

Expanding Horizons: Enchanted Epilogue

The door to the workshop groaned open. Tired and weary, an aged man lumbered into the quiet shop to find the room dim and void of any candlelight. Dust clung to his celestial cloak from a long journey. Dropping his leather bag, Akir took in the scene.

Bottles were tipped and spilled in a long-dried mess. A concoction, half-brewed, remained in a cauldron on the table. It had gone rancid. He could see the fluid level staining the metal as it had evaporated from days gone by. Everything was frozen as if he'd walked in and taken the room by surprise in a moment of chaos.

Frustration bubbled beneath his exhaustion. Over two weeks had gone by since he'd departed from his workshop to procure rare supplies. The building had been spotless then. Now, mold grew from abandoned food and drink left on a table. He recognized it as his breakfast from the morning he'd left.

"Minerva?" he called out from the front door.

He waited, expecting to see his apprentice burst into sight from the back room. No sounds came except for the scurry of unseen mice.

"Minerva!"

Still nothing. Akir moved through the storefront with building vengeance. The tomes he'd left for her to study remained untouched. It was obvious that all manner of responsibility had been shirked.

"MINERVA! I DEMAND THAT YOU--"

His foot connected with something hollow on the ground. Upon seeing the object, Akir felt fury and despair erupt at the same time. It was his hollowed dragon's tooth. Once full of precious dragon blood, it now waited empty and dull on the floor against his boot. He looked at his case of invaluable materials and saw it open. Then back to the discarded dragon's tooth.

Akir stooped and took the ancient flask. Not a drop of the priceless blood remained. Even with the jewels decorating the tooth, it was worthless compared to the value of the blood it once held. Akir's hand shook, tightening on the tooth. It popped and cracked. All at once, it shattered in his grasp and sent shards across the floor.

"MINERVA!!" he bellowed, standing and marching toward the back room. There, he pushed a door open that led to his apprentice's bedroom. *"WHAT IS THE MEANING OF--"*

The tiny room was deserted. Any important things had been taken. What remained was strewn across the floor or left in a wardrobe. At this point, Akir feared the worst: robbers, thieves, bandits, kidnappers. Anything was possible given his missing dragon blood and his absent apprentice.

It was at this point that he saw a note on Minerva's nightstand. Akir approached, expecting a ransom or a threat, but found something far different.

Master,

I'm sorry to have to do this. I know it shows a lack of honor on my part to leave with only a note in my stead, but I feel it is the best path forward.

Certain events took place in your absence. Events that, if I were to describe, you would likely think me mad. I have no doubt that you've discovered the missing dragon blood... And I have no doubt about your rage. Please know that it was an accident. It spilled somewhere unretrievable. I know how precious an ingredient it is, and knowing that, I left immediately to find a replacement.

I never could have dreamed how much more I would find. The journey I have embarked on has changed my life so much that I don't believe I can continue living as I once was. I can no longer be your apprentice. While sorcery remains a passion, I have discovered greater depths to my heart. I have expanded my horizons, and there are new facets to my reality that I cannot, and do not wish to, ignore.

I apologize for what happened to your dragon blood. Someday, I hope to make it up to you. When that day comes, I'm confident you'll be speechless by how your apprentice has blossomed. Until then, thank you for all you have taught me. They're lessons I won't soon forget.

--Minerva

Akir read the note once, then twice, then a third time. By then, the paper was splitting as his hands slowly ripped it in half from rage.

One Year Later

A warm breeze caused Glomia's canopy to shiver and wave. Enjoying the late afternoon sun, Minerva and Eris napped atop the roof of their tree house, nestled high in the branches. The ground waited below like a world separated from their tiny world of privacy. Enjoying the peace and quiet, with her hand interlaced with Eris's, Minerva's draconic tail idly twitched behind her. This high up, she felt she could feel the sky on her cheeks.

A thudding came from below. Both girls opened their nap-weary eyes and felt the tree shake with a bounding rhythm.

"Uh-oh, guess who's here..." Eris grinned.

The sound circled up the trunk like a whirlwind before bursting into Minerva's and Eris's home and scrambling up to the roof. A flurry of red and green scampered over the wooden deck and came to a halt in front of the sorceress. Claws and scales clambered over Minerva as she was

assaulted by a long, whipping tongue. A scaled nose prodded and nestled against her face and chest.

“Ahh! Tria! I--” She pawed at the baby dragon with a fairy mounted upon its back. *“How many times have I told you not to-- Gah! Down, Sinter! Down!”*

The dragon licked several more times before stepping back, resting her head in Minerva’s lap. She scratched behind a row of scales circling Sinter’s neck, leaving the dragon purring smoke rings from her nose. From Sinter’s back, Tria took the opportunity to dismount. The fairy treaded carefully, holding the bottom of her distended belly with care. It threatened to topple her forward as every day left her more top-heavy than the last.

Tria’s time was near, and as her pregnancy approached the end, Eris found it all the more difficult to tear her eyes away from the rounded fairy. She’d forfeited the green dress in favor of a two-piece outfit.

“What... Uh... What’s the rush?” Eris asked, blushing.

Finding her balance, Tria raised her hands to the air in delight. *“We have a guest!”*

Minerva turned her head toward the flight of stairs. She could hear two pairs of footprints. “I was beginning to think she’d gotten lost again.”

A horn emerged, followed by a nest of curly black hair and a whipping cow’s tail.

“It’s Mel!” Tria shouted.

All faces illuminated upon seeing the bovine woman. Scars from her battle with Marci remained, namely, a missing horn. Behind her, Karnor followed and joined everyone on the roof. He went to Tria’s side and embraced her with his hands on her belly.

Minerva patted Sinter’s head as the dragon begged for more attention, then stood. “Forget where we lived again?”

They embraced. Flesh bulged between them as both women sported impressive busts reaching to their hips. Eris nearly fainted at the sight.

“Every tree looks the same when they’re the size of buildings. I might still be lost if Karnor hadn’t happened upon me while he was hunting. Maybe next visit, I’ll finally get here without some help.”

Karnor chuckled. “If you listen, you can hear Luna whining at the bottom of your tree. She’s eager to get back to it.”

Looking around, Mel locked eyes with Sinter. The dragon wiggled with anticipation as Mel gasped, *“There she is! Come here!”*

The dragon slinked over, wiggling long and lithe with excitement. She coiled around Mel’s feet as hands fell upon the soft of her belly.

“She’s incredible...” Mel sighed. “Bigger every time I see her.”

“And hungrier, too.” Minerva sputtered in exhaustion. “She’s going to clear the forest of all its deer pretty soon.” A hand rubbed her bloated chest. Motherly love left it taut and engorged. “I can hardly keep her bowl topped off.”

“Has she spoken yet?”

Minerva shook her head. There was a deep-rooted bond between her and Sinter, but no communication like she'd shared with the dragon's mother. "Still too juvenile, I think." Loving hands ran over the smooth leather of Sinter's folded wings. "She's been trying to fly."

Mel nodded. "I noticed one of your doors is half burned away." A hand reached into a pocket and produced a charm similar to the one Minerva had once worn. "That should help. Should have asked for it sooner!"

Relief washed over Minerva's face. She tied the charm to Sinter's horn. Smoke stopped leaking from her nostrils as fires were quelled in her belly. Minerva sighed and looked to the sky. "Thank the goddess... If she caught another tree on fire, the Sacred might kick us out."

"They threatened to sit on us last time," Eris grumbled.

Minerva stood. "How much do I owe you?"

Making a calculating face, Mel smirked and said, "We'll say ten jugs of milk and call it even. They're down in my cart, empty and waiting to be filled with your liquid gold. It's the best-selling export out of Malghi at this point! You have the girls running around frantically trying to produce milk at the same quality."

Minerva blushed, feeling her breasts already churning. A hand moved to massage them and the pressure within as they began swelling with cream and rounding forth.

"No sense in rushing!" Mel patted her like a straining tank. "I forget that they're always listening..."

"Can you stay for dinner??" Eris asked.

"You wouldn't be able to stop me! I'm not leaving until tomorrow, so there had better be breakfast too." Mel escaped Sinter's coil and collapsed in Minerva's chair with enough bovine weight to make it groan. The view extending over the top of Glomia took her breath away. In the far distance, she could see the mountains where her village lay hidden. Soon, the sun would set and the sea of green would turn dark.

"I see why you decided to settle here..." Mel sighed. "You can see the whole world..."

Karnor and Tria turned to face the view. Hugging her from behind, he rubbed her belly and felt their child kick. Tria giggled as he kissed her neck.

"Yea..." Minerva nodded and looked over the green majesty. Sinter prodded her hand for more love, and she obliged. "It's something, isn't it?"

Eris approached and hugged Minerva's arm into her chest. Marci's burn remained, but it hadn't bothered her in months. Milk produced with love and care kept it at bay.

Together, they stared ahead and enjoyed the soothing breeze scented with a forest's freshness. Minerva's chest ached with milk, but it was laden with another weight that she'd come to recognize as contentment. It was times like this, when surrounded by her partner, her friends, and a baby dragon she wasn't ashamed to call her child, that her heart felt close to bursting.

Eris's eyes sparkled at the setting sun. She breathed deep, pulling Minerva close. "After all this time, I still find myself in disbelief of how everything turned out..."

“Me too.” Minerva turned and kissed Eris in the setting sun. Their eyes locked, radiant with a sunset’s golden sheen. Fulfillment left her feeling ready to burst. “Who knew a horizon could be so bright...”

The End