

You stand at the great wooden doors into King Balaur's chambers, doing your best to ignore the twisting of your gut as you do. Behind you are Helda and Hugh, dressed in ceremonial veils as good concubines do. You yourself wear the thick, white paint of a traveling winemaker and *de facto* party-bringer.

Helda's sharp eyes practically pierce the back of your head as you wait for the doors to open. She's the unquestioned leader of your trio, and you can practically see her pressing her thin lips into a calculating ferret smirk, hidden by her veil. The way she pinches her lips like that makes your own lips hurt.

Hugh stands behind you to your right. He's an ox of few words, but what he lacks in eloquence, he makes up for in brute strength.

Obviously, Helda's the brains and Hugh's the brawn. As for you? You're the ticket in; you bring the party, and people let you go places they probably shouldn't. You can't really blame them. After all, who *doesn't* like to get drunk?

Or at least that's what you hope the king and his guards are thinking as the latter eye you with a bored sense of suspicion. You flash a beaming smile from behind your white makeup. If this were Greece, people might think you wore one of those simplistic theatrical masks. But this isn't Greece—it's China—and those plaster masks the Greeks make have nothing on your true-to-life makeup that manages to convey your expression without revealing your identity—or your stripes. For all anybody knows, you could be a horse or even a short-eared mule.

The doors suddenly shift with a loud *clunk* and swing away in a huge sweeping motion before your eyes. At the back of the room is a towering figure, his body red with golden scales on his belly, lithe and sitting in front of you, his expression one of good ease and relaxation. Atop his draconic head are two enormous sets of almost deer-like antlers. Long, tapered whiskers trail off each side of his nose and seem to float in the air, streaming far behind his head as if blown by some unseen breeze. Unlike a western dragon, King Balaur has no wings, and his scales are so fine that they do nothing to conceal the muscles that ripple beneath them. His tail sweeps out from behind him and forms a great arc towards the back right side of the room before curling back towards him, looking just as relaxed and at ease as the rest of him. Between his front legs, you can make out the not-so-subtle bulge of his sheath nestled back among his loins. Even the way the tip of his prick has emerged from his sheath belies how at peace he seems to be.

But there's no time to dwell on any of that; the doors are open, and it's time to do your part.

"Oh, great King Balaur!" you say, taking a few steps inside and throwing yourself on the ground in front of him in an extravagant display of supplication.

With your forehead on the ground, you project your voice between back legs to bounce it off the doors behind you—which closed as quickly as they opened.

"I thank you, Great King, for inviting me into your home! If it please thee, I have brought with me a couple of concubines—one male, one female—for your enjoyment during the festivities!"

"Rise, winemaker, and approach," replies the dragon in a deep, sonorous voice. "You and your offerings are quite welcome here. Guards, please escort the concubines up here."

Wordlessly, two guards approach and take Helda off behind the dragon to one side and Hugh to the other. The guards stand next to your comrades, their hands resting easily on the pommels of their swords.

"O, Great King," you say once everybody is in place, "Will you try my wine? I assure you, Your Greatness, it is the finest you will ever taste!"

"May it be so," the king replies, "Blessings upon your produce, winemaker."

As he speaks, a squirrely-looking fur with large spectacles shuffles forward and stands expectantly in front of you. You look at him curiously, and he gestures at your decanter and points to the little wooden bowl he carries.

"Oh!" you say in surprise and then pour a small amount into the bowl.

You frown on realizing this fur's purpose, taken slightly aback and avoiding the urge to feel indignant.

The fur trudges back to the king and stands directly in front of him—or beneath him; you can't quite tell from where you're standing—and swallows the wine in one, big gulp. He licks his lips and smacks his mouth a few times, contemplating the complex flavors of your best wine. He half-turns to look at you, a look of astonishment and admiration on his face.

"Your Excellence," he says slowly, "That is truly, without a doubt, the best wine I have ever tasted!" he says, his voice tinged with disbelief. "This winemaker's claims are absolutely true! There can be no better in all the land!"

"So, you feel fine, then?" the king inquires.

"Yes, my king! If anything, the only alteration to my person has been my mood; I want to cry for the joy of having tasted such a wine in this lifetime!"

"Very well. Thank you, Shamus." The dragon turns his attention to you and gives you an apologetic smile. "My apologies, winemaker," he says. "With the wedding at hand, my viziers are worried of an attack on my person and have insisted that I must use a taster. I hope you understand."

"Of course, Great King, of course," you reply, catching Hugh and Helda exchanging glances behind the dragon's back. "Ahem, would you care to try the wine yourself, then?"

"Yes, winemaker, please do oblige me; my taster has tasted thousands of wines, and for him to give such a glowing compliment has quite piqued my curiosity."

"At once, Mighty King," you reply.

You nod to the guards behind you, who work together to heave several casks of the wine that you brought with you up to a large, golden goblet that sits in front of the dragon. Standing on wooden ladders, they haul the casks up and empty them into the goblet one-by-one, until four casks have all been emptied.

The king nods to you, and you bow low as he takes a drink of the wine. His breath catches momentarily, and his face melts into a placid smile.

"Winemaker, your reputation does not do you justice," he says as he gently swirls the wine in his goblet. "Shamus is absolutely right; I have never tasted wine such as this before!"

He nods to the guards, who open another cask and begin distributing it amongst themselves.

"Thank you, O King," you say humbly. "It pleases me greatly to see you enjoying it so!"

As you talk, you notice Helda and Hugh watching the guards as one-after-another, they take a drink of the wine, one-after-another, their eyebrows rise in surprise and delight, and one-after-another, they take swallow after swallow as if they can't get enough. Their exuberance is easily understandable: after all, how often do they get to taste the finest wine in the land? *Why shouldn't* they try to get as much of it as they can before your limited supply runs out?

As for the king himself, the effects of the poison you laced into his drink take far longer to work, and with good reason: the guards must be completely incapacitated before the slightest hint of trouble appears on his gigantic face...

You carry yourself well through all of this—Helda might well believe you to be a master assassin for how well you've pulled off your part of the job—as you crack joke after uproarious joke, doubling the soldiers over with merriment and making the walls of the throne room reverberate with the king's deep, resonant laughter.

But as the evening wanes on, one-by-one, the soldiers stop laughing. It's understandable enough, of course: they've had too much to drink, perhaps, and they've succumbed to perfectly natural slumber.

"Here's a riddle for you, Most Excellent King," you say, "What must a man put on the table 'ere every game, lest he find himself ill-equipped to play?"

You wait for an answer, but none comes. The dragon's placid expression seems frozen on his face. His eyes move around with growing speed and volatility, but no other part of him moves.

"I apologize, O Great King," you say sincerely. "Has my humor lost its touch?"

There is no response from the dragon. You nod to Hugh, who manifests a sword from beneath his robes and stabs the dragon in the flank. There is an uncomfortable sigh from the dragon but nothing more.

Helda immediately takes over, jerking her head towards the guards to signal Hugh to begin tying them up while she prepares the dragon's "lordship" for its "operation."

You move off to the side and keep a watchful eye out the window. From your vantage point this high in the palace, you can see nearly the whole city from where you stand. All is quiet and tranquil; nobody suspects a thing.

You hope.

You turn to look at Helda, who has pulled a needle and prefilled syringe from her robes that is almost half as tall as she is. You wince as she moves up under the dragon and stabs it into the protruding tip of his penis and then cringe as she drives it all the way in, bottoming its base out against the dragon's prick. The dragon emits a muffled huffing sound, and his eyes roll back in his head as she calls Hugh over to use his superior strength and height to depress the plunger and drive whatever horrible chemical is in the syringe into the dragon's penis. Then he removes the syringe and tosses it off to the side of the room.

"Hey!" Helda barks at Hugh. "Hurry up!"

Hugh says nothing but tosses a lasso around the dragon's neck and then pulls him over to the side as gently as possible, spreading his limp body out and giving Helda better access to his genitals. You can't get over the wild look the king has in his eyes. You feel sorry for him—sort of—after all, he's been nothing but kind to you, but were he to marry as planned... Well, you can't risk that. Still, you don't really wish *ill* upon him beyond the bare necessities.

"Have no fear, King Balaur," you say as soothingly as you can.

His eyes flash towards you, watching you apprehensively.

"Rest assured, we have no intention of killing you," you say. "We just—"

"Shut up, you fool!" Helda snaps. "Before you give anything away."

You reluctantly take her advice and close your trap.

"He's right, though," she says to the dragon, "We can't make you a martyr, after all. There's a better way."

Though you're certain the drug you laced into the king's wine has rendered him completely paralyzed, you're equally certain that the look he gives you is a hateful glare.

"Let's, uh, get on with this, huh?" you say uneasily.

"All in time," Helda retorts. "We waited all fucking evening for *you*; you can wait a few more minutes for the drug to take its effect."

"What effect?"

"Watch and see, you idiot! Why don't you...go drink some wine or something? Just stay out of our way!"

You can't help but feel a little insulted; you thought you'd done an admirable job at getting everyone into the throne room without so much as a hint of suspicion, but apparently she thinks otherwise.

Nevertheless, you pop open a bottle of wine and take a hearty swig as you sit on the windowsill to watch. It *is* good wine, after all.

Sure enough, within minutes, the dragon's penis has poked completely out of his sheath. It is bright red, about ten feet long and two feet in diameter, and throbbing angrily, making the veins on it pulse red and purple. A large knot at the base easily six feet in diameter prevents it from being sucked back into his sheath. You can't help but think how strange and chimerical it looks: a cross between many different species, having the knot of a canine, the girth of a horse, and the length of an elephant. You wonder how on earth anyone other than another dragon would take anything so...erm...large...and think of the fur

supposed to marry this dragon in a few days. How could that consummation be anything but fatal for her?!

"Let's get started," Helda says, and Hugh steps up beside her, sword at the ready.

"Insert into the urethra and slice ventrally," she says.

Hugh shoves his sword down the dragon's piss-hole and starts cutting towards his belly.

"No, *ventrally*, you nincompoop! Do you *want* him to bleed out?! Move; I'll do it!" Helda scoffs and bodily shoves Hugh out of the way before pulling the sword towards the underside of the dragon's penis and making a surgical slice about a foot long to split it in two.

"That will sever the meatus and expose the spongiform matter," Helda murmurs as blood spurts out of the dragon's dick and his body heaves with agonized sighs of pain.

"You, Muscles! Come sponge this out!" she orders, and Hugh dutifully comes over with one of the guards' uniforms and proceeds to blot up the spurting blood until only a small ooze remains.

"That's enough; now, move!"

Hugh gets out of the way, and Helda takes the sword and draws a sharp line up the bottom of the dragon's penis starting at his scrotum between his testes, slicing it open cleanly before moving up his sheath, up the base of his penis, and finally meeting the slit she'd cut at the tip of his prepuce.

Blood gushes out all over the floor as the dragon's eyes roll back in his head once more. Hugh wastes no time, quickly stripping several of the guards and using their clothing to mop up the blood as best he can. When at last the blood is cleaned up, what used to be the king's knot hangs flabbily, like a giant beach ball whose air has been let out of it.

"Get over here and get ready to carry things," Helda orders. "You, too!" she says to you.

You hesitantly follow Hugh, and as you watch, she carves a piece of flesh out of the bottom-side of the dragon's penis. You can see the smooth lining of his urethra lying in stark contrast to the spongy meat she hands you.

"Take that to the place," she says. "You know where. And don't damage it! You know that for this to work, every piece must be kept intact!"

"Shouldn't I keep watch?" you ask, shriveling your nose, "In case someone comes?"

She snorts and gives a dismissive wave. You hand your bleeding parcel to Hugh, who shrugs and walks off somewhere. Meanwhile, Helda carves off piece after piece of spongy matter, each about the size of a melon, and tosses them down on the ground beside her. Hugh returns and collects another couple of pieces, disappears, and returns for more.

"What's he doing with them?" you ask curiously.

"Putting them on ice," Helda replies distractedly as she grunts and pokes her sword through the dragon's urethral wall, carves out a square about the size of your hand with your fingers extended, and flops it on the ground.

This urethral flesh is apparently tougher than the spongy stuff, and you see Helda sweating with exertion as she begins making a stack of the flat, slightly curved flesh patches and working her way back towards the tip of the dragon's penis. This goes on for some time, and she wipes her face repeatedly with the back of her robe, being careful not to dislodge the veil that covers her face from the dragon's eyes. But at last, she comes to the tip of the dragon's penis, pinched much narrower than the rest of the dragon's girth, like a small, exposed nipple perched atop a much larger breast.

Now she stops and calls Hugh over, telling him to heat his sword in the great, roaring fireplace behind the dragon first.

"We're going to have to time this just right," she says. "I'm going to make the cut, and then you're going to touch your sword to the dragon's body where I cut, got it? His *body*, not towards his glans!"

Hugh nods understanding, and Helda quickly circumscribes a cut around the base of the dragon's penis along where it meets his sheath, starting at the cutout she'd made on the underside of his penis and traveling up to the top of his dick. The dragon sighs with pain, and then Hugh follows with his red-hot sword. The sigh turns into a hiss as you listen to the crackle of searing, cauterizing flesh. Hugh returns to the fire to reheat his sword, and they repeat the process on the other side of the dragon's penis. Now the dragon's large member flops open like a book filled with meat. Under Helda's direction, Hugh quickly spreads it apart to act like a doorstop, preventing it from being sucked into the dragon's sheath.

"Why don't you just cut it off?" you ask.

"There are still some nutrients going to it," she replies over her shoulder, "And we need it to receive those as long as it can in case Hu—er, Muscles—has a problem getting the pieces on ice."

With that, Helda goes back to the dragon penis's tip and cuts it off, handing it to Hugh like a large head-sized ham. With that out of the way, she can see a cross-section of the dragon's penis.

"Sever here between the corpus cavernosa," she mutters to herself, grunting as she makes cut after cut to sever the sinewy flesh that separates the dragon's penis's left and right halves.

Then, with the speed of a butcher and the skill of a surgeon, she begins to alternate slicing the dragon's right and left sides into steak-sized hunks of spongy meat and slapping them down on the ground beside her. Hugh comes and goes, grabbing stack after stack of the dragon's meat and taking them elsewhere to be chilled.

Now all that is left outside the dragon's sheath is a little—well, okay, large and long—ribbon of sliced urethra and the flabby, billowing bits of his knot that Hugh has long-since tied off to his balls. Helda curses under her breath at Hugh not having left her a space to get in and shoves the deflated husks of the king's bulbus glandis out of the way as she feels along the inside of his sheath.

"Mmm, that feels like tendon," she muttered, "And that feels like...prostate...and that...Where the hell is that muscle? Ah!"

She fishes around for her sword, just out of reach. You spring forward and hand it to her, and she reaches deep into the dragon's sheath, her head, arms, and sword disappearing as she cuts whatever it was she found.

Abruptly, the tension trying to pull the dragon's loose flesh into his sheath releases, and the remains of his knot swing down, supported only by the ropes attached to his balls, and slap Helda in the backs of the legs.

"Ugh," she grumbles and steps carefully out of them before hacking through the ropes and spreading the dragon's severed, deflated knot on the ground like a quilt.

She cuts it up deftly, turning it into countless little spongy cubes each small enough to hold with two hands. Hugh dutifully takes these a few at a time to get frozen.

Now all that you can see is the flat, broken tube of urethra that has so far escaped Helda's ministrations. But no longer. With a deft swipe of her blade, she slices it longitudinally multiple times, turning it into streamers before slicing those streamers into flat squares a few at a time with a series of lateral cuts.

All this time, you've felt a little unnerved by the whole thing, and at times, you've found yourself crossing your legs instinctively. Seeing Hugh carry off the last of the dragon's penis, you breathe a sigh of relief.

But too soon.

Now Helda moves her attention to the dragon's sheath. Devoid of its contents, it looks almost like an empty cannon with flabby sides, or perhaps like the sleeves of a long, flowing robe. Helda doesn't seem to care about what it looks like, though; she climbs up onto the dragon's belly, slices through the thin membrane that keeps his sheath from flopping all over, and begins making slice after slice through both sides of his sheath, cutting them off flush with his abdomen. As she does, she deepens the cut on the bottom side of his sheath, and it unfolds and flops away like giant chaps slowly being cut off his stomach. As she goes along, she reveals a long, thin, blood-stained bone. She avoids impaling herself on this,

shoving it out of the way—with a sigh of protest from the dragon—as she scoots ever-closer to the dragon’s slit-open scrotum.

But before she makes it that far, she cuts off the last of the dragon’s sheath-flaps and slides off his belly, landing on the ground between them. Unlike the dragon’s penis, which was little more than spongy tissue and sinew, there is a layer of fat to provide cushioning here, and it stands out brightly off-white in contrast to everything else you’ve seen so far. It’s a little tougher for Helda to cut, too, and she ends up ditching her sword for one of the guards’ after testing it for sharpness and muttering something about it having to do. Using a fair bit of force and considerably more hacking than she’s used on most of the rest of his penis, she manages to cut each of the fatty pieces into irregular blobs of sheath-meat for Hugh to take away.

Now she turns her attention back to the king’s body, and specifically to the two orbs between his bloody inner thighs. One of them has managed to escape its fleshy womb and hangs partially outside the dragon’s scrotum. From your vantage point, you can clearly see the epididymis hugging up against the side of it.

Once again, you figure Helda will just lop one of the testicles off so she can process it from the safety and sturdiness of the ground, but once again, you’re wrong. She instead jabs her sword into the dragon’s scrotum, fishes around a bit, and then pulls it back out, now quartering the flaps of skin that used to protect the dragon’s gonads. Then she takes out a dagger, and, holding one of his three-foot-diameter balls with one arm, carefully circumscribes partway around it, adjusts her grip, and cuts the rest of the way around. With a flipping motion, she rips the sliced skin off the testicle like swiping a tablecloth out from under a set table. For a moment, nothing happens, and then the dragon’s coiled testicular contents begin to unravel and fall out like a bag of boiled pasta, trailing from his now-empty testicular membrane to the ground.

Helda wastes no time. Letting go of the empty testicle casing but holding onto one of the threads of its contents, she begins slicing over and over, quickly cutting the ribbon of tubules into countless shorter strands and dropping them haphazardly on the dragon’s belly, leg, and ground.

Okay, you stand corrected. *Now* it looks like a bag of boiled pasta.

Hugh comes over and grabs handfuls of the stuff, grimaces slightly—you find this odd, given the other stuff he’s handled without complaint—and hauls it away.

Now lying belly-to-belly with the dragon, Helda sticks her arm down into the dragon’s abdomen, fishing around for something attached to what used to be his testicle. On finding it, she pushes the sword in, too, and moments later, the empty membrane and the tendon that attached it to the dragon fall to the ground. She sits upright and scoots a little closer to the dragon’s groin as Hugh makes off with the severed cord. Then she takes it in her hand and circumscribes this one top-to-bottom then bottom-to-top. The halves separate on their own, forced apart by their contents, and another flood of testicular entrails spills out between the dragon’s legs. She grimaces and tugs on one end, pulling it up over the dragon’s leg and then using a hand-over-hand motion to move it from between the dragon’s legs to in front of his belly. Then she proceeds as before, quickly reducing the once-virile dragon’s sperm factory into a base for a nice meat sauce. After repeating the digging action to cut off the dragon’s other testicular tendon and letting it fall, she sheaths her dagger and wipes her forehead once more.

“All done?” you ask.

“No,” she replies.

Your eyes dart to the guards. You’re not sure how long it’s been since you drugged them, but it feels like it’s been an eternity. Still, gazing out the window, the sun has not even begun to lighten the sky, and you relax somewhat.

“What’s left?” you ask.

“Don’t ask stupid questions; we’ll be done when we’re done,” comes the curt reply.

*Sheesh, what a bitch*, you think to yourself as you take another swig of wine. Still, your curiosity gets the better of you, and you move to where you can see what she’s doing.

She's cutting things off, of course. More specifically, she's hacking off two opposite corners of the scrotum she quartered. You watch this curiously. Unlike literally every other thing she's cut off, she holds onto these, putting them safely behind her as she moves her sword out of the way and pulls out a very large needle. Taking thread from somewhere deep within her robes—geez, how much stuff can she have hidden in there?—she begins sewing the two remaining corners together. Yet instead of sewing them at their edges, she begins sewing halfway down, joining opposing corners and letting the remaining corner poke into the dragon's insides.

"This will ensure that you always remember what has happened," Helda says over her shoulder to the dragon. "Every time you move just right, you'll feel your own scrotum poking you in the guts."

You grimace at seeing what you think is a sadistic glint from Helda. Had you known she was going to be cruel about it, you might have had second thoughts about working with her. You gaze at the dragon, and you notice that a tear has slipped from his eye and down his snout. Overcome with compassion, you can't help yourself, and you go up to him.

"For your pain, Your Highness," you say, pouring some wine down his throat.

He gurgles and seems to glare at you, and you quickly scramble back away from him.

"Hey, wino! Toss that up here!" Helda demands.

You purse your lips reluctantly but do as told. She promptly empties the bottle into the hole she's left in the dragon's scrotum, drops the bottle, and sews him shut. You scramble to catch the bottle just before it shatters all over the ground and throw a dirty glare over your shoulder at Helda, who seems completely oblivious to your irritation.

To her, all that remains is the big, white bone protruding from the dragon's sheath-less abdomen. She scoots back, uses some rope to tie herself off to the dragon's leg, and then lowers herself head-first into the void where the dragon's sheath used to be, taking her sword with her. The baculum shivers and quivers as she hacks around inside of the dragon, who sighs endlessly in pain, and then it abruptly falls over, leaning loosely against the hole in his gut.

"Hey!" her muffled voice yells. "Hey! Muscles! Come pull me out!"

You clear your throat to get Hugh's attention and inclined your head toward the tied-off rope. Hugh goes over, glances up, and then grabs the rope and heaves Helda out.

"About time!" she snaps.

You can't tell for certain, but you're pretty sure you see a glint in Hugh's eyes as he contemplates pushing her back inside. A shadow of a smile crosses your lips: you have to admit that you wouldn't tell anyone if he did.

But there's no time for that. Now that she's out, Helda quickly retrieves the dragon's penis-bone and gently slides it down the dragon's belly. Hugh picks it up, contemplates it, and then goes to break it over his knee.

"No!" Helda cries just in time.

Hugh looks up at her curiously, and she looks back at him with a cold, sour glare.

"That can't be sewn back together, you idiot!" she snaps. "If you break that, then he can regenerate! Geez, use some common sense, you two!"

Hugh opens his mouth to say something, thinks better of it, and then walks the baculum out of the room. As he passes you with his back to Helda, his lip pulls back in a sneer, and he mockingly mouths the words, "Use some common sense, you two." You chuckle in spite of yourself.

Now Helda reaches over her shoulder and grabs one of the flaps of scrotal skin that she'd cut off. Wasting no time, she begins to sew its long edge around the gaping hole in the dragon's abdomen and repeats the action with the other one diagonally across from it. Then, pulling tightly against the dragon's skin, she begins stitching him closed, sewing a few stitches then stretching him tight, then sewing a few

more stitches, and so on, until only a small hole remains. She calls for another bottle of wine, which you toss to her, ready to catch it again once empty, and she again pours its contents into him.

"Why do you do that to perfectly good wine?" you ask.

"To prevent infection," she replies brusquely as she sews the final stitch. She stands up and examines her handiwork.

"Not bad," she says to herself. "It would be better if his scrotal skin matched the color of the rest of him, but it's good enough." She turns to the dragon's head, and her eyes bely a cruel smile as she sits and pats the off-colored patch on his belly. "As an added bonus, it'll *always* remind you of what happened," she says. "Good luck marrying the princess when you feel like less than a male, Nullo! All hail King Nullo, the less-than-king!"

She laughs derisively at her own joke and then slides off the dragon, lands on her feet, and strolls casually towards the door on the side of the room where Hugh has been taking the pieces of dragon flesh. You follow her, and Hugh follows you. You cast one last glance at the emasculated, nullified king and can't help but feel a little sorry for him. As you turn around, you gasp to find several wagons lined up, each stacked high with frozen parcels wrapped in butcher paper.

"We'll take these to the far corners of the kingdom," Helda says, doffing her costume. "Hide each piece no closer than a mile apart, preserved in icehouses, cold caverns, and freezing lakes all over the country. As long as he doesn't find the pieces and none of them gets destroyed, he'll never have his malehood again."

You purse your lips, taken a little aback by her fervor.

"Tell me, Horace," says Hugh, startling you from your thoughts, "What *must* a man put on the table 'ere every game, lest he find himself ill-equipped to play?"

You turn to him, frankly amazed to learn that he actually *can* talk.

"His balls, Hugh," you murmur. "His balls."

Helda rolls her eyes.

"Always present the best wine first," you say defensively, "And the best jokes. Once everyone is good and drunk, they will think even the daftest jokes hilarious and even vinegar delicious."

"Well, I don't think he'll be playing any games for a long time by your logic, then," Helda replies.

"Let's certainly hope not."

As the three of you ride your separate ways, putting as much distance between you and the palace as you can, you suddenly hear a deafening wail behind you. You turn around to see the sun balancing by its bottom edge on the horizon.

*Right on time.*