

Tales from ForeverAge 2

Wysteria, a Beastfolk Shaman, mounted her steed and made haste to Gladesvale in pursuit of an item that might grant her amazing powers.

In a dense forest just outside the quiet Fae village was the Wishing Well. The Spirit of the Forest allegedly used the well to escape pursuers, building herself a home at the bottom. Those who are worthy—so really, those with great wealth, since the Spirit of the Forest was known for her propensity to lose borrowed money in high-risk gambles—would receive a blessing from the Spirit if they asked with the truest intentions. Those whose desires bore fault only brought destruction on themselves, as the Spirit of the Forest was as adept at blessings as she was at curses.

“Oh Spirit, out of your great generosity, bestow strength and prosperity to me and my comrades,” said Wysteria, resolving her prayer. She went to Zephyr, her Oathsworn, a white-gray Great Mare, and produced a sack from the worn saddle. The pouch fit square in her hand. One would need two human palms to manage similarly.

Wysteria frowned. Must not be all that powerful a Spirit, she thought. If she needed a hulking sack of silver pieces to make people’s dreams come true, most would profit better by investing the money into the exchange, or just dungeoning with the gear the sack of coins would buy.

Luckily, the money was stolen anyway—from a cultish church. Her plus-eight, enchanted mallet had been enough to put the fear of god into the undead nuns, who had been promising eternal life while they sucked the life force away from the town in which they lived. The affair still filled the Shaman’s nostrils with the odor of rotten flesh and dusty, abandoned churches.

All this to mean, she didn’t consider the money hers. Whatever she got out of the Wishing Well would be of profit because she was gambling with undead money in the first place.

And, of course, if she were to profit, it would be done at little or no personal cost.

Wysteria looked inside, saw the glint of water from the fading sunlight, and dropped her coins. She fully expected a splash, but heard nothing. Instead, a single vial came shooting from the well, glimmering with drops of water without warning. Reactions swift, she snatched it from the air.

Your wish has been granted. Drink this vial of lesser enchantment in the heat of battle!

Lesser enchantment, eh? Cheapskate.

Wysteria mounted Zephyr and travelled to where her dungeoning party awaited her with little more to show for her trip than a vial of little significance.

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Naa the Gnomish Bard, talked to Wysteria to try to keep the fighter’s mind on the adventure

instead of on augmented animosity.

Group dynamics had suffered as of late. For a long while, Wysteria had been the main source of damage for the party. A fighting Shaman with a badass enchanted mallet, she could send enemies flying and summon elements of nature to protect and tank for her. In reality, she was a one-woman army who mostly just needed Bards and Guardians for when she was seriously outnumbered.

Naa presumed that the Beastfolk woman took pride in her role.

That was, until LuvelyCypress2020, known as 'Luv' or 'Luvvy', switched to their realm and joined the party. Like Wysteria, Luvvy was a damage dealing Shaman. Unlike Wysteria, who had put considerable effort into her talents and skills to maximize damage, Luvvy had specced into whatever struck her fickle fancy.

Luvvy the Faerie, a Shaman, had specced in nearly every class and subclass for one skill or another, which ruined her ability to do any type of sustained, meaningful damage. It did, however, win her a chest full of cool points.

She was a Shaman, Ninja, Cannoneer. Seriously. Which was freaking cool. Her only practical function was executing large monsters, though. Kill stealing, basically; enough to participate in the loot drawings.

Which she spent on dyes, fancy clothes, and other aesthetics. As a result, Luv was a Shaman Ninja Cannoneer Faerie with swirls of pink and blue hair, boisterous wings, custom animations for literally everything, and a brothel maiden's character model.

"Who fights like that? It's so unrealistic!" Wysteria grunted noisily.

Naa looked ahead. Luv and the three other teammates were busied in conversation. Guys also, naturally, found the Faerie funny, charming, and original. Even the sharpshooting bowman, who was supposed to be covering the flank, far from the pathfinders, was walking up front to have a chat with her Highness, newly-crowned princess of the party.

Wysteria gagged.

A large bead of sweat rolled down Naa's temple. "I tried offering her some better gear, but she can't exactly wear much. Everything's for higher levels. But her robes reflect magic, don't they?"

"How is that going to help us in a dungeon full of mountain giants?"

"Well, it won't," Naa's head slumped. "But hey! Now you can carry like you always used to. Someone has to chunk through their health pools, and you're still the heaviest hitter we've got."

Naa had spoken as if she hoped reassurance would be all Wysteria needed. Clearly, it wasn't. In fact, it just seemed to annoy the Beastfolk even more.

Wysteria's nostrils flared. She grumbled something that had to be a swear in the language of one of the many creatures she'd befriended. Likely horse, since Zypher blinked slowly and pretended not to have heard the slur as she trailed behind.

For a descendent of one of the four horses of the apocalypse, Zephyr was a chaste, innocent soul who blushed at the mere mention of such vulgarity.

"I shouldn't have to take my position back. It should just be my position. This party may have needed a sixth, but it didn't need more damage. I'm the damage." Wysteria swung her mallet to emphasize. Flames and ashes rained as she swung it, like it was fresh from the forge and peppered in blackened coals. "And I'm just six-thousand giant kills away from the bonus Slayer Quests, so it's really halting my progress having our promiscuous pixie last hitting all my kills."

"Whoa, you're that close! Wait, so since you're Beastfolk, you could challenge the Narjoula and take its horn, right? You need a crazy strength stat and a form of overdamage to break it off. the fight just to keep it!" Naa hadn't meant to, but she swooned. A survive Then you have to bard couldn't stop herself from fangirling over a rare instrument. "It would slow my movement to a crawl, but those buffs it gives? I need it—

"I'll get it for you. Might take a few weeks to grind for a good set to fight the thing, but that's what good teammates are for." Wysteria was excited for barely a moment, captivated by Naa's eagerness.

But then the Beastfolk heard Luv's sweet giggle up ahead and her eyes narrowed. Naa had been close to cheering her up. Closer than anyone else had been, and not just because her team wasn't interested in trying.

Naa kicked at a stone and freed her magic flute so she would be ready for combat. And Wysteria would never know, but now that a new, rare instrument was on the line, Naa wished Wysteria could get the kill credit too.

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Mountain Giant dungeons were all elemental. Some were themed around wind and storms, others on luscious fields of vibrant hills.

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Pillars of lava dripped like waterfalls from this dungeon. Molten earth was sometimes disguised under normal looking rock, which would swallow up an adventurer like a sinkhole if they weren't careful. Magic, poisonous mountain gas could build up and fill a room with purple and white fog causing adverse effects, the least of which was common poison. Often there wasn't even much of a warning. A faint odor was all that might warn an adventuring party that they were on death's doorstep.

The Hall of Brandforge lay perched at the peak of the mountain, and the party stood stalwart before it. They knew that Brandforge was the Mountain King—lovingly referred to as King

Scorchy Burn Burn—and that he'd created a line of molten weapons and armor out of the fires of the Underworld. As such, Wysteria's mallet was the main damage of choice, since it wouldn't burn or melt as she used it to bash the Mountain Giant King.

"Five potions of greater healing," called the party's Human Alchemist. He acted as the healer for the coming battle. "That's twenty drinks."

"Frost arrows for the guys he spawns. Still have plenty," replied their Elven Sharpshooter.

"I'm specced in heat resist. But I'll still need bardic inspiration if I want to avoid hellflame blight damage," said the Guardian, a bear who walked on his hind legs, glistening in pointed pauldrons and a war helmet.

The shield, which could guard his whole ten foot height, began to glisten as Naa flitted a ditty on her flute. It was a gay and lively tune from a gay and lively Gnome. "Done. I'll keep an eye on you to renew it. Otherwise, I'll just stay in range for my—. . ."

A sound like a crashing cart turned the heads of the five.

An immense boulder had fallen from a previously unexplored cliff, smashing the ground nearby, opening up a cauldron of magma that bubbled and splashed from the impact. Moments later, demons wrapped in the liquid earth rose and slurped to life, taking aim at the adventurers.

"Oops," said Luvvy, who was flapping her sparkling Faerie wings like a hummingbird near the boulder she'd just knocked over.

Wysteria squeezed her weapon with such vexation that light shone through her fingers. At the very least, Luvvy was playing her archetype: Faeries were prone to curiosity and mischief. But damned that wench! Did she not know the final battle was about to commence? And here she was summoning more bosses to fight through.

With added vigor, the mallet-wielder pulverized the lava demons till they were nothing but dark splatters on her weapon. The ambush cost the party a few drinks from their healing potions. They were lower than comfortable now. A general unrest filled the group.

Everyone knew it was all Luvvy's fault, that the smoothness of the dungeon clear had been compromised. The group waited for one member to rise up and address it.

No one did.

Wystria nearly boiled over. She would put the wench in her rightful place. But when she was nearing the Faerie, who was distracted by the shiny gems dropped by the demons, Naa stopped her.

"Don't. Her damage will make this fight all the faster. You know how long this boss can take if there isn't enough people hurting him. We can't afford to stall him out, either—. . ."

"Because that worthless, brain dead bimbo forgot that ninjas were supposed to be sneaky!"

Wysteria roared.

“Umm, excuse me,” Luvvy said, then turned, her arms full of shiny rocks. Decolletage on her black dress put most of the glittering treasures under, over, and between her luscious breasts. Wysteria had successfully ignored the fact for several weeks, but glaring at Luvvy brought to her attention how well done the Faerie’s chesty figure had been conjured. While flying, there was a constant bobbling of her immense, buoyant breasts, within which she could hide no shortage of treasure. “Why you mad, Wysteria?”

“Because I’m being forced to split my drops between six people when I’m doing the work of two! Honestly, it would be a massive improvement if you would stand still and touch nothing.” Wysteria struggled for eye contact. There was a ruby the size of a fist and it had all but disappeared between her new teammates fat titties. Who needed tits of that size on a battlefield? For Aether’s sake! “It’s actually a waste of mana keeping you alive.”

“First of all, I’m only two-thousand kills from Shaman Slayer Quests, so clearly I’m not useless. I’m getting a ton of kills—. . .”

“Those are my kills!” Wysteria’s voice went screechy. “You stole them! From.

“Anyway.” The Faerie used her free hand to flick back her coral and aqua hair, then slinged her traveler’s satchel of unexpected depth to the front. In went all the drops. “We were about to leave without all this good loot. I figured it was smart of me to keep exploring. You’re welcome.”

Hundreds of copper pieces dropped, nay, ores too. The pristine ruby she had to fish out and she didn’t pretend—not for a single

from her outfit. Coins rolled down, precious oozed

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second—that she didn’t have the highest charm level in the whole party when she went to groping down the front of her robe. In truth, such an astronomically high stat did permit her to have increased rewards for trading items, almost guaranteeing that she would make back more from trading the loot than any of her party members. And because of this unique advantage, Luv had been the one responsible for trading in the party’s loot, then distributing the earnings among the members. She sort of just fell into the role and was doing it well.

But it shouldn’t have been given that she should activate traps for loot, or that she should be the one carrying the huge ruby, or anything, really, since she was still too new—in Wysteria’s opinion—to be taking anything for granted. She should have asked. Ask before coming into a new group and changing fucking everything.

Who did she think she was?

“But now we might not be able to complete the boss fight. We were playing it safe. What? Did you really think we just forgot that hard mobs spawn good loot?” Wysteria chuckled

sardonically. She turned back to her group, hoping at least one of them would see how glaringly aloof Luvvy was being; how unreasonable.

The two men of the group, Sharpshooter and Alchemist, held eye contact with the ground. Occasionally, they looked Wysteria up and down, then Luvvy, but ultimately returned to staring at pools of lava. The guard bear, who was also male even if nobody thought of him that way, took more interest in Zephyr, choosing to stay out of the group spat. Zephyr was bashful, conflict averse as well.

Naa was visibly troubled, her flute pressed to her chest. Her fists were tight around it, knuckles white.

“Guys? Tell her!”

“It’s not that big a deal, Wysty,” said Alchemist. “It’s just one dungeon run. If it doesn’t go well we can always retreat.”

“I had no idea the room before the boss had such nice drops, too. The golems inside don’t drop gems,” said Sharpshooter.

Luvvy flitted over merrily and hugged the archer. They had been very buddy-buddy lately, thought Wysteria. More than friends, spending extra time in the backline together. Wysteria used to be able to depend on her bowman to be there for her, to have her back. He’d been slipping some, as of late. Missed spells, poor timing, things she would normally overlook.

But with the buxom Faerie fawning over him, Wysty couldn’t help but feel the heat of betrayal spidering jagged, forking strings of treason around her heart. Not only was Luvvy stealing her kills, she was stealing another competent warrior.

Wysteria hated that her party was weakening. She looked down at herself, her hulking muscled form in hardened leather. Bits of chain poked out in places, bandages covering old combat wounds. Around her neck was a wide crescent of Beastfolk Shaman artifacts for spellcasting and minor buffs.

Like every girl does, she wondered if she could have held her party together with her looks. If she lost some stats—unrobed her shaman collar—would her body help inspire her party as Luvvy’s did?

Likely not. Her charm level—and cup size—was ineffective in those regards.

Having had enough, she marched toward the Faerie who was rubbing her scarcely covered self against the archer. “One-’V’-One me. Right now. I’ve had it.”

“Speaking of wasting resources,” Luvvy sassed. “So obsessed with numbers and efficiency but you’re ready to lose a party member over. . . o-over—. . .

Wysteria raised her mallet. She came fast, swinging with a heavy overhand.

Her strike found purchase, but it was on the Guardian's shield. The heat aura Naa had passed all but neutralized Wysteria's damage.

"I wasn't going to kill her. Duels are nonlethal," snarled the Beastfolk Shaman.

"But they do consume health points, and debuffs last their full duration. You know that." The bear flashed his fangs, eyes a sickly yellow between the glint in his helmet.

"You're on her side too, huh?"

"That bitch tried to hit me! She really tried!" Luvvy hissed.

"Nobody is on anybody's side," Naa interjected. "This isn't a sided thing. We're on the same team."

Wysteria felt the Gnome girl's hand on her fist, applying gentle pressure so that the hammer came down to her side.

"We do what's best for the team," the bear said, barely moving his mouth.

" Eep!

"She'd have one hit point with heavily compromised armor, if that was the case," Wysteria grumbled. "That close to death, she'd have to play more carefully."

Luvvy screamed, "Screw you!"

It wasn't nearly enough, but Wysteria contented herself to scaring the shit out of the little Faerie. She nodded to her Guardian, silently agreeing to a truce.

"Damned cubs," Guardian said, nostrils wriggling with frustration.

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The warriors entered the Hall of Brandforge. Inside was a tremendous throne room carved of black rock. The sides were rivers of lava whose starts were somewhere behind a vast throne at the back wall of the cave. On the right was a hole in the wall grand enough for a giant to pass through, though the King wasn't known to run from battle. Perhaps he'd gotten angry and punched a hole in his wall. It was a menacing, jagged opening so maybe its whole purpose was to be menacing and jagged.

Sitting on the lip of the glossy black bench, three sizes too small, was the person to whom such questions should be posited: King Brandforge.

None of the experienced fighters were surprised by his size, having heard about the Giant's shapeshifting qualities from written lore or word of mouth.

"That's him? He's just a normal guy!" Luvvy said emphatically. "Why did we need so many resources just to fight one guy? We could have carried even less so we could take more loot

with us on the way out.”

The Sharpshooter blushed, fingers subconsciously fidgeting around an arrow shaft.

“That right there,” Wysteria muttered down to her bowman. “Is who you’re trusting with your life.”

The King rose from his seat. Skin darker than black rippled with cracks from his molten core bleeding through; bursts of orange and brown breaking his skin. He wore no clothes so his stony exterior could be seen melting and hardening like tectonic plates. Though he was no doubt elemental, his body was largely humanoid, taking the form of a muscled young man. Six feet, five inches. His hair glowed with whips of hot fire and each arm burned with pumice.

“Travelers! Ah, how long it has been since I’ve had worthy company. You will not find me to be the most gracious of hosts. I do apologize!”

There were a few lines of dialogue that came to Wysteria to speak. Each one changed based on the encounter, improving a person’s odds. “We come on a quest for weapons to vanquish the fires of the Underworld! We know you to be the only artisan of such invaluable crafts!”

“That I am. Quests to that world would be impossible without the work of my hands.”

Good. ‘Work of his hands’. First would come close range combat. Wysteria saw her frontline partner brandishing his shield. Naa gave her confident eyes, lips already pursed to blow a heat repelling melody.

“Why are we waiting for all this dialogue? We’re wasting time. We could be selling our stuff and running the dungeon again,” Luvvy whined.

“Would you find a way to close that hole in your face?” Wysteria said, commented with a friendly smile.

Luvvy shot back. “Why don’t you make me?”

“Say that when you can do more than hide behind our Guardian’s shield—. . .”

“Did anyone hear what the boss said? What are we supposed to say to him next?” Naa intruded on the catty rivalry.

“I was distracted,” answered Alchemist.

Sharpshooter answered in the negative, face gone beet red.

Zephyr blew fast air through her lips and stamped a hoof on the ground a few times.

“What does that mean?” asked Naa.

“I don’t know,” Wysteria shrugged. “It’s hard to understand Zephyr’s accent sometimes. Something about the Mountain Queen? One more time, Zephyr. Slower—. . .”

“No matter!” shrieked Brandforge. “I will show you all what makes my molten weapons so potent! This will teach you foolish mortals to climb my mountain!”

“Finally!” Luvvy groaned and brandished a set of throwing stars that were green with vines and laced with thorns.

The fight commenced with a sense of dread across the whole party.

The sky that opened above them filled with a column of toxic, volcanic gas. A small earthquake made the ground rumble with foreboding, signalling the influx of mana rushing toward the monster of a young man. Belting demonic utterances, the King’s eyes went red, orange, yellow, blue, and white—every color of flame, from warm to unapproachably hot. Then, his body grew, losing all semblance of humanity. The fumes which rushed out of the volcano’s top now swirled about his middle and bottom. His abdominals became meteorites. His chest, a mountain of stone set ablaze.

Brandforge sank a hand into one of his rivers of molten rock and pulled out a dripping lance, nearly twenty feet in length. It remained liquid for the most part, dripping untouchable dollops of intolerably hot goo all around him. The tip popped and sizzled as it cooled into a triangularly headed bolt.

“Face the Underworld’s Champion, mortals!”

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The King’s whole battle scheme changed.

As the King swung his lance, crescent blades of orange lava would sling from the rod and solidify as they wrapped around like boomerangs. The party split into groups of two. Clumping up would only make for an easier target. Zephyr fled the battle, remaining just outside the door, (still) conflict averse.

Wysteria summoned a duo of swamp golems whose moisture helped shield them from the heat. Upon direct contact with the sickles of fire, though, they each burst into flame, all moisture sizzling away at once. A smoke cloud was all that remained of the vaporized spirit. It smelled like sewage and sulphur, and weakened Wysteria’s strength if she breathed it in. Alchemist was behind her preparing tonics while casting minor spells to keep the Beastfolk Shamen topped off.

In the middle, the Guardian bear bore the brunt of the damage. His shield was reinforced with Naa’s flute playing. His roar bought the attention of the King, who mocked the efforts of nature and promised to rid the world of all bear kind. It seemed to be part of the bear’s plan, even though he was absolutely pinned by the swirling projectiles.

Several feet beyond the Guardian’s shield, the Sharpshooter took aim. While he did have the range to hit the King, many of his shots were aimed at taking down the boomerangs that managed to bend around the shield meant to be protecting him. The tank and spank method of combat was seriously inhibited because the ranger was sniping projectiles out of the air, leaping

or tumbling out of the way of those that caught him by surprise.

The King had the upper hand, but the party at least held its own. It would have been a great time for a sixth member to step in and do damage to the weaker points.

“Kyaah! Hah! Hah!” Luvvy made different martial art poses, each accompanied by her throwing a nature magic infused shuriken.

The poses were wrong. Ninjas were part of the rogue class, not the monk or the fighter. There she was, doing kicks and flips and bringing extra attention to herself, when she should have been blending in, biding time in search of a weak point. Also, her shuriken didn’t have the strength to travel far enough. Each one fell short, melting in the air before they even reached the whirlwind of poisonous fog serving as a barrier to the King. Luvvy was utterly useless. Her abilities were nothing but a show.

Which wasn’t so bad, if that was your thing. The abundance of chest flesh was a source of entertainment at the very least, trouncing around with reckless, sexy abandon. In some form of reality bending magic, each time a wardrobe malfunction was threatened, a gossamer band of her robe would slither down into place to cover her. Her combat was the perfect tease, and her heated, effortful face charmed those who watched.

Wysteria fell prey to the girl’s charms, paying way more attention than she should have. A crescent of magma to the shoulder was all the motivation needed to put her focus back on the battle. She winced, nearly taken to the ground by the pain, blight eating away at her armor till nothing but her shoulder remained. Before it could completely paralyze her, though, the Alchemist smashed a vial over her arm whose blue contents soothed the blight and rejuvenated Wysteria.

It stung like hell in the process, though.

“Stay sharp,” he told her. “Those are expensive. I don’t have many more left.”

“Sorry! Sorry, okay,” Wysteria replied.

The King cackled madly after a successful hit which gave a pause to the artillery that had forced the group onto the defensive. Wysteria roared that her group advance. She led the charge. While she wasn’t the fastest, she made it to the throne before King Brandforge could break away from taunting the Guardian and used the arm of the throne to spring herself high into the air. Down came her mallet, smashing the Mountain King’s shoulder. She’d aimed for his head but her actions needed to be fast to deal damage within the break window. Also, since much of his upper body was shrouded by his smog, it was hard to tell exactly where the head, neck, and shoulders were.

“Glaaaarghraaah!” bellowed the king.

Naa’s spell of levity ensured Wysteria’s descent happened without much trouble. It was a solid hit and a swift retreat. Obsidian shards twinkled down from the right shoulder of the king like

falling stars.

“Nice!” shouted Sharpshooter. He’d remained back, but had a frost shot charged.

Wysteria nodded at him.

He grinned and let fly his arrow, which sang through the air and lodged itself into the damaged shoulder. Brandforge went spinning, twenty-five foot tall pillar of fire and smog and rock and volcano all in a death spiral. He’d taken serious damage.

The party was working. It was actually working!

Until Luvvy found a way to mess things up.

Before Wysteria or Sharpshooter or anyone else could stop her, she went running forward with her pink club. “I got him!” she shouted. Half gliding, half skipping she reached the King as he writhed. Experienced fighters could tell the window for damage had closed, but Luvvy went on and bonked him with the heart-shaped head of her shaman war club.

That’s when the King ceased his charade of taking damage. “Ahh, a foolish Faerie. You remind me much of my old bride. . . insolent!”

Then a billow of toxic gas blasted Luvvy clear across the room, where her body slammed flat on the wall behind and slumped to the ground at an odd angle. Instantly, the expensive, custom, magic resistant robes began to disintegrate. She wailed in pain as the toxins ate into her flesh, poisoning her.

“He wasn’t open, you idiot. . .” Wysty whispered. She couldn’t bring herself to scream it, not after seeing her get taken from everything to nothing in a single counterattack.

‘If she were brought to the brink of death, maybe she’d play more carefully’. That’s what Wysteria had said just a few minutes earlier. Now, the Faerie was all but shattered into nothing, the sizzle of acid on her black robes an ominously ticking time bomb. Wysteria had gotten her wish, but she couldn’t bring herself to look the one she cursed in the eye.

The Alchemist ran over, blue flasks double fisted. Wysteria heard them shatter but turned to face the King before she could see what accompanied a blood curdling cry of out-of-body suffering. It was like Luvvy wanted to die—the pain of being healed being worse than death.

“Incoming!”

The King had his fingers curled to both his sides. Out of the rivers of lava marched lava golems. Each was twice the size of the ones that the team had dispensed with just outside the door, and these guys were armed. The giant, craggled stone men marched, held together by sticky, sinewy magic lava goop. Each of them were holding smaller versions of the King’s lance.

Wysteria readied herself, trusting Luvvy’s care to their healer. This meant she had no source of healing. They’d gone from six against one to four against two—a very big two.

Naa blew a new melody. Wysteria felt herself being lighter on her feet. When a golem came at her, she was able to move herself out of the way, reflecting the stabbing motion, and slamming her weapon into the lava golem's side. She turned and winked at Naa who couldn't keep herself from grinning. Tune of enhanced alacrity. It felt strong, like a second level spell. Possibly third. The range on such a thing was impossibly short, though, so only the bear Guardian and Wysteria could make use of their newfound speed and dexterity.

They felled the golems quickly, taking no hits and spending little more than Naa's mana. But then, the pieces of broken stone and the splatters of fiery adherent began to piece themselves back together. Now, there were four golems, made from what had been broken in the first two.

They were multiplying.

Wysteria swore. She looked at her partnering frontliner. He looked ready to defend, but his shield was dented, showing wear. If Naa was giving them speed to increase their chances of damage dealing, she wasn't buffing their defenses. This was weakening Guardian.

"Slower this time. Defense, Naa," Wysty instructed.

Which Naa did. The group had to back up. Sharpshooter wasn't able to get good shots on the four golems as they were now small enough to fit behind Guardian and his shield. Naa kept a consistent spell of healing and defense, but her mana pools were ebbing fast. Wysteria managed a few more kills, but each time she pounded her hammer into a golem or had a swamp elemental tackle a sentry into the lava pools nearby, they would always divide and multiply, coming back with twice the speed and aggressiveness.

Things were looking bad.

If not for that damned Faerie! They needed a dedicated healer, not a bard doing her best to play out of both sides of her mouth. Cloistered so tight together at the back of the dungeon hall, it seemed all but lost for everyone involved.

"We ought'a retreat. We hadn't planned for this. Not enough area of effect," Guardian called as he shield bashed a golem, knocking it back with a sound like bricks breaking.

"I can do AoE, but I need time to charge it," countered Wysteria.

"How long?"

"Twenty? Twenty five seconds?"

"I can't tank this many for you. Bardic haste an option?"

Naa couldn't answer as her lips were busy. She shook her head.

"We already have her playing two songs. By the time she adds a third, the effects are negligible."

“We retreat. Go, now! I’ll hold them—. . .” Guardian started.

But Wysteria called out first, “No! No, we’ve come this far. Done a ton of damage. We can finish. We just need. . .”

“I said go! There’s nothing we have to counter this. No shame in trying again another day, cutting our losses. Hrragh!” Guardian held off two lava golems with his shield in one hand, then activated rage and tore the stone head off another with his sharp maw and slung it away before slapping the rest of the beast with his claws.

It was, admittedly, bad ass. Except, when the bear started to use his animal skills, it meant that he wasn’t saving them for the later phases of the boss fight. Guardian was digging deep into his bag of tricks, becoming reckless, less logical. Their tank had a clock on his tankiness now.

But Wysteria couldn’t give up.

She looked over and scowled clearly at the recovering Faerie. That wench! It was her fault. This raid was a failure because of her. To think, Wysteria’s party had taken the Faerie’s side—was still taking it by using their most valuable potions to basically bring their most useless member back to life. It was like they’d all forgotten how much this raid meant to all of them! Weeks ago, when they were gathering supplies for the battle, they were a well-oiled machine. They dug as deep as they needed and beat dungeons that were ten levels above what was recommended. Wysteria was their fearless Beastfolk leader. She knew they were unstoppable if they stuck together. She always made up the difference, too, clutching out a win with whatever her team could provide her.

Luv greedily sucked down an entire potion of greater healing, her lips on the flask like a child with her mother’s teat. A red droplet escaped, fleeing the newcomer’s mouth, dripping down to the point of her chin where it splashed onto her nearly exposed tits.

That’s when Wysteria remembered her own special raid preparations.

She blew between her fingers. A loud whistle pierced the chaos. From the door behind them burst Zephyr who was left outside for not having any combat stats yet. She dug in her saddle bag and fished out the vial from the Spirit of the Forest’s Wishing well.

“Keep tanking! This will be quick—we’re going to win this!” Wysteria shouted.

Then she thought of the power she would need to help her team and swallowed the vial’s contents.

It was warm going down. A smooth comfort coated the back of her throat. Then, her vision blurred and her balance wavered. She stumbled but caught herself on Zephyr’s side. The warmth was gone. All that remained was bitterness and a lingering feeling of an approaching death.

“The hell did she drink?” said the Alchemist. He went to the vial that Wysteria had dropped in

her delirium. “Where did you get this?”

“Wishing Well. G-Gladesvale,” Wysteria slurred. She tried using her force of will to come to and managed to clear her vision. Standing on her own was still impossible. “T-the spirit of the forest. . .”

The Alchemist understood, as he might since his class specialized in rare mixtures and potions. His face soured. “You know that well has two names, right? It’s the Wishing Well for those who wish with a clear conscience. It’s the Witch’s Well for people with selfish intention. And since you’re clearly being poisoned, I’d say your intentions were pretty spiteful.”

“Spiteful of. . .” Naa said, breaking a note in half to say what the whole party already understood.

The Alchemist turned toward Luvvy. Her tongue was flicking at the bottom of the potion she’d just had. “Who else?” The Alchemist shrugged. “Fae are tricksters. You knew this and still went spending money on potions they offer?”

“I-it was to help the team. . .” rasped Wysty.

“It was to get a boost in combat so you could look good and prove the group doesn’t need Luvvy,” the Guardian amended. “Well, congratulations. Your jealousy has done nothing but make you the weakest in the party, so now we need Luvvy’s power more than ever.”

And just like that, as if the spell was waiting for someone to call Wysteria out, a bright light started in the Beastfolk’s heart. To her, it was like a frost bolt being plunged into her chest, biting

crystals digging like nails through her leather armor and skin. Out came the swirling, frosty glow. A ball of it spun lopsidedly in the air as if regarding its existence and those around it for the first time. Then, before anyone could call it into question—Wysty most desired to interrogate it, but its departure left her as weighted and undefined as a bag of sand—it shot high into an arch before plopping down square on Luvvy’s candy-colored head.

An angelic choir called. Trumpets sounded. The ball of light dispersed leaving the Faerie alight with its endowment.

“Uh. What was that?” Luvvy asked, finally concerned enough about the situation to put the vial of potion on the ground at her side.

Wysteria wanted to say what she thought, but Naa said what was on her mind, giving up on her song. “Looks like a buff of some kind. Haven’t seen it before, though. It doesn’t feel bardic in origin.”

“Not Alchemic, either,” said the Alchemist.

Wysteria made a noise of pain and bereavement.

“Magic of the Beastfolk? Is that what it is?” Guardian interpreted.

Zephyr bobbed her head back and forth, clucking her hoof on the ground once.

“Think that means no,” Sharpshooter sighed.

Luvvy skipped over and squeezed Sharpshooter’s arm. “I didn’t know you spoke horse! That’s so cool!” It appeared that her recovery was complete which, even with a whole potion of greater healing, should have taken a much longer time.

“Someone bounced back quickly,” mentioned the Alchemist.

“Yea! That light feels really good. I feel great, actually. Maybe it’s a buff of invigoration—. . .”

“Trying to flee, mortals? I’m afraid I cannot allow that—not after you’ve disgraced me with your pathetic excuses for attacks!” King roared.

At his command, creatures made of lava rose from the fiery pits that flanked the throne room. They were sluggish pillars of rolling liquid fire whose bodies were slender tubes with four smaller tubes of flame slithering twelve feet long from each of its sides. They kept coming and coming. The rivers of lava never lowered, birthing deadly tentacled beasts ceaselessly as if fueled by the powers of hell. Within a wink, there were a dozen of them. In short order, that number doubled. The air hung heavy with their smoke and the smell of sulfur, nearly suffocating.

With Wysteria incapacitated, Guardian unfastened his shield and gave the order to run as his fangs elongated. He was prepared to deal as much damage and buy enough time for his team to escape with their leader slumped atop her horse.

But of all people to refuse, Luvvy floated in front of the party.

“Luvvy! It’s time to go—there’s nothing else we can do!” Naa screamed.

Alchemist agreed. He was pulling Sharpshooter back by the arms since the bowman had frozen at the sight of his closest party member fluttering herself in front of the sacrificial war bear.

“Nah, it’s fine. I somehow feel like I can handle this?” she answered.

Wysteria, still mostly out of sorts, had little choice but to watch. With Zephyr lowering herself and Naa pushing on Wysty’s behind, the Shaman was made to straddle her stead, riding backward like the fool she now felt she was. She saw Luvvy find her pink Faerie club and hold it in an outstretched hand. From behind, her curvaceous little body was fully on display. She stood nude in front of rolling mountain giants, dripping lava golems, and the Mountain King himself.

Then the aura of the light hardened sharply into a sash and wrapped her in a bikini made of solid light.

“Wh-whoa!” shouted Luvvy.

And her power soared.

Everyone in the room felt it—like someone had popped a potion of Greater Sorcery or a Buff of Absolute Domination. Dust and stone rose up and swirled around her ankles. Her hair billowed beautifully, up and back, lifted by an invisible spirit.

Suddenly, the Faerie's body started to shift. Luvvy noticed too, and reacted with a sharp panic that had her watching over her shoulders, whimpering. "Wh-what is—Ah! Hey, th-that's t-too tight."

Wysteria made a ghost smile with as little energy as she could. She hoped Luvvy had cracked after seeing what she'd volunteered for and was making an excuse for why she should be allowed to retreat after all.

"M-my ass?!" was what Luvvy said instead.

She said so as she clapped a hand over an exposed cheek. Wysteria saw the defined ripple of her soft skin at the impact of her hand. Her fingers sank in, too, and her plumpness appeared anew between her fingers and beside her palm. Luvvy always had a nice butt. This butt was way better than 'nice'.

The string of her bikini bottom wedged tighter and tighter, squeezing until her hips and cheeks were rolling over and camouflaging them completely. Luvvy used her wings and spun, trying to crane her head around with futility to see what was happening to her. It no doubt felt awkward, to feel the surging power of magic while also feeling your clothes shrink around you. Still, that was the truth of this new power, and the Faerie had to suffer it.

On one of her spins she turned back around and noticed her front instead of her rear. She made her discovery while looking straight in Wysty's direction and gave a full on 'O' face at the sight. "No way. Here too?! It took me weeks to save for the ones I had—I always wanted them bigger!"

She'd gotten her wish. Luvvy's already flirtatious, impractical chest was being augmented by this magic buff. Her bulging breasts surged in bursts like an invisible agent was pumping her up with a lever from a well.

That's when it clicked for Wysteria.

She wished for strength and prosperity. She'd wished it for her and her comrades. Never did she specify who ought to get the strength or prosperity. And, since her vengeance was against the newest member of the party, the Great Spirit of the Forest had seen it fit to steal as much energy as could be taken without killing Wysteria herself and giving it to the one person she didn't want to have it.

Cruelty.

"It was a booby buff!" Luvvy announced, like everyone wasn't already gawking at her absurd proportions.

With each growth she'd make a cute little hiccup and make her chest bounce. Grander, they

pushed the bikini to its limits. Whenever it looked like its strings were about to fail, the magic of the light bikini would extend so that her modesty was protected. Still, the front coverage lost effectiveness as the faerie continued inflating to uncertain, precarious sizes.

“Glaaaargh!”

“Eep!”

A stony golem from before interrupted the excitement of the Faerie Shaman’s growth by rushing her while her back was turned. Luvvy heard the creature approach, at which point what little fighting instinct she had took over. She spun with her baton to bonk the beast on his head.

jeez!” Whoa

The blow struck home, a full-bodied overarm club that had so much speed and power that it threw her rounded, moonish rump into the air as a counterbalance.

The bikini bottom was so tight, Wysty saw everything.

But she couldn’t dally on that fact long. The monster went from volcanic stone to dust with the single hit, and lightening bent from the source of the impact to another three rock golems behind the first. They each were hit by the forking electricity and fell to the ground.

“No way,” Wysty croaked.

“She has chain lightning!” Naa shouted, unable to keep a grin off her face. “It’s the AOE we need.”

Luvvy spun around halfway, flapping her wings ecstatically as she looked at the party. Pride had her full lips bent into a radiant smile, and the view of her body from profile was a treat on the weary eyes of her warrior band.

“See? I knew I could handle th-that—. . .

Her light bikini flashed with sun rays. Her legs kicked just a few inches off the ground, some sensation rushing up her body. Then came a few more noticeable bursts during which the faerie’s lithe, petite frame was taxed with several more helpings of delightful body weight.

“Ahhn! Mmm, th-that’s—that’s good,” she moaned as her wings worked doubletime to keep her aloft. She had an expression of effort, but her biting her lower lip implied that it had little to do with the extra effort of keeping her new size off the ground. Her breasts sank lower and lower, held tight to her body by the work of her magic string bikini, but their lower ridges rolled with a freedom around her stomach, padding her tummy. At the same time, from the side, her bulging areola were a ripe pink and puffed up cutely, peeking out all three sides of the celestial fabric keeping her together.

Then there was her booty. Each cheek had lost their pert, muscular quality and acquired an equal level of soft jiggle—not yet a rival to her breasts, but still a compliment to them. Each

time her top half grew, so her round rump rounded further.

All to maintain what was becoming an hourglass figure reserved only for the world of fantasy.

“This is the coolest spell ever! I would have had to work forever to get enough gold to pay for this kind of body! I’m so flirty—I love it!” Luvvy spun cheerfully, striking a pose.

Hand on her hip, girlish pink club over her left shoulder. A wink, a giggle. Her breasts swung sexy and hypnotic when she leaned forward. They were so perfect in fullness and length and size. Everyone was watching her, which she played to by taking that hand off her hip and scooping it under her right udder as if to imply it was quite the effort just to tote herself around.

And despite herself, Wysty found herself deeply curious whether those blessed, newly inflated jugs would feel as nice as they looked.

“Incoming! Behind you!” Sharpshooter yelled, then broke away from Alchemist who was petrified like the rest of the party.

Sharpshooter made for his bow, but when he had his arrow ready, Luvvy was already in the midst of combat again.

Her flesh went slinging, rotating wildly, full of seduction. She all but danced around her enemies, finally acting like a true Faerie. The way her wings carried her up and over confused and beguiled her enemies, sparing plenty of time for her to come down on each with her club one at a time.

Many went for her softer, squishier bits as they were large targets and magnetic to just about everyone who watched them—apparently including inanimate material made to fight by magic forces. This Luvvy seemed to suspect, and just when her big, delicate titties were in her enemy’s sights, she’d pull them just out of range and counter. Soon, she was taunting the golems and giants with her body, shimmying out her luscious figure and giggling merrily at the attention it garnered her.

Truly, nobody had ever seen anything so hilarious, sexy, and effective at wiping away vast swaths of enemies. Every other hit or so lightning would branch out and vaporize several of the King’s spawns. Those golems were reduced to rubble, never reanimated. Not even the lava rivers could supply enough to replace how many Luv was defeating. The damned lap dance of destruction was working.

“Zephyr. . . Get me out of here.” Wysteria’s guts were so sick and twisted she thought she might vomit. The emotions of pride, wonder, lust, and resentment were strong and all she wanted to do was run away.

The horse seemed reluctant and only got two steps out the door before Naa got in the way. She was so short that Zephyr was able to step over her and out the doorway, but the horse stopped dead with a jerk that reminded its rider of the icy needles still unmelted in her chest.

“Ouch. . .”

Wysty heard Naa’s voice. “You’re staying. Not only is this what you wished for, it’s what we needed. Now, the group is strong. I’m not the biggest fan of how this unfolded either, but you’ve made your bed, Wysteria.”

Now she would have to sleep in it. Except, sleep didn’t come. Her restlessness warred within her and she was forced to watch, both eyes open, as five, ten, and twenty monsters were all taken down by a single, hourglass-shaped Faerie.

So that is what she did.

Luvvy cleared away all the smaller monsters on her own. Every few underlings slain resulted in a flash of her bikini strings. More growth; Wysteria had put that much together. Every so many foes, the micro top—it seemed pointless in battle, but it would be foolish not to refer to the diamond-shaped slivers of modesty as a ‘battle bikini’—would twinkle.

It was like the battle just before the boss, Wysty remembered. Luvvy’s tits were flashing with the diamonds and coins and treasures she’d carried around in her boobs. Those were artificial light, reflections off of metal and crystal, but Luvvy’s boobs created their own light now, like she was the greatest treasure in the whole dungeon.

Her pink melons shone even brighter when ten or so enemies spilled their molten blood over the mountain floor. The bikini absorbed their power, but needed a place to store it. Shaman were natural conduits, so it made sense to place all the accumulated power of a horde of demonic fire enemies in Luvvy’s body. Wysteria had been a conduit for energy too. But it never did for her what it was doing for Luvvy. All the power of the Faerie’s slain foes seemed to bolster her already-astronomic charm, causing her to grow bigger, sexier, and even happier about both of those qualities.

The Faerie’s endowments were tremendously powerful. Bouncy too. They looked like they would make for the best night’s rest, certainly preferable to Zephyr’s rear end. Wysteria knew this and still felt spite. Except, there was little more for her to do than lay there and admire. As much as she wrote off Luvvy’s growing chest as gewgaw, useless, gaudy, and inefficient, her pride as a warrior wouldn’t let her denounce the technique all together.

“Hiyaah!” Luvvy screamed in quite the impressive maneuver. A monster had rushed her with a large, granite bulb at the length of its ‘arm’. Luvvy was quick on her wings, so she spun away. Except, rather than retreating, she appeared on the spawn’s left. And instead of dealing a killing blow, she had the foresight to incapacitate the first beast and use its body for shield against yet another approaching monster. How did she incapacitate it?

Why, with her boobs, of course.

She clutched an entire rock golem in her canyon of delicious, pale flesh. His entire build was sunken inside her, bulging skin yielding around it, trapping the spawn and inhibiting its movements. It did struggle, but Luvvy was plenty busty enough to deal with its futile swinging.

It ended up bashing its teammates in a blind rage—literally blind, both because it lacked eyes, and because the boulder which served as its ‘head’ was gone without a trace betwixt the little trickster’s gargantuan gourds. “Now left. Now right! Now left again, hehe,” Luvvy teased. Her shoulder shimmy confused the stone warrior even further. He threw his stone body in wide berths, none of which came close to hitting the lady he was being suffocated by. Then, once five of his comrades had been bowled over by his own hand, his form lost all composure, vibrated violently, and tumbled to the ground in lifeless bits of rubble.

The conscious spawn of fiery war was so frustrated—sexually?—that he saw no better way of escape than complete incapacitation. Luvvy had cuddled a stone golem to death.

“Ahh yea! Here it comes—he was a big one,” the Faerie cheered. Luvvy’s eyes rolled, and her fluorescent hair blinked a brighter color momentarily receiving the magic that her clothes absorbed for her. Flesh compounded on flesh, softness on softness. Her chest continued to blimp, racing to beat the bikini, hoping to snap the poor thing to pieces. Wysteria partially hoped for such a fate. It would make Luvvy topless—which was disgusting, annoying, and arousing—but at least the magic item which fueled her growth would be destroyed. Instead, the magic wear behaved, well, magically and stretched thin and long, accommodating Luvvy as her pixie body was belabored to absurdity.

Her entire center of mass while flying sank toward the ground. She no longer hovered upright, but had to over-rotate to the front just to keep herself airborne. Admiration filled her eyes as she dangled her breasts, now the size of wine casks—which corresponded to the same volume of wine Wysteria would have had to drink to be drunk enough to believe what was in front of her under normal circumstances.

“I’m so heavy!” Luvvy said, eyes wide, smile heart-shaped. “A-and full. I bet I could solo this dungeon with this size.”

“I recommend you finish up! It’s been fun,” the Alchemist shouted. “But Fae magic fades fast. You ought to finish the boss off.”

“Oh really? Man! So I don’t get to stay this big and beautiful forever?” Luvvy asked, frowning at the resident expert in enhancements.

“That’s Fae magic: never lasts as long as expected, never in the way expected.”

Sharpshooter spoke up. “I’ll grind mobs forever to earn you the money to pay for the body you want, Luvvy. I owe you that much, at least, for saving us from this party wipe.”

“Aww, Sharpy!” Luvvy giggled and floated nearby.

At the height she needed to hover above the ground, she was a foot or so above him as she swooped down to plant a kiss on his forehead. For reference, the tip of her barrel breast—her nipple was as round as a pint from an inn, thick and throbbing, proportionate to the rest of

her—bumped sharpshooter's knee, and he wasn't the shortest of the group by quite a margin. There was nearly four feet to Luvvy's breast, a size so ample that Naa could walk into her swinging cloud canyon and never return.

"Alright. I'll finish off the boss, but only if you promise I get boobs like these for real one day."

Sharpshooter blushed, but his eyes intensified. He flashed a half smile. "Easy. For you, dear, I'll raid the four realms. And you'll have the biggest chest when I'm through, I swear."

Dumb lovebirds, thought Wysteria. Then, she realized she could feel her hatred even stronger. It motivated her, gave her the strength to start to get up. It wasn't all there yet, but her power was returning to her, which meant Luvvy was nearly out of time.

The image obsessed Faerie floated over to center stage yet again.

"You send a single shaman girl to fight me? She may have survived my spawn, but one small daughter of magic is no match for me!" the Mountain King bellowed.

Her silhouette from behind was a shrine to gratuity as Luvvy reached into her satchel and pulled out a medium-sized cannon. There might have been a time when it was large for her frame, but like everything else in the room except the King himself, Luvvy's chest eclipsed the cannon.

"There's nothing small about me, Mountain King! Now surrender your fat loot!" Luvvy smarted off.

Wysteria groaned. The line wasn't cool at all. At least she could groan without pain, though.

"Insolence will only expedite your demise! Now, face the hellish flames from which I've forged the world's strongest weapons!"

The King wound up his arm, cocking it like a weapon. Spirals of lava branched away from his body. They formed a tight, glowing ball just in front of his palm. More and more, he built magic and heat and smoke into the orb, till it was meteoric and devastatingly massive. He could take out the entire mountain with it.

He levelled it at the party.

But Luvvy faced complete annihilation with a smile. In fact, she briefly surveyed her cannon, and found something amiss, as she slipped it back into her satchel and rolled her eyes. What was she thinking? She'd never be able to rush the King in time. Even with greatly increased constitution and dexterity, her gargantuan breasts would drag the ground slowing her. At her size any attempt to hide her intentions was futility.

"You holster your weapon?! Good! Yes! Face your demise knowing you are powerless to resist me!"

"Gah! Please, you're not so hot," Luvvy said.

She then grounded herself. It came as a surprise to everyone, since almost all her combat had been done in the air. But the Faerie rested her wings, and breasts, on the ground. Wisty would never get the image out of her mind. There was too much emotion knotted around the memory. Her delicate shoulders, translucent wings, pinched waist, and rounded hips were all womanly yet slender. Then, appearing almost a foot on either side, bunched up between her legs, stacked tall and soft and obtrusive, were her unfathomable barrel breasts.

Luvvy leaned back. Her boobs dismounted, raising from their semi-rounded domes to elongated, cylindrical beauties, hoisted by their owner. Each of her nipples were angled toward the Mountain King.

Never having slain an enemy, her bikini straps began to glow and her hair swam through the air. Elevated with the help of her hands, her tremendous, sexual blimps developed a faint aura all their own. It began with a few wisps of color, barely visible. Within seconds, it was a roaring flame with tongues of power surging up and away. Her nipples extended even further, domes first, then full on rods. Cannons. Clearly, they were becoming cannons. Powering them were a web of blue cords, veins that were as brilliant as sapphire, bulging all over her skin in their branched and rivered journey to reach their destination at the end of her powerful teats.

“Now, puny warrior,” King wound up, his asteroid of devastation complete. “Face my mighty—”

“Suck my awesome tits, Brandforge!” Luvvy screamed.

And what had to be a fourth level spell shined at the tips of her nipples and burst forth in sparkling white heaven. The King was slain before he could even unleash his stored powers.

• ○

The Brightmoss Tavern was situated in the Agher Mountains. It was the only dwarven settlement in this part of the mountains that welcomed people of all classes and races. For this reason, most hard working Dwarves kept to their tunnels and underground keeps, but on a rare occasion, when they were feeling talky or social—distinctly non-dwarvish—they might venture to Brightmoss and share a drink with one of the other races.

Naa slapped her thigh and stomped her feet. A ring of dwarves mimicked her and sloshed ale in their stone pitchers, singing a jaunty tune. “I sing a tale of warrior brave, of beauty great, of giant slain!” Naa’s high pitched soprano contrasted sweetly with the shouting raucousness.

Wisty checked again, making sure her bard friend was alright. Naa snatched a dwarf’s ale, chugging long and deep, and leaped up onto the table. She trilled out a flute solo worthy of a stage. The twelve dwarves loved it. She was fine. Her hangover would be of greater concern than her safety as a fun-loving Gnome among Dwarves.

So the Beastfolk Shaman retreated into shadow, climbing the steps that led to the upper rooms where she and her party were spending the next day or so. She came to the first door and found it opened, lit by candle light. Guardian was seated, nubby hind legs crossed, pouring over a scroll of some kind. He’d found a pair of spectacles somewhere and balanced them over his

snout, like his eyes weren't too far apart to make use of them. A feather dabbed with ink was situated between two of his claws.

Wisty thought she best not disrupt the creative process, even if her curiosity all but consumed her. She left without saying a word.

"Get some rest, Wysteria. You'll need your strength," came his resonant voice.

Wisty didn't answer, moving toward the end of the hall. Tomorrow, they would be hiring transportation to move all of the ore, gold, and items they pillaged from the Hall of Brandforge. With such a large load of supplies, they would need to be awake and alert to ensure the safety of their winnings.

Thinking of how much they would make off their killings, Wisty changed her mind and didn't go straight to bed as she wished. She stopped, instead, at the door across the hall. It was cracked open, the flicker of a lantern still on.

"Hey, Luvvy? I. . ."

She started to open the door and heard scrambling and a startled yip. Danger? Was something the matter? Something wrong, must be.

Wisty's legs carried her to the center of the action. Even if she was still weakened by the potion, her instincts always put her in the middle of danger if it meant she could protect her party, so she found herself on an animal fur rug in the middle of Luvvy's room. She had convinced herself that she'd find a greedy thief or unwanted solicitor.

Instead, she found Luvvy in bed with white linen sheets bunched and strewn around her. There was a desk at the head of the bed with a lantern, lit lower than Guardian's. Beside it was that fist-sized ruby from earlier in the day, capturing the flicker of the flame in a million imperfect faces. Wysteria thought it beautiful, even in its imperfect state.

Sharpshooter was in the room. In the bed, actually, and on top of Luvvy. Topless. And well-endowed? For a woman, that is. Yup, the scarce light enhanced the shadows in the room, so rounded things like breasts and hips were much more prevalent.

And Sharpshooter had them.

"I-I. . . I, umm," Wisty stammered. "You, uh. I thought you were in trouble and—. . ."

Sharpshooter held up a hand. He—whoops, pushed up from the mattress. "Don't. I didn't she—want you to find out this way, but now that you have could we please save the conversation till morning?"

There. Wysteria heard it. Sharpshooter always had a boyish, cocky voice. He was the kind of man that young girls fell for. It wasn't until now, with her hair undone, with her voice more smooth and natural, that it became clear. "I'm so sorry," Wisty whispered.

“Relax, will ya?” Sharpshooter stood—of stature for a man, but impressively statuesque for a woman—and swept a bit of discarded garb over her breasts. “I assume you’re here for her?”

“Sharpy,” said Luvvy.

“I’ll be back,” said the bow

A few heartbeats elapsed with nothing said. Luvvy swept her legs onto the floor and sat up. “Well?” It was clear she was annoyed. Why wouldn’t she be? Her and her ‘Sharpy’ had been rudely interrupted.

Wysty had become the unsolicited visitor she’d wanted to protect Luvvy from. That seemed to be the running theme for the day: Wysteria’s best efforts turning on her.

“This is hard for me,” Wysteria started. She grabbed the nape of her neck and squeezed. “But it’s the only way I’ll be able to sleep tonight. I’m sorry for antagonizing you. Sorry for thinking you didn’t belong—that you had nothing to contribute. You saved our party, saved the raid, and saved me.” Wysteria had expected to be interrupted so she sighed, giving her audience a chance to interject. When she didn’t, Wysty said some more. “We have different styles. That’s all. In the future, I’d like to, uh, maybe try to find a way to compliment yours instead of fighting over the differences.”

Luvvy’s eyebrow went up. She waited, as if waiting for the team leader to redact her statement. When she didn’t, her lips bent into a sweet smile and she rolled her fingers through her pastel-colored hair.

, as she slipped by Wysteria and out the door. woman

“I would love that. And I’m sorry too. Fighting is a two-way street and I wasn’t exactly the easiest girl to get along with.”

“No. You certainly weren’t.”

“Rude!” Luvvy levelled her gaze. Her look was soft, though. “You’re just jealous that I found love in that dungeon. Love and titties.”

“As long as I get my share of gold to fix the gear that was eaten by scalding acid, you can keep my share of love and ‘titties’.” Wysteria smirked. Even if she meant what she said, Luvvy’s nudity felt like such a rare and elusive thing that her eyes flicked momentarily to the Faerie’s bosom.

“That’s not where a woman focused on armor is supposed to look.” Luvvy caught Wysty immediately.

Wysty played it cool. “Just making sure you aren’t about to suffocate. For the record, you don’t need to pay for any enhancements. You’re proportioned plenty well as it is.”

“Just like our raiding and combat styles, I’m inclined to disagree. We’re just going to have to

come to a compromise there, Wysty."

Luvvy smiled, and it felt warm and genuine to Wysty so she turned and left without another word. Actually, there were a few words spoken in tones only Zephyr would understand, and likely blush over.

Even after the unleashing of all that magic, Luvvy still had tits in her lap! And they didn't seem to bother her, either. She was somehow more confident with them. It was like how Wysteria felt whenever she wore a nice new set of armor. Maybe that's how the Beastfolk Shaman would have to think of it: Luvvy would only boldly face her foe with a gratuitous padding of her fleshy mounds.

And if that was the case, Wysty was fine with admitting that Luvvy was indeed a warrior worthy of her party. By no means a typical one, but one they could not do without.

No sooner after having left did she hear the fair maiden pining for her brave bowwoman.
"Sharpy! Oh, Sharpy!"

Sharpshooter had waited patiently behind the door and appeared as Wysteria was leaving. Before the ranger returned to her lover, she held the team leader by the arm.

"Thank you," said Sharpshooter. "That's exactly what she's been worried about all evening. She doesn't act like it, but your opinion of her matters a lot to her."

Wysty felt a pang because she heard the truth in her bowwoman. How silly this whole adventure had been. "I'm touched. Really. And I'll be happy to show how touched I am as soon as you put some clothes on."

Sharpshooter grinned, her charming half smirk a crackling, welcoming fire. "Really, Wysteria. Thank you. I'm proud to call you my party leader. So is Luvvy—. . ."

"Yea, yea. Back to bed with you," Wysty shrugged away, scampering down the hall as a gallant leader might. "We'll have this talk at a better time." Like when she could stop comparing chest sizes with every girl in the party. She wasn't sure how the conversation would go, but at some point she'd have to ask Sharpshooter how she'd hidden such round, bulbous boobs for so long.

That put Wysty in third place. Only Naa had smaller tits than her. That wasn't a comfort though! Naa was a Gnome! And why did it matter anyway.

"Sharpy! Hurry up!" Luv called.

Sharpshooter seemed pleased. When Wysty turned before entering her bedroom for the night, the tall, busty archer nodded and said. "Goodnight, Wysteria. Now, where were we, my sweet?"

Their door shut firmly, then. The click of the lock sealed them in for the night.

"Good riddance," said Wysty. All her armor came off and she hit the mattress in her room like a log. Out she went, into the realm of dreams. She couldn't help but feel that things were as they

should be, and that they could only improve from here.

Why had she ever gone to that Well in Gladesvale? To grant her party strength and prosperity. But they'd already had that. They had been stronger than ever without some Fae magic trick. And Luvvy, in her eclectic wonder, had only added to that strength. Wysteria swore, as she adjusted her pillow, that she would never lose faith in her team's strength ever again. And, as far as Fae magic, she was done. That Great Spirit could drown in her well for all the Beastfolk Shaman cared.

• ◦

Just before dawn, the Alchemist was still awake. He hadn't slept since the battle. The others had burned through their post-victory high in their own ways. The Bard wrestled with dehydration after a night of drunken reverie, the Guardian slept on the cool floor pleased by the creative uptick he'd had after such a triumph, and the Faerie and Sharpshooter had kept each other company in the expected way, passionate and noisy till just a few minutes ago.

Alchemist had gone straight back to work. He had no passion like the others, other than botany and cataloguing and other skills that paralleled his role of potion maker. There were times when he would be bothered by such things, times like these where his energies still fueled him. He wished he might find something else to take his mind off of how his stocks were low or how he would need to consult the glass mason for additional vials.

That shaky old woman would have his head for sure this time. Glass for her was an art and no amount of payment could justify all the damage Alchemist had done by shattering her prized pieces.

Something about making the hag upset did feel like home, though.

"Alchemist. Good morning."

He paused his picking of clovers from behind the inn in time to see Wysteria diving from the second floor window. In the rare moment before the sun rose above the mountains, the braids in her messy hair looked to slow her fall and she was, briefly, angelic.

She diffused the force of her landing with a series of tumbles, then popped up to her feet and slowed into a walk in a single fluid motion. Alchemist blinked at this. He of course knew her to be a skilled fighter but could never quite get over seeing her feats of strength and agility. The move of her body was that of nature itself, efficient and forceful, yet full of grace. The top she wore was tanned and contoured her musculature while clinging to her breasts. Again, force and grace were embodied.

"Glad to see you well after a quick nap." Alchemist rolled a plant between his fingers before stuffing it into a pouch at his waist. "Has your shoulder recovered?"

"It's sore," Wysteria answered honestly. "But the more I use it, the better it'll be. I wouldn't have an arm if not for you, so thank you."

Alchemist didn't answer. He busied himself with the blades of grass and the tiny, dew-covered petals of wildflowers. Anything to keep from having to see his leader's thankfulness or remember how it pained him to see her wounded.

"I have a favor to ask of you, Alchemist. It's, uh, not a typical one."

They'd spent mornings together before, her meditating in the break of dusk, him collecting rare plants for salves. Their silent communion had been enough for him. When her eyes were closed and she was at peace, he could feel better about watching her beautiful body, of admiring her physically for more than her leadership and status as a warrior. She was a Beastfolk. She was the body of a human but scaled in height and girth and curve the way Alchemist secretly adored.

It was one thing to fight alongside her, and another to watch her in a meditative state. But to have her standing beside him—over him—with eyes like amber marbles and lashes that blinked like fans. Her Beastkin were horses, and she had eyes of similar size and depth. Men could lose themselves in them. Enemies had cowered under them. Now, they gently rested on Alchemist's features, and they both shrank and grew him; made him tremble and made him rise.

"Speak," he said at last.

"You're knowledgeable in Fae magics, yes? And you understood how the potion I took affected Luvvy and I."

"I do. . ."

"I'm not going back there. That's not what I'm thinking—unless it's to raze that damned Well, I can't think of a reason to return to that cursed Spirit."

Alchemist fought a grin. He loved hearing her swear and speak of destruction on her enemies. "But you still want to study Fae magic?"

"It's less straightforward than that. I, uh," Wysty spoke, then paused. She seemed to shrink before making her request. Was she nervous? Impossible. Maybe just unsure if what she wanted was even possible. "I would like to explore new methods of storing natural power. Say, holding energy within me so I can unleash it on larger enemies and bosses."

"Oh, like Luvvy did," said Alchemist.

"Yes. Like, uh, like Luvvy did."

But the leader's eyes flicked away. A blush came up her neck and her shoulders hunched. Alchemist was slow to social situations but even he distilled the meaning out of the silence. "Oh. you mean, like Luvvy. Literally."

"No!" Wysty shouted. She cleared her throat and straightened herself, realizing something about how she'd come off. "Not to her ridiculousness. Just, something similar. It will take some planning, as I'll need armor that would accommodate my new skill. And I'm pretty sure I'll need

to research what talents and magic routes will be necessary to have the desired effects. This will be a lengthy journey. I'll need the best—the most loyal. The tightest lips. . .”

“You want my help in his?” Alchemist answered flatly.

“It would be preferred to doing this alone. I trust your council. You would be honest with me.”

He understood now. And he was thrilled. His leader, whom he admired, had invited him on a quest to make her boobs bigger! That was the gist of it, wasn't it? His leader was on a valiant quest for strength and bust size and she'd come to him first. He was already imagining it. Luvvy had danced and flown, but Wysteria would mow down foes with a swing of her hammer and reduce bosses to dust with a single blow. Her body could easily holster curves twice or thrice Luvvy's since she had the muscle and stature to support it. The might and sexuality were too much! Alchemists's heart couldn't take the anticipation.

On the outside, though, he sighed through his nose and shrugged. Playing cool and being level were what made him the best candidate for this mission, after all. “Two conditions.”

“I'm listening.”

“You will refer to me by my name, not my role.”

Wysteria, after a beat of recognition, chortled. She crossed her arms under her breasts. “Alright, Haes. It'll take a while like it did with Naa, but I'll eventually get used to it.”

Haes felt pleasant shivers hearing his name on her lips. Again, he divulged nothing. “And second—and answer me straight—do you want bigger boobs for a reason other than power?”

“Haes! Ugh!” she said and spun toward the Inn's front door.

“I'll help you. Consider me your right hand,” he called after her.

“You'll be my right and left after a question like that! I can't believe you. . .” Wysteria stormed off, cursing in beast tongue as she disappeared.

Haes the Alchemist went back to picking rare herbs. Except, for the first time in his life, he couldn't focus on his task. He had something else to think about and aim at, now. When he was finished gathering, he went back upstairs but passed his room by so that he could peek in at Wysteria.

Her back was to him. She was on the floor in a spot of sunlight, meditating, peaceful, already over his offensive question.

Again, he allowed himself the pleasure of being close to her and seeing her for everything he appreciated. Strength. Leadership. Unrivalled beauty.

When he went back to his room, he went straight to work. There had to be a potion that grew breasts—it seemed the most obvious thing when he thought about it. If it hadn't yet been

created, he would be the one to do it.

And he'd do it for Wysteria.