

Fanatical Publishing's

# Weekly Review

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Artist offering illustration commissions

Realize your story into visual reality.

I work in intricate, dynamic realism, but here is a link to my work as pictures speak for themselves:

<http://dreamliquor.deviantart.com/journal/open-for-commissions-340796955>

## ***Original Prose***

Original Literature is brought to you by [Lurk and his friends](#).

# ELENA

Anrisa

of [r.e.snitzer@live.com](mailto:r.e.snitzer@live.com) and <http://anrisa.deviantart.com/>

The woman drew the cloak around her face against the wind, hiding her features to any passerby. She traveled swiftly, avoiding eye contact with even those who's eyes rested on her longer than she wished. Her emerald eyes flashed as a hunted creature longing for the safety of its home. But she was unable to go home, for she was hunted.

Just days ago she had been sleeping in her own bed, with her own family. Her children had just gone to bed, and her husband, the man she had loved since she was but sixteen, was asking if she was going to stay up all night worrying. Tomorrow was her eldest's entrance exam to the University, the country's most prestigious magical school.

As a child, she had always wished she had enough magic to attempt for entry herself, but she was never good enough in her own right. She could only produce small splashes of magic, useful for basic everyday tasks. Which was fine in itself, but it never fulfilled her dreams of a better life. So this, this exam, was her one chance to make things better. If her children could be more magical than she....

Her eldest had always loved magic. He had played with the dancing sparks since his birth. So encouraging her to study hard so she could get into the University was nothing at all. She knew everything there was to know about anything magical related: what pendants and amulets could be spelled to be used for protection, which charms and incantations were to be said at the right times.

But, Elena was worried that wouldn't be enough. Having picked up a few things in teaching her eldest, she decided that a little extra luck would be in order.

She ignored her husbands question, and skimmed through the spell textbooks. A small smile crossed her lips as her index finger found a charm that could be placed on a coin for good luck. She scooped up the urn that contained all their spare changed and picked out the largest one. It was golden in color and had a crown on the front.

This will be perfect, she thought, placing the book open on her lap. Whispering the small spell, the coin flashed red and grew hot. She yelped and dropped it on the floor, and it left a small burn mark on the old wooden planks below her feet. Oh, that should be nothing, she reasoned, ignoring the scorch. She placed the coin on the desk next to her

and finally headed off to bed.

The smell of burning awoke her. At first she simply lay in her bed, thinking it was still a dream, but something began to worry her as she became more aware of the smell in the darkness. Sitting up, she went to the kitchen, pumping the faucet for a glass of iron-tasting water.

Out of the corner of her eye, a small spark of something drew her attention. She turned and gasped at the sight of a small pyre-sprite.

It said nothing to her, just giggled.

Suddenly, the kitchen was ablaze. Elena raced about, trying to put out the flames. She burst into tears, screaming for her family to wake up, but none of them moved.

*This is what happens when you get in over your head, Elena*, a voice in her head told her. But, it wasn't her own voice. It was darker, deeper. An invisible force slammed her against the wall and she cried out in pain and shock. She called for her children, screaming for them to awaken, but to no avail. She watched in shock as her whole life burned down before her eyes.

When the blaze was finished, she stood in the center of the ashes. Nothing was left. Everything she had ever worked for, and loved, was gone in a split second.

*Run, Elena. Run*, the voice told her again. She knew she must, for there was nothing left for her. Nothing in the world. Her family was dead. She was alone.

And, it was all her fault.

# THE GRAY WIDOW

Marina Boccuzzi

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Marina Boccuzzi was originally born in England but grew up in America. She has spent most of her youth and adult life in Rhode Island but moved to Los Angeles in 2005.

"The Grey Widow" is the first short story in the Lorelei series and is followed by a sequel called "The Lorelei Kiss." There is also a prequel called "The Reluctant Vampire" which is still being worked on. There will be more Lorelei stories in the near future.

Her writing style for these particular stories is historical horror mixed with Lovecraftian influences. She is also working on a science fiction children's story and also writes fanfiction as well as other short stories. And she is also part of the Odyssey II project on Deviant Art.

Her favorite writers are: Lynda Barry, Clive Barker, H.P. Lovecraft, Isaac Asimov, Bill Bryson, Ursula K LeGuin, Tolkien, Michael Ende, and Lewis Carroll.

This story is set in the 1920's. I have a sequel to this and a prequel set in 1891.

(For Howell Golson III)

*I know that I might not be alive when the sun comes up.  
She's waiting for me in her house of death. I have my weapons, but I know they will only  
work so far.*

*She has caused great misery for my best friend, Jonathon.  
I know what she did to him.  
I know she is very old...*

*I must explain myself from the beginning. I will try to tell the entire story even though I  
was not involved and did not witness all of the circumstances.*

It began with a beautiful autumn night. The town of Rum Point was unusually festive. Normally, it was a quiet town. The majority of the crowd was outside the Belonna Museum located in the center of the main square, waiting to get in. The proprietor of the museum, the very rich and eccentric businessman, Alfred Sparks, was also an accomplished traveler. He claimed to have traveled to all countries, save Antarctica and

the Arctic pole.

Alfred was fascinated by the macabre, especially in art. Pieces that he had purchased from around the world brought in people from hundreds of miles away. The museum showcased everything from Egyptian mummies to the strange works of Jurgen Borenign, whose works of art on canvas brought murderous rampages to mind.

This night was Jonathon's. His most exquisite paintings were displayed in the main rooms of the museum. His works were a combination of dark, lush overtones with enigmatic meanings laced in the landscapes or in the expressions of the characters he painted. It was as if the paintings were fragments of dreams half forgotten.

The visitors in the museum were a mixture of the wealthy and the Bohemian. They all crowded to get a closer look at Jonathon's paintings. A murmuring ripple of appreciation pervaded the crowd as they trailed past his works. Some were staring intensely as if they were trying to memorize every last detail of a canvas.

I was next to my friend, holding a glass of champagne. Jonathon was about to make a toast when his voice trailed off in mid-sentence. I saw her as well. She was in front of his most famous painting, "Flight of the Demons," which depicted a beautiful young lady floating above a pack of monstrous beings in a dimly lit cave.

I would have lied if I said she wasn't beautiful. She was exquisite, although rather tragic looking, with pale, almost translucent skin. Her form was slight, which gave her the appearance of frailty. But what was most alluring was the color of her hair, gray, as an old lady. She was almost ethereal. I saw that Jonathon couldn't look away, neither could I for that matter.

She glided quickly down the stairs and appeared before us wrapped in green finery. Her pale throat glittered with a silver locket. She smiled at us but her beautiful dark blue eyes lingered on Jonathon. She extended her hand to him and said softly, "I am most honored to meet you, Mr. Noble."

I looked at Jonathon who seemed to have been rendered speechless by her gaze.

"Yes, a pleasure," he recovered quickly and smiled.

She took a step closer, and I decided to take a few steps backward to the makeshift bar



located to the right of the main room.

Alfred was already drinking another martini when I sat down next to him. I knew this because even though one drink remained in his hand; there were toothpicks from former olives strewn haphazardly before him.

“Quite a lovely lady,” he mused aloud.

“Um? Oh yes,” I said as I waved to the bartender. I quickly ordered my drink and turned to Alfred.

“Do you know her name?” I asked.

The old man closed his eyes for a second. “Oh yes, Katrianna Sainsbury, widow of the late Captain Walker who died at sea. They never found him.”

“Sorry?”

“What I mean to say is that they never found the body.”

“Oh right,” I downed half my drink in a single gulp.

“Mrs. Sainsbury’s family has owned the house for generations, although she has only recently moved here. You know, that house on the cliffs with the turret and all those caves at the bottom?”

“Yes. I never see her,” I added.

”She is rather a recluse. Not much is known about her family except they are very rich.” He giggled into his glass.

“Say sonny,” he said unexpectedly, as if determined to change the subject,” did I ever tell you about the time I went to Japan and actually met a Geisha girl?”

“No.” I looked at Katrianna and Jonathon.

They seemed to have drawn even closer together. I felt a pang of jealousy. Why him and not me? I shook my head out of my reverie and scolded myself for being selfish. Jonathon deserved this. I ordered another drink to celebrate this realization and listened to Alfred’s embellished tale of a Geisha girl and her elaborate tea ceremonies for the rest of the night.

---

It is not my intention to risk boring you with the romantic details of Jonathon and

Katrianna's courtship, except to tell you that they seemed to be the perfect match. His charisma and her shy intensity bounced off each other, igniting unseen sparks. She was irradiant, kind and gracious. In the winter months that followed, many times I would be invited to partake in luncheons and frequent trips to museums or bookstores. Katrianna was well read, knew many languages and delighted me with her grasp of the Classics. She professed to me that reading was one of her passions, equaled only by her love of traveling.

The decision to settle in the old family estate and marry her now late husband had been a difficult one. Because it had been over five years since her husband's death, she would talk freely about her Captain Walker and admitted that she would always love him, but I could see that she was falling in love with Jonathon and he with her.

It was therefore no surprise to me when one day at a luncheon they announced they planned to marry in late spring. They looked so happy that I embraced them both at the same time and toasted them in the course of becoming exceedingly intoxicated. These were happy times indeed, and gave no intimation of the tragedies to come.

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In all the months that I knew Katrianna, I had only seen the outside of the house, having never been invited inside, and I was naturally curious to know what her home looked like.

I knocked on the front door, which quickly opened to a happy yet tired-looking Jonathon. We embraced, and he quickly ushered me in. It was rather dark inside and Jonathon decided to give me a tour of the rooms.

The main room was nicely appointed with a staircase that went up on either side to the second floor like an arch. There was a fireplace in the space between the stairs and a few comfortable sofas. The rest of the main room was littered with tables and bookcases. Then, he showed me the library to the right of the main room, which was clearly Katrianna's favorite.

Filled bookcases lined the walls and comfortable chairs and little tables were carefully placed in the corners of the room, positioned so that one felt to be in an actual public library.

To the left of the main hall was a large kitchen with plenty of

windows which made the room more cheerful than any I had seen so far. The room was filled with people cooking and preparing a beautiful array of food. The next room was the dining room with a long rectangular piece of oak for a table, covered with wine-colored linen and vases overflowing with Dahlias. The chairs were also oak and had ornate brocading on the backs.

I walked upstairs with Jonathon who explained to me that Katrianna was getting dressed in her bedroom so we could not go there yet. Then he showed me the other three bedrooms, which were tasteful, yet sparse, with a bed and one dresser in each room, yet there was always an overflowing bookcase.

Lastly, he took me to his painting studio, which was the turret. The windows were beautifully stained a rich green. This room was my favorite. Nearly every inch of the floor was covered with easels, holding variously sized paintings in different stages of landscapes or portraits of some whimsical beast that he dreamed in the night. The walls were covered with excellent reproductions of the works of Boccaccio, Bernardino, and some Parrish, who is rather famous nowadays, and rightly so.

“What a beautiful house,” I said. I was so happy for Jonathon. I turned to look at him but strangely, he didn’t reply. He was standing looking at a sketch. The drawing looked like a sea creature, part -human, part- fish. It was a rather evil looking picture.

“I’m having a lot of nightmares,” he rubbed his head absent-mindedly.

“And look what it brought out.” I tried to laugh good-naturedly and pointed to his creation.

He laughed when he saw it and shook his head.

“Let’s go downstairs.” As we withdrew from the room, Jonathon took a last look back at the eerie creature before he firmly closed the door.

The wedding ceremony took place outside the house. It was a perfect day even though the breeze from the sea made it slightly cold. The house had a splendid view of the ocean. The back yard was spacious with apple trees and willows, which grew precariously close to the cliffs.

The wedding was very small and only fifteen guests were invited, one of them being, to my surprise and delight, Alfred. Not one of these guests was Katrianna’s family, and I felt sorry for her that they couldn’t be here on this happy occasion, although if she shared my

sentiment, she did well not to show it. Alfred sat next to me and snored while Reverend Albright, the local minister, gave the vows.

Jonathon and Katrianna smiled at each other as they exchanged rings and the priest announced in a whisper that they were now married. The guests applauded as the happy couple embraced and kissed. The commotion woke up Alfred who then stood and clapped vigorously, pretending to have witnessed the whole thing.

The wedding banquet was elaborate and included many different types of meat: duck, filet, and ham, and others that I could only identify as fish, meat, or fowl. There were golden potatoes in chive butter and vegetables in cream sauce. There were several different wines, and I tasted every single one. Once the main dinner concluded, the plates were taken away by quiet servants who disappeared back into the kitchen. Next, the wedding cake was brought out, an elaborate two-tiered cake with plum colored flowers on top.

The bridal couple stood, and together cut the cake. Everyone clinked their glasses, and they kissed once more. The servants returned with dishes of ice cream and fruit to complement the cake, which was a simple white cake with delicious raspberry filling. I found that I could not eat anymore and gave the dessert to Alfred, who smiled gratefully, as he shoveled another spoonful of raspberry soaked cake into his mouth.

After the dessert, our champagne glasses were filled again, and I stood up and gave my little speech which I had regretfully only wrote the night before. Everyone giggled, especially when I stumbled over the words, but I saw that Jonathon and Katrianna were pleased. They looked so happy that I felt a pang in my heart. I sat down quickly after my speech and turned to Alfred who was engaging in another glass of champagne. He smiled at me and belched loudly.

“The rich have no respect.” I muttered jokingly to him.

He whispered, “I love a good wedding, free booze!”

Most of the wedding guests left by midnight. Only Alfred, Jonathon, Katrianna and I remained. By this time, Alfred and I were uproariously drunk, and sat by the fire drinking shots of Jonathon’s licorice brandy from a crystal decanter, all attempts at ceremony were now happily abandoned. I looked around and realized that Katrianna and Jonathon had disappeared. I knew it was my cue to leave and nudged Mr. Sparks to hurry with his drink and he gulped the fiery brandy in one swig. We then both stood up and headed for the door.

“Goodnight sweet couple!” roared Alfred.

I giggled and clutched the railing of the stairs as I headed for the door. Then I heard a strange sound. Alfred had already walked out the door, but I heard the strange noise again and decided to investigate. I slowly climbed the stairs aware that what I was doing was wrong; perhaps I would intrude on their lovemaking. But that sound, that almost inhuman sound. I’ll never forget it.

The sound came from the second door to the right; and the door was shut. I did not want to open it, but looked through the keyhole just for a second. I felt shame wash over me, but it soon ceased.

Jonathon was lying on the bed with Katrianna on top of him. Both were fully clothed. His unfocused eyes were open and seemed to be staring at the wall. Her head was bent close to him, almost kissing him. But she was breathing in. She seemed to be breathing him in like those tales of the cats in the baby’s cribs. She stopped and turned her head to the door. Her eyes looked at my one eye peering through the keyhole. I flinched and went downstairs quietly and out the door.

I must have been seeing things. I ran to catch up with Alfred, his shambling gait allowed me to make quick work of it even in my drunken condition. I told him what I saw.

“Maybe it’s one of those new sexual customs brought from Europe. They do some strange things!” he laughed it off, and I did too.

“Go home, William, you’re drunk.” he laughed.

“So are you, Alfred!” I retorted as I ambled my way back to my small house.

I did not think about that strange incident until exactly one month after Katrianna and Jonathon came back from their honeymoon. I sat at my desk reading Yeats, when I heard a knock on my front door. When I opened it, I gasped. It was Jonathon, but he must have lost over twenty pounds! He looked as if he had not slept in days.

“My friend,” he murmured and embraced me. I hastened him into my home.

“Dear God, Jon, what did you do on your honeymoon?” I joked.

“I’m sorry, I haven’t slept well lately, and I’ve been having nightmares.” William said softly.

He and I sat in my sparse living room, and I poured us each a glass of port.

“I have to tell you, William,” he leaned forward in his seat, and nearly spilled his drink. “I haven’t had any time to paint. I have been with Katrianna night and day.”

I laughed. “Well, that’s a honeymoon. What’s your problem?”

“No, no see, I mean there is no space. It’s as if she can’t bear to be out of my sight. Ever.”

“That doesn’t sound so bad, chap. I am sure she will loosen her grip in time.”

Jonathon stared into the deep red liquid in his glass, as though it were an abyss.

“That’s not all. Her independence and her craving for adventure are gone. Do you want to know what we did on our honeymoon?”

I cocked my head “Um, perhaps...”

“We stayed in our rooms in the hotel with the blinds shut, and she asked me if I loved her over and over again. What is the matter with me?” Jonathon’s eyes were bleary.

“Perhaps she is thinking of her late husband. Perhaps she’s afraid that if she lets you go for even an hour or two, you’ll never return,” I surmised.

“Maybe,” he shook his head. “I feel so clear headed when I’m out of that house. It’s a strange house. Did you know that there is a basement that has secret passageways, and some lead to caves on the beach? Pirates used to use those caves. I’ve been in some, but I’m afraid of getting lost. It’s bigger on the inside than it seems...” he trailed off.

“Do you know how old the house is?” I asked.

“I think mid 1800s. I looked quickly at the plans at city hall this morning before I came to see you. There was none of the new house. I mean, I found another house but the plans were different. It’s like it’s always been there. I also asked around, and no one remembers any of that family. It’s a big mystery. I keep hearing that her family comes from Europe and they bought the house in the mid 1800s as I said, but why doesn’t any one know her family? I don’t know, I only saw the plans. I did not look up anything else. I just don’t know what to think.” He sighed and rubbed his temples.

“Maybe you’re thinking too hard.” I said.

I didn't want to tell him about what I saw.

Jonathon looked at me, then. "This is a rather strange question. But I know you're good at finding things, and I can't leave her alone too long. I was wondering if you could finish the job for me. Do you think you could also research her name? Dig around? Maybe if I knew a little more. Perhaps there's a medical condition."

"Did you at least ask her about her family?"

"I tried but I get the feeling that she was estranged from them. Will you help me?" he pleaded.

"Yes." My voice did not falter.

He relaxed then. "Good, I feel better. I'm sure that this is all nothing. I have just been having queer dreams lately and I just want Katrianna back the way she was before we married."

"Many a good man has wished the same after the blessed day," I joked, hoping to alleviate his dark mood.

"I must leave now," Jonathon stood up, hugged me, then quickly left.

Was my friend going mad?

I decided to pay Alfred a visit before I went to the city hall. I was sure he knew a little history. Mr. Spark's house was as big as the Sainsbury estate except that his was built recently and had a rather nice garden in the front, well attended with many rose bushes. When I knocked on his front door, he answered himself. His faded blue eyes lit up when he saw me.

"Come in, come in, old boy." He said.

I followed him into the spacious main room where a fire was dying out. Alfred poured a whiskey from a large flask and handed a glass to me. He sat in a large leather overstuffed chair next to the fire, and I sat on the other chair opposite. I hesitantly took a sip of the drink.

"I have a rather odd favor to ask," I began quickly outlining the details Jonathon gave to me. When I finished, Alfred sat for a moment with his eyes closed before opening them.

“Well, from what I know, a house has always been on that property, but I believe that the Salisbury house is the second house,” he mused.

“What happened to the first one?”

“I believe that pirates, raiding the coasts in the late 1700s, used the first house. Then, it burned down. Also, I think the original owner had created passageways to the caves, which the pirates later used to store their booty. Then, I think about the mid 1800s, another house was built.”

“Perhaps that’s why they never updated the plans,” I interjected.

“Could be, but they say that house has always been haunted and shunned. Some of those caves go on for miles.” Alfred paused to drain his whiskey and continued. “As far as Katrianna’s name, you could also look up the death and birth certificates at the town hall as well as looking at the floor plans...”

“Jonathon says no one has ever known her family.”

“Well, perhaps it is because most of the Sainsburys remained in England,” he retorted.

I stood up. “Well, that’s a start.”

Alfred stood up as well. “I hope Jonathon feels better... reminds me of the Mara...”

“The what?”

“Oh, nothing,” he laughed as he showed me to the door.

“Best of luck,” he said as he waved goodbye before shutting the door firmly. I sighed and trudged into town.

---

I found the gentleman, a Mr. Blackwood, at the City Hall, to be most informative. He had



recalled helping my friend. But he remarked that Jonathon looked unwell and had not stayed for more than ten minutes before he left rather abruptly.

He took great pains to show me the architectural drawings, and I could see that the floor plans of the original house were slightly smaller than that of the new house. The gentleman told me that the house was built in 1785, by Elijah James, a master craftsman. He was also the person who created the secret passageways under the house. Then, in 1803, a band of pirates overran the town, killed the James family as they slept, and took on the house for exactly one year, creating a trade of stolen goods off the coasts of these shores. They renamed the town Rum Point, which has not changed to this day.

Most of the town folk had moved out by then or were threatened or murdered. Some stayed and waited for the right time to strike back. In 1804, another band of pirates tried to take the town away from the original pirates and the pirate leader was killed. As the battle waged on between the two pirate clans on the lonely cliffs, the rest of the able-bodied village men who hadn't run away decided to finally take matters into their own hands. They set fire to the house, thus killing the other pirate leader, and disbanded his followers, who either ran away or were killed by the town folk.

Then Mr. Leo Sainsbury built the new house directly on top of the old foundation for his new bride in 1852 when they arrived on the shores of America. I asked Mr. Blackwood why another plan of the house wasn't drawn up. He looked ashamed for a moment but then stated, "I know someone really should have, but everyone thought it was haunted."

He then showed me the birth and death records of the Sainsburys. There were seven children. I quickly looked through the names and gasped at one. Katrianna Sainsbury, *born 1859 died 1860!*

I could not find any more information, so I thanked the eccentric but helpful gentleman, and set off for the local library. The head librarian kindly told me that she had kept some of the papers of the late owners of the house. She said they were given to the library many years ago. She also let me look at the old diary of Mrs. Sainsbury. I quickly perused the brittle pages, reading only normal household occurrences until I read a passage about a young servant girl who came knocking on the door looking for work:

*"She was about eighteen, quiet with unbecoming dark gray hair that made her appear as a witch. The funny thing was that she seemed to know her way about the house as if she had been there before. She was eventually dismissed for neglecting her duties. She was known to go to the basement for long periods of time. It is known that a previous house was built there and had passages to the caves below the cliffs."*

From what I gathered they had all died within a month of each other after the strange girl left. They seemed to die of some wasting disease prevalent around that time. Institutions at the time were filled with people afflicted by tuberculosis and other respiratory diseases.

I could hardly believe what I was reading. It couldn't be Jonathon's Katrianna! To be sure, there could be another Katrianna Sainsbury but this tale of the servant girl from over fifty years ago was too eerie to be a mere coincidence. Did they have a name for her? I quickly scanned the pages. One sentence stood out among the rest.

*"I have dreamt that Lorelei, Demon of the Sea, has come back."* My blood ran cold.

I pounded on the door of Alfred's house until the old man answered in gown and slippers. Apparently, he liked to take naps in the afternoon.

"What's all the commotion?" he asked crossly. I quickly told him what I had found out.

"Very strange," he said.

"Remember you said something about the Mara?"

Alfred shrugged. "It's just a tale of a beautiful woman who takes men to bed and starves them of life while she grows rosier every day. Why?"

"Have you seen Katrianna lately?" I asked.

Alfred raised his eyebrows in mock horror. "No,"

"Maybe I should pay her a visit." I said, annoyed that he wasn't taking me seriously. I started to turn away when Alfred grabbed my arm.

"William, I have to show you something." His voice was soft and I turned to look as he took out a small women's pocket mirror from an oak desk nearby.

"I've seen a lot of strange things in my life, and I've learned a few things. I will bless this mirror in the rays of the full moon, which will occur in a few days. I have to say a few special words too, learned them from a gypsy woman in Romania..." Alfred sighed and shook his head.

“And then what happens?” I asked, suddenly filled with a potent mix of curiosity and dread.

“Well, you hold it up where she reflects in the glass and if she looks like a demon from hell then we know Jonathon’s in trouble!” he smiled foolishly.

“And if not?”

“Well, then obviously either Jonathon’s working too hard or maybe he needs a new wife.” Alfred snapped.

“This is ridiculous!” I muttered.

“Of course it is.” Alfred agreed. “But you’re the one who wants to know if she’s some type of evil spirit. I’m just doing this so you can get that nonsense out of your head.”

Five days later at exactly eight p.m., Alfred and I stood in front of the Nobles’ door. I knocked loudly. It took a full five minutes before Katrianna appeared. It was obvious that I saw a moment of displeasure cross her face, but she quickly covered it with a beautiful smile.

We walked into the main room, and saw Jonathon lying on the couch looking pale as death. Katrianna stood behind the sofa and stroked Jonathon’s head.

“I don’t know what’s the matter with him,” she said softly. “The doctor has seen him. He cannot find what is wrong with him.”

I peered hard at her. She did seem to have very rosy cheeks and her eyes were very bright. I looked at Jonathon who was sleeping soundly, his pale face even more wasted away than a few days ago. I saw Alfred fiddling in his pocket. Katrianna turned to the bookcase and absently dusted the shelves with a cloth, as if dismissing us.

Alfred took the mirror from his pocket and gave it to me to hold. I held it out in front of me while he peered in the glass. He suppressed a gasp.

I looked at him and gave him the mirror, which he held up while his hands shook. I peered through and suppressed a shudder. What was she?

“What is the matter?” she turned around while Alfred still had the mirror held out and it captured her true face. Dear lord! That face! She had slimy blue-green skin and hair that cascaded like snakes around her face. She was the Medusa of the Sea!

“Lorelei?” I whispered.

The face in the mirror smiled revealing two rows of large teeth. I quickly looked at Katrianna who still appeared normal. She did not say anything but backed away and ran into the kitchen. I lunged after her but Alfred held my arm.

“Wait” he fished a silver dagger out of his pocket.

“Silver works best.”

“She’s from the sea you know,” whispered Jonathon.

Alfred and I both knelt down to hear Jonathon’s words.

“Before I became too weak, I followed her. I know where she hides.”

He whispered the directions in my ear before he fell back into an unconscious state.

“Also, take this with you,” said Alfred as he nudged me.

I looked at him with the revolver in his hand.

“Aren’t you coming?”

“Why the hell would I?” he shouted, putting the gun in my palm.

“I’m an old man; you are young. Take care of this, Mr. Barker.” He looked at Jonathon. “I’ll try to help your friend.”

I quickly turned around and ran through the kitchen. The door to the basement was on the left, and I quietly opened it. I grabbed a candle from the kitchen, lighting it before I went down the stairs. The basement was large. I held the candle at arm’s length before me, and moved it back and forth so it shone in every direction. I didn’t want to be caught unaware. I saw a puddle of slime that ended at a small alcove near the stairs of the basement. So she was in there. I pressed the panel, which looked like a door. It slid easily and revealed a dark recess. I had to go in there! I held out the candle again and my hand trembled as I gripped the revolver.

The passageway was long with many turns. Rats were everywhere. Sometimes I heard heavy breathing ahead of me, but I could not be certain if it was Katrianna. The

passageway was getting narrower and wetter. This must lead to the network of caves that littered below the point. I made a right, then a left, then a right again as Jonathon instructed.

There were worn steps leading down into a room, which eerily glowed blue and purple. Finally reaching the bottom, I saw that there were crystal formations glowing from the rough ceiling. There were also several caverns leading off into the darkness. But I did not pay attention to them. I saw Katrianna in the center of the large room.

She was kneeling away from me breathing heavily. I took a step closer.

“I am not dead!” She turned around and her eyes were black.

I shot her once in the shoulder. She flinched but stood up.

“I am not dead,” she repeated.

I shot her again, this time in the forehead. The wound did not shed blood and she did not fall. I took out the knife as she closed in on me, stabbing the harpy in the heart. She put her arms around me and brought me close to her once beautiful face.

She whispered, “I am not dead.”

She breathed her last in my arms, her dying breath cold on my face and in my mouth. I let her go and when she hit the ground, she turned to dust.

“How could this be? “ I thought.

I let out a sob and slowly turned around and trudged the weary paths back to the light of the house. When I finally came to the main room, I found that I was too late.

Alfred looked up at me and shook his head, as he lowered the lids of Jonathon’s obviously dead eyes.

All had been in vain! I collapsed into tears as Alfred patted my back, and offered whispered words of consolation. Wise as they were, they offered no solace. I had lost the best friend that I had ever had.

It was autumn again. The local physicians listed Jonathon’s death as a particularly acute case of TB, although Alfred and I knew better. We had told the authorities that Katrianna disappeared into the caverns. A full search of the grounds yielded nothing of the mysterious woman, although the skeleton of the late Captain was found with his medals and uniform rusted and tattered, but still clearly identifiable. The authorities sent information to the English police and inquiries were made into the Sainsbury family.

They found that there never was a Katrianna Sainsbury except on American soil, and she died after her first birthday, just as the records had stated.

The authorities also found another copy of the deed to the house in a desk in Katrianna's library. The one that Katrianna/Lorelei had was an elaborate fake. The house legally belonged to the British Sainsburys, but they wanted nothing of it so the house has been for sale for the past few months.

As of late, no one has bought it. Perhaps Lorelei belonged to that place even before either house was built. I can only imagine her creeping about night after night from the white beaches, and into the caves that were her home.

*William's diary*

Oct 1

*I am having nightmares. I feel her cold breath inside me, her breathing filling my body and invading my soul. I feel hollow. I keep thinking of that house.*

Oct 5

*I keep awakening screaming. Lorelei appears to me all the time in my dreams saying, "I am not dead." Am I going mad? I cannot work. I cannot eat.*

Oct. 12

*The doctor says I am better, and I can go back to teaching at the school. It's been days since I've had those awful dreams.*

Oct 23

*I am starting to have very different dreams now. They are beautiful and full of oceans and watery secrets. I see beautiful beings. I wake up and write about them in my journal.*

Oct. 29

*I have found out that Jonathon left me everything in his will. All of his funds were originally to go to Katrianna but since she was gone, I was the one who received it. I feel that I should buy the house. I don't know why, but I think I can be happy there. I will fix it up and write my memoirs in the turret. I now go to bed looking forward to dreaming.*

Nov. 15

*I feel strangely at peace in this house. The price was decent and the furniture and books were included. It is so beautiful! I have much to do to make it perfect!*

Dec. 3

*I am all done!*

*The house is perfect.*

*Tonight, Alfred is coming to visit me. I hope that he likes what I have done to the house. I especially hope he will love the basement and what I have done for my very special secret place...*

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# SOUL GAME

Owlpocket

<http://owlpocket.deviantart.com>

This is Soul Game part 2!

Check us out on Deviantart, OwlPocket

Enjoy

The breaths got harder and harder. The oxygen wouldn't transfer to my lungs, helping my chest raise. I ran, as fast as I could, though I don't know where to. I was running towards nowhere, just to feel alive again.

I came closer to the barrier and I had to slow down. I looked right ahead of me as I tried to catch my breath. This pain, it feels the same, it appears the same... yet it's nothing like reality. They did a good job copying it. I turned and ran again. I heard cheers. As I ran, the closer it got.

'Orion! Oriooooon!' a low pitched voice started talking. I looked at the arena at my left, the lights were almost blinding.

My body reacted to the electric waves, and my suit gave of a shimmer of it's own. I noticed it and pulled the cloth a bit. This body of mine were starting to become one with the game... I'm turning into pixels. It isn't unusual, but it wouldn't happen before. They just gave me a temporary body to live in until they'd "fixed" mine. So to speak... my "avatar" was a bit different, customized to not let me get killed that easily. Not letting anyone destroy me, because that would also mean the end of the real me.

That day, 3 years ago changed my life. I was just as any ordinary girl, nothing special, average grades, normal friends etc. The only thing that differed me from the rest of my classmates was my poor health condition. It wasn't anything noticeable. I participated in different kind of activities, living a normal life. Until one day when my heart stopped collaborate with my body, and I had to spend my days in a hospital.

They told me that my body wouldn't make it in that state, it took too much energy keeping me awake. So they put me in this world. I've been here for so long now... I thought, reviewing my life for some reason.

"They said I'd be here till they'd gotten control of the situation... But hasn't it been a long time now?" I whispered out loud.

This game-world was really big, but I had already reached another end of it.

My breaths were still hard when I looked at the "wall".

"I can't pass this..." I said and turned around. I walked into the city again.



Everything were so familiar, it scared me. I had been here for so long that I'd remember every corner of this made up city. I was becoming a part of it.

My steps brought me back to the tall towers, into the dark city... "hasn't it been too long..?" I said out loud. I had already been here for so long, weren't my body alright soon? It scared me. That this world started to make more sense than the real. I had started to blend in too well. The fact that I knew almost every corner, the fact that my "body" started to act strange, and the fact that it has been to long... I froze. Did this mean... were my real life body dead already..? with my consciousness trapped in this virtual reality?

"no way..." I looked at my hand. "that can't be the case..." though my mind couldn't let it go.

This world... started to seem more like reality, the graphic, the voices, even the pain were the same. Had I become an NPC? No, no. They would give me a notice right?

I'd rather die than live forever in a world dark like this... The fear grew into my body, impregnated in every pixel.

I tried to ignore it, but it lingered in my head.

I had gotten to the center of the city, my head hadn't let the mortifying thought slip even for a slight second, "eating me alive." I heard cheers again, from the arena. I took out and looked at my disk. I had never been able to use this, I never needed to.

I looked at the big building, the game- arena was the only place I hadn't been in. I had only heard the cheers, the deep voice the effects of the games...

This was the only thing that kept me from believing that this wasn't fiction. One of the spotlights that looked like white jets that pierced the sky hit me and it felt like my eyes burned for a moment. I hid my face with my hand with leather gloves.

"...haha! sure! like that'll ever happen!"

"I do think so, why wouldn't he?"

"isn't he a rookie?"

"he has talent, right?"

"Orion might be good, but I doubt he would win a match against Jessica!"

"shut it, she seems like a total bitch"

they continued talking. It wasn't the first time that I'd heard about Orion, he seemed to be a big-shot here now. After that conversation, I started hearing more and more about him. Finally, I saw a picture of him. "...that's Orion..?" I said out loud to myself. I expected something else, completely else... His skyblue eyes seemed like they calmly pierced through anything, and his blonde hair matched them very well.

"hey, Orion didn't appear as scheduled... I wonder what happened"

"probably busy"

"what are you talking about, he's famous, this is his job now"

"he still has a life"

"ah that's right, what you seem to be missing"

People started to become so rude nowadays, is this a side effect from the electric waves?

Some of them started to piss me off, and I always thought about acting rude towards them too.

Still, he didn't show up? How sly of that Orion.

Somehow I had expected to hear about his match, what a letdown.

# One Shattered Ornament

By Elizabeth Eike

of [eaieke00@hotmail.com](mailto:eaieke00@hotmail.com)

I live in Tennessee. My house is small and cramped, but you needn't know about *that*. Just yesterday, I was in my Aunt Christy's large house, most nearly alone. I'll tell you about it.

On December 17(a week from Christmas Eve), while I was decorating my Christmas tree, Aunt Christy gave me a call. She said that she forgot to buy Christmas presents, and she and Uncle Jake need to shop all that day and the next out of town in order to catch up. She asked me to come over and house-sit while she was gone. I was so excited! Aunt Christy's house was so much like a maze; I couldn't remember what all the rooms looked like!

I rushed to the mirror in my room to make myself ready. I took off my sweat pants and slipped on some freshly – washed dark blue jeans. I changed from my “Ho ho ho!” T-shirt I got for Christmas last year to my navy blue turtleneck. I brushed my short, dark brown hair and put it back in pigtails. Then, to top it all off, I put on a hat that matched the color of the turtleneck.

I gave myself a quick smile in the mirror, and then hurried off to my sparkling new, spring green convertible. I drove to the airport and flew two hours to the Rocky Mountains in Colorado, which is where Aunt Christy lives. Then I got in a taxi and rode to her house.

When I stepped out of the bright yellow cab, Aunt Christy hurried out of the house.

“Thank you so much for coming,” she panted. “Here's your list of chores to do and the keys to the house. I can't talk much, I have to go.”

Uncle Jake came out of the house putting his wallet in his pocket and carrying Aunt Christy's green purse. They hopped into their red car and drove away.

I walked into the house, took off my coat, and looked at my list. The first thing read:

## Set up tree

I figured that meant, “Set up *Christmas* tree”, so I put my coat back on and headed for the door to cut down a tree when I heard a CRASH! “Ow! Stay there if you want to!” coming from the attic.

I threw off my coat again, ran up the stairs, and swung open the door to the attic. There, a girl quickly turned around and looked at me with big, shining blue eyes. She smiled.

“Oh, hello. You must be Hannah,” she said.

I was dumbfounded. How did she know my name?

The girl, seeing my astonished look, laughed and said, “Mother told me that you

were coming to care for the house. She said that I was too young to do it by myself, being only 9 and all, and that you were in your teens. Oh, I'm sorry, she must not have mentioned me," she laughed. "I'm Jane," the girl introduced herself, trying to curtsy but instead tripped over her tight skirt. So this was Cousin Jane.

I examined Jane for a moment. She was wearing a hot pink tight skirt and a light pink T-shirt. Around her neck hung a pearl necklace, and I could just glimpse a pair of glossy pearl earrings behind her curly, medium length, dark blonde hair.

Finally, I spoke. "Uh, should we go cut down the tree?"

"Oh, the tree. I was just trying to find it... Oh! There it is!" Jane said, pulling out a long, white box with large, bold, dark blue letters that said:

## CHRISTMAS TREE

I was astonished. How could a Christmas tree fit in a box?

Jane looked up and saw my confused look. She laughed again and said, "She must not have told you. Mother uses a fake tree."

A fake tree? I had never heard of a fake tree.

Jane laughed again and showed me. She opened the box, and in it was a great mass of fake evergreen branches. She dumped them all out and looked at a hook-like end of each branch. On each was a colored tag. Each color was on a different sized branch. Jane sorted them out by color, and then started to set up the tree when she stopped.

"Oops!" she cried. "The tree goes in the *family room*. We're in the *attic*."

I laughed with her, and then I helped her carry the piles of branches down, and then we brought down the pieces of the trunk.

Each piece of the base of the tree was a slender, navy-blue pole covered in fake pine needles. All the pieces fitted on top of each other, making a tree trunk with one top branch.

Then Jane showed me how to put the branches in. I didn't learn very well, so instead she gave me an easier job. I could spread out the twigs on each branch, so it actually looked like an evergreen tree. When we were finished, Jane and I carried the tree to the corner.

Then we had to decorate the tree. Now THAT I knew how to do. Jane said that Aunt Christy had never let her do it, because she was too little, but now she was 9 and old enough. So Jane didn't know how! Teaching her was fun! While Jane watched, I put the star on, then I draped the bright red, orange, blue, yellow, and green lights and the sparkling tinsel around the tree, and finally I showed her how to put the ornaments on the tree. But when she got to the 5<sup>th</sup> ornament, she put it too close to the end of one branch. It slipped off and shattered.

Jane practically turned into a puddle. "Oh, Mother's going to be really angry!" she wailed.

I vacuumed up the pieces and sat next to her. "Don't cry Jane, it was only one ornament," I said. "Many times, I have broken ornaments and plates." I got out my photograph album and showed her. "See, here's the time I was eleven. My mom thought I looked so cute sobbing she took a picture." I blushed, being embarrassed that my mom still thought I was her cute crybaby while I was eleven.

Jane began to laugh. “You were *eleven*?” she asked.

“Yup,” I said. “Would you like to try again?”

Jane gulped and cautiously hung an ornament on the tree. But sure enough, it stayed on the branch. “Oh, Hannah, thank you so much!” she cried, giving me a huge hug. But she bumped the tree, and two of the ornaments plummeted to the floor.

Jane buried her face in her hands. I tried to swallow the lump in my throat. It would be harder to console her, now that she did it again. But she looked up and grinned.

“Just kidding!” she said, and laughed so hard she cried. The carpet was soft, and the ornaments were not broken at all. She picked them up and went on laughing. I joined in. We were so jolly that day.

## ***POETRY***

Poetry is published here thanks to John Mahler's [Quotes of the Day](#).

## POSTPONING

A. Polgar

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It all ended about a three weeks ago  
I thought two

Then I realized for me it had already ended two months ago

I understand him now

I understand where it all began

And where it ended

He was diffident and I was insecure

*We had been postponing everything in our relationship*

Anything

I should have been honest

That sole time

He should have been brave enough

To ask when he wanted to know

Anyone told me he'd never want to lose me before

But maybe that was what I feared

Because it was the same for me

*We have been postponing everything in our relationship*

Most of it

The situation was never right

We tried

I cried

Once

After he broke up with me

When I did not even realize

And I could not cry

When I did

Some things we hesitated

When maybe he nor I was set for that

I have been a hypocrite

For I did not see what I did wrong

I was scared

For something I had desired for so long

It was unrealistic

I could not believe it

I could not give love or emotion

*But we have been postponing everything in our relationship*

And maybe I thought it was alright

It was going to be alright

I cannot change what I have done

I have regrets

But what with it, now that it is all gone?

I was afraid to get overly attached

Because I have seen what it had done to my dear friend



*We have been postponing everything in our relationship*

Even now we are not

completely

finished

Maybe spending a little more time together could not have harmed

Was it the distance?

Was it a lack of time?

*And so we have been postponing everything in our relationship*

“Because we were not quite ready

And we are still too young”

## I LOVE HATING YOU

Salome Farya

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*"I love you"*

A hitched breath escaped her pink lips,  
An odd feeling swells in her chest.  
It's warm, and it makes her cringe.

What has happened to her?

*"I love you"*

Those three words repeat in her mind.  
Why did it feel so *wrong*?  
It's what she wanted.  
It's what was *supposed* to happen.

*"I love you"*

What?  
What does she say?

*"I love you , too"*

She says just that.  
The feeling makes her face go sour.  
She always wanted it.  
Right?  
Then why did it feel so odd?

Why did she not want to respond?

Why?

Why?

*"How much?" , with that , he gives her a warm embrace.*

She likes the touch.

She leans into it.

*"This much." She spreads her arms out as wide as she can,  
earning a chuckle from him.*

Why does she cringe at those words?

But wants him to keep saying them?

Why does she yearn for his touch?

Why?

Why?

She doesn't get it.

*"You just aren't used to it," Her mother says, leaning over her shoulder.*

*"M-MOM!" She yelps, and hides the notebook that contains her thoughts.*

She just isn't used to it?

She doesn't get it.

She hates it.

She loves it.

She hates it.

*"Maybe I just hate loving him.."*

-----

## LOSING HER

Mackenzie Gregory

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Alone, alone i stand,  
Where upon the world,  
No one apprehends,  
Dying, I'm in my land,  
Leave ma alone,  
I'm dying by your hand,  
Love, Losing her is death,  
Death, Death is my demise,

No. No. No.  
No one else can be,  
No one else is to me as she,  
No. No. No.  
Nobody else can believe!  
Nobody else can see whats me!  
No. Just no.

Shes gone, Gone with her I'm gone,  
From heaven to hell,  
With all my silent yells,  
Shes gone and what of me,  
I'm condemned to this cell,  
Covered with this emotional shell,  
Upon my dreams i dwell,  
For everyone i never knew well.

Shes Gone, Now I'm Gone.

## CHRISTMAS WARMTH

Marialina T

of yoseominkie@gmail.com

The poetry is about..

Two lovers, a girl and a boy; finally meet on Christmas Day after long time.

They wanted to have memorable moments together.

...

*It would be so sweet when you read the poetry*

*and while listen to ---> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8bzMu0062Z4> (Pink Romance)*

*Visit my gallery for more art - <http://yoseominkie.deviantart.com/>*

The day ..The night

has finally arrive

are having crystal lights

and every family are filled with harmony

warmth and love..

where every houses

from the Christmas tree

Happiness is all

in the air..

..There are two teenagers

two lovers

finally meet

after months

of studies and long to be together..

It was a very silent night and a holy night,  
they two spend time praying sitting together  
under the big Christmas tree  
The lovers knew that beautiful moment  
they are having will only be  
once in a year..  
..After the pray ended  
The lovers spent hours  
telling so many stories  
in their hometown  
along with their family..  
experiences they had  
through the whole year  
while sitting on a couch and sharing a blanket..  
After all the stories  
All the things they wished  
to tell to each other,  
the girl then slept  
the boy also then slept  
so they end up to spend time  
together  
to the boy's shoulder..  
as he closes his eyes

through the whole night..

...It was actually a cold night

but both of them managed to feel the warmth

since their greeting

and their eyes met..

# I SAW YOU A MONTH AGO...

Albin "Aborro" Myhrman

of [albin.myhrman@gmail.com](mailto:albin.myhrman@gmail.com)

More of my work can be seen at <http://aborro.deviantart.com/gallery/>

Winter, what took you so long?  
I saw you sneaking around  
Then you just left  
and I don't know why I'm upset  
I didn't even want you around  
you may look nice, but... I lie  
because when I can't feel my fingers,  
can't feel my toes, can't feel my face,  
then maybe I can feel  
myself:  
my real  
me.



## DESOLATION

Mariusz Gospodarczyk

of [phoss666@hotmail.com](mailto:phoss666@hotmail.com)

Desolation

[English version]

We young people, those unwanted- warded off from work  
With robust minds, gifted with strength- polluted with depression.

They deprived us from tomorrow's smiles,  
we peek aimlessly in the empty casket of life;  
They deprived us from sweet hope,  
we are fed up with our bitter distress.

It's only the wage givers' bad will- the vultures' rulers  
We the executed generation, those debased- lulled with crisis.

Our eyes give scanty tears- we won't bloom like white lilac  
We're escaping with our dreams there somewhere- you death, rise the goblet.

We were taught to clench the penny in our fist,  
with politeness we apologize for hunger when they start to smite;  
We were taught to beg for respect,  
the teeth's catatonic scraping is the sorrow.

Dezolacja

[Polska wersja]

My ludzie młodzi, niechciani- od pracy odganiani  
Z umysłem krzepkim, siłą obdarzeni- depresją skażeni.

Pozbawili nas uśmiechów na jutro,  
wglądamy bezwładnie w puste życiowe puzdro;  
Pozbawili nas nadziei słodkiej,  
mamy dość niedoli naszej gorzkiej.

Li tylko to zła chęć płacodawców- tych sępich władców  
My pokolenie stracone, upodlone- kryzysem uśpione.

Oczy nasze skąpią łez- nie rozkwitniemy jak biały bez  
Uciekamy snami hen gdzieś- ty śmiercio, kielich wznieś.

Nauczono nas grosz pięścią ścisnąć,  
grzecznie za głód przepraszamy gdy poczną ćwikać;  
Nauczono nas żebrać o szacunek,  
katatoniczny zębów zgrzyt ot frasunek.

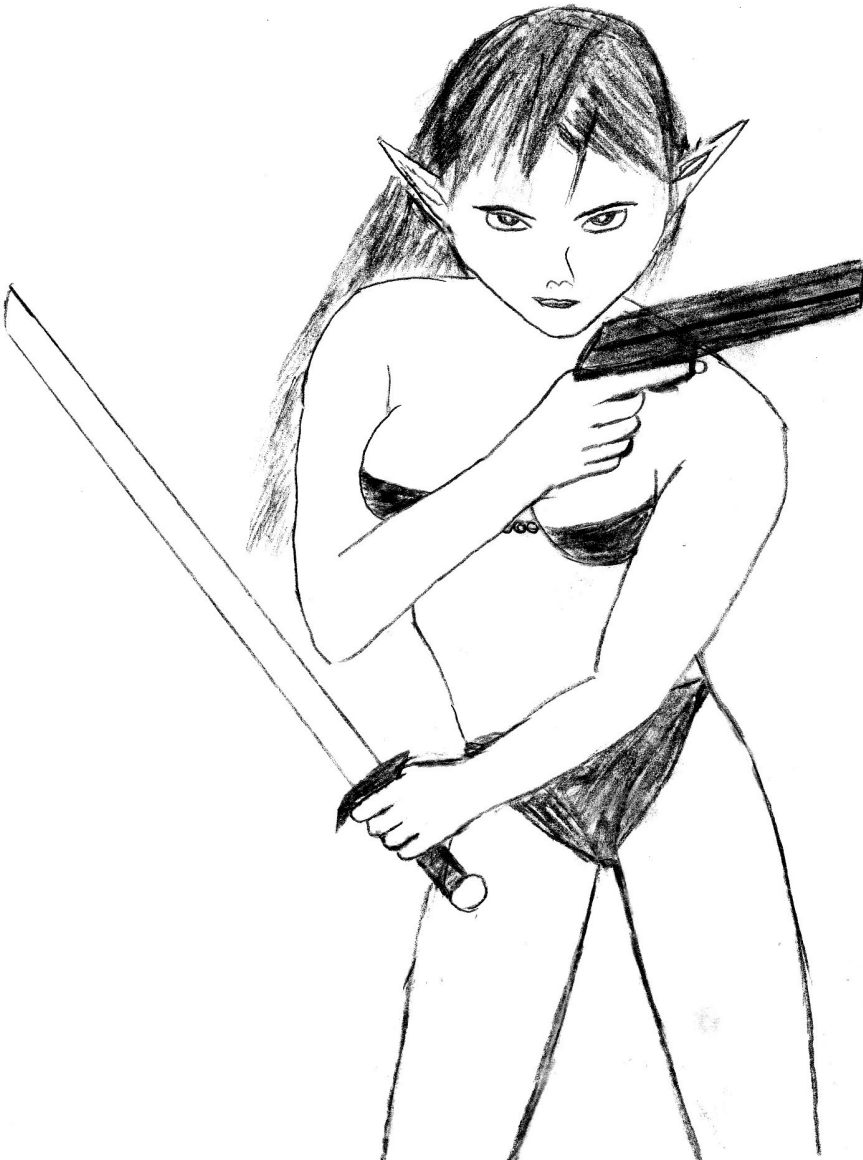
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## PLAY

Jon Ritter

Her green circles  
open wide and  
her pitch black  
mouths whisper  
that your face  
is close to her face-  
it is close enough,  
and that she  
also said: "only  
the hands", but  
you chose to  
forget, because  
it feels better  
this way and  
what is wrong  
with a hedon  
who wants to be  
sculpted  
from gold  
and loud music.

**FAN FICTION**



***Or: Leanna's Return***

(Gosh, does anyone even remember her?)

Fan Fiction is brought to you courtesy of [Gunslinger](#)

## ME2 HELLDIVER SAGA CHAPTER 9: ARIA'S GRATITUDE

Veyron722skyhook  
of [veyronmaster722@gmail.com](mailto:veyronmaster722@gmail.com)

Austin had gone alone on this one since this business with Aria was nothing critical. He had told the rest of the crew he would just be attending to some business and had told them to do a bit of shopping for supplies if they could find any. Omega wasn't well known for being the most stocked.

Since he was technically off duty, Austin wasn't wearing his Helldiver armour and was instead dressed in an off-duty spacer outfit so that he would blend in with the rest of the environment. He also didn't have to worry about his scars drawing attention since many people had similar sorts of things here and Omega had no laws or rules, so it wasn't like he'd be questioned about things like that.

The message from Aria had told Austin to speak to one of Aria's bodyguards, a Turian named Grizz.

"Aria has a job she needs doing. You up for some work?" the Turian asked.

"That depends on what Aria has in mind." Said Austin.

"Aria's gotten word that some Blood Pack mercs plan to kill an old acquaintance of hers. A Krogan named Patriarch. She'd like you to keep that from happening." Said Grizz.

"Why come to me? Aria's usual muscle not up for the job?" Austin asked.

"Because Aria said so. What other reason do you need?" Grizz replied.

"People like Aria don't do things without a damn good reason. I want to hear it." Said Austin forcefully.

“Fine. But I didn’t tell you this. Got me?” said Grizz. “If it gets out that Aria’s protecting Patriarch... well, that can look like a weakness. And some people might want to exploit that. You’re not on her payroll, so you helping Patriarch just seems like a random act of kindness.” Said Grizz.

“Alright, I’ll look into it.” Said Austin.

“Good. Patriarch’s downstairs, likely surrounded by his “fans.” Get him into hiding until the mercs move on. Come back here when it’s done, and you’ll get your due. Who knows, Aria might even be more generous than you think.” Said Grizz.

“I’ll be back when the job is done.” Said Austin.

“Good luck.” Said Grizz.

Afterlife it seemed had a second part to it. This club was slightly smaller. Of course it still had a bar and plenty of Asari dancers. Austin soon found the area he was looking for. It was a small secluded room far away from the other things.

Austin could see only one Krogan. He guessed this had to be Patriarch. The Krogan appeared to be addressing a very small audience of one Asari and one Turian.

“No. You said he had close family. They’ll just want revenge. Kill the family first. Then he’ll get angry and come at you stupid... and then you kill him.” Said Patriarch. The Krogan then took notice of Austin.

“I don’t think I know you, human. I’m the Patriarch. Aria’s Patriarch. What do you want?” he asked.

“Some people want you dead. I’ve been asked to move you to safety.” Said Austin.

“Of course. Aria wouldn’t want me hurt. T would make her look bad.” Said Patriarch. He

turned to his listeners and dismissed them. “But perhaps Aria’s reputation is no longer my concern. Perhaps I will stay, and see who thinks me important enough to kill.”

“Here’s an idea: Let me handle the assassins for you.” Austin suggested.

“And so your name grows while I remain an old man who lets others fight his battle.” Said Patriarch crossly.

“No, you remain a powerful warlord with forces at his command. Not just Aria’s trophy.” Said Austin.

“You could... you could be my krantt. Fighting for my honor. If you would do this for me, I would be grateful. I might even be a Krogan again.” Said Patriarch.

Austin left the bar and headed for the exit. As the door opened however he found himself facing two Blood Pack mercs.

“Out of our way, human!” one of them said.

“You here for Patriarch?” said Austin.

“What if we are? You gonna do something about it?” one of the thugs threatened.

“Yeah. Patriarch sent me. Said to do whatever it takes.” Said Austin as he drew his Phalanx pistol from where he’d had it concealed. He also activated his right omni blade.

“You?! You’re Patriarch’s krantt? I wasn’t aware the old man had one!” said one of the thugs.

“You should’ve done your homework.” Said Austin.

One of the thugs activated his flame thrower but Austin avoided the flames and shot the Krogan right in the crotch several times. Before the other one could react in time, Austin slashed him across the neck with his omni blade. With his work done, Austin reported back to Patriarch.

“You killed them all! And everyone knows that the Patriarch is not to be crossed.” said the Krogan happily as he banged his fists together. “Thanks to you, Aria may think of me as more than a trophy. A real advisor, maybe. Or even a threat.”

“Take care, Patriarch.” Said Austin.

“For the first time, I like that name.” said Patriarch. “By the way, be careful with Aria. She will approve of what you’ve done, I think, but not of you altering the balance of Omega. I think it reminds her too much of herself.”

Austin proceeded back to Aria’s booth. Grizz instructed him to speak with Aria herself.

“Word has it that Patriarch’s krantt took out the men sent here to kill him. Funny, I didn’t think he had a krantt.” Said Aria.

“Patriarch has more influence than you thought.” Said Austin as he folded his arms.

“I see. Well. Maybe I should watch my back, then.” Said Aria. The Queen of Omega didn’t seem intimidated at all by this. “It’s now what I asked... but you got the job done.” She said as she indicated to the seat next to her.

“Do you need something else?” she asked as Austin sat down.

“Yes. I have something for you. This datapad was on one of the mercs that was after Team Archangel. They were coming for you next.” Said Austin as he took out the datapad he’d collected from the Eclipse.



“Let me see.” Said Aria as she took the datapad and read it. “Interesting.”

She then threw it at one of her guards. Rather funnily, it was the same one that Austin had punched when he'd first arrived here. The Batarian had a bit of a bruise on his head and a black eye.

“Would someone like to tell how this information slipped the net?!” said Aria crossly as the datapad hit the Batarian in the face.

“I... I'll look into it.” The Batarian stuttered.

“You've done a lot for me, Shepard. Let me return the favour.” Said Aria gratefully. “We're sending you coordinates to a cache on an uncharted world. You want it, it's yours.” She said.

“I'm not looking for payment from you.” Said Austin.

“Look at you. So proud.” Aria smiled slyly. “At least accept this too.”

Aria clicked her fingers and one of the Asari dancers came forward holding a tray containing two glasses of what looked like Asari wine.

“You're letting me have a drink with you? I had no idea you were that generous.” Said Austin as Aria took one of the glasses. The dancer then offered the other to him and he took it. Austin was a cautious man though, and he sniffed it just to be sure.

“I'm not trying to poison you, Shepard. I don't believe in tricking people.” Said Aria.

“Alright. If you say so.” Said Austin. “Cheers.”

“Cheers.” Aria repeated.

The two clinked their glasses together and drank. The wine had a very sweet taste to it,

and it made Austin seem very peaceful.

Aria smiled slyly when Austin drank all the wine.

“Now, why don’t you come with me? I have something else I think you’ll like.” She said.

“Of... course.” Austin struggled to reply. Somehow, he felt himself going along with it. He felt different somehow. More confident than usual, and he knew this wasn’t like him. Something wasn’t right. Somehow though, a more dominant part of his mind was in control here, so he couldn’t really ponder it.

After a short walk through the club Aria walked straight to a wall, she pressed on a specific spot, coloured slightly different. The spot turned out to be a panel, lifting itself up into the wall, revealing a small console. Aria turned around staring down Shepard. He quickly got the hint and turned around. Aria punched her code in and the door revealed itself. Hidden seamlessly into the wall.

“Come in.” Her aura was strong.

The room was rather large. Full of expensive art on the walls. A very large bed clearly able to hold at least 3 people, a stripping pole and an insanely comfortable looking sofa. He placed his hand on the fabric, it was really smooth...

*“I need to buy something like this.”* He thought.

The room was also full of some kind of purple mist. It suited the area though.

Aria then suddenly turned Austin around and pushed him down onto the sofa.

“What... what are you doing?” Austin asked very slowly. He felt very weak, but at the same time he wasn’t tired. He was fully awake. It was almost as if he wasn’t in control.

“As I said, you’ve done a lot for me, so it would be rude of me not to repay you in some way. Since you don’t think much of the cache, it seems you want a different sort of reward, and I will admit you’ve interested me greatly since we met. You’re so strong,

tough, and at the same time very my type.” Said Aria.

To Austin surprise she then slid her arms up his legs and very close to crotch. She noticed a bulge slowly forming the closer she got. She smiled slyly.

“Looks like the little thing I gave you in your drink is doing the trick.” She said.

“You drugged my drink?” Austin asked.

“How else was I to get you in bed? You Helldivers are always a bit... secluded.” Aria replied.

She then stood back up and undid the clasps on the chest portion of her outfit. It fell away revealing her surprisingly large breasts. Her nipples where already very erect.

“We shouldn’t...” Austin tried to say. It was then that he noticed that he and Aria weren’t alone in here. Out of the shadows emerged several Asari dancers, each one of them staring at him and Aria with lust in their eyes.

It all made sense now. Aria had obviously slipped some kind of Pheromone drug into his drink and the whole room was now filled with Pheromone dust so that he’d go along with this. At this point however he was far too aroused to care.

“Are you honestly going to decline all this?” Aria asked seductively as the other dancers approached her.

“I suppose not.” Austin said drearily. He really didn’t feel himself now, but he was so aroused by all the pheromones that he didn’t care now.

“I thought as much.” Aria smiled. She then turned to the dancers. “Enjoy the show for now, girls. You’ll have you own fun soon, but at the moment he’s mine.” She said.

With that, Aria brought Austin over to the massive bed and pushed him down onto it. As she did, she locked her lips onto his and kissed him furiously. This took Austin by

surprise but he quickly eased into the kiss.

Aria then briefly broke the kiss in order to remove a bit more of the top portion of her outfit. It truly did leave nothing to the imagination. Unable to help himself, Austin latched his mouth onto one of Aria's breasts and began suckling on them. They a tiny bit larger than Liara's so they were quite a handful.

Aria moaned her approval as Austin's rather skilled tongue played with her nipples.

"You've done this before, Shepard." She said.

Austin didn't say anything and just continued sucking Aria's breasts.

Some of the dancers were now getting slightly aroused by the sight of their Queen having her tits played with. Some of them were touching themselves very gently, others were nuzzling against one another, and some even groping one another as they watched Aria arch her back in passionate enjoyment.

Aria then pushed Austin back down onto the bed and hastily helped remove his jacket, exposing his muscular chest.

"What a soldier!" she heard one of the dancers moan.

Aria couldn't help but smile at this. The pheromones affected them as much as they affected Shepard. She'd taken something so that it wouldn't affect her as much, but still allowed her arousal to climb.

Aria then stood up on the bed and finished stripping herself completely until she was completely naked in front of the Helldiver lying below her, and the other dancers all giggling slightly at their nude Queen.

Aria then knelt down at Austin's legs and began unzipping his trousers.

"Now, let's see what you're packing in here." Said the purple Asari.

The Helldiver couldn't help but smile at this. It did take Aria a few seconds to figure out how to get the trousers off, but once she did, she found it to be worth the effort. Austin's cock sprang to full attention, already dripping with a bit of pre cum and swaying gently with every heartbeat. Aria smiled at the sight of it and the other dancers gasped slightly.

"That's a big one!" he heard one of them say. The others giggled slightly.

Aria motioned for the dancers to be silent and turned back to Austin. The Helldiver still seemed very dreary. The drug would last another several hours. More than long enough for her to have a lot of fun with him.

"What do you want? Tell me what you want." She said.

"Blowjob." Austin muttered.

Aria laughed slightly. "Careful! I bite." She smiled evilly.

His grin didn't falter. "I like a challenge." He said boldly.

Aria grinned at his comment. He certainly was a very bold human. The only person she'd even known that could compare to him would probably be herself. Any other people she'd known, or any lovers she'd known had been nowhere near as confident or bold as him. She'd certainly enjoy this, even if it was just a fling.

"I'm going to enjoy this. **We're** going to enjoy this." She said. The other dancers muttered excitedly to one another as Aria wrapped her fingers around the root of Austin's cock, before lowering her head and breathing hotly against the sensitive tip.

Austin moaned rather loudly as Aria sucked greedily. Obviously she had hundreds of years of experience with this sort of things so she knew how to give pleasure quickly. He was thick enough to make it uncomfortable for, to make her jaw ache, but Aria liked nothing that didn't challenge her.

The Asari took a deep breath and plunged forward, taking him deep, until the hair on his balls tickled her chin. Pushes further, flattening her nose against his abdomen. Austin's hand came down on top of her head, pushing her back briefly, pauses to let her breathe, then his hips began to move, pushing his cock deep inside her mouth again. She reached up for his balls and stroked and squeezed them lightly, using that grip to direct his movements, pulling him in, deep down her throat, then pushing him out to let her breathe

and lap at his tip with her tongue. Slowly at first, then faster, until there is no pause between his thrusts.

The dancers had now got even more aroused and many of them had now shed their outfits. Austin noticed that the one that had tattoos had them in more than places than just on their faces. Some had them on their breasts, their stomachs, and even on their legs. Austin could see their stripper outfits hid those parts. Austin could see how aroused many of the dancers were from how wet they were. Some were even kissing and groping each other. Some were even fingering themselves.

Aria finally released Austin's cock from her mouth in order to catch. She smiled as she panted for breath, her large chest heaving with each breath. She then slowly crawled up Austin as she motioned for the dancers to finish undressing him.

“Show time, Girls!” she grinned as she planted a kiss on Austin's lips.

The Dancers that were still clothed immediately obeyed and stripped out of their outfits.

Aria quickly mounted Austin and the rest of the dancers joined her on the bed. Aria quickly plunged her pussy down on Austin's cock as the dancer who seemed to have the most tattoos started grinding her pussy against his face.

Aria moaned loudly as she began rocking her hips back and forward, her tight vaginal walls massaging his cock invitingly every time she lowered herself back down, and then gripping to him like a vice every time she lifted back up. She then intertwined her hands with the Dancer who was currently having her pussy licked by Austin and engaged in a very. She squealed in pleasure as Austin hit her erogenous zone perfectly, pushing her into an orgasm and she came all over Austin's face.

Aria's insides contracted as another orgasm pulled through her body, her insides gripping the meat stick stuffed inside her. Austin grunted as he felt her walls come down on every inch of his member. His body briefly losing strength at the intense pleasure running through his entire body.

The tattooed Asari got off of Austin as she slowly came down from her orgasm. Aria meanwhile remained on top of Austin for a little while as she savoured the feeling of her orgasm. She could also tell that Austin was still a bit far off from his own, but she and her

girls would make quick work of that.

“FFuck...” Austin groaned.

He grabbed a firm hold on the asari and slowly pulled back out. He slowly went back in, thrusting the last few inches hard inside her. Aria moaned loudly every time his cock hit her cervix with force, her insides gripping him tight all along the shaft, Austin’s pleasure reaching highs every time he pulled back to start a new thrust.

As he did, Aria latched her mouth onto his and the two engaged in a rather fierce kiss, both their tongues entangling with one another.

The Dancers meanwhile were just following procedure for now. Until their Queen told them otherwise they were simply moving their hands across any part of either Aria or Austin, whoever they could get their hands on. Occasionally though, they would pause to group and kiss each other. They were after all aroused beyond belief. The tattooed one was even furiously rubbing her pussy as she watched the massive cock disappear in and out of Aria’s soaked Azure.

“You’re quite tight.” Austin groaned. “Bit surprising.”

“Only very special people get the pleasure of having me. You’re even luckier that I’m letting my girls join in the fun. Especially, Elraa.” Aria panted in between thrusts.

Elraa was the tattooed Asari who was currently plunging a finger in and out of her pussy as she continued watching Aria bounce up and down on Austin’s cock. She did smile though as Aria mentioned her name. She was Aria’s favourite and most respected dancer. She was often the one that sought to people who Aria saw as being more worthy than others. It was rare though that she and the other Asari were invited to have a massive orgy with her as well. For them, it was a dream come true, for Elraa though, it was heaven. She loved Aria in fact, but lacked the confidence to say it out loud since she knew that Aria would probably say that she had no time for love.

The sounds of sex and moans were the only thing filling this room. The sounds of the music and the people outside almost seemed like they stopped and left. Austin could feel the cum slowly creeping up his cock, Aria’s grip on his member felt like she was getting tighter and tighter with every thrust, both were reaching new levels.

“I’m close!” Austin grunted as he sped up the speed of thrusting just a bit more.

“Give him a hand, Elraa.” Aria grinned as Austin massaged her breasts and sat up slightly to suck on them.

Elraa smiled and began stroking Austin’s cock, even though it was still disappearing in and out of Aria’s pussy. For a moment, Austin pulled out fully so that the tattooed Asari could stroke him properly.

Austin moaned as Elraa gripped his dick tightly and stroked him several times. He went rock hard instantly. After several hard strokes from Elraa’s hand, Austin was ready to cum. Elraa noticed this and pushed Austin back into Aria’s pussy.

Both screamed as Austin released a torrent of cum inside her womb. Aria gripped his cock so hard he couldn’t pull out.

Both Aria and Austin took very deep breaths as they recovered from the feeling.

Austin finally pulled out and Elraa once again took his cock in her hand and stroked it a few times. The other dancers moved in and started to get way more intimate with him. Some of them kissed him on the face, some of them licked various parts of his body, especially his chest, and one even willingly offered her tits to him. The Helldiver didn’t decline.

Meanwhile, Aria had lowered herself back down to Austin’s shaft and had once again taken it in her hands. Just as she started licking the tip, Elraa joined her too. They both smiled to one another and joined in with one another.

The two Asari were doing nothing but torturing him with their mouths. Austin’s massive cock stood proudly at attention as Aria and Elraa wrapped their lips around his cock, flicking their tongues over the pulsing head. Aria was lower, focusing on his hefty sack, while Elraa sucked the shaft dry of her Queen’s juices and cum.

“Oh God!” Austin moaned as the sensation of two Asari sucking his cock at the same time proved too much for him. Elraa let his cock pop out of her mouth and she and Aria both opened wide for the imminent cum shot.



The two Asari were quite amazed by how much cum the Helldiver was giving. Austin truly was a remarkable man. Massive gallons of cum shot out and bathed the two Asari's faces as Elraa and Aria savoured the sensation. After a long moment, Austin collapsed on the bed, exhausted.

"Oh, wow! I love humans!" said Elraa.

Austin then made a very bold move and flipped Aria over. He then lined his cock up with her rear entrance. Before he could thrust in however, Aria grabbed him and pushed him away.

"Don't! No one get's in there!" she said harshly.

"She'll only ever let her true love in there." Said Elraa. "But you can do me!" she said as she spread her ass cheeks apart revealing her puckered hole.

"It'll do." Austin smiled as he stroked himself a few times and grabbed Elraa's ass.

"Go on then, Helldiver. Fuck me! I want it all!" Elraa encouraged him.

At first, Austin was met with resistance as he thrust forward. Despite his cock still being wet from being in the mouths of Elraa and Aria, it took a while to work the head in and out of the Asari.

After a bit of pushing effort, Austin's hips finally met with Elraa's.

"Ooooh, Goddess!" Elraa screamed. In all her years of working with Aria she'd never had anyone fill her up this much.

For a moment Austin was unable to move. Elraa was incredibly tight, despite how many people she must've bedded, human or otherwise. Soon the two settled into a slow but steady pace as Austin thrust in and out of Elraa's tight rear. Austin thrust as much as he could but he ultimately couldn't get the whole of his length in. Elraa was just too tight.

Elraa moaned loudly into the mattress as she thrust back against Austin's thrusts. Austin too moaned his approval.

"Oh Goddess, Harder!" Elraa screamed.

At the same time, some of the dancers were joining in the fun. One of them had slid under Elraa and was kissing her while groping her tits. Another had also got under the tattooed Asari and was licking her pussy as she watched Austin's shaft slide in and out. One other was knelt behind Austin and had her hands on his hips as she helped control his thrusting. Aria meanwhile was rubbing her pussy as she watched the sight.

"Oh God! I'm gonna cum again!" Austin groaned through gritted teeth.

He pulled out of Elraa and stroked his cock vigorously. Aria was the first to lie down in front of Austin as the other dancers did the same as they awaited Austin's final cum shot before the drug wore off and Aria would have one last thing to do before Austin left.

Austin roared as he reached the point beyond stopping. His cock jerked in his hand as it completely exploded and a massive spurt of cum shot out. All the Asari moaned in sheer delight at the feeling of the cum spurts landing on them. Just as the last of the cum left Austin's shaft, Aria grabbed it in her hand and sucked and liked the last of the cum off his penis.

"Phew! I needed that!" Austin panted.

"Remember, don't fuck with Aria?" Aria laughed as she took Austin's face in her hands.

"I don't see Garka trying to toss him out of the airlock." Elraa laughed as she groped Aria's rack.

Aria's eyes went black as she initiated the very brief meld. Finding the memory she needed, she extracted it from his head so that he would no longer remember any of this. Aria knew that if Austin knew what he had done, the consequences for her could be severe. She had never messed with Helldivers before.

“Dress him back up and put him in my booth. I’ll handle the rest.” Aria ordered as she began putting her outfit back on.

Austin awoke to the sound of loud music. He found he was on his side on a comfortable chair. As he slowly opened his eyes he could see Aria looking down at him.

“What... what happened? Why have I got such a headache?” he asked groggily as he sat up, rubbing his throbbing head.

“You probably had a bit too much of that wine I gave you.” Said Aria as Austin stood up. He looked at the time.

“Oh dear! I better get back before everyone starts getting worried.” Said Austin.

Austin left quickly without even saying goodbye. Not that Aria blamed him. As the Helldiver left, Elraa appeared out of the Shadows and walked up to Aria’s booth. Because Elraa was currently off-duty, she was dressed in a normal Asari commando outfit. When she was working though, she always wore a different outfit to the other dancers. Hers was black and more revealing than the others enabling her various white tattoos to be shown.

“Well?” the dancer asked.

“He doesn’t remember.” Said Aria. “And even if he does, I doubt he’ll do much.”

“Can we expect this again one day?” Elraa asked as she sat down next to her secret lover.

“I doubt it. He has a bond mate.” Said Aria.

“Oh well. It was fun while it lasted.” Said Elraa as she took a sip of some of the wine that Austin and Aria had been drinking earlier.

Miranda Lawson proceeded down the long hallways of the ship she was on. She had recently found some useful Intel that Shadow would be interested, given her desire for revenge on the Helldiver. Miranda could not say that she was expecting Shadow to smile for once. Shadow was always angry, never showing any gratitude when one of them did well, and always pushing them. It reminded Miranda of her father.

The Cerberus operative arrived at the door that led to Shadow's quarters. She didn't bother knocking. If Shadow didn't want to be disturbed, she should've said so.

The doors opened and Miranda found herself inside a rather a surprisingly tidy room. She'd expected it to be a mess due to Shadow's temper and anger. Obviously she was getting better at it, or she was slowly calming down. That didn't mean however that her attitude towards her or the crew would improve. The Phantom knew that she commanded the loyalty of her crew through fear. In fact she herself had once said, "If I don't disembowel someone every now and then, they forget who I am."

Miranda could see that Shadow was at her desk. She was sat in the chair and was currently sleeping with her head laid down. Her right arm was hidden under the desk while her left was fully visible. She had a knife in it. This was one of the five knives that she attached to her hand.

"Azula? Jacob and I have been thinking that there may be a way of drawing Shepard to us, rather than us hunting for him. This datapad might..." said Miranda as she placed the datapad on the desk. As she did however, Shadow's left hand moved with lightning fast movements and she stabbed the datapad several times with her knife until it shorted out.

Shadow groaned slightly and slowly raised her head up. This was the first time that Miranda had seen the Phantom without her helmet.

Shadow had short jet black hair. It was rather badly cut however; Miranda guessed though that this was because Shadow had done this herself. She had a burn mark on her left cheek and also severe burns all down her left arm. At the moment, Shadow was only wearing some trousers and a tank top, leaving her arms visible, apart from her right wrist which was hidden under the desk.

Shadow blinked several times before staring up at Miranda. Shadow had lost her right eye many years ago. Unlike some however who resorted to wearing an eye patch, Shadow had replaced hers with a blue cybernetic one which glowed.

“I was dreaming, Lawson... of Shepard.” Shadow groaned.

“When have you never?” said Miranda. This came as no surprise to her seeing as how much Shadow wanted the Helldiver dead.

Shadow slowly sat up and took a sip from a nearby bottle of Asari wine.

“And in my dream... I was rather surprisingly... full of forgiveness.” She said.

She then lifted her right arm from under the table. From there, it revealed one of the two primary reasons as to why Shadow wanted revenge.

“I thanked Shepard, for cutting off my arm.” She said.

Miranda shivered when she saw the injury. She had read the reports of how Shepard had severed Shadow’s arm, but up till now she had never seen it in person. Whenever she had seen Shadow, the Phantom had always had her cybernetic arm attached and in some cases had it concealed in her armour. This time however, Shadow didn’t have the injury covered and Miranda could see the extent of the cybernetics. Her arm had been severed just below the elbow, leaving a small part of her wrist still there. The very end had been cauterized and a cybernetic socket had been placed over the wound so that she could attach her new arm into place. Shadow often removed it when she slept though as she would always find it uncomfortable if she accidentally ended up sleeping on the arm.

Miranda couldn’t help but notice that the cybernetics where not 100% perfect. In fact it looked as though the process was half finished. A lot of the flesh where the arm joined the socket looked like it was infected slightly and various small strands of flesh seemed to wrap around part of the socket. There were also several gaps in Shadow’s arm showing just how far the cybernetics went into her arm. It was not a pleasant sight.

“And for giving me this fine arm, for disembowelling and ripping out hearts... and other such homely uses.” Said Shadow as she picked up the detached arm and fixed it onto the

socket. Shadow then started fixing several screws into place. As she tightened them up she winced. Even Miranda could see that it was clearly painful.

“Doesn’t that hurt?” she asked.

“Pain can be controlled, Lawson. Besides, I’ve had lots of time to get used to this arm. It has many fine advantages.” Said Shadow as she finished the last bolt. There was faint humming sound as the arm powered up. A few blue neon lights on the arm activated and Shadow flexed the arm several times by moving the fingers and rotating the wrist to make sure it worked and functioned properly.

The arm’s design was actually rather elegant. Most of the arm’s internal workings were covered by plates. Thanks to all these coverings it looked more human than machine like.

“Sounds like Shepard did you a favour.” said Miranda. She had a feeling that the comment trod on Shadow’s territory slightly.

“A favour? That Helldiver severed my arm, he humiliated me in front of my own friends, and he gave me these scars.” Said Shadow coldly as she approached Miranda.

The fingers and thumb on Shadow’s cybernetic arm seemed to grow. Upon closer inspection Miranda could see that they were in fact knives.

“You call that a favour?!” Shadow shouted as she pushed Miranda against the wall and plunged her claws around Miranda’s head. The Cerberus operative flinched slightly at this. Miranda wasn’t afraid to stand up to Shadow, but the Phantom did often scare her.

“No. No.” Miranda quickly corrected as she did her best to hide her fright.

Shadow dislodged her knives from the wall and noticed a strand of Miranda’s hair hanging loose. Using one of her knifed fingers she gently pushed the strand aside so that it re-joined the rest of Miranda’s hair.

“Thank you.” Miranda managed to say.

“You’re just lucky that you’ve proven useful. If it wasn’t for that, I’d have killed you by now.” Said Shadow as she turned her back to Miranda and walked up to a nearby bowl of steaming liquid designed for cleaning her knives and her arm.

“So that is why you want him dead so much?” Miranda asked.

“I don’t expect you to understand. You wouldn’t anyway.” Said Shadow as she dipped her arm into the liquid. There was a faint hissing sound due to the liquid being acidic. Shadow gave a sharp intake of breath due to the stinging. Like Arkane cybernetics, her arm had a nervous system as well. “Why did you wake me, Lawson?”

“As I was saying... before you smashed that datapad, Jacob and I think that there may be a way for us to draw Shepard to us, rather than us having to chase him and hope we eventually catch up with him.” Miranda explained.

Shadow slowly lifted her mechanical arm out of the acid. It now glinted brightly and the claws shone with the lights.

“I’m listening.” She said coldly.