Draw and Quarter a Stranger to Feel Some Blood on Your Fingers

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Draw and Quarter a Stranger to Feel Some Blood on Your Fingers

by hanktalkin

Summary

Hawke and Aveline avert an assassination attempt.

“Fuck Maker’s hairy balls FUCK ow ow ow owowOW-PETRICE!! I’m going fucking kill your Petrice!!!”

“Maker’s mercy Hawke, hold *still*.” Aveline pulled again, one hand braced against flesh while the other strained on the shaft, but the skin still rose as the arrow failed to free itself. She let it drop back down with a, “damn. Looks like the head is barbed. We’re going to have to wait until the guard comes back with a medic.”

“Well isn’t that great!” Hawke bayed at the listening arrises of the ceiling. “She killed me with a trick arrow. Trick arrows, Aveline! That’s my thing!”

“You’re not going to die, Hawke,” Aveline said, and wiped her bloodied hands on her chausses.

It was true. Although the dais was covered in blood and the arrow buried deep in the meat of Hawke’s shoulder, no one was going to die, not even the shaking Viscount’s son, who was currently being comforted by a cheerfully unscratched Isabela. Aveline made an idle note to break *that* pairing up before Saemus suffered even more mental grief. Two of the faithful—faithful to spending all their time clutching pearls over a handful of oxmen, that is—laid dead and bare beneath Andraste’s holy feet, her eyes turned skyward and unbothered as ever. They’d been picked clean of valuables in the short time it’d taken for Hawke to get shot, be lowered gently to the ground, and start screaming her bloody head off.

“How dare you!” Hawke was still ranting at the nominally empty Chantry. “After everything we’ve done for you, and you skewer me like a pig on Feastday? The Maker spits on two-faced rats you know! Pisses out his bloody nose at them!”

Aveline rubbed her temples, wishing it would make the ceaseless noise go on and cease. “‘After everything we’ve done’? You mean when we hauled around that qunari mage and you threatened pull her nipples out through her ears?”

“But I *didn’t*! She should have been grateful.”

“You know Hawke, I don’t think she was aiming at you.”

Hawke attempted to flop back with a groan, only to forget the arrow in her shoulder and lose her complaint in a keen of pain. “I know I know, was shooting at the qunari-lover-boy, should stop throwing yourself bodily where your body doesn’t belong Hawke! Stop leaving torn trousers in my office Hawke! Well I’m so bloody sorry I went and got myself killed because I know how much paperwork that’ll make for you but actually wait I’m not sorry because I am *not* going to die on the floor of the *fucking* Chantry unless I’m fully naked and holding a bottle of Aqua Magus in one hand a blonde girl’s tit in the other who looks *just* like Andraste as long as I’m still drunk. In fact! I’m not going to die even then! I’m not frog-marching into the beyond until I see that women’s head on a pike!” She sat up, the arrow jutting forward like the sentinels’ thuribles surrounding them. “You hear that Petrice? I’m going to kill you! DO YOU HEAR ME PETRICE? PETRICE DO YOU HEA-”

“HAWKE!” Aveline roared. “SHUT! UP! She’s not here, she’s *gone*.”

Oh, and of course *that* made the two bystanders turn and look at them, but not Hawke’s hysterics. Aveline glared at them until they turned back around.

But Hawke did shut up, Maker’s small mercies, and lay back down onto Aveline’s lap. “…I really have caused quite a bit of trouble for you, haven’t I?”

“Maybe,” Aveline admitted. She looked up to the balcony, thinking someone was going to have to tell the Grand Cleric there’d been two murders and an assassination attempt in her place of worship. “I think you did a good thing tonight, though.”

Hawke’s mouth, turned pale from lack of blood, pursed further until it was just a slit on her face. “Doesn’t feel very good. It feels like shit.”

Aveline placed a hand against the side of Hawk’s cheek, and held it there.

Hawke did not bleed out by the time Merrill came back with six of Aveline’s guard, one thankfully being Powell, who had no qualms about operating in the middle a massacre. If Aveline could return her ears back twenty minutes to when Hawke was only screaming about creative revenge fantasies, she’d gladly take that offer for all the gold in her purse. The last stitch closed with a *snip*.

“Oh quit your bellyachin’,” Powell said as Hawke whined with her face leaking tears onto a clean section of stone. “Din’ even hit an artery. Slap a poultice on it and it’ll be fine by morning.”

“Thank you Powell,” Aveline nodded, though privately she was glad Powell didn’t often get to execute her particular brand of bedside manner on civilians.

“No problem. Want the arrow?” Powell held it out. It was still rather bloody.

“Er…No.”

“Yes,” Hawke sniffled from the floor.

“She doesn’t want it,” Aveline reiterated. To Hawke, she said, “I’m going to go look for the Grand Cleric. And then the Viscount.”

“…Shouldn’t you deal with lover-boy over there first?” Hawke jerked her chin in Saemus’s direction. He’d had his head in his hands ever since guard began taking bodies from the room.

“Wright will escort him back to his rooms. He’s safer with his own guards. I’m more worried about you.”

“Me?” Hawke mopped away a trail of snot. “I’m fit as a fiddle!”

“You’re missing a quarter of your blood and half your yellow bile,” Powell pointed out.

Aveline looked up the balcony again. She wanted to talk to the Elthina before word spread, and with Isabela parted from Saemus's side, that meant there were only so many hours before the news would be on the lips of every dockworker in Kirkwall.

And yet, she didn't want to leave Hawke like this. "What do you recommend Powell?"

"Rest. Relaxation. Avoid men who wear socks to bed."

Aveline looked down at Hawke, graying in the face with circles around her eyes more noticeable than ever, and resisted the urge to kneel beside her again. "Are you listening to her Hawke? Think you can lay low for a few weeks?"

Hawke smiled, teeth bright and shiny underneath a nose that had been broken and re-healed more times than it's owner had won a bet against Varric. "Can do, captain."

Hawke did not.

The stakeout that was not a stakeout but was instead Hawke insisting for the third time in two weeks that she'd found a veritable lead on the former mother, was occurring in a warehouse that looked exactly like all the other warehouses they'd staked out in. And, as someone who had performed *actual* stakeouts, Aveline was got the feeling this would be a circuitous round of late-night babysitting than an actual stab at investigation. The baby in question was Hawke, who really could have been healed right now if she drank a potion or listened to Aveline, or didn't practice with her bow, or got more than ten winks a night, or, again, listened to Aveline. Their conversation thankfully involved other subjects than what Hawke was going to do to Petrice when they found her, in exchange for the various merits of late night nudist shuffleboard and whether it was legal to do so in Hightown.

"You know," Hawke said, fingers full of feathers as she re-fletched an arrow, "the Viscount offered me his son's hand."

Aveline choked, water spurting out her nose as a mouthful slipped down the wrong pipe. She might have thought Hawke waited specifically for when she was halfway into her waterskin in order to drop that news, but Hawke putting such head into anything wasn't likely.

"His *hand*?" Aveline wiped the back of her gauntlet against her mouth. "As in *marriage*?"

"'Fraid so!" Hawke grinned up at Aveline. "Terrible idea, I know. Worst idea since trading over the Maker's Bride for a couple of swampy mountains. What am I going to say when there's no kids over the next however-long-Marlowe's-got? *Sorry my liege, I must have misplaced them*?"

Aveline shook her head. "If this is his solution to a rebellious son, it's no wonder the way the city is the way it's gone."

"I know!" Hawke deftly twirled a completed arrow, orange and red and yellow feathers forming a velvety pinwheel. "If half the Fereldans in this city can spot a freak on sight, you'd think a well-bred nobleman would notice."

“You know,” Aveline prompted, “you might not get nearly as many shouts at you in the docks if you just kept your shirt buttoned closed.”

Hawke raised her eyebrows. “Guard Captain! This is a *poet shirt*! If it’s not flapping half-open in the breeze, then I’ve dishonored the profession that came before me.” Aveline had read some of Hawke’s poetry. If she was worried about dishonoring the great Paragon Lynchcar, she had more pressing worries than her choice in dress. “Would you tell *Varric* to keep his shirt closed, and deprive the world of his bountiful virility?”

“I have actually,” Aveline said. “But even so, Varric’s not trying to convince the average sailor of anything.”

Hawke didn’t look offended. She never did, not after anything anyone called her, not after other nobles likened their countrymen to dogs. Aveline could remember the long trip in the belly of the ship, looking down at what amounted to little more than a sickly child with a sister slumped against her side. Her nose was still just as massive back then, but before all the bar fights had given it a new shape, and above it were eyes that appeared to be wasting away right in front of her. Aveline had offered her some water, and been jovially refused. Hawke subsisted on nothing, least of all the approval of other people.

Shrugging, Hawke said, “and if I kept my shirt closed, would that convince them? Make them think I donated my tits to some poor elf girl because Maker knows she needed them? Come on Aveline, has stuffing your gambeson for all these years ever earned you an *ounce* more respect from the people who’ve made up their minds not to give you any?”

“Life’s easier when you meet expectations,” Aveline replied stiffly. “It’s not that difficult a concept to grasp.”

“Oh? Is that you’re climbing up Donnic’s tree? Fit better into those *expectations*?”

For the time, she sensed a drop of bitterness in Hawke’s voice, and the subject startled her. “What? What’s *that* supposed to mean?”

No longer looking, Hawke slit another fine line into the wood with her carving knife. “Oh nothing. Just seems that putting yourself next to Mister Sideburns is a clever little way to fool yourself into *convincing*.”

“I *like* Donnic.” Aveline’s hackles were up now. “It’s not some…*ploy*. I wouldn’t sink so low as to-”

“Talk yourself into liking someone just for appearances sake?” The cheer was back in Hawke’s voice. “That actually sounds *exactly* like something you’d do.”

Aveline scoffed. “How am I supposed to prove anything to you if my own *wants* are up for question?”

Hawke set down her finished arrow and said, “you know, maybe I will take the Viscount up on his offer.”

Aveline gritted her teeth. “A minute ago you said it was the worst thing since the betrayal of Andraste.”

“I reserve the right to change my opinion at a moment’s notice.” Hawke tapped an arrow idly against her lips. “Couldn’t be so bad, could it? I cover for him while he runs of with his shiny lover, he covers for me while I have orgies in the grand library. I get to sit on the big chair while he’s in Starkhaven, the list goes on. What’s really the downside here?”

“I see what you’re doing Hawke,” Aveline told her, knowing she shouldn’t let Hawke rile her but unable to help it. “Stop it.”

“Do you? That makes one of us. I happen to be in a constant state of not knowing what I’m doing. But you? Ser Vallen, you’ve got it all figured out: the Captainship, the subordinates-

“Hawke,” Aveline warned.

“-to have everyone love and respect you because you’re *exactly* what they want-”

“*Hawke*,” she whispered. “Shut *up*.” And she pointed.

There were two figures, not smugglers, not with the armor on one and robes on the other. Aveline pressed a finger to her lips, and crept to the edge of their hiding spot, trying to get a look as to how alert their targets were. If they could keep to the dark side of the warehouse for a little longer…

“PETRICE!!”

“Oh sodding hell,” Aveline murmured, and climbed over the banister to land on the straw covered floor.

Hawke was on her feet, bow firing wildly off mark, a thousand multilingual curses hauled overboard at the startled chantry members below. Varnell raised his blade, but as Hawke reached back to draw another arrow, she jerked, clutching her unhealed shoulder. “Shit!!”

Aveline sighed, rolled her eyes, and went to deal with the heretics herself.

Varnell put a good fight, parrying her first block and making her arm go nearly numb when he batted aside her second. But templar training will never be the same as a weekly regiment of beating up bandits, and when he followed forward with his own series of attack to press her weakness, her stamina won out. Within the minute, Varnell was dead, and Petrice was cowering before her.

The mother’s eyes flicked toward the way she’d come, but Hawke had finally managed to make her way down from the landing. Her carving knife was drawn in her good hand, the left side of her now a mess of blood and popped open stitches. She placed herself in between Petrice and the second exit, smiling manically. “No where to run, Petrice! You don’t know how long I’ve been waiting for this.”

With widened eyes, Petrice backed into a wall and slid to her knees.

Hawke was filling her lungs with air to launch into another tirade, when Petrice's eyes suddenly focused on Aveline. "You have betrayed this city, and it's people."

"Takes one to know one, lady," Hawke rebuked. "And you're about to see what happens to-"

Petrice cut her off. "Every decision you make, every time you side with those heathens over your people, you add one more hurt to the pile. How can you rest at the end of the day when you hunt down brothers and sisters instead of the evil lurking at the heart of the city?"

"You are under arrest for the attempted murder of Seamus Dumar, Petrice," Aveline told her firmly. "Come with us peacefully, and Her Holiness will see to your fate."

"And what then, Guard Captain?" Petrice hissed. "Do you still believe in justice in this city anymore? That the sinful will get what they deserve and the innocent will be spared? Time and time again you hand over those who do what is best to the powers that be, even though you know they are blind. You see their weakness, yet you contribute to their gluttony."

Aveline swallowed. She knew who Petrice meant by 'sinful' and 'innocent', but truth still ringed her words like spores on a clean cloth. Hadn't Aveline seen for herself what was in store at a time of crisis? If the past weeks were anything to go by, both the city's most powerful people would simply withdraw.

Unfortunately, her brief hesitation opened the window Hawke needed. "Psyche! You're not getting as far as your trail you dog-breathed dwarf-mother! We're doing this right here, right now. I'm going to need you to squeeze your cheeks together real tight until your whole ass gets sucked in and you get turned inside out. Then! I'm going to feed you your ass horse radish sauce because that will be your mouth by that point and make you guzzle the stuff, you back stabbing, radish shitting-"

Aveline hit Petrice over the head with her pommel.

"Hey! I wasn't done!" Hawke complained, lowering her knife.

Slinging the unconscious body over one shoulder, Aveline said, "and you never will be."

"I might've! When I actually killed her that is."

"We're not killing her," Aveline pointed out. "The Grand Cleric wants her alive, remember?"

"That? I thought we were kidding about that."

Aveline grunted, but said no more. They travelled out of the warehouse, down the damp Lowtown streets and making their way through the thin mists that seemed capture Aveline's gaze and not let go.

"Hey, you alright?" Hawke asked as the silence stretched on, Aveline still staring at the quieted homes.

"How do you do it?" Aveline said suddenly. "Just…not care what anyone thinks."

Hawke shrugged, unperturbed by the change in topic. “Don’t see why I should. I tend to make up my own mind. There are lot of things people say you need that, if you really look into it, you actually don’t.”

“Like sleep?” Aveline raised an eyebrow. “Food, water, medicine?”

“Yeah, all those things.”

Shaking her head, she said, “I could never be like you.”

“Ah. Shame that is. I think the world would be a lot better place if it was filled with Hawkes.”

They walked the length of the city together a bit longer, the Viscount’s Way coming closer in sight. Once or twice, she thought she felt Hawke looking sidelong at her, but when she turned her head, Hawke was still whistling straight ahead.

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