

The beast tried to sneak away again. Always scurrying away, chirping mockery in that foul language.

Her eyes narrowed in concentration; feathers flattened against her skull like a cat about to pounce. Her wings flickered a few times as she prepared herself.

The red eyes of her prey glared at her challengingly... and darted away.

She flew at great speed, moving between the obstacles, the cracks, the holes. She followed the thing over a long pipe, always hovering an inch or two off the ground. She moved like an eagle, like a peerless hunter of the sky, always in pursuit of her prey.

The little pest mocked her with each flick of its tail, reminding her she had yet to truly catch up. She might be fast, but *it* knew every nook and cranny of this structure far better than she did.

Even still, she would not relent; she would give chase to this thing till the ends of the earth if need be. She had tolerated its mockery, its thieving ways, its hateful, hateful chirping for far too long!

It was almost within reach, that tail that lashed out from side to side, she just needed to-!

Light filled her vision as they passed through a hole.

She was temporarily blinded and missed how the rat darted away in the last second.

Tirilee screeched right before she collided with the table's leg.

"Ehhhh," She plopped down on the floor after a moment of being plastered against the hard wood. The impact had rattled her world.

Once more, the rat got away.

Tirilee sat up, grumbling to herself as she began flying upward. She dusted off the tufts of fur around her forearms and legs, and patted down to the patterns of black stripes that covered

her more private parts. She looked around for the little pest, but it had disappeared once again.

Much as the fairy loved her home, an alchemist's tower made it the perfect playground for pests. And it was her sacred (self-appointed) duty to make sure Arina's place remained pest-free.

Not that she had had much luck lately.

"Little bastard..." The grumbled this and dust as she kept flying up, moving over the table filled with various assortments. Books, notes, and such. She couldn't help but roll her eyes. This was the *kitchen*, and yet Arina took her work everywhere. She landed on a bowl of grapes and picked one as large as her head and began eating the large (for her) fruit.

The tower was gigantic. Though, to be fair, everything was big to a fairy. They were just used to most of the world being like that.

She idly kept flying, moving past the pantry and going up, passing by various shelves, the storage room where Arina kept all her reagents, and finally reaching the top of the tower where her friend kept the still room. That is, the alchemy room.

The room was filled with glasses and complex sets of alchemical equipment whose purpose often eluded Tirilee's mind. Even the names for most of those things were hard to remember. Big folk always liked to make things so complicated by giving things an unnecessary amount of names. Fairies liked to keep things simple, contrary to popular belief. Wasn't their fault big folk had such trouble understanding their language, preferring their completely drab and uninspired common tongue.

There, in the middle of the room, was the giant (human) who owned the tower. Her friend Arina hummed to herself as she pulled her long black hair in a ponytail, letting two long bangs frame her face in a way that always suited her. She wore a long black skirted dress with a white apron over it to keep it clean whenever she worked on her projects. She walked up to a mortar set as she began grinding herbs into a paste.

She looked so at peace doing it, like every part of her labor brought her satisfaction and a sense of calm. Alchemy was always an interesting craft for Tirilee. Mages and magically inclined creatures could pull from the ether and make spells. But alchemy was about, as Arina put it, drawing from the essence of the natural world to craft magic in a bottle.

And she'd seen it work! Potions that would heal people right up. Red smoke that would reduce metal (especially that hateful iron) to dust. Flasks that would explode with elemental power. And much, much more. It was like having your own mage in your pocket!

She often helped Arina find the best ingredients around. Who better to find the best magical flora than a forest fairy, after all? In return, Arina had made a little room for her to live here, often repaying her with a lot of things fairies couldn't get on their own. Like baked goods! You could only get that in big folk towns!

Though after enough years of knowing each other, Tirilee knew for a fact that the two were friends. She enjoyed talking to Arina, learning from her. Even when learning from her books, the world never felt too big. Arina had this way to make it feel just small and comfy.

Living with her was the best.

She settled on her shoulder, and Arina barely reacted to her presence. "So, what are we cooking today?"

"I am *brewing*," She patiently corrected. "Tonics to sell around town. Seasonal change is near. Lots of running noses and sick children."

"Big folk should just get used to pollen." The fairy argued. "It's the best! You can gather enough, and you can *swim* in it!"

Arina merely smiled. "Of course, the fairy, who is immune to pollen, would say that."

She grumbled. "Maybe it's big folk who are too frail."

The alchemist chuckled before giving her a side glance. "So, lost another fight to the 'Rat King?'"

"It's a demon!" She banged a tiny fist on her shoulder. "A fiend! A creature from the lower realms! This tower used to belong to a warlock, I tell you!"

"I'll keep that in mind when I put the traps again. It's odd, though. That rat always gets the cheese but doesn't spring the straps."

"...That cheese's a trap?" The fairy asked. "I thought you were just leaving me snacks."

Arina pursed her lips and gave her an unimpressed look. Tirilee flew away from her shoulder and gave her a half-hearted glare. "I didn't know it was a trap for the rat! You could have told me that!"

"And you thought it was, what, a strange dinner table for fairies?"

The fairy huffed and glowered, turning away from her friend with a sharp turn. Arina merely giggled and kept working. Tirilee floated around, watching as she prepared the tonic she would sell next time she went to town.

"Hmm..." Tirilee hummed as she rested her head on her palms, lying flat on her stomach as though she was over a solid surface despite floating in the air. Her feathers flattened against her head. "You're going to see Amanda at the village again?" She tried not to sound too sullen about it.

"I'm... afraid we've decided to stay friends."

She perked up. "Really?!"

Careful, don't sound too hopeful.

"We want different things. I want to be out here experimenting. She wants to go to the academy in the capital for her research."

Okay, good. That was good. Arina was too good for her anyway. She needed someone who'd care for her, who wanted the same things she did. Someone who could talk all day about anything and everything...

...someone who'd be her height.

Tirilee floated around with a sudden morose mood. Yeah, the issue about crushing on a big folk, they'd never really consider a relationship with a fairy. There was a certain height

threshold at which humans, elves, or orcs would consider you a potential romantic partner. It went from goblin to halfling, then to dwarves. They'd even go for races much taller than them, too.

Fairies though? Not exactly dating material if you could fit them in your palm...

Tirilee was *very* aware of that fact, much to her dismay.

Her drifting led her to the alchemy set by the side, until she got close to a big vial which contained a rather sparkling blue liquid. Her innate magical sensitivity made her hair stand up from the raw magic coursing through that substance. "What's this?" She asked.

Arina briefly turned to look. "Oh, it's a new recipe I've been testing out. Book says it's meant to be a potion of gigantification."

Well... wasn't that *interesting*?

"Really?" She had the largest smile on her lips as she stood by the edge of the glass, peering into its blue depths.

What sort of things could a giant fairy achieve? Fly unafraid of birds mistaking you for a bug? Catch a rodent too smart for its own good? Get the attention of one particularly lovely human?

Well, only one way to find out.

"Woops!" Tirilee sang, "I'm slipping!"

She 'accidentally' fell into the potion with a soft splash.