

PLAIN JANE

COMMISSION STORY

BY CHALDEACHANGE



For someone with chronic bouts of anxiety, it wasn't all that surprising to have episodes like this. Times where you felt like you weren't living up to all you could be, that no matter how hard you tried you just could not become stronger. It was thoughts like these that passed through Dreah's mind after a bout of training within the woods of Gridania. Monsters had grown stronger as of late, and with the emergence of a cult claiming to intend to bring about the Final Days, there was plenty of reason for the Dragoon to improve her skills.

The Au Ra just didn't think she was improving *at all*. She had been fighting with a spear for years now and she wasn't too shabby in her own opinion, but it really felt from her perspective that she had hit a skill ceiling of some sort. **"Maybe I'm lacking in inspiration? I know what I do, I do well. I'm just not sure I can do anything more than that..."** With a sigh, she propped her spear up against a tree a moment so that she might summon her mount. Before she could blow that particular whistle though, a voice called out to her.

**WHAT? ARE YOU LOOKING TO IMPROVE
WITH THAT OLD THING? CONSIDER IT
DONE!**

Where had that voice come from? Within the trees of the forest? Try as she might to look around, Dreah could not see anyone. Which was a little problematic, seeing as the voice she'd heard had sounded like it belonged to a child. **"Is someone there? I cannot see you..."**

The child in question, however, was no mere child. She was a nekomata from another world visiting this world out of little more than boredom. Why not grant the wishes of a few people of this realm before dipping out and exploring another? Of course, she wasn't one to grant desires in



conventional ways. Her whole shtick was embodying the cursed monkey paw principle when she felt like it – which was a *lot* of the time, in fact.

Dreah's woes were little more than a passing fancy for her to fulfill, and no sooner than she had casted the spell that would see the Au Ra's dreams to fruition did she disappear. Thus, the woman received no answer from the child regardless of how much she cried out in hopes of being answered. **"That's strange... Am I hearing things?"**

She didn't exactly have an answer, and so she turned back to the spear she had propped up against the tree. But it was gone! Well, okay, there was still a spear there, but it wasn't hers! The pole was blue, and its overall design was much less elaborate than the weapon she frequented. Had someone stolen hers and replaced it? But in doing so they had also left

behind a big, blue shield with an emblem of some sort weaved about in stone. How had they done so without her seeing?

The Au Ra took a step backwards. Was she in danger? If push came to shove, she would have to take that unfamiliar spear to defend herself. Had it really been a child that had spoken to her? If so, she was more likely to pull her punches, but... Dreah hardly realized that the voice's source was already *long* gone.

As she pondered her plan of action, the magicks that had been cast upon her were *already* affecting her flesh – or, more specifically, her muscles in this case. Her body was one that was rather enticingly toned, as expected of someone that had dedicated so much of her time to the spear. Someone that soared through the sky on the strength of her legs alone could not be without power to her body.

And yet that strength had begun to leave her. It occurred in a way that Dreah herself hardly noticed short of a wave of exhaustion, but she was quick to dismiss that fatigue as a side effect of the anxiety that was building thanks to the unusual situation she had found herself in. If only it had been something so simple, but it *wasn't*. The swell of her toned

body had begun to soften, chiseled muscles smoothing out so that the strength that remained was more befitting of a fledgling warrior rather than a talent of her ability. It was reflected this way in both arms and legs, and even her tummy stuck out an extra inch as fat was softened out of the muscle that once gave her the perfect set of abdominal muscles.

Because she had been training that day she hadn't been in armor, which worked in her favor because if she *had* been wearing it, it would have felt much too heavy now. Her desire had been to become much more skilled with the spear, so what purpose did erasing that skill serve?

Perhaps if her skills were still better than those around her?

Cracks began to form across the woman's body – or at least key areas of it. Anything done up in white scales or keratin were victimized by chips and holes, ultimately crumbling from her body in the form of a white powder that was taken by the forest's breeze. This included the scales upon her thighs, ankles, and around her neck, as well as her horns and even those that clad her tail.

Not that they were really *needed*. Eroded patches of scales revealed soft, supple skin beneath them as one might expect, and the erosion of those horns revealed rounded, fleshy Hyur ears beneath them so that her hearing wasn't at all disrupted. Even her tail, a key appendage on the body of an Au Ra and something she had sported her entire life, was robbed from her once its scale-free form regressed so that her tailbone slurped it back up and left the spot above her booty bare.

“I don't feel... right?” But what was wrong? At first she had thought it was just fatigue, and then a moment later she wondered if she had come down with an illness of some sort. But now? Dreah's balance felt off (because her tail was missing), which paired with the fatigue forced her to prop herself up against the tree the unfamiliar spear and shield had been propped against.

Yet why, all of a sudden, did those two items look so *familiar*?

Dreah's eyes felt heavy, and yet it *wasn't* because she was tired. Instead the eyes themselves had begun to droop in shape, their thin and clearly defined designs appearing looser and perhaps depending on opinion, much *plainer*. It was an adjective that bled into all of her facial faculties, seeing it all loosen and sad just ever so slightly. Lips thinned a little, and her nose ended up looking a little crooked. Throw in the emergence of a string of small, brown freckles across her nose, and she was hardly the natural beauty she had been before (*even if she hadn't seen herself that way*).

In fact she looked terribly *plain*, like the kind of young woman you might find in any town or village tilling the fields. Adding to that aesthetic, her hair soon grew longer and longer, ultimately spilling far down her back as the volume thickened with fresh sheen. But this hair, for all of its mass, was oily and frayed – signs that it hadn't received the same treatment that the once Au Ra was meticulous about enforcing.

With this new length also came new color, for locks of vibrant blonde were dulled to a paltry silver laces with the odd strand of dirty brown. It wasn't necessarily a *common* color, but it felt just as plain as her face *looked* when the two features were paired together. Of course the health and cleanliness of this mane certainly didn't help with that aesthetical conundrum. It was one that had even spread to the hair within her loins, pubes having erupted into an untamed bush that felt quite compacted by her present outfit.

Yet as everything else about her became more and more mundane, so too did her costume change to fit in with this trend. Well, to be fair it wasn't *actually* a boring looking outfit in any sense of it. It was more in the sense that what she was ultimately adorned with was a *uniform*, something assigned to someone that was part of an organization like knights or scholars, that spoke to them giving up their individuality for a cause.

“*Huh!?*” In a nasally voice that wasn't hers, the woman's voice cracked as she shrieked in surprise at the sensation, and sight, of her clothing turning into a gelatinous substance that wriggled across softened flesh. At times it parted to reveal her skin, in turn showing her that her body was not as firm as it had once been, before it hardened. At times it turned to steel, such as the golden mail that hung heftily from her torso, and at others it softened, such as where it became the black one piece – complete with a skirt – that rested *beneath* that mail.

Thigh-highed leggings of black with gold trim found her legs, ultimately revealing themselves to be parts of boots with golden heels, while dark blue gloves clad her arms all of the way up to her elbows. The final piece of this outfit was a black helmet with golden decals, a pair of armored, blue wings protruding out of the sides almost like a Valkyrie.

For as strange as it all was from her perspective, the woman felt compelled to pick up the lance and spear, and before long had them fashioned to her body as if it was completely normal. They felt almost a little *too* heavy for her, as did the mail, but it all fit her body *perfectly*, like it was meant for her.

But it was, wasn't it? That was what she thought now.

The woman, her eyes shrouded by the darkness forged by the overhang of her new helmet, breathed a sigh as she looked about. Each turn of her body caused something to clank or creak within her armored chest piece thanks to the golden mail it was composed of. **“How did I arrive here? This is not Embla, and as a humble soldier, I…”** She was only meant to follow orders. It was not within her paygrade to deal with such confusing matters.



Was her superior officer about? As far as the eye could see, she could only perceive unfamiliar forest. Wait... *No!* She wasn't a soldier! She was supposed to be a Dragoon! An accomplished wielder of the spear! **“But as I am now, my strength…”** It was paltry at best. She could only recall the basics of handling a polearm? What of her jumps? Of her many exceptional abilities that her crystal afforded her? She couldn't so much as recall their names, much less how to wield them!

Her body was fittingly weaker now, and it wasn't that of an Au Ra but a *human*. Human? No, wasn't the word 'Hyr'? Why had a completely different term come to mind? She didn't understand! She didn't—!?

“Ah?” The forest around her had disappeared, and before long she was standing in what appeared to be the barracks of an army of some sort. No shortage of weapons were hoisted upon a nearby wall, and while to Dreah it all seemed unfamiliar, there was a part of her that knew this place. The same part of her that had declared herself a 'soldier' at the peak of her transformation.

“FIRST PLATOON DRUSILLA! Why are you dillydallying there? Don't you have duties to see to? You're the best lancer we have in that lackluster platoon of yours.”

A voice boomed from the nearby doorway, and the soldier immediately stiffened like a board. **“Y-Yes! Sir!”** Her name was *Drusilla*? Since when? It seemed that whether or not she had questions, it didn't really matter. In the fact of what was expected of her, her body and mind both

responded as they should. As if she were an honest-to-goodness lancer of the Askr army. For that was where she was now.

And that was who she was.