

ON THE NATURE OF DRAGONS

II. Ferocity

Leof sat in silence at the foot of the bed, eyeing the bucket of water on the table across from him. He pursed his lips and leaned his elbows into his legs. The bucket sat there, taunting him. The knight had avoided his reflection for a few weeks now, but now he needed to know. He was afraid it might be getting to the point where people would notice.

Where Braun might notice.

He narrowed his eyes and stood with a sniff. His platemail rattled as he stomped over to the bucket and moved it to the floor, accidentally dousing a candle as the water sloshed and its surface slowly returned to stillness. Leof swallowed and leaned over the rippling surface. His breath drew in sharply at the sight that greeted him.

It was as if someone had taken sandpaper to every hard angle in his face until it all softened into smooth roundness. The square of his jaw, the slope of his nose, the slant of his eyes, all gone and replaced with delicate versions of themselves. One thing, however, had grown pointier: his ears. Leof flicked the growths of cartilage at their tips, wincing as the sensitive lobes vibrated with his touch. He could feel everything. This was all really him.

Leof's hair had grown tangled, a thick flourish of white hanging down over his eyes. He put his hand to his cheek and traced upwards, sifting through his bangs, where he came across something hard. He turned his head to the side and squatted in closer to the makeshift mirror, spreading his hair with both hands to find the culprit. They were horns: tiny, bony little nubs hidden amidst the white mess. Leof turned away, feeling as if the very act of looking might cause scales to start peeking out from his skin.

He sat a little taller and thrust his chest forward slightly, turning side to side as he studied his torso. Leof had an inkling of what awaited him there, but wanted confirmation nonetheless. His lean chest muscle had softened into a layer of subtle plumpness, his nipples shivering where they puffed out into the air. He was growing breasts, there was no denying it. When he touched them even slightly, his body shuddered in pleasure and his heart raced.

"I can't fight like this..." he muttered, grabbing a bundle from his pack. "I need to bind these up until I find a cure."

He tightened his mouth and ripped a strand from the roll of bandages, but before he started wrapping he paused. Taking his undershirt from the bed, he grabbed his knife and cautiously carved away the bottom half, then slipped it over his head. The stretchy black cloth clung tightly to his form and compressed his chest, ending right above the bumpy ring of his areola. Leof checked the water bucket and nodded, then took up the bandage once more and began wrapping himself in a tight, firm weave anchored under his arms. His nipples protested as they were tucked away out of sight, but Leof grit his teeth and continued

wrapping, ignoring the blood flowing into them with each thump of his heart.

He set into a rhythm as he put the finishing touches on the binding. He cupped one hand over his breast, testing, relieved to find that his nipples had stopped throbbing and the touch found no pleasure but the rough cloth of the bandage. He grunted and pulled the wrapping taut with his other hand.

“There,” he murmured, “that should do the trick.

“Don’t know what I’m going to do about this belly though...” He rested his eyes and let his hand slip from his breast to stroke southwards. His stomach had grown soft like his chest, the line of his once-slim silhouette now broken by a slight paunch. Leof sighed. It wasn’t like he was growing fat. Just... rounder. Leof had certain suspicions pertaining to his new figure, but dwelling on them wouldn’t help. At the very least, his petite curves would still be easily hidden under his armor which still fit well enough.

Leof tried to relax his mind. This was alright, he could make it work. And he still couldn’t deny how nice it felt to rub his skin, tease at the scales forming up under his big, fat potbelly...

He blinked twice and yelped. His hand had wandered too far and with his guard down, it had started teasing along his netherlips. It felt like something sharp had cut into his delicate nerves down there, and he grabbed the naughty hand.

“No, no, bad!” he slapped it and pulled it harshly from between his legs. Holding his arm back, he returned his gaze downwards to investigate the sharp pain he had felt.

His femininity had long since blossomed into full ripeness. The entirety of his groin was blanketed in sparkling silver dragonscales from his *mons pubis* all the way back to the taper of his thick stumpy tail. The scales fit seamlessly together around the swell of his flower, which hid artfully layered folds of muscle in its



depths; depths that shuddered and flexed as he scooped his finger along them, carrying back a dollop of fluid. Leof brought the finger to his eye, suppressing an urge to lick it clean, and saw dark red speckles floating in the translucent goo. Blood?

He opened his legs and leaned forwards (with a flexibility he'd never thought possible three months ago) then spread his folds wide to see where he was bleeding.

“Ouch,” he cried as he felt a sharp prick again. He realized he had somehow scratched his puffy cunt flesh. Confused, he released his hands, bucking his hips ever so slightly at the sense of emptiness that burned as his lips oozed back together. He felt at the fingers of his right hand, and sure enough, clawtips were sprouting from under his nails.

“No...” Leof whispered. “Oh no.”

Leof jumped as a knock suddenly rang out at the door.

“Leof,” Braun spoke in muffled tones through the wood. “What’s the holdup? We were supposed to be moving twenty minutes ago.”

Leof kicked the water bucket over in his rush to find his undergarments. They were tucked in a neat pile underneath the cold steel of his gauntlets. One of the metal gloves slid onto the table and rolled off with a crash as he snatched his clothes.

“*Dammit dammit dammit!*” Leof whispered. He picked up the gauntlet from off the ground and dusted it off, then set it back on the table. “Sorry, wasn't feeling too great. The pork from last night didn't sit well. I'll be out in a minute, just meet me outside.”

The clinks of his chainmail shirt made him wince as he snuck his head and arms through them.

Braun was silent for a moment, then replied. “Alright, sorry to hear you're feeling ill. We can move a little slower today if we must. I'll be at the town gate.”

Leof waited until he heard the clomping of Braun's boots fade, then scrambled over to his greaves. They clanked loudly as he slipped one on, then the other, tightening the straps carelessly before continuing to his breastplate. His anklets, of course, were already in place. They never left his shins, just as his new organs never seemed to stay dry.

Leof grunted as he hoisted the heavy plating over his head and let it settle on his shoulders. They felt comfy enough, though he had a little too much room to bounce around and it felt a little constricting at his hips. *Almost done*, he told himself.

The penultimate piece of the puzzle was his gauntlets. They were from Andestin, a northern kingdom famed for its blacksmiths. Leof loved the flexibility afforded him by the intricately assembled scales of leather and steel which defined the trademark style of forges from “the

firelands.” Of course, these were not the real firelands. The name simply made for effective marketing.

The real Firelands were still quite a distance. They had crossed the Ironstakes before winter could set in, but now as the first snows were drifting in from the south they found themselves in a foreign country walking foreign roads. They had been staying in a border town filled with stout, dark skinned herdsman for a couple nights now, plotting a course through the Great Flats. The problem with the Great Flats was twofold: in winter, it became the Great Slick, the most barren of any of the ice deserts. But more importantly, it was split down the middle by something every traveler loathed: the Crack. Stretching all the way from the tropical mountains in the north to the cold seas of the south, the continent was bisected by a massive and dangerously steep river canyon. At first Braun had suggested they go the typical route, circumventing the Great Flat and passing through the Bridgelands farther north, but Leof urged a faster route. Braun didn't like his idea of cutting straight through a desert in the middle of winter to find an ancient bridge that likely crumbled long ago, but Leof insisted. And where Leof went, Braun followed.

Leof frowned as he jostled his helmet into place. He had pulled his gauntlet clasps as tight as possible, but the damn things were slipping off. It was making the experience of gathering his things far more of a pain than normal. His sword constantly felt as if it were falling out of his grip. The knight's thumbs felt cramped against the tips of their sleeves and his other fingers seemed to just jiggle uselessly inside the custom fit metal. *It's the damn claws*, he realized. His hands had slimmed but the fingers were growing fatter, looking more and more like draconic paws. He couldn't just toss the gauntlets out, though. He decided he'd have to tolerate the inconvenience for the time being, and once he was back to normal they'd be just as perfect for him as before.

Finally he bolted out the door covered from head to toe in the safety of his steel. Gaggles of overgrown sheep bleated and shied away from him as he passed them in the streets. The morning light was hollowed by the grim winds of the dying autumn, plucking the last of the leaves from their branches and carrying them to their muddy fate. A few yards forward Braun sat, shivering over a rotting fence at the trailhead. Leof could hear the man singing softly to himself as he stared out into the vast plains stretching to the horizon.

*“And when the eagle stole its shell, the tortoise cried, the tortoise yelled,
But on its back it fell, it fell; at least in the end,
The hatchlings ate well!...”*

His broken tune trailed off as Leof approached.

“It's been a long time since I heard that one,” Leof said as Braun hopped off the fence and slung his cape back over his shoulder. “Something on your mind?”

“No.” Braun picked up his bow and checked the string's tension. “No. It's just a good song for beginning long journeys.” He cast a tired gaze at the herdsman meandering through the

village with their flocks. “Wish we could take some mutton with us. There won’t be much to hunt out there in the grass, the herds have all moved south already,” he said, his eyes dodging away from Leof. “We really should try to grab some venison before we leave the treeline.”

Leof ignored him. “You remember the last time we heard that song? It was the night-”

“- of the Coup. Twelve years ago today. How could I forget, Leof?”

Braun started forwards at a brisk pace. Leof took off after him.

“Hey, hey now. The last time you sang that song, you were watching your father burn alive. Are you sure you’re alright?” Leof put an armored hand on Braun’s shoulder. The archer flinched and shoved the hand off, then looked into the Knight’s visor. “Like I said. It’s nothing. We left that memory behind long ago, you know that. Let’s get moving already. We need to be hitting the canyon within a fortnight or we’ll freeze.

“If you say so.” Leof was glad for his helmet. It hid the hurt in his eyes from when Braun had pushed him away.

Leof couldn’t have known about the first time Braun had heard “The Stolen Shell.” It was on his twelfth birthday, when he had snuck out of the castle to meet the miller’s daughter. On the way he chanced upon a young voice singing a silly fable at the edge of the moat beneath the gatehouse. One of the guard’s sons.

He never did make it to the mill. Instead Braun kept finding excuses to return each night and eavesdrop on the singing boy. The gatehouse battlements became his summer bedroom. Eventually, a year after that first song, he found the courage to introduce himself.

So began his friendship with Leof.

“I’m telling you, you need to eat more,” Braun insisted as they pressed forward through the sleet. “We’ve got plenty since we caught that Greatrabbit. You’re getting weaker, I can see the ravenous look on your face at night. Your body is telling you it’s hungry.”

Leof pretended he couldn’t hear him over the wind. It was a lie of course, Leof’s hearing had grown keen. Sometimes as they walked, he could hear the prairie dogs scratching at the walls of their burrows deep in the earth. He didn’t tell Braun for obvious reasons.

“WHAT?” he called loudly.

“I’M SAYING I’M WORRIED ABOUT YOU,” Braun yelled back. The tall dead stalks of grass around them whipped violently about. Having only a hood to protect him, his face burned with tiny cuts that stung in the breeze.

The armored man just shook his head and shrugged his arms. Braun sighed and covered his face back up with his cloak.

By the time they found a suitable place to camp- a wadi just barely deep enough to shield them- the storm had passed, and the dance of the grasses grew solemn as the grave. Leof shook off the snow that had gathered in the nooks of his shoulderplates and stomped his feet as he drilled tent stakes into the slushy muck. Braun began collecting reeds for the fire.

“It’s too wet,” he stated as he dropped a pile of damp kindling at the ground just outside the tent canvas. “You’ll have to jumpstart it.”

“Alright,” Leof agreed. “Here, finish this up, I’ll get it started.”

He passed the last stake and final corner of the tent over to Braun and crawled over to his own pack. After a bit of digging he pulled out a small chunk of soft red crystal and his knife, then moved over to the pile of grass and carefully carved a single shaving from the surface of the substance. He handed the crystal back to Braun, whose hand shook as he placed it back into the bag. Leof grabbed a flint from his belt and struck it with the knife, sending a shower of sparks over the crystal.

The snowbound wadi glowed hot blue in the flare of the ignited sulfurstone. Braun shielded his eyes until they stopped swimming with purple spots, then opened them when he felt the warmth of a healthy fire on his toes. Leof’s pupils reflected the licks of flame as he returned his flint and knife to his belt, smiling.

“Sometimes I wish we’d never gotten our hands on that stuff,” Braun confided. “But it’s probably keeping us alive.”

Leof nodded and gestured at Braun’s feet. “C’mon,” he said, “Let’s start with your boots.”

Half an hour later, the two of them were huddled together under their tent as pieces of their equipment dried near the flames. Braun looked at Leof, who had folded his arms tightly against his chest.

“Why don’t you warm your hands by the fire?” he asked the knight.

“Its, uh... warmer under here, actually.” Leof curled his bulky fingers inside their wrappings, drumming the developing talons against his underarms.

Braun raised one eyebrow.

“I’m worried about you,” he said after some time. “You look pale. Sometimes almost white when I see you tossing and turning in your sleep. Are you sure you haven’t come down with something?”

“It’s nothing.” Leof shifted uncomfortably. His tail ached in the confines of his leggings and squirmed under his weight.

“No it’s not,” Braun countered. “It’s the curse, isn’t it? You’re hiding something.”

Leof lowered his head.

“Leof. I need to know more. I can’t help you remove it if I don’t know what it’s doing to you. Don’t think I haven’t noticed. You won’t look me in the eye, you’re constantly wrapping yourself up, you sleep in full armor. And then I hear you groaning at night like you’re in terrible pain.” Braun put his hand on Leof’s leg. “You can tell me. It’s okay.”

Leof shook his head.

“You shouldn’t have to worry about it. I can handle it myself. You just need to get me to the cure.”

Braun’s eyes slanted. “You’re lying. I’ve been with you for more than a decade, I know when you’re lying to me. Tell me the god damned truth.” He sniffed at the air. “And what in spirit’s names is that smell? You getting it too?”

Leof crossed his legs. “What? No, I don’t smell anything.”

Braun held his breath but quickly gave up. “It must be some type of sweetgrass sap. Whenever we camp and start our fire I run into it. I think I might be allergic.”

Leof felt sick with embarrassment. Every part of him was frozen except his anklets and their gifts, and no matter how cold or wet or dry the world around them became, they kept seeping their fragrant juices. He couldn’t help it, the heat never went away. It scorched his skin at every patch of scaled silver. But he hadn’t realized the scent was powerful enough for Braun to notice.

“You’re right, it’s probably sap. Crystallizes in the cold, then melts in the heat of our fire.”

Braun seemed entranced by the flickers of orange and red. “You still haven’t answered my questions...” his voice trailed off. The archer’s eyes grew distant and unfocused.

It doesn’t have to be this complicated, a voice whispered in the back of Leof’s head. Braun is loyal. He will understand. He’d help you with your heat if you asked him. Just say the words. Say them. Leof pushed the voice away but it kept coming back, stronger. It’s not you, he’ll know that. It’s the curse. Just helping ease your path. These feelings are not yours, that makes it okay to give in a little. C’mon, use his cock. Just this one time.

“How about a quick song before bedtime?” he blurted out. “I’m getting sleepy.”

Braun blinked twice and looked blankly his way. “Oh? A song?” His eyes lit up. “Sure, why not. Have one in mind?” Braun felt just the tiniest bit intoxicated for some reason. His vision was a little fuzzy, perhaps he needed sleep too.

“*When night grows long and shadows dark...*” Leof sang. Braun picked up the bassline.
“*... hold close the song of the meadowlark...*”

“I told you it’d still be standing.” Leof punched Braun’s shoulder playfully.

“I’ll be damned,” he laughed, shaking off the blow. “It really is.”

The two men stood exhausted at the peak of a snowy dune, the long grasses long since entombed under winter’s touch. Snowflake cinders drifted serenely around them and a patch of blue sun shone through the grey skies. The expanse of the Great Slick broke at last against a jagged line of cliffs, stretching as far as the eye could see in either direction. The Crack.

It almost felt wrong as they left the crunch of boots against snow behind. The ground underfoot turning to mossy rock as they approached the cliff edge. Sprouting from the precipice, a long, narrow bridge arched over the canyon. Its crumbling architecture was covered in strange bas relief, depicting beasts of lichen and icicle locked in endless combat with headless, rusted heroes. Five square towers, adorned with worn limestone spikes, split the long causeway into four segments, with the tallest sprouting from a massive pillar in the middle of the canyon.

“Who built this?” Braun wondered aloud. “To think it’s stood here so long that the roads forgot they could cross...”

“When my father’s father migrated east, he came as an escort with the Exiled Princes,” Leof began. “The scholar that fled with them knew this place as a secret route over the canyon. But he couldn’t say who built it, nor how long ago. I suppose we’ll never know.”

“Shame,” said Braun. “It’s beautiful. I wonder what their fortresses looked like.”

“Probably very spiky,” Leof glanced at the blunted spires atop the first guardtower as they passed underneath. He imagined what it might feel like to slide down over top of it, gasping in pleas- *ahgoddammit!* The dragonslayer internally chided himself and shifted his gait to avoid the moisture gathering between his thighs. At this point a single stray thought about any hard object got him dripping. Once again the sweet smell of his arousal filled the air.

“Halt.”

Leof’s hands were at his sheathe in an instant, and Braun already had an arrow at the ready. They stood back to back, searching for the speaker. Leof found him first.

“Are you serious?” he groaned. “Out here, of all places?”

“What, where?” Braun asked. Leof pointed forwards, past the second guard tower, to an open faced courtyard under the arches of the central pillar. Braun lowered his bow and swore.

“Spirits of the damned,” he shook his head. “There really is no place safe from that insane cult.”

Awaiting them in black full plate, trimmed with gold, stood seven feet of knight, hands resting on the hilt of an upturned granite maul. His helm was crowned by the mark of his order: a slanted cross made of two daggers, sheared in half and then reforged into one.

Leof kept his hands on the hilt of his blade as he approached, partly because he could feel one of the gauntlets slipping off and was trying to pin it in place with the other.

“So,” he quipped. “What brings an Oathmender out to guard a forsaken ruin in the middle of a barren wasteland?”

“A promise broken.” The knight responded with practiced stoicism, his metallic baritone echoing against the walls of the canyon. Leof rolled his eyes.

“Yes, I gathered as much. But what was the oath? How long have you been out here?”

“The guarding of this crossing is the most ancient of the mantles taken up by our order. To be chosen as the Blackgold Sentinel is an honor without measure.”

Braun laughed. “Do you even know who gave the original oath, or how he failed to keep it? What the hell is the purpose of blocking off a bridge no one crosses?”

The Sentinel remained motionless. “I vow that no unworthy foe should pass this way. Not ‘til the cold desert burns and beasts sit upon the thrones of men. This is the oath whose sanctity I protect with my life.”

“No unworthy foe. We must defeat you, then, I presume.”

“In honorable single combat. Yes.”

Braun raised his bow and aimed towards the gap at the armored cultist’s neck. “Let me take care of this, Leof, we can’t afford the danger to you.”

Leof grabbed Braun's bow arm and slammed it down. "Are you stupid?" he hissed. "You plan to kill an Oathmender with arrows? I don't plan on scraping pieces of your corpse from the underside of a hammer. I'm the knight here. I'll handle it."

Braun sighed as Leof tightened the straps of his armor and marched forwards. "Please be careful," he called out. The wind whistled through the cracks of the stone bridge as another blizzard approached.

Leof's breath quickened, his jaws set in stone. His hands clung to his sword hilt even tighter as he entered the courtyard arena. Suddenly he was cognizant of every component of his armor; the heft and texture of every chain link, the size of every small gap. If only he could will his curse to behave for just a few minutes. This would not be a fight that afforded room for distraction.

The towering figure of black and gold assumed a wide stance and grasped the shaft of his warhammer, lifting it and resting it over his shoulder. The cursed knight lifted his visor and spat at the face of his opponent. The sentinel's frozen breath billowed from his helmet and his stance shifted ever so slightly when he noticed the reptilian slits of the trespasser's eyes, flashing purple against the walls of cascading snow surrounding them.

"You cannot intimidate an Oathmender, no matter what you are," the cultist said.

"Who cares. Ready when you are." Leof flashed his teeth. The Oathmender grunted his assent.

Leof's claymore shrieked as it caught the downward arc of the brute's hammer. He spun around the blow and kneed the knight in the belly, but his blow glanced off and instead he found himself cursing as he hopped away, his knee aching where it had struck. The cultist spun on the planted head of his hammer and pulled it from the dented pavement with his momentum, swinging it in sideways at Leof's chest. He narrowly dodged the strike, almost losing his balance as he hopped back, but manages to twist his left toes hard enough into the earth to find his footing again. He backed away slowly, chest heaving as he reassessed the matchup.

"*He's slow, as expected,*" Leof thought to himself as they circled each other. "*And rather powerfully built,*" he admitted, examining the massive hammer his foe dragged effortlessly behind him.

"You fight well, traveller," spoke the bridge guardian. "I will allow you to turn back."

"Turn back?" Leof asked. "What makes you think I'm that sort of coward?"

The cultist pointed downwards. "You're so scared you've pissed yourself."

Leof glanced downwards at the stain spreading over his leather and grimaced. “That’s not piss you cocksucker,” he muttered. “No, I will not back down. Stop delaying.”

The sentinel put his hammer down and rested on it mockingly. “I am in no rush.”

He wants me to come at him, Leof realized. He knows he can’t catch me so he’ll just let me do the dirty work for him. He studied the man carefully. Part of him wished he could see through that armor to better judge the muscle beneath, find the weak points. Maybe he could make a go at the vulnerability all men shared. *Dodge a blow and duck between those legs and... uh... and...*

Leof’s vision swam a little and he found his throat growing dry. He swallowed and tried to collect himself. Where was he again? Right, he was planning his attack. He needed to keep the cultist guessing, start probing his defenses again.

He raised his blade and lunged forward with a wild stab. The knight sidestepped and struck Leof with a jab from the butt of his mace, sending him stumbling towards the courtyard edge. He took a dive and found himself staring over the precipice into the void, little crumbs of stone rolling off the edge and disappearing slowly into the river far below.

Braun bit the inside of his cheek as he watched. Something was wrong.

Leof coughed up a little blood and clambered back to a defensive stance. The sentinel watched impassionately from the heart of the arena, waiting for the next move. It dawned on Leof that he’d never get past the arc of that hammer. If he kept trying he’d inevitably get nailed. He’d have to get inside the man’s swing and take him out in close quarters. Images flitted through his mind of sliding between the man’s bear arms and tackling him to the floor. Straddling his chest and clawing at his helmet and *leaning in to kiss-- MOTHERFUCKER!* Leof fell to one knee and palmed his forehead. “Not now, spirits, please, not right now,” he begged silently. The voice at the back of his head was urging him to lay down his sword and kneel before the man. *You’ll never win this fight fairly, it said. Seduce him. Get him on his back and let him fuck you and maybe once he’s filled you up, he’ll let you pass.*

The Oathmender regarded Leof suspiciously as he groaned and closed his eyes to dull his sudden splitting headache. This fight had dragged on far longer than necessary. Best it ended quickly.

As his eyelids hitched open, Leof saw his opponent take a step forward and raise his hammer to the sky. His instincts roared into action as the maul fell like a meteor towards his skull, and he darted upwards with a flash of his blade, parrying the deadly blow. Leof cried out as the weight of the deflection crushed against his left shoulder. The hammer splintered the stone where it struck, and Leof’s sword clattered to the ground beside it along with his right gauntlet which had slipped off with the force of the blow. The cultist bellowed as the impact of the hammer sent shockwaves through his bones and shook his grip loose.

“Godssmite,” he howled, clutching his arm, “You broke it!”

Leof watched in horror as his gauntlet rolled away towards the tower’s edge. He tried to crawl to intercept it but his shoulder collapsed under him, making him hiss through his teeth. The gauntlet slid over the edge and was gone. He shook the pain from his naked hand, the frayed and bloodstained wrappings fluttering loosely.

He remembered too late that he was in the midst of a duel. Something smacked across his jaw and the world spun darkly around him as he hit the ground. The white snowy light blinded him when he felt his helmet tugged from his head and tossed away. The Oathmender looked down on the pale bruised flesh of Leof’s face and pulled back his left arm, his armored fist clenched tightly.

Leof stared back up at him with those inhuman violet eyes and realized he was a goner. It was over. He relaxed his muscles and let his mind go blank, accepting his fate. With his will gone, the curse flooded in to replace it. Leof felt himself grow incredibly hot. It felt so good to be pinned to the ground by a strong male, to feel weight crushing his chest and see powerful muscles straddling his hips. He closed his eyes and his dragon cunt practically *squirted* its excitement.

He *moaned*. It was no man’s death moan. It was the melliflocity of a woman in orgasm.

The Oathmender’s fist faltered in the air, and he sat back in alarm. “What the...”

Braun, just about to let his arrow fly straight into the sentinel’s throat, found himself similarly distracted. He blinked twice and his fingers slipped.

The arrow whizzed just to the left of the sentinel’s helm, who flinched and instinctively covered his neck before jerking his head Braun’s way. Before the cultist could utter a word, something slammed against his visor and he crumpled to a heap. Leof stood on his knees with chest heaving, holding a chunk of debris aloft.

Leof tossed away the rock and then stooped over the fallen man’s chest, grabbing ahold of his greathelm and ripping it off to reveal the swarthy features beneath. Leof grasped the man’s breastplate with his left hand and began hammering at him with his right. The scales of his clenched claw left angry red welts where they imprinted on the man’s cheek. Leof kept going, possessed by fury. He took a moment to tear off his left gauntlet and let it fall to the ground, then curled his left claw into a fist as well and began flailing at the man’s face with both hands at once. The Oathmender curled into a ball and began coughing up blood as the beating continued. Finally Leof grabbed a bunch of the man’s hair and tugged his head back with a fanged snarl, raising his right claw to threaten the man’s exposed jugular. He sat there, chest rising and falling, covered in blood, and he hesitated.

The laws of combat were simple. A man tries to kill you, you kill him. Leof had never questioned that. A year ago he’d have put his sword through the man’s throat without a

second thought. But now, about to tear out the man's life by his throat, something held him back. He studied the man's beaten and bruised face.

Leof sighed. Oathmenders were not evil men. Just idiotic and overly obedient. He was no threat anymore.

"Concede," he demanded. "Concede my victory or I'll claw out your tongue."

The sentinel beneath him sputtered and blinked. "I..- hrk..- I concede," he finally managed.

Leof released his grasp on the man's hair and stood up, rolling his right shoulder. The sentinel remained motionless on the floor as he walked over to where his right gauntlet had disappeared and peered over the edge with a sigh. Leof raised his right claw and rotated it, analyzing it, mulling over something. He seemed to come to a conclusion and walked over to the gauntlet he had intentionally removed. Without ceremony, he kicked it into the canyon.

"Let's go, Braun," he growled. "We're done here." He picked up his sword and helmet and began walking to the other side of the bridge.

Braun gawked at Leof's claws from a distance. As he passed over the unconscious Oathmender, he winced at the slashes and welts scarring the man's face, then followed after his partner with a vacant stare, still processing the events he'd just witnessed.

Leof and Braun sat on opposite sides of the fire, each nursing a bowl of hot stew. Neither one seemed to want to look the other in the eye. The night sky was clear and full, and the air had grown surprisingly warm since their crossing.

Leof chewed a hunk of bread silently. Braun played with his knife, twirling it in his fingers instead of finishing the arrow he was supposed to be fletching.

Braun broke the silence first. "So," he mused. "You have claws. That's... something."

Leof rolled his eyes to Braun, then returned to staring at his stew.

"The curse. It's... turning you into a dragon."

Leof sipped his stew and took another bite of bread. "Something like that."

Braun could tell Leof wasn't in the mood. He decided to change the subject. "You really kicked that guy's ass back there, huh? Reminds me of that time we were hired to escort that one noblewoman. Heatherish, that was her name I think."

Leof chuckled. “Yeah, I remember that one. We’d just slain the Red Wyrms of Myrtleton. Impressed the local lord so much he hired us to get his daughter down to Andestin for her marriage. Guess he was too busy suppressing serf rebellions to take her himself? And then,” he laughed, continuing, “Then you let her bed you and the whole thing went belly up. Yeah, I remember.”

Braun snorted. “She made the first move. Pulled me into her tent and started kissing me, rambling on about hating her father and wanting to run off on an adventure with me. Told me in the morning that I was big enough to satisfy a dragon.” He guzzled some water, then wiped his mouth.

“As I recall it,” Leof reminisced, “It ended with you ‘dueling’ her suitor.”

“Yeah, put him flat on the ground. Then we hightailed it outta there before the lady got any ideas. Don’t think we ever got any pay from her father.”

Leof smiled. “The price for sticking your dick in crazy, I suppose.”

He looked at Braun with hunger in his eyes and bit his lip.

“You want to know more about the curse, don't you?”

Braun scratched his neck. “You’ll tell me? I thought...”

Leof shook his head. “It’s better if I just show you,” he said, his nose twitching. “Follow me.”

The battered knight rose promptly and disappeared over the top of a nearby dune.

“Leof?” Braun called, his voice wavering. “What do you mean?” No one responded. With a shrug he stood and walked to the crest of the sandy hill.

He hadn’t been sure what to expect when he reached the top, but what greeted him there was beyond all reckoning. The dunes came together to form a massive sandy crater, and at the center of that crater, Leof sat with his tail raised, displaying his scaled female anatomy.

“Well?” Leof sulked. “Are you just going to stare at it?” His tail flicked lightly back and forth, its white underbelly glowing softly in the moonlight.

Braun was speechless. He wrung his eyes, checking to make sure he wasn’t seeing things. He roamed over the wide curve of Leof’s rump, his cheeks covered in silver scales where they creased inwards to his puckered tailhole. The scales seemed to have climbed up his back to where his waist pinched in, though these ones glinted with indigo as they undulated against the sand.



“That’s... that’s a...” Braun didn’t seem to want to say the words. He noticed that Leof’s feet had shifted, the soles curling in a high arch down to a leathery pad near his thickening toes; toes splayed wide that ended in sharp black and dug deep into the sand where they curled. Leof smiled back at him, sliding a talon luridly down the edge of his blade where it was buried upright in the ground. He flipped his hair and twisted his torso to face his longtime friend. Braun could see he wasn’t entirely flat up top anymore. The wraps binding Leof’s chest only served to emphasize the expanding orbs where the compressed tissue bulged out from his shoulderblades.

“You said you were big enough for a dragon. Back at camp, remember?” Leof returned to his forward facing position, running his hand along his ass as he turned.

“I don’t have all day,” he stated, facing the night sky. “Get to it.”

Braun stood still.

Leof gave a long, squirming sigh. “Fine, I hate to do this. I order you, Braun. As fulfilment of your life debt. Satisfy me and be quick about it.”

“I... I never imagined it would happen like this,” Braun mumbled to himself. The archer was already at full mast as he stripped and moved behind his friend, unsure of how to proceed. He’d never fucked a knight, and certainly not any of the dragon-cuntboy variety.

“Sit down,” Leof growled.

Braun sat.

“Spread your legs and lean back a little, if you would.”

Braun spread his legs and leaned back. His heart raced and he could feel the touch of scales against his sensitive flesh. It felt strange to lust for something he normally might slaughter.

“Very good,” Leof closed his eyes and let his mouth hang open slightly. “I can’t tell you how long I’ve been waiting for this moment.”

“Since the very beginning of the curse?” Braun ventured.

Leof smiled wryly.

“Please be gentle,” he cooed as he slid himself down over Braun’s lap.

“Warlock’s tits,” Braun gasped as he felt his length enveloped in tight wetness. “You’re hot in there, Leof.”

He was no virgin, but he may as well have been. The pleasure consuming his being was immediate and unlike any he’d felt before.

“A dragon’s heat is nothing to be trifled with,” Leof teased, growing short of breath as he felt himself overcome with the sweetness of being filled at last. He lifted himself and slid back down, relishing the friction of flesh against flesh. As their passage grew easier and slicker, Leof began slowly bouncing faster. He needed more of himself rubbing against Braun, more tension, it was getting too easy. His hips bounced and bucked until he had worked himself into a frenzy, frantically forcing himself down on Braun who sat grunting beneath him.

“Don’t just sit there like a dead fish, you oaf,” Leof cried as he felt a familiar dreamy pleasure building inside him. “Kiss me, dammit!”

Braun hugged his arms around Leof’s breastplate, running his hands down his puffy belly and hips as he leaned into his lover’s back and breathed hot air down the nape of his neck. Leof cried out softly and turned his head and locked lips with Braun, their hair tangling together as they writhed in passionate unison. Braun’s fingers trailed through Leof’s snowy mane, marveling at the slender points of his ears, wrapping around the dragon horns he

found rising proudly from his skull. Short though they were, he could still use them to pull Leof's tongue deeper into his own.

Braun huffed as their lips unsealed with a slight pop. Leof stared at him with adoring violet eyes, their shared pleasure building higher and higher. "Do it," he gasped, "Keep going, harder." Braun clenched his jaw as he felt himself reaching his limit. He thrust harder and faster up into Leof's cleft. "HARDER!" cried Leof. "I'm so close Braun, please gods, unfh-- come inside me now!" He pushed himself down as far as he could manage and shuddered as fire seared through his body from horn to claw, his depths clenching and unclenching in ecstasy.

The feeling of his partner's walls smothering him drove Braun over the edge. With a guttural shout he felt his balls tighten against his body, followed by the pulsing of his muscles as they began firing wildly. His eyes slammed shut as his seed pumped through his dick and leapt out into Leof's unnatural womb, one thick spurt after another. They fell back in a heap, Braun hugging Leof tightly to his chest as they soared together in love. Leof continued squirming over him as their mutual high slowly bled away until the two sat exhausted in the embrace of their other, catching their breath desperately as the warm wind blew sand from their ruffled hair.

Braun didn't want to open his eyes. He was afraid he would wake to find it was a dream.

"Braun," Leof murmured. "Grab my bag, over by my sword."

Braun blinked and sat up, finding the sword quickly and seeing the bag at its base. He reached over and pulled it into Leof's lap.

"Thank you, Braun... For everything." Leof kissed him on the cheek before rummaging through the bag. He pulled out a hollow reed he'd saved from the plains, then found the cut of sulfurstone and sliced a sliver off onto the makeshift pipe. He sucked in, then shut his eyes tight and blew onto the crystal. One small puff of flame later, and Leof was blowing smoke through the reed, the embers at its tip glowing brightly. Leof smiled contently and puffed on the reed once more, then leaned back into Braun's arms and went to sleep.

The sweet smoke of the grass twirled in the air to join with the tangy aroma of their sex. Braun yawned and felt himself drifting away as well, his hands still feeling over the smoothness of Leof's scales. The archer wished he could stay with Leof in that smoky moonlit basin forever. Eventually, he too closed his eyes.

For the first night in twelve years, both Leof and Braun slept peacefully.