

Discipline Problems

In the dim light of the tent Bratsy stared down at the sleeping satyr woman. She lay on her side and her chest moved in and out with her breathing. He stared at her breasts and slowly licked his lips. Tentatively he reached out and squeezed one of her nipples. Her mouth opened and she mumbled something incoherent. He caressed her breast and knelt down next to her. Leaning forward he opened his mouth and that was when she opened her eyes and screamed.

Bratsy flinched back and started to his hooves. She brought one of her legs up to her stomach and lashed out catching Bratsy hard in the stomach. Flailing his arms he pitched backward. She sat up and then scrambled to her hooves as Bratsy was starting to get back up again. She screeched at him, "I told you next time I'd tie your ears underneath your chin you little deevil dropping."

Bratsy ran wailing from the tent with Beth practically right behind him. Into the murky pre-dawn darkness he shouted, "She's going to kill me."

An arched foot with three toes appeared from behind a tree and tripped Bratsy. He skidded along the wet ground. Beth jumped right on top of him and grabbed his big floppy goat ears. He started to squeal and she pressed his face hard to the ground gagging him. Csryfed stepped out from behind the tree and casually

said, "An infiltrator, huh? I think we should treat him the way we treat all spies. We'll keep him alive by mystical means while we remove things from him a piece at a time."

From nowhere Thosl appeared. Beth jumped and even Csryfed stepped back and raised one of his three-fingered hands in defence. She said, "Death."

Bratsy squirmed underneath of Beth and made a panicked noise in the back of his throat. Thosl reiterated, "Death," and then after a pause added, "This is such a time of death as we have never known. We suffer it and try all the harder to reward our enemies with it. It is all dark, the black steely shell that cloaks them, expressing not only their future, but also their desire. Should we deal amongst ourselves the same cold fate?"

Bratsy was shaking his head and Beth was sitting less heavily on him. Beth turned to the basilisk and told her, "This wretched little thing of yours was in my tent again. I woke up to him trying to suckle me. If I wanted such a thing I would ask."

Thosl said, "His time of darkness draws near enough."

Csryfed asked, "So you're going to punish your underling?"

Beth piped in, "Otherwise I will make him regret he ever came to this dimension."

Thosl replied, "What more punishment than the constant hovering of imminent death that surrounds

need he, or any of us for that matter? Do you punish your own troops? Thirty lashes? The cries of the tormented await."

Csryfed tilted his football-shaped head to the side, a move that he had picked up from some of the First String members. He said, "We are a civilised military. There is no lashing of it members."

Thosl said, "This soldier will be redressed and the situation handled."

Csryfed said, "Go ahead then."

Thosl looked directly at the leader of the recon squad and said, "It will be done when I have deemed the time appropriate."

Csryfed said, "Sergeant Thosl, the time is now."

Thosl told him, "Sergeant Major Pentax, I will do it in my own good time. You must respect that I am not in your chain of command."

Csryfed recoiled as he had been struck. He said, "Such insolence will not be tolerated. My rank is higher than yours and that is all that matters. It is all one chain and you must bow to my superiority."

Thosl told him, "You will release the Nechistai Sila into my custody now."

Csryfed began to cast a spell. Thosl shook her head and said, "Such a waste of time when it is all that we have left to us. The yawning chasm spreads beneath you and you will try to resist but it is the irresistible. The tide is coming in, the black wash of hard unrelenting hatred."

Swept away we will be, and yet you persevere in your limited struggle to remain dominant, to be pertinent, to continue to live."

Csryfed completed his chant. Thosl raised her neck all the way up, threw her head back, and laughed. Beth got to her hooves and dragged Bratsy up to his. She whispered to him, "Your Sergeant is in trouble now. You'd better head it off while you can. Don't think this means I've even considered forgiving you."

Beth stepped back and kicked Bratsy squarely in the left buttock. He stumbled forward and then ran the few remaining steps to stop in front of Thosl. He said, "Miss Thosl, we should go where we are more welcome."

Csryfed began a new spell. His voice rose to a high trembling pitch unlike anything that Beth had ever heard from her commander. She backed away. Thosl calmly began a spell of her own. She completed hers quickly. She stepped forward and disappeared. Bratsy stood where he was and looked around wild-eyed. With Thosl gone Csryfed raised his hand to the sky, one long gnarly-knuckled finger raised. He slowly lowered it at Bratsy. Beth screamed, "Sergeant Major, no!"

He unleashed the spell at the hapless little Russian demon. From the clear sky lightning lanced down and struck the basilisk's charge. Bratsy collapsed to the ground. Beth looked at Csryfed, "You've killed him! Fried him to a crisp!"

Csryfed turned around, his thin robe fluttering, and

strode away. Beth ran over to Bratsy and picked him up, pulling him into her lap, and cradling his head on her breasts. He opened his eyes part way and coughed hard. Beth almost dropped him. His voice cracked as he said, "He tried to kill me."

Beth stroked his greasy hair. He closed his eyes again until she told him, "Dawn is very near."

His eyes shot open and he jumped to his feet and almost fell over again. He shook his head and spreading his legs a little planted his hands on the ground. He transformed in a mangy looking black wolf and unsteadily started to trot away. Beth looked on after him. He'd gotten more than even he had deserved.

Csryfed was in General Maxwell's tent. He was saying, "She totally refused to acquiesce to my authority."

Thosl burst into the tent. Max tried to give her a stern glare but the basilisk didn't even look at him. She went right straight up to the Sergeant Major and grabbed him by the shoulder. He started to say something and tried to pull away. She sunk her claws into his shoulder like hot knives into butter. He shrieked and Max got to his feet. Thosl brought Csryfed to his knees. He continued to scream as she wriggled her claws. Max planted his hands on the table and vaulted over it.

Finally Thosl looked at him and he hesitated a moment until her eyes returned to the Aarden Tek skewered by her fingers. Max grabbed her wrist with his

bionic hand and told her, "Let the Sergeant Major go."

Without letting go she said, "This kreck nearly killed my associate Bratsy."

Max said, "Let go, and we'll talk about it."

She spread her claws opening his shoulder even further then pulled free of his flesh. She shook off the General's grip. Max dragged Csryfed up into a chair. He went back around behind the table and sat in his own chair. He asked Csryfed, "Is this true? Did you hurt the little fellow?"

His voice still at a high pitch and ragged from his heavy breathing said, "This one left as I was calling lightning from the sky, so as a lesson I struck the little rapist in waiting."

Thosl roared, "Do you not know lightning is highly dangerous to Nechistai Sila?"

Max asked, "Rapist?"

Thosl continued, "This _being_ lies, I have not seen him since the last meeting."

Max said to Thosl, "Where is Bratsy?"

She answered, "Resting in my tent and recovering from his brush with death. He was seriously burned and in a terrible state of shock."

Max told her, "I want to talk to him, even if I have to go there."

She nodded and said, "We should go then."

Max looked at Csryfed and asked him, "Can you heal that with a spell or some kind of internal thing?"

Csryfed clutched his shoulder practically holding it together. He shook his head. Max picked up his radio to call the MASH team. Thosl told the General not to bother. She turned her crimson glare on the Sergeant Major turning him to stone. Max gaped at her. She told him, "I will revert him to normal, as well as heal his wound, when we return."

Max told the basilisk, "You are way out of line, Thosl."

She said, "So was this being here when he nearly killed my associate, and then to have the nerve to say that I was at fault, so much so, as being there where I was not."

Max asked, "What were you doing?"

She told him, "I was in my tent making my morning preparations. 2nd Lieutenant Walker came in with your orders. He is with Bratsy right now. He offered to use the healing spell that I taught him."

He said, "I really wish you hadn't stoned him like that."

She explained, "He will not bleed any further, nor will he suffer the pain while he is altered."

They entered Thosl's tent. Chris was there and Bratsy was wrapped up in a blanket. Chris said to Max, "This little guy was in a terrible state. I hear Sergeant Major Csryfed did it? Shot the fellow with a lightning bolt?"

Max confirmed it. He asked, "How long, Chris, were you in contact with Thosl this morning?"

Chris replied, "I've been here the last hour and a half now."

Max said, "Well Csryfed said that Thosl was over near the recon team's camp just prior to him coming to my tent."

Chris asked, "Where's Csryfed now?"

Max gave Thosl a dirty look, which she didn't even catch. She was kneeling next to Bratsy and stroking his hair gently. Max said, "Csryfed is a stone statue sitting in my tent right now."

A look crossed Chris' eyes but then was gone almost as soon as it appeared. He said slow and even, "There is no way that Sergeant Thosl could have been over at the recon squad's camp."

To Thosl, Chris said, "I hope you can undo the petrification."

She said, "Yes, and I can mend the damage as well if he merit's such a reprieve."

Then from behind everyone at the door of the tent Thosl said, "Death."

Everyone turned to look. Another Thosl stood by the door. That same one said, "The only reprieve is death."

Max asked, "What the shock is going on? Thosl, what is this?"

The one kneeling next to Bratsy said, "I demand you drop that form this instant."

The entire tent filled with a palpable sense of sorrow and emotional pain. The kneeling Thosl gave the other one a look that could kill without even a hint of magic. That other Thosl dropped to its knees. The demand was repeated. The other Thosl began to shimmer, except it was shadows instead of light. Her form began to essentially unravel. In its place there was a wispy spectral form. Thosl said, "Many things have fallen into place now. There seemed undue concern about me. Never mind the disproportionate number of odd and leading questions."

Max said, "Well fill the rest of us in Thosl. I haven't the slightest clue what is going on."

She said, "This is the haunting entity that I brought back from Tolkeen. It approached me in an alley in my own form, spouting rubbish about death and destruction and darkness. It had fixated on my accidental encounter with the cyborg. Perhaps it had initially been there at the scene and had only manifested in a perceptible manner at that later time. I have given it opportunities to manifest other forms, like the wolf that was part of my pseudo-attack on the Coalition troops. It appears though that its fixation on me has persisted and it has been impersonating me."

Chris said, "So it was the ghost that came to us in the tent and then disappeared that one afternoon, Max. I have to guess that G'lishi saw it as well. He had strange questions the one day about giving magic to Thosl."

Max asked, "So, Thosl can you break it of this habit? Or do we have to destroy it."

She told him, "We do not, I believe, have the means to destroy it. It is unwise to try to push it away as then it would become a free agent to do as it pleases. I will have to break it of the habit somehow. I will take care of it General."

He said, "See that you do."