

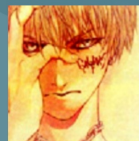
Vexing Vex

A Critical Role Story



*Season 1
Episode 6*

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Season 1, Episode 6 – Berin Hierarchy

You just sold me your freedom for one copper piece.

There was no way to tell day from night in the cell. Vex wasn't sure how long she was left in the room, how long she had been there. Elly brought her food sometimes, handing her the sliced fruit and meat and grains and retreating to the table to watch Vex eat.

“Let me go,” Vex would say.

“I can't,” Elly would answer.

Vex had learned nothing about the other half-elf except that she hated her. She'd learned nothing about this place except that she hated it. And she'd learned nothing about Lord Berin except that he got off on destroying her.

But now, in the dark, she huddled on the blankets she'd been given with the collar heavy on her neck and looked at the single copper piece in the palm of her hand.

You just sold me your freedom for one copper piece.

The words echoed in her brain. The coin had been ensorcelled, she knew that – everything Berin did to assault her dignity was rooted in magic. It was the only way that someone like him could touch her. But there was something about the idea that she had sold her freedom – *her self* – to this man she despised, even if it had been a trick.

A simple copper coin.

Her fingers curled around it and pressed down hard enough that it hurt and she curled around it, feeling the rage inside her broil. She wondered how she could have been so easily captured, so easily held. She wondered how this idiot of a human male could have abused her with impunity. She wondered where her brother was, wondered how a fellow half-elven female could assist in her continued humiliation.

Roaring, furious, she stood and screamed, hurling the coin across the room. It slammed against the door, fell to the ground and bounced, circled, fell still outside of her grasp. She screamed and flailed, trying to pull herself free of the chain, trying to escape, kept trying and failing until exhaustion took her.

The lights came on and the room warmed. The door opened and Lord Berin stepped over the coin, smiling as he noticed it, and then picked it up and flicked it to her. It landed a foot away from her, skidded to where she lay.

“You should know your worth,” Lord Berin said.

“Fuck you,” Vex spat, but the words sounded as empty as she felt. Berin laughed at her.

“You're worth one copper piece,” he taunted, and she looked at the coin. “Remember that.”

Elly brought in his breakfast and he ate, considering her as her belly rumbled.

“Would you like something to eat?” he asked. She nodded, salivating; whatever it was smelled delicious and he hadn't let her eat between her most recent waking and this moment. “If you want me to feed you, put your hands behind your back.”

She scowled at him but he just raised an eyebrow and ate another piece of whatever it was his cook had prepared. It still smelled amazing. She wondered how much of it there was. He was

placing the third piece in his mouth when she put her hands behind her back, grasping her left wrist with her right hand.

“Good girl,” he said, selecting a piece. “Now, stand up and bend down, like you're bowing. There you go. Good girl.” He walked over with the treat and held it under her nose.

“How do I eat this without my hands?”

“With your lips.”

He couldn't see her scowl, couldn't see how pride warred with hunger until hunger won. She opened her mouth, picked at the treat with her lips and scooped it up with her tongue. He ran his hand through her hair while she chewed, keeping her head bowed, and when she was done he let her look up at him.

“Would you like another?”

She hated him so much, but she nodded and let him feed her. Aside from the collar and leash she wasn't bound in any way. She could have attacked him, maybe killed him, maybe found a key on his person, but the possibility of that all felt like a dream to her. She ate and he fed her and she thought, feeling her confidence build.

It was just after the fourth piece that she made her move, spinning and hooking his knee with her own, driving him down to the floor. He screamed and floundered, his dignity forgotten like her own as he tried and failed to scamper away. Muscles aching with rage overpowered his, drove him to the ground, her palm slamming into his cheek, then his forehead, then his throat, her other hand reaching for his pockets as she straddled him.

He had nothing on him. Maybe she could take him hostage, get Elly to let her out...?

Wait, Vex thought, eyes going wide, where the fuck is Elly?

“*ਯਸਿੰਦ੍ਰਿਯੰ ਯਸਿੰਦ੍ਰਿਯੰ*,” Elly whispered, behind Vex. She turned just in time to see the other half-elf reaching for her, lightning springing from her fingers. Vex's scream of fury gargled into cries of pain as she tried to keep her grip on Berin, but the lord scampered out of her grip, looking terrified and gulping air.

“You bitch,” Berin gasped. Vex said nothing, kneeling in the aftermath of another magical assault.

“You've hurt her body and mind but not her soul,” Elly said. The other half-elf had moved out of Vex's range and she eyed the her, wary, hoping the stupid bitch would get close enough to hit.

“Do we have anything to hurt her soul and her body?” Berin spat, picking himself up off the floor. Elly nodded, leading Berin to the wooden case and opening it, studying the remaining scrolls in it carefully before handing one to the human lord. He accepted it, read it over, his dour expression splitting into a grin as he eyed Vex. “This will do.”

“What will do?” Vex asked, unafraid. “You're never going to break me, you piece of shit. You should either kill me or let me go.”

He did neither, moving to another sigil on the wall and touching it. The chain's anchor began to move up the wall and then across the ceiling, dragging her into the middle of the room, then shortening until she was standing on the balls of her feet. She reached out for him, wanting to hit him again, but he was so godsdamn far away.

He took off his belt, letting it slide across his hips, and folded it in half. He slapped his palm as Elly held the scroll, letting him read off of it.

“ᑎᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦ ᑎᑎᑦᑎᑦ ᑕᑦᑎᑦ ᑎᑎᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦ,” he read, and the belt in his hands began to glow a soft purple-blue. He smiled, got closer, avoiding her attempts to kick him, her attempts to grab him, the belt flying out and slapping against her ass.

THAK

She screamed in fury, kicking as he danced out of range, and she remembered in vivid detail the way her bow had broken in her hands. She remembered the way he had told her to break it and how it had hurt when she'd struck it against her thigh, how it had splintered when she'd struck it against the wall again and again until it broke.

She'd done that. Vex. She'd taken that bow – *a thing she loved as much as life itself, so much more than tool or weapon* – and destroyed it completely. He'd made her do that, made her do so many things.

Did she really think she was going to escape this?

“ᑎᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦ ᑎᑎᑦᑎᑦ ᑕᑦᑎᑦ ᑎᑎᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦ,” he said again.

THAK

THAK

It was harder to try and fight him with the image of her bow breaking in her head, the memory seeming to take all of her strength from her. Another image flashed in her head, this one of something she could not confirm – her bear, Trinket, left alone in the woods, hunted as a simple animal. Killed, because she wasn't there to stop it. That was what happened to animals that got too close to humans, they were either domesticated or killed.

THAK

There were welts rising on her ass, along her ribs.

“ᑎᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦ ᑎᑎᑦᑎᑦ ᑕᑦᑎᑦ ᑎᑎᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦ,” he laughed, moving in again.

THAK

She screamed, the belt slashing across her inner thigh. She kicked and it was so useless, a performative gesture that left her off balance. He whipped her again and she staggered, the collar catching her, choking her, she using her arms to pull herself out of choking.

THAK

Against her shoulder blades, and where was Vax, where was her twin brother while she was suffering? Getting into trouble, sleeping around, maybe even arrested. He was always too impetuous for his own good, and without her there to keep him from getting into too much trouble he had probably gotten arrested or killed or simply drunk himself into a stupor. It was her fault. If she had been there with him, then he would have rescued her by now.

THAK

THAK

Her foot when she kicked, her arm as she tried not to choke.

“ᑎᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦ ᑎᑎᑦᑎᑦ ᑕᑦᑎᑦ ᑎᑎᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦ,” he screamed, striking her ass again.

THAK

And she thought of her father. She knew other parents had spanked their children when they were bad but their father never had, not before or in Syngorn, and Vex knew it wasn't because he hadn't wanted to. The twins were a constant disappointment for their father, no matter how hard Vex tried to live up to his expectations. Her father had not punished her properly because, she knew, he never considered her worth punishing.



Knowing the truth of this hurt just as much as the belt. She was crying, sobbing, stomping her feet like a child.

THAK

“*ᄒᄒᄒᄒ ᄒᄒᄒᄒ ᄒᄒᄒᄒ ᄒᄒᄒᄒ*,” he hissed.

THAK

Against one breast, then the nipple, then the other breast. Rapid succession. The elves in Syngorn thought her ugly, rotting, had told her so whenever her father wasn't in earshot. They weren't trying to hide their scorn from her father because he might be angry with them; they were doing it to spare him the embarrassment of his bastard child. He had to know that she was simple, ugly, pathetic – there was no sense in hurting him when he was doing his best to fulfill his obligation as

a parent to children who were so much less than worthy.

“ଅମୃତ ମୃତ୍ୟୁ ଧର୍ମ ଚକ୍ର ଉପରେ ଶାନ୍ତି,” he said.

THAK

Her belly, knocking the air out of her lungs, and she sagged on loose legs. At least Berin had wanted to see her naked and use her, at least he wasn't another person she'd had to get drunk to even look at her as a sexual partner. Who was she to be so mean to him when he'd offered to give her what she wanted? So what if he expected to fuck her first, and so what if he would have probably abandoned her afterwards?

Why shouldn't he? Everyone else did.

Even Vax. Even her brother had left her to this.

She fought to stand.

“ଅମୃତ ମୃତ୍ୟୁ ଧର୍ମ ଚକ୍ର ଉପରେ ଶାନ୍ତି”

THAK

She choked. He whipped her bicep again and her fingers loosened and her arm fell, twitching, the welt rising red against her pale skin. The other arm was trembling with the effort to keep her alive. Had he raised the chain leash when she wasn't paying attention? He might have. It was what she deserved. She'd abandoned her mother to die alone because her father had shown up with his riches and his sense of duty to collect children he did not want and saw as a burden.

Vex stared at the copper piece at her feet. If she had been worth even that much than maybe her father would have taken her mother with them to Syngorn. But Vex knew she had not been worth even that much in her father's eyes. She wondered who her mother had been before she and Vax had been born, how special she must have been before the twins had taken that gleam from their mother just by being.

She was worth nothing.

Less than nothing.

THAK

“ଅମୃତ ମୃତ୍ୟୁ ଧର୍ମ ଚକ୍ର ଉପରେ ଶାନ୍ତି,” he said, striking her between the legs.

She kicked but her heart wasn't in it. She didn't struggle when he moved in close, running his hand over the criss-cross welts all over her sweat slick body. She welcomed it when he cupped the wet little hole between her legs, moaning when he played with her, biting her tongue to stifle her ungrateful sobs. She'd somehow tricked him into thinking she was worth something, that she was worth one copper piece.

She looked at it and knew the truth: she wasn't even worth that much.

“Who owns you?” Lord Berin asked, nibbling on her ear, one hand inside her and other tracing the aching red lines along her skin with the implement that had made them.

“Fuck you,” whispered Vex, but there was nothing to the words, the curse as empty as she felt.

THAK

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The belt found her ass as his fingers played with her clit.

“Who owns you, pet?” Lord Berin asked, and she remembered: *When you hear me call you pet, you’ll know that I could be calling you by your name instead and I am choosing not to.*

“You do,” Vex whispered, bowing her head, unable to look at her owner.

“What was that?” Berin asked. He whipped her again, her ass, her back, her tits, ran the belt along her jaw. She nuzzled the whip and remembered that he could be kind.

“You do, Darling,” Vex cried, not able to look at him, shaking her head as his fingers probed deeper.

“Good girl,” Lord Berin said, thumb brushing her clit until she shook, cumming into his hand like the whore she was, the pet she would become.

Elly undid the collar and she sank gratefully into his arms, all her strength blasted and gone. She clung to him and wept, crying for the girl she had believed herself to be as he held her and let her cry, wrapping her in the blanket he had been so kind to give her.

When he used his hand to hold her head up and pressed his lips against hers, she was quick to kiss him back.



The seventh week Vex was missing, the city watch hunted Vax down.

The city watch did not survive.