

SETTLING DOWN

COMMISSION STORY

BY CHALDEACHANGE



“To think Magnai has his heart set on this woman as his Nhaama with such intensity that he’d ask me to recite such an ancient spell.” Nestled within one of the huts upon the Dawn Throne was a Xaela shaman. The Dawn Throne was the proud home of the Oronir Tribe, populated by the reptilian Au Ra race that was prominent in Doma and the surrounding area. The tribe had an ancient tradition spanning back many generations -- that the head of the Oroniri tribe, the personification of the Dawn Father Azim, was destined to always find his beloved in the Dusk Mother Nhaama. It was a muddled tradition that seemed to be based more on the Dawn Father’s preferences than anything, but all of the tribes of the Azim Steppe were steeped in such deep tradition.

The current leader of the Oroniri was Magnai Oronir. A grandiose and powerful man, he led his people to be grand and powerful fighters, and all followed him without question. He wholly believed in his quest to find his Nhaama, and during his search he believed he had finally found *the one*. She was a cat, a Miqo’te woman that was affiliated with the Warrior of Light by the name of Y’shtola Rhul. He’d already once spoken his desire to wed to her, but was ultimately let down in such a magnificent way that he only desired her more.

There were ways for an Azim descendant to obtain their Nhaama despite rejection if they believed that love to be true. The shamans of the tribe had a spell passed down from ages old, though it had hardly been used in modern times. It would twist the form and will of the woman thought to be the fated Nhaama, wholly making her the ruler’s beloved. **“I hope for his sake that her absence doesn’t have correlation drawn to his eventual marriage.”**

The rays of the morning sun tickled Y'shtola's eyes, but because she was effectively blind short of her ability to perceive the aether that composed her surroundings it was the chirping of birds outdoors that ultimately stirred her awake and provided the information she required regarding the time of day.

"Hm? Surely I fell asleep in an inn room in Kugane, and yet..." Rising from the bed she'd woken on, aether was perceived all around her as directed by her eyes. She appeared to be in a hut of sorts, likely made of hardened mud and waterproofed on the outside with plant-life based on the leaves hovering over the tip of the window. The bird chirping outside, too, was not one she'd heard in Kugane before. It was native to the Steppe, which was much farther than a single night's journey.

The covers fell off of the Miqu'te's body as she rose to her feet, toes digging into the dirt floor beneath her. The cool air greeted her by surprise not because the small hut was chilly, but because she found herself unclothed. Perky breasts stood firm in the morning air, the subtle natural tan of her body aglow under the light presented through the small, open air windows. **"Was I taken captive? Though the architecture of this space seems reminiscent of those in Azim Steppe... Surely such a trip would take more than a single night through typical means?"**

Arms across her breasts, she moved to the nearest window carefully so that any potential onlookers wouldn't be able to sneak a peak of sorts. The inside of the hut was relatively bare. The bed, a basket of fruits, little else. Not even a change of clothes for her to adorn. Her assumption was that the mud hut wasn't typically used for dwelling in long term and was likely something akin to a guest house.

The catlike ears atop her head twitched more in response to the sounds coming from the outdoors; the mooing of livestock, the sounds of monsters fighting far in the distance. But what she saw? A plethora of Au Ra working tirelessly, an archaic building reaching towards the sky. She recognized this scenery as the Dawn Thrown that rose in the center of the Steppe, confirming suspicion about her location.

How had she ended up here? Under whose intention? Could she have fallen ill in her sleep and have been taken here for some reason? Y'shtola supposed it was possible she'd slept for more than just a single night, and yet...

But staring out at the unfamiliar morning, she was suddenly forced to slam her eyes shut for the most unlikely of reasons: *it was too bright*. Ever since having her vision stolen she could not perceive the natural light of the sun, and yet she'd just been overwhelmed by that light at high intensity, as if she was looking at it for the first time after being trapped in a cave.

This burning was accompanied by an uncanny phenomenon that the woman couldn't possibly notice; the empty silver of her eyes was filling in with a pale green. Not all of the silver ended up disappearing completely, but instead grew more concentrated on the rim of either eye in a band of white that began to glow

supernaturally. It may have been supernatural for a Miqu'te, but those bands of light were fairly common to those of the Au Ra race.

Y'shtola managed to open her eyes once more, overwhelmed by what was essentially a dead sense coming back to life once more. She could make out the color of the grass outside, the brown walls of the hut around her, and she found herself turning off her aether perception not by choice, but thanks to a sudden inability to do so. It was as if her connection to the aether had all but dissipated.

"How is this possible? The correlation between myself and the aether should be..." She was interrupted, however. Not by anything other than an absence of words. Y'shtola had spent so much time studying over the course of her life that the prospect of just forgetting what she was talking about seemed next to impossible, and yet whatever words she'd been about to conclude with? They'd dissipated along with any understanding. It became harder and harder for her to grasp the nature of the aether, mind instead wandering to more simplistic things like how she might harvest nature's bounty today.

Which was very not the train of thought of a scholar. It was the thought of a simple-minded village maiden.

The deterioration of the scholar's thought processes found her distracted, allowing more prominent change to sweep through her body without much notice at first. For example? White fur began to sprinkle the muddy floor behind the woman, their original point the lean tail that all Miqu'te were born with. Considering her position, Y'shtola was generally one to keep her fur well-kept, but beginning at the tip and spreading towards the base came a phenomenon that stripped the tail of its fur altogether.

Any expecting the appearance of a hairless cat tail would be left wanting though, since as quickly as it balded it likewise began to change in more meaningful ways. Skin coating their surfaces began to thicken as a dark and scaly hide rose to the surface, each scale smooth and durable while likewise weighing her tail down. It remained thin at the tip, though scales came to a point, but the closer to Y'shtola's rear the changes spread the thicker the appendage became, to the point that it grew too heavy and she lost her ability to freely move it. What remained was a thick and extremely dark blue reptilian tail, armored form flopping downward and finally drawing its owners attention as it had smacked the back of her leg.

She was surprised of course, but couldn't find the words to express that surprise. **"The tail of an Au Ra..."** What should have been a cry for help was calmly worded as a mere observation, like it was a fact she was already aware of. It was like when you tricked yourself into believing a lie was true, but in this case she should have possessed plenty of reason to call this a lie.

But the scales upon her now furless tail were just the beginning. Flesh began to harden in the very same way it had behind her at various points across the Miqu'te's

body. They were of the same dark blue as the rest, and seemed to harden most prominently around several key sets of areas; toes wriggled against the dirt below as scaling spread across the top of her foot and up either lower leg, stopping about six inches beneath either knee, while further north they etched themselves up and down the curvature of her hips, spreading out sporadically into what could be considered regular skin. While Y'shtola's jaw and the area of neck directly under it were spared, scales likewise settled across her lower neck and shoulders, and others finally wrapped thinly down her arms like a snake, stopping just at the back of her hands.

"These are Xaela...?" There were two primary clans of Au Ra. The Raen and Xaela. While the Raen were fair-skinned and had lighter scales, Xaela generally had scales of dark blue like these, usually with darker skin tones to match. Y'shtola seemed to be struggling with this realization, more-so when the veins spreading from the now scaly portions of her body began to turn on uncanny blue. Was it merely the veins however? No.

While it was most evident in the veins at first thanks to how they contrasted with her tanned skin, that skin was quickly compromised by a blue of its own. It wasn't as dark as the scales the phenomenon was stemming from, not by a long shot, but it was still a dark, navy blue that would have looked out of place on a Miquo'te. This blue spread like wildfire, relieving the woman's form of any blemish while likewise turning her rose pink nipples a dark blue.

It wasn't merely color that shifted in her skin but quality as well. Everywhere the blue touched, skin also thickened with bonus resilience that the woman's original race didn't profit from. To begin with said skin was far cooler to the touch than the original tan, allowing her to breathe more comfortably in the climate of the Steppe.

Y'shtola stumbled back, inevitably resting her ass on the rudimentary bed at the back of the hut thanks to the spinning sensation that took point in her head. Her tail flopped against the worn mattress as blue palms sunk into the seat to stabilize herself. Why was she so confused? So *lost*? Even what she'd been doing five minutes ago was a memory being thrown into doubt, let alone the history of herself established in her memory.

Things like becoming a Scion, fighting alongside the Warrior of Light... they almost seemed nonsensical, fantastical, things that could never happen to a woman like her in a million years. After all, she was a mere maiden of the Oronir tribe -- or at least would soon be once today's wedding was completed. Until then she was a lady of the Dotharl -- but even this didn't feel like it was something that rang true. After all, she was not one to marry.

...or was she one whom had dreamed of marrying her entire life? Did she live a simple life, seeing to the fields and going hunting with her sister Sadu as necessary? As she suffered an existential crisis, her mane of short silver saw movement. It was far too bright, contrasting her new scales and skin, but it slowly snaked downward

from its short cut, locks smeared with dark ashen that better suited the tribe she was believing herself to stem from. Each hair was straight at the top, but as they grew longer and longer, more voluminous, the ends began to weave and flow together, until the tips reached halfway down her back and just above her nipples.

Chin ultimately rested in Y'shtola's palm as another memory bled in. It was of a man so powerful that he had scared her at first, but through repeated meetings she'd come to grow interested in him and ultimately fall in love like a maiden might. She let out a longing sigh, a gesture that her original self never would have stooped to. Y'shtola had never been one for love and romance, and yet now she was thinking of little else.

The feline ears atop her head flickered their final flickers as change brought them down towards her head as if guided by gravity itself. The silver fur that still lined them blew off thanks to the movement as the skin beneath was revealed to be the very same blue as the new Xaela's skin, ultimately settling into a rounded form that was obscured by her new ashen hair. For a moment she went completely deaf, but her sense of hearing ultimately came back online with much duller sensitivity than she was accustomed to.

Fingers, that now had specks of dirt on them from *'tending to the fields'* as she recalled, stroked the areas at the sides of her face as a peculiar tingling stole her Miqu'te facial features away to the point that she could no longer be recognizable as Y'shtola Rhul. The whisker-like markings were made obsolete as dark blue scales etched themselves towards her nose, a nose that had grown longer and rounder to accommodate her broadening cheeks. Brows narrowed and lips chapped in slight from sleeping consistently during the cool Steppe nights.

But the most dramatic change to the woman's head was the emergence of a set of horns. They didn't erupt from the top of her head, no, but instead pushed outward painfully from the sides of her skull, bearing the same coloration as the scales across her body. **"Ow...! Why does my head hurt so much!?"** But *Yastola* didn't comprehend the pain as horns growing, instead thinking it to be some kind of intense, overwhelming headache. It stirred uncharacteristic tears to her eyes, at least uncharacteristic for the woman she'd once been, and a name escaped her lips as she sought comfort. **"Magnai... help..."** Her personality had clearly taken a dramatic turn from what it had been when she'd woken up. Y'shtola was far too independent to think she needed to rely on a man like him.

But *Yasta*? Not so much.

The horns ultimately curved outward and ceased their growth, giving the newly created *Yasa Dotharl* reprieve from the feeling that something was wrong with her body. Having hugged herself to provide comfort midst the pain, she of course hadn't taken notice of how her breasts sported the glow of fresh growth as they'd jumped up to a more pronounced size, nor that the gait of her hips had grown to rear better results in childbearing -- as she undoubtedly would for Magnai.

In fact... that discomfort was a thing of the past. Sitting on her bed, it was like the prior ten minutes had all been erased from her memory. But that was necessary. After all, it was a big risk to leave any chance of the Oronir-to-be recalling her previous lifetime. She was a woman of the Steppe now, and would remain as much for the rest of her life.

"Ah, my beautiful Moon! Are you ready to wed the Sun? The ceremony will begin in a few hours!" The voice Yasa had longed to hear all morning ultimately sounded from the other side of the door. As per Oronir tradition, the Azim could not see his Nhaama face to face on the day of their wedding until the ceremony proper, but this was enough for her. She was still waiting on her ceremonial dress to be fitted and delivered anyways.

She rested hands upon the wooden door, knowing this hut to be the traditional building used to house the Nhaama. She couldn't touch her beloved now but soon they would be able to happily consummate their marriage and work on beginning the next generation. Her loins yearned for that very moment. **"Yes, my Sun! I've been waiting my whole life for this very moment! To find the one I love, to proudly bear him a child... Today, the rest of our lives begin!"**

And she didn't even doubt that those feelings were true.