[00:11] arynwyn: <The sun has just set. It's autumn and the farmers are coming in from harvesting crops and caring for their animals. The nights have been getting chilly, and warm mead and hot meals are much appreciated by the men as they come in. There has been war brewing in the northern part of the country, and many soldiers have passed through the town/village on their way to battle. Tonight is no different. A regiment from Somerset has set up camp just south of the city, and rumor has it, the Lord himself is with his troops.

Not long after dark, a tall, fair-haired man enters the inn. He has on a shiny breastplate with his coat of arms - an intricate celtic cross. The rest of his armor is out on his horse, which a stable boy is taking care of. His hair is medium length, wavy and golden, his eyes a light blue, his skin creamy. If he weren't so intimidating (only in part because of the sword strapped at his side), he'd look angelic. The crowd in the tavern hushes as he enters and looks around>

[00:17] Socks: <There are a couple serving girls amongst the crowd. Finally one of them, a svelte little blonde thing, sweeps over to him to ask> Care for a seat, sir? Some mead? We've got duck or ham on the menu, if either's your fancy. <she bats her eyelashes up at him. The other serving girl, a brunette, eyes the soldier a bit longer, then resumes her standard activity when a customer makes a grab for her ass. She sidesteps the hand and asks for his order.>

[00:19] arynwyn: <His eyes sweep the room and takes in most everything with keen observation, then he gives a slight nod to the blonde serving girl> Yes, please. Supper and a room, if there is one available. <he doesn't smile but his eyes are kind>

[00:20] Socks: <She beams up at him and clears off a table for him> I can get you a room, sir. Would you care for some company after dinner? <bat bat bat go the eyelashes>

[00:22] arynwyn: <His eyes sweep over her for a moment, and he smiles a bit> As much as I would love company, m'dear, my men are sleeping on hard ground in the cold. I would not feel right if I accepted. <he sits down at the table and sighs wearily>

[00:24] Socks: <she pouts at him a moment, then pats his shoulder> Well, if you change your mind, you just let me know. Now then, you want the duck or the ham, sir? 'Fraid all we got for drink is mead, ale or water. <the brunette is taking orders at the table behind them now. The men make crude passes at her, which she ignores>

[00:26] arynwyn: The ham will be fine, and some mead, thank you. <he frowns in the direction of the men making crude comments>

[00:31] Socks: <His waitress drops a half-assed curtsey and bustles off towards the kitchen. The brunette passes by a moment later, also intent on putting in her orders.>

Man 1: Eh, she's a whippet, compared to Marigold. Not enough upstairs for m'taste anyway.

Man 2: Ought ta be friendlier ta those o' us givin' her tips, that's for sure. Nice handful now and then, nothin' wrong with that.

Man 3: Eh, she's new; she'll learn the trade soon enough. We gots other things more worth worrying over than whether th' new wench'll put out. Things go wrong up north, that shit'll run downhill to us in quick order. <There is a general grumble of agreement>

[00:32] arynwyn: <Says quietly, though loud enough for the men to hear> Perhaps if you showed women a little more respect, they would be a bit kinder to you, sirs. <offhand - he's not even looking at them>

[00:35] Socks: Man 2: <shoots a glare at the soldier's head - not that it's visible to him> No one's talking to you, SIR <saying the word sarcastically> so how's about you shut your pretty mouth.

Man 3: <comments around his mug of mead> You're like ta get your head thumped in, Fred; shouldn't start shit with a soldier.

[00:36] arynwyn: <his jaw muscle clenches a few times, but he manages to ignore the insult> Perhaps you should listen to your friend. <referring to Man 3>

[00:39] Socks: Fred (Man 2): Eh, what're you gonna do? We gotcha outnumbered here. So 'less you plan on slaughtering the whole lot o' us and the town to boot, you best just shut your trap.

Man 1: <laughs>

<The blonde waitress - presumably the aforementioned Marigold - brings a plate of ham and warm bread out, and a flagon of mead. She slides them in front of him> Here you go, sir, nice and hot. <The brunette is carrying a tray to the first table she was at; she once again dances around a grabby hand before serving out the dishes>

[00:42] arynwyn: Thank you, Miss. <he digs in hungrily, but keeps an eye on the men and the brunette waitress>

[00:45] Socks: <the blonde does another half-a-curtsey, smiles and waves at the men behind him in a friendly manner, and bustles off to see to her other tables. The brunette comes up behind him to serve the table their food. They are sullenly silent this time. She arches an eyebrow curiously at the soldier as she passes him. She drops off the tray in the kitchen and heads upstairs with a basket of clean sheets. Not long after she goes up, one of the men from the table rises and heads for the stairs>

 [00:47] arynwyn: <Sets his fork down, waits half a beat, then rises and follows Fred up the stairs, moving exceptionally quiet>

[00:48] Socks: <Fred looks around and spies a single open door at the end of the hallway. The hallway's mostly dark, as are most of the rooms, even the one with the open door. He heads in that direction regardless, and shuts the door behind him>

[00:49] arynwyn: <Follows him to the door, then waits just outside, listening, hand on the knob>

[00:50] Socks: <There's a muttered curse and then the door yanks open - and it's Fred. He narrows his eyes> What're you doin' here then? I'm not some poncy fey thing, even if YOU are so don't you try it. Sword or not, I'll do for you. <raising his fists. Behind him the room is empty - but the window's open, despite the chill in the air>

[00:50] Socks: <The basket of sheets is on the floor>

[00:51] arynwyn: <Smirks just a bit, ignoring Fred, and turns on his heel to head back downstairs>

 [00:58] Socks: <As night goes on, the men get a little mellower thanks to warm mead and hot food. One of the old-timers, set up cozy by the fireplace, regales the inn with stories of the supposed shapechangers who live up north, and how they catch human children and eat them to power their dark magics. Marigold scolds him for telling tall tales, but sneaks him an extra bit of mead regardless.

Eventually, basket now empty of sheets, the brunette comes back downstairs. Attentive ears can hear the innkeeper catching after her about how long it takes to put bloody clean sheets on the beds.

Then a soldier runs in> M'lord! M'lord! <casting about frantically for him before running up to him> M'lord, trouble! [His aide-de-camp, who I can't think of a name for atm] 's been knocked out!

[00:59] arynwyn: <Rises to his feet and strides toward the door at the news> And no one saw anything?

[01:01] Socks: No, m'lord! Not a thing! We heard a scuffle and ducked in and he was just out cold in his tent!

[01:01] arynwyn: <he frowns, his brow creasing> Did you come on horse? <stepping out into the cold night>

[01:02] Socks: Yessir, fast as I could. <his horse's bridle is tossed loosely around a post outside the door>

[01:02] arynwyn: Come along, then. <he mounts the horse and holds out a hand to help the man up behind him>

[01:03] Socks: <the scout climbs up behind him>

[01:04] arynwyn: <takes off for camp, arriving as quickly as the horse can get them there. He follows the crowd to the tent where the aide was knocked out> Stand back, please. Stand back. <he dismounts>

[01:05] Socks: <the scout dismounts and stands back, as ordered. Inside the tent, the aide is being tended to by one of the medics, who will stand at attention when his lord comes in>

[01:05] arynwyn: <he takes in the scene> Is he alright? <is he conscious?>

[01:07] Socks: <He's still unconscious> Just a bad hit to the back of the head; maybe with the handle of something? If whoever it was snuck in past the guards, probably a dagger of some sort. <the tent's contents have been clearly riffled through, the papers and maps especially> He'll have a hell of a headache when he wakes up, but he should be okay. I...I dunno what all is supposed to be here so I don't know what the guy took with him, if anything, sir.

[01:08] arynwyn: <Starts to search the tent to see what is missing>

[01:10] Socks: <one of the maps of the northern country is gone, and notes on their battle strategy seem to have gone missing as well>

[01:10] arynwyn: Damn. <he runs a hand through his hair, thinking> Where are the men who were on guard?

[01:12] Socks: <The medic nods towards the tent flap> [the next highest in command after the Lord himself and his aide] has them outside, sir. They claim they weren't sleeping and...well, I believe them, sir. They're good guys, really. <trying to stick up for his buddies, clearly>

[01:12] arynwyn: <steps outside and glances around for the men> Gentlemen, tell me what happened. Leave nothing out.

[01:14] Socks: <The men speak about standing guard, not being sleepy at all, didn't see or hear nothing 'cept for a scuffle, a thud, and a groan. They ran in, saw the aide knocked out and ran to get [mr. third-in-charge man]>

[01:16] arynwyn: <obviously not pleased, but he doesn't seem angry either> Switch out the guard. Get some sleep. We will have to stay here a few extra days until we can either recover what was lost, or reformulate our plans.

[01:16] Socks: Aye aye, sir! <salute, run off>

[01:17] arynwyn: <he returns to the tent to speak to the medic> I am at the inn. Please update me if [aide]'s condition worsens. I will return in the morning otherwise.

[01:18] Socks: Medic: Of course, sir! <salute>

[01:18] arynwyn: <he leaves the tent and starts back toward the village - on foot>

[01:20] Socks: <it's quiet in the chilly night. By the time he gets back, most of the regulars have returned to their own beds. Marigold is waiting for him at the door> Is everything okay, sir? <she seems to have tugged her shirt lower to show off more ample cleavage, but is otherwise the picture of warm concern>

[01:21] arynwyn: <affords her a small smile> Everything will be fine, thank you. Is my room ready?

[01:23] Socks: Yes sir, up the stairs, to the left, end of the hall. <it is, in fact, the room he followed Fred to earlier> Nice and aired out for you, sir. Though it can get chilly, if you'd like a bedwarmer...? <she could be speaking of a hot water bottle or of herself. Given the smile and the batting eyelashes, she probably doesn't mean the water bottle>

[01:24] arynwyn: <he pulls out a small coin purse and shakes out a few gold coins> For supper, and your service. <he gives her a small bow> I must get some rest. Tomorrow is going to be a long day for me.

[01:27] Socks: <she pouts a little, but accepts the coins> Thank you, sir. <she heads to the kitchen to help finish with the cleaning up. The brunette is mopping up spilled mead nearby. She is, compared to Marigold, on the smaller side all around, except for height, which they nearly share. She looks scrawny in relation to the blonde, but she pushes the mop as if she could WILL the floor clean through the sheer force of her hatred for this job>

[01:28] arynwyn: <considers her a moment, then steps over to her> Miss? Might I make a request? I will compensate you well.

[01:30] Socks: <she doesn't look up at him> Marigold's practically panting to sleep with you. <she comments in a "go away" tone>

[01:30] arynwyn: Ah, you misunderstand me. <seems geniunely embarrassed> I do not wish for... "bed services"... Rather, I need some information.

[01:31] Socks: <she casts him a sidelong look, very green eyes narrowed> What sort of information then, sir?

[01:32] arynwyn: A few things went missing from my soldiers' camp not long ago. If you wouldn't mind keeping an ear-out for any information, I would compensate you. And you would be doing your country a great service.

[01:33] Socks: <she stops mopping and turns to face him directly> Why are you asking me this, and not Mari? You think she's dumb or something?

[01:34] arynwyn: <arches a brow in surprise> Not at all. Quieter people tend to listen better and miss fewer things. If you would rather I ask her, then I will, of course. <studying her closely>

[01:38] Socks: <She's more handsome than pretty, and a soldier's eye might catch the lean muscle in her arms from her rolled up sleeves. She studies him in return. She doesn't seem to be very concerned with being subservient just now. After a moment, she nods> Well, if I hear something I think concerns you, I'll let you know. Good of the country and all that.

[01:39] arynwyn: <gives her a small bow> I appreciate it very much. <pulls out his coin purse and shakes out five gold pieces>

[01:39] Socks: <She shakes her head> I don't want your money. Sir. <she adds as an afterthought>

[01:40] arynwyn: <studies her a moment longer, then puts his purse away and gives her another bow> I am in your debt then, Miss. <he gives her a kind smile, then turns to head upstairs to his room>

[01:42] Socks: I'll remember that. <she comments quietly, then resumes her mopping>

[01:42] arynwyn: <disappears upstairs and into his room>

[The Next Morning]

 [12:54] Socks: <The next morning sees an early fog rise up from the hills to accompany the chill. The skies are clear though, so there's every reason to believe it'll be chased off eventually.

Back at camp, the men are huddled in and around the mess tents, eating rations of hot gruel with their journeybread. The soldiers salute their Lord as they see him approach; those not already standing do so, of course. They direct him to the infirmary tent to see Williams (the aide who just got a name, isn't he happy?)>

[12:56] arynwyn: <Nods to his men as he passes, making his way to the infirmary tent. He steps inside and looks around>

[12:57] Socks: <There's one other soldier and Williams, who's sitting up in bed and reading. he's got a bandage wrapped around his temple but that's about it. He salutes from his bed (the other soldier is asleep)> G'morning, m'lord. I'd get up, but under the circumstances...

[12:58] arynwyn: No, no, please stay seated. You know I'm not one for those formalities. <he sits down at the end of the bed> How are you feeling?

[12:59] Socks: Williams: Well enough, but the doc seems to think I should take it easy for a week. I talked him down to a day of bedrest. <he chuckles> Waking up wasn't so great though. Thought someone'd taken an axe to my head.

[13:01] arynwyn: You will stay on bedrest until we leave, and until we find our missing papers or draw them back up, it might be a few days. <smiles just a little> Do you remember anything?

[13:03] Socks: Williams: <shakes his head> I was putting the maps in order when I thought I heard something behind me. Before I could turn around - THUNK! <he chops one hand into his other palm in demonstration> and out. <he sighs> Sorry, sir. What'd they get? Johnson ((the medic)) wouldn't let me back in the tent to check.

[13:06] arynwyn: Strategic papers and our map of the north. We can redraw our plans - they will need to be changed now that ours are in unknown hands - but getting another map is going to prove difficult. <he rubs a hand over his face> I'm just glad all you got was a smack to the head rather than a knife to the throat.

 [13:07] Socks: Williams: Yeah, well that makes two of us. How's the local inn, by the way? <smile>

[13:09] arynwyn: The bed was comfortable, the food hot, and the service very... enthusiastic. <grins a little embarrassedly>

[13:10] Socks: Williams: Oh, aye? <he laughs> Don't let that get around; the men'll be sneaking up there constantly.

[13:11] arynwyn: <chuckles> I'm glad you're all right, Williams. Get some rest. I'm going to need your head in one piece later when we re-draw our strategy plans. <he stands>

[13:12] Socks: Williams: Aye aye, sir. Don't overdo it with the "enthusiastic" service. <he jokes; he knows his C.O. well enough to know that it's rather unlikely>

[13:13] arynwyn: <grins a little, embarrassed again> Yes sir! <he salutes teasingly>

[13:18] Socks: <Apparently the brunette has today off? She's not around at the inn>

[13:19] arynwyn: <Decides to go door-to-door to talk to some of the residents of the town and find out if they've seen or heard anything... with a full bag of gold, just in case>

[13:22] Socks: <Well, the town certainly appreciates that. But no one knows anything about that. A few of the housewives have choice commentary on this whole "war" business - some in favor, some against, most just worried their husbands and sons will be called upon to serve and possibly die. But of missing papers, secret spies, or anything of the like, there is no credible word, discounting the obvious rivalries between some of the womenfolk (i.e., "Well, I don't know nothin' 'bout tha' m'self, m'lord, but if'n ya ask me, ya ought take a close gander at Mrs. Smith down the lane. High 'n' mighty she figgers herself, aye - prolly higher'n the laws o' man or God, as I figger.")>

[13:26] arynwyn: <Skipped lunch, so he heads back to the inn early in the evening, his stomach rumbling, discouraged and frustrated>

 [13:29] Socks: <Marigold is, of course, there and...perky. She smiles at him; the dinner rush isn't in yet, so she's not too busy> G'evening, sir! We've got some lovely chicken tonight if you'd care for some. <smile smile>

[13:34] arynwyn: <nods> That would be excellent.

[13:36] Socks: Marigold: <beams, pleased and bustles off>

Karen: <hurries downstairs. Her hair's loose, tumbling over one shoulder haphazardly atm, and she's tying on her apron. Maybe it wasn't supposed to be her day off after all. She heads straight to the kitchen and it doesn't take attentive ears THIS time to hear her getting chewed out by the innkeeper - with so few people around at the moment, there's less crowd noise to drown it out>

[13:37] arynwyn: <cocks his head to listen better, wondering why she's getting chewed out this time>

[13:41] Socks: Innkeeper: Where the hell you been all day?

Karen: I'm sorry, sir.

Innkeeper: Marigold could use the help cleanin' the place up. If you're out runnin' around, should at least give the customers some of it!

Karen: <tightly> I'm not whoring, sir.

Innkeeper: Well, I sure as hell don't keep ya under my roof in a room a customer could be usin' so's you can flit about the woods like some forest sprite or something either. You're here to work, you got me?

Karen: Yes, sir. I'm sorry, sir.

Innkeeper: <sighs> Alright, go get started on the dishes until the dinner rush comes. May be that we'll get s'more of those soldiers up here spending that coin.

Karen: I'd be surprised of that, sir.

Innkeeper: No one asked yer opinion. Go on.

[13:43] arynwyn: <leans back in his chair, digesting this, wondering where she was all day when she was supposed to be working>

[13:44] Socks: Marigold: <brings out a plate of chicken, warm, fresh bread, and a flagon of mead> Here you are, sir. <setting it before him> Anything else I can do for you, sir? <smile smile>

[13:45] arynwyn: <studies her a moment, then motions for her to take a seat across from him> If you have a moment...?

[13:45] Socks: Marigold: <seems thrilled with the idea that he wants to spend time with her. She looks over her shoulder, back towards the kitchen where the Innkeeper lurks, then smiles at him and sits in the indicated seat> Yes, sir?

[13:47] arynwyn: Tell me about yourself. Have you always lived here? Do you like working here? <rattles off other questions in a getting-to-know-her way as he drinks some mead>

[13:49] Socks: Marigold: <beams and happily chatters on about how her family's been here her whole life, and her ma took sick and died from the fever about three years back, and her pa's getting old and the farm doesn't bring in as much as it used to so she helps out however she can and it's good working here, the guys're just bein' guys, y'know how they are <giggle> and they're all good folks round here, though none of 'em half as handsome as he is>

[13:50] arynwyn: <listens attentively as he noms his chicken and bread> And how old are you?

[13:51] Socks: Marigold: Oh now that's a question, ain't it? <she giggles> 'm just 20 this past summer, m'lord.

[13:51] arynwyn: <looks a little surprised (or fakes it)> And you're not married?

[13:52] Socks: Marigold: Oh no, sir. Had offers, but...<she blushes lightly> none that really counted. Just stuff said and not really meant at the time.

[13:53] arynwyn: <smiles kindly> I'm sure you'll find someone.

[13:55] Socks: Marigold: Kind o' you to say so, sir. <smiles and stands> I'd best get back to work, if you're done with me? <her smile says she hopes he isn't>

[13:57] arynwyn: <hesitates a moment, glancing at the innkeeper> I do have a few more questions... <he pulls out his purse and shows it to the innkeeper with a nod>

[13:58] Socks: <The innkeeper nods and smiles and goes back to his work>

Marigold: <resumes her seat> What else could one as you want to know about little ol' me? <smile smile>

[13:59] arynwyn: Well, actually, it's more about the customers here. Last night one of my men was attacked and a few things went missing. Have you heard anything? <studies her reaction closely>

[14:00] Socks: Marigold: <blinks> Is he okay?

[14:01] arynwyn: He will be fine, in time, I hope. <making it sound worse than it really was> Have you heard anything?

[14:02] Socks: Marigold: No, sir, not a word. 'Course, not many in here since last night. Most're out in the fields. It was pretty normal night last night 'cept for you comin' in <blush, bat eyelashes> and...<pauses, thinking. She looks back at the kitchen a moment> ..well, perhaps I shouldn't say.

[14:06] arynwyn: <leans forward> If you did say, no one would know except me. <he reaches across and touches her cheek, turing her face back to his> For the good of our country. <charming smile>

[14:08] Socks: Marigold: <blushes harder> Well, it's just that...Karen never takes that long to change the sheets out. I thought it was odd, but she said she was daydreamin' or something. I teased her 'cause I thought it was 'bout you, but she said it wasn't and...<she shrugs> Karen's been real nice to me since she got here a couple weeks ago, and I'm sure she wouldn't hurt anyone, really. But it is the only other odd thing about last night, aside from an angel striding in here in armor. <blush beam flirt>

 [14:10] arynwyn: <he chuckles> Well, if you hear anything, you will let me know, won't you? <he shakes five gold coins from his purse and slides them across the table to her>

[14:12] Socks: Marigold: Oh, of course, sir! <smiles and scoops up the coins happily> Thank you, sir! <she stands> Dessert, sir? The missus is makin' raspberry cobbler.

[14:12] arynwyn: That sounds excellent. <he smiles>

 [14:14] Socks: Marigold: <bustles off to go get him a plate. The innkeeper can be heard offering Marigold as a shining example of customer service to Karen, who is presumably still back there buried up to her elbows in dishes>

 [14:16] arynwyn: <ponders questioning Karen, but doubts his ability to charm her. He frowns, deep in thought>

 [14:18] Socks: Marigold: <comes out with a plate of warm raspberry cobbler and another flagon for him> Here you are, sir. The innkeeper said to say that your officers are welcome to join you up here, sir. Especially the one who got himself hurt. Prob'ly better he convalesce here, hm? We can get some hot water for baths too.

[14:19] arynwyn: <he nods> Depending on how long we must stay, I might have to take you up on the offer. Please tell him I said thank you.

[14:20] Socks: Marigold: How long \*were\* you planning on staying, sir? Just...out of curiosity...? <smile smile>

[14:20] arynwyn: Planning? Overnight. Now? <he sighs> I really can't say. It depends on if we recover what was taken. I hope a week at the very most.

[14:22] Socks: Marigold: <she chuckles> Oh, don't tell me that, sir! I might be tempted to go down and nick something else to keep you here longer. <bat eyelashes. The farmers are starting to come in from the fields now, so she bustles off to tend to her usual custom>

[14:23] arynwyn: <he finishes his cobbler, pays (leaving a hefty tip), and heads up to his room, pensive>

[14:25] Socks: Karen: <knocks on his door about an hour later> Laundry service, sir. Clean sheets. <she says matter-of-factly>

[14:27] arynwyn: <he gets up and pulls the door open. He's shirtless, shoeless - okay, he's naked except for his breeches> Please come in. <he looks tired and frustrated. The table is covered with papers, a quill, and a bottle of ink>

[14:30] Socks: Karen: <she's got her hair tied back now. Her eyes dip over his chest briefly, but land longer on the papers on his table. She comes in with her basket of clean sheets and heads for the bed to change it> Got laundry needs doing? <she asks gruffly. Okay, so she does sneak a peek back at him quickly before he turns around>

[14:31] arynwyn: No, thank you. <he closes the door and stands in front of it> Have you heard anything useful?

[14:33] Socks: Karen: <shakes her head> Not a word, sir. But then, we're not as busy during the day. <she's doing a decent job of...approximating the local accent, but even if he hadn't been told she wasn't from around here, she just doesn't sound like the rest of the villagers. Whether she's TRYING to sound like them or has only just started picking up their cadences due to living here for a bit is a harder to say> And everyone 'round these parts are pretty simple folk, really.

[14:34] arynwyn: <he crosses his arms, frowning> Where did you go last night? When you were supposed to be changing the sheets in here?

[14:35] Socks: Karen: <halfway through changing the sheets now, she looks over at him> What makes you think I went somewhere, sir? <being, of course, unaware that she was followed - first by Fred and then by the Lord here>

[14:36] arynwyn: A little bird told me. Please answer the question.

[14:38] Socks: Karen: <arches an eyebrow at this "little bird" comment> Just needed a breather. Some time away from grabby hands and lewd comments. Sir. <there she goes, forgetting the sir again. She's not doing it sarcastically or being uppity. She seems to genuinely forget it>

[14:39] arynwyn: <really doesn't care if he's called sir or not> So where did you go? To the stables? Take a walk? End up south of town, by chance?

[14:41] Socks: Karen: <stops all pretense at changing the sheets to put her hands on her hips> Just what're you getting at, Sir? <okay that one was a little uppity. She is in NO way acting like a servant. She's wearing the same sort of undyed peasant blouse - rough corset - long skirt outfit as Marigold downstairs (though Mari's blouse shows off a LOT more cleavage), yet she's giving him a look and tone that says she ought to be dressed in silks and velvets instead>

 [14:43] arynwyn: <takes a step foward, uncrossing his arms> You're a smart woman, I think you know. Answer my questions to my satisfaction and you can return to work. Otherwise, I will be forced to arrest you as a spy. And though I may be merciful and fair, I can't say the same for the townsfolk.

[14:48] Socks: Karen: <she snorts> What're THEY gonna do to me? <she turns back to putting clean sheets on his bed> I was back behind the stables, since you care so much about where I go. Smell's not so great, but better the horse shit out there than the bullshit downstairs.

[14:49] arynwyn: <he grabs her arm - though not hard, just with authority - and turns her around to face him> Did you run away from your father or a husband? Who are you?

[14:53] Socks: Karen: <wrenches her arm out of his grasp with a quick, decisive motion and takes a step away from him> The woman changing your sheets, SIR. <yeah that was REAL uppity> And what in hell makes you think I ran away from something? Want to play white knight? That how you like it? 'Cause Mari'll go along with that happily if you prefer your damsels in distress, but I'M not playing.

[14:54] arynwyn: <quietly, and darkly> I'm not playing either, Miss. I don't care why you're here, hiding and working as a peasant. I just need to know if you're a threat to me and my men, to the war effort.

[14:55] Socks: Karen: Hiding? Why do you think I'm HIDING? <she keeps her hands at her sides, eyeing him for sudden movements>

[14:58] arynwyn: No peasant would ever speak to a lord in such a manner. <seems rather amused by her tone>

 [15:02] Socks: Karen: Oh well, I am so sorry, SIR <she says, curtseying - though she's not doing herself any favors with that. Peasants, like Marigold, curtsey badly because no one has ever drilled into them exactly how it's done. It's like making a cake when someone's only vaguely described what a cake looks like to you. The end result just isn't very good.

Karen curtseys perfectly, the way a courtier should, graceful, elegant, with head bowed JUST the right amount. Even doing it sarcastically - which she definitely is now - she does it far too well to be anything other than nobility> I'll try to do better to remember my place from now on <as she straightens up, she shoots him a glare as she adds>...just so long as you know my place ISN'T your bed. <she moves towards him, but only because he's between her and her basket of sheets that she's looking at> Your lordship must forgive me; I've been so worried about the war.

 [15:06] arynwyn: <he tips his head back and laughs> Because I've insinuated so many times that I want you in my bed.

 [15:09] Socks: Karen: Because I know what men - and especially soldiers - can be like. <she picks up her basket of sheets and shoots him a Look> Maybe you are that way and maybe you aren't. But I'd rather be clear about it up front.

 [15:11] arynwyn: <he blocks her path to the door, leaning in close to say quietly> Attack my men again, and I will personally make sure you are executed, noble or not. Now get out of my room.

[15:12] Socks: Karen: <looks up at him and returns> I've never meant any of your men any harm, sir. Haven't even met them. And if you want me out of your room, you'll have to get out of my way.

[15:12] arynwyn: <he pulls the door open and stands aside for her to exit>

[15:14] Socks: Karen: <sweeps past him and out into the hallway>

Innkeeper: <can be heard calling from the kitchen> Took you blessed long enough!

Karen: Keep your shirt on! <she bellows back>

[15:16] arynwyn: <closes the door and returns to the table and his paperwork>

[15:17] Socks: <a few minutes afterwards, there is a thud against the wall of the room next to his, followed by a man crying out in shock - or pain. Maybe both>

[15:17] arynwyn: <jumps up and dashes out to the hall. He doesn't knock, just barges in>

[15:20] Socks: <Fred is clutching his groin on the floor, in a fetal position next to the basket of sheets. Karen is standing over him in a position of martial readiness - very much so "Get back up and try that again, motherfucker!". When she sees him in the doorway, she eases down>

Karen: You wonder why I think the way I do, you talk to this lot. <she kicks him in his back - not hard enough to do any major damage, but there'll be a nice bruise there>

[15:22] arynwyn: <snorts in disgust - at Fred, not her - and heaves him to his feet> Get out. <shoves him out of the room and toward the stairs> And don't let me catch you harrassing this woman again or I will have you arrested.

[15:23] Socks: <Fred stumbles red-faced towards the stairs and the surely mocking jeers of his friends>

Karen: <she folds her arms> You really do like to play White Knight, don't you? <she turns and starts changing the bed> If I've nothing else to call you aside from "Your Lordship", I think it'd better be that.

[15:24] arynwyn: <shoots her back a dark look> You're welcome. <heads down the hall toward his room>

[15:26] Socks: <aaaaaaand it doesn't take long before there is shouting downstairs>

 [15:27] arynwyn: <sighs and sets his quill down, then hurries downstairs to see what the hubub is>

[15:34] Socks: Innkeeper: ..and I'll not have you mistreating the customers! <my god, he's actually out of the kitchen to harass her this time. In the common room, no less>

Karen: So it's better I let him do as he wants with me? Because that will not happen. <hands back on hips, she's returning the Innkeeper glare for glare> It's not like I ASK them to keep after me, but I will by-God defend myself!

<Marigold fidgets nearby. Everyone's watching the show, but Fred and his buddies are standing by the Innkeeper>

Man 3: Fred, she's not interested; just stick with Mari, alright? She's a nice girl, more meat on her anyway.

Fred: Eh, what's the point? Half the village's had at her more than once alre...

Karen: <doesn't let him finish that. She's backhanded him so suddenly and so hard that everyone blinks in shock at how fast she moved and how quickly that tooth flew straight out of Fred's mouth> Don't you DARE talk about her that way, you sonuvabitch! <okay, she's seeming a little less Noble now>

[15:38] arynwyn: <stops at the bottom of the stairs and crosses his arms, not moving to defend either Fred or Karen>

[15:40] Socks: Fred: <in pain. Again>

Man 3: <shakes his head and heads out of the inn>

Marigold: <looks like she's going to cry>

Karen: <goes to hug Mari, continuing to shoot daggers at Fred when she's not giving the Innkeeper her best "Bring it" look>

Innkeeper: <gives up and retreats into the kitchen again, his bastion of power>

Fred: <glares at Karen and Marigold as he and his remaining friend leave. He spits blood at the floor at their feet as he passes them>

[15:41] arynwyn: <peeks out the door to make sure the men really leave, then heads over to the women> Are you two alright?

[15:44] Socks: Karen: Fine. Just can't keep my boss happy is all. <she mutters, sending another dark look at the kitchen. She rubs Mari's back soothingly>

Marigold: <she isn't crying, but she looks like she's been kicked>

Karen: Here now, the tosser's gone. You don't even worry about what he thinks; he's just a pig. <she all but pushes Mari at him> Lord White Knight, if you'd take a turn consoling her? I have to get the food to those that've stayed through the spectacle, or there'll be another row from His High and Mightyness in the kitchen back there. And frankly, I think she'd like comfort from you more than from me. <smiles a little dryly - it's the first thing like a genuine smile he's seen on her face>

[15:46] arynwyn: <he nods> Let's have a drink, shall we? <to Mari> On me. <smile>

[15:46] Socks: Marigold: <sniffles with repressed tears and nods>

Karen: <ducks back into the kitchen, then scoots out with a large tray of food to distribute to the patrons>

[15:48] arynwyn: <ducks behind the bar and pours them each a flagon of mead, then returns and hands her one of them> You shouldn't listen to men like that Fred fellow.

[15:50] Socks: Mari: He...he's right though. But I mean...it earns better money than just waiting tables does and...we need it sorely. <she sniffles and downs some mead> He was always so nice to me before...

Karen: <surrepticiously drops a basket of some warm bread slices on the bar near them, en route to seeing to the customers, who are starting to talk again and return to their own business>

[15:54] arynwyn: <slides the bread toward Mari> We all do things that we wish we didn't have to do because we have to. Do you really think I want to march off to battle? <wry smile> Of course not. And not everyone agrees with what I do. I can't count how many towns we've marched through that I and my men have been spit on... <he sighs>

[15:55] Socks: Karen: <arches an eyebrow at this as she passes him>

Mari: But...then why do you do it? You're a lord, ain't ya? No need to go off and be treated like crap and maybe die.

[15:59] arynwyn: I fight for the things I believe in. And though I disagree with keeping the Scots under British rule, I disagree with how the Scots are going about getting their freedom. My goal is to reduce the bloodshed. <he shrugs, then smiles a little> I apologize. You do not need to hear about my problems when you're already upset.

 [16:02] Socks: Karen: <actually stops when she hears him say this. She tosses him a look over her shoulder, then goes back to her work>

Mari: 'at's real nice of ya. Ya're a nice man. <drinks more of her mead>

[16:02] arynwyn: <he pats her hand> Feeling a little better?

[16:04] Socks: Mari: <nods, still drinking her mead> Mmhm. <setting the mug down> Thank ya, sir. No need for ya to do this for one such as me.

[16:04] arynwyn: Don't be silly. We're all human. <he smiles>

[16:05] Socks: Mari: Not so sure 'bout that. Ya're so like an angel come down from Heaven...

 [16:13] arynwyn: <a strange look passes over his face for a moment, then he smiles> Hardly. <(is surprised she's not all over him since he's shirtless)>

 [16:16] Socks: Mari: No, ya're. All pretty and kind and wantin' peace in the world like. <drinks the rest of her mead down> 's no wonder ya don' want me.

[16:17] arynwyn: <the muscle his jaw twitches and his eyes soften> I think you've had enough to drink.

[16:18] Socks: Mari: Prob'ly. I should...get back to work. Can't just sit about like a lump. <she pulls on a cheerful smile that almost reaches her eyes. She pats his hand and steals a slice of the bread that Karen left near them> Ya don' get yaself killed, mm?

[16:19] arynwyn: <he reaches over and touches her cheek> You don't need to worry about me. Worry about yourself. <there is desire in his eyes but he tries to mask it>

[16:21] Socks: Mari: Oh, lord, that's all I do, sir. <she leans in to kiss his cheek> Ya know my offer's always good for ya, sir, e'en so.

[16:22] arynwyn: <he sighs quietly> Thank you but I... I really shouldn't. <smiles a little and fishes out his coin purse to distract himself>

[16:22] Socks: Mari: Why not? Ya're married? 'Cause she's awful far away, and I'm not one to talk...

[16:24] arynwyn: No, I'm not married. I just... <he glances up at Mari, then around the room> If you need to talk again, please don't hesitate to seek me out. <he stands, dropping a few coins on the table>

[16:25] Socks: Mari: <collects up the coins>

<back in his room, there is something rolled up on his table>

[16:26] arynwyn: <frowns and mentally kicks himself for leaving his papers unprotected. He strides over and looks at the rolled-up bundle>

[16:27] Socks: <This is the map that was taken from Williams. In a neat hand, certain areas have been marked: "there's game here usually" or "don't sleep here, the wind's wicked cold at night.">

[16:28] arynwyn: <this makes him pause for a long few moments, then he sighs and sits down, rubbing the back of his neck, rather bewildered>

[16:29] Socks: <Mari knocks on his doorframe, smiling hopefully as she stands in the doorway>

[16:29] arynwyn: <looks up and over at her, then stands> Is everything alright?

[16:30] Socks: Mari: <walks in, closes the door behind her and goes over to him, bending to kiss him (if he'll let her)>

 [16:31] arynwyn: <blinks a couple of times, but lets her kiss him. He pulls away after a few moments and clears his throat>

 [16:32] Socks: Mari: <smiles at him> 's okay, right? I think we could both use the comfort, hm? <she rubs one of his shoulders lightly>

[16:33] arynwyn: <huskily> I'm not sure this is a good idea... <but he doesn't pull away>

[16:33] Socks: Mari: Why not? <she kisses his neck>

[16:35] arynwyn: Because I... <he exhales raggedly, closing his eyes> my history... You cannot understand... <he rests his hands on her waist>

[16:36] Socks: Mari: I can' believe ya'd be anything but a gentleman. <she is all smiling trust>

[16:37] arynwyn: <that seems to snap him out of it and he pushes her back a step> No, please. <he looks pained> Please, go.

[16:37] Socks: Mari: <looks confused> Did I do somethin' wrong?

[16:38] arynwyn: No. It's not you. <he touches her cheek and leans in to kiss her quickly> You are beautiful and kind and lovely. I just... can't. Please try to understand.

[16:39] Socks: Mari: <smiles sadly> Ya're too good for this world, I swear. <she heads for the door>

 [16:40] arynwyn: <he sighs unhappily, his thoughts at war> I'm sorry.

[16:41] Socks: Mari: Na, don' be. <She waves at him and ducks out>

 [16:41] arynwyn: <closes the door, then punches it angrily>

[The Next Morning]

 [16:48] Socks: Karen: <is working breakfast. She strides over when he comes downstairs> We've got a nice breakfast casserole, but I'd steer clear if I were you. It sits on your stomach like a brick, even if it is tasty. Porridge, warm bread, or we can fry you up some eggs? And we've got fresh milk. <she smiles at him - it's mostly a customer service smile, but there might be something genuine about it. Maybe>

 [16:50] arynwyn: <he looks up at her tiredly> The porridge and eggs, then, if that's what you suggest. And the milk. Thank you very much. <he's in a simple tunic and breeches and boots - that's one thing about him, he never dresses as a "lord", more like a regular soldier>

 [16:50] Socks: Karen: <nods and goes to put in the order, then comes back with the milk> I canNOT figure you out, you know that? <she helps herself to a seat at the table>

[16:51] arynwyn: <arches a brow as he takes a drink> I didn't realize you were trying. <faint smile> What is it that you can't figure out?

[16:53] Socks: Karen: You're attracted to Mari but won't sleep with her, even though she wants to. You're going to march off to war in order to stop bloodshed. You're a lord who refuses to act like it. There's nothing about you that makes any kind of sense. <she folds her arms on the table and looks at him>

[16:55] arynwyn: <he chuckles and shrugs> We all have quirks, do we not?

[16:55] Socks: Karen: How do you plan to stop bloodshed while leading men to war, Your Lordship? <she's actually not saying that sarcastically for a change>

[16:57] arynwyn: Diplomacy. My men are going as a precaution. When we arrive in Scotland, I expect the Scots will see another Brit coming to war. I hope to negotiate some peace between the Brits and Scots. It is, perhaps, a futile effort, but I must do what I feel is right.

[17:00] Socks: Karen: You showing up with an army WILL be seen as a threat, you know. <she stands> Daft man. <I forgot to mention: one entire estate is noted on the map he got back: the Farmington estate. The note reads: "may be of some help to you"> Not the least for turning Mari down. <she shakes her head as if at a silly child, then turns to the kitchen to go get his food>

[17:01] arynwyn: <quietly, more to himself than to her> Yes, probably. <he rubs his eyes>

[17:03] Socks: Karen: <she brings back the plate of eggs and a bowl of porridge> You don't look like you slept.

[17:04] arynwyn: Not much, no. Thank you. <his stomach rumbles loudly> Smells wonderful

[17:04] arynwyn: .

[17:05] Socks: Karen: <sits down again> You need sleep to make this peace of yours. What kept you up, since I know it wasn't a good time?

[17:06] arynwyn: Worry. And... <admits embarrassedly> visions of Marigold. <he digs into the porridge> Mostly worry though.

[17:07] Socks: Karen: Then why did you turn her down?

[17:07] arynwyn: <he stares into his porridge bowl for a moment, then takes another bite> I suppose you could say it was morals. But it's hardy that noble.

 [17:09] Socks: Karen: Then what is it? Or will you not allow your sterling reputation to be tarnished?

[17:23] arynwyn: It is nothing anyone would understand, I'm afraid.

 [17:23] Socks: Karen: <smirks faintly> Try me.

[17:24] arynwyn: <shakes his head> I'd rather not.

[17:25] Socks: Karen: I think you'll find I'm not that easily shaken off. Sir. <as she forgets it again>

[17:26] arynwyn: <shifts uncomfortably and clears his throat> I can be just as stubborn, Miss.

[17:27] Socks: Karen: You can call me Karen, Lord....? <name-fishing>

[17:29] arynwyn: Cederic, of Somerset. <smiles faintly>

 [17:39] arynwyn: (( Here's the fairly common-knowledge reputation. Cederic isn't a blood noble - he was adopted by Lord Vaughan of Somerset after his wife died without giving birth to any children. No one knows where Cederic came from or how Lord Vaughan met him. Anyway, Lord Vaughan died a couple years ago from illness and left everything to Cederic. As for Cederic himself, he is known to be a fair and kind Lord who taxes very little and lives as much like a peasant as possible (he works on his farm, helps build and repair houses, etc). He raised his regiment about 3 months ago and has been training with them daily since. ))

[17:42] Socks: Karen: <arches an eyebrow> White Knight indeed then, Sir Cederic. Still doesn't explain why you're refusing to sleep with a woman who wants you and who is, in turn, attractive to you. <she props her head up on one hand and studies him> I know it's none of my business, but I confess I've never seen anyone turn Mari down, and she's so sweet about this little crush.

[17:42] Socks: <is sounding more and more northern and noble-type as she goes>

[17:43] arynwyn: Cederic: It was not easy, trust me. <smiles a little> I'm still unsure I made the right decision.

[17:44] Socks: Karen: Well, she's pretty much decided you are a Messenger from God and are too pure and good for something so base as sexual congress. So if you change your mind, you're going to have to do a LOT of work to convince her otherwise. <she shrugs> Or you could just pull her into your bed and start pulling clothes off; that'd probably work too. <she grins>

[17:46] arynwyn: Cederic: <he sighs, seemingly discouraged by these words> I am not too pure or too good. <he rubs a hand over his face> It is better for both of us if she and I don't...

[17:47] Socks: Karen: You think you'd hurt her? <arched eyebrow of disbelief>

[17:47] arynwyn: Cederic: Not physically, no. But there is no good in relations when I will be leaving in a few days, perhaps never to return. <takes a drink>

[17:48] Socks: Karen: See, that sounds an awful lot like those "morals" you claimed earlier.

[17:49] arynwyn: Cederic: And what is wrong with having a few morals? Especially when one has to make up for past mistakes. <he blinks, then looks down at his plate, looking as if he didn't mean to say that last bit>

[17:51] Socks: Karen: Oh, I see. You're atoning for your past misdeeds by staying good and pure in the present. <she reaches over and pats his hand> Don't judge yourself, White Knight; leave that to God. <she stands> I'd better find something to do before the innkeeper catches after me again for...I don't know...being a woman or something. Whatever bug is up his ass today.

[17:52] arynwyn: Cederic: <quietly> It was God that judged me unworthy to begin with. <he fishes out his coin purse and shakes out enough for breakfast and tip> Thank you for breakfast, and for the conversation.

[17:54] Socks: Karen: Well, I'm required to give you the first. <she smiles> And I was curious enough to start the second, so really I should be thanking you. <she picks up the coins and asks> Do you know how much longer you'll be staying? You're spending so much money here, the innkeeper wants to marry you, I think. Which would be hard, as he's got a wife already, though Heaven knows how....

[17:56] arynwyn: Cederic: <chuckles> Well, I was fortunate enough to have my map returned to me last night <glances at her coyly> but the strategic plans are still missing, so probably two more days. Then we must move on.

[17:58] Socks: Karen: Well, you have two more days to get your necessary rest then. <she pauses to study him> You are a mystery, my lord, but one I've enjoyed. Thank you for your time. <and, again, the immaculate curtsey>

[17:59] arynwyn: Cederic: The pleasure has been mine. <he stands and gives her a proper bow>

[18:00] Socks: Karen: <smirks at him and heads back into the kitchen>

<a scout brings in a dispatch from the northern border for him, salutes and trudges back to his horse wearily>

[18:00] arynwyn: Cederic: <breaks the seal and peruses the report>

[18:04] Socks: <the main force camp was attacked in the night. Casualties amongst many of the officers, with the rank-and-file mostly just wounded or knocked out. One officer who survived (barely) swears forwards and backwards his assailant sprang at him AS a wolf - not like one, but in the form of one - changed to be a man, and then resumed wolf shape to flee. Naturally, they think he's gone insane and relieved him of command.

Among other things, key points in the stolen strategic plans were hit and their strategic value to the British army undermined drastically.>

[18:05] arynwyn: Cederic: <sighs> Damn.

[Karen is not seen in the inn again, much to the Innkeeper’s consternation. Cederic and his men move out; Mari wishes them godspeed and good luck in their travels.]

 [18:14] arynwyn: Cederic: <a couple days later, he leads his men toward the estate mentioned on the map, on guard. He's still unsure whether or not he should trust the writing on the map when he doesn't know who wrote it. But his men are tired and it's been a long day and there are no settlements nearby, so he decides to take his chances>

[18:17] Socks: <Farmington Estate is, largely, farms, as might be expected from the name. Predominantly sheep and cattle-based, the economy has been good and steady for Lord Robert. His keep has strong walls and his guards respectfully ask Cederic to stop and identify himself and his business with Lord Robert before they will let him inside. Though they keep their spears crossed to bar him entrance, they are polite>

[18:18] arynwyn: Cederic: Lord Cederic Vaughan, of Somerset, with my men. We are on our way north to the battle in Scotland and heard that we might find friends here. We've been traveling for two days and are in need of a place to rest. If Lord Robert wishes us on our way, we will go.

[18:21] Socks: Guard 1: Wait here, sir. <he heads in towards the manor>

Guard 2: <makes polite chit-chat with them while they wait. No, really. He's built like a brick shithouse, so he's clearly got no intention of moving and letting them pass anytime soon, but he's happy enough to commiserate about the weather and the war and such while they wait>

Guard 1: <comes running back out and whispers something to the second guard before addressing Cederic again with a bow> Lord Cederic, you're welcome here. We have quarters, food and good ale for your men in the keep; you and your officers are invited to stay in the manor as Lord Robert's guests.

Guard 2: <moves out of the way respectfully>

 [18:25] arynwyn: Cederic: <nods> Thank you. <he turns to address his men, repeating the instructions of the men to sleep in the keep and his officers to follow him>

[18:26] Socks: <Guard 1 leads Cederic, Williams and the officers through the keep into the manor proper> The chatelaine is getting your rooms together. Lord Robert would like to meet you, Lord Cederic. He'd prefer to talk with you alone, but says that if you feel you must, your aide may come with you. <the guard smiles> He knows not everyone feels safe with strangers in this time.

[18:27] arynwyn: Cederic: <this brings a smirk to his face> Alone will be fine.

[18:34] Socks: Guard: This way then, sir. <addressing the officers> Your rooms are down this hall; the chatelaine should be awaiting you there. <bows to them quickly and leads Cederic down the other way. They walk a ways until they come to a set of double doors - one is closed, the other open. The guard knocks on the closed door> Lord Robert, Lord Cederic Vaughn of Somerset is here, as you requested.

Ah, thank you, Billings. <the room is a library - one entire wall filled with books in an age when books were a luxury. There's a desk at the far end of the room. The wall opposite the bookshelves (the shelves are to the left as you come in) has a couple of comfy chairs and a small bar. Lord Robert has gray hair on top of his head and red on his chin by way of a bushy beard and moustache. He's got a bit of weight on him, and dresses well, though not ostentatiously. His skin is tan with being outdoors and his hand - which he offers for a shake to Cederic - is rough. His eyes are hazel, and his smile is warm> So good of you to come, Lord Cederic - or should I use Lord Vaughn? I have been led to believe you wouldn't mind something less formal.

[18:36] arynwyn: Cederic: <shakes his hand and smiles> You've heard right, Sir. Thank you for housing my men tonight. We've had a rough journey.

[18:37] Socks: Lord Robert: Yes, the country between Somerset and here can be quite unforgiving. Brandy? It does take the edge off. <he gestures to one of the comfy chairs>

[18:38] arynwyn: Cederic: Yes, thank you. <he takes a seat wearily>

[18:41] Socks: Lord Robert: <grins and goes to pour two brandies> So I've heard all kinds of things about you, yet I wonder what, if anything, you've heard about me.

((Well, that will depend. In the northern part of the country, Lord Robert has a great reputation as a decent man with a good head on his shoulders; men he's led into battle have considered him a second father. He's also known for his charity, as his two oldest children - twins, a boy and a girl - were born illegitimately, and yet he claims them as legitimate heirs anyway. He married a different woman and has four children by her.

In the southern part of the country, it might be just the parts about his martial abilities and a quiet reputation of being a relatively good guy that have made it.))

[18:42] arynwyn: Cederic: That you are a good, decent man and an excellent leader. <smiles> More than that, I cannot say.

[18:45] Socks: Lord Robert: <he smiles as he offers Cederic a brandy. He takes the nearest chair> I have learned to watch my reputation; a necessary trait for nobles, sadly. And I have heard similar about you, Lord Cederic. Your reputation paints you as a man of singular disposition. There is some rumor I have heard that you are hoping to negotiate with the Scots, rather than fight them? <he drinks from his brandy>

[18:46] arynwyn: Cederic: That is my hope, as naive as it might be. <he takes a long drink of brandy>

[18:49] Socks: Lord Robert: <the brandy is, as might be expected, excellent> I do business with the Scots often. I consider some of their lords my good friends. I've tried to get a couple of my daughters to consider marriages north of the border, but the one is in love with someone already and the other...<he chuckles> well, sometimes I think she was supposed to be a boy. Still, there's hope; one of my sons has turned an eye to Lord MacKenzie's daughter, and between that and my personal business...well, wars aren't always profitable. <he sighs at his brandy> Please understand; if called upon, my sons and I will fight for Britain. But I would rather this were settled peaceably.

[18:50] arynwyn: Cederic: <he nods> As would I. Perhaps you could get me an audience with some of your friends? If we can get a few of them on our side, then we would be leagues ahead.

[18:58] Socks: Lord Robert: I have already sent for them. <his eyes twinkle> I had some news you might be headed this way and that you might seek my assistance. I am glad to hear it was correct. It may be a while before they arrive; I sent word immediately but, assuming no mishaps in travel, the nearest should only just now be receiving my letter. But please, you and your men are my guests for as long as you should wish to stay.

<a familiar voice bursts into the room, along with a...not entirely familiar woman. She's about the right height and general shape, though she's perhaps a bit more buxom than last remembered. And her hair's red, braided, falling to the middle of her back. She's far prettier than when last seen as well, but her eyes are the same Very Green> Father, where's Evans's History of Ro...<she stops dead when she sees Cederic, then curtesys - immaculately> Forgive me, I didn't realize we had guests. <She is wearing a green dyed tunic over leather breeches and boots, in the manner of a man; there's a silver handled dagger at her hip>

Lord Robert: Ah! <standing> 'Renne, this is Lord Cederic Vaughn of Somerset. <he seems amused, as if at a private joke, when he turns to Cederic> Lord Cederic, this is my eldest daughter, Kyrenne.

[19:01] arynwyn: Cederic: <stands and bows very low> M'Lady. <he eyes her amusedly as he straightens up>

[19:05] Socks: Kyrenne: So good of you to visit us, Lord Cederic. <curtseying to him, despite the lack of a skirt. She looks to her father> I'm looking for Evans's History of Rome, and I can't find anything in this blasted place. <she gestures at the wall of books helplessly> You keep moving everything around.

Lord Robert: <rolls his eyes> Why do you need this particular volume this instant, dear child?

Kyrenne: To settle a bet with Renard, why else? <she folds her arms under her breasts> Finding that book is worth ten coppers to one of us.

Lord Robert: Forgive me, Lord Cederic; my children are reprobates, because I have spoiled them. <as he starts looking for the requested book>

[19:07] arynwyn: Cederic: <sits back down, still amused> The History of Rome. Exellent book. I've read it several times myself. It was one of Lord Vaughan's favorites. <he swirls the brandy in his glass, then drains it>

[19:11] Socks: Kyrenne: Your late father had excellent taste.

Lord Robert: <starts to hand over the requested book but pauses his book-holding hand en route> By accepting this, you are not only promising me you will not leave it in the stables all night, you are also swearing to me you will dress appropriately for dinner while Lord Cederic is with us.

Kyrenne: Father! <she whines>

Lord Robert: 'Renne. <he returns sternly>

Kyrenne: <she pouts> How about just tonight?

Lord Robert: <Stern look>

Kyrenne: <big eyes, pouty lips, pleading face>

Lord Robert: <hands the book to her> Fine, tonight. But when the Scottish lords get here, I expect PROPRIETY from you.

Kyrenne: Thank you, Father! <she kisses his cheek and dashes out>

Lord Robert: <sighs> Didn't even bid our guest good day; all she cares about is settling her bet with her brother. <he shakes his head> Do you have children, Lord Cederic?

[19:12] arynwyn: Cederic: No, I do not. I afraid I'm not even married. My father's greatest regret was not seeing me married before he died. <sighs sadly> My greatest regret, as well.

[19:14] Socks: Lord Robert: A dangerous thing to say to a man with daughters, my lord. <he laughs> Still, while children are considered a necessity, sometimes I think I would do better to warn you away from having any. They CAN be a trial, as well as a joy. <resumes his seat> I do apologize for her manner of dress; 'Renne would be the tomboy I mentioned earlier, if that hadn't been made clear.

[19:15] arynwyn: Cederic: There is no need to apologize, M'Lord. Women have minds just as men do. <smiles>

[19:18] Socks: Lord Robert: <seems pleased with this response> Well, I don't know why I am sitting here...<standing again with a groan> Oh, forgive me; the passing of years...but as I was saying, you are doubtless tired, and your room should be ready by now. I'll show you the way, and you can rest before dinner.

[19:19] arynwyn: Cederic: I would greatly appreciate it, M'Lord. <he stands> Thank you for the brandy, it was excellent.

[19:22] Socks: Lord Robert: Oh of course, think nothing of it. <waves a hand> This way, please.

<And he will lead him to....the dungeon! Mwahaha just kidding. No, to a very nice room, with a view of the courtyard and the barracks where many of his men are being quartered. They're not glamorous accomodations for the troops, but they're actual wood walls and doors and beds to sleep on, so hey, already pretty good. Cederic's are more glamorous: fireplace, furs on the bed, all the best, etc. etc. A servant will come warn him when it's dinner time>

[19:23] arynwyn: Cederic: <bows to Lord Robert, then collapses on the bed once he's gone. He stretches out, yawning, and falls asleep quickly>

 [19:26] Socks: Kyrenne: <knocks on his door after a few hours and picks up the old cadences from the little town down south to make herself sound more like a servant> M'lord? <she tries not to laugh>

[19:26] arynwyn: Cederic: <grunts in his sleep and doesn't reply>

[19:28] Socks: Kyrenne: <knocks louder> M'lor...oh fuck it...<she just barges in. She is, as promised, dressed for dinner: http://www.roxx-online.com/roxxOnline/images/productPhotos/Red%20Taffeta%20&%20ivory%20velvet%20medieval%20dress%202571.JPG in that, including the necklace, but she has no other jewelry. Her hair's more nicely done: braids going back from each temple, meeting in the back with a silver clasp, and the rest of her hair flowing loose and somewhat curly>

[19:29] arynwyn: Cederic: <starts up, blinking wildly and obviously confused> What-?

 [19:29] Socks: Kyrenne: <folds her arms> It's nearly time for dinner, Lord Cederic. Best be up now. <smirking at him>

 [19:31] arynwyn: Cederic: <finally remembers where he is and why. He clears his throat> Oh yes, thank you. <finally catches sight of her and his eyes widen just a bit. He jumps to his feet and bows> M'Lady, forgive my manners.

 [19:32] Socks: Kyrenne: Hell, I'm the one who barged into your room. I suppose I should leave you some privacy to wash up and change...<*Course I've already seen you with most of your clothes off, so really, what's the difference?*  She keeps that to herself, of course>

 [19:33] arynwyn: Cederic: Ah, yes, please, if you don't mind. Propriety, and all of that. <he smiles, remembering the same thing she does>

[19:34] Socks: Kyrenne: Propriety, propriety, so much fucking propriety...<she curtseys and heads for the door> I'll be just outside if you forget how commoners pull on trousers or some such. <teasing>

[19:35] arynwyn: Cederic: I was at least partly right, then, wasn't I? <he smirks>

[19:37] Socks: Kyrenne: Right? <she asks, turning back to face him> Right about what, my lord? <feigning ignorance>

[19:37] arynwyn: Cederic: That you came from noble stock. <he goes over to dig through his rucksack for a clean shirt>

[19:38] Socks: Kyrenne: I am Lord Robert's daughter, so I have no idea why you would ever think anything else. <arched eyebrow> I am certainly NOT some...peasant girl working in a dirty inn somewhere for a rather constantly angry innkeeper.

[19:39] arynwyn: Cederic: <he laughs, tossing his shirt on the bed> Come now, I was frank with you. Why were you there? Certainly not for the companionship of the men.

[19:40] Socks: Kyrenne: <makes a sour face> No, I should say not. <she eyes his chest again, appreciatively, then curtseys> I should also not be here while you're disrobing. I scandalize my father enough.

[19:41] arynwyn: Cederic: <chuckles> I won't be put off that easily. We can resume our chat when I'm dressed.

[19:43] Socks: Kyrenne: Indeed. I'll be waiting in the hallway then. <she pops out of the room, closes the door, waits a beat, then pops her head back in> Sir. <before popping back out again>

[19:45] arynwyn: Cederic: <she can hear him chuckle. He dresses and washes quickly, then steps out into the hall. He's in http://www.roundtwocostumes.com/galleries/SSS11.jpg only it's a dark blue velvet with gold belt and accets, tan leather breeches, and black dress shoes. He looks like a very different person>

[19:46] Socks: Kyrenne: <blinks at him, then smiles> Well, you clean up nice. Look quite respectable when you're fully clothed and all. <grins>

[19:47] arynwyn: Cederic: The same can be said about you. <smiles and offers her his arm> So, will you tell me? Why were you at the inn?

[19:48] Socks: Kyrenne: <accepts his arm> Will you tell me why you wouldn't sleep with a desperately willing woman?

[19:49] arynwyn: Cederic: <his back stiffens a little as he starts down the hall> I thought I explained that? We decided it was morals, didn't we?

[19:51] Socks: Kyrenne: Perhaps I don't believe you. And if I decide not to believe you, then you are in need of some serious lightening up, White Knight. You don't want me to undertake the task of lightening you up, Lord Cederic. <grinning at him mischeviously>

[19:52] arynwyn: Cederic: <arches a brow> And how would you go about doing that?

[19:53] Socks: Kyrenne: <clicks her tongue> No, no, no, if I tell you, it would ruin it. Though! I should warn you about what you're walking into just now. <as they near the dining hall>

[19:53] arynwyn: Cederic: Ah, yes, please do.

[19:55] Socks: Kyrenne: By walking into dinner with me on your arm, you have guaranteed that my father, who has already begun his scheming by getting me to wear a dress tonight, will ceaselessly attempt to find ways to convince you to court me. He is overwrought by his eldest daughter's terribly boyish behavior, despite having taught her everything she knows and encouraged her in such, and wishes her to be married so desperately, now that she's an old spinster of 19. <her eyeroll is nearly audible>

[19:55] arynwyn: Cederic: Well then, I will leave it to you - stay on my arm if you wish, if not I will not take offense. <he smiles>

 [19:57] Socks: Kyrenne: And if I disengage now and walk in ahead of you - or even behind you - Father will chastise me for my rudeness. If I walk in next to you, but having refused your arm, it will only be worse. No, no, THIS way, YOU are his prime target, and not me. <she squeezes his arm as if refusing to let him go> I much prefer this.

[19:58] arynwyn: Cederic: <laughs> Devious woman, you are. <he steps forward and opens the door for them>

[20:02] Socks: Kyrenne: <grins at him momentarily before immediately schooling her face into politeness as they walk into the room>

Lord Robert: <smiles, ever SO pleased to see them walk in together, and announces Lord Cederic's presence to the crowd, as he indicates a spot next to him at the table. To his other side is his lady wife, a blonde haired woman of warm smile and ample bosom. Their children bear obvious relation to each other and to their parents, but Kyrenne's twin brother is quite obviously HER twin. Cut away her breasts and her hair, and they would be a matched set. Well, and bulk her up a bit. He arches an eyebrow at Kyrenne, who quickly sticks her tongue out at him>

Kyrenne: <She disengages from his arm, curtseys quickly and gracefully and goes to sit next to her brother - noting that her father has put her between her brother and the spot for Lord Cederic> And so it begins...<she comments under her breath to Cederic>

[20:03] arynwyn: Cederic: <bows to her, then steps up to the table. He bows to Lord Robert’s wife and kisses her hand> Thank you for having me and my men, M'Lady. <then he bows to Lord Robert>

 [20:07] Socks: Lord Robert: <his wife nods and they all sit> I hope your room is to your liking, Lord Cederic? <Lord Robert asks as the wine steward comes around to fill goblets>

Kyrenne: Pay up, brother. <holding her hand out to her brother>

Renard: Thief. <dropping ten coppers into her outstretched hand> To soak your own family this way. Now tell me about you and our guest, hm? Will Father finally get his wish?

Kyrenne: Oh shut up, Renard, and do tell me how dear sweet Fiona is doing?

Renard: You mock, but it'll happen to you one day.

[20:08] arynwyn: Cederic: My room is excellent, thank you. <he sips his wine>

[20:12] Socks: Lord Robert: <the servants are bringing around platters of roast duck, fresh bread, and local vegetables, letting each guest help themselves as they pause in front of them> I am glad to hear it. You know, you should ask Kyrenne for a tour of the keep tomorrow; she and her brother know it nearly as well as any of my guards.

Kyrenne: One day I'll be turned into a milquetoast like you've become? Perish the thought. <helping herself to food>

Renard: No, no, you'll just be magically turned into a woman. It'll be a change for you, I'm sure.

Kyrenne: Well at least you'll be there to tell me how to manage. <bats her eyelashes at him>

 [20:13] arynwyn: Cederic: <stifles a chuckle at Kyrenne and Renard, trying to keep his attention with the Lord and Lady> I would like that very much. <he glances at Kyrenne>

[20:15] Socks: Lord Robert: <seems much heartened by this> Good, good, then it's settled. 'Renne?

Kyrenne: Yes, Father? <turning her attention away from her brother>

Lord Robert: Lord Cederic's expressed interest in the keep. Show him around tomorrow, will you?

Kyrenne: Of course, Father. <all dutiful and obedient and such>

Renard: <coughmilquetoastcough>

Kyrenne: <kicks her brother under the table>

 [20:18] arynwyn: Cederic: <smirks and digs into the food hungrily> Delicious.

 [18:03] Socks: <Over dinner, she makes plans to meet Cederic outside the next morning so she can show him around, when she's not busily annoying her brother or eating.

The next morning, at the appointed time, she awaits him in the courtyard. And, as I have stolen large swaths of who and what she is from one source, I am stealing her outfit from another. http://sockschan.info/personal/kahlan.html <---the top two pics show the coat and belt she's wearing, though the part that swoops down goes to her right, not her left, and has that silver handled dagger hanging off it. The bottom pic shows what she's wearing UNDER the coat - well, with black pants and boots. She has her red hair loose>

[18:05] arynwyn: Cederic: <arrives just on time, wearing a simple undyed tunic and leather breeches, with black boots. He bows low when he nears> M'Lady. <smiles. He looks well-rested and happy to see her>

[18:09] Socks: Kyrenne: <curtsey> I'm happy to see you looking well, Lord Cederic. <polite, polite> I take it your bed was agreeable, then?

[18:10] arynwyn: Cederic: Very. I trust you slept well as well? <offers her his arm, though he doesn't really expect her to take it>

 [18:12] Socks: Kyrenne: <does take it> Very. Much better than the inn beds, hm? Though I could be biased. I thought we'd start over by where your men are being quartered; I'm sure you'll want to make sure we're not mistreating them.

 [18:14] arynwyn: Cederic: <chuckles> Perish the thought. I'm sure more than not are still sleeping, either in a drunken stupor, or enjoying not having to sleep on the ground.

[18:17] Socks: Kyrenne: <she grins and heads towards the area of the keep dedicated as barracks. They pass the stables> Father's been breeding horses: sturdy stock, not ever going to be the quickest out there, but they'll make good draft horses or maybe even war chargers, depending on their temperament.

[18:18] arynwyn: Cederic: <smiles> I might have to invest in some of those horses. We could use some war chargers... <gazing at the stables in thought>

[18:22] Socks: Kyrenne: He'd appreciate the coin, if you did. Though if you can pull off peaceful independence for Scotland, we'd ALL appreciate that. <past the stables are long rows of what look like small individual rooms, each with its own door> These are the sleeping quarters of the barracks. They don't look like much, I know, but they really are meant just as a place to get your gear off and sleep. There's really just a bed and a small table in each one. <one has a broken door, so is unoccupied; she pulls open the broken door to show him> We have good woolen blankets to keep them warm; in the worst weather, we move everyone into the main barracks hall, but that's up ahead of us <nodding her head at the building in front of them a little ways>

[18:23] arynwyn: Cederic: This is much better than tents and hard ground. I'm sure they appreciate it greatly. <smiles reassuringly>

[18:27] Socks: Kyrenne: Well, Father's been on campaign before. He knows what it's like. Nothing to be done out in the field, but at least while on duty on home territory they can have some small comfort. <taking his arm again - whether he offered it or not; she practically yanks him over - and heads for the main barracks hall> Or while visiting local, softhearted nobleman, in the case of you and your little band.

[18:28] arynwyn: Cederic: <smiles> You know, you still haven't answered my question. The more I learn about you, the more I wish to know. Why were you in Templeton? <'cause that's what I'm going to name the village she was at>

[18:33] Socks: Kyrenne: Well, you've answered precious few of mine to my satisfaction either. Here we go! <she opens the door for him as they come up on the main barracks hall. It has a HUGE fireplace (with a currently banked fire), with several chairs pulled up around it from last night's conversation. There are two or three LONG tables and benches for meals or, judging by some of the cards laying out still, gambling. Warm tapestries are on the walls and fur rugs on the floors, but most of the hall is empty space> We can pull the beds out of those sleeping rooms and put them in here if the weather gets bad. Less privacy, but a LOT more warmth. <and unlike the wooden sleeping rooms, the barracks hall is mostly stone>

[18:34] arynwyn: Cederic: <smiles> Reminds me of home, actually. Cozy and... <glances at her with a grin> manly.

[18:37] Socks: Kyrenne: Oh, Somerset is a MANLY place is it? <mockingly saying the word - but good-naturedly mocking> I shall keep that in mind if I ever decide to visit.

[18:38] arynwyn: Cederic: I think you would like it. We spend our days in the fields and forests, hunting, gathering, farming. It's sunny more than not, and we're only a couple hours ride from the shore.

[18:39] Socks: Kyrenne: <feigns offense> Are you saying that I, a proper young lady if ever there was one <barely manages to keep a straight face through that>, am in any way Manly? <must...not....laugh>

[18:40] arynwyn: Cederic: Only in the mind. <as he scans her body appreciatively>

[18:41] Socks: Kyrenne: <arches an eyebrow, smirking a little> Well this is a different side to you. So, how often do women throw themselves at you, and do you turn them all down?

[18:41] arynwyn: Cederic: <he looks away, regretting his moment of weakness> All the time, on both counts. <sighs just a little>

[18:42] Socks: Kyrenne: Whoever she was, she must've been special. <leading him back out of the barracks hall, still with a near death grip on his arm>

[18:43] arynwyn: Cederic: <his eye twitches but he follows her back out of the hall, silent>

[18:44] Socks: Kyrenne: Not willing to talk about that, right. And I've spoiled a nice walk. Well, let's see. The rest of the keep is mostly just the tradesmen we need here in the manor, and the armory. Maybe I shouldn't show you where we keep all our weapons; I'll say the wrong thing some night and you'll come looking for an axe. <grins>

[18:45] arynwyn: Cederic: I much prefer the sword. <trying to lighten the mood back up, he smiles, though still a little uneasy>

[18:47] Socks: Kyrenne: Oh that could be problematic, against me and my wee dagger. I shall have to work extra hard to stay on your good side. <she steers them a very specific way, even though it doesn't look like there's much over this way>

[18:47] arynwyn: Cederic: I didn't think you cared very much whose good side you were on. <teasing>

[18:48] Socks: Kyrenne: <chuckles> That obvious, is it? <sighs> How many times have I been told that I'd never make a decent spy...

[18:48] arynwyn: Cederic: <arches a brow> You want to be a spy?

[18:49] Socks: Kyrenne: Well, who wouldn't? Danger, intrigue, thrilling adventures! <squeezes his arm and snuggles in close as they pass a certain window>

[18:50] arynwyn: Cederic: <brow still arched> Never being able to trust anyone, always having to watch your back, never having anyone be loyal to you... <he glances out the window>

[18:52] Socks: Kyrenne: <someone male walks away from the window, frowning. Kyrenne looks smug for a bit and then finally releases her death grip on his arm - though she doesn't disengage> Who says you can never trust anyone? You just have to be very, very careful.

[18:56] arynwyn: Cederic: <eyes her warily and steers her away from the window> Trying to thwart a suitor?

[18:57] Socks: Kyrenne: Hrm? Oh, the arm. No, no, I've no suitors in residence. Renard bet me 5 silver I wouldn't stay on your arm while we were out here. <grins at him>

 [18:58] arynwyn: Cederic: <rolls his eyes> Gambling is unbecoming of a woman, you know. Not that you'd care, I suspect. <torn between being amused and annoyed>

[18:58] Socks: Kyrenne: Not in the slightest. Does it bother you?

[18:59] arynwyn: Cederic: Only a little.

[19:02] Socks: Kyrenne: I only wager with Ren, really. I don't bet on horses or dogs or bears or any of that other nonsense. <she tilts her head back and looks skyward, thinking> Y'know, looking back, I guess we decided at some point that "I bet you 5 coppers" sounded more adult than "I dare you". <she looks at him with a somewhat sheepish smile> Ren and I are always trying to get each other in trouble. It's just how we are.

[19:03] arynwyn: Cederic: <smiles> I suppose it's because you're twins.

[19:06] Socks: Kyrenne: Most likely. <she chuckles> Though he got all the BRAT of the two of us, I swe... <she pauses as a robin alights nearby and chirps at her - no, really, chirps AT her. She sighs and looks at at Cederic> I've just remembered I have other obligations to see to today. But I'm sure Father won't mind you wandering about on your own. The only thing he even tries to keep secret is how thoroughly I disgrace him with the tomboyish ways he taught me. <she winks to show she's joking> And we're not so large an estate that you'll get lost and eaten by something nasty.

[19:07] arynwyn: Cederic: <eyes the bird for a moment, then nods and bows to her> Thank you for the tour.

[19:07] Socks: Kyrenne: <curtseys> And thank you for helping me win my wager. I'll give you your cut later. <she winks and, as the robin flies off, runs off back the way they came>

[19:08] arynwyn: Cederic: <watches her go, then wanders after her, taking his time, unsure what to do with himself>

[19:10] Socks: Kyrenne: <out in an open area, unaware she's not entirely alone, she starts to...shimmer. Her body seems to get melty and flow down inwards on itself, until where once stood a young woman, there is now a sparrow. It fluffs and shakes its feathers out, then flaps off into the air>

 [19:11] arynwyn: Cederic: <watches with mild surprise - he's known for a while that she's not completely normal. Then he smirks and continues to wander, heading down to the barracks where his men are sleeping>

 [19:15] Socks: Renard: <finds Cederic as he wanders back inside the manor. He bows, very properly, of course. He's wearing a farmer's undyed tunic and simple brown breeches and boots today; were it not for his impeccable grooming and manners, he would be indistinguishable from a peasant> So, how are you enjoying my sister's company? <he grins as if he'd just asked "Getting along well with those rabid weasels, are you?">

[19:16] arynwyn: Cederic: <chuckles faintly> I think that if it were not for the bets she makes with you, she'd pay me no attention at all. <oh, he bows before he says that>

[19:17] Socks: Renard: Heh, told you, did she? <he shrugs> If I tried to convince her to pay you more attention any OTHER way, she'd do the opposite, just to be the stubborn little wench she is.

[19:18] arynwyn: Cederic: <arches a brow> Why do you wish her to spend time with me?

 [19:19] Socks: Renard: Basically for the same reason our father wants her to spend time with you. Though he looks at it as "When I'm dead and gone, SOMEONE has to keep an eye on her." She's my sister, and my twin, and I want her to be as happy as I am....or, well, as happy as I hope to be.

 [19:25] arynwyn: Cederic: <smiles> As delightful as I find your sister, I'm not sure I'm an appropriate match for her. <he shifts a little uncomfortably>

[19:26] Socks: Renard: <smirks> You find her delightful? That's damn near all I need to consider you appropriate for her.

[19:27] arynwyn: Cederic: <chuckles> There are much better men, I assure you.

[19:30] Socks: Renard: <shakes his head> Not for her. Not many men - especially not noblemen - consider a woman who'd rather ride out hunting than stay home and do needlepoint a valuable mate. She used to have suitors lined up for miles but she either drove them off with her habit of speaking her mind or her penchant for wearing men's clothes or any of the other dozen things she does and say that we all love her for and the rest of the world seems to find abhorrent. <something occurs to him> By the by, if you ever come across Roger Chillworth of the Corrington estates, belt him for me, will you?

[19:32] arynwyn: Cederic: <arches a brow> Perhaps, if you give me reason?

 [13:37] Socks: Renard: Oh, 'Renne was...13, I think? Roger Chillworth was her first crush, so she was rather amenable to his suggestions. And he apparently decided to try and make her a proper young lady. That...didn't work too well. Oh sure, she wore dresses every day now, very fashionable ones too - but she'd still climb trees and run around in them. Her grasp of French and Latin improved, but only so she could learn to insult people in them. <he chuckles> Well, the day he caught me and her fighting in a mud puddle in the yard, he said he'd had enough of this and there was no way he'd ever consent to wed a "dirty little guttersnipe" like her. <his mirth fades and a fist clenches> Father made me swear I wouldn't punch him myself for it, but it broke her heart at the time. <his fist unclenches and he shrugs> It was a long time ago, and she's over it now, but he hasn't gotten any less insufferable. He could still use a good smack. <Corrington, btw, is the next estate over, so they're neighbors of a sort>

[13:39] arynwyn: Cederic: <scowls> It sounds like it. I will do the honors, if ever I meet him.

[13:40] Socks: Renard: <bows> I thank you, Lord Cederic, for your interest in justice. Just...don't tell 'Renne I told you. I'll never hear the end of THAT.

[13:40] arynwyn: Cederic: <chuckles> Your secret is safe with me.

[13:41] Socks: Renard: <bows again> I'll leave you to your own affairs then, my lord. ...unless I have to wager with you to get you to spend time with my sister? <grins>

[13:42] arynwyn: Cederic: <bows and chuckles again> I'm not a betting man. But any time your sister wishes to spend with me, I will gladly do so.

[13:43] Socks: Renard: <bows a third time> May your patience be infinite, my lord. <and leaves Cederic on his own again>

 [The Next Morning]

[13:49] Socks: Kyrenne: <the next day, she's wearing her black pants and boots again, but with the green tunic she had on the first day he came. Her hair's still loose...and yes, she still has her silver-handled dagger with her. She's draped in a chair in her father's library, back against one arm, legs kicked up over the other as she reads>

[13:51] arynwyn: Cederic: <wanders in, dressed as usual in his undyed tunic and leather breeches. He stops when he spots her> Forgive me, I didn't realize anyone would be in here. <he bows>

[13:53] Socks: Kyrenne: <doesn't look up from her book> No worries; there's more than one chair. I'll try to keep my page turning quiet if it bothers you. <shoots him a quick look, accompanied by a smirk> Good luck FINDING anything in here, though.

[13:54] arynwyn: Cederic: <smiles and starts to peruse the bookshelves, finally settling on a religious text in Latin>

[13:56] Socks: Kyrenne: <waits for him to get settled before asking conversationally> Lord MacKenzie should be here tomorrow, weather permitting. Lord Stewart shouldn't be far behind him.

[13:56] arynwyn: Cederic: <his brow furrows a little> I wish I knew more about these Lords before I met them.

[13:57] Socks: Kyrenne: <looks at him over the top of her book> Well, I suppose I could be persuaded to help... <puts the book back up and pretends to resume reading>

[13:58] arynwyn: Cederic: <studies her for a moment> And how might I persuade you, M'Lady?

[13:59] Socks: Kyrenne: <lowers the book and looks at him evenly> My brother said he had the chance to talk with you yesterday. Tell me what that little weasel said about me and I'll tell you what I know about the Scottish Lords coming. <grin>

 [14:00] arynwyn: Cederic: He agrees with your father, that I would be a good match for you. <clears his throat> I tried to change his mind but it was to no avail.

[14:01] Socks: Kyrenne: <kicks her legs off the arm and turns to sit properly in the chair> Pushy little...<she grumbles> He ought to worry about his own marriage prospects and leave mine alone.

[14:01] arynwyn: Cederic: <smiles> He cares for you very much.

[14:04] Socks: Kyrenne: If he cared so much, he'd hurry up and make Fee my sister-in-law already. Which is as good a place to start as any. <She drops the book to the floor with a thud and looks over at Cederic> Lord MacKenzie is our nearest neighbor over the border, and Father's good friend. Some years his children spend summers here and some years we spend the summer up there. His only daughter, Fiona, is my best friend and the apple of my brother's eye - if he'd only get off his ass and PROPOSE. <she clears her throat> But none of that helps you.

Lord Connor MacKenzie is very like my father in temperament. He wants Scotland independent and would prefer it happen peacefully. Be honest with him and try not to come off as an arrogant Brit, and you should be fine. He is already on your side.

[14:06] arynwyn: Cederic: <nods, making mental notes> And the other? Lord Stewart?

[14:08] Socks: Kyrenne: Lord Stewart. <she sighs> Lord Malcolm Stewart wants Scotland free of British rule fiercely - and he's much more...violent about it. To him, "negotiating" for peaceful independent rule is weak and undermines his vision of Scotland as a tough, determined and...<smirking at Cederic> MANLY nation. And I'm warning you now, he's twice as stubborn as I am.

[14:09] arynwyn: Cederic: <sighs and frowns a little> Well, perhaps with your father and Lord MacKenzie on my side, we may be able to convince him that war is not the best option.

[14:12] Socks: Kyrenne: Father's sent word to a couple other Lords, but they aren't as close associates - or as powerful in Scottish Britain - as Lords MacKenzie and Stewart are. If you can get Lord Stewart on your side, it will be a huge help in the House of Lords. You just have to find a way to convince him that negotiation isn't weak. Appeal to his manliness, O Lord of Somerset, Most Manly of Estates. <she winks at him>

[14:13] arynwyn: Cederic: <chuckles> I don't suppose you could be of any help in convincing him?

[14:13] Socks: Kyrenne: Because I am so charming and persuasive? <she arches an eyebrow>

[14:14] arynwyn: Cederic: Because you have a cool head and keen logic. Four against one is better than three against one.

[14:15] Socks: Kyrenne: Yes, well I might do better to challenge him to a race in order to decide the fate of Scotland. Lord Malcolm is rather...rotund.

[14:17] arynwyn: Cederic: Well, if you'd like to take part in the negotiations, I would like to have you there. This war affects you too.

[14:19] Socks: Kyrenne: <She evaluates this statement - and him, for a moment, before nodding> Very well. I'll try not to completely wreck your negotiations. Though if you're going to invite everyone who is affected by the war, we'll run out of beds.

[14:20] arynwyn: Cederic: <smiles> Then we'll leave it at just you, then.

[14:22] Socks: Kyrenne: <grins> Yes, I think that best. So! <rising and walking over to his seat> I'm not sure which is more interesting: that my brother's started trying to marry me off too or that you were apparently trying to change his mind about the whole thing. Were you regaling him with stories about what a terrible waitress and maid I was?

[14:23] arynwyn: Cederic: <looks surprised> No. I haven't mentioned that to anyone. I wasn't sure who here knew about your escapade and who didn't. <smirks and scoots over a little on the sofa so she can sit next to him if she wishes>

[14:24] Socks: Kyrenne: <takes the proffered seat> I am rather destined to be a spinster I suppose. But then, if I'm going to be a spy or a pirate or any of the other things I used to dream about as a little girl, I suppose a husband would just get in the way.

[14:25] arynwyn: Cederic: <chuckles> I suppose so. Though, if you were to be a spy, a husband who was in on the secret could be a valuable ally and back-up.

[14:26] Socks: Kyrenne: Oh yes, he'd be a tremendous help until he was hanged. Maybe if we were lucky, we could be hanged alongside each other, isn't THAT romantic? <sarcastically, with a grin>

[14:27] arynwyn: Cederic: A good husband would never allow his wife to be hanged. He would send her to India first.

[14:29] Socks: Kyrenne: And a good wife would insist her husband accompany her so that he wouldn't be hanged either.

[14:29] arynwyn: Cederic: <smiles> Indeed.

[14:30] Socks: Kyrenne: I wonder what India's like...? <leaning back on the sofa and looking up at the ceiling>

[14:31] arynwyn: Cederic: It's beautiful. Colors everywhere, delicious food, festivals every week. <he's followed her gaze to the ceiling. Also? He's only mid-20s, how the heck has be been to India?>

[14:32] Socks: Kyrenne: <stops pondering the ceiling to look at him> You've been to India? <she asks incredulously>

[14:32] arynwyn: Cederic: <opens his mouth to reply, blinks at her and looks uncomfortable> Ah, well, yes. A very long time ago.

[14:33] Socks: Kyrenne: How old are you again?

[14:33] arynwyn: Cederic: <shifts> Twenty-four. <doesn't sound very sure>

[14:33] Socks: Kyrenne: Really?

[14:34] arynwyn: Cederic: Something like that, yes.

[14:34] Socks: Kyrenne: "Something like that"? What does THAT mean?

[14:34] arynwyn: Cederic: Well, do you remember the day you were born? Neither do I, and I never had a mother to tell me when I was born. <somewhat defensively>

[14:36] Socks: Kyrenne: <frowns, the gleeful investigation going out of her tone> I'm sorry. I didn't mean to...<she clears her throat and her tone resumes polite civility. She even sits up properly> My apologies for having pried, and for the loss of your mother. <her hands fidget in her lap>

[14:38] arynwyn: Cederic: <he sighs> I didn't... lose a mother. I just... never had one. <he glances at her out of the corner of his eye>

[14:39] Socks: Kyrenne: <sighs harshly> Well it amounts to the same thing, doesn't it? The woman who bore you isn't around to raise you. I...<she looks at her hands> I know what that's like.

 [14:40] arynwyn: Cederic: The Lady never accepted you as her own? <sounds a little sad about that>

[14:42] Socks: Kyrenne: <looks up> Oh, no, Irina's been nothing but kind to us. Raised us as her own, even with what hellions Ren and I are. But...even before Father told us we weren't Irina's we...just knew. And...well, you never stop wondering.

[14:42] arynwyn: Cederic: <he nods> Have you never tried to find her? Your birthmother, I mean?

[14:44] Socks: Kyrenne: Oh, no. She...she's dead. My uncle - her brother - brought us to Father after she died; we were still just babes then. We've seen him and his wife a few times since. Not as often as I'd like, but not much to be done about that. Everyone has their own lives to lead.

[14:45] arynwyn: Cederic: <he reaches over and squeezes her shoulder gently> I'm sorry.

[14:46] Socks: Kyrenne: Thank you, my lord. And accept my own sympathies as well. You must've gone through something similar with Lord Vaughn, I suppose.

[14:47] arynwyn: Cederic: <he nods and looks away> Well, we must move on. It's all we can do.

[14:47] Socks: Kyrenne: True enough. <she exhales and tries to find a way to get things back on a somewhat cheerier track> So, tell me, do you hunt, Lord Cederic?

[14:49] arynwyn: Cederic: <looks back at her and smiles> When I have time, yes.

[14:50] Socks: Kyrenne: Well you have time now. <grabs his hand and pulls him up, not caring that he came here to read; she's headed for the door>

[14:51] arynwyn: Cederic: Won't we be missed? <sets the book aside and allows himself to be tugged along>

[14:52] Socks: Kyrenne: The stable boys will have word of us getting our horses. We'll be fine. 'Sides, Father's used to me gadding about as I please; that I seem to have disappeared WITH you will only delight him.

[14:52] arynwyn: Cederic: <stifles a groan> We shouldn't encourage them, you know. It's only going to make things worse when I leave.

[14:54] Socks: Kyrenne: They're going to have to get it through their thick heads that I'm not the marrying kind at SOME point, and I'm not going to sit around and wait on that to do as I please.

[14:54] arynwyn: Cederic: <laughs> Very well, M'Lady. Hunting it is.

[14:54] Socks: Kyrenne: <laughs> You speak as if I gave you the choice. <pulling him towards the stables>

[14:55] arynwyn: Cederic: <he tugs her to a stop just before the stables> Again I ask, why were you in Templeton?

 [14:56] Socks: Kyrenne: Why do you think I was there?

[14:57] arynwyn: Cederic: Your unequaled beauty. <grins>

 [14:58] Socks: Kyrenne: <blinks, an unexpected blush rising to her face> You think I was playing at being a barwench because of my beauty? <she asks, arching an eyebrow as the blush fades>

[14:59] arynwyn: Cederic: Because of it? No. I'm not sure the reason. But your beauty is certainly the reason I know it was you. <somewhat surprised by her reaction>

[15:00] Socks: Kyrenne: I wasn't quite so beautiful at the time, as I recall. Oh I was alright, but...<stops that line of commentary quickly> You have no guesses as to my reason? I'm terribly interested in your interest.

[15:02] arynwyn: Cederic: Well, I have a couple of guesses. Perhaps it was a bet with your brother. Perhaps you wanted to escape your life for a while. But the reason I keep coming back to, the reason that worries me, is that you were there because my men and I were there. <he arches a brow at her>

[15:03] Socks: Kyrenne: <attempts to get him to the stables via hand-tugging again> Why would that worry you so much?

[15:04] arynwyn: Cederic: <tugs back, pulling her closer> Because one of my men was attacked and vital papers went missing. <he gazes at her, his eyes very serious, almost begging> I need to know that I can trust you.

 [15:05] Socks: Kyrenne: <blinks at him and swallows> Why do you need to know you can trust me? <she asks evenly>

[15:07] arynwyn: Cederic: <he studies her a long moment> Firstly, because I don't want you undermining my mission in Scotland. But mostly because I've been betrayed before and... <pain flashes in his eyes for a moment before he's able to hide it>

[15:09] Socks: Kyrenne: <she presses a hand to his cheek consolingly> I want Scotland free. Peacefully. I'll do anything in my power to see that happen, Cederic. That much about me, you can trust. <then she smiles faintly, as if trying to remind him how, and comments> And that I'll always find a way to win a bet with my brother, if at all possible.

[15:11] arynwyn: Cederic: <he nods> Then I will trust you as far as Scotland goes. No more, no less. <smiles faintly>

 [15:12] Socks: Kyrenne: Smart lad. C'mon then, we'll see if we can bring a nice buck down for dinner, hm?

[15:13] arynwyn: Cederic: <nods and, hand still in hers, starts toward the stables>

[15:13] Socks: Kyrenne: One of these days, I plan to worm all your secrets out of you, you know.

[15:14] arynwyn: Cederic: You have about a week, and then I leave for Scotland, so you'd better get to it. <smiles>

[15:15] Socks: Kyrenne: Well then. Let's see. I could try seducing you, but I'm rather afraid you'd fall on your ass laughing and hurt yourself instead. I could try blackmailing you, but considering I've never seen you be anything but good and moral, that's likely to get me nowhere. <she looks over her shoulder at him as they enter the stables> I could just try and beat them out of you.

[15:16] arynwyn: Cederic: <he grins broadly> Now *that* I would heartily enjoy.

[15:17] Socks: Kyrenne: <stops and turns fully> Would you now? Maybe we should postpone the hunt for some sparring. And when I beat you, you'll tell me the REAL reason you wouldn't sleep with Mari?

 [15:19] arynwyn: Cederic: <he laughs> If you beat me, I will answer any and all questions you have.

 [15:20] Socks: Kyrenne: Oh, "if", is it? And what do you want in the extremely unlikely consequence of your victory?

[15:22] arynwyn: Cederic: <grins> I'd like the same. Answers to any and all questions I have.

 [15:22] Socks: Kyrenne: Fair enough. Though you DO just realize you've made a wager? I hope you're not terribly disappointed in yourself. <grins>

[15:23] arynwyn: Cederic: <chuckles> I suppose I'll survive.

[15:23] Socks: Kyrenne: Weapon of choice, my lord?

[15:24] arynwyn: Cederic: <arches a brow> Weapons, then? Any. Or fists if you prefer. I'm not picky. <and yes, he's gotten very arrogant all the sudden>

[15:25] Socks: Kyrenne: <arches an eyebrow> Bare-handed it is then. After all, I'd hate to cause you serious damage with my dagger. <she heads through the stables for the keep's courtyard>

[15:26] arynwyn: Cederic: <follows after her, smirking just a little> Don't worry, M'Lady, I won't bruise anywhere visible.

[15:27] Socks: Kyrenne: You suggesting I go for that pretty face of yours? Mari'd thrash me within an inch of my life if I put so much as a smudge on it, I think. <she pulls the tunic off to reveal the corsety thing she was wearing under her coat yesterday. Not that he got much of a look at it itself at the time.>

 [15:29] arynwyn: Cederic: <he glances at the corset, then away, clearing his throat, all of his arrogance suddenly gone>

[15:31] Socks: Kyrenne: So, rules for this conflict: I just thrash you until you surrender? <grins and takes up a spot opposite him in the yard>

[15:31] arynwyn: Cederic: <his eyes light back up> How about... you attempt to thrash me until I get bored, then I pin you until you surrender? <grin>

[15:33] Socks: Kyrenne: Ha! <and she charges him. Just when she gets close and looks like she might be going for a punch, she drops and sweeps a leg out at him, trying to knock his feet out from under him>

[15:35] arynwyn: Cederic: <her leg hits his but he is SOLID, not even flinching or stumbling. It's like he's made of marble. He smirks at her>

[15:37] Socks: Kyrenne: <growls a little and skitters away before he can attempt to grab hold of her> Okay, so you're a stable one, I'll give you that much. <eyeing him, trying to find a decent opening>

[15:37] arynwyn: Cederic: <he doesn't even have his arms up in a protective position, he just stands there, smirking at her>

[15:38] Socks: Kyrenne: <arches an eyebrow and closes distance quickly again, aiming a punch for his solar plexus>

[15:39] arynwyn: Cederic: <doesn't move to block, just absorbs the blow. It does knock some wind out of him but again, he doesn't move or flinch>

[15:40] Socks: Kyrenne: <growls again and darts around behind him, trying for a kidney shot>

[15:40] arynwyn: Cederic: <doesn't even turn to protect himself, just absorbs the blow again, then - to infuriate her - he chuckles> Having fun?

[15:41] Socks: Kyrenne: <curses under her breath and jumps to wrap her arms around his neck, attempting a chokehold>

[15:43] arynwyn: Cederic: <in one swift move, he twists her arm free, and around, until he's standing behind her with her arm pinned painfully at her back>

[15:44] Socks: Kyrenne: <winces but refuses to cry out, screwing her mouth shut (figuratively, obviously). She attempts to get her free arm between them, intending a grab at the <cough> family jewels - less as a pain ploy (because he'd doubtless shrug that off), and more as a shock tactic>

[15:46] arynwyn: Cederic: <he does jump a bit when she grabs him there, but doesn't release his hold on her. He chuckles> Should have known you'd play dirty. <he knocks her feet out from under her and pins her face-down in the ground, his knee in her lower back and arm still pinned>

[15:48] Socks: Kyrenne: <struggles and writhes, trying to get free. She flails at his knee in her back helplessly, stubbornly trying to find a way out of this>

[15:48] arynwyn: Cederic: You can start by telling me why you were in Templeton. We'll get to the more difficult questions later. <amused and arrogant>

 [15:50] Socks: Kyrenne: You think I'm going to answer questions like THIS? <she mutters>

 [15:51] arynwyn: Cederic: I'm not stupid enough to release you until you verbally surrender. <chuckles>

 [15:52] Socks: Kyrenne: <grumbles then sighs> ...don't see what good it'd do me. You shrug off every attack I make at you. So fine. <muttermutterwordsmutter>

[15:52] arynwyn: Cederic: Sorry, what was that? I didn't quite catch it.

[15:53] Socks: Kyrenne: I said I...<grumble> I surrender. Nowlemmeup.

 [15:54] arynwyn: Cederic: <he releases her and stands up, brushing non-existant dirt off his pants> You're an excellent fighter. You would make a good spy or pirate.

 [15:55] Socks: Kyrenne: <standing up and brushing off her own clothes> I can only think of one thing I can do that might unsettle you, and I don't know that it's a smart move to make. And even if I did it, I don't see what good would come of it; unsettling you isn't the same thing as getting you to surrender.

 [15:57] arynwyn: Cederic: <arches a brow> Now I am curious.

[16:01] Socks: Kyrenne: <smirks> A girl has to have SOME secrets; I might need that move some day. <she sighs and looks around> I know a little place we can go so the whole world doesn't have to know all the rest of them, at any rate. <she nods> This way. We won't even need the horses.

[16:01] arynwyn: Cederic: <slips his hand in hers nonchalantly and follows after her>

[16:03] Socks: Kyrenne: <leads him just outside of the castle walls, ignoring (or maybe not even really seeing) the looks on the guards' faces at watching her walking hand-in-hand with Lord Cederic, heading for the relative privacy of the forest. Just inside the treeline, she heads for a tree> I hope you can climb. <she drops his hand and starts climbing up>

[16:04] arynwyn: Cederic: <has no difficulty climbing up behind her> Of course I can.

[16:05] Socks: Kyrenne: <clambers up until there's a big thick branch. She hops onto it and climbs out a little ways, enough so that he can sit closer to the trunk> Ren and I would come out here to talk a lot.

[16:06] arynwyn: Cederic: <follows her out onto the branch, though not nearly as far due to his weight> Past tense?

[16:07] Socks: Kyrenne: Well, I've been away at school. And then I was in Templeton. And, bastard or not, he's Father's heir. So that's kept him busy.

[16:08] arynwyn: Cederic: <he leans against the trunk of the tree, stradling the branch> You've been lonely.

[16:09] Socks: Kyrenne: A bit. I mean, I've had people around. But they aren't Ren, they aren't Fee, they aren't Father or Irina or any of my other siblings. And none of that has anything to do with why I was in Templeton. <she sighs>

[16:11] arynwyn: Cederic: <swings his legs and looks out at the forest> I turned Mari down because of previous transgressions... I'm trying to atone for sins I've committed. One sin in particular - lust. <he sighs a bit, and looks back at her>

[16:12] Socks: Kyrenne: <she blinks at him and then laughs. She's sitting with both legs on one side of the branch, facing the keep, and she leans so far backwards, she looks like she'll tip over. She straightens up at the last minute> Men are lustful. Hell, PEOPLE are lustful, just men especially so. Are you supposed to be perfect?

[16:14] arynwyn: Cederic: <a very strange look crosses his face for a moment and he doesn't answer> So, why were you in Templeton?

[16:15] Socks: Kyrenne: <she sighs> For the reason you thought. We knew there'd be troops coming through there eventually. I went down there to await a large troop movement. And yes, I stole your battle plans....but at least I gave you the map back? You were supposed to end up lost and separated from the main force, but I heard what you told Mari about wanting to find a peaceful solution to Scottish independence. So I took pity on you. But I'd already turned in your battle plans by then.

[16:16] arynwyn: Cederic: So you're working for the Scots? <he studies her, frowning and looking disappointed>

[16:18] Socks: Kyrenne: <she gives him an even look> I'm working for what's best for both our countries - something I thought you were working for, too. And the group I'm with is a secret to both nations’ governments.

 [16:19] arynwyn: Cederic: I see. <he looks away from her, pain and confusion in his eyes> Well, thank you for finally being honest with me. <it sounds stiff and not very sincere>

[16:20] Socks: Kyrenne: Well. <she looks at the ground, kicking her feet> You have other questions?

[16:22] arynwyn: Cederic: <he looks back at her for a moment, deciding> No. <shakes his head and looks away again> I should get back to my men. They're training today.

[16:23] Socks: Kyrenne: Still want me at the negotiations? <she asks, only looking at him sidelong>

[16:24] arynwyn: Cederic: Yes. <he crouches on the branch, then swings down around, hanging by his arms, dropping to the ground with an easy landing> I still respect you for your mind.

[16:26] Socks: Kyrenne: <jumps off. She crouches when she hits the ground, and straightens up> For what it's worth: I could've killed your aide, or hurt him worse than I did. And the men who died in the main force camp...that wasn't my idea. I'm very sorry about that; I've never wanted anyone to be killed. That was supposed to be the point of this. <she sighs and heads for the keep>

[16:27] arynwyn: Cederic: <he doesn't follow her. He wanders in the other direction, into the forest, instead>

[That Night]

 [16:33] Socks: Lord Robert: <as dinner winds down> Lord Cederic, would you care to join me in the library for brandy? <friendly smile>

[16:34] arynwyn: Cederic: <returns the smile> Of course.

[16:35] Socks: Lord Robert: <stands and leads the way. Once in the library, he heads straight to pour the brandies> We should have the first of the lords here tomorrow, and the second a day or two after. I hope you and your men have been enjoying yourselves during the wait?

[16:36] arynwyn: Cederic: Very much. My men are well-rested and well-fed, thanks to you. <he takes a chair by the fire>

[16:37] Socks: Lord Robert: <brings him a brandy, holding his own in his other hand> I cannot help but notice that my daughter seems to have finally offended you. I confess I'm surprised it took her this long. <sits in a chair opposite him and drinks>

[16:37] arynwyn: Cederic: <sips his brandy> Not so much an offense, sir... <he frowns a bit> Did you know she went to Templeton?

[16:40] Socks: Lord Robert: No. <he seems surprised, but not upset. Sort of like finding out that your kid was at a friend's house when you were told they were at the library studying for exams> But then she's got much of her mother's free spirit in her, and, though she thinks I'm unaware of that little band she runs with, I do have something of an inkling of it and what it's about.

[16:40] arynwyn: Cederic: <his brow furrows> What band, sir?

[16:43] Socks: Lord Robert: I don't know the exact membership. She's in it; Renard isn't, but he knows about it, I'd dare say. She could never keep a secret from him. And I don't know their exact movements and actions. But I know my daughter, Lord Cederic, and she would never knowingly be involved in anything evil. She is a bit...more hands on than most women would be. And I have let her do as she wants.

[16:44] arynwyn: Cederic: Are you aware that she is working as a spy for them? That she attacked one of my men and stole a map and strategic documents from me, resulting in the death of several British soldiers? <he stands up and paces away from the fire, sighing>

[16:45] Socks: Lord Robert: <he blinks> ...she killed someone?

[16:46] arynwyn: Cederic: No, merely knocked him out, thank God.

[16:49] Socks: Lord Robert: <he heaves a sigh of relief> Then I cannot believe anything other than that she thought it was for the best. She might've been wrong - she often is, more than she'll admit - but she believed it to be the best course at the time. It doesn't excuse her harming someone. But I know her. She wouldn't have done any of that if she'd known British soldiers would die. <he sighs a very different sort of sigh this time and evaluates Cederic> What will you do with this information, Lord Cederic? Whether she knew about it or not would be hard to prove in a court of law. This information - however you came by it - is excellent proof of treason.

[16:54] arynwyn: Cederic: You don't need to worry, M'Lord, I have no intention of bringing charges against her. She seemed sincere in her regret that people were harmed. And I would do you a great dishonor after you've housed me and my men and are working so hard to help me solve this peacefully. <he takes a long drink>

[16:57] Socks: Lord Robert: <another sigh of relief> She wants the same thing, my lord. She does. But I can see that her violence has ruined any chance of...of friendship between you two. I am quite aggrieved for that. She had seemed to enjoy your company. Or perhaps it was a foolish father's wishful thinking. <drinks the rest of his brandy>

 [16:58] arynwyn: Cederic: I know you wish her a husband, M'Lord, but I assure you, I am not the right man. <he shakes his head>

 [17:01] Socks: Lord Robert: I cannot see why not, aside from this unfortunate business. But I suppose it's for naught. And we should focus on the more important business of the negotiations. The fate of my daughter, as important to me as it is, is not of the same wordly weight as the fate of two nations.

[17:02] arynwyn: Cederic: She seems very against marriage as it is, M'Lord. She might be happier if you set her up alone in a cabin in the woods. <he smiles, amused at the thought>

[17:04] Socks: Lord Robert: <sighs> She probably would be, if said cabin were in Scotland, or reasonably close to it. Her best friend is there, and likely soon her twin brother will be there as well. She isn't the hermetical type, really. Just...difficult for most noblemen to...comprehend. <smiles wanly>

[17:07] arynwyn: Cederic: <sits back down> Yes, most noblemen are stuffy and dislike anyone who disagrees with them. I understand why she doesn't wish to marry.

[17:11] Socks: Lord Robert: She seemed to enjoy your company, and you weren't shocked by her manner and dress. I got my hopes up, which is foolish for a man of my age. I should know better by now. She's given up on marriage because every man she's met outside our family has treated her like a freak or else been scandalized by her behavior. I should've taken my cue from her and given up as well. I do hope you forgive me.

[17:12] arynwyn: Cederic: There is nothing to forgive, sir. And please understand that I find nothing wrong with your daughter - the spying notwithstanding - and that the fault lies with me. I'm afraid I would make a terrible husband and do not wish my company on anyone.

[17:16] Socks: Lord Robert: <he looks his guest over> My lord, you are close to her in age. You are passing agreeable to look on. You are not scandalized by her, nor think her a freak. You are not coming to Scotland to subdue it, but to seek peaceful negotiation for its independence. You have a reputation for being fair to your peasantry, for being a good and decent man. You are nobility of a good estate. I cannot know more than what you wish to tell me, of course, but everything I have seen and been told has spoken to me of a perfect match for 'Renne, or for any lucky noblewoman. If you insist that you would be a terrible husband, then there must be something truly horrific to counterbalance all of the rest of your character.

[17:18] arynwyn: Cederic: <looks down at his glass, frowning> I do not wish to change your impression of me, sir.

[17:21] Socks: Lord Robert: <he shakes his head> I cannot understand then. But if you don't wish to marry my daughter -for whatever reason- I must respect that. I assume that you'll pass the estate on to an appointed heir instead of a biological one, then?

 [17:25] arynwyn: Cederic: <he nods> Yes, that is the plan as of now.

[17:28] Socks: Lord Robert: <tsks> Shame, but I suppose if you feel it necessary, it's not for me to tell you how to live your life.

[17:29] arynwyn: Cederic: <finishes his brandy> I don't feel that I have any other choice, sir.

 [17:43] Socks: Lord Robert: <sighs and shakes his head> Best head on up to bed. I doubt we'll be doing much in the way of negotiating when Connor gets here tomorrow, but you'll want to make a good first impression, hm?

[17:43] arynwyn: Cederic: <he nods and stands> Thank you for the brandy and discussion and for your patience. <bows deeply>

[17:46] Socks: Lord Robert: Of course. And I thank you for your own patience as well. God knows when Malcolm shows up, you'll need it. <stands and bows as well>

 [17:47] arynwyn: Cederic: <starts toward his room, then decides he wants some fresh air first. He goes out into the courtyard and into the moonlight>

[17:48] Socks: <over near the wall, two figures are speaking in hushed tones. They are animated in their movements, but, standing in the shadows, they are hard to make out>

 [17:49] arynwyn: Cederic: <takes to the shadows and creeps toward them>

 [17:55] Socks: Kyrenne: <her voice is immediately recognizable> If you've any care for our countries, you'd be helping him.

<the other person is male, with a much more Scottish tone to his voice, but is otherwise a stranger> You are meant to be helping US, 'Renne. Helping ME.

Kyrenne: I have been helping you - up until you started killing people, Seamus! The idea was that no blood would be spilled! That was the POINT.

Seamus: No, the point was that no *Scottish* blood would be spilled. And anyway, it was only the officers.

Kyrenne: ONLY, as if they're not human. It was WRONG, Seamus.

[17:56] arynwyn: Cederic: <stops moving and listens carefully, wishing he had some kind of weapon in case of an altercation>

[17:59] Socks: Seamus: <his back is to Cederic, and in the dark, his features are hard to make out. He grabs hold of Kyrenne's arms> Do you honestly think a British officer would give a damn about anything except themselves and their own reputation?

Kyrenne: <wrests herself out of his grasp> I know one who does.

Seamus: Daft woman. He's playing you. At best, his idea of negotiation is "Scotland gets to play at being a nation and Britain still holds the thumbscrews"; at worst, he'll just straight up murder the lords first chance he gets. He's got enough troops here to do it. And if you or your father try to resist, it'll be your heads, too.

Kyrenne: He wouldn't do that. You don't know him.

Seamus: And you do?

[18:01] arynwyn: Cederic: <scowls and takes a step forward when Seamus grabs Kyrenne's arm but steadies himself and continues to listen>

 [18:03] Socks: Kyrenne: <is brought up short by the question, but recovers quickly> Better than you do.

Seamus: I just don't want to see you hurt, 'Renne. <he raises a hand toward her face, seeking a caress>

Kyrenne: <turns her face away from his hand and folds her arms over her chest> I don't want to see ANYONE hurt, Seamus. I told you "no" once already; did you think killing a bunch of British officers was going to change my mind?

[18:05] arynwyn: Cederic: <scowls more>

[18:07] Socks: Seamus: <scowls also, not that Cedric can likely see it. He does the shimmer/melt thing that Cederic had seen Kyrenne do before, and in his place is a hawk. It screeches once at her and flies off into the night>

Kyrenne: <sighs and turns to let her back hit the wall. She closes her eyes (and so doesn't see Cederic) and lets the coolness of the wall sink in through her skin - she's got her tunic back on though, so mostly it's through her neck and the back of her head>

[18:08] arynwyn: Cederic: <he slinks backwards, away from her, intent on not letting her discover him. ...until he crunches on some stone>

[18:09] Socks: Kyrenne: <her head whips towards the sound, her eyes searching> Who's there? Ren, if that's you, I will beat the snot out of you! <she's trying to sound tough, but there's a slight tremor in her voice>

[18:11] arynwyn: Cederic: <hesitates a moment, then tries to act nonchalant> M'Lady, I didn't realize anyone else was out here. I just fancied some air before I retired. <strolls toward her>

[18:12] Socks: Kyrenne: <that eases her down...a little bit> I'm sorry, my lord. <she curtseys, despite the lack of skirt> I'll just leave you to your thoughts then; I'm sure you'd rather not have my company after our talk this afternoon.

[18:13] arynwyn: Cederic: <ignores the last comment> I spoke with your father. <looking up at the moon>

[18:13] Socks: Kyrenne: Finally convince him that you'd rather wed a snake than me? <she says this conversationally, trying to joke>

[18:15] arynwyn: Cederic: Well, I managed to convince him that I'm not going to wed anyone. And I promised him I wasn't going to have you charged with treason.

[18:17] Socks: Kyrenne: Somehow, I hadn't really thought you would do that. I'm a bit surprised that you won't marry ANYONE. Y'know, God allows you to lust after your wife. Kind of required, if you're to be fruitful and multiply.

[18:18] arynwyn: Cederic: NO! <suddenly angry> It's not -- I don't -- Argh. <he shoves his hands into his pockets and turns to head back toward the house>

[18:20] Socks: Kyrenne: YOU DON'T MAKE ANY SENSE! <she yells after him, folding her arms under her breasts again> Daft looney.

[18:23] arynwyn: Cederic: <his back stiffens and he stops for a moment, turning halfway like he might retort, then his shoulders slump again and he starts toward the house again>

[18:24] Socks: Kyrenne: <catches up with him easily> So why not join the clergy?

[18:25] arynwyn: Cederic: <he finds this humorous, laughs> I'm not worthy of the clergy.

[18:25] Socks: Kyrenne: How is that even possible? What'd you do: sell your soul to the devil?

[18:26] arynwyn: Cederic: I might as well have. <he sounds pained now, all humor gone>

[18:27] Socks: Kyrenne: <she throws her hands up> So fucking dramatic. I give up; you are too determined to be miserable for me to lighten you up. There isn't enough hunting and sparring in the wor...<pauses> You like brandy, yeah?

[18:29] arynwyn: Cederic: <he eyes her warily> Yes. Why?

[18:30] Socks: Kyrenne: <her eyes light up> C'mon then. <she grabs his hand and starts heading back inside>

[18:31] arynwyn: Cederic: You think you're going to get me drunk and I'm going to spill all my secrets to you? <but he follows her along, running his thumb across the back of her hand absentmindedly>

[18:33] Socks: Kyrenne: Or at least stop being so miserable for one bloody night. <once inside the manor, she tugs him down a corridor and then down a flight of stairs to the wine cellar. She finally pulls her hand away from his as she searches out a good bottle> Here! <yanking a bottle out of the racks> This is some really excellent brandy, but we're not drinking it here. C'mon. <grabbing his hand again>

[18:34] arynwyn: Cederic: <chuckles and follows after her>

[18:37] Socks: Kyrenne: <she leads him up and up and through long hallways - including a spot where she orders him to tiptoe past some bedrooms - and up some more flights of stairs until they come out to a small balcony off of one of the towers; it's just big enough for two people to sit on, facing each other, backs against the railing> This is supposed to be for archers, or to dump boiling pitch on siege attackers who've broken through the walls or something, I dunno. It's been here longer than my grandfather. <she sits down cross legged (good thing she's wearing pants) and pulls the cork out of the brandy bottle with her teeth. She offers him first swig of it - and yes, she didn't bring any glasses up with her>

[18:39] arynwyn: Cederic: <he takes a long drink (more like a chug) and then passes it back to her. He leans back against the railing and sighs>

[18:40] Socks: Kyrenne: <does likewise and puts the bottle between them so he can help himself when he likes> So, pretend you're a perfectly sinless being somehow. Tell me what you'd do with your life, if you could do anything.

 [18:42] arynwyn: Cederic: <he looks out past the rails> I'd marry, have children, travel, and die a happy old man.

[18:43] Socks: Kyrenne: So do it. Can't see anything Biblically wrong with any of that. <she takes another swig from the brandy bottle and then nudges it closer to him>

[18:43] arynwyn: Cederic: <he takes the bottle and drinks deeply again> How do you turn into a sparrow?

[18:44] Socks: Kyrenne: <blinks at him> I'm...sorry? <sitting very still> I think I misheard you.

[18:45] arynwyn: Cederic: I saw you turn into a sparrow. And I'm assuming that's how you got out of the inn that night. I thought you had jumped but flying would be much easier, obviously.

[18:47] Socks: Kyrenne: ...damn. I've gotta pay better attention to who's around when I do that. <she shrugs> My mother's blood. She was a shapeshifter. Ren can do it too. If we'd had proper training, we could do better at it, but all I can do is the sparrow, a couple other forms, and change what I look like a little. That's how I looked different at the inn too. 'Cept I can't change my eyes worth a damn. <she frowns at herself>

[18:48] arynwyn: Cederic: <takes another drink, smaller this time> It's fascinating.

[18:49] Socks: Kyrenne: You don't think it makes me a demon or something? Don't believe those idiot stories about shapeshifters drinking baby blood to fuel our dark magics or anything like that? <making scary fingers at him as she says the part about "drinking baby blood", then follows it up with another swig of brandy>

[18:51] arynwyn: Cederic: <smirks> There are rumors about all kinds of beings, usually they are negative.

[18:52] Socks: Kyrenne: <exhales in relief> Wanna see what else I can do? <grins and doesn't wait for him to answer: she goes shimmery/melty and within seconds, there is a small brown mouse in front of him. 'Renne-mouse runs up his leg and starts climbing his shirt>

[18:52] arynwyn: Cederic: <scoops her up in his hand and raises her to eye-level> So that's how you got past my guard. <he smiles and sets her back down on the stone>

[18:54] Socks: Kyrenne: <squeaks and goes shimmery again, getting larger this time. Before he can blink, he has a lapful of red fox. 'Renne-fox curls up on his lap and makes herself to home>

[18:55] arynwyn: Cederic: <smiles and runs his hand down her back> God's creatures are so beautiful. And you, especially.

[18:58] Socks: Kyrenne: <rolls onto her back before getting shimmery again so that, when she's once again human, she's sitting in his lap properly - if there is a proper way to sit in a nobleman's lap. Her legs drape over one of his, back in towards the stairs they came up, and her back is against the railing. She reaches for the bottle of brandy> Got a thing for foxes, have you? I'll have to keep you away from Renard; he can do that form too. Though he's a boy fox, naturally. <she chuckles and offers him another drink after she's had a sip - not a swig this time>

 [18:59] arynwyn: Cederic: <takes a drink and sets the bottle aside, sliding his arm around behind her> What's your favorite form?

 [19:01] Socks: Kyrenne: Oh well I'm usually human, but I think if I had my way...<she ponders> either human or fox. I mean, human's the norm anyway - we're born that way. And mouse and sparrow are good for spying. But I think fox is my prettiest form. And I can bite people. <grins>

[19:03] arynwyn: Cederic: <laughs> Yes, you would like that, wouldn't you? <the brandy's kicking in and he's started to relax>

[19:04] Socks: Kyrenne: I can bite people as a human, but for some reason, you get yelled at if you do it as a human....I mean, I suppose they yell at you as a fox too, but you can make a quicker getaway.

[19:04] arynwyn: Cederic: <laughs again> Just stay away from hunters, will you?

 [19:05] Socks: Kyrenne: Yeah, Father already gave me that lecture. Fox was the first form I learned. He also told me to stay away from the sheep. <she giggles>

[19:06] arynwyn: Cederic: Ah, yes. <grins> And how many times did you and Renard break that rule?

[19:08] Socks: Kyrenne: ...not THAT many. Farmers around here are really good shots with those bows. <she grins> One of 'em got Renard's tail. We don't have tails in human form, but he was sittin' funny for a week. <she laughs>

[19:09] arynwyn: Cederic: <laughs> I'm sure he wasn't too happy about that.

[19:10] Socks: Kyrenne: Yeah, we didn't go back after that. We had to make up a story about how he fell off his horse, and that got him all kinds of teased about that in the bargain. <she leans back against the railing and closes her eyes> It's nice to share these stories with someone else besides Fee. She's heard 'em all already anyway.

[19:11] arynwyn: Cederic: Is she a shifter as well?

[19:13] Socks: Kyrenne: <opens her eyes> No, but she and Ren and I practically grew up together. And for awhile we hid it from her, but she was my best friend, and Ren was crushing on her, so we thought she should know. I knew they were meant to be together the night I caught them alone by a fireplace, and he was curled up on her lap as a fox, and she was just petting him....<she smiles at the memory> they looked so happy.

[19:14] arynwyn: Cederic: That's what you want, too, isn't it? <not so much of a question as it is a statement> To be able to be yourself. <he touches her cheek gently, eyes soft>

[19:16] Socks: Kyrenne: <nods, not moving away from his fingers> Yeah. I can't even be myself as a human around most men without driving 'em off. Imagine if they knew I could turn into an animal that most of 'em hunt for sport? <she sighs and leans into his hand, closing her eyes> Prob'ly burn me at the stake as a witch or somethin'.

[19:17] arynwyn: Cederic: <his breathing hitches a little and he pulls his hand away suddenly, looking away> I'm sure you'll find someone.

[19:18] Socks: Kyrenne: <blinks her eyes open at the hand disappearing. She studies him a moment, then picks up the brandy bottle> You're getting miser'ble again. <shoves the brandy bottle at his chest>

[19:19] arynwyn: Cederic: You're right. <he takes another long drink, then offers it to her>

[19:22] Socks: Kyrenne: <accepts it so she can take another swig> I figure I'm gonna end up livin' here forever. Father'll pass the reins on to Ren and he'll marry Fee and she'll move in here, and I'll be the crazy spinster aunt to all their kids. <she chuckles> It'll be fun, teachin' 'em all kinds of ways to drive their dad crazy. I'm lookin' forward to it.

[19:24] arynwyn: Cederic: <chuckles> I wish... <he sighs and closes his eyes> I wish I could be that man for you. I really do.

[19:25] Socks: Kyrenne: <looks at him> So do it.

 [19:26] arynwyn: Cederic: <opens his eyes in surprise> I thought you didn't want...?

[19:28] Socks: Kyrenne: I don't want a man doesn't want me. An' you're all set to be a priest without actually BEIN' one, so I'm tryin' not to get my hopes up. This afternoon helped a lot with that. You were MAD at me...<whistles lowly and sets the bottle down>

[19:31] arynwyn: Cederic: <he takes the bottle and chugs some more, sets it down. He hesitates a moment, then whispers "God forgive me" as he leans in and kisses her gently>

[19:32] Socks: Kyrenne: <kisses him back, sliding her arms up around his neck loosely. She tastes strongly of brandy, but since he does too, he probably doesn't even notice that>

[19:33] arynwyn: Cederic: <groans against her lips and pulls her closer, sliding his hands around her waist and up her back>

[19:37] Socks: Kyrenne: <kisses him deeper, running her hands up into his hair>

[19:42] arynwyn: Cederic: <crushes her against him as they kiss, his hands tangling in her hair>

 [19:46] Socks: Kyrenne: <finally breaks away to breathe, chest heaving. She rests her forehead against his, eyes closed, letting her arms drape over his shoulders loosely>

[19:47] arynwyn: Cederic: <pants along with her, holding her close, fighting the ache in his chest>

[19:48] Socks: Kyrenne: <after she's had a breath or six, she decides that's enough and goes to kiss the hell out of him again>

 [19:51] arynwyn: Cederic: <happily returns the kisses and rubs her back slowly>

[Next Morning]

 [21:45] Socks: <So, the next morning, whether either Kyrenne or Cederic likes it or not, Lord Connor MacKenzie arrives. Fortunately, his daughter, Fiona, is with him, causing even a hungover Kyrenne to squeal with joy. Renard beams and the girls hug and Lord Connor and Lord Robert exchange friendly pats on the back. Lord Robert does introductions while Ren, 'Renne and Fee disappear off somewhere the way old friends do.

Lord Connor is everything Kyrenne promised he'd be: the Scottish version of Lord Robert, pretty much, though his hair's darker and not as gray yet. There is, in fact, very little work to be done in persuading him; once convinced of Cederic's honest desire for peaceful independence for Scotland, the rest of the day is mostly drinking (what joy, eh, Cederic?), eating and playing friendly games of cards (no actual gambling). At dinner that night, Fiona occasionally shoots Cederic evaluating looks - when she's not smiling at 'Renne or stealing snuggles from Ren.

The next day, however, Lord Malcolm Stewart arrives. Whereas Lord Connor brought only his daughter and one aide, Lord Malcolm seems to have a veritable entourage - including a bodyguard. He didn't bring any family members, but one of his servants has a very familiar voice. The servant in question, a young man with dark blonde hair and green eyes, seems...servile enough, but when his master's back is turned, he shoots the occasional glance over at 'Renne...who largely pretends to ignore him.>

[21:47] arynwyn: Cederic: <wearing his finest tunic - the one he wore to dinner the first night - he greets the entourage respectfully, making note of who the servant must be and his interest in 'Renne>

[21:54] Socks: Kyrenne: <as promised, she is dressed up properly for Lord Malcolm (there was little point in doing it for Lord Connor; he knows all about her anyway). She wears http://www.tudordressing.com/images/attributes/C1093.jpg (without the necklace), curtseys properly and remains obediently quiet...for now>

Lord Malcolm: <after having been shown to his rooms, Malcolm bellows> Well, how's the hunting here? I assume you hunt, Lord Lyon? <that being Lord Robert's surname, since I finally decided to give him one>

Lord Robert: Absolutely, Lord Stewart; we've quite a bit of deer, and I think some wild boar this season. I'm sure your trip has tired you though, and...

Lord Malcolm: Nonsense! Hunting is an enjoyment, even after a long ride. Seamus! Get my good bow!

Seamus: <nods> Yes, m'lord, right away. <hurries off to get the bow>

Lord Robert: Well, if you're sure, I should be able to convince Lord MacKenzie to join us. Lord Vaughn? <since everyone's bein' all formal and shit now> Care to go hunting? I hear Somerset is a prime hunting estate as well.

[21:55] arynwyn: Cederic: <hesitates a moment, then bows> Of course. It would be an honor.

[21:58] Socks: Lord Robert: <smiles> 'Renne, care to join us?

Lord Malcolm: <arches a bushy eyebrow> Your daughter?

Lord Robert: Yes, Lord Malcolm; Kyrenne is an accomplished hunter.

Kyrenne: <eyeing Lord Malcolm's disapproval> Perhaps I should leave off today. I have...needlepoint to see to. <tries...not...to laugh...>

Lord Robert: <stares at her like she's gone nuts>

Lord Malcolm: <nods in grudging approval>

[22:00] arynwyn: Cederic: <frowns at Malcolm's reaction but keeps his mouth shut>

[22:04] Socks: Seamus: <disguises his laugh as a cough and hands Malcolm the requested hunting bow> M'lord.

Lord Malcolm: <grins as he accepts it and heads for the stables, where he just came from>

Lord Robert: <steps in close to his daughter> Never seen you give up on a hunt before...or care what someone thought of you.

Kyrenne: I 'd rather spend some extra time with Fiona than in his company, if you don't mind. <rather tightly>

Lord Robert: <accepts that and heads after their guest>

Kyrenne: <turns to Cederic> Go on out there and prove how MANLY Somerset is. <'cause, yes, she's never going to let him forget that. She grins at him and adds> No, really; he's more apt to listen to you if he respects you, and he won't respect you unless you can prove you're not some weak little milksop.

Seamus: <watches their interactions closely>

[22:05] arynwyn: Cederic: <quietly> Still, I wish you were coming. <he smiles before turning to follow the men out to the stables> Don't prick your finger too many times on that needle. <glances back with a smirk>

[22:09] Socks: Kyrenne: <sticks her tongue out at him, then turns to Seamus once she believes he's out of earshot> He'll do his best. Just let him try.

Seamus: Lord Malcolm's NOT going to be impressed by some Southern nancyboy.

Kyrenne: He is NOT a nancyboy. I think you'll be surprised what he's capable of.

Seamus: <mutters something under his breath, then, in normal volume> I've got to get everything stored the way he likes it, or there's hell to pay. Go spend time with your friend.

[22:10] arynwyn: Cederic: <heads out into the stables and locates his horse and helps the stableboy gear it up>

[22:12] Socks: Lord Malcolm: <already re-horsed - whether the horse likes it or not> Well, what brings you north at this time of year, Southblood? I thought you lot were afraid of the cold.

Lord Connor: <closes his eyes in exasperation, since he is safely behind Lord Malcolm>

Lord Robert: <is finishing up with his own horse>

[22:13] arynwyn: Cederic: <mounts up and eyes Malcolm evenly> I march north to Scotland to help secure peace. <smiles>

[22:15] Socks: Lord Malcolm: So you're turning traitor then? Gonna come fight with us? <grins>

Lord Robert: <arches an eyebrow at the newest guest> It's a harsh thing to accuse another of treason, my lord - even in jest.

Lord Connor: Aye. More like, young Lord Cederic is here on a more diplomatic mission. <swinging up onto his horse>

[22:16] arynwyn: Cederic: <nods at Connor> Yes, I hope to secure peace through talk rather than battle. I have already secured audiences with several of the British lords who are in Scotland, fighting. I hope that they will be as receptive of my message as Lord Robert and Connor are, and I hope you, too.

[22:19] Socks: Lord Malcolm: <frowns> Through TALK? Ha! What are we: women, to sit about and chatter all day? Mark me, lad: the British will never respect an adversary who has not first thoroughly thrashed them.

Lord Robert: <mounting his horse> As a Briton, Lord Malcolm, I find I must disagree. <he says evenly>

Lord Malcolm: You would. <he leans forward in his saddle to address Lord Robert> Look here, Lyon; we've been business partners a good many years, and it's been profitable for me, I'll admit. But you've a soft lump where your brain should be sometimes.

Lord Connor: <frowns> You're insulting our host, Lord Stewart.

[22:21] arynwyn: Cederic: <frowns too> I am a Briton as well and I have made it my mission to prevent precious blood from being spilt from either side, sir.

[22:23] Socks: Lord Malcolm: Feh. You ever even SEEN a battle, boy?

Lord Robert: <has this look that says he wants to show Lord Malcolm a battle or two right now>

[22:23] arynwyn: Cederic: <evenly> Yes. More than most men, I'd wager. <though that really doesn't make sense, given his age>

[22:25] Socks: Lord Malcolm: <scoffs again>

Lord Connor: <clears his throat> If we're to have any light for this hunt, we should go now.

Lord Robert: <spurs his horse towards the gate>

Lord Malcolm: Well you lie promptly, boy; let's see if you can hunt at all. <rides out after Lord Robert>

[22:26] arynwyn: Cederic: <stifles a sigh and follows after the men, feeling badly for Lord Robert and wondering why Malcolm was invited to a diplomatic talk at all>

[22:29] Socks: <throughout the hunt, Malcolm discourses loud and long on why Britain needs to be trounced. Connor suggests at one point that he's scaring the game away. Robert looks like he's reconsidering his invitation to Malcolm in the first place. Eventually there is sight of a deer. Malcolm and Connor ride off one way to try and drive it back towards Robert and Cederic>

Lord Robert: <quietly, bow drawn and an arrow notched as he sits his horse> I am sorry for his behavior, Lord Cederic. But he is one of the more powerful lords in Scottish Britain at the moment...and if his support could be gained, it would be an overwhelming help.

[22:30] arynwyn: Cederic: There is no reason to apologize for something you cannot control, sir. <keeping an eye out for the deer> Do you have any suggestions on how to gain his support?

[22:32] Socks: Lord Robert: A more unethical little voice in my head suggests a hunting accident and quiet burial....but that's only because he's annoying me at the moment. <he sighs> Seriously? I'm still thinking about it. I have to warn you, there's only so much of him I will be able to stomach.

[22:33] arynwyn: Cederic: <nods> We will do our best and send him on his way when finished. <smiles reassuringly. He spots the deer and quickly draws his bow, shooting an arrow straight into its heart. It staggers and falls to the ground, dead> Well, at least we'll have supper tonight.

[22:36] Socks: Lord Robert: Excellent shot!

<Lords Connor and Malcolm ride up and Connor cheers>

Lord Connor: Well done! Which of you downed it?

Lord Robert: That would be Lord Cederic here.

Lord Malcolm: Oh, well the lad can shoot well enough. You sure you won't take a thought to joining Scotland's side in the fight? <chuckles, but he did seem impressed>

[22:37] arynwyn: Cederic: <shakes his head a little in annoyance, then rides toward the deer. He dismounts and hoists it onto the rear of his horse, tying it down with a bit of rope>

[Time Passes]

[07:25] Socks: <Over the next few days, the lords work on "negotiating" - which mostly consists of trying to convince Lord Malcolm that it is neither weak nor womanly to bargain for peace with Britain. Kyrenne is present, as per Lord Cederic's request, and always properly dressed, as per her father's. In the beginning, she had tried to bring up points, but her attempts at speaking during a "men's discussion" seem to only make Lord Malcolm angrier, so eventually she merely plays hostess: making sure everyone has drinks and quietly listening to everything that is said>

 [07:27] arynwyn: Cederic: <his strategy is compromise - let's try negotiation and diplomacy first, and if it fails, Malcolm can have his war. He attemps to draw Kyrenne into the conversation, but over time, he too realizes that it only makes things worse>

[07:31] Socks: <About the fifth day in to things...>

Lord Robert: <sighs harshly, sitting back in his chair> I suppose there's just no way to convince you then, Lord Malcolm. I wish to Heaven there was some way...I'd be willing to bribe you into peace at this point, were it possible without insulting your honor.

Lord Connor: <rolls his eyes as he drinks from his goblet>

Kyrenne: <offering her tray of wine goblets to Lord Malcolm, she says nothing>

Lord Malcolm: <accepts a goblet and comments> Well...perhaps there IS something...

Kyrenne: <turned away from him now, she arches an eyebrow as she offers a goblet to her father>

Lord Robert: And what is that - ah, thank you, dear - <as he takes one>, Lord Malcolm?

Kyrenne: <brings the tray over to Cederic>

[07:32] arynwyn: Cederic: <thanks her quietly as he takes a goblet as well, his eyes intent upon Malcolm and what it is that he so desperately wants>

[07:34] Socks: Lord Malcolm: Well, as you know, my wife died last winter from the fever. Terrible thing. I've been done with mourning her some time now, and could use a woman's comfort. <he drinks deeply from his goblet> Perhaps if your daughter would be willing to marry me, I could be persuaded to go along with this daft little scheme of yours.

Kyrenne: <drops the tray in shock>

[07:36] arynwyn: Cederic: <immediately> No. <he stands up to help Kyrenne with the tray, not meeting her eyes> No, I'm afraid that's not possible, sir. Kyrenne has already agreed to marry me. <his voice is even but his eyes flick to hers uncertainly>

[07:38] Socks: Kyrenne: <now blinks at Cederic in shock>

Lord Robert: She has? <the beginnings of joy start to reach his eyes>

Lord Malcolm: <tsks> A pity then.

Kyrenne: ...no. <she says quietly. She clears her throat> I... <she makes herself turn to face Lord Malcolm, very definitely putting her back to Cederic> I never promised Lord Cederic anything of the sort. And if my marriage to you secures Scotland peaceful independence, then I agree, Lord Malcolm.

Lord Robert: <looks conflicted>

Lord Connor: <drops his head into one hand>

[07:40] arynwyn: Cederic: ... ... ... <he sits back down, looking like he might be sick>

[07:43] Socks: Lord Malcolm: <grins and stands> Excellent! I shall look forward to...

Kyrenne: AFTER the treaty is signed. Once Scotland has peacefully become its own nation, I will marry you the next day...the next hour, the next SECOND if you wish. But not before.

Lord Malcolm: <chuckles> Very well. Consider these negotiations a wedding present from me then. <he walks to her and bends to kiss her>

Kyrenne: <she turns her head at the last minute, so that his lips hit her cheek. She closes her eyes, her hands clenched at her sides>

Lord Malcolm: <doesn't seem to mind> Good day, my lords. <he bows as best his girth will let him and saunters from the room with his goblet>

Lord Robert: <stands immediately and goes to his daughter> Dear God, child, are you sure?

Kyrenne: <eyes still closed, she nods tightly, not trusting herself to say anything>

Lord Connor: <watching Lord Malcolm leave> That's a dear price to be paid, right enough. <sighs>

[07:44] arynwyn: Cederic: <his voice tight, he sets his goblet aside and stands> If you'll excuse me... <heading for the door without looking at any of them>

[07:47] Socks: Kyrenne: What would you have me do, Lord Cederic? <she says in a voice taut with repressed emotion. Still it is loud enough to carry to him> You wanted to know once whether you could trust me. I told you then: I would do ANYTHING in my power to secure Scotland's freedom, peacefully. <she finally opens her eyes and looks to his back> That much about me, you can trust.

[07:48] arynwyn: Cederic: Your sacrifice is noble, M'Lady. <as he turns. He bows very low to her, but the pain in his eyes is obvious, even as he tries to avoid her gaze>

[07:50] Socks: Kyrenne: <she hikes her skirts a little and stalks for the door. As she passes him, she comments, just barely loud enough to be heard> It isn't as if anyone else was going to marry me anyway.

[07:51] arynwyn: Cederic: <just as quietly> I meant what I said. <he follows her out of the room and turns in the opposite direction she does, not really knowing or caring where he's going>

[07:53] Socks: Kyrenne: What you said WHEN, exactly? <she asks in a volume that's nearly yelling, as she whirls to him> All the times you said you'd be a terrible husband and were not meant to marry? Because what you said in there was a LIE, Lord Cederic! <she strides to him and shoves him as she says> Add THAT to your list of sins that seek forgiveness!

[07:55] arynwyn: Cederic: That's what I'm trying to tell you, daft woman! <he grabs her arm to keep her from shoving him away> I don't care if it means a life of sin, of being an outcast forever. You would be worth it. <his tone quiets> But I will not take the choice away from you. If you wish to marry that man to save Scotland, then I will not stop you. And I will pray every day I live that you will not regret it. <he releases her arm and turns away>

[07:57] Socks: Kyrenne: <just stares at him a moment and runs off in the opposite direction>

Lord Robert: <walks up, sighing> I wish you had said something sooner, my lord. I had no idea...

[07:58] arynwyn: Cederic: The fault is mine. I didn't realize what I wanted until it was gone. <he watches her go, pained> At least we've secured peace. My men will be happy to return to their homes and families.

[08:01] Socks: Lord Robert: <puts a hand on his shoulder> I am sorrier than you can know, sir. For your loss, as well as for hers. I will send for the British Lords to meet here to sign the treaty. <he sounds suddenly tired>

[08:02] arynwyn: Cederic: <he nods> I need to tell my men we will be returning home soon. I doubt you will need my signature for the treaty, so we will leave tomorrow.

[08:03] Socks: Lord Robert: You should sign it, I think. Your willingness to do this is what started the negotiations. And you are a British Lord. I cannot imagine that fewer signatures would be better than more. But it is, of course, your decision.

[08:04] arynwyn: Cederic: <sighs softly, then nods> Very well. I will stay until the treaty is signed. <he bows> If you'd kindly excuse me, I need some fresh air...

[08:05] Socks: Lord Robert: Of course. <bows and lets him be>

[08:05] arynwyn: Cederic: <he goes to his room and changes into his peasant-y clothes, then heads outside and toward the forest, wanting to just lose himself for a while>

[08:07] Socks: <there is quiet sobbing from a very specific tree. Should he glance up as he nears it, he will see Renard and Kyrenne, out a little ways on that branch. Renard has his arms around his sister, who is sobbing into his shoulder>

[08:08] arynwyn: Cederic: <the sound makes him sick to his stomach, so he wanders away from them, deeper into the forest. When he can no longer hear her cry, he sinks down onto the ground and leans against a tree>

[08:13] Socks: <a long time passes before a red fox comes up to him. This one doesn't look like Renne - she had black going up her back legs and black at the tip of her tail. This one has white socks on his front feet and a white tip on his tail. He pads up to Cederic and cocks his head once before commenting, in human speech> I'd ask you to take her away with you, now, but she'd come back the second your back was turned. Stubborn thing.

[08:15] arynwyn: Cederic: <nods distractedly, intent upon his misery> It is my fault, and I will never forgive myself for it. <he sighs>

[08:16] Socks: Renard: <sits and swishes his tail> It is not your fault. Had you courted her from the beginning and sung her sweet songs and written her poems - had you drawn down the moon and the stars for her, my lord, she would have made this choice regardless. <he sighs and lays down, resting his head on his paws> and she would cry for it the harder.

[08:17] arynwyn: Cederic: If it hadn't been her choice, I'd kill the man now for suggesting such an arrangement. <he rubs a hand over his face>

[08:18] Socks: Renard: <if foxes could arch eyebrows> ...I thought you were a man of peace, despite being a soldier?

[08:19] arynwyn: Cederic: Normally, yes. But to see her in such misery makes me lose all logic and reason.

[08:19] Socks: Renard: You care for her that deeply?

[08:19] arynwyn: Cederic: <his jaw muscle works a few times> It seems so, yes.

[08:21] Socks: Renard: <sighs and stretches, catlike> You could always lock her in iron manacles. We cannot shapechange with cold iron about us. But she would never forgive you for that, for all that she loves you. <tail swishing in thought> Stupid, stubborn woman.

[08:23] arynwyn: Cederic: <sighs> She is doing what she thinks is right. I would never take that away from her. To do so would be to ruin the thing I love most about her. <he picks up a rock and chucks it into the bushes>

[08:25] Socks: Renard: I have to go. She thinks I went to get Fee, and if I take too long about it, she'll know I came to find you instead. <the fox gets melty/shimmery and a starling stands in its place> I am sorry for the both of you. I will keep trying to think of a way out of this.

[08:25] arynwyn: Cederic: <gives a little wave and goes back to his misery>

[08:26] Socks: Renard: <flies off>

 [08:27] arynwyn: Cederic: <excuses himself from dinner that evening, claiming to have caught a chill while out in the woods. In actuality, he can't stomach seeing Malcolm gloat over his "prize">

 [08:30] arynwyn: Cederic: <After taking his meal in his room, he takes a few extra swigs of brandy, tugs off his shirt and boots, and flops onto bed, hoping that sleep takes him quickly>

[08:31] Socks: <a couple of hours go by. There is no noise of a door opening or closing. There is no indication that anything has changed until the blankets and sheets lift, and the mattress next to him shifts>

[08:32] arynwyn: Cederic: <starts awake, jumping out of bed and reaching for his sword, which he keeps beside his bed. He grabs it at turns around to face the intruder>

[08:35] Socks: Kyrenne: <arches an eyebrow from where she is sitting in his bed, wearing a thin chemise (( http://www.thecastlecloset.com/i/wmsnchemises/medieval\_chemise8.jpg ))> If this is how you treat women, it's a wonder Mari wanted anything to do with you in the first place. <she's trying to keep her tone joking, the way she's used to talking with him. The slight tremor in her voice betrays her though>

[08:37] arynwyn: Cederic: <exhales in relief and sets his sword back down> You startled me. You should know better than to startle a soldier. <he sits back down on the bed, his bare back to her. In the dim firelight, if she looks closely, she can make out two faint vertical scars doing down his back, one on each side of his spine>

[08:38] Socks: Kyrenne: I think I could escape well enough, should you prove dangerous. <she scoots over to be behind him and rubs his back and shoulders> Though I did not mean to scare you. Truly, I thought you beyond fright. <one finger traces a scar down>

[08:40] arynwyn: Cederic: <he shivers a little> Beyond fright? Hardly. I scream like a little girl when I come across a spider. <joking>

[08:41] Socks: Kyrenne: And here I never learned that form. <she presses a kiss to his neck softly> Opportunities missed.

[08:42] arynwyn: Cederic: <he clutches his hands together to keep them from trembling> Why are you here?

[08:45] Socks: Kyrenne: A bit too much wine with dinner, coupled with the knowledge that you wanted to leave soon, and I would never, ever see you again. <she slides her arms around his waist from behind, pressing up against his back to continue brushing her lips to his neck and shoulder in light, soft kisses>

[08:45] arynwyn: Cederic: Need I remind you that you are a betrothed woman now? <he closes his eyes and sighs softly>

[08:46] Socks: Kyrenne: <sighs, her breath curling over his skin> I wish you wouldn't. <she rests her head against his back, one hand petting the skin of abdomen idly> I...

[08:47] arynwyn: Cederic: <he sniffs, trying to hide the fact that he's tearing up> Yes? <his voice is mostly steady>

[08:49] Socks: Kyrenne: I know that my being here is hard for you. I know what being here...what it makes me. But...<she's not doing as well as he is at sounding steady>...I also know that I may never know any touch other than *HIS* and...and I feel like I can't bear that thought. <there is sudden wetness on his back, running parallel to a scar, and she sniffles more audibly>

[08:50] arynwyn: Cederic: <he disengages himself from her and turns around to face her, wrapping his arms around her and pulling her close. He pets her hair and lets her cry, occasionally adding a tear of his own>

[08:52] Socks: Kyrenne: <holds him tightly> It was stupid of me to come here, wasn't it? It...it'll just make it harder later.

[08:53] arynwyn: Cederic: Yes, it will. But if it's what you wish, then I will happily oblige. <kisses the top of her head> And count myself lucky for it.

[08:54] Socks: Kyrenne: <sniffs> Will I be another sin to atone for, then? Your new reason for pushing away willing women? <she sits up a little, arms still draped around his waist - just more loosely now, trying to force a smile and trying to joke through her tears>

[08:55] arynwyn: Cederic: Love is never a sin. But I doubt I will ever be with another woman after you. <he leans in and kisses her gently>

[08:57] Socks: Kyrenne: <tries to keep the kiss's gentle nature as she returns it, but it becomes tinged with desperation all too quickly>

[08:58] arynwyn: Cederic: <pulls away after a few moments> Are you sure this is what you want? <unclear if he means sleeping with him or marrying the douchebag>

[08:59] Socks: Kyrenne: I'm sure I want you. <she presses a palm to one of his cheeks and her lips to the other> When you tried to claim I was promised to you today, my heart leapt for a moment.

[09:01] arynwyn: Cederic: <he sighs a little, sadly> As did mine. For the briefest of moments... <he moves his lips to her throat and drops kisses across her collarbone, brushing aside the shoulder of her gown to kiss the skin there>

[09:03] Socks: Kyrenne: <exhales> I'm sorry. God, I am so sorry, Cederic. <she nuzzles an ear> To choose him over you should be a travesty, but you know why I made that choice.

[09:05] arynwyn: Cederic: I know. I would never take your right to make your own decisions away from you, even when I disagree. <he pushes her down until she's laying on her back and he leans over her, one arm on each side of her, propping him up. He studies her face for a long moment> You are a very noble woman, Kyrenne. And I respect you for it.

[09:08] Socks: Kyrenne: <she reaches a hand up into his hair to pull him down, whispering just before her lips reach his> I love you, daft as you are.

[09:10] arynwyn: Cederic: <closes his eyes and kisses her deeply, trying to put what he feels into the kiss since she didn't give him time to reply. He rests one hand on her waist and keeps himself propped up with the other>

 [09:12] Socks: Kyrenne: <starts working on undoing his breeches, which she's rather good at, despite not looking at them and being rather distracted at the moment>

 [09:15] arynwyn: Cederic: <he's already hard. He reaches down and catches the hem of her nightgown, running his hand up her leg underneath it, drawing it up as he does>

[09:17] Socks: Kyrenne: <tries to shoo his breeches off of him without breaking contact with his lips. And she is, by the way, wearing not a stitch under the chemise. Her breath still tastes vaguely of dinner wine, and a bit of dinner as well, but given how long ago that was, she's not likely to still be drunk now, though her skin is flushed>

[09:18] arynwyn: Cederic: <he wiggles out of his pants and pulls away from her lips long enough to pull the chemise off over her head. Then he leans back and appreciates the view for a long couple of moments> You are so beautiful. <he traces a finger down her chest, between her breasts, to her bellybutton>

[09:21] Socks: Kyrenne: So are you. <she shifts a little, smiling, as his finger winds its way along her skin. She loops her arms around his neck to tug him down to her> Among many other wonderful and maddening qualities.

[09:22] arynwyn: Cederic: <he kisses her again as he slides into her gently, his breath catching at the first contact>

[09:24] Socks: Kyrenne: <her own breath halts briefly as well, then she exhales all at once with a quiet groan and shifts a little beneath him. She slips her arms away from his neck and back up around his torso, under his own arms, so she can hold him closer to her>

[09:24] arynwyn: Cederic: <whispers> I didn't hurt you, did I? <dropping kisses along her neck again, petting her hair with the hand he's not holding himself up with>

[09:25] Socks: Kyrenne: No, no <she reassures him, snuggling in close> And if you stop now, I may murder you.

[09:26] arynwyn: Cederic: <chuckles faintly and starts moving slowly, his lips trailing down to her breasts>

 [09:33] Socks: Kyrenne: <gasps softly and bites her lip a little to try and keep herself quiet>

[09:34] arynwyn: Cederic: <groans softly against her skin and thrusts a little faster, running his free hand over her skin, trying to memorize the feel>

[09:38] Socks: Kyrenne: <her breath comes harsher, quicker and her moans become louder. She turns her head towards the pillow to try and muffle herself. One hand grips the sheets tightly as the fingers of her other hand cling to his back. His name is the only word that makes it past her lips>

[09:40] arynwyn: Cederic: <it's been far too long for him and he's not able to control himself as she climaxes. He groans softly into her neck as he finishes, then pants and kisses her neck over and over>

[09:42] Socks: Kyrenne: <she gradually releases her deathgrip on the sheets so she can wrap both arms around him. She entwines a leg with his and pants raggedly into his hair, a light sheen of sweat starting to dry on her skin>

[09:43] arynwyn: Cederic: <he rolls off of her and onto his side, pulling her with him so she's laying half on top of him. He pets her hair as he continues to try and catch his breath, his eyes closed, a look of mingled sadness and joy on his face>

[09:45] Socks: Kyrenne: <snuggles in next to/atop him> I need to be back in my room at first light, but I can use my mouse or sparrow forms for that.

[09:46] arynwyn: Cederic: We could run away together. Go to India. Or America. Or somewhere where he could never find you. <rubs her back>

[09:47] Socks: Kyrenne: <she smiles sadly> You know I can't do that. If I could put my own desires ahead of Scotland and Britain, I'd've kicked Lord Malcolm in his groin for even suggesting such a thing. <her smile gets a little less sad as she adds> and then pinned you to the floor to kiss you silly.

[09:50] arynwyn: Cederic: <sighs a little> I know. <he holds her more tightly> I never got a chance to say, but I love you too, Kyrenne. <he kisses her forehead>

[09:51] Socks: Kyrenne: Why do you think I called you daft? <she smiles> Why do you think I'm here in the first place?

[09:51] arynwyn: Cederic: Because you're insane? <smiles a little>

[09:53] Socks: Kyrenne: Normally I would defend my sanity, but it's possible you have a point. <her smile reverts to wistfulness> Tell me about Somerset and all the fun we would've had there? I do so enjoy fairy tales at bedtime.

[09:55] arynwyn: Cederic: My favorite place is the sea. Just a couple hours' easy ride and you're there. The warm sun, the smell of the saltwater, sand under your feet... I like to take my dogs and let them run and catch gulls. The water is cold but refreshing, and a picnic in the sand is always fun. <he continues on about the sea, then switches to the forest outside his home, much like hers, and how she could run free as a fox without threat of hunters as long as she stayed within his grounds, etc etc>

[09:56] Socks: Kyrenne: <smiles, eyes starting to droop> It sounds lovely. <yawn>

[09:57] arynwyn: Cederic: You'd best get back to your room before we fall asleep. <sounds sad> I can't promise that I will wake up before daybreak. <he leans in to kiss her>

 [09:59] Socks: Kyrenne: <kissing him back deeply - she rarely does anything gently - before sitting up regretfully> I suppose you're right. <she pulls her chemise up from where he had tossed it and starts tugging it back over her head> May I visit again tomorrow night?

[10:03] arynwyn: Cederic: Please do. <he touches her cheek and starts to pull on his breeches>

[10:04] Socks: Kyrenne: <she blows him a kiss, shimmers into mouse form, and darts out beneath his door>

[10:04] arynwyn: Cederic: <sighs and lays back on the bed, wishing he was anywhere but here>

[Time Passes – the British lords are en route to sign the treaty]

[20:39] Socks: Seamus: <is out in the stables seeing to Lord Malcolm's horse. To say Lord Malcolm is an avid hunter is understating it a bit; he rides out every day, whether anyone goes with him or not, and he insists that his own servants see to his animals. Seamus moves about his work methodically; after doing it for so long, it's basically second nature.>

[20:44] arynwyn: Cederic: <he's avoided most of the social goings-on since Renne declared herself betrothed to Malcolm, and he's spent a lot of time out in the forests or with his men. Today he decides to go for a ride, so he heads to the stables. He nods to Seamus politely as he passes>

[20:46] Socks: Seamus: <eyes him with obvious suspicion while still going about his work. Though he ought to bow or at least acknowledge the presence of a social superior, he instead comments> Quite a feather in your cap then, sir. This "negotiation" ye've worked out. <he doesn't really sound congratulatory>

[20:50] arynwyn: Cederic: <stops and turns around to eye Seamus back> I'm afraid that I did nothing. It was all Lady Kyrenne. <looks pained>

[20:52] Socks: Seamus: <snorts quietly> 'Least you've sense enough to know that. Gonna give her the credit when ye talk to the House o' Lords then?

[20:53] arynwyn: Cederic: Of course. She is sacrificing more than soldiers on the field do, as far as I'm concerned, and she will get credit for it.

[20:54] Socks: Seamus: Aye. <nods quietly and, having done with brushing Lord Malcolm's horse down, throws the brush to the ground in repressed anger> 's not right, if you ask me, but then Lords always get what they want. <glare at Cederic as if he were personally responsible for every tragedy in the world>

[20:58] arynwyn: Cederic: <arches a brow just a little> No, it's not very fair, I agree. But I suspect you have something in specific that you are angry about?

[20:58] Socks: Seamus: Not that one such as you would care, m'lord. <he says "m'lord" like it's a curse>

[20:59] arynwyn: Cederic: <shrugs> You are the one that brought it up. If you wish to bring something to my attention, perhaps I could help.

[21:00] Socks: Seamus: <grumbles> Not that it matters. <picking up the discarded brush and packing it away properly> She's Lord Malcolm's now.

[21:01] arynwyn: Cederic: <wary now> You have feelings for Kyrenne?

[21:03] Socks: Seamus: <eyes him warily> She's a pretty lass, but I wouldn't presume, sir, to pursue the quality like that. <coughcoughliecough. of course, he is unaware that Cederic saw him and Kyrenne talking that night>

[21:06] arynwyn: Cederic: <sighs a little sadly> It seems that more men than not desire her. <he leans against the stable gate> Well, you and I have at least one thing in common, then. <smiles bitterly>

[21:07] Socks: Seamus: <arches an eyebrow at him> We got eyes in our heads?

 [21:10] arynwyn: Cederic: <shakes his head> Well, she has made her choice and there is nothing to be done about it. It's a pity she didn't end up with a shifter like you though. <tossing that out nonchalantly, but he's hoping for a reaction>

[21:10] Socks: Seamus: <whirls to him> What'd you say? ...sir. <belatedly. That might've been deliberate, or simply forgotten in the shock>

[21:11] arynwyn: Cederic: <repeats it, apparently unaware of his surprise> I said it's a pity she didn't end up with a shifter. She'd be much happier if she were able to be herself.

[21:12] Socks: Seamus: <narrows his eyes, looks around, and then closes on Cederic quickly to get within whispering distance> Who are you and what do you know? <he demands, leaving behind what little servile attitude he had to begin with>

[21:13] arynwyn: Cederic: I am Lord Cederic, of Somerset. I thought you knew, surely. <okay, so he's being a bit of a jerk>

[21:14] Socks: Seamus: <snarls> And what do you want here, LORD Cederic. <heavy on the biting sarcasm. His eyes are narrow pinpoints of suspicion>

[21:16] arynwyn: Cederic: <he sighs, rolling his eyes> Your secret is safe with me, Seamus. I don't care about what you or Kyrenne or Renard are.

[21:17] Socks: Seamus: How do you even KNOW what we are?

[21:18] arynwyn: Cederic: Kyrenne told me. <only sort of a fib>

[21:20] Socks: Seamus: <curses under his breath and stalks back towards Lord Malcolm's horse> She trusts too easily. <he looks back at him> What ELSE did she tell you about?

[21:21] arynwyn: Cederic: <shrugs> She's told me lots of things, I suppose. And perhaps you haven't noticed, but I've done nothing to betray her trust.

[21:22] Socks: Seamus: Yet.

[21:22] arynwyn: Cederic: I have no plans to, either. As soon as the treaty is signed, I will return home and she will probably never hear from me again.

[21:23] Socks: Seamus: Right, right. Once you've had what you wanted, you'll leave. 'S just like a Lord. 'Least your smart enough to give credit where credit's due...or to claim such anyway.

[21:24] arynwyn: Cederic: <his eyes widen in disbelief> Once I've had what I want? And what exactly is that? I've come and given everything I have to *your* cause and taken *nothing*, yet you treat me with more disdain than Lord Malcolm!

[21:26] Socks: Seamus: You don't even KNOW the disdain I have for Lord Malcolm. But it's my job to bow and scrape to him, so I do it. She's far too good for the likes o' him, but he'll never see it that way. He may not even get a glimpse o' that, pompous blowhard.

[21:27] arynwyn: Cederic: Again, we agree. So why do you have such dislike for me, a man you do not even know?

[21:28] Socks: Seamus: I've no need to tell you that, SIR.

[21:28] arynwyn: Cederic: <gives a bitter chuckle and shakes his head> As you wish. <he turns to head toward his horse>

[The Next Day]

[21:31] arynwyn: Cederic: <next day he's out for a walk in the forest, in his usual clothes of undyed tunic and leather breeches. He wanders past the tree Renne took him to, not paying much attention to where he is or where he's going>

[21:36] Socks: <Fiona MacKenzie is in http://www.tudordressing.com/images/MR-882508\_1.jpg , up in the tree. She spies Cederic and tosses a convenient piece of bark at his head from the branch she's sitting on. (She has the skirt tucked in around her legs, for modesty's sake). Fiona, since she has not previously been described, is blonde-haired, pale and freckled. Her eyes are green, but not the vibrant, almost too-bright green of Ren and 'Renne. She looks rather much like a porcelain doll - if they'd had porcelain back then>

[21:37] arynwyn: Cederic: <glances up as the bark hits him. He blinks at her a few times, then smiles> Ah, Lady Fiona. <he bows> I'm afraid I wasn't paying attention.

[21:38] Socks: Fiona: Lookin' for someone? <she grins. Her voice is much more obviously Scottish, but softer in tone overall than 'Renne's>

[21:38] arynwyn: Cederic: No, not especially. <he shrugs> I was just... wandering.

[21:39] Socks: Fiona: Wait a bit and your lady love'll be along. She was supposed to be here by now, actually. <frowns> Probably betting Ren she can't hold her breath longer than he can or something... <shooting an annoyed look at the keep>

[21:40] arynwyn: Cederic: Oh, I should... not be here then. <he glances back toward the keep as if afraid Renne is standing behind him>

[21:41] Socks: Fiona: Why not? I don't expect you two're gonna go at it out here in the open. <she jumps down, one hand on her skirt (always thinking about her modesty). She straightens up, smirking at him> No reason in the world you couldn't have just run into her out here.

[21:44] arynwyn: Cederic: No, it's not that. I just -- <looks pained> Please don't tell her I said anything but... it's very difficult for me to see her when I know that... <clears his throat> that soon I will have to leave and she will be married and... <he rubs his hands over her face> Forgive me, I shouldn't be so frank with you when I hardly know you.

[21:46] Socks: Fiona: <shrugs> You can't be half as frank with me as Renne is. And if it's so hard to see her, I don't doubt it's even harder <cough clear throat entrendre much> bedding her every night. Doesn't seem to stop either of you though. <grin>

[21:47] arynwyn: Cederic: <he sighs and leans against the trunk of the tree> No, it doesn't. I pretend that -- <he stops himself> Nevermind. <he blushes a little>

[21:48] Socks: Fiona: <cocks her head> Pretend that you're already married?

[21:48] arynwyn: Cederic: <turns even redder> It's the only way I can justify it. It's the only way I can not punish myself for it, not feel like it's a sin.

[21:50] Socks: Fiona: <sighs> I see what she means. God, maybe I ought to sneak into Ren's room some night. Then he'd just about HAVE to propose. <shakes that off> Anyway, that's neither here nor there. Ren and I have been racking our brains to think of a way around all this. We haven't yet come up with anything SERIOUS, just...nonsense. But then Ren's almost entirely composed of nonsense, so that's hardly surprising.

[21:51] arynwyn: Cederic: <he shakes his head> There is no way around it, not when it is Kyrenne's decision. She is making a sacrifice for what she believes is right and taking that away from her would be unjust.

[21:53] Socks: Fiona: <snorts> And if we could find some other way to get Lord Malcolm's signature on that piece of paper - or just get him out of the way so we know he doesn't run off and start a war behind our backs - she would JUMP for it. Her decision isn't "I want to marry Lord Malcolm", after all; her decision is "I want to do what's best for my nation and that of my best friend." Unfortunately, the tosser had to go and connect the two, so she's stuck. We have to disconnect them somehow.

[21:54] arynwyn: Cederic: Well, I haven't come up with an alternate solution. <he shrugs a little> If you do, please let me know.

[21:56] Socks: Fiona: <shrugs> Killing him's out of the question, though Ren's brought it up a time or two. <she flops on the grass and smoothes out her skirt> She's chased off every other man who came sniffing around, but the one she actually WANTS rid of won't go. 'Course, if he got wind of her real nature, he probably wouldn't sign the treaty in the first place, so I guess she's sort of stuck there. I've never seen her wear so many dresses...<shakes her head sadly>

[21:59] arynwyn: Cederic: <slides down the trunk of the tree to join her on the grass> It's only going to get worse. <looks miserable> Who knows what Malcolm's going to make her do once they're married and she's whisked away to his fortress... <leans his head back against the tree and looks up at the canopy>

[22:01] Socks: Fiona: Best not to think on that. <shudders> I give it a year before she snaps and kills him, or he kills her. Either way she ends up dead - his hands or the hangman's. She won't be able to keep up that farce.

[22:02] arynwyn: Cederic: <groans a little at the thought> I asked her to run away with me to India or America or *anywhere*... But she's intent upon making peace.

[22:04] Socks: Fiona: Lord Malcolm'd track her to the ends of the earth, once he's got it in his head that she's HIS, and she knows that. He wouldn't sign the treaty, and then...well, peace for Scotland gets a lot harder. He's the main funding for Scottish troops - AND the main training. He'll keep turning out soldiers unless he's either on our side or removed from play.

[22:06] arynwyn: Cederic: <he gazes over at her> You're depressing me. <but he's teasing, mostly>

[22:07] Socks: Fiona: Sorry. <sheepishly> Should I talk instead of her flashing eyes, her trembling lips, her cries of desperate passion? <grins and chuckles> It's terribly romantic.

[22:08] arynwyn: Cederic: <groans again> From depressing me to torturing me. You're so kind. <he flashes her a grin>

[22:09] Socks: Fiona: It's payback for all the torture she gives ME. Every time I see her, she's whining about how long the day is, and isn't it sunset yet?, and when will dinner be over already, blah blah blah

[22:10] arynwyn: Cederic: <laughs> That sounds just like her. And just like me, too. <blushes>

[22:11] Socks: Fiona: Lucky man, to have your Renne to yourself, even if only at night; I'd just about kill to get my Ren to even THINK such thoughts around me. <folds her arms and pouts> Convince him to propose already, will you? 'Renne's been trying for a year now; I'm about to take her advice and say hell-all to tradition and go ask Lord Robert for his son's hand in marriage.

[22:12] arynwyn: Cederic: <grins> I could say something to him for you, if you really wish it.

[22:13] Socks: Fiona: Would you? Please? I could pay you! <eager, like a terrier with a chew toy>

[22:15] arynwyn: Cederic: <he laughs> There is no payment necessary. I consider you a friend, and I do everything I can for friends.

[22:15] Socks: Fiona: <hugs him briefly> We've just got to find a way to get you properly married to 'Renne; I want to come visit and go to the seaside! <pouts as she straightens up and releases him>

[22:17] arynwyn: Cederic: You are welcome at Somerset anytime. <returns the hug, patting her on the back> Whether I marry Kyrenne or not.

[22:18] Socks: Fiona: <stands> I'd better go track her down. She's never this late for hanging out. Probably her bridegroom <rolls eyes> cornered her or something. <she curtseys to Cederic> We'll figure something out. Don't give up hope, okay?

[22:19] arynwyn: Cederic: <stands and bows deeply> It was a pleasure speaking with you. I will speak to Renard on your behalf. <smile>

[22:20] Socks: Fiona: From what 'Renne's said, you should give him some bedroom tips too. <winks and heads back towards the keep>

 [22:20] arynwyn: Cederic: <blushes a little and waves, then turns to continue wandering in the forest>

[That Night]

 [22:28] Socks: Kyrenne: <snuggles in next to him in happy sweaty afterglow, nuzzling his neck right where it meets his shoulder and draping a leg over one of his> Mmm, that was especially well done. <eyes closed and radiating contentment like a cat in a sunbeam>

[22:30] arynwyn: Cederic: <still panting a bit, he runs his hand up and down her back, his eyes closed> You flatter me. <smiles a little> I like it.

[22:31] Socks: Kyrenne: You calling me a liar, sir? <she asks in mock-anger. It might work better if she weren't still so obviously Blissed-out>

[22:31] arynwyn: Cederic: No, but you don't have much to compare me to, do you? <chuckles softly>

[22:33] Socks: Kyrenne: I can compare tonight to last night well enough though. <she nips at an earlobe, but then pauses in thought> I guess the real question is how **I** compare. I'm not sure how much...room for comparison there is there. <subtle hint>

[22:37] arynwyn: Cederic: <he goes rather still though he continues to pet her skin> There were only two others, and neither of them compare to you. <said quietly, hoping she doesn't jump up and slap him and shift and run away to disappear forever>

[22:38] Socks: Kyrenne: Only two? For a man attempting to atone for lustfulness, I would've expected a lot more. <she chuckles in honest humor>

[22:39] arynwyn: Cederic: <he rolls onto his side to look at her> Not a man, Kyrenne. <he sighs>

[22:39] Socks: Kyrenne: <arches an eyebrow> This...<putting a hand on a very specific part of him> would suggest otherwise.

[22:40] arynwyn: Cederic: <chuckles very faintly> No, that would imply that I am male... There is a difference.

[22:41] Socks: Kyrenne: Oh good lord. Are you suggesting you're a boy? You're awfully....developed for one. <petting his abdomen now>

[22:42] arynwyn: Cederic: <sighs> No... <he sits up and looks down at her> This is terribly difficult. I've never told anyone before. I figured it would only make my situation worse. Kyrenne, I am -- I *was* -- an angel. Now I am fallen. Fallen due to lust for a woman. <he sighs and looks away from her> There was love, too, but lust was the sin.

[22:43] Socks: Kyrenne: <blinks at him> ...that...isn't something I would expect you to joke about. <she clears her throat> You're saying Mari was right?

[22:44] arynwyn: Cederic: <he arches a brow> Mari?

[22:45] Socks: Kyrenne: Marigold, back in Templeton? She who was convinced you were a Messenger from God? 'Course, she also thought you were too good and pure for sex...

[22:47] arynwyn: Cederic: I didn't know she actually believed it. <he smiles just a little> She was terribly innocent.

[22:47] Socks: Kyrenne: So you're saying God threw you out 'cause you were in love with a woman?

[22:48] arynwyn: Cederic: <he rolls onto his back again> No. The angels threw me out because I *lusted* after a woman. And they laughed at me when -- <he stops>

[22:48] Socks: Kyrenne: When what?

[22:50] arynwyn: Cederic: <he sighs> I gave up *everything* for her. And she... she was unfaithful. She betrayed me. <rubs a hand over his face>

[22:50] Socks: Kyrenne: <her mouth drops open> and they LAUGHED at you for that? <she frowns> They better hope I end up in Hell, or I'm going to have some very strong words for that lot when I get up there.

[22:52] arynwyn: Cederic: <he shrugs> When I sinned, I was no longer their equal. They cast me out, burned my wings... and when the reason I sinned betrayed me, they thought it to be a lovely irony.

[22:52] Socks: Kyrenne: <she hugs him to her> I'm sorry. Right bastards they are, and coming from an actual bastard, that's saying something.

[22:54] arynwyn: Cederic: It was no less than I deserve. <he kisses her neck, then sighs> And so I spend my days trying to make up for my sin on the small chance that one day I may be able to die and either cease to exist or return to heaven.

[22:56] Socks: Kyrenne: No less than... <she pushes away to look him in the eye> You think you deserve to be mocked because you loved someone who didn't love you the same? <she combs a hand into his hair> I can't begin to fathom someone cheating on YOU. ...though I guess I'm not about to have a choice. <frowns and clears her throat to return to the subject at hand> But...I've messed all that up for you now, haven't I?

[22:57] arynwyn: Cederic: <he touches her cheek> I told you, you're worth it. If I died today and spent the rest of eternity in Hell, I wouldn't take any of it back. <he leans up and kisses her deeply> Not a moment.

[22:58] Socks: Kyrenne: <kisses him back> Well. Don't. <she says, when she can again> Don't die today. or tomorrow. Or any time in the forseeable future. <she snuggles back in next to him> So who was the other one then?

[23:01] arynwyn: Cederic: <pets her side> After Deliah betrayed me, I wandered around for a long time. I was sad and alone and lost. I figured since I was already damned - that's how I saw it - then I might as well do as I please. So the other was just a tavern girl, not nearly as pretty or sweet as Mari.

[23:02] Socks: Kyrenne: <she chuckles> Really? That's it? One betrayed love and a random tavern girl? Well, good to know I don't have terribly stiff competition.

[23:03] arynwyn: Cederic: You wouldn't even if I had slept with every woman I had met for the past three hundred years. <nuzzles her ear> Even the woman I was cast out for was nothing compared to you. I thought that was love but *this*....

[23:05] Socks: Kyrenne: <she blushes, something she doesn't do much of> I guess, given the way they've treated you, calling down some divine assistance for our situation is unlikely?

[23:06] arynwyn: Cederic: <chuckles bitterly> I've been praying for some since I got here and so far, no luck.

[23:07] Socks: Kyrenne: Well, one can only....

<There is a loud roar - something animal and feral and savage, followed by a much more human yell of pain. These sounds are not outside, but from within the manor - and close by>

Kyrenne: <sits up and dives for her chemise>

[23:08] arynwyn: Cederic: <tugs on his breeches and grabs his sword> Kyrenne, stay here! <he dashes out the door and toward the noise>

[23:11] Socks: Kyrenne: LIKE HELL! <following after him>

<It's coming from Lord Malcolm's room - there is thrashing about and thuds and all manner of commotion>

Fiona: <opens the door to her room, which is also nearby, but stays in the doorway. Her chemise is less...see-through than Kyrenne's, but she has a shawl wrapped around her arms and chest regardless> What in BLAZES...?

[23:13] arynwyn: Cederic: <he stops at Malcolm's door and turns to Fiona> Keep her back, will you? <nodding toward Renne. Then he pushes open Malcolm's door and steps inside slowly, sword at the ready>

[23:16] Socks: Kyrenne: <does nothing of the sort; she's right behind Cederic>

<A large, lightish brown wolf is standing over Lord Malcolm...or rather, what remains of him. Its muzzle is smeared with blood, and it has green eyes. Its hackles rise again when it sees Cederic, and it snarls a warning>

Kyrenne: <gasps, a hand going over her mouth> Oh gods no....what've you DONE....?

Renard: <skids into the hallway in nothing but his own breeches, wielding twin daggers> 'Renne, what... <he looks to Fiona, who nods at him to say she's okay, then puts a hand on his sister's shoulder and looks into the room>

[23:18] arynwyn: Cederic: <pushes Renne back with his shoulder, trying to keep her out of view of the wolf. He keeps his sword steady but doesn't attack, sensing that there is more to the wolf than just a wolf, considering what Renne says>

[23:21] Socks: <It leaps for Cederic, aiming for the throat>

<and a lightning-quick red and black fox bounds in to intercept the wolf which is easily twice her size; the surprise of the attack knocks them off course, and they hit the floor and skid a ways>

Lord Connor: What is all the infernal racket?!

Fiona: <goes to her father quickly and hugs him as if distressed; she's attempting to keep him away from the room>

[23:24] arynwyn: Cederic: NO! <he leaps into the fray but tosses his sword aside. He grabs the wolf by the throat and pins him against the wall with inhuman strength> Renard! Please - Kyrenne! Get her out of here!

[23:27] Socks: Renard: <runs in to try and scoop up fox-'Renne. She shakes off her daze from hitting the floor and wriggles> Damnit, hold STILL! <she slips out of his grasp and runs to Cederic and the wolf>

<The wolf shimmers, melts - and just as realization hits that it's Seamus, he aims a kick right at Cederic's crotch>

Lord Robert: <in the doorway now> Dear God, Lord Malcolm...!

Renard: <tackles fox-'Renne - as a fox himself now, and pins her in place, despite her struggling>

[23:31] arynwyn: Cederic: <he grunts in pain as the kick connects but he doesn't release Seamus. He pants a couple of times, then glances back at Lord Robert> What do you wish me to do? <jerking his head toward Seamus, unsure if he should be arresting him or thanking him>

[23:35] Socks: Lord Robert: GUARDS! <he bellows>

Seamus: <kicks and thrashes and, despite being human now, snarls and growls. He starts using his fingers to claw at Cederic's arm>

Renard: Oof! <still in fox form, he's thrown off of 'Renne>

Kyrenne: <and she is QUICK as a fox. She bounds towards Seamus and leaps up to BITE him in the BALLS>

Seamus: [For the sake of those with more delicate sensibilities, Seamus's red-faced torrent of obscenities will not be repeated here]

Lord Connor: <in the doorway with his daughter, he reflexively covers her ears even as he tries to take in all of this>

[23:36] arynwyn: Cederic: Kyrenne, get ahold of yourself. <but he's half-laughing, mostly in disbelief at her behavior. He tries to bat her away with his free hand>

[23:40] Socks: Kyrenne: <drops to the floor and spits - an odd motion for a fox. She keeps doing it though>

Renard: <IS laughing - at first as a fox and then, forgetting that Lord Connor is in the doorway, he shifts back to human. He picks up his sister and holds her at arm's length> Brandy?

Kyrenne: Oh god, please? <she asks, still in fox form>

Lord Connor: ... ... ...

Fiona: <clears her throat>

Kyrenne: Shit. <she shifts back to human form>

Renard: <lets her go and clears his own throat. He drops a bow> Lord Connor. <he says worriedly>

Lord Connor: ...When you get that brandy, get one for me too?

Renard: Right away, sir. <hurries out>

<The guards show up with iron manacles which they clap on Seamus's wrists; he's in far too much pain to thrash about at this point>

[23:41] arynwyn: Cederic: <as soon as Seamus is in the guards' custody, he rounds on Kyrenne> What EXACTLY were you thinking?! Oh wait, I know, you WEREN'T! <he's extremely pissed> Taking on a WOLF as a FOX? After everything I just told you about myself?! <?!?!?!?!>

[23:43] Socks: Kyrenne: <whirls right back at him> He was going to tear your throat out! I wasn't about to let him do to you what he did to...<blinks and remembers. Her eyes track over to the bloody corpse> ...to Lord Malcolm. <swallows harshly>

[23:44] arynwyn: Cederic: <he grabs a knife from Renard and slices it across his forearm. It heals almost instantly, though a stain of blood remains> He couldn't have. Daft woman. <he pulls her close and kisses her hard> Don't EVER do that to me again. Ever.

[23:46] Socks: Kyrenne: I make no promises. <grins>

Lord Robert: <blink>

Fiona: <clears her throat...again>

Lord Connor: We have to do something about Lord Malcolm. We have a great number of British lords descending upon the estate in the next couple of days. Also, I would appreciate it very much if SOMEONE WOULD TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON. <he sounds tired and frustrated, not angry>

[23:48] arynwyn: Cederic: <he returns the knife to Renard, then says quietly in his ear> It's time. Together, then, like men? <hoping he gets the meaning of his cryptic message> For the women? <jerks his head toward Kyrenne and Fiona>

[23:49] Socks: Renard: <blinks and hisses> Now? You do realize my sister's LAST fiance is lying in a pool of his own blood just behind us?

[23:50] arynwyn: Cederic: <gives him an "oh come on" look> And you do realize the *only* reason she was going to marry him was for peace, yes?

[23:51] Socks: Renard: Yes, but...it's not exactly the romantic circumstances I'd imagined...

Kyrenne: <rolls her eyes; she can't hear exactly what they're talking about, but she's fed up with their secrecy. She walks up and shoves Ren from behind> Whatever you two are conspiring about, I Refuse to be kept out. <she folds her arms in what is now immediately recognizable as her stubborn pose>

[23:53] arynwyn: Cederic: Well, I for one am not going to be a pansy about it. <he turns to Kyrenne> Perhaps it is a crude circumstance but now that you're free, I must make a move before anyone else can. <he grabs her hand and lifts it to his lips> Kyrenne, I demand that you become my wife as immediately as possible. <his eyes sparkle with humor>

[00:00] Socks: Kyrenne: ... ... ...well, I...I suppose I have to, don't I? Being compromised already and all... <she grins before she tackles Cederic for a kiss>

Lord Robert: <goes from joy to shock in the space of a moment>

Fiona: <giggles>

Renard: Fee...I...

Fiona: Dare I hope marriage proposals are contagious? <she comments wryly>

Renard: <blinks, then reaches out and pulls her over to him> Yes, they are. So say yes already and put me out of my misery? Please, Fee. I can't marry anyone else.

Fiona: <beams at him> Of course you can't. The only other woman who can tolerate you is your sister - and she's spoken for. <leans up to kiss him>

Lord Connor: <rolls his eyes and drinks his brandy, muttering around the glass> I don't understand half of what went on here tonight... <lowering the glass now>...but I'm not thinking about it until morning. Fiona, to your room; I'll not have you following 'Renne's example <cleared throat, significant look at Kyrenne>

Kyrenne: <too busy kissing Cederic to notice>

Lord Connor: Ren?

Renard: <breaking away from Fiona reluctantly> Yes, sir? <clears his throat>

Lord Connor: Touch her before the wedding and I will break your hand, son. <he claps Ren on the shoulder and heads back to his room>

[00:03] arynwyn: Cederic: <his ears go a little pink at the "compromised" comment but he happily returns the kiss, holding her as tight as he dares and looking like he'll never let go>

[00:07] Socks: Lord Robert: <clears his throat now - it's a night for it - immediately behind them>

Kyrenne: <finally does stop kissing Cederic to look at her father>

Lord Robert: Back to your OWN room now, please? Your father's had enough scandal for one night, and we still have to deal with Lord Malcolm.

Kyrenne: How soon can we be married?

Fiona: <from the doorway> Can we have a double wedding?

Lord Robert: We might have to, or else they'll bet on who will get married first. <he doesn't have to specify who "they" are in that sentence> Now get to your room as your father ordered, Fiona.

Fiona: <grins at 'Renne and ducks out>

Lord Robert: <considers Cederic> I ought to be raging mad at you for taking advantage of her, but it's 'Renne, and I know better. She probably took advantage of you. <sighs and shakes his head>

[00:09] arynwyn: Cederic: <looks properly penitent> I could have - should have - said no, sir. But believe me, I had every intention of wedding her as soon as I could find a way out of that horrific agreement she was in.

[00:11] Socks: Lord Robert: Yes well, I do hope you love her 'cause you're stuck with her now. 'Renne, to your room. NOW. I expect you to BEHAVE until the wedding.

Kyrenne: <snorts> Expect to be disappointed. <she kisses Cederic quickly and heads for the door>

[00:12] arynwyn: Cederic: <quietly, when he thinks Renne is out of earshot> She will. I promise. <he bows very low, then gathers his sword up>

[00:15] Socks: Kyrenne: Good luck with that. <she comments as she ducks out>

Lord Robert: <looks at Lord Malcolm's remains> Poor man. But it'll go out that he was attacked by a wolf and died fighting. He would've liked that. And, since we hadn't TOLD anyone about the engagement yet, there's no face-saving delay necessary. That being said, undue haste is usually a bad sign as well....<he gives up thinking on it for now> Logistics. They'll wait until morning. <he claps a hand on Cederic's shoulder> I am honestly glad she found someone who makes her happy. Better yet that she gets to marry him.

[00:18] arynwyn: Cederic: <he smiles> Agreed, sir. By the by, have you any property for sale up here that I might invest in?

[00:19] Socks: Lord Robert: <seems surprised> For what purpose, my lord?

[00:20] arynwyn: Cederic: A wedding present, for Kyrenne. I daresay she's going to miss her brother, her best friend, and her parents terribly. Perhaps a summer home would lessen that.

[00:21] Socks: Lord Robert: <smiles> I think that should be MY present to the two of you, if anything. Go to sleep. We'll discuss it in the morning.

 [00:22] arynwyn: Cederic: <nods and heads out into the hallway, yawning. He pads back to his room and collapses on the bed>

[Time Passes]

[18:55] Socks: <It is decided, after a visit from the nearest doctor to ascertain that 'Renne isn't pregnant, that a dual wedding will be held in the spring for Ren & Fiona and Cederic & 'Renne. Cederic and his men are, of course, invited to spend the winter at Farmington, or they may go as they please>

[18:57] arynwyn: Cederic: <he releases his men to return home to their families, and most of them go. There are a few stragglers - single men or those that have started relationships with some of the womenhelp. Cederic, of course, stays>

[18:59] Socks: <Lord Connor leaves Fiona in the care of Lord Robert and heads home, promising to visit around Christmastime and, of course, to be back in the spring for the wedding. Lord Robert lays down the following injunction: No Pre-Marital Sex - or, rather, in 'Renne's case, no MORE of it. Despite 'Renne's pouting, she agrees, as does Ren>

[19:00] arynwyn: Cederic: <wholeheartedly agrees with the decree. I mean, he's waited 300 years, he can wait a little longer>

[19:04] Socks: <As autumn starts to frost over into winter, the twins are generally behaving themselves. Ren finds excuses to snuggle Fiona - or, better still, to go fox form and curl up on her lap. They share the occasional kiss, but are, in general, chaste and well-behaved.

'Renne likes to make flirty comments at Cederic, and sometimes "accidentally" touches him indecently at dinner, under the table, but by and large, she behaves as well. She bids him good night at dinner and goes to her own room and stays there nowadays. There is little reason to expect any change in behavior and, for the most part, Lord Robert is pleased with his children.>

[19:06] arynwyn: Cederic: <retires to his room after dinner with a book he borrowed from the library. He tugs off his tunic and boots and flops down on his bed on his stomach to read, scars glinting in the firelight ('cause there's still a secret about the scars ;) )>

[19:11] Socks: <There is a sound. It might be a hiss, it might be a rattle. It might simply be imagined. But then a disembodied voice, sinister and male hisses in his ear> Good evening, comrade. Such fine chilly weather we have up here, hmm?

[19:11] arynwyn: Cederic: <sits bolt upright and looks around the room carefully>

[19:13] Socks: <with a puff of sulfur and brimstone, a demon appears in the room with him, smiling. It is dressed like a lord of the realm, complete with military honors, and its grin is fangy and self-satisfied> We are of a kind, are we not? Banished from the Silver City for our sins, hmm? I've heard the stories of you; your former compatriots DO love to gossip.

[19:21] arynwyn: Cederic: <eyes him warily> What do you want with me?

[19:24] Socks: <smiles> A friendly chat, that's all. It's so rare I get to talk with your kind....well, what USED to be your kind. <he tsks lightly as he shakes his head> Banished for lust...well, no point in holding back then, is there? <he grins at Cederic> If they already know you hunger for female flesh, why deny it? And you've certainly lived up to it now...<he disappears and reappears right next to Cederic>...so how is she? She looks like she'd be fun. But then I'M not the one taking her every night...

[19:25] arynwyn: Cederic: <snarls at him> Stay away from her or I will tear you limb from limb.

[19:27] Socks: <looks wide-eyed and innocent> Me? Oh, I have no intention of going after your prize! Professional courtesy, one damned to another. <grins> Besides, I have miles of succubi I can plow should I require it. No, no, I just wanted to congratulate you on not sticking to your stuck up ways! Condemned for lust....and enjoying every second of it, hm? <beams>

[19:27] arynwyn: Cederic: What I feel isn't lust, it's love. There is a difference, and now I understand it.

[19:30] Socks: <he laughs> Semantics. <disappears and reappears on his other side> Don't you dream of the feel of her beneath you? the sound of her passionate cries? the taste of her lips?

[19:31] arynwyn: Cederic: <grabs the front of his tunic angrily> You sicken me. Get out of my sight.

[19:33] Socks: <laughs again> We're getting into wrath now! Branching out, very good! <he looks Cederic right in the eye> You know, the Cardinals - the BIG sins, like lust - they're like a plague. Who knows who will come down with a terminal case of lust next, hm? I'd say your hot little piece of ass is already infected...

[19:34] arynwyn: Cederic: <his eye twitches> She's not going to end up in Hell. I will make sure of it.

[19:35] Socks: Who's talking about Hell? Lust is a sin of THIS world, mon frere. <he grins and disappears - and doesn't return this time, except for one last whispered comment> ...just wait and see...

[19:36] arynwyn: Cederic: <dashes for the door and down to Kyrenne's room. He pounds on the door> Kyrenne? Are you alright?

[19:37] Socks: Kyrenne: <answers the door in her usual chemise> Of course I am, why wouldn't I be? <she looks at him with furrowed brow>

[19:37] arynwyn: Cederic: <pushes his way in and looks around the room just to make sure, breathing hard>

[19:39] Socks: Kyrenne: <her room is normal: bed, chair and fur rug by her own fireplace, nightstand and dresser. She has a small fire going, and a book in the chair says she was reading before he knocked. There's no scent or sensation of anything demonic> What is going on, Cederic? You know if Father catches you in my room, he's going to lecture us to death. <she watches him carefully>

[19:40] arynwyn: Cederic: <he runs a hand over his face and retreats to the hall> Forgive me. I just... had a bad dream. <he pulls her into a tight hug> You know I love you, don't you?

[19:41] Socks: Kyrenne: Of course I do. And I love you. <she hugs him back and kisses his cheek> Now go on before we both get in trouble. <okay, she does risk a quick buttgrab>

[19:42] arynwyn: Cederic: <nuzzles her ear quickly> If you need me, scream. <strange parting words, but he pulls away and turns to return to his room>

[19:42] Socks: Kyrenne: <does seem befuddled>

[Time Passes and Winter Comes]

[19:47] Socks: <Winter roars in in force, with large amounts of snow which guarantees Farmington's occupants will be staying indoors. The estate is well stocked, however, and thus very well prepared.

As for the demon, occasionally Cederic hears a voice, but he can't place whether it is his memory playing tricks on him or the demon himself come to visit again; the actual creature never materializes. Otherwise, all is normal.>

Renard: <tracks down Fiona one fine afternoon. He's in fox form, using his nose to find her. He yips to get her attention, despite the fact that he's perfectly capable of human speech - he likes playing up his cuteness>

[19:52] arynwyn: Fiona: <She's lounging by the fire in the library, reading, since Renne is with Cederic. She's wearing http://www.voguefabricsstore.com/images/P/B4827lg.jpg in a vibrant red, sitting sideways in the chair with her bare feet dangling over the arm nearest the fire and her head resting on the other arm, her red braid hanging down. When she hears Ren yip, she turns her head and smiles, closing the book> I thought you'd never come save me from boredom.

[19:55] Socks: Renard: <leaps onto her lap and then runs up to her shoulder and snuggles, wrapping his tail around her neck loosely> You could've come and found me. I will always make time for you. <he nips at an earlobe playfully then zips down and hides under the chair before she can yell at him for biting her>

[19:56] arynwyn: Fiona: <she sits up, swinging her legs around in front of the chair> I thought you were helping your father with estate matters. <she leans down to peek at him under the chair>

[19:57] Socks: Renard: He said I was more of a hindrance than a help today. <skitters under the hem of her dress> Ooo it's nice under here.... <this is NOT something he normally does; even as a fox, he usually respects propriety. Well, with Fee anyway>

[19:58] arynwyn: Fiona: Hey! <she jumps up and swooshes her skirt away from him> What's gotten into you? Had a bit too much brandy?

[20:00] Socks: Renard: <puts his ears back, as if scolded> I haven't had ANY today. And I don't need to be drunk to want to spend time with you, best beloved. <he shifts to human form> I'm sorry, I shouldn't have. Childish whimsy, please forgive me. <he leans in and kisses her cheek softly>

[20:06] arynwyn: Fiona: <smiles and kisses his cheek> If I must.

[20:07] Socks: Renard: <beams at her forgiveness> Yes, you're required. By...some law I shall make up later. <he wraps his arms around her, nuzzles her cheek and then drops into fox form and bounds off again>

[20:08] arynwyn: Fiona: <dashes after him> Where are you going? <she's laughing> Wait for me!

[20:09] Socks: Renard: <skids to a halt in the hallway, turns, yips, and takes off again, tail flashing>

[20:10] arynwyn: Fiona: <scrambles after him in her bare feet, grinning> When I catch you... <empty threat, of course>

[20:11] Socks: Renard: <skids to a halt again> ...IF you catch me, I get kisses? <even as a fox, it's clear he's beaming>

[20:12] arynwyn: Fiona: <laughs> If I catch you, then you have to tell me what you got me for Christmas. <still running and catching up quickly since he stopped> And *then* you get a kiss.

[20:13] Socks: Renard: <pretends to ponder this and lets her get close then darts between her legs (and thus under her skirts again) and back down the hallway she just came through> What if I got you kisses?

[20:15] arynwyn: Fiona: <spins around and dashes after him again, grinning> Then I'll be looking forward to Christmas.

[20:16] Socks: Renard: <chuckles and, after some hopping about, lets himself be caught>

[20:16] arynwyn: Fiona: <scoops him up into her arms and plants a kiss on his nose> Now tell me what you got me.

[20:18] Socks: Renard: <puts his ears back and gives her big puppy-dog...er...foxy eyes> And ruin the surprise? <he starts shimmering as he returns to human form>

[20:19] arynwyn: Fiona: <sets him down as he does> It'll still be a surprise! Just... now, and not on Christmas. <grins and slides her hands around his neck, toying with his hair playfully, giving him her own version of puppy eyes>

[20:21] Socks: Renard: I think I shall have to distract you from the question...<he comments. He moves his hands to her sides and given that his normal method of distraction is tickling, she should be very worried. But instead of tickling her, he presses her back against the nearest wall and bends to kiss her neck instead>

[20:21] arynwyn: Fiona: Oh... <her breath catches and her eyes close> What's gotten into you today? Not that I'm complaining...

[20:25] Socks: Renard: Nothing but your beauty. <he smiles as he straightens up and kisses her lips quickly> That and...

Lord Robert: <significant throat clear>

Renard: <straightens up and takes a step away> Father.

Lord Robert: Ren. Lady Fiona. <half-bow to her> It's nearly dinner time. Perhaps you should each go to your rooms and freshen up. <with a look that says NOW>

[20:25] arynwyn: Fiona: <curtsies and blushes deeply> Yes, sir, that is perhaps an excellent idea. <she shoots Ren a Look, then turns to go to her room>

[20:28] arynwyn: Cederic: <after dinner, he's in his room again, this time sharpening and polishing his sword -- for the tenth time since he's been there. He still has his tunic on, but his boots are off, and he sits by the fire to keep his feet warm>

[20:31] Socks: <knock knock>

[20:32] arynwyn: Cederic: <sets his sword aside and goes to open the door> Yes?

[20:34] Socks: Kyrenne: <in the same dress she was in for dinner, which was unusual in and of itself. Since when does she wear dresses for normal dinner? She smiles at him> Cederic, can I come in? I have something I need to discuss with you.

[20:35] arynwyn: Cederic: <arches a brow> Perhaps we should go to the library. I wouldn't want your father to get the wrong idea.

[20:36] Socks: Kyrenne: He's IN the library, having his evening brandy. Please? <oy, again with the puppy dog eyes>

[20:36] arynwyn: Cederic: <smiles a little> Very well. <he stands aside to let her in> But we should be quick.

[20:37] Socks: Kyrenne: I intend to be. <she walks in and turns to face him, waiting for him to close the door>

[20:37] arynwyn: Cederic: <closes the door and turns to smile at her> Do you have wedding plans you'd like to discuss?

[20:38] Socks: Kyrenne: <instead of answering that, she practically tackle-kisses him>

[20:39] arynwyn: Cederic: <blinks in surprise, but wraps his arms around her and kisses her back, chuckling a bit. He pulls away after a couple of moments and pets her hair> I've missed you too. I dream of you every night.

[20:41] Socks: Kyrenne: As I dream of you, love. <she moves to kiss him again and, perhaps more importantly, her hands drop to his breeches to begin undoing them; no longer the struggling helpless one, she'd gotten quite good at getting into his pants in short order during their earlier interludes>

[20:42] arynwyn: Cederic: <he puts a hand on her wrist to stop her> Kyrenne, we promised. <he puts his other hand on her cheek> It will be worth the wait.

 [20:44] Socks: Kyrenne: <she whimpers and goes for his neck as if she might try to tear his throat out, though instead she kisses it when she's not speaking> I may go mad before then... <she presses herself against him> I need you so badly, Cederic.

[20:45] arynwyn: Cederic: <he feels the heat rise in his body and he holds her close, burying his face in her hair and smelling her scent. He's so torn, he's unable to come up with any kind of retort>

[20:47] Socks: <is that a very demonic chuckle nearby?>

Kyrenne: <doesn't seem to hear it or respond to it> I don't think it's fair that we should have to wait. <only really getting one or two words out at a time, between kisses on his neck and ear and cheek; she does pull her face away long enough to comment> What's the worst that happens? I carry your child a few months early? How terrible would that really be? <moves to kiss his lips again>

[20:49] arynwyn: Cederic: Kyrenne... <he pushes her back until she's at arm's length> Waiting will be worth it. <but he doesn't sound totally convinced>

[20:51] Socks: Kyrenne: <she studies him, panting, then growls in frustration and pulls away from him. She paces furiously up and down his bedchamber> I just...<pauses to pout at him - less sexy and more like a kid who wants a pony>

[20:52] arynwyn: Cederic: <he looks pained that he's having to deny her what she wants> Just...?

[20:56] Socks: Kyrenne: There's no POINT to our waiting. It's not like we're safeguarding my virtue! And I don't see what's so wrong with it in the first place. <she strides over to him to press herself against him once more, sliding her hands around his waist> It's not like I'm sleeping with someone other than my intended. ...at least, not THIS time. And I miss you. <she lowers her voice, which makes it sound husky, as she looks up into his eyes> I miss the feel of you within me. The sound of you groaning in desire for me. The taste of your lips. <All of this sounds vaguely familiar...or should. She tries to kiss him again, eyes dropping closed because she doesn't need them to find the way to her target>

[20:58] arynwyn: Cederic: <he pushes her back again and studies her closely, unsure how to approach this> I think we should pray. Pray for patience and prudence.

[20:59] Socks: Kyrenne: Pray? PRAY?! <she tears open his door and storms out into the hallway, nearly knocking Lord Robert over. She doesn't seem to remark it, just storms off>

Lord Robert: <blinks and looks at Cederic> Are you injured, sir? <looking back at the way his daughter stomped off>

[21:02] arynwyn: Cederic: <blows out a sigh> No, not physically at least. <he leans against the jamb of his door> I vowed we would not... ah... have relations again until we are wed. <scrubs a hand into her hair> She is not so happy about that, apparently.

[21:04] Socks: Lord Robert: <clears his throat> You are a man of honor, Lord Cederic, and I thank you for it. God knows, she's hard to say no to, and I say this as her father. <smiles wanly> Rather like her mother that way, I suppose.

[21:05] arynwyn: Cederic: <looks down the hall where she disappeared> Was she baptised, sir?

[21:07] Socks: Lord Robert: <nods> Yes, of course. As soon as she and her brother were delivered to me. Helven - ah, her maternal uncle - informed me that their mother died not long after childbirth, so presumably they were baptised within the accepted period for such.

[21:08] arynwyn: Cederic: <looks somewhat relieved, though still worried> Good.

[21:08] Socks: Lord Robert: Why do you ask? <curious>

[21:09] arynwyn: Cederic: <shakes his head> Her behavior tonight. It was just... strange. Some things she said reminded me of -- <stops> It's probably nothing.

[21:10] Socks: Lord Robert: <his brow draws down> If you have concerns that involve my daughter, I would like to know them.

[21:10] arynwyn: Cederic: I'm afraid I would only sound mad, sir. And I'm sure there's nothing to worry about.

[21:16] Socks: Lord Robert: Sir, you are talking to a man who has children capable of turning into wild animals. My daughter's last fiance was murdered by his servant who turned into a wolf. I am rather used to "madness" in my life.

[21:18] arynwyn: Cederic: <chuckles a little> Very well. A while ago, I had a... "visitor" in my room. A demon. <glances at Robert> He spoke of lust and some of the phrases he used were the same Kyrenne said to me tonight. I don't know what to make of it.

[21:18] Socks: Lord Robert: ...okay that was a bit more than I expected. <he clears his throat> You think she's been possessed?

[21:19] arynwyn: Cederic: No, I don't think it's anything that extreme. But I think perhaps this demon is whispering in her ear, giving her ideas. I could be wrong. As I said, it was just... strange. And you noticed she wore a dress to dinner? <arches a brow> Did you ask her to?

[21:21] Socks: Lord Robert: I asked her to wear one for Christmas, since Lord Connor will be with us, but no, there's nothing special about tonight that would require her to play at being a lady. I had hoped that she was simply taking cues from Fiona or hoping to live up to being your wife; however, I had assumed that she had actually just made a bet with Renard about it for some silly reason.

[21:22] arynwyn: Cederic: Yes, perhaps she did. I should have thought of that. <he shrugs just a bit> I will keep an eye on her. Will you do the same?

[21:23] Socks: Lord Robert: <nods> That, Lord Cederic, is all I ever seem to do. <he bows> Good night, sir.

[21:24] arynwyn: Cederic: <bows as well> Good night.

[The Next Day]

[21:28] Socks: Kyrenne: <the next day sees her in her more normal clothes - she's wearing the corsety thing OVER a shirt today, and is back in breeches and boots; I mean, it's freaking December and there's mounds of snow everywhere outside. She's in the library, trying to read. Just as (I assume) Cederic walks in, she hurls the book at the wall and stands to pace. When she sees him, she does her skirtless curtsey>

[21:29] arynwyn: Cederic: Why are you curtseying to me? <arching a brow - he's always insisted she doesn't curtsey to him, just as his men are only allowed to salute, not bow> And what's the matter?

[21:31] Socks: Kyrenne: You KNOW the matter. <she mutters, pacing> And books aren't helping take my mind off of it. ...off of you. And as far as curtseying goes...<sidles up to him> would you rather I kiss you hello? <eyebrow, smirk>

[21:32] arynwyn: Cederic: <he touches her cheek and sighs> Kyrenne, have you been having any strange dreams or... hearing voices? NOT that I think you've gone mad, only that I think there might be... someone... tormenting you.

[21:33] Socks: Kyrenne: YOU'RE tormenting me. <she sighs, letting her head drop to his shoulder> But no, I haven't been hearing voices and the only thing strange about my dreams is that it's the only place I can touch you.

[21:34] arynwyn: Cederic: Is this a shifter thing, then? Something about the weather and being cooped up inside? <he wraps his arms around her and pets her hair>

[21:35] Socks: Kyrenne: I... <blinks at him> ...I actually don't know.

[21:37] arynwyn: Cederic: I don't know what to do, Renne. <he sighs heavily> I want you just as badly as you want me. But we gave our word, and I'm afraid -- that voice I spoke of, I've heard it and it's made me afraid. I don't want you to end up in hell because I couldn't control my lust for you. Or you control your lust for me.

[21:38] Socks: Kyrenne: <she laughs> There're so many other reasons I'll go to Hell. You're waaaaay down on the list. But uh....I'm going to...<she starts for the door, pauses, reconsiders, swoops back in to kiss him hard, then bolts out the door>

[21:39] arynwyn: Cederic: <watches her go, frowning>

[21:41] Socks: Lord Robert: <cries out from the hallway>

Renard: <bounds past at high foxy speed; he seems to have a pair of ladies' undergarments in his mouth. 3 guesses who they belong to; first 2 don't count>

Lord Robert: REN! <he barks out, but his son is already gone>

[21:42] arynwyn: Fiona: <rounds the corner after Ren, blushing red and looking panicked and embarrassed. She stops short when she spots Lord Robert, and her blush gets worse>

[21:44] Socks: Lord Robert: <he sighs> I apologize for son's my behavior, Lady. It is my dearest hope that your sweeter nature might be of some improvement to his manner....but then, if that were likely, it would've happened over all the time you've spent here with us. <grins apologetically>

[21:45] arynwyn: Fiona: <chuckles a bit> I just... don't know what's gotten into him recently! He's been so... mischievous. I think he's been spending too much time as a fox. <grins>

[21:46] Socks: Lord Robert: I can't even begin to hazard a guess...<he bows to her and heads into the library> Oh, Lord Cederic. <bow>

[21:47] arynwyn: Cederic: <looks up from the fire, where he's brooding> Sir. <he reciprocates the bow> Is there something I can help you with?

[21:49] Socks: Lord Robert: No, I just came to...er...<he bends to pick up the thrown book from earlier> ...do some reading. Quiet times for the estate. Have you seen my daughter around today? <he studies the book he's picked up: a treatise on herbs and their medicinal uses>

[21:50] arynwyn: Cederic: Yes, she and I just spoke. I told her most of what I told you last night, and about my concerns. But she assures me she has neither seen nor heard anything strange, not even in her dreams.

 [21:52] Socks: Lord Robert: Hrm. I just cannot figure what bizaare plague has infected her and her brother. <scrubs at his face> He nearly knocked me down in the hallway, fleeing with what I fear was a pair of Fiona's underthings in his mouth. Ah, he was a fox at the time; I perhaps should've said that first.

[21:53] Socks: Renard: <skids into a turn into another hallway, then turns to see if she's still chasing him>

[21:55] arynwyn: Cederic: <arches a brow> I thought perhaps it was a shifter thing. Kyrenne said she didn't know. <he sits down in the chair by the fire>

Fiona: <out of breath and getting annoyed, she rounds the corner and stops to frown at him> Ren, give those back! You're embarassing me!

[21:57] Socks: Renard: <swishes his tail and asks around his mouthful of undies> Wha 's it worth to ya? <dancing away a little>

Lord Robert: <blinks> Well, I suppose that's possible. I never claimed to be an expert on that, and without their mother around and Helven so damnably distant...

[22:00] arynwyn: Fiona: <she crosses her arms, still frowning. Her eyes tear up just a little> I want the old Ren back! <she turns and heads back toward her room, head hanging>

Cederic: Sending a messenger in this weather isn't really practical either. <sighs a bit> The question is, how long is it going to last, and how far are they going to go before it stops?

[22:01] Socks: Lord Robert: I haven't the foggiest...<pauses> Where IS Kyrenne?

Renard: <blinks. He bounds up to her and nudges her ankle by way of offering her undies back to her>

[22:03] arynwyn: Cederic: I'm not sure. She ran out of here... <he glances toward the door> She won't go far, will she?

Fiona: <snatches them out of his mouth and shoves them into a pocket on her dress> Your *father* saw them! <her cheeks redden again>

[22:06] Socks: Renard: I'm sorry, Fee. I was just... <he shifts back to human and rests a hand on her shoulder> I was just trying to have goofy fun. You know, like we used to? 'course I guess I was like...five then.

Lord Robert: <he sighs and falls into an empty chair> It's just that, if anyone's going to do something impractical, it'd be 'Renne. And why send a messenger, when she can turn into a sparrow herself? I...wasn't aware she knew where her uncle lives but...I can hope? Oh Dear God, I hope she knows where he lives. <facepalms>

[22:14] arynwyn: Fiona: There's nothing wrong with goofy fun, Ren, but I'm a *lady* now, and soon to be your wife. Flashing my undergarments around is... well, extremely embarrassing! If it had been Renne, I wouldn't care, but your father!...

Cederic: You think she went to find her uncle? <his chest tightens in anxiety>

[22:18] Socks: Lord Robert: <nods> They've spent some time with him, especially since they started their changes towards adulthood. He taught them to take the shapes they CAN take; supposedly, a fullblood shifter can be anything ...or anyone. <he shivers> It's a little unsettling to think on. But the twins just aren't as capable at it. Still, it might've been worse without Helven to teach them.

Renard: I didn't know he was going to be there...<he whimpers defensively> Fee, I'm sorry. Truly, I am. <he lifts a hand to her cheek to brush her skin softly>

[22:21] arynwyn: Cederic: <he sighs heavily, his brow creasing in worry> She should have said something. I could have gone with her, somehow... All I can do now is worry and fret like an old woman.

Fiona: I know you are. <she sighs and turns her face into his hand to kiss his palm> I know you're going crazy, having to be inside all the time. I don't blame you for trying to have some fun. <smiles>

[22:24] Socks: Renard: You're better than I deserve. <nuzzles her other cheek>

Lord Robert: <chuckles> Yes, well, you're marrying her. You should get used to that.

[22:25] arynwyn: Fiona: Only sometimes. <smiles and kisses him gently>

Cederic: <chuckles a little> That's probably true...

[22:28] Socks: Lord Robert: Brandy? I swear, I never drank this much before becoming a father...<standing>

Renard: <deepens the kiss, but not for too long> C'mon, we should go put your underwear back where it belongs. <he sighs> Spring is too far off.

[22:28] arynwyn: Cederic: Please.

Fiona: <she slips a hand in his after returning the kiss> Yes, it is. Of course, if you had proposed a year ago, like you should have... <grins and nudges him in the ribs>

[22:31] Socks: Renard: I have proposed to you a thousand times! ...every night in my dreams.

Lord Robert: <nods> I was going to give you that hunting cottage on the edge of the property for a wedding gift, but it might be better if I simply sent half my brandy stores with you instead. You'd get more regular use out of that.

[22:32] arynwyn: Fiona: <she laughs> That's sweet, Ren. <said sincerely> And I've accepted each time, in my dreams.

Cederic: <he laughs> And what would I do after I drank it all up the first year?

[22:34] Socks: Lord Robert: <chuckles> A year? You think it'd last you that long?

Renard: And then, at least in MY dreams, we fast forward to the wedding night...but maybe I shouldn't talk about that. There's a LADY present after all... <grins at her>

[22:35] arynwyn: Cederic: <grins> If I rationed it.

Fiona: <elbows him in the ribs again but grins up at him> What about the wedding? You always skip that part?

[22:37] Socks: Renard: <clears his throat and doesn't answer>

Lord Robert: Wise man. Probably wiser still not to marry her in the first place, but love can make even wise men fools. <hands him a brandy glass>

[22:39] arynwyn: Fiona: <rolls her eyes> Of course you do. Men...

Cederic: Thank you. <he takes a sip> I would be King of Fools, if it meant I could be with Kyrenne. <smiles>

[22:40] Socks: Lord Robert: I think you may already be. Certainly her other prospective suitors would say so. <resumes his seat with his own brandy> I'm glad someone was able to look past her...eccentricities, many of which are my fault to begin with.

Renard: What? The wedding is for the woman and the wedding night is for the man... <grins, then adds> ...to make the woman deliriously happy.

[22:42] arynwyn: Cederic: I find her quirks to be charming. Some of her best qualities. Though I could do with her being less stubborn. <chuckles>

Fiona: <blushes a little> It will make you deliriously happy too.

[22:43] Socks: Renard: YOU make me deliriously happy. <kisses her temple> Whereas 'Renne just makes me delirious.

Lord Robert: <laughs> That one is DEFINITELY my fault. I suppose. I...can't say I knew her mother that well. <clears his throat>

[22:44] arynwyn: Fiona: <laughs and nuzzles his ear> I do wish it were spring already. I've waited so long, I hate to wait any longer.

Cederic: <looks over at him> How did that happen, anyway? If you don't mind my asking?

[22:49] Socks: Lord Robert: <sits back> Ships that pass in the night, I suppose. Er...well, day, really. For about a week. It was...end of June. <he chuckles> To say she pounced me is to be literal about it. I kept trying to find her after that week, but she seemed to have just vanished into the wind. <he shrugs> I'd given up on her and begun courting Irina when I suddenly had two children delivered to me via falcons. I always thought it was supposed to be storks. It is a blessing beyond all others that Irina didn't turn down my suit at that point.

Renard: Shouldn't say such things, Fee. Not very ladylike. <gives her a quick goose as he grins>

[22:51] arynwyn: Cederic: <sips his brandy> It was very kind of her to take them in.

Fiona: <sticks her tongue out at him> I was speaking of the *wedding*, not the wedding night! You have such a dirty mind. <grins>

[22:54] Socks: Renard: Yet you knew what I was talking about anyway. So maybe my mind isn't the only one not perfectly clean?

Lord Robert: She's a saint. She's always treated them as her own, right from the start. She was a little shocked when they started taking other forms, but she got over it. She's a very adaptable woman, among other things. I am singularly blessed to have her...and I make sure she knows I haven't forgotten it. <he grins> There's your unsolicited marriage advice, by the way.

[22:55] arynwyn: Fiona: <blushes again> Alright, so I want to jump your bones. <grins> But we're going to have to wait.

Cederic: <chuckles> Thank you. I will memorize it and put it to practice.

[22:57] Socks: Lord Robert: Might want to memorize what you just said and say it to everyone who tries to tell you how to survive your marriage. <drinks>

Renard: Yes. Sweet, sweet torture. And, for the record, I would want you for my wife even without the ability to get up your skirts on a nightly basis....though that is a nice bonus.

[22:58] arynwyn: Cederic: <chuckles and drains his glass>

Fiona: <she turns and kisses him> That's a very kind thing to say, Ren.

[23:05] Socks: Renard: It's the truth. There's no other woman in the world who is more perfect for me than you. Not even 'Renne....not that I'd marry my own twin. <makes a face>

<there's a fluttering at the library window>

Lord Robert: What the...? <stands and goes to the window to open it and admits...a sparrow and a falcon>

Kyrenne: <sparrow-form! she alights on Cederic's shoulder and chirps at him>

<The falcon lands on the seat of a chair then shimmer/melts -very quickly, more so than the twins can- into a human form. His hair is dark and his eyes the same exceptional green as 'Renne's. He's about Lord Robert's age in appearance, and wears unassuming peasant's clothes along with a large gem set in gold, dangling from a gold chain. It's a bit incongruous with his clothes. He has no beard, which is also unusual; most men his age do> Lord Lyon, hello. <he says, without rising, and then directs his gaze to Cederic> And this must be my niece's betrothed.

[23:07] arynwyn: Fiona: And there is no man more perfect for me than you. And even if there were, I'd pick you anyway.

Cederic: Thank goodness. <to Kyrenne> I was worried. <he looks over to her uncle> Yes, sir. Lord Cederic Vaughan of Somerset. <polite smile>

[23:12] Socks: Kyrenne: <flies to his lap and goes fox form> I'm sorry to have worried you.

Helven: So, my niece wants to know if winter makes her horny.

Lord Robert: <clears his throat>

Helven: <ignores Lord Robert's discomfort> I might as well explain this to both of you. Go get your brother, lass.

Kyrenne: Can't I warm up first? <snuggling in to Cederic's lap>

Helven: You'll get warm enough running. Go on.

Kyrenne: <licks Cederic's hand once and jumps down, dashing off to find Ren>

Renard: Oh, well THAT'S reassuring. <he sticks his tongue out at her>

[23:14] arynwyn: Cederic: <watches her go, then turns to Helven> I appreciate you coming on such short notice to explain what's going on.

Fiona: <grins> It should be. <she leans up and kisses him>

[23:20] Socks: Renard: <kisses her back, deeply, letting some real emotion flow into it...>

Kyrenne: <comes running up and barks, still in fox form> Save it for the wedding night; Uncle Helven's here and he needs to talk with us.

Renard: <breaks away with a growl> "Save it for the wedding night"? YOU'RE one to talk.

Helven: She's lucky she didn't end up my lunch. <he makes himself comfy in the chair and looks at Robert> Finally getting her married off, are you? I'm surprised your extraneous morality allowed her to be with her intended before the rituals were completed.

Lord Robert: No, actually, my...morality did not allow that. That was her own decision. Brandy, Helven?

Helven: <waves a hand> No. And I should have known. <he's very gruff. Not quite rude. More like he just doesn't GET the normal social niceties> So very silly to keep lovers apart for the sake of some words and gestures.

[23:21] arynwyn: Fiona: <laughs and takes Ren's hand> Should I come too?

Cederic: <agrees with him but doesn't say anything, just smiles a little>

[23:25] Socks: Lord Robert: <resumes his seat>

Renard: Might as well. 'Renne'll just tell you all about it later anyway. <squeezes her hand> In the library?

Kyrenne: <nods and bounds back that way. She, naturally, hits the library first and leaps up into Cederic's lap, curling up and making herself to home>

Lord Robert: Could you please be a human for this discussion, 'Renne?

Kyrenne: Do I HAVE to? <you can almost hear the pout>

Renard: <bows to his uncle as he enters> Uncle Helven, this is my fiancee, Fiona. Fee, this is my mother's brother.

Helven: By the winds and stars, they're both engaged. I knew they did ALMOST everything together; I had no idea how far it extended... <something like humor! my god!>

[23:27] arynwyn: Cederic: <runs his hand down Renne's silky back and smiles at her>

Fiona: <gives him a proper curtsey> It's a pleasure to meet you, sir.

[23:32] Socks: Lord Robert: <stands, as is proper when a lady enters a room> Please, have a seat everyone. 'Renne.

Kyrenne: Fine, fine. <she rolls over and shifts back so she's sitting on Cederic's lap as a human. She loops her arms around his neck> Is this better?

Lord Robert: In your OWN chair, 'Renne.

Helven: I don't see the point of enforcing chastity on her NOW. She has already broken your stupid rule, and she has promised herself to the man.

Lord Robert: Helven, please try to understand: in our society, to have a child outside of wedlock is generally considered a scandal. You know that **I** don't care about that, but other people WILL. I am thinking of my children here.

Helven: <rolls his eyes>

Renard: <makes sure to get a chair with an empty neighbor, so Fee can sit next to him> What brings you here, Uncle? <smiles>

Helven: Your sister. Specifically, she has brought to my attention that you two do not know about how seasonal changes might affect you both. I wasn't even entirely sure they WOULD.

[23:34] arynwyn: Fiona: <sits down next to Renard, keeping hold of his hand>

Cederic: <slides his arms around Kyrenne and doesn't let her up to find her own chair. He may be keeping his promise to not bed her until they are married, but her sitting on his lap doesn't fall under that heading. He can be stubborn too :P>

[23:38] Socks: Lord Robert: <gives up on getting 'Renne to move and sits down again>

Kyrenne: <is attentive, listening to her uncle...and snuggling Cederic>

Renard: Seasonal changes?

Helven: To use your term, "shapeshifters" are very connected to Nature. A proper fullblood can use Nature to heal, to harm, to do all manner of things aside from changing our shape. But that also means that we are, in turn, affected by her and her states. At the Midsummer and Midwinter marks, there is an especially large concentration of natural energy that surrounds and infuses us. It can lead to...interesting consequences. <he shoots Lord Robert a Look>

[23:39] arynwyn: Cederic: <arches a brow in curiosity>

Fiona: <glances at Ren like he might suddenly start growing feathers out his ass or something>

[23:43] Socks: Renard: What sort of consequences?

Kyrenne: And why are we only seeing them NOW?

Helven: <tsks at her> You aren't. You're only RECOGNIZING them now - because you have had a change in situation. Haven't you two always hated to be cooped up behind stone walls during the winter?

Renard: Hell, we usually hate being cooped up behind stone walls any time of year...

Helven: <withering look at his nephew> But it is especially bad now, yes? <looks to Lord Robert> They are more of a handful?

Lord Robert: Mm <in absent-minded agreement. He's thinking of something else>

Helven: You have more energy and it is going to waste. Before, you probably used it to make each other - and those around you - miserable with mischiefs. The reason it seems as if you are overeager to be with your mate is...

Kyrenne: ...'cause I just want to burn it off?

Helven: <nods> And because the society that raised you is moronic and has told you to repress that part of you to begin with. <grumps>

[23:44] arynwyn: Fiona: <glances at Lord Robert and notices his distraction, but returns her attention to Helven almost immediately>

Cederic: <he sighs a little> Perhaps we should reconsider the wedding date, then.

[23:47] Socks: Helven: When were you to be married?

Kyrenne: Spring.

Renard: Spring. <they say this at the same time>

Helven: It should be fine. Spring is an excellent time for new unions. You two just need an outlet. Go fly around outside for a few hours every day. It should only last a few more days, at this point.

Lord Robert: So...this...change? It doesn't have an effect on their emotions per se?

Helven: <arches an eyebrow> No.

Lord Robert: <seems relieved>

Helven: <looks to Cederic> My niece tells me you asked her about her dreams, or voices? Why was that?

[23:49] arynwyn: Cederic: <shifts a little, looking uncomfortable> It was nothing, a dream I had. Something she said reminded me of it.

[23:50] Socks: Helven: Do not lie to me, clouddweller. My kind does not hold much fear for those you come from. We respect you, but will not bow.

Lord Robert: <looks confused>

[23:51] arynwyn: Cederic: <he arches a brow at Kyrenne, but answers Helven's questions> Very well. A demon visited me one evening. He spoke of lust, the sin I was banished for. Some of the things Kyrenne said reminded me of what he said. It worried me. I thought perhaps he was tormenting her with dreams or voices.

[23:54] Socks: Renard: Banished?

Lord Robert: "Clouddweller"?

Helven: <ignores them> You needn't worry. Demons cannot possess a fullblood, and I find it hard to believe they could influence a halfblood even. More likely it knew of the changes - they study us, because they cannot control us, and it infuriates them - and came to torment you. It wanted you to feel guilty. That is what demons do.

 [23:55] arynwyn: Cederic: <looks relieved> Good. He can torment me all he likes, as long as he leaves Kyrenne alone. <he kisses the back of her hand>

Fiona: <arches a brow at Renne in a "what haven't you told me?" look>

[23:59] Socks: Kyrenne: <smiles at her uncle, ignoring Fee...for now> Thank you, uncle. For ALL your help.

Helven: <stands> Somerset's a long flight to get to the village, child. If you have other questions, best ask them before your groom whisks you off. And Renard?

Renard: Yes , sir?

Helven: Should've been married an age ago. Been pining for that lass <jerks his chin at Fee> since you were old enough to realize what women are for.

Kyrenne: "What women are for"? <she asks archly, already getting angry>

Helven: Keeping men in line. <he replies evenly, before changing into a falcon and flying out the open window again>

Lord Robert: <goes to shut it>

[00:01] arynwyn: Fiona: <smiles at Ren and pokes him> I like him. He's smart. You should listen to him. <nodnodnod>

Cederic: <tightens his arms around her waist when she starts to get angry, then grins at Helven's answer>

[00:03] Socks: Lord Robert: Right. <agreeing with Fiona> And you two can start by flying about together. Stay close to the keep though; Helven said he nearly made you a meal, 'Renne.

Kyrenne: Yes, sir. <she kisses Cederic searingly before turning into a sparrow again>

Renard: <kisses Fee's hand before taking his starling form. He hops up onto her shoulder and fluffs his feathers up by her cheek>

[00:04] arynwyn: Cederic: <returns the kiss and watches her go to the window with something akin to jealousy>

Fiona: <giggles softly and pets his feathers> Hurry back. I miss you already.

[Time Passes]

[17:17] Socks: Kyrenne: <flies back inside as part of her now daily routine of flying for a few hours. She darts through the kitchens, flits through the hallways, and swoops into the library to see if Cederic is about>

[17:18] arynwyn: Cederic: <is, indeed, cooped up in the library, not having the luxury of being able to turn into a bird and fly about, and because of this he's been a little grumpy lately. He's sprawled out on a sofa, book in hand, though he's staring out the window instead of reading>

[17:19] Socks: Kyrenne: <flies onto his shoulder and fluffs her feathers> What's wrong, love? You look pensive.

[17:20] arynwyn: Cederic: <he sets the book on the floor and takes her carefully into his hands> Just wishing I were outside. Wishing I could fly about like you. <he strokes her feathers> Did you have a nice time?

[17:21] Socks: Kyrenne: Mm. It's not as bad today as it could be. Wind's a bit much though, but I could stand the exercise. And it clears my head, helps me think.

[17:22] arynwyn: Cederic: <smiles> I am glad. <he sets her on his chest in case she wants to shift> The next sunny day I plan on spending outside, no matter how cold it is. <glances at the window again>

[17:23] Socks: Kyrenne: <does take the opportunity to go fox form, and tickles his nose with her tail> It'll do you some good. And if you catch sick, I shall have to nurse you. <her grin is audible>

[17:24] arynwyn: Cederic: <wraps his arms around her and strokes her fur, smiling> Perhaps I'll be sure to fall ill then. <grins> Then claim I need you in my bed to keep me warm. <runs a finger up her nose and between her eyes>

[17:26] Socks: Kyrenne: <chuckles> I won't be very good for you getting rest though. You're the one who keeps saying it will be worth waiting. If I have to suffer until we're wed, so do you. <she sticks her tongue out - an odd gesture for a fox>

[17:27] arynwyn: Cederic: <chuckles> Trust me, dearest, I am suffering. I dream of you every night. New things to do to you to make you moan my name... <his eyes darken just a little>

[17:28] Socks: Kyrenne: <whimpers and puts her ears back> Don't talk about it, or I'm going to have to fly around until supper to tire myself out so I don't sneak into your bed tonight. <she rests her head on her paws> I wish spring would get here. I never thought I'd ever say this, but I feel a desperate NEED to be married all of a sudden.

[17:29] arynwyn: Cederic: <laughs> As do I. I fought it nearly as hard as you did, remember? Now it's all I can think of. But still, only a few more months, then I will take you every night until you're sick of me.

[17:31] Socks: Kyrenne: <laughs> I'll hold you to that. I figure it'll take me several decades to get sick of you. <crawls forward a little and snuggles under his chin> But speaking of weddings, is it horrifically impolite to ask for a wedding present? Or do you have to surprise me with it?

[17:32] arynwyn: Cederic: <he arches a brow as he cuddles her close> Considering your father took my only idea, please share. <chuckles a little>

[17:32] Socks: Kyrenne: Well, I'm going to have to be a proper lady, aren't I? I mean, down in Somerset. Maybe not all the time....well, I *hope* not all the time...but...

[17:33] arynwyn: Cederic: ...but? <waits for her to continue>

[17:36] Socks: Kyrenne: Well, I've only BARELY avoided having a lady's maid here. I realized that I probably can't keep putting that off. So, if I'm to have a lady's maid, I should at least get to pick her. And I know someone in rather sore need of a job. Nice girl, very sweet really; only thing is she has a sick father, so we'd have to bring him with too. She doesn't live around here, but she's on our way back to Somerset. Little village called Templeton? <bats her foxy eyes at him>

[17:37] arynwyn: Cederic: <he smiles broadly> That's an excellent idea, Kyrenne. Really, it is. You should write her at once, and I will start making preparations. <leans up to kiss her nose>

[17:38] Socks: Kyrenne: <scrabbles back down to the floor and shifts back to human form so she can lean down and kiss him properly, face a-beam with happiness> You wonderful, beautiful man!

[17:40] arynwyn: Cederic: <sits up and wraps his hands around her, pulling her onto his lap> I haven't done anything! You're the one with the brilliant idea. I've been worrying over Mari since I left Templeton but couldn't come up with a decent idea. You, on the other hand, did.

[17:41] Socks: Kyrenne: <she gives him a mock stern look> Now, see here: I am not one of those permissive wives who will suffer her husband to be up all her ladies' skirts. She was a temptation to you once: can I be sure you can resist her when you have to live with her day in and day out? <she's so obviously trying not to laugh and stay stern, but she's not doing too good a job>

[17:42] arynwyn: Cederic: <smirks just a little> I will do my best to behave myself. Of course, it will require a great sacrifice on your part, to keep me satisfied... <grins now>

[17:44] Socks: Kyrenne: Oh! <presses the back of her hand to her forehead> A wife's work is never done, truly! What a scandalously horrible husband I shall have, always trying to have his way with me in stairwells and hallways. <she grins at him and lays her head on his shoulder> I can't say it's what I've always dreamed of, but it's certainly all I've dreamed of the last couple of months.

[17:44] arynwyn: Cederic: What *have* you always dreamed of? <holding her close and petting her hair>

[17:46] Socks: Kyrenne: A life of thrilling adventure, of course! I think the last few months have given me more than my share of that for now. Living with a former angel sounds like it may be adventure enough....for awhile, anyway...

[17:47] arynwyn: Cederic: We can always travel, if you'd like. Have some adventures abroad?

[17:48] Socks: Kyrenne: <she chuckles> I'd like that. After I'm settled in my new home, of course. All new forests to run about in will be wonderful. And I've never been to the sea.

[17:50] arynwyn: Cederic: <he smiles> Yes, there will be plenty to do for the first few years. After that, we can talk about traveling. <he pauses a moment> That reminds me, I should ask... Do you desire children? <sounds uncertain>

[17:52] Socks: Kyrenne: I prefer my mates fully grown, thank you. <she teases, then answers his question seriously> I hadn't honestly thought about it. I'd like at least a few months of wanton sexual congress beforehand, but...<she shrugs> I never ever thought I'd be married, so I never thought children would be a possibility. Why do you ask?

[17:53] arynwyn: Cederic: <he shrugs> Just something I thought we ought to talk about. Especially if we plan on traveling at some point. <he strokes her cheek> And there is no rush. None at all.

[17:55] Socks: Kyrenne: A child of yours would be a gift to the world. <she kisses his jaw> A child of mine might be more trouble than the world could handle though, so it could go either way. <grins>

[17:56] arynwyn: Cederic: <laughs> It should balance out. I wonder if he or she will be like you? A shifter, I mean.

[17:57] Socks: Kyrenne: Mm. Only a quarterblood at that point, so it's rather uncertain. I'd ask my uncle, but he doesn't seem to like this idea of less-than-fullblood shifters to begin with. Grousey old thing.

[18:00] arynwyn: Cederic: I don't see why it makes a difference, if you're happy.

[18:02] Socks: Kyrenne: <smiles> I am, very much so. Be even happier on our wedding night. <snuggles>

[A Day or Two Later]

 [00:03] arynwyn: Cederic: <It's an unseasonably warm day. The snow is melting into little pools and the grounds are muddy. The sun shines bright and is warm on the skin. Ced's out in the courtyard, swinging his sword about happily, practicing some moves that have gotten rusty after being unused for so long. Because of the warm weather, he's in just his breeches and boots, and his scars glint faintly in the sunlight>

[00:07] Socks: Kyrenne: <is flying around. She spies Cederic and flies around up above him to watch him for a bit>

[00:07] arynwyn: Cederic: <slash, swing, turn, stab, do it all again>

[00:08] Socks: Kyrenne: <Moves into attack position! She swoops down and lands on his head, chirping happily. She eyes the scars on his back, cocking her little birdy head curiously ('cause she's facing that way)>

[00:09] arynwyn: Cederic: <looks up as if he can see her on top of his head, smiling> I thought that might be you. Beautiful day, isn't it?

[00:10] Socks: Kyrenne: Mm. I could do with more of these....especially if it gets you out of your shirt.

[00:12] arynwyn: Cederic: <chuckles> I wouldn't mind them either. <he flexes the arm holding the sword and examines the muscles and his skin> I've gotten awfully pale. I can spend much more time outdoors in winter at Somerset.

[00:15] Socks: Kyrenne: Spoiled little southblood. <she jumps to the ground, and shimmers into fox form. She sits and considers his back> Can I ask you something, O Best and Most Wonderful Beloved? <uh oh, this means she wants something out of him>

[00:16] arynwyn: Cederic: <smiles> You may *ask*, of course. But I'm not promising anything.

[00:17] Socks: Kyrenne: Where'd you get these scars?

[00:17] arynwyn: Cederic: <stills and studies her a moment> The ones on my back?

[00:20] Socks: Kyrenne: Mmhm. <cocks her head again>

[00:20] arynwyn: Cederic: They're not really scars... It's where my wings attach. <he looks away, a bit uncomfortable>

[00:24] Socks: Kyrenne: Attach? <ears perking up> As in present tense?

[00:24] arynwyn: Cederic: They're a sorry sight, I'm afraid. But I will show you if you'd like.

[00:26] Socks: Kyrenne: <goes human form already nodding> Please? <big eyes, clasped hands>

[00:30] arynwyn: Cederic: <glances around to make sure they're alone, then nods. In the shifting sunlight, wings appear folded at his back, looking like they've always been there, just invisible. They're ethereal, almost look like they're made out of shadows, and they *are* a sorry sight. The wings were once white, but now are shades of gray and black, looking like they were burned, and feathers are missing or singed or sticking out at odd angles. He spreads them out and the wing span is nearly 20 ft, with gaping burned holes and ragged, broken feathers>

[00:30] Socks: Kyrenne: <winces> Do they...hurt? <she walks around to inspect them, starts to reach a hand towards one and then pulls it back, thinking better of it>

[00:32] arynwyn: Cederic: Sometimes. The pain has lessened over time. <he glances back at her> You could try to touch it but I doubt you can. <she can't - they'd go right through, like trying to touch a shadow>

[00:35] Socks: Kyrenne: <does try to touch it and is amazed when her hand goes through> Do they still work? I mean...can you fly with them?

[00:35] arynwyn: Cederic: <shakes his head> They're too damaged. They don't hold enough air. <he contracts them back down and they settle on his back, folded>

[00:38] Socks: Kyrenne: <she frowns> I'm sorry, love. It must be terrible.

[00:39] arynwyn: Cederic: <the wings disappear again and he turns to look at her> Now you know why I get so jealous of you when you turn into a sparrow. <he smiles and kisses her cheek> Will you forgive me?

[00:41] Socks: Kyrenne: ...I ought to extract some terrible price for your jealousy...<she grins momentarily, then smiles and loops her arms around his neck> but I think, under the circumstances, I will forgive you.

[00:43] arynwyn: Cederic: <kisses her gently> Thank you. <he nuzzles her ear> I love you.

[00:44] Socks: Kyrenne: I don't know why there's really anything to forgive here, honestly. I wish there was some way to restore them...

[00:44] arynwyn: Cederic: <he shrugs> The only way is to secure forgiveness and return to Heaven, I suppose. But, to be perfectly honest, I would rather stay here on Earth with you.

[00:45] Socks: Kyrenne: No way to have your wings and a wife as well, hm? <pout>

[00:46] arynwyn: Cederic: Not that I know of. <rubs a thumb over her cheek> Don't think on it. I have made my choice. <smiles>

[00:47] Socks: Kyrenne: Well, there *ought* to be a way. <she frowns thoughtfully> I should go find one. I don't know what ELSE to get you as a wedding present, after all...

[00:48] arynwyn: Cederic: <chuckles> *You* are my present, my sweet. I need nothing else.

[00:49] Socks: Kyrenne: Pish tosh. I'm getting a maid out of you. I have to give SOMETHING back.

[00:50] arynwyn: Cederic: You already have, Kyrenne. You've given me joy again. You've given me a purpose to live. <he puts a hand on either side of her face> You brought light back into my life. I will never be able to thank you enough for that.

[00:53] Socks: Kyrenne: <a rare blush blooms on her face> Were you really so miserable before? 'Cause we can't be the only place in the country with decent brandy. <winks>

[00:55] arynwyn: Cederic: <smiles a little> Yes, I was. Brandy makes me pensive and sad, anyway. <kisses her forehead>

[00:55] Socks: Kyrenne: Unless you're drinking it with me in the middle of the night. <grins> So what makes you happy then? BESIDES me, don't use that again, you're not allowed. <she pokes him>

[00:56] arynwyn: Cederic: Riding, being outdoors, hunting. Spending time with my dogs. Walking on the beach and watching the sun set.

[00:58] Socks: Kyrenne: I'm going to have to be careful around your dogs. <she melts down into fox form and wags her tail> Think they'll accept me as one of them?

[00:59] arynwyn: Cederic: I've never taught them to hunt foxes. I'm sure they will love you. They are happy dogs, hardly hunting dogs. I've spoiled them too much. <he smiles>

[01:01] Socks: Kyrenne: Does that mean I get spoiled too? Long petting sessions in front of the fireplace?

 [01:01] arynwyn: Cederic: <grins> All you want. I'll even read to you during, if you'd like.

[01:03] Socks: Kyrenne: You always know exactly what to say! Maybe I should take up the sword....I don't know that my dagger and I will be able to fend off the throngs of women who are probably routinely beating down your door.

[01:03] arynwyn: Cederic: <laughs> They can beat on my door all they want, but you're the queen of my castle. <kisses her cheek> But I think it's an excellent idea for you to learn the sword. It would give us something to do until the wedding.

[01:05] Socks: Kyrenne: If you can't use one sword on me, <significant look at his crotch> you'll use another, is that it?

[01:05] arynwyn: Cederic: <grins> You catch on quick. <he hefts his sword and passes it to her> Show me what you can do.

[01:06] Socks: Kyrenne: <she has to go human form for that, but she's glad to> Show you how? I don't have anything to kill here...

[01:07] arynwyn: Cederic: Use it on me, then. You can't hurt me. At least, not for long. Just don't lop off my head. That one's a little trickier to repair...

[01:09] Socks: Kyrenne: ...I'm not sure I like that idea either. <she holds the sword well enough; it's not trembling or anything in her grip> At least get another sword or something so you can block.

[01:10] arynwyn: Cederic: <looks to her waist for her dagger>

[01:11] Socks: Kyrenne: <it's there, on her right hip; she sees where he's looking> I suppose you could block a sword with a dagger. It's tricky, but I'm sure you know how.

[01:11] arynwyn: Cederic: <he leans in and grabs it, then smiles> Alright, when you're ready.

[01:14] Socks: Kyrenne: <studies him a moment, then charges in, looking like she's going to go for his heart; at the last second, she crosses the sword in front of herself to go for his right side. She is, essentially, using the sword as a much longer dagger, and anticipating that going for his left side is what he's expecting her to do (since she's right handed and, facing him, his left side is opposite her right)>

[01:15] arynwyn: Cederic: <blocks the sword with the dagger and steps to the side. He gives her a good piece of advice that I can't come up with, then readies himself for her next attack>

[A Few Days Later]

[23:17] Socks: Ren: <goes fox form to sniff out (literally) his soon-to-be brother-in-law one afternoon>

[23:18] arynwyn: Cederic: <he's out in the stables, brushing his horse. It's one of the warmer, sunnier days, and he's taking advantage of it by being outside. He's bundled up, though, as he's not doing a lot of physical activity - a heavy fur and leather coat, and fur-lined boots with his normal attire>

[23:21] Socks: Ren: <trots out into stables and sneezes; with his more sensitive foxy nose, the hay bothers him. He shifts back to human form to avoid the smell> Good afternoon, Cederic. <he's in a long-sleeved tunic, breeches, & boots; he does have a fur-lined leather vest (that goes down past his hips) on over the tunic at least, but he obviously isn't dressed for the outdoors. He gives Ced a friendly smile>

[23:22] arynwyn: Cederic: <smiles over the horse at him> Afternoon, Renard. How are you today?

[23:23] Socks: Ren: Oh, I'm...I'm good, thank you. And you? My sister's not driving you to distraction is she? <he sounds...mostly normal, save for that hesitation at the beginning>

[23:24] arynwyn: Cederic: <chuckles> We are driving each other to distraction, I'm afraid. We're ready for spring. Is Fiona well?

[23:26] Socks: Ren: <he folds his arms on the top of the stall> She's... <He intends to say, "...still a tad miffed at me for my midwinter-induced mischief, but I hope if I promise her a pony, I'll be okay." What comes out instead is>...far too beautiful to be married to me. <he lets his head fall to his arms>

[23:27] arynwyn: Cederic: <stops brushing the horse to look at him> She loves you. That's all that matters.

[23:29] Socks: Ren: And I love her. I have spent so much time enraptured with her that I...<he hasn't lifted his head from his arms during all of this, and he's certainly not about to NOW>...I couldn't even THINK of touching another woman. And in a few months, we'll be married and I...<sigh>

[23:31] arynwyn: Cederic: <comes around the horse and leans against the gate> Well, you do have the advantage that Fiona has never been with another man. It will be a new experience for both of you.

[23:32] Socks: Ren: I just...want it to be perfect for her. I want EVERYTHING to be perfect for her. <he finally lifts his head> I'm losing sleep over this. I start dreaming that it's our wedding night and then I wake up in a cold sweat 'cause nothing's gone right and I hurt her or she's disappointed or... <lets his head fall back down to his arms again with a groan>

[23:33] arynwyn: Cederic: I could make a few suggestions, if you'd like. Not that I'm an expert, by any means.

[23:34] Socks: Ren: <his head shoots up; he has a somewhat desperate look in his eye> Oh god, PLEASE help me. I mean...you have to be doing SOMETHING right. 'Renne's after you like a cat after mice.

[23:37] arynwyn: Cederic: <blushes a little> One thing I have found to be important is the time spent together before the... act. <clears his throat> What I mean is... there's a time to jump in and do it furiously, and there is a time to take things slow. The slower you go the more... tender and loving it comes across. <he's looking at the ground now> For your first time, it would be my suggestion to take things slow. I know you're impatient, and Fiona probably is too, but it will mean more if it's tender.

[23:40] Socks: Ren: <nods, paying close attention - he's obviously trying to commit everything Cederic says to memory as if it were the WORD OF THE LORD OUR GOD ON HIGH> Go slow at first. Okay. Um....how do I know when it's appropriate to...er....not go slow? <okay, NOW he's blushing. Or he could just be getting red from being outside in winter. Sure, he'll go with that if anyone asks>

[23:41] arynwyn: Cederic: You'll take cues from her. If she acts impatient, starts kissing you like her life depends on it, then I would speed things up. But as I said, for the first time, especially to avoid hurting her, slow is the best. Also, if you're afraid of hurting her, you could start with... <clears his throat, coloring again> fingers.

[23:42] Socks: Ren: <blinks> I don't follow.

 [23:43] arynwyn: Cederic: Er, well... Your finger is smaller than your... Well, you need to... er... stretch her slowly, before you enter... One finger, then two... Women find it pleasurable. <Very much Not Looking at Ren>

 [23:47] Socks: Ren: Oh. <VERY red as well. He clears his throat> That - that's good to know. <another throat clear> I just...sometimes I want to be married desperately and sometimes I wish I had more time. Sometimes I wish I'd really been with all those women I've been claiming, and sometimes I'm glad I haven't been, and... it's all very confusing.

[23:48] arynwyn: Cederic: Be glad that you haven't, Ren. Your first time will be special and memorable and with the woman you love. <smiles>

[23:49] Socks: Ren: If she doesn't end up laughing at me. <he sighs> But you've been very helpful. And I know it's...not exactly a comfortable topic. <rubs the back of his neck> So I really owe you for this.

[23:50] arynwyn: Cederic: <claps him on the shoulder> We will soon be brothers. We can talk about anything together, as far as I'm concerned. <smile>

[23:50] Socks: Ren: <chuckles> ...yeaaah, well, I'd rather NOT know too much about what my sister's like in bed. <makes an EW face>

[23:51] arynwyn: Cederic: <laughs> Alright, well, there are a few things we shouldn't talk about... Ah, one more thing, if you'd like to know?

[23:52] Socks: Ren: Hm? What's that? <Ever the eager student>

[23:53] arynwyn: Cederic: Well, the first time it's going to be very easy for you to... er... finish. And it's going to be hard for her to. I would recommend counting in a foreign language to keep yourself distracted until you've satisfied her at least once.

[23:53] Socks: Ren: <blinks> Oh, damn. I didn't even THINK of that. <Manly Hug> You are a godsend.

[23:54] arynwyn: Cederic: <chuckles at the ironic title and returns the hug, patting his back> Expect to always use that trick. I have to, still, and probably always will.

[23:55] Socks: Ren: ...what, really? As a kid, all you had to do to satisfy 'Renne was dangle some string in front of her...

[23:56] arynwyn: Cederic: <grins> Once is never enough. And she is far too beautiful for me to keep my control.

[23:58] Socks: Ren: Yeaaaaaah, verging back onto stuff I don't wanna hear. <but he smiles> Hmm. Latin or French...? <pondering> My Latin's worse than my French, in general, but then their number systems are pretty similar...

[23:59] arynwyn: Cederic: You can go back and forth. The practice will be good for you. <chuckles>

[00:03] Socks: Ren: And enjoyable as well. <he leans back against the stable wall> I might've paid better attention to my tutors if I'd known I could put this knowledge to use pleasuring my wife someday. Then again, at the time I was learning French, I still thought most girls were stupid and worthless. <shrugs>

[00:03] arynwyn: Cederic: <smiles> The folly of youth. Your father has a few good Latin books in the library if you need a refresher.

[00:08] Socks: Ren: I might, at that. It's hard now to remember a time when I wasn't head over heels for Fee, but I know when we were kids, she was just...a friend. I almost never even thought of her as a girl, and now...well, now she's all woman and I can never forget it. <he sighs, looking out across the keep> How does this happen to us? Aren't we supposed to be tough and strong and...undisturbed by things like this?

[00:09] arynwyn: Cederic: <sounds surprised> No. We are meant to fall in love. It is the thing that makes man the happiest.

[00:11] Socks: Ren: And the most insane, I think. Um. <standing up straight> I suppose if you had questions about 'Renne that *didn't* have to do with bedding her, I can probably answer those...<shrugs>

[00:11] arynwyn: Cederic: Hm. Most things I've wanted to know, I simply ask her. But if I think of anything, I will seek you out. <smile>

[00:14] Socks: Ren: Oh! There is one thing: sometimes, if she has bad dreams? Even if she's in human form, scritch behind her ears...<demonstrating with one hand, "scritching" the air> as if she were a fox. She'll drop right off to sleep again. <smiles>

[00:15] arynwyn: Cederic: <his eyes light up> That's good to know. Thank you! <filing this away mentally>

[00:18] Socks: Ren: She can handle brandy and wine okay, but mead tends to make her sick. And...do NOT let her cook if you value your health. Baking: fine. She can make very nice berry tarts. They don't LOOK like much, but they taste wonderful. Just DON'T LET HER COOK.

[00:19] arynwyn: Cederic: <arches a brow> Will she burn down my manor? <grins; he finds this amusing>

[00:20] Socks: Ren: Possibly. One summer she tried to learn how to cook - I think she was still trying to impress Roger at that point - <quick roll of the eyes> and she burned most of her hair off. And the food? Either burnt or undercooked. Father ate every bite out of paternal sympathy and spent the next two days in bed, with the chamber pot CLOSE to hand. <shakes his head>

[00:22] arynwyn: Cederic: <grins> Well, I don't expect her to cook. I don't expect her to do any especially womanly things. I'd rather have her with me, riding and hunting and the like.

[00:25] Socks: Ren: She will love you forever then. And, more to the point, your innards will love you forever as well. <sobers up a bit> I also wanted to say that...well, I'm really happy she found someone who accepts every bit of her. Just getting someone who would put up with her as a human was enough of a trial that she really had just assumed she'd never be married. And I know she played it off like a joke, or like a relief - not part of the meat market anymore, you know? - but I also know that it bothered her. More than she'd ever admit it, even to me. So. Thanks for making her so happy. Means I don't have to feel so guilty about being happy with Fee, y'know?

[00:26] arynwyn: Cederic: <smiles> The good part is, she makes me just as happy. And she would never begrudge your happiness with Fiona even if she had never found anyone.

[00:28] Socks: Ren: I know that, but...that just kinda made me feel guiltier. <clears his throat> Anyway, I'm taking up your whole day here, and I have chores I'm supposed to see to. Thanks again for...the advice. <slight blush>

[00:29] arynwyn: Cederic: <nods> Anytime.

[Time Passes]

[15:55] arynwyn: Cederic: <It's a warm day, though the breeze is chilly. He's outside at the very edge of the forest in his coat and fur-lined boots, sitting on a thick cushion to keep his butt from freezing or getting wet. He's got a book - a religious text - and he sits reading as the sun warms him and slowly melts some of the snow>

[15:56] Socks: <a falcon lands on a tree branch near him and cries out. It peers at him closely>

[15:57] arynwyn: Cederic: <glances up at the sound and studies the falcon closely, wondering if he should recognize it. Considering he only saw Helvin as a falcon for a few short seconds, he doesn't say anything>

[15:59] Socks: <the falcon flies over and lands at his feet> Good afternoon, clouddweller. <the falcon says evenly>

[16:00] arynwyn: Cederic: Ah. I was wondering if that was you. I hope you are well? <closing the book>

[16:01] Socks: Helven: <the falcon nods> And I hear you are not. Show me the wings. <He fluffs his wings up a little, flaps them out as if in demonstration, and then resettles his wings in against his sides>

[16:02] arynwyn: Cederic: <hesitates, the stands up slowly. The tree behind him shimmers for a moment, and then his wings appear, easier to see in the shadow, still looking painful and tattered>

[16:04] Socks: Helven: <he tsks and cocks his head. He flies up onto a branch to get a better look at them> They are worse than she led me to think. <he eyes Cederic> She asked me not to tell you that she told me. <not that he has to say who the "she" is> But I am not given to lying, and she did it out of concern for her intended.

 [16:05] arynwyn: Cederic: <he lets his wings disappear again> I'm not entirely sure why she told you. There's nothing you can do. <sounds rather certain>

 [16:07] Socks: Helven: Had you known of our existence before my niece revealed herself to you?

 [16:08] arynwyn: Cederic: <shakes his head> No.

 [16:09] Socks: Helven: Then how do you know what we can and cannot do? Though this....<he tsks again>...this would be...difficult. I do not think you can fly again, even with the help of our magic.

[16:10] arynwyn: Cederic: <shifts a little, looking uncertain> It is part of my punishment.

[16:14] Socks: Helven: It must hurt. <he isn't asking> Were you human, green magic could ease your pain. Clouddwellers are a risk. Sometimes green magic is invigorating; sometimes it is disagreeable to your kind. <he flies off the branch to swoop around behind Cederic and is human again before he hits the ground. He slides his hands up under Cederic's coat and shirt without preamble, prodding at the skin on either side of the wings>

[16:16] arynwyn: Cederic: <shivers a little, keeping quiet, still uncertain>

[16:18] Socks: Helven: <and then there is something very odd. It warms Cederic's back quickly, just *this* side of burning> How is your vision? Your head? Are you dizzy?

 [16:19] arynwyn: Cederic: <blinks a few times> Everything went blurry. But... the pain has lessened.

[16:23] Socks: Helven: <pulls his hand away and the warming sensation is instantly gone - it doesn't fade like normal warm radiance> You've been human long enough then. If, somehow, you were a winged human, I could probably restore your wings to flyable condition. You are a clouddweller; it is highly improbable. But I can apparently help with the pain. <he walks around in front of him again> I am not sure why I *should* do this; you are not blood of my blood, and marrying my niece does not make you so. <this is apparently Helven-speak for "make me an offer">

[16:24] arynwyn: Cederic: <eyes Helven evenly> I have not asked anything of you. But, if there is something in specific you have in mind, then I might consider it.

[16:29] Socks: Helven: <nods> There is a village of our kind south and east of here. They have stopped communicating with us. Go there with Kyrenne and Renard. Find out what has happened to them. Help our kind as you can, and we will help you as we can.

 [16:30] arynwyn: Cederic: I would go even without making a deal, you only had to ask. <he bows a little> I will go and see what the problem is, and take care of it as I can.

[16:30] Socks: Helven: Give me your arm, free of fabric.

 [16:32] arynwyn: Cederic: <he tugs off his coat and pulls up his sleeve, holding it out to Helven>

[16:36] Socks: Helven: <snatches hold of his arm - and now there IS pain, like someone pressing a brand into his flesh. He drops Cederic's arm and the burning/searing sensation again is gone instantly. There is a mark on his arm like this: http://boashmoremusic.files.wordpress.com/2009/05/4290\_80143698069\_20963663069\_1754692\_2296394\_n.jpg%3Fw%3D604%26h%3D453 > You'll need that. <Helven says, shifting to falcon quickly> I must go talk to my niece. <and he flies off>

[16:37] arynwyn: Cederic: <studies the mark, feeling a little sick at the mark. He quickly pulls his sleeve down so he doesn't have to look at it. He gathers up the cushion and his book and heads inside>

[16:39] Socks: Renard: <nearly runs into Cederic> Oh, hey, sorr... <blinks and goes silent for a moment, looking at him>

[16:40] arynwyn: Cederic: ...Is something wrong?

[16:41] Socks: Renard: Something is...different about you. <his brow draws down and he leans towards Cederic as if closer inspection would reveal it>

[16:43] arynwyn: Cederic: Yes, well, your Uncle paid me a visit. <he tugs up his sleeve to reveal the mark> Do you know what it means?

[16:44] Socks: Renard: <blinks and grabs at the arm to look at it better> No...but...it...feels familiar? I don't know how to describe that. <he looks up at Cederic, releasing his arm> What'd Uncle Helven say?

[16:45] arynwyn: Cederic: He wants me to go with you and Kyrenne to a village to the south to find out why they stopped communicating with your Uncle.

[16:45] Socks: Renard: A *ke'mari* village? Er...shapeshifter village?

[16:47] arynwyn: Cederic: Yes. He went to speak with Kyrenne. Perhaps you should find him and he can fill you in with more details. The information he shared with me was minimal.

[16:48] Socks: Renard: Yeah, well, that sounds like him. But I bet that's what the mark's for. <he touches the mark experimentally>

[16:48] arynwyn: Cederic: <nods> I just wish he hadn't. It makes me uncomfortable. <frowns>

[16:50] Socks: Renard: He had to. Shapeshifter villages are hidden. I don't mean "off the beaten trail" hidden. I mean MAGICALLY. If you don't have shifter blood, you won't see it. I bet this mark will let you see the village. You can't help what you can't see, after all. <he touches it again> I didn't think shifters tolerated tattoos though. Odd.

[16:51] arynwyn: Cederic: I hope he's able to remove it once we're done. <rubs a thumb over it and sighs> Well, I suppose I'd better get packed. Kyrenne will want to leave immediately, if I know anything about her.

[16:55] Socks: Kyrenne: REN! <running down the corridor in her typical corset, shirt, breeches and boots. She skids to a halt near them> Oh, I see you've heard already. <grins at him> C'mon, an adventure awaits! Go talk to Fee, I'm going to talk to Fa... <sees the mark> Oh wow. <she also grabs at Cederic's arm - everyone seems to be doing that today - and looks at it. She touches it lightly, tracing the lines with her fingertips>

Renard: <claps a hand on Ced's shoulder and heads off to find Fee and start packing>

[16:56] arynwyn: Cederic: It's nice to see you too. <looks amused> I was just heading to my room to pack. I assume you want to leave immediately?

[16:57] Socks: Kyrenne: Absolutely! <she looks around and presses up next to him> You know, we'll be away from the manor while we're traveling...away from Father and any other living soul except for Ren... <grins up at him>

[16:58] arynwyn: Cederic: <kisses her cheek> You can wait another month and a half, dearest. We've waited this long.

[16:58] Socks: Kyrenne: <pouts> Mean thing. What'd he say about your wings? He wouldn't tell me.

[17:00] arynwyn: Cederic: He can ease the pain. But I doubt he will be able to repair them even slightly. I'm just... uncertain about the whole thing. I don't mind going to help this village at all, not in the slightest, but the pain, the wings... it's my punishment. I deserve it. I don't feel like I should allow your Uncle to stop the pain. <frown>

[17:03] Socks: Kyrenne: You're too hard on yourself, Cederic. <she brushes his cheek softly> I want you to be happy - and NOT be in pain.

[17:05] arynwyn: Cederic: <he shrugs> If a child breaks the rules, you must punish him. It is the same for us. I disobeyed God, so I must be punished.

[17:07] Socks: Kyrenne: <she cocks her head> If a child is punished, maybe he gets spanked, hm? The spanking is the punishment. It hurts at the time but the pain fades. Why shouldn't your own pain fade?

[17:09] arynwyn: Cederic: Because my sin was worse, and I was a perfect being. The pain has lessened though, over time. <sighs a little> I would like to help this village. Perhaps the time away will change my mind, or perhaps you will be able to change it. Either way, we should get going.

[17:12] Socks: Kyrenne: <stares at him a moment> Maybe you have a point. After all, your *sin* was to love someone, and even *WITH* the pain, you've repeated it. *Without* the pain, you might just fall in love left and right, since you're no longer *PERFECT*. <she turns and stalks off towards the library>

[17:13] arynwyn: Cederic: <blinks, then catches up to her and grabs her arm> Kyrenne... My sin was *lust*. I realize that now. The only person I have ever loved is you.

[17:16] Socks: Kyrenne: <whirls back to him, but she's not yelling> Great, so you learned your lesson. So let me help you! I don't like the idea of you being in pain, Cederic! I was hoping Uncle Helven could fix your wings, let you fly again, but if he can't do that, at least he can make you hurt less.

[17:17] arynwyn: Cederic: Alright. Alright. If your Uncle can help, I will graciously allow him to. I didn't realize it meant so much to you. Forgive me. <he touches her cheek>

[17:18] Socks: Kyrenne: <hugs him tightly> Daft man. Why would I *want* you in pain?

[17:20] arynwyn: Cederic: <returns the hug and pets her hair> I've gotten used to it, over three hundred years, I suppose.

[17:21] Socks: Kyrenne: ...Three hundre... <blinks. She stares at him a moment, then shakes her head> I need to talk to Father. Go pack. <smiles at him and kisses him quickly>

[17:21] arynwyn: Cederic: <returns the kiss but doesn't release her yet> I love you.

[17:22] Socks: Kyrenne: I know you do, daft thing. I love you, too.

[17:23] arynwyn: Cederic: <smiles an releases her> Go on. I'll get packed and head down to the stables to ready our horses. Unfortunately, I have to go horseback since I can't turn into a sparrow.

[17:24] Socks: Kyrenne: <grins> Poor man. <steals another quick kiss and goes to her father>

 [17:25] Socks: Renard: <tracks down Fiona>

[17:26] arynwyn: Fiona: <practicing her harp in the study, 'cause I say she plays harp>

 [17:27] Socks: Renard: <goes in mouse form to run around behind her before he shifts back, so he can wrap his arms around her from behind and kiss her cheek> So like an angel... <he whispers>

[17:28] arynwyn: Fiona: <blushes deeply and stops playing> Angels don't make mistakes. And I'm sure their fingers don't get raw from the strings. <she shows him her red and chafed fingers>

[17:29] Socks: Renard: <he kisses each of her fingers lightly> Fee, my most beautiful, talented, and red-fingered love, I'm afraid I have to go away for a little bit.

[17:29] arynwyn: Fiona: <her smiles disappears> Go away? Where?

[17:32] Socks: Renard: My uncle is sending 'Renne and Cederic and I to a shifter village. I guess they stopped communicating with him and he's worried.

[17:33] arynwyn: Fiona: <frowns> How long will you be gone?

[17:35] Socks: Renard: I don't know; he talked to Cederic and 'Renne about it. If we're lucky, he gave one of them a map. But I don't know where it is or how far. I'm sure we'll be back well before spring - I wouldn't do anything that would put off marrying you by even a single day. <kisses her temple>

[17:35] arynwyn: Fionia: <she stands up> I'm coming with you. Don't argue. I might be able to help, somehow.

[17:36] Socks: Renard: Fee, you won't even be able to see the village. Only those of shifter blood can see it; Uncle had to *brand* Cederic to allow him to help.

[17:37] arynwyn: Fiona: Then make him brand me! <the line of her mouth hardens> Don't you even *think* about running off with your sister and having fun adventures without me, Renard!

[17:38] Socks: Renard: <blinks at her using his full name> You're assuming I can *make* Uncle Helven do *anything*, Fee. <he tries to brush her cheek again> I shouldn't be gone too long...

[17:40] arynwyn: Fiona: At least ask him! <she buries her face in his neck, clinging to him> Please don't leave me.

[17:41] Socks: Renard: Fee...<wraps his arms around her> Fee, I'm not going away forever. <he rubs her back consolingly and sighs> And...we don't know what's going on there. It could be dangerous.

[17:42] arynwyn: Fiona: <her back stiffens> All the more reason I need to go! What if something happens to you and I never get to see you again, or marry you, or make love with you?... <she sniffs, trying to hide her tears>

[17:45] Socks: Renard: <blushes at that last part, but runs a thumb over her cheek, up near her eyes> 'Renne'll look out for me.

Helven: <lands on the windowsill outside ('cause of course he's a falcon atm) and watches>

Renard: I promise, Fee, I will do everything in my power to make my way back to you. But I don't want to take you somewhere dangerous. What if something happens to you?

[17:47] arynwyn: Fiona: You're taking your sister! I'm just as capable as she is! You've never not allowed me something! <she pulls away and wipes tears off her cheeks>

[17:49] Socks: Renard: <he sighs> It is so damnably hard to say "no" to someone when you love them. <he clasps her face in both hands> I am trying to protect you, Fiona.

Helven: <taps on the glass with his beak and shifts his grip on the windowsill impatiently>

[17:51] arynwyn: Fiona: <jumps a little and looks over at the window, blinking in surprise. She sniffs and tries to look normal>

[17:53] Socks: Renard: <spins to the noise> Uncle? <he releases Fee and goes to open the window>

Helven: <flies in, landing atop her harp, and cocks his head at Fiona> I have every reason to suspect that where they are going is dangerous. The village hasn't been heard from in some time. I do not expect them to be well. Do you understand this, and wish to go anyway?

[17:56] arynwyn: Fiona: Yes! If Renard is going to danger, I want to face it with him. I don't want to live without him. <looks at Helven pleadingly>

[17:58] Socks: Renard: She has no formal fighting training, Uncle, and I don't want her to be hurt...

Helven: <lands on the floor, already human> It is her decision, not yours, nephew. <he holds his hand out with a sigh> Give me your arm, free of fabric.

[17:58] arynwyn: Fiona: <tugs the sleeve of her dress up and holds out her arm, looking triumphant and nervous>

[18:01] Socks: Helven: <grabs hold of her arm and sears the brand into her flesh quickly> Do not worry about your pretty skin. It will fade over time. <he looks her over appraisingly and then comments to Ren> If you had to marry a human, you at least chose a surpassingly beautiful one. <claps him on the shoulder and flies out before either of them could comment>

[18:02] arynwyn: Fiona: <turns to Ren> Don't be angry. <she goes over and hugs him tightly, snuggling against him, repeating> I don't want to live without you.

[18:03] Socks: Renard: <holds her tightly> I'm not angry, Fee; I'm just worried. <he sighs> Go pack. It's cold out. You might see about borrowing from 'Renne's wardrobe. <not that he thinks she will; she always wears dresses>

[18:04] arynwyn: Fiona: <kisses him quickly> We'll be fine. <she dashes out the door and off to Renne's room, fully intending to break out of her dress habit>

[18:06] Socks: Kyrenne: <having told her father (note: not asked - TOLD) they were leaving, she is in her room packing up>

[18:07] arynwyn: Fiona: <rushes in> Renne, I need some clothes. <her eyes are bright with excitement> Some breeches and tunics and things that aren't dresses. Do you have a pair of boots I can use? <she starts digging in Renne's dresser>

[18:08] Socks: Kyrenne: <blinks> Are you coming with us? <she sounds like she's just been told that Fee can come to the festival with them after all - a smile is starting to break out on her face>

[18:09] arynwyn: Fiona: <pulls her sleeve back to reveal the same mark Cederic has> Yes! Ren didn't want me to but your uncle interrupted and said that it was my decision. <beams> You're not going to have all the fun without me!

[18:10] Socks: Kyrenne: <she hugs Fee tightly> Okay, well first we're getting you out of that dress... <uh oh it's "let's play dress up" time...>

[18:11] arynwyn: Fiona: <she closes the door and all but rips the dress off. She kicks off her pretty little flats too> Okay, make me a tomboy. <grin>

[18:12] Socks: Kyrenne: Oh, Fee, it's the words I've always longed to hear!

 [18:14] arynwyn: Fiona: <grins> Think of it as payback for me dressing you up on our wedding day.

[18:15] Socks: Kyrenne: Remember: I want Cederic to take one look at me and be knocked flat. <grins at her and works on getting her dressed, discussing what to pack and how to pack it for the trip while they work>

[Down in the Stables]

 [19:21] Socks: Renard: <getting his horse situated and prepared for the trip>

 [19:25] arynwyn: Fiona: <comes into the stables with her pack over her shoulders, wearing http://www.kaboodle.com/hi/img/2/0/0/15a/1/AAAAAvpsrlwAAAAAAVoXQw.jpg (including the tunic) and leather breeches and boots. She's smiling happily, her hair braided back out of her face, joking with Renne>

[19:30] Socks: Renard: <hearing her talking with 'Renne> You about ready to...<turns to face her and stops dead, staring her up and down, drinking in every luscious curve he's ever imagined standing there in sexy leather and gorgeous colors. His mouth hangs open and he...just...STARES.>

Kyrenne: <watches her brother's reaction with some amusement, but says nothing to break the spell yet>

[19:31] arynwyn: Fiona: <turns scarlet from the top of her chest to the roots of her hair> Well, I couldn't go in a dress, now could I?

[19:33] Socks: Renard: <nods distantly, still staring>

Kyrenne: <deciding there's always time to torment her brother> It looks good on her, doesn't it? Even after all this time, Fee and I are still about the same size. Though she's packing more up top...

Renard: <nods distantly, still staring>

[19:34] arynwyn: Fiona: <smacks Renne's arm, going even redder, if that's possible, but grinning stupidly> We should get going or it'll be nightfall before we're off your father's grounds.

[19:37] Socks: Renard: Night...yeah...

Kyrenne: <walks over to him and hits him upside the head, hard>

Renard: OW! HEY! <turning to her> What was that for?!

Kyrenne: We. Have. To LEAVE. The only thing you're mounting anytime soon needs to be your horse.

Renard: <blushes and turns to said horse...but not before glancing back over his shoulder at Fee one last time>

[19:38] arynwyn: Fiona: <goes over to him and kisses his cheek quickly, still blushing> Still wish I weren't coming? <she hoists her pack onto her horse with surprising strength and straps it down>

[19:39] Socks: Renard: ....yes, but for an entirely different reason. <clears his throat and swings up onto the saddle> You are going to be all kinds of temptation, and your father's promised me bodily harm if I touch you before the wedding.

[19:40] arynwyn: Fiona: <grins at him> Renne won't tell, and I don't think Cederic would either. <arches a brow at Cederic>

Cederic: <grins at her and winks at Ren>

[19:42] Socks: Ren: <clears his throat> But it also would mean I'm a man incapable of keeping his word, Fee. And ...well...frankly... <eyes his sister and her suitor>

Kyrenne: <rolls her eyes and leads her horse out, since Ren seems to want some privacy for a sec>

[19:43] arynwyn: Cederic: <follows Renne out, catching her hand and kissing it when he catches up>

Fiona: <her smile fades and she blushes again> What?

[19:47] Socks: Kyrenne: Here. <she pulls a folded map out of her saddlebags and hands it to him> Uncle gave me this, so we'd know where we're going. It shouldn't be more than a day or two to get there so long as the weather stays good. It's a bit more east than south, but the terrain isn't terrible. I figure Ren and I can take turns scouting ahead.

Ren: <he dismounts and steps over to her> I don't want to...<can't say this without blushing>...to take you on some rocky pile of moss or something. You deserve satin sheets and candlelight, pillows of the softest down, furs and velvets. <he rests a hand on her shoulder> Our first time together should be magical and perfect....and my sister should not be anywhere NEAR it. <clears his throat>

 [19:50] arynwyn: Cederic: <studies the map, nodding> We can camp here <points to a spot> tonight, and here <points to another spot> tomorrow night.

Fiona: <she leans up and kisses him gently> I was only teasing, Ren. <smiles a little, her blush fading> I want it to be perfect too.

 [19:53] Socks: Ren: I will do everything in my power to make sure it is, love. <can't help glancing down at her chest for a moment, then nods towards the horses> C'mon, you wanted to go on this adventure. The sooner we leave, the sooner I can have you safely home again, and the more likely I am not to be disemboweled by Lord Connor.

Kyrenne: That should be doable. Fee's an excellent rider, and my father's horses aren't fast, but they've got stamina. <she mounts up> Keep the map, I've already looked it over a bit.

[19:56] arynwyn: Fiona: <gives him a quick kiss, then swings up on the horse> Ready when you are.

Cederic: <mounts and tucks the map into a pocket> Kyrenne, will you promise me something?

[19:57] Socks: 'Renne: That depends on what it is. Surely you know by now that asking me to stay out of trouble is pointless, hm? <smiles at him>

Ren: <eyeing her ass in those pants> I am so very jealous of that horse. <clears his throat>

[20:00] arynwyn: Cederic: <he sighs a little> Yes. But I will ask that you do not rush in in an attempt to save *me*. I cannot die. My wounds heal almost instantly. So please, please, PLEASE don't endanger yourself for my sake. <looks at her with pleading eyes>

Fiona: <tosses her braid over her shoulder and grins at him> C'mon. <she nudges the horse and heads out of the stable>

[20:02] Socks: Ren: <trots out after her, the better to keep "watch" over her. <coughs> >

Renne: ... ...and how well do you heal being decapitated?

[20:04] arynwyn: Cederic: If you put my head back against my body, it will heal. I just can't regrow it. <he glances back as Ren and Fiona come out>

[20:06] Socks: 'Renne: <frowns> I can't make any promises. If I see you in danger, I am going to react - the same as I expect you will. But...I...I'll try.

Ren: I hope someone knows where we're going exactly?

[20:06] arynwyn: Cederic: That's all I can ask. <but he doesn't look too happy about it. He turns to Ren> Yes, we've planned out a route. Is everyone ready?

[20:08] Socks: Ren: <nods tightly> As I'll ever be. Do we have any more information on this place?

'Renne: Just where it is and that they're not talking to the council up here anymore. <she shrugs> C'mon, adventure awaits! <she grins over at Fee, pushing her thoughts about Cederic aside for now>

[20:09] arynwyn: Cederic: <starts off, leading the way at a fast walk>

Fiona: <grins back at Renne and nudges her horse forward>

[Traveling…]

 [20:18] Socks: <They ride during the day, stopping at the sites Cederic's picked out on the map. It's an aggressive riding schedule, especially in parts where the melting snow has turned the trails and roads into muddy mush, but they keep up well enough. As suggested, the twins take turns going bird form and scouting ahead, with the non-shifted twin leading the other's horse. To avoid temptation, Ren sleeps by his sister's side - keeping an eye on her and his back to Fiona and just...trying not to think about it. 'Renne tries to get up to go snuggle Cederic one night and Ren pulls her back down onto her sleeping bag and makes her stay put.

The shifter - or *ke'mari* - village is nestled in a forest clearing, not far from the human town of Setton, which is where Ren suggests they find actual lodging - a good stable for their horses and a roof over their heads, as...>

Ren: <looking at the sky> I think it's going to snow tonight. And I'm not letting Fee sleep outside in a snowstorm.

[20:21] arynwyn: Fiona: <huffs a little> Like I'm a doll or something. <mutters>

Cederic: I think it's a good idea. We'll get some decent rest and head to the village tomorrow.

[20:22] Socks: Ren: <leans over from his horse and whispers> If you get sick, we might have to postpone the wedding until you're well...

'Renne: If we're lucky, they'll only have two rooms. <grins hopefully at Cederic>

[20:24] arynwyn: Cederic: <smirks at her as they stop in front of the inn. He motions for the stable boy to come over to take their horses>

Fiona: <shoots him an annoyed look out the corner of her eye and pretends like she didn't hear him>

[20:25] Socks: Ren: If they only have two rooms free, then you and Fee can share one and we'll take the other. <eyeing his sister reproachfully>

Renne: Killjoy.

[20:27] arynwyn: Fiona: <grins at Renne>

Cederic: Agreed. <nodding at Ren>

<two stable boys come over and bow> Twen'y-five silver a horse per night, sir. <one says>

Cederic: <he slides off his horse and tosses the boys two gold pieces> Make sure you brush them well. We've been on the road for two days. <he starts to unstrap his pack>

[20:38] Socks: Renne: I'm going to go in and see about rooms. <as she sees her brother open his mouth, she adds> I give you my word of honor that I will see to the bedding arrangements in an honorable fashion.

Ren: Meaning you girls bunk together, yes?

Renne: Yes, meaning Fee and I share a bed tonight if it comes to that. Yeesh. <she heads inside>

 [20:48] arynwyn: Fiona: <slides down and grabs her pack, eager to follow Renne into the tavern. It's started to get chilly and late and they're all tired>

Cederic: <he gets his pack removed and goes to Renne's horse to get her pack, since she went in to get the rooms>

<the stable boys lead the two freed-up horses into the stable>

[20:54] Socks: Renne: <heads inside and looks around> Oh god, flashbacks to Templeton. <she clears her throat as a matronly woman comes over: this is apparently the innkeeper here. Renne explains their need for rooms and secures a separate room for each of them, as there's little travel to this part of Britain during this time of year. She pays the woman for the first night and some extra for baths to be arranged - starting with Fee's room, then hers, and then the guys' rooms in turn. The innkeeper indicates the rooms that will be theirs - she's put the guys at one end of the hall and the girls at the other, but there's only two rooms in between anyway - and Renne heads up to a room>

Ren: God, it's only been two days but it already seems like forever since I was last in a bed. <stretches> I hope their food's good; I feel like I could eat a horse.

[20:58] arynwyn: Cederic: <chuckles> It smells good, at any rate. <sniffing the air>

Fiona: <trails after Renne so she can dump her pack in her room before they eat>

[21:01] Socks: Renne: <comments to Fee> If my brother happens to sneak into your room tonight, I'll pretend not to hear.

Ren: I want a food, a bath, and then to sleep for a week. And then wake up and get married to Fee. In that order. <nods in agreement with himself and dismounts. He pats his horse's neck and gives it an apple he had tucked away> They'll take good care of you. <he tells the horse, who whickers appreciatively as it takes the apple>

[21:03] arynwyn: Fiona: <chuckles and rolls her eyes> I should be so lucky. I think it makes more sense for me to say, if you happen to sneak into Cederic's room tonight, I'll pretend not to hear. <grins>

Cederic: I like how you think. <he hoists his and Renne's packs> Shall we?

[21:05] Socks: Ren: Oh god, yes. <he pulls his pack off, pats his horse one last time and heads for the door> So, I'm going to warn you now: my sister will try and sneak into your room.

Renne: You're a good friend, Fee. I think I smell steak and kidney pie. C'mon. <heading back downstairs>

[21:08] arynwyn: Cederic: <chuckles> You think I do not know this? She's snuck into my room at least once a week back at Farmington.

Fiona: <dumps her pack and follows Renne back downstairs, her stomach rumbling>

[21:09] Socks: Renne: <falls into a seat at a table>

Ren: <facepalms> I should've known. Should I come to your rescue or let you two...<ahem> Sort it out? <he stops outside the inn door>

[21:11] arynwyn: Fiona: <collapses next to her> Do you think it odd that us women are more interested in... prenuptial intimacy than our men?

Cederic: No, there's no need to rescue me. I can handle her. <grin>

[21:13] Socks: Ren: Mental image I don't need...<coughs and walks in>

Renne: Eh, men and their "honor". And they think they're protecting OUR honor by denying us what we want. <she rolls her eyes> Give a man something to defend, and he's like a dog with a bone. Speaking of which... <she waves at her brother as she sees him come in> We each have our own room and I paid extra for baths.

Ren: You are a wonderful woman, my sister. <he says with a sigh, collapsing into a chair and letting his pack drop next to him for the time being>

[21:14] arynwyn: Cederic: <follows him over and drops his and Renne's packs in the corner, then taking the last chair, rubbing a hand over his face in fatigue>

Fiona: <leans over and kisses Ren's cheek> You look tired.

[21:18] Socks: Ren: I am. The thought of sleeping for a se'en-night has crossed my mind more than once. <but he smiles at her>

Renne: Stay awake long enough to bathe <she comments, poking him in the side> Or I will refuse to be seen with you. 'Sides, food's coming. <as she sees the waitress bringing out a large steak and kidney pie>

<The waitress sets the pie down in the middle of the table, along with four plates and some knives> What'll you have to drink? Water, mead, ale?

Renne: Mea...

Ren: She'll have water, and so will I. <gives his sister a Don't try it look>

Renne: <sticks her tongue out>

[21:19] arynwyn: Fiona: <arches a brow at Ren> Water is fine, thank you.

Cederic: <looks at the three of them, then shrugs> Mead for me, please. I'm the odd one out, apparently. <he eyes the steak and kidney pie hungrily>

[21:20] Socks: Renne: <Dark look at her brother>

Ren: Mead makes you sick. Shut up and drink your water.

[Next Day]

 [21:37] Socks: <The next day, the group sets out over freshly fallen snow to find the village. They ride for an hour or so and then the twins stop their horses dead. At first Cederic and Fiona don't see what the twins see, but gradually the village shimmers into view in response to the marks on their arms:

The place has been torn apart. It looks like most of the houses and buildings were simply decimated by something and nearly everything is burnt. The fires have long since burned out, of course, but there are still corpses everywhere. There aren't nearly enough corpses to justify a village of this size - though it is on the smaller side, it's still larger than the dead left here would need.

Ren looks angry; 'Renne looks sad. They ride down to investigate - even after the weeks it's been, those sensitive to it (which'd probably only be Cederic) can sense the tingle of magic used to do this. 'Renne can't take it and heads to the edge of town, refusing to look back at the village. Ren escorts Fiona out not long after, whispering ferverently in her ear how he wishes she hadn't had to see this. The group rides back to Setton in quiet shock>

[21:40] arynwyn: Cederic: <looks slightly sick, his jaw set in appalled anger>

Fiona: <being rather sheltered, she's all wide-eyed and horrified by what they see. She'll be jumpy and nervous for the rest of the day, and probably cry herself to sleep>

[21:43] Socks: Ren: <is keeping a close eye on Fiona, the better not to think about what happened back in that village>

Renne: <is still unnervingly quiet as they ride back into town proper. She just steers the horse back towards the inn without even thinking about it>

[21:49] arynwyn: Fiona: <fidgets as they ride, jumps at small noises, making her horse skiddish as well>

Cederic: <turns to Ren and says quietly> We'll need to send word to your Uncle immediately.

<Once they get out of the woods and on the road toward town, a woman steps out onto the road in front of them, blocking their way. She's slender and short, almost faery-like, with jet-black hair that falls over her shoulders and down her back, and vibrant blue eyes. She's in http://historyshop.piratemerch.com/images/scarlet\_medieval\_dress\_.jpg and http://www.pyramidcollection.com/prodimages/P9438B.jpg over, unbuttoned. She eyes them evenly>

Cederic: <grabs Kyrenne's arm and steers his horse in front of hers protectively>

[21:54] Socks: Renne: Oh seriously, Cederic. <she shoots him a look at his overprotectiveness. She looks at the woman and tries to force a smile> Good afternoon, miss. Can we help you with something?

Ren: <reaches over to pat Fiona's skittish mount soothingly. He's taking in the details of her>

[21:59] arynwyn: <her eyes flick to Cederic's and Fiona's arms for a moment, then to Renne's face> Are you friend or foe of the *ke'mari*?

[22:01] Socks: Renne: <arches an eyebrow> Try relations.

Ren: Well, not to this village specifically. Our uncle, Helven, sent us to....

Renne: <shoots her brother a look> You...don't seem like a shifter.

 [22:04] arynwyn: <she looks relieved> Plus, I need your help. If you are friend to the *ke'mari*, you are a friend to me. Would you take the time to hear my story? <the wind whips her hair and she glances to the side for a moment> But not here. It is not safe here.

Cederic: <studing her closely> We will hear you out. Where would you like to talk?

<thinks a moment> The church in the village. That should be safe from eavesdroppers.

[22:08] Socks: Renne: <nods> Point the way. <leans down and offers her hand to pull the woman up onto her horse>

Ren: <tosses a look to Fiona and nudges his horse over towards her> You okay, love?

[22:10] arynwyn: <eyes the hand a moment> No, thank you. <she smiles very faintly> I will meet you there. <she does the same sort of shimmery/melty thing Ren & Renne do, except she disappears completely>

Cederic: <arches a brow just a little, then turns to Renne> You shouldn't trust so easily.

Fiona: <clears her throat> I... yes. <she sighs> I suppose I had fooled myself that they were fine...

[22:12] Socks: Ren: <leans over and kisses her temple reassuringly, then turns his horse in that direction>

Renne: I'm not the one mentioning family to a stranger. <shoots Ren a look but, seeing him distracted with Fee, she shakes her head> Besides, she's a lead. Let's go.

[22:16] arynwyn: Cederic: <nods and starts toward the village again, but setting a quicker pace this time>

Fiona: <she follows the group, at the back, looking just a little better>

<When they arrive at the church, it's empty except for her, sitting in a pew. She's pulled off her cloak and sits in the gown, http://www.bellchamber.net/catalogue/EmiliesGoddesswithEmerald.jpg at her throat on a heavy gold chain>

[22:21] Socks: Renne: <walks in first and goes to sit next to her, keeping her dagger on the far side of the woman>

Ren: <stands behind where his sister is sitting>

Renne: What do you know about what happened here?

[22:26] arynwyn: Fiona: <trails in last and stands next to Ren, slipping her hand in his>

Cederic: <eyes the altar at the front of the church with a strange expression, then sits down next to Renne to listen>

<the woman sighs heavily and touches the pendant> It's my fault. My father found the pendant and copied it. Otherwise he would never have found the village. <her eyes fill with tears and she bows her head> It's a magical pendant, allows the wearer to see the village. I made it so I could meet Liam's family... and now I don't even know if he's alive. <sniffles>

 [22:32] Socks: Ren: <squeezes Fee's hand reassuringly>

Renne: Liam? He lived here?

[22:35] arynwyn: <nods miserably> We... we fell in love. My father, he believes all the rumors that the *ke'mari* are evil and drink infants' blood and... I don't even know what else. Once he copied the amulet, he attacked the village.

[22:41] Socks: Renne: <sighs harshly and curses under her breath>

Ren: Do you know where they'd hide if they had to go to ground? <he asks quietly>

Renne: <gets to her feet> Do you know where your father is right now? Because I have a dagger with his name on it....

Ren: RENNE! <he barks at her>

[22:43] arynwyn: Cederic: <pulls Renne back down into a sitting position and peers at the woman> Do you know where they would hide?

<she blinks at him a couple of times> No, not really, but there are limited places to hide if they stayed close. There's a clearing a couple of miles north of the village, and there are caves just south of it. The closest village aside from here is Middleton, about ten miles up-river.

[22:45] Socks: Ren: We can split up: one pair take the clearing and the others take the caves. If those fall through, we'll head to Middleton. <he's back to his carefully even tone>

Renne: <closes her eyes to try and calm down>

[22:48] arynwyn: <she looks up, hopeful> You're going to help?

Cederic: <rubs Renne's back soothingly> Yes, that's why we've come. What more can you tell us about your father?

We're - ...he's a mage. Dangerous. Arrogant. <her eyes harden> Evil. <sniffs>

[22:51] Socks: Renne: <tightly, eyes still closed> You sure I can't just put a dagger in his heart? Or does he not have one?

Ren: 'Renne, you're not helping. <he looks at their new friend> I'm sorry about my sister.

[22:53] arynwyn: <chuckles bitterly> No need to apologize. I'm with her. But I'm not sure a dagger to the heart would kill him. <wipes her eyes> I was thinking a fiery death. Seems more ironic.

Cederic: <he looks to Ren> Should we start the search tonight or wait until first light?

 [23:02] Socks: Ren: <looks to Fee> How you doin', love?

Renne: <stands, pulling away from Cederic> I'm going now. You do what you want. <starts to go fox form>

[23:04] arynwyn: Cederic: <grabs her arm before she can shift> We'll all go. You and Ren can go as sparrows to search the clearing and Fiona and I will go on horseback to search the caves.

I'll help. What do you want me to do? <she stands as well>

Fiona: <nods at Ren> Action is good. I want to do something to help.

[23:07] Socks: Renne: Fine. Fine. Ren, c'mon. <goes to sparrow form instead>

Ren: <kisses her quickly and looks to Cederic> Keep her safe. <to the mage> Go keep your father occupied. Finding them does no good if we lead him straight to them. I promise, we'll come find you to let you know.

[23:10] arynwyn: Fiona: <returns the kiss and pulls her cloak around herself tightly>

Cederic: <to Ren> The same for Kyrenne. <he watches her fly out and says, under his breath> Love you.

<the mage nods and shimmers, grabbing her cloak just before she disappears>

 [23:13] Socks: Ren: I'm always watching out for her. It's like all I do... <he shifts to starling form and flies off after her>

[At the Caves]

[23:17] arynwyn: Cederic: <they arrive at the caves and start searching for signs of life. He leads his horse as he walks, but insists Fiona stays mounted on hers for an easy escape if necessary>

Fiona: <somewhat annoyed at the chivalry but doesn't argue since she doesn't know him very well. Common sense tells her to, anyway, since she can't really fight>

[23:19] Socks: <The caves are dark and suitably cavernous. They seem quiet and uninhabited enough...until two wolves charge out of the darkness towards them. Their eyes are intensely green>

[23:21] arynwyn: Fiona: <her horse rears and she struggles to keep it under control. It backs up several steps>

Cederic: <doesn't draw his sword> Wait! Please, we're friends! We're here to help! <he tugs his sleeve up to show the mark on his arm in the hopes that they recognize the symbol>

[23:23] Socks: <the wolves skid to a halt and sniff warily at Cederic. They growl a little and regard him suspiciously>

Wolf 1: Who sent you, clouddweller?

[23:24] arynwyn: Cederic: <looks relieved> Helven, from... <pauses 'cause he doesn't really know where Helven is from> somewhere in Scotland. I'm marrying his neice. He was afraid something had happened since you stopped responding to messages and he sent us to investigate. It seems he was right.

[23:25] Socks: Wolf 1: <narrows its eyes at Fiona and sniffs> That is no shifter.

Wolf 2: <runs back into the caves>

[23:27] arynwyn: Cederic: <stepping between the wolf and Fiona> No, she is marrying my fiancee's brother, Helven's nephew.

Fiona: <tugs up her own sleeve to show the mark>

[23:28] Socks: Wolf 1: <cocks its head consideringly> Helven sent a clouddweller and a human to come find us? And how did you know to look here?

[23:30] arynwyn: Cederic: Helven sent his neice and nephew and us. We've split up to search areas faster. <he doesn't mention the mage since it was her father that did this and he isn't sure she'll be well-received> They are searching the clearing to the north.

[23:36] Socks: Wolf 1: <regards him warily> And what will you do, now that you have found us? We are not leaving the caves to be slaughtered by superstitious humans.

[23:37] arynwyn: Cederic: No, I would agree with that. <he sighs> We hadn't gotten that far. We have just been focued on finding you. I suppose you could relocate to Helven's village. But the twins might have a better idea. I'm sure they'll be here any time - I'm sure once they discover the clearing is empty they will attempt to find Fiona and myself, since they can fly much faster than we can ride.

 [23:45] Socks: Wolf 1: I had thought the council in Arynkal frowned upon intermarriage. But you cannot fake those marks. <eyeing his arm again warily>

<Wolf 2 trots back up and whispers something to Wolf 1>

Wolf 1: We have decided to send someone with you. You will leave these caves with...our representative <said sourly; clearly the wolf is not fond of this person>. When Helven's blood arrives, send them in to us.

<A young man walks out of the darkness toward them. He has hair the color of wet earth, long and pulled back. His tanned skin and obvious musculature make him look like a farmer's son, but his eyes give away his shifter nature. He's wearing modest clothes - an undyed tunic with a leather vest and breeches and boots. He nods at them tightly>

 [23:48] arynwyn: Cederic: <bows a little but doesn't take his eyes off of the man or the wolves> Cederic Vaughan of Somerset. This is Lady Fiona. <motions behind him>

Fiona: <gives a bow from the back of her horse>

[23:49] Socks: <nods to them both, but doesn't bow> C'mon. <he shoots a look back at the wolves>

<They trot off back into the darkness without another word>

You're not from Setton. <he observes, heading for the entrance>

[23:50] arynwyn: Cederic: Farmington, as of late. <following, leading his horse>

Fiona: <follows behind the men, eying the newcomer closely>

[23:52] Socks: Mm. That's up near Arynkal, I take it. I don't follow human settlements for the most part.

 [23:54] arynwyn: Cederic: If that is where Helven lives, then yes, it's near there I believe. How many of you survived?

[23:55] Socks: Not nearly enough. <he looks around> Is it too much to hope that you have dealt with the mage who did this?

[23:56] arynwyn: Cederic: I'm afraid no, not yet. But we will stay and help, of course. Did he work alone?

[23:59] Socks: He had a couple of younger men with him; his sons by the look of things. <he looks pained> Magery runs in families, after all.

Renne: <In sparrow form, she lands on Cederic's shoulder> Oh no, please tell me he isn't the *only* survivor.

Ren: <lands on the ground next to Fiona so he can immediately shift back to human form and reach a hand up to her cheek>

[00:01] arynwyn: Cederic: No, he's not. They sent him with us as a... diplomat, of sorts. They weren't very trusting, understandably.

Fiona: <slides down off her horse and wraps her arms around Ren, hugging him tightly> I'm glad you're okay. I was worried.

[00:04] Socks: Ren: Not half as worried as I was about you.

<he watches Fiona and Ren wistfully a moment, then looks back at the sparrow> You are Helven's blood then?

Renne: <jumps down to take her human form again> Halfway, anyway. I am Kyrenne and that's Renard. <nodding at her brother> And you are?

Liam of Rytkal.

[00:06] arynwyn: Fiona: <slips her hand in Ren's and leads her horse so they can walk together> You ARE alive! That woman was so worried about you.

Cederic: <kisses Renne's cheek quickly> We need to contact her. Do you know how? We didn't even get her name...

[00:08] Socks: Liam: Her? <blinks>

Renne: I'll go. Wait here. <goes back to sparrow form> I'll find her. Better yet, wait at the church.

[00:10] arynwyn: Fiona: The daughter of the mage that attacked your village. She was really upset. She thought you were dead.

Cederic: <his face twists in dislike but he says> Be careful. We'll meet you at the church.

[00:12] Socks: Renne: You worry too much. <flies off>

Liam: <he blinks> You've seen her? She's okay? I was worried that her father would...<clears his throat and recomposes himself>

Ren: <chuckles lightly> Love is love. <he kisses Fee's cheek>

[00:13] arynwyn: Cederic: She's the one who helped us find you. Told us likely hiding places.

Fiona: <smiles and kisses his neck in return> That it is.

 [00:16] Socks: Liam: They sent me with you because they blame me. If I had not given a way into our village to an outsider, everyone would be alive and happy and protected now.

Ren: <shoots Liam a glare>

Liam: That does not mean I don't care for her still, but...my love has become something deadly. Perhaps...perhaps it is best that she believes me dead.

Renne: <wings her way back to Setton and the billowing smoke catches her eye right away. She swoops in that way to investigate>

[00:20] arynwyn: Fiona: That's terrible...

Cederic: <looks pained> If that is what you wish, then we will comply, but... <he shakes his head> It will condemn you both to unhappiness. <sighs> Not that it is my place to say.

Fiona: <clings to Ren more tightly, whispering> I'm glad we don't have problems like that. I'd run away from home if my father tried to stop me from being with you.

<there's a giant manor house on fire and buring down quickly. Really, it doesn't look like normal fire, it's burning too fast and too hot. There's a woman in a treetop, watching the blaze with fierce eyes>

[00:23] Socks: Liam: She would do better to find a human man to marry. <he sighs> I am nothing but trouble.

Ren: <squeezes her to his side and says> Shut. Up.

Liam: What?

Ren: You. Love. Her. She loves you. Runaway together if you have to, but don't give up on her, you spineless lump!

Renne: <lands on a nearby branch> Did you do this...?

[00:27] arynwyn: <turns her vivid blue eyes on the sparrow> Justice, isn't it? He burns down their village, so I burn his. Unfortunately, he escaped. <sighs a little> I had to use Fiend Fire so he couldn't put it out. It's dangerous, could spread easily, but with the melting snow I think it will be alright.

Cederic: <glances back at Ren, then steps out of the cave and into the dimming sunlight>

Fiona: She won't ever be happy with another man. Not if she really loves you.

[00:29] Socks: Renne: ... ...but is that not also your home?

Liam: And how would we earn a living? Our fields are burned and salted. Our homes have been violated. Anywhere we go, we will be outcasts at best, and hunted and murdered at worst. Would you put the woman you love through a life like that, just to selfishly keep her with you?

Ren: ...I don't really think she'd give me the choice. <looks to Fee for confirmation>

[00:32] arynwyn: Fiona: No, I wouldn't. I insisted on coming on this trip despite the dangers. I would rather die than live without Ren.

Cederic: There are options, Liam. Places you can live and not be hunted. Farmington, for one. You would always be welcome in Somerset as well. And Helven probably knows more places you could live together happily.

<snorts> I haven't lived there since the night he destroyed the village. I stole back my amulet, got some of my things, and left. I can't sleep under his roof knowing what he did. He disgusts me. <she spits at the ground>

[00:35] Socks: Renne: We've found the survivors, Liam among them. They're headed for the church, from the caves.

Liam: ...and pray, how would I support us in these human places?

Ren: We'll think of something.

[00:37] arynwyn: <she gasps and nearly falls off the branch> Liam's alive?! <her eyes fill with tears> Thank the Lord on High. Let's go. I want to see him! <she starts to clambor down the tree>

Fiona: Don't give up, Liam. You'll regret it the rest of your life.

[00:40] Socks: Liam: <falls into silent thought>

Renne: Carefully! Don't slip. <she flies to the ground, eyeing the fire cautiously> Where have you been living, if not with your family?

[00:41] arynwyn: Here and there. Camping in the woods, sleeping on a pew at the church, wherever I can find a warm, safe place. <she lands on the ground and starts toward the church>

[00:42] Socks: Renne: You should come with us. My father would take you and Liam in, and if he won't, perhaps my uncle will. <shifts to fox form and trots along next to the mage>

[00:44] arynwyn: If Liam can ever forgive me. Afterall, I got most of his friends and family killed. He may not want to run away with me. <she sighs heavily> If he doesn't, then I may just... <shakes her head> I don't know what I will do if he doesn't.

[00:45] Socks: Renne: <comments wryly> Bat him about the head until he gets to making sense?

[00:45] arynwyn: He's far too stubborn for me to do that without killing him. <smiles just a little>

[00:48] Socks: Renne: <grins foxily> I know all about stubborn. It seems to be in the water in this half of the country. <she considers a moment as they trot along> Could always seduce him. Pull him into bed, let things get going and then pull away and refuse to let him finish until he agrees to run away with you.

 [00:48] arynwyn: <laughs> Now *that's* devious. I like how you think. <grin>

[00:53] Socks: Renne: <chuckles> Product of personal frustration. I'm Kyrenne Lyon, by the way. <shifters don't normally have surnames>

[00:53] arynwyn: <arches a brow> Lyon?

[00:55] Socks: Renne: My father is Lord Robert Lyon of Farmington. I am, as my uncle keeps reminding us, a halfblood. <rolls her eyes> Ditto my brother, obviously. Meanwhile, I don't have the first idea what to call you...

 [00:56] arynwyn: I'm Emma. Formerly Emma Thomas. <glancing back at the billowing smoke> Now, just Emma.

[00:58] Socks: Renne: Nice to meet you, Emma. Just wish it had been under better circumstances. Oh, I can see the church! <resists the urge to bound ahead>

Ren: Oh, church ahoy! <coming at it from the other direction> We'll meet back up with Renne and your lady love and we'll figure something out.

Liam: <makes a vague sound of thoughtful agreement>

[01:00] arynwyn: Emma: <her breath catches and she breaks into a run when she spots the others> LIAM!

Cederic: <smiles as he sees the woman running at them> I think she's happy to see you.

[01:02] Socks: Liam: <looks up out of his reverie, and can't help the smile that breaks out on his face> Emma! <meets her halfway and hugs her hard enough that it looks like he might crush her>

Renne: <still in fox form, she pounces on Cederic, curling up on his shoulders, around his neck>

 [01:03] arynwyn: Emma: <starts crying as soon as she's in his arms> I thought you were dead! <clinging to him just as hard as he hugs her>

Cederic: <smiles and turns his head to kiss her nose> Have any trouble finding her?

 [01:04] Socks: Renne: Nah, just followed the smoke. <coughs and licks his nose in response>

Liam: <pulls away enough to be able to kiss her, hard> Do I seem dead to you?

Ren: <arches an eyebrow, taking mental notes>

 [01:06] arynwyn: Cederic: <arches a brow> Smoke?

Emma: <kisses the HELL out of him> No, thank God. But I didn't know. I couldn't find any of you. And I didn't have the stomach to search the bodies... <she shudders>

[01:08] Socks: Liam: We're hiding in the caves, what's left of us. They...they don't much care for me anymore, and...I can't entirely blame them for it. <he rests his forehead against hers, closing his eyes>

Renne: She burned her father's house down. I think it might still be burning... <looking back the way they came. In a lower voice she comments> I hope to be kissed that way sometime soon, by the way - I hope you were paying attention.

 [01:10] arynwyn: Emma: Oh God, Liam... I'm so sorry. This is all my fault. <she puts a hand on his cheek> I shouldn't have been so STUPID...

Cederic: <tries to look offended> You don't like the way I kiss you? Well, why don't you just go and kiss *him*, then. <pretend pout>

Fiona: <to Ren> Well, after a reunion like that, I'd say it's not likely he's going to leave her. <chuckle>

 [01:13] Socks: Renne: <tickles his nose with her tail> Well, I dunno, it seems like it's been So Long since the last time we had some real *passion*...

Ren: If he does, I'll hunt him down and tie him to her. <he comments under his breath to Fee>

Liam: It's not your fault, Em. Don't ever think that. <turns his head to kiss her palm> Not ever. We have to figure out what we're going to do.

 [01:16] arynwyn: Cederic: <chuckles> Well, I'm not going to kiss a *fox* like that, so you'd better shift if you want me to kiss you like that.

Fiona: <smiles> Noble hero of love, you are.

Emma: What *are* we going to do? Neither of us have a home anymore. We're both exiles. <she sighs>

[01:19] Socks: Liam: These people are offering us homes, but...I do not know what service we could be to them...

Renne: Save it for later, hmm? <to the rest of the group> A mage and a shifter? Hell, there are all KINDS of uses for you two, at either Farmington OR Somerset. And if there's anyone here who can offer you your choice of shelters, it'd be me.

Ren: What am I: chopped liver?

Renne: <sniffs> YOU are not the future Lady Vaughn of Somerset, dear brother. You can only offer up Farmington.

 [01:22] arynwyn: Emma: <slips her hand in Liam's and smiles through her tears> You are very kind. It's up to Liam, what he wants to do. I will follow him wherever he goes.

Fiona: I'm sure my father would be happy to have extra help as well.

 [01:23] Socks: Renne: So which will it be: Scotland, Farmington or Somerset? Somerset's supposedly much milder, but I haven't been there yet... <looks at Cederic>

 [01:26] arynwyn: Cederic: Yes. It's by the sea as well as being forested. The winters aren't nearly this harsh.

Emma: <looks to Liam> It's up to you.

[01:28] Socks: Liam: I want you to be happy. You should choose.

Ren: Uh-oh, I see where THIS is going. <he clears his throat to intervene> Perhaps, for now, you should come to Farmington. Uncle Helven will want to know what happened down here, and we're closest to them.

Liam: <that reminds him> Oh, we should go back to the caves; the survivors wished to speak with Helven's blood.

[01:30] arynwyn: Emma: <shudders> I'd better not go. They might lynch me.

Cederic: Why don't I take Kyrenne and Renard to the caves and Fiona can take Liam and Emma to get rooms at the inn?

Fiona: That's fine with me. I don't think I want to go near all those bodies again. <shivers>

 [01:33] Socks: Ren: <kisses her goodbye>

Renne: Okay, let's go. It'll be nice to meet more shifters.

Liam: Hold on. <he shimmers until he looks different: blonde with brown eyes. He's a little less attractive, and looks like any other not-too-bright farmhand> Just so no one suspects me for anything other than perfectly human.

[01:35] arynwyn: Emma: <pouts> I like you better the other way. <but she kisses him again> Hurry back.

Fiona: <returns the kiss and heads toward the inn>

Cederic: <leads the way back to the caves>

[A short walk later…]

 [12:29] Socks: Ren: <entering the caves> Ugh. Imagine having to live here?

Renne: I don't suppose there's room around Somerset for them to live? <asking Cederic> I mean, they certainly can't stay near Setton now.

[12:31] arynwyn: Cederic: <looks thoughtful> They would have to avoid Bristol - too many people. But if they're willing to live by the sea, I own some property up there where they could live. Feel free to offer. I think it would be better coming from you, being at least half-blood, than me, a complete outsider.

 [12:38] Socks: Ren: By the way, what's up with the "clouddweller" thing?

Renne: <opens her mouth but is spared her "creative truthtelling" by the arrival of the two wolves who'd greeted Cederic earlier>

Wolf 1: <sniffs at the two of them> Halfbloods?

Wolf 2: I wasn't aware Arynkal allowed halfbloods.

Ren: Our mother was a shifter; our father is not. We live with him.

Renne: <who is still fox form simply because I never said she shifted back> We could offer you sanctuary. If Uncle Helven won't take you in, there's a spot of land near the sea you could ha...

Wolf 1: You are the offspring of Kyrsten then? Interesting.

Wolf 2: <in something approaching a conversational tone> I knew your mother. She was very....freespirited. <wolfish grin>

Renne: <beams but clears her throat> As I was saying....

Wolf 1: <interrupting again> Is this land YOURS to offer?

Renne: <glances at Cederic> It....will be? So...sort of?

<The wolves do not seem impressed by this>

 [12:39] arynwyn: Cederic: Kyrenne is my betrothed, as I told you earlier. What is mine is hers.

 [12:45] Socks: Wolf 1: <cocks his head> A clouddweller and a halfblood....what interesting offspring that will make.

Wolf 2: Sounds like something Kyrsten would do. <chuckles> At least they will never want for a father.

Renne: <clears her throat> So. Yes, the land is mine to offer, and I offer it to your people. You can't stay here.

Ren: It's not the quickest journey in the world, especially if you have belongings, but it'd certainly be warmer.

Wolf 2: <trots off back into the caves without another word>

Wolf 1: <sits> The council will deliberate on your offer. I do thank you for making it. Your uncle must be informed. Do you know if he will take action against Setton?

Renne: <shakes her head> I do not know. I almost never know what he'll do. But I know that the house of the man who attacked your village has been burnt - may, in fact, still be burning.

Ren: His daughter did that, of her own will. She loves Liam very much you know.

Wolf 1: <sniffs> Foolish boy. Where is he? Could he no longer face his own kind?

[12:46] arynwyn: Cederic: He's finding lodging at the inn. He seemed to think you were rather unhappy with him. That perhaps you would not want him to return.

[12:50] Socks: Wolf 1: Yes, well, he would be correct in that. There's a reason we do not normally...associate <eyeing the twins> with outsiders.

Ren: It isn't their fault! All they did was love each other and want to be together!

Wolf 1: That is your human side speaking. *Ke'mari* have a duty to their own kind first, and that duty is protection. Liam did not think of the village, only of himself.

Renne: <growls a little>

Wolf 1: Don't raise your hackles at me, halfblood. I am speaking of the law of our people. You have been raised as an oddling human, not as one of us.

 [12:52] arynwyn: Cederic: <he puts a hand on Renne's shoulder to steady her> We are not here to challenge your laws, just to help.

 [12:57] Socks: Wolf 1: We appreciate your willingness to aid us.

<Wolf 2 trots back up and whispers in Wolf 1's ear again, then sits, grinning wolfishly>

Wolf 1: The council will accept your offer, as it is made by blood of Helven, who is a council member of Arynkal. We will stay here until we have word from him though.

[12:59] arynwyn: Cederic: <nods> We will send message to him as soon as we get back to the village and then return when we have word from him.

 [13:58] Socks: Wolf 1: We will send our own messenger to Helven. This is not meant as an insult to you, <looking at Renne, who's still a little bristly> it is how we do things.

Wolf 2: <runs towards the cave entrance at high speed and shifts on the fly (ha! pun!) into an eagle, soaring off into the sky>

Ren: So what should *we* do?

Wolf 1: <looks to Ren now> We will need a guide to this new home you have promised us. Am I to understand that it is the clouddweller's land at present?

[13:59] arynwyn: Cederic: <nods> Yes. I can take you there myself. I should check on my estate anyway.

 [14:00] Socks: Renne: <lowers her ears sadly for a moment, then says> Take the road past Templeton on your way back up to Farmington? I could use my new maid to help me prepare for the wedding. <grin grin grin> You can bring her and her father with you. <wags her tail a little>

 [14:05] arynwyn: Cederic: <nods and smiles> Of course.

[14:08] Socks: Wolf 1: That will be suitable.

Ren: What's to happen with Liam?

Wolf 1: We do not care. He is not exiled from us - he is still our own kind. But if he chooses to leave, we will not detain him.

Renne: We should take Liam and Emma with us back up to Farmington. They can talk with Uncle Helven and Father and make a better decision about where they want to live.

[14:09] arynwyn: Cederic: <nods again, then says to the wolf> When can you and your people be ready to travel?

[14:11] Socks: Wolf 1: As soon as Merrin returns from speaking with Helven. He should be back late tomorrow, perhaps early the morning after. He is swift.

[14:12] arynwyn: Cederic: <nods> Then I will return the morning of the day after tomorrow.

[14:17] Socks: Wolf 1: <nods> Good day....friends. <the tone is the same even, uninflected tone it has always been. The wolf turns and trots back into the cave>

Renne: <jumps to Cederic's shoulder again> You're going away soon. Are you sure I can't give you a *Proper* goodbye?

Ren: You're going to torture him, 'Renne. Stop that.

[14:18] arynwyn: Cederic: <chuckles> I'm sure. You should leave at first light tomorrow, get back to Farmington and get Emma and Liam settled in.

[14:22] Socks: Renne: <snorts lightly> Men and their need to protect our virtue...even when they know it's nonexistent.

Ren: I shall not deign that with a response.

Renne: If you value your health, you won't. <she teases back, fluffing her tail under Cederic's chin>

[14:22] arynwyn: Cederic: I'm more concerned about *my* honor - I promised your father I wouldn't touch you.

[14:25] Socks: Renne: How's he going to know?

Ren: 'Renne. You know better. You can be just as prickly about *your* word as Cederic and I are about *ours*.

Renne: I know, I know, but....

Ren: Yes, we know, please don't specify. I do not want to think about it, okay? <heading out of the cave>

Renne: <jumps to Ren's shoulder to comment quietly> Fee's practically panting with anticipation for you, brother.

Ren: <stumbles a step over non-existent rocks>

[14:28] arynwyn: Cederic: <snickers just a little> I think it's safe to say we are *all* tortured by our desire for our significant other.

[Back at the Inn]

 [14:40] Socks: <The innkeeper regrets to inform them that they had a traveler come in late last night, so there is only the one room left>

Liam: <opens his mouth to offer to sleep outside - he can, after all, have a fur coat whenever he decides>

[14:41] arynwyn: Emma: <cuts across him> That will be fine. <she pulls out her coin purse and pays for the room, smiling>

[14:43] Socks: <The innkeeper arches an eyebrow at her but is glad enough to take her coin>

Liam: <blinks at her briefly but tries to act as if this is perfectly normal>

[14:44] arynwyn: Emma: Thank you. And now I'm going to go sleep for a week. I haven't slept in a real bed in ages. <she slips her hand in Liam's and starts toward the stairs>

[14:46] Socks: Liam: Are you well then, Em? I can cast a healing spell if it would help... <not wanting to hope..er...assume>

[14:47] arynwyn: Emma: I'm fine. I just miss my bed. Which has been reduced to ash. I really wish I could have saved it. <shrugs and pulls him upstairs, yawning>

[14:50] Socks: Liam: Em, I don't know what our future will be like together, but I swear I will do everything I can to make you happy...

[14:50] arynwyn: Emma: <she turns around and pulls him close for a kiss> Liam, I'm just so glad you don't hate me for what happened. God, to think he's my *father*!... <she sighs>

[14:52] Socks: Liam: How could I ever hate you? <combing his fingers into her hair and pushing it away from her face slowly> Certainly you cannot be blamed for someone else's actions.

[14:52] arynwyn: Emma: But I left the amulet unprotected. I didn't think he'd be able to sense it. I should have known. <buries her face in his neck> I'm so sorry.

[14:58] Socks: Liam: <his free hand pets her back soothingly> For so small a crime, you are easily forgiven. <he rests his head against hers>

[14:59] arynwyn: Emma: <she sighs softly> I love you. I had nightmares every night that you were dead. That I would never see you again, or hear your voice, or feel the touch of your hand...

[15:03] Socks: Liam: <smiles at her> I am sorry. I could not come find you after the attack. I've been going crazy. I worried that your father would harm you for your involvement with me. But you are safe here now, with me. <he slides his hand around to tip her chin up so he can kiss her>

[15:04] arynwyn: Emma: <slides her arms around his neck and kisses him deeply. When they come up for air, she says> I left. I wasn't going to stay there with him knowing what he had done. I've been staying in the forest, and when it's cold or snowing, I slept at the church.

[15:07] Socks: Liam: Tch. <he frowns, then bends down, scoops her up and then carries her the rest of the way to the room's bed> No wonder you are tired. <he sets her gently down upon the mattress> You should rest.

[15:08] arynwyn: Emma: <takes his hand and pulls him onto the bed> We should both rest.

[15:11] Socks: Liam: I believe you are right. <he snuggles in next to her> Em...I have no idea how humans do this, so I will have to do this in the way of my people.

[15:11] arynwyn: Emma: You don't know how humans sleep? <blinking, confused>

 [15:12] Socks: Liam: No, not that. <slipping a hand over her waist> I would have you by my side always, as my life partner. I think the term humans use is "wife"? <in a "am I saying that right?" way>

 [15:13] arynwyn: Emma: <blushes just a little and smiles and snuggles close> Good, because I want to be your wife. Life partner. It doesn't matter what word we use, it amounts to the same thing.

[15:14] Socks: Liam: <smiles at her> Then it is settled. <he snuggles in contentedly>

[15:16] arynwyn: Emma: <sighs happily and curls up against him. It doesn't take long, though, before her dress gets tangled around her legs and she gets uncomfortable> Damnable dress...

 [15:17] Socks: Liam: You could take it off. <he says evenly> We are lifepartners, it will not bother me. <to anyone else, his contented smile has not changed. Emma probably knows him well enough to know that there is a weee tiny grin there>

[15:18] arynwyn: Emma: <sits up, then leans down and kisses him. She slides out of bed and starts to unlace her dress, her back to him, trying to hide her blush>

[15:22] Socks: Liam: <rolls his head over to watch the show, the grin becoming more obvious> I am an unequal match to you, I fear. But I will try.

[15:24] arynwyn: Emma: <the dress drops to the floor so that she's in just her underwear. She turns around slowly, blushing harder> Don't be silly. <she slides back into bed and snuggles up to him again>

[15:26] Socks: Liam: I am never silly. <offended pride. He slips his hands over her skin and leans in to kiss her neck>

[15:28] arynwyn: Emma: <her breath catches> You're right. <she lets her eyes close and exhales slowly>

[15:31] Socks: Liam: <runs his hand over her every curve, whether it has underwear on it or not. He returns his lips to hers for a deeply passionate kiss>

[15:32] arynwyn: Emma: <returns the kiss, wrapping her arms around him tightly and running her fingers into the back of his hair> Mmm...

[15:36] Socks: Liam: My beautiful, talented mate...<he murmurs against her lips> Be kind to me, love; you have so much power over my heart. <his hand comes up along her thigh>

[15:37] arynwyn: Emma: <gasps softly and shivers> I knew you were eloquent in speech but I didn't realize you were a poet. <she kisses his neck and presses her body against his>

[15:40] Socks: Liam: <he is straining against his breeches, which she can probably feel, being pressed together like this> Would you prefer to sleep or would you rather be together now? <his eyes dip to her chest and he slides his hand up to brush the side of her breast gently>

[15:41] arynwyn: Emma: <lets out a breathy laugh> Neither of us could sleep now, even if we tried. <she sits up and slides her hands up under his tunic, pushing it up to reveal his skin. She leans down and kisses his stomach>

[15:44] Socks: Liam: I agree. <smiles and slips his hand down along her breast into her underwear. He's gentle but it doesn't take him very long to find the exact perfect spot>

[15:45] arynwyn: Emma: <she moans and falls back against the pillow, her eyes closing again> Ohh... wow... <it doesn't take long for her to climax, gasping for air and twisting her hands into the blankets>

[15:47] Socks: Liam: <pleased, he kisses her cheek>

[15:49] arynwyn: Emma: <kisses him all over his face worshipfully> You are amazing. I love you so much.

[15:51] Socks: Liam: And I you, most wonderful Emma. <something occurs to him> I have no second name to give you. That is the human custom, is it not? I hope that the lack of a second name does not bother you?

[15:52] arynwyn: Emma: I don't care. I can just be Emma, wife of Liam. <smiles and pets his stomach>

[15:53] Socks: Liam: And what is the term for male wives? I do not know it.

 [15:53] arynwyn: Emma: Husband. But we don't have to use those terms if you don't want to.

[15:55] Socks: Liam: I prefer to think of you as my partner, my mate, the match to my soul. But I might need to know the more human terms, to explain to other humans. <he tries the word> "Husband." <he arches an eyebrow> Am I an animal being bred? <with no small amount of amusement>

[15:56] arynwyn: Emma: <chuckles> We don't have to live with humans. We can live in a cabin in the woods where we don't have to deal with anyone else.

[15:56] Socks: Liam: I would live at the bottom of the seas, or in the tops of the trees, if you were with me and happy there.

[15:57] arynwyn: Emma: I will always be with you and be happy. <nuzzles his ear>

[15:58] Socks: Liam: Do you need sleep, love?

[15:59] arynwyn: Emma: Not yet. I... <blushes> I want you. <buries her face in his neck so he won't see her red face> I want you inside of me...

[16:00] Socks: Liam: <smiles and sits up to get his boots off so he can better remove his breeches. He pulls his shirt off first>

[16:01] arynwyn: Emma: <lays back on the pillows and tries to calm her breathing. She reaches over and touches his back when he gets his shirt off, petting his skin> Do you want to...?

[16:02] Socks: Liam: Do I want to be with you? Of course I do - why would you ever think otherwise?

[16:03] arynwyn: Emma: ...I don't know. I just want to make sure. <still sounds uncertain>

[16:05] Socks: Liam: <half turns back to her as he gets his boots off. He studies her face a moment and leans in to whisper, in his even tone> I have dreamed of sharing a bed with you every night since we met.

[16:06] arynwyn: Emma: <relaxes a bit and smiles> This is just all new to me...

[16:08] Socks: Liam: <he shakes his head> A shame you have never known this pleasure yet in your life. <stands to open his breeches and slide them off, along with any underwear he might be wearing> I will make sure the rest of your life is not so bereft.

[16:08] arynwyn: Emma: Have you...? <looking a little surprised and dismayed>

[16:10] Socks: Liam: Yes. *Ke'mari* do not believe in denying ourselves until some bizaare and unnecessary ritual has been completed. If God is indeed everywhere and knows what is in our hearts, then why do we need someone else to tell Him that we love one another. Does He not already know? <he shakes his head and turns back to her, but blinks at the look on her face> I have hurt you somehow...?

[16:11] arynwyn: Emma: <tries to smooth over her face> No, of course not. <smiles faintly but not really all that convincingly since he knows her so well>

[16:13] Socks: Liam: Please do not lie to me. <he pets her face> It bothers you, that I've been with other women? I did not love them. I never thought that I did. Nor did any of them love me.

[16:17] arynwyn: Emma: It's just a silly human thing. And even then, most men don't conform to it. <she sighs> Women are expect to save themselves for marriage. Men too, but they usually don't. I guess I was just hoping that this would be your first time too. <she shrugs> It's not important. It can't be changed so there's no point in being upset about it.

 [17:27] Socks: Liam: <he pets her hair and kisses her forehead> It is important if you say it is. But you are correct in that I cannot change it. You are the first woman I have loved, and I expect you will be the last and only.

[17:27] arynwyn: Emma: I'd better be. <smiles and kisses him gently>

[17:30] Socks: Liam: <kisses her back, hands wandering over her body again. He whispers> You are far more beautiful than any other woman I've ever seen <before he starts kissing down her body>

[Aaaand, we know how THAT goes. Time Passes; it is Spring now, and specifically, Ren & Fee’s wedding night.]

[14:29] Socks: Ren: <waves off the last well-wisher and shuts the door behind him, now that he and his lovely new bride are safely ensconced within. He leans with his back against the door, closes his eyes and heaves a sigh of relief. Without opening his eyes, he comments> Can I give you your cut later? I don't seem to have my purse on me, and Renne hasn't paid me yet anyway.

<For his marriage, Ren is wearing http://www.houseofanoria.com/Tunics1/Medieval\_WeddingGlen.jpg (including the shirt - though the tunic will be a similar color to whatever color dress Fee picks out. If she wore white, then he'll stick with the blue.) over his clean black breeches and boots, and actually pulled his hair back with a ribbon to match his tunic. He has, as is his custom, nursed the same goblet of wine all night>

((Ren and Renne made a bet as to whose "You may now kiss the bride" kiss would last longer. Ren told Fiona about it so she'd help him win it (whereas Renne didn't mention it to Cederic), and, of course, promised her a cut of his winnings. ...because, of course, they had to wager over SOMETHING at the wedding.))

[14:33] arynwyn: Fiona:<in http://www.livedirtcheap.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/medieval-wedding-dresses.jpg with her hair braided and twisted back. She goes to stand by the fire, feeling a little nervous> What's mine is yours. <she smiles faintly>

[14:35] Socks: Ren: <he smiles and opens his eyes again> That goes both ways, you know. <he walks over to her and rubs her shoulders> So now I have to ask your forgiveness.

[14:35] arynwyn: Fiona: <blinks> Forgiveness? <she looks a little dismayed> For what?

[14:37] Socks: Ren: I have been trying all day and all night - from the moment I first saw you today - to think of how to describe how incredibly beautiful you are, and I simply do not have words for it. <he leans in to kiss her cheek> I am so sorry. You deserve a much more eloquent husband, but you're stuck with me now.

[14:38] arynwyn: Fiona: Oh Ren... <she wraps her arms around his neck> If I had wanted an eloquent husband, I would have married a poet. <she smiles> Your blunt words mean much more to me than a flowery rhyme. <she kisses him gently>

 [14:40] Socks: Ren: <returns her kiss for a moment, then pulls away and says softly> I have a further confession to make, if you would be so good as to grant me absolution?

[14:41] arynwyn: Fiona: <she slips a hand in his, raising her eyebrows> What is it?

[14:45] Socks: Ren: I'm sure 'Renne's mentioned to you my trips with some of the other young noblemen. Out on the town, whoring and drinking and gambling. I have always portrayed myself as being a full participant in those trips, and I have to confess now that...that was pretty much all a lie. Except for the drinking, the first trip, anyway. <he winces at the memory> I have never been so sick in my LIFE. Ugh. And you know I don't gamble, except with 'Renne. As for the whoring, I...I just couldn't. Even if any of those women had been as beautiful as you are - and none of them were even close - none of them WERE you. <he sighs and runs a hand back over his hair> That may not seem like a terrible thing, but...I find myself entirely unprepared in the arts of pleasing a woman. I've sought advice, but...

 [14:47] arynwyn: Fiona: <she smiles and kisses him again> Then we are on equal footing. Ren, you don't have to do anything special. Just being with you, knowing you're my husband and I get to grow old and die with you is more than enough. I love you. <she nuzzles his neck>

[14:49] Socks: Ren: I love you too, Fee. I have for so many years now and I just want everything to be perfect for you. <he hugs her to him> Just know that...if I hurt you somehow, I swear I didn't mean to. And if I disappoint you, I beg you to allow me the chance to make it up to you.

[14:51] arynwyn: Fiona: You won't hurt or disappoint me. <snuggles against him> But you must be patient with me. For all my talk, I'm feeling rather shy about this whole thing. I've never been naked in the presence of a man. <clears her throat>

[14:51] Socks: Ren: Sure you have been. We all used to skinny dip together when we were children, remember? The pond at the north end? <grins>

 [14:52] arynwyn: Fiona: <laughs> I said *man*, not boy! <pokes him in the ribs>

[14:53] Socks: Ren: Yes, well, certainly a lot about you has...<ahem>...changed since then. <looking down at her ....dress. Yes. The fine embroidery on the bodice, that is clearly what he's looking at, and not her boobs. Uh-huh. Yes.>

[14:54] arynwyn: Fiona: <blushes deeply> You've changed a lot since then too. <smiles>

[14:58] Socks: Ren: I should hope so. <he rests his hands on her waist and slowly leans in to press his lips to her cheek softly. He drops kisses along her face and down to her neck> I remember...<he says between kisses>...the summer you showed up in that gold-and-green dress - I think you were 15? - and I was just...thunderstruck. <he straightens up to look in her eyes again> You were a *woman* and I still felt like a boy - a suddenly-uncomfortable-with-being-in-public boy, no less <he laughs lightly at himself>...I began to believe then that you were far beyond my star.

[15:00] arynwyn: Fiona: It was two summers before that that I decided I liked you more than a friend or brother. Remember when you and I and 'Renne snuck out to camp in the woods overnight? When we laid out and talked about the stars and when we woke up, I was snuggled against you? 'Renne never let me live that down.

[15:02] Socks: Ren: Yes, well, she wouldn't. <smirks quietly> And I just thought you were cold. Daft, stupid boy that I was then. <he kisses what he can of her shoulder, then starts to tug the fabric away so he can get at more skin> Promise me you won't pinch me; I'm half afraid I'm dreaming again now.

[15:03] arynwyn: Fiona: If you promise not to pinch me. <she reaches back to loosen the lace ties in the back of her dress>

[15:08] Socks: Ren: Deal. <he murmurs against her skin. He straightens up to undo his belt and pull off the tunic. He goes to sit on the edge of his bed to tug his boots off, giving her time to fiddle with lacings - but he doesn't strip any more than that for now. He lays back on the bed with a contented sigh> You know, I actually did think about marrying you before you were 15. When I was 10, 'Renne and I had it all planned out: I would marry you so that you would have to come live here and stay with us all the time, so you'd never have to leave. I ran to Father and said I had to marry you right away. He just laughed and patted me on the head and told me I had to wait a few years. <he laughs> 'Renne was so mad at being denied constant access to her best friend, she dumped extra pepper in the soup that night to get back at Father for it.

[15:09] arynwyn: Fiona: <laughs> Sounds like her. <she kicks off her slipper after she gets her dress loosened, then follows him over to the bed. She sits down next to him and looks down at her hands, nervous again>

[15:12] Socks: Ren: <sits up and kisses her shoulder again> I had no concept of marriage - or wedding nights, or love-making - at that point. We had just heard that when women were married, they went to live with their husbands. It would've been great to have you here all the time with us. And now the wish has come true...though 'Renne's going to Somerset. I seem to have swapped one woman in my life for another. <he grins> I think I've made quite a nice deal here. <kisses her cheek again>

 [15:12] arynwyn: Fiona: You'll miss her. Who else are you going to make wagers with? <she smiles and returns the kisses>

[15:13] Socks: Ren: We'll see her now and then for holidays, I'm sure. What do you say to winters by the seashore?

[15:14] arynwyn: Fiona: Sounds lovely. <she slips her hand in his and raises it to her lips to kiss> If you're not too busy running Farmington.

[15:15] Socks: Ren: Well, not for the next few years, at least. For now, all my attention can be on making you happy. <he slides his free hand along her cheek as he leans in to kiss her lips>

[15:16] arynwyn: Fiona: <returns the kiss, resting her other hand on his chest to feel his heartbeat>

[15:18] Socks: Ren: <his heart is beating faster than normal already. He kisses her more deeply as some of his restrained-for-politeness's-sake emotion starts to be released>

[15:19] arynwyn: Fiona: <as the kiss grows more passionate, her hand twists into his tunic and her body grows hot with desire>

[15:21] Socks: Ren: <works on shooing the loosened dress off of her, but slowly, in that "unwrapping the gift but wanting to save the paper" way>

[15:22] arynwyn: Fiona: <her blush returns as her skin is exposed, then wraps her arms around her chest as the dress falls to her waist, shy and very red>

[15:24] Socks: Ren: You have nothing to be embarassed about, Fee. You are...exquisite. <he kisses a bicep of her arm> Would it help if I were shirtless too? <smile>

[15:24] arynwyn: Fiona: <nods and tries to prise her arms away from her body>

[15:27] Socks: Ren: <pulls away from her to tug his shirt off. He's still wearing the wolf's tooth necklace, of course, even after all this time> There. Better? Hrm, how about this...<he crawls on hands and knees on the bed to get around behind her. He rubs her shoulders soothingly, shooing her hair out of the way, and kisses her bare back reverently. He rests one hand on her waist, just above where the dress leaves off, wanting to feel more of her skin>

[15:28] arynwyn: Fiona: <she leans back against him and drops her arms slowly. She turns her head and kisses his neck, closing her eyes> You always know how to make me feel better.

[15:31] Socks: Ren: It was either this or tickle you; I thought you might prefer this. <he says with a smile. He runs his hands up her sides slowly and, assuming she doesn't protest, slides them around to cup her breasts. He closes his eyes and kisses up her shoulder back to her neck, more passionately this time.>

[15:33] arynwyn: Fiona: <shivers and puts her hands over his on her breasts, not to stop him, just to try and feel what he feels> Yes, I much prefer this...

[15:36] Socks: Ren: <he lets his thumbs brush her nipples softly> Me too <he comments, with a lick at her throat. He pulls his legs out (he had been kneeling) to sit on the bed, pulling her back in against him>

[15:37] arynwyn: Fiona: <she snuggles back against him and closes her eyes> I'm keeping you from... from pleasure, I know. I'm sorry.

[15:41] Socks: Ren: What are you talking about? I'm enjoying myself quite a lot right now. <the half-mast in his pants agrees> I'm more concerned with your pleasure right now anyway, Fee. <he hesitates a moment, then starts a hand south, along her tummy and beneath the dress>

[15:44] arynwyn: Fiona: <she shivers again but doesn't tense up. She puts a hand up to press against his cheek> I'm just happy to be with you.

[15:46] Socks: Ren: Well, I'll just go to sleep then...<he teases quietly. He fumbles experimentally between her legs (atop her underwear) - I think most likely he's trying to figure out how to get IN her underwear but he might stumble across his goal this way anyway>

 [15:47] arynwyn: Fiona: <chuckles until his hand slips down between her legs, then she gasps softly as he brushes her sweet spot> Oh... Mmm...

[15:49] Socks: Ren: <blinks and does that again, since it got a good reaction. He tries it a bit more directly - not too hard, but that's more obviously "I meant to do this" instead of "Oops, sorry, was that your clitoris?">

 [15:50] arynwyn: Fiona: <her back arches a little bit and she sucks in a breath> What are you doing? <moans a bit> Whatever it is, don't stop...

[15:51] Socks: Ren: Apparently, I'm making my lovely new bride happy....which is all I've wanted, really. <he resumes kissing her neck in addition>

[15:53] arynwyn: Fiona: <leans back against him with more of her weight, losing herself in the pleasure. It doesn't take long for her to tense up and gasp again, her face flushing and chest heaving>

[15:57] Socks: Ren: <withdraws his hand to try and hugs her, dropping lighter kisses rather than the more passionate ones. He's definitely aroused now, watching and listening and feeling her get such happiness from him, but he's content for now to let her catch her breath>

[15:58] arynwyn: Fiona: <she squirms and turns around to wrap her arms around his neck and kiss him hard, pressing her bare chest against him>

[16:01] Socks: Ren: <his eyes drop closed as he kisses her, holding her to him tightly. He lets himself fall back and carries her with him, so she's sort of halfway atop him for now>

[16:02] arynwyn: Fiona: <as she lays down on top of him, her dress slips down over her ass and down to her knees, but she doesn't seem to care. She's aroused now and her shyness seems to have disappeared>

[16:04] Socks: Ren: <rolls them over so he's halfway atop her now, and kisses down her neck to a breast>

[16:05] arynwyn: Fiona: Mmm... <she slides her hands down his chest and to the top of his breeches, toying with them but not unlacing them>

[16:08] Socks: Ren: My beautiful, wonderful Fee...<he switches which breast is getting attention from his mouth> I love you so much.

 [16:10] arynwyn: Fiona: <she raises one hand to thread her fingers into his hair, closing her eyes> I love you too, Ren. More than I can say.

[16:11] Socks: Ren: You don't have to say more than "I love you". <he smiles and comments quietly> and maybe the occasional "yes, more" <grins>

[16:12] arynwyn: Fiona: <laughs and tugs him up by the chin to kiss him> Yes, more. I want more of you. <her other hand starts to unlace his breeches awkwardly>

[16:14] Socks: Ren: <he nuzzles her cheek> You're so perfect.

[16:15] arynwyn: Fiona: *You're* perfect. I'm the luckiest woman alive. <gets his breeches unlaced and pushes them down. Her cheeks redden suddenly as she gets bashful again>

[16:18] Socks: Ren: <blushing a little at her reaction, he kisses her again to hopefully distract her from her shyness. He slips his hand down between her legs again, betting that'll be a better distraction. This time, getting under her underwear (if she's still wearing it), he attempts Cederic's "finger" advice>

[16:20] arynwyn: Fiona: <pulls away to gasp in the middle of their kiss, her eyes flying open in surprise> What -- you -- <seems unable to form a complete sentence, she decides to just go with> Mmm... <her eyes fall closed again and she licks her lips>

[16:24] Socks: Ren: <kisses her neck again briefly and then tries to get her undies down with one hand, since his other is....occupied>

[16:25] arynwyn: Fiona: <reaches down to help him tug her undies off, then pulls him in for a deep kiss> I want you *Now*. <panting>

[16:29] Socks: Ren: <he slides a hand along her thigh, licks his lips a little nervously, then slides into her nervously with a soft moan>

[16:30] arynwyn: Fiona: <echos his moan and wraps her arms around his neck tightly> Oh God... <her back arches a bit>

[16:32] Socks: Ren: <encouraged, he begins to gently move, bending to kiss her briefly>

 [16:34] arynwyn: Fiona: <returns the kiss, then goes back to panting. Her hair comes loose from the braids and sticks to her sweaty face and neck. It doesn't take her long to gasp and moan and cling to him tightly, her nails digging into his skin>

 [16:37] Socks: Ren: <he's grateful for that, because he's been counting in his head in...whatever language he could remember at the time. French and Latin = ....Fratin? Lench? He stops counting and holding back as she clings to him, gasping for air. He has himself propped up on his arms over her and he stays there to smile down at her>

[16:38] arynwyn: Fiona: <it takes her a minute to open her eyes and when she sees him smiling at her, she blushes, but smiles back>

[16:40] Socks: Ren: <bends to kiss her when he has the breath to spare for it, then lets himself roll to one side, still facing her and still smiling>

[16:40] arynwyn: Fiona: <curls up against him and sighs happily> I love you.

[16:41] Socks: Ren: And I love you, Fee. <snuggles her in tightly>

 [16:42] arynwyn: Fiona: <yawns and kisses his neck> It's been a long day. Would it insult you very much if I slept for a while?

 [16:43] Socks: Ren: I was just going to ask you that. Besides, we have the rest of our lives together. <kiss kiss kiss> Sweet dreams, my lady wife. <beam>

 [16:46] arynwyn: Fiona: <nuzzles his neck and stays there, closing her eyes. It doesn't take her long to fall asleep, her breathing evening out and deepening>

[The Next Morning – with a different couple]

[20:42] arynwyn: Cederic: <so, it's late morning, the sun shines through the window and warms them as they lay in bed, snuggling. Finally, Cederic stretches and sits up on the edge of the bed, still naked. He rubs his hands over his face, trying to wake up. The sun glints on his back, but not his scars... they seemed to have disappeared>

[20:45] Socks: Renne: <rolls over and reaches towards him sleepily. She flails at him a moment, trying to get him back into bed, before she relents to necessity and opens her eyes> Augh...<wincing against the sunlight. She blinks her eyes open, trying to get them to adjust> ...get back here, 'm not done with you yet. <she protests, still half-awake; she doesn't sound like she's about to do much of ANYTHING other than fall back asleep next to him>

 [20:47] arynwyn: Cederic: You must forgive me for being mortal, Goddess... I need something to eat to replenish my energy before I'm able to ravage you again. <he grins over his shoulder at her>

 [20:49] Socks: Renne: Damnit, clouddweller... <she's taken to calling him that as a somewhat endearingly annoying petname>...who said anything about *you* ravaging *me* this ti...? <she sits straight up in bed and STARES at his back as her eyes finally adjust to the light> They're gone....?

 [20:50] arynwyn: Cederic: <standing up to find some clothes> Hm? What're gone?

[20:50] Socks: Renne: Pull out your wings. <she says instead>

 [20:51] arynwyn: Cederic: <turns around to look at her, brow arched. He stands there for about 30 seconds, looking over his shoulder, waiting for his wings to appear> What the -- ...??

[20:52] Socks: Renne: Your scars are gone. Is the pain still there? Are you...?

[20:54] arynwyn: Cederic: <he looks at her, baffled> No, there's no pain. <he grabs his sword and draws the blade across the palm of his hand. Blood oozes and drips and the wound doesn't heal. He goes wide-eyed>

[20:55] Socks: Renne: Stop that! <leaping out of bed when he draws his sword> What are you...? <she realizes what this means> ...Cederic? I think you actually *are* mortal now. <sort of wide-eyed in shock>

[20:57] arynwyn: Cederic: <he looks at her in amazement> I've... I've been forgiven!... <he grabs her, getting one of her arms bloody in the process, and kisses her hard> Do you know what this means? I will grow old with you, die with you! <he looks elated>

[20:57] Socks: Renne: I...I had honestly worried about that... <she admits>

[21:01] arynwyn: Cederic: <crushes her to him and spins her around, laughing happily> I can't believe this!

[21:03] Socks: Renne: <Laughs too, then comments> Let me bandage that hand and go sneak us some food. Mortals need that, you know. <grinning> But I'm still gonna call you clouddweller.

[21:04] arynwyn: Cederic: <kisses her hard - like, really hard and passionate, making Liam's kiss seem like a peck on the cheek>

[21:05] Socks: Renne: Mmf! <melts in his arms and sort of drapes herself up against him>

[21:06] arynwyn: Cederic: <lets her go, finally, smiling broadly> I love you.

[21:09] Socks: Renne: I love you too, clouddweller. <snuggling in and kissing his neck> Now where the hell did you toss my chemise last night? I have to have SOMETHING to wear to go get us food...