

A Visit to Arrowrest

A typical springtime morning was underway throughout the streets of Cedar Vale, a woodland town located in the kingdom of Armello. It was home to a large variety of rodent animal folk such as chipmunks, squirrels, and beavers. The occasional raccoon or fox fur made the relaxing place their home as well. Cedar Vale was situated between two much larger settlements: Arrowrest and Blueberry Town, making it a frequent rest stop for merchants. It was also quite popular among adventurers back when the kingdom of Armello was under the harsh rule of a power-hungry king.

Armello was as peaceful as it ever was, causing Cedar Vale to become a rather humdrum place to visit. It was still a pleasant rest stop for travelers, but it lacked exciting locales that its neighboring towns offered. The place seemed to run like clockwork, which was a pleasure to some, but a bit boring for those with adventurous spirits.

Twiss, one of the animal folk residing in Cedar Vale, was one of many residents experiencing a normal morning – at least, for the time being. The tan squirrel lived alone as she relaxed in a simple wooden chair within her comfy cabin's dining area. A cup of her favorite morning tea was cooling down as it rested on a table in front of her. Its minty taste helped jump-start her day.

The lady took a sip of tea as she admired the scenery from a small square window in her main room. She tended to a fairly large patch of land, growing a variety of useful herbs, tasty veggies, and a few fragrant flowers for decorative purposes. Her planting was done, but there was always something to take care of outside.

Twiss seemed to be having difficulty finding the motivation to get out of her chair as she was too busy daydreaming about a recent springtime festival she had attended with a few friends of hers. It was definitely an eventful night full of delightful memories, and her routine was already feeling a bit monotonous after such a change of pace. One moment in particular stood out above the rest. She kept revisiting the scene in her head since she could recall every detail of it. Twiss was resting on her back alongside her friend, Mercurio. They were stargazing on a rooftop belonging to another friend of theirs – a badger named Horace.

Twiss remembered Mercurio resting peacefully just inches away from her as they looked up at the stars. The handsome rat was dressed in a classy manner, and his alluring smile lingered in her mind. She could practically feel the cool night breeze on her fur as she delved deeper into the memory. Mercurio's eyes glistened under the moonlight and his silky brown fur had an attractive sheen to it. Most importantly, Mercurio looked the happiest he had ever been beside her. Twiss wondered what would have happened if she had simply expressed her feelings to Mercurio that night.

She fantasized about Mercurio being equally fond of her, and how perfect it would have been if they had shared a romantic kiss under the moonlight.

“Hmmm, Mercurio,” Twiss mused while closing her eyes for a moment.

Oops! Twiss opened her eyes and returned to reality. She swished her soft, bushy tail behind herself after realizing she had been hugging it. The squirrel lady then looked out her window with a sigh as she finally rose from her seat. Was it finally time to start a completely ordinary day?

“I’ve got to do something different today.”

Twiss decided it was time to be bold. Her heart was set on seeing Mercurio's smile today, and that mission took precedence over anything else. She got up with a boost of energy as she was ready to put her plan into action.

Twiss noticed her classic black cloak hanging from a chair across from her. As comfortable as it was, she wanted Mercurio to see her in something classier than that. The squirrel rushed to her bedroom to put a proper outfit together instead.

The lady opened an oak chest that housed her limited attire, and it didn't take long for her to reach the bottom of it. She knew that assembling the outfit she wore during the festival would suffice, but continued to weigh her options. Her fingertips brushed across something silky after another minute of rummaging. A curious Twiss shoved a few unremarkable garments aside to further examine the clothing item she had just touched. She then let out an excited gasp as she freed it from the pile. It was perfect for her upcoming quest.

The squirrel held up what appeared to be an elegant olive green dress at first glance, but it suited Twiss' personal style much better than that. It seemed to have been crossed with a pair of leather armor, sacrificing some of its graceful appeal for an extra dash of uniqueness. Leather patchwork and a matching belt seemed to work in perfect harmony with the subtle floral print and silken texture.

Twiss hastily donned the attractive garment and made her way out the door. The dress fit comfortably on her figure much like her favorite cloak. She began to wonder when she had purchased it, and if she had even worn it anywhere outside Cedar Vale. She wasn't quite ready to head off on her adventure as she needed an extra hand to help tie the strings in the back of her dress. It was one of the garment's more elegant features.

“Flora! Good morning, Flora!” An excited Twiss called out to her neighbor.

“Good morning, little Twiss,” Twiss' older neighbor said back. “You're looking bright-eyed and bushy-tailed today.”

Twiss heard Flora's squirrel-themed signature phrase many times, but giggled regardless. "Can you help me fix up my dress real quick? I'm heading off on a little adventure today."

"That sounds lovely." Flora smiled ear to ear because of Twiss' enthusiasm. She tied some strings located between Twiss' shoulder blades. The clothing item tightened around Twiss' figure slightly, but it was still quite comfortable.

"Thanks for the help," Twiss spun around while Flora seemed to admire how the dress suited Twiss' personality.

"I've never seen you wearing something so pretty before," Flora pointed out. "May I ask what the special occasion is?"

"Of course, I'm taking a trip to Arrowrest today," Twiss was honest with her inquisitive neighbor. "I'd really like to visit Mercurio today too, and, well..."

Twiss felt her cheeks warm up as Flora let out an unexpected squeak. She clapped her hands rapidly with a smile, and even stepped in place a few times.

"No need to finish that thought little Twiss," Flora said as her tail swished side to side.

"I-it's that obvious?"

"You bet it is. You're always so full of energy whenever you mention that handsome young lad."

"I'm a little nervous about telling him how I feel."

"I'm sure everything will naturally fall into place." Flora gave the hesitant gal a few gentle shoulder pats. "I know you have what it takes to open up to that special someone."

"Thanks very much, Flora," Twiss gave her a heartfelt hug, thanking her for both the words of encouragement and for helping her prepare.

"It was my pleasure, dear," Flora replied, giving Twiss one last pat on the back. "You've got this."

Twiss nodded and was soon on her way as Flora began tending to her garden. Her walk was rather uneventful, but at least the gentle breeze and greenery made it enjoyable. The only other souls she encountered was a snow leopard going for a morning jog and a ferret couple going for a stroll. Perhaps they were headed to Cedar Vale to enjoy the scenery and forest air.

Twiss was able to get a good look at the two ferrets as they walked at a steady pace. The ferret maiden wore a black dress over her milk chocolate fur while her significant other wore chocolate brown clothing and an open red vest over a cotton shirt. His fur was black and white, making his appearance resemble that of a badger's from a distance. The ferret lady caught sight of Twiss and was obviously commenting

about Twiss' stylish and unique dress. Twiss received compliments from the ferret couple as they passed by, causing the squirrel to confidently march the rest of the way to town.

Despite the long walk, Twiss was full of energy as she reached her destination. Furthermore, The Grinning Blade was one of the first buildings situated on Arrowrest's main strip. Twiss reached for the door, shaking off some feelings of nervousness that tried to creep up on her.

“Okay, I've got this,” Twiss repeated Flora's words of encouragement as she entered the tavern.

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Mercurio was barely awake as he heard the jingling of bells from his bedroom located a floor directly above his tavern. The time was barely past noon, so it was unusual for anyone to be heading into the place as the clientele typically arrived after sunset. He even considered ignoring the jingle in order to rest in bed for a few minutes longer, but ultimately decided to investigate. He figured he could properly close the place after taking care of the extremely early customer's needs, and then get some more rest afterwards.

Twiss was able to thoroughly inspect The Grinning Blade as she waited for Mercurio to make an appearance. Simple crimson cloths adorned the wooden furnishings and a few banners along the walls added an elegant appeal to the place. There was just enough accents to the room to evoke a feeling of luxury without feeling pretentious.

Another item caught the squirrel's attention as she had been unknowingly resting her hand on top of it. A fragment of a Spirit Stone was displayed on a pedestal near the entrance of the tavern. Wavy indents along the stone's otherwise smooth surface emitted a gentle blue glow. Spirit Stones were rumored to be good luck, and could fetch a high price based on their size or how brilliantly they glowed.

Mercurio came into view as he descended some stairs while fiddling with his doublet. He attempted to smooth out its wrinkles as he walked, making it fairly obvious that he threw on the nearest clothing items he could get his hands on. He also adjusted a simple leather belt before turning his attention to his guest. His jaw immediately dropped from the sight. A familiar squirrel lady stood at the entryway of The Grinning Blade, not in her signature black cloak, but in a gorgeous green dress.

“T-Twiss?” A flabbergasted Mercurio said at the volume of a mere whisper.

Time appeared to stand still as the two kept their eyes on one another, and they were soon lost in a daydream. They both envisioned the fireworks they had watched together with their friends back at Blueberry Town, except Twiss fantasized about a

kiss that unfortunately never occurred. Meanwhile, Mercurio remembered Twiss alluding to being able to steal his heart while they were stargazing on top of Horace's rooftop during the festival. He began to wonder if it was more than just a playful comment, especially now that she was visiting unexpectedly. There also seemed to be a look of desire in her eyes that was not to be ignored. Twiss gave Mercurio a shy smile and wave, which seemed to resume time as Mercurio headed down the rest of the stairs to greet her.

“Twiss!” Mercurio said cheerfully, opening his arms in a showy fashion to properly welcome her to the tavern. “It's so good to see you. My, you look absolutely stunning!”

“Oh, this isn't that elegant is it?” Twiss looked down at her own dress and tried to play off how attractive she looked. “You're looking good too.”

“W-well thanks.” Mercurio chuckled and rubbed the back of his neck considering he slapped his outfit on in no time. “I'm curious as to what brings you to Arrowrest today,” Mercurio then said while displaying his familiar grin.

“I'm just going on a bit of an adventure today, that's all.” Twiss had to look away from the handsome fellow in order to calm her nerves. “I haven't ventured out to Arrowrest in a long time, and this happened to be my first stop.”

“Ah, that sounds like fun,” Mercurio said, although he had a slight suspicion that there was more to her visit than that, especially since his tavern was her first stop.

“I know it hasn't been too long since the last time we hung out, but I'd like to catch up on things if that's okay with you.” Twiss was slightly more honest in regards to her visit.

“I'd enjoy that very much.” Mercurio clasped his hands together with a smile.

Twiss started to get comfortable in Mercurio's company as they casually socialized before heading to a table. She still had her mind set on confessing her adoration towards the fellow, but was uncertain about how she could ease into such a conversation.

“Would you care for a drink while you're here?” Mercurio asked.

“Yes, please,” Twiss answered politely.

“Do you have anything specific in mind?” Mercurio wondered, “the place is fully stocked so there's a lot to choose from.”

“Ummm, surprise me,” Twiss responded.

Mercurio nodded and pondered behind the counter. It was difficult to treat Twiss as a regular old customer, and he definitely wanted to make her something special. He had a lot on his mind, much like Twiss, but stayed sharp in order to concoct a unique

beverage that wasn't just something he had written down or memorized. His goal was to capture the essence of Twiss, whatever that may be.

“Let's see, she's very sweet so cherries? No, strawberries,” Mercurio whispered as quietly as possible.

Twiss tapped her fingers together, waiting patiently. The current break between conversing with Mercurio helped the squirrel gather her thoughts. Would it be alright if the day turned out to be completely ordinary? It was hard to tell. After all, she was so close to opening up to Mercurio.

“She's cunning, and there's more to her than meets the eye,” Mercurio tapped his chin. “I know, I'll mix a 'Bandit's Strike' but tone down the spice, so it hits just right.”

Mercurio looked up from the counter, catching Twiss staring at him while he stirred the drink. She swiftly looked elsewhere, pretending to study the décor to the pub.

“It looks a little plain, hmmm...” Mercurio decided to drop a leaf of lemon balm into the glass at the last second before heading over to the lady. “Here you go miss Twiss, enjoy.”

“Thanks, Mercurio,” Twiss smiled as her racing thoughts dissipated temporarily. “What did you end up mixing?”

“Something new, so I hope it's good,” Mercurio put his glass to his lips, waiting for Twiss to take the first sip. Twiss took a swig of the drink, set the glass down on the table, and looked towards the ceiling as the various flavors hit her taste buds.

“How is it?” Mercurio asked before he taste-tested the cocktail to see for himself. “Honest opinions only,” he added.

“Hmmm, well it's delicious for starters,” Twiss said, getting a sigh of relief out Mercurio. “I think it might be just a tad too sweet if you're looking for some criticism. I really enjoy the moment where it gets a little spicy, but not overwhelming. It kind of comes out of nowhere.”

“Ah I see, thanks for the honest review.” Mercurio paused, deciding to confess something. “You know, I tried to capture your essence through that drink, so maybe that's why it ended up being too sweet.”

Twiss' eyes widened a bit and, unfortunately, the butterflies in her stomach returned. Mercurio seemed as calm as ever as he took another sip of the newly-invented cocktail. She poked her index fingers together, trying to find the right words to say to him. She then let out a little “psh” sound and tipped her drink back. It seemed she was just about to give up on expressing her feelings towards Mercurio.

Mercurio stuck a finger in his collar and tugged it away from his neck. He was just as fidgety as Twiss, unbeknownst to her. They were both able to sport exceptional

poker faces when playing games of chance, but their feelings seemed much harder to conceal this time around.

Twiss and Mercurio simultaneously looked up from their drinks, making eye contact. Twiss let out a small sigh as Mercurio's expression was too charming to ignore. She let herself get lost in his light brownish, almost orange irises. Mercurio was doing the same, gazing back into her sparkly gray eyes. They were typically a faint bluish or slate gray color, but appeared darker in the dim lighting. It was almost as if he was staring into a clear night sky full of stars.

"You blinked, I win," Mercurio suddenly pointed out.

"Mercurioooo!" Twiss whined, but couldn't help but to giggle afterwards. The silly moment wasn't helping Twiss reach her goal, and she was getting flustered by how long it was taking to gather the courage to speak up.

"What was that little noise?" Mercurio chuckled before casually adding: "so cute."

"M-Mercurio?" Twiss nervously placed one foot on top of the other while sliding her glass off to the side with a hand. She was ready to let Mercurio know why she showed up to The Grinning Blade, at least, so she thought.

"Yes Twiss?" Mercurio assumed the same exact posture, sliding his glass aside too.

Twiss planted both feet on the floor and did her best to keep cool. She managed to calmly reach for one of Mercurio's hands in which he gladly accepted. The two then slowly rose from their seats. Twiss sidestepped away from the table to let Mercurio draw closer to her. She then glanced down for a moment and exhaled. Mercurio was feeling the same nervous excitement as Twiss, so he didn't say a word just yet.

"Do you live right above the pub?" Twiss asked out of the blue. She then tightly closed her eyes while her free hand gently punched her thigh. Her tail also conducted a quick flick, making her frustration apparent.

"I sure do," Mercurio simply smiled while still holding her hand. "It's not much to look at, but if you'd like to unwind there as opposed to the pub area, we can do that."

"I'd love to hang out with you there," Twiss said enthusiastically.

"To Mercurio's place we go," Mercurio announced.

Twiss held a portion of her dress higher up as the duo ascended a creaky, unspectacular spiral staircase to Mercurio's sleeping quarters. Mercurio then opened an equally squeaky door, allowing Twiss to enter his room first. It was spacious enough for the two of them, but the only pieces of furniture available for sitting on was his bed and an unusual chair that resembled a king's throne. It looked cheaply-crafted much like a few other "antiques" and baubles Mercurio had on display. A few

genuinely rare, expensive-looking items were displayed in his room, but Twiss was refocusing on her mission rather than paying much attention to the nick-knacks.

“Told you it wasn't much,” Mercurio said, not bothering to close the door since he assumed the squirrel would soon want to continue on with her day.

“Maybe not, but it's still quite nice,” Twiss assured Mercurio. She let go of his hand to further explore the room.

“Yeah?” Was all Mercurio managed to utter as Twiss twirled around happily in her dress.

“Um, Mercurio,” Twiss spoke up as she looked out the only window of the gentlerat's room. She figured she could finally open up to Mercurio if she wasn't directly looking into his expressive eyes and handsome grin.

“The springtime festival was a lot of fun wasn't it?” Twiss put her hands behind her back and then lightly held on to one of her wrists.

“It sure was.” Mercurio began to once again daydream about the lovely night. “My favorite part was watching the fireworks together from under the tree.”

“Mine too,” Twiss smiled, but still didn't turn to face Mercurio just yet. “Watching the stars from Horace's rooftop was delightful too.”

“Oh yes, it was definitely a night to remember.”

“Do you-” Twiss bit her lower lip, looking over her shoulder for a moment. Mercurio was leaning against the door frame with the door still wide open. “Do you ever get...bored in Arrowrest when you have no plans for a while? I know you serve customers and such, but how about when you're right here in your room?”

“Oh it certainly gets boring,” Mercurio snickered, “I get a bit lonely too. Fortunately, I can dive into plenty of busywork to keep my spirits up.”

The clever rat knew Twiss was alluding to companionship rather than boredom, so he mentioned loneliness. It was a truthful statement since he was the happiest around his best pals: Barnaby, Horace, and Twiss. He was especially at his highest when around Twiss.

“Can we spend more time together?” Twiss turned around, placing her hands tightly against her chest.

“Well, of course,” Mercurio stopped propping himself on the entrance of the room and inched his way towards Twiss. His legs felt like jelly as he tiptoed towards her.

“I don't mean just spend more time together. What I really mean is-” Twiss took a deep breath, then abruptly reached for one of Mercurio's hands. Mercurio let out a soft gasp, but stayed quiet afterwards so she could finish her thought. He did, however, place his other hand on top of hers to comfort the dear squirrel.

“I'm happy back home in Cedar Vale, with the trees, my tea, and my garden but...but when I'm around you-” Twiss started to squeeze Mercurio's hand as her pulse started to race. “You brighten my days more than anything, and I want to always be around you. Can we find a way to be together? It's like, you're that missing piece in my life and I don't want to go another day without-”

Mercurio pulled an emotional Twiss into a warm embrace, causing her to let out a surprised squeak. Twiss then squeezed Mercurio tightly, calming down nearly instantly. She soon realized how tense Mercurio's body was, and even noticed that Mercurio's prehensile tail was pointed skyward rather than resting in its usual “S” shape. Twiss' own tail fluffed behind her as she loosened her grip on Mercurio's shoulders, causing Mercurio to relax them. It was time for Mercurio to open up about something too.

“Twiss, I would brave the worst blizzard Armello has ever experienced just to spend time with you,” Mercurio admitted. “Nothing is as sweet as you, and no shiny trinket comes close to the treasure that you are.”

“Aww, Mercurioooo.” Twiss let out another elongated version of his name, but this time it wasn't in the form of a frustrated whine. “I never knew you felt that way.”

“During the springtime festival, I always thought about how lucky I was to spend the night with you. It has been on my mind for days. Oh, how I wish we would have-” Mercurio paused as his cheeks began to heat up immensely.

“Kissed under the fireworks?” Twiss presumed, sharing the same exact regret.

“Y-yes, that,” Mercurio let out a sigh as he continued to reminisce.

Twiss giggled, now realizing Mercurio had been filled to the brim with bottled up emotions much like herself. Their racing minds finally started to simmer down, and it felt like a weight had been lifted off their shoulders. The two held one another in the silence of Mercurio's quaint bedroom, dreaming about making new unforgettable memories together.

“How does Cedar Vale sound to you?” Twiss asked, still clinging to Mercurio. She couldn't seem to get enough of having him in her grasp.

“Anywhere sounds like home if it means being around you,” Mercurio smiled. “Cedar Vale sounds extra delightful though.”

A joyous Twiss pulled one of her hands up higher to grip Mercurio's shoulder. Her fingers slid down the collar of his shirt to brush her fingertips across the silky fur between his shoulder blades. The two then broke their embrace, practically seeing hearts in their enchanting, loving eyes. Mercurio caressed Twiss' cheek, and the pair felt an increase in their heart rates once more. The flirtatious lad brought his snout closer to hers until the two were touching noses. Twiss closed her eyes while letting

out the most adorable giggle Mercurio had ever heard as they nuzzled briefly. She then unexpectedly pounced into Mercurio's arms with reckless abandon, locking lips with her beloved boyfriend for the first time.

Mercurio's rump landed on the edge of his bed as the two engaged in some less-than-perfect snogging. He soon fell onto his back with Twiss' hand behind his head. She exuberantly kissed Mercurio's lower lip, holding it between her own for a moment before tilting her head and engulfing part of Mercurio's muzzle with hers. Mercurio let out a huff through his nostrils as he placed a hand on Twiss' head, rubbing one of the gal's cute round ears with his thumb. Twiss pulled her mouth away from Mercurio's lips to take a quick breath, as did Mercurio. The two closed in for more, accidentally clicking their teeth together, but smooched regardless. Twiss opened her eyes while Mercurio's fluttered open as well, finally separating their muzzles with a juicy smack. Twiss crawled backwards for a second and knelt upright, giving Mercurio some legroom to sit up as well.

The two shared worried expressions as neither wanted to make the first move in cleaning up their faces. Mercurio could feel some spittle gliding down his cheek, and made a move to dab it off with his sleeve, allowing Twiss to pluck a strand of Mercurio's fur from her tongue. They started chuckling softly from the situation rather than feeling guilty.

"We were bloody awful at that weren't we?" Twiss spoke up while trying to hold back more giggles.

"Oh no, I guess we'll just have to try that again," Mercurio snickered, smiling at her with his classic smirk.

"Mmhm, let's try again and make it much better this time," Twiss agreed.

The duo went nose to nose once more, taking a slower approach to the upcoming display of affection. The two held hands as Mercurio tipped his head upwards, brushing his lips across Twiss' a few times. Twiss closed her eyes and eased in for a sweet lip-lock showing much more restraint than the previous attempt. At first, the two lovebirds simply pecked at each other's lips before going in for the main event. They were a lot more in sync with one another as they shared a much more pleasant kissing session.

Twiss rested her hands on Mercurio's upper back while Mercurio held Twiss' waist. They wet their lips down one more time and smooched sweetly, both letting out muffled purring sounds. The two broke the kiss at the same time, giving them a clue towards how well the two managed this time around.

"Well that was much better," Twiss let out a satisfied hum, followed by a quick giggle.

“It was the best,” Mercurio smiled wide, letting out a small rumble from his throat.

“Can we cuddle next?” Twiss requested, lacing her fingers with Mercurio's.

“There's no way I'd refuse that,” Mercurio's eyes gleamed.

“Let's lose some of this pesky coverage, though,” Twiss insisted without hesitation. “I want to feel your warmth and your silky fur against mine. What do you say?”

“Golly, that sounds-” Mercurio had to pause as his breath had been taken away for a second, “-beyond superb!”

“You bet it does!” Twiss' tail swished in excitement.

Twiss turned around to let Mercurio help her out of her dress. Mercurio took his time with the delicate strings, peeking around Twiss' bushy tail in order to see what he was doing. Once Twiss' figure was free from the dress, she rewarded Mercurio with a tickle to his chin with her tail. Mercurio nuzzled the back of her neck lovingly before it was his turn to lose a layer of clothing.

It didn't take long for Mercurio to be stripped of his main attire. He unceremoniously chucked a tunic that was underneath his doublet off the bed while Twiss dropped his leather belt off the side with a clink. The presence of a belt buckle would have definitely interfered with a cozy cuddle session.

The two paid no mind to the remaining garments on their cuddle partner's bodies. Instead, they focused on the fur they had exposed. Twiss ran a few fingertips down Mercurio's chest, discovering his physically fit physique for the first time. She put both hands on his silky white fur before speaking up.

“You hide all this under your fancy clothes?” She teased playfully, giving his solid stomach a few curious slaps. “Oh!”

Twiss looked down, realizing Mercurio was admiring her slightly pudgy build, which was probably why he didn't reply. He had his hand on her side while his thumb glided across her soft, cream-colored tummy fur.

“My stomach's not ve-” Twiss started.

“It's perfect,” Mercurio interrupted, lunging forward.

“Oyyy, what are you doing?” Twiss giggled frantically as Mercurio nuzzled her tummy. He even sneaked in a kiss before pulling his nose away from it.

“Admiring your adorable tum, that's all. You got to play with mine.” Mercurio gave his best puppy-eyed look with his snout pointed downward and the whites of his eyes showing.

“Just barely, and not like tha-ha-hat!” Twiss continued to laugh.

Twiss settled down as she looked into Mercurio's half-closed, passion-filled eyes. Their tails swayed happily in unison.

“Love you so much, Twiss.” Mercurio gently rubbed her palms with his thumbs before falling back into his bed.

“Love you more, Mercurio.” Twiss smiled as her cheeks warmed up a bit. “Okay, here I come.”

Twiss eased herself down on Mercurio like the softest, comfiest blanket in all of Armello. She threaded her arms below Mercurio's underarms and gave the fellow a tight, almost possessive squeeze before loosening her grip on him. Mercurio didn't mind the tight embrace one bit as he indulged in Twiss' warmth, letting a low hum escape his lips while doing so.

The squirrel gal cooed blissfully as she nestled into her partner. She gave him a sweet peck on the cheek while repositioning her arms, and then treated Mercurio to a few shoulder squeezes, causing him to produce various sounds of enjoyment. Suddenly, an indelicate grunt escaped him as Twiss' dexterous digits found a tight spot near the back of his neck. He looked at Twiss as if he had done something naughty, but Twiss simply giggled while working the tense spot out.

Mercurio stroked Twiss' head and began treating her to a shoulder rub as well. It was only fair after receiving such a wonderful one from her. Twiss closed her eyes and let out a happy sigh as Mercurio started working on them. The romantic rat seemed to expertly apply the right amount of pressure, causing his adorable companion to just about nap right on top of him.

They two stayed locked in a warm embrace with their warm bellies pressed against each other for a few more minutes. Twiss' bushy tail was rested on Mercurio's whenever it wasn't gently bobbing out of joy. It coincidentally fanned their hind paws that were also cuddling snugly like the rest of their bodies. Since the two were getting quite warm, Twiss eventually rolled off of Mercurio's tummy to cuddle at his side with a hand on his sturdy chest.

“What an amazing day this is turning out to be,” Mercurio broke the silence, but spoke quietly in a relaxed manner.

“I concur,” Twiss said with her eyes closed and a big smile on her face.

“Would you be interested in heading out pretty soon?” Mercurio asked. “I can show you all the best places in Arrowrest. I know it's not as grand as Blueberry Town, but there's some lovely spots that can't be overlooked.”

“That sounds like a lovely way to spend the evening,” Twiss nuzzled Mercurio's cheek and the pair began to sit up to continue with their day.

Mercurio assembled a classic look of his, fitting himself into some fancy silken finery, along with a velvety jacket to compliment the rest of the attire. Twiss' tail swayed in delight from the sight, despite being familiar with his flashier outfits. She then spun around so Mercurio could help fix up the back of her dress. Mercurio then offered up a hand with the other tucked behind his back. He leaned his upper body forward as if they were about to ballroom dance together. Twiss delicately took Mercurio's hand and the two began to head to the door.

“Oh, what's your favorite gemstone?” Mercurio asked suddenly. “There's an excellent jeweler in town, and I would love to pick out a beautiful necklace with you by my side.”

“You don't need to spoil me with something like that,” Twiss said, although her eyes looked towards the ceiling for a moment as she thought about some sparkly favorites of hers.

Mercurio's brow line appeared to be raised, and he simply stared with a twinkle in his eyes. It was obvious that her bluff was being called.

“Okay, it's pink topaz,” Twiss chuckled, fessing up to the fact that she had one in mind.

“Oh that's a lovely choice; perfect for a pretty lady.” Mercurio approved of her unique taste while navigating the rickety spiral staircase. “Let's continue on with today's adventure and seek out some beautiful pink topaz accessories.”

“After lunchtime though,” Twiss reminded her lover approximately what time it was, and then gripped the back of Mercurio's neck. She twirled with him at the bottom of the stairs and planted a surprise kiss right on his lips, causing the unprepared recipient's cheeks to warm up.

Twiss now took the lead as they headed out of The Grinning Blade with the gal excitedly holding onto the blushing rat's wrist. Mercurio chuckled as the joyous lady tipped her head skyward, giggling in delight as she enjoyed the sunlight hitting her face. It felt even warmer and brighter because she was sharing the moment Mercurio. Twiss then put her arm around Mercurio's midsection while strolling with her head rested on his shoulder for a while. Mercurio stayed cuddled up to Twiss as well, putting a hand against her side as they started up one of many adventures they'd have, together.

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