

A black unicorn with a single golden horn is rearing up on its hind legs. The background is a vibrant sunset with orange and yellow clouds. A small brown bird is perched on a tree branch to the right. The scene is set in a rocky, grassy area.

Viola  
Grace

The Warder's  
Unicorn

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THE WARDER'S UNICORN  
BOOK SIX

BY

VIOLA GRACE

## DEDICATION

*To my brother, sister, Mom and her fella. They  
know what I write and still want to see me at  
Christmas and holidays. Supportive only  
begins to scratch the surface.*

## CHAPTER ONE

“Okay, I am ready to go, are we still using the same portal?” Sephany Dremlock was wearing her party dress and she was ready to go.

Her mother came out of the kitchen wiping her hands on a dishtowel. “The local portal has been discontinued. Someone bought the property. The nearest one is forty kilometres.”

“Well, Dad’s taken my car apart, how am I going to get there?”

“Your father has arranged a ride for you. Don’t worry, you’ll be on time.” Negara Dremlock looked a lot like her daughter, same blood red hair, same green eyes. It was like looking at a slightly older mirror.

Suspicion rampaged through Seph. Her father had been trying to fix her up with some eligible paranormals for the last ten years. The instant that she turned eighteen, he started looking, just as he had for her sisters, Sarro and Lihan. They were both happily married, one to a werewolf and the other to one of the goblin born.

A knock on the door broke her out of her thoughts. She nodded to her mother and pulled the door open. "Hello?"

"Hello, Seph. Nice to see you again." Standing in the doorway was her worst nightmare, six and a half sexy feet of unicorn. He lounged in the arch of the door and eyed her up and down. Like most shape shifters, he was naked after his shift. Unlike most shape shifters, his eyes were on Seph with a predatory fixation. A little odd for a ruminant.

"Malksis. Hello. I am guessing by your attire that you are my ride?" At his smug nod, she picked up the parcel that she was bringing to the party. She muttered as she tied a scarf on her hair, "And by the erection I am guessing that my dad is still matchmaking."

Hot breath on her neck made her jump. A sharp prod to her backside confirmed the second. "No, I have simply been this way since your father asked me to chaperone you to the party."

"Chaperoned? By a horny unicorn? Pardon the pun."

"Better than one of the giants or dragons. With the Warders being made a respectable clan, there are dozens of males fighting for the available ones. With your blazing hair, you'd make a tempting target."

"Then I should just wear it up for the rest of the day. Shouldn't I?" She was holding very still as he

sniffed along her neckline. Nothing to encourage him, but she still needed that ride.

"No. I think it is very pretty. I have been thinking about it a lot."

"Oh. Have you? I think we had better be going."

"Yes, spread out on my pillow, tangled in my fists as I hold you still for me."

"Charming. Now, could you shift so we can get out of here?"

"Your wish is my command, Lady Seph." He led the way out of the door, his buttocks bunching and releasing as he moved, the lithe grace of his species in the line of every taut gliding muscle. He surely was something to watch, but his possessive attitude since the day she met him had always rubbed her the wrong way. He moved toward her emotionally and she dodged. It worked with every man she met, except him. He kept coming back for more at six-month intervals. This time, he was early.

She sighed heavily. "Please just shift so I can stop having to talk to you."

He raised one raven eyebrow and cocked his head. "You know that makes me want to give you a human-style ride to the portal."

Images flashed through her mind that had her pale skin flaming. It was only when his grin caught her attention she realized what he meant,

and that he knew what she was thinking. "Oh, stop the verbal banter. You can taunt me on the way home. For now, I need to get to this shower before they start to wrap Belana in toilette paper or something. I promised her that I would keep the silliness to a minimum."

"So I am to be your ride and you will just put me out to pasture? How cruel."

"You can hang out with the other escorts."

He was having far too much fun with her. "Oh. Now I am an escort. I can't wait."

"Malksis, please." She said nothing else. Defeated.

His face sobered and he shifted, dropping to all fours and growing to twenty hands high at the shoulder.

She sighed heavily, the little girl in her falling in love with the pretty horsy, the ivory horn a blazing warning to any who would cross him. His eyes swirled, the black of his human eyes with a large dose of silver in the mix. Against his pure blue-black hide, his eyes stood out like flaring beacons.

Cradling the gift in her arms, she hiked over to the fence, beckoned him closer, and when he ambled over, she climbed up two rungs of the fence and then jumped onto his back. She fussed with her skirt a bit, so it wouldn't wrinkle as much and put the box in front of her while she wove her



fingers into his mane. When she was finally settled, she tapped his ribs with her heels and he started forward.

He picked his way carefully through the gravel yard, his tail occasionally swatting her thighs, completely by accident no doubt. When they made it to the meadow and the grass was solid beneath his hooves, he picked up speed. A lot of speed.

She estimated that they would reach the new portal in under ten minutes at this speed. When they were out of danger for being seen from the highway, he opened up. Running flat out was a unicorn's favourite thing to do, and Malksis was having a blast. He was almost flying through the meadows as they drew ever closer to their destination.

Seph could feel the wards around the portal hum as she approached. It was her one and only talent, to set wards on rock or tree, and to recognize them in turn. The portal was well protected, her family had seen to it.

He slowed as they approached. It wouldn't do to run into someone on the other side, as all the portals were channelled to come out at the same area. Mirror stations transported those who could cast spells to activate them, but few if any Warders had that ability.

Malksis's sides were heaving with exertion, but

he walked calmly through the portal to come out the other side, in Realm. As she appeared in the portal zone, Seph heard welcoming shrieks from nearby. It was time to party.

## CHAPTER TWO

When the single women of the Warders get together and have a party, they have to do it in Realm. They would get kicked out of anywhere else.

“Wow. Seph is on a unicorn. Who would have thunk it?” A giggley half-elf smirked as they passed further into the crowd. Mal wasn’t going to let her down any time soon, if his gait was any indication. They were still within the on-lookers who were trying to wrangle an invite to the Warder’s stagette and bridal shower.

“Very funny, Tieara. I will remember that at your next magic test.” Though the Warders couldn’t work magic, they could identify it easily. Tieara was notoriously bad at the tests, and Seph had had to flunk her on three occasions. True to his occupation as escort, he was bringing her right to the core party, Belana’s bridal shower and the stagette were just getting under way, judging by the music being played by Goblin Rulz. The ladies

were in a variety of states of inebriation, and the men were nowhere to be seen.

A quick yank on his mane stopped Mal in his tracks.

"Better let me off here, they might mistake you for a stripper and then you would never make it out of there alive." She knew he heard her, judging by the flick of his ears, but he moved closer to the group of Warders until he struck the barrier they had erected against the men.

Now that she could make eye contact, she called over a cousin with a raised arm and handed down the present. Finally, she could slide free of the unicorn without endangering the fine crystal sculpture of Belana and her fiancé, the giant, Gelo. A little stiff after straddling him so long, she dragged her leg over his side and rolled to her belly, a safe if undignified removal.

The instant that she was off him, he shifted. In a crowd of naked and horny women, it was a bit of a gamble, but his dignity was around him like a cloak, and it was all that he had on. "Well, that was fun, the feel of you against me was fabulous. When do you want me to pick you up for the ride home?"

"I have no idea. Usually this kind of thing runs its course around three in the morning."

"I'll go graze."

Women were sidling up to him and

surreptitiously bumping into his rather impressive physique with drunken attentions.

"Good plan. I will call you if I need you." She turned dismissively and sashayed into the warded area to join the party. Seph could feel his gaze on her and put a little more swing into her hips now that she was safe. Playing hard to get wasn't like her, but something about Malksis just rubbed her every nerve into awareness. When Belana shrieked her greeting, Seph went up to congratulate her cousin. "Great party."

"I think so. But Gelo is on the other side of the ward, trying to glare a hole through it." She laughed and flicked her midnight hair over her shoulder. "So is Mal. What did you do to him?"

She told herself not to look around, but she did and there he was, staring at her through the veil of magic that parted them. "Nothing. I think that is the problem. If we had actually knocked boots, he would probably be done with me by now."

"Oh. I don't think that that is the look he is giving you. That is a slow burn of emotion if ever I saw one. But he should still take advantage of the sarongs that were provided for shifters. He is causing quite a stir."

"If you make any comparisons between him and horses, don't bother. I have already made them a thousand times."

Belana laughed, taking another drink from a

circulating server. He removed her empty glass and moved through the crowd with a lithe grace. Seph cocked her head and looked at him. He looked elvish, but his skin was wrong. It was the hard black of granite and his hair was a startling silver. Several of the drunker members of the crowd brushed against him as he passed, but it had no effect, he just kept serving and collecting the glasses one by one.

Seph made it to the bar and got a soda from the bartender. All six of his arms were moving at a blurring pace as he kept up with the women who were demanding his time and attention.

The dancers were becoming more frenzied, undulating and writhing to the heady beat of the music. Belana was up, holding her drink in one hand as she danced and Seph moved to join her.

It was a party after all.

\* \* \* \*

"She is just doing this to torture me." Mal was scowling at Seph through the haze of the ward that kept her from him.

"Probably. Same as Belana is working to torment me, but I have to say I love watching her dance like that." Gelo was sitting down, yet still almost as tall as Mal was standing. The giant had remarkable patience. It showed in his ability to

win a Warder.

"It is amazing to me that they can move like that without any formal training. She was dancing the first time I saw her, you know."

"No. I didn't."

"Another one of this kind of event. A shower for another cousin who was getting married to a man too dumb to run."

Mal was wrapping a length of cloth around his hips. One of the werewolves had tossed it at him and he took the hint. With the females of other clans circling the outer boundary of the ward, the men of the Warders were targets for their attentions.

"I wouldn't mind so much, but there is a male server inside the ward, and he seems to be fixated on Seph." Mal watched his woman closely, knowing that someone else was watching from a much closer location. It made him want to paw the ground and lower his horn to take on all comers.

"A what? There aren't supposed to be any men in there aside from the band and the bartender." Gelo stood to his considerable height and walked over to the edge of the ward. When his tipsy fiancée approached and stepped out of the ward for a moment, he looked down from his vantage point. "Who is the server? He isn't supposed to be in there."

She rubbed up against him and batted her

eyelashes, “He’s just helping out. Besides, he doesn’t want anything to do with me, he has eyes for Seph though.”

Mal’s eyes narrowed as the male in question made his way onto the dance floor. “More than just eyes, damn it.” He slammed his fist into the barrier as the man wrapped his arms around Seph. “Belana, I have to get in there he is—” Mal couldn’t finish his sentence as a surprised Sephany was lifted off her feet and disappeared into the ground with her abductor.

Belana cried out, but immediately grabbed one of the warding rocks and deactivated the shield.

Malksis ran immediately to the place where his mate had disappeared and screamed.

\* \* \* \*

“Call her parents and get Malksis away from the spot where they sank. Seph’s father will be able to track them if they are moving through dirt.” Gelo was holding his woman as she trembled with the shock of watching her cousin abducted. Some of the other men took his direction and pulled Malksis away from the depression in the earth. All the Warders were moving out of the area and huddling together.

A dragon was dispatched to bring Gorven and his wife to Realm. The dwarf lord would be able to



tell who and what took her.

"Belana, what did he look like? We could not get a very good look through the haze." Her fiancée, Gelo, rubbed his hand up and down her back, soothing her while he kept his voice calm. He did not want to shut her down with a harsh tone.

"Like an elf made of onyx, red eyes and silvery tinsel hair. His ears were sticking out of his hair and they were pointy."

"Did he have a scent?"

"Earth and rock." She looked up at him and tears welled in her eyes. "Why would anyone take Seph? She is the most ornery Warder there is. No one would want that kind of trouble, right? Right?" She was in a full-blown tear storm and all he could do was hold her until it passed.

The roar of a dragon came as a relief, and when it set down Seph's parents, Malksis had to face the music. "How could you have let them take her?" Gorven swung out and struck the unicorn in the ribs, sending him flying through the air to skid to a halt at the base of a tree.

When the dwarf made another move to the unicorn, Gelo stepped between them. "Gorven, calm down. There was nothing Mal could do. The wards were up and he couldn't get in. No one noticed that there was anything amiss."

The dwarf calmed down when his wife reached

to take his hand. "Malksis, I am sorry. I..."

"Never mind. Can you track the dark elf that took her?"

Gorven looked surprise, "Dark elf? There hasn't been one of those seen in centuries."

"Onyx skin, red eyes, silvery hair?"

"That's a dark elf alright. What brought it out?"

"Apparently, your daughter." Gelo didn't like delivering that news, but it needed to be said.

A new and timid voice spoke out. "Actually, he was here for me."

Gorven looked over at the woman who was speaking. Alora Negri was shy, and it was a miracle that she had come to this event at all. "What do you mean, Alora?"

"I mean that, well, my great great grandmother was promised to a lord of the dark elf realm, and she ducked out of it by running off with my great great grandfather, Agrath, the goblin." The people within earshot looked a little surprised. "Great Great Gran was afraid of enclosed spaces." She was quiet as soon as she finished speaking.

It was a hard question, but Gelo had to ask it. "So there is a family obligation here? You will willingly fulfill it?"

"I will." The whisper fell on the silent crowd. "As soon as you find out where I have to go."

Gorven took his place near the depression where his daughter had disappeared. He tasted

the dirt and sighed heavily. "Dark elves. Definitely. But why Seph, if you were here Alora?"

Alora hung her head, "I stayed behind the speaker. No one could see me. And our colouring is basically the same."

"I haven't seen it before, but you are right. Your hair matches my daughter's, as do your eyes. Perhaps he was working from a scry view." Gorven was gentle with his observations, Alora seemed ready to snap. The shyest of the Warders, she rarely made it to family functions, preferring books to people. And now she was volunteering to go underground where she may never be seen again.

Gelo looked her over. She may be shy, but she had more steel in her than anyone had guessed. It was a good thing, she would need it.

## CHAPTER THREE

“What the hell are you doing? Where are we? Let me go, you jackass!” She was just running her mouth. If he let her go now, she would be imbedded in the stone surrounding them.

“Quiet, woman. We will be through the portal soon and then all your questions will be answered.”

Mister Grabbyhands had simply come up behind her wrapped his arms around her, which had been startling enough and then dropped them through the dance floor. Now they were falling through the ground toward an undisclosed portal. Fantastic.

She kept her limbs tight and prepared for anything. If he let her go now, she would die. There weren't too many survival options for a woman imbedded in stone. Patience was not her forte.

When he hauled her out of the portal and into

the caverns, she started her harangue again. "Why me? There were a ton of girls hotter than me who were at that event. Why not one of them? Not that I wouldn't still want to kick your ass, but you wouldn't have to listen to me."

"Don't I wish. Your face was seen in our scrying dish and so you were the one I brought to fulfill the promise of your ancestors." He had flipped her over his shoulder and she was getting a little dizzy as he walked.

"A scry? Those things are all fuzzy and blurry. You probably wanted one of my cousins. I am already spoken for."

"That is too bad. He will miss you, but you are destined for our lord. He has waited long enough for one of your line to come to him." He bounced her on his shoulder and she huffed as the air escaped her. "Silence from you would be appreciated."

Since she was busy sucking air into her lungs, he got his wish. Weiner. She kept quiet until her captor walked through two guarded doors with her still on his shoulder and dumped her in the large bedchamber, then he used his knife to cut her clothing from her.

"We don't want any Warder tricks, so if you have nothing to ward with, we should be safe." He didn't even stop to ogle her, merely took her dress, shoes, and underwear out of the room with

him, then locked the door.

"Okay. That is odd, even for a kidnapping psychopath. Not even a peek. Weird." She pulled her hair over her breasts and smoothed it into a light cape.

"He isn't allowed to look at my bride."

The voice from behind her made her whirl in shock.

Sitting up on one elbow was another of the dark elves. This one had deep silver eyes to go with his bright silver hair.

"I am not your bride."

"I beg to differ. Your ancestor broke the pact made with my people for a bride, and now I have had you taken by force." He was starting to stand up and as the sheet slid down his rippled abdomen, she realized that she wasn't the only one in the room without clothing.

"Freeze. I am not in the mood to see if the curtains match the carpets."

He stopped in surprise and laughed at her.

"And I can tell you that none of my ancestors have ever entered into such an agreement."

"Vorsera the bold, was the woman who was promised to me. She would have been your great great grandmother."

"Nope. My great great grandmother was Ansolar, married to the elfin warrior, Xalchin, when she was just seventeen. She would not have

been up for your arrangement, she was betrothed at birth." Seph paced back and forth. "What made you think it was me?"

"A picture that was scryed. It showed a woman of your characteristics as my chosen." He was out of the bed and moving toward her, his erection bobbing enticingly. "There is one way for me to tell if you will allow."

She backed away from him, but there was no way for her to escape the room. He caught her with deceptive ease. His skin was cool to the touch as he pulled her to him and when he took her lips in a kiss that was far from chaste, she tasted a wild heat. Each stroke of his tongue was nice, but it did not make her senses spin like Mal's least touch did.

Finally, he pulled away. "You are not the one. Similar blood, but not the same."

"I think I know who you need, but I need to see that scrying pool." She was still in his arms and he was still interested, but was ignoring it. So was she. "And what is your name?"

"Lord Caldur Armerik." He bowed formally.

She nodded in return, "Warder Sephany Dremlock."

"Dremlock? As in the dwarf lord Gorven Dremlock?"

"My father."

"Then I am relieved that you are not my

chosen, for having him as an in-law would be more than I could stand." The humour in his voice made him a little more likeable.

"And I have no doubt that Malksis is trying to find a way to get down here."

"Malksis?"

"My unicorn. He has gotten permission from my father to court me. We are in the stage of getting to know each other."

"So you are keeping him at bay with words. Here, put this on." He opened a wardrobe and pulled on some leather pants with a belt for him and a lovely gown for her.

The gown was in the elvish style, so it concealed and revealed at the same time. Everything about it was to draw the eye, and it took a bit of manoeuvring to close the ties at the back without asking him for help. She was just glad not to be naked anymore.

"You look lovely. Are you sure that you are not the one?"

"Well, you were sure until you saw me dressed up, so I am saying yes. I am sure that it is someone else."

Caldur nodded and held out his arm for her to take.

Having no objection, she held his arm as the doors swung open. Imagine her surprise to come face to face with the Unicorn of her dreams, but on



his back was one of her favourite cousins. Alora ducked her head in embarrassment and slid from Mal's back, petting him absently.

"That is my cousin, Alora, and that is my unicorn, Malksis." His guards were standing every few feet with swords and spears drawn.

"Stand down, my guard. I believe that my bride has arrived after all these centuries of waiting." The guards stepped back, but stayed ready.

Alora walked to stand in front of Caldur and knelt. "I am here to fulfill the bargain made by my ancestor, Vorsera. My family's shame of her actions has lasted for these centuries."

He looked from Alora to Sephany. "I can see why he was confused. Unless you were standing next to each other, the image that we had could have been either one of you." He looked down at the woman at his feet, "Rise, Alora. Sephany, you may go with your unicorn, but be warned, you will have to travel above ground and we are in a harsh area of Realm. Good luck getting home."

Sephany hugged Alora, "Take care and we will get a mirror to you as soon as we can."

"I am so glad that you are okay, Seph. Stay with Mal, he's a good guy and it nearly tore his heart out when you disappeared."

Her shy whisper caressed her ear and when Seph drew back to look in her solemn cousin's eyes, her own laughter was gone.

"It's okay. I want this."

Taking a deep breath, giving Lord Caldur a curtsy, she moved to Mal and reached out to touch him. At the first sniff, he jerked his head, but then examined her from head to toe and was satisfied by something. One of the dark elves helped her mount. With her skirts hiked up and parted by her thighs' position, she was ready to ride.

Caldur raised his hand and began casting a spell, "Farewell, Sephany. The best five minutes I have spent in centuries."

## CHAPTER FOUR

“He could have transported us back to the gathering.” Their surroundings were hostile to say the least. A dark forest surrounded them and as Malksis lifted his head to get his bearings, Seph kept ranting. “I mean, imagine him being able to teleport us anywhere, and he decides to dump us in the middle of a thick forest. What could he have been thinking?” She was still into her tirade when Mal stopped and she felt him shift under her. Before she could dismount, he was shifted, naked and on her.

He shoved her back against a tree and took her mouth with his own. “Finally, a way to shut you up.” He went back in for another kiss.

She responded with everything that she had held back from the elf. She tangled her fingers in his midnight hair and held him to her as she memorized him, his taste, the heat of his body against hers. She felt the tug of his hands on the laces of her gown and it was enough to snap her to

the present. "Whoa, horsie!" She shoved at him and he leaned back a little. "I don't want our first time to be up against a tree."

His eyes took on the focus of lasers as he looked her up and down. "But you want me."

"But I want safety more. I want to be able to not worry about seven foot spiders coming at us from behind." Her phrasing was unfortunate. Mal made another lunge for her as the image of her on her hands and knees obviously rippled through his mind. His cock twitched in reaction, so she did the only thing she could. Her new dress became a ward.

That stopped him. He sighed heavily, "You couldn't just enjoy the privacy, could you?"

"Nope. I want to be home and safe. Or at least safe." The oppression of the trees weighed on her. Something dark was in those trees and it felt hungry.

"You may have a point there, I prefer the open meadows myself." He stepped away from her reluctantly. "Will you be able to mount me?"

"The jokes running through my head won't stop at that one. Yeah, I can probably manage, but I may pull your mane a little." She surveyed what she could of the nearby terrain and took a position on a high tree root. "Come on, horny naked guy, let me jump on your back."

"You are so going to pay for that later."

"Don't threaten me, pony boy." She waited and he shifted into his other form, then approached her and swatted her with his tail. She pulled herself onto his back with a distinct lack of grace, but managed to get up with only minor yanking on his hair. "Mush." She tapped her heels into his sides and he bucked a little in response. "Yikes! Knock that off."

He bucked a little again to teach her to behave and she was soon holding on for dear life as he started to increase his speed through the thick forest. Glimpses of a meadow started to appear on the other side of the trees, and with a burst of energy, he broke through the green barrier to come to a rambling halt in the centre of a moonlit meadow.

He bucked a little to get her to dismount.

When she slid free, he dug and stamped out a fire pit.

"I am guessing that I need to gather some wood."

His equine head nodding in assent made her laugh. "Like you need more wood."

His threatening glare with a gesture of his horn got her moving, but she kept laughing the whole time. Gathering fallen branches had been her job as the youngest in her family whenever they went camping in Realm so her father could attend to dwarf business. The gown that Caldur had given

her was not designed to keep her warm, so she was shivering heavily by the time she had enough wood to last through the night.

"I hope you can light this, because flint and steel are not components in this dress." She stacked the wood into a flammable configuration and sat back. The lightest touch of Malksis's horn caused a flare of flame to emanate from the construction. First came the light and then came the heat. She was able to relax a bit as the fire danced. "I am sorry you had to come out here, Mal. You could have let my Dad come to get me, you know. He would have been able to teleport us back to the gathering in a jiffy."

"And then I would have missed this opportunity." Malksis took a position close to her and the heat coming off his body was almost comparable to that of the fire.

"Oh, yes. Let's make it all about you, shan't we?" She was a little disgruntled, but firing back out of habit. Having him so close was wearing on her self-control. She had always found him devastatingly attractive to her, whether he was in jeans and a t-shirt or nothing at all. It must be his scent. That had to be it. As soon as she stopped breathing, she would be free of the urge to throw herself on him.

"Why not? What objection can you have to me? I am smart, have my own business, can pass for

human in the normal world if I wish to...so?"

"My father picked you." There it was out in the open.

"So. This pseudo dislike of me is due to your father finding me acceptable as a son-in-law."

"Yes."

He started to laugh.

She grumbled and moved precariously close to the fire, feeding more of her hard-won wood into the blaze. "It's not funny."

"It is. Quite funny. Do you have any idea what your father would do to a suitor who tried to make a move on you without his permission? He isn't called the Splitter for nothing."

"So I have to go with his pick?"

"No. But you do have to allow me a chance to court you. So far you have put up your spikes and are keeping me back with them. You have avoided dates, run to family events to get away from the idea of seeing me socially. If not for the shift in the portal, I would not have seen you again by your own choice."

Seph fed more wood into the fire while she thought about it. She really had no rebuttal. "I am a modern woman, damn it. We don't get set up by our parents."

"And you are also a Warder, and they do try to find the best matches for their children. It is a proud heritage and one they want to see carried

on."

"What about you unicorns? Why me? Why not some mare who flicked her tail at you at one of your gatherings?"

"Because the instant that I saw you, I knew that you and I were destined for each other. You made me feel energized, like I could take on a horde of imps at a moment's notice. And warm enough to set blaze to the nearest trees."

He hadn't moved, but she felt as if he was behind her, breathing onto the sensitive nape of her neck.

"Would it be so bad to try?"

"I suppose not." Sephany turned to him and found him naked and attentive. "Who should start?"

It was a question that threw Malksis into action. In less than two seconds, he had her on her feet and was loosening the ties and peeling the gown over her head. Standing there as naked as he was took more nerve on her part than facing down the dark elf had. His rampant interest was evident. He lay the gown carefully down on the grass and then picked her up to lay her on top of it. For all the world like he was assembling a sandwich.

She took in a breath to speak her thought and he covered her mouth with his own in a light, teasing kiss. His tongue flicked at the seam in her pursed lips and she allowed him entrance after



suitable hesitation. He forged forward, tasting of wild wind and heady need. She enjoyed the novelty of his tongue sliding against hers, and she began to mimic him.

Their bodies touched everywhere. His erection pressed between them, with one thigh between her own pressing up against her needy clit. She moaned into his mouth, but began to rock against him as he moved across that most sensitive spot with a steady rhythm. Damp heat was starting to emanate from her core and as he kept pressing against her, she started to draw her breath in faster and faster, until she was almost blacking out as her orgasm approached by inches. Her hips matched his movements, driving for more contact until she screamed her release to the night.

Instead of pouncing on her like she thought he would, he scooted down her body and simply stroked her breasts, belly and abdomen while resting his chin on top of her mound.

“Ready for the next round?”

The rumble of his voice went through his chin to reverberate between her thighs. Moisture flowed freely from her core as each touch woke nerve endings that she had never bothered activating. “How many rounds are involved here?”

“At least three. More if you are up for it.”

He had to use his hands to hold her down, she

was trying to get up and run. He held onto her until she stopped squirming. His laughter continued for a while. Lying between her thighs had them spread for easy access, and he was going to take full advantage. She closed her eyes and tried to ignore her urge to run. He wasn't making it simple for her to stay calm, he had finished chortling and had started to use his tongue on the inside of her left thigh. The pattern he was drawing was certainly distracting.

His tongue would grow close, closer and then he would switch from left to right. More maddening designs. While he doodled, he inserted one of his fingers into her, spreading the warmth and moisture before sliding in again. As her hips kept pace with his hand, he inserted a second and then a third finger, his long digits butting up against her internal barrier until she cried out. When her body was trembling at every touch of his hand or flick of his tongue, he moved over her and she felt the hard blunt insistence of his cock at her entrance. His fingers had primed her, stretched her, but when he struck her hymen, she mewled.

Fighting for air, he pressed his forehead against hers, his chest heaving like a bellows, but his eyes gentle and determined. "Relax, Sephany. Once and then it's over."

"Promise?" Sweat was breaking out on her

body, the pain deep inside wasn't waning. Relaxing was out of the question.

"Promise." He came to a decision, she could see it in his eyes. His head backed away from her and then he head butted her lightly.

"Hey!" Before she had a chance to get outraged, the pain in her head was distracted by the sharp tear deep inside and then both areas started throbbing. "That wasn't very nice."

"It will get better, I promise. Unicorns have healing powers." He moved inside her slowly.

She had to admit that it felt rather nice. "I thought that was just your horns."

A short hard thrust was answer enough, and she had to keep herself from laughing as he started a slow lovemaking that soon had her wrapping her thighs around him in an effort to get him closer. "More. I want more."

"Then you shall have it." He pounded into her, slamming his cock against her until she could feel his balls slapping against her with every thrust.

Another orgasm was building. Seph held her breath and tightened around Mal, holding on for dear life as small whimpers came from her throat. This time she came with a gasp, her body taut and locked against him. She held on, her body frozen as it rippled with its contractions. When her limbs were able to loosen, she looked up at his savage expression and cringed, he wasn't done.

He withdrew and flipped her to her knees, pulling her upright against him. Back to front. He stroked her breasts, flicked the nipples with his fingers and then massaged each breast while he gnawed at her neck. That had more effect than playing with her breasts and in seconds, she was arching against him, offering her neck and reaching back to tangle her fingers in his hair.

With a snort, he bent her forward and widened the stance of her knees, then slid into her, and with the swelling from her first time, it was a very tight fit. He didn't seem to mind, and started a slow pace that drove her nuts. She leaned her head on her arms and angled her hips to catch him with every thrust.

When his fingers brushed her clit, she almost went out of her mind. Squealing, she pushed back against him hard, and he leaned forward to bite her shoulder, holding her still for his thrusts.

He pounded into her, sliding in and withdrawing in a primal beat that weakened Seph to her knees. Good thing she was already on them. His fingers worked their magic and soon she was moaning into her folded arms and he finally started to fuck her with a determined deliberation. His teeth were still in her as he groaned and jerked his hips in a spasmodic reaction that made her relax. If he was done, she could rest.

His weight bore her onto the rumpled remains

of her dress and she lay under him, catching her breath. So that was what the fuss was all about. She should have tried sex sooner.

He rolled to his side and leaned up on one arm, "Are you alright?"

"Yeah. I suppose so. Will probably be a little sore tomorrow though."

"Don't underestimate the powers of a unicorn. You should be fine." He pulled her against him and turned her so he was spooning her. With her front to the fire, she was almost comfortable, a little sticky, but sleep eventually came to her.

## CHAPTER FIVE

“Why can’t I move?” Seph struggled and the bindings around her just got tighter, almost strangling her as she fought.

“Stop squirming. You will anger the trees.” An imp jumped onto her abdomen and scowled into her face.

“Mal? Where are you?”

“The unicorn is tied to a tree a few yards away. When he gives us what we want, he will go free.” The imp climbed up her torso and used her hair to keep stability as she tried to buck and throw him off. The vines that bound her did get tighter.

“Fine. What about me? Why am I tied?” She kept her breathing shallow and tried to relax into the grip of the vines. They obligingly allowed her to breathe normally as they retracted slightly.

“You are the unicorn’s mate. You would probably object to him losing his horn.”

The shock that rippled through her caused the small devil on her chest to look vaguely uneasy.

"Why do you need his horn?"

"A troll befouled our drinking water, and only a unicorn's horn can remove the poison."

"Then why not have him simply cure the water and let him go on his way?"

"The troll will simply do it again. We need to put the horn in the water and tether it there to keep the stream pure." He crossed his arms and scowled at her. "The unicorn is not cooperating."

A scream rent the air and a series of imps came flying through the trees to land in groaning heaps nearby.

"He is definitely not cooperating." She stifled a giggle and the imp looked thoughtful.

"You are correct. Perhaps if he felt you were at risk he would be more amenable." It was a big word for such a little imp.

Before she could wonder what he was talking about, he had scampered off her chest and disappeared toward the origin point of the flying imps. She could hear chattering in a high-pitched language, and soon there was a naked humanoid Malksis being hauled along by a few hundred imps holding on to leather straps and vines as they pulled him to stand in front of her. A jerk and a shudder went through the nearby trees as the vines started to haul her into an upright posture. "Hiya, Mal. You are a heavy sleeper, too?"

"The imps used a gas to drug us. Are you

alright?" He, like she, was ignoring their audience.

"Yeah, these vines don't like me to try and squirm though, it makes it harder to breathe." She looked at him carefully, noting the scratches on his arms, legs and belly. "Are they trying to get you mad enough to shift?"

"Yes. But once I am, if they take my horn, I will be fixed in that form until it grows back."

Seph dangled in the tree's embrace. "How much of your horn would do the job?"

"What are you thinking?" He eyed her closely, "Less than an ounce would keep their stream clean indefinitely."

"Would you have to regrow shavings?"

"No. I gotcha." He straightened, "But I don't trust these rodents to do it. Will you?"

"Shave your horn? Sure. But don't think that this lets you out of a courtship." Handling a unicorn's horn was the height of intimacy.

His grin warmed her, "Agreed. Okay, imps. We have come to an agreement, my mate and I. I will shift and she will remove the portions of horn that you require to keep your water clean."

The grouching imp who had parked on Seph's chest was looking suspicious. "But we haven't even threatened her yet."

Seph snorted, "We just want to get home. Wasting time here is worrying my family and you don't want them to come looking."



"We are not afraid of pathetic humans."

"Aw. Whoever said I was human?" She chuckled darkly.

Suddenly the imps looked a lot less sure. "You have not tried to escape."

Sephany shrugged and the vines binding her expanded away from her until she was free. "You know, you could have just asked me to ward the stream. It would have been a lot less hostile than tying us up and threatening his horn." She reached out to take Mal's hand and expanded the ward around him.

Each warder was taught to ward their own bodies as soon as they could generate enough power. Extending that protection to another was a little more difficult, but when there was affection, it was possible. Seph could feel her energy coating Mal's skin and when she pressed outward, the bindings fell away.

The imps grovelled.

Seph moved closer to Malksis, it was easier to keep up the barrier if they weren't too far apart.

"Shall we leave them, Sephany?"

"No. Their rude behaviour aside, I don't like trolls befouling the water works. My dad used to tell me stories about it. People sick, dying, and all from water table contamination."

"So what shall we do?"

"Imps. Get me twelve small pebbles and lead

me to your water supply. And a knife." She looked up at her unicorn. "Sorry, you are going to have to sacrifice a sliver or two of horn for this, unless you want to jump in and purify the water?"

"If that will work, it is my preferred method then."

"Good. Now, imps. Where is my dress?"

They looked abashed for small hostile creatures. "We have torn the clothing into nest materials. I am sorry. There is nothing else available." Grovelling was a little odd when seen en masse, but the imps pulled it off.

So they had trashed her gown. Obviously they had not been intending to let her go. Nasty little creatures. She could always pull the power from the wards if they did not let them leave. "Lead the way to the stream. I want to get this over with." She kept hold of Mal's hand and he tucked her against his side as they walked through the forest. The stench of the troll's contamination reached his nose first, and hers seconds later. "Gah. That is horrible. Dark magic and shit. Why would he have anchored that much magic here?"

"We insulted him. This was his revenge."

"Is he still nearby?"

"Fairly close, yes."

"Then he is going to feel what we are about to do." A thought occurred to her. "You were going to give me to him, weren't you?"

"It was one plan, yes." The imp wouldn't look at her.

Mal's body was taut with fury at her side.

"Idiot imps." She shook her head and then tried to hold her breath as they reached the mouth of the stream. "You are up, Mal." She let go of his hand and kissed him back enthusiastically as he took her in her arms.

"Shut up for just a moment, Seph, and I will be done." Malksis was scowling at her as he shifted.

She ended up glaring at a horse with a very pointy horn before he splashed into the stream to disenchant the lump of excrement that carried the curse.

He dipped his elegant head and touched the offending object, a pulse of white light and it shattered into tiny bits to be washed away by the stream. He sloshed out of the water and stood next to her, gesturing for her to mount.

"Wait! Lady wait! You said you would give us wards."

Seph sighed heavily and took the dozen pebbles from the imps. She charged them against troll incursion and then handed them back. "Bury them even distances apart at the mouth of the stream on both banks, and that should keep him from coming back. He can still drink from the stream downstream, but not here."

She grabbed two hands full of mane and hauled

herself onto his back without any more chatter. Mal was in a mood and he wanted to be going. They may even make it to the gathering place of Realm before dark if he really pushed it.

Naked as the day she was born, she clung to his back, holding tight with her eyes closed. Her red hair streamed out behind them, a banner against the white of her skin. As she hung on during the deceptively smooth ride, she wondered idly how her cousin Alora was doing with her dark elf.

Alora's quiet and shy nature would make her very adaptable to life underground, but how would she deal with not being able to contact her friends and family at a whim? Warders didn't have any problem living in Realm, but leaving the mortal world behind was sometimes difficult. For those whose fathers had been non-humans, it was easier. They would have spent much more time in Realm than others. Seph was the perfect example.

Hours passed with the pounding of hoof beats as her only entertainment. They crossed plains, passed mountains, and darted through creeks, when finally the gathering place of Realm loomed before them. All of the races had their own guildhalls, and it was these structures that reached to the sky.

Personal nudity was forgotten as they galloped into the gathering area that she had been taken from less than two days earlier. Warders were still

there, worried faces gathered around that lit up as Malksis thundered toward them. Sephany was looking for a pair of faces and when she saw her parents, she laughed with joy. Her father's height of four foot four inches should have made him invisible in the crowd, but he shone like a beacon to her tired eyes.

As Mal came to a halt, blowing hard, someone threw a cloak over her shoulders and helped her off the unicorn. The instant that she was off her steed, her father's arms came around her. "Ah, Seph. I thought I would not see you this soon."

"Mal was most insistent, and Alora convinced the dark elf that she was the target and not myself." She worked an arm out from under the cloak and hugged her father in return. "I am very glad to see you as well."

Gorven's grip was tight, but he separated one arm from the hug to give Malksis a firm handshake. "Thank you, you kept your word." The unicorn was standing next to them, great circles under his eyes. "But I think you both need a bath and some food. Come with me."

He led a procession to the dwarf hall and as he entered, servants started to scurry to his orders. Sephany sat with her knees up around her chin as her mother scrubbed her back for her, Negara had reminded Gorven to send for clothing that would fit, as few dwarves reached her size, and Malksis's

height was out of the question. "Your father was worried. He couldn't track you after you left the dark elves' realm, and there have been tales of packs of imp roaming the woods."

"The tales are true. Those little bastards shredded my clothing." She yawned and stretched until her mom dumped a bucket of warm water over her head. She spluttered, "Thanks for that."

"No problem, Sephany." A knock on the door brought two platters of food and Negara eyed her daughter. "You are going to eat something before you rest. Gorven is doing the same with Malksis. You are not going anywhere today."

With a rush of water, Sephany stood and embraced the warmth of the robe that she was given. It only reached the bottom of her ass, but it was thick and warm. Just the kind of thing that would let her eat in comfort and nod off quickly. Bread, meat, fruit and cheese were all on the table waiting for her, and she jumped into them with astonishing ferocity.

She consumed water by the jug full, and when her feeding frenzy was done, curled up in one of the dwarf guest beds and fell asleep, safe, warm and sated.

## CHAPTER SIX

“You know. If one more person picks me up and hauls me around while I am unconscious, I am going to start castrating men randomly.” Seph sighed and snuggled into Mal’s suddenly tense arms.

“I thought you were sound asleep.”

“Have you ever tried to sleep in a dwarf bed for more than an hour? I never sleep heavily here.” Her robe was still on, but the draft snaking under the backside was a little uncomfortable. “Where are you taking me?”

“To my house. I thought it would be a nice break from Realm.”

“At this point, a street corner at rush hour would be more restful, so I am in.”

He chuckled. “You say this like you had a choice.”

“I did. I could have screamed the house down when you tripped in my room on your way to abduct me. I chose to let you abscond with me to

see what you would do.”

Malksis sighed. “Are you ready for the portal?”

She yawned and wrapped her arms around his neck. “Go ahead.”

The shimmering energy enveloped her an instant later. The destination of the portal was not what she had been expecting. An open meadow with a ranch style house greeted her sleepy gaze, and her transport carried her to the house with only a slight pause to close the portal.

He shifted her to one arm as he opened the door, then kicked it shut as he continued through the house.

“I really hope you live here, or someone is going to be really surprised.”

He didn’t respond to that, but continued on into a bedroom. He stripped the small robe from her, tucked her under the sheets and crawled in next to her. A deep sigh and he was asleep, pinning her to his bed with his body.

“So I guess that watching television is out.” She sighed and then blinked as his hand shot out, grabbed a remote from the bedside table and turned on the television. He dropped the remote in front of her and rewrapped his arm around her waist. Game shows it was going to be.

It was two hours and three screaming winners later and she had to get out of bed. The bathroom was calling after all that water. “Let me out or



change your sheets." She was suddenly free.

The trip to the bathroom accomplished its purpose and it was with some relief that she found a hairbrush and a robe. She brushed and braided her hair, then knotted the end and flipped the braid to hang down her back. The robe was silk and it was only three inches too long. Seph folded it up at the waist and tied it tightly. Now, time to go exploring.

The five bedrooms were tidy, as were the kitchen and entertaining area. There was a well-organized office on the far side of the house, and that got her curiosity up and perky. Rifling through his paperwork, she came to an astonishing conclusion, he and his family owned one of the largest producers of purified water in the area. "Of course. Unicorn purified water."

"Come back to bed." His dark magic voice called to her, and his blatant nudity looked terribly right in his own home. His very interested nudity.

"Not with you pointing that thing at me," she said with narrowed eyes. "Why have you never mentioned your last name to me before?"

"You didn't ask. You rarely even use my given name."

"You have a point, pony boy." She was feeling a little vindictive, but still didn't notice the narrowing of his own eyes that preceded his lunge

by less than a second.

She was over his shoulder and watching his buttocks flex as he walked back to his room. His hand slid under the robe and between her thighs, finding the secret she had wanted to keep. Just the sight of him and a little verbal banter had her wet and wanting him.

“Ah ha. So I have finally found the reason for your nagging me. I get you hot.”

She kicked out and struck something soft, revelling in her small triumph. She didn't have enough time to wallow in her success because before long she was falling head first onto the bed. He stood her up and stripped the robe from her while she was still disoriented. Her head was still spinning as he leaned her forward over the bed and fitted the blunt heat of his cock to her wet channel.

She was wet, but not ready enough and it took several slow thrusts to get him any serious penetration. Sephany groaned as her body fought to accommodate him, and he finally got the hint. He reached around her hips and stimulated her clitoris with his fingers while he worked to get into her.

He fingered her clit as he eased into her now lubricated passage. “Pony boy? We will have to remove that from your vocabulary.” Seated to the hilt, he began to thrust.

The angle of his penetration was working magic on her nerve endings. Sephany kept her eyes on the patterns on the coverlet, wadding the fabric in her fists as she hung on for dear life. Each thrust was harder than the last, slamming deeply into her while swinging his balls forward to strike her clit. He hammered away at her with deliberate intent to wipe her mind. She had no thoughts beyond the obvious, "Oh godohgodohgodohgod." Soon it turned into "Pleasepleasepleaseplease."

She jerked when he bent forward and spoke in her ear, "Are you going to call me pony boy again?"

"Nononononononononono."

"Do you swear?"

"Yes, pleasepleasepleaseplease." Her body was shaking, covered in sweat, and he sounded like they were discussing what to have for lunch. Bastard. She could feel the smile on his face, even though she couldn't see it, but the instant that his fingers pressed against her clit and set off her orgasm, she didn't care.

She thought she heard the coverlet tear, but wasn't sure. All she knew was that her body was milking his dry and he was pumping harder into her. She came again as he bit down on the join of neck and shoulder, screaming her pleasure to the room at large.

His grunt and groan kept her internal caresses

over his cock for what seemed like minutes. He relaxed against her, crushing her into the bedding. "Mhhpphhhhffff. Up." She pushed against him to feel him slide around inside her. "Oh." She relaxed again, but turned her head so she could get some oxygen.

Keeping himself inside her, he wrapped an arm around her hips and lifted her into the bed, scooting forward until they were both under the covers and snuggled together. His recovery period must have kicked in, because he was asleep again in seconds.

Come to think of it, she was pretty sleepy herself.

She was alone when she woke and was a little disappointed. A repeat of the previous evening's activities would have been fun. A quick search brought forth a white button down shirt and she slipped it on before going in search of Mal.

When she approached the living room, she heard voices and was very glad she had taken the time to cover up when she saw what had to be Mal's parents and another older male.

"Sephany, you are up." Mal jumped to his feet and took her hand to pull her into their group. "These are my parents, Halefa and Norlsis, and our Herd Master, Kano."

The unicorns nodded respectfully to her and

she nodded back. Herd Master Kano was looking pleased, but Mal's parents were unsure. "Pleased to meet you all. Early morning meeting?"

"Its afternoon." Halefa was disapproving. Having a daughter-in-law that slept in was obviously not high on her list.

Seph rolled with it, "Then good afternoon. I interrupted a meeting?"

"We were just discussing the benefits of Mal's decision to take you as mate, versus the detriment." Norlsis was polite, but firm. It seemed he was siding with his wife on this one.

"I for one, am enthused about a Warder joining our clan." Kano reached forward and took what appeared to be a cream cheese and watercress sandwich from the table. "Wards are handy for herd creatures, and we are no different."

She inclined her head. "The first ward that I wish to place will be in the field around the portal. Having a gateway unguarded is dangerous, I don't care what kind of creatures you are."

"This is the kind of protective nature that has kept you Warders flourishing. Please, by all means place wards on any piece of Malksis's property that you deem suitable."

She smiled and nodded, Mal took her hand in his own. "She is still a little weak from her ordeal. The imps were insistent that she ward their stream."

Kano looked concerned at that, "How much energy does it take to create a barrier?"

"Enough. But if I can give this address to my mom, she will have some more warders here in a few hours and we could put barriers around the whole place. I mean, as long as we had a way to get to the outer edges."

"It will be arranged." Kano inclined his head. "We will leave you two alone. The first days of mating are rather heady, if I recall."

Halefa looked a little sick, but Norlsis dragged her to her feet and nodded to his new daughter-in-law. "It was nice to meet you, Sephany. We will return in a few hours with some members of our herd, they will aid in the warding of this property. They won't like it, but they will do it."

"It was nice to meet you. All of you. I have wondered for a while if Malksis had any family."

Kano looked surprised. "He has a herd, he will always have family."

She looked from her new mate to his parents and then to his Herd Master. "I am beginning to see that. The Warders are the same. We always have ones we can call on."

Mal looked over at her, "It is time to call some of them now."

## CHAPTER SEVEN

“Hiya Mom. No, I am at Mal’s home. Yes, I am fine.” She sighed and listened to her mother’s high-pitched twittering on the other end of the phone. “Can I talk to Dad?”

“I am here, seedling.” Her father’s deep soothing voice came through the line in a wave.

“Hiya Dad, can you get Mom to get me some clothing? And to drag some of the Warders here to Mal’s place? We need some wards around the herd lands, and I am heading to the portal to ward it against hostile intrusion.”

“Where are his herd lands?”

“I am going to hand him over to you. I have no idea where we are.”

“Love you, seedling. See you soon.”

“Love you, too, Dad.” She handed the phone to the hovering unicorn, “Here’s Mal.”

“Hello, Lord Dremlock.” Mal nodded his dark head toward the phone, “Gorven, then.” He paused for a minute, cocking his head, “I am sorry

that I took her from your custody, but I wanted her safe, with me. Plus, the bed didn't really fit me." He smiled at whatever her father said on the other end of the line.

"Let me just give you the directions and the portal coordinates." He rattled them off quickly, keeping his gaze on Seph the whole time. "I look forward to seeing you soon, sir, Gorven."

When he hung up, he walked toward her and she winced at the look in his eyes. "None of that until the portal is warded, you horny bugger. Work first."

"Fine. Then come with me, and try not to pull all my hair out when you mount me."

"Great, then get me a mounting block. You are too tall for me to make that jump cold. Maybe you could kneel or something." The black look that he gave her was worth it. She giggled all the way to the front door.

The wind caught the tails of the shirt she was wearing and the draft made her blush. She had forgotten her lack of attire. Dwarves were dressed constantly when in public, and being this exposed definitely triggered her prudish sensitivity. Despite her surpassing dwarvish height, she had been raised in the dwarf court. Making sure that no one could look up her skirt had become second nature.

Mal shucked his trousers when they left the



confines of the house, and once in his unicorn form he wandered parallel to the porch until he got to the end. He tapped the railing with his horn.

She took the hint. It wasn't a mounting block, but it would do. "Oh. Wait a minute." She padded back into the house barefoot and looked around until she saw what she would need. The little glass beads used in the bottom of silk arrangements as objects of visual interest called her. She grabbed a few dozen and dumped them into the pocket of the shirt. Now she was prepared.

Pattering back out the door, she nodded to her mate and headed to the corner where she stood on the railing, clutching the corner post until he was in position. Then she dropped onto his back with enough force to make him grunt. She giggled. "Okay, this is too much fun."

He took a few steps forward and she clutched at his mane. It was a peculiar cadence that took them into the meadow and it had the effect of stimulating every nerve ending between her knees and hips. "Oh, no."

He snorted and shook his head, the velvet of the skin of his back rasping against her with every step of this peculiar gait.

They didn't go straight to the portal, but rather he wove lazy circles in the meadow with his strangely arousing steps. By the time he did take

her to the portal, she was panting with the need to not molest his horned form and shaking with the urge to kill her new mate.

“Off. I am getting off.” His snort let her know that he had caught the double entendre. She slid slowly down his side and stepped away from him. “That was sneaky.” She punched him in the side.

He blew hard and moved away from her irritated flailing.

“Make yourself useful and use your horn to make eighteen holes around the portal.” She counted out the beads and followed him around the gateway, planting the glass as rapidly as the equine form could move out of her way. She carefully sealed the glass beads into the earth and replaced the plugs of grass so that they were less than visible to the naked eye.

“Now for my favourite part.” She knelt at the twelve o’clock position and closed her eyes. In her mind, the beads began to glow as bright as the sun. A barrier consisting of bars that reached down into the earth and over the portal in a long egg shape. Nothing could come through, fly through, or dig under if it had evil intent, or any kind of hostility to the denizens of the property.

It was a pretty standard home ward. The kind that was taught to young Warders right after the self-defence magic. Anything hostile would just be bounced back through the portal.

The wards were living barriers. As long as she was alive, or someone of her bloodline kept updating the energies, it would last forever.

The wind tugged at her hair and the shirt, and she stood on wobbly legs. "There. Phase one is complete. Now, let's get some dinner. I have worked up an appetite and you are woefully neglectful in the care and feeding of a Warder." The grass prickled against the bottom of her feet as she walked back to the house. Mal nudged her from behind with his equine nose and jerked his head upward to indicate she should mount. "Nope. I can't get up there and you aren't cooperating."

He turned his head quizzically.

"I am not going to yank out your mane and you won't kneel. So I am walking. Ow." The grasses were rather tough, but she was making fair progress across the meadow when he cut her off.

Glaring at her, he shifted back into human form and without a word, lifted her onto his back.

She was astride him as he shifted back to his horsy form. "Well, that works."

He pranced a little bit and then took off galloping through the meadow, happily tearing grasses up as he went through all of his gaits, including that very seductive pattern he had used on her earlier.

Moisture pooled between her thighs, making

the velvet of his back sticky as he continued with the pattern of steps. She was bounced, rubbed and slid against his velvety hide. As her sensation threshold peaked, she squeaked in surprise.

Mal shook his head proudly and nodded in amusement, then headed home.

She gasped for breath as the aftershocks rang through her system, an internal pulse that caught her by surprise with every contraction. He pranced up to the house and shifted back into his human form, still wearing her. She jumped off with surprise and not a little embarrassment as her parent's car pulled into the drive. Positioning herself between her mate and her family, she winced as more of the Warders pulled in behind her parents. "Mal, hon. You had best get dressed. The horse comparisons are hard enough to keep at bay without you prancing in front of them in hide and hair."

"As my lady wishes."

The whisper was soft, light, and caressed the nerves between her thighs in the same manner as his strange canter.

"I will be back in a moment, and I think your mother is bringing a bag or two of clothing for you. You might want to change."

"Why you..." She was half-turned to kick his disappearing ass when her mom enveloped her in a hug.

"Sephany, we were so worried when you disappeared from the hall. It was such a relief when you called."

"Indeed. Where is Malksis? I want to thank him personally for letting your mother worry." Her father stomped up the stairs with two large chests that Sephany recognized from her room at her parents' home.

"He's inside, finding pants. Speaking of which, can you put one of those trunks down so I can fish out some jeans and perhaps some sneakers?" Moving with the lightning speed of his kind, he slid the chest from his right arm across the floor.

"There you go seedling. The other ladies are waiting outside until Malksis and I have our talk."

"Good plan. I am going to join them." She flicked open one of the chests and yanked out a set of jeans. Her shoes were in the one that her father laid next to the couch. Finally attired, she ran from the room as Mal came back. No way did she want to watch what was about to happen.

She was greeting her cousins and hugging her mother when the first impact struck. It was out behind the house and with the bevy of women around her, Sephany was pushed to watch her father beat the hell out of her new husband, and he looked like he was enjoying it. "Aw crap. They are both enjoying this."

She sat heavily on the ground and buried her

head in her hands. It was too much. Like supernatural Sunday football. A thunder of hoof beats was approaching, and all too soon an enormous herd of unicorns was glaring at the Warders on the other side of the fight. When Mal was on the ground and held there, another unicorn came up and aimed it's horn at Gorven. He backed away from the prone human form and the Warders came up to support him.

Sephany was halfway to the battleground when a tugging at her personal energies caught her attention. "Mal! The portal is opening! We need to be there." Her beloved staggered to his feet and shifted on the run, one of the cousins helped her mount and then a thundering of hooves surrounded her as they crossed the distance to the wildly flaring energy.

"Drop the wards. Let him come." Her mother was standing next to Mal's side the instant she cleared Kano's back.

"Him?"

"The troll was tracking you in Realm. It was why your father was so upset when you disappeared." Negara patted Seph's thigh, "Drop the wards. He wants to tear you apart."

"Okay, Mom." She pulled the energy back into her and waited with the others, half still on the unicorns that brought them. "It's down."

They didn't have long to wait. Roaring madly,

gnashing its teeth, a ravening troll burst through the portal and howled, "I want that damned Warder!"

The ladies, cousins, sisters, aunts and mothers all stepped forward. "*You found her.*"

If it was possible for the scaly skin to pale, it would have, but faced with the army of Warders and unicorns, it had only one choice, back through the portal as fast as its magic could carry it.

The laughter started slowly and grew in ferocity. The unicorns whinnied and pranced in amusement. Seph looked down at Malksis and slowly stroked his neck. Sure, they had some things to work out.

Family, jobs, that annoying thing he did with his tail when he thought something was funny. All things that needed to be worked out. But she was willing to try, willing to put in the effort. After all, it wasn't everyday that a lady got her unicorn and her knight all in one sweet package.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

Thanks for rejoining me in my first series published by Extasy books. The Warders. I described them as the most powerful and least respected of the families of Realm. The Warder's Djinn begins the series followed by The Warder's Dragon, The Warder's Wolf (my personal favourite), the Warder's Vampire and the Warder's Gryphon.

Stay tuned for the Warder's Elf, in which we find out how Alora is adapting to life underground, in the dark elf's embrace.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Viola Grace was born in Manitoba, Canada where she still resides today. She really likes it there.

She has no pets and can barely keep sea monkeys alive for a reasonable amount of time. Her line of day job tends to be analytical which leaves her mind hopping to weave stories. No co-worker is safe from her character analysis.

In keeping with busy hands are happy hands, her hobbies have included cross-stitch, needlepoint, quilting, costuming, cake decorating, baking, cooking, metal work, beading, sculpting, painting, doll making, henna tattoos, chain mail, and a few others that have been forgotten. It is quite often that these hobbies make their way into her tales.

Viola's fetishes include boots and corsetry, and her greatest weakness is her uncontrollable blush.

Her writing actively pursues the Happily Ever After that so rarely occurs in nature. It is an admirable thing and something that we should all strive for. To find one that we truly like, as well as love.

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