



INCOMPATIBLE:

BIRTH OF A  
SPELLBINDER

BY

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RAGNAROK  
RISING

PART ONE

## Incompatible: Birth of A Spellbinder

*The world is not without irony, as evident by my life. I was born Thurston Olaf Steenberg and grew up hating the Spellbinders and all that they stood for. I lived more than thirty-five years as a simple man. Had I been allowed to continue on that path I would have died an insignificant nobody who would not have gained so much as a footnote in the history of the world. It was only by becoming what I hated most that I was able to transcend my humble beginnings and do good in the world. The following is the story of my origins. It is not the story of my birth, but of my rebirth. It the story of how I became Aryanna Morgana Le Fey.*

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### **Author's Note:**

This story was something of an experiment. I wanted to write a story in first person, but I didn't want to be confined to a single narrator. So, after some input from the good folks on the Fictionmania Message Board, I decided to write the story as if it were a journal. The story is compilation of the protagonist's journal entries. It contains several entries from the journals of his/her mother who plays a large part in the story.

There is a brief part of the story that bears some resemblance to the movie 'Die Hard'. This is intentional and was meant as a tribute to both the film and the book. For some reason I found the idea immensely amusing and decide to go with it.

Although, I have posted this story as a stand-alone, the intent has always been to follow up with two sequels both of which are completed. At the time this note was written, I was in the process of posting the final story, "Destiny: Legacy of a Spellbinder" as a serial.

I'd like to thank both Holly H. Hart and for djkauf for the wonderful job they did editing the story.



## PART 1

### Freydag 9. Harpa

I've been writing in this journal for a few months at my mother's request and I'm finding it harder and harder to find something to write about. Of course, today is an exception since it's Independence Day.

When I saw those great scarlet bursts of energy hurl upward and coalesce into a single great conflagration in the sky, I couldn't help but stare upward and wonder if there was there any limit to the power of the Spellbinders. The fires in the sky then merged to form into the figure of a dancing couple who twirled around in the sky and shared a kiss before shimmering with a vast array of colors and then faded into oblivion.

The whole display was disgusting. It isn't so much the fireworks themselves that I hated but the arrogance of those putting on the display, the Spellbinders. For centuries, they have subjugated men for the simple fact that we do not share their ability to use magic. They see men as little more than mindless grunts who are incapable of doing even the simplest tasks without supervision. There have been great strides made by the civil rights movement in the last thirty years, but it's still the Spellbinders who dominate politics and the corporate world.

Not all Spellbinders are bad, a few have even been involved in the men's civil rights movement, but the vast majority of the Spellbinders are power hungry manipulators who only care to line their pockets with more money and grab more power for themselves. It doesn't help that the Spellbinders are granted long life spans far beyond that of men and women with lesser amounts of magic, allowing those in power to stay in power centuries at a time.

More burst of light hurled into the night sky and I couldn't help but continue to stare in disgust at the display. Today is the day our nation celebrates its independence from the Nordic Empire and the formation of the Free Federalist States of Nyrland. What a farce. The only people who are truly free are women. Men, can never hope for the freedoms that most women take for granted. Still disgusted, I turned my back on the display and never looked back.

## **Manadag 19. Harpa**

I know it has been a while since my last entry, but considering the week I've had I think it's understandable. This entry is going to cover a whole week and is probably the most significant journal entry to date. Yeah, it has been that kind of week.

It all began on last Manadag, and as usual the building was empty except for me. Of course that was to be expected since I was the night watchman. Though, I'm sure I've mentioned that before. Just as I always did, I started my shift by making rounds. I checked all the doors and windows on the main level, then gradually made my way up each of the five floors of the office building until I reached the top. About halfway through the top floor, I noticed that one of the offices had the light on. That wasn't right, everyone was supposed to have signed out and left the building. Maybe one of the bosses had decided to burn the midnight oil. It happened sometimes, but building security procedures required they notify the current night watchman. Not wanting to piss anyone off by walking in on them I brought my hand up to knock on the door. Just before my knuckle was about to strike on the hardwood I heard a voice speak and I froze.

"So, this is what it's come to," a man's voice said with resignation.

"You had to have known this was coming," a woman's voice said coldly.

The first voice sighed warily, "You've betrayed the cause."

The woman grunted, "It was never my cause. It was simply a means to an end."

"The others will know what you've done, Jeanne," the man said angrily.

The woman laughed, "Will they? The only one that was ever suspicious of me was you and you won't be alive much longer."

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I stood there aghast, frozen with indecision. A life of frustration and anger coalesced in that moment. I have been oppressed and cast down by women of this world and I just couldn't stand by while another man's life was in jeopardy.

I slammed the door open and locked eyes with the would-be killer. "Hey bitch." I said with all the bravado I could muster, "You're not going to kill anyone on my watch."

The woman scowled at me then brought her hands up and focused her will on me. Suddenly, I found it very hard to move and I struggled against the binding spell that she had laid on me. I felt a strange pressure begin to build up inside of me. Then without any apparent reason, I was suddenly able to move again. I immediately started in towards the would-be assassin. She brought up her arms and shouted something with a vicious snarl. The spell hit me right in the chest and I felt my knees strain against some unseen force. Then a strangely warm tingly feeling seemed to spread inside my chest and the pressure from the spell was suddenly gone.

"What in the name of Hel?" the woman cursed. Then she gathered up more energy and hurled a huge blast of sickly green light at me.

The spell was much more powerful than the last two and I fell to my knees against the sudden onslaught. The green light blinded me and I felt a strange sensation crawl across my skin. Darkness closed in the corners of my eyes and I felt death's chilling touch upon my skin. Just when I thought

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all was lost, that strangely tingling warmth from before spread across my entire body. The warmth pushed out against my skin and struck against the nauseous green light, with a blinding flash of pure white light, the pain was gone and I could move again.

I looked about the room, the woman lay on the floor either unconscious or dead and the man stood in the corner with a look of pure terror on his face. Feeling extremely weak, I forced myself to my feet. I staggered towards the inert form of my attacker, growing weaker by the moment, and lost my balance. Darkness closed over me and I remembered muttering the phrase "Friggin' crap," before drifting into unconsciousness.





## PART 2

### Manadag 19. Harpa (cont'd)

On Eirdag, I woke to a really annoying buzzing sound somewhere to my right. I opened my eyes and cast them in the direction of the sound to discover its source. The device had two rods sticking out from it, an electrical current which fluctuated in a representation of my heartbeat ran between the two rods, below the rods there was a bell housed in the device's casing. It was a typical heart monitor.

Apparently, I was in the hospital. It seemed odd that I should awaken there of all places, but with a flash, all my memories from the previous night came back in one great torrential flood of images. I struggled in my bed and tried to get up, but I was so weak that I was unable to do so.

"Thurston, thank the Norns. You're awake," a voice said from the left. I turned my head and found my mother, Brigit Steenberg, standing in the doorway "How do you feel?"

My mother is an Enchantress, a moderately powerful-magic user, who looks to be in her mid-twenties, rather than her actual sixty-two years. "Like I was run down by a herd of Horsemen." I said groaning.

Mom smiled, but in a fragile worried sort of way "It's a miracle you're even alive." she said, "From the sound of it you were hit with some incredibly powerful magic.

I grunted, "That's what I figured. The woman that attacked me. Is she...?" I asked choking on my words at the very thought that the woman might be dead.

She nodded having apparently understood, "Dead."

I grimaced; that didn't bode particularly well, "And the man?"

"The detective was pretty vague on the details," she said "She mentioned that there had been a man involved, but not much else."

I let out a sigh, "I don't understand what happened. I don't understand how I was able to withstand her attacks."

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"You withstood the attacks because you were drawing on a reservoir of magic within yourself," a new voice said from the door. My eyes darted back to my left to look upon the newcomer. A middle-aged woman with dark brown hair, wearing a doctor's lab coat with a stethoscope around her neck, stood in the doorway looking down at me. "I'm Dr. Poganski," she said with a sour look on her face.

"Hello, doctor," I said, "If what you say is true that would mean I'm a magic user," I said, feeling a bit of excitement at the idea. If I did have the magic perhaps I could make something of myself. Perhaps I could disprove all the misconceptions the world had about men.

The doctor nodded almost mechanically, "Yes, that's exactly what it means."

Mother gasped "But that's-

"Impossible," Dr. Poganski finished, her voice flat, "It is common medical knowledge. The chemical composition of a man's body is supposed to prohibit magic and yet somehow you have seemingly done the impossible, Mr. Steenberg. Unfortunately, the magic seems to be having an adverse effect on your health."

"What do you mean?" I asked suddenly feeling extremely worried.

"There's no use hiding it from you," the doctor said with clinical detachment, "Your body is treating the magic as a foreign material and is rejecting it just as it would a failed organ transplant. The magic in turn is behaving like a caged animal attacking everything within its reach."

I bit my lip, "What you're saying is, this is going to kill me?"

The doctor nodded, "In all likelihood, yes."

I shook my head dejectedly, "When you said I had the magic. I thought that this would be my chance to make something of myself. To prove that I wasn't another worthless man." I spat out the last two words in sarcastic rage.

Mom smiled sadly and put her hand on top of mine, "Is there nothing we can do?"

The doctor shook her head, "Your son's situation is unprecedented and is beyond my abilities as a healer."

Mom gritted her teeth with sudden determination, "If you can't help my son. I'll find someone who can." she said. Then, without warning she disappeared with a great gust of wind.

A few minutes after Mother's sudden and dramatic disappearance, the doctor departed and I was left alone. Still very weak, I almost immediately fell asleep. I don't think I was asleep very long when I was awakened. It wasn't as much a sound that woke me, as a presence. I opened my eyes, and much to my surprise I found a hand perched above my chest holding a nasty looking dagger.

My first instinct was to roll to my side and grapple with the person holding the knife. I tried to do just that, but I quickly realized that I was far too weak to lift my hands, let alone fight off my attacker. A great sense of dread filled me as I realized that there was nothing I could do to fend off my would-be killer. Desperately, I racked my mind trying to think of something I could do.

Then almost without thinking about it, I reached deep inside myself and touched the wellspring of



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magic that resided inside me. Just as I tapped into that reservoir of power, the knife came hurtling down towards me. After a brief moment of hurried uncertainty I wrenched that power loose and the blade stopped a few centimeters shy of my chest. Clumsily, I sent the magic outward hoping to hurl the blade further away from myself. At first, I didn't think I had succeeded, but the blade soon tumbled out of the assassins hands and clattered across the floor with several dull thumps. Without hesitation, my attacker reached inside a black jacket and procured a rather wicked looking blade from within.

A heavy weight fell upon my legs as I realized the attacker was kneeling over me atop the bed, the blade poised to strike at my heart. I brought my magic to bear against the new blade, attempted to divert it as it came crashing down towards my chest. I was only partially successful; the blade completed its arc and planted itself inside my shoulder. The use of the magic must have drained what little energy I had because it was about then that I lost consciousness.



## PART 3

*NOTE: The following is an excerpt from my mother's journal. It details the events that took place after her disappearance from the hospital.*

### **Eirdag, 6-13**

Frigg preserve me for what I have done. I just hope that Thurston can forgive me. When the doctor said that there was nothing that could be done for my son, I panicked. I turned to the only person I knew that might be able to make a difference.

I don't know if I can properly describe just how nervous I was waiting outside my ancestor's office. The woman terrifies me. Hours seemed to fly by as I waited outside the door, but I know it couldn't have been more than a few minutes.

Finally, the door opened and I was directed inside by her assistant. "Brigit," Athilda Le Fey said without turning to face me, "What do you want?"

My heart skipped a beat in surprise, my ancestor had remembered my name, "Revered ancestor, I've come to seek your help." I said.

Athilda sighed, "I do not have all day, child. Speak and be done with it."

I twitched nervously, "Esteemed Lady, it's my son. He's awakened." I received only silence from Athilda. It dawned on me that she probably didn't comprehend what I was trying to say so I added, "He's awakened magically. It's killing him."

For the first time, Athilda turned to look me in the eyes, "You are certain?"

I gulped and nodded, I opened my mouth to speak, but was cut short by Athilda who had moved from across the room to stand before me with her hand held out. "Take me now."

Without another word I took my ancestor's hand, I drew on my magic and released a great surge of wind magic.

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Nearly twenty minutes later we arrived in the hospital to find a cloaked assassin perched on Thurston's chest holding a blood soaked blade poised over his heart.

Athilda reacted so swiftly with her magic that I didn't even realize she had acted until the would-be assassin lay sprawled on the floor. My ancestor walked over to where the assassin lay. Then with only a small grunt of effort, she knelt down beside the woman. I could feel Athilda extend her awareness around the woman's body, and then she turned and locked eyes with me, "Dead."

I gulped, "You killed her?"

Athilda looked up at me irritably, "Don't be foolish, child. The assassin called upon her magic and stopped her own heart when she realized she would not be able to complete her mission."

I think I might have lost it then, if it hadn't been for Athilda. "Brigit," she said calmly, "Go find someone and instruct them to contact the local constabulary."

I nodded my head and ran out the door to do as Athilda instructed only to return once I had completed the task I had been given.

It didn't take long for the police to arrive. When they did I was shocked by the vehemence of Athilda's reaction. "Incompetents," Athilda growled suddenly and whirled on a pretty red-haired detective who was nearby conferring with a colleague.

"Excuse me?" the detective said, clenching her hand into a fist so tightly that her knuckles turned white.

My ancestor narrowed her eyes, and focused hard on the other woman, "Why was this child not put under guard after the first attack?"

The detective narrowed her eyes in turn and met Athilda's gaze "Look lady," she said in a patronizing manner and folded her arms across her chest, "We had no reason to believe his life was in any danger."

Athilda's eyes burned with a fiery rage, "You dare to condescend to me? Do you have any idea who I am, child?"

The detective grimaced, "I don't really care. Now just stand back and let us do our job."

Athilda gritted her teeth, "As the head of House Le Fey, I declare this a matter of interest to the Seidskati and am placing this child under my protection. Begone from my presence and pray that we never meet again."

The detective's face paled noticeably upon hearing Athilda's pronouncement, "Yes, Lady Le Fey."

She turned her back to the detective and continued her examination of my son. He had a nasty stab wound in his right shoulder. Athilda placed her hand upon it, and I felt a surge of magical power as she extended her senses into the wound. I watched as the severed ends of Thurston's muscle drew together and fused to one another as if they had never been cut. Then with another small release of power, she closed the stab wound and I watched in amazement as the tissue mended. Save for slightly pinkish color of the new skin, there was nothing to suggest that my son had ever been stabbed.

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There were stories about my ancestor's extraordinary healing talents, but I had always believed they were exaggerated. To heal a wound that quickly was nothing short of amazing. It would take a talented healer hours to close such a wound and Athilda had done it in a matter of minutes.

"Brigit," Athilda said quietly, "Come, there is something we must discuss."

Hesitantly, I came over beside her, "Yes? What is it?"

Athilda sighed warily and shook her head, "Your son has indeed awoken magically. It is possible to save him, but it will change him irrevocably."

I pursed my lips, "What do you mean?"

Athilda closed her eyes warily, "A man's body will not accept the presence of the magic. It is seen as a foreign force that must be expunged. Left unchecked, the body will destroy itself in its attempts to eradicate the magic. The only way to prevent this is to transform the body so that it will accept the magic's presence."

I stared up at my ancestor blankly, "Transform it? Into what?"

Athilda looked down at me and smiled sadly, "We must transform your son into woman."

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. "I-is that even possible?"

Athilda nodded, "It is extremely difficult, but it is possible. I believe with your help I can begin the process."

"My help? What good would I be? I'm just an Enchantress I could never hope to match your power," I said.

Athilda shook her head, "Power does not matter in this instance. In order to transform a person in such a way, it normally requires their willing cooperation. Since, young Thurston is unconscious; we do not have the luxury of asking him."

I gasped, "Then how are we to transform him?"

Athilda smirked, "You are Thurston's mother; you share both a physical and emotional bond with him. Through that bond, I believe I can bring about the changes. Though I must warn you there is a strong chance that he will not survive."

I shook my head, "If there's even a small chance we can save him, I'm willing to try anything..."

"Very well," Athilda said extending her hand out to me, "Let us begin."

I bit my lip, and hesitated only a moment before joining hands with my ancestor and prayed to the Goddesses in Asgard that Thurston would find it in his heart to forgive me.



## PART 4

### Manadag 19. Harpa (cont'd)

On Vordag, A songbird chattering in the window was the first sound I heard as I came awake. I was rather foggy on the details, but I could remember being stabbed. With just a little more effort than normal, I sat up and looked about the room that I found myself within. The room was huge, I could probably have fit my entire apartment in it and still have room to spare. The décor, and the bedding on which I appeared to be resting, were of extremely high quality, and they bespoke of great wealth and opulence.

Once again I looked about the room, and caught a flash of myself in a beautiful antique mirror mounted on the wall. I almost didn't take notice as my eyes quickly darted across the room, but something seemed off about my reflection. I turned my full attention upon the mirror and gasped at what I saw. I could swear I looked younger, I didn't look a day over thirty and I could easily pass for twenty-five, but it wasn't just the apparent youth that was different. I looked more slender than I had just a few days ago, my head was completely bald, and to top it off my face looked a bit rounder, one might even say softer.

Remembering my stab wound, I brought my hand up to my shoulder, and found nothing, not even a scar. I cast my gaze on the mirror again, and felt a deep unease at the reflection that looked back on me. I sensed something was wrong and it set me on edge. Once more I looked about the room, and realized that I was not alone. My mother lay sprawled on a small loveseat in the corner, fast asleep.

Not wishing to wake her, I silently crept out of bed and made my way to the opposite side of the room where the door was. Quietly, I turned the knob and poked my head out the door. I found myself looking down a long hallway spaced with doors. On either end of the hall there was a set of stairs leading down. I briefly considered leaving the room and exploring the hallway further, but caution quickly overrode my desire for exploration and I returned to the room and closed the door behind me. My mother stirred on the loveseat and came awake. She looked about for a moment, and then her eyes fell upon me.

"Thor," she said using an old nickname of mine, "You should be in bed.

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"I feel fine," I said, "Where are we?"

Mother sat up and brushed her hair away from her face, "The estate of Athilda Le Fey," she mumbled sleepily.

I couldn't believe my ears. My mother had just told me that I had awoken in the home in one of the most powerful and well known Spellbinders in history. I know I'm a descendant of House Le Fey, but the Steenbergs were considered a very minor branch of the house and gained no prestige from their relation to the Le Feys or so I had always been told.

There was a momentary silence then I spoke, "Why am I here?"

"To save your life," Mother said finally, "When I disappeared from the hospital, I came here seeking Athilda's help. She brought you here to be able to better treat you."

A Spellbinder had agreed to help me? The idea seems ludicrous. No Spellbinder would willingly help a man who had developed magical abilities. They would see him as a threat to their powers. "Why would she help me?" I replied suspiciously.

Mom shook her head wearily, "I don't know Thor. She hasn't told me much and I haven't asked."

I knew my mother was hiding something, I could see it in the way she kept biting her lip and twirling her hair with her finger. "What aren't you telling me?" I said quietly.

My mother sighed warily, "She has found a way to keep the magic from killing you."

I felt a sense of elation at my mother's pronouncement, "I'll live?"

"Yes." My mother looked up nervously at me, "I really don't understand the finer points myself, but in essence your body is incompatible with the magic."

My elation quickly turned to dread as I asked the next question, "I thought you said I would live."

Mother pursed her lips, "I did. In order for you to live, Athilda had to find a way for the magic and your body to coexist."

I looked at my mother, I'm sure, my befuddlement was evident on my face, "Mom, what are you trying to say?"

She looked at me as tears started to form out of the corner of her eyes, "I'm sorry, Thor." she wept, "I had to do it. I couldn't stand the thought of losing you."

I simply looked at my mother; I simply could not comprehend what she was trying to say. There was a brief moment of silence as my mother wept and then finally she spoke, "To save you we had to make it so your body would accept the presence of the magic, but we couldn't do it all at once. The process had to be gradual or it might kill you."

I felt a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach as I finally came to realize just what my mother was trying to say. "You're changing me into one of them." I said quietly letting the words sink in. I felt dread fill the pit of my stomach. I turned my back on my mother and without another word I exited the room leaving my mother alone to weep.

At that point, I really wasn't sure where I was going, but after wandering through the oversized

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house for a few moments I soon found myself exiting the building and entering into a garden area. The garden was massive and featured a wide variety of flowers, shrubs, trees and even fountains and statues. I wandered through the garden for a moment then found a stone bench in a secluded spot and sat down to think.

Just a short while after sitting down, I felt a small thump on the bench. I looked about and found a woman sitting on the bench beside me. I examined the woman in hopes of ascertaining her identity. She looked to be in her seventies. She was tall, standing at about six feet, her pale white hair fell far past her waist, and she almost seemed to radiate power. I sighed deeply, and I narrowed my eyes as I realized just who she was, "Oh Frigg. You're her aren't you?" I said angrily, "What do you want with me?"

Athilda Le Fey's green eyes flashed with anger, but when she spoke she did so calmly and her voice did not betray the anger and irritation that I could sense lingered just below the surface. "I want to help you, child." When she spoke she spoke with an odd accent, one that was probably the product of a life spanning numerous centuries and having spoken languages that hadn't been spoken in hundreds of years.

I gritted my teeth then spat out angrily, "Bullshit! I might be another stupid man in your eyes, but I know when I'm being used."

Instead of showing her anger as I expected, she almost seemed amused, "I understand your anger and to tell you the truth I do have my own reasons for helping you, but I do genuinely wish you well."

I looked the Spellbinder in the eyes, "You say that you want to help, but what do you stand to gain from helping me?"

Athilda sighed, "At the present time, I do not believe it prudent to reveal my intentions. You have my word that I mean you no harm and have only the most honorable of reasons for helping you."

I scowled, "You can excuse me if I'm somewhat skeptical concerning your intentions." I said sarcastically. "The fact that you won't tell me a damn thing tells me you are untrustworthy."

Athilda narrowed her eyes and her voice had turned ice-cold, "I am afraid that you must put your trust in me for the time being. Two attempts have been made upon your life. Had I not arrived in the place of healing when I had, you would be dead."

Damn it, she was right. Without Athilda to protect me, I didn't stand a chance. "What do the police have to say about all this?" I asked.

Athilda sighed, "The police are not an issue. As a Seidskati of the Council of Seidkona, I have declared this a matter of interest for the Council."

I stared at Athilda aghast. It was unusual for the Council to interfere in 'earthly' matters. It was unprecedented for the Council to declare an event a matter of interest. Pending review by the rest of the Seidskati, it would give Athilda the power to call off the police and investigate the matter with the backing and resources of the Council.

"Norns," I muttered, "You can't seriously think the Council will take an interest in a couple of death attempts against a man do you? It would be another thing if I were a woman and a member of the



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Council."

Athilda's expression shifted to one of amusement, "That will not be an issue much longer, as I'm sure you have surmised."

I bowed my head, "So it's true then," I said, "I'm going to change into..." for a long moment I was unable to make myself say the words, "one of you." I said finally.

Athilda nodded and I shook my head tiredly, "It wasn't your choice to make," I said angrily. "You should have let me decide."

Athilda pursed her lips, "You are right, child," she said, "I should have, but the attack from the assassin had left your body weak, and I was afraid you would not awake in time to seek your permission."

I shook my head, "My whole life I've resented the Spellbinders," I said quietly. "Now I find that I'm about to become one. I don't know that I can live with that."

Athilda pursed her lips, "A Spellbinder's power can be used for good just as it can be for harm. It is your choice what kind of Spellbinder you will be."

There were several moments of awkward silence before I finally spoke, "Maybe I could do some good as a Spellbinder if I live long enough," I said. "I've nearly died twice already. Whoever sent that assassin to attack me isn't likely to give up."

Athilda stood up and looked down upon me, "As long as I am alive you will never fall victim to an assassin. I intend to bring light to the darkness and find those responsible. Now come, child. You are still very weak. You need to rest." she said holding her hand extended toward me.

I looked up at my ancestor angrily, ready to refuse her, but realized that she was right. Reluctantly, I took her hand, stood and began to follow her back into the house.



Shortly after having returned me to the room I had awoken in, Athilda left me alone with my mother. Mother still acted pretty upset about our earlier confrontation. I didn't want to talk about it and Mother knew better than to try to speak with me when I was this upset. We sat there in awkward silence for the better part of an hour. It took an outside disruption to finally break the silence.

The door swung open and Athilda appeared in the doorway followed by a rather attractive red-haired woman dressed in professional attire who looked to be in her late twenties. "Mr. Steenburg," the woman said, "I'm detective Dahlstrom with the New Copenhagen police department. I'm here to speak to you regarding the recent attempts on your life."

My eyebrows shot up in surprise, "I thought the police weren't going to be involved." I said giving Athilda a pointed look.

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Athilda shook her head, "It appears the council wishes the police to remain involved."

Detective Dahlstrom smiled, "Shall we get started?"

Mom and Athilda shuffled out of the room and I was left alone with the detective. I'll just give a short recap. The detective asked for a description of the events, and anything unusual I might remember. I told her everything I could remember. I was a bit hesitant at first, but the detective revealed she already knew I could use magic. She asked me a bunch of questions regarding the suspect I answered as best I could and I provided a description.

I could sense the interview was almost over when the detective said something I hadn't expected, "I don't know what you've gotten yourself into, but I'd tread softly were I you. This is much more than it seems on the surface."

I shook my head in confusion, "What do you mean?"

She sighed, "Look I probably shouldn't even tell you this. But the body of the woman that attacked you has gone missing, as well as nearly all the evidence related to this case. Whoever those two women were, someone very powerful doesn't want us to know their identities."

"Shit," I muttered, "What about the man I saved?"

The detective shook her head dejectedly, "He's disappeared as well. I have reason to believe he was involved with a radical masculinist group known as the Sons of Odin. Does that mean anything to you?"

I shook my head, "Sorry, no."

Detective Dahlstrom seemed suddenly very tired, "Well, Mr. Steenburg I think that just about wraps everything up. Here's my card; please call me if you can think of anything that might be helpful."

I promised to call should I think of anything. Then the detective departed and shortly thereafter my mother returned. It wasn't long after the detective had left that I started feeling dizzy and was forced to lie down. Mother helped me into bed and sat down beside me. "The magic is surfacing again," she said with a sad smile, "It won't be long before we see more changes."

My stomach felt as if it had been set afire, "Goddesses," I screamed, "Eir preserve."

Over the next several hours, intense pain spread through my entire body, so much so that if I even so much as moved a finger it sent a stab throughout my entire body. I closed my eyes and gritted my teeth against the agony, and waited for it to go away. It didn't subside, at least not for a long while. I could literally feel my skin shift, and my bones crunch and I wanted to cry out but had I done so, it would have only aggravated my pain. So I lay there and let the searing hot agony course across my body without letting out so much as a peep and without any movement whatsoever.

My throat and face burned for quite a while. So did my chest and hips. The pain continued to sear through my body for what felt like hours, and then I felt a sudden sharp pain within my testicles and the pain faded and was finally gone.

Weakly, I turned my head and looked to my mother who gave me a look that managed to convey both sympathy and worry in the same glance. I tried to lift my legs to get out of bed, but I discovered that my legs just didn't want to move nor did my arms for that matter. "I-I can't move," I

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said my voice coming out with a pronounced crack as if I were undergoing puberty again.

Mother smiled, that damn infuriating smile of hers that she used whenever she was worried, "Athilda said something like this might happen."

I grunted angrily, "She damn well didn't tell me!"

Mother sighed warily, "I have a feeling there is much Athilda hasn't told either of us."

I licked my lips, "Can you get a mirror or something? I'd like to see what I look like now."

Mom cocked her eyebrows, "I can do you one better."

When I caught that look from my mother, I knew almost immediately what she intended, but before I could let out any sort of protests it was already too late. She lifted her hands and called upon her magical energy and sent a great gust of wind right at me. I half expect to get smacked against the wall behind me, but instead I felt myself being gently lifted from the bed. Although, Mom was an Enchantress, she was insanely powerful when it came to wind magic. Unfortunately, wind magic was notoriously difficult to control. She must have been practicing. Slowly, I drifted towards the mirror on the other side of the room. Once I was sufficiently close, Mom twisted her hands and righted me so that I hovered in the air fully erect in front of the mirror.

The first thing I noticed, were the two small breasts that were poking out from inside my shirt. They were small, but there was no denying what they were. Breasts! I had breasts!. I lingered over the sight of them for a moment, and then continued my examination. I had shrunk considerably, and guessed I now measured closer to five-nine rather than my usual six-two. It was hard to tell from the baggy pants that just barely clung to me, but I appeared to have the faintest outline of feminine hips. My shoulders had narrowed considerably, and my arms hands and wrists were much thinner.

Finally, I looked at my face, but I wasn't really sure I could call it my face anymore. My jaw had softened considerably, my nose was much smaller and I looked even younger than I had before. Despite the changes, I still looked predominately male though just barely, my eyes had shifted from steel-blue to a very soft green; I had grown nearly eight inches worth of hair that was now dark auburn like my mother's, rather than my usual brown.

"Shit," I said my voice cracking as it had before, "Mom could you maybe remove my clothes, and I don't know; turn your back or something?"

Mother raised her hands and with sent a burst of wind at me which tore the clothes off me. I looked at my now naked body in the mirror and confirmed that I had breasts and my hips were indeed somewhat feminine. I noted that my testicles were missing, but I still had a penis, though it was significantly smaller than it had been before. I had a sneaking suspicion concerning what had happened to my scrotum, but there was no way for me to confirm it without having someone else look at it.

I know it might have seemed silly to some people, but I felt funny having my mother looking at my private bits. (I was a grown man for goodness' sake!) Nevertheless, the need to know overrode my embarrassment. "Mom, I need you to look at me and tell me something."

Mom turned to me and I could see that faint lines of strain had begun to form around her eyes. I knew next to nothing about magic, but I did know that often times the more delicate workings of

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magic was often more difficult to use and created more strain upon the user than one might think. Wind magic by its very nature was wild and unpredictable. Using it to lift someone gently up and hold them in the air went against its chaotic essence and could conceivably create an incredible strain on the user. Mother closed her eyes wearily, "Let me set you down."

Mother rotated me back onto my back and I slowly drifted back to the bed and landed softly atop it. "Impressive," a voice said from the doorway.

It was Athilda, "Few Spellbinders are capable of such control, let alone an Enchantress. You have a remarkable talent for Wind magic."

"Th-thank you, Revered Ancestor," Mom said nervously.

"Well, it appears our young Thurston has undergone some more changes," Athilda said.

"You think?" I said sarcastically. "It would have been nice to know that this would paralyze me.

Briefly, grim amusement flashed across Athilda's face, "Worry not, your paralysis is only temporary."

I grimaced, "Well gee, that's such a relief." I said sarcastically, "Mom could you please take a look between my legs and tell me what you see. I'd really like to get this over with."

Mother sighed warily as she grabbed hold of my legs and pulled them apart. She gently pushed my limp penis out of the way and gasped, "That's weird," said quietly, "You have something resembling a vulva, but it's not quite fully formed. "

I sighed warily, "Damn, just as I suspected." I said quietly, "Do you think you could cover me up now?"

Mother shook her head warily and lifted her hands to call upon the magic, but before she could do so Athilda stepped forward, and a gust of wind pulled me up off the bed again, swept the bedding from atop the bed then placed me gently back down before placing the bedding on top of me.

Mother looked to the ancient woman thankfully, "I thought you said that most Spellbinders don't have much control over wind magic."

Athilda looked at my mother with both amusement and irritation evident upon her face, "Most do not. I do." Then the Spellbinder turned her back and left the room.



## PART 5

### Manadag 19. Harpa (cont'd)

I remained paralyzed for over three days before the next round of changes took place. It was one of the most excruciatingly unbearable three days of my life. I can't say I fully understand the sort of despair a quadriplegic must endure after finding out they are paralyzed for life, but for those three days I came as close as I could without ever becoming a quadriplegic myself. The only thing that kept me going was the knowledge that I would soon regain use of my limbs. Of course, that was little consolation considering that regaining use of my limbs also meant I would have to deal with having a female body.

It was very early in the morning, on Sunnudag, when I awoke and felt the pain begin to spread throughout my body again. The pain was just as excruciating as my previous transformation and I gritted my teeth in silent agony. Just as before, the pain lasted several hours and ended with an intense pain in my crotch. I lay there in bed a moment and attempted to move my arm in front of my face. Much to my relief, my arm responded to my summons, but it took a great deal more effort than it normally would have and my muscles felt oddly tight.

I wiggled my toes and then my legs and received similar results. I slid to the side of the bed and tested my feet on the ground. My legs felt a little weak, but I thought I'd be able to make it across the room. So I slid the rest of the way off the bed and nearly fell on my ass. It was only by bracing myself against the bed that I managed to stay on my feet. Stubbornly, I moved away from the bed and half-walked, half-crawled to the opposite wall. Using the wall as leverage, I hit the button on the wall to turn the light on, and then I made my way to the mirror that was across from the foot of my bed.

My age had further regressed and I now looked to be in my early twenties. I looked to be roughly five-foot-seven and was actually somewhat pretty, but a slightly squared jaw kept me from being truly beautiful and gave me a slightly masculine appearance. My dark auburn hair was now close to sixteen-inches long and granted me a wild and unkempt appearance due to its lack of styling. All in all, it was odd realizing that the girl in the mirror was me.

I moved my hands up to the collar of the pajama shirt I was wearing and unbuttoned it, a task made

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more difficult by my weakened state. Once done, I wiggled out of my shirt then I worked my way out of my pants. I nearly fell over a few times while I undressed, but was just barely able to maintain my balance. Once, undressed I looked at my naked body and noted the changes. My breasts were now much larger and my hips had widened considerably, but both were still on the small side. All that remained of my penis was the head which just barely poked out from the skin. I have never actually seen my vulva, but based on my mother's description I think that it was considerably more developed than it had been before.

I stared at my reflection for a few more moments, then slowly put my pajamas back on. Once finished, I realized I really had to take a leak. I opened the door to 'my' room and looked down the hall. I was fairly sure one of the rooms down the hall had to be a bathroom, but I had no idea which one. Most of the time I had spent in Athilda's estate I had either been bedridden or unconscious. While paralyzed I had been forced to either use a bedpan (with Mom's assistance much to my annoyance), or wet the bed.

I staggered down the hall and tested several doors before I found the bathroom. Like the rest of Athilda's estate the bathroom was huge and extravagant. I hobbled over to the toilet and with a grunt of effort flipped the lid open. I pulled my pants down and looked down at my shrunken penis, and realized that it would be next to impossible to aim. I leaned over the toilet and positioned my hips so that my tiny penis aimed straight down into the toilet then I let loose. Nothing happened. I let in a deep breath and pushed harder. A small stream of urine escaped my penis, and then stopped. Try as I might I couldn't urinate any faster. So I stood there for nearly ten minutes and urinated in brief bursts of yellow pee.

I nearly collapsed as I staggered over to the sink to wash my hands, which spoke volumes for how exhausted I had become. I made my way from the bathroom and nearly made it back to the room before finally crumpling to the floor in front of the door.



I woke to the sound of hushed voices. I opened my eyes and found that once again, I was lying in bed in the same room as before. "Damn," I muttered under my breath; noticing that my voice now sounded entirely female.

Athilda was the first to speak, "Are you a fool, child?" she said angrily.

"Apparently," I replied irritably. "How long have I been out?" I said changing the subject.

Mom grimaced, "We found you at around six this morning. It's almost four now."

"Damn," I muttered again, "I wish these changes would just finish already. I hate this damn waiting."

Athilda sighed, "You do not have long to wait, child. The final changes will soon come upon you."

I scowled up at her, "Then why the Hel did it take so long for these latest changes?"

Athilda returned my scowl with an angry glare, "Your body was not yet ready for the changes. Had you undergone them sooner it would have been your death, child."

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"Death or breasts," I grumbled irritably, "I don't know which is preferable."

Athilda's eyes flashed with irritation, but instead of responding to my comment she merely said, "Rest, child." Then she turned to Mother. "See that she does not leave the bed." Without another word Athilda left the room.

"Damn it," I grumbled, "I haven't finished changing and she's already using female pronouns."

Mom didn't say anything; she merely looked at me and started giggling.



I think I really tested my mother's patience the rest of the day and the following morning. I knew that I was weak, but felt that I should be allowed to at least get out of bed to use the bathroom. My mother didn't agree. Because of my shrunken penis I was unable to use the bedpan facing upward so I had to turn around and pee straight into the cavity of the bedpan. Thankfully, I was able to convince my mother that I didn't need assistance to use the damn thing. I wasn't entirely pleasant to be around and I took most of my frustration and anger out on my mother. I don't know how late it was when I finally drifted off to sleep, but I doubt it was much later than ten.

Well, I'm just about caught up. It's now Manadag and I only went through my final changes a few hours ago. I must have been exhausted because I didn't wake until late morning. My mother was sitting beside my bed reading a magazine. When I asked her for the time, she told me it was almost ten. She stepped outside the room for a few minutes and returned saying that breakfast was being sent up. After breakfast mom, handed me some of my belongings out of a large black bag in the corner. Among the items she gave me, I found my journal and a number of books. She explained that she had gone to my apartment to retrieve some of my belongings.

It was shortly after noon when I felt the first burst of pain sear across my body. It wasn't long before my entire body felt as if it were on fire. As before, I close my eyes and gritted my teeth against the pain. Several hours later, the pain faded as it had before with a sharp pain in my groin.

With a sigh of relief, I opened my eyes and sat up. I felt a little weak, but the effort was much easier than it had been before. The oddly tight feeling that had accompanied every movement was gone. I slid off the side of the bed, and noted for the first time that mother was absent from the room. I walked over to mirror and was stunned by the girl I saw in the mirror. She was nothing short of breathtaking.

When I say breathtaking, I don't mean the girl in the mirror was hot or sexy. I mean I'm beautiful in a way that goes beyond sex appeal. The image in the mirror was what I imagine what the Light Elves must look like. My jaw dropped, and I simply stood there transfixed by my own reflection. My face had lost all its hard edges and was now a soft oval shape. My hair had grown another eight inches or so and was now roughly two-feet long. I was even shorter than before, though only by a few inches or so. I looked to be in my late teens and had the kind of figure that most women would kill for. I brought my hand up to touch my cheek, my skin felt so smooth and soft against my fingertips. Of course, the skin on my now long and delicate fingers was just as soft.



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When I was finally able to peel my eyes away from my reflection; I slowly stripped out of my clothes and looked upon my completely female body. My breasts had grown quite a lot since my last set of changes and they seemed massive, but as I looked at my reflection I realized they were not nearly as huge as they felt, and they complemented my hourglass figure perfectly. There was no trace of my penis and my vulva now looked complete and fully formed.

"Thor?" a voice said from the doorway.

I swirled around to gaze upon my mother and Athilda. "By Freya," Mother said with a gasp, "You're beautiful."

I didn't immediately reply. I looked to Athilda and was caught off guard by her reaction. The ancient woman simply stared at me aghast, almost as if she had seen a ghost. Mom must have seen something in my eyes because she turned back to look upon our ancestor. We all stood there staring at one another, until Athilda finally broke the silence.

"A ghost made flesh," she whispered and move to stand before me, "As if she had not been dead these last four-hundred years."

I looked up at the ancient woman and spoke, "Who?"

Athilda eyes hardened and all trace of shock disappeared from her face, "Worry not upon it, child." she said angrily, and turned to leave.

Before she made it very far, I grabbed hold of one her wrists and spoke, "Athilda." I said with gritted teeth, "Who?"

My ancestor broke my hold on her wrist then whirled on me and brought her hands up almost as if she intended to attack. Shocked by her sudden movement, I took a few steps back, stumbled and fell on my ass. I brought my hands up to protect my face and waited for Athilda's attack. It never came. I realized suddenly my hands were shaking. Slowly, I lowered them and folded them across my chest in an attempt to stay their trembling.

I looked up to Athilda and noted that much of the anger that had marked Athilda's face had faded, "My daughter. You resemble my daughter," she said quietly then turned her back, and left the room.



## PART 6

### **Eirdag 20. Harpa**

Compared to the events of the last week, today was relatively calm. Though that's not to say it was uneventful. Mom and I had been left alone to fend for ourselves after my confrontation with Athilda. My body is still very foreign and I can't even move or sit without being reminded of my new proportions. The clothes I am wearing, a thin white blouse that does little to conceal my breasts and a pair of slacks, are ill-fitting and uncomfortable, though I'm not sure I could have been comfortable even if I were wearing clothes that fit. I guess I can take comfort from the fact that I am finally through with the changes. Around noon, I was alone in the garden when I heard a scuffling sound and found Athilda standing nearby.

"Thurston," she said closing the distance between us and came to sit on the bench beside me, "There are some matters upon which we need to speak."

I folded my arms across my chest, "Gosh, you really think so?" I said sarcastically.

Irritation flashed across her face, but was soon replaced by a rather stoic expression, "The Seidskati has issued a summons concerning my declaration of interest. We shall meet a week hence."

I shook my head, "What does that got to do with me?"

Athilda's eyes flashed with irritation, "Everything, child. Twice, you have nearly died by the hands of an assassin. The knife that the second assassin used had runes etched upon the blade and hilt. Only a Spellbinder of great power could have placed those runes upon it."

I grimaced, "So, you think both incidences are linked?"

Athilda spoke coolly, "In all likelihood."

"Shit," I muttered.

Athilda grimaced, "Such language does not befit a future member of the council."

I grunted angrily, "What makes you think I want to become a member of the council? I didn't ask

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for any of this."

"It is not a choice for you to make, child." Athilda raged, "It is too dangerous for a Spellbinder to be unlearned in the Ways of the Seidh. If you do not learn how to use your abilities you could inadvertently cause great harm to others or even level whole cities."

"What if I refuse?" I glared back at her.

Athilda sighed warily, "Refusal is not unprecedented, but it has never ended favorably for the initiate. We have important matters to discuss, child. You waste our time debating that which need not be debated."

I shook my head stubbornly, "Like what?"

Athilda's irritation flashed across her face, "Assuming that you do not refuse initiation, and find yourself brought before the council against your will, you need to groom and dress yourself in preparation to appear before the Seidskati."

I looked at Athilda flatly, "In other words you want me to get a haircut and some clothes." I said with a sigh, "I won't lie to you, this hair is driving me nuts, and it might be nice to have some clothing that actually fits."

Athilda smiled, it was the first time I had ever seen her do so, "Very well," she spoke, "It is much too dangerous for you to leave the estates. I shall have the necessary laborers brought to you." Then once more turned her back and walked away.

"Damn," I said to no one in particular. I still can't escape the feeling that I had sold my soul for a haircut and a couple of sets of clothes.



Much later, I scowled up at the woman as she finished up my haircut. Athilda had steadfastly refused to let me get my hair cut any shorter than its current length. The hairstylist had of course sided with Athilda and I was stuck with the damned long hair. My hair is now only a few inches shorter than it had been, and that's due mostly to its previously jagged ends. The hairstylist finished up and produced a mirror for me to look at my reflection.

I reluctantly have to admit my hair looks infinitely better with the styling. Very little hair has been trimmed from my face, but with the use of various hair products my wild hair had been tamed and made to look wavy with a styling wand augmented by the hair stylist's innate magical abilities. To finish it off my hair was parted to either side of my face out of the way of my eyes. The new hairstyle suits my face perfectly and it serves to further enhance my already beautiful features.

Athilda paid the hairstylist an extortionate price then ushered her out the door and it was on to the seamstress. I stripped out of my clothes and was completely naked since I didn't have any undergarments. The seamstress took my measurements, even going so far as to measure my feet. Then she too was paid a large sum then ushered out of the room and presumably out of the house.

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Once everything was completed I dressed myself and attempted once again to get answers from my ancestor. "Athilda," I said quietly, "Assuming I go before the Seidskati. Am I to tell them that I used to be a man?"

The elderly woman looked upon me with an appraising look, "Of course, child. It would be foolish to endeavor to deceive the council. There are those who could detect your lie with no more effort than it takes to breathe."

"So what? I tell them I was a man and they'll welcome me with open arms?" I replied.

Athilda shook her head, "Nay, child. They will debate and argue as they do in all things then they will vote upon it. "

I swallowed hard, "And if they vote against me?"

"I know not," Athilda replied, "Such a matter has never been presented before the Seidskati."

"Well, that's reassuring," I muttered sarcastically.

Athilda looked down at me, amusement evident upon her face, "Worry not, child. No harm shall come to you so long as there is a breath left in my body."

I opened my mouth to say some sarcastic remark, but realized that Athilda was being sincere, "Thanks," I said quietly, "That really is reassuring."

There was a moment of awkward silence. Then much to my annoyance, Athilda turned her back and walked away.

"Wait, Athilda!" I called after her, but my ancestor didn't so much as glance back at me. "Damn," I muttered, "That woman has got to be the most infuriating person I have ever met."



## PART 7

### **Eirdag 20. Harpa (cont'd)**

Today, I met Athilda's assistant and I'm still having a hard time getting her out of my thoughts. She first made her presence known with a light tap on the door. I knew almost immediate that it was not Athilda or my mother. Neither would bother knocking. A small voice inside of me warned that the person on the other side of the door might wish to harm me, but common sense overrode my concerns. I was in the home of one of the most powerful Spellbinders in the world, it was doubtful that anyone could intrude upon Athilda's domain. "Come in," I said finally.

An extremely attractive blonde woman, a few inches taller than me stepped inside the room. She smiled hesitantly and held a bag out to me. "Hi," she said cautiously, "Athilda said to bring these up here. I guess they're for you."

I took the bag and opened it, inside there were several brassieres and panties. "Um... thanks," I said blushing a bit.

The woman smiled sweetly, "I'm Penelope, by the way. I'm Athilda's assistant."

I was a bit hesitant to reveal my true identity to this person. So I racked my brain as I tried to think of a female name for myself. Ari-" I started to say then stopped myself thinking better of it, "Aryanna" I said finally, "I guess Athilda's told you all about me."

Penelope sighed, "Not really, she doesn't really tell me much of anything. Mostly I just file things and take messages."

I grimaced, "That I can understand. My ancestor isn't the most talkative of people."

Penelope smiled, "Oh, so you're a descendant. You know you look kind of familiar..." she trailed off with a thoughtful expression on her face. "By the Norns!" she said suddenly, "The painting!"

I bit my lip, "What painting?"

Instead of answering me she grabbed hold of my hand and dragged me out of the room, through a hallway, down a flight of stairs and did not halt despite my many protests. Finally we stopped in

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another long hallway lined with row after row of portraits. "See," Penelope said, indicating a portrait near the very end of the hall.

I drew in a breath as I looked upon the face in the picture. The girl in the portrait could have been my twin. There was only one major difference that was readily apparent, the woman in the portrait had black hair whereas my new female body had auburn hair.

"No wonder Athilda was so taken aback when she first saw me," I muttered. "Do you know what her name was?" I asked Penelope.

Athilda's assistance shook her head, "No, all the other painting have nameplates. This one doesn't."

"She was Athilda's daughter." I said quietly, "Something happened between them that Athilda doesn't want anyone to know about."

"She looks sad," Penelope said quietly.

"Yes," I replied thoughtfully, "Yes, she does."

We eventually made our way back to 'my' room. I wanted to try on my new undergarments, but when I asked Penelope to step out of the room so I could have some privacy. She started giggling and told me I didn't have anything she "hadn't seen before." Penelope began unbuttoning my blouse despite my protestations and within a few moments she had me completely naked.

Penelope bit her lip and stared at my chest, "Oh," she said, "I think I know why you were so shy about undressing in front of me."

I looked down at my chest and realized just what she meant, "Oh, Norns," I said, "I'm sorry. It's just that the last time I was undressed by a woman. We..." I said trailing off, "well, I'm sure you know what I mean."

Penelope smiled mischievously, "It's okay, the last time I undressed a woman we had sex too."

My jaw dropped and Penelope started to laugh, "You're too cute." she said. "I'm sure Athilda's wondering where I am by now. I'll leave you to dress alone."

"I hope to see you again soon." she said then she drew close to me and kissed me on the lips. I was so taken aback that I simply stood there staring after her naked as the day I was born.



### **Yordag 21. Harpa**

Today, a full dozen sets of clothes arrived inside four bags. The first contained various undergarments and sleep wear; the second contained various sets of shoes and a pair of slippers; the remaining two contained various skirts dresses and assorted outfits. Apparently, the seamstress had a shoemaker on staff, which probably explained why she had measured my feet. All of the clothes were of an extremely feminine variety, which was too be expected since pants and many of the type of clothes favored by men were out of style for women. Groaning inwardly I selected a

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skirt, a matching blouse, a pair of shoes and the appropriate undergarments and made my way to the bathroom to take a shower.

I had been avoiding the shower since I had completed my transformation two days prior, but I was starting to smell rather ripe and I didn't think I could bear waiting much longer. With only a moment's hesitation I removed my clothes and slipped into the shower. I adjusted the slider for the heat control then pressed the switch and warm water came pouring down from the shower head set into the ceiling.

For a brief moment I was able to forget about my worries as the soothing warm water poured down over my body, but the water splashing against my breasts felt very odd and proved to be too strong a reminder of just how foreign my body now was. With a sigh, I reached up and grabbed a bottle of body wash that was hanging from a hook on the ceiling and began to soap up my chest. Eager to get out of the shower, I hurriedly soaped up the rest of my body and was almost finished when I reached my vulva.

I pursed my lips, and looked down. I was about to squirt more soap into my hands, but curiosity got the better of me. Setting the bottle aside, I began to feel around my vulva with my hands. It felt rather sensitive, and I felt a slight tingling of pleasure as my finger passed across its surface. My thoughts turned to Penelope and the kiss we had shared and I could feel my nipples harden. She was beautiful and I hadn't been able to get her out of my head since we'd met, the day before. I continued to massage my vulva, and my finger traced over my orifice and finally I put my finger inside and felt tingles of orgasmic pleasure run up my spine.

I gasped and experimentally stuck my finger inside my vagina again. This time the sensation was much more pleasurable and my thoughts of Penelope became much more provocative, and I imagined myself making love to her, first as a man then as a woman. I started cumming and I continued to masturbate in the shower for what seemed like hours.

"Thor," a voice said from the other side of the shower curtain, "Are you alright? You've been in here a while."

All thoughts of Penelope flew out of my head like a great gush of wind as I replied to my mother, "Yeah, Mom. I'm fine."

The shower curtain flew open and my mother looked down to my private area and gasped. I quickly extricated my finger from inside my vulva and grunted, "Mom, I'm a grown ma-," I said then caught myself, "woman." I said testing out the sound of the word, "Is it too much to ask for a little privacy when I take a shower?"

"Thor, you've been in the shower for over an hour. I thought something might be wrong," she said, "I didn't expect to find you playing with yourself," she said a bit of smile touching her lips.

"Mom!" I protested.

"It's alright dear," she said, "We all do it."

I shuddered and threw the curtain closed again, "Too much information." I grumbled.

Mom laughed. Goddesses my mother could be so evil, "I'll be outside. When you're out of the shower, I think you and I need to have a talk."



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"Mom," I grumbled, "Dad and I had the sex talk a long time ago."

Mom started giggling again, "I hadn't intended to talk about sex. We need to talk about your hygiene, your new body has a few more..." she paused as if to think, then said, "requirements than your old one."

"Just great," I mumbled sarcastically, "Give me a few minutes."

I soaped between my legs again, and then I washed my hair which took forever since there was so damn much of it. Once I completed rinsing out my hair, I shut the shower off and grabbed a fresh towel in the stack beside the shower. I dried myself off, then wrapped the towel over my chest, and opened the door to find my mother waiting outside.

"Let's talk," I said motioning for my mother to come inside.

I won't recount the details, but it was probably one of the strangest conversations I'd ever had with my mother. My mind was still having trouble accepting my female body, and the conversation with mother was oddly disturbing to my tattered male ego. When we finished our discussion (which included a demonstration on proper hair care) Mother was gracious enough to dry my hair using wind magic, a smattering of fire magic and strangely enough earth magic. Since, I'm stuck with this damnable long hair; it might be good for me to learn that particular trick.

Mother and I parted ways and I was finally able to dress myself. The bra came first (which was a lot more difficult to put on than I would have thought), then the panties, next I slipped on the plain black skirt and finally I pulled on the white blouse. The clothes are the first I have worn in over a week that actually fit. They also happen to be a constant reminder of my new femininity. Especially the skirt, which feels almost as if I'm not wearing anything at all.

Of course, that proved to be the least of my worries. Athilda has taken it upon herself to tutor me in the ways of woman, or more specifically the ways of a woman of the council. I spent all day learning how to behave before the council and what sort of things to say or not to say. Athilda behaved as if I had already agreed to appear before the council. I didn't do anything to contradict her, but I had yet to come to a decision on the subject. I thought it better to keep my options open. If Athilda knew I was still undecided she might take action to ensure my compliance.

Penelope appeared halfway into my 'lesson' to ask Athilda some inane question concerning business matters. Initially, Penelope didn't seem to notice me, but our eyes met and she winked at me. She finished up her discussion with Athilda. "Aryanna," she said smiling, "It's nice to see you again."

I briefly cast my gaze toward my ancestor to gauge her reaction. Athilda's eyebrows rose ever so slightly, but she gave no other indication that she found Penelope's comment surprising. I turned back to Penelope and smiled nervously, "Nice to see you as well," I managed, "Thank you for your help."

There was a mischievous twinkle in Penelope's eyes as she spoke, "Oh, believe me it was my pleasure."

The encounter with Penelope was over almost as soon as it had began, we soon exchange polite goodbyes and I soon found myself under Athilda's inquiring gaze, "What?" I asked as if nothing were amiss.

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"Aryanna?" my ancestor asked.

I folded my arms across my chest defensively, "I wasn't sure she could be trusted," I muttered, "So I gave her a fake name."

Athilda gave me another one of those appraising looks and smiled, "A wise choice, child. Penelope is an able assistant, but there is much I have not made her privy to."

Neither one of us said much more concerning the matter and I thought the matter forgotten as I continued my lesson with Athilda. I couldn't have been more wrong. As we finished up the lesson, Athilda mentioned that we would continue the next day. Then we parted ways and I was left to my own devices.

I met the maid today, which wouldn't otherwise be very noteworthy. I mean all these super-rich Spellbinder's have maids. It was the fact that the maid called me 'Lady Aryanna' that set the event firmly in my mind. Initially, I thought it had been Penelope that had told the maid about me, but it proved to be Athilda who had done so. Apparently she told the maid that I would be staying indefinitely and that I would require her services.

I suppose I should have expected this from Athilda. Damn, that woman pisses me off. To top things off, Mom has started calling me Aryanna as well. Damn it, can't I hold on to at least a small part of my masculinity?



## PART 8

### Laurdag 24. Harpa

My journal is missing. I've resorting to writing everything in a spiral notebook until I can find it. The maid was in here earlier I wonder if she saw it. I'll ask her the next time I see her.

Oh, Goddesses! I can't get Penelope out my head. She's absolutely amazing. Before she started work for Athilda she came and visited me. We kissed and I could hardly keep my hands off her. I've never been so strongly attracted to anyone in my life.

I've had a hard time concentrating all day. My lessons with Athilda went horribly. She looked as if she wanted to strangle me. She finally gave up trying to teach me for the day.

Damn, I'm so horny. I wonder if something is wrong with me. This can't be normal. I've been playing with myself almost all day. I can't believe how good it feels to masturbate as a woman.



### Vordag 28. Harpa

Holy shit, I'm lucky to be alive.

Yesterday, Mother and I left Athilda's estates to appear before the Seidskati. (I still can't believe I caved in to Athilda) Athilda claimed that she would meet us there and I really didn't think much on it. We rode in one of those old wind cars I've only ever heard about and never seen. It requires that the driver channel wind magic in order to power the vehicle. I heard that some wind mages back in the day managed to make small fortunes by busing people around in the things. Mother drove and her formidable skills with wind magic proved to be more than adequate to the task.

About ten minutes after we left, everything went wrong. The car came to a sudden screeching halt.

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"Was that you?" I said turning to look my mother in the eyes.

Mother shook her head, "No, it's like we slammed into a brick wall."

"Damn it," I swore, "I have a bad feeling about this."

Mother cursed, "Norns preserve us."

I tried to open the door, but it wouldn't so much as budge. The roof of the car peeled back and the most terrifying creature I had ever seen appeared in the opening. It was vaguely man-shaped, but that was where the resemblance ended. Its skin was pitch-black, it had razor-sharp teeth that protruded about an inch from its mouth, its eyes glowed-red with malice and did I mention the smell? I have never smelled anything so foul in my entire life. Image the stench of rotten meat and magnify that by about a hundred and you might come close.

The creature lunged for me but it stopped midair then suddenly went flying backwards out of the car and into a nearby building, collapsing a wall in the process. I turned to look at Mother, "Thanks."

Mom shook her head, "That wasn't me." she muttered.

"No," a nearby voice said. "It was me."

My heart nearly jumped out of my chest when I heard the voice. Fortunately, it turned out to be Athilda who seemed to materialize in the seat beside me a moment later. I learned later that she had been there the whole time.

With a flicker of her hands all the doors in the car suddenly swung open. "Hurry," she said, "We haven't much time. More will soon be upon us."

"What the Hel was that thing?" I asked as we scrambled out of the car.

Athilda shook her head, "A Dokkálfur," she said, "Speak later."

I nodded and started running. Mother and Athilda were close on my tail. We ran for nearly two city blocks, before the dark elves caught up to us from behind.

"Brigit," Athilda called, "Get Aryanna away now."

"I can't," mother called back; "Something is preventing me from casting a travel spell."

Athilda gritted her teeth, "Then run, child."

"No way," I said cutting in, "We'll stand and fight beside you."

"Run, child," Athilda commanded, "You are not ready to repel such an onslaught."

Mother and I still hesitated.

"Go," Athilda commanded and turned to face the horde of beastly dark elves.

As much as I hated to admit it Athilda was right. Running went against all my instincts, but to butcher an old phrase common sense proved to be the better part of valor. If I stayed I'd prove to

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be a distraction to Athilda. Yes, I had tremendous power, but I'd yet to consciously control that power. Each time I've used my power, it had been done out of mindless desperation. I might be able to defend myself, but I doubt I could do so without harming either my mother or Athilda.

As I ran, I looked back and watched in amazement as Athilda waved her hand and dozens of Dokkálfur, collapsed to the ground dead. Hundreds came at her and were repelled by her Spirit-shield, and hundreds died as she unleashed earth, fire, wind and water magic against her attackers.

I was so mesmerized by Athilda's display of power that I almost didn't notice when a group of dark elves appeared right in front of me. I caught myself before I tumbled into them, but it was pretty close. The nearest dark elf smiled menacingly with a mouth of crooked and jagged teeth, and advanced upon me. My magic must have sensed that I was in danger because I could feel it beginning to surface. "Crap," I muttered, "Mom, get down now!"

Mother leapt to the ground just as a torrent of raw magical energy came gushing out of every pore in my body and collided with the creatures of darkness before me. I watched in shocked awe as the magic took on a mind of its own. It soon overwhelmed the dark elves and tore them apart leaving nothing behind as if the creatures had never been there. The magic overwhelmed each and every one of them, until there was only one left. Somehow the final Dokkálfur managed to avoid the same fate as its companions. My magic died down, and I fell to my knees in a near exhausted state.

The final elf let out the most horrid screeching howl I had ever heard and charged straight at me. I tried to bring my magic to bear, but nothing happened. When the creature was within a few feet of me, a white clad figure appeared out of nowhere and intercepted it.

Darkness closed in my senses and I collapsed into an exhausted heap before falling into unconsciousness.



## PART 9

### Yordag 28. Harpa (cont'd)

I came awake with a start fully expecting to find a horde of Dark Vattir hunched over me ready to tear my throat out. What I found was a stark contrast to what I had feared. I lay atop a padded bench in what appeared to be a rather large foyer. I cast my eyes to either side and took stock of my situation. Mom lay sprawled unconscious on a bench similar to my own and I initially believed the room to be empty save for my mother and myself. After my eyes swept the room one more time, I noted the presence of four women, two on each end of the foyer, standing at a guard position.

Warily, I stood and walked towards my mother's bench. Quietly, I sat down beside her, and gently shook her shoulder. Mom came awake with a start and I nearly fell off the bench so surprised was I by her reaction. "Hel," mother muttered, "Aryanna don't do that." I grimaced at her use of the female name.

"What happened?" I asked, "Where are we?"

Mother yawned loudly, "We're in the dingha. As for what happened it might be better if you tell me what you remember."

I briefly told mom what I remembered and from that she was able to fill me in.

"Your rescuer was a Lejosálfur," mother said quietly, "After he killed that single dark elf, another Light Elf appeared, this one a woman. She joined forces with Athilda and together they obliterated the remaining Dark Elves."

"Light Elves and Dark Elves," I muttered, "This has gotten a lot bigger than I think even Athilda expected."

Mom sighed, "Goddess, no one has even seen a Dokkálfur in hundreds of years and we get attacked by a whole horde of them. What do you think it means?"

I shook my head, "I don't know, but I think it all has to do with that whatever I stumbled upon that night my magic awakened." I sighed then looked about suddenly aware of the absence of my ancestor, "Where is Athilda?"

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"She speaks before the council," mother said.

"Without me?" I asked a touch of anger entering into my voice.

Mother shook her head and rolled her eyes, "Relax, Athilda can't have you accepted as an initiate without you actually being there."

I sighed and was about to speak when a door on the far end of the foyer swung open and a woman who looked to be in her early forties appeared. She looked right at me, scowled, and then started walking toward us. "Are you the Scion of house Le Fey who has come seeking admittance into the Order of the Seidkona?" she asked, glaring down at me.

I stood and looked her right in the eyes, smiled with false cheer and replied, "Why yes, Spellbinder, I am."

She looked from me then back to my mother, scowled again and said, "Come this way. You stay, Enchantress."

Mother glared at the woman but stayed put as I followed her to the other side of the foyer and through the door which she had exited. I found myself within a large circular room with Athilda standing in the center looking up. A raised platform circled the entire room and seated around the platform were about twenty robed women. "The Seidskati," I muttered feeling suddenly very uncomfortable as the door swung shut behind me. I briefly looked back and noted two figures standing near the doorway.

Athilda's eye suddenly met my own and I walked across the room to stand beside her. I looked up at all the women and was startled by the relative youth of some of the Seidskati members. A full dozen of the women looked to be middle-aged, one woman looked like she could have been in her late thirties or early forties; the rest looked to be roughly Athilda's age and perhaps a bit younger. Of course, they were all Spellbinders, so they had to be centuries old.

"Young one," an elderly woman said, "Do you seek admittance into the Council of the Seidkona?"

I look defiantly up at the woman, "If you're asking if I want to be a Spellbinder then my answer is yes."

"The circumstances of your awakening are most... unusual. Your induction must be discussed." she said, frowning down at me.

"Why?" I retorted back angrily, "Is it because I was born a man?"

The woman frowned down at me, "Silence child. I have no patience for such irrelevance."

I glared back at the woman, but didn't reply. "Are you a fool?" Athilda whispered furiously.

I said nothing, merely glared at my ancestor angrily.

"Such defiance," a woman said lifting the hood from her face. Norns, it was Agnes Bernauer, "Save for her hair she is the spitting image of your daughter, Athilda. Truly, Lilith would be proud to call this one her descendant."

Another Spellbinder stood and removed her hood. Holy Goddesses it was Elizabeth Bathory, "I



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don't know what you stand to gain by bringing this thing before us, Athilda, but I find no reason to accept this abomination into our ranks."

"Don't be a fool, Elizabeth," Athilda retorted, "To deny Aryanna admittance would be to deny our own history. One of those who helped found this order was born a man."

Elizabeth narrowed her eyes, "Lies, Athilda. Are you so desperate to force this creature upon us that you need to rewrite our history in order to do so?"

"Fool, you are barely more than half a millennium old and you dare question me? I was a child when the order was established. I have lived to see it grow from a few dozen to hundreds of thousands." Athilda said angrily.

Ol' Lizzy was seething with anger, "Who then? Sister Le Fey. Which of the founders was born a man?"

Athilda smiled sardonically, "My mother of course. Morgana Le Fey."

The entire room fell silent. Morgana Le Fey was probably the most well-known Spellbinders of all time. She had defeated some of history's most notorious villains including Ambrosius Aurelianus and Myrddin Wyllt. To claim that Morgana had been born a man was sure to give rise to heated debate and it did. The entire room erupted into chaos as nearly everyone save for me and Athilda started yelling at once.

One of the figures standing by the door joined Athilda and me in the center of the room. I gasped as she drew close. I had barely even noticed her when I had first entered the room. To tell the truth, I have no idea how I could have so casually walked by her without taking more notice. She was absolutely the most beautiful thing I had ever laid eyes on. She wasn't human, of course. She was one of the Light Elves who had come to our rescue earlier that same day. When I first saw myself in the mirror after my transformation, I had imagined that I looked like a Light Elf. There was no comparison, my beauty paled in comparison to hers.

She smiled then cast her eyes above at the bickering Spellbinders and she looked upon me and her eyes displayed a sadness that made me want to weep. "Peace," she spoke softly. Her voice was barely more than a whisper, but somehow it permeated the entire room. Everyone fell silent and all eyes turned to focus upon the Elven Lady.

"Friends," she said, "Athilda Le Fey speaks sooth. I was witness to the rebirth of Morgana Le Fey."

For a moment, the Lejosálfur's proclamation was met only with silence. Elizabeth was the first to speak, "High Lady," she said angrily, "This matter does not concern the Alfur."

The Elven Lady smiled sadly, but when she spoke she sounded angry, "Fool. Seek not to contend with me. Thou art but a child in thy understanding of the Seidh. It was the Lejosálfur that granted thy forebears the power of the Seidh and should we see fit we would take thy power away. Choose thy words wisely, Seidkona."

Lizzy glared angrily, but remained silent. Agnes Bernauer smiled triumphantly and spoke, "Sisters, I call for a vote upon the matter."

The whole process was long and drawn out, due mostly to the excessive pomp and protocol that the

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Seidskati seem to love, but when all was said and done, seventeen Spellbinders plus Athilda voted in favor of my admittance as an initiate. Only Elizabeth and two others voted against me. One of the women looked oddly familiar, but I couldn't quite place her.

As the Council disbanded and I found myself surrounded by several congratulatory senior Spellbinders. I thanked them politely then looked about to find the Elven Lady who seemed to have vanished. I spotted her as she was about to leave, and excused myself to chase after the Lejosálfur.

I caught up to her, just in time. "Lady," I called after her.

The Elven woman turned to face me and smiled, "Well met, Scion of House Le Fey."

I felt my nipples harden as I locked gazed with the Fae Lady. Goddesses she was beautiful. I felt a brief urge to tear her clothes off and have sex with her there and then, but I forced such thoughts out of my mind, "High Lady, I wanted to thank you."

Irritation passed across the Elf's face and she laughed, "Thank the Matriarch of thy House. It was to her that I owed my debt." and once more she turned to leave.

"Wait," I said.

"What seekest thou, mortal?" she asked.

I don't know why it was so important, but for some reason I felt I needed to know. If only I had kept my damn mouth shut, "What's your name?"

She smiled, "To what ends wouldst thou be willing to go for such knowledge, mortal?"

I shrugged, "I guess I would owe you a favor." Okay that was stupid I admit it. What can I say? I'm used to dealing with mortal women. To be fair I've used it as a pick up line in the past with a small measure of success.

The Elven Lady was almost giddy with glee, "Very well, mortal. I accept thy terms. My name is Hervor."

My jaw dropped and I watched in stunned disbelief as the Queen of the Elves walked away followed by an Elven man dressed in white.

"That was ill-advised," Athilda said seemingly from out of nowhere. "A debt owed to the Fae is not something to be taken lightly."

I shook my head, "It's just a favor."

Athilda smiled sadly, "A favor that will come back to haunt you."



I kid you not, for the next couple of hours, Athilda simply stood and talked. Of course, it didn't help that just about every Spellbinder present just had to talk with her and me by extension. I really

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don't care to repeat any of the conversations, mostly because absolutely none of it appealed to me. I was like an outsider who had been given membership in an exclusive club. I didn't have anything in common with any of these people. Fortunately, most of the people seemed content to jabber away with Athilda and leave me alone after a brief exchange.

Most but not all. The one exception happened to be a woman by the name of Janice Claymore. She seemed friendly enough, but I really had no idea what to say to her. Mostly I just answered questions about my life and tried not to sound too stupid. She didn't go outright and say it, but I got the feeling her intentions had more to do with forming an alliance with House Le Fey than any real interest in me. I mostly just played stupid and did my best not to give her any definite answers.

Finally, after what seemed an eternity Athilda stated it was time to leave. I gladly followed her out of the circular room and found my mother waiting impatiently in the lobby.

"What took so long?" she asked warily.

"Athilda had to stay and chat," I said more than a little irritated.

Athilda sighed warily and gave me a irritated look in return, "I had to keep up appearance, child. Tradition is very important."

I sighed warily, "Oh boy, I'm so looking forward to future meetings."

Mother smiled, "So that means they've admitted you."

I sighed warily, "Yeah, whether or not that's a good thing remains to be seen." I grimaced then added, "Let's just get out of here."

We exited from the doors opposite the Council Room and almost immediately found ourselves bombarded with a sight far more horrible than the Dokkálfur from before. Reporters, almost immediately converged on us and started asking all kinds of questions. Although, Athilda seemed to be their main focus, a few reporters did seem interested in what Mother and I had to say. Fortunately, Athilda acted swiftly. She took both of our hands and called upon wind magic to whisk us back to her estates.

And that was more or less my day. I was so tired when we got back that I just collapsed in bed. I didn't even spend any time masturbating, which is saying something considering how horny I've been lately.



## PART 10

### Freydag 29. Harpa

My face has been all over the news since it became known out that I had been accepted as an initiate before the Seidskati. Especially considering the special circumstances behind my acceptance. It's very unusual for such a matter to come before the Seidskati. Usually it was only required that three Spellbinders vote on my admittance.

Oh, and guess what? Apparently, there's a difference between an initiate and an apprentice. Although an initiate has been accepted into the Council they have yet to be accepted by a mistress. An apprentice is an initiate who has been accepted by a mistress. No big worry on that front. I know a mistress who happens to be looking for an apprentice. I bet you'll never guess who. Yep, it's Athilda. Surprised? No? Me neither. I still don't trust the woman. She has to have some ulterior motive for helping me.

Apparently, it's customary for Spellbinder accepting a new apprentice to host a big to-do, called a Naming Ceremony. In which, Athilda will name me as her apprentice and grant me the use of the Le Fey name. Why can't these people do anything small? Athilda is having a special gown made for me for the occasion and both Mother and Penelope seem to think it's going to be wonderful. I just can't wait until I'm a full blown Spellbinder and I can get out from under Athilda's wing. Maybe then I might be able to do some good with my powers and the influence that the Le Fey name will likely grant me.

Of course the people on the news were making all sorts of speculation on the subject. Some seemed to think that another descendant of House Le Fey would take me on as an apprentice. Some even speculated that Athilda herself would take me on as an apprentice. The most startling thing was the lies they were telling about my female identity. Apparently, I'm the illegitimate daughter of Thurston Steenberg. Yeah, you read that right I'm my own daughter. 'Arianna's' mother is one Alicia Meyer.

I have to give whoever came up with my 'life' story credit. I actually did date Alicia Meyer for a little while back when I was in High School and it is entirely possible she could have had my child. Her family moved away after we'd been dating for a few months and I never saw her again. The news

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cast went on to say that Alicia died giving birth and that her parents put 'me' up for adoption. The rest was some gibberish about my years spent languishing in an orphanage and some crap about Athilda hunting me down when my magic started to surface.

And of course there was no mention whatsoever of the attack from the Dokkálfur. I guess Athilda was keeping that under wraps just as she was keeping my true identity secret. Angrily, I flicked the ancient teleprojector off, then went to find my ancestor.

I found her in her office. "The lies have to stop," I said stomping into the room.

Athilda sighed warily, "Aryanna."

"Don't call me that!" I spat, "That's not my name!"

"Thurston," she said calmly, "To what are you referring?"

I shook my head and grimaced, "Don't pretend like you don't know. It has been all over the news. All about the tragic life of Aryanna Meyer."

Athilda sighed, "What would you have me do, child? It is not as if I have a choice."

"By all the names of Freya why not?" I said, "I won't have you suppress the truth. The Spellbinders have been doing that for too long."

"It was the Seidskati's decision. I was overruled in this matter," Athilda said quietly.

I shook my head, "Athilda their story isn't going to hold up under any scrutiny. Once someone figures out that I don't have a daughter the whole thing will fall apart at the seams."

Athilda sighed, "The story will stand up to the scrutiny."

"What kind of dream land are you living in that makes you think that people won't see through that fairy tale?" I said seething with anger.

Athilda looked me in the eyes and said quite simply, "Worry not over the details. This is not the first time the Council has had to fabricate an identity."

"Fuck, you people have some nerve." I spat and walked off.



On a much more mundane note. I've figured out why I've been so sexually aroused as of late. My period started today. Weird, that's a phrase I never thought I'd ever have to say... er write. I'm by no means an expert on the subject, but apparently I've been suffering from PMS the last little while. According to Mom, PMS can start up to eleven days before my period and will last until I start menstruating. Mother mentioned I might have been easily aroused and I sort of put two and two together. She listed a bunch of other symptoms and now that I think about it I do remember having some of them. Mom says I've been moody, but I don't see it. I can't believe women go through this shit every month. Whatever, I guess I'll have to learn to live with it.

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A small side note. My journal is still missing. Where in the name of Hel could it be?



### **Laurdag 1. Skerpla**

Oh, Goddesses I can't believe it. The whole world knows I was born a man. Before I get ahead of myself let me explain what happened.

Penelope had paid me a visit when the door suddenly flew open. "Thurston," Mom said from the doorway using my real name for the first time in days. "You'll never believe what's on the news."

Penelope and I exchanged glances then followed mother through the house and into the large where Athilda kept the teleprojector. "For those of you just joining us. A rather odd bit of news has surfaced concerning the recently initiated Spellbinder by the name of Aryanna of House Le Fey." The ghostly image of a female reporter said over the teleprojector.

I felt a cold shiver creep up my spine. This couldn't be good. "According to a source close to the Billionaire Spellbinder Athilda Le Fey, the young woman, known by Athilda's household staff as Lady Aryanna, was in fact born Thurston Steenberg, a man who went missing earlier this month."

"Shit," I muttered, "How the hell did they find out?" After the words left my mouth I realized Penelope was in the room and quickly turned to gauge her reaction.

She simply stared at me a look of surprise on her face. I wanted to say something to her, but the reporter continued and my focus once more returned to the teleprojector. "...from a diary that she claims was written by Thurston himself."

"Frigg," I swore, "That's what happened to my journal."

"I think Athilda needs to see this." mother said suddenly.

"Fine," I grumbled still feeling angry with my ancestor.

"Is it true?" Penelope said after Mother left.

I bit my lips and looked her in the eyes, "Yeah, it's true."

Penelope smiled a bit awkwardly, "This certainly does explain some things."

"I wanted to tell you, but..." I started to say but was cut short by Penelope.

"Don't." She said quietly, "We barely know each other. I would have done the same were our situations reversed."

"Goddesses," I muttered, "Where have you been all my life?" I said then I kissed her passionately on the lips. We briefly broke for air then Penelope returned my kiss. Had Athilda and my mother not chosen that moment to appear I'm not sure I could have kept myself from tearing Penelope's clothes off. In retrospect, it was probably a good thing they appeared when they did.

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"Holy Hel; If I didn't know better I'd swear you were pair of hormonal teenagers," mother said as she entered the room.

"It's the only time we've ever been caught kissing," I said defensively.

Mother laughed, "Oh, please. You two are about as subtle as a train wreck."

"As much as I've enjoyed this conversation," Athilda said dryly, "There are more important matters that need to be discussed."

I folded my arms across my chest, "What exactly is there to discuss? You and your Council will likely find a way to suppress the truth anyway."

Athilda's eyes gleamed with what I could have sworn was a small flash of mischief, "The Seidskati would most likely attempt to do so, but I cannot be responsible for the actions of an initiate who has yet to be accepted by a mistress."

I looked up at Athilda shocked that my ancestor would ever make such a statement, "So what I just march on out the gates and tell the first person I see that the news stories are true?"

Athilda shook her head, "I couldn't stop you should you choose to do so. There are a number of reporters waiting outside the gates. It would be most unfortunate if you were to speak with one of them," she said with an exaggerated sigh then walked off.

Mother was strongly opposed to it, but I eventually decided that I would rather have the world know the truth than live a lie. Penelope would only say that she would support me no matter what I chose to do. So, I made my way outside started toward the outside gate. As I approached the gate, the reporters on the other side started talking all at once in a horrendous mish-mash of indistinguishable gibberish. When I finally got close enough I spoke, "I'm here to address the rumors concerning my identity."

The reporters were silent for a moment then they all started talking again. I waited several moments for silence then continued, "The allegations that I am Thurston Olaf Steenberg are all true."

The reporters went into a frenzy after my pronouncement. They asked all sorts of questions, but I ignored every one of them. When their questions died down again; I continued detailing how I had transformed covering only the transformation itself and how it was initiated and not the events surrounding them. When I finished I thanked the reporters for their time and turned to leave. They shouted after me, but I ignored them and made my way back into the house.

### **Manadag 3. Skerpla**

My period is finally over! I feel as if storm clouds have parted above my head. Things are looking up. Of course, that could be because of what me and Penelope and I did today. I won't go into the details, but damn sex as a woman is so much better than as a man. Penelope is a wildcat in the sack. I admit I was a bit clumsy at first, but after she showed me the ropes I think I did pretty well.

On a more depressing note there's been a media frenzy over my 'bizarre behavior' at the gates of Athilda's estates the other day. Opinion varies, but the one thing just about everyone seems to agree on is that I wasn't born a man as I claimed. Most of the news stations claim I'm either mentally

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unstable or simply lying. The Seidskati has yet to speak on the subject, but I highly doubt they'll confirm my pronouncement. At least I know I was telling the truth.





## PART 11

**NOTE:** Due to reasons that will soon become very obvious I have very little recollection of the following events. For this reason I have included another entry from my mother's journal to help give the reader a greater grasp of the events.

### **Freydag 8-7**

Goddesses, they have my child. I feel so helpless lying here doing nothing. I need to be doing something. It's painful to even think about it.

It all started at the Naming Ceremony which took place earlier today in a large public meeting hall that was a short way from Athilda's estates. Aryanna was wearing the most beautiful white gown that made her look like a Princess out of some Fairy Tale. Athilda and Aryanna greeted guests while Penelope and I were relegated to sit at a table and wait.

Finally, after sitting around for nearly an hour, Athilda walked into the center of the room followed closely by Aryanna. "Thurston Olaf Steenburg," my ancestor said with a faint smile. There were hushed murmurs throughout the room. Athilda placed her hand upon my son's cheek and smiled warmly, "Descendant, four generations removed, great-grandchild of my beloved daughter Lilith," There were more murmurs throughout the crowd. I think Aryanna's jaw must have fallen to the floor. Of course, mine couldn't be far off. I had no idea Athilda was my great-grandmother. I had always believed my relation to her was much more distant.

"Child, you have sought admittance into the Council and have been found worthy of the Seidkona. You show great promise. Thus have I chosen to take you on as my apprentice." she said taking hold of a large strand of my daughter's hair and holding it in front of her face. Athilda smiled, then a bright flash seemed to encompass Aryanna's face. I couldn't really tell from this far away, but I knew that the strand would have turned a metallic gray.

"By this mark the world shall know you as my apprentice." she said. "On this occasion I believe it fitting to also bestow upon you a new name. After careful deliberation, I have chosen to so name you Aryanna Morgana Le Fey. Aryanna a name of your own choosing and Morgana after the founder of our House." More muttering rippled throughout the crowd.

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Athilda was silent for only a moment before she turned to the crowd and spoke, "I would like to thank you all for coming. As thanks, House Le Fey would like to invite you to stay for refreshments and live entertainment." Aryanna followed Athilda out from the center of the room to be seated at the table with Penelope and me.

"Well played, Athilda," a woman's voice said nearby. "With just a few short words you've managed to legitimize Aryanna's claims about being born a woman and named her a potential heir."

Athilda smiled, but I could tell she was irritated, "Olivia," she said, "For only having been recently accepted into the Seidskati, you seem to understand the game better than most."

Olivia smiled, "My mother was a great tutor."

"Most unfortunate, the death of your mother," Athilda replied, "You stood to gain much from her passing."

Olivia smile briefly transformed into an angry scowl, "It seems others benefited more from my mother's passing than I," she said, then stalked off.

"Norns," Aryanna said suddenly, "Why didn't I see it before?"

"Aryanna," I said, "Who is that woman?"

"She's a member of the Seidskati. She was one of three women who voted against me." She shook her head then turned to our ancestor, "Athilda," she said, "Would you say Olivia bears a strong resemblance to her mother?"

"Yes, child," Athilda said, "Why do you ask?"

Aryanna grimaced, "The woman that attacked me at the office building bears a striking resemblance to Olivia over there."

"Brigit," Athilda said suddenly turning to face me, "Get Aryanna and Penelope out of here now! I doubt Olivia would have risked revealing herself if she didn't have something planned."

"What about you?" I said feeling a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach.

Athilda shook her head, "I will provide a distraction should it prove necessary."

The whole thing made me feel uneasy, but I did as Athilda said and led Penelope and Aryanna out of the assembly hall. Had I listened to that sense of unease I think things would have turned out much better. At the very least a life could have been saved. When we stood to leave, I felt as if everyone's eyes were on us. I tried to act casual as I led Thor and Penelope towards the doors, but I couldn't escape the feeling that everyone knew what we intended, which was absolutely ridiculous. Olivia and perhaps a few cohorts were the only ones we needed to worry about.

Once we were outside the Hall I called upon my magic and started laying the weave for a travel spell, but the spell quickly unraveled and I realized that a spell-net had been laid to prevent anyone from escaping by magical means. I cursed under my breath and stopped for a moment to think. "We'll have to find another means to escape." I said, "I can't cast a travel spell."

I looked about and noted a service door. I used a powerful gust of wind magic to blow it open then

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I led them through several more sets of service doors and an access corridor before finding an emergency exit. I knew that opening the door would trigger the alarm, but at that point I really didn't care. The safety of Aryanna was paramount. I could not let that scheming bitch get a hold of my child. As the door swung open, I knew we had fallen right into a trap. I tried to close the door but a hand grasped it on the other side and prevented it from closing. I reached into myself ready to summon my magic, but a hand waved a gun in my face destroying any hopes of escape. The door swung wide open and four rather large men appeared in the doorway each of them holding a gun.

The leader, a tall dark-haired man who under normal circumstances I would have found to be quite handsome, motioned for us to file out the door. Not seeing any other choice I complied, and Aryanna and Penelope soon followed. "We have the freak and two stragglers," the leader said into a handheld radio.

"Take the freak. Kill the others." a woman's voice said over the radio.

The leader brought his gun to bear and pointed it right at my heart. Before he could pull the trigger, I summoned my magic and hurled my fist at his jaw. I supplemented the blow with earth magic. It did its job, and the leader fell to the ground unconscious. I turned on the nearest attacker, but before I could call forth another spell I felt something slam into my shoulder and chest and I crumpled to the ground.

I heard Aryanna scream Penelope's name before I fell into unconsciousness.



"Brigit," a voice said through the haze.

I opened my eyes and noted the woman standing above me. She looked familiar, but I couldn't place her. "Brigit," the woman said again and suddenly reality reasserted itself and my memories came back to me in a rapid succession of violent flashes, "Holy Hel," I said to the woman who I now knew to be Athilda, "They have Aryanna."

"I know, child," Athilda said angrily.

"I have to get up, I have to..." I started to say but was cut short.

Athilda shook her head, "You have been badly injured. I have healed much of the damage, but you have lost much blood. You must rest. Help will arrive soon."

I tried to sit up, but realized how weak I really was, "What about Penelope?"

Athilda sighed, "I do not know."

"Norns," I said angrily, "Make those bastards pay."

"I intend to, child." Athilda said then stood and disappeared with a surge of magic and a gust of wind.



## PART 12

### Laurdag 8. Skerpla

Where do I even start? I find myself for a loss of words and yet I feel that I need to write something, anything, if only to help myself understand yesterday's events. I feel so angry and why the Hel shouldn't I? My life has been permanently and irrevocably changed. I can't even be sure if my thoughts are even mine anymore. Maybe putting these thoughts to paper will help me put my anger and despair aside. It has helped in the past.

Apparently, it all started at my Naming Ceremony, but I don't really remember what happened. The doctor said there's a good chance I never will. Blunt trauma to the head can do that to a person. It's just as well; I don't really think I want to remember.

I don't care to go over the details, but according to mother, Athilda managed to both confirm my identity and name me as a potential heir. Apparently Athilda is my great-great-grandmother. Oh, and I guess my name is now officially Aryanna Morgana Le Fey. After, some sort of confrontation with Olivia de Clisson, (more about her in a while), Athilda became suspicious enough to have Mother, Penelope and me make a break for it.

That's when we were confronted by four goons. Mom didn't fare to well, she was shot repeatedly, but Athilda managed to get to her in time. After Mom was shot I was abducted by the four goons and Penelope came along for the ride. The first thing I do remember was the pain in my head. It felt as if a pair of dwarves had taken to using it as an anvil. I opened my eyes and found myself in near as I could tell a dimly lit basement. I could hear dripping water and I felt a cumbersome weight on my wrists and ankles.

Slowly, I sat up and was reminded again of the weight on my wrists and ankles. I examined them and noted that both my legs and arms had been shackled to the floor. I looked around and noted a circle had been drawn around me with all sorts of archaic Norse runes that glowed with a soft blue light.

"Freya preserve me," I muttered. I didn't have any recollection of how I had gotten in this predicament, but I did know what the circle was for. It was a circle of imprisonment, usually used to prevent a rogue magic-user from using her powers. They had recently been featured in one of those

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big Kings- burgh Blockbusters.

"Ah," a woman's voice said from behind. "Finally."

I heard footsteps and a woman that looked vaguely familiar stepped into sight, "I apologize if my friends were too rough. They don't follow orders very well."

I looked up at the woman suspiciously, "Who the Hel are you?"

The woman smiled, "Poor dear," she sighed, "Did the bump on your head leave you a bit confused?"

"Look lady," I said, "I don't know what you want from me, but if you think chaining me up in a circle of imprisonment is going to get my cooperation you've got another thing coming."

The woman's smile turned malicious, "You are nothing more than a pawn, freak. At first I was content to see you dead, but when I found out Athilda intended to name you her apprentice I couldn't resist fitting you into my plans. Any apprentice would have sufficed, but your part in the death of my mother has guaranteed your place here." she raged.

I grimaced, "I knew you looked familiar. Goddesses; you look just like her. You were there at the Seidskati meeting too. You voted against my induction."

My captor smiled, "Very good," she said with mock praise, "Do you remember our little introduction earlier today?"

I shook my head, "Lady, I have no idea what you're talking about."

The woman almost sounded motherly as she spoke, "Pity, I'm Olivia de Clisson." she said then her expression turned dark, "The woman you murdered was my mother, Jeanne de Clisson. Do you remember now?"

I shook my head, "Fuck off," I said and spat in her face.

Olivia grimaced and wiped my spit from her face, "Disgusting freak, didn't your whore mother ever teach you any manners?"

I glared up at my captor, but didn't say a word.

"Reginald," Olivia said suddenly, "Prepare our guest. I have some things to take care of."

I heard footsteps from behind and then there was darkness as the pain in my head exploded.



## PART 13

### Laurdag 8. Skerpla (cont'd)

I don't have any recollection of ever actually coming awake. One moment everything was dark, the next I was standing at the entrance in the Office building I worked had at. It didn't occur to me that I no longer worked there. I was in my male body again, but I didn't stop to question it. Everything was as it should be or so I believed. I looked down at my feet and noted that I wasn't wearing any shoes, which did seem odd, but for the life of me I couldn't fathom why they would be missing. I shrugged my shoulders and moved to the elevators. I had no idea why, but I sensed that I needed to get to the top floor. Something important was happening there. Something that I had to put a stop to.

Once inside the elevator, I noted the large line of switches for each floor. It seemed odd that there should be so many. A small voice in the back of my head told me there should be only five switches since the office building I worked in only had five floors, but that was ludicrous. Obviously, there were many more than five floors. Otherwise there wouldn't have been so many switches. With some trepidation, I flicked the switch for the top floor. The doors briefly closed then instantly slammed back open. Before me was the top floor.

I stepped out of the elevator and found myself face to face with a rather unpleasant looking man who was straddling a rather large automatic weapon. The man swore something in what sounded like German, and leveled his gun at me face. "Arms up," he said with a heavy accent and lifted a two-way radio to his mouth. He muttered the name "Anton" into the handset then started to say something in German.

I saw my opportunity and took it. While the German's attention was on the radio, I balled my hand into a fist and decked him in the face. The German collapsed to the ground and I grabbed his gun and radio. Then I dragged him into the closest office. I looked for something to tie him up, but there was nothing inside the office. So I tore his shirt off, and tore it into to strips and used it to tie him up. I didn't know if it would hold, but it was better than nothing. When I finished up, I dragged him behind the desk so that he would at least be partially hidden.

I was struck then by the wrongness of the whole situation. I couldn't escape the feeling that I was

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enacting the plot of an action movie. I shrugged it off then made my way to the door, as my hand reached for the door knob I was struck by sudden idea. I pulled the German's radio out from my pocket where I had placed it and spoke into it, "Hey Anton," I said, "You still there?"

"Who is this?" A man's voice said over the radio.

I scowled down at the radio and said, "I'm the guy that just took down one of your goons."

I could almost see the man scowl as he spoke, "Why should I care? Just one less thug to share the ransom with. You are just one against many. I hardly think you can take us all down."

I growled, "I wouldn't be too sure of that."

Anton laughed, "Such confidence! You Nylander Cowboys. You all think you're John Wayne."

Briefly, I considered saying something about being partial to Roy Rogers, but the comment seemed a bit inappropriate. Who the Hel was Roy Rogers anyway? "You're next," I said instead then switched off the radio.

I know I had just given myself away, but I needed to know what I was up against. Anton had given me two pieces of information. First, his numbers were so great that he saw me as little threat; second, he was holding someone or something ransom in exchange for money. I stood there for a moment unsure of my next move. I wanted Anton to know that I was coming for him, but I knew he would be looking for me. I looked about the room and my eyes locked on the air duct in the top corner of the room and almost immediately discarded the idea. I was simply too big to fit into the hole. Then I looked down at my hourglass figure and laughed at the notion. How could I have thought I was too big to fit through such a hole? I could easily squeeze into such an opening.

I moved across the room grabbed a chair by the desk as I went. I placed the chair under the vent then I forced the vent grating open and crawled up into the hole. As I was climbing into the air duct I scrapped my breasts against the side. It hurt like a mother, and the strangest thought popped into my head. Why was I suddenly a woman? Hadn't I been a man just a few moments ago? I shook my head against the absurdity. People just didn't just change from male to female at the blink of an eye. Of course, I had been a woman before.

Once, I had completed crawling into the vent, I did my best to close the grate behind me. Then, as quietly as I could, I crawled through the vents and made my way to where I instinctively knew Anton was waiting. I didn't question how I knew where Anton was, I simply knew.

I stopped just past an intersection of ducts and peered down into the room below. Sure enough, a man with black hair and a neatly trimmed beard was holding a gun to a woman's throat while another man was tinkering around with what looked to be a safe. Somehow I knew the man with the beard was Anton. I wasn't sure who she was, but the woman he held looked oddly familiar. I couldn't place her, but I had a feeling she was why I was there.

Without hesitation I kicked the vent grate open and I leapt down into the room. I landed on my feet and brought my gun to bear against Anton. "Let her go," I growled.

Anton laughed, "Why would I do such a thing? Drop your gun or the girl gets a bullet in the head."

I hesitated for a moment then dropped the automatic to the ground. Anton removed his gun from

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the woman's throat and pointed it right at me. "You're far too trusting." he said then his finger squeezed the trigger and a bullet slammed into my shoulder.

I collapsed to the ground and waited for Anton to take the killing shot. He came over and stood over me with the gun and was about to pull the trigger when everything froze.

"Aryanna," a voice said suddenly. It was the woman, "This isn't real."

I sighed weakly, "Penelope?"

"Yes," she said, "This is all an illusion. Olivia has invaded your mind. She's trying to make you her slave."

Whatever shroud had clouded my thoughts and memories lifted and I realized that Penelope was right. Suddenly, the pain in my shoulder was gone. I looked up at Anton, who stood frozen in place above me. I stood and hurled my fist into his chest. Anton's body flew against the wall and shattered into a thousand pieces.

I picked up the gun I had dropped and aimed it at the man tinkering with the safe. Bullets slammed into him and he shattered just as Anton had. Olivia de Clisson took his place. Olivia eyes turned to Penelope, "Fool! Your betrayal will cost you dearly." She raised her hand, and bolts of energy shot out from it. Penelope screamed and vanished amidst a great torrent of energy.

Olivia turned to me, "I would have you now if it weren't for that fool's interference."

I smiled grimly, "Sorry Bitch, this is my mind." I said focusing my will on Olivia.

A whirlpool of energy opened up behind her as I moved toward her. "What are you doing?" she demanded.

I gave her a toothy grin, "Why taking out the trash of course." Olivia took a step backwards and fell right into the whirlpool I had formed. She let out a scream and disappeared into the whirlpool which closed up behind her.

I took one last look around then I closed my eyes and willed myself to return to the real world.





## PART 14

### Laurdag 8. Skerpla (cont'd)

When I came awake it was to a world of excruciating pain, specifically in my head. The pain in my head had gotten much worse and I felt as if it were ready for liftoff. Remembering, where I was I did my best not to reveal that I was awake. Slowly I turned my head to get a better view of the room around me.

Penelope stood in the corner a shield of pure spirit magic surrounded her as she was pummeled by an onslaught of magic attacks loose on her by Olivia de Clisson. Penelope had hinted in the past that she was a mage, but never would I have dream that she was a Spirit Mage. Spirit magic is a rare and highly sought after power. Sadly, it's also completely useless for anything but defense and healing spells. As a Spellbinder Olivia was infinitely more powerful, sooner or later she would get through Penelope's shield and then it would be the end.

"Your task was completed. I would have released your sister and you would have been free. Why when I was so close did you betray me?" Olivia spat.

Penelope didn't answer. I could tell that the strain of prolonged use of her shield was getting to her. So, Penelope had been working for Olivia and had betrayed her. I didn't know what to think of that. I thought I might have been falling in love with her, but could I be sure her feelings for me were ever genuine? Penelope had saved me; I at least owed her a chance to explain herself.

Before I could even think to do anything Olivia broke through Penelope's shield and unleashed a massive fireball at her chest. "NOOOOO!" I screamed and called forth my magic. Pure, unfocused energy unleashed itself as it tore into everything in its path. I didn't care; I wanted Olivia dead for all the pain she had caused. Olivia was caught unaware and was thrown against a wall and her body fell limply to the ground against the onslaught of my magic. I didn't stop, even after Olivia was struck down, I wanted to destroy everything. Power rippled through the building and the roof started to fall inward and the walls buckled.

"Aryanna, don't," a voice said softly and I felt a hand touch my ankle. I looked down and saw Penelope. I relinquished my hold upon my magic and fell to my knees. Somehow Penelope was still alive though only just barely. Astonishingly she had managed to crawl all the way across the room

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toward me.

"Penelope," I muttered taking hold of her hand as tears cascaded down my face.

Her face was barely recognizable as it was covered with blisters and burnt flesh. Somehow she managed to smile, "I'm sorry," she muttered, "She had my sister; I had to. You have to understand."

"Penelope," I pleaded, "Don't talk. You can't you're too weak, you'll..."

Penelope coughed, "I'll die? It's too late for that now. I couldn't live with myself knowing I had betrayed you. Please find my sister. Olivia has her locked up in the basement somewhere. Please, she's the only family I have. Make sure she's safe."

I nodded, "I'll find her," I said, "I'll take care of her I promise."

She smiled again, "I'm so sorry. I..." she started to say but never finished. The light faded from her eyes, and I stared into the empty abyss that had taken its place. I wept and time seemed to come to a halt as I mourned the passing of the woman who had betrayed me.



I don't know how long I sat there clutching Penelope's lifeless body, but I think it must have been many hours. "Aryanna," a voice said softly.

I ignored the voice willing it to go away, but the voice persisted and I finally responded, "Please leave me be." I said.

"Aryanna," the voice repeated again, "You have to let go."

My mind came into focus and I looked up to find Athilda standing over me. I was startled to realize it was dark. Had I been there that long? Slowly, I released my hold on Penelope and stood. I looked about the rubble around me. I stood within the ruins of what was once a vast and lavish mansion. Only a few walls still stood. Had I caused such destruction? It seemed impossible that I could unleash such power.

I bit my lip, "How did you find me?"

Athilda smiled sadly, "I knew Olivia had to have taken you to one of her properties. I went from property to property until I found you."

I shook my head and laughed warily, "That's it? Somehow I expected you to have some miraculous means of tracking me." I said then paused for a moment. "Oh, Goddesses," I muttered, remembering my promise to Penelope. I rushed to the remains of what looked to be a stairwell and started throwing the rubble aside.

"Aryanna," Athilda said coming beside me, "What are you doing?"

I sunk to my knees and started weeping, "They had her sister, Athilda. She made me promise that I'd find her."

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"Step aside," Athilda said calmly.

I stood to comply and stepped out of the way. Athilda called forth her magic and lifted up the debris to reveal a stairwell beneath. I practically leapt down the stairs heedless of any danger, real or imagined. I rushed down a hallway and down several more sets of stairs before coming to a halt before a big steel door. I pounded on it, but there was no reply.

Athilda appeared from around a corner, and motioned for me to move out of the way. I complied and Athilda torched the hinges and lock, she swung the door open and we walked inside. Huddled in the corner was a girl who looked to be about eight years old. It occurred to me that I didn't even know the girl's name. Slowly I walked over to where the girl lay. "Hello," I said, "My name is Aryanna. I've come to take you someplace safe."

The girl looked me in the eyes, "My sister's coming for me. She said she would."

I smiled down at her trying my best not to burst into tears, "What's your name."

The girl looked at me and then to Athilda, but didn't say a word. I felt my eyes mist up a bit, "Penelope sent me to come find you. She and I are good friends. The woman in the doorway is Athilda, she's a friend too."

The girl looked up to me stubbornly, "Penelope said she would come."

I felt tears fall down my cheeks, "I'm sorry, honey." I said, "She couldn't make it."

The girl hesitated for a moment more then she took my hand and said, "My name is Marion." Then the three of us left the basement together. Shortly before we reached the surface, I picked Marion up and made sure to block her view of her sister's remains. I don't think Penelope would have wanted her sister to see her that way.

Two figures met us as we walked away from the ruins of the Olivia's estates. I was shocked to realize that it was Elizabeth Bathory and Agnes Bernauer. They were two I would have never expected to see together. "Well, Athilda," Elizabeth sneered, "Is it as you feared?"

Athilda shook her head warily and sighed, "It is. I was able to probe Olivia's mind before she passed to the other side. The Clisson's planned to overthrow the Council."

Agnes grimaced and frowned, "Did you learn anything else?"

Athilda shook her head, "The probe weakened her. I was not able to gain any more information before she passed."

Agnes sighed, "This does not bode well, old friend. Couldn't you have healed her?"

Athilda frowned, "She was too far gone."

Elizabeth almost looked relieved, "A pity," she said and looked from Agnes to Athilda then turned away and disappeared into the night.

Agnes shook her head and smiled warily, "There's more you're not telling us isn't there?" she said.

Athilda sighed, "Yes."

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Agnes frowned, "I would have thought that after all these years of cooperation between our houses that you would be more willing to trust me."

Athilda shook her head, "It is not an issue of whether or not I could trust Agnes Bernauer. It is whether or not I am actually speaking with her."

Agnes' eyebrows shot up, "Is it truly that serious?" she asked.

Athilda sighed warily, "I am afraid so."

Agnes smiled glumly, "We must devise a way to verify our identities."

"It would be wise." Athilda replied.

Agnes shook her head, "If you were anyone else I would think you were being overly cautious. The resources of House Bernauer at your disposal should you wish to use them."

Athilda smiled sadly, "I respectfully decline. I am unsure that I can trust those within my own house let alone the members of another house."

Agnes bit her lip, "I understand. " she said then suddenly seemed to take noticed of me, "My goodness your apprentice looks as if she is on the verge of collapse. I'll take care of things here. Take care of your apprentice, Athilda, I have a feeling we will be seeing great things from her."

"I-uh," I started to say but realized I was still holding Marion in my arms, "There are some things that need to be taken care of within the rubble."

Agnes gave me an odd look and I gestured to the child in my arms. Agnes reached over to the child and stroked her cheek. Marion fell asleep instantly, "The child sleeps. What would you have me do?"

I bit my lips, "There are some remains in the rubble. They belong to this girl's older sister..." I said trailing off as tears dripped down my cheeks.

Agnes smiled reassuringly, "Say no more. I will see to it that the girl's remains are treated with respect."

I nodded and mouthed the words "Thank you."

Athilda reached out for me to take her hand and I did so without hesitation, "Farewell, Agnes." Athilda said. Then she called upon her magic, and Athilda, and I, and the sleeping child I held in my arms disappeared.

That was hard to write. I'm still crying my eyes out. I think maybe I'll finish up later today.



## PART 15

### Laurdag 8. Skerpla (cont'd)

After we returned to Athilda's estates, we put Marion to bed. I wanted to speak with my mother, though Athilda tried to convince me to get some rest, but I refused. After some argument Athilda finally relented.

Athilda led me down through the house and the hallway that led to my room, but rather than entering my room she led me to the door to my mother's room.

The door cracked open and I could hear a voice speak "Hello?" It was Mother.

"Mom?" I called back then slammed the door the rest of way open and ran into the bedroom to find my mother lying atop a bed that was virtually identical to the one in my own room.

"Thank the Norns you're safe, " she said looking so weak and helpless laying there.

I felt fresh tears stream down my face as I knelt down beside the bed to embrace my mother, "Sif preserve." I muttered "What happened to you?"

Mom shook her head, "I was shot when they took you. If Athilda hadn't found me when she had, I'd probably be dead."

I shook my head and looked up at Athilda, "Why is she like this? Didn't you heal her?"

Athilda shook her head, "She was weak. Had I healed her completely the shock to her body would have been so great it may very well have killed her."

I bowed my head, "I guess there's still a lot I have to learn."

We spoke for quite a while after that mostly going over the details of what happened after I was abducted and Penelope's death. After a lengthy and tear-filled discussion. I finally asked the question that had been at the back of my mind since my rescue. "What's really going on, Athilda?"

Athilda grimaced, "What do you wish to know, child?"

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I folded my arms across my chest and said simply, "Everything you learned from Olivia."

Athilda seemed to age right before my eyes. She had always looked old, but now that age seemed to weigh her, "You know not what you ask."

I eyed my ancestor angrily, "I'm sick of this bullshit. I think I deserve to know after everything I've been through."

Athilda sighed warily, "Very well. When I finally found you, I noticed Olivia lying in the rubble not far from you. Leaving you alone with your grief, I decided to attempt a probe of Olivia's mind. What I learned was worse than I could have ever imagined. Everything that has happened has been leading up to a single event. One which I hoped I would never live to see, Ragnarok."

Cold shivers went down my spine as I looked at my ancestor aghast, "The Doom of the Gods?"

Athilda nodded, "Olivia and her mother were agents of the Jotun as were the Dark Elves who attacked us."

"Olivia was trying to rearrange my brain." I muttered, "No doubt she wanted me as an agent within your household."

Athilda smiled sadly and shook her head, "She already had an agent within House Le Fey. No, I'm afraid her intentions were much more malevolent. She wanted an assassin."

I looked at my ancestor blankly, "An assassin?" I asked, "I can't even control my own power. How could I ever be used as an assassin?"

Athilda grimaced, "Do not discount yourself so quickly. In the short time since your power has awakened you have managed to defeat two powerful Seidkona. Think upon it, child. Imagine an assassin who does not know that she is an assassin. One who has been conditioned to attack when a certain stipulation has been met. One who is completely trusted by the victim."

"Norns," Mother spoke up suddenly, "If Olivia had succeeded you would have been a walking time bomb."

Athilda nodded, "Indeed. Jeanne de Clisson was the mastermind. After her death, Olivia took her mother's place. Only she underestimated you. Motivated by revenge she attempted to work you into her plans, but she didn't account for Penelope's interference and it cost her dearly."

"This is beginning to make sense." I said, "What about the man? The one I rescued the night my powers awakened?"

Athilda sighed, "The de Clissons have been collaborating with a group of extremists known as the Sons of Odin. From your description of the encounter I would guess the man distrusted Jeanne and believed she had betrayed his group."

I nodded, "What are we to do about Ragnarok?"

Athilda gave me a pointed look, "There is not much we can do but fight, child."

I sighed and shook my head, "I don't like the idea of an absolute end to everything. I'll gladly fight if it means preventing Ragnarok."

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Athilda looked at my wide-eyed, "Ragnarok cannot be stopped child. It is foreordained."

I gritted my teeth, "Bullshit," I growled, "Nothing is predestined. We each chose our fate. Goddesses or Jotun be damned."

Mother and Athilda stared at me aghast, "Thor," mother said, "you can't expect to go against the Vattar." Mom said after a brief silence.

"You know not the power these beings hold. I have seen it firsthand. We are as insects to them," Athilda said.

I clenched my fists and said calmly, "Something must be done."

Athilda smiled sadly, "Your thoughts are clouded by the day's events. You need to rest, child."

I tried to tell Athilda that I felt fine, but in the end both my ancestor and my mother outvoted me and I was soon relegated to my room.

I found that I was much more tired than I had believed and I was lying down when a voice spoke, "Did you mean it?"

I was so startled by the sudden question that I nearly fell out of bed. I looked about and found a woman sitting on the edge of the bed opposite me. She spoke with a calm and reassuring voice and despite her sudden appearance I found a sense of ease and well-being come over me, "Goddesses," I muttered, "Who are you?"

The woman smiled as if amused, "Goddess, actually."

I gave the woman a blank stare and she started to laugh.

"You mortals," she said between chuckles, "You never seem to realize that nothing is quite as it seems."

I had the strangest feeling as if I knew this woman and it suddenly dawned on me why as a cold shiver ran up my spine, "Goddess Frigg," I muttered then slipped off my bed and fell to my knees.

The woman sighed deeply, "Get up!"

I did as directed and stood to look the Goddess in the eyes. On first glance she appeared as an extraordinarily beautiful woman, but upon further examination other details began to stand out. The light seemed to dance in her eyes and she almost seemed to glow as she sat there. "I'm s-sorry," I said, "I didn't know. Forgive me Allmother."

Frigg rolled her eyes and spoke, "Oh, for crying out loud." she muttered, "Just sit down and shut up for a minute."

Startled by the Goddess's abruptness I quickly complied.

"Did you mean it when you said you wished to stop Ragnarok?" she asked, tracing her hand across my cheek.

For a moment I merely looked at the Goddess. Fearful of the wrath my answer might bring me and feeling that it would be foolish to lie to a Goddess I said simply, "Yes."

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The Goddess almost seemed to purr, "Good," she said with a smile so bright that it made me want to fall to my knees and sing praises to her, "I thought you'd prove useful, otherwise I wouldn't have entrusted the magic to you."

I stared at the Goddess, aghast, "Y-you?" I muttered.

She nodded and continued, "Despite what you might have read in the Eddas or the Codices, Ragnarok can be stopped. Prophecy tells of a possible outcome. It is never absolutely certain. Ragnarok at this moment is the most likely outcome, but I look to change that."

"W-why?" I muttered.

The Goddess laughed again, "Why?" she said her voice dripping with glee, "Why do you think, mortal? I do not wish to die anymore than you do!"

I trembled before the Goddess. "I'm sorry," I muttered, "I didn't mean to..." I said only to be cut short by a scowl from the Goddess.

"Stop apologizing and listen. If I intended that any harm come to you, you would already be dead." She said with a disdainful flick of her wrist.

I nodded my acquiescence and the Goddess continued, "At the moment you are our greatest hope of putting a stop to Ragnarok, but should we play the game correctly, there will be another who could very well save our existence."

I dumbly nodded my head and listened as the Goddess continued, "You have indebted yourself to the Lejosálfur Queen. When she comes to you, and she will, no matter what that debt might entail, you must agree to her terms. You must fulfill that debt."

I couldn't believe my ears. I found the Goddess's pronouncement so odd that I forgot myself, "What could she possibly ask of me that would be so important? All I did was ask her her name!" I said, and almost instantly feared the Goddess would bring her wrath down upon me for daring to question her.

Instead she laughed, "The Elves do not see things as you mortals do. To them a debt is not equal to the deed that incurred it. They could ask you to tell a story or to murder your best friend and either would fulfill the debt."

I shook my head, "I should never have been so stupid."

The Goddess laughed, "Don't be so hard on yourself, mortal. That single act is the gateway upon which Ragnarok may be halted."

I opened my mouth to speak, but it was then I thought I heard a small clatter somewhere outside the room. I turned my head to look and found nothing. When I looked back she was gone.

I remained awake for hours wondering if I had really spoken with the Goddess or not. Perhaps I was delusional. Maybe I was still inside my mind fighting against Olivia's incursion. I wondered too, that if my conversation with the Goddess had been real what the implications might be. What sort of debt once fulfilled would help stop Ragnarok? It seemed inconceivable that anything I did could have such a drastic effect upon the outcome of future events.



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I don't how late I remained awake, but I finally drifted off in the early morning as exhaustion overtook me.

I think that more or less brings everything up to speed. The more I write my story the more I feel as if I'm writing a fiction novel rather than a record of my life. Had I not experienced these events for myself I doubt I would believe they had actually happened.



## PART 16

### **Sunadag 9. Skerpla**

Today, I finally explained to Marion what had become of her sister. It was one of the hardest things I've ever had to do. I couldn't bear telling the poor girl all the gruesome details, nor would I tell her that Penelope had betrayed me in exchange for her sister's safety. I merely told the girl that her sister had died in an attempt to save me. I had feared the girl might try to blame me, but it soon became clear she felt no anger towards me. In the end, the girl and I had both broke into uncontrollable tears.

Penelope was the girl's only relative. I don't know what will become of Marion, but I I will do everything in my power to assure that she finds a good home.



### **Freydag 14. Skerpla**

Well, it has been a rather tough week, with Penelope's funeral, but at least it's finally over. It was a small ceremony with just Athilda, Mom, Marion and me. Each of us left our gifts with Penelope's body. Then Athilda led us in prayer-song and Penelope's remains were lowered into the ground and set on fire.

I won't go into further detail. I'm about ready to burst into tears.

On a more positive note. I've finally begun learning to use my magic. The day after Penelope's funeral, Athilda decided it was time. Anxious to put Penelope's death behind me I wholeheartedly agreed. It's not at all what I imagined. For starters, I haven't actually done any magic with Athilda. Mostly I've done some form of meditation or another to help me "silence my thoughts." as Athilda seems so fond of saying.

Marion seems to be doing well for having just lost her sister. Mom seems to have taken a shine to

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the girl and the two are all but inseparable. For the time being, the State has granted Athilda temporary guardianship of the girl.

Damn, Athilda is calling! She probably wants to continue our lessons.

Later.



## PART 17

### Five years later...

#### **Manadag 2. Heyannir**

After a lengthy court battle, Athilda's lawyers finally managed to get my old journal back. After the maid took it, I thought I'd never get it back. I looked through it and I can't believe it has been more than five years since my change. It is so hard to believe that so much time has passed. It seems just yesterday that I became Athilda's apprentice. It is only a matter of days now until I'm to undergo the trials. Then I'll be a member of the Council.

Athilda allowed me my first night out in months. I took the opportunity to get wasted, which probably was a bad idea. Curiosity got the better of me and I brought a man home with me. I can't say the experience was altogether unpleasant, but it just felt wrong. I guess I'm no longer a 'virgin' since my male lover was kind enough to pop my cherry.

I better get going. Athilda insists I continue my lessons despite her belief that I'm ready to take the trials. It's no big deal. I'm still learning things; the woman is a veritable wellspring of knowledge. I guess I'll be off then.



#### **Eirdag 3. Heyannir**

I've been up all night with Athilda. I can't believe she didn't tell me she was sick. After everything we've been through together she's still keeping secrets from me. Apparently, she's been fighting Leukemia for the last three years. When I went to find her for my lesson yesterday I found her collapsed on the ground. I've offered to heal her, but she won't let me or anyone else touch her. She insists that her time is nearly up and that no amount of healing magic will save her.

She's still full of surprises. She notified me today she intends to name me her heir. I told her there

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were others better qualified to run House Le Fey, but she insists they're all "arrogant fools". I even tried telling her I was too young to take her seat on the Seidskati, but she insists I'm the right choice. I should have seen this coming. I really don't want anything to do with those old crones. A couple of them seem nice, but for the most part I find them all detestable.

Mom and Marion are watching Athilda while I get some rest. I guess I should be thankful, but I feel as if I should be there. I've spent more time with Athilda than either of them.

Marion seems to be blossoming into a beautiful young woman. I'm sure she's already beating off the boys with a stick. She looks so much like her sister it makes me want to weep every time I look at her. My only regret with the girl is that I've been unable to spend much time with her since Mother adopted her. Perhaps after I'm named a Seidkona I'll finally have some time to take her on that trip I promised.

❖ TO BE CONTINUED ❖

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