

The Road to Change, Part 9 - Hoof It (Centaur's TFTG)

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A Commission for Al

Melvin is a noble-born magic caster, stuffy and serious. Allison is a vibrant and confident fighter, charged with his protection. Despite their contrasting personalities, the two must set forth together on a grand mission when a foul demon lord rises and unleashes transformative domination magic across the land. As the two adventure and deal with their own series of bodily transformations, they are forced to grapple with their own growing feelings for one another.

The Road to Change

Chapter 9: Hoof It

"What do you mean, Lady Giselle has gone missing?"

The Chief Steward of Polven shrugged his shoulders, as if that was enough to dismiss the presence of Melvin and Allison, despite the former carrying the seal of the Dawnway family of Arlingdale.

"I mean exactly what I say, Lady Greenwood. She has gone missing, and there is no notion of where she has gone to."

Aly scowled. "I'm no Lady-"

"That much is clear."

"But even I know that when someone goes missing, you *find them*, Mr Chief Steward."

He narrowed his eyes. "There would be a search, *young miss*, but our city is much more busy preparing defences against an onslaught by a risen Demon Lord, in case you hadn't noticed. Now, I suggest you keep a civil tongue and let your master do the speaking for you, *after* you have both taken some time to cool off. Away with you."

Even Melvin was riled, and ready to hurl a damn lightning bolt at this man. They were just here at the town of Polven to reprovision after D'Arbour and get horses more suited for mountainous terrain, given their next planned part of the journey. Melvin had been rushing them to find traces of Tiffany, but upon arriving in the city Aly had taken a personal interest in it. Lady Giselle was one of the few nobles who had been truly kind to Aly back at the Dawnway Estate, and she had wanted to let her know she was in the city. Except the plump noble girl was missing, and no one seemed to damn care.

“Ooh, I really hate that man!” Allison said, clenching her fists and walking in circles as they were hurried back to the waiting room. “And the rest of these Polven nobles. Did you hear the gossip as we passed?”

Melvin grimaced. “I do recall hearing a line about ‘the fat girl’, and another made a rather poor reference to ‘checking the coast for sightings of a new whale.’”

“She’s not even fat! She’s just . . . big-boned. And a bit pudgy. Look, she’s a friend to me, Mel, even if a distant one. I . . . I don’t have a lot of friends. I know you want to find Tiffany. I’m fond of her myself, teasing aside. And we should move forward to get her, and I would never ask you to-”

Melvin grabbed her by the shoulders. “Aly, just *breathe*. We’re going to find her, okay?”

She was astonished. “We - we are?”

“Of course. You’re helping me find Tiff, why wouldn’t I do the same for someone important to you?”

She hugged him, and it was a warm embrace that he, slowly, returned.

“Thank you, Mel. You’re the best master a protector like me could hope for.”

“That’s . . . kind of you,” he said, remembering how he briefly felt about her back in D’Arbour. He pulled back, and adjusted his clothing. “Where should we start?”

Allison focused, her mind darting about. “Further north, where her horse was found. Call it instinct, but I feel we need to see the forest.”

Aly examined the ground. “Yeah, Polven guards are fucking stupid.”

“That bad, huh?”

“Real dummies. Look at these hoof tracks. Tell me those are from a panicked horse.”

Melvin looked at the various hoof tracks, completely unable to discern their meaning.

“Uh, those are from a panicked horse?”

Aly giggled. “Yeah, right! This is numerous horses, only they’re slightly smaller than a full grown steed for this region. Which is odd. Makes me think a centaur left them; a tribe of them. Her horse went that way, they went this way - likely with her.”

“Kidnapped?”

Aly frowned. “I don’t know why. Centaurs are usually . . . oh.”

“*Demon Lord*,” they both said as one, knowing it was the only explanation.

“I won’t be able to track them into their domain. Mel, can you use magic to help me?”

But Melvin was already on it, highlighting a track now that he could isolate it with Aly’s help. It lit up a glowing purple, heading deeper into the forests of Polven, and the two

chased after it on foot. Unless you were a centaur, riding through the forest was a bad idea here.

"Can I ask why you're so adamant on saving her?" Melvin asked several hours later as they took a break to catch their breath and eat. "I know she's your friend, but you seem pretty furious at her."

Aly shook her head. "Not her," she said, before pointing a finger at herself. "At me. The last time we met, I made a comment. I was training with Quartermaster Berrick's charges - all boys - and I wanted . . . I guess I wanted to fit in. A few of them were making jokes about the 'plump princess' - the fuckwits couldn't even figure out she's a Lady, not a princess, though one of them called her 'the Lady of the Larder,' the fucking asshole."

"Gods, who was that?"

"Me," she said, in a tiny voice. "It caught on, too. She heard it later in my presence, and I could tell it shook her, even though she tried to remain stalwart. She never found out it was me. *But I knew.*"

"You didn't mean to-"

"Mel, don't try to make me feel good about this. I try to put kindness into the world. That day, I did the opposite. I'm going to make it up to her."

Melvin stood. His magical senses were tingling; he could feel the creature they were tracking looping back and getting closer. The ground began to shake.

"Um, you just might get your wish, right now in fact. They're coming, Aly. Be ready!"

A tribe of centaurs burst through the treeline and leapt over the line of thick bushes at the edge of the present clearing. Allison drew her bow immediately - she knew that her sword, even a Sarathian sword - would be of no use against the distance fighting of the centaurs. Melvin also readied himself, a green flame in one hand and a rotating ice orb in the other.

"Let me do the talking this time," Allison said, keeping her bow aimed down and undrawn.

"More than happy for you to do so," Melvin said, slightly daunted as they were surrounded.

It was a well-warranted reaction: Melvin had never seen centaurs before, and was shocked at the power and muscle of their proud bodies, a far cry from the more elegant illustrations from his tomes. Their equine halves were slightly smaller than a riding steed, but still possessed the strength and raw stamina of a trained horse. They came in various coloured coats, ranging from white to black, brown to blonde, and the only consistency that Melvin could note was that their coats tended to match the colour of the hair of their human halves. And what human halves they were! Each looked to be at the peak of their physical capability, regardless of gender or age, though most appeared to be young hunters. Man or

woman, they had prominent abs and impressive shoulders, and their backs rippled with muscles also. Their hair was wild and free, containing numerous trinkets and baubles and talismans tied along its length. As for their clothing, it was spartan. The men were mostly entirely naked, and the women wore a simple woven wrap around their slim breasts to keep them bound. A darker skinned member had impressive dreadlocks, while a red-haired centauress had her fiery hair like a great mane all the way down her back. Each had a bow at the ready, and moved in a martial fashion.

“By the Gods, they are impressive,” Melvin admitted.

“You’re not wrong,” Allison said. “I’ve only seen their like twice before, and never this many together. This is a true wild herd, not trading centaurs on the edge of Arlingdale.”

The centaurs slowly stopped moving, their equine tails flickering as they took up cautious positions around the pair, a clear show of force. Allison swallowed, then lowered her bow to the ground and raised her hands, putting on her best smile.

“Hello there!” she called. “We mean you no hostilities, greatherd of the forest lands whose name you alone know!”

“You are not from Polven,” the dark-skinned male said, stepping forward on heavy hooves just a little. He still had his bow at the ready.

“No, great stallion, we are from distant Arlingdale. I am Allison Greenwood, and this is Melvin Dawnway.”

The centaur nodded. “Our herdsman speak well of the Dawnway lands; they have always been treated civilly there. But times change, and we must be cautious. What is your business, outlander?”

Allison looked to Melvin, who nodded.

“We are looking for a human friend!” Allison declared. “One who has gone missing! Her name is Giselle, Giselle Merath, perhaps known to you as Lady Giselle. She is a young noblewoman from Polven, and she has gone missing. But she is from only a minor noble house, and while the city prepares its defences against the risen Demon Lord they, well, they haven’t given a damn to find her!”

Melvin winced. She’d started so well. Still, the lead centaur seemed to relax a little.

“I am Staeth,” he declared, trotting forward. “If you are truly a friend of Giselle’s, then we can take you to her. If she says otherwise, we shall not hesitate to dispatch you. Herdleader Willow has declared that we must be wary of all outsiders during these trying times.”

Another shared look followed between Melvin and Allison. She really, *really* hoped Giselle was still a friend.

“Come,” Staeth declared. “We have a long walk ahead of us.”

“Um, I don’t suppose we can, er, hop on?” Melvin declared.

Allison slapped her face with her hand as every centaur turned to look at him.

"I would suggest you walk," one said, the fiery-haired woman with the amazonian upper body. "It will prevent you from speaking further."

"Nice one," Allison whispered as they got started. "Centaur is proud creatures. They don't offer *rides*, Mel."

"I read that they did! Gods, all my tomes are wrong . . ."

Centaur is nomadic creatures. They didn't build cities or villages, but *camp*s. Allison knew they would take only what they could carry on their strong equine backs, and this was evident as they were escorted into the clearing that held hundreds more of their impressive people; there had to be nearly a thousand in this one herd alone judging from its size. Melvin gaped at the sight, amazed at all that he was seeing, and Allison kept looking at him and smiling. It warmed her right to the core to see her friend in awe; it was not often she got to see the dry, cynical wizard light up like that.

"Wow," was all he could say.

"I know," she replied.

Straeth led them forth to a large tent around which a number of centaurs moved. This was clearly a place of leadership for them.

"Just remember to always show respect to them," she reminded Melvin. "They aren't human, and don't believe in hierarchy like you do. The strong dominate in a centaur herd, but they then have a responsibility to their weak. Anyone can lead, and anyone can choose to leave if the leader is unpopular."

Even in saying that, Allison got the sense that this could well be the case here; the centaurs favoured the number seven in their ranks, part of their astrological views. But there were only six guards, and a number of the other shade cloths in the camp looked emptier than the social centaur community would usually possess. Even with this large herd, some people were missing.

"You will find your friend in here," Straeth said, gesturing into the tent. "If she is indeed your friend."

Allison thanked him, then stepped within, Melvin close behind her. Inside the tent were a number of centaurs lounging against one another, eating wildberries and deer they had caught and now cooked. But very little of that caught Allison's attention; what did catch her attention, or rather *who*, was Lady Giselle resting comfortably among the centaurs.

And being a *centaur* herself.

Allison almost hadn't recognised her. Lady Giselle had always possessed light olive skin and curly dark brown hair, but it was her plumpness that gained most people's attention. That largesse was still present to a degree, but now it was also bolstered by the muscle and rigour of a centaur lower half; a dark-coated equine body that radiated a power and nobility that she had never possessed as a human. From her head sprang two sets of antler horns - a rarity among centaurs - which added to this aura. Her upper half had a softness to it still, unlike others of her new kind, but somehow it finally seemed to fit her; her large bosom was supported by a woven chest wrap, and from her delighted smile as she talked to another centaress it was clear she no longer possessed any shame over her body. Where she had once covered herself up, she now showed off her curves proudly.

"By the Gods," Allison whispered.

Lady Giselle looked her way and squeaked. "Allison? ALY!?"

She rose to her impressive height, no longer short but proudly tall, and before anyone could react, she *bolted* forward, hooves beating heavily upon the ground. Melvin tried to cast a spell to hold her but it was too late: Giselle easily scooped Allison up in her arms and carried her out from the tent, running through the herd's camp and laughing merrily.

"It is so good to see you, my friend!" she declared, hugging Allison against her bosom.

Allison nearly suffocated until she adjusted her position. She beamed up at her friend. "Giselle, you look glorious!"

"I feel glorious!" she declared. "Hang on a moment, get on my back and I'll show you something."

A few centaurs looked warily at this, but evidently there was an established trust between these two that made such an act allowable, because Giselle swept Allison around onto her equine back and told her to hold on tight.

"Don't mind the love handles!" she cried. "There's muscle beneath them now! Feel!"

Allison did, and marvelled at how well Giselle's humanoid half seemed to work so much better as part of a centaur's form. She clung onto her friend as the centaress bolted even faster, speeding around the camp and leaping over various bushes and supplies, achieving feats of athleticism she never would have been capable of before. Allison laughed gaily, joined by Giselle. Melvin watched from afar, and even he had to smile; Aly certainly had a way with people.

He ran over to where they stopped, Giselle puffing and placing her hands on her equine forward hips. She let loose a belly laugh that was characteristic of exactly how Allison remembered her.

"Ha! I never get tired of that!" she cried.

"I can't believe you're a centaur," Allison said. "And a magnificent one at that!"

"I know, isn't it amazing? This herd has taken me in. I don't, well, I don't know all of their customs, but I'm learning fast! I never want to go back to Polven, Aly, let me tell you that! The life of a centaur has finally made me love my body, and be wild and free instead of some cloistered noblewoman mocked for her weight. Here, weight isn't half bad."

She shifted her powerful horse half for emphasis and grinned.

"I can see that!" Aly said. "Oh, Giselle, you would remember the noble Melvin Dawnway?"

The centauress looked down at Melvin and her smile diminished a little. "Y-yes. I do. How are you, Lord Melvin?"

"I'm well, thank you, Lady Giselle," he replied, bowing slightly.

She cackled. "I'm just Giselle here! That's the beauty of it! No more insults. No more cruel words."

At this, she folded her arms, stomping one back hoof against the ground deliberately as she stared at Melvin.

"L-Lady - Giselle, I mean - if there has been some offence I have given-"

"Not given, young lord. *Spread*. But that was another life for me. Excuse me if I don't readily forgive, however."

Melvin was utterly confused by this, but Allison knew exactly what had occurred. She bit her lip, heart beating as she realised the horrible insult she had given to Giselle was one she thought came from her master.

"Giselle," she said. "I think-"

"*WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS!? WHO DARES BRING HUMANS INTO OUR CAMP!?*"

A powerful female voice echoed as a beautiful centauress stampeded angrily towards them, pulling to a stop only at the last second in such a way that Melvin fell backwards and Allison had to catch him. This new figure's body was tall and proud, and unlike most centauresses she had a pair of bountiful breasts, though her frame was leaner and more muscular than Giselle's. Her copper-brown hair was pulled back in a tight ponytail, and she had a *lance* of all things tied around her equine half, which had chestnut brown fur. Her old grey eyes stared down upon the interlopers.

"These are outsiders!" she declared, rallying several more centaurs to her side and readying the longbow upon her upper half's back. "I had decreed that we would have no relations with them until I gave the order!"

Giselle gave a sheepish look. "Sorry, Willow. It's my fault. They're my friends and were looking for me. I mean, I *did* go missing, after all. After you changed me, I couldn't get word back."

"Because you are a centaress now," Willow spat, her look imperious. "Just like I am! This is who we are, and I will *not* stand for contact with outsiders during these dangerous times. There are only those outside the herd, and those within it. And, of course . . ."

Her eyes flashed as a smile appeared on her lips.

". . . those who can joined to the herd as well."

Melvin sensed it immediately; domination magic, no doubt the source of Giselle's transformation. Aly's friend reared up, her front hooves kicking. "No! I chose to join you when you gave me the chance! But these two aren't meant to be centaurs."

But Willow appeared adamant. She gestured to the gathering crowd. "Why not? We need more in our herd, and they can be broken in like any horse."

A few made sounds of displeasure at this, but she reared up also.

"Do any of you doubt me!?"

"You are still an outsider yourself, Willow," Straeth said. "Just because you bested our chieftain in combat and prowess, doesn't mean you can dictate our entire culture."

Willow sneered. "I am your leader! You made me so! The ones who refused left like the dogs they are. I am a centaur like you, and I bested your strongest. And these two can easily join your way, or mine, so long as our enemies are no longer their former selves."

At this, Melvin noticed something wrong in her aura, his magical senses indicating that a change had occurred in the woman. But then her eyes flashed red, and both he and Allison fell to the ground, groaning as powerful Domination magic swept through them.

"Become centaur!" Willow cried. "Join the herd under my control!"

"N-no!" Melvin cried. He could fight it off, and so could Allison. But where would that put them then? In the middle of a hail of arrows. Allison grunted, her shoes falling off her feet as powerful hooves emerged, her flanks starting to cover themselves in fur. "Aly, f-fight it!"

"Mel, n-not this time." She looked back at Giselle, who nodded. "Embrace it; just for a moment!"

"What!?"

"Trust me!"

And he knew his response, even if it went unspoken: "*always*." He trusted her implicitly, and that inner warmth spread within him again. The nobleman took a deep breath, then let the domination magic in. His body began to buckle and change, growing immensely in his lower half. New legs sprung forth, a tail erupted from above his spine, and a barrel-like lower body emerged that lifted him way up in the air. In moments he had extra legs and all sorts of coordination issues, but that wasn't the only problem: he was sprouting breasts yet again, his hair becoming long and dark, his browned olive skin blemish free.

"Oh, by all the Gods!" he cried in a womanly voice as his manhood retreated into his backside - his *equine* backside. "Why a woman!?"

Willow simply smirked. "I have my reasons," she said, hand on her own ample chest. Her eyes flashed upon Aly, and the expected happened.

"Woah, Nellie!" she cried, a large furry sheath with a very, very large centaur cock contained within it extending into being. Her breasts flattened to nothingness, her clothes evaporating as she was left looking like a powerful and very handsome male centaur. One look at Melvin and the new Aly felt a stirring in her - *his* - loins.

"That feels way too big!" he shouted, unable to cover himself.

Willow chuckled. "That's the spirit - be uncomfortable. From now on you shall be members of my herd. You will produce foals for us, and roam and defend my hunts. You shall never again be in contact with your old life. This is your life now, as it is for me."

Melvin tried not to stare at Aly's enormous horse penis, or his impressive ab muscles. She was obviously trying not to look at his impressive flanks and slim but lovely chest either.

"What - what do we do now?" she asked.

"*THIS!*" Giselle cried, and she turned on the spot and kicked out with her rear hooves, knocking Willow to the ground. It was enough to startle the guards around the leader, and the woman was easily able to bolt straight through a gap between them. Allison took his cue and followed her, and Melvin hoofed it straight behind him. They headed straight through the camp and towards the treeline, the new transformees having to adapt to their changes very quickly. Allison was clearly better at this, but Melvin found that so long as she didn't *think* about having four legs - or being female, for that matter - she could move with great alacrity.

"GET THEM!" Willow cried from far back, but they continued to race forward even as the herdleader and her forces followed in pursuit.

Allison jumped over a rock and continued up a hill. "What do we do now, Giselle? What's the plan?"

"What plan? This was as far as I got, Aly! I just knew we had to get you out of there and trust me, I move a lot faster as a centaur than I did as a human!"

An arrow nearly took Melvin in the back and embedded right into a tree next to the female centaur.

"The problem is, so do they!" she cried. "And they've had more experience!"

She used what magic she could, creating sheets of ice to trip up the frontline of their pursuers, then tangling roots together to web up others. She didn't want to kill anyone - at least not yet - but she did her best to obscure their path with illusions and thick bursts of fog. Allison still had his bow upon his back, and managed to get some warning shots off, though they were far from accurate.

"Damn it! It's a lot different firing from horseback than *being* the horseback! Mel, tell me *you've* got an idea!"

Melvin considered her options. She was the weakest rider - was it really riding if you *were* the horse, she wondered? - but that aspect of Domination magic she'd sensed in Willow, there was something there.

"We need to get to Willow!" she declared. "And beat her! It'll show her most rabid followers we mean business, and I think I can beat her magic."

"We'll clear a path!" Giselle cried. "I may be fairly new at this, but I'm large and in charge!"

With a loud warcry she turned about and leapt into the fray, knocking aside one horse with her front hooves and letting Allison wound another in the hindleg just enough to put them out of action. Melvin used a blinding spell on a third centaur, then weaved back towards the camp, leaving the rest in the fog. Willow was rallying, giving orders from the camp and preparing her lance.

"Allison, I think you should challenge her to a-"

"No, she's mine!" Giselle roared. "She betrayed my trust after I finally found my place. **WILLOW! I CHALLENGE YOU FOR LEADERSHIP RIGHT NOW!**"

Willow smirked, charging forward. "Please, you're barely a centaur at all. Your challenge doesn't count."

"Neither are you!" Melvin revealed. "You were human once, weren't you, Willow? And male too, if I'm not mistaken."

The beautiful centaress paused. "What - what are you talking about?"

"I can sense Domination magic, and my studies have taken me far in knowing its mysteries. And you are easy to read, Willow. I sense a name, and it isn't Willow. It's *Wessel*, isn't it? *Sir Wessel? Of Aenir?*"

Willow was gobsmacked. Other centaurs gathered around, the violence briefly paused. "What - how did you know - she speaks lies!"

"*He* doesn't," Aly said. "But you do! No wonder other centaurs left your group, and why your ways are different! She's not from a different tribe, she's not even originally a centaur! Not that, you know, I've got a problem with that, but she's deceived you!"

Willow sneered, readying her lance. "Lies, lies, and desperation."

"The only liar is you, servant of the Demon Lord," Melvin said. "I recognise his magic."

"Fine! I accept 'Lady' Giselle's champion, if it puts this nonsense to rest. And then I shall enjoy making sure you are mounted, wizard."

"Giselle *will* win," Aly said. "And you'll lose, Wessel."

Willow howled in anger. The centaurs drew back. Giselle had no weapon at all, and refused to accept one, much to Allison's confusion. Instead, she winked at the new male centaur.

"You look very cute like that, but don't worry, I've got this."

"But - how?"

"Just watch!"

Staeth had reached them, and looked quite agitated. "This can be called off!" he announced, but neither party wanted it, and he was forced to act as arbitrator, being the most respected among the herd. The handsome centaur sighed, then raised a hand.

"NOW!"

The two centaurs charged. Aly could barely watch: she hoped Giselle knew what she was doing. Melvin had certainly made Willow unsure of herself, and it was clear she wasn't in her best form now that her true nature had been revealed, but she was still a dangerous opponent. Giselle bolted forward to meet her across the stretch of grass, bounding heavily on her hooves and roaring with what seemed like a berserker's delight. Willow lifted her lance, readying for a possibly fatal blow, and grinned at her obvious coming success.

Only for Giselle to side step the lance at the last second, rear up, and then *body slam* Willow to the ground before trampling her front hooves against the other woman's equine half. Willow cried out.

"I yield! I - Gods! I said I yield, damn you!"

She looked half-pulverised, her opponent's superior weight having been too much to withstand.

"Ha!" Giselle cried. "They don't call me the Lady of the Larder for nothing! Now turn back my friends and get the hell out of this herd, Willow. *Now.*"

The centaur rose, bruised and defeated. With a flash of her eyes both Melvin and Aly returned to their original, much smaller bodies. Both were also very happy to find their clothing restored; that would have been quite embarrassing otherwise.

"Damn it all, I nearly had them! If I'd done it, I would have been free," Willow whined.

"Free of the Demon Lord, you mean," Melvin said. "You serve him, don't you?"

"Not willingly! Gods, man, look at what he turned me into? A centaress who had to learn a whole new way of fighting just to keep the stallions from constantly talking about mounting me! Stupid damn centaur body - and it's permanent too. This is me now! I don't get to be a knight again! Or a man! I've got four legs and a damn furcoat and a pair of tits between my hind legs and on my chest! I was at Aenir! The Demon Lord was breathing down my neck! If I didn't try to divide the realm then there's much worse in offer for me!"

She sagged a little, clearly having had this on her rather considerable chest for some time. Melvin was about to say something sarcastic, but Giselle spoke up first.

"We'll protect you."

Willow raised her head. "What!?"

"I'm not cut out to lead this herd, but before I relinquish my power to someone capable like Straeth-

Straeth raised his head this time.

"-I can at least make one commanding decision. You stay with us, and we'll protect you and help you adjust to being a centaress, for real."

"But - but why?"

Giselle looked at Aly and Melvin. "I know what it's like not to be happy with your body. I'll let you decide. For now, I have to talk to my friends."

She moved over to Melvin and Allison and lowered her equine form to talk more closely to them. "Thank you for coming for me," she said, "your arrival helped a lot, even if I wasn't the one that needed helping."

"That was pretty damn empathetic of you, Giselle," Allison complimented. "I'm fucking proud of you - er, I mean-

Giselle giggled. "No, I like the foul mouth! As a centaress, I don't have to give, well, a shit what people think of what I say! Perks of being out in the wild; they make you wild too."

Allison hugged her arm. "Listen, Giselle, it was me that spread that horrible insult about you. I - I called you Lady of the Larder to fit in. It was while I was training with stupid boys with their stupid insults and I joined in to be one of them. I did it, not Melvin, and I've regretted it ever since."

Giselle frowned.

Then she punched Allison on the arm.

"Ow!" Aly exclaimed.

"That's a centaur way to say, 'that's for being a jerk, but we're square now.'"

"What, really?"

"Well, it's my way of saying it."

"But - but I caused you such misery!"

Giselle shrugged. "And I won't lie, that sucks. But I know you, Aly, you wouldn't mean it. And besides, I know you had trouble fitting in, too. Looks like we both found out the kind of person we want to be."

Allison hugged her friend, which consisted more of hugging her waist thanks to the height difference. "You're a good person, Giselle. And way, way more impressive as a centaur, wouldn't you agree, Mel?"

"Definitely," he said. "Though I think I'll enjoy having two feet again, not to mention being a man. Again."

Allison giggled at Giselle's quizzical expression. "It's a long story. I'll tell you sometime when we're not on a quest to stop the Demon Lord. Do you think Willow will stay with you?"

Giselle looked at the woman, who suddenly seemed a lot less vicious and a lot more vulnerable, her arms around her bare waist as she stared longingly at the horizon.

"I think she will. You know, we were both changed due to Domination magic, but I found my change beautiful. I wouldn't change back for the world."

"But it's evil!" Melvin exclaimed.

Giselle smiled. "Do I look evil? Do I seem evil? If evil started it, then perhaps it's just a corrupted form of good. Food for thought, perhaps."

It was something Melvin thought deeply on even as Allison said her tearful goodbyes to Giselle and the pair parted ways from the centaurs back through the forest. Willow had seemingly decided to stay - at least for now - and it seemed the centaress could perhaps come to appreciate her new form if she made the attempt at it.

"It's very strange, Aly," Melvin said as they exited the forest. "Domination magic is under the Demon Lord's will, and yet we've seen a few examples where people embraced it and ultimately found good in it."

"Hey, you're right, I guess. Lady Skara likes her new cat form. Marion and Leo ended up happier after they got free of the corruption, and Giselle is way better as a centaur."

"Not to mention Bessie - formerly Barson - seems to have some hope as a cowgirl, even if it's a strange one. It just makes me think that perhaps there truly is a goodness lurking in Domination magic, a strand of which we have yet to fully uncover or understand."

Aly smiled at Melvin, glad to have her man and his handsome face back, even if she wouldn't say that to him directly.

"Food for thought, master," she declared. "Just like our new centaur friend said!"

Alternate Ending: Foal-ish Desires

"Push, honey! You're nearly there!"

"I kn-know!" Melevara whined, pushing with all of her might. "It was I-like this last time, damn it all! Ohhhhh, why did I h-have to be the m-mare in the relationship! It's not d-dignified for a nobleman to - NGHH! - be pushing out f-foals!"

"That's right, Mel," Alisahn said, rubbing his partner's furry flanks as she gripped the tree branch before her for support. "Focus on that while you keep on pushing. It's nearly here!"

Mel's hindlegs were spread wide, her tail raised as the contraction rolled through her. Her equine belly was low and heavy with their foal, and the two-teat udder between her back legs was already swollen with milk ready for the child to come. Not that Melevara was exactly enjoying this particular part of motherhood. She shook her head, causing her long

brown hair to flick this way and that. She was naked for this moment, as was centauress tradition, and even her upper breasts had swelled to, though she'd have little use for them even when her foal came; not that Alisahn would mind needing to attend to their engorged nature from time to time. It was a nice image, and one that made her smile before her body urged her to push once more.

"F-fuck me!" she cried.

"Gods, it must be bad if *you're* swearing," Alisahn said. He rubbed his centaur mate's back, their tails flicking against one another in companionship.

"It's - UGH! - that bad! I - AGGGHH!! I NEED TO PUSH! HOLD MY HAND, LOVE!"

Alisahn did just that, as finally their foal emerged from Melevara's opening. At first it was like the birth of a regular human child, squalling and purple-bruised, but then a set of shaking forelegs emerged, and with another inhuman effort Melevara managed to push out the rest of her foal, which Alisahn caught and helped to the ground. Its equine half was covered in sticky fur that was still wet with its mother's amniotic fluid, and a cord still extended from its upper half's belly button, but otherwise the child was out. Its lower half was comically small and stubby, but would soon grow in power. But unlike a human child, a centaur foal could stand on its feet, and it did so as Alisahn cut the cord. He helped shepherd their child to Melevara, who was still panting, turning her head to see her child.

"Is it okay?" she asked. "Is it healthy?"

Alisahn grinned as his child latched at her mother's udder, just barely tall enough to suckle from her, which he did greedily.

"More than healthy, honey," Alisahn said proudly. "You've finally given me a strapping boy, my love!"

The centauress exhaled in pure relief, slowly regaining control over her breath. "Th-thank the Gods!" she declared. "So long as he's healthy." She smiled at her husband, who was keeping an eye on both of them. "But I'm joyous to know that we have a son. Of course, I always imagined I would be the f-father. And that - ahhh, still coming down from it all - that I would be on two-legs when it happened!"

She leaned her upper half against Alisahn, her loving mate and warrior-protector still, even after all these years.

"Thank you," she said.

"Me?" he replied, astonished. "You're the one that just went through childbirth, sweetie. I'll get this little one's coat all cleaned up in a moment."

She shook her head, then rested it in the crook of his shoulder, her flanks pressing against his. "There's no rush, my love. All in good time. For now, let me just enjoy this moment. Mhmm . . ."

Their new child continued to drink from her, and all seemed right in the world.

“Remember, my good warrioresses, what do we say to the Demon Lord when we face him?”

“*WE’LL NEVER BE YOURS TO CONQUER!*” shouted the congregation of centaur children, among them four girls ranging from the adorable age of two all the way to a more hardened eight. Each had similar features to either Alisahn or Melevara, or some combination of them. In fact, one was almost the spitting image of her father back when he’d been a young girl, a concept that would have to be explained to them someday. For now though, they were rapt with attention towards Willow, the chief commander of the herd’s mobile defensive group, master of bow, lance, and longsword.

“Very good, young foals!” the incredibly beautiful yet deadly centauress said with a gleam in her eye. “But words are not always enough! Recall that I was once under the will of the Demon Lord until I was freed by our very own Melevara - our chief sorceress - and Alisahn - who remains our greatest huntress. I was the one who turned them to this way of life, for the Demon Lord believed that changing them would thwart them. And it did for a time, but as they adopted our ways and freed my mind we were able to open new possibilities, the most important of all being our resistance to the Demon Lord and all the lands he has conquered. So I can tell you, with all this knowledge and experience, that when you face his Domination magic, you had best believe those words to the greatest depths of your hearts, young ones, or you will succumb as I once did. To which I say, *never again.*”

“*NEVER AGAIN!*” they repeated, the Greenwood herdgirls most loudly of all, even little Saraneen, who could barely pronounce the words and then began giggling with excitement at the sight of several butterflies, rearing up on her hind legs out of excitement.

A deep belly laugh erupted from a centauress who approached, her hands on her wide hips, her powerful dark-coated equine half stamping the ground proudly.

“Don’t get them too excited, Willow! You’ll be declaring war on half the continent before we’ve even trained them in the art of the composite bow!”

Willow frowned, annoyed to have her lesson disrupted. “Giselle, it is always a welcome sight to have you present for my tutelage. Are you wishing to finally learn something in the art of combat beyond that hefty mace of yours?”

Giselle gave another big belly laugh, one that set her muscled yet soft stomach trembling, not to mention her admirable chest despite the supportive fabric cupping it. She tapped the mace by her side, which was a hefty thing indeed.

“I’m getting the art of the bow, Willow, but as for other weapons, I know my strengths! And my strengths are, apparently, *strength!*”

Willow pouted, and then even more so as a number of the children giggled.

"I swear, Giselle, if your knowledge of human culture in this region and your ties to Polven weren't so crucial, I would really be requesting that Staeth force me to train you."

Giselle just stuck out her tongue, something which made Willow utterly exasperated. The warriorress had long since redeemed herself for her past transgressions, and as evidence she bore the scars against the Demon Lord's armies in skirmishes too many to count. But sometimes a small part of her really wanted to kick her hindlegs against this haughty woman!

"Is there a reason why you're here? We're getting into ambush tactics today."

"Yes, there is," Giselle said. "I need the Greenwood girls. I'm sure they'd all like to meet their new . . ."

All four of them clutched one another tightly, even Saraneen, who didn't really understand all of what was going on.

". . . brother," Giselle finished, relishing every moment.

Willow covered her ears just in time as the girls *screamed* and took off in a veritable stampede, chasing Giselle across the camp to their mother and father, who had made a private place for themselves in a separate clearing where Melevara could give birth to her fifth child. None of them knew what it was like to grow up in a world without the Demon Lord's presence. Their eldest, Nikala, was the only one of them to remember his forces directly, when a force led by Callista the succubus assaulted their camp when she was three and her younger sister Ilope had just been born. She remembered her mother using magic in a scale she'd never imagined even while bravely carrying her foal in one arm just three days after birth, while their father cut down foe after foe with all manner of weapons. Once, they had been human; all of them except for young Saranenn knew that, though Tiress didn't quite understand it, being only four. But their parents had told them that they had once been on a great quest to stop the Demon Lord, and it had been derailed when they had become centaurs.

"I don't regret a thing," Melevara said to Nikala when she'd questioned them about it one late evening. "Not a single moment. I just wish we had been able to move faster, and make a world free of the Demon Lord before you were born. But I would never give you up, Nikala, nor your sisters, nor my role as a mother, much as I've had to grow accustomed to it!"

And indeed, all the daughters knew their mother to be truthful. She had a powerful mind, and was teaching literature to the herd, as well as human magic in combination with their own cosmic arts, just as their father taught them skills with various martial techniques. Theirs was the beating heart of the resistance against the Demon Lord, one that might not succeed in a decade, or even in a century, but over time would work to overcome him. It was a future that gave them hope and purpose.

But for now, such a hope fell by the wayside against the much more physical one born into their family so very recently. Nikala, Tiress, Illope and Saraneen all arrived to their parents' little grove one by one, their littlest sister falling head over hoof with excitement.

"Brother!" she declared happily. "Baby brother!"

"I take it you've heard from Giselle!" Melevara said, cradling her little one in her muscular arms. She knew it was a human instinct in her, though the Gods knew it was not a male one, but she liked to feed her children from her breast occasionally, at least in those youngest stages when it was still possible. Her son was a greedy drinker too, so it certainly helped relieve her build up of milk there. Alisahn shifted around beside her, his tail comfortingly shifting against her side, and he gestured to their son.

"Don't be too loud," he whispered. "Your new brother needs his sleep and care. But would you like to meet him?"

Tiress practically exploded with excitement, and Illope had to give a loud, horse-like snout of disapproval to silence her.

"Sorry!" she squeaked. "I'm just so keen to meet him! Ohhh, look at his dark brown fur. Look at that hair!"

Alisahn and Melevara exchanged a loving glance as they saw how their daughters reacted. Their tails were flicking from side to side as if they were dogs, and their furry ears were ramrod straight, as if yearning to hear even the slightest whimper from the newborn child. The first boy in the family, and one that both parents had long been hoping for, they knew.

Nikala stepped forward on her hooves, keen to get a better look. The little child was so strangely proportioned, but then again, she supposed they all were when they were young. "What's his name, Mom?" she asked.

Their parents exchanged another loving glance, and it was clear that of all the herd, these two were the most inseparable.

"Girls," Alisahn said. "Meet little Melvin, named for someone very important to your mother who she had never forgotten. Melvin, meet your sisters. Welcome to the herd, little warrior."