

HERE BE DRAGONS:
VEKHERRA'S HUNT

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FADE IN.

EXT. SEVEN SKIES - DAY

The blue skies fade into grey mist.

Suspended in air, large jagged islands surround the Crimson Maelstrom, a red sky-ship with a snarling dragon figurehead.

EXT. CRIMSON MAELSTROM - QUARTER DECK - DAY

The ship enters a narrow gap between the large rocks.

VEKHERRA (30s) marches up to XIAOYING (40s) manning the helm.

JASPER (9) follows Vekherra closely, studying her.

VEKHERRA
Try to keep us East.

XIAOYING
Of course, Captain.

VEKHERRA
(to crew)
Make sure the cargo is secure, we
want to deliver it in good shape!

A light breeze pulls the sails as the mist becomes a thick fog.

MAIN DECK

Arms crossed, SYLVESTER (30s) watches the bow intently. His demon tail flicks with irritation.

Large shadows pass menacingly close to the ship's sides.

SYLVESTER
I don't like this. We should've
taken the Doldrum's border.

Vekherra approaches Sylvester's right.

VEKHERRA
It would've taken us too long.

SYLVESTER
Sure, but I wonder if that would've
been better than this.

Vekherra and Sylvester watch nervously as a sharp rocky outcropping barely makes it over the main mast.

O'MALLEY (O.C.)
Are you kidding?!

O'MALLEY (40s) slaps Sylvester's back. Sylvester grimaces giving him a disapproving glare. O'Malley smiles back.

O'MALLEY (CONT'D)
This is better than getting stuck in the Doldrums. I can fix a few cracks, but I can't get us out of dead air if we lose the engines.
(turns to Vekherra)
Hey Cap, engines are purring. At this speed we should be in Winonatoa by noon. That's if Xiaoqing doesn't ram us into rock.

VEKHERRA
(raises eyebrow)
Good.
(turns to Xiaoqing)
I hope you heard that!

Xiaoqing narrows her eyes on O'Malley with disdain.

LATER

Vekherra sits in a chair at a large table bolted to the ship's deck.

She reads through her grimoire, occasionally writing in a small notebook.

She glances up to Jasper.

He reads through a smaller spell book.

VEKHERRA
Don't forget each spell's attribute will help you understand the object you wish to manipulate.

Jasper nods placing a hand over a small seed in front of him.

JASPER
Can weapons be tuned?

VEKHERRA
 ...Yes, but it is dangerous... I
 just want you to learn the basics
 for now.

Jasper glances to Vekherra's pistol.

JASPER
 Did you tune that?

Vekherra looks to the weapon with contempt.

VEKHERRA
 No... my father.

Vekherra notices Jasper's collar sticking up. She bushes it
 down softly then straightens his jacket.

VEKHERRA (CONT'D)
 Alright, let's begin. Place the
 seed in your palm...

FORECASTLE DECK

O'Malley is kneeling analyzing a small transformer on the
 forecastle mast. He reorients a collection of wires with some
 pliers.

Tapping his pliers to the wood he takes a moment to look up
 toward the bow sprit.

The fog clears slightly revealing a blurry silhouette of a
 large ship ahead.

O'MALLEY
 We got a ship twelve 'o'clock!

SYLVESTER
 Hold engines!

QUARTER DECK

Xiaoying pulls down a copper lever on the small control
 console next to the wheel.

The ship becomes QUIET.

MAIN DECK

Vekherra focuses on the vessel ahead of them.

As they slowly approach, details of the ship's haul are revealed.

Vekherra stiffens.

Jasper studies Vekherra. He takes a step forward to get a better understanding of the vessel ahead.

VEKHERRA
Steer away from that ship! Get us
in the fog cover now!

Xiaoying sharply turns the wheel and the ship drifts back into thick fog.

The crew watch intently as the ship disappears behind them.

VEKHERRA
Its not following... Good.

SYLVESTER
Why is a ship stalled here?

VEKHERRA
They're hunting... they're monster
hunters.

Sylvester recoils in disgust.

VEKHERRA
Xiaoying, let's move a little
faster!

Xiaoying pulls up the lever and the ship slowly begins to RUMBLE, picking up speed.

Vekherra moves back to the table pushing aside her grimoire.

She unrolls a map. She waves her hand over it.

VEKHERRA
Iter revelatum.

A blue line glows on the map illuminating the path they have taken.

Vekherra taps her fingers on the table impatiently.

CRUNCH! KLANK! The ship jolts and is pulled sharply to the right.

The crew stumble, some fall on the deck.

SYLVESTER
(growls)
We've been hooked!

EXT. FOGGY SKY - DAY

The Maelstrom is attached by thick chains to a larger Terracongan sky-ship made of elaborately carved stone.

The Terracongan ship blends in well among the rocky islands suspended about in the thick fog.

EXT. CRIMSON MAELSTROM - MAIN DECK - DAY

Vekherra inspects the claws and chain impaled in the Maelstrom's side.

The Terracongan ship reels up the chain pulling the Maelstrom up close to its haul.

Vekherra and her crew back away to the center of the deck as the shadow of the massive Terracongan ship towers above.

A long plank slides down to the Maelstrom deck.

There is moment of stillness then the plank CREAKS.

A man walks down its form followed by five other MEN.

Vekherra's face drops. She lowers her gaze.

LORD DRUPADA (60s) scans the Maelstrom's deck. His face contorts with disgust.

Rigidly he moves to inspect each of the Maelstrom's crew members.

He stops in front of Vekherra placing his hands behind his back.

LORD DRUPADA
Daughter...

Vekherra's crew sharply turn their attention to their captain, surprise riddling their faces.

Vekherra dares a look at her father.

VEKHERRA
Father... sir... What beasts are
you butchering today?

LORD DRUPADA
Distasteful wording. Lack of honor.

VEKHERRA
I'm not apart of that anymore.

LORD DRUPADA
Not Drupada... Of course, you made
that quite clear.

Lord Drupada tightens his lips then strolls back to his vessel.

LORD DRUPADA
Secure the ship. Put them below
deck.

Armed, Lord Drupada's men approach the Maelstrom's crew. They signal for them to move.

The Maelstrom's crew look to Vekherra for their orders.

VEKHERRA
(tightens fists)
I don't think so.

Lord Drupada continues his stride. Vekherra unsheathes her rapier and charges him.

Lord Drupada pivots, outstretching his hand. A magical, purple ring blows Vekherra back.

LORD DRUPADA
Tsk, predictable.

VEKHERRA
You can't hold us. This ship will
take to high skies whether you like
it or not!

Lord Drupada narrows his eyes, lifting his lip in disdain.

LORD DRUPADA
I would have thought you'd remember
about Wispsnape in this region...
any movement attracts them. You are
not moving... not interrupting this
hunt!

Lord Drupada waves his hand and his men aim their weapons on the Maelstrom crew.

Tail stiffly twitching, Sylvester steps up to Lord Drupada.

SYLVESTER

We don't have time for this
nonsense.

Vekherra shoots Sylvester a warning look.

Lord Drupada's face twists with horror and he quickly
unholsters and aims his pistol on Sylvester.

SYLVESTER

Whoa, hey! There's no need for
Violence!... Yet.

Vekherra jumps to Sylvester's side blocking her father's aim.

LORD DRUPADA

Demon!... And it talks...

SYLVESTER

Rude.

VEKHERRA

He's Commander of the Maelstrom!

LORD DRUPADA

Commander? This isn't a military
vessel! I demand this thing's
execution.

Sylvester summons a fan of warped blades from nothing. They
float around his form.

The Maelstrom begins to CREAK violently and the Terracongan
ship MOANS and RATTLES ominously.

Lord Drupada casts a worried glance about. Vekherra shoots
Sylvester a heeding glare.

SYLVESTER

Can we just be civilized here? We
have cargo to transport and you...
monsters to hunt... There doesn't
need to be more weight on our
plates.

LORD DRUPADA

I thought better of you Vekherra...
Th-this is blasphemy!

Lord Drupada pulls the trigger.

Sylvester rolls flinging two knives at him.

Lord Drupada summons a purple field of magic, blocking Sylvester's attack.

Tail flicking angrily, Sylvester raises a hand to let loose the rest of his blades.

Dread falls on Vekherra's face.

VEKHERRA
Sylvester, no!

Sylvester glances to Vekherra in confusion.

Lord Drupada redraws his aim. Vekherra rushes up to him striking the pistol out of his hand with her rapier.

Lord Drupada unsheathes his sword.

Vekherra's sword locks with his in an X.

Vekherra pushes on her sword. He father does not move.

Vekherra dares a look up to her father's face. His face reflects rage and disappointment.

Vekherra's form weakens.

An eerie HOOT and BELLOW echo through the fog.

Something quick and slender weaves around the Terracongan ship's masts. KABOOM! The Terracongan ship fires a cannon.

O'MALLEY
Incoming, starboard!

Vekherra's eyes widen as the WISPSNAPE flies onto, and then off the Crimson Maelstrom's deck.

Lord Drupada pushes Vekherra away. She stumbles back.

LORD DRUPADA
Prepare the nets!!!

VEKHERRA
(turning to Xiaoying)
Turn the ship 90 degrees East.

O'MALLEY
Wait, you're going to tear my ship!

VEKHERRA
She can handle a little scratch.
O'Malley, get Jasper below!

O'Malley nods, herding Jasper toward the stairs. With a hurt look toward Vekherra, Jasper resists.

O'MALLEY
Come'on, kid.

Lord Drupada glances back to Vekherra noticing her crew dispersing.

LORD DRUPADA
Lock these mongrels down!!! Clip
its wings if you have to, this boat
will not interfere!

The Maelstrom turns sharply. A gale of wind tugs at the sails.

The chains stretch...

CRACK! The claws detach from the Maelstrom along with a good chunk of her wood.

SCREECH! The Wispsnape flies back down onto the Maelstrom. The ship rocks violently.

The Terracongan ship fire two cannon balls toward the Wispsnape, nearly impacting the Maelstrom in the process.

O'MALLEY
Hey, not my ship!!!

EXT. FOGGY SKY

CRUNCH! The rocking Maelstrom rams into an island. Red wood splinters, masts rip as sharp rock dig into its side.

The rear engine spitters as the Maelstrom begins losing altitude.

The Wispsnape leaps back to Terracongan ship.

EXT. CRIMSON MAELSTROM - MAIN DECK

The ship tilts at an increasingly sharp angle.

Objects on the deck slide off into a multitude of tunnels in the island's side.

Vekherra grabs the railing stabilizing herself.

VEKHERRA
Xiaoying, fix our position!

Xiaoying struggles to turn the wheel. She pulls the engine lever on and off.

The ship continues to tilt.

O'Malley loses his step and lets go of Jasper to grab the railing.

Jasper jumps to the stairs but the ship jerks. He slides down the deck down toward the island.

Vekherra watches helplessly as her son tumbles down into the tunnels.

VEKHERRA

Jasper!

Vekherra slides down the deck jumping into the tunnel after Jasper.

Darkness engulfs her.

INT. FLOATING ISLAND - MAIN CAVERN - DAY

The large dome-like room is lined with treasure and ship parts. The room is lit by tunnel openings that riddle the walls.

Vekherra slides into the room through a lower tunnel opening, crashing into powdery dirt.

Vekherra COUGHS, waving away the dust.

As she stands she hears the SCREECHING of a Wispsnape coming through one of the tunnels above her.

There is a GROANING and Vekherra spins around to find Jasper laying in the dirt.

He slowly sits up and stares confusedly at Vekherra.

Vekherra rushes over to his side. She helps him to his feet, straightening his clothes.

VEKHERRA

Jasper, are you okay?

JASPER

My soul hurts...

(looks around)

Where are we?

A CLICKING permeates the room. Vekherra stills. She looks up nervously.

VEKHERRA

Don't move, stay quiet.

The Wispsnape snakes out of the ceiling and softly places itself on the floor of the room.

It looks around with small pin-point eyes.

Watching the beast unblinkingly, Vekherra holds Jasper close to her.

The Wispsnape turns around, digging through its collection of ship wreckage.

It PURRS then curls around a nest made of straw. Three little BABY WISPSNAPE(s) CLICK to their mother.

Vekherra's eyes widen in surprise; she relaxes slightly.

BANG! BANG! Two of the babies are shot dead. The mother Wispsnape rears back in confusion, then fury. It ROARS!

Vekherra pivots.

Lord Drupada aims a smoking pistol at the Wispsnape mother.

With little thought, Vekherra rushes to block her father from the Wispsnape.

VEKHERRA

Stop!

LORD DRUPADA

(narrows eyes)

You are a disappointment.

He throws her to the side.

The movement alerts the Wispsnape and it charges toward Vekherra.

Vekherra collects herself noticing the incoming Wispsnape. She grabs Jasper spinning out of the Wispsnape's way.

The Wispsnape takes a moment to reorientate itself.

It swings around catching the movements of Jasper and Vekherra. It charges them.

Vekherra snaps a look toward Jasper.

She tries to push him away, but Jasper trips and falls. In horror, Vekherra turns around.

With lightning speed draws her pistol. BANG!

The Wispsnape HOWLS!

It falls with a skidding THUD. Blood pools around its head.

For a brief moment, Vekherra's eyes light up before she steps back in horror.

She looks down toward the pistol in her hand. She throws it to her side.

Jasper slowly rises as Lord Drupada approaches Vekherra. He stands over her with pride.

LORD DRUPADA

Good aim... but slow reaction.

Lord Drupada begins to walk away to the Wispsnapes' nest. Vekherra glares at him with rage.

Lord Drupada searches the straw nest. He lifts the dead baby Wispsnapes' heads. He studies their glossy eyes.

LORD DRUPADA

You were a good Huntress, but you deny yourself, and in the process, dishonor your name.

Lord Drupada cuts the stubby, one-clawed feet of the little Wispsnapes and places their parts in his leather bag.

He stands and turns, looking Vekherra in the eyes.

Vekherra tightens her grip on her rapier. Jasper notices and takes her hand.

He looks up at her with concern. Vekherra looks back down to Jasper with softness.

Lord Drupada watches them with contempt.

LORD DRUPADA (CONT'D)

That was your first weakness!

She looks back to her father tightening her hand, sheathing her sword.

Lord Drupada frowns then turns and leaves the chamber.

Vekherra and Jasper stand in silence.

Jasper notices movement by the Wispsnape's nest. He walks over.

A ship fragment quivers.

Jasper kneels down and moves the wooden plank to find a baby Wispsnape curled up shaking. Jasper cocks his head, reaches out stroking it softly.

Vekherra walks over to Jasper, head low.

VEKHERRA

Let's go...

JASPER

Look. Its one of the babies.

Vekherra looks down with surprise. She leans to grab Jasper to pull him away from the Wispsnape.

She pauses.

The baby Wispsnape leans into Jasper's hand then climbs up his arm, snuggling into his hair. It begins to PURR.

EXT. CRIMSON MAELSTROM - MAIN DECK - DAY

The Crimson Maelstrom flies lopsided in the air. Xiaoying struggles with the wheel as it wants to turn on her.

O'Malley stares at Jasper's shoulder mesmerized by the little Wispsnape curled up in his hair. He points a finger, opens his mouth to say something then retracts.

Vekherra stands at the center of the deck, hands placed at her hips. She stares sternly ahead.

Sylvester approaches Vekherra with a skip in his step.

SYLVESTER

We should have taken the Doldrums.

Vekherra closes her eyes and SIGHS heavily.

VEKHERRA

Shut up.

THE END