



Season 1, Episode 2 – Berin Hold

Vex didn't sleep, not really. They took the bench she'd sat on away and let her dangle, the chain too short for her to sit or lie down. The best she could do was a sort of crouch, her knees and back aching from the effort to maintain the position. Every time she nodded off the collar caught her and choked her back into sputtering consciousness, flecks of drool pooling at her feet.

"Good morning, Vex."

Elly slid into the room and came close, holding a towel. Vex pulled away as the other half-elf reached for her, but Elly was persistent and Vex was exhausted. Elly mopped the sweat from Vex's

forehead, her neck and shoulders.

"You could let me go," Vex whispered. "If you bring me my bow, I can get you of here."

"I can't," Elly said, shaking her head sadly. She stepped away, looked like she was about to say something before stepping away again.

"She really can't."

The familiar voice of Lord Berin set Vex's teeth on edge. Pushing herself up the wall, she pulled herself to her full height and squared her shoulders, mustering every ounce of defiance in her. His responsive smirk was infuriating.

"Good morning, *pet*," he said, drawing out the last word and enjoying the hate in her eyes. "I have something for you."

She said nothing, not wanting anything from him but knowing how vulnerable she was.

I just have to last until Vax gets here, she thought. Vax will pick this lock, easy as breath, and then I'm going to kill this man. On the whole, Vex didn't enjoy killing, but she was looking forward to killing Berin.

He was walking forward with a bowl of what looked like fresh sliced fruit and buttered bread slices. She stared at it, trying to remember when the last time she ate was, felt her cheeks flush as her belly rumbled.

"Hungry?" Berin asked, smirking. He took out a slice of fruit and ate it, chewing slowly. "Ask nice and you can have everything in this bowl."

"Fuck you," Vex said. Berin smiled and ate one of the slices of bread. Toasted, she saw, and still warm. He smiled at her, licking his lips. The growl of her stomach was louder than the growl in her throat. He was reaching for another slice when she said

"Please."

"Please, what?"

"Please can I have the bowl of fruit." Vex kept her voice level, tried to make the words an insult. He shook his head and laughed, but he brought the bowl closer to her, sprinkling something that looked like sugar on the food before handing it to her.

"We'll work on tone, but it's a good start," he said. She stared at the food.

"What did you put on it?" she asked.

"A flavor enhancer," he shrugged. "I want you to know I can be kind."

She stared at the food a moment longer – if he wanted to poison her, he would have. If he expected her to think he was kind, he was more a fool than she thought, and that was something she could work with.

Her fingers traced a slice of fruit, pulled it out. She brought it to her nose and inhaled but the fruit smelled just like fruit and nothing more. It was the best thing she had ever tasted, and she felt no shame in devouring the rest.

"Do all nobles use this stuff?" she asked.

"No," he answered. "It's expensive, but Westruun is a trading town and I have some amount of pull. It allows me to indulge some appetites, and dabble in some curiosities. Also, that delicious

dust is a minor will suppressant, which will help with what comes next.”

What?

“What?” she asked, dropping the bowl, staring down at the two remaining slices of fruit. She felt like she was going to be sick. He pulled a scroll from a case and carefully unrolled it, leering at her before turning his attention to the scroll.

“፲፱፻፲፱ ፳፻፲፱ ፳፻፲፱ ፳፻፲፱,” Berin pronounced. Vex braced herself, but nothing happened.

“You’re pronouncing your ፳’s like ፳፻s,” whispered Elly, her head bowed.

Vex screamed, throwing the bowl at her. Elly did not move, letting it strike her in the head, fell to her knees clutching the bleeding wound Vex had inflicted upon her.

“፲፱፻፲፱ ፳፻፲፱ ፳፻፲፱ ፳፻፲፱,” Berin corrected, the letters on the scroll burning into a terrible blue light that caught and held Vex’s eye and moved around the room, lighting sigils inlaid on the wall that Vex had not seen until that moment. She tried to look away but the light faded and she didn’t feel any different. She tried to tell him that whatever he’d tried hadn’t worked but she couldn’t speak – not that her voice had been taken, but that she couldn’t move her jaw, her tongue, anything at all.

“You can breathe,” Elly whispered. “You can blink. Your eyes can move. That’s about all.”

For how long? Vex wanted to ask, but she could only think the words and neither of her captors seemed to care.

“Go and get yourself patched up, then come back here,” Berin ordered Elly. “I’m going to get started.”

Elly nodded and Vex found herself alone and unable to move with a man who regarded her like a possession.

He walked closer and she wanted to scream as his hands got closer but he didn’t touch her, instead unfastening the collar around her neck, freeing her from the wall but not from the magic. He dragged her into the center of the room, straining with her slight weight, made certain she was balanced before stepping back to admire her. He ran a finger across her cheek and she couldn’t even shudder.

“Cute,” he said, then stepped back and circled her, a shark with prey. She prayed to gods she did not think cared and none of them did, because not a single one did anything to help her.

Vax, now would be a good time for you to show up, she thought, but her brother did not appear.

He moved closer, casually running a hand across the small of her back and around to her midriff, smiling up at her.

“Look at these rags,” he said, unbuckling the belt resting on her hips. “I would have dressed you like a queen. I still might, after I teach you how to behave.” He wound the belt across his palm and he thought he meant to strike her, but he walked across the room and placed it on a table instead, smiling as he walked back to her with her own knife in hand.

“Pretty little thing,” he said, resting the point on her chest. “I wonder where you stole it from.” He used it to cut the clasps off the leather covering her torso. He could move her body as she could not, and it was easy for him to take the armor off her and back to the table. He folded it, letting it lie there.

When he returned it was without her knife. He unwound the knots of her gloves and pulled them off, bending down and brushing his lips and tongue against her knuckle. She wanted to recoil in horror but could do nothing except stand there with silent consent, her skin crawling as she could not. Her hands were bare and she felt embarrassed by that, trying to remember the last time anyone but her brother had seen her hands.

She was trying to regain control of herself and failing when he returned with her knife. She tried to scream, in rage, in horror, in fear, in rejection. She tried to do anything but stand there as the knife went to her dark blue long vest and severed the buckles, letting him open the jacket and pull it from her shoulders. He draped it over his arm as if she had offered it to him and walked away, letting her stew in silent fury and wonder what was the next thing he'd take from her.

Elly returned and he had the other half-elf hold her up as he brought a chair over to where she stood. She wanted to kick him as he cradled her foot in his hand and brought it up to his thigh, letting the heel of her boot rest on his leg. She seethed, breathing shallow as he undid the laces of her boot and loosened them, pulling the boot off one foot, pulling her stockings down off her ankle, heel, and toes. He placed her bare foot back down on the cool stone and then grabbed her other foot, repeating the process before moving the chair away.

"Not a lot left to you, is there?" he asked. He cupped her cheek and moved his hand down her neck, between her breasts, and she could do nothing as his touch moved down and down, slithering under the shell of her droptail shirt and tracing the border of skin and hemline.

She wanted to scream. She wanted to fight.

She wanted to do anything other than stand still while he did this.

His fingers found the laces of her pants and undid them, and though he was the one who knelt she was the one who felt like she was losing, he pulling her pants down from her hips, her thighs, he calves. He moved her legs enough to pull the comfortable fabric off and away, smiling at her as he did it.

"Don't worry," he smiled, holding her pants under her nose. "I didn't look."

He handed the pants to Elly and grabbed the hem of her dropshirt, pulling it up and over her shoulders, her neck her head, until the only thing she had left was the slim boyshorts cradling her ass. He folded the dropshirt and paused, unfolded it and felt around where it had covered her chest.

"Did you have padding on your chest?" he asked, smirking. He passed the dropshirt to Elly. "Was it for protection or are you ashamed of those little bee stings?" He reached out and twisted her left nipple and she managed to whimper, even if she couldn't protect herself.

His fingers found the center of her last little protection and she wanted to kill him, wanted nothing so badly as to murder this man in the most painful way she could imagine. She would take days to kill him. Weeks. She would find ways to resurrect him so that she could kill him and his little friend again and again and again...

Berin pulled at her underwear, fingers slipping in and brushing her inner thighs and higher, teasing the core of her. When he pulled his fingers up she could see the glistening wet there even as she blinked back her tears.

He whispered more soft insults to her but she didn't really hear them, lost in this moment of despair. She knew he was taking her panties off and she expected he would rape her, but instead he and Elly dragged her naked back to the wall and fastened the collar back around her neck. He

took all of her neat folded clothing and placed it on the floor close by, everything except her panties.

“Here,” Berin said, bunching them up while he forced her mouth open. “Something to chew on over night.”

He sprinkled some of the delicious dust on her bunched underwear and forced it into her mouth. It was the best thing she had ever tasted.



The second night Vex was missing, Vax spoke with some merchants.

The merchants did not survive.