

The Shore

By Lonelyrider

James' pretty pegasus filly sparring partner rode on her black shire mare beside Magnus and his brown-furred brother. Ahead of her many protectors, Lonely drove her small cart with her sturdy highland pony mare Bridgette pulling, loaded with food and flowers for the local poor and the ornate bible her old flame and mother had gifted to her last Christmas.

"She's unusually quiet today, I'm a little concerned, but I can't pry into her business." Magnus said quietly; Amber gave him her attention and

his brother raised a hand; all three pulled on the reins and stopped their big mounts. Magnus called ahead, his voice strong but gentle with her.

"Miss Rider, please halt briefly!"

"Of course, mighty Magnus!" Lonely obeyed, she took the opportunity to feed her mare a carrot snack and offer her water from a wooden bucket.

"I'm scouting ahead, you and Amber stay with her." Magnus's hunter brother said, his horse chomping on the bridle, beside him his hunter pet black bear and her cub paced, eager to track.

"Fine, let her water your beasts

before you do, brother." Magnus offered. His brother nodded and tossed Lonely a thank you coin as she watered his big horse and fed him an extra fat apple from the sack in her cart. With that he rode ahead, letting his pet bear take the lead. Lonely watered Magnus' and Amber's shires and they thanked her, then gently shook the wagon reins and they were off again at a slow walk. Magnus' warhorse nibbled at Amber's mare curiously as they rode side by side.

"I've seen James since the move early today, we practiced fought in the courtyard of his mansion, it's in the black swamp. He's shaken

without her." Amber said, her face strong but caring at the same time. "The black swamp? Why would Lord Abaddon put his son there, tis a harbor of black magi."

"I'm startled you didn't know, Lord, ahem, James' father is an infamous black sorcerer. I don't think James is happy about this move, but he loves his father and desperately wants to please him. Not a word of this to anyone, Magnus. James is my friend and this is personal information." Amber bared her equine fangs; the two knew each other, they were from the same tribe of carnivorous pegasi barbarian fighters.

"But of course, Lady FierceFang. I work for James' under the contract of he and his father, I'd also never break confidence. I am pleased you decided to accompany my brother and I on this outing to protect Miss Rider." Magnus said, gesturing towards Lonely; they'd reach the tall sea rock where Lonely would set up by, she stopped and set Bridgette loose to rest with a feedbag, Magnus pulled his reins as Amber hopped off her tall mare with a swift leap using her wings.

"Now, Lonely, let us help you. I sparred with James today, he sends you endless love. He misses you very much. You and his father were

all he spoke of, ahh yes, his mother too." Amber comforted, she and Magnus helped Lonely unload the fruits bread and cheese Lonely had brought; now that her best male friend Father Dixon had left for a crusade, only Lonely was keeping his legacy of feeding the local poor alive.

"Oh...oh how is he, is he well? I do miss him so! Is he hale? Oh, thank you, both of you!" Lonely gushed; with the help of the two stronger taller fellow equines her table was all set for the poor, who started to wearily approach in a line, she greeted them sweetly with a wave. "Go on, my dear lady. Fear not, lady

Amber tells me your sweetheart is hale, just sad without you. We shall keep guard as you attend to your Christian mission." Magnus assured, Lonely smiled kindly at him.

"Oh...thank you, both of you! Here, like James would do, if he were here. For you both." Lonely tipped each a gold coin from her tiny pouch.

"Now, milady, accepting coin from my master is one thing, but from my protected charge? Thank you, but I cannot." Magnus handed it back.

"Magnus, go on! I'll make sure I get it to him another way, go on then." Amber whispered kindly, Lonely

mouthed an excited thank you to her and turned with open arms to the ragged visitors, furries and humans and other folk alike.

"Welcome, welcome all to Father Dixon's Table for the poor, please, make yourselves at home. Bread, Miss? Here, take some cheese and wine too, after everyone has been served, you are welcome to stay for bible stories for the children as well. Yes, I've brought water, here you are sir. Tea? Yes, I can brew you some."

Magnus and Amber stood guard atop the sea rock, far out on the horizon, they could see Magnus' sturdy brother still chasing his

ursine pet and patrolling the area, the sea wind ruffled their thick manes.

"My, I've never seen anyone multitask like her." Amber admired, looking down at Lonely serving soup to hungry children, who shoved each other they were so famished, at the same time she read to them many holy words from Jesus.

"Yes, her priest friend taught her well. It's terrible that he went away in the manner he did. This stays between us as well, I believe he was jealous." Magnus told amber, stomping his feathered hoof as they stood erect guarding Lonely from

their high vantage point.

"Jealous? My, that is interesting, but of whom?" Amber asked softly.

"Yes, it stays between us, on my honor as a Light Wanderer warrior."

Amber swore, crossing her heart in their tribe's barbarian oath.

Satisfied, Magnus continued.

"Of James." Magnus finished.

"Ahhh...that makes sense."

"Yes, it does, but it hurt her, he could've handled it better, in my mind. Not to say the priest hasn't changed these towns for the better."

Amber nodded and they guarded silently, scanning the horizon, they heard Lonely reading a bible story to the unruly children, who crawled

over each other and fought for closer spaces, they heard the haunting blow of Magnus' brother's horn on the wind.

"Go! I'll guard her, I'll blow my own if trouble comes, but I scent nothing on the wind." Amber told him.

Magnus nodded gruffly and rode away fast in the direction of his brother, who blew his horn again.

Amber watched Lonely read the children another story, and then Lonely gave away supplies to every poor soul for their return journey, she'd even brought small home made crochet dolls from her church for the girls and slingshots for the boys. The children shrieked and

played with joy as their parents hefted what they could carry, thanked Lonely, and finally, with much din, they all slowly left. Lonely put away her light table in her cart and the empty sacks, pausing to drink water. Amber scanned the horizon and saw and scented nothing. Below she heard the unmistakable noise of a surge of magic and saw Lonely's small magic hand mirror whoosh with green light, and she smiled and eavesdropped a little, leaning on her spear as she watched the image of big James waving madly at Lonely, the two began to gush to each other how much they missed one another.

"I shouldn't spy on them; I'll move." Amber told herself out loud, she spread her wings and let the sea breeze carry her to a farther rock where she could still guard Lonely and hear her laughter and blushes as she and James talked up a lively storm on their magic mirrors, in the distance, Amber saw Magnus and his sibling riding back towards them, and she knew all was well and relaxed into her spear once more, soon the three barbarians would escort Lonely home to her humble cottage, sending James and his father magical proof that once again they'd escorted her safely; this time, James would

reward all three of them with sacks of gold, for the separation from his love was driving him insane, and he was pleased beyond words with the men and his female friend for ensuring her safety.