

# Misc Writings.

One-shots and solo RPs not worthy of a book

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# Ashlyn's New Blade

Ashlyn sat in her study, the orchestrion playing music softly. Though the Rava couldn't focus on it. In her hands, held a wicked blade. It was true, it was balanced perfectly for her. The weight of the steel, balance of the blade. It was all perfect. Too perfect. The sharp design, there was a darkness around this blade she couldn't put her finger on.

**"The Blacksmith said it was a reflection of our aether."**

An all too familiar voice called out. Sighing, the Rava closed her storm blue eyes for a moment. "What do you fucking want this time Justice...?" She asked tersely. The armor of the other Viera clinked as she strode across the wooden flooring.

**"What, I need a reason to talk to my other hal-well...third I guess?"** The spectre sneered towards her host.

"Not like I can stop you anyways..." Ashlyn sighed once more. It was true, the old blacksmith that Ashlyn had gone to forged this black specifically for her. It took a few suns, but the Rava held the blade, almost in fear. It's design seemed almost alien. Almost as of the void. A far cry from her old Ishgardian Inquisitorial weapon she held all those years ago.

**"I just want to say, I'm proud of you. This is one step to going back to how we should be. How we need to be."**

Justice narrowed her ruby red eyes as a grin spread across her tanned face. Long, brown locks, pulled back in to a ponytail. White highlights still at the tips. The armor she wore was equally wicked as the blade within Ashlyn's hands.

"I'm not going back to what we were. I left that behind us. I'm doing this because of my gunbreaker honor. I've stood by for far too long. I'm going to resume the work my father and I were doing. Nothing more."

*"C'mon, we all know if you pick up this blade, if you use those powers. You're going to go back to your old ways."*

A new voice appeared, one that was much younger. Ashlyn closed her eyes once more. Desperately, she wished both would just go away, just leave her be. She wanted to just be with her lovers, be happy. Yet, they wouldn't let her go.

"I'm not Regret. Just...go..away..."

*"And leave you here alone with **her**? I think not."*

Justice rolled her eyes. The long overcoat of the younger Rava, a stark contrast to the heavily armored older one. Her own dark grey eyes, peering towards the Rava.

**"What do you mean with that?!"**

*"You know what I mean about it."*

**"Gods you are annoying. I only want us to go back to saving this star."**

*"I told you Justice, we aren't. We are going to only go back to our old ways with father. We will honor father."*

There was a finality within her voice. The Rava stared daggers at her dark spectre. Ashlyn was putting her foot down for once. She wanted nothing to do with who they used to be. Justice just began laughing.

**"Is that really it? Do you really think you can stop it from happening? Come now you fucking bimbo. We both know you never changed. We all know you truly wish to go back to protecting the weak, protecting those who need us. This star still needs us Ashl-"**

**"SILENCE!"**

Justice froze in place for a moment. Narrowing her eyes, she looked between the two.

**"Very well, I'll just sit back and observe. I'll just be waiting for when you come back to ask for our power..."**

With that, Justice began laughing wickedly as she faded away. Regret, soon followed suit, saying nothing to the Rava. Leaving her alone.

The Viera's gaze shifted downward to the blade. Was Justice right? Was her desire to have a blade reforged just her following a calling? Would she just become as she used to be?

The door to the office slammed open. A panting Elezen at the door. "Mistress Ishina, is everything okay?"

Ashlyn snapped up, and took a deep breath. "Yeah Elvone, everything is fine."

"But I heard-"

"...Everything is fine..."

# The (K)Nightmare.

It had been an uneasy rest for Ashlyn ever since the fight. She had to draw on so much of her power, so much latent darkness. Yes, the Rava kept control. For how long though? How long could she keep this up? She tossed and turned in her sleep. There was no easy answer. She didn't know. The very thought frightened her now. To be reduced to nothing more than a blood thirsty killer. It downright frightened her. She's known for many a summer now that it was to be her fate eventually. It was the fate that fully befell any of her kind.

She tossed and turned in her sleep. While the Viera's body was recovered, her spirit was not. She had to rely on too much of her power, too much of her darkness. She felt the pull, the desire to lap at it more. Ever growing in the depths of her mind. Forbidden strength borne from hatred and righteous fury. It was too enticing to not use, even now, almost two epochs after she had nearly fell of that fate. Try as she might, Ashlyn couldn't resist the urge. She couldn't resist the desire for the strength.

How could one think about resisting it? How could one fight the urge? The strength is unrivaled. The power boost you get is like nothing else. When she draws upon the darkness, it is almost intoxicating. She loses all fear, all worry that things may not end well. She loses all care as she pulls on it more. The Viera almost grows manic. Yet, she knows that's the dangerous part. Had she drawn on it more during her spar with Deha, she may have very well won. She may have very well beaten the other fast enough that the assassin, whomever they are, may not have struck.

Yet, if she fell. She'd have put the princess at risk. She'd have put the Lieutenant at risk. She'd have put the rest of the Knights at risk. That was not a chance Ashlyn e'er wished to play with.

**Coward.**

Go away.

**No**

Yes, this isn't something for you to weigh in on.

**What makes you say that? You're my ruler all of a sudden?**

I own this body, you merely share it. You need to-

**We own this body. Never forget that. I'm as much a part of you as is that fucking brat.**

*Don't you dare talk about me in that manner **wench**.*

Ashlyn could hear, no *feel* Justice sighing in disgust.

**This power is what separates us from the chaff. This power is what gives us the strength to do what we must. You waste it doing nothing Ashlyn!**

I nearly was consumed by this 'power'! I have too much to lose now.

**YOU ONLY HAVE THAT TO 'LOSE' BECAUSE YOU LET YOURSELF GROW SOFT!**

Would you rather I'd have died alone?

**You'd never have been alone. You had me this entire time. I'm the only person you need.**

Oh yeah, that makes one not seem completely fucking insane. Just keeping myself company for a few hundred years. Not even. We all know we would have likely been dead by now if I kept the course.

**And? We aren't supposed to live forever.**

...what if I want to?

*You can't. You need to die.*

**Oh, so now the fucking brat wants to weigh in.**

*Shut up you murderous psychopath.*

**You only call me a psychopath because you don't have the resolve I do. These people cannot be changed. They can only be removed.**

*It's not our place to be judge, jury, and executioner.*

**Says who? The city-states are doing nothing!**

*It's. Not. Our. Place.*

**Coward.**

Ashlyn tosses and turns some more. Her face straining visibly. Sweat begins to bead upon the Rava's forehead. The Viera's body is continuously showing distress.

*It's not cowardice, it's honor. Something you know nothing about.*

**HONOR IS FOR THE WE-**

Enough.

**NO THIS UPPITY LITTLE BI-**

**I SAID ENOUGH!**

Silence fell for once on this eve. It was almost deafening. Truly, Ashlyn didn't know what to do. She knew she should use the power. On her contracts, and on official missions for Asuka. Yet, every time, the Rava risked losing herself for good. Yeah, a few of her lovers agreed to, and the Knights were under orders to put her down should she lose herself. Yet, the Rava knew if that came. It would hurt her lovers for so long.

At the same time, the fight against Deha put it in perspective just the gulf of the distance between her skill as a proud Bozjan gunbreaker and that of the ebony heart.

Truly she didn't know...

# A clash of Knights

# Page 1

They had only been to sea for a few suns, but the small Elezen kept looking wistfully out the porthole in their shared cabin. Was she right about her hunch of her Ser? Was this gallant knight, the one who saved her from a life of suffering and misery, the one who gives so freely of not only house and home to a poor lowborn, but also gives money to her family, was she truly one of the evil few? How could it be? It didn't make sense, but Istrone couldn't deny the signs. She'd have to be blind to not see them. No, there had to be something more to it.

She sighed deeply and looked over towards the Rava. Her quill hadn't been set down since they did their morning exercises. The Viera was ever dutiful in making sure everything was being done according to meticulous plan. While she had to relinquish some trust and control to the ship's captain for once, Istrone could easily see how much this bothered her Ser. Yet, the Viera knew her place. As long as their liege was safe, that's all that mattered. Her eyes shifted now towards one of the two blades that the Ser had brought along.

It even felt as though a wickedness was emanating from the weapon. The blade itself, as long as Istrone was tall. That was one of the biggest signs, both literally and figuratively. Sure, there were some from The Holy See who traditionally used such a weapon, but it was in ever of The Fury's hallowed service. They also felt... differently. No, this was a much more sinister blade. There was something cold about it that the Elezen couldn't quite place.

Then, there were the scars. Wounds that normally should have killed someone. A grave wound across her midriff, merely scar tissue now. A scar lining in a ring around her neck, reminiscent of a noose having done its job. Yet, if it had, would she still walk among them? No, she should be six fulms under. Each of those scars alone should have killed her, but still she stood. She seemed not even phased by these wounds when many Templar-Knights have been felled by less, not to mention being maimed beyond service.

Yet, here Ashlyn stood. Not just proud, but almost in defiance of the natural order. There was something unnatural about her Ser. Something that caused her to still stand when many would fall, something that would cause her the ability to wield such a wicked weapon. Yet, the wonder burned in her. Would she still follow the Rava? Would she still study under her? What would cause such an evil being to follow a princess as pure as their liege. Nothing added up to the Elezen.

Finally she couldn't take it anymore. "Ser, pray forgive me if I'm speaking out of order. I know we are to be relaxing right now, but may I ask a few questions?" Her light voice rang out within their rather spacious accommodations. This sudden question caused Ashlyn's ear to twitch. "Oh? You know I am fine with you asking things. After all, we can't learn anything if we never inquire about the star around us." She responded warmly. This was the Ser she knew. This couldn't have been one of the accursed ones, right? One of the Dark Knights of legend? Istrone averted her eyes for a moment while she thought about how best to tackle this.

Back but a year ago, she would have stupidly blurted out the question bluntly. Yet, in her time with Ashlyn, the lowborn had already began to learn tact and the social graces of the highborn. Had she not known any different, she would have expected Ashlyn to have been born as one of them. The Viera kept smiling brightly towards her young squire. "Well, it's.... about you...." She asked finally.

This made Ashlyn practically freeze in place. Her ears were unnaturally rigid as the bunny began thinking about what this could be regarding. Sure, she's been asked things before, but usually it was directly related to their training. "Well, I... am rather curious what you wish to know Istrone. You know I have nothing to hide from you." She replied softly. Truth be told, she hid quite a bite from the Elezen.



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She did indeed hide the true reason as to her strength. She hid the source as to her scars. She hid all of this to protect her protege. She did so to let the girl live in ignorance of what the Ser truly was. Taking a deep breath, Ashlyn expected for the worse. After a few moments more of silence, what felt to be an eternity. The young Elezen spoke.

“Ser, I will admit I am young. I am still only fifteen years old, I still have five more years before I become an adult, let alone a knight. Forgive me if I am out of line in this but I must ask...” At first, the girl began soft, almost coyly. Then, as she spoke the next part, her gaze hardened. “Why do you live when your scars say you shouldn’t?” This question burned the hottest in the girl’s mind.

Ashlyn was taken aback. Where did this come from? “Istrone, I’ve... I...” She knew that she couldn’t turn around and tell the Elezen to not worry. To not think anything of it right after telling her that she had nothing to hide. Clearing her throat, the Viera thought about how best to answer.

“Istrone... You must understand a few things first...” She began softly, her gaze was almost motherly to her charge. Yet, the Elezen knew some bullshit was about to come her way.

“Save it Ser, I’ve heard lies before.” she stated softly. She knew this kind of talk would only go to mentioning her age, mentioning wanting to protect her. This was all the same she had heard time and time again from her parents. “I may not be an adult, but I am training to be a knight under you, am I not? I’ve earned the right to have your respect, have I not?” She stated proudly. Her Ishgardian heritage showing in the very way this smaller girl held her head up. Ashlyn went to speak once more, but then Istrone went on the attack, her youth getting the best of her.

“Ser, are you a dark knight? Are you one of the heretics that we were warned about? Are you one of... the dark ones who haunted our lands, who slew the Templar-Knights, who acted like they were above-” As she was going, the Elezen’s voice was shaking, but she never got to finish. “Enough!” Called out the Rava. “No Ser! I will not let you squirm away from this. I need you to be honest with me. I need you to tell me the truth!”

To this, Ashlyn slammed her fist against the desk. “Enough I said!” Her voice rang out firm. Standing up, the Rava merely gives an order. Her warm demeanor gone. “Clean and sharpen my Thorn.” The order came through firmly. It was clear that the Rava was intent on avoiding this discussion as long as possible. Standing up, the Viera walked to the door. “But Ser! I-” Though, before she got another word out, Ashlyn snapped. “You heard me Squire!”

The seriousness with which she spoke the title. Istrone knew it was pointless to pursue this longer. Maybe she could get some answers from her Ser’s lovers who are coming with. “Yes Ser. Sorry Ser for speaking out of line...” Her voice remained low, and the Elezen kept looking towards the floor. With that, the Viera opened the door. “I’m going up on deck, I need fresh air. Come find me when you are done, we need to get back practicing your basic form.” With that, the Rava departed and Istrone remained quiet.

Still lost in her thought, the Elezen realized, even if it turned out to be true. She still wanted to follow Ashlyn to the ends of the star. She knew that the Rava was far more than just what the legends would tell of her kin. There had to be significantly more, like the truth about the history of the Dragonsong War, but like that, this one is keen on keeping the truth hidden. Istrone wouldn’t let that stop her, no. She will see this khani and girlfriend... maybe even the Princess may know.



# The Meeting of a Squire

# Page 1

It was a snowy day in Ishgard, breath crystallizing instantly upon leaving her mouth. The Viera cursed to herself silently about coming back to this gods forsaken land. Her and hers left this place for the much better Ul'dah clime some while ago and she never looked back. Yet, here stood Ashlyn Ishina, Knight-Captain to Asuka Stiles. The adults recognized her from her public trial, most stared at her as she walked in to the walled city. The Viera could still feel cold steel from some of their gazes. A Templar-Knight approached the Rava. "Halt, what business have you in our city, heretic?" He asked, icy daggers in his tone.

"Look, I'm just here to find a person. That's it. I've been granted my amnesty by the council." She stated softly. Her gunblade, safely stowed upon her back. "You and yours got your closure. Let me be in peace." She sighed heavily. He stood tall. "You slew my brother *wench*. There is no closure for that without your blood. Though, you are right. You were granted amnesty by those who've decided we are to stow our blades. You know the rules, you have eyes on you. Any of your dark arts, and you will have all of Ishgard down on you for your blood." Through his narrow slits, the Viera could see the Elezen narrowing his eyes.

"I gave them my word, did I not? Do you think a Knight becomes a captain by breaking her word?" The Viera held her head up high. "As Knight-Captain to a foreign emissary, I would hate for something to happen to you for stopping in official business." He snarled. Suddenly, a mailed hand presses against his shoulder. "Leave her be Ilmex." Ashlyn snapped back to reality, looking to the one who talked to the one who stepped in. "Forgive him for his outburst Ser Ishina." His voice was low, truly seeking forgiveness.

Ashlyn merely raised her hand. "No, it's fine. I understand his pain. I've seen enough of it in my life that I caused. I can only do my best to try to atone for my sins. I did kill many who did not deserve it, especially among your order who were just doing their jobs. I can never truly ask to be forgiven, but I can only work on doing my best to make things better in the meantime." The other knight nodded. "That's all any of us can do to those we wronged."

Ashlyn solemnly nodded. With that, she began walking away, still able to hear the first Elezen snarling for quite a few foot steps. As the Viera walked through the stone pathways, her mind raced to where best to search for a squire. For that was the real reason the Rava had made her way to this frigid place. Her mind raced back to the talk with her liege after her interrupted duel. She knew she would need to find a squire, even if she no longer feels the need to die to atone. Her path to peace requires her teaching the next generation. The next generation to protect others, to not go after some perverted sense of justice.

Without thinking, the Viera found herself wandering in the slums of The Brume. While the high houses would have likely had good 'stock' for a squire. Most would not dare send a child to be with this Knight. For they all remember the sins of her past. As she looked around at the crumbling buildings, the undercity where many are left to die wallowing in poverty. This is where her eldest daughter was born. Her eldest whom hated her very soul. Ashlyn's mind traveled back to Ashlee, the troubled young adult, seemingly falling to the sins of her mother's past. Ashlyn sighed and shook her head. Maybe if she picked someone fitting from here, she could understand Ashlee better.

Yet, the Rava really didn't even know what to look for in a squire. Hells, she barely knew how to be

a 'proper' knight herself. She just went about her life, using her training from back in Bozja on how to be a guard. Yet, instead of a whole family, she is protecting just one. One very precious royal, her sapphire eyes scanned side to side. Trying to find someone suitable. Every person around her either fled from

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what they remember her doing, or the fact that someone from money was walking through this ghetto. She went to call out and mention that she wasn't a threat or anything when her ears picked up something. Shouting, children fighting it seemed. The Viera wasted not a moment. She began dashing towards the source of the sounds.

As soon as she arrived on the scene, she took in the sight. A young blonde Elezen, no more than thirteen or fourteen summers old, standing with her fists balled up, ready to fight. Behind her was a young boy of about ten summers old it seemed. He looked nothing like the rest, maybe a refugee? Before her stood three other children around her age. It was clear what was going on. "Stand down Istrone, he's not worth getting beat up over." Called the leader of the group. "Just let us teach this refuse where he belongs on the totem pole down here."

Istrone stood firm. "No! I will not stand by and let you and your cronies do as you please Edaux!" It was clear that she did not want to just let them walk all over the other child. Edaux scoffed. "Fine then. Have it your way." What proceeded was nothing short of a brawl. While she was outnumbered, it seemed this girl was not a stranger to fighting. Ashlyn stood back for a moment, wanting to see this outcome naturally.

Folding her arms, the Viera watched it intensely. It went as well as one would expect when someone is outnumbered three to one. Yet, she still fought valiantly. As this Istrone fell to the ground, broken and bruised, Edaux walked up to her. "I told you, you need to learn your \*own\* place Istrone!" With that, he pulled his leg back to kick her.

In an instant, Ashlyn lept to the girl's side. "That's enough, you little street rats best scurry back to your little hovels." She states softly. There was a low threat to her words, Ashlyn was not planning on actually harming them, but she was not above scaring them. Sure enough, the sight of the full grown Rava, with a gunblade in hand was enough to cause the small gang to scatter. With them dealt with, Ashlyn leaned down and checked Istrone.

"Who are you?" The Elezen girl asked, terrified at the sudden showing up of the gunbreaker. The small refugee child was just as scared. "You need not fear me. I am coming here looking for someone to take under my wing. Someone worthy of it. I think I found it in you, Istrone was it?" The small Elezen nodded. "Y-yeah..." Ashlyn smiled down at her. "I'm looking for someone to be my squire. I'm the Knight-Captain to a princess from a far away land. The way you handled yourself against those bullies. I think you fit the bill perfectly. I'd like to take you and train you. Maybe give you a better life than you would have here."

The Rava looked around, there was a small crowd gathering and whispering. "We should probably go though, do you have any parents?" Istrone nodded. She was starting to fear the Viera less as they talked. "Y-yeah. Both my mom and my dad. Though, I... can't leave them. As nice as that sounds. They need whatever money I can help bring them." Hearing this broke Ashlyn's heart. "Then, it is especially important I talk to them."

Istrone looked pensively towards the refugee child. "Come Alric. We should take you back to your parents as well." It was clear she wasn't sure if she should trust this random adult who wanted to take her away. Her parents had oft warned her of such people. Yet, this promise of a better tomorrow. Could she risk throwing that away? The small Elezen bit her lip.



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Ashlyn walked beside the pair, whispers abound of what it may mean. Delivering the child to his parents, Ashlyn spoke with them and after a bit handed the couple a rather handsome amount of gil to help them momentarily. Help them at least be able to gain some status within the Brume and even offered them positions within her manor, although only the mother seemed willing to accept.

Seeing the Viera display this act of kindness, Istrone fought with herself more and more. Soon enough, she found herself being willing to trust this bunny. At least for some time. Soon enough, they would be off to Istrone's own parents. Once there, they instantly recognized Ashlyn. For they were at her trial. Fear crossed her father's eyes. He ordered Istrone to leave Ashlyn's side immediately. The small Elezen listened to him and went inside their hovel. Yet, she couldn't help but be curious. Peeking out from a hoarfrost coated window, she couldn't make out a single word as the Rava talked with her parents.

Once the small girl was out of earshot, her father asked. "Why were you with our Istrone? Did you not kill enough? Did you not hurt enough of our people? Why are you here?" Ashlyn sighed. "Look, I know I've done many wrongs, you have to believe me. I was not lying when I said in my trial that I want to ato-" He interrupted her "Enough with your lies heretic! You may have fooled the Tribunal, but you cannot fool me." Ashlyn just silently stared at him.

"I want to take your daughter as my squire." She simply states. This stunned both parents. "Squire? We aren't highborn. Why would you want her as a squire? She's not proper stock for it." The Viera nodded her head slowly. "I see in her the very same determination, and desire to bring about justice that I had at her age. That I still have. I watched her fight bullies, she lost but she still did the right thing. I want to reward that. That's exactly who I am looking for to be my protege."

The parents looked to each other. Her mother states, "You know Rudix, she might be telling the truth. Istrone does fight a lot and you know I worry about her..." Rudix slams a fist against the side of their hovel. "Damn it Olpine, what if this... *heretic* is lying? What if she means to capture our daughter to kill? Can we trust her?" Olpine looked towards Ashlyn, directly in to the Viera's eyes. After a moment she breaks the contact. "I trust her, I don't know why, but I do trust that she means her words."

"If it helps, I can send you guys a moonly stipend of say a hundred thousand gil. Istrone will live with me in my manor. I will give you both the address so you can visit or send mail whenever you please. She will learn the ways of the court, she will be educated in the arts, maths, and sciences. She will be well taken care of and raised under my care. Not that you two aren't capable parents. She would just thrive much better in my care."

Rudix was clearly fighting with himself. "She's our only child... you're asking me to give you my only daughter..." Ashlyn nodded. "I'm a parent myself. I know what it's like. Like I said, you two can come visit whenever. There are airships that come to Ul'dah daily. I'll give you the stipend once a moon and you can use that to... well live better than you are here."

Olpine tugged on his sleeve. "Think of it Rudix, this is... this is a once in a lifetime opportunity for both her and us. She can get the stuff we could never provide. She can live... a good life." Ashlyn nodded. "I am not only a Knight-Captain, but I am exceptionally wealthy independent of my status.



I have connections. I can help her even after she is done training under me. I can help find her a lord or lady to serve." Rudix's knuckles turned white. Then just as suddenly, he went limp. "Fine... you win. You can take her. Just... promise me no harm will come to her." Ashlyn nodded slowly. "I'll treat her as one of my own kits. She'll be given a caring home to live in. You can visit her, or she can visit you whenever. I will not tie her to me unless my work takes me to far away locales."

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Rudix nodded. "Thank you. I... guess we will say our goodbyes and let her know where she will be going." Ashlyn solemnly nodded. "Just one request. She doesn't appear to recognize me. Please... don't mention to her that I was the dark knight on trial just last year. I'm sure she heard of that... I'd... rather avoid scaring her." Rudix grimaced. "I had no plans on it heretic. I have but one request, do not teach her of your dark arts." Ashlyn nodded. "Of that, we are of one mind. I am planning on teaching her whichever discipline she desires once she learns the fundamentals, but that is one I'd rather avoid..."

Rudix sighed. "Okay... let's go..." A few bells later, and Ashlyn and Istrone were flying out of Ishgard, the Elezen watching the city she has only known her entire life fade in to the distance. Her future, unknown.

# A Duel with the Dawnservant

# Page 1

It had been a few suns since they arrived in this hot, humid clime. Ashlyn felt just at home within it. She almost seemed revitalized with the heavy, humid air that wasn't all too dissimilar to her own native jungle. Though, today was not a sun for relaxation. Her boots echoed loudly off the stone walls as the Viera walked through the palace to the throne room. Her party in tow, the nerves of what was about to be shown could be felt in the air. Would Ashlyn prevail? Would she lose within seconds? No one knew, and that excited the Rava.

**You're going to need me.**

No I won't. I will fight him on my own strength.

**You idiot, look at him, you have no chance without using our strength.**

I have more here than just him and I. I cannot, not with Istrone right there...

**Forget the elf, she'll discover what we are soon enough. She already suspects us...**

Enough, I said I won't use that.

**You fucking stupid bu-**

ENOUGH!

The Viera steeled her gaze, sapphire eyes piercing in to the older Mamool Ja. "Gulool Ja Ja. It is my honor to come to you today to duel." She motions grandly before him. Pulling out her gunblade, the Viera smiled. "Sadly, today only one of us will emerge victorious. Let us find out who the better is. My Bozjan arts, or your ancient native Viper arts!" He laughed a full chested bellow. "My my, quite the eager one you are. I am going to enjoy this!" The Mamool Ja replied picking up his monstrous blades. Each one easily the size of the Viera it seemed.

Preparing herself in to her battle stance, the Rava glances over at those who have come to watch. Her squire, Istrone, the small Elezen of only fifteen summers. Asuka, the princess with whom Ashlyn has sworn her life to protect. Entyra, her lieutenant, easily the more book smart of the two officers. Ruby, her Khani and one of the loves of her life. Kira, Ruby's wife and another love of Ashlyn life. Finally, Mizzy, a budding new romantic interest, whom the Rava had become quite interested in. They all have their own feelings about this duel, some excitement, others fear.

The Viera returned her gaze to her opponent. Her fingers flexed on the grip as she wound up her legs, ready to explode at any moment. "I see you brought a small audience little one. Good, good, then let us give them a show, eh?" He laughed heartily once more finally readying himself in to his own battle stance. Despite his advanced age, Ashlyn could feel the years of experience just emanating from him. It was awe inspiring.

Smiling, the Knight-Captain nodded. "Let us not disappoint!" She shouted. Her voice echoing off the stone. Once both got ready, Ashlyn's powerful legs kicked off launching the small body forward. Though, in her haste, Gulool Ja Ja easily read the attack and side stepped. Causing the Viera to slam in to the ground with her blade harmlessly. Using his chance, the mighty Mamool Ja swung with both massive weapons and Ashlyn barely had time to escape.

They slammed in to the ground and kicked up dust, the shockwave the Viera felt was even more inspiring. Upon landing, the Rava immediately launched in to yet another attack. This time, her

Thorn sank in and let off an explosion. Gulool Ja Ja tried to retaliate, but his massive foot missed the bunny as she kicked off his body. Landing a few yalms away, the Viera smirked as first blood was hers. She tried to go on the offensive, but as her next swing went wide, the Mamool Ja took advantage of her miss and smashed her with his thick tail.

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The Rava was thrown back ten yalms slamming directly in to a stone pillar. A loud gasp as the air rapidly escaped her lungs could be heard by all. Falling to the ground, Ashlyn took a moment being dazed. Her opponent wasn't going to let up so soon. Charging forward with speed not like his size, Gulool Ja Ja swung both massive blades but Ashlyn managed to dodge just in the nick of time. In response, she managed to kick off and swung her blade with an almost wild fervor, that even despite his own size, her opponent parried with ease.

Ashlyn landed on the ground and spun to face him. Gulool Ja Ja began laughing. "I can see you're holding back little one. Do not disrespect me. I can feel something within you that you aren't letting loose! FIGHT ME LIKE A WARRIOR!" He roared at her. Ashlyn grit her teeth. How could he see such a thing. "I am giving you everything a Bozjan has. I am holding nothing back!" Gulool Ja Ja shook his head. "Stop lying girl!"

**Even your opponent can feel me. Accept it. Accept us. Let me come free. Use our power.**  
No! I will not! I... can not...

Ashlyn steeled her resolve. Glancing towards the crowd, she heard their cheers, looked upon their faces for various expression from worried, to reveling in the fight as sweat fell from her brow. Time seemed to slow as her gaze moved from face to face. Cheers echoing in her ears, the bunny shifted her gaze back towards her massive opponent to see he had taken advantage of her momentary distraction. His blades slamming in to the spot where she stood just heartbeats before her body reacted vaulting her to safety. The moment the Rava landed, she sprung forward but once more badly missed her aim.

She did not let this deter her. Yet, in her frantic swings to try to prove that she does not need her darkness, the Viera badly missed again to where Gulool Ja Ja barely had to move to dodge. "Ha! Your mind is clouded! Come, give me your all!" He cried swinging his blades together. They connected against Ashlyn's gunblade as it snapped to protect her. Yet the sheer force from the swing still sent her flying backwards. The Rava landed with a hard thud. Standing up, it could be seen by all that Ashlyn was taking a beating. Yet, even as a small bit of blood began to leak from her forehead, the Viera stood defiant against the gargant.

Springing once more in to action, as the Rava wrestled within herself to maintain control. She once more badly missed her target. The pommel of one of the giant blades finds itself buried in to her back. Ashlyn slammed down in to the ground as a result. The Viera took a moment and quickly rolled to the side and up on her feet as a massive foot slammed down right next to where she once was. A flurry of blades came her way, the Viera did her best to parry as many as she could. Yet, even still unable to land a blow herself, the Viera grit her teeth harder.

**You will never win without me. Look at how much you're losing. Look at how you're embarrassing yourself in front of your beloved princess, in front of your 'khani', in front of your lovers.**

No! You're... you're wrong...

**Even you know the truth! Come, embrace us. Embrace what we are. Give him what he wants!**

Ashlyn exhaled deeply. She knew Justice was right. She knew that she had to fight him with all of her might. Her eyes closed for a moment.

Fine. I will use it. Only for this, and this is not a sign of things going back to what they were.

**Good girl. Just relax, tap in to it and feel the power flow through you once more...**

# Page 3

The Viera exhaled once more, time seemed to move at a standstill as she channeled all her hatred, disdain, and anguish of being unable to defend those she wants to. A malefic aura begins to form around the Viera. Gulool Ja Ja paused for a moment, staring at his quarry. Asuka's own light flared as a shield to protect her once more. Quietly, only loud enough for the two other Viera in place to be able to hear, the princess can be heard gritting her own teeth, stating. "Gods damnit Ash. This better be worth it..." Her amber eyes remained transfixed on where the bunny was.

The flow of darkness seemed to crackle around the Rava. Her muscles reacted, the blood flowing from her forehead became black as the darkest ichor. Through the crowd, a set of mixed reactions could be heard. Entyra stared intently at her superior. Worried if Ash might have done something stupid. Mizzy stared in fear, looking through fingers trying to cover her eyes from what was happening. Ruby stepped in front of Kira, to protect her wife. Just as the others, staring directly at Ash. Everyone seems quite tense watching the Viera begin to unlock herself.

Istrone, grimaced. "...I knew it..." She said softly. "Ser... why won't you just talk to me about it..." Through all of this, the bunny had just focused on keeping her control. The Rava did her best to not lose herself. She may be willing to deal with Justice, but by the twelve, she needed to not let the girl take over. As the Viera opened her eyes. Her sapphire orbs were now ruby red. Yet, even after this change, even as the darkness rippled around her, she was in control indeed. A few of the group watching breathing a collective sigh of relief.

Gulool Ja Ja just began laughing once more. "There we go! Now this is the real you I can feel!" Ashlyn remained staring him down, emotionless as her hand extended to the side. Blade breaking down in to aether. Channeling a little extra of her own, it begins to reform in to the wicked blade that was sitting back in her cabin. The sheer size difference in the weapons seemed to only excite Gulool Ja Ja even more.

Charging in, he swings his twinblades downward. The Rava moves to parry them but this time her counter attack lands a hit upon his arms. Blood is drawn once more in her favor. He goes on the offensive, spinning his blades around to cause her to maintain distance. Drawing deep within the darkness, three bolts of raw crackling energy erupt from her fingertips and make their way in to his body.

Gulool Ja Ja, not expecting that was thrown off balance and the Rava goes on the attack, swinging just to be riposted by the massive brute. The blades connect with her body, the skin was mostly protected by a shimmering purple shield. Yet, her uniform began showing tatters. Ashlyn grimaced as blood began to form under her leather. Cuts forming from all of the hits and near misses. Things she never noticed until just now. Rivers of ichor flowing down her arms. She didn't want to give in though.

Gripping her greatsword with two hands, the Viera dashed forward and lept skyward just to bring the blade down using a flip to add momentum. Gulool Ja Ja blocked the blow with his arm, and the wicked blade sank within his flesh. Kicking off her quarry, the Viera launched in to a flurry of blows, each one narrowly missing the still quite agile Dawnservant. After her flurry though, the Viera was left off balance. A momentary lapse that he tried to take advantage of.



Yet, the Viera was able to anticipate it. She fell with one of her motions and his own counter attack missed her. Spinning on the ground, the Viera got back up and a large outward burst of dark energy crackles from her blade as she spun it around. Be it the weapon, or the energy. Something struck him hard.

# Page 4

Gulool Ja Ja had to take a knee for the first time since this fight began. One of his eyes closed, as the venerable weaponmaster panted hard. The Vow of Reason remained oddly silent still with only the Vow of Resolve being active. Ashlyn paid it no mind. For he was still quite formidable. Were he at his full strength, she most assuredly would have had to channel this much sooner or the fight would have ended much earlier.

Blood almost seemed to flow freely from both of them as they stared each other down. In an explosive move, the combatants dashed to each other. Deflecting and trading blows with one another in a flurry of steel on steel. Yet, try as they might, neither could land a decisive blow.

Hit after hit goes unconnected. This continues for a few minutes more before finally the palace doors slam open. "Dawnservant! I have news about the rite of succession!" A servant shouted amid the clashes of steel. Hearing this, he backed off. Ashlyn recognized the sign to stop fighting and paused herself. "Ha Ha! I rarely get to enjoy this as I have these past days! First that man Estinien, then that adventurer from across the sea. Now you! I thank you friend. You are indeed a worthy adversary."

There was a weariness to his voice, but even as his rumble calmed down and he moved to the throne to be mended and deal with his news. Ashlyn nodded. "And you are all the fighter I could have wished to duel against. Thank you for letting me test myself against you. I fear how it would have turned out had you still had the vigor of your youth." The Viera responded. Though her voice was not just her own. There was almost a twinned quality to it.

Before anyone could worry though, Ashlyn had closed her eyes. The aura died down, her blade shattered and reformed back in to her Thorn. As the bunny opened them once more, they were back to their calm deep blue again. Bowing, she began walking away before stumbling for a moment. Though, thanks to her entourage. There was no shortage of help to get the bunny back to her own cabin and mended.

As she walked away, Gulool Ja Ja just smiled at her. Knowing that deep within her heart beat the heart of a warrior who reveled in combat just as much as he...