

SKILL DOWN, BUST UP

BIWEEKLY STORY #176

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“Fake, fake, fake...”

Frieren, or as she was known by her enemies, *Frieren the Slayer*, wasn't exactly doing anything of note that could be attributed to that namesake on that quiet afternoon. Truthfully, it was the day *after* an incident of note where that title would have come into play. Along with Fern and Stark, she had arrived in a small town in the North on route to their final destination that morning, but things had been amiss at the time.

The small town had secretly been besieged by demons masquerading as humans. She couldn't blame the locals for not realizing, but *she* had noticed right away and had dispatched of them with the rest of her party. The townsfolk had been so shellshocked at the time that they hadn't said much of anything to them until the next day, which she believed was understandable enough. It wasn't like she had done it for respect or a reward.

She had simply done it because she hated demons.

But the night came and passed, and the next morning? After she left the inn room they had rented on the cusp of noon, she had been approached by a woman that had introduced herself as the local book shop owner. Apparently one of those demons had dumped their wares on her, and among them were a number of books that claimed to be 'magic grimoires'. She hadn't wanted them if a demon had donated them, and she wasn't even sure of authenticity, and so she had dumped them onto the elf.



Which led to Frieren going all the way back up into her inn room with the box in tow, where she sat on the bed and had begun to go through them. **“I wonder what the point was in giving these to the bookstore owner? A show of good faith, I suppose.”** It didn’t take her long to get through *most* of the box, and she’d yet to find a single authentic spellbook. Your regular, non-magical human would struggle to tell the difference, so it was probably easy to lie to them. She wouldn’t be surprised if she heard other stories of demons giving gifts to the townsfolk in an attempt to earn their trust.

“Good thing we came along when we did.” There had already been several disappearances. Townsfolk that the demons had eaten in secret. There would have been a lot more if they’d come even later. There might not have even been a town *to* come across. **“Hm... One left. I’m assuming that it’s also...”** The elf eventually reached the bottom of the box and pulled out the final grimoire, expecting it to be fake as well. **“Hm? This is a genuine article. What spell does it contain?”**

That was surprising. Maybe the demon had mixed one real one in to give the box some credibility? Frieren chased the cover before opening it. Usually, the spell’s purpose was written in the earliest pages. **“A spell to inherit essence?”** That was a broad and confusing name. Reading further, it seemed it allowed you to bring someone’s essence into your body ‘in the hopes of better understanding them’? **“Hm...”**

It sounded dangerous to test, but what if she tested it on someone she knew well already? After memorizing the technique, she put the book down and rummaged through Fern’s luggage before retrieving an old dress she’d been traveling with. She placed it on the bed, summoned her staff, and *cast the spell*. Her own body glowed along with the dress briefly, and... **“Was that it?”** When the light faded, she didn’t really *feel* any differently.

“Wait.” Frieren had initially *thought* as much, but a slight change *did* catch her attention. It just wasn’t a matter of bestowing her with Fern’s memories or anything like that. It had been something *much* more unexpected. Her mana level was fluctuating. No... a ‘fluctuation’ would imply a dip followed by a flare. Less, then more, repeatedly in quick succession. That wasn’t what happening. There was a dip that continued

to drop but... there was no recovery, no bounce back. **“That’s probably not good.”**

Her intuition on that point *was* indeed sharp... which couldn’t quite be said about her *ears* any longer. While fixed on the issues with her mana, the shapes of her ears had been taking the opportunity to change in secret. Their long points drew closer and closer to the sides of her head, cartilage rounded, and before long her own two ears were perfectly *human* shaped. Her internal clock was even readjusted so that her age made sense for the look of her body at a *human* age – not that such a thing was simply to take note of.

Transformation magic was hardly a common art, and so the ex-elf hadn’t even initially considered its usage. She was still focused on her dwindling power, inwardly attempting to stifle its pace if not stop it entirely. This required a great deal of focus on her part, and the results were becoming less and less effective as the moments wore on. This became *visually* evident as well with time.

Because Frieren was still concentrating on attempting to mediate the drop, she wasn’t giving her own body the attention it deserved though, to be fair, nothing had realistically happened yet that would have been *hard* to miss. Continuing this trend, it was the *color* of the woman’s hair that was changing. Silver strands were darkening – not towards black, but towards a *very* familiar purple that stole away strand after strand until all of the hair atop her head – as well as elsewhere on her body - was dyed within time.

That purple would have been *very* familiar once she noticed it, and it even seeped into the irises of her gaze beneath bangs that straightened. The length of her mane didn’t really change much at all in the back, but it *did* grow a little longer on the sides. Her bangs, which were typically parted in the center, closed that gap and shortened so that they were styled straight to better frame her eyes. The length of these bangs was only *just* short enough to avoid an outcome where the mage noticed.

The *next* change wasn’t anywhere *near* as discreet, however. Frieren’s concentration was finally broken by the feelings of the tights she was wearing being pulled down... along with her dress feeling *very* tight around the shoulders and *other* places. **“Hm?”** She had no choice but to pull her attention away from her mana, which led to its level dropping at an even quicker pace. Incidentally, this only accelerated what had begun to happen to her body. Was her mana level tied to those changes?

“I suppose I just need to accept it.” What else could she do? At best she’d slowed its progress, and that hadn’t stopped what was clearly an attempt at making her *taller*. Her limbs and torso were lengthening,

thus leading to her clothing slipping and tightening. Arms jut farther from her sleeves while her tights eventually slipped down past her knees. **“But why is it making me taller? Was the description in the book incorrect, or...?”**

Her purple eyes went wide at what was clearly a difference in the sound of her own voice. Unbeknownst to the ex-elf, her facial structure had been changing as her body's height was adjusted. Its shape had become rounder and softer, losing the more angular shape that was typical among the elvish in exchange for a vaguely more circular shape. Her lips swelled plumper and her eyes wider, but her nose actually *shrunk* ever so slightly. She didn't really look *like* 'Frieren' anymore.

But she certainly looked more like the woman she *sounded* like. **“*Fern?*”** Even saying the name aloud, the sound of her voice was effectively 1:1 with that of her student's. **“Well, that explains the height... And the hair, I suppose.”** While Fern wasn't all that different from her master when it came to personality, there was even a difference in the inflection of her words when she spoke. That personality must have altered *slightly*.

...Was that why a pastry sounded so good all of a sudden?

Regardless, her height had stopped growing once she was around 5'4". Considering she'd been well *below* the 5' mark before, that was a pretty significant jump. But it had also affected her body's *width*, particularly when it came to her shoulders and hips. It felt like one wrong move and her sleeves would tear off their seams, while hips that had jutted out three or four inches wider made old-fashioned undergarment unravel somewhat.

Well, *additional* growth eventually finished the job there. **“Ah.”** It was out of character for Frieren to feel *embarrassed*, so it must have been her student's personality that caused her cheeks to pinken when it occurred to her that she was about to be exposed from the waist down. Her height increase had lifted her skirt, and without the tights her crotch had effectively been unprotected. But now? Her butt and thighs were bloating, taking advantage of the widened canvas to swell as her skin was pulled tauter around them.

Effectively being Fern's mother, Frieren had seen Fern naked in the bath before. Her butt swelling into a peach shape and her thighs burgeoning to twice the elf's size were within expectation, but she couldn't help but feel a little more *fatigued* by them. Her muscles weren't accustomed to carrying their weight, and if they were accustomed to carry *that* weight, then... **“...Oh, right.”** In a strange

way, Frieren had always felt a little jealous of Fern. She had taken her in when she was still a little girl, so she'd watched her grow up.

She'd watched her *outgrow* her, and nowhere had that stung more than in her chest. A woman's sex appeal was often tied to their bosom, which was something that Frieren had *not* had, so to see her own disciple quickly surpass her in that regard, well... Realistically, it didn't even matter anymore. Not when her own chest began to reach the same heights... and at a much quicker pace, at that. **"...This might be inconvenient."**

Frieren had already begun to fiddle with the belt that was tied beneath her chest. It had tightened thanks to her torso broadening a little already, but her longer fingers worked with the knowledge that she was about to have a *real* problem if she couldn't free up space in time. Her small breasts were ballooning, rapidly growing until they were a pair of *DDs* that had not yet sagged in the least. After all, she was now in her early 20s. At the very least, she was able to leave a sigh of relief that she managed to undo the belt in time. The weight of her bigger breasts heaved a bit once that belt was removed, but it was better than the alternative of their size tearing them up.

"Ah... I can't stay dressed like this. Fern will get mad." It felt like a strange thing to say *with* Fern's voice, but she knew well enough that Fern didn't like showing anymore of her body than necessary. That wasn't something she had learned because of the spell, but the copied *Fern* had already known Fern's preferences on the matter from all of their time spent together. **"It's a good thing I used a dress as a catalyst, but... Sorry, Fern."**

Moving around in an unfamiliar body was already uncomfortable, but the body being her student's added an extra layer to it. She was considerate as she peeled away the outfit that no longer fit her, taking extra care not to look. Even so, some things were unavoidable... like feeling the added weight. **"These things are so heavy. How does she fly efficiently?"** Well, depending on how long it took her to reverse the spell, she'd probably have an opportunity to figure it out herself. The issue was that... there wasn't a reversal spell in the grimoire.



"...Come to think of it, Fern is probably going to be very mad at me either way."

And things were about to become *very* confusing for Stark.