**Fiona’s Final Exam**

by [thehypnotoad](https://nficstoryboard.com/profile/thehypnotoad/)

As she made her way up the spiral, stone staircase to the Archmage’s chambers, Fiona Core was nervous. Not about passing her final practical exam and completing her 4 years at the Siros Mage’s Collage. She’d finished all her written exams and studies with top marks across the board, the practical exam was little more then a formality. Everyone was aware of her power and raw talent, and that was the problem.

During her time at the collage, Fiona had earned herself the nickname, Crimson. She’d like to think this was from the colour of her long hair that reached halfway down her back in a tight ponytail. Or perhaps, she hoped, it was for her incredible skill with fire magic. She adjusted her glasses and let out a sigh as she neared the top of the stairs, knowing deep down that the source of the name really came from the colour of her cheeks after one of her…accidents.

So potent, so gifted was Fiona with flame magic that unleashing her strength would cause anything she was wearing to turn to ash in seconds. Growing up, her parents had gone through two homes and half an inn before discovering she was the cause. Her elven mother had given her a pendent to suppress her magic till she could control it. She fingered the red gem around her neck now. Though her years at the collage had seen her grow far beyond its protection, she still found it a comfort.

Her first practical class had been a humiliating ordeal. The first time using her skills of her own choice had been exhilarating at first. Years of keeping the magic inside, bottled up, now been realised had felt wonderful. However the gasps of astonishment at her display quickly changed to suppressed laughter and cries of shock. Looking down, Fiona had frozen as her display of power tore though the simple protective enchantments of her apprentice robe. Then the hem, sleeves and neck line all flared, and within a second the long garment was ash in the wind, revealing to the class that the freckles across her nose and cheeks also covered the rest of her tan skin. The same fate awaited her simple underwear, her bra disintegrated, freeing her ample chest. The sides of her panties burnt through and garment fall away from her hips, and were dust before they hit the ground. The patch of hair between her legs they had hidden left no doubt to those watching that her red locks where natural. Even the sturdy boots had burnt away, along with her glasses and anything else on her person.

Long seconds of stunned silenced passed as the flames of Fiona’s demonstration dissipated and she realised she was still stood in her casting pose with arm starched out to either side. It took another few seconds to snapped out of her stunned state to realised she was still on full display to the class and her tutor before letting out a startled squeak and throwing one arm across her chest, hiding her nipples and using her other hand to cover her exposed womanhood. Her cheeks burnt red as she turned away from the class, her round bottom jiggling slightly as crouched into a ball. The silence was only broken when her room mate, Serana, rushed forward to cover her with her cloak she’d thankfully left by the door.

“If it’s any consolation”, Serana had said when they were back in their dorm room, “I think you looked gorgeous.” She grinned as she watched Fiona putting a fresh set of clothes. It wasn’t, Fiona had said but she appreciated thought.

Fiona quickly looked into getting some fire-resistant clothes, but only heavily enchanted garment could stand up to her flames. She had to wear her apprentice robes for class according the rules her tutors insisted on following, but even the cost of sufficiently warded underwear left her breathless and she was almost through her third year before she and enough sets to last between trips to the laundry. Why did it always seem like practical class fell whenever she didn’t have a safe set of underwear? Still Serana was always there with a spare robe for her, even if she did insist one been there as she redressed “in case you’re still flammable” she had said.

Fiona hugged her arms around her as the memories of her numerous exposures brought a flush to her cheeks. It’s not that she was ashamed of her body. Quite the opposite, she was proud of the physique the years of sword and martial arts training with her human mercenary father had given her, along with the natural beauty gifted to her by her mother, a stunning eleven priestess cast out in shame for falling in love with a lowly human sell-sword. Fiona had wondered, perhaps even hoped if she would get used to been naked after a few more classes showed this problem was not going away. Instead each incident seemed to amplify her embarrassment, leaving her curled in a blushing ball until Serana rescued her.

She’d told her parents about the mortifying incidents, but they were no help. Instead they told her the story of her mother banishment. How she was stripped of her already scant vestments in the temple by the head priestess and forced to walk though the city naked as penance for breaking her vows. She did so proudly, however, knowing that Fiona’s father was waiting at the city gates to take her away. Fiona had tried to picture herself in that position, but couldn’t imagine taking the first step outside.

She checked again that her spare robe was in her bag, the fifth timed she’d down so on the way up the stairs. Just once more, she kept telling herself. Though her amply supply of fire-proof lingerie had kept most of her dignity intact for the final year, the rules for her final exam made it clear that no enchanted items where allowed. Fiona blushed deeply once more as the thought reminded her that because all of her underwear was now warded against her flames, she was going commando under her robe, a fact that had greatly amused Serana when she flipped up the back of her robe on the way out of dorms and given her exposed right buttock a healthy squeeze “for luck”

No, Fiona said to herself, just once more and she would be an accredited mage, allowed to use her skills openly. She thought about the set of armour under her bed, enchanted like her underwear. A black and sliver corset top, banded with black steel, a matching pair of shorts with boiled leather black belt and a sliver buckle with a flame design. The tough boots also reinforced with black steel with red highlights, and the matching gauntlet for her right arm. To complete the look she had a long red leather coat. The whole set impervious to fire. Next to the armour was the gift her father had given when he considered her sword training complete.

“Looks like you can give your old man a run for his money now kiddo” he had said the day before she left of the collage, “so here, this should give you an edge in the unlikely event you find someone even better then me,” he finished with a wink. He handed her a long wooden box that contained a thin, curved sword. Its black steel glisten and a line of a strange red material ran the length of the blade. “Fire dragon scales!” her father exclaimed proudly as she examined the sword. “Had some left over from my adventuring days, and the blacksmith owed me a favour.” Fiona gave the sword a few swings. It was lighter then she expected and felt so natural in her hands. “Your mother was kind enough to enchant the whole thing,” he continued, “and with the scales forged into the blade, I don’t know, maybe you can send those flames of yours though them when you get them under control.” She’d given him the biggest hug after that.

That was her goal, weather this final exam, get her accreditation, and then become a mercenary like her father. Her dreams of travelling the land and helping those in need would soon become reality. The grateful towns people always had spare coin for those willing to deal with wolves or goblins and alike her father had always said. Just one more ordeal. She had finally reached the top of the stairs. Checking once more she had her spare robe, she took a deep breath and opened the door.

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Serana twirled her curly brown hair around her finger. This was sooooo boring. Her specialty was teleportation magic so getting into her hiding spot in the rafters above the Archmage’s chambers was easy, but she wasn’t sure when Fiona’s exam was, so she’d been up here since parting ways outside the dorms this morning. Ah, she could still feel the warmth of Fiona’s bare arse on her hand. Of cause she knew she’d have to go commando today because of all those blasted magic panties. Those accursed unmentionables had been the bane of Serena’s final year. No more tantalising glimpses of Fiona’s lovely body exposed for all. Sure she could “accidently” walk in on her changing, but her reaction in front of an audience was so much better, and while seeing her flustered in her thrice dammed enchanted underwear was still a joy, seeing her in all her glory was the real treat. What a struggle it was to rush to her aid every time and hide those luscious curves from the world.

Not that she wanted to cause Fiona harm. Far from it, she cared deeply for her roommate. In fact more then Fiona ever seemed to realise. But her love for her friend seemed to match only with the joy of seeing her on display for the world. That split second before she covered herself, the jiggle of her boobs and arse and she tried to hide as much as possible, good times.

Serana was snapped from her found memories by the sound of the door opening. Finally! She repositioned herself and brought a small crystal from the pouch on her belt. The imager had cost most of the money her parents had sent her as a graduation gift, but once activated it would capture a fully life like image of it’s target for about a minute of time and could play back the images in full 3d whenever the user wish. This was her last chance to see one of Fiona’s accidents and she wanted to remember it forever. Come to think of it, once they graduated so may never see Fiona again! The thought gave her pause. Never again to see those bright green eyes or that fierce red her or those wonderful freckles all over her body. She was roused from her thoughts as the exam began.

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Fiona removed her pendant and placed it in her bag, then hung it and her cloak on a hook by the door, before moving to stand in front of the Archmage and senior tutors of the collage. Arrayed behind the Archmage’s huge desk, they were the most powerful wizards, mages and sorcerers she had even know. The Archmage himself, look exactly as he had on her first day, his long white beard and hair beneath a tall pointed hat. The bright glint in his gray eyes showed he was as sharp as ever.

“Well Miss Core,” he spoke softly. Though he may sound like a weak old man, anyone who knew the Archmage knew it was an act. “You’ve certainly had a, shall we say, interesting time at our collage.” Fiona was sure she saw several of the tutors suppressing a smile, determined to keep a stern expression. She blushed but otherwise did not react.

“Yes, sir,” she said demurely, “perhaps a little more interesting then I’d like,” she managed a smile. The Archmage smiled warmly in return. It reminded her of the old man who looked after the horses back home.

“Quite,” he said happily, “we’ve all been very impressed with the progress you’ve made.” Now his smile seem to remind Fiona of the times when Serana had walk in on her while drying her self after bathing.

“Thank you, sir,” she replied, carefully keeping the smile on her face, “and thank you all for your guidance.” The assembled tutors all mumbled responses. Happy to have taught her, fond memories, that kind of thing.

“Well without further ado,” the Archmage said bringing the tutors to order, “I suppose we should conduct your final exam.” Four of the tutor made a series of gestures and four figures materialised behind Fiona at the far end of the room. They appeared humanoid, though featureless like wooden dummies, the same training dummies Fiona and practiced on for years. This time though she knew they would be much quicker and stronger than in class. “Whenever your are ready Miss Core,” the Archmage said.

Fiona spun to face the dummies and made ready to cast her first spell. Immediately they began moving to attack her, not only quicker, but with much more grace and purpose then they had in class. That’s the difference, she thought, when the tutors are controlling their puppets directly. She was ready however, and made a few quick movements with her hands. A bight yellow array appeared before her and four streaks of lighting jumped from centre striking each of the dummies in the chest. All four stopped and convulsed with electricity coursing though them. Not giving them a chance to recover, she quickly sent a wide blast of freezing cold towards the stricken targets, rapidly encasing each in ice. She smiled, turned back to the Archmage and tutors and snapped her fingers. The chilly statues shattered behind her, the ruined remnants of the dummies quickly fading. She’d done it. She’d hope to complete her test without resorting to fire magic and though her ice and lightning spells were no were near as powerful they’d been up to the task. The tutors and Archmage conferred briefly.

“Very good Miss Core, very impressive,” The Archmage praised. Fiona sensed a “but” coming. “However, accuracy and power have never been your weakness, control that’s the problem.” He snapped his own fingers and pedestal with a block of ice about meter to a side appeared with a flash next to Fiona. “Melt the ice without damaging the pedestal and your exam will be complete.”

Fiona sighed as the tutors all agreed with each other that this was the prefect test for her. She would have to use her flames after all. Okay then, she could do this. She’d spent a lot of time and a lot of robes figuring out exactly how much power she could pour into her flames before her clothes were at risk. She’d have to hope it was enough. She raised her right arm towards the ice making the hand gestures to form the fire rune in front of her palm. The blast of flame that leaped forward stuck the centre of the ice block, but nothing happened. How?! Thought Fiona, the heat was more then enough to melt ice. She gradually began to raze the heat of her flames, always creeping towards the critical level. Only when she began to approach the limit of what she could safely do did the tell-tale shimmer of an enchantment ripple across the surface of the cube. They’d enchanted the ice! It was almost as if they wanted her robe to burn away. It was close though, the fact that the enchantment was visible meant it was close to its limit. Could she risk exposing her self to the Archmage? The tutors had all taught her at some point, there where all familiar with the details of her naked form, but the Archmage. She’d never live it down.

“We don’t have all day, Miss Core,” the Archmage said as if reading her indecision. Nothing for it then. She pushed further channelling more power in the concentrated tongue of fire. The hem of her sleeve began to smoulder, then spark, until finally the enchantment failed the cube of ice was quickly vaporised by the flame, leaving the pedestal untouched. Fiona quickly stopped her spell and cast some low level ice magic over her right side. She was relived to find the damaged wasn’t too bad. Her entire right sleeve was gone and the flames had caught part of right side of her robes leaving a hole through which the side of her right breast was visible, but she was decent. Everything covered. She positively beamed at have unleashed her flame and stayed dressed. She turned to Archmage who was now deep in a hushed conference with the tutors.

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What a con, Serana thought. The imaging crystal had been so expensive. On one hand she was glad she hadn’t wasted it on a little side-boob action, and she was happy her friend has passed, but at the same time she was disappointed she didn’t get to see her exposed one last time. Well, graduation wasn’t for another couple of days, she was sure she could arrange to walk in on her changing one last time before then. She was about to teleport herself away when some commotion below drew her attention.

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“What?” Fiona exclaimed, and then composed herself, “I mean, forgive me sir, but haven’t I completed the tasks you set me. How are we not done? The Archmage straightened himself up in his seat.

“Indeed have passed your exam, Miss Core,” he said all business, “and we congratulate you. However we cannot assign you a final grade until we see the, um, upper limits of your ample, um, talents.” This was ridiculous. This whole thing might have seem like a huge farce to get her naked, but these were some of the most brilliant and respected minds in the kingdom. They didn’t stoop to that kind of base thinking.

“Surely,” Fiona protest, “my past record is enough.”

“Ah, but this must be conduct under, um, exam conditions, yes,” The Archmage shot back. The tutors all sombrely nodded in agreement.

“Very well” Fiona sighed, defeated and stepped back. She had heard of something like this, truth be told. A display of power used as part of the final exam, but never surly after the test had been past. She blushed deeply and the though of what was about to happen but forced herself to continue. One more time, just one more time.

She closed her eyes, and began making a series of complex hand gestures in front of her chest and chanting the ancient words she knew by heart. She was glad she had prepared for this, but hoped it wouldn’t come to it. As the flames began to swirl around her the Archmage and tutors glanced at each other and hastily prepared and powerful barrier on front of them. Fiona’s robe quickly burnt away, her chest jiggling slightly as the power of the incantation lifter her into the air, fully exposing her to her audience. She eyes flashed open, burning with the same brightness as the flames that surrounded her as her glasses crumble away from her face. Her long hair freed from the ties that held fanned out in all directions.

The Archmage’s mouth hung open. Of cause the tutors had told him the tale of talented, voluptuous student whose power stripped her naked all the time. Male and female tutors both spoke very enthusiastically about both her magic skill and her great beauty. A joy to teach and to behold they said. They insisted he must witness it for himself, and now he was glad he did. He was 107 years old, but right now he couldn’t think of anything from those long decades that pleased him more than the vision in front of him now. “A goddess,” was all he could say with a big grin on his face.

Any thoughts of embarrassment were gone, at least for now from Fiona as she was caught up in the spell now entering its final stage. The flames began to come together forming first two huge clawed feet that slammed down on the floor, the great heat causing the stone to crack and sizzle beneath them. Fiona remembered vividly the description of the fire dragon her father had battled long ago and it’s shaped now flowed into her flames. Finally, when the great flaming beast was complete it let out an ear-splitting roar, shattering the windows of the chamber. Fiona pointed forward and the fire dragon let out gout of white hot flame that spread out over the tutor’s barrier. The barrage continued, the flames the made up the dragon been expelled through its mouth. So great were the flames the hastily conjured barrier began to crack under their onslaught. It was on the verge of collapse when the flames were final spent and Fiona floated gently to the ground. Quickly regaining her wits, she through an arm across her chest and cover her nethers with the other and blushing from the pointed tips of her ears to her toes faced the Archmage’s desk.

To her horror the Archmage, his desk and the tutors were all covered in a layer of black soot. She hoped none of the paper that had been on the desk, which were how a collection of charred ashes blowing through the broken windows, were terribly important. The breeze from the shattered window reminded her of her state of undress as the cold wind caused her nipples to stiffen under her arm. The Archmage coughed sending out a cloud of black soot.

“Very good indeed Miss Core,” he croaked and cleared his throat. “I think we can all agree you deserved the highest marks for your…display.” The tutors all voices their agreement as the dusted them selves off. “I believe this grade puts you top of your graduating class,” he continued, cleaning himself off with a quick spell. “I think we’d all like to shake your hand.”

“Um yes of course,” Fiona stammered clutching her arms around herself a little tighter. “Let me just get my spare…” Her bottom bounced pleasingly to the Archmage’s eyes as she turned towards the door where her bag and cloak where, or rather where they had been. All that was left of the stand, her cloak, her bag and most importantly her spare robe was a pile of ash with the red jewelled pendent from her mother sitting on top.

She could have collapsed from embarrassment but the tutors and Archmage had already moved from behind the desk to congratulate her. She awkwardly shook hands with them while attempting to keep her chest covered which only caused her breast to bounce free of their concealment with every hand she shook. Many of her tutors also slapped her on the back, my but some of their hands were getting awful low. She kept trying to ask for something to cover herself with as they continued to extol her virtues and ushered her towards the door.

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Serana peeked out from her hiding spot. That was amazing! She’d know Fiona had something up her sleeve but hadn’t been able to pry it out of her. She took stock of herself. Her robe was singed here and there but nothing too bad. Thankfully the blast hadn’t been directed upward or she’d been toast. Pretty dumb way to die, trying to see your friend butt naked. That reminded her, the crystal! Thankfully it was miraculously untouched, but she had to know. She activated the playback at its smallest size, as breathed a sigh of relief as the events playing themselves back in miniature on her palm. Certainly it was worth the money she’d paid, the detail was fine enough that you could see Fiona’s boobs and arse jiggle as the magic flowed though her. She hugged the crystal tight. This would be her greatest treasure; she’d keep it with her always. Looking down, she saw the tutors leading the still nude Fiona out of the chambers. As fun as it might be to watch her make her way back to the dorm in the buff, Serana decided she’d been through enough for one day. Teleporting back to their room she quickly changed into a fresh robe and grabbed one of Fiona’s spears. Wait, she thought to herself. It might seem suspicious if she had one of Fiona’s own robs with her. He placed it back in the wardrobe and instead wrapped her cloak around her shoulder. She darted down the stairs out outside just in time to see the door to the Archmage’s tower open.

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Gods, they’re not going to stop, Fiona thought as the door to the tower was pushed open. She was going to have to walk naked back to the dorm. She burned with shame as she was lead out into the daylight, but no soon had she cleared the threshold then she heard a familiar voice.

“Fiona! How did it go?” Serana asked cheerfully, then “Gods what happened?” as she noticed her friends lack of clothing. The tutors reluctantly parted as she removed her cloak and wrapped it around Fiona. Serana was smaller then Fiona, but cloak covered her, just. She’d be fine for the trip back to the dorms at least.

“The usual,” Fiona managed a smile. Serana was such a good friend always there for her in her embarrassing moments. She hugged Fiona now tightly, her hand accidently finding its way under the cloak and rubbing past her chest. Fiona flushed from the contact. “Um, carful that’s my…”

“Goodness I’m so sorry,” Serana apologised, her face a picture of concern as she carefully removed her arm. Fiona quickly closed the cloak in front of her, grabbing it together and ran Serana though the details of the exam. Serana giggled when she got the part were she discovered her spare robe had also been torched but quickly said sorry as she continued. “So you’re top of the class, congrats, Fiona” Serana smiled as Fiona was redressing in the dorm room. “Doesn’t that mean you have to give a speech at graduation?”

“Sure does,” Fiona said relaxing now she was fully clothed and away from prying eyes. “But I had one ready just in case so it should been fine.”

“Wont you be embarrassed to speak in front of all those people?” asked Serana astonished. Fiona shook her head.

“It’s just a speech, after everything I’ve been through public speaking doesn’t bother me.” Serana laughed

“People have seen an awful lot of you these passed few years,” she grinned. Fiona was surprised to find herself smiling back.

“But you were always there for me, Serana; you’ve been a really good friend.” Now it was Serena’s turn to blush

“C’mon, you don’t really mean that,” she said lowering her head.

“I do,” Fiona said in no uncertain terms, “No one else ever seem concerned for me. Just you. Thanks Serana.” Serana was very quiet for a moment but rubbed her eyes with eyes with her sleeve.

“No problem,” She stuck her hip out pointed at Fiona, her usual cheerful disposition restored, “You can always count on me to cover your arse! Figuratively and literally if needed.”

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Graduation day rolled around without incident, Though Serana did manage to make her way into Fiona’s bed after the celebration party.

“Too many drinks, so sorry,” Serana had bowed an apologise after Fiona had woken up to find Serana cuddle up against her back with her hand cupping Fiona’s right boob under her thin nightdress. Such scant night clothes, Serana had always thought for someone so easily embarrassed. Fiona had just laughed off the whole thing and even given her a big hug, telling her how much she’d miss her. As brilliant as Fiona was Serana was still amazed out how naïve she could be. She looked at her friend how given her speech. The expected stuff about hard work and believing in yourself, but to Serana’s surprise she even made a couple of jokes about her embarrassing accidents that both got laughs and raised an endearing blush on Fiona’s cheeks. As she spoke on the stage in her black graduation gown, highlighted with bright sash that identified her as top of the class Serana found herself thinking how much she would miss her friend, and how much she would miss seeing her in an embarrassing situation. She clutched the pocket of her own robe that contained the recording of Fiona’s final exam and smiled to herself. She’d always have her memories.

Finally it was time for everyone to receive their certificates of accreditation. Everyone lined up before the Archmage, Fiona going first as the top student. She shook his hand and took her certificate. Serana noted the big grin on the old perv’s face as he congratulated her. Her thoughts began to wonder as he waited for her turn. Perhaps she could stay with Fiona after graduation. Her plan to become a travelling mercenary certainly sound more exciting than the job her parents had lined up for her with the kingdoms travel bureau. Teleporting people between the major cites was certainly profitable, sounded so dull. Besides, there were other rewards besides the monetary. Her skills could make travelling easier and she knew some simple healing spells. She was lost in thought, thinking how best to propose the idea to Fiona when she came to climb the steps to the stage. She tripped on the top step, falling ungracefully forward onto the stage, her robe flying up around her waist as she fell exposing her lacy green thong to the world. She quickly got up and pulled her robe back in to place blushing as he wondered how many people had seen her risqué underwear. She needn’t had worried as everyone was looking upwards. Above the stage a ten foot tall image of Fiona was projects, naked and doing her best to cover herself after her final exam. The image turned around and hundreds of heads bobbed in unison with jiggle of her lovely arse. Serana’s brief embarrassment was replaced by dread as she felt for the crystal in her pocket and found it gone. Looking around while everyone else was distracted, she spotted it on stage a few feet away. She dove on the crystal and quickly stuffed it back in her robes before anyone could notice. No longer distracted by Fiona’s mesmerising form the assembled student and faculty regained there sense and murmurs of discussion of the amazing images began to ripple through the crowd. No one seemed to realise that Serana had dropped the crystal and assumed she’d fallen because she was distracted, but surely Fiona must have seen. She couldn’t even look at her friend as order was restored and she collected her certificate. She’d know Serana had made the recording and their friend ship would be over. She’d never let her join her adventures now.

The Formal ball that evening was the last time many of the, now former students would she each other. Serana had tried to make pleasant conversation with the others but her thoughts kept drifting back to Fiona. She’d left the ceremony before she could speak with her and hadn’t been back to their room. Her dress for the ball was still laid out when Serana had left. Now she was stood in a corner miserable. Her fancy green dress seemed wasted now. She took another drink, and idly sipped at it, contemplating a future as a glorified coach driver when all the conversation around her suddenly stopped. She looked up, and there was Fiona in her dress. It was an elegant, strapless black number that hugged her figure from bust to ankle. A large red blossom of material at her hip completed the look, and she was wearing her hair up! In the four years she’d known her she’d never seen her wear her hair up. She looked absolutely radiant, even as she looked around nervously and adjusted her glasses. Her eyes met Serana’s and to her amazement she smiled at her. Suddenly someone was clapping. All eyes turned to the Archmage who had broken from the group of collage patrons he was with began the applause. It soon made its way around and the entire room was clapping for Fiona, Serana perhaps loudest of all. Fiona was blushing just as brightly as she had during any of her incidents.

“Alright everyone, that’s enough,” the Archmage said calming the room, “all of you enjoy yourselves!” and with that the ball resumed.

Serana was prepared for the worst as Fiona made her way over to her, but before she could say anything Fiona grabbed her and hugged her tightly.

“I’m sorry,” Fiona said.

“You’re sorry?” Serana managed to blurt out. “What for?” she asked, puzzled.

“For running off after the ceremony,” Fiona admitted. “You must have been so worried. But the Archmage wanted to give me an official apology.”

“The Archmage was sorry?!” Serana exclaimed not able to comprehend what she was hearing.

“He had to explain to me how all exam are recorded to ensure fair-play,” Fiona went on, “and how some mix-up with the imaging crystals lead to everyone seeing my…erm…exam” She blushed endearingly. Serana couldn’t believe her luck. Was that what had happened, had her crystal really not activate? “So I’m sorry I’ve been gone all day,” Fiona continued, “but the Archmage wanted give me his official apology he even offered me 10000 gold pieces by way of atonement.

“10000?!” Serana managed, “What are you going to do with all that money?” Fiona waved her hand dismissively.

“Oh, I told him I didn’t need it,” she smiled

“You didn’t need it?!” Serana gasped, “but it’s 10000 gold pieces!”

“I’m planning on been a travelling mercenary, I can’t be lugging that kind of cash around.” Serana blinked at the amount of money her friend had turned down as “inconvenient”. “Now if you’ll excuse me,” Fiona went on, “the Archmage pointed out some people who might have some tips for me on how to get started, I’ll see you later.” She gave Serana another quick hug before starting to move off.

“Sure,” Serana called after her, “I’ve got something I want to ask you.” Fiona gave her a wave before disappearing into the crowd. She gave a sigh of relief and thanked her good fortune. Perhaps the future wasn’t so bleak after all.

As if on queue a shadow fell over her. She looked up to see the Archmage standing next to her.

“Miss Byrell,” he nodded to her.

“Sir,” she replied curtseying slightly. They stood in silence for a few minutes before a nasty thought came over Serana.

“Sir?” she asked

“Yes, Miss Byrell,” the Archmage replied, his voice carefully neutral.

“You don’t record all exams for fair-play do you.” she said softly. It wasn’t a question.

“No, Miss Byrell,” said the Archmage

“And there was no crystal mix up was there?” she asked.

“No, Miss Byrell,” said the Archmage. Serana sighed heavily.

“Okay, you old pervert,” she dropped all pretence from the conversation, “what’s this going to cost me?” The old mage smiled a toothy grin.

“Well if that’s not the pot calling the kettle black, Miss Byrell,” he said conversationally, “after all I’m not then one making voyeuristic crystal recordings of my roommate.” That fact that is was the truth caused Serana to bristle, but she knew better then to argue at this point and let the Archmage continue. “Let’s see,” he began to note points on his fingers, “Breaking into my chambers. Unauthorised monitoring of an official exam. Clandestine use of a recording crystal. Any one of those is enough to get your certification revoked and have you expelled, I’d imagine the city watch would probably want a word with you as well,” he smile again.

“You wouldn’t…” Serana began, but the Archmage held up a hand.

“Now, Miss Byrell,” he was all professional courtesy again now. “I would be remiss in my duty as an educator to condemn one for my students for simple, shall we call it, high spirits.”

“You’re letting me off?” Serana’s ears once again couldn’t believe what she was hearing. “There’s a catch right?”

“Oh, not at all,” the old man’s face was a picture of innocence, “just hand me that illicit recording so it can be properly disposed of and we’ll say no more about it.” He smiled and held out his hand. Give up her treasure? Surely not. Serana took the crystal from her pocket and stared at it. Surely if she could join Fiona there would be other chances for fun right? She gritted her teeth and thrust it into the Archmage’s waiting hand. Not that she believed for a second he would dispose of it, the dirty old geezer. She fumed at him as he pocketed the crystal. “Thank you, Miss Byrell,” he said happily, “I knew you’d make the right choice.” He moved off and Serana was left alone with her thoughts. She hoped it was the right thing. One day she’d come clean with Fiona and tell her everything she decided. She glanced around and spotted Fiona chatting with a group of men and women, many of whom sported scars and eye patches. Glancing down she noticed Fiona’s strapless dress had already slipped about an inch and was threatening to expose the tops of her nipples if she didn’t notice. Someone should tell her. Serana smiled to herself. One day she would tell Fiona everything, just not tonight.