Synopsis

Autumn 1705. George wakes from the fever dreams of his vampire conversion. Soula has nursed him, provided her blood to keep him alive. She has lost her family years before. She looks 26, is about 70

$$ -

\* \* \* \* \*

Fever Dreams. George was surfacing slowly, trying to sort horrible fact from equally horrifying fantasy. The burned village was real. His dead wife and daughter, also real. George felt his eyes sting.

The bandits had offered the survivors shelter. They hadn’t sacked the village, that had been the Turkish invaders, the current overlords of the Greeks.

The bandit camp included a central camp fire, and the survivors had been drinking with the bandits around the fire. The screaming flames, filled with writhing ghosts, was fantasy. The dark trees? They were in a forest at night, the trees were real. But the gnarled faces, the nobbly limbs with grasping hands, those were fantasy.

In the fever, the bandits had glowing eyes, and had attacked him, holding him down, scratching, biting. Had they raped him? He didn’t think so, the entire sequence must be fantasy.

Then there was a woman who nursed him, held him. He’d dreamed she’d given him her breast to suckle, but the milk was blood. Fantasy.

A vision of his wife floated before him, like a broken doll, clothes torn, abused, battered. A knife through his guts. “ANA! NO! GOD NO! GOD, PLEASE LET ME DIE!”

A woman held him, rocked him, made soothing noises. His wracking sobs subsided, everything faded.

Later. George emerged from a fog, alert, still. How much time had passed he could not say. But he did know it was close to sunset, though he could not have said how he knew. There was something he needed to remember, but what?

His attention turned to the receding fog. *You must do something before I allow you to die.* Echoed dimly through his consciousness.

What?

*Patience. I will ask you when the time is right.*

What do I do?

*Be the best you can at what you do best.*

It was gone, drowned in echoes from his surroundings. There were many distant voices, but he could isolate any conversation, and it became clear. Weird. The qualities of the voices suggested a large stone chamber connected by corridors to others.

The scents in the air included wood smoke, cooking, dankness and earth. It all suggested to George that he was underground, perhaps in a cave system. Hadn’t the bandits mentioned having a cave hideaway nearby?

Closer at hand, there was a fire in this room. He could also hear someone breathing, and two heartbeats. One was his. The other, well she smelled like his nurse from the fever dreams. He drew more air through his nose, surreptitiously he hoped.

“You’re awake. we thought we’d lost you. How are you feeling?”

George’s eyes sprang open. He was in a rocky chamber lit by flickering firelight. Despite the low light, he could see everything clearly. There were curtains covering much of the walls, and a tapestry of a pastoral scene hanging over the bed, near the bed a red haired woman sat in a white chair.

Her hair was caught in a loose braid, and she wore a cream skirt and embroidered bodice that was unlaced, as if she was preparing to suckle a baby. That thought flickered and he forced it away. She was pretty, in her mid twenties, her bloom of youth just starting to fade. Her eyes looked old and careworn, and there were scars at her neck, wrists and crooks of her elbows. Her smile warmed him.

“Hello. I’m fine, I think. I wasn’t aware I was sick. What happened? I’m George by the way.”

“I’m Soula. The fever kills more than half those he attacks.” She laughed bitterly. That didn’t quite make sense. “You fought hard, but I brought you back. You may not thank me when you know what happened. Do you know what *vrykolakas* means?”

“A monster? A blood sucking corpse? Why?”

“That’s what you have become. Like all the menfolk here. Do you not remember the men holding you down and biting you? Then Philippos gave you some of his blood to drink? That set off what he calls the conversion, and with it your fever.”

“No, it can’t be possible.”

“Look within. Feel the difference. The cooking smells make your stomach roil. You can hear conversations at a distance. You can hear me breathing. You can recognise me by my smell. You crave blood.”

“I do not crave blood!”

“No?” Soula picked up a small knife and cut her wrist. George found himself staring at the welling blood hungrily. “Kiss my wrist, lick my blood.”

George hesitated. “Do it!” Soula ordered.

Once George tasted Soula’s blood he clung to her wrist, drinking the flow. She cuddled him to her chest and made soothing noises. “My blood and my power will make you strong. Drink. I will stop you when you’ve had what you need.”

George felt like a helpless baby. Soula kept repeating softly “You are mine and I am yours. I will protect you and you will protect me.”

Eventually Soula called “Stop.” And George was compelled to obey. The mindless hunger faded, and he returned to his normal self.

“Soula, what have you done to me?” He asked gently.

She put her face close to his, so close he could have kissed her. “George, I saved your life. Philippos and his band bit you, drank your blood, and then they forced you to drink Philippos’ blood. That caused your illness.”

“If I am a vrykolakas, I am damned.”

“I am not so sure. You did not choose to be one, it was forced upon you. I believe God in his infinite mercy will find a way to save you.”

“Maybe. If I am a vrykolakas, what are you?”

“I am one of Philippos’ human servants. All the men are vrykolakes, all the women are someone’s servant. We do things they can’t, like walk in the daytime, wash their clothes, rub errands, and provide blood to feed them once or twice a week. We can’t give blood everyday, we would fade and die.”

Soula seemed comfortable enough with her situation. George asked “Why do you do it?”

“You lost your wife and children to the Turks. I lost my husband and children to them. You are here, safe, free; they took me captive. Many of them raped me every day for weeks, until Philippos and his band attacked them and slew them. All the captives went with Philippos, and we owe them our lives. I gave birth to a son, half Turkish, but Philippos brought him up as a Greek, and when he was seventeen they turned him into a vrykolakas. He died in a Turkish raid twelve years ago.”

“I am sorry. How old are you? You look in your mid twenties.”

“We don’t know how long vrykolakes can live, hundreds of years at least. Human servants can live as long as the vrykolakas they serve. I am seventy four. Do you think I am pretty?”

“Yes, yes you are pretty. So, what happens to me now? And where is my son? He’s twelve.”

“He is probably with one of the servants, we can look for him soon, after Philippos comes to talk with you. I am to look after you while you learn how to live. I have asked Philippos to give me to you as your servant. I like you, you’re a much nicer person than Philippos.”

“Do I need someone to look after me? I like you, you’re a nice person, but I should be mourning my wife and children.”

“Mourn your wife and family all you want. You still need a woman to look after you, to teach you what you need to know. You don’t have to have sex with me.”

What do I say to that? “Not while I am in mourning. I like you, let’s see how things work out.”

Soula was leaning forward, her bodice undone. Her full breasts were peeking out, and George could have fondled them easily.

Soula smiled as if she knew what he was thinking. “We will get on well. You will wonder how you managed to live without me. Now, as a fledgling vrykolakas there is much you need to know.” She proceeded to tell him things a new vampire needed to know.

“What’s to stop me from walking out into the sunlight?” George asked at one point.

“Firstly, you’d be asleep. Secondly, it would be suicide, and that is a sin. Thirdly, you won’t choose death when you could help someone. I know you George, just like you know me. I was in your mind, sharing your fever dream for almost two days. We know one another in a way you probably can’t imagine yet. We’re family now.”

George was conflicted. On the one hand there was Ana, dead only a few days. On the other hand, he was developing feelings towards Soula, feelings he thought he shouldn’t be feeling. Soula’s words offered a way through. “Ana is family, you are family. It starts to make sense. I think I can work with that.”

“I know you can. And so can I. There is no need for haste.”

Philippos came by perhaps forty minutes later. With him was Petros, a dark haired vrykolakas, Elektra, a young blonde who radiated a sense of power, and Helena, a dark haired woman in her thirties.

“Well George, how are you? It’s good to see you up and around. How is hem Soula?”

“The fever broke this evening. He still needs a few days.”

George added “I feel good at present, but I’m not happy about what you did to me.”

“George, you came to us asking for our help in your vengeance against the Turks. You were weak, we made you strong, powerful. You will become an invincible warrior. This is Helena, I want to give her to you as your servant.”

“Do I need one?” George barely got out before Soula exploded.

“You can’t do that! I brought George back from death with my power. Helena doesn’t have enough. George needs me, not her.”

“You witch!” Philippos was on Soula in an instant, backhanding her hard enough that she flew across the room, striking the wall and falling in a heap. George surprised himself by being where she landed as she landed, kneeling to see her injuries.

“I’m fine. Just help me up.” George did as he was bid.

Meanwhile Philippos screamed “You bound yourself to him! You live only because I wish it! Cross me once more and I will kill you.”

Soula growled, then yelled back “And you live only because I do your dirty work under the sun, while you sleep!” She continued in a lower vein “Besides, I had to use my power to pull him back from the abyss. Of course that bound us. What did you expect?”

Philippos growled, then said more reasonably “George, I’m assigning you this room. Soula comes with it. Use her as you will, tame her if you can. This week you can spend recuperating, but I want you to report to Petros here every midnight for combat training. you won’t go out on attacks until he says you’re ready.”

Soula smiled secretly at George.

“Thank you.” George replied. “Where is my son?”

“The boy. Oh. I am very sorry George, he did not survive his fever. But his soul is clean.”

George froze. Soula reacted for him. “What! Philippos, are you out of your mind? Did you do this?”

“No.” Philippos managed to get out.

“Who was it? It was Yannis and Constantine wasn’t it? They have a fondness for boys! I will kill them both myself!” She was advancing on Philippos threateningly.

Philippos ignored her. “George, I am very sorry. You and I will talk later. I have sealed Yannis and Constantine in coffins and buried them under heavy stones. They can stay there until you say they can come out.”

“I need time to grieve.”

“Where is the boy buried?” Soula asked.

“I can show you.” Helena volunteered.

“Good. Please stay. The rest of you get out of here. We will look after George.” Philippos, Petros and Elektra left. Soula led George over to the bed, sat down, and pulled George into her lap. “George, you should cry, if you can.”

George shed silent tears while Soula rocked him on her lap. Helena sat quietly in the nearby chair.

Elektra returned about fifteen minutes later. George’s tears had ceased. “I thought I brought him to safety, instead I brought him to death.” He was saying.

Elektra interrupted. “I was the one with him during his fever. I did everything I could to save him, but it wasn’t God’s will.”

“No one blames you, Elektra.” Soula said.

There was silence for a moment, then Elektra said “I was with him when he died. His mother and sister collected his soul. George, his mother and sister collected him.”

“How could you know?” George asked despondently.

“George, we three can see spirits.” Helena said.

“And talk with them.” Elektra added.

“And we can tell when someone is lying.” Soula added. “Elektra is telling the truth.”

“George, Ana gave me a message for you. Are you ready to hear it?”

“Of course. Tell me.”

“She said not to mourn her or the children, because they are in a better place. She said you have to be the best you can at what you do best. That you have to find and rescue your other daughter. That you must always help others, and if you do, God in his infinite mercy will save your soul.”

George was shivering. “She really said that?”

“Yes. You should grieve and then get on with what you have to do, knowing that she is in a better place, and she will be happy. It’s up to you now.”

“Well that matches what I heard in your fever dream.” Soula commented.

“We should go and see the grave soon,” Helena added, “because we need to sleep.”

George exhaled heavily, shook himself. “Yes, lead me to the grave.”

Then he turned to Soula. “Please forgive me for seeming preoccupied. I meant to check your injuries from Philippos.”

“We are tough and heal quickly. The bruises are nearly gone. Look at my wrist, where you drank my blood two hours ago.”

The wound was now a healed pink scar.

The living area was in a large cavern. Some of the rooms, like Soula’s, were actual grottoes or small caves off the cavern. The rest were shacks and sheds built from rough stone and roofed with wood and cloth. The cavern was dim even for vampire sight, and away from the dwellings they had to walk with care.

“Down there,” Soula indicated the centre of the cavern, “is a pool fed by a spring. The water is sweet and cool. And over to the right, towards the back, is the midden. It’s a split that goes very deep. We empty the chamber pots, but if you ever want to, be careful not to fall in.”

“At some stage I would like to explore the caves, but there is no hurry.”

“Philippos has maps of parts of the cave system.” Elektra volunteered. “There are several entrances, though I am not sure of where they come out.”

“I know some of them.” Soula replied. “Tonight we go through the main entrance.”

That passage wound upwards, but was wide enough fir two to walk abreast. George could smell the night air long before they reached it. “There’s little chance of daylight reaching the living area.”

“Yes, a cave is ideal.” Helena said. “It’s always dark, it’s difficult to attack, and there are secret exits.”

The passage opened into a tall fissure in the hillside, partly hidden by a large boulder. The ground was stony, with sparse vegetation and no real trees.

“The graveyard is in the valley behind this hill.” Helena led the way.

There was no moon, though it would rise around midnight. The four picked there their way rapidly under starlight. “You ladies can see as well as I can.” George remarked.

Elektra laughed. “We are human servants, we have the same powers as our vrykolakes masters.”

“I don’t think we can fly.” Helena said.

“I’ve never tried.” Soula responded. “George, when you learn to fly, will you teach me?”

“I don’t see why not.”

“You can teach us as well.” Elektra added.

“If I learn to fly, I’ll teach the three of you.”

Helena led them into the valley where there were patches of thicker scrub. They stopped at one of the patches where there were fresh graves on one side. “Each patch hides graves. These are the ones from the last two days. And this smaller one is your son.” Helene said.

“Seven graves. Only five of us survived. It would be good if they could have headstones. I want to say a prayer for all of them. Do you think God will still hear me?”

“I am sure he will.” Soula replied. “We will pray as well.”

They stood in comparative silence, each one mouthing prayers. George began to feel cold. Just then Elektra said “Hello Ana. We brought George. This is Helena and this is Soula.”

George looked around wildly. The three women were looking in the same direction, but as far as he could see there was nothing there. “I don’t see anything.”

“Just here George.” Elektra said. “Don’t stare, just gaze. Can you hear her?”

“No, I can’t. I can see a patch of wispy white. Is that you Ana?”

“She says yes. She says to tell you she loves you very much. Her concerns now are you and Helena. Your daughter, right? She says you must look after yourself and your soul, because it is in danger.”

“I love you very much, Ana. Costa was the only reason for me to go on, and now he’s gone.”

“She says there’s Helena and you. Once you rescue Helena you need to go on to rescue your soul. And if you can’t do it for your soul, then do it for Ana.”

“I will do everything in my power to rescue Helena. I don’t care about myself, but I will do what I can for you, Ana, but I don’t know how to save my soul.”

“Do good works.” Soula burst out. “Help others. Spend the rest of your life on that.”

“Ana says listen to us, we will guide you.” Elektra said. “And especially listen to Soula. You need a woman to look after you, and she will be good for you.”

“I married you Ana. You were my childhood sweetheart.”

“Ana says now she is dead. You will live a long time, and you need a female companion from the living.”

Soula spoke. “Ana, I promised George I would look after him. I would like you blessing for that, because George will be more accepting.”

“Ana says she gives Soula her blessing to be your woman, your companion and wife, as long as she takes good care of you.”

George felt overwhelmed. There were things he would have said if it were just him and Ana. “Ana, I will always love you. I miss you.”

“Sophocles, I will always love you. Is you name Sophocles?” Elektra said. “Oh, right. I will miss you. But you are living, I am dead, and we must part for a time. There is a black cloud over you, threatening to destroy your soul. If you do not save your soul, you will be lost forever. And you will not be permitted to see me ever again. Sophocles, does that make sense to you?”

“Yes, as a vrykolakas, my soul is damned. Ana, both you and Soula have said I can save my soul. After I save Helena, I will concentrate on saving my soul. However long it takes.”

“Ana says she is going now, she wants to watch over Helena. Never forget what she has told you.”

George stumbled over his goodbye. Soula put a hand on him, followed by Elektra. “She’s gone George. She says that’s your middle name, for St. Georgios. Why did she want to use your first name?”

George sighed. “That’s so I would know it was her. Only Ana and my parents know that name. Everybody has called me George all my life. There really is life after death. She is still there, or her soul is. We all need to work at saving our souls.”

“Help others.” Soula said. “I will help you.”

“And I will help you.” Helena added. “I will be your human servant if you and Soula will have me.”

“He’s not ready for that.” Soula replied for George. “If you want to wait, I will be happy if he is happy.”

“That is something you two should decide between yourselves.” George replied. “I hardly know you, but I will take Soula’s advice.”

“I will help too,” Elektra said, “but I can’t be your human servant while I am Philippos’.”

“Thank you, all three of you. This is where Costa’s body lies, but he’s not here anymore. He’s moved on, he’s with Ana. I feel a lot better. Still sad, but they’re fine. It’s the living who have all the pain. I’m happy to go back now.”

George’s mood continued to improve on the walk back.

Helena and Elektra said goodbye at the cavern, George and Soula continued to there room. “George, there is about an hour till you have to meet Petros. You seem much happier now. Is there anything you want me to do for you? Do you want to talk, to you want to cuddle, should I rub your back?”

“I am happier. Don’t you need to sleep?

“I can sleep when you sleep. I could sleep when you leave, you can wake me when you return. I’d like that. Wake me when you return. I don’t want to sleep when you’re with me.”

“There’s a lot of new things to get used to. I feel out of my depth right now. I need to sit and think.”

“You can’t learn everything in one day. This is your first day as a vrykolakas. Learn things a bit at a time. Did you learn everything about herbs in one day?”

“No, but I still need to sit and think about things.”

“Then sit with me. Let me put my arms about you and lend you my strength. I can sit still and silent, like a vrykolakas. Come.”

They sat quietly together for nearly forty five minutes.

“Thank you Soula. I feel more peaceful now.”

“You have another fifteen minutes. I will wash and prepare for bed.” Soula disappeared behind a curtain. “George, will you do me a favour? When you come home, please strip off all your clothes and leave them for me to wash. You have worn them for several days. And wash yourself well, you do not smell fresh. I sleep naked, I want you to as well. Will you do this for me?”

“Yes, I should have a sack somewhere with clothes and belongings in it.”

“I will look for it in the morning.”

“When I get into bed I will wake you."

“Good. Now, take a good look at your human servant.” Soula walked out from behind the curtain stark naked. “Feast your eyes.” She pirouetted for him.

Part of George thought he should be shocked, but he put that aside and looked appreciatively. Soula was curvaceous with large firm breasts and hips, narrow waist and the wiry muscles of a village girl. The red fur between her legs had been trimmed very short, and there appeared to be no hair in her armpits.

“Very nice, sexy lady. You are a real woman.”

“Thank you.” She dimpled and sat on the bed. “This is what you come home to every day.”

“I am very happy about that.” George sat beside her. He was surprised to realise he felt completely at ease with the situation. “What do you do to remove the hair from your underarms?”

“We pluck the hair. The first time is painful, but after that there are only a few to remove each week. I don’t know how it started, it was the practice of the women here when I arrived. It’s cleaner, there is less smell.”

“Ana never did that, though there were rumours in the village that some of the woman used their husband’s cutthroat razor. That seemed dangerous.”

“I had never heard of removing underarm hair until I came here. Now I pluck my lip and my nipples.” She laughed. “Now you know all my secrets.”

“I had wondered about your nipples. I think a human servant is closer than a wife. We should have no secrets between us.”

“I agree completely. I feel completely at ease with you George. I trust you always to do the right thing for me. And you know I will always do the right thing by you. I trust you with my life.”

George put his arm about Soula. “I trust you with my life. Which is odd, because I only met you today. I’m not complaining, mind.”

“If I were an ordinary human, it would take years to build up the trust, the power, the relationship. I was trained by Philippos, I was one of his human servants for nigh on forty years. He replaced me with Elektra once he trained her. She suits him better. You suit me better. And don’t forget I shared your fever dreams for two days, my own power linked with yours and bound us. I can’t explain how that works; just that my power saved your life, and that bound us. We’re stuck with each other.” Soula smiled happily. George’s smile matched hers.

$$ -

\* \* \* \* \*

“Boys, how goes it?” George greeted his fellow villagers where they waited for Petros.

“Hmph. We would be better off if we were dead.” Stephanos the carpenter replied. “Is this hell? I think we’re all damned.”

“Where are the others?” Markos, a farmer, asked. “I’m not happy about what they’ve done to us.”

“We five are all the survivors. They killed the rest, including Costa.” George replied.

“I’m sorry, George, you were right, we should never have trusted bandits.” Loukas the cobbler said.

“We are here, we survived. We need to continue to survive. We want vengeance in the Turks, and after that, we’ll see about righting some wrongs done to us.” George replied. “Right now, we need to learn as much as we can about how to live. We might even be able to enjoy what we have left.”

“Well, they’ve given me a young woman, and she’s friendly. I could be happy about that.” Iakovos was approaching fifty, built like an ox, and a widower. He was another farmer.

“Well boys, that’s something to focus on.” George advised. “Things could be worse.”

“Petros is on his way.” Markos commented.

“Right. I wonder what he will teach us?”

Petros sauntered up to them and they all introduced themselves. “Well, what a sorry lot of soldiers you are - two farmers, a cobbler, a carpenter and a herbalist.” Then he laughed. “You’ll fit right in. We were all village boys once. Anyone know how to use a sword? No, well we’ll get to that later. Any of you know how to fight with a knife?”

“Hey, we’re Greek. Of course we do.” Iakovos replied.

“Good. Weapons like swords and spears take time to learn. This week, I want to concentrate on our powers. You already know about seeing in the dark, sensitive hearing, and that we’re five to ten times stronger than humans. We have the power to control the human mind, and that’s what I want to focus on this week. You can make a soldier turn around, paralyse them, make yourself invisible and a lot more.”

George returned home about an hour before sunrise. As requested, he stripped and washed himself. When he walked out from behind the curtain, Soula was awake and watching.

“Welcome home George. How are you feeling?” Soula sat up.

“Good, happy enough. Sad for my family, happy you are with me. And I think I am hungry.” George sat on the bed, almost beside Soula, but positioned so he had a good view of her body. She jiggled for him.

“Then you are healing. That takes time. I’m afraid you can’t feed so close to sleeping. Philippos says it is bad if you feed before sleeping; I don’t know the reason though.”

“Maybe I will ask him next time I see him. We didn’t cover flying today. Petros said today was something of an introduction.”

“What did Petros teach you?”

“The first hour was leaping, lifting and running, and how to do that without hurting yourself.”

“We all learn that; human servants develop much the same powers as their masters. Did you do anything about using power?”

“How to control humans. Petros had two young girls brought along. They were ordinary humans. We had to make them do things like walk in a particular direction. The last one was turning invisible, except we could still see each other, but the girls couldn’t.”

“Yes, I can do that. Mind power doesn’t work properly on vrykolakes or their human servants.”

“There are a lot of rooms in this cavern, and there seem to be many more women than men. Is there a reason? Do you know how many men and women there are here?”

“All the men are vrykolakes, most of the women are human servants, or in training. We women are your breakfast. Do you remember I told you I can only feed you every third or fourth day? That means you need to have at least three times as many women, and it’s better if there are more. There were seventeen vrykolakes, but with your five villagers that’s twenty two.

“I think there are seventy to eighty women, plus six children, all girls. With Yannis and Constantine sealed in coffins, that is twenty vrykolakes who need to be fed every day. That’s eighty women. I am not sure whether we have that many.”

“It seems a tidy arrangement. I am thinking that the men don’t have to go hunting for victims. Who came up with this?”

“Philippos, I think. He told me that in the old days, a band of vrykolakes would wake up hungry after sunset, and go out hunting. That meant preying on fellow Greeks, and most of the victims died. I think Philippos rescued some captives from the Turks and set about training all of them to be human servants. It’s not like farming sheep, because no one dies. It takes a few days to recover after each gift of blood, but we are all happy to give that gift.”

“Philippos is smart. But why did he attack me and the others?”

“I truly do not know. Perhaps he wanted a bigger band of vrykolakes. But if he hadn’t, I would still be unassigned, like Helena. Now I have you, and I feel complete again.”

“I read somewhere that inside every cloud is a silver lining. I have lost everything, but I found you. On balance things are good, and with you they will continue to improve.” I really think that, George thought with mild surprise. I said goodbye to Ana, and I am adjusting to her death. Her spirit has survived.

George and Soula moved at exactly the same time; she snuggled against him, he put his arm about her. “Soula, I don’t feel cold, but you feel quite warm.”

“I’m neither hot nor cold, just comfortable. Your body will always be colder than mine, except when you have just fed. I enjoy the feeling of your coolness against my warmth.”

A little later Soula lay back on the bed, pulling George with her. She adjusted their positions so he lay on her chest. “We will not make love this time. But I want you to lie between my legs as if we have just finished, and fall asleep in this position. It will be sunrise soon.”

George put one hand on each of her breasts. “Can I fondle and kiss these?”

“Of course. You are my lover. You can do anything with me.”

Soula kissed George as they both felt the sun peek above the horizon. She held him like that for several minutes before she broke the kiss. “The sun is just above the horizon and you are still awake. That is odd.”

“Mmm, I was expecting to fall asleep by now.”

“That is what the others do. Stay here, I want to see how long you can stay awake.”

They lay, gazing into each others eyes for another fifteen minutes before George remarked “I am suddenly feeling very sleepy.” His eyes closed and his head fell forward.

Soula pillowed his head on her breasts, and softly stroked his hair. Her expression was like the cat that just licked the cream.

$$ -

Stephanos = carpenter

Loukas = cobbler

Markos + Iakovos = farmers

\* \* \* \* \*

George woke before sunset, as he had before - wide awake, surfacing from a dark, roiling cloud, its images fading as he tried to glimpse them. Nearby Soula and Helena were talking. They both noticed he was awake.

“Good evening George, welcome back.” Soula greeted him. “You’re about fifteen minutes early.”

“Good evening George. Soula asked me if I would like to be your breakfast today. I would like to be.”

“Well, thank you. Soula explained to me that she can give me blood about every fourth day.”

“Me too. Since I am unassigned, I said I will be her number two.”

“If it works out.” Soula added, “Helena will become your second human servant. Now, if you will freshen up, we will start. We need to show you what to do.”

When George returned, both Soula and Helena were naked. Helena was thinner, though developing a small pot belly. Her dark pubic hair had been trimmed like Soula’s, and her armpits were plucked.

“We usually do this naked, it saves having to wash blood off clothes.” Helena explained.

“You will practice on me,” Soula added, “and when you’re ready you will feed on Helena.”

“Fine by me.”

“Right. First, when you take blood there are some places that are easier than others. Can you guess which ones?” Soula asked.

“Wrist and inner elbow are the obvious ones. But I notice that many of you have neck scars.”

Soula looked at Helena, who spoke. “There are two more easy ones - back of the knee and groin. I prefer the groin, because the scars aren’t obvious, and its very intimate. You haven’t bitten anyone before, have you?”

“Er no. When Soula fed me yesterday she used a knife on her wrist.”

“That’s the easiest place when you need to feed someone else. Oh, yes. Always human blood, never animal blood, never vrykolakas blood. Either will kill you. We don’t know why, just that you will sicken and die. Soula has already told you that, I can see.

“Use your fangs to pierce a vein, but be careful of the big ones like the neck. You have to be able to swallow, you need to close the wound when you finish. The big ones spurt everywhere and they are very difficult to stop. Your meal can bleed to death very quickly.”

“The big ones are called arteries,” he used the Latin word, “they are usually deep except for the carotid arteries in the neck. I’ve studied medicine, I’m not just a herbalist. How do you stop the bleeding?”

A glance passed between Soula and Helena before Helena replied “Place your index and middle finger on the punctures and will it to close. It should close in a few minutes. We can do it ourselves, but it’s polite to do it for your meal. Now, Soula is lying there like I will. You have to bite her in the groin. Where will you bite?”

“Don’t really bite me, just show us.” Soula added.

This is surreal, George thought. But I do know how to find it. There was actually several small scars, more pinkish dots, on Soula’s groin where the vein would be. “If you press in a vein or artery hard, it will puff up behind. Arteries take blood away from the heart, veins towards the heart.” He felt around near the pink dots, then pressed hard. “See that? That’s the vein. The artery would puff up on the other side of my thumb.”

“We didn’t know that. We should pass that little tip around.” Soula said.

“Now George, you can’t just bite, it will hurt. You need to use your power to take away the pain, keep us still. Usually you distract your partner with pleasure. You use your powers, but first you need to know how to physically pleasure a woman, you need to feel the pleasure sensations you need to give her. Soula, shall I demonstrate now?”

“Yes.”

“George, the best way to pleasure a woman is like this. Lick just here, keep it up fore several minutes and she will climax. Watch, and try to feel Soula’s pleasure sensations.”

Helena began licking Soula, and kept it up for several minutes. Soula began writhing in pleasure before she finally exploded in a climax.

“I’ve never done that before.”

“Then you copy exactly what Helena did, but keep your mind on what I am feeling ”

George did so, and Soula climaxed quicker than before.

“Now George, use your mind to achieve the same effect. You don’t want to get her too worked up, because if she is writhing around she will be difficult to bite and difficult to feed from.”

“Best to give me my climax when you finish feeding. Do you want to start now?”

George placed one hand on Soula’s mons veneris, and the other on her thigh. He thought, pleasure, sexual arousal, climax, and was surprised when Soula writhed in climax again. “Sorry, too much.”

It took over twenty minutes before Soula declared herself satisfied with his performance. Helena joked “Thirty minutes and several climaxes. Or was that eight? I’m sure you’re satisfied. George, my turn. I want you to do to me the same as you did with Soula.”

“I’m becoming sexually aroused. When do we get to have sex.”

“George, you can’t have sex with me, that’s disrespectful to Soula. She’s your human servant, not me.”

“And you haven’t had sex with me yet, you can’t have sex with Helena until after you have sex with me. And you won’t feed today unless you do as Helena tells you. Get started on her.”

“Hasn’t he had sex with you yet? Just a little higher George.”

“No, he’s still mourning Ana.”

“That’s the right spot, just there. Don’t stop. Then we have to do the right thing by George and wait until he’s ready.”

Eventually Helena told George it was time to bite her. Soula guided him, and he let the feeding rapture wash over him. He thought about sharing with Soula and Helena, and watched Helena’s face turn to bliss. I hope I’ll remember to stop.

After about fifteen minutes Soula tapped him on the shoulder. “That’s enough George. Seal the wound.”

Helena came back to herself. “Wow, the rapture. I didn’t know you could share that. Philippos is the only one I thought could do that.”

“We were all distracted.” Soula said. “I hope you didn’t give too much.”

“I will be fine, I just need to rest a little. George, you forgot my climax when you sealed the wound, but I don’t want it now. Just let me sleep.”

“George, you and I will do a little healing on Helena to ensure her blood is replenished quickly.”

“Her heart beat is still strong. But I feel I took more than last time. Show me what to do.”

“Essentially the same as healing the wound, except you will that her blood replenish. I will give some of my power, you wield it.”

Ten minutes later Helena fell asleep, her cheeks rosy, her breathing steady. “She looks quite healthy to me.” George commented.

“Yes, she should be fine. With your permission I would like to make her your second human servant as soon as we can. You shared the rapture with both of us. I think you can handle a second human servant as soon as you can feed properly.”

“You are my guide and counsel Soula. If you say she’s right, she’s the one. And if you say I’m ready, then I am.”

“Good. I will arrange it with her. Next feed you need to control the amount of rapture you share, perhaps set a time limit of ten minutes? We can all tell the time of day and how much has elapsed. Now, are you still in mourning, or will you have sex with me?”

“I’m ready. What if we wake her?”

“We tell her she’s number two human servant and ask her to join in. We’ll show you what you can do with two women at once.”

Helena woke half an hour later, and joined in enthusiastically. Then Soula, George and Helena went through the binding ritual to make Helena George’s human servant, and bind her to both George and Soula. “Philippos doesn’t do this last part, but it’s better for everyone. It binds the human servants together, and prevents friction.” Soula explained.

Elektra visited, bringing George’s sack, and George dressed himself in his clean clothes. Elektra also announced that Philippos would visit within the hour.

$$ - the next morning - with Helena

\* \* \* \* \*

An hour later, Philippos and Elektra dropped in. “Hello George, how are you settling in? I thought we should have our talk I promised, and answer your questions.”

George invited them in, and offered seats about the table. Soula set about making Greek coffee, Helena walked out with a comment about bringing more cups, and Elektra settled in a chair beside Philippos.

“George, you should be able to handle Greek coffee.” Soula commented.

“Now is a good time to find out.” Philippos said. “Some of us never get past water, most of us can handle wine, coffee, herbal tea. I met with another family of vrykolakes many years ago, and their patriarch could eat roast meat, though in small amounts.”

“That is interesting. I will make careful experiments. Where was this other family? It stands to reason there should be others.”

“They were in Athens. The hunting is easier in a city, but it works both ways. We sleep during daylight and we are easier to kill. We need our human servants to protect us while we sleep. They told me there are families scattered throughout Europe.”

“My father sent me to Athens for two years to study medicine with a physician who was his cousin. I liked living there. I even dreamed of setting up as a physician. But instead I went home to marry, help with the farm, and assist in my father’s apothecary.”

Helena returned with a tray and four small coffee cups. Soula began measuring sugar and coffee into a pot of boiling water she took from the fire.

Philippos continued “One hundred and twenty two years ago I was out hunting when I came across three men sitting around a fire. It was night of course, and they invited me to sit with them. I could not resist, and they attacked me. Their plan was to drink their fill and let me die. I struggled, and cut one with my knife on his face. It must have trickled into my mouth, because three days later I awoke in this cave, near the entrance, with the three men standing watching me.

“They explained that I was now vrykolakas like them. We fed only when we could waylay someone, that wasn’t very often, and I think the victim always died. I suggested we should attack Turkish soldiers by luring them from their posts at night. After that we fed often, and Petros and I felt better about killing people. The other two, older, didn’t care. They’d always preyed on Greek villagers. But they were happy to feed regularly.”

Soula brought a tray with the pot of coffee and five small cups and set it on the table. Helena sat on George’s left while Soula spooned froth into each cup, then poured black coffee for everyone. She handed the cups around, Philippos first, then George, then the women. She sat on George’s other side.

Philippos continued. “One day we encountered a small camp of Turkish soldiers, with two wagons. Petros and I persuaded the others we should kill all the Turks save one to feed on. The two older vrykolakes died in the skirmish - the Turks cut off their heads. Petros and I were better at controlling the soldiers, we were unharmed, and fed well. Then we discovered one of the wagons held twelve young Greek women the Turks had taken as comfort women.”

Philippos sipped his coffee. The three women seemed to be waiting for this moment, and picked up theirs. George followed suit, sipping appreciatively.

“Good coffee. You still remember how I like it.” Philippos said. “George, you know how our people think. There were comfort women. They’d been raped repeatedly every night for weeks or months. If they had a family, they could not go home. Their husbands would not accept them, their parents would not accept them, if they were single no one would marry them. Petros and I talked, and we offered them the hospitality of our cave, a place to call home. If we were careful, we could feed on them and not harm them. We could give them a chance of a happy life, Petros and I would have feminine company and food without having to prey on Greek people.”

“It seems a very ethical idea. I would not be comfortable preying on my fellow Greeks. But this arrangement is one I can live with. Everyone I’ve met seems happy. It’s grown a bit since then.”

“New women find it a bit of an adjustment,” Soula said, but they see the others women are happy, and they become happy too. We are free to leave if we want, but very few ever leave. We can make trips to nearby villages and towns when we want.”

Philippos merely grunted at this interruption. “Some of the original twelve were not happy and left, but they all returned save one. And then we realised that the women were developing powers like ours, they were bonding with us like wives and lovers, and they were not aging. We made certain they enjoyed giving their gift of blood, and we had our happy little family.

“It’s grown slowly. We need more men to attack the Turks, and as we rescue more comfort women we need more men for them to serve. Before you arrived we were seventeen men and eighty nine women. Now we are twenty, with the same number of women.”

“That’s a good size. I think you may not wane to get too much larger, you might attract unwanted attention.”

“Petros says the same. I think we could grow to a total of around one hundred and fifty.”

“Thirty men, one hundred and twenty women?” Soula asked.

“We will take it slowly. I do not intend adding any more for perhaps a year. This is our home. We have all lost our families, this is our new family.”

“I assume you could not return to yours?” George asked.

“No, they still lived, but I was dead to them. If they suspected what I was, they would burn me alive. Every single one of us here has lived through tragedy and loss. We have built a happy family.”

“I must admit everyone I meet seems to be content with life here. That”s unusual, but I am settling in.”

“Good. Do you have any questions so far?”

“Not that I can think of. I may come up with some over the next few days.”

Philippos nodded. “George, you are a smart man. Petros tells me you have power, ability, and you learn new things quickly. You will be an asset to our family. Now, your deceased wife has paid me a visit, and we discussed your daughter’s predicament. She is being held in the barracks part of a town about thirty five kilometers from here. About half a day’s ride each way, more for wagons. We can outrun a galloping horse, but none of us could run that far at anything like that speed.

“Our practice is to waylay small groups travelling outside towns and villages. Petros and I are not sure how we should go about rescuing someone from there. I made a promise to Ana to rescue Helena as my way of making up for what our family did with Costa. Will you volunteer to be part of any rescue party?”

“Yes. I promised Ana.”

“I want to be part of the party too.” Soula added.

“Women do not fight.”

“A human servant will follow her master. I think you will need several human servants on this, at least as many as men.” Soula countered.

“I agree with Soula, This is a mission that will last several days. We need food, we need people who can walk in daylight.” George added.

Philippos was silent for several moments. “George, your reasoning is sound. Soula, you may go with George. I will talk with Petros about planning this as a multi day mission, and providing sufficient servants. Petros has volunteered, and I believe we will have two to four more. I will also discuss what additional training you will need.”

“I need to learn to fly, if I’m able to. I would also like any of the servants to learn, if they can.”

“Flying will be a major part of getting into and out of the building. Soula, you will go with George tonight, and Petros will try to train both of you in flying. If you can manage, then we will teach anyone else on the raiding party.” Soula nodded and grinned. “George, what are your thoughts on staging the attack?”

“Flying will be a big part, as you said. I need to know how far you can fly, how fast, and how much weight you can carry.”

“There are twelve villages within about six kilometers of here. We can fly to any of those villages in ten to fifteen minutes. Most of us would need to rest before returning, maybe ten minutes. We can easily carry two humans one way. The ones on the raid should be able to fly for forty or fifty minutes.”

“I thought we should travel overnight to within say four or five kilometers of the town, and find a rabbit hole to hide in so we can sleep. Some of the women would go in daylight into the town to locate the building, find an easy means of entry and exit, and look for somewhere outside the town where the raiders can group. Maybe a kilometer away, and from there the raiders fly in. I’m not sure about the actual rescue, but Ana tells me,” actually she told Soula who told me, but I won’t tell you that, “there are seven girls, most from our village, who need rescue. We subdue any guards and fly the girls back to our staging point, or directly to our camp. Then we break camp and go home.It needs detail but our servants will be able to comfort the girls.”

“Quite a sound plan. If the raid is carried out around midnight we have five hours to return here. If the camp is close enough, the raiding party can fly directly from and to there. Buildings we usually enter by an open window, and we can land on the roof. Petros planned to travel by day, with us in coffins, and make camp somewhere. When we awoke we would reconnoitre the area, and the rescue would be similar to yours. I was not comfortable with travelling by day in a coffin, I prefer your idea. I need to arrange for someone to find us a rabbit hole to hide in. Elektra, we have work to do.” They stood and left.

There was silence and three grins while everyone waited for Philippos to walk out of earshot. Finally Soula asked “Helena, would you like to learn to fly?”

“Yes, I would.”

“That went better than I hoped.” George said. “I’d like to learn some way of putting people to sleep.”

“That’s easy George, Helena and I can both do that. It’s like when you give us pleasure with your mind, except you think ‘sleep five hours’ or however long you want them to. It won’t work on us, we need to find a human to practice on.”

“I know where the two teenage girls are.” Helena said. “We can practice on them.”

They were the same two George and the others had practised on last night. Both were thirteen. George hadn’t really looked at them last night, but up close he realised both were pregnant.

“They were girls we rescued from the Turks four weeks ago. They’re still settling in.” Helena said. “Their babies will be brought up as Greeks. The girls are cared for here, and loved. This is their home. This is Ariana,” brown hair and grey eyes, “and this is Chloe.” Black hair and blue eyes. “Everyone, this is George.”

“You were one of the new ones making us walk up and down.” Chloe said.

“Hello. Yes, I was. Do you like it here here?”

“It’s a bit gloomy.” Ariana said.

“And we miss our families.” Chloe said.

“But everyone is friendly.” Ariana added.

“And there is lots to eat.” Chloe added.

“Eventually you will think of this place as home.” Helena explained.

“George only arrived a few days ago. He lost his family.” Soula explained.

The girls expressed sympathy. George asked “Do you girls live here by yourselves?”

“No, there’s our foster mama, but she’s out now.” Chloe replied.

“She’s going to help us look after our babies when they come.” Ariana added.

”I don’t think I want a baby.” Chloe added.

“Babies are gifts from God.” Helena explained. “You’ll love them when they arrive. We all did when we had ours.”

“We were all once like you girls.” Soula added. “We were kidnapped by Turks, raped, then rescued and brought here. We had our babies, we brought them up, and we found husbands. If you stay here, the same will happen to you.”

Helena asked “George needs to practice putting people to sleep. Can he practice on you two?”

“Yes, we should be going to sleep soon anyway.” Ariana said.

“Why do you want to practice that?” Chloe asked.

“Because sometimes you need to stop someone from doing something, and most methods will hurt them.” George explained. “Making them sleep should be painless.”

“I hope so.” Chloe replied.

“I would like you to sit on your beds so you won’t hit the floor.”

“Erm, this is our bed, we share it. Mama Athena sleeps in that one.” Ariana replied.

“Would you prefer separate beds?” Soula asked.

“Maybe. But then we couldn’t snuggle up like we do now.”

“That may change when you give birth.” Helena said. “That’s something to think about. Three beds will take up more room, and baby beds even more.”

“That’s for later.” Soula said. “You might need a bigger room.”

The girls sat on their bed, and George started. “I’ll try to put you to sleep for five minutes only.”

At first, nothing worked. Soula exhorted “George, you have to feel their minds, their presence. You have to project sleep.”

Helena added “Try giving them pleasure because you want to feed from them. It is almost the same.”

Both girls began moaning in pleasure. Well, that’s the principle. “Sorry Ladies.”

“Aw, don’t stop.” from Ariana.

“That was really good.” from Chloe.

“Another time.” Let’s see, sleep, thirty seconds. It should happen within seconds.

“Stop George.” Soula ordered. “Put your hands on my shoulders, and feel what I am doing.” Sleep one minute now. Both girls fell backwards on the bed. “You are trying too hard.”

When the two girls awoke, George tried again. On the third attempt, Chloe fell asleep. On the second attempt on Ariana, she fell asleep. They waited until the girls awoke again, and George tried again. After twenty minutes he could do it reliably every time, one girl or both girls.

Athena walked in, and Soula introduced George. Athena was slim, with dark eyes, nut brown skin, and glossy black hair. “I was born here. My mother is Greek, My father some kind of Turk. I’ve trained now for about fifteen years with different men, but no one has bonded with me yet.”

“George is one of the new ones. We are his human servants,” Soula explained, “we are helping with his training.”

“I heard there were five new ones. Is it true that Yannis and Constantine have been punished?’

“Yes, and they’ve lost their human servants, five each. Speaking of which, we need to arrange for unbonded servants to feed George on a semi regular basis. Fill the gaps when we can’t. Suitable ones we’ll consider for bonding, but that isn’t guaranteed. Are you interested?”

“Yes, but I can only give once a week, it’s just coming up to seven days now.”

“We’re right for tomorrow, can you do the day after? We’ll make you regular of you want.”

“Yes. All of us unbonded ones want to have a master.” George thought that sounded odd, and resolved to ask Soula later. “Now there are five more men, and ten more women, my chances should improve. Soula, you take precedence if you make me regular.”

“We don’t want Yannis’ or Constantine’s castoffs. It takes months to adjust to being free, until then we would prefer not to use them. Unless there is no other option. If we can line you up once a week, then we need to find three more. And your chances have improved. Helena recommends you.”

“Thank you Helena. George, how did you join our family?”

George decided on an abridged version. “The turks raided my village while I was collecting firewood. They killed my family. Some of us fled to the woods, and encountered what we thought were friendly bandits. I was one of those who woke up yesterday. I am still coming to terms with what happened.”

“Most people here have sad stories to tell. Were you a farmer?”

“Not really. The village might have been seven hundred people. I was the apothecary - a herbalist and physician.”

“We’ve never had a physician here. I am sure we could find you patients among the newcomers.”

“Yes, anyone who isn’t a human servant might have need of my skills from time to time.”

“Were you wealthy? Sorry, I don’t know a lot about the outside world.”

“We had enough money for our needs. But many people who were farmers would pay us in farm produce.”

They talked a little longer, then Soula interrupted. “Sorry Athena, George, but it’s approaching midnight and George and I need to meet with Petros.”

“Athena, I’d like to spend some time with you tonight, if that’s fine by all of you.” Helena asked.

“I’d love you to.” Athena replied.

“We will be hours, might not be home until near sunrise.” Soula replied. “So it’s fine by both of us.”

George and Soula took their leave and left. Soula explained once they were outside “Helena will likely stay the rest of the night with Athena. They have been lovers off and on for ten years or so. Athena was training with Helena’s master for a while.”

“I thought it might be something like that. Eighty something women, fifteen men...” George trailed off.

“It happens often here. Helena and I have been lovers off and on over twenty five years. That’s why she is your second human servant. Now she wants Athena, and I want Sylvia, who is tomorrow’s girl. And I think Athena and Sylvia have been lovers also. If we can manage to get those two, then we’ll have a really cosy little household.”

“I’ll take your word for it. Peace and harmony in a home is important. What did Athena mean with she said she wanted to belong to a master? That sounds like slavery.”

“We’re not slaves, George. A servant works for a master, that is all. But even though you are my master and I am your human servant, we are more equals than servant and master. It might have been different in past ages. The terms we use are old. But when you get married, your wife promises to obey you as her master, and legally she becomes your property.”

“I hadn’t thought of it like that.”

$$ - Philippos talks

13 yo girls - ariana and chloe

Foster mother = athena, mixed greek and turkish

\* \* \* \* \*

“It’s unusual for Philippos to agree to train a human servant like this. But he says to train both of you equally, so here we are. This is Lydia, she is still human, I’m training her to be my human servant. Lydia, this is George, he’s Soula’s master.” Petros said.

Lydia was tall and slender. Her brown hair was tied back in a pony tail, her eyes were blue, and she was fresh faced, perhaps seventeen. She greeted George and then Soula.

“First up, invisibility. Doesn’t work on human servants or us, but works on humans. We project a cloud into the mind of the subject, and say ‘see me not’ Sometimes we add ‘hear me not’ if we are making noise. If you know how to project anything into your subject’s mind, this should be easy. Soula, you first.”

Soula smiled, and spoke aloud. “See me not, hear me not.” She walked around Lydia.

“You just vanished. Where are you?”

“Behind you.”

“Can you hear me Soula? Where are you?”

“See me, hear me. I’m behind you.”

“Oh. It must have worked.”

“Very good Soula. George, your turn.”

“See me not, hear me not.”

“I can still see you George.”

“George, project, like when you’re feeding.”

“Not quite like that. Different image. Right.” George sighed, shook his hands as if limbering up for some test of manual dexterity. Touch her mind, but not pleasure. Then “See me not, hear me not.”

“You have disappeared George. Where are you?”

“Right in front of you.”

There was a pause, then Lydia said “I didn’t hear you, George. You can come back now.”

“See me, hear me.”

“Good. Lydia, you can go now.”

“Aw, I’d like to see if they can fly.”

“Let her stay, Petros. She can laugh at us if we fail.” Soula suggested.

“Very well, Lydia, you can stay and watch. Flying is different, you need to think of floating, picture it, feel it. You can think of ‘floating’, ‘hover’, ‘thistle on the breeze’, what ever gives you the impression of floating. Once you are floating, you can think about moving, changing direction, and stopping.”

Both Soula and George took about fifteen minutes to float gently off the ground. Petros suggested “You can move by looking at where you want to go. Think ‘move there’, ‘stop’, ‘higher’, ‘lower’”

There were a few false starts, near crashes as they approached each other, but after twenty minutes they were adept at moving around the cavern, changing direction, stopping, and landing as well as rising. “Soula, you surprised me, you are as quick as George. Now, do you feel like flying outside in the night air?”

“Why not?” George answered. Soula agreed.

“Then we will fly to the cave entrance. Lydia, this time you can go home, there is nothing else to see.”

“Goodbye George and Soula.”

Petros took to the air and floated quickly towards the cave that led to the surface, the one they designated the main entrance. The three flew out of the entrance and hovered over the hillside. A fat, half moon was rising.

“Some tips. Don’t fly too low, you can crash into buildings and trees, and people will notice you. If you can see your destination, you can fly directly towards it. If you can’t see your destination, you will have to recognise landmarks and fly to them, or follow rivers or roads. And of course, things look different from up here. You won’t always recognise your destination even when you can see it. I am going to lead you to a near by village, and then you can fly back here. If you are feeling tired, call out to me. You might need to land. Follow me.”

Petros flew off at a moderate pace, twice as fast as walking. Once George and Soula caught up, he increased the pace, until they were all flying at about the speed of a galloping horse. They flew directly over the village, and landed in a field beyond the houses.

“Now you make your own way home. Soula, you first, I’ll give you five minutes, then I’ll send George after you. George, close your eyes, I don’t want you watching which direction Soula flies.”

Soula took off and flew in the direction of the hill visible in the distance.

“I am very surprised that Soula can do this. But we know they pick up our powers, and it is obvious that women can learn to fly. I will have to pick a few more to teach now.”

“Soula is a powerful human servant. It’s a privilege having her. I’d suggest you pick the most powerful ones first.”

“They seem to have as much power as we do. I worry that one day the women will decide they don’t need us.” Petros confided.

“But doesn’t their power come from us? So they will be as powerful as their master, but without us they revert to ordinary mortals. Soula told me their power starts to fade if their master releases them.”

“You’re right. I’ll have to remind Philippos of that.”

Ah, so Philippos feels threatened by the power the women have. Aloud, George asked “Have you any idea of when we’ll stage my daughter’s rescue?”

“Not yet. You and Soula need to be ready. The other human servants we take need to be trained. We need information about the layout of the town and its surroundings. I’m guessing at least a week, but Philippos will decide. There will be a new moon in nine days, I would want to be going in then, when the Turks will be blindest. So we’ll probably start the night before. Do you know how many women might be there?”

“I was told seven including Helena. I would hope we can rescue all of them.”

“We will do our best. It is always good to have some new girls.”

After a little while, Petros said “I think it is five minutes. Off you go.”

George rose into the air. Head for the hill, it’s a big landmark, and the cave is on this side. He flew fast, directly towards the hill, changing course when he recognised the boulder that hid the entrance. He landed in front of Soula. She hugged him.

Petros arrived a few minutes later. “Good. We’ll go to another village, and do the same. If either of you are getting tired, we’ll stop.”

After six villages, Petros announced “That’s enough. You can both go home. You both did well.”

$$ - Flying training and Invisibility Training

Petros and his trainee human servant Lydia

\* \* \* \* \*

Soula linker her arm through George’s. “I am really, really happy that we managed that. It was fun as well.”

“I’m proud of you, convincing Philippos to let you learn, and then learning. There was something I wanted to ask you about. There don’t seem to be any female vrykolakes. Do you know why?”

“There are many reasons. Philippos forbade it, but I think that was his pride, and his fear of powerful women. I think when he first set up this arrangement, he was thinking of a harem of women for his pleasure, and a walking larder, a flock of sheep.” Soula grinned. “What he got was a flock of goats. I don’t think he imagined we would become as powerful as our master.”

“Well, if all his victims either died, or became vrykolakes, he would have no idea that it was possible for a human servant to gain power.”

“We are not the only family of vrykolakes, I suspect that in other families there may be some female ones. But the main reason is that none of the women want to be what you are. Without us, you are monsters, killing for food, raiding villages. You have lost your humanity. Philippos’ grand idea must have come from God. We are your companions, your lovers, your servants, your food, but we are also your humanity. We keep you from being monsters, we help you to remember your humanity. We give ourselves to you so you don’t have to kill for food. You feed every day, yet no one dies. Philippos must have been inspired. We all know that we are saving you, and saving the lives of all those villagers out there. I said earlier we are not slaves. We are here because we want to be. We are here because we help you be nearly human. We will stay young and live as long as our master. And with our gift of blood to you, we save you from yourselves. We save your souls. Not one of us wants to be a vrykolakas.”

“I am touched. I hadn’t thought that through. You see us for what we are, and yet you love us, serve us, save us. Thank you Soula.”

Soula kissed him. “You were right when you said I am more than wife to you. You need a number of us. We have noticed that those men with more human servants are more human. I want to get you at least six, if I can. You will be a better person for it, more balanced, more human.”

“What amazes me is that you and Helena don’t seem to have any jealousy.”

“We have been lovers, we are both your human servants now, and we are bonded with each other as well as with you. Helena is spending the night with Athena, and you are not jealous either.”

“And I can’t explain that.”

Soula parted the curtain at the entrance to their home. “You lost your humanity, we give you some of ours. None of us are fully human any longer. Helena is out, we have the house to ourselves. There is nearly two hours to sunrise, and I will sleep most of the day. Would you like to freshen up, and see how many climaxes we can give each other? I want to try using my mind to pleasure you as well as my body, my lips and my tongue.”

“Is two hours long enough?” George laughed.

“No, but that is the time we have.”

“Let’s make the most of it.”

$$ - walking back to George and Soula’s home. Why are there no female vrykolakes?

- We don’t want to be. You are monsters. We keep you human. We are your humanity.

\* \* \* \* \*

George woke suddenly into stillness, rising from a black cloud, as he had the every day since the fever dreams, except that this time there were bright scintillating flashes on the periphery of the dark cloud. Somehow those flashes reminded him of Soula. It was roughly fifteen minutes before sunset. Soula was asleep, her head pillowed in his chest. There were two low voices talking, one was Helena, the other an unknown woman.

*That is Sylvia. If she wasn’t here, I’d jump you right now, and Helena would join in.* Soula said to George, mind to mind. She’d started that last night, during a hiatus in their lovemaking, on the basis that it enabled them to talk even when their mouths were full.

*What’s to stop me from jumping you right now?* George replied the same way.

*It would be disrespectful to Sylvia. I awoke when you did. Let’s freshen up so you can feed.*

George hopped out of bed and ducked behind the wall curtain, making his way to the area designated for ablutions. Soula followed him. Pegs on the wall held towels, a shelf held soap and wash cloths, and there was a bucket of cold water. Someone, presumably a stone mason, had made a small depression in the rock to allow the water to pool, with a small hole at the deepest part of the depression to allow the water to drain. Ingenious.

“He’s up early.” Sylvia’s voice said.

“It’s Soula’s influence.” Helena replied. “I think she pulls him out.”

“Do you know why?”

“Because I can.” Soula replied. “Hello Sylvia, we won’t be long.”

George sluiced water to wash off the soap, and took the towel Soula handed him.

*So it’s disrespectful to have sex in front of her, but not disrespectful to be naked in front of her?* George thought to Soula. It was like talking, but you had to push it to your intended listener. No one else could eavesdrop.

*Nudity is not disrespectful among us. Sylvia will be naked when she feeds you, but she hardly knows you. I think you’re dry enough.*

They stepped out from behind the curtain, and Soula performed the introductions. Sylvia was slim, as tall as George, with pale skin, black hair and dark eyes. Her long dark hair was pulled into a pony tail on the top of her head where it cascaded down over her shoulders, making her look taller than she was. With her small breasts she looked no more than sixteen.

“Can I ask how old you are, Sylvia?”

“I’m thirty eight. I am one of the girls who were born here. I have Turkish blood from my father, and I’ve been training as a human servant since I was fifteen. Does my Turkish blood put you off?”

“Not at all. I only asked because I thought you looked young. You’re actually older than I am, I’m thirty three.”

“After a few years you will find that age does not matter much. Let’s get the feeding over, we can talk afterwards.” Sylvia shed her clothes, and lay down on the bed.

“Direct. I like that. Where would you like me to bite you?”

“Crook of my left elbow, thank you. I hope you won’t hurt.”

“I’ve had no complaints so far. Let’s get you settled and relaxed.” George placed his left hand on her lower abdomen, just above her pubic hair, and began the process. He felt Soula’s mind presence, a soft touch. *Share that with all of us. We don’t like to be left out while you’re feeding.*

George did as he was bid. Helena quickly sat in a chair while Soula sat beside George, gently stroking his thigh. Sylvia lay back, lips parted, eyes half closed, looking like she was ready for sex.

*Sylvia is ready. You have to do this gently. Do not go too deep.*

George pressed with his right thumb and watched the veins at Sylvia’s elbow swell. He carefully pressed his fangs to puncture the vein, then drew back to let the blood flow, releasing the pressure at the same time. The rapture started, and he set two thoughts in motion. The first was to stop in about ten minutes. Soula agreed. The second was to share the rapture with all three women.

The rapture ended. George pressed his tongue against the punctures, and thought *heal now.* He could feel his power doing something for almost thirty seconds before it finished. Carefully he moved his tongue away, waiting for any renewed flow of blood. He licked once, and took his mouth away. The wounds were two pinkish scars, healing well. There was a glass of water positioned within his reach, and he sluiced his mouth, swallowing twice. Now he could drop the sexual excitement that still held the three women in his thrall.

“You did really well George, as if you had years of practice.” Soula said.

Sylvia stretched languidly. “I can’t remember the last time I enjoyed giving blood so much. I think I would like to rest for a few moments.”

“Thank you Sylvia. Please make yourself comfortable.” George said gently. His hand was still just above Sylvia’s pubic hair.

Soula put her other hand on top of George’s. “Rest Sylvia. Rest as long as you like.”

Helena was still clothed. “I think I should make coffee for everyone.” She stood and set to work.

George and Soula sat silently. She moved George’s right hand to cup Sylvia’s left breast, while then cupped Sylvia’s right breast with her hand. *Just cup it. Let her rest. Our power is reviving her. Would you like her as your human servant?*

*I hardly know her, but I suppose that doesn’t matter. She did well. I rely on your advice. Do you want her as number three?*

*Yes. I will ask her at the right moment.*

Eventually Helena returned with coffee. Sylvia yawned and sat up, resting her back against Soula’s chest. Soula rested her left hand in Sylvia’s lap.

“How do you feel now?” George asked.

“Refreshed. I’ve never felt this good after giving blood.”

“George may be new, but he’s powerful.” Soula said. “And he has two powerful human servants to help him. We have told you about George. Why not tell him a little about yourself?”

“Well, I was born here, I’ve lived all my life here, though I have visited the surrounding villages and a couple of nearby towns. I was baptised at the church of Saint Loukas.”

“You were? I didn’t think you people were into that.”

“Vrykolakes can’t enter a church, or walk on holy ground. We can, and every child born here is baptised at that church. The priest understands that the mother was raped by the Turks, and that we are looking after mother and child. We bring the child up to be Greek, and part of that is our religion.” Helena explained. “We also take the child to church for important days.”

“We have several bibles, we teach every child to read and write, and arithmetic.”

“Sounds like a good idea to me. I take it the other men approve?”

Soula laughed softly. “They are all Greek, once they were religious themselves. They want us to be happy, and they allow us to do this.”

Sylvia continued. “I can read and write, and do arithmetic. I can cook clean and sew. Not just mending clothes, I can measure and make them. When I was fifteen, I was sent to Philippos to learn about being a human servant. There were four of us, born about the same time - Artemis, Athena and Phoebe. We were close friends. Soula and Elektra were both with Philippos then. They both encouraged the four of us to become lovers. Does that shock you George?”

“Not any more. I’ve known about things like that for years, but usually people in the village are secretive about it.”

“We all like men, but it’s simpler with another woman. We were with Philippos for three or four years, then he gave us to Petros. A few years later he gave us to Stavros. Stavros didn’t like Athena’s brown skin, nor Phoebe’s looks, so he sent them away. We have still remained close though. Then about a year ago Stavros died, and all his human servants died except me and Artemis.”

“How did he die?” George interrupted. “And why to human servants die? Is that normal? Do you know why you didn’t?”

“He was on a raid. I was told a Turkish soldier managed to cut off his head. And human servants seem to die when their master dies. Soula, you know more about this.”

“We don’t really know why human servants die, but Elektra and I realised that most human servants are bonded only with their master, and they usually die when their master dies. But a number of the human servants are lovers with others, and many of them bonded themselves to each other as well. The ones who were bonded lovers survived. Maybe it’s about losing too much power, and if you are bonded to others then they can support you. Spread the load around. So Helena and I are bonded, Elektra and I are bonded. Sylvia and I are bonded. There are a few others. When Philippos sent me away, he broke his bond with me, but Elektra did not. And anyone we take on as a human servant will bond with all of us, not just you.”

“I’m for anything that promotes harmony in the household. You and Helena seem very happy with our arrangement.”

“We know you are, George. Now Sylvia does. Which brings me to something I want to ask you, Sylvia. George currently has only two human servants. We want to find him several more, ones that will all be happy together. Would you like to become George’s human servant, and bond with the three of us?”

“Yes, I would. I’ve been free for too long. I like you George, I hope you like me.”

“I like you very much.”

“Thank you.” Sylvia replied. “Soula, would you like to see whether Artemis, Athena and Phoebe are suitable? They are all on the free list.”

“I would. Athena will feed George tomorrow, we’ll ask her after that. I will talk to Artemis and Phoebe later tonight. Would you like to start now? As soon as we finish our coffee.”

“Yes. I hope to get to know Helena well too.”

“Oh, you will get to know me very well.” Helena replied. “I want you and me to be lovers too.”

Helena collected the coffee cups and placed them on the bench in the alcove they used for food preparation. “I feel overdressed with you three.” She divested herself of her clothes and placed them neatly over a chair, then sat on the bed beside George. He put his arm about her, and she placed an arm about him.

“We all have to touch Sylvia.” Soula ordered.

Helena placed her other hand on Sylvia’s thigh; George took Sylvia’s closest hand; Soula placed her free hand on George’s. “We all share our power with Sylvia, and we all say the same words - ‘Sylvia, I bind you to me, and I bind myself to you.’ Sylvia, you know to say a different name each time. Keep repeating until I tell you to stop.”

“I don’t feel any different.” George said when they finished.

“George, you should find you can feel Sylvia’s presence now, just as you can feel Helena’s and mine.”

“Uh, yes. I didn’t notice Helena’s either.” Eyes closed, he could feel the presence of all three women. *Sylvia, can you hear me speaking mind to mind?*

*Yes George, I can. Just be aware you need to target me for a private conversation. Otherwise all your human servants will hear you.*

*Soula told me that. I’ll check with Helena and Soula. Helena, can you hear me speaking mind to mind? And did you hear me speaking with Soula or Sylvia?*

*I can hear you now. I didn’t hear you talking with Sylvia or Soula.*

*That’s great. This one is for all of you. Reply if you can hear me this time.*

All three replied. Soula added aloud “I hoped you would realise you could talk with any of your human servants mind to mind once I showed you how to talk with me. Well girlfriends, what should we do now?”

“I think it’s time George had sex with all three of us.” Sylvia suggested.

“I agree, let’s work him hard.” Helena added, smiling saucily.

*Soula, do you think I’m up to this?*

“ Of course you are. Think back to yesterday, when Helena and I worked you hard. Was that too much for you?”

“No, it was a great deal of fun. But how would it work with three?”

“Much the same. Yesterday I rode your hips while Helena rode your face, and when you made both of us climax we swapped places. We continued swapping places regularly until you climaxed. You can do that with three or more quite easily. The one riding your hips gets off, the one riding your face moves to ride your hips, and someone else rides your face. Think about it.”

“It’s a simple way to ensure every human servant gets an equal amount of sex and an equal number of climaxes.” Helena added. “It stops their master from playing favourites.”

“You can use any position you like, but this is easy for us to change places.” Sylvia added. “Some positions, especially you in top, can be quite disruptive, and put you off your stride, if you take my meaning. Were you thinking it would be one on one?”

“It might have flashed through my mind.”

“George,” Sylvia teased, “I do believe if you were a normal human, and we three were your normal human though luscious wives, you would want to do just one of us each night, leaving two of us wanting each night, and having to resort to female companionship for solace.”

George smiled at this. “When I was an ordinary human I had only one wife.” He bit back what he planned to say; what Christianity allowed was a moot point here. “And because she was the only one, we could have sex whenever we wanted. Now I have three luscious beauties I should do my ...”

“Not duty George. It is our pleasure and yours. We offer our honour and you honour our offer ...”

“That won’t do either, Sylvia.” Soula corrected with a smile. “We offer our charms, we offer ourselves, we offer our pleasures. We offer to pleasure him and he offers to pleasure us. We are his, and he is ours.”

“All right ladies, let’s say I will pleasure each of you whenever you wish, and as you wish, and you will do the same for me. So show me how this works with three women.”

“Yours is the easy part.” Helena said. “You get to lie on your back on the bed. We do all the hard work.”

“That’s why we’re so fit.” Sylvia joked.

“George has to work at our pleasure.” Soula countered. “What you do George is to use your mind to pleasure us like when you feed. You continue doing that until I tell you to stop. We will start by arousing you so that we can all ride you. It would be good if we could use our minds to arouse you the way your arouse us. So lie back George, close your eyes, and get to work pleasuring us.”

George could feel hands and lips and other less identifiable body parts sliding pleasurably over his skin. Once Soula asked him to lower the intensity of what he was doing so the women could think. When she judged him sufficiently aroused Sylvia knelt over his hips and began riding him slowly. Helena knelt over his face, while Soula seemed to be kissing and fondling Helena. George could also feel the mental presence of all three women, and sense something of the physical sensations. He wondered whether they could feel his.

Five times Soula asked George to bring the three of them to climax, and then the three would change places. Then Soula said mind to mind *George, you are close, only another one or two minutes. Please share this with us. If possible, bring us to climax at the same time.*

*I’ll do my best.*

In just over one minute and fifteen seconds George climaxed, long and strong, with incredible energy running through him. The women climaxed as well, and they brought hot energy with them. Waves of pleasure seemed to wash through him, vibrating, tingling; and he felt the echoes of similar pleasure for each of his lovers. If it weren’t for his strength, Sylvia’s weight on his face might have been suffocating. The who process took several minutes before it all faded.

Soula slumped forward onto his chest, her eyes wild. Sylvia fell forward, then rolled so her body rested mostly on the bed, not George. Helena fell backwards into a chair, gasping.

“My god George, what was that?” From Soula.

“And I thought you knew what you were doing.” George felt himself settling, grounding.

“I’ve never had that happen before. Sylvia, grab hold of Helena’s arm, we need to balance everything.”

George could sense all three women in his mind, bright swirls that were contracting, meshing with him. “I don’t want to move. Helena, are you all right? Can you get on the bed with us?”

“I don’t think I can walk, my legs are shaking so much. Wow, what happened?”

With Sylvia’s and George’s help Helena staggered to the bed where she fell across George and Soula. George put an arm about her, Sylvia pulled on her upper arm, while Soula grabbed one leg and lifted. With a bit of pulling and pushing Helena lay beside George, with her upper leg hooked around Soula and George’s leg. Sylvia slid along the bed until she could do much the same from the other side. George wrapped one arm about Helena and the other about Sylvia.

“I don’t think any of us are going anywhere for a time. Soula, do you have any idea what happened there?”

“When we women climax, there is always energy that comes from somewhere, vibrating, tingling. That felt like that, but on a much bigger scale. You men don’t release a lot of energy, you take ours, but when we climax we have energy to spare, so that’s fine. This time, you seemed to pull in lots of energy from somewhere else. That was a wild ride.”

“Do you think it will be like that tomorrow?” Helena asked.

“I hope so.” Sylvia said. “I’d like to do that again now, but somehow I don’t think I could manage it.”

“If we do what we did today, then I think we’ll get the same result when we do it with Athena.” Soula suggested.

*It’s too much effort to talk.* Helena broadcast. *Let’s rest, maybe sleep. But keep the mental connection going between all of us. That seems important to me.*

*I agree.* Soula added. *Let’s all lie on top of George. We seem to be like a ring, and there are vibrations flowing around us. See? There’s another one.*

*Oh yes, it’s passing through me now.* Sylvia commented.

It seemed to George that they were picnicking on the grass, in the partial shade of a bluebell plant that was as as tall as they were, and possessed of flowers the size of their heads. The tea was mint, and the cakes tasted of rose water. He shouldn’t be picnicking, he had things to do, such as rescuing his daughter. But that would happen on new moon. And there was one extra woman, wearing a blue dress. Ana?

Suddenly he was awake, full of energy. His three women opened their eyes at almost the same time, all of them wide awake. He started to tell them of his dream, and they all remembered the same dream, and added snippets. “Yes, Ana was there.” Soula said. “Don’t ask me to explain. This happened for a reason, it may happen next time, or it may happen only when we add a new human servant. We’ll see. George, you and I need to practice flying, and you need to practice invisibility and your sleep power. Helena and Sylvia, I think you should both meet with Petros tonight to see if he is willing to train you. Otherwise we will train you. Let’s freshen up and get dressed.”

“I can’t believe how long it took me to climax. Longer than yesterday, I’m sure.” George said to Soula as they ducked behind the curtains into the area designated for washing.

“You might as well get used to it. I think all you menfolk are like that. It has an advantage - you managed to satisfy all of us twice.”

“Be happy George,” Sylvia added, “if you were still a one minute wonder you wouldn’t be able to satisfy even one of us.”

“And that’s another reason to have sex with several women at the same time. Imagine grinding away in the same woman for half an hour. She’d have terrible chafing.” Helena added.

“So it’s all for the best. I’m fine with it if it keeps you three happy.”

“I’d like to get us another three to five women.” Soula said. “How do you two feel about that?”

“I’m happy if we get Athena.” Helena said. “I just have to like the others.”

“And you’ll try for Artemis and Phoebe. Elektra would be good, but don’t think Philippos will release her. I’m sure I like whoever you select for George.”

“Where will they all sleep?” George asked. “I am assuming I have no say in this other than I trust Soula’s judgment.”

“There are several vacant rooms on either side we can use. But most women have there own room. Helena still uses hers.” Soula replied. “And I will choose the best for you, George.”

“I’m happy to move up here.” Sylvia said. “I’m sharing with Philomena, one of Yannis’ women. I have a few things to move though.”

“A second bed would be excellent.” Soula decided. “But you can take left or right room for anything else that’s big. Whichever you choose will become yours officially.”

“I will help you move.” Helena offered. “Let’s take a look next door, we’ll have to sweep whichever you choose.”

“George and I have to meet with Petros. Talk mind to mind if you need me urgently. Otherwise we’ll be back towards dawn. Leave me some food please.”

Once they were out of earshot of their home, Soula said “One thing I want to keep between you and me for now is that not only will you take a long time to climax, but your seed will not grow inside any of us. The only children in our village are the ones fathered by normal human men. According to Philippos no vrykolakas has fathered a child, either with a human servant or a human. But I am not to tell anyone.”

“Then that’s the real reason he banned making female vrykolakes.”

“I don’t understand.”

“You are thinking our seed is dead. Philippos probably told you that. But what if breeding vrykolakes with humans is like breeding sheep with goats? The seed doesn’t grow unless the male puts it into a female of the same species. Possibly Philippos even encountered a female vrykolakas and made her pregnant, or met one who was. But Philippos doesn’t want to breed monsters, so he bans making female vrykolakes. Petros probably knows as well, and he’s keeping it secret too. You and I had better keep that our secret as well.”

“Yes, I won’t tell the others. Philippos can have a small band of monsters and he can control how many there are. And he has a much larger band of women, powerful women, who can protect his monsters while they sleep, and stand up to Turkish soldiers during the day. I will stick to telling all the new girls that none of us want to be monsters.”

$$ - Sylvia - 1 of four dark haired, born in cave. Artemis, Athena, phoebe

\* \* \* \* \*

There was a bevy of beauties with Petros, twelve in all, four sets of three human servants. “Soula, you should start training two more of George’s human servants in what I’ve taught you.” He had the twelve attempting to float into the air. “Will you show these ones that you can fly? Good. Girls,” he raised his voice, “Soula will demonstrate that she can fly.”

“It’s easy enough once you get past your fear of falling, and your belief that you can’t. Watch.”

Soula rose into the air, circled the group, sped off in the direction of the spring and returned. Then she paused by a woman named Sophia, wrapped her arms about the woman, and lifted her into the air. Soula flew again towards the spring and returned, gently depositing Sophia on the ground.

“I was showing Helena today. She can fly as well now.”

“All right. Thank you Soula. Girls, Soula and Helena learned to do that. You can too. Start by rising into the air, hovering for three breaths and landing. Wait on the ground for three breaths, and repeat. I need to give instructions to George and Soula, follow me please.”

Petros took to the air and led them fifty meters away. “Soula, what you demonstrated was to be the first part of today’s lesson. Can George do that? No? Well, when I go back to the girls you can test him on picking you up and carrying you back and forth.

“Once he can do that, the next thing is moving other objects with your minds.” Three head sized rocks rose into the air, danced about each other, and settled back. “When you can do what I just did, move up to bigger rocks until you can move something at least twice your weight. Always set them down gently.

“Once you can do that, you can start on throwing and catching. Again, start small. Throwing means fast, hard, and hitting a target. You can use that as a weapon. Catching you can start easy, but you work up to catching a large rock thrown fast. It could be a weapon thrown at you, it could be a boulder, or a cannon ball. I don’t think you’ll manage all this in one day, but that will give you something to continue tomorrow. Are you both happy with that? Good. I have to see what the girls are doing.”

“Thanks Petros.” George called out after the man’s departing back. “He seems to think he has his hands full with twelve women.”

Soula laughed. “When you woke, you thought three women were three hands full. Now we will see if you can handle two hands full of me. You have to fly me over to the spring and back.”

Lifting and moving rocks proved easy, throwing them proved hard. They tended to drop to the ground as soon as they were released. George finally managed to hit their target by holding the rock while he moved it as fast as he could all the way to the target.

“That’s the way you do it! It isn’t really throwing.”

As soon as Soula knew what to do, she copied him. “A hit! So that’s lifting, moving and throwing covered. Petros’ girls have left already. Catching can wait until tomorrow. Let’s go home. I want to eat, I want to have sex with you, just you and me if the others are asleep, and I want to fall asleep in your arms. Let’s fly.” She grabbed his hand, and they flew home.

There was a small pot of lamb stew keeping warm on the hearth. They could both smell it as they entered. Helena and Sylvia were asleep in presumably Sylvia’s bed, snuggled up together.

*Good, they’re asleep.* Soula said mind to mind. *I don’t want to wake them. That stew smells wonderful.*

*It doesn’t smell very nice to me. I’ll get us water and watch you eat.*

*I’ll try to share my enjoyment of it.*

When he returned with two cups of water, Soula gently touched his mind. The lamb stew suddenly smelled and tasted wonderful. She reached the bottom of the pot, and George asked *Can I taste it?*

*Your stomach might rebel. But one spoon, mostly juice, no meat.*

Soula took the spoon from her mouth, licked it suggestively, then carefully picked up the juice at the bottom of the pot.

*What about that shred of meat there?*

*You might be all right. There you go, baby.* Soula carefully steered the spoon into his mouth, feeding him like a baby. *Let me know if you feel nauseous.*

When Soula ate for him, he enjoyed the experience immensely. Now it was in his mouth it tasted like rotting meat. He gagged and spat into his cup. *I can’t swallow. Perhaps a little juice only?*

Soula scooped up a very small amount of juice in the bottom of the spoon and watched him put that in his mouth. Her face showed her concern. George swallowed carefully, then grabbed her water to wash it down.

*Lamb is off the list. I do not like the taste of the stew, and the shred of meat tasted rotten. Too ambitious. Sorry.*

*Water, coffee, wine are all fine. Maybe a little vegetable broth, no solids. Then we can try fruit. Don’t hurry, you have hundreds of years to work up to lamb stew. Go and get us fresh water to drink while I wash the pot and utensils.*

George told his stomach it was just water and to deal with it. By the time Soula had finished with the dishes he was fine again.

*Are you good for sex?*

*I’m fine now. I was just a bit queasy for a few minutes.*

*Let’s freshen up and go to bed. I want an hour of your loving. Then I can fall asleep in your arms.*

$$ - training

\* \* \* \* \*

George woke suddenly, the black cloud falling away. There were three bright sparks around the periphery, and their brightness made three dents in the gloom of the cloud. They stayed hovering around him. Soula was pillowed on his chest, also awake. It was fifteen minutes before sunset. Helena, Sylvia and Athena were talking in low voices.

*Did you sleep here the entire day?* George asked.

*No, I woke around noon. I spent some time teaching Helena and Sylvia what you and I learned. We cleaned the room to the left, it will be suitable for Athena and her children. I returned to our bed two hours ago and slept some more.*

“George is awake.” Sylvia said.

“How do you know?” Athena asked.

“I’m his human servant, I can feel him in my mind. When he’s asleep it feels fainter.”

“Do you think he’ll want me as his servant? Soula said he might.”

*Many of the men find her ugly because of her dark skin.* Soula remarked to George.

*I think she’s attractive. Different, but attractive.*

Soula said aloud “George would like you to become his servant. We will see how the feeding goes, and discuss it over coffee.” She swung out of bed, standing naked and proud. “Come on George, show Athena what you are offering.”

George slid out of bed beside Soula. “I find you attractive Athena, but we hardly know one another. I will take advice from my existing servants. Soula and I need to freshen up, then we’ll see to feeding.”

Naked, Athena did not conform to the accepted standard of female beauty. Her hips were narrow, her breasts were small, and her muscles defined and wiry. Lying on his bed with one knee up, she was obviously female, and she had a lovely personality. She made George feel comfortable with her spread in front of him, and he was happy with her. His three human servants sat on the bed beside Athena, each with one hand on her body.

Feeding proceeded very much as it had yesterday. George placed his left hand just above her pubic area, Soula linked her mind with his and guided him through the process as she had with Sylvia. George bit Athena in the crook of her left elbow and shared the rapture with everyone.

Afterwards they let Athena rest while Helena prepared coffee. Helena placed the coffee on the table and sat in a chair. Sylvia joined her. George placed his hands on Athena and she sat up, inspecting her elbow. “It’s completely healed! No one’s done that for me before. Thank you.”

“Just a courtesy detail. We can’t have you bleeding. You might be a little dizzy though.”

“That’s why we all do it lying down. I’m rested now, there shouldn’t be any dizziness. That coffee smells good.”

The coffee was poured into small cups and sipped. “Hot, sweet and strong. Just like my women.” George quipped.

“Well, that means I can say that we would like to add our coffee coloured sister to George’s collection.” Soula said. “Your feeding went very well, and you have several lovers here already. Athena, would you like to become George’s human servant?”

“I would. Very much. I know three of you well, and I look forward to getting to know George well. There’s just one thing, what do I do about my foster children?”

“You can move them next door if you like.” George replied. “The girls spent some time cleaning up that room.”

“You don’t have to move if you don’t want to,” Soula added, “but you will be walking forwards and backwards a lot. We thought it might be easier here. ”

“I think if my foster daughters can be part of an extended family like this one that would be great. They need a lot of acceptance and loving and a normal, loving family.”

“We’ll help you move them in the morning, or tonight if you prefer. They’ve met George already.”

“I’ll let them decide. When do we formalise it?”

“When we finish our coffee. We’ll be binding you to all of us, not just George; but you already know that.”

Sylvia and Helena slipped out of their clothes. Athena was told to lie on the bed while everyone else sat on the bed and put one hand on Athena and the other on the person next to them.

“How many people do you think can sit on this bed before it collapses?” George asked.

“It’s been reinforced.” Soula replied. “It should take at least fifteen, and you’re not getting that many human servants. We need enough so that you can feed every day without taxing any of us, and few enough that you can have sex with all of us every day, and satisfy all of us at least once. Based on yesterday’s performance you can handle six women. Everybody ready?”

Soula gave the same instructions as yesterday, and they started the process. When they finished George found there was another glowing light flitting around the periphery of his mind. *Athena, can you hear me? If you can, nod, then try to reply to me. If you focus on me, only I will hear you reply. If you can’t focus, the others will hear your reply.*

*Yes George, I can hear you clearly.*

“And so can we.” Soula responded. “We’ll have you practising later. Right now we are going to spend thirty or forty minutes pleasuring George while he pleasures all of us. I think you remember what we did when you were training with Philippos.”

“Sylvia told me all the details of what you did with George yesterday. Do I go first?”

“You will, but first George warms up all of us while we all warm him up. One day I hope to do that with our minds the ways George does. For now, we get physical.”

George lasted nearly thirty five minutes. They made one complete cycle, and were on stage three of the second cycle. Sylvia was riding George’s hips, Helena George’s face. Athena was kissing and fondling Sylvia, Soula was kissing and fondling Helena.

*Here it comes.* Soula warned everyone. A wave of energy rolled through them, over them, tumbling them like surf. George felt tossed around, but around him four bright sparks danced in the turmoil, seeming to steady him, holding him fast in a net of light. Somewhere down below him was the dark cloud, roiling tendrils linked to him, besmirching his light with smut. Then with a spurting hiss everything subsided. George was on the bed, wide awake, four naked women piled on top of him.

“Oh wow! I was not ready for that. I don’t think I can walk, my legs are shaking.”

“Is it just me, or are there two forces warring over me?” George asked. I feel there is a dark cloud dragging me down, but each time we do this, there is some light that blows away some of the dark.”

“Well George, you are a monster, though I don’t mean to be rude.” Soula said. “I sense something dark about you, especially in dreams. Ana told you and us that we would be your salvation. Another reason for you having as many strong women around you as we can find. It is my fervent wish that we can save your soul.”

“Do you mean that all of us having sex with him will save his soul?” Athena asked.

“No, this is something to do with the power we have, and the power George has. I cannot explain, we will have to see how things develop. Athena, did you enjoy the sex?”

“Enjoy? That has to be the best sex I’ve ever had. Sylvia told me that happened yesterday. How does yesterday compare with today?”

“About the same.” Sylvia said.

“Stronger.” George said.

“About the same.” Helena said.

“Stronger.” Soula said. “We’ll see how it develops. Perhaps some spirit or angel will advise us in our dreams. Let’s freshen up, and then we can help you move house if you like Athena.”

It took no more than an hour to move Athena and her foster daughters Ariana and Chloe into the large room on the left of Soula’s and George’s. Helena stayed to help Athena arrange things, while George, Soula and Sylvia flew off to meet Petros.

“I’ve been wondering about yesterday and today, about those surges of power when we all have sex. I’ve been trying to identify what is different about me. It dawned on me while we were moving things.” George said to Soula while they flew. “When I woke as a vrykolakas, I had almost no emotions, no feelings. I knew Ana was dead, but there was nothing there, no feelings, as if she were a stranger. Now, sadness over her death is returning, but not the anger. We sort of said goodbye, through you Soula, but we did talk. She was angry, but now she has two of our three children in her care again.”

“No, she’s not angry now. She is sad for you, she doesn’t know what to do about you. But she told me that an angel had told her that some of your human servants can help you. I am one of them, I am not sure who the others are. Time will tell. I think Sylvia, you might be another, and that Helena might not be up to the task.”

“I will do whatever I can to help George.”

“I know, and I am glad for that. George, a vrykolakas is naturally angry, has hatred towards humans, and rejoices at hurt to others. You were turning into that monster, I pulled you back from the brink. You were dying because you had no wish to become the monster. I don’t apologise for saving you from the abyss. You can now save your daughter, do something good. We women, your human servants, give you some of our humanity. I told you that before. You are beginning to rediscover what it means to be human. I don’t know how many women you need to restore your humanity. Maybe we can’t do that. But the fact that your feelings are returning means that we are helping you. I think it significant that the wave of power did not come when there was just Helena and I, it needed Sylvia to make it happen. Athena is another who will help you. Sylvia, will you help me in this? Help me to gather as many powerful women as George needs. I don’t care if it’s ten or twenty or fifty, as long as it helps George. Although, I think more than ten might be difficult to manage. You need sex with all of us every day. Maybe more often.”

“Let’s give it our best.” Sylvia said. “I feel I have a mission now, a purpose.”

When they returned before dawn, Helena was absent. “She is sleeping with Athena. Can you tell George?” Soula asked.

“Until you told me I didn’t know, but now it is obvious. You girls need to eat, and we all need to sleep.”

“And before we sleep we can give each other pleasure.” Soula said. “Sylvia, will you sleep with us?”

“Gladly.”

$$ - athena (has foster daughters ariana, chloe)

\* \* \* \* \*

George woke suddenly, as seemed to be his habit now. A dream fragment faded - his four women dressed in white, and someone in a blue dress - Ana? A conversation he could not recall. Then four bright lights, small, one above him, three below him, a tetrahedron he remembered from his study of geometry. The four sides of the tetrahedron were gossamer nets of light. A roiling black cloud somewhere below, tendrils like an octopus grasping him. The nets of light were no match for the inky tentacles, which passed straight through. It seemed to George there were fewer than last time. Progress?

Soula and Sylvia were lying on each side. “We both woke when you did.” Sylvia said.

“Thank you both for being here when I wake. Did either of you dream?”

“Being with you when you wake is our pleasure.” Soula said. “There was a discussion with Ana, but I can’t recall what was said.”

“The woman in the blue dress?” Sylvia asked. “The three of us were there, but I don’t recall what was discussed either.”

“Well, that makes three of us. Perhaps Ana is nagging us to rescue Helena?”

“Yes, I believe she is anxious for her daughter to be rescued. I think I have explained to her that it will happen around new moon, but she is impatient. She does not appreciate that if we are not ready when we attempt the rescue it will fail, and could lead to deaths as well.” Soula responded.

“That’s another five or six days isn’t it?” Sylvia asked.

“I think the idea is that the moon rises after three or four in the morning.” George replied. “So it could be three days away. But we are awaiting surveillance reports of the town and surroundings. We also need somewhere to hide during daylight. Why can’t they report mind to mind?”

“Because that seems to be limited to human servants and their master. Petros didn’t think to include a couple of human servants who could report to someone back here. Let’s wash, Artemis will be here soon.”

“Soula, would it be possible to get hold of a razor to shave with? I have been meaning to ask since I first woke up.”

Sylvia chortled. Soula smiled sweetly. “Don’t bother with shaving, it will only grow back to where it is within an hour. The same with cutting your hair. On the plus side, it isn’t growing any longer.”

“Soula, I was hoping to see the expression on his face when his beard grew back.”

“Would you really laugh at George like that?”

“No, not laugh. That would hurt his feelings and I won’t do that. But it would have been fun to watch.”

“I might have laughed with you.” George noted. “Is that Artemis?”

“Yes.” Sylvia replied. “Let me help you dry yourself.”

“George, hair regrowth is the same for human servants.” Soula said. “When we are ordinary humans we pluck and trim it, and it regrows. Once we are bound as human servants it stops growing. Mostly that’s good because plucked areas remain bare and trimmed areas stay trimmed. But if I were to cut my hair, or pluck out all my pubic hair, it will regrow to what it was within an hour. So before we become a human servant we should groom ourselves because that’s how we’ll stay.”

When George was dried to their satisfaction, Soula pushed aside the curtain, waited while both women linked arms with George, then the three of them walked through.

“Hello Artemis, this is George. George, Artemis.”

“Hello Artemis, welcome to our home.”

Artemis was well named. Her boyish figure included slim hips, broad shoulders, wiry muscles and a flat chest. Her black hair was cut in a short bob, and her light brown eyes were alive. She was dressed in dark coloured trousers and a man’s shirt.

“Hello George, this isn’t really a social call. I’m here to feed you, you’re going to pleasure me. I am hoping you will pleasure me so well that my knees will be weak and I’ll have trouble walking. And if you do, I’ll be sociable and we can chat.”

“I think we can manage that. I’ve not had any complaints so far? Have I Soula?”

Soula looked amused. “We are all very happy with George. Well, get under and lie on the bed. Where would you like to be bitten?”

“Crook of me left arm thanks.”

When George started the warming up process, Artemis murmured “This is good. It feels like you’re doing things with your tongue. Soula you’ve been teaching him.” Soula was seated on Artemis’ right, Sylvia was sitting behind her, cradling Artemis’ head in her lap. Helena was seated at the other end of the bed by Artemis’ feet, cradling Athena between her legs.

“I know what I like, and that’s what I taught him. It gets better.”

When it came time to bite, Artemis whispered “George, don’t you dare stop what you’re doing.”

“Brace yourself.” Sylvia cautioned.

George bit, then shared the rapture. There were sighs and little moans of pleasure, but little other sound. Eleven minutes later, George stopped feeding and sealed the wound, healing it. Only then did he drop the sexual pleasure line he had been sharing with all the women.

“I think it must be my turn to make coffee.” Soula said.

“I’ll help.” Helena said. “I think we need to make two pots, they’re only small.”

When the coffee was served, Artemis sat up. “That is definitely the best feeding I’ve ever had. What did you do George?”

“That’s what I feel when I’m feeding. I share it with you. It the same principle as sharing a sexual feeling with all of you. I decide I want to do it, and it happens.”

“Well George, I promised you a social visit if you did well. I’m keeping my promise now. I will feed you whenever you want if you can do that each time.”

“That’s an easy promise to keep....”

*Stop there.* Soula said mind to mind. *I must ask her.*

“Artemis, you originally said you did not want to commit to more than one feeding.” Soula said. “Does this mean you will commit to feedings on a regular basis?”

“Every week if you’ll let me.”

“We would like you to do that. But we want you to become George’s human servant. That way you would have regular feedings, like today, and share with the rest of us.”

“But then I’d have to have sex with George as well.”

“George could have had sex with you after feeding, and you would not have complained.”

“He earned that right. I enjoyed what he did, it was much better than leaving my legs shaking. I could promise him sex each time I feed him.”

“If you will promise him that, we will make you his human servant. But I think you know we will bind you to all of us, not just him.”

“Oh, I am very happy to be bound to all of you women. I accept. I will be happy to become George’s human servant on those terms.”

Soula smiled saucily. “I thought you might. George is looking a little puzzled, perhaps you could explain before we bind you.”

“Bind me and I will explain everything to him. Please do it this way. You know I will honour any commitment I make.”

“And as his servant, you will have to obey if he asks.”

“Of course, but I know George will be content with what I wish to give. I know he will not step beyond that.”

“Well, I never beat my wife, or ordered her to do anything. I only ever asked. She could always refuse.” George said, sounding a little bemused by the conversation.

“And that’s how George treats his human servants. He doesn’t order, he asks. That is why I want to be his servant. Please do it now, then we can have sex, and an explanation, in whatever order you wish.”

“I suggest we go from binding straight into sex. Artemis, please lie on the bed, the rest of us will sit around you.”

Everyone got onto the bed naked, and Soula conducted the binding. George noted that Artemis, like Sylvia and Athena, had plucked all the hair from their genitals while leaving a trimmed strip at the front. Helena and Soula hadn’t plucked that area, but had trimmed it short.

After Artemis was bound, Soula organised their sex. Artemis was to be first to ride George’s hips with everyone taking their turn, and finishing with Soula. “Once we have all of George’s human servants we can charge the order as we like.” Soula explained.

“I am happy I get to enjoy all of George’s women. George warm me up before I climb on you.”

“I always warm everyone up before we start. You want to enjoy what we’re doing.”

They cycled through one complete round and were partway through the second when Soula decided to halve the time between the women’s climaxes. They moved rapidly from Sylvia to Helena to Soula. *George has about a minute. Everyone get on the bed. I’ll try to make this as slow as possible.* Soula declared as she settled herself.

The climax rolled over them all, just as powerful as yesterday, but lasting longer. Wave after wave of pulsating, vibrating energy, bringing pleasure so strong as to be almost excruciating, along with bright flashes of light like coloured lightning, and strange sounds like snatches of music. It seemed to George that he and the five women were inside a thundercloud being tossed around. He and Soula seemed to be anchoring all of them.

And then, within a few heartbeats, everything faded out, and George found himself buried under five naked women. Artemis was sitting on his face, but she backed up to sit on his chest.

“Wow, George. If you can do that, I’ll have sex with you whenever you want. That really was something special.”

“I’m very happy about that Artemis, but you won’t be alone.”

“Yes, of course. That’s why Soula makes all of us take turns.”

“Let’s all sit around the table.” Athena suggested. “I’m not very comfortable lying on Helena.”

“You could always move down my body a bit, so your legs are on either side of my head.” Helena joked.

“That won’t help George, who is underneath all of us.” Soula admonished. “I am comfortable lying on top of George, but we should wash ourselves. Some of us should sleep, Sylvia and I will go with George for training. Athena, Artemis, will you join us?”

“Not Helena?” George asked as they all untangled themselves.

“No George, I can fly and move objects. I will stay with Athena’s foster children.”

Soula pulled back the curtain hiding the alcove used for washing. “There isn’t room for all of us with the curtain shut.”

George reflected on the oddness of communal washing. His wife would wash herself in private, and expected him to do the same. At least he could enjoy the view of five attractive naked women performing their ablutions.

Helena went next door to where Athena and her foster children slept. Athena stayed with the rest of the women. “Artemis, there are more spare rooms. Do you and Sylvia want to share the room next door, or would you prefer your own room next door?” Soula asked. “There is another room beyond that one that should suit Phoebe and her foster daughter, if she is suitable.”

“I think you’ll want another two women yet, so I’ll share with Sylvia.”

“What is this explanation you were going to give me?” George asked.

“Well George, all your human servants know that I am not attracted to men, only women. But the custom in our village is for the women to give blood to the menfolk, and in return the men folk give us sexual pleasure. If we become a human servant, they also give us power. If I stayed an ordinary woman, I would not have sex with any man. However, I give blood, and I enjoy the pleasure that is given in return. I have also found that a good man can give me pleasure to excess while having sex with me. I don’t find him sexually attractive, but I enjoy the sensations, and I am happy for that man to have sex with me that time. If I am bound to that man, he can command me to serve him and not make the sensations pleasurable enough. Stavros was like that, and I was happy to be released from him.

“I did not know you, and I told Soula I would have to meet you and feed you before I could consider being a human servant again. I met you, I like you as a person. As I said to you, you do not order your human servants around, you treat them as equals, and ask them. We can refuse. So I agreed to become your human servant. I went into the sex today knowing I would enjoy the four women you have, and that would help distract me from having sex with a man. You managed to distract me quite well yourself, and I enjoyed myself with you. And then that climax. I would perform distasteful acts with you simply to have that experience again. But with you, and your distractions, I never felt I was doing anything distasteful. I meant what I said, you distracted me so skillfully, and pleasured me so masterfully, that I want to do that with you often.”

“I thought you preferred women. But I also knew that Soula recommended you as my human servant, and you were considering accepting. That meant you could handle the position, and Soula thought you would suit me, just as the others suit me. Welcome to our little family.”

“I might have some gossip for you.” Sylvia said. “Did you know that all of Constantine’s women have been given to Stephanos, and all of Yannis’ women have been given to Loukas? I wonder why.”

“Well Sylvia, if we needed a new master, we’d want to go in a group.” Artemis said. “All five of us, right Soula?”

“You, we would, but I think I can hazard a guess.” Soula offered. “George, is Stephanos a carpenter or cabinet maker by any chance?”

“Yes, he is our village carpenter and cabinet maker.”

“Constantine was our carpenter and cabinet maker, and all his women were trained by him. Philippos insisted. What about Loukas?”

“He is a cobbler.”

“We don’t have a cobbler. I expect Philippos wants Loukas to train his women in his trade.”

“Makes sense to me. There’s probably enough work for all of them here.”

“Oh, we have a thriving industry making things for the surrounding villages as well. Furniture, clothes, cheese and more. Sometimes they give us gold or silver, often they pay us in farm produce, including live animals.” Soula said.

“Yes, there’s a farm area past the graveyard.” Athena said. “That’s where we keep sheep and goats. There’s also a vegetable patch, quite large. There’s also olive trees, and grape vines in several places around the hill. We go a lot of our own food, but we supplement with stuff we get from the near by villages.”

“Where are we going?” George asked.

Soula was leading him, Sylvia, Athena and Artemis around the side of the cavern past the rooms. Petros and his class was clearly visible on the training area, thanks to a number of lanterns placed there. Light spilled from the dwellings to light the sides of the cavern, and some ares like the training ground, the spring, the midden and a cluster of structures half way between them were lit with lanterns. The rest of the cavern was gloomy even to George’s eyes. And the area beyond the spring faded into inky blackness.

“The workshop area and bakery. You haven’t been there yet. We might train down near the spring, out of Petros’ and his group’s way.”

As they reached the end of the dwellings, George asked “We can all see well in the dark. But what about the humans that live here?”

“George, that’s what lanterns are for. My daughters take lanterns when they go beyond the dwelling area, and when we were children we did the same.” Athena said with a smile.

“It’s nearly pitch black to the children.” Sylvia added. “They can’t go anywhere without a lantern. But it also means that any Turks that come in here will be night blind.”

“They’ll see the lights. They’ll know there’s a settlement here.” George observed.

“I think we’ll stop them before they get this far.” Soula said. “Several of us guard the entrance in shifts all day and all night, every day.”

The cluster of structures turned out to be roofless rooms, sometimes little more than low stone walls. There were sacks of grain, sacks of coffee and other food stuff, huge piles of wood, and several structures that served to house equipment. In one of them Stephanos and two women were working.

“George, how goes it?”

“I am good, Stephanos. How are you?”

“Huh! I would never have asked for this to happen, but I am alive and I am here. Philippos has assigned me five women, and they are all carpenters and cabinet makers. We have a commission. Several in fact. Right now we are working on furniture for a young couple that will be married next May. This is Maria, and this is Rebeka.” Maria was brown haired, light brown eyes, and looked in her early twenties. Rebeka was dark haired and dark eyed, but looked about the same age. Both were dressed in men’s working clothes, and seemed to be making a set of drawers for a dresser. Stephanos was carving some delicate tracery as decoration.

George introduced his women. “We are alive, you and I. We make the best we can out of this. Soula has discovered that my eldest daughter is still alive, but captive of the Turks. We will be part of the party to rescue her. I have a purpose.”

“Helena is still alive? I am happy for you. She will live here of course, no one will marry her now. But she can be happy here.”

“We will heal her.” Rebeka said. “She will come to know happiness again. We are content to be here with Stephanos. He loves his work, he will come to love us, and we will come to love him.”

“George, you see that area over there?” Stephanos pointed. There was a wooden bench, nothing more. “Loukas will set up his equipment there. He has gone back to the village tonight to see what he can salvage from his work shop.”

They chatted for a few minutes more, then moved on. They came to another large area, this one with tables and chair, three large ovens, and some fire pits with stone blocks over the coals. “This is the bakery.” Soula said. “It is also the communal kitchen and refectory. We cook meals and eat here during the day. And there are large dishes and pans for cooking for a large number of people. Later tonight Leonidas and his women will come here to make tomorrow’s bread. He was a baker when he was human, he continued baking here. Once the bread is baked, the ovens can be used to cook what ever we want to eat.”

“This is more like a manor, with Philippos the lord.” George observed. “Everybody works together for the entire population. I know you call it your village, but a village is not as cooperative, not as communal.”

“It’s an extended family.” Soula said. “Mostly women, not related to one another, but we need to cooperate to survive, to be happy. Cooking food is best done centrally, since the men do not eat. We women come together to talk while we cook, and while we eat. And over there is a communal area for making clothes. We could make clothes at home, but it is always easier there are others around to assist when needed.”

They walked down to the spring. It welled from the ground, forming a large pool that overflowed, running off into the darkness. On one side a stone quay had been built. There were three lanterns on the platform, and a wooded box beside the middle one. There were two wooden structures - tripods with a long arm supporting a large bucket, between the lanterns.

“Guess what these are for George.”

“They are for getting water from a river instead of a well. I read about them when I was studying in Athens; Archimedes invented them. I don’t remember what they’re called. I’m guessing this side is deep, and that side is shallow? You’d have to wade into the water?”

Athena looked crestfallen, then brightened. “Actually the pool is very deep. The sides are treacherous - they extend out a meter or two, then drop. It’s hard to make out where they stop in the low light. It’s too easy to fall in.”

“They were building this platform when I first arrived. There had been several near drownings.” Soula said.

“What’s in the wooden box?” George asked.

“Oil for the lanterns, spare wicks, flint and steel and tinder. Whoever comes here should check the lanterns; we’ll do that now.”

Once that was done Soula led them around the pool to a large flattish area where she and George coached Athena and Artemis, and Sylvia practised what she had learned.

“I’d love to know how far this extends.” George said when they finally stopped. ”Has anyone followed the stream?”

“We did,” Artemis said, “just the three of us.”

“We were about twenty, still apprenticed to Philippos.” Athena added.

“We followed the stream all the way to where it disappears.” Sylvia continued.

“About half a kilometer.” Artemis continued, “it hits the far wall. There’s a pool and a crevice that it disappears into. It sounds like a waterfall so it must drop some distance.”

“And there are three or four caves on the left between the stream and the dwellings.” Artemis continued. “We didn’t go in them very far.”

“Philippos has a map that shows four on the left and three on the right.” Soula said. “Two of them don’t go very far, one comes out about half a kilometer away, but it’s narrow. He and Petros blocked it off. I’m not sure about the others. I will make a point of asking Elektra about it.”

-- Visit stephanos

- Details about bakery, kitchen,

$$ - artemis - muscular

\* \* \* \* \*

$$ - phoebe (pure, bright) - chubby, button nose

\* \* \* \* \*

$$ - Elina (sunray) - light blonde with hazel eyes and pale skin. 15, Phoebe’s foster daughter. Has 2yo girl Andromeda. Elina is made apprentice human servant.

\* \* \* \* \*

$$ -

\* \* \* \* \*

$$ -

\* \* \* \* \*

$$ -

\* \* \* \* \*

$$ -

\* \* \* \* \*

$$ -

\* \* \* \* \*

$$ -

\* \* \* \* \*

$$ -

\* \* \* \* \*

$$ -

\* \* \* \* \*

$$ - thalassa (auburn), thera, elektra (blonde), kyra (blonde/red)