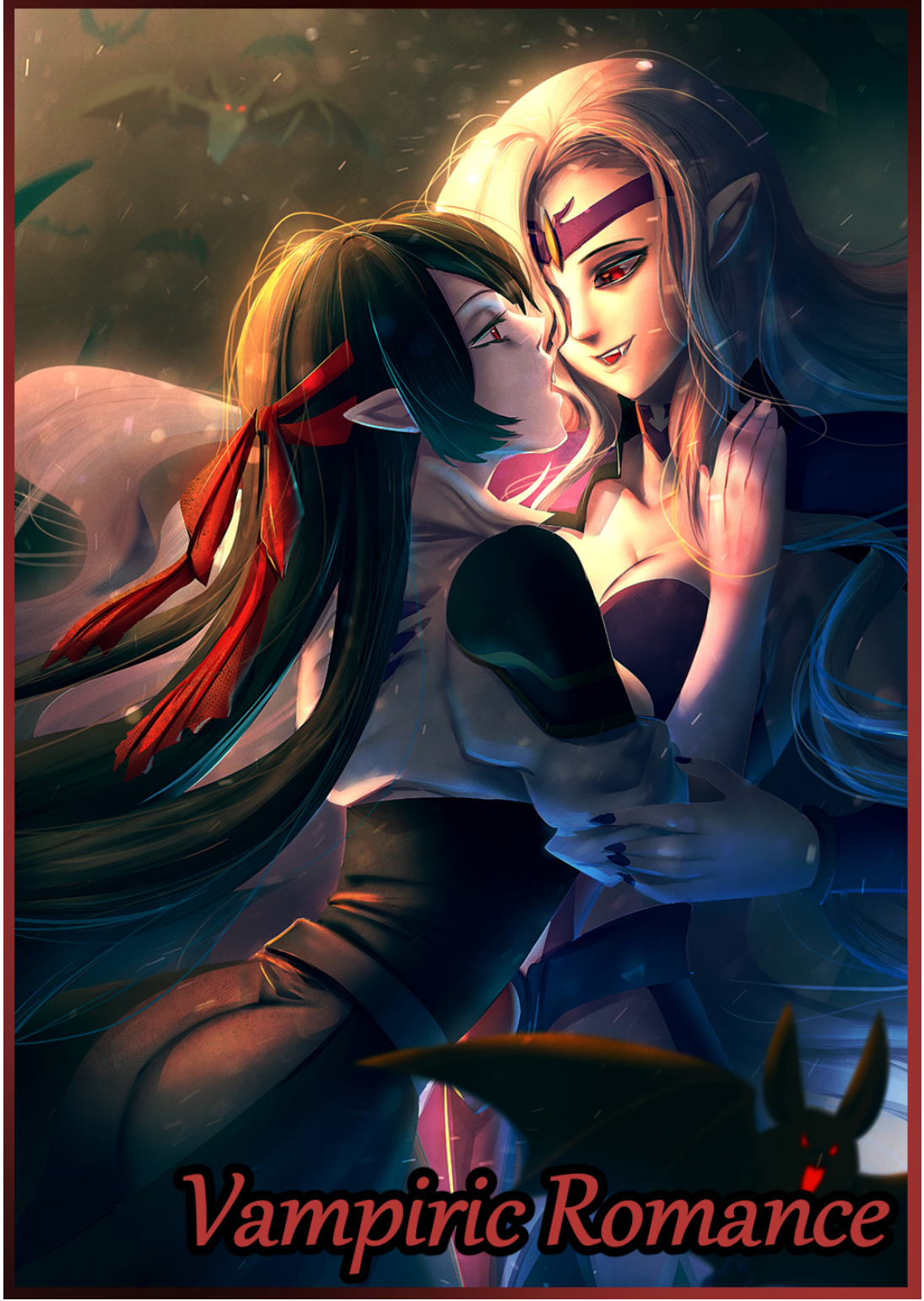


# Vampiric Romance

Siggy Commission for TheQuelch



## ~Vampire~

### Chapter 1

High up in the alpines of treacherous mountain and sheer cliff faces with bottomless crevices speckling the land like the open maws of earthen beasts, a curious horde of glowing orange orbs dart through the thick trunks of primeval wood, breaking the pitch black of night while painting the surroundings in warm oranges and brilliant whites. Accompanied by the distant raucousness of an irate mob and the slow rumble of their combined boots tromping through the woods, it was clear that something big was going on.

While some in the crowd held flaming torches, weathered axes and rustic crossbows primed with sturdy bolts and ready to fire, others wielded oak staves carved into the shape of a cross with its lower portion tapering off into a bladed stump fashioned from haphazard strokes and purposeful tampering to ensure as many splinters stuck out as possible to bring out the highest level of pain in the unfortunate soul on the receiving end of it.

But it wasn't a human the group were hunting, nor did it have a soul in the first place. It was something that they blamed for all their ill fortunes under the misguided beliefs a blinded group of fools had come to bear from another land. It didn't take long for the 'unenlightened' masses to band together armed with the information and skills taught by these foreigners to bear on the unholy threats that plagued the land and its people. From mischievous spirits to the Wood Folk they once held reverence for, all things fantastical and otherworldly would soon begin to fade from the land as a new generation of faithless folk arose to supplant their elders' fervent beliefs in the old ways.

And once the weaker ones were disposed of, the unruly mob began to grow bolder, eventually coming into conflict with stronger entities that would be the first to spill human blood in defense of themselves and their brethren. But with humans being the arrogant creatures they were, each loss only served to fuel their self righteous belief that the creatures they were up against were nothing more than animals and were better off culled from the face of the land, land they saw as theirs and theirs alone despite the treaties of the past that allowed the sentient races of man and beast to live together in harmony.

But even beasts had their limit, and while they stood stronger than a hundred men alone, the humans' seemingly endless numbers and crude weaponry would eventually fell them. No matter how much they wanted to be left alone, the bloodthirsty mob would always return with more numbers to buffer their ranks and new weapons with which to kill them with. Eventually a decision would come to be made in the form of a mass exodus from the land in the hopes of finding greener pastures elsewhere. But some would choose to stay, with too much emotional baggage and attachment holding them back, they had seen fit to remain, maybe even to buy their fleeing companions time while the humans went after them.

Chief among these was a Higher Vampire going by the name of *Danitha*, a rare occurrence even in the realm of the supernatural. Higher Vampires were creatures of the night, feasting on the blood of animal and human alike before returning to whichever place had taken their fancy, sequestered in the darkness offered by mountain peaks or thick forests that had been around for as long as they have. One quality that set them apart from their lower brethren was their strength, speed and the ability to use magic to bolster their already impressive repertoire of offensive and defensive skills. Add to that a powerful mind capable of independent thought and comprehending the world around them, and you had Higher Vampires that were very much able to formulate strategies and plans of attack, the fearsome string that bundled it all together.

One would think these cunning creatures to look like beastial gargoyles with wings and fangs, but that description only held true for the less intelligent and devolved kin of the Higher Vampire, undead creatures risen from the dead to do the bidding of their more intellectually capable masters. Instead of raw aggression and ferocity, furtive deception and cunning was the bread and butter of any Higher Vampire whose outer appearance was nearly indistinguishable from any other human except for a few key exceptions that could be hidden with magic.

For one, their hide was of a deathly pallor not unlike that of a corpse with an equally cold chill to the touch. And while it was hard to see from afar, a closer inspection bears fruit in the form of serpentine slits for irises, deep set in the middle of alluring eyes that could enchant any weak willed minds with ease. But with their command over magic, these ‘blemishes’ were easily hidden, allowing them to seamlessly blend in with humans wherever they lived, to make connections if they so pleased but more importantly; to satiate their hunger for human blood. While some only fed in moderation, others took on the mantle of serial killers and bandit lords, becoming too addicted to see the harm they did to both sides of the conflict. Ruining the reputation of Higher Vampires and stirring insecurity and distrust in the humans. Danitha was capable of all these things and more, but unlike her brethren, she preferred a life of solitude, hunting local animals in the abundant forests to keep herself filled at night before returning to the derelict but still standing keep hidden away at the top of the mountains with its craggy spires blending in perfectly with the rocky terrain and blanketing snow. After a millenia’s worth of time alone and endless meditation, the vampiress had become immune to her kind’s innate thirst for human blood, or at least, that was what she had convinced herself of until now, when her repetitious life of self imposed isolation had come to an end to answer the call of her magically inclined supernatural fellows. Leaving her domain after her senses had told her of an intruder that hadn’t dared enter past the front door separate from the larger crowd of humans wandering by far below torches and weapons demanding blood.

And now as she pushes herself up against a gnarled tree trunk with a searing wound in her side, that bloodlust she had thought long banished had begun to flow freely within her veins, gritting her teeth against a wracking feeling she had long forgotten; pain.

Whatever it was that the humans had shot her with was enough to bypass her natural defenses. And while she had the wit and speed to dodge one, not even a Higher Vampire could dodge a web of criss-crossing shots that came from every single direction. And it didn't help that the mob had some sort of vile masking scent over them, making it exceptionally hard to land her strikes amidst the glare of their flames and the nauseating sight of the holy crosses they bore atop those wooden stakes of theirs. When the noise of the humans impending approach reached her ears atop her hidden perch, she had thought them to be easy pickings, scowling at the mindless hoard on yet another one of their nightly hunts for the inhuman.

But after her first kill with a swift decapitation with her rending claws, the resultant assault against her senses from the humans visual and auditory wards had left her open for a counterattack.

Left with no other choice, Danitha was quick to retreat, only realizing she had been struck in the side once the slight stinging from the initial impact had grown into a furious throbbing in the flesh around the puncture wound while life energy begins to leave her body from the small yet devastating wound. If one bolt was enough to do this to her, then Danitha shivered at the idea of what would've happened if all those bolts from earlier had found their mark.

*'This is ridiculous! Since when did those rats get so smart anyway?!'*

After so long without human blood, Danitha was in no state to fight a group of well armed humans, and with the wound in her side, she would probably be the first of her kind to die lying against a tree, not to another or to the bite of a sword but because she lost too much blood.

But even if she survived, there was no way she would be able to withstand the rays of the morning sun. While it wouldn't kill her outright, the resultant coma would, if she were to fall asleep in this state...it would be her last nap for sure.

**"Need...to move...can't just...agh!"**

No matter what she tried however, moving was futile with her worsening wound. Once she had stopped moving and the initial adrenaline had faded, Danitha was doomed. Without help, she could do nothing but curse her fate, looking up at the starry skies above shrouded by the twisted branches and speckled leaves of the towering trees above.

With what little remained of her strength continuing to leave her, Danitha's struggle to survive ceases as crimson arms fall to her sides, exposing the pus ridden wound staining her extravagant snow matted dress, letting out a hoarse chuckle as the strength to maintain her posture fades, leaning forward while barely missing the sight of an approaching figure from the darkness, creeping slowly and hunched over as they sought to creep up on a helpless vampire in her dying moments.

*'I'm sorry Fran...I don't think I'll be able to...hold up my promise after all...'*

Unlike the angry mob of humans however, Danitha could clearly smell the scent of the stranger. Despite the bulk of its silhouette, she could tell the human was a female, young yet mature in more ways than one. An experienced survivor skilled in the arts of medicine evident from the musk of herbs in her pouches and in the calluses on her fingers from years of scouring plants and trees in search of her ingredients.

But the scent of earthen leaves and sun kissed dew told her this human wasn't native. Unlike the others who usually reeked of fish and stale wood, she smelled...attractive...foreign...and yet, familiar.

With her eyelids growing heavy and her body running colder than death however, Danitha wouldn't be able to contemplate whoever this stranger was for much longer as she falls unconscious right before the mystery woman peels apart her hood, revealing a soft wave of auburn hair framing a naive young face with the excess done up into a neat, flowing ponytail. She couldn't hear what she was saying, but she didn't care.

If this was to be her end then she would gladly accept it...at least then the only thing she would have to worry about was her dearest chiding and reprimanding her for failing to hold up her end of their promise even in the afterlife...if there was such a thing anyway...

## **~The Wanderer~**

### **Chapter 2**

**“Shit...her wounds...this isn't right...how...no, this isn't the time for that, I need to get her somewhere safer first!”**

In all her time as a healer, Freya had never seen wounds like these before; necrotized around a puckered hole, flesh that looked as if it had been dissolved, blood and mucus pooling in burned crevices. While the cause had clearly been the iron bolt lying half buried in the snow by the woman's side, the damage looked like someone had poured a powerful corrosive down the wound. It was ugly...

But Freya had no doubt in her mind that the lady could be saved. Even now as she wraps temporary bindings with herbal paste over the wound after cleaning it up as best she could, the signs of life were there despite the ice cold chill of her skin and the deathly white coloration, but they were there, and as long as she was under her care, Freya just couldn't leave someone to die out here in the middle of the frigid mountain tops with a raging mob of villagers she could only assume were the ones responsible for her injury. Probably shooting her by mistake in the darkness of night, but leaving her to just die under a tree? Despicable.

Hefting the stranger on her shoulders after securing her limp body comfortably to her travel pack, Freya sets off in the opposite direction back where she had come from. If her guess, no matter how far-fetched, was right, then the only place she could've come from was that ruined castle she had found a few hours earlier. Its doors hung open with plentiful amounts of snow caking the entrance hall, but that was as far as Freya had dared to go after the eerie vibes she had felt running all over her discouraged her from going any further as she peeled her eyes away from the darkened interior of the dilapidated castle, looking like the bottomless maw of an immense stone beast.

But now that very same darkness was her best hope at getting her patient somewhere safe. She couldn't afford to let fear get in the way of her mission.

Dashing past the zig zagging rows of trees and foliage while dodging past crooked roots and low hanging branches, the trained medic speeds through the snow caked terrain back toward where she remembered the obscure path that led to the castle, the muscles in her legs were already throbbing from a days worth of travel to get to this tundra, and running a marathon uphill with a person on her back wasn't going to do wonders for her constitution. But without proper supplies to last the night and a roving band of irate villagers around, she could only push onward and hope she made it in time.

With adrenaline fueling her onward and the numbness that followed after her pain, Freya's boots finally touch solid stone as the cracked cobble and tattered ivory of the abandoned structure replaces the numbing whites and grays out the outside, providing some levity and respite from the biting chills of endless winter. But after moving on past the stairs, Freya had half expected to find herself lost in an endless maze of corridors and doors that led nowhere, only to find a rather straightforward path leading to the only vacant room in the entire place, a room that showed signs of recent habitation from the cleanliness of the furniture to the lack of dust and grime anywhere on the floors. There was even a fireplace with a burning ember still going strong.

Laying down her pack without breaking a sweat before detaching the woman's shivering body, the doctor knew she had very little time left to do much else before her patient succumbed to her wounds, laying out a mat on the floor to clean her wounds, doing away with her withered dress to reveal a slightly aged woman's body clad in pristine underwear that still retained signs of its former glory here and there. From supple flesh to wide, gentle curves and even a face that held not even a wrinkle or sagging flesh, Freya had to admit she was quite the looker...maybe even better than she was!

But her attention wouldn't remain on the lady's amazing figure for long as she moves to unwind the bandages from her sickening wound, only to raise her brow in confusion, blinking a few times after feeling something wasn't quite right with the wounds she was examining and cross referencing from those in her not too distant memories. There were fewer sores, the nasty burns were gone and the deep bore into her waist had marginally healed over enough to look like a puckered pimple than a bloody hole. Even the flaking

skin and discomforting webs of blackened veins weren't there anymore...had she been seeing things and rushed all this way for nothing? Or maybe...

**"That can't be...no such thing as vampires...not out here...C'mon Freya...you're not superstitious! She's just some poor lady who needs help, that's it!"**

Getting to work on patching up her wounds, the wanderer's mind drifts elsewhere, thinking back to all the rumors she had heard while on the road far out back where she had come from. Tales of night creatures and the roving bands of villagers out to hunt them all down. While there weren't any concrete sightings for ages besides the tales old folk told to young uns to keep them well behaved, participants of said raiding parties brought back undeniable proof of their kills; the skull of a massive ram like beast, the eye of a cyclopien ogre. Many such prizes made the rounds and in turn, more bodies to fill their ranks, eager to flush out the denizens of the dark they had no idea were living so close to them all this time. Of course, Freya had never seen them in the flesh, always on the move and with little stops in between her travels, all she concerned herself with were the needy. She wanted to see the world, but one with medical knowledge was rare, and so she had also made it her mission to aid whoever she could along the way.

But after years of traveling ever since leaving her hometown with the passing of her parents when she was but a young teenager, Freya had begun to harbor doubts about whether the world truly was worth seeing, losing her faith with each mottled wasteland and starving commune she passed.

Beyond the endless stretch of mountains and forest bordering her country's limits laid her next and final destination; a snowy hamlet where it was said that all were welcomed to join into the locals' rural lifestyle with a bountiful forest around them to provide for all. But upon reaching it, she found not peace but misery; angry townspeople who lashed out at foreigners, swept up in a storm by missionaries of the faith prevalent in her land as they prepared brutal weaponry buried the dead lost from the raids against their supernatural foes, foes she was sure definitely didn't need culling if their races have lived together for this long without major conflict. It all weighed down on Freya's mind heavily as she strode through the village, silent and despondent.

To take her mind off of it all, she had gone on a little exploratory hike through the tundra and the heavily wooded forest that marked its borders. That was how she had eventually come across the strange castle after her skilled eyes had found the path leading up to it. And when that strange foreboding feeling drove her away, it wasn't until a good few minutes later when a pained cry had caught her attention, leading to current events where she had found this strange woman out here in the middle of the wilderness with what should've been a fatal wound in her side. While saving a life was Freya's steadfast goal, she had been fully prepared to give this displaced stranger a proper burial if she was too far gone.

But as her hands carefully dab a cloth over the lady's wound and dressing, she could tell that it definitely wasn't a trick of the light. Her wounds were healing incredibly fast as if spurred on by the medical cream and healing ointments only intended to disinfect the affected area. She could see the individual flakes of dead meat piece themselves together, slowly but surely, the wound was healing and it wouldn't be long till it was fully plastered over in the rest of her pristine skin...which still felt unnaturally cold despite the warm fireplace she had laid her out next to.

**"Her skin...it's so...smooth...soft, tender...but...colder than any dead body I've handled...could she really be one of them?"**

Vampires; creatures in folklore that were faster than you could see and silent in their movement. With appearances that matched humans, they could disguise themselves, make friendly talk, and before their victims knew of the danger they were in, sink their fangs into them, sucking out their life-force until nothing but a drained husk remained.

*'B-But then that makes no sense...if she was a vampire, how'd she even get these wounds in the first place? Maybe she just...heals really fast! Everyone's different after all, right?'*

Sighing before wondering what to do next with her efforts to clean the lady's wounds proving ineffective against her impressive metabolism, Freya applies the last slithering of cream before bandaging her waist. Pushing off the floor with her patient's body cradled gently in her arms, she stumbles over toward the well kept bed in the back of the room away from sealed windows. As stuffy as the room was, she had to respect the homeowners wishes for privacy.

By the time all was said and done, the pale woman was tucked up in the sheets and dressed in fluffy new nightwear Freya had picked out from the wardrobe, breathing gently in deep sleep as the curious brunette runs a hand over her chilling forehead, brushing at platinum locks of well cared hair before retracting her hands away from the otherworldly beauty before her eyes. Shaking her head as she does so while turning her attention to more important things at hand.

**"Like where I'm going to rest for example...all the rooms are boarded up...maybe, the couch? Surely she wouldn't mind...after all I did save her life...sheesh, who am I kidding..."**

Puffing her cheeks out as she turns to move toward the fireplace, Freya settles down on the smooth carpeting, packing up her medical supplies before sluggishly withdrawing her trusty sleeping sack from the back, patting it down before putting her head on the custom made bag filled with soft hem and cotton, gingerly lying down to give her weary body and deflated mind some well deserved rest from the events and disappointment of the day, unaware of just how much time had already passed as the first rays of the early morning sun crests over the horizon, bathing the treetops below with a warm orange glow while the snow



capped peaks glimmer brilliantly like polished diamonds. An effect made possible thanks to the special stone that made up the terrain in the region.

With the rampaging mob retreating back to their settlement for their own R&R and peace temporarily returning to the mountains, that left Freya and the stranger at peace to rest to their heart's content. Something the traveling healer doesn't hesitate to do as her aching body quickly succumbs to the pleasures of sleep, letting out tiny whistling breaths that break the monotonous crackle of the fireplace every so often.

Unbeknownst to Freya however, the second occupant wasn't as deep in the realm of the unconscious as she assumed her to be, stirring from her pseudo nap with a click of the tongue and a wince at the subtle throbbing she felt in her abdomen. Danitha had been hoping her nose was wrong, but as her eyes narrowed at the sight of the human female sleeping so casually in front of her fireplace with her embroidered dress lying in tatters beside her, she knew this wasn't a dream or the afterlife.

Inspecting the woman's bloody belongings and medical utensils with keen vision, the unpleasant memories of the previous night's events come rolling into her mind alongside the fatal wound she had received...and that lumbering figure emerging out of the darkness of the woods before her eyes shut tight, clutching her bandaged waist while keeping her eyes firmly locked on to the waifish woman sleeping so casually in the lion's den she had unknowingly entered.

*'That smell...and those bags! It's that stranger I saw before I lost consciousness! And my body...there's no way it should have healed this fast...it's got to be her doing!'*

Why would some lowly human even save her? Who was she? Did she bring others? There were so many unknowns at play here that it made Danitha's brain hurt just trying to consider them all. While she would've liked to simply kill her then and there, her first brush with modern man had taught her to be patient, to take a step back and examine what she knew before making her move.

With her arms folded over her bosom and a deep sigh known, the frustrated vampiress slides back under the sheets. With the sun now out and her wound still healing below the surface of her mended skin, Danitha could do nothing but rest. But once nightfall came however, she would need to tend to this curious matter concerning her unwitting savior immediately.

As much as she despised the thought. She had to admit that she wouldn't be alive to fuss about the situation right now if it weren't for her and those nauseating concoctions of hers which she could still smell radiating off of her body, making a mental note to wash herself off once night fell and her body was back in tip top shape.

*'That is of course...if the little lady proves cooperative, depending on the outcome...the bath might be a little delayed...'*

And so she would sleep for the rest of the day alongside her uninvited guest, but as much as he tried to will herself to sleep, Danitha's brain just couldn't let its guard down. For so many years now she had lived in isolation, in peace. To have another warm body so close by now? It was like being asked to sleep next to a hibernating bear...harmless for now, but when it awoke? Would it immediately maul her to death or simply prod her awake out of curiosity? That was how she saw Freya; an unpredictable and sudden factor she had to contend with.

Exhaustion would eventually like Danitha's mind however, allowing her some measure of momentary peace. At least until the sun set and her instincts drove her awake. And with Freya's irregular sleep schedule, she would soon find herself sharing the night with Danitha as both women stir in their sleep upon the passing of noon and the arrival of a cool, tranquil evening. But Freya was not a vampire, and her body still needed some extra time before it was ready to move. Time enough for Danitha to make her preparations as she rises without a sound before flitting over to her wardrobe, picking out a fresh change of clothes for herself and for her guest, as fair as she looked, the heavy odor of stale leaves and damp mud radiating off of her in waves. She was sorely in need of a bath. Despite the possibility that she might need to kill Freya, Danitha was a stickler for appearances. First impressions mattered a lot to the prim noble lady so turning up to a gathering, no matter how small, dressed like some northland savage was completely unacceptable!

*'Dare I say these dressings are more than acceptable for compensation are they not? The girl should be flattered...'*

Patting down the form fitting dress she had prepared for Freya while scribing a note of directions on yellowed paper, Danitha makes her exit from the room, closing the door behind her before slowly walking through the derelict halls of her home, inspecting each and every nook and cranny in search of any more surprises. Although her mind was intricately linked with her domain, it never hurt to check twice, especially after realizing just how far these humans had come when it came to inventing new ways to weed out her kind and put them to the blade.

But after making her way up to one of the few surviving spires atop her ruined home, Danitha was more than convinced that no one else was here. The air was cooling, relaxing to breathe but the silence was no longer the same, not with another warm body sleeping down below. Even now from atop her perch, she could hear the soft breaths of air escaping the woman's lips, the rhythmic beating of her heart, the slurry of lifeblood rushing in her veins...it all served to stir old memories, bringing back images and scenes long thought lost to the ancient vampire as she clutches at her breast in pain and sadness upon the reminder of an old friend.

"Ahh...dearest Fran..."

Sighing despondently before staring out at the tree tops below, her solemn eyes could spy no further human activity in the woods. No angry calls for blood, no ominous orange lights, the woods were calm today...

*'Which means I can feast till I'm satisfied...though I wonder how many others remain...'*

Shaking her mind off of such mood dampening thoughts, Danitha leaps down from her roost, flitting silently through the evening sky while discarding the obscuring hood she had been wearing mid-flight to reveal an ornate outfit that balanced gothic elegance with sultry beauty. Consisting of a tight leotard with concealing clasps for her immense bosom to nestle in, a crimson band of unknown make serving as headgear and a wicked cloak with a frayed collar that fans outward in menacing spikes, it was one most people would consider outrageous with so much skin exposed especially around the lower regions where there was only a dangling loincloth to conceal its wearers decency, but to the vampire, it was one of great import and nobility amongst the Higher Vampires. One of the last few surviving pieces passed down from ancient seamstresses and powerful sorcerers, Danitha only ever wore the precious dress during times of duress. And now when humans were out and about calling for the blood of all fantastical beings? Now was such a time to wear it, even while on the hunt for simple prey animals that would satisfy her hunger, and after losing so much blood followed by a quick but strained recovery? She was starving...

"Ah! That's right...does a girl such as her even know how to put on a dress?"

### ~Recollections~

#### Chapter 3

*An argument between two adults, one man and a woman. Yelling unintelligible words and throwing heavy objects around a cramped musky room far too dark to make out. The voices were familiar yet distant, but without a face to cling on to, no mental connections could be made. But that didn't seem to stop the strange ache in my heart from making itself known, as if I knew the conversation was focused on me.*

*And nothing they had to say was remotely good...*

*From there, the scene begins to change right before the approaching voices could reach the molding door that hid me from them; thick black smoke smelling heavily of ash and cooked flesh fills the air around me, the solid faith of oak beneath my feet softens for bloodied mud and the discomforting warmth of home fades for the chill of a rainy morning just outside a ruined village dotted with the ruins of shattered homes and salted farmland. And amongst the debris, bodies...so many bodies...but their faces, just like the voices...I can't see any of them...*

*Another transition and I'm suddenly in a cave, rocky outcroppings...a table fashioned out of a boulder lit by crude wax candles and littered with old memoirs and formulae. And on the far side of the damp hole I remember far better than that musty old house that's supposed to be the place I spent most of my childhood in sits a man, my mentor. The father figure who taught me the secret medicinal techniques and recipes along with the parental guidance and lessons that made me who I am today. This is probably the one and only period of my life I still hold dear...and the calm before the storm so to speak.*

*As my mentor recedes into the suffocating darkness surrounding me, an invisible force pulls me past a torrent of horrid experiences, a collection of all the tragedy, the blatant disregard for life, the terrors of war and mind breaking suffering the survivors had to live through. It was a disgusting miasma, but even in my dreamlike stupor, I knew it was my own mind, misguided and disillusioned after years of traveling on my lonesome without anything to my name besides the survivalist gear my mentor had taught me to craft and maintain. Living off of nature's bounty while traversing the broken lands of men in the hopes of a better place, that was my life.*

*But then came talk of the supernatural, of fantasy being far truer to life than we all thought possible. Magical beings it was said, from folklore to legends, all of these could be explained by the existence of flesh and blood monsters that, until now, had lived alongside us in secret...although I never paid these rumors much mind, I must admit; It did pique my interest somewhat as I fantasized a meeting with a stunning vampire lord. Tall, pale and handsome...or maybe a mysterious woman with a cold heart and a piercing gaze? Ahh, the possibilities were endless!*

*Right as I begin to daydream about women however, the myriad scenes of dilapidated towns and dying land fades away in exchange for total darkness littered with pale gray tree trunks and dancing orange lights. And in the distance, angry yelling and triumphant chants echoed from an unseen mob...*

*And down the middle of the sparse forest, at the base of an exceptionally large tree laid an unmoving figure, limp, lifeless and bloodied.*

*Rushing forward to help, I shook her shoulders before recoiling at her deathly pallor and freezing body temperature, she had to be dead. And yet, I could feel, see her breath. It was short and shallow but miraculously she was alive. Setting down my pack in order to get her somewhere safe, I turn my eyes away from the pale woman in order to prepare it for transport...only to feel death curl its unfeeling grip over my neck.*

*A snarl and brilliant pain over the base of my neck...and then it was all over...*

**~Meeting~**  
Chapter 4

Awakening with a start, a panicking Freya begins to trash, feeling an unfamiliar damp sensation in her hair and skin, all while a pleasant yet suffocating weight clamps down on her body, feeling as if an immense snake had coiled itself tightly around her while she slept. And right after being released from a terrible dream involving twin icicles biting down into her neck? The sudden assault to her senses wasn't helping to maintain the wandering healer's composure.

**“Gaah! S-Stay away!”**

**“Oh my~ So much energy! Calm yourself dear, it's just the collar tickling your tiny little neck! I must ask though, how did you manage to keep hair this...refined? I initially took you for a wandering savage!”**



**“S-Savage?! Who do you even...wait! You're?! Aren't you supposed to be sleeping? it is way too early for you to be awake!”**

**“Oh come now dear, don't fuss over the little things, here, let me fasten the tie, I was almost done until you decided to start bawking!”**

**“N-No thank you! I'm completely fine! I can cloth myself!”**

**“Really now? Do you actually know how to put on an extravagant dress such as this? If so, I can stop now and let you do all the rest...or if you aren't up to it, you could always quit...though you'll find that your old clothes are currently hanging out to dry...and this dress is all that I have~ So what'll it be?”**

Danitha was clearly enjoying Freya's flustered indecision, smiling widely as she felt the humans grip around her wrists lighten, allowing for her dexterous fingers to weasel themselves free before turning the tables and taking Freya's dainty hands in her own, stroking at her smooth sun kissed skin whose lovely peach hues contrasted her snow white skin. It was hard to believe this was the same smelly human she had tossed into the baths. For one capable of sleeping through being manhandled in a bath, it came as a surprise to know an accidental tightening of the choker and a brush on the neck was all but necessary to give the little lady a rude awakening...although she was beginning to suspect something else might be responsible for her deep sleep and adverse reaction to certain stimuli.

Although her bashful look was something else entirely...enough to stir strange feelings in the vampire's cold heart as more memories of an old friendship pour into her mind. How strange...to be reminded of Fran now of all times...was it because the two were women? Whatever the case, Danitha masks the slight curl of her lips while moving to finish dressing up her human host. The fun was starting to wear thin now that her old memories were back in full force to remind her of old fealties and bonds.

"I'll take your silence for agreement then! Hold still...this won't take long..."

With the last notch in her crimson dress firmly tied and arranged in line with the others, Freya was free to move away from Danitha, fiddling with the flowery hem of her dress with a look of disbelief and embarrassment on her face. It was the first time she had ever gotten to wear such luxurious clothes. And although they were a bit strained and stiff here and there with a tiny bit of color fading, it was still an impressive piece, one she couldn't help but feel proud for being given the opportunity to wear.

But before she can get too touchy feely, a quick rap against the thick doors was enough to snap her attention back to Danitha, who was already one foot out the door, beckoning for her to follow. There were so many things she wanted to find out about this place. About her! But Freya knew when and when not to overstep her boundaries. And so she would comply, falling in behind her only to realize her boots had been replaced with equally posh heels that made her gait unsteady while devastating her confidence in putting her full weight into each step in fear of snapping the impossibly thin pole on its end. Compared to Danitha's calm elegant movements, Freya was like a toddler learning to take her first steps and understandably so; she felt much more at home out in the wilderness with her protective equipment on, not in cramped hallways dressed in fanciful garb that left so much exposed.

Examining the halls around her in an effort to help keep her mind off of her change in attire, Freya takes in the archaic design of the ebony brick and eye-catching embroidery that had survived the passage of time. It wasn't anything she had seen in her travels across the land. And when her gaze inevitably falls on the equally alien clothes the pale woman wore. It seemed so revealing, so impractical...everywhere she looked, Freya's eyes left her with more questions than it did answers, like the corridor bearing no evidence of recent tampering despite the recent memory floating in Freya's mind of ruined blocks and rafter logs piled up high right where she and her host were walking through. For it all to suddenly vanish while she slept seemed impossible so maybe she had imagined it all in her adrenaline fueled rush to get her then critically wounded lady somewhere safe?

*'Strange...I could've sworn this pathway was blocked off...was I seeing things after all?'*

**"Come dear, we're almost there! You seem curious about something...does my humble abode strike your fancy?"**

**"O-oh no! I was just...confused about something...I thought I remembered this place being blocked off last night...are you sure it's safe to keep living here? It feels like the roof might come down on us any second now..."**

Hearing that, Danitha chuckles before casting a longing gaze over the walls, unfazed by her guest's very real concerns.

**"Nonsense dear! I've lived here for a long time...these walls were built to last, and with the mountain itself serving as a natural bulwark, we are safe here, rest assured...though it does get lonely without another warm body to converse with..."**

**"Umm...ma'am? Are you...okay?"**

**"My injuries? They're coming along just fine...all thanks to you I suppose? But please, call me Danitha."**

**"Yeah but...herbal paste shouldn't be able to heal wounds like yours so quickly...in fact, for someone like you to be walking around so soon afterwards...ah! And I'm Freya!"**

**"How perceptive of you...that is precisely what I want to talk about...and if you have any more questions for me, I will happily answer them for you. Once we're seated and comfortable of course!"**

That was enough for Freya to follow suit in relative silence, for a moment there, I felt like someone had pushed a dagger up to her warm delicate flesh as if daring her to say another word. She wanted to dismiss it as just a side effect of her rude awakening, but for that one singular moment, her better judgment had successfully convinced her to drop the conversation. From there it only took a few steps before they arrived at their destination; a warm lit study of sorts with two couches facing inward around a pristine table bereft of the tea set Freya had been secretly hoping to see, but once both women were seated on opposite sides of the humble arrangement, any hope for a light hearted exchange of thank you's was long gone from within Freya's mind, sitting with her back to attention and her shoulders squared. While some part of her was mystified by her host, another was desperately telling her to make a break for it. The exit, if her memory was correct, lay just around the corner. And considering how the woman, Danitha, hinted at her injuries still healing beneath the surface (which was already plastered over in a fresh layer of pristine skin,) maybe she could outrun her? That is of course, assuming there was an ulterior motive driving Danitha's overly courteous behavior...sure, she had saved her life...but at the end of the day, Freya was still a complete stranger...and Danitha was a recluse living high up in a castle built into the peak of an isolated mountain.

Bracing herself, Freya holds in a breath as the bodacious lady reclines in her seat, gingerly running a hand over her side before staring her straight in the eye with undaunting crimson irises before her firm lips slowly open, ready to make her intentions known.

### **~Proposition~**

Chapter 5

**“Wait...you want me to do what again?!”**

**"Hmhm~ You heard me; I want you to stay and be my personal caretaker! As you know your medicines have done wonders on my body...and as healthy as I might look, I occasionally suffer every so often by a...'malignant' condition of sorts, so I was thinking of leveraging your expertise in the field of medicine...you are free to decline of course...but I sense something else in you, something that tells me you've been wandering for many years now without any hope in sight of discovering what you seek. Am I right?"**

**"That...that's a little complicated..."**

Grinning as she leans back into her seat, Danitha's inner voice mocks the pliable mind of the human before her. Although her mind reading capabilities had weakened over the years with nothing but animals to interact with, what little remained allowed her to view enough of her guest's memories and emotions to form her own opinions on Freya and her mission.

*'A wandering healer with no straight goal in mind...if I play my cards right, she'll be wrapped up in my fingers to do my bidding~'*

What Danitha saw was standard fare to a long lived vampire like herself; A terrible childhood, traumatic events that could break a person, the horrors of war. Danitha, much like the rest of the Higher Vampires, were desensitized to it all. Like their cold heart, they felt nothing in the face of such dark topics.

*'Because when you've suffered through it all...you learn to live with it...and move on...ahh, human lives are such a fickle thing.'*

Turning her attention from her own thoughts back to Freya, Danitha sighs before rising from her seat without a sound. She didn't need to read the girl's mind to know what that undecided look on her face meant. The very fact she was contemplating the matter suggested that she had some interest. Now all she needed to do was to coax that small spark into an earnest flame as her pale arms moved to wrap around Freya, pulling her into a cooling embrace that sends a shudder running down the girl's spine and forces a jitter to her shoulders.



**"Why so hesitant dear? I'll have you know my home has more to it than just these dusty old rooms! The library for instance, I'm certain there's one or two dusty old tomes in there that could cater well to your interests. And there's plentiful rooms around the place for you to choose if the current accommodations don't suit your preferences~"**

**"M-My preferences?! No! It's fine really! This place is gorgeous I guess...but...Danitha, I don't mean to be rude when I say this; don't you think it's dangerous? To be living here I mean?"**

**"Dangerous? What makes you say that?"**

**"Well...for starters the front hall was shattered and the corridors are covered in rubble...how long has this-"**

**"Oh tut tut my dear! Come, let me show you around myself! Maybe then you'll be able to appreciate the true splendor of my cozy little nest~"**

**"Whoa! H-Hey! Let me go! I can walk on my own!"**

Chortling with her Freya doll in hand, Danitha whisks the girl away in an unbreakable bear hug, holding her tight to her bosom, her steady gait unbroken even with all the flailing she had to endure at the hands of Freya's unwillingness to be manhandled in such a way that made her look frail. From a bystanders point of view, the scene looked like a carefree mother whisking her unruly daughter away against her will.

Eventually, her drive to escape would whittle away once she figured out there was no breaking Danitha's iron grip. For a woman her age and stature, Freya wasn't expecting her to boast this much strength. Were all mountain people like this?

**"Gugh! How're you so strong..."**

**"That's a secret dear! But let's just say a healthy diet is key to honing such power~"**

Once they had turned the corner and back out onto the main hall, Freya was free to roam on her own two feet next to the towering Danitha who she only now realized held a massive height advantage over her, towering a head or two taller than she was.

*'She's so strong...yet she looks old enough to be my mother...there's definitely something strange going on with her...gotta learn more before I decode on anything else, if she really is just a simple lady living in an empty castle high up in the mountains, then I'd be making a total fool of myself!'*

Withholding her judgment for later, Freya follows in the giantesses' wake, trotting back down along the path she remembered running through with a wounded Danitha on her back. Except instead of the flea bitten rags for curtains and rotted wood beams, everything had been restored into a more or less presentable state with dulled fabrics composing satin curtains draped over tinted glass layered over with a strange black resin that seems to filter out the sunlight pouring in, converting it into a mesmerizing beam of ethereal light in a shade of blue she had never seen before in all her travels, just like the castle itself.

**"See? it is a little quaint and the colors in the tapestry's faded somewhat...but I don't see how this makes my home dangerous to live in?"**

**"T-That shouldn't be possible! When I carried you here...I swear! The place was in ruins and the windows were shattered! Look! That hallway should've been ba-"**

**"Shhh~ Dear, calm down...that whole ordeal is over and behind us. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for pushing yourself up this treacherous mountain but that's exactly what I'm worried about; are you alright? All that stress must have done quite a number on your mental state!"**

**"But...ahh just forget it...must've been a trick of the light or something..."**

*'Indeed~ Nothing more than a trick~'*

As long as she held that assumption and made it her reality, then Danitha saw no reason to press her case further. Unbeknownst to Freya whose eyes had definitely not deceived her that night, the castle had indeed undergone a number of stealthy repairs to its broken interior. A secret related to its mistresses heritage; a power unique to only the most long lived amongst Higher Vampires.

Once they held a place close to heart, that place would become their domain. Such 'nests' were usually isolated from prying eyes, like caves or rural locales far from major population centers. In Danitha's case, it had been this castle, handed down to her from her ancestors when they first coexisted with man before receding to the shadows. A battered monument to a time long forgotten. With a Domain established, the location would be forever linked to the vampire that had bonded with it. Whatever emotional state their tenant was in would reflect in the physical appearance of the Domain. Even their health had a role to play. If the vampire was healthy and able minded, then their Domain would flourish like a well tended garden, but if the vampire's health deteriorated or they felt emotional trauma, then their home would begin to crumble, aging rapidly until nothing but dust and echoes remained when their tenant would finally pass.

With Danitha saved from her fatal wound by Freya's timely arrival, the healing salve she used had eased her natural regeneration powers once the healer had unknowingly cleaned the wound off the tainted water

disrupting her abilities the bolt had been laced with. And with her physical self safely stowed away in bed. Both the Domain and its mistress were free to recover with Freya left to second guess herself on whether or not what she saw had been real or simply a product of exhaustion from the adrenaline fueled rush to scurry her dying patient to the castle.

In fact, Freya was so deep in thought that she hadn't noticed Danitha turning into a passageway on the right, stumbling aimlessly toward the entrance hall.

**"Freya? Over here!"**

**"Wuh? O-Oh! Sorry, I was thinking about something..."**

**"Silly girl, save the thinking for what I'm about to show you hm? I hope you like books as much as I do~"**

Reaching the end of the path with Freya tripping on her heels to catch up, Danitha pushes open the heavy mahogany wood barring entrance to a massive interior space lit from floor to ceiling with a small number of candles, casting warm orange hues over the darkened shelves which stood tall over the two women.

**"Oh wow...so many shelves...a-and are those...scrolls?!"**

**"Mmm~ You've a keen eye! Yes, scrolls ranging from my forefathers research into ancient cultures to the mundane like simple decrees and speeches written on parchment...I knew you'd love this place!"**

From what little of the library Freya could see, there was already enough to keep her busy for weeks just perusing the ones she knew how to read. And if Danitha somehow had an educational book or two about new languages...she could spend years here learning so much!

**"Everything, from history to literature, it's all here. Amassed over many generations. I myself have not stepped foot inside this place for quite a long time..."**

But while Freya eyed the place with curiosity and unrestrained excitement, Danitha seemed to cast hers with masked sadness as her tired gaze came to rest on the forgotten fireplace and the arrangement of chairs and tables as if it had been a gathering place of sorts for a party of two. Maybe it was for her family back when they lived here with her?

**"Hahh...let's move on shall we? There's still the matter of accommodations to discuss...as well as what your job entails...if you choose to stay of course!"**

**"Can't have food on the plate for nothing I guess."**

**"Quite right! Off we go then, there's no time to dawdle."**

As much as she tried to hide it, Freya could already tell from her sudden mood swings that something was weighing down Danitha's mind. Her words felt strung together, forced. As if the jovial woman before her was just a mask hiding a truth she did not want Freya to see. But the more she tried, the more she kindled that flame of curiosity within her, because every now and then, she could sense genuine sincerity through the slight cracks that showed whenever Danitha would slip into these *'soft'* phases where she seemed most vulnerable in letting loose hints critical in unlocking whatever shady past she was hiding from Freya.

'Not to mention that injury...was it really an accidental arrow shot...or were those villagers actually hunting you? So many questions...'

Leaving the library behind before she got left behind by a wistful Danitha who had seemingly lost interest in babying her, Freya moves to walk in line with her host in relative silence for the rest of the way back up where they had come from before turning left this time into a room that, while marginally smaller than Danitha's, still looked too elegant for the likes of her. The bed was embroidered with silk and lace patterns, the furnishing was decorated and shimmery smooth and the glowing embers within the fireplace radiated a comforting warmth. And in the corner of the room were her belongings, all neatly arranged and lined up in a bundle.

**"So?"**

**"..."**

She knew what Danitha was asking her but her mind was still not made up. After traveling all the way out here to the brutal northern peaks only to be met with disappointment when she realized the locals weren't the peaceful folk she had heard of, Freya was contemplating the point of resuming her march. For close to 20 years now she had been on the move, an ill fated wanderer with ever changing goals and a skillset that had her harboring big dreams to heal the injured and help the needy...but when the injured and needy kept cropping up wherever she went? It was all simply too much of a wake up call to her that ultimately her actions would never have any real long term effect.

How long would she last till she met a gruesome end? True, she had managed to survive the perilous road she had been treading on since the day she became her own woman, but the physical and mental toll this was all taking on her would inevitably lead to her game end at some point in the future.

Maybe the time to hang up her hat was finally here? In a solemn castle high up in the peaks far from prying eyes. And with Danitha rubbing her shoulders reassuringly, that temptation only grew tenfold. Turning to look into the woman's crimson irises before giving her answer.

**"I...I think it'd be nice to stay...for a while I guess...so, yeah. I accept...thanks for the room and board Danitha."**

**"Ohh~ That's exciting to hear! For a moment there I thought you were about ready to turn and walk out the doors. And please, no need for thanks, it is the least I can do to repay you for saving my life...which brings us to our last topic for the night."**

With the pleasantries out of the way, the two would settle down to begin discussions on what Freya's stay here would entail.

For one; she would only need to administer weekly checks for any resurfacing issues from last night's wound and other health related problems Danitha had hinted at earlier much to Freya's confusion. She could lift her without trouble and move around without so much as a limp. But then again, some of the most dangerous ailments she had seen on the road showed no surface level symptoms until it was too late to recover. And secondly; to use her medicinal knowledge to create more of the healing salves and recovery water she had used to treat her injury as a precaution in case she was ever in trouble and Freya wasn't around.

To her surprise however, that was all Danitha seemed to want out of her. Other than staying out of her quarters until called for or invited inside, the freedom she afforded her seemed almost unreal.

**"Just be sure to avoid the villagers down the mountain and cover your tracks if you ever find yourself going out for a stroll or two!"**

**"Speaking of...who are they? They don't seem like the type to associate with you if they really did land that shot on purpose..."**

**"Correct...that rabble hasn't seen good times because of their crops failing from overtaxed soil and their rivers are polluted. Instead of looking inward and fixing their mistakes...some foreign group claiming to be the speakers for the Almighty above directed their anger toward the...woodland spirits shall we say? Now they go on hunts almost every night now, swinging pitchforks and shooting at anything that moves in the dark. That's how I was injured on my evening walk."**

**"But I heard groups like them have actually taken down the supernatural, taken home prizes carved from the bodies of monsters and beasts."**

**"Hm, the world is vast...maybe there are creatures of the night, skulking around where human eyes don't belong out there. But here? No such thing my dear. Only rabbits and wolves prowl the woods."**

**"Yeah...I guess you're right...probably just the locals being riled up by fairy tales. Still can't believe they'd leave you for dead just like that though..."**

As much as she wanted to doubt Danitha's claims, the tenacious healer had decided to keep her interest in the generous woman hidden for now. If she truly could move as she pleased outside of work, then she would have all the time in the world to figure things out piece by piece, something she hoped could be answered within the library.

Proceeding the conclusion of their talk with some minor questions from Freya like where the bathrooms and kitchen were, Danitha would be the first to back out of the conversation, leaving Freya alone for the rest of the night as she lets out a mighty yawn, clearly exhausted from all the fun she had with Freya wiping out her remaining energy reserves.

**"I shall take my leave then...thank you so much for agreeing to stay dear, with you around, I'm certain the place will liven up!"**

**"Y-you're welcome! But when the time comes, do you want me to prepare food for you?"**

**"No need for that. You just take care of yourself. You'll find the store well stocked with meat and vegetables if you ever have need for them, I'm certain you could whip up an amazing meal!"**

With a final wave of her hand and a curt bow, Danitha exits the room, closing the door behind her before walking off down the hallway to return to her chambers. Giving Freya the space to process everything she had learned in just that short tour of what was probably only a small portion of the castle...which honestly wasn't much at all.

*'But I've got the pieces laid out in front of me...if I can put it all together, then maybe I can figure out who Danitha really is...and maybe what she is...'*

She didn't buy Danitha's claims of being a secluded lady living in some strange castle atop a mountain. And she certainly didn't buy the excuse that the villagers had mistakenly shot her just because she was walking around on a stroll. Who in their right mind went walking around potentially dangerous forests clumped with snow and rocks? And for a woman dressed of her stature, she certainly was much stronger than she looked.

*'And no one could ever recover that fast from wounds that severe...she should be dead...'*

Whatever the case, Freya shakes her head, turning her mind off of unanswerable questions she would rather not ponder the implications of towards her belongings, making sure everything was in place before a sudden thought crosses her mind as her eyes gaze upon the gorgeous cuffs of her dress protruding into her field of vision.

**"How do I even take this thing off..."**

While Freya struggles with juggling her plans and problems however, Danitha too seemed to be contemplating her short time with Freya with equal parts loathing and longing. She had grown distrustful of humans but amidst the subtle prodding by Freya to get her to loosen her tongue, she had both seen, heard and felt her naive innocence to both learn and care for the wounded. First in the library and then when she brought up the subject of her injury. It reminded her of the time when the concept of love wasn't lost to her, a time when these halls were filled with the cheerful sounds of the one she loved.

**"No...Fran is gone...she isn't her...not by a long shot."**

Slumping over without even bothering to remove her battle dressing, Danitha's body soon grows limp as the sun rises over the mountain peaks to bathe the castle walls in their warm light. With such a strong link to her Domain, it was an unavoidable drawback that she would basically be rendered helpless when the morning came. The sun's rays against the brick and mortar made her feel lethargic, a call for her to sleep. A call not even Higher Vampires could resist.

With heavy eyelids slipping shut as the fire in the hearth dies off unnaturally fast, drowning the room in darkness to give its occupant a measure of peace in troubling times...

**~Bonding~**  
Chapter 6

Freya's first few weeks in the castle were rather uneventful. Once the initial awe of the place wore away alongside her growing accustomed to living under a sturdy roof and not out in the wilderness where her eyes and ears had to be open at all times, the curious woman would begin roaming around the place in her free time, coming across more or less the same bedrooms like the one she occupied to the occasional curiosity that stood out from the others with abandoned contraptions whose function wasn't immediately recognisable at first glance and old musky paintings of otherworldly sights and indecipherable scrawls.

But most of her time would be spent in the library browsing through the armada of books, papers and scrolls left lying in the shelves for who knew how long without being touched. While she was slightly disappointed at the absence of modern literature, the abundance of books detailing ancient scripts and old

legends were more than enough to make up for it. And while she did try to keep to her usual routine of turning in early, her gracious host's preference for nocturnal operating hours meant she usually had to stay up for an hour or two longer than she usually would.

It was during those small periods when the two could converse, with Freya filling Danitha in on the days events while checking her body over for any signs of negative reactions to the medical salve the woman had her apply over her body, and although she had to assure Freya many times now that this was normal in her eyes, the flustered woman would have a hard time keeping her focus whenever she had to rub down Danitha's bodacious figure, running her oily medicated hands over impossibly smooth, cooling skin, rubbing into pillowy teats that were incredibly perky despite their age, ensuring the medication seeped into every nook and cranny including the one that laid nestled between plump thighs. She knew the rules of nature well, more than others with an active sex life, but rubbing her hands over the naked body of an older woman was something she never expected to derive pleasure from. She had washed and dressed others before, but Danitha was not like them. She was fair, elegant and beautiful. During her first session, the feel of the woman's alluring body remained on her fingertips. While some level of familiarity and a mundane sense of duty had set in by her third, she still couldn't wipe away the sense that she could be doing so much more to Danitha's vulnerable form. If she wasn't careful, those vivacious red eyes of hers might just make her lose herself in both body and mind...

Thankfully for her sanity's sake, this was a process she only had to acquiesce to once a week in exchange for her continued stay here. Not a bad deal if one were to think about it.

But steamy times weren't everything the two shared together. Over time, Freya would begin making the effort to adjust her sleeping hours, lining it up so that she could spend more time in contact with Danitha while still waking up somewhat early enough to prepare food and scour the library for more knowledge much to the blonde's surprise. It had even given her the opportunity to prepare food for her, something that took a while for both Freya and Danitha to warm up to after she initially grew wary once Freya had presented her with a plate of piping hot vegetable stew mixed in with diced rabbit and a generous topping of herbal shavings. A mix of foods the reclusive lady had strangely never seen before from the raised brow and inquisitive look she shot at Freya's eager one before glancing in abject horror at the wooden spoon held out for her to use. As if the concept of eating such an aromatic dish was some sort of taboo.

**"Come on! Just one bite? it's based on a recipe my teacher taught me for something delicious to make while out and about...and with the food you've got in the store, this is a little more generous than it should be honestly."**

**"W-While I'm thankful for the gesture...I'm afraid I don't usually...Haa, alright, just one bite..."**



And from there, one bite would gradually turn into two, then 3 until whole mouthfuls emptied out the bowl of its mouth wateringly delicious contents much to Freya's chagrin.

"So? How was it?"

"Well, i'll admit; It was...moderately appetizing...you surprise me Freya..."

"You're welcome~"

The idea of making a meal for Danitha had honestly never crossed Freya's mind when her nightly meetings and weekly checkups with the lady had drawn no cause for concern. She was as healthy as a wolf bounding through the snow and just as distant as usual, masking her feelings and intent with that jovial face of hers. It reminded her of a sulky child who didn't want to listen to his parents. And what better way to turn a frown upside down than hot, delicious food served straight from the kitchen? And after weeks of feeling as if she owed Danitha despite her doubts, this was simply her way of lightening that load. Especially after noticing a few discrepancies around the castle after she awoke from a good night's rest. Discrepancies that only seemed to intensify after that fateful night when Freya had decided to give Danitha a literal taste of the finer things in life there was to experience in the outside world.

Take for instance; the chilled store that had begun to restock itself with fresh ingredients and even some new additions like fish, boar and unidentified baubles. she had to assume that Danitha was the one responsible for doing so. An impressive feat that if true, only served to deepen Freya's doubts about her claims of being an ordinary woman living alone in the mountains.

Meanwhile on the other side of things, Danitha's nightly feasting and inspection of the castle grounds would soon be interrupted by Freya's extended schedule butting into hers. She knew the girl's goodwill extended past her nosy attempts at peeking into her privacy but she remained careful to maintain distance. So far, Freya had done well to abide by her rules, keeping to herself mostly in the library and kitchen with occasional exploratory trips around the castle that didn't result in much. If anything, she seemed to have found a new spot to read her books in at the top of the northernmost spire where the sunlight was at its brightest through the snowfall and gray clouds.

But during the few hours she had to herself after she was sure Freya had gone to bed, they would be spent foraging for blood sapped from the animals lurking in the forest alongside checking on what little of her otherworldly kin remained. And for each bloodied den or ransacked home she found, her grudge for the humans in the village grew even further, made worse when she knew there was nothing she could do when they now had deadly weapons capable of catching a Higher Vampire mid strike, making them something to be avoided, especially when they began to resume their nightly prowling, patrolling the woods in group, crossbows drawn and at the ready. It left her hungry and irritable when she couldn't get her nightly fill.

Until Freya had suddenly approached her an hour after checking up on her condition with a bowl of something hot. The source of the rich smell of succulent vegetables and well boiled chunks of rabbit meat laced with heavy herbal aftertones. She had expressed some level of disinterest, but after a rumble in her tummy and the reminder that she had to eat at least something, Danitha would finally give in, planning to entertain Freya's insistence that she at least give it a try.

Instead she found herself devouring the entire bowl in no time flat. The overall taste was an excellent blending of the mild spices, mellowed meat and enriching vegetables. And the more of it flowed around her tongue before sloshing down her throat and into her belly, the hunger only grew until she inevitably downs the entire bowl. Leaving herself stunned and Freya grinning from ear to ear. It was the first time in ages since she had eaten normal food despite keeping her stock of food refreshed all these years that she hadn't noticed her handling of the spoon wrapped tight in her entire hand, unbecoming of the grace and elegance she displayed in her demeanor.

Despite her inability to derive much nutrients from the consumption of regular food, the roster of activities Danitha would partake in come nightfall had expanded to include foraging for anything that could serve as suitable ingredients in Freya's cooking, and since it blended nicely with her feeding, some of her kills would in turn serve to fill the store instead of how she usually left the cadavers out in the open for scavengers to pick apart. It was a cruel winter after all, and in a forest as bountiful as this, the smallest of critters tended to have a hard time foraging for food amongst all their competitors.

From there, the two strange tenants of the lone mountain top castle would begin a tenuous relationship with small contributions from both sides that would slowly build upon it. With Freya's cooking soon growing bolder with new custom recipes, she would inevitably need a taste tester, and with Danitha being the only other point of contact in this homely little castle, their evenings were now filled with playful banter and an earnest swapping of opinions about the direction Freya should take her recipes in. Should there be more salt? Maybe an equal level of that bitter herb she loved so much? Moments like these where the two were given chances to talk about topics that weren't related to either of them were chances for growth.

And on Danitha's end, she had taken to reeling Freya into the finer things in life; dresses, makeup, skincare powders and ointments she kept in abundance. Like a caring older sister looking to educate her siblings, the scope of these 'lessons' covered everything from putting on corsets to learning how to wear a dress and all the little intricacies that made their flare pop alongside tricks to make the process faster. And while she displayed a dislike for such things citing longer times spent putting them on, Danitha could tell the little lady was secretly gushing over every single fancy dress and gown she got to wear...and the fact that she would, on occasion, take the original red velvet dress she had given her during her rude awakening out for a spin, wearing it until the time came for her to go to bed, taking care to wash, dry and maintain it herself. It was

almost hard to believe this was the same vampire who had plotted to carve her up by the end of the first month...

These were just two of the many blocks that would come together in the span of a few months to form a solid bond between them. Especially with Danitha, who held more experience in the matters of girl-to-girl relationships. But beneath the purity, ugly cracks and unwoven threads were beginning to build up. Stemming from an unexpected source.

While Danitha's trust in Freya grew and her insecure self started to break away the girl she would unconsciously begin to harbor feelings for was careful to keep her growing distrust in Danitha hidden. She didn't want to feel lied to, not after all the experiences they had made together. But all the evidence she found pointed towards the suspicions she had initially laughed off as myth.

That the woman who had invited her into her home was a vampire. Bloodsuckers who evaded the light of day in their reverential pursuit of the darkness. That would explain why she never seemed to come out in the morning, the puncture marks she found in the dead animals in the store, her inhuman recovery speed and the fact that there wasn't a single mirror in the entire place. All she had to go on when trying on dresses were Danitha's remarks and her own neck breaking inspections to ensure she got it on right. But at the same time she sort of understood the reasoning behind why Danitha wanted to hide it. The roving mob rampaging through the woods on the cold night of her first meeting with her had intended for that bolt to hit because she was their target.

She would've died then and there all alone...until Freya had come along and saved her, returning her to the castle; her Domain, where she would be at her strongest before administering healing salves and ointments that would unknowingly hasten her recovery. While she still hadn't been able to get a full grasp over some of the more archaic tomes written in a tongue not of her own, the conveniently placed dictionaries and self help material were more than enough for Freya to piece together the information in some kind of written account on the differences between regular vampires and their greater kin.

It was also what assuaged her of the fear that Danitha had been coddling her with the purpose of draining her dry, similar to a pig being fed till it was bursting with fat and roiling with delectable juices. Within the thick leather cover, faded ink scrawled over ancient paper with precise quill strokes told her that Higher Vampires weren't so different from humans besides their affinity for apathy over empathy and that most were dignified with their own core values and beliefs. That would definitely help explain the bite marks on the animal corpses...but one question remained unanswered in Freya's mind.

*'Why didn't she just kill me when she woke up? For all she knows I'm probably a liability!'*

Instead, she had dressed her up like a doll before showing her around the place with the proposal that she become her caretaker of sorts. And what did she get in return? Free food, a room, open access to a sprawling fortress and lovely company...

But compared to the Danitha of the past whose motherly demeanor felt forced, the woman she spoke to now had no hesitation puppeteering her limbs, no doubts to force a smile on her face and saw Freya not as a stranger to be feared but a friend to confide in. Where their past conversations had been stiff and awkward, there was now an air of familiarity between them as they swapped tales from their respective lives at the behest of Danitha, who seemed to want to spice their evening chatter up a bit while Freya whipped up new dishes. And although Danitha's ended up embellished somewhat from her having to hide the fact that she was a vampire without knowing Freya was more than aware, she has figured out Danitha's habit of swapping her role in the story early on. She loved to swap her actual role as the 'otherworldly being' with a random person or animal she still remembered. So when she said that 'she' had witnessed the creature cutting down large swathes of men sent by a wayward lord, helping a crying child or on any other occasion it did appear in her stories, all she had to do was reverse their roles once more to get the full picture.

And when she proved herself a good listener, the cracks in Danitha's mask only broke further, with empathetic responses to the blurry recounting of Freya's troubled childhood of two parents who each had their own conflicting views on what they wanted for her. Only for it to come to an end in the fires of a war no one but the withered codgers of the kingdom wanted. She had to intervene when the poor girl's breathing started to grow heavy and erratic alongside the frail arms that held the ladle in a boiling crock of soup trembling madly. While most would shudder under a touch as cold as ice, Freya had grown used to the chill of a vampire's body. So used to it that she found a strange coziness in it, a feeling her mind now associated with safety.

Once the fire was put out and the soup covered over, Danitha had seen fit to carry her towards the nearby chair to give her a place to rest without the possibility of harming herself.

**"It's fine if you can't continue...don't push yourself Freya."**

**"I-I'm...hurk! Alright...it's just...lemme continue...if I don't get it off my shoulders now I might never be able to do it again...please Danitha, you've listened to me this long...just a little while more?"**

With a small puff of air and a reassuring pat, the less than subtle vampire seats herself before the trembling human, allowing her to continue as her smile slowly returns to its former bitter grimace upon hearing of what Freya had to go through until meeting her mentor after passing out in the ruins of a village her jumbled memory couldn't even tell was hers or some other unfortunate settlement that had been razed as well.

All her knowledge, her values and arguably the woman she was today. All of it had been honed under the wise tutelage of the weathered old hermit that had seen fit to adopt her as his child. So great was his love for her that he had passed on the night when, and only when everything he knew was perfectly ingrained within Freya's mind. By then she had barely been 15 years old, and a girl like her would need it to survive all on her lonesome in a harsh world where loss and strife ruled over peace and prosperity.

**"At least...that's what I think...Papa Ulan was so old when he found me...by the time I'd mastered his last brewing technique, he could barely walk without a cane. And all he ate was just...rice in a bowl of boiled water.."**

*"I suppose I should be thanking Ulan then..."*

**"Hm? What did you say?"**

**"Think nothing about it dear...please continue."**

Continuing past that brief disturbance, the conclusion had been swift; a monotonous life of surviving, helping others and traveling across the blackened lands of an unrecognizable countryside in the hopes of a safe haven free from all this death and destruction. She had heard tales of green rolling hills and verdant plains. Instead all she saw was shattered earth and dead land strewn with corpses and pockmarked haphazardly with impact craters.

Wandering aimlessly and without purpose, Freya's goodwill and hope had been all but exhausted by the time she had reached the village at the base of the mountain peak after being lured there by tales of a community untouched by the trappings of paranoia and an attitude for war. Only to find the same thing happening here...

**"And that's when I came upon a dying woman lying under the shade of a tree...all on her lonesome and dressed like an old noble..."**

**"Hmhm~ I'll have you know this 'old noble' of yours is still very much alive and able."**

**"All thanks to me of course! Well...that's it for story time! Gotta get back to heating the soup before it thickens."**

**"Let me help!"**

**"O-Oh? It's fine Danitha really, besides you wouldn't know what to do. I'll handle it."**

**"But you could always teach me, yes? Just like how I taught you how to wear this neat dress of yours..."**

**"Where are you-no! Danith-ahn!"**

Freya's body still shuddered whenever she thought back to that night when Danitha's frigid touch had raked across her body. It was a sensation unlike any other that served to instill the same sense of guilty pleasure she felt when she first had to rub the pale woman currently groping her down in medication. From the way her nails scraped the indents of her perfectly toned neck bones while the chill instilled shivers of ecstasy in places she never thought possible, it was only a matter of time till the innocent cotton panties beneath Freya's dress became stained with her vulgar lust, spewing forth from wanton lips between trembling legs. The subtle stinging in her heart from recounting her past was gone, replaced with uncertainty and an eagerness for more as she cranes her neck upward, hoping for a kiss...she truly didn't mind losing her virginity to another woman, if it was Danitha...hell, she didn't even care if she was human or vampire.

All she wanted now was to have this unbearable itch inside of her taken away.

**"W-What am I...N-No, I'm sorry I...really should be resting..."**

Until Danitha suddenly parts from the embrace, quickly flitting out of the kitchen before Freya could say a word or do anything to keep her there by her side.

With her bodily needs left untended, the soup had all but faded from concern as Freya stumbled back to her room along the empty corridor, holding herself back before collapsing in bed gasping for breath, all while her hands remained balled into fists, keeping her knees locked together and her thighs firmly clamped shut in an effort to appease the incredible itch she felt in her virgin folds. While human sexual reproduction was something she had read up on, experiencing that urge to reproduce firsthand with a woman no less was something she was woefully unprepared for.

But all things would inevitably come to pass, and when her body had finally exhausted itself of energy trying to fight back against the pleasure, a gentle sigh was Freya's weak celebratory cry of her triumph against lust as her drooping eyelids finally slid shut.

While Freya slept in the safety of the castle's innards, Danitha would remain high above the castle proper, sitting all by herself at the mountain's peak to gaze down at the luminous dots of amber glowing amidst the darkness of the snow capped canopy the trees provided. How long had it been since she last left the castle proper? How long since she last satiated her thirst for blood?

It was when she felt the flutter of interest to try more of the human woman's cooking, the desire to learn more of her past and in turn; who she was. A forgotten instinct telling her to remain in the safe confines of

the castle with someone there to speak to and protect...protect Freya? What had happened to her earlier plan to learn all she could about her before doing away with her before she drew unnecessary attention?

**"Why....am I acting this way again! Freya isn't Fran...why do they have to be so alike..."**

Out of the myriad stories she had exchanged with Freya, there was one last one she had purposefully left aside because of its vast similarities to the ongoing story the both of them starred in as the pivotal lovebirds that seemed to be on the path to a good ending...unlike the previous rendition of the story with its casting being slightly different alongside a downer of an ending where no one lived happily ever after. An ending that abolished the concept of love from the heart of the sole surviving maiden.

Or at least, that's what she thought. For how could she truly forget when she still held the deceased close to heart alongside the promise she had made before her soul slipped free of her fading vessel? Especially after daring to get as hands on as she did earlier with Freya, teasing her young, inexperienced body, filling it with the euphoric spasms and subtle twitching of a woman in heat, awakening the desires for a romantic trust within the virgin's heart. Only to be slapped back to reality when Freya's lovestruck face eerily mirrored that of her deceased partner; a ghostly reminder of her past and the traumas associated with it.

And now here she sat, contemplating how to move on from this sudden turn of events. Her uncontrollable desire for Freya was now exposed, and that terrified Danitha greatly, fearing she had broken the trust she had established with her for assaulting her so suddenly.

*'And what if she isn't in to same sex relationships? Abhh~ Why did I run?!'*

Unbeknown to Danitha, the hour of dawn's arrival was fast approaching ever since she had left Freya to rest, and in all her reminiscing and self conflict, she never noticed when tike simply flew her by.

When she left Freya's side, the moon had barely risen high enough to shine brightly in the middle of the skies above. And now they had faded into the backdrop of retreating night as the first rays beam across the distant peaks, hitting an exposed Danitha directly as her eye widen momentarily before sliding shut while her body goes limp, falling back down the steep slope of stairs leading up the spire with a rolling series of thumps and bumps that ends with the ear piercing crack of wood, the sound of her body hitting the floor downstairs. If it weren't for her enchanted garb and status as a Higher Vampire, she would've been reduced to cinders when exposed directly to the sunlight. Instead, she was knocked out, forced into a coma where she could only dream, just like every morning since her inception into this world.

**"Mmm...D-Danitha? Where...are you?"**

But while Danitha slept, Freya would awaken to the sounds of distant rapping; of bare knuckles against hard wooden doors. Rising groggily to her feet in her disheveled red dress, the unwary woman could barely be given the time to think about the events of last night before the knocking comes again, louder and faster this time, as if the person on the other side was in desperate need of help.

Moving at a brisk pace toward the entrance hall, Freya's eyes gaze over the immaculate entrance, musing to herself how it was all just rubble and snow the first time she set foot here before finally reaching the towering doors, rattling on its hinges as the person on the other side continues to beat down on it. Earning a click of the tongue from Freya in her frustration as her stiff hands reach out to grab ahold of the handle before twisting and pulling the heavy iron handles, filling the air with the thunderous creak of protesting wood, masking the sound of a bolt being loaded into a crossbow...

"I'm coming! Sheesh...no need to be so rude about i-"

### *~Realization~*

#### *Finale*

It was a nightmare. She hadn't had one in a good long while now...but this one was most unusual to her. For it depicted not the past but a strange event of sorts; within it, she saw Freya, wounded in the shoulder with an iron bolt jutting out of a red gash in her pristine skin, staining her dress with streaks of dark red. She wanted to leap forward to help, but her vision remained glued to that point high up in the ceiling. It was as if only her eyes were there to watch as a silent observer, helpless to prevent Freya from going at it alone as she screamed wordlessly at her to stop as she leapt to the side, aiming for the nearest offender with a face full of feral rage.

All while the other invaders readied ranged weapons, yelling their 'holy words' while preparing a volley of deadly bolts laced with the liquid that had burned her. And even if it had no effect on an ordinary human like her, iron was still iron, and right before she could watch the deadly projectiles hit their mark, her eyes snapped open in a fit of panic. Breathing erratically before calming herself upon finding herself awake once more with the words of Freya's war cry still lingering in her ears. She has insulted members of her own kind, labeling them as filthy ingrates and berating them for coming into her home with weapons drawn...her home? What did she even mean by that?

Taking a slow look around her, night had already fallen as usual...pale moonlight high above in the spiraling depths of a stone construct, this wasn't her room. It was the northernmost spire...the one Freya loved to read her books at. Rising to a seated position calmly before pushing herself up onto her feet, the dazed vampire rubs the back of her head in an effort to quell the insane throbbing running beneath the bone from where her skull had impacted the floor earlier, filling her eyes with that brief moment of searing sunlight beaming past her eyes and directly into her brain before it all went dark as she felt herself slide down the stairs before



slipping off the edge and falling all the way back downstairs. She had blacked out after being directly exposed to a high concentration of sunlight in the one spot where dawn's first light was at its strongest.

Even in the comfort of reality however, a sickening feeling would make her clench a fist over her bosom in an effort to calm herself, pressing down on the immense weight that told her something terribly wrong had occurred in her Domain. There weren't any life signs and yet, she could detect three faint bodies situated in and around the entrance hall. Maybe it was just a lingering after effect? Emotional baggage from a bad dream...or maybe it actually...

Gritting her teeth in disgust and incredulity at the thought of the alternative, Danitha unleashes the full strength of her abilities that, although a bit muddled from her abstinence from blood, were still enough of a boost to get her back to the main hallway while checking Freya's usual spots, only to find them all abandoned and bereft of life until eventually reaching the entrance hall. Where she could immediately see two strangers sprawled out on the ground in pools of their own dried blood. No sign of Freya in sight, which meant there was still hope that she had gotten out unscathed!

Until her eyes finally settle on the third and last corpse lying in the middle of the room, her elegant dress riddled with holes and her soft, broken body painfully speared through three times with iron bolts. And where her heart should be, a crude wooden stake had been driven straight into her chest, smashed to bits with pulp protruding from the edge of chilled, torn skin, broken bone and ripped flesh. All her hopes were dashed upon seeing the dirtied trail of auburn hair glimmering in the pale blue of the moonlight pouring in from the open door, contrasting the slick dark crimson of her lifeblood spilled all around her.

Besides the weeping wind swirling in from the outside, no other sound could be heard as Danitha slowly crossed the distance between her and the woman's corpse lying unmoving on the floor. And the closer she got, the more horrific the damage was as a sultified gasp escaped her lips at the sight of Freya's lifeless face lying slumped over to the side, badly beaten with the pearly blue eyes that once gazed at her with equal parts curiosity and uncertainty left as dull orbs already on the way to losing their aqua luster, crusted by dried tears all while cracked lips remained unmoving despite Danitha's insistence that they draw breath.

Removing the stake that had been driven through with enough force to shatter the cobblestone beneath Freya's fragile form with a wet pop and a sickening crunch of her shattered spine sticking to the blood soaked log, Danitha kneels before her friend's body, cradling the back of her head gently in one hand while supporting her fragile waistline with her other. She knew she had little time left to make a decision, a decision she never could have done so with Fran, not if it meant breaking her promise to live life to its fullest no matter what happened to her. For years Danitha had insisted she become a vampire like her so the two truly could be together forever. But the stubborn girl remained stubbornly glued to her beliefs that each individual being should remain the way they were born into this world as. Humans were humans, and vampires were vampires. Unless of course, a person chose to do so willingly.

And then the accident happened, and Fran had died a flesh and blood human being, leaving Danitha all alone for the following millenia, unwilling to end herself or others once she had set her mind in following her deceased lover's code as if they were her own...but had she really been living when she had kept herself locked away in her home with all that bitterness boiling away in her heart? For generations she busied her mind with thoughts about who to blame for the accident; Fran's pig headed human fiance to whom she held no love for or her family that had been foolishly convinced to hire mercenaries in order to kill their daughters heretical idol, a false mistress that had led their innocent sheep astray...which in a way, she had become. Hiding under that mask to bury the sorrow from remembering Fran and all she did with her. The blood of her murderers had long since stained her hands, but her irrational hatred would take many years until it finally dissipated altogether when word of the humans brutal actions against the supernatural would finally make it to her ears by those that had fled the forest entirely in a great exodus far up into the northern reaches where no one could find them. And in her effort to draw human blood like she had done so effortlessly in the past, she had been injured. A Higher Vampire, dealt a fatal blow by a measly human weapon.

But that was also how she would come to meet Freya, her second encounter with a curious human who seemed too smart for their own good. She had initially planned to kill her once she was well and certain she had no connection to the villagers. But the more time she spent with her, the further she found herself falling back into assuming her old persona of a gentle vampiress who saw the good in everyone and made an effort to make friendly talk.

Eventually, she would come to forget those plans, even discarding the constant use of mind reading magic in an effort to spy on Freya. She began treating her like she had Fran, all the way up till their heartfelt exchange of stories and...the lead up to the thing she always engaged Fran with when either of them grew too needy, too lustful for the other's touch; *sex*.

Cue the horror of realizing she had almost forced herself on someone who wasn't Fran, Danitha had fled in shame and embarrassment, leaving Freya on her lonesome all while she wiled time away at the peak, only to be fried by a strong blast of sunlight due to her lowered guard and indecision to make a choice in time. And that indecision had cost her; sleeping all while Freya fended off a sudden surprise attack by men from the village who had probably mistaken her for being the vampire they were hunting. And although she had put up a valiant fight managing to down two men, she was still outnumbered...

All it took was a single glance of the scene to envision what had happened after Freya had gouged out the second man's eyes; a bolt in the side, then three more in the hips alongside a stray shot that ended up slitting her throat. Danitha had stopped the mental recreation then, she knew the rest of what happened once her loyal companion had dropped to her knees gasping for air she could no longer take in. Not once did she even try to claim she wasn't a vampire once her analytical mind had surmised the men were here to finish the job.

Even going so far as to put her survivalist talents to use in keeping up the act. But the details of her death remained obscure and unknown to Danitha. Had she died with a smile knowing she had protected Danitha? Or did she regret her decision to stay here with her? Passing in horrific agony as the heartless bastards drove their cruel invention into her chest without even giving her the mercy of a quick end first.

But in doing so, she had managed to make the humans think they had finally eliminated the vampiric threat. Giving Danitha a clean slate to live on without worrying about the next attack. In exchange for her own life...

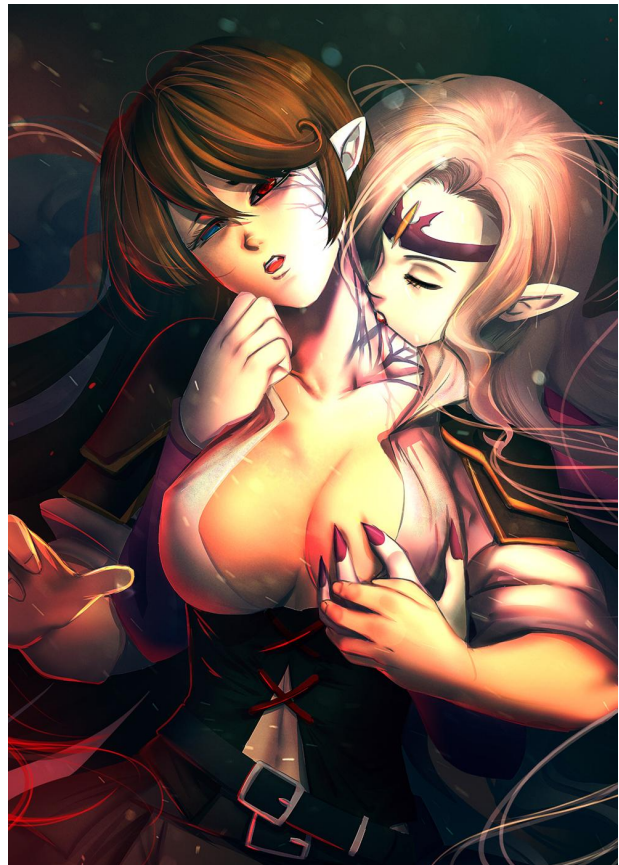
This wasn't a fate someone like Freya deserved to suffer, an unfitting end for a brilliant soul. She didn't want her to go, not when they still had unfinished business to settle; why did she protect her? But alas, a cold corpse could offer no answers...unless...

**"No...not again...I'm not losing you Freya! We haven't even finished talking yet! There's still so much we haven't done together! You...idiot!"**

Leaning forward to bite down on Freya's coarse, stiff neck, Danitha begins to draw what little blood remained within Freya's limp form, all while injecting a special secretion from thin veins in her fangs, replacing her coagulating fluids with fresh lifeblood from which she could use to return to the land of the living once more.

Unlike normal vampires, whose bite reanimated their kills into more mindless ghouls like them, Higher Vampires had the unique ability to impart their genes onto another, preferably a human being. Turning them into another Higher Vampire in a process that was generally violent, and had a chance to fail thanks to genetic rejection. But in Freya's case, her still body begins to adapt quickly to the foreign agent, assuming Danitha's snow white pallor, inky black veins and otherworldly aura as her injuries begin to unwind and heal, ugly gashes and unsightly holes in the flesh close up with reinvigorated sinew, flesh and bone stitching themselves back together under the influence of

Freya's new vampiric blood flowing through her body, reviving deceased organs all while converting her physiology into that of a vampire's. Superhuman feats of herculean strength, the ability to melt into an inky



cloud of smoke, seeing clearly in low light conditions, all these and more would become Freya's new staple as her cracked eyelids begin to flutter once more as they heal over, leaving pale skin behind as her eyes begin to lose their original azure blue coloration for a deep shade of blood red while her previously lifeless hands move to wrap around Danitha's arm. Trembling in shock, horror and finally calm once her adrenaline-fueled mind finally registers the safety of her friend, wiggling a pointed ear in relief as both women's vampiric traits fully come forth in each other's embrace.

Danitha knew she no longer had to hide anything, not now after Freya had given her all to save her. She must've been as undecided as she was if she was hiding the fact that she knew her truth all this time behind her back. Letting her die was simply too cruel an act to allow. And with the gaping hole in her bosom sealing itself, Danitha was free to thread her fingers once more along the gentle curves of Freya's succulent melons, giving her left breast a firm squeeze to bask in their warmth before they inevitably faded for the familiar chill of her kin.

**"Ack?! Da...itha...I...al...ays...knew...haaa~"**

**"Shh...you're still recovering...just let me handle the rest my love~"**

***"Mm!"***

Releasing her fangs from Freya's saliva slick neck, Danitha runs her free tongue down the young woman's neckline just as she had done with Fran oh so many years ago, a flick of the tongue behind her ears, an adventurous finger to probe at her swollen nipples, another to trace the toned contours of Freya's navel before eventually plunging into the dripping crevasse of her virgin snatch, stirring her up to prepare for the main course ahead as she repositions herself carefully, treating her lover's body with care while sidling over until she sits before Freya, undoing the clasps that held her dress together while pushing aside the stuff fabric of her leotard, exposing her own eager pussy while spreading her legs to wrap firmly around the healer's unexpectedly bodacious form, claiming tight around broad hips and supple thighs until both of their lower lips were pressed up tight against each other. They could feel the throb of the other's folds, the subtle excretions of vaginal juices, the prodding of their clitoris as the two fleshy nubs poked against each other. It was absolute bliss and neither woman could wait a second more as they leaned forward, Danitha with slow relief and Freya with an eagerness to satiate her reinvigorated love for the woman that had given her a new lease on life.

With the last of her former sun kissed hide taking on the signature deathly pallor of the vampire while her rounded right ear morphs into a long pointed tip to match her other, Freya had been reborn as a Higher Vampire, gasping as the damage to her throat finally heals, allowing her to speak vocalize words and sounds once more as her back arches to the expert movements of Danitha as the elder rubs her mature body against her younger, less grandiose figure. But that wasn't to say Freya was lacking, not when she was already a

stunning beauty for a no name village girl raised to be a healer who found comfort in mud and grime scrounging for herbs while helping the less fortunate.

And in a way, she had served her duty even now as she basked in the raw pleasures of sex as Danitha held her tough arms down all while bucking her hips and thrusting forward, slamming her ass into the ground while bouncing and grinding Freya's dripping pussy against hers. Smiling warmly at the sight of the woman's usually serious expression warped into a caricature of a damsel consumed by the raw emotional blast of orgasmic pleasure that could only be experienced by giving in to the temptations of the body alongside another well versed in manipulating the body; touching them in places they could never reach themselves, making them feel things they never would have thought imaginable. And luckily for Freya, Danitha was her woman, and she would do everything in her power to ensure her first time would be an occasion she looked back fondly to whenever they fucked as she materializes a phallic structure made out of crystallized mana, an old favourite of hers she could now access after tasting the blood of a human after so long, and although both edges were a little oblong and it wasn't quite as large as she would've liked, it would have to do, freeing herself momentarily from Freya to insert one end of the dual edged sword into her dripping orifice, letting out a guttural moan upon the feeling her cold, tight innards spread apart after so many years going ignored.

Prodding the other end against Freya's heated labia was all she needed to get the girl to spread her legs wide apart, happily preparing herself to receive Danitha's artificial member as the two vampiric lovers exchange a wordless vow to be together forever with their narrowed eyes alone, staring deeply into each others souls with unabashed desire.

One simple thrust was all it took for Freya's reserved self to shatter as her stuffed cunt lets loose a strong jet of slick fluids while tossing her head back from the sheer pain and equally mind breaking pleasure of having her virginity taken while letting loose the most gorgeous sound Danitha's ears had ever been treated to, spurring her to piston in and out of her soft wet folds faster and faster, shaking Freya's nubile young body like an earthquake all while her moans devolved into giggling and then short rapid bouts of 'ahn?!' repeated like a mantra as her throat bounces to the rhythm of Danitha's powerful corkscrew fucking.

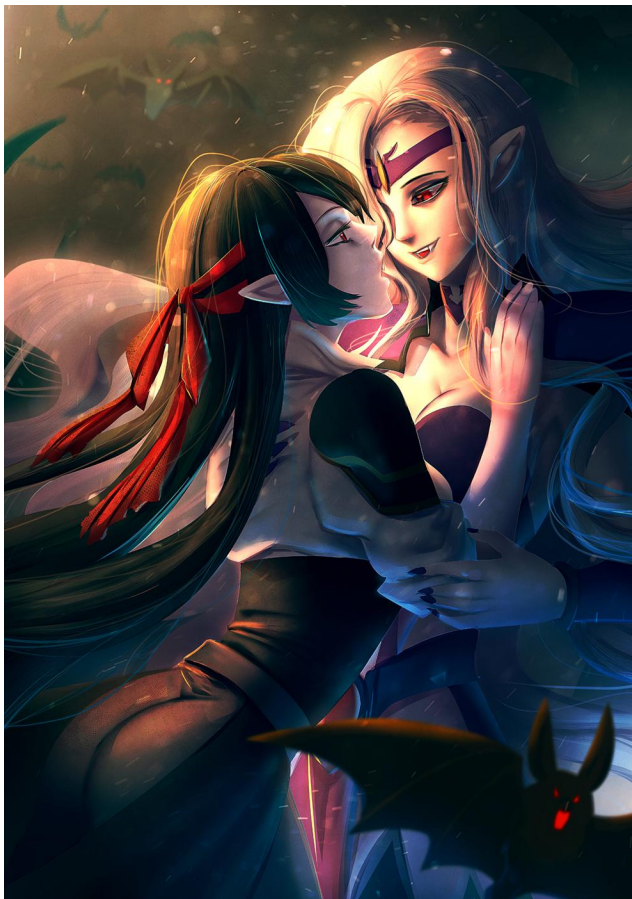
By the time Freya had experienced her 10th orgasm, the newbie vampiress was left lying weakened on the ground, panting heavily with Danitha the victor of their sweaty wrestling match as she parts from her freshly broken in girlfriend with a wet squelch as the dildo slips free from Freya's puckered snatch. And with a simple snap of the finger and a subtle sigh, Danitha's throbbing innards were soon given some reprieve as her aching folds converged to fill the emptiness inside of her as she gazed down longingly at the stupefied visage of Freya, slick with sweat and framed by long silken locks of brown...she looked just as eye catching as she did back when she first awoke in bed all those months ago to find this curious little lady sleeping in her room...

And now that she had become a fellow Higher Vampire like her, the possibilities for what they could do together had broadened so much more than before. Magic training, showing her the ropes of being a vampire, hunting together, and once she had mastered her concept of Domains, then maybe she could even help renovate the castle! Making its defenses stronger all while introducing her own flair to the home she was more than ready to share once more with another soul mate as she extended a hand for Freya to take hold, pulling her up into a hug as a new dress materialized over Freya's body much to Danitha's surprise.

"Oh hoh? I should've expected this of your Freya! How did you even know to materialize clothes like that?"

"Hah...ha...well, when you...formed that...phallus...I just thought I'd try it out in a different..way...hackack!.I'm sorry Danitha...that thing you did back there..."

"Oh dear I'm so sorry love! I got too carried away! Did I hurt you? Don't push yours-*mmpf?!"*



Taking the opportunity to exploit Danitha's concern, Frey leans forward, closing the miniscule gap between them as her pouty lips connect with her girlfriend's plump cushions, pressing a serpentine tongue through the fleshy barrier before entwining around Danitha's slippery appendage, keeping her head locked in with a gentle, loving grip to her cheeks as the two stayed in that position for a good long minute, mewling and gasping every so often as both sides begin exploring each others bodies.

Parting lips with a steamy exhale, Freya's newly instilled vampire self comes to the forefront, presenting a new, overbearing persona that had Danitha squealing in her mind as the suddenly confident maiden stands on her tippy toes, tracing the perfect contours of Danitha's chin before whispering sweet things that promised so much more in the future.

"...was amazing...but I'll get better someday, and when I do, I can't wait to show you just how much I've improved my love~"

"Haha! How dashing of you~ Well, I look forward to that day...*sweetheart*~ Now let's say we head back inside for some rest? I'm certain the sun will be up in a bit...and as capable as you are, even you will need some rest hm?"

"Agreed...i feel so tired...lead the way Dani~"

"Dani hmm? Then you won't mind if I call you FreyFrey then?"

"Aww that's so childish!"

Pecking her on the head with a gentle kiss, the two lovers would retreat back inside the castle as the doors slam shut on their own while the cobble comes to life, devouring the bodies of the human scum while eliminating any trace of the skirmish that had taken place here not too long ago. Looking as good as new by the time the pair make it back inside Danitha's room just in time for the sun to make its arrival once more, coaxing the newly paired couple to sleep as they held each other close under the sheets, a smile on each others faces with the knowledge that their respective crises were over, especially for Danitha as a solemn goodbye rings clear in the expanse of her dreamscape, a plane that had never looked as pristine as it did now; a soothing void of white and subtle purple waves.

*'Thank you Fran...I don't know if you can bear me but...don't be mad okay? I'll do it...I'll live my life without regrets...with Freya. She's a good woman...I only wish you could've met her. You two are so alike I almost wouldn't be surprised if you two were...sisters? Fran? Fran! Is that you?!'*

For a split second, the wispy vapors of her mental abode held within them the vague outline of the frail blonde noblewoman. Although her body was as featureless as the smoke that masked her presence, Danitha was able to make out a faint smile on its face alongside a small wave of fading hands before eventually losing sight of the figure entirely as a wayward gust blows an obfuscating cloud that whisks her away just as quickly as she had appeared to her in this dream of hers...But whether or not it really had been Fran's tender soul returning if only for a moment to visit her or a simple figment of her imagination, Danitha understood full well the meaning behind this surprise; acceptance. From now on she would have Freya to care for and live with. Never looking back on the past ever again if only to reminisce, not to be bound by like she had been all these hundreds of years until an unwitting human bearing a startling resemblance to Fran's strong unwavering soul happened by.

Both women had found their little slice of heaven in each other, and for the hundreds of years that followed, the pair would remain forever happy as long as they had each other to fall back on to...

**THE END**