

The Chase

Shalandria covered her mouth with one hand to quiet her breathing. Her other hand flew over the closet wall searching for the latch point. She swallowed a scream when the door to the library began to splinter. The grunts and cackles from the other side left an empty feeling inside her. She knew what would happen if they caught her.

A final crash of the axe brought the door down with a bang. The frantic clickety-clickety of nails running across the wood floors echoed against the high ceilings.

“Come out, little elf. We won’t hurt you.” The deep grunt and broken common tongue of one of the Grazul who’d surprised her in the dining hall.

“We just want your bones!” The high-pitched, screeching of another Grazul voice sang out to her. “Find her, my pets.”

She could hear the nails running across the floor, encouraged by more incomprehensible screeching from their master. The delangers would sniff her out quickly if she couldn’t find the latch to the safe realm. Grazul weren’t able to enter there.

A set of clicking paws ran past the door. Shalandria moved both shaking hands to the wall, her lips moving in a silent prayer to not be found. The clicking returned to the closet door and stopped. Shalandria turned to see the delanger’s clawed paw trying to reach under the door.

Trying to reach her.

Shalandria froze, not daring to make even the tiniest sound. The silence seemed to drag on for an eternity before the creature started clawing at the door and let out frenzied shrieks. Three more joined the assault in seconds.

“Oh, ho, ho! What have you found, my pets?”

“Laza ma-rak u-la!” The words slipped from Shalandria’s lips instinctively. A bolt of yellow light illuminated the closet before settling against the door.

“You can’t hide forever!” The deep voice boomed as his axe hit the door. The fortification shield shook but held. The swings from the Grazul warrior were unrelenting and prompted the delangers to yowl excitedly at the prospect of tearing her apart.

Shalandria turned back to the wall, closed her eyes, and softly started another spell. She tried to drown out the sound of the door behind her cracking under the assault with her thoughts and ignored the pinging of the axe beating against the shield.

Her eyes opened to a small rectangle with shallow, intricate carvings glowing a soft blue as she felt the wind of the shattering barrier on her back. Her hand flew to the medallion around her neck and she lunged at the illumination. A blue portal opened in the wall before her. She dove forward but was tugged back by one of the beast's teeth latched onto her cloak.

Shalandria kicked it hard enough to loosen its grip and tumbled into the safety of the other realm. She stared into the angry eyes of the Grazul while the delanger chomped against the invisible barrier as the portal closed behind her.