

The tower before me was a foreboding thing. You would think having seen it a dozen times or so would've mitigated that, but context is ever so important. I used to take comfort in the fact that even in a magocracy we little mundane serfs couldn't be used as slaves. That much was still against the law one way or another. Used to being the key term here though, for all that even the most inept of the citizens with magic at their call liked to taunt us about how much we didn't understand they were still right. Smug and hypocritical but in no way incorrect. Now I was getting lessons one after another, and not like a child in The City tends to dream of when young - finding out you've got the gift and being carted off to an academy. I was getting them the hard way, from the top down. Everything in my body was cold when I reached for the large brass knocker on that door, and the sound it made striking home was like the pounding of a Judge's gavel. It served much the same purpose, it passed sentence on my future. Not for crimes in this case, but for failing to pay debts to the wrong people one too many times.

I wish I could say I had been wronged to get here but I'm trying to get out of the habit of lying to myself. Might be too late to do me any good, but you never know. Staring here at rune inscribed stone that I could swear isn't quite aligned the same way each time I look back at it and really pay attention I tell myself it might not be too late, or maybe I'm just lying to myself there too. I told myself the next loan would pan out so many times, that I couldn't keep failing forever and eventually I'd make myself rich enough to become a merchant. Provide for my family. Every single one of them fell through though, and then my debt was bought out by one of the Warlock houses. Which is why I'm standing here in front of the thing, indentured and all that. Can't be a slave, I'm still human so there's limits on what they can do to me. That somehow helps take the edge off the fear, but I'm still standing under a dark shadow with my arms wrapped tight around myself. Listening to footsteps descending a staircase grow ever closer.

I couldn't say I knew what to expect, but certainly it was not some mousey looking apprentice. Dark green robes but no patches of office, little round

spectacles, pocket watch on a gold chain, a small rolled up parchment that I could just make out had my signature from the bank on the bottom of it. That watch shut with an audible click when she met my eyes. Her smile was slight, but seemed like all her kind. Like she knew something I didn't, and wasn't going to tell me. At least her tone sounded soft though (kind of like the rest of her - she seemed a bit on the plump side under all that dark hued silk),

"You're right on time, excellent. Come along quietly, we'll get you something to eat first and then prepare you for the rest."

Come along quietly she said, like a Watch member. I did exactly that though, somehow I felt like I couldn't do anything else. There were a half dozen things I wanted to say. Three useless platitudes, two desperate rebellious challenges, one terrified whisper. None of them actually passed my lips though, as soon as I tried to will that to happen I felt some kind of numb weight across my shoulders and spine. Felt the entire batch of them die on my tongue as my feet began to mechanically follow her up the stairs. I couldn't tell you how long the staircase was, I should've been aching all through my legs by the time we reached the top but I wasn't. I should've been able to keep track of how high up we'd just gone, but there was some kind of fog settling in over my mind and a pair of buttocks under green silk swaying in front of me. In hindsight maybe that had more to do with not realizing how long it took to get up the stairs than some sinister magic.

The doors opened though which drew my attention elsewhere. I was still following some three steps or so behind her, that wouldn't change for anything until she said otherwise, but my eyes were free to wander. The room was circular (of course it was, it was in a tower) and bare on most of the walls. The center housed a small table though, with a tea service and two chairs. When that cheery voice of hers uttered 'take a seat' that's exactly what I did. Not exactly sure I remember doing it but there's the tea service in front of me, little biscuits and sugars and things. She ends up sitting across from me not a moment later. The next words I hear shake the fog away, they don't command so much as suggest -



maybe inspire a little.

"You can relax now you know, have some tea and feel free to get into the cakes if you like. You must be hungry."

She was right. I felt famished, also a touch nauseous but I could swear I remember tea being good for that. My hands looked small reaching for the tea cup and pot, memories came to me of reaching for play sets as a child. Understandable since that's rather how I felt compared to this girl, who sat across from me with that strange aloof confidence. Not condescension as I expected but instead a sort of patient expectation. Not sure exactly how long I spent at this. I'm holding the cup now, sipping at it and almost smiling, but I swear I felt like I was pouring for ten minutes and added about twelve sugars to this ludicrously small cup. She's talking about things I already know. Like every one of those little biscuits I nibble down while drinking from this endless tea cup is some failure of mine being recited for the court. Except we're alone, and I know we both know these things already. The first thing that she says that I actually really hear, that means something to me, falls on the table like a weight.

"So. I know you meant well, but sometimes one has to give up and live with a different kind of purpose. We bought out your debts, nobody's coming for your family. They'll have to get by without you but that's just how the world works. What matters now is we get you started for what you'll be doing for us from now on."

It wasn't that I had expected to avoid this mind you. I was indentured now, within certain limits I had to do anything she or the masters of the tower wanted. Some small part of me wondered where those masters were right about then but really it was one voice amid a cacophony. A chorus which fell silent when she spoke again. "We're full up on servants and the like really, so I'm afraid it'll be more of a- well-" I was feeling hazy as she spoke. She had at some point stood up, taken a couple of steps around the table toward me. I stared up at the dimple in her chin, watching her lips move and only half comprehending. She had raised one alabaster hand and placed her palm against my forehead.

"Kind of akin to livestock."

Disoriented isn't the word for this feeling that fell across my mind at her touch. It was deja-vu for something I had never felt before, disconnection with my body and yet feeling every inch of it being crawled over and pulled apart by ants. She looked like the tower. That was the thought that dredged itself out of my mind like a wrecked wagon being hauled out of a mud pit. She looks so huge, pristine and tall and immovable. The next thing about myself that I'm aware of feels like being snapped back to wakefulness after drifting to sleep, and yet we haven't moved. She still stands there smiling down at me in that strange fashion. Like she knew something I don't.

That hand of hers is still put to my forehead I think, I- no, she's got them folded under her chest. Way up there. Why is she so tall?

"So you know there's rules about what we can do to citizens, but you'd be amazed at the loopholes."

She reached one of those hands down and took mine in it, like a child's hand in her mother's. My fingers are dainty and.. green? Pale green.

"I told you you must be hungry, and because I told you, you were. You guzzle down a transmogrification tincture and some priming agents in the biscuits."

Her fingers close around my tiny hand and wrist, her other hand brushes through hair that's longer and thicker than it ought to be, past an ear that's just enormous and comes to a pointed tip. The journey those cold fingers take across the contours of my ear leaves me gasping in her grip.

"Which brings us to now. A mage, and a new little goblin for the tower's power stores."

There's a gentle spark from her fingertips. My hand, the tip of my ear, I feel a jolt run from one to the other - right across my heart. I watch as the clothing that had hung around me like a tent evaporates. For some reason when



the instinct to roll out of the now far too large chair hits me I'm actually able to act on it. I roll, going right underneath the arm rest and tumbling what looks like so much further to the floor than it used to be. Yet when I land it's not in a painful sprawled heap of limbs but kind of.. bouncy? There's a little roll done and I'm up running for the stairs toward the door out! Or.. I should be? A fast step, another, an awkward one where my thighs rub together, then I'm tumbling face first toward the floor when this time it's not a rub so much as a slap together and an abrupt stop. The impact left me a bit dazed but when I pushed up on my palms and tried to get my legs under me I could feel before I saw that there was just a great deal more leg than there used to be. There were at least two seconds of dumbly staring at them, watching the oddly colored flesh just billow outward like an inflating water balloon. Two seconds, if she had been even trying to catch me it would've been more than enough, and yet for some reason I still try to run. Try being the operative word, my first step goes more toward a waddle as my thighs swell out to something approaching the width of my torso - at some point my hips must have compensated a little because the next swing of my leg doesn't send me over again. Instead it just sends wobbling shockwaves through my lower body entire. Ripples that push down into my calves and move just a little further each time, repeating far longer than they should and leaving my ankles bloated to the point of hiding all but my toes from my view.

"Ahh that's coming along nicely.."

Her voice. Right behind me, which startles me and sends me toppling forward in another attempt to get away. I still couldn't give you any good reason why I would expect that to work right now but what's reason got to do with it in a place like this? There's a cold popping sensation just as I round the corner toward the first stair, some part of me recognizes it as my hips realigning but that's a minority while the rest of me worries about the fact that I'm now tumbling face first down the stairs. Arms held up in front of my face is all I can manage to mitigate this since the incessant pressure in my legs has left them tingly and bloated and useless. Huge trunks of greenish flesh jutting out and feebly wiggling. I roll and tumble down stone for a few seconds, and I really

ought to be hurt by this but when I land on wider step in the curve of the tower most of me is just numb. Face into the stone my hands weakly search for purchase to push me upward, and my legs comically wiggle. I hear footsteps behind me, and a faint gurgling noise which I slowly realize is coming from my own gut. I'd been pushing up, my waist resting on the ground with my hands doing the lifting but that wasn't the case of a second or two ago. My navel pressed itself onto the cold stone as my belly collapsed outward like someone had cut the ropes holding a tightly bound sack of meat together. Flesh billowed out all under and around me, my weight flattening it a bit against the steps, my hands stabilizing me only until the bloating growth caught up to my chest and shoulders. I tried to curl them against my chest at first, not entirely sure why, but slowly they drifted away as my neck and arms fell under the sway of the same loose tingling magic I'd been infected with. While my neck blimped into place and left me forcibly looking upward and unable to turn my head an attempt to speak the word 'help' ended in a gasping intake of air that lasted a lot longer than it ought to have.

Her leisurely pace finally caught up to me right about then. I felt two things. Her hands closing around my hips and lifting me with far more ease than I would've expected, and the sucking in of air that I couldn't seem to stop causing each of the two domes of my ass to share the same fate as the rest of me and stretch obscenely outward. I felt sure parts of me must be bigger even than they were before in spite of being all of three feet tall. If that.

"It takes a phenomenal amount of magic to run some of the tower's defenses and spells. We used to have the apprentices focusing for hours a day, which they hated as you can imagine."

I watch her lick one of those dainty fingers of hers, then feel her press it hard into my navel. Wiggling around in there a bit. There's a cold shiver that runs through every inch of my being before I feel something like pressure welling up. A rumbling in the stomach, churning and hissing.

I watch my view turn toward the ceiling as I'm picked up, watching upside



down as we pass the doorway I entered. That incessant pressure starts to focus itself in the most humiliating of ways. (Briefly I wonder about it feeling humiliating when I've been reduced to a naked goblin-like body blown up like a balloon. Briefly.) My body wars with what to lose control of first, but in the end the two bulbous globes of my ass are the casualty that starts the cascade. A kind of white blue eruption of something that felt like an oily mist billowing from vibrating buttocks. My thighs failed their clenching efforts next and left another jet of the same sort bursting its way out of me. My eyes roll back, watching stone patterns in the walls pass by as I'm walked ever further down, the fireflies behind us are gathering in a storm is what I think, what I almost try to say. Speaking doesn't happen though, I only find my open lips spewing forth more of the same odd matter. I smell ozone, taste mint, then endure a moment of disconnection that might have been a bit of a blackout since my next coherent thought is that I'm still a helpless fleshy orb being held by the buttocks, still erupting from three orifices, and being marched toward the center of a dark room. A circle in the middle glows a faint bluish hue but I can't quite see what's in there from the angle my host holds me at.

"So, this is where you'll be for the foreseeable future my friend. Every so often, maybe every ten or fifteen years your mana font will run dry and we'll fish you out. Take care of you for a couple months until you're ready to go back in."

All I know after that is that I'm falling. I felt her hands let go, I see blue light dancing off stone walls and then the wet slap of flesh landing on flesh. Not really able to see much of anything apart from greenish blue skin and feeling my eyes dry out from the constant blast coming from what I vaguely realize is the swollen ass of another former human in exactly my condition.

"At least you have lots of friends. See you in a few years hon."