

"I am called Listin, the great and terrible, ruler of the **ompphh**." Namira shoved a coin between Listin's lips before she went on a further tangent.

"Good. Hey, Listin, can you lead us to the coins you ate to get so big?" Namira held out another coin, this time from her sack.

"You have a deal, spider, but only if you keep giving me your treasures. I hunger and your gold tastes...good." Listin stacked another coin atop of the others, snacking on them like a sandwich.

"I think I can handle a deal like that." Namira grinned, side-eyeing Lucian as she shook Listin's tiny hand.

"Fine, but I'm taking a bigger share of the hoard when we get there." Lucian grumbled as he looked pitifully down at his coin purse.

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"Good, now, hand me some more. I hunger." Listin held out a dainty hand, beckoning for Lucian to provide another coin as she swallowed the other.

Lucian reluctantly removed a coin, handing the small disc to the greedy fairy as she chewed pieces from the metal. He didn't want to admit it, but his purse was far lighter than he liked; it's why he took on a job like this. So to empty his purse to feed an overbloated guide was overstepping a few boundaries, but he obliged; it was all in pursuit of a greater treasure.

"Now, which way do we go?" Namira's question was stern, much like a taskmaster; she wasn't ready to let this pixie drain Lucian's coffers.

"Head that way, keep going and I'll tell you when to turn." Listin pointed a finger down the path ahead of them as she snacked.

With a dutiful resolve, they began to walk, venturing deeper into the alien woods, following Listin's direction.

The woods were far deeper and far more labyrinthine than they had initially expected; trees twisted around each other in unnatural ways, and they would often circle back to a new landscape from when they had started. Treebark turned an otherworldly shade of purple and gray; the underbrush rose and fell in uneven slopes the deeper they went. Namira suspected the whole thing was a ploy by Listin, a way to wring more food out of them, but her explanation of the situation was enough to satisfy her. The woods were enchanted by fae magic; beings

without any such magic were doomed to wander the woods eternally if they followed it by their eyes. The path that Listin took them on followed the winding woods, exploiting the patterned shifts in the foliage. Their travel lasted days, exhausting them of almost all of their rations, save for Lucian's coin. Listin had been fattening herself on more coin than she should have reasonably been able to hold. Bloating her stomach into a grand ball of pale flesh that wobbled in Namira's hand. She had outgrown the glass decanter but was too large to fly, leaving her completely groundbound. The same could not be said for Namira.

Urrlll

"How much longer? I can feel myself wasting away." Namira looked almost deflated as her stomach rumbled from hunger.

She had brought two weeks of rations to start this journey, and it had been twenty days since they started. Namira had stripped herself of her black plate, stowing the load in her rucksack to ease the burden, leaving her in her hardened leather top. With meager supplies to nourish her over the past few days, her body had eaten the pudge on her trunk. Leaving the muscle bulging against loose skin, her abdomen slightly smaller than when she had first set out. She felt exhausted with each step; looking over towards Lucian, he was less burdened by his lack of food. He was noticeably thinner and worn out, but not as much as Namira. Their differing sizes were a key factor in the amount of food they needed. Namira's mind wandered, counting up the crumbs of food that lay in her pack: how much further could she stretch dust?

"Fear not mortal, a few more steps and we will have arrived." Listin haughtily gestured for the next turn to take.

Namira felt Listin's body wriggle in her hand, the bulbous blob of arcane dust and potential fat. Her predatory instincts made her look at Listin like food, but Namira knew it would be pointless. She was closer to a balloon than she was anything of substance; her body sloshed like fat, but it was nothing but magical air. Namira pulled her attention back to the path ahead, her weary steps carrying her around the tree that Listin had pointed. Each plant of her claws was shaky and weak; she braced herself on the pillar of a trunk in front of her, the redwood acting as a support for her body. Looking around it, the pathway seemed like nothing, but she knew better than to believe her eyes. As she stepped around the circumference, the scenery changed, the dark woods shifting to a wondrous clearing.

"Has this been hiding here the whole time?" Lucian rubbed his eyes to adjust to the light ahead of him.

Both Namira and Lucian stood in wonder at the clearing that had been hidden from them for long. A brook babbled across a plain as large as a farmfield; pristine grass rippled in the breeze as the wind penetrated the open treetops. All around them the ominous trees had gained a halcyon glow as the sun danced across their surface. The clearing stretched beyond their vision, the treetops on the opposite side barely visible until they got closer. Sitting in the center

of that clearing was a yawning cavemouth, a deep opening in the earth with a shadowed entrance.

"It is visible to those with the right eyes; one must simply follow directions." Listin's wings fluttered, enthusiastically trying to give her liftoff. "Drat, I am too grand to fly. Would you escort me to the hoard, large spider? I hunger."

"I hunger too; I don't know how much longer we can go without food. So if you don't mind, we'll stop and fish for a bit. The animals here should be real." Namira couldn't contain her annoyance at Listin's remark.

"Ha, what a foolish spider-thing. Food here is plentiful; the dragon keeps her pantry fully stocked and her offerings preserved." Listin laughed defiantly, wobbling her form in Namira's hand as she motioned towards a hill ahead of them.

Namira's eyes focused, stepping close to see what Listin was talking about; initially, she thought that was a mere spire, an extension of the cave. When she got closer and her eyes focused, she saw that it was no mere spire. It was a tower of food, collected offerings and meats piled atop each other, some still steaming with freshly cooked heat. Namira looked at it with watering eyes, the growling of her stomach intensifying as she found herself moving closer. Her legs were moving of their own accord, pushing her with a strength she didn't know was still inside of her. Between the massive tower of food and the cave entrance was a mound of glittering treasure, its gleam catching Lucian and Listin's eyes. All three of them were running at full-sprint, galloping across the plain in a joyous revelry. The smiles plastered on their faces were the widest ones they'd had since this whole journey began. The sun warmed their cold bodies as they closed in on the mounds.

Namira tossed the bloated Listin towards Lucian like she was a ball, her wobbling body jiggling in the air as he caught her. Both of them diverged paths to the treasure pile; Lucian scooped treasure into his pack while Listin perched herself on bloated stomach, face buried in enchanted goods as she shoved them into her mouth. Biting random bits and bots, sampling each one before she settled on a piece of treasure to snack on. Namira's eyes had only one treasure in mind as she reached the base of the mountain. There was food, more food than she'd ever seen in her life, enough food for a giant. Whatever danger sense that she still had was overridden by her gnawing hunger. She reached out to the pile, gripping a massive slab of meat in her hands. A single bone protruded from the shank of glistening meat, the ends scorched by the fire it had been suspended over as honeyed glazed dripped from it. The entire shank was as large as her own head, maybe a bit bigger, large enough that it made her aching stomach growl..

Namira couldn't help herself, taking a healthy bite of the shank, letting the honeyed glaze cake around her lips as she viciously ate it. A pointed tooth popped over her lips as she chewed happily, taking a moment to hum happily to herself at the fantastic taste. Smokey, salty, and the right amount of fat, the perfect salve for a starving stomach. Namira closed her eyes as she took

another bite, her face scrunched in a contented smile as she took a rest. Her legs curling under her body like small cushions as she bobbed back and forth, tearing large chunks from the shank. Meat slapped against her chin as she bit into pieces far too large to easily fit into her mouth, nibbling at it like a grinder as it sank into her mouth. Namira's throat bobbed up and down; muscles worked overtime to deposit the food into her stomach.

Lucian felt his gaze being drawn towards Namira; something about the way she was eating made her look particularly cute. Her closed eyes, her happy hums, it was a side of her he never really got to see since they parted ways. The quiet moments where she let her guard down and could just be herself, she was like something out of a painting. Her expression as sweet as her words as she ate, picking meat from the bone as she cleaned the last bits of gristle from it. He watched her pause for a moment, dropping the bone as her eyes opened wide, mouth pursing in surprise.

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Her cheeks puffed before a loud and rolling belch blew past her lips, shattering the cute image she had created. Her lips were opened wide, wobbling from the airy force as her body rapidly digested the nutrients. Namira barely budged, barely acknowledged the belch before reaching for another offering. Lucian eyed her up and down, watching the bites slip past her lips and deposit themselves in her stomach, a stomach that was growing. Her once deflated stomach had begun to pooch out from the excess of her indulgence. The bare curve of her belly was starting to slope, a gradual curve rising up from under her sternum and carrying before it descended into her pelvis. The swell was shallow at first, barely noticeable to anyone not overly familiar with Namira's body, but after the next shank of meat, it was more prominent. Namira let another bone clatter to her side as she grabbed a melon from the pile, shooting Lucian a dirty look when she noticed him watching. By reflex, Lucian snapped his gaze back to the treasure, piling it into his sack. He felt the heat of blush creep across his cheeks, like he'd been caught watching someone changing.

It's not like I'm eating that much; why's he staring at me?

Namira ran her fingers across the rind of the melon, slicing it in two as the juices sprayed out, the red insides glistening like candy. Her thoughts traveling back to Lucian's gaze as she ate, the idea of him judging her was infuriating. So why did she feel sad when he looked away? The feeling was fleeting, but she knew it was there; her stray thoughts were soon directed back to her food as hunger overrode it. The sudden influx of calories was bringing back all the forsaken meals of days prior. Meals left wanting, left stripped of anything but the most meager of sustenance, meals that would be paid back in triplicate. She dug her teeth into the melon's flesh, red splashing on her cheek as she pulled a hunk away. Sweet juices flooded her mouth as she took deeper and deeper bites, running her tongue across the surface and scooping any missed goods.

Namira ate like there was no tomorrow, plowing through her head-sized fruit and into another slab of meat. She alternated, going back and forth between meat and fruit, stuffing herself like a pig. Each defeated food was another bloat on her midriff, another bit of girth on her tummy. Her stomach began to hang over her waist, upper and lower slopes starting to devolve into a heavy balloon. Her tight stomach rippled with every bite she took, growing further out until the shape began to change. The heavy undercurve collapsed under the increasing weight she stored inside, curling into a heavy teardrop. Slipping over the waist of her pants like a light blob, a bubbling swell that wobbled with a mixture of pudge and food. The fat she'd lost was refilling, fat cells remembering how full they could become as the softness of her stomach returned.