

1.2 Stories of Yesteryear

Kàra felt her demeanor had soured as she paced the empty study[1]. Seriously, sometimes I don't feel needed; Not needed in a way that matters, I guess. They all do such a fantastic job, everyone is so well disciplined, for the most part Kàra could feel the restless energy building up in legs, she spun about to face the massive wooden door.

Presumably, these doors are so large and cumbersome because Karak the second had a penchant for getting... handsy or just general weirdness. Standing over you as you sleep, painting a portrait of you while you sleep. Washing your hands and feet. Braiding your hair. Trimming your ears, nose, shaving you. So many things that you would think someone would wake up for...

Kàra tugged at the door harder, digging her heels in.

General oddities really. It wasn't quite clear from the books if any of the behavior was meant to be malicious, or if it just ended up looking that way. I mean there was the one person who was slow cooked, but out of the thousands of other encounters, only a handful are strange and unsettling.

Worms... ugh

By the time she had pushed the massive wooden door beyond arm's length, she had a roguish smile affixed to her face. The door continued sliding to her left, coming to an abrupt stop with a dull and loud clang. Once into the open Kàra's hand shot up above her eyes shading them while they adjusted.

I must say, I always feel something special when I see genuine teamwork and camaraderie. I am convinced is a side effect of becoming a citizen. Home and community cemented together by duty and honor. We serve each other in order to serve ourselves.

Kàra looked down towards the inner wards where her soldiers were helping with the Karak evacuation.

We have been evacuating people into the mines for hours now. Negotiations took longer than expected with the Elder Karak finally relenting, I mean, gracious hosting his own people, opening his doors, or elevators, whatever... But, honestly it took a lot more to convince him than I would have anticipated.

It wasn't long before her presence along the wall was noted by two runners passing through to various field commanders. Routine reroutes... Two runners, one after the other, approaching with a clang of their armor and a huff of exertion.

Each interaction is generally brief, and efficient. The corps, runner corps that is, knows that I enjoy situation reports from across the ranks, but that I also don't want to eat up their precious time.

Kàra began to read through the reports. Taking the briefest of moments to rub the paper between her thumb and middle finger.

The runners generally collect a few reports at a time and reroute based on importance. The field commanders scratch out on rough paper whatever reports they deem too important to be intercepted by nefarious actors.

These don't have a whole lot to say, some general numbers, oh, here we go, Colonel Alistair reports a drunkard down in the lower ward has been detained pending the Karak authorities arrival.

It says here that Colonel Alistair found a drunkard frantically harassing any and all who might listen about a djinn that was following him. But, nobody, including the Colonel, could see anything following mad man upon detaining the man, and surveying a few of the locals, a little orc servant boy claimed to have seen a floating orb tied up to the man as he flailed through the ward.

The child said it was "funny," especially when the orb burst out of the man's trousers and floated into the sky. But unfortunately as the Colonel was speaking to the orc boy, the man had asked to use the tros-haus and once clear enough, slipped his wrists from the tight knots that bound him, in a single blue streak of plasma.

This is noted due to the proximity to the tros-haus, it caused a flare of the spiteful air to catch fire, and it says that as the man entered the single haus, its sides burst off, with blue plasma cutting the ropes easily. He opened the half hanging door, letting the door fall as he opens it. A smile affixed to his face. And he just began casually walking towards the next ward. I don't blame them for not pursuing.

Kàra looked up to see one of the runners getting impatient. She furrowed her brow slightly and looked back at the reports.

Interestingly enough, it says here that Specialist Aton also reported a drunkard flailing about in the wards.

Hmm... Anton states that patrons from a tavern in the middle ward claimed to have witnessed a drunken old man screaming to himself in the corner of the tavern. He repeatedly shouted about the quality of his gin. Interesting. It says here a blue streak of plasma engulfed the back corner of the room. Not ominous at all. The man lost it, grabbed his bottle from the table, and then as he "tore" through the tavern to get out he caused the following through various drunken acts, a fight, a fire, three robberies, two muggings, a pantsing after a pissin'...

An... impromptu wedding, an impromptu separation of spouses, possibly related. A piano man hammerin' away at the keys, getting more frantic the more nervous they got. Turns out piano man was the pisser, and the groom was the pissee. Guess he wasn't too fond of that, he broke the piano man's fingers, who was then whisked away by his now ex bride, after she stabbed him in the thigh and left him for dead.

I wouldn't mind seeing this one, an anxiety fueled burlesque dance broke out. No seriously, it says that the burlesque dancers was forced to continue dancing upon fearing certain death from

the Karaks. So, they kept dancing while trying to stamp out the firey bits that hit their stage.

She handed the first runner back their reports and they took off. Kàra drew in a slow breath, “I know you have a lot to do corporal. And I commend your,”

The corporal raised his hand with his head lowered, “No, no ma’am. Ih... iht isn’t like that.”

Kàra shifted her stance slightly annoyed. ugh what do they say. it really bugs me when... oh! Yeah, I can appreciate the humor, knowing the dancers were fine. It is something that sticks with you, and you remember it years later, and hopefully you can laugh, because you have already shed enough tears.

ugh! He is still talking! I haven't even heard a word he has said!

“...sternly and then turned away. I thought you knew.” **Tros[2]**.

“...in the study. Earlier...” Tros. Did I completely blank on something? Why can't I remember him? “I knew you would understand commander.” The soldier concluded stiffening his pose.

Kàra could see a sincere smile cross his face. “I. Yes. Absolutely, I try.” Kàra replied as sincerely as she could muster.

Kàra held out the reports with her left hand and leaned into the parapet, but was just short of grasping the top, and awkwardly landed against it. The corporal saluted and jogged off after taking the report from her.

Kàra straightened herself out, feeling a bit critical of herself. That did not go as expected. She turned to the study.

oh, and, umm... one of the reports also mentioned that Ætherial Knight Gar found one of those establishments that we spoke of

earlier... and while in the process of melting various costumes onto the proprietors of the establishment, they pulled some interesting information out.

A pilgrimage to the Lidless Eye is to take place, and a tribute from each ward within Karakazan is to be represented. Lured there under pretenses of their release from bondage, their freedom once there they were used as forced labor to erect a faire about the eye.

This we knew. The official story was that the children were actually set free, with all choosing to retire within the remote communities among the island nations. All choosing, or so we were told, that the kids left the shores of Karakazan. They traveled months by ship, through pirate, and general maritime anarchist, infested waters. They did that year after year just so these kids can be sent to the paradise islands for their years of service. Tros. Couldn't prove it though couldn't even get close to the islands.

Kàra stared absentmindedly at the large portal leading into the study. The wood grain on the frame is kind of interesting. Worn, with the appearance of rot, but... She watched as sand blew onto the tattered, but ornate looking rug that covered the stone floor inside the study. She smirked and walked over to the wood frame, looked it up and down and picked at it a bit, sending chips floating to the ground.

What we didn't know was how long this had been going on. That each year the oldest from each of the wards were to be "selected" for this the two hundredth and thirty second banquet of flesh Rivers of blood from all forms of malice, to feed the eye and increase the fortunes of the abusers.[3]

It finally made sense though, both creatures feeding the others insatiable hunger. Thousands upon thousands of victims. I don't get how they have enjoyed this level of secrecy for so long?

Kàra shuddered.

Despite sometimes the horrors involved, I find a sense of security in hearing of the challenges throughout the regiment. I mean I don't need them, but I feel closer... to those under my command. Sometimes... It feels that the higher up I go, the more detached I feel from the lower ranks. Almost needed less...

But maybe that is what the transition to leading people is all about. You are attempting to navigate the larger picture, choosing a team who can accomplish the specific goals you need done. Their eccentricities strengthen their bonds. Throw 'em to the meat grinder and you very well know that the soldier next to you has your back. Who they are is nothing, but a soldier, and a citizen.

A time of war is a time for soldiers, but a time for peace, well. That conflict, can follow you for moments, or years. But should peace be found, that time is for thought and reflection.

The improvement of one's self, and their community is a worthy goal for each and every day. Apart we falter, apart we conspire, but together. Together we are strong.

Kàra picked a few more chunks of wood from the frame and turned to look along the walls, and to the soldiers dutifully working.

Sometimes I get into my head about things, as you can probably see. I also like to think about the deeper ideas in life. Not that I have the answers, but if I am always afraid of being a misstep away from falling back into the despair, I get paralyzed. If I stop I sink.

Kàra scuffed the toe of her boot at the sand sending a spray all over.

I take great care to not to forget that this is a journey that we, in both senses of the idea of we, take together. Where we have been, will inform where we go next, but I will share. The hardest part for me is putting into practice Maester Tolbin's primary tenant: "Know that you know not but find the courage to try."

This teaching has served me well, I figure if you can get enough traction to overcome enough of the little hurdles, you are bound to at least go somewhere.

Kàra could feel her hair getting hot. She brought her hand to her head, felt it, and quickly moved it away. She slipped her hand into her bag and procured a simple white linen shawl. She stretched it out and then wrapped it around her head, leaving her face exposed.[4]

It really is the little sayings or pictures or I dunno, this weird one comes to mind. Be wary of two pendulums; one riding tuther. But yeah we have things to do. I can try to explain that one later[5]..

Kàra could feel energy in her chest building causing her to do a few push-offs the wall. With each push off she enjoyed the rhythmic clapping, allowing her mind to relax[6]. She made sure to give a little extra shove to the sand, sending it all over. She followed a clump of sand as it disintegrated on the stairs that lead to the gate below.

Kara bit the inside of her lip slightly as she stared into nothingness. She stopped, stood straight up, drew in a deep breath, put on a slight smile and turned and started skipping, Only a little, to the next tower. Along her way she spoke with a variety of soldiers who were readying their positions atop, and below. Think of it as operational security, and a fast forward button for you. I don't want to bore you, honest. I swear on Valfreyja's spirit, I will not maliciously fast forward on you. Just give me time to open up[7].

In terms of those I spoke to: It isn't that I think anyone did anything wrong, it's more like I feel a sense of duty, drawing me into their lives. I don't always know what someone needs, but I at least have the sense to know everyone needs something slightly different to be effective.

I know I haveta trust them, as they haveta trust me. If we don't have that.. Well, we might as well hand in our brooches and march into a nest, because in battle with these creatures.. we are all equally food.

Kàra stopped midway to the next tower, turned and stared down into the alleyways below.

For a desert peoples, they sure do have a lot of stuff. I think down there is considered the middle ward. How these people get so much stuff is beyond me. As you can see, I choose not to let our job end at the physical conflict. I want us to hedge ourselves against future conflicts, show them that what we do matters, and strategically we want to place ourselves within these people's lives. Trust begets trust.. Even if they live among.. These palm trees.. Kàra twisted about and began walking back to the study.

Along her walk back, she spied a particularly good view of the fields to the south. She strolled along finding what seemed to be the most optimal spot. Kàra let her hand drag across the stone ridges the lined the parapets. She dug her fingers dig into the parapets sandy top, while also lifting her other hand to provide shade for her eyes as she looked toward the river lagoons.

I really like working my fingers down towards the cooler layers. It keeps my mind occupied when I am just.. Looking. Those fields are meticulously tended to..

Service routes worn into the landscape.

That is some serious hard labor.

Hmmm.. and I think those lagoons are cut into the palms too.. Somehow they got the water to just slip in and calm itself among the trees.

Do they have an underground aqueduct? That would be pretty interesting to see. oh! oh!

I got it!

This isn't our first..

Arachnid Showdown..

No..

That was terrible.

Kàra pushed off and slapped her hands together knocking loose the sand in the process. She brushed the rest on her knee length pleated skirt as she walked back to the study, ignoring the door as she walked in, but did make sure to grab the last apple from the bowl on the desk. As she slipped it into her bag, she scuffed her maroon boots against the sandy rug. She felt eager to get the battle started, if only so that it could end.

Kàra paused a moment, staring down at the little box with the drawing. I always wanted kids... She peeled the shawl away from her face and let it drape around her neck. She chuckled to herself upon seeing a small sand drift near the, still open, balcony door. She fished in her bag, procuring a few pieces of jerky which she immediately began gnawing on as she walked out onto the balcony.

I can tell you this, this is probably going to be one of the more difficult jumps I've ever done.. Well, sorta.

Kàra looked up at the sloped roof directly above, partially shaded from the sun, darn thing is blocking a portion of my flight path. She

shoved the jerky back in her bag, swapping it instead for another apple to which she immediately took a bite from.

Different than the last apple in color, but quite the same otherwise. But, I still get amazed at some of the Karak artisans. Some of the more interesting designs. All very... I dunno, it feels sensual. Like the variety of smooth stone creations they can make. Soft lines everywhere. Blending of nature and culture. The sand softening everything as it whips across its surface.

So yeah, I will certainly give them the good artisans award. The mason who set the windows, and roofs... I think they really knew what they were doing. Reinforced and everything.

Kàra looked down, admiring the distance to the ground, and then shifted her gaze to the path out of the obscured southern gate. From there she traced her eyes to the southeast and to the encampments that her three regiments had erected. Each similar, yet distinct to the commanding officers' taste. Not seeing anything of interest she sighed.

Oh... Kàra gasped, coughed covering her mouth instinctively as she coughed. Finally she felt a small chunk of apple hit her hand. She looked down at to and then wiped her hand against her skirt.

I knew it!

I knew it!

I told her back at the academy!

I said, "if I ever was the one to be chosen... I would forget to even introduce myself to," ...uhh, you, "the interpreter." Ástriar gave me a fair amount of teasing and agreement with my thoughts.

Well. Here we are.

My apologies interpreter... I just get so caught up in my own thoughts sometimes, what with the war and all.

Kidding

Kara took a few large bites from her apple and tossed the remains off the balcony[8]. She leaned forward, watching as it splashed into the sand below. She then straightened out her posture, and uniform.

Regiment Commander, Kàra Eiryk, serving at the pleasure of her Majesty Valfreyja, High Priestess of Folkenvangar, and Empress to the peoples of Midgard.

our battlefield designation: Valkyrja.

We are three thousand plus strong, spread across three battalions. Many cycles of our great moon, Folkenvangar, have come and gone, and triumphantly we press on with limited casualties to this fiend of a creature we call the Skripi.

Bófreær, with whom you have met, sort of, is my most senior, and executive officer. Field Commander Bófreær leads the dragoons; Field Commander Nevek heads up the Rangers; The Ætherial Priestess: Ástriær and her company of acolytes tend to the infirm. This is my regiment, my Valkyrja. Accompanying us are Talik, and her Ætherial knights.

The Ætherial knights are... well, formidable to say the least. They were a last minute addition at behest of the Ætherial Council.

Normally a welcome presence, but I figured with the sensitive nature of our mission, so I pressed Councilmember Arturos, but he was quite evasive. I was told, "under my command, but not under my purview."

What does that even mean? under my purview. I have level Aetherial access. Nothing should be out of my purview. unless... Either I don't have as high of access as I thought, or the Council has an off the books operation that they don't want traced back to them.

I can at least say that the knights have proven themselves in battle time and time again. Skilled with a bow, sword, or any blunt object. They can ride just about anything and are devastating wielders of the Aetherial arts. An air of chaos generally follows in their wake.

And you, my newest friend are...

She gestured towards out from the balcony.

about to witness...

Well... I don't really want to spoil it. The lot of us have this bet goin', and I am finally about to win! I can feel it!

This, Kara took her hands and showcased her figure, This fine, athletic, and dare I say... work of art... Well...

Technically Astrid and I are the works of art... and it is the art of students... But, that counts right? Say, you have time don't you?

Okay, good. So, a long time ago, ten years ago. I found out Astrid was into painting. Well... being the subject of anyway. And well, I saw a chance. I mean, I thought she was pretty, and cute, and I just couldn't get her out of my head. So, I thought why not. These were some of the best painters to ever, well maybe not ever... but at the time I certainly thought they were. They had a way of making you think that what they were producing was a triumph, a deep insight into the world.

So... Yeah

Fourth year was wild... Take that for what you will... I do wonder what some of them are doing now. The strange part is that I wonder how they are doing but when I see them in public... Well it is never seems to be in an official capacity, nope, always when I am groggy, my hair is a mess, I hadn't seen the inside of a bathhouse in months... So no, I don't want to strike up a conversation first thing when I wake up, and so even though we went to the same schools, I can't always find the energy to turn my filter on.

So, Karin, I am sorry I called your kid a fat moose knuckle, and that I told him that I hoped he would choke on a gerbil. So yeah...

My original plan had merit, but that was about it. Either way, I am glad things turned out the way they did. It was definitely a defining moment for me and what I would assume was for,

Ástríðr...

Kàra winced. **Hold up, what was that.** She brought her hand to her forehead. Did you...

Did you do that?

Interpreter?

Kàra closed her eyes, leaning against the stone railing, until the dull pain subsided.

That was... definitely strange...

Anyways... it took our company of cadets two weeks to get to the lowertown of Fjallstream. The town itself has an interesting story of its own, built north of the capital, at the foothills of the Gallarhorn. If I remember correctly, it originally was a sprawling monastery, but has since been converted into a resort town catering to weary soldiers, dignitaries, and the well to-do. Owned by the Citadel and operated by the Monks of Ragnaros.

So, yeah, there we were... in front of our classmates, just south of town among the rolling wheat and barley fields, my heart was a flutter. I couldn't believe that I had pulled it off. Ástríðr ducked slightly as she pushed back the flap of her tent. I saw her exit her tent, so carefully. She was so... so, breathtaking. I felt a

strange sensation as I stood there in front of her. I felt as if none of it were real. That I was outside of myself, viewing the actions of another. But seeing through my own eyes. Hard to explain.

She gave me a look, that gave me an energy in my chest that I could feel spread across me. Kàra bit her lower lip gently.

A gentle breeze had come off the lake. The leaves were rustling, and I finally realized we were in front of the others, but the murmur of the other students washed into the background as we took our places. Our classmates sat around us in a semi-circle, Astrid and I at their focal point.

I could feel the dipping sun's warmth against my exposed back. The sky was just beginning to shift colors. The gentle lapping of water against the shore, framed in by the most beautiful flowers.

The instructor flitted about like a butterfly, but I didn't hear a word of what she said. I was transfixed by Ástríðr. When I saw her, and I mean I feel like I really saw her... Sitting with me on that cold, and blunt stone slab.

Oh, I'll never forget how her sweet scent intermingled with these meticulously maintained, lilies and orchids that I had ever seen. Those colors were simply remarkable.

“Mmm” Kàra hummed. There were a variety of flowers all maintained to honor those of us who choose to become citizens. The Monks serve because we serve. All of us knowingly working towards the day in which, Ragnarök is upon us. And upon that day..

Well, the Monks claim that they will be set free, and they will shun the non-believers, and part us for another realm. A gift. A gift is all they chant. I am not sure what that really means, and I am not sure if they even do.. but.. When you meet them, well, yeah, it is a treat to meet them in person, they are a bit eccentric.

Kàra looked off into the distance, not at anything in particular... she shifted her gaze frequently, looking for changes in the background pattern.

Yeah, so how it all started was that I found out Ástríar absolutely loves lilies, and other assorted flora. The answer just kind of presented itself; I had remembered a scouting trip where we had mapped out the journey from the Citadel to the Gjallarhorn. Maester Moor would surly scowl if I not also add, it is not only the tallest mountain in all of the land, but is also said to be the real Gjallarhorn.

The records from that time indicate that Valfréyja, while locked in a battle with Ásgarðr for control over the Bifrost, she was determined to make her final stand, locked in battle with

Heimdallr. Heimdallr went to drink from the Gjallarhorn, replenishing his mind and spirit with the knowledge and wisdom of Mimir.

Valfreyja reached out with the Ætherial tendrils of Yggdrasil, across all of time and space, a multidimensional, multivers-ian, I don't know. But I do know it is like all forms of Valfreyja that exist along her Ætherial root of Yggdrasil, converged. A great plasma storm erupted in the sky as both Valfreyja and Yggdrasil brought the sacred symbol crashing into our planet. Ending the conflict in a cataclysmic event.

This... as it is noted in her personal letters, outcome was unforeseen by Valfreyja and she was forced to redirect her energy to contain the fallout from the impact, but it still split the planet, and it still sent pieces of it into the sky. She is said to have wept as she watched the Bifrost crumble. She chose us...

...over Ásgarðr.

So, yeah back to the story, we were marking every location we could find that could provide a strategic advantage, shelter, food, water.

You get the idea.

As good scouts do, we did as we were told, or at least we tried to. I am sure my map looks different than the others, but I

distinctly remember marking that place on my map. Fishing, hunting, spectacular flora, berries, plentiful deer, and elk. I marked that one with a little fish, a little flower etcetera.

Still got that map... Never stopped marking it either. Sooo... bringing it back around again, I made sure to encourage the instructor that it was an absolute must for a painting symposium, filled with these special lilies, and I knew just the place. Not gonna lie, I am still fairly confused how anyone ever listened to me!

I mean Seriously, who listens to a sixteen-year-old? Yeah... I definitely rolled a perfect twenty on my persuasion skills that day, because it led to two of the most defining moments in my life... one, I found out that some of my classmates did not all share in my moral or ethical compass. And two...

Without the trauma of the first, I would not have had as such of an impactful moment with Ástríðr. This girl with whom I had spent so much time thinking about... Thinking of how I could express myself, constantly lost in my own thoughts...

But instead of passionate moments with her, we see each other briefly at dinner, constantly separated by throngs of people. Then again in passing as the dance was to begin, which I later learned she was hoping to dance the night away with me. But

instead she finds me, bruised, barely conscious, splayed out among the reeds, in the middle of the night, full moons in the sky, I was broken, pretending to be alright.

But yeah, doesn't matter. She showed me her angelic light.

And it..

was intense..

Ástríðr has become a central figure in my life, and I not sure I would have it any other way. She was there for me when I was at the point in my life when all I wanted to do was finish my story as quickly as possible..

She paused, closed her eyes, a tear welling to the surface. When she opened her eyes, she felt it fall, but she kept staring off into the distance; A blank, and distant expression set across her face. She slapped her face, "Enough!"

Anyways, the sun was dipping into the evening sky, and it was warm like today, but way more humid, and way too many insects. Anyways, we shifted positions on command, allowing us to sit back-to-back. I could feel her warmth pressed up against me. I drew in a quick breath, feeling an energy, coil itself around my spirit. But it was out of sight of the others, that our fingers awkwardly found each other. I turned my head catching her smiling eye. I knew my face was getting red, but I didn't care.

I felt... the warmth of the heart, the depth of a conversation that didn't need to be had. It was something that I had never felt before, but it also felt as if I did not deserve it. It is funny what darkness can creep into your spirit if you let it get far enough.

But, when she touched me...

I didn't have the words then, but I felt as if an emissary of Valfrejja had come to free me, and to guide me along her path.

Astrid, without a doubt, has given me the greatest gift of all...

Hope...

Kàra's face grew somber.

I can still see her in that dress...

Kara rubbed her right eye gently.

"Gah these creatures can be slow..." Kara mumbled and stretched out. She reached for her pouch and pulled out a small skin filled with water, and began drinking it.

Now, why you?

Why are you here, interpreter?

Why now? What is it that I am to show you? How is my death going to help? What role am I to play?

Sometimes I just replay things over and over, looking for new details. A trace of some design I have yet to see.

Kàra walked inside the study, walked back over to the commandant's chair, pulled it closer to the window that looked down

upon the gateway. She plopped herself into the chair and leaned her chin on her hands as they rested on the windowsill. She shifted positions until she had a good view of the people coming and going through the inner gate.

With a sigh she let her eyes wander and grabbed the lower portion of the heavy stained-glass window. She began pushing and pulling on it while resting her head on her left arm. A flash of light caught her eye. She scanned the sand caked outer wall, finding what appeared to be an symbol of Ásgarðr.

Kàra pulled the window closer and ran her fingers along it until an ornate crimson M became apparent towards the bottom of the window. She looked back to the sand wall, only the Ásgarðr...ian symbol present on the wall.

Curious. I haven't seen magick like this except in books.

Kàra grabbed a piece of parchment from the desk, first held it, quite awkwardly, against the symbol on the glass, then reached into her pouch pulling a piece of, *Sketchy-Sketch is its' more humble name*, and she began by, shadow tracing, and then moving down to ledge here to, *ope, grab a few more colors, and done.*

Kàra held her sketch in her hand, proud of what she had found. She rolled up the parchment and tossed it into her pit of a bag, pushed the window back and resumed her watch. After a few minutes of seeing, no one of interest. She stood up, stretched, and wandered through the study until she was standing in the balcony doorway.

Kàra's eyes fixated on the grassy patches off in the distance among the red rock spires that ate at and melded with the distant hillsides. As Kàra let her eyes draw back across the long red grass, *giving way to the long green grass, and then the white sand, and then the red and white sand..... and the river, and the... and the... Mill.* She saw a something moving near the mill. She stretched her hands out to touch both sides of the balcony door as she tried to see what was

happening near the mill. She felt like she made out what appeared to be Talik's soldiers.

Hmmm..

Kara's eyes snapped back to the horizon. It had been a while, and she knew she was fighting boredom. She had picked at a stone on the wall enough to send a piece clattering to the floor.

oh, I never told you! Today's category is the "flashiest" kill.. but.. Kàra strained to make anything out on the horizon. Still nothing. Sorry you will just have to wait to feast your eyes on this.. err..

Her eyes began to wander again, this time they found their way to the path that led to the gate below. A flash of dark brown hair had caught her eye.

Ástríðr.

Kara's face flushed slightly. That ponytail and that crimson bow in her hair. And that white dress. She always gets me with that one.

Whew.. Mark my words, by the end of this, two things will happen. That dress will be a different color, it will match much of the sand, and hopefully it will end up outside my shower.

Kara breathed intentionally, to steady herself.

When this thing finally gets going.. You just watch I am going to be like a one-two punch

Today is my day

This is my category.

oh, and I assure you, mine will be over in a.. Flash..^[6]

You know...

Kàra jumped backwards, stumbling a bit on the sand on the floor. She could feel, feel, a crackle in her brain as it obscured the offending voice in her head. She drew in a deep breath and could feel her heart racing.

Interpreter? Is this...

She fell to her knees, supposed to happen?

Her eyes darted back and forth scanning for anything to give a clue as to what was happening.

THE TASK AT HAND APPEARS THAT IT WILL BE QUITE DIFFICULT IF YOU REFUSE TO PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR SURROUNDINGS YOUNG ONE.

Kara shook her head feeling lightheaded. Interpreter? She found her right hand at the side of her head, the world was spinning, blackness encroached upon her vision and swirls of stars blotted out what remained. Her body slumped below the stone window well near the balcony doors, with a muffled thud.

What... the. The fuck!?^[1]

[1] oh, and I bet you are wondering how exactly did we go from blow by blow of my life, to time jump! Kàra pointed her finger to her temple, a little green glow illuminating just the tip of her finger. on, off. I am sworn to keep it on at all times, but that seems a bit much for me. And besides sometimes things get fuzzy, like a poor reception, and I can tell you, that hurts. It is deemed to be the chosen's choice.

[2] This may or may not be the best choice to convey the complexity in use of the expression, sh*t, but I feel it is close enough.

[3] Another sacrifice, another offering, another year of diminishing prosperity. A massive fortune and luck that shifts as each coin in the treasury departs its master's hand.

[4] R022.01 - Maya licked the side of my screen. What do I have on my screen that is so worthy of your tongue, dog?

[5] As you get a handle on the current storm, you must brace for the next. Exhausting, but still giving it your all. We pray to understand the rhythm just well enough that we may influence our own little ships, little by little. That maybe one day we will find calmer waters through hard work and a whole lot of luck.

[6] How long is she in the air? t_i is the moment contact is lost, and t_f is the moment contact is made again, I would assume stiff arm off and on, with a motion that could be thought of as a stiff board, hinged to the ground near her ankles. Does the difference in height from the ground to her ankle make a difference in how long she remains in the air? How does the force required change with the positioning of her arms? Assume right angle ordinary geometry [2], same laws of physics in inertial reference frames [1]. Yggdrasil's tendrils of Ætherial magicks manifest differently in each of our universes, but the mechanics are the same. Each story, each interpreter bringing with them a new perspective.

[7] I am sure that future interpreters may uncover lost archives, possibilities that intertwine themselves, anchoring dimensions to one another. Portals in space time, that exist because we can imagine it.

[8] Work out physics problem.

☞ Get it?? Paying tribute to my son, Jackson. Who is always coming up with great "dad" jokes.

☞ I thought long and hard about this. According to my "extensive" research on wikipedia and <https://www.etymonline.com/word/fuck> I assessed that it was a word traced back to the middle ages, probably Germanic/Dutch origins. To me, it is a word that is flexible. I feel it satisfies my need to express complex ideas that are generally entangled amongst some emotion or at least that is what I am thinking.

[AHi] You only see small orc children. They cull them when they get too rowdy.