need to be coerced, cajoled, bribed, or anything like that. Cole said it connects to a hurt she holds in secret. You don't think she had and lost a child with the Duke, do you? Of course, a cynical part of me says she's doing it because if she can save the baby, it'll boost the prestige of the reformed Circle. They have a lot of political connections, but it's going to die out if they can't get new apprentices. Most of the nobility are reluctant to send new mages to the Circle now that there's an alternative to losing children that can be used for possible political alliances. The few Templars that are left that weren't part of the Reds or the Inquisition aren't exactly what you'd call prizes either, so Viv's having a hell of a time finding ones to properly guard her followers without causing scandal. The ones that volunteer for training are also not the cream of any crop. Since she offered her help, I'm biting my tongue against saying "I told you so". But oh, the temptation is there.

Your light-o'-love is going to drive me to madness with his coddling. Write to Bull and tell him to ease up, please. I don't need him hovering over me, and somehow he found what seems to be every book on midwifery in existence, and is badgering Cook constantly with menus to ensure that both the baby and I are healthy. Dalish and Fiona have to reassure him daily that they know what they're doing, and are already well-prepared for a babe that won't be here for another five months. Even Krem has made three dozen plush nugs, all different colors and styles, with wings and without, and Bull is critiquing all of them. He really doesn't let up when he sets his mind to something, does he? Next he'll be confiscating all of the outfits and booties Sera knitted and sorting through them to ensure they meet his standards of quality.

Yes, Sera is still here, and she's been knitting up a storm because she loves the 'stabby sewing'. She and Krem got together with Thom to make a lovely cradle, which is already done and has a mattress and blanket ready. Did I mention that this baby isn't even going to be here for at least another five months?

Ugh, I'm exhausted just thinking about dealing with all of this for another five days, let alone five months. Thankfully, being Inquisitor does have its perks, like an unending supply of Rivaini tea that does wonders for morning sickness. I know that's exactly what you want to think about, but it's part and parcel of this whole affair, and you're not here to complain to in person, so via letter it is. Just be glad you don't have to help hold my hair back, right? I finally get to wear more of my Dalish clothing again, it's more comfortable and has more room for the little tummy I've developed. It really is very cute.

OH! I almost forgot to tell you. I nearly set Mother Busybody on fire. You'd think she would have given up on attempting to convert me with 'Come to Andraste' monologues by now, but

I may have been too subtle in the past. She accosted me in the gardens, and I may or may not have set an Inferno on her. I didn't know anyone could move that fast in those silly robes with those ridiculous hats. What is it with you shemlen and your awful headwear? Is it true that the Archon wears hats that are even worse?

Anyway, I'm feeling the need for a nap, and Charter is here with a raven. Write back when you can, my dearest. If you happen to find any information in Tevinter that can help my baby boy, please send it?

With much love,

Fen'lath

- From 'My Sweetest Friend: The Collected Letters and Writings of Inquisitor Fen'lath Lavellan', by Duncan Surana, Teyrn of Gwaren, Grand Enchanter of the Ferelden College of Enchanters

Camp NaNo Day 13 Prompt - Dance

Chapter Summary

Alistair has regrets. Specifically, saying he would dance the Remigold while wearing a dress for Gwyneth if she asked.

“I am never, *ever*, going to promise you anything ever again, Gwyn,” Alistair groused.

“That sounds an awful lot like a promise, Alistair,” Elissa giggled, watching as Gwyneth finished lacing him into the dark sapphire, fur-trimmed dress Elissa had made to match his ‘I’m King, look at me being kingly’ gambeson and breeches.

“You were right, though, you do look rather fetching in this dress.” Biting back her laughter, Gwyn stepped away. The skirt stopped between his calves and ankles, leaving his bare feet visible, toes curling against the chill hardwood floors. His chest, upper body, and arms, so much broader than Elissa’s, hadn’t fit into the sleeves or bodice properly. The sleeves were barely laced around his biceps and forearms, and the bodice covered little more than an underbust corset would. His undershirt served as a chemise, and hid just how far down the blush darkening his neck went.

After tying on the skirt, they’d had to pin it to his breeches because he didn’t have Elissa’s hips to hold it up, and Alistair huffed, “How am I supposed to properly dance the Remigold for you if I have to hold my breeches and this skirt up?”

“You’re smart, even though you like to play different, Ali, you’ll think of something.” Gwyn brushed at the fur, fluffing it up, and stepped back. “All right, looks like you’re ready to go.”

Elissa sat on the couch in the music room, legs tucked up under her body, “This should be quite entertaining. Did they teach you the Remigold in the monastery?”

“Well, no. I learned it before-,” he stopped, face going dark with hurt, “Before. And then when I joined the Wardens, some of the men decided I needed to brush up on it.”

“Hey,” Gwyn took his hands in hers, “This will be fun, right? Something silly and happy.”

“Right, yes.” He gave her a weak smile, squeezing her hands.

Elissa picked up her mandolin, one of her few possessions that had survived Highever. She ran her fingers over the strings, warming up both strings and fingers as Gwyn made the final adjustments to the dress, ensuring Alistair would be able to dance without being pantsed by the skirt. “Are we ready, dancers?”

Alistair grumbled again. Gwyn poked him in the side, “Do you want to go it alone?”

“No.” He drew his shoulders back, and took Gwyn’s hand. “Shall I lead, or are you taking that role this evening?”

“Oh, no, you’re leading. I think if you had to do too many jumps in that, you’d rip the seams. Good luck explaining *that* to the seamstresses!”

Taking up position next to each other, and holding hands crossed in front of their bodies, Elissa struck up the traditional tune for the Remigold on her mandolin. Hopping, skipping steps forward, turning to face each other and a quick jump, turning back and hop-skipping back, then a jump. They released hands, and Alistair put a hand on the small of Gwyn’s back, and the other on her elbow. Back-and-forth hop-skips, then Alistair lifted her in a jump and set her on the other side, and they repeated the hop-skips and jump-lift. Turning back to face the direction they had started in, they moved in long, prancing skips, stopping after every three for Alistair to lift Gwyn in a jump. During one set of prancing skips, Alistair had to take his hands away to yank breeches and skirt back into place with a quick “Maker’s blighted knickers!” while Gwyn giggled.

A full circuit of the music room from their starting point, and they joined hands again, doing the side-to-side hop skips, three prancing steps forward, and another set of side-to-side

hopping skips before turning to each other and releasing hands. Gwyn sank into a curtsy while Alistair gave a ridiculous looking courtly bow.

Elissa set down her instrument and clapped, “That was fantastic! Too bad the Remigold is considered too provincial for state affairs, you’d have the Bannorn eating out of your palm in no time if you could show off your skill.”

Flushing, Alistair curled his toes against the hardwood floor again. “I don’t see how my ability to dance the Remigold would change anything.”

Sitting up straight, voice firm, Elissa said, “The Remigold is one of the few traditional Fereldan dances that made it through the Occupation. So many of our traditional dances were lost, or changed to something more ‘properly Orlesian’, all the jumps and happiness were basically removed. Knowing and properly dancing the Remigold would prove to them that you aren’t an Orlesian plant like the Traitor claimed you are.”

“What about Summerday? It would be expected that the court celebrations be freer and less stodgy than normal state affairs.” Gwyn asked as she started unpinning the skirt from Alistair’s breeches, “We could make it a celebration of the first anniversary of the end of the Blight, and marking the first year of your reign.”

“That could work,” Alistair stroked at the little patch of beard on his chin.

“It would give us a good three months to plan as well, since we just had Wintersend. That’s an excellent idea, Gwyn!”

“She does tend to have lots of good ones, falling for me notwithstanding.” Alistair grinned over his shoulder at her when she smacked him between the shoulder blades.

“Hush, you!”

“Gwyn?” Elissa’s voice had grown soft.

“Hmm?” She looked around Alistair, hands still on the laces of the bodice.

“Will you summon Nate to court to represent the Wardens for Summerday?”

“Of course, Liss. It’ll be expected, so no one will think it unusual.” Gwyn went back to unlacing, melancholy settling over her. She got to see Alistair every day, even if she didn’t get to spend time with him how she would like to. Elissa had to wait until Nathaniel was summoned to court to be able to spend time with him, and even then, they had to play cool and neutral with each other in public, because she was a Cousland and he was a Howe. Regardless of his part in his father’s actions, Rendon Howe’s misdeeds still hung over the family name.

She sent up a prayer of thanks for the hidden passages in the royal wing’s walls, meant for the royal family to escape to safety in case of attack, but more recently being used for Alistair to visit her bedchamber and Elissa and Nathaniel to visit each other. Bodice and sleeves unlaced, and neatly folded with the skirt, Gwyn handed them over to Elissa. “All done, and we have now seen Alistair dance the Remigold in a very pretty dress.”

Elissa looped her arm through Alistair’s, “We should all be getting to bed, the business of the nation waits for no-one in the morning.”

“Another day of hearing Eamon sulk over not being made Chancellor, *joy*,” Alistair groaned, following along. He stopped in the doorway, Elissa going without him, “Are you coming, Gwyn?”

“In a minute, Alistair.” She picked up the mandolin and carefully placed it on its stand.

He walked back to her, “I love you, Gwyn. That hasn’t changed, and it will never change. I hope you know that.”

She leaned her forehead on his chest as his arms came around her. “I know. My head is just full of ‘what ifs’ and ‘if onlys’ tonight.”

He kissed the top of her head, “I wish I could do something to make them go away.”

“Just hold me for a little while longer?”

“However long you need.”

Camp NaNo Day 14 Prompt - Trap

Chapter Summary

Fenris asks Marian to accompany him to meet his sister.

“You talk to him, Hawke, I’ve had my fill for today.” Marian watched Aveline stride out of the room as Fenris remained hunched over the table, a piece of parchment spread out on the wooden surface.

Bitterly, Marian hoped Aveline had investigated whatever matter Fenris had asked her to look into more extensively than she had the Kirkwall Killer. Though they still remained friends, their previous closeness had become strained by Leandra’s death, and the failure to properly investigate the guardsman who had been murdered by the elves who had become *viddathari* .

Fenris slammed his hands on the table and snarled, “ *Venhedis! Fasta vass!* ”

Trying to lighten the mood, both for Fenris and herself, Marian quipped, “Maybe it’s just me, but I’d swear you’re upset.”

Fenris let out a long-suffering sigh, and replied, “It’s my sister. I didn’t tell you,” his shoulders hunched in, as if he was ashamed to have kept it from her, “but I followed up on Hadriana’s information. Everything she said was true. I had to keep it quiet, but I eventually contacted Varania and sent her coin enough to come meet me. And now she’s here.”

Marian’s jaw dropped. That bitch hadn’t lied? Fenris really did have a sister? “She was in Qarinus after all?”

“My sister left Magister Ahriman’s service, and I found her in Minrathous. That made things more difficult.” Fenris started pacing in frustration, “But according to the men I paid, it’s just as Hadriana said: she’s not a slave. She’s a tailor, in fact.”

A small, proud smile crossed Fenris's face, and Marian's heart melted a little.

"Getting a letter to her was difficult, and she didn't believe me at first... but she's finally come."

"You think it's a trap. You're worried Danarius knows." She felt her heart start pounding. It would be too convenient for Varania to come without any issues at all. They both knew it.

"The more it seems he doesn't know, the more certain I become he does. Come with me, Hawke. I need you there when I meet her!"

"Where is she?" She tried not to let herself get caught on the 'I need you'. Fenris was asking her as a trusted friend, someone he knew would have his back--no matter what. Even if that monster who had branded and scarred him had followed his sister. This had nothing to do with... before.

"If we go to the Hanged Man during the day, she'll be there. For the next week, at least." His face fell, uncertainty crossing it before he closed his eyes and took a deep breath. He finally raised his eyes to meet hers through his bangs, "It would mean a lot to me, that's all I ask."

Marian nodded. "Of course, Fenris. I have your back. Shall I bring Varric?"

"Yes. Just in case... the abomination as well."

"You... want Anders along?" She had the urge to pinch herself. The only logical explanation for Fenris requesting Anders was that she was hallucinating.

"You do not heal well." It was a blunt truth.

“Point taken. I’ll meet you in Lowtown in an hour?”

“Thank you, Ma-Hawke.”

Opening the door to the Hanged Man, Fenris strode in, taking the lead with Marian at his back. Varric was at his normal table, playing cards with Anders to make them look like bystanders. Marian scanned the room, looking for people who seemed out of place, any indication they could be there to jump Fenris.

There were some men who were eying the red-headed elven woman sitting by herself at one of the tables. Was it interest, or keeping an eye on her for Danarius?

“It really is you,” Marian’s attention snapped back to the woman, who was gazing at her clasped hands.

“Varania?” Fenris staggered a little, she caught his arm to support him as he ground out, “I... I remember you. We played in our master’s courtyard while Mother worked. You called me--”

“Leto. That’s your name.” Varania stood, her gaze drifting over the denizens of the tavern instead of going to the brother she hadn’t seen in Maker knew how long. The hair on the back of Marian’s neck stood up. Everything in her was screaming at her to drag Fenris out at full speed, whether he liked it or not.

“What’s wrong?” Fenris sounded lost, hurt even. “Why are you so--”

“Fenris, we have to get out of here!” Marian used her grip on his arm to pull him back. He stumbled, and Varania kept her eyes locked on the Hanged Man’s wall instead of actually looking at him.

It was too late. Danarius's voice slid down her spine like ice as the man himself strode down the stairs. Marian was going to *murder* Aveline for not checking into this more thoroughly. "Ah, my little Fenris. Predictable as always."

Camp NaNo Day 15 Prompt - Soft

Chapter Summary

A little one-on-one time for Fen and Bull in the Exalted Plains

Dawn on the Exalted Plains was beautiful. The mists that would burn off later in the day muted the colors of the sunrise, giving it a mystical glow. Sitting atop the statue of Fen'Harel they had made camp below, Fen'lath combed out her hair while watching the fingers of sunlight stretch across the Plains. They were on the way back to Skyhold, to Cassandra's dismay. Fen didn't want to continue on without knowing that Solas was safe, if not doing well.

"Hey, Boss, whatcha doing up there?" Bull called from the base of the statue.

"Thinking." The comb paused, then started up again. "Also watching the sunrise. Not fighting every moment of every day feels good."

"Maybe for you! The more action I get, the better." Even from her perch, she could tell Bull's eye was sparkling with mirth.

"Which kind of action are we talking? Battlefield or bedroom? I think the whole camp is well aware you're getting plenty of the latter."

Bull threw back his head and roared with laughter, then climbed up to sit behind her. He plucked the comb from her fingers and started running it through her hair, starting from the ends and working his way up. Fen leaned her head back, letting out a sigh.

"So what's really eating you?"

“I’m worried about Solas. You know Cassandra isn’t happy I’ve decided to return to Skyhold to wait for him there instead of continuing on here in the Plains without him.”

“Eh, Cass needs to loosen up in my opinion. She’s upset that so many of the Exalted March monuments we’ve come across appear to have been destroyed in the fighting. Pity, that.”

“Yes, *such* a pity.” Bull, Dorian, and Solas had kept mum on the fact that Fen herself had been destroying the monuments. The Dales had been promised to the People by the *shemlen* of old without condition, and each stone pylon was so bloody *smug* about grinding the People of that Age beneath their feet and forcing elven backs to bend to their Maker.

“Don’t worry about Solas, he can take care of himself, and then some.” Bull eyed her hair, then carefully sectioned it out with the comb. Gathering one section in a hand, he combed it out, then started braiding.

“I know he can, Bull. That doesn’t stop me from worrying. And since when do you know how to braid hair the Dalish way?”

“Dalish. She had hair longer than yours when she first joined the Chargers. Broke her arm once, and while she was waiting for it to heal, those of us who could braid took turns helping.” He gestured for one of the leather strips to secure the braid. “I learned the basics in Seheron, a bunch of my men had long hair that they braided close to their head, like the Arishok. Have to get more creative with horns in the way. He doesn’t have to worry about those.”

“Mind if I ask why Dalish cut her hair?” Fen pulled the finished braid over her shoulder.

“Easier as a merc. Don’t need to wash it as often, less to get blood and bits out of. She’ll still chase us all into whichever body of water is closest whenever she can, just like you. Is that a Dalish thing, or a mage thing?”

She snorted, “It’s a ‘we don’t want to reek to the heavens’ thing. And a Dalish thing. The scent of our soaps burn the noses of the dogs slavers use to track clans.”

The comb paused on the lock Bull had sectioned out to braid. “Clever. And explains a lot.”

“Mmh.”

They sat in a gentle silence as the sun rose higher, and the soft fall of Fen’s hair was braided. Bull tied off the last braid, and twisted them up into the tight bundle that kept them out of the way and on the back of her head, tucking in the ends. She handed over the pins to keep them in place, and a few pats later, her hair was done.

He lifted her into his lap and wrapped his arms around her. “Seeker’ll be yelling her head off for you soon. She’ll want to get a move on, whether she’s happy about returning to Skyhold or not.”

Fen groaned. “Do you think I can quit for a day, just while we’re on the road? I feel like I’m always rushing to and fro.”

“You taking time for yourself? Do I need to glare at Solas and give him pointers?”

Feeling herself go red, Fen squeaked, “We haven’t quite gotten to that stage yet.”

“You’re shitting me.”

“I am not.”

“What’s he waiting for, a proclamation from Josie?”

“He’s *courting* me, Bull. It’s... different from what I’ve experienced before.”

“How can he be courting you? You just said you feel like you’re always rushing to and fro. That doesn’t leave much time for romantic googly-eyes.”

“Maybe not for you,” Fen sniffed, “Solas has been courting me in our dreams, he can do that, you know.”

Bull let out an uncomfortable grumble. “Fade crap... spirit crap...”

“It’s not so bad. Dreams can feel like they last days, so we’ve been courting for a lot longer than you’d think. Certainly longer than you and Dorian.” He spluttered and she elbowed him in the side, and her tone went soft, “You two are good for each other. You’ve opened his eyes to more of the dark side of Tevinter, and helped him be more... himself? I don’t know how else to say it.”

“I get what you mean, Boss. He’s a good guy, just needed someone to help him see it, too.”

“If Solas doesn’t make a move soon, I may start rolling around on the floor and wailing like a cat in heat, though.”

Fen held on as Bull laughed so hard she was almost tossed from his lap. “If it gets to that point, I’ll sit him down and have a chat with him first, deal?”

“Deal.”

“INQUISITOR!” Cassandra’s bellow echoed across the Plains. Fen let out a sigh.

“Once more, into the Breach?”

“Once was enough,” Bull grumbled as they started picking their way back down the statue.

Camp NaNo Day Prompt 16 - Intent

Chapter Summary

King Alistair takes a petition from a shady Bann.

King Alistair read over the petition that Bann Rufus had laid before him. He didn't know what the Bann thought his reaction would be, but it had certainly succeeded in royally pissing him off. It requested to take over the teyrnir of Gwaren immediately, with the intent to provide 'proper leadership and stability' in the south of Ferelden. Alistair drew in a deep breath, keeping his temper reined in. It could be the Bann did have good intentions, and wasn't trying to snatch Duncan's inheritance out from under him because he was elf-blooded. He doubted it, but he'd been surprised by members of the Bannorn before.

"So, Bann Rufus," Alistair steepled his fingers, "I've read the petition. Why do you believe you deserve Gwaren? I could easily set it aside for one of the princes."

The man appeared surprised that his petition was being considered, then straightened. Rufus ran a hand through his thick black hair, and then said, "Well, Your Majesty, my family has supported the Theirins through the Ages, including against the Traitor Loghain. If you decide to preserve Gwaren for the princes, it will still need a proper administrator. Ser Gilmore has been moderately successful in running the teyrnir for Lady Gwyneth, but it needs direct, consistent governance to thrive, sire."

"I'd say Gilmore has been more than 'moderately successful', considering trade in and out of the Gwaren port is reaching levels not seen since before the Occupation." Alistair raised an eyebrow. He couldn't acknowledge Duncan as his, but he'd be damned if he let this Bann take what he *could* give him. The fool just had to take enough of the rope to hang himself with.

"Er, yes, sire. The fact of the matter is, with Lady Gwyneth out of the kingdom, and a mere child in charge, there are concerns about the teyrnir."

"Such as?"

“Logging rights, Your Majesty. Lady Gwyneth was, begging your pardon, rather unreasonable and kept your subjects limited to a few miles’ stretch of the borders of the Brecilian Forest, claiming the rest for the Dalish! If Ser Gilmore continues her policies, where are your subjects to get Brecilian oak for their use? And in favor of heathens, no less.”

“Those ‘heathens’ were given the range of the Brecilian Forest for their own in thanks for assisting during the Blight, Bann Rufus. And I happen to agree with Lady Gwyneth’s policies. The amount of lumber in the areas logging is allowed should provide indefinitely, as long as it is not over-logged by greedy merchants.” Alistair raised his wine chalice hiding his smirk at the Bann’s shocked face.

“Majesty, surely your true subjects-” Rufus spluttered

“Are you saying the Dalish are not my subjects to care for while they are within Ferelden borders?”

“Their concerns are not superseded by those of the subjects who were ravaged by the Blight and who are still struggling to regain their living! Subjects who should take a priority over a rabble of bloody knife-ears.”

“Ah, so we’ve come to the heart of the matter. Is this because Lady Gwyneth is an elf, Bann Rufus? Or perhaps because Teyrn Duncan is elf-blooded?”

Going for broke and forgetting himself, the Bann barked out, “The Blight was ten years ago, Majesty. Surely she has been rewarded more than enough with Amaranthine and the freedom to live outside the Circles before they dissolved. And no jumped-up bastard, elf-blood or no, has any business becoming Teyrn!” Rufus snapped his mouth shut, face going pale, “M-Majesty, I-”

“Silence, Bann Rufus.” Alistair sat forward, mouth set in a hard line. “I see the truth of your intent for the teyrnir.”

“Majesty, please-”

“I. Said. Be. Quiet.”

Rufus gulped. Alistair knew he had a reputation for being affable. Gwyn, Elissa, and now Fergus were the ones who had the reputations for being hard and cold when they needed to be. With Elissa long departed, and Gwyn having gone to find a cure for the Taint, he needed to show that he wasn't the pushover the Bannorn had been tricked into believing he was.

“Bann Rufus, not only is your petition denied, you are banished from court immediately, and forbidden to return unless we should summon you.” *Oh yes, the King just used the royal 'We' on you, you weasel.*

“But-!”

“Silence! Regardless of being an elf, regardless of being a mage, Lady Gwyneth Surana has worked tirelessly in our service and the service of the kingdom of Ferelden. The Divine herself granted Gwyneth the right to live free of the Circle and keep Lord Duncan, as you are *well* aware. Teyrn Fergus is assisting Ser Gilmore in overseeing Gwaren, and will continue to do so with our blessing. Lord Duncan will continue as Teyrn of Gwaren in his mother's absence. Her policies regarding the Brecilian Forest and the Dalish therein will continue to be upheld.” He sat forward, making the Bann step back in fear, “If we discover that you or any other Banns or Arls are violating them, it will be considered treason.”

The Bann went white. So Darrian was correct, Bann Rufus did have illegal logging stands inside the Brecilian Forest that he was attempting to give the gloss of legality. “If we were you, Bann Rufus, we would retire from your position in favor of our daughter as soon as we returned home. If not she may shortly find herself disinherited and short a father. Do we make ourselves clear?”

“As crystal, Majesty.”

Rufus bowed out of the room, and his office was silent for a moment. “He is a terrible plotter, is he not, Alistair?”

“I have a better Wicked Grace face, Zevran, and I am a terrible liar.” The Antivan elf emerged from his hiding place behind the tapestry of the Ferelden arms. “Have all of Rufus’s logging stands been dismantled?”

“ *Si* , my friend.”

“I need for you to identify the Dalish camps, elven settlements, and alienages most at risk for retaliation.” Alistair rubbed his temples, missing Elissa and Gwyn both terribly at that moment.

“Darrian and I already have a list.” Zevran plopped into a chair and propped his feet up on the edge of Alistair’s desk, tilting back in the chair. “What shall we do next?”

“Arrange for your people to integrate themselves into the at-risk populations. There’s bound to be retaliation, and I want my elven subjects protected.”

“Of course, my friend. You can count on us.”

Camp NaNo Day 17 Prompt - Birth

Chapter Summary

Marian is ready to pop, and Merrill is there to keep her company.

All there was to do was wait. The nursery was complete, all the blankets, booties, jumpers, caps, nappies, and other things the baby could possibly need were put away in the armoire and dressers in the room. When Carver and Merrill had arrived, the Amell family cradle had been brought with them. Marian ran her hand over the dark mahogany wood, trying to imagine her mother and Uncle Gamlen being small enough to sleep in it. Her back and stomach had been taking turns cramping every so often, and she had planted herself next to the cradle on her settee in the hopes that being off her feet would stop it.

Fenris was going over the security measures around the holding at least twice a day, dragging Carver along with him in the hopes he might spot something her husband didn't. Marian dropped her book in what was left of her lap, realizing she had read the same page four times now and still had no idea what was happening.

"Merrill, what are you doing?" Marian carefully levered herself around on the settee facing the large windows that faced out over the fields to the forest outside Starkhaven, and leaned into the pile of pillows strategically placed to support her back. She felt so restless, and she had no idea why.

"Hmm? Oh, just knitting." The petite Dalish elf held up what appeared to be the start of another jumper. "You will never believe how many clothes a baby can go through. I helped Keeper with a fair few in my time with the clan." Her lower lip quivered for a moment, "No matter how much clothing there was for a new wee one, it seemed like the baby needed twice as much when all was said and done."

"Sweet Maker... do you think we have enough nappies?" Marian rubbed her belly as the baby shifted, feeling a cramp in her stomach.

"Ah, the lovely thing about nappies is you can fold them especially to fit from birth to potty training, and I can make at least four dozen more for you before I return home, easily. Orana will be on her way from Kirkwall as soon as we send word the little one's here to help you keep up on the laundry."

"Mmh. Why did Orana stay back in Kirkwall, again?"

"Oh, Varric thought it wouldn't be prudent for all of us to leave at the same time, and she's overseeing the people moving Aveline and Donnic's things into your estate so they can keep an eye on it for you. Once they're back from their... oh, Mythal'enaste, what did Varric call

it...‘Second honeymoon’? They’ll move in, and Orana hardly ever leaves the estate as it is. No one will notice her absence.” Merrill’s knitting needles clicked in a soothing rhythm while she talked, “Everyone leaving Kirkwall all at once would set off too many alarms with the Templars and Seekers, I think. They’ve been knocking on my door plenty.”

“You didn’t tell me that! Are you alright?” Marian tried to sit up and look at Merrill properly, but only succeeded in flopping around like a fish for a moment before giving up. “Maker, I am ready to give birth to this baby so I’m moderately more graceful than a tipsy druffalo calf.”

“Oh, Hawke, you’re always graceful! Unless there’s stairs or dancing involved. And I’m fine. I just asked them in for tea and started talking about my day, and after about half an hour, they about ran out of my house. You and Carver are some of the only shemlen who seem to be able to tolerate chatting with me, I don’t quite understand it. Am I getting something wrong? Is my tea bad?”

“Nothing’s wrong with you, Merrill. It’s something wrong with them.” Merrill’s bright, chirpy, and at times, inane chatter was soothing to her, but she could see how it might drive Templars expecting a dangerous, subversive elven mage to madness. “So how did you and Carver manage to sneak out from under Cullen’s watchful eye?”

“Oh, Carver got leave to accompany me to Gwaren on short notice. Keeper Lanaya in the Brecilian Forest had an emergency that she needed my help with.”

“I...see?” That sounded like a Varric plan.

“Oh, she did! I even showed the Knight-Captain her letter. I just didn’t tell him that Varric offered to send the herbs she needed with one of his associates so I could come straight here to help you instead. Wasn’t that nice of him?” Merrill’s brows pinched together in a completely unthreatening frown, “Although, Carver seemed to know that we were coming here without going to Gwaren first from the start.”

Definitely a Varric plan. Merrill continued chattering idly about their trip overland from Kirkwall, while Marian contemplated her craving for an apple pastry and druffalo sausage. And a tall glass of milk. Perhaps a fresh loaf of bread. Another movement of the baby made her very aware that she needed yet another trip to the privy. “Merrill?”

“Yes, Hawke?”

“I need help getting out of the settee. The privy calls again.”

Merrill set down her knitting and padded over, helping Marian haul herself out of the pillow nest. That damn muscle in her stomach cramped again. She shuffled to the privy, and after a few minutes, called out, “Merrill?”

“Are you stuck in the privy, Hawke?”

“No... but I think I may be in labor, if the pop and splash that just happened is anything to go by.”

“By the Dread Wolf!”

“Unless he’s delivering the baby, I don’t think that’s going to help.”

Camp NaNo Day 18 Prompt - Hope

Chapter Summary

The Inquisition must save the Var Bellanaris from treasure-hunters.

(Aka my explanation for why any elven Inquisitor would go back and ransack the site for "The Spoils of Desecration")

Fen'lath just about fell off of Stormhart at Keeper Hawen's feet. "Keeper," she panted out, "I need your permission to disinter the ancestors of the *Var Bellanaris*, and remove the artifacts of the People that are kept there."

The elder mage gaped at her, taking in the wild, half-braided halo of her hair, the unbuckled armor, and the companions that were still pounding across the Plains on their mounts to catch up to her. "Disinter the ancestors? What is the meaning of this, *da'len*?"

"I've had a raven from Loranil, Keeper. The group of scouts he left the Plains with crossed a team of antiquarians who intend to 'acquire and preserve' the artifacts in our burial site. My companion The Iron Bull tells me that the People's bones and treasures sell for exorbitant amounts to collectors in the *shemlen* cities like Val Royeax, Cumberland, and Antiva City. We must distribute all amongst the People if we have any hope to preserve our history!"

"Creators have mercy..." Hawen staggered back and sat down heavily on a stool. "Are you sure, *da'len*? Loranil is sure?"

"I do not believe Loranil or my scouts would lie, Keeper, not about this. I trust Bull's word over a thousand *shems*'. The scouts snuck close to their camp and eavesdropped; their plan is to sack the entirety of the *Var Bellanaris* and then raze the ruins. If asked what happened to the site, they will claim it was destroyed by the warring Orlesian armies and they 'rescued' the valuables that remained to drive up the prices they fetch."

The Keeper, suddenly aged twenty years in but a moment, put his head in his hands, "We must notify the other clans, somehow."

“I will send ravens. I can use the Inquisition to get some artifacts to my Keeper, and she will distribute them through the Free Marches, Antiva, and Nevarra. One of the mages at Skyhold knows Keeper Lanaya in the Brecilian Forest. We can send the ancestors to her to be interred in the ruins there, to rest with the elders that went there to slumber.”

The tension that had hunched Hawen’s shoulders released and he looked up at her, “That is a good plan, Fen’lath of Lavellan. You do the People proud.”

Fen smiled, bowing her head to him. Solas, Bull, and Dorian stopped at the edge of the camp with a contingent of Inquisition scouts, all elves, following them. Her companions dismounted and nodded to Hawen. Sweeping her hand towards them, she said, “My people and I have as many satchels as our mounts can carry for the artifacts we find. How fast can your camp provide baskets?”

“Baskets?”

“Yes, to place the bones of the ancestors in. Baskets will be better than satchels.”

“Vhenelgara,” Hawen called to the clan’s head basket-weaver, “How many baskets can we produce in a day?”

A woman with cornsilk blonde hair, sky blue eyes, and Ghilan’nain’s *vallaslin* , stood up and tilted her head, calculating. “If I put all the basket-weavers to it, I believe we can do twenty-six a day.”

Hawen turned back to Fen, “How many days do we have, *da’len* ?”

“If Bull’s calculations are correct, a week and two days.”

“ *Mythal’enaste* .”

“If we all work together, Keeper, I believe we can completely clear out our burial grounds and save our history from the grasp of greedy *shem* vultures. We will return at sundown with satchels for you to distribute through the clans of the Dales, and in the morning, I will be back for baskets.”

Fen mounted up, signalling to Solas and the rest to mount as well, and turned Stormhart towards the *Var Bellanaris* . As soon as her companions were secure in their saddles, Fen kicked Stormhart into a gallop. The whole group thundered off, well aware that they were running on a tight deadline.

Vhenelgara approached Hawen, resting her hand on his arm, “What was that all about, Keeper?”

“We need to get as many baskets together as quickly as possible, *mir da’len* . The *Var Bellanaris* is in danger, and the Inquisitor is determined to save as much of it as she can.”

“In danger? How?!”

“Greedy *shems* , of course.” He sighed, “Thank the Creators that she was the one who survived the *shemlen* Conclave, *da’len* . Seeing what she’s done for the People so far, and knowing what she intends to do for us, she may be our only hope of surviving this war.”

Camp NaNo Day 19 Prompt - Hero

Chapter Summary

A moment on the morning before Gwyneth is installed as Teyrna of Gwaren and Chancellor of Ferelden.

“Oh, Maker’s sake, Gwyneth, knock that off.” Elissa swept into Gwyn’s bedroom past the curtseying elf.

“Yes, Your Majesty.” Gwyn gave a small smile as she straightened, knowing it irked Elissa for her to use her title. The queen rolled her eyes at her, then gestured for the maids behind her to follow her into the suite. Gwyn could hear Alistair settling into the chairs in the sitting room, grousing about something or other from his court attire being uncomfortable.

“That can stop right now too, Gwyn.” She sat down in one of the chairs before the fireplace, regal in her dark Highever blue gown. “Now, I know you aren’t a fan of the celebrations Alistair and I throw in your honor, but they are expected. And right now, with Anora’s intransigence and... other events,” Her jaw clenched, and she sat up straighter, “We need to appear as strong and united as possible.”

Gwyn took a moment to really *look* at Elissa while the maids bustled around with the garments they were bringing in. There were traces of dark circles under her eyes that no cosmetics could cover, and the flush in her cheeks was from rouge. Beneath the makeup, her complexion was wan with sallow undertones. She would have to speak with her friend later. The reassurances that Elissa had recovered from the grief of her miscarriage rang hollow when the evidence of the contrary was plain to see.

One of the maids, Viola, grabbed Gwyn’s attention, “Pardon me, my lady, but we have your dress ready.”

Gwyn gaped at the gown that was laid out. A dark leaf green, it had dusty gold veins sewn on it to enhance the resemblance to a leaf, and long, elegant sleeves that Gwyn knew would likely be floor-length. She stepped forward and touched it, “This is leather!”

Elissa smiled. “A gift from Lanaya, with with a little input from Alistair and myself. She said it’s a Dalish leatherworking secret. They know how to work leather until it looks and moves like fabric. The color suits you, and it’s a nod to your roots without being overtly so. I was there when Mother found you, you know. It’s a small way for her to be here while you take your titles, Hero of Ferelden.”

“I’ll stop calling you ‘Your Majesty’ and stop curtsying to you if you stop calling me that, Liss.” Gwyn scrunched up her nose at he title that still felt uncomfortably heavy on her shoulders.

“Deal.” Elissa waved her hand, directing the maids to assist Gwyn in changing out of her sleeping gown into the leggings and stays that were required for the dress.

Mid-change, as the stays were being pulled tight, she grouched, “Why can’t I just wear my armor? I’m the blighted Warden-Commander on top of everything else, and I don’t have to mash what little bosom I have into these things in the vain hope of making cleavage.”

Nearly choking on her wine as she laughed mid-sip, Elissa managed to get out, “Because you can only afford to thumb your nose at the Bannorn with the armor so much, Gwynnie. You’re going from Circle Mage to the pinnacle of politics in one fell swoop-”

“Swooping is bad!” Alistair called from the sitting room.

“Shut it, you! It’s a figure of speech, and this is important girl talk!” Elissa yelled back. The maids all giggled. From what Viola had told Gwyn on previous visits, under Anora laughter had been rare, to the point where it felt forbidden. With Elissa and Alistair, even with the stress of helping Ferelden recover from the Blight, there was a light-heartedness and joy that would hopefully mean that laughter would ring in the palace halls once again.

Maker willing, she could help Elissa recover from the loss of their first attempt at an heir, and there would be a child’s giggles to add to the laughter. Maybe... with the Circle being more independent, and mages being looked on more favorably, she could ask for Solona to be summoned to care for Elissa and oversee any future pregnancies.

The dress was swept around her , and fastened up the front with the tiniest hooks that were then hidden by a panel sewn with vines. A split went up to mid-thigh which showed the matching leggings, and kidskin boots. “Why bother with a dress if it’s going to be split like this?”

Alistair came into the doorway, grinning, “I’ve given you a horse to ride in on from the stables. Lovely Forder named Belena. The split allows you to ride astride and it’ll drape the skirt over her withers in a lovely way.”

“Oh Maker, I have to ride a horse?”

“Don’t worry, Belena’s gentle as a lamb, and almost as smart as Hero.” Hero let out an insulted sounding bark from behind Alistair. “I said *almost* as smart, you blighted hound!”

Another indignant woof came from behind him. “How is it the dog always manages to get the last word on me?”

“Because you let him, Ali,” Gwyn giggled. Elissa nudged Alistair’s elbow, then tilted her head at Gwyneth in an odd gesture. The elf raised an eyebrow at the both of them.

“What? Oh! Right, yes. Viola,” The maid dropped into a curtsy as Alistair picked up a box that Elissa had set on the side table next to her at some point. “Maker’s breath, please stop that. Viola, take this box here and help Lady Gwyneth put the contents in her hair.”

“Yes, Your Majesty.”

Alistair grimace-grinned, “Thank you, Viola.”

Viola took the box and escorted Gwyn to the stool in front of her vanity. Every so often, Gwyn found it so odd to have her own rooms, her own vanity, even people whose whole

responsibility was to make sure she was comfortable and content. Life in the Circle Tower hadn't prepared her for this. She took a few deep, shaky breaths, clamping down on the rising anxiety before it could rise up too much.

"My lady?"

"I'm all right, Viola. Nerves."

Viola nodded, "Understandable, my lady."

The maid opened the box, and lifted out strands of gold thread interspersed with faceted peridots. She let out a little gasp of delight, "Oh, these will match your dress perfectly, my lady, and look lovely in your hair!"

Quick fingers braided Gwyn's hair with the strands woven in, and then twisted and pinned the braids into a coronet that glittered with green gems every time she moved her head. "It's perfect, Viola, thank you."

Viola beamed, and bowed out of the room at Alistair's gesture. "The queen and I need to have a word in private with Lady Gwyneth."

The Viola and the other maids exited, and Elissa moved to the sitting room, closing the door behind her as soon as the maids were gone. Alistair tucked a single lock that had escaped the braids behind the point of Gwyn's ear. "You are so beautiful. If Ferelden weren't in such tight financial straights, I would give you emeralds instead, to go with your perfect eyes."

Gwyn tilted her head into his palm. "I don't need emeralds, Ali. Just you, or a rose you picked because it reminded you of me."

"Ah, Gwyn, stop." Red crept up his neck and ears.

She stood on her tiptoes, brushing a kiss across his lips, then running her fingers along the soft fur edging his gambeson. “Let’s go, my love. I have to go play hero for the day.”

Camp NaNo Day 20 Prompt - Foreign

Chapter Summary

Fenris finds Marian Hawke different, and very frustrating.

From the moment he realized the woman was a mage, he began to notice just how much she stood out from the rest of the people of Kirkwall. He decided it was because she wasn't a native, but a refugee from Ferelden.

Instead of slinking through the streets and glancing over her shoulder, always wary of the Templars or the guard, she stood straight and tall, halberd strapped to her back or held proudly in her hand. No one really looked twice; they didn't expect a mage to know how to use a halberd, for one. Fereldans had also expelled the Orlesians from their home using halberds and pikes against the mounted Chevaliers, so her choice of weapon was not considered unusual for one from that realm.

Her accent, like his own, marked her as not being a Kirkwaller the moment she spoke, even as the tan of her skin made it seem like she should come from sunnier climes than she was born to. Antivan blood through her mother, and Rivaini through her father, so she said.

The magic she wielded without shame and with an ease even some magisters hadn't displayed set her apart, of course. There was a courtesy displayed that set her above any other mage he'd met, as well. She never used her magic on him, even after the abomination taught her a Heal so she could help triage if necessary. If he needed help, she would use bandages and potions, and asked before laying a hand on him. Her touch was light, hesitant, ever mindful of the fact that his markings hurt when touched incorrectly, or had magic forced upon them.

The few times his injuries had been severe enough to warrant magical healing, the confusing, maddening woman would ask if she had his permission first. If it was beyond her skill, she would make the abomination ask and avoid touching him, and ask throughout the whole process if anything hurt and if he was well.

With every mage he'd known before, they were arrogant, looking down on those who didn't have the ability to bend the Fade to their will. Non-magical people were to be looked down on, used for whatever purpose the mage chose, and then discarded at their leisure. One such as he was a tool, an object. Never a person.

What truly marked her as different wasn't her magic, though. It was *her*. Always a quick joke, a sunny smile, or a question of genuine concern for one's well-being. The people native to the City of Chains were beaten down in a way he hadn't seen in his travels. Smiles were false, a transaction from buyer to seller and vice-versa, pinched out of faces set in a perpetual frown of displeasure with a Maker that the ill-humor to trap them in the city.

But she, the Fereldan refugee, someone like him who should be ground down by the miasma of misery the city exuded, was carefree and exuberant in a way he couldn't comprehend.

Everything about her was too foreign. He just didn't *understand* her.

Camp NaNo Day 21 Prompt - Laugh

Chapter Summary

Fen'lath has a private discussion with Celene during the ball at Halamshiral.

The tinkle of crystal and chatter of the guests at the Winter Palace was being used to distract from the bloody events earlier. If not for the stains on the floor, one would never guess that Fen'lath had removed Florienne de Chalons from the equation with one swift stroke of a dagger only half an hour before. Eyes wide with apprehension flashed from behind the masks of the nobility who were keeping their distance from the one elf on Thedas who could draw a weapon in the presence of the Empress of Orlais and not be executed on the spot.

“Do you think if I charged at them and yelled ‘Boo!’, they’d soil themselves and run?” Fen smirked to Dorian as they waltzed around the dance floor, showing off until Celene was ready to speak with her privately.

“My darling, I don’t think they have anything left to soil themselves with, now that they’ve seen the savage Dalish and the heathen Tevinter dance together and look absolutely stunning doing it. They can’t hold a candle to the two of us, even with me in this ghastly creation.”

Fen smiled, a tight grimace more than the real thing. She had to keep the mask on until she was finished with Celene. All of the People in Orlais depended on her making a point with the Empress. The woman had escaped the night with her life, Briala at her side to make a point with the nobility, but the woman herself needed to know that she only ruled by the grace of the elves.

Titters of nervous laughter followed them as others joined them on the floor, a whirl of choking perfume and too much fabric. Fen and the Inquisition stood out, her companions and advisors in tailored military uniforms, bright colorful splashes wherever they stood, or loomed in Bull’s case. Dorian's was a magnificent peacock teal.

Fen herself was in a gown that weeks of arguments with Josephine, Leliana, and Vivienne had created. Based on a Dalish Keeper’s robes in a rich purple that matched her *vallaslin* ,

and was an overt show of support for Celene, it sparkled with strands of crystal. No paste, not in the Empress's presence, but she had insisted that ruinously expensive diamonds were not necessary, over Vivienne's objections. Tissue-light fabric fanned out in a 'skirt' and long, flowing sleeves that attached with tiny crystal buttons and were easily exchanged for the torn, bloody scraps left from her previous adventuring. Leliana's doing, although Fen wished getting the blood and sweat dried into the pomaded monstrosity of a hairstyle on her head was as easily undone.

Celene nodded her head to her, a sapphire bird above the flock of white and black attired Orlesian nobles. Time to finish the charade then. Dorian turned her to the edge of the dance floor and escorted her to the Empress. Solas fell in step with her on her left, and they ascended the staircase. Flanked by two of the three people she trusted most in the world, she looked nigh invincible, and she needed that as her heart started pounding against her corset.

She resented that she had one on, and that she felt comfortable wearing a corset. That she could fight, run, fling magic and scale a trellis in a corset. Stupid, useless *shemlen* clothing that served no purpose other than to present her bosom front and center for their lords and ladies to drool over. The Empress fluttered a hand, and Fen followed along with Briala, passing guards and traversing the halls to Celene's private sitting room. The further they got from the ballroom, the easier it was to breathe. The cloying, choking perfumes of the Orlesians weren't thickening the air, and Fen was able to collect herself and harden the mask of civility she wore. Solas took a spot next to the door once they were in the sitting room. Celene's guards dismissed to display the trust the Empress had in her guest. Dorian lounged nonchalantly, and the two men worked together silently to put a soundproof barrier around the entirety of the thing. It wouldn't do to have guards swarming in while she was making her point with the Empress.

"Inquisitor Lavellan, I thank you for your assistance in keeping my throne." Celene sat in a high-backed chair, the back of the chair flat to the wall. "I will not forget the Inquisition, and you will have my full support for the coming battles against this Corypheus."

"Celene," Both the Empress and Briala stiffened at Fen's familiarity, since she had not been given permission to speak thus, "I am not going to play your Orlesian Game here. I am not the one you have to thank for your throne."

"Is that so?"

“Indeed.”

“Well then,” Celene gave Fen a tight smile, “Who shall I thank for my good fortune?”

“You owe your throne, and your continued good health, to the elves of Orlais, Celene.”

“I do not understand,” She tilted her head to the elf at her side, “Briala?”

“I-”

“Briala doesn’t know, because what she knows, *you* know, and we couldn’t have that. No, Empress, this was something I did with help from my elven scouts. Have you ever heard of an hahrenal?”

“A what?” The Empress was visibly having trouble keeping up with the subject changes.

“A hahrenal is a gathering of Dalish clan hahrens, Imperial Majesty,” Briala murmured, an uncertain look crossing her face.

“What does a hahrenal have to do with anything?”

“I called one for all of the elves in Orlais, Dalish and alienage.”

“How? We would have heard-”

“As I said,” Fen was enjoying interrupting the Empress just a little too much, “My elven scouts helped me arrange this. Representatives from each alienage and clan met with me in the Dales as I was traveling through to the Winter Palace and I presented them with a choice. Keep the murderess of the Halamshiral alienage on the throne, or give Gaspard a chance.

Fortunately for you, Celene, they decided that Halamshiral was a mistake on your part compared to Gaspard's history as a Chevalier murdering elves as often as he wished, tipping their ears indiscriminately, encouraging the rape of our people, and then paying for the University to call us animals."

The human empress relaxed, seeming to believe that this was the end of it. Fen nodded to Solas, and in unison, they Fade-Stepped. Solas had Briala, restraining her to prevent her from being able to assist Celene in any way. Fen'lath ended up on the edge of Celene's chair, pinning the woman's legs by kneeling on the skirt of her gown. Her arm was across the Empress's throat, firm and immovable as Celene clawed at it in panic.

"I want you to remember this for the rest of your reign. You owe your throne, your crown, *your life* to the elves who live within the borders of Orlais. They were willing to forgive you. Once. If you ever raise your hand against them, or allow one of those idiot nobles out there to do so, I swear to you, I will tear out your throat myself and hang your corpse from the walls of the city."

"I... did... all that I could... to prevent... it coming... to... violence...before!" Celene choked out past Fen's arm.

"Bullshit! I've read the reports. Instead of slaughtering the alienage, you could have gotten a Grand Cleric or two to call Gaspard and his playwright blasphemers! But no, rather than raise a finger in real effort, you took the easy way. Never again. And you," Fade-green eyes snapped to Briala, "You are going to hold onto the blackmail I found. Represent the elves. Make connections, get sponsors for more of our people to get into the University. Restore the Dales for the People. Protect us. Or else."

She turned back to Celene. "Reign in the Chevaliers. Sponsor elves for the University yourself. Clean up and repair the Halamshiral alienage out of your own coffers. And if you value your life at all, do not think that Briala can shield you if you betray my people again. After all, she is the only elf you can identify, is she not? The rest of us are nameless, faceless entities that drift in and out of your notice every day."

A steely cold smile cut Fen's face. "Have a pleasant evening, Imperial Majesty. I believe I need some air. Don't bother calling the guards, I'm the only one who can save your cesspit of an empire from Corypheus."

Solas released Briala, and Fen climbed off Celene. She gave the shaken Empress a perfect curtsy, then took Dorian's arm. His mustache twitched as he struggled to keep a straight face. They swept out of the room, and as soon as they left Celene's wing of the palace, Fen linked arms with Solas as well and burst out laughing. "Did you *see* the look on her face?!"

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