

A Felonious Feudal Feline Fwoomps Fittingly

By Pendell

Xaviette had worked as the Royal Mage for several years after narrowly escaping a beheading for her practice of witchcraft. It was a lucrative position; apparently as soon as it was endorsed by the state, people would give quite a lot for a little touch of magic in their lives. Despite the popularity of her “services,” there was still a stigma around her status as a witch. She had never been contacted by anyone for any reasons beyond a need for her powers. She had no complaints about being left alone, but it was still a shock to wake up one morning to find an invitation to a royal feast pinned to her front door.

~ To the Royal Mage Xaviette ~

King Gellius requests your timely presence at a royal gathering and supper in the Great Hall, beginning this evening when the shadow of the wall touches the market. Ladylike attire would be much appreciated.

As far as she could recall, the kingdom had no holidays to celebrate today. *Must be some sort of diplomatic event*, she thought as she brought the parchment into her quarters. It was even signed by King Gellius himself, so he must really want her there. She wondered what for, what made this event so special that she was specifically requested for it? Maybe the king wanted to use her as a political tool, like her presence threatening an opponent.

Whatever. The reason didn't matter too much to her in the long run. She had nothing better to do today, and she had heard good things about the food served at these royal dinners.

That last comment about “ladylike attire” though... *Fuck that.* She had seen what the people in this kingdom considered “proper” for a lady to wear. Asphyxiating corsets, expensive dresses that must be kept spotless, heels that wrecked your spine, it was all stupid. She never dressed anything like that, and that was probably why the letter had made mention of it. But they had made the mistake of saying “would be much appreciated” instead of “is required”. So she would happily ignore the recommendation.

She had a two-thirds of a day to kill until it was time - as the letter had said, “when the shadow of the wall touches the market”. So, after a breakfast of hen eggs and minced grilled rat, she decided she could waste some time out on the town.

She bathed herself in her enchanted tub of perpetually soapy water. She scrubbed vigorously to get yesterday's dirt and grime out of her yellow fur. *I have GOT to start charging double for anything involving pits*, she thought to herself, continually pulling crumbs of dirt out of her hair.

Once she was clean (though not quite as much as she would have liked), she wondered what to wear. Her witch's outfit was right out, with its “ladylike” ruffles and blatant sex appeal. She would normally wear that,

and enjoy every second of it, but that “*ladylike attire*” comment put her in no mood to show off her body with flashy wears. Her wizard's robe was purple with sparkling glints in it, and even included a pointy cap. Not ladylike, but still too formal for her taste. She feared it might still be seen as acceptable.

She settled on a very practical outfit, which she had acquired from a far-off village in one of her midnight trading flights across the lands. It was a dark grey one-piece, an almost form-fitting suit of breathable, stretchy fabric, with various belts and straps for carrying all sorts of equipment. Certainly not fashionable by feudal standards, but then, that was her exact reason for choosing it.

Examining her body after she got it on, it certainly conformed tightly to her curves, but the clothing itself was so out of the norm for the people of the kingdom, they would have trouble getting any kind of rise out of it. They would be too focused on wondering just what the hell she was wearing. And she liked that.

She loaded up the outfit's various belt, pockets, pouches, and over-shoulder straps with her usual assortment of powders, potions, and pocket books. She grabbed her wooden staff at the front door and left, but not before making sure to tap her staff against the closed door to activate the anti-trespassing spell, of course. Any sneaking individuals would receive quite the shock, and have a permanent mark on their hands until they paid the feline witch a sum she deemed fair.

She was already getting looks just a few steps out of her front door. A royal gardener ridding the weeds in front of her house glanced momentarily and nodded, then stopped what he was doing, looked back at her, and stared. His eyes traveled up and down her body, as if looking for an answer written somewhere on it. She grinned and returned his nod. The precise reaction she wanted. She couldn't *wait* to see that look on King Gellius' face that evening.

Her staff, always a help for lengthy walks, helped her along as she sauntered happily down a beaten path towards the villages of the kingdom. Her small cabin had been constructed perfectly triangulated between the castle, the village, and the marketplace.

Eventually she came to her usual spot, a smooth hill that stood near enough to the marketplace and was raised above it enough that she could captivate a large audience. She reached for one of the potions latched to the belt around her waist, yanking out the cork and taking a swig. She grimaced at the flavor and put it back. Immediately, her fur began to emit a soft glow that shared its dark yellow color. That was all the potion did, make one's fur, scales, or feathers glow, but it was all she needed it to do.

With that done, she grasped her staff firmly in paw and gently waved her other paw over the plain chunk of quartz crystal embedded in its top. It began to pulsate with a deep purple glow. She raised both arms in the air over her head, and then began to wave the staff around in swift, smooth motions. As she moved it through the air, crackling sparks spewed from the quartz, going in every direction, up, down, to her left, to her right. She used this time to exercise; after all, she had no desire to become a fat witch. How would she fit into her small selection of outfits if she got pudgy?

She spun with the crackling staff, using its weight and inertia to pull her body. She took various poses, grounding her boots firmly into the dirt. The breathable fabric of the clothing proved very helpful as she exercised, the airflow much better than her other robes, and movement far more free. She could contort and spin in all sorts of ways without worry of ripping anything or making herself indecent. *Why haven't I worn this more often?*

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Knightmaster Frenen, a large and broad-shouldered mutt, looked up disapprovingly at the cat on the hill. He remembered what had transpired earlier that morning near the kingdom gates, and gritted his teeth. The baker sat the loaf of rye down before him, and curiously followed the noble's gaze.

"Ah, I hadn't seen her arrive," the baker stated flatly. "Sixty pence."

Frenen grumbled and dropped a few shilling coins into the baker's outstretched paw. He lifted the loaf of bread off the counter, glaring at it the same as he had the witch. "She's a fraud."

The baker perked at this comment, and laughed in shock. "What? A fraud? I certainly don't know what you mean! Why, just yesterday some young troublemakers went and dumped all my sugar into a pit, and she used her magic to separate all the sugar from the dirt, so none of it went to waste! Now, you tell me how a fraud pulls off a trick like that."

Frenen scoffed. "I never said she wasn't a *witch*. Only a loon would claim such a thing. No, I accuse her of doing nothing to protect this kingdom. I think - nay, I *know* she's playing us all for fools, and none of those "protective enchantments" she sold the king on are real."

The baker glanced off to his side, taking a moment to speak his mind to the large gruff dog. "Well, your lordship... could you not consider... you might think that way because she makes the king's army... *irrelevant?*" His voice quieted to a whisper by the end. It was one thing to laugh away a nonsense statement made by a knight, it was another entirely to throw your own accusation towards him.

Frenen growled deeply and leaned over the meerkat baker, who quickly broke into a fit of trembling and sputtering. "W-well, not, of cc-course, not to *accuse* you, or, of, I just-"

Frenen managed to growl and speak at the same time. "I've got a tip for you. It might be *bad business* to go telling customers their bread's sugar fished from dirt. And it might be even *worse* to accuse your superiors of insincerity. I recommend you ***keep your mouth shut.***"

The meerkat could only nod frantically. Frenen stood straight again, straightened his royal vest, ripped a large bite out of the loaf, and stormed off.

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The improved aerodynamics of her grey one-piece was not enough to stop Xaviette from breaking a sweat. After all, she was essentially doing theatrical gymnastics. Feeling her lungs beginning to burn, she decided to take a short break. She reached to another bottle on her waist belt, which despite being stored in as fancy a container as her potions, just contained water. Well, perpetually chilled, endless water. But still, just water. She sat down in the grass took a few large gulps from the bottle. She leaned back, setting her staff down next to her and propping herself up with her arms behind her. She gazed up at the morning sky, smiling as she waited for her breathing to calm.

A meek voice came from behind her. “Ma’am?”

The witch spun her head to her side to see the wolf cub behind her, who took a few steps back as she locked eyes with him.

She smiled, and sat back straight up. “Yes?” She asked in a relaxed tone.

“Well...” The cub looked behind him, and Xaviette heard hushed whispers from further down the hill. The wolf had probably been dared by his friends to come speak to her.

“W-was that... *real* magic you were doing?” The cub pointed at the staff laying in the grass, its quartz still emitting purple pulses.

“Oh, most definitely. I work for the king, you know. He lets me live in the cabin out east of here so long as I protect his kingdom from invasion.” She had given this speech many times. Every time she had to fight to hold back laughter at Gellius’ gullibility. *King Gelliable*, she sometimes thought to herself, though she dare not say something like that aloud.

“But isn’t that the soldiers’ job?” The cub asked, tilting his head a little.

It certainly is, Xavi thought. *And that’s why they despise me*. “Well, would you rather good men with families and children lose their lives in battle, or prevent that from ever needing to happen?”

The young boy thought about it for a while, and then nodded. “... Oh, I get it. U-uhm, thank you for letting me talk to you, a-and not cursing me or anything.”

Xaviette winked. “No problem, bud.” Just as the wolf turned to leave, she called out to him. “Hey! Why don’t you show this to your little friends down there?”

She plucked a small white daisy out of the dirt and passed her paw over it. Each petal shone brightly with different colors. Blue next to red, next to yellow, next to green. She blew the flower out of her hand, and the cub caught it out of the air. He looked down at it in his paws like it was a sack of gold. "Thank you!" He proclaimed before running down the hill, overjoyed.

They're so easy to impress. So easy to trick. Xavi laughed to herself as she stood up. She leaned over to grab her staff off the ground, and once again a voice came from behind her. But this one was far less meek.

"Nice view from back here."

Xaviette flinched, and spun around straight up with her staff in paw firmly. Her eyes squinted and she hissed slightly as she looked up at the mutt she stood in the shadow of. "Hello, *Frenen*."

The Knightmaster grinned, showing his impeccably clean, sharp teeth. "Nice to see you again too, charlatan."

"Hah!" Xaviette laughed bombastically. "You've never been able to prove me a liar, and you never will, you poor sod."

Frenen's grin did not change. "I know."

Xaviette did not expect a response like that from the jealous noblemutt. Her brow furrowed, her spiteful gaze becoming one of suspicion. "What are you up to?"

"Nothing for you to worry yourself about, of course. Knightmaster business only. I've got better things to do with my time than try to prove you're a liar." He put his paws into his vest pockets casually, still grinning away.

Xaviette snickered, her grasp on her staff relaxing a bit. "Well... It's about time. Good to know you've finally accepted I make your jobs nearly irrelevant. Enjoy the rest of your career fighting petty crime, bud!" She responded to his grin with a snarky one of her own, and spun herself around and away from the mutt, returning to her ~~spellcasting~~ morning exercises. Frenen watched her stomp around, swing her staff, and stretch for a few moments, before chuckling to himself and heading off towards the castle. He pulled one paw out of his pocket and looked at the object nestled in the bottom, acquired from that morning's incident. *This'll be it for her.*

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After she had finished her "enchanting" for the day, Xaviette took a while to wander the markets. She sold a small pouch of cure-all powder to a family with a sick child for an exorbitant price, mended a fractured leg with a tap of her staff in trade for free soup for the next seven days, and enjoyed some of that for

lunch, and lastly went into a nearby neighborhood to extort her owed payments from peasants she'd assisted at the threat of terrible curses being placed on their homes and families. That was always the most fun part of her day, and she didn't notice the time pass until she stepped out of one housefull of trembling farmers to see the afternoon shadow cast by the kingdom's wall just about to touch the markets.

In a hurry, she ran the whole way back to her cabin, heaving by the time she reached her door. She stumbled inside to wash herself again. She was in too much of a rush to bother removing her clothes, and quickly dunked her body into the sudsy water. She dried off with a spell, which she never enjoyed doing because it caused her fur to fluff and made her look puffy. She spent so much time brushing her fur back down that it probably would have been faster to bathe properly and dry with a towel.

Darting back out the door, she began her trek to the castle, walking briskly, as she knew she was going to be late no matter what.

She approached the large gated entrance a good half hour later than she should have. She couldn't help but notice the lack of carriages around the outer wall of the castle. She had to wonder who else had been invited to this royal occasion.

As she pushed the gates open enough to slide through, a lady servant came rushing out from a stone hallway to greet her. "Good evening to you, madame! If I may take your walking stick, I can--"

"No," Xaviette cut her off firmly. The woman stopped, her eyes widened, and she quickly composed herself and bowed.

"I apologize if I have offended you."

Xaviette rolled her eyes. "No fault of yours, don't concern yourself. Now, I'm hungry. Would you point me to the Great Hall?"

The servant perked up and pointed down the same stone hall she had just come from. "It's down there, in the south end. You'll know it when you get there, it's the biggest door by far."

Xavi flashed a smile and nodded, and the servant scurried off in the other direction. Xaviette proceeded down the stone hall. It was lit by the occasional hole in the walls with no glass to make them true windows. As such, the cool air rushed against her fur each time she passed one. The rhythmic sounds of her paws and the staff echoed throughout the structure. Step-step-thunk, step-step-thunk. *This place is about as empty as Gellius' head*, she thought to herself, grinning slightly as she looked around.

Finally, she reached it... That servant had been correct. The doors to the Great Hall were impossible to miss. While every door up to then had been normally sized wooden slabs curved at the top, not unlike the doors of all the houses in the kingdom - though clearly made from more expensive materials. This door,

though, towered up to the height of the walls, and was wide enough to easily fit a two-horse carriage through. It was cracked open just a touch, and the orange flickering glow of a fire reached out from it. The tabby leaned her head in through the crack and knocked lightly on the wood. “Anybody home?”

The Great Hall was clearly built to accompany a very large party of guests, its vast tables reaching out from either side of the entryway all the way down to one of the king’s lesser thrones (his greater one residing in the Throne Room, obviously) a good several yards down. The Hall was almost as long as, if not longer than, the great stretches of road that lined the marketplace. The left and right walls each had periodically placed torch holders, all of them currently lit. The walls rose up so far the torches were not enough to light the uppermost portions, which were instead lit by several long skylights, these ones *were* decorated with glass to keep the elements at bay. The rightmost wall also featured a great fireplace, large enough to fit a bed into, which roared calmly with flame. It was around this fireplace that the only occupants of the room sat. King Gellius on one end of a table, in a chair larger than any other, and across from him, Knightmaster Frenen. A third seat was put out, set in the middle of the long table, right between the two nobilities.

King Gellius turned to face Xaviette at the sound of the knock. His eyes only glanced over her clothing for a half second before he smiled and laughed heartily. “Wonderful! We were just beginning to worry you wouldn’t show!”

Gellius was getting on in his years, the royal bear’s fur had started turning from brown to grey, especially around his beard. He had always been large, but the development of his potbelly was recent. His diet had clearly not changed with his metabolism.

Xaviette did not respond to the king’s welcome for a few seconds. Her eyes darted between the two men at the table. The king seemed genuinely happy to see her. Frenen... Also seemed genuinely happy to see her? His smile was not one of intimidation or vice. It was the smile of someone thrilled that you could make it.

King Gellius broke the nervous silence with a chuckle. “Now, I know what you’re thinking. I’ve heard enough ramblings from the both of you about the *whole kingdom* being threatened by the other. But, I assure you, Xaviette, this meeting is no attack on you. In fact, it is quite the opposite!”

The king nodded his head towards Frenen, who shifted in his seat and cleared his throat to speak. Xavi, though curious, still had only her head poked through the door.

“Yes... I’ve put a lot of thought into it, and...” Frenen looked into her eyes honestly. “I have accepted that you truly *are* here for the betterment of the kingdom. The Majesty himself has swayed me to accepting the truth of the matter. My paranoia was unfounded, and I wish to apologize sincerely.”

Now *that* was not something she was expecting to hear today. Where had this change in demeanor come from?

It was enough to lure the witch finally through the door. She stepped tentatively over to her seat, clutching her staff like it was an anchor keeping her from drifting away. The sounds of crackling fire and chair legs screeching against stone echoed through the unusually empty hall.

Seated, uncomfortably, with her staff leaned up against the table, Xaviette glanced back to Frenen.

“I’m certain I recall you slandering me as a charlatan just earlier this day,” She spoke, not an accusation but a blunt statement of fact.

Gellius looked at Frenen expectedly, who chuckled. “Consider it a playful jab. Old habits die hard, don’t they?”

Xaviette looked down at the wood table. There was nothing on it. An almost insulting nothingness, she had come all this way for this? To stare at an empty table, a table which could easily hold a feast for ten, or twenty, mockingly left with nothing but dust.

She could not pick up even a hint of lying on Frenen’s tongue. By her well-trained ears, the mutt was telling the truth. She wondered if she might need to have them checked out.

“I... I accept your apology.” The words slipped out of her mouth like thick molasses. She had not prepared herself for anything like this.

Frenen nodded slowly, respectfully. “Thank you, Mage.”

Was he the kind to act like this? He must be, since he currently was.

Xaviette felt an ache in the back of her head. “When’s dinner?” She asked, as it was the only thing she could think to say at the moment.

Gellius responded with more of his hearty laughter. “You always know how to cut through the fat and get to the point, don’t you, Mage? Servants will be here in just a moment with our meal and drink, don’t worry yourself over it. After all, I wouldn’t refuse you food at a dinner meant to celebrate you!”

Xaviette looked up at the king with wild eyes. “*Celebrate* me?”

“Yes! It was Frenen himself who proposed the idea,” Gellius exclaimed. The cat’s wild look traveled across the table. “After he came to his senses about your abilities, he suggested this to me, and I thought it appropriate. I’ve noticed you don’t receive nearly the amount of respect you deserve around here for your work.”

Xaviette felt herself blush, something she hadn’t done in a long while. “Oh, w-well, really, I don’t mi-”

The king interrupted her. “But! ... I know you don’t like too much publicity, so that’s why this is a small event. Just between us three. Nobody else in the kingdom knows about this.” He gestured with a hushed finger to his lips.

That really *was* considerate, the last thing she wanted was for her quiet life to be interrupted by constant queries about her dining with the king in the Great Hall, a rare privilege that always received vast attention from the citizenry.

“I... thank you. A-again. Well, I mean... Both of you. Really.” Xaviette felt incredibly strange, unsure of how best to respond. She had become very used to her life of relative isolation. It had become a comfort to her at this point. She had never expected any sort of celebration for her position, even one this small and quiet. All of this had come so quickly... She just couldn’t quite describe how it made her feel. It was raw.

“It’s more than earned, for all you’ve done for this kingdom,” Frenen said. More genuine (*sounding? Is it just genuine-sounding?*) remarks from the man that she had considered an enemy up until just a few moments ago. Not to mention he had of course always been right, her protective magic was nothing more than a theatrical exercise routine. But, even though *she* knew it was a sham, she still felt like this respect had been earned, in a way she wouldn’t have ever been able to explain if she were asked to.

The imposing hall door creaked open behind Xaviette. She turned in her chair to watch with the others as ten or so servants shuffled silently and respectfully into the room. Some came bearing large platters of steaming meats, others great pots of stew, and at least two brought empty wood-and-steel mugs and pitchers of wine. *Pitchers* of wine. The tabby witch jokingly wondered if she would have to be rolled out of here by the end of the night.

The barren table was quickly populated with the platters and pitchers, the servants moving gracefully, having danced this dance many times before. Xavi’s eyes remained wide as she watched the previously barren table become heavily populated. You almost couldn’t see that mocking wood anymore. An empty plate and bowl were sat before her, same as the one before Frenen, but both smaller and less decorative than Gellius’. The size of his plate and bowl were probably another contributing factor to his girth.

The King grinned. “I know that face. Never seen a meal quite like this, hm?”

Xaviette shook her head slowly. “Definitely...” She inhaled deeply. “Not.”

Gellius reached over and twisted a large leg off of a turkey with a juicy snap. Juices dribbled off of the open end of the turkey leg as he moved it to his plate, and steam billowed from the exposed meat of the well-done bird. He nodded to his two guests.

In the time it took for Frenen to scoop some mashed potatoes onto his own plate, Xaviette had filled her plate to the top - a mound of various selections from all around the table - and had dug in, viciously ripping her teeth into a slab of beef.

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Xaviette let out a thick belch, leaning back into her seat with a big grin on her face. Her stomach formed a rounded bump on her lower torso, churning quietly with food. She hadn't eaten like that in time out of mind. No doubt it would take weeks to work the calories off, but hey, she earned it. This was a party in her honor, after all. It probably would have been *rude* to hold back and only eat as much as she needed. She purred calmly, and her tail swished from side to side happily.

No matter the amount she had eaten, though, King Gellius was ahead by a wide margin, having so many clean-picked bones and use utensils piled onto his plate that they spilled over onto the wood. He didn't look much different, a stomach full of food under double-digit inches of fat won't show as much a difference as a stomach full of food under a toned middle.

Frenen, lastly... Had only eaten a single plate of food. After he had finished, he simply watched the other two stuff themselves silly. Gellius had asked him several times if he wanted more, and Frenen had turned the king down every time. Once he saw that both were satisfied, he happily stood up from his seat.

"I'll pour us some wine, then," he said, walking over to where the pitchers and mugs rested. Gellius smiled and nodded his head. "Good man. *Bhurrrp*, always a good man, Frenen."

Xaviette let out a hiccup that turned into a burp. "Oh yes, I need something good to wash down all those mashed potatoes." This elicited another hearty chuckle from Gellius that filled the hall with its echoes.

While he was laughing, Frenen was pouring the three mugs of wine. At the last mug, he reached into the pocket of his coat, and took out the small pouch buried at its bottom. It contained a very fine light brown powdery substance. He quickly and with as little movement as possible dumped its contents into the half-filled mug, stashed the empty pouch back in his pocket, and filled the mug the rest of the way. It bubble for a few seconds, worrying him, but it settled soon after, and the mug with the powder in it looked just like the other two. *A well-earned prize*, he thought to himself. He could not stop a grin from spreading across his face, which luckily for him could in the situation be seen as a sign of jolly spirits and not the enjoyment of a devious revenge plot proceeding flawlessly.

Frenen took his time walking around the table, customarily placing the first mug before the king with a light bow, then over to Xaviette, whom he gave the spiked mug, and finally back to his own seat with the last mug of wine. All three held their mugs high above their heads. Gellius stifled another belch, and spoke, "A toast, in honor of our most wonderful King's Witch, Xaviette, and to our greatly humble Knightmaster

Frenen.” They swayed their cups vaguely inwards, though they were all too far apart to actually reach each other from their seats, and then tilted their heads back, letting the sweet alcohol pour down their throats.

The sound of three furs chugging aggressively filled the Great Hall for a long while, until all of their mugs were slammed down on the table.

Gellius sighed, wiping some wine and chicken grease from his chin, and looked around. He raised his arms at his sides and nodded slowly. “Are we not ever grateful for the prosperity the Lord bestows upon us?”

Xaviette slammed her mug onto the table and clapped. The fur of her lower jaw was soaked with wine. “Oh, abso-*lutely!* Yes, your majesty, I couldn’t agree mo-*oooouurp!*” Xaviette’s sudden belch elicited uproarious laughter from both her and the king, while Frenen simply grinned, tapping his claws on the table patiently.

Just as the laughter was dying down, the witch let out another spontaneous burp, this one much more drawn-out. This only refueled the king’s guffawing, but while Xavi’s laughter did continue, it was accompanied by a tone of confusion. It hadn’t been *sparkling* wine they had drank, had it? She didn’t seem to remember it feeling fizzy as it traveled down her throat. But these burps were distinct of a carbonated beverage. Not only that, but she was beginning to feel a tingling in her food-packed gut, the drink sat atop a mountain of heavy eats in her gut was bubbling around. For sure.

Xaviette placed a paw on her stomach as another bubble of gas pushed its way up her esophagus. Her eyes bulged in surprise as this one came out with a yet-unheard intensity, so loud it made her throat and head wobble. She gasped for breath after the expulsion, feeling like the wind had been knocked out of her. She leaned back in her chair, rubbing her bubbling stomach. The king’s bellowing continued unabated, tears of laughter now beading at the corners of his closed eyes. Frenen stared on with a grin so wide his teeth were showing again.

The witch looked down at her belly in horror, clutching it with both paws. The bubbling sensation was growing stronger, and she could feel the pressure starting to build in her gut forcing the wine deeper into her gut. Her stomach let out a faint squelching groan and pushed out slowly, bloating with fizzy air, and rapidly became much softer to the touch, her paws sinking into her increasingly plush belly gently.

“Wh-what is thi-*Brrraaarrrrp!*” Her eyes darted to her mug, and then up to Frenen. The drunken king’s laughter punctuated the moment as they stared each other down across the table, Frenen’s eyes filled with childlike joy, Xaviette’s filled with bloodlust and rage. In those few seconds, her stomach continued to bubble quietly, filling out her grey skin tight jumpsuit more and more. Her belt, with its flasks and tools, was beginning to press into her widening torso.

Xaviette’s paw flew from her gut to her staff leaned against the table. As she touched it, the crystal at its top glew bright red. “*What have you- **bhuuoorp-** done to me, Knightmaster?*” She hissed between clenched teeth.

“Why, whatever are you talking about, Witch? I have only been so hospitable, why, I served you wine, and nothing more,” Frenen’s voice was absolutely drooling with delight at Xavi’s condition, which was growing worse by the second.

The belching had only grown more severe, now accompanied by the occasional hiccup. Xaviette was about to stand, but an abrupt twang of pressure in her thighs startled her, and she looked down in fright. She could just see it over the absurd bulge of her stomach, her lap was widening, her toned thighs becoming thick and plush as her gut was doing. The same strong bubbling sensation coursed down her waist, hips, and into her legs. Although she could not see it, she could feel the surface area her buttocks covered on her chair growing. With each passing second her rump enveloped more of it, coming closer and closer to the edges.

It was in this moment that Xaviette realized, whatever was happening to her was not ordinary. When one becomes bloated, it is not a regular occurrence for whatever is filling them to spread beyond their stomachs, unless of course their stomachs have ruptured, and considering she wasn’t coughing up blood, that was not the case. No. This was *magic*. Frenen had gotten ahold of something magical, and it was now exerting its effects on her lithe form.

“Y-you... *Sssson of a b-BHHHUUURRRRP!!!*” This belch was accompanied by an additional bulging in her throat, and the expelling of a short burst of small wine-colored bubbles that rose up and popped.

Gellius found the sight so hilarious that he leaned a little too far back in his seat, and it toppled over onto its back, only the king’s footpaws and a peek of his gut being visible over the tabletop. This only led him into further fits of laughter.

Xaviette grunted angrily, pushing back her chair - noticing as she did so that even her footpaws felt wider than before. She stood up quickly, intending to intimidate. But the effect was ruined as her bulging gut squished softly against the edge of the table, forcing more gas and bubbles to erupt from her mouth.

Frenen still sat, that pleased grin stretched across his muzzle. “You should consider joining show business. A traveling circus, maybe? *The Living Gasbag*, how does that sound?” He snickered like a juvenile, crossing his arms over his chest.

Xaviette could tell she was at a massive disadvantage. The king was drunk out of his mind and totally useless, she was rapidly filling with some sort of magical gas, and Frenen was as healthy and untouched as ever. But Frenen did not have a magical staff. Or at least, she hoped he didn’t. Who knew, at this point.

She raised her staff in her arm dramatically, noticing a pressure in her shoulder, seeping down her forearm. Tingling. Bubbling. *You’ve got to be kidding me.* A glance at her arm revealed, yes, it too was beginning to swell and press out against her suit. But she saw something else out of the corner of her vision then,

another sphere... Not the globe of her stomach, that was too low to be in her sight while she looked at her raised arm... A look down, and *of course*, her tits were filling out too. They looked like two party balloons being blown up right out of her chest. She struggled to not whimper as she became acutely aware of the feeling of fabric stretching out and shifting against her nipples.

A scoff, pretending to find this all trivial, and she reattached her glare on Frenen. The red glow within the crystal swirled energetically. "I could blow you to b-**BBRRRAAOOORRP**- bits right now, Frenen!"

He tilted his head, smile unmoving. "Oh? With what, a big enough burp?"

The witch could feel her face burning. This was humiliating on too many levels to count, but the humiliation took a backseat to her rage.

She brought her staff down as hard as she could. It continued moving down beyond where the floor should have been. So was the table, and everything else around her. *She was moving up*. Xavi couldn't help but shriek, dropping her staff. The red glow faded immediately and it clattered uselessly on the stone floor. She kicked her feet, but neither of them found surface of any sort. Her ascent stopped just three inches over the floor, and she hovered, suspended in midair, her eyes wide, but not nearly as wide as her waistline. **Bmmuuurrrrhph!!** More bubbles, rising out of her mouth and floating upwards beyond her.

Her bloating body drifted gently back down to the ground, her feet touching the floor with incredibly lightness. She looked down at her form in desperation, as though it was a trustworthy friend that had abandoned her. With only two small exits at the top and bottom, made in such a way to keep bad things out and good things in, it became problematic as soon as anything bad did manage to get past its defenses. The only exit the gas building within Xaviette found was through occasional belches that, while immense, were far too little to ease her growth. She felt like a tea kettle with her throat the whistle.

Frenen mimicked the king's drunken laughter, rocking back in his seat and clapping joyfully. "Wonderful show, really! I amend my suggestion. *The Living Hot Air Balloon* would be much more suitable!"

The burning of her face was revived again, and she began trying to press the swelling of her torso back down, in vain. She didn't know what else to do. She had, after all, dropped her staff. Even though it was only a few feet away from where she so delicately stood (on her tippy toes, in fact), in her ballooned state the last thing she could do was lean over. Her paws, swollen in their own right, began pressing on her gut and sides, trying to push her grey-clad fur back down. They sank into her body deeply, and her belching increased in voracity as she pushed, but she still gained no relief from the act. Tossing any concepts of dignity to the wayside, she cupped both puffy paws over her basketball-sized tits, and began trying to press them down. Again, nothing came of it except more belching, and deep squishing. All the while, her gradual inflation continued on.

Frenen leaned forward onto the table, propping his head up on his arms, looking at the fumbling witch as though he were daydreaming of a crush. He chuckled. “I thought I’d never get you back for what you did to my career, my livelihood. I thought for sure you would take over every last bit of my position, until I was left a lame duck in the kingdom. I tried for *so long* to prove you a fraud to the whole city. So much time wasted. I had been looking for the *wrong thing* this whole time!”

Xaviette was barely conscious of Frenen’s monologuing. She was trying to reach down past the crest of her stomach, where her belt of potions was wrapped incredibly tightly around her waist. From Frenen’s view, it was as though one had tied a rope around the middle of a large grey blimp. All of the potions dangling off of its straps were held up at a tilted angle by the cat’s bloating waistline and at her sides by her hips. Her paws grabbed around uselessly. Even if she had been able to reach the belt, it wasn’t like she would have been able to grab anything from them. Her paws had long since filled out, any dexterity of her individual fingers being lost. With a loud *creeeak-Snap!* the belt flew apart, bouncing off of her gut and crumpling to the floor. The fizzing air inside of her rushed to fill the freed space, with a heavy *bwoomp*, her torso was free to round out without restriction. The grey jumpsuit, after all, was made of highly elastic cloth. The jolt sent the cat stumbling backwards slowly, a good second and a half between each step attempting to rebalance herself.

“S-Stop this at- **BUUUUAAAAUUURP-** once! You’re messing with the **BEEEELLLLCCH** wrong witch!” Her commanding tone was undermined by her cartoonishly huge bubbly burps. She could feel the pressure beginning to reach its limit. If she continued filling at this rate, without end... It didn’t bear thinking about. What did was how she could fix this. Xaviette knew she had a stock of cure-alls back at her cabin. Some part of her brain told her she could never make it all the way back there in time, but it was overridden by the part of her brain that told her she didn’t have any other options.

Turning around slowly, pressing her blimpish tits down with her swollen arms to try and retain some amount of peripheral vision, she began to make towards the large wooden doors of the Great Hall. Her steps were great and bounding, each time a foot landed on the floor as lightly as a feather, she propelled herself forward, her gassy bodice floating slowly upwards and closer to the door. Every propulsion sent her into the air longer than the last. Every landing, though light beyond belief, was still enough of a shock to her body to force out more belches. Her rear end jiggled with every step, two great orbs blending smoothly into a much larger orb above and bloated cones below.

Frenen scooted his seat out, standing up. He looked over to the king’s overturned seat. Gellius was just climbing back up to stand, peeking over the table curiously. “Where did the witch gooo?” He moped, unaware of her squeaking, fizzing, belching body just out of his sight.

The Knightmaster happily walked over to him and put a hand on his back. “My Lord, she’s just over here, exposing herself as the traitor she is.”

The drunken majesty swooned as Frenen led him away from the table. “Traitor...?”

“Oh, yes. I can show you, my Majesty. Just this way.” Frenen’s giddiness was reaching its peak. He giggled like a schoolchild as he turned the king around slowly to face the blimp of a feline in her futile attempt to escape.

Xaviette was just a few steps away from the door. She reached her paw out for the ornate metal handle, her left breast decompressing and squishing up against her chin, blocking out most of the vision on her left side. But she could still see the door, and that was all that mattered.

Two bounds away, she leapt gracefully, rising up slowly... But she wasn’t coming back down. That was it. Her body’s mass had spent its usefulness, being totally overpowered by the lighter-than-air fizz she had been filling with for the past few minutes.

“N-*hic*-no!! No!! **BWWWWWAAAUUURRRRRRPP!!!** No, th-that’s not fair!” She whined and whimpered. She released her grasp on her other breast, totally filling her vision with her chest. It didn’t matter, as she could sense her body was tilting forwards as she rose anyways. She still had a last chance... When the time was right, she looked up. Instead of the ceiling, she saw the door again. She began to motion like she was swimming, waving her distended arms in broad strokes while kicking her bulging legs - as much as she could anyway, all of her limbs were so filled with gas that movement was extremely stiff, and any she succeeded in pulling off was accompanied by the gurgles of displaced air and rubber-like squeaking sounds as her thin clothing rubbed against itself.

But she was moving, again, slowly but surely. She was well above the door handle, but the door itself rose far above any reasonable door would need to. She braced herself against the wood with her outstretched arms, her body colliding softly, with a light squeak and burble. She didn’t have much of a grip on the wood, or on anything. She extended her claws, which felt much shorter than they were due to the paws around them having filled so much. Using them like mountain climbing spikes, she dug them into the wood, and the grasp was enough to stop her ascent, but just barely. Her body turned fully upside down, with her claws dug into the wood her sole anchor to the earth. As soon as the slack of her arms was taken up by the upwards pull of her ballooned form, her grip began to loosen. She quickly started to move along the door’s surface, shifting her dug-in claws over little by little, looking down to the floor below, a cold and unremarkable stone floor that she would kiss the moment she touched down to it again. Never again would she take for granted the wonderful gift of weight and the ground.

Her swelling continued, but as if God were feeling particularly kind at this moment, the intense bubbling she had been experiencing this whole time felt as though it was slowing. Or maybe she was just becoming numb to it. Who could tell? The orange witch reached the edge of the wood... The wrong edge. Next to her was stone, and a curved candle holder, not the cracked-open door. Damn. But she had no time left to crawl back the other way, for then she would certainly lose her grip. Her claws were already aching with the task of holding her down. Nervously, she yanked herself down and freed herself from the wood. The momentum she created pulled her downwards with rapidly slowing speed, but it was enough for her to

loop both puffy arms over the metal of the candle-holder. Her fingers were useless to clasp onto it, so she had to press both paws together under the metal and wedge both sets of swollen fingers in between each other, creating a solid enough seal to anchor her to the candle-holder. And that was it. She was out of tricks, out of options, out of courses to run except letting herself rise up to the endlessly high ceiling shrouded in darkness.

Having time finally to take stock of things besides the immediate task of anchoring her buoyant form, she looked around her limited scope of vision. Floor, wall, tables... Frenen and the King. Both standing near the feast table, looking up at her. Frenen wore his joyous grin, Gellius wore a look of mixed confusion and worry. Xaviette belched helplessly, the bubbles rising up and rolling over her face before floating off out of her sight.

“You see, my Lord? Do you see her?” Frenen insisted.

“Oh, yes, of course, Frenen, I surely do. She seems to be in quite thee... Oh, quite the predicament. I can fetch a servant to help her...” Gellius came across as distant due to his heavily intoxicated state, but his generous concern still showed through.

Frenen scoffed. “Nonsense, she deserves nothing less than to be let outside to float off to her doom! She is a traitor to our wonderful nation.”

Gellius hiccuped and laughed. “Frenen, Frenen. How on Earth could this witch be a traitor? She spend *hic* all of her time protecting us! Even you admitted it, finally...”

“My King... I was informed just this morning of a traveling salesman attempting to enter our markets. I was called in to inspect his wares, and do you know what I found?” His teeth shown bright white, and though he spoke to the king, his gaze was fixed upon the witch balloon suspended over the candle holder.

Xaviette could do nothing but observe the conversation, of course. It was doing very little to help her anxiety. Even the feeling that the bubbling and swelling of her form had finally subsided did not help. She was at a totally powerless position, at the absolute mercy of the two men below her, one kind and caring yet totally drunk, the other cruel and uncaring, harboring a burning and passionate hatred for her. Her prospects didn't look great. More belching, more bubbles sliding over her face, temporarily obscuring her vision with distorted light red before floating off.

“What... *hic* What did you find, Knightmaster?”

Frenen took a small pouch from his pocket, now empty. “This. Do you know what it was full of? Something called *Felcumvive Powder*. He said it was a highly volatile substance used to cause bloating. I didn't believe him until he took out a frog and forced a teaspoon down its throat. I watched that creature in seconds turn into a perfectly round green orb and saw it float away into the sky until we couldn't see it

anymore. It's **extremely** dangerous. So I asked him where he got it." Frenen paused for dramatic effect, as the king listened intently.

Xaviette had begun to sweat. She knew what he was going to say next, and she dreaded it.

"He told me it came from the Rodanmore Kingdom. Now, I know for a *fact* Rodanmore doesn't keep any sort of King's Witch. And this little marketboy told me he had gotten it from a *traveling* witch. From far away, he said. An orange tabby with a great staff topped with crystal, come to sell her wares. He told me that she came every other week, in fact."

Gellius' expression became very serious. Despite his drunkenness, he was well aware of the gravity of the story he was being told. He looked up at the fully rounded witch as a father might look down to his son charged with theft. Great disappointment was on his face.

"So you see, your Majesty, Xaviette has been selling her services to other kingdoms. Dangerous services, which may be used by assassins coming in here, who knows. I know not the extent to which she has done so, but I know for certain that she is a *traitor* to this wonderful province. She broke her sworn loyalty to *you*." Frenen stood triumphantly before the king.

Gellius finally spoke, his voice low and steady. He spoke slower than he normally might, so that he did not fumble his words. "Is what Frenen tells me... True, Xaviette? Is he right to accuse you of traitorous actions against your oath of loyalty to the crown?"

It was true. She had been selling potions and powders to neighboring kingdoms by night on occasion. It pulled in a good bit of extra money. She had made the ones she sold to promise to never give them to anyone else, take them beyond their own kingdom, or tell stories of her at all, but of course, how could she have expected any of them to be honest? Maybe she should have cursed them. But hindsight is 20/20, and she could do nothing about it now. There was no use attempting to deny it. After all, she was in no position to defend herself.

Xaviette could not shake her head due to her breasts and shoulders pressing against her face, so she tried to speak her answer.

"Y-**BWWAARRRRRRP!!!** Y-ye-**UUUUUOOOOOORRRRRRRP!!!!**"

Gellius nodded and waved her to stop. "I understand you." He looked down to the floor, and was subtly reminded of how grateful he was that his feet were touching it, and not drifting about uselessly in the air over his head.

"I recommend banishment, my King. It would be simple. All we would have to do is take the blimp outdoors and let her go. I assure she would never return to this land."

Xavi whimpered at the notion. Frenen grinned at it, but Gellius seemed to consider it more seriously.

“Nonsense. We do not *execute* people in this kingdom for infractions such as these. She did not kill anyone, and she did not sell poison,” Gellius expressed.

“You don’t know she didn’t,” Frenen argued.

Gellius shot him a glare strong enough to make the mutt back off. “And neither do *you*.” Frenen stood his distance from the king and bowed reverently.

Gellius paced back and forth before the ballooned woman dangling at his wall. “Standard procedure for a crime like this would be... The Walk of Shame. But there are a few problems with that.”

The Walk of Shame. Yes. When petty criminals are stripped naked, locked up in mobile cages too small for them to sit in, and drawn by carriage through town, down all the streets, giving every citizens plenty of opportunity to shame them, spit on them, and pelt them with rotten vegetables and whatever they had on hand. Xaviette had gleefully participated in this ritual a few times, pelting a fox thief with a potion that turned him bright blue for a week and tossing at a ferret brawler a powder that turned his head into that of a donkey, hee-hawing uncontrollably the rest of his Walk. The obvious issue with putting Xaviette through the same punishment was the fact that her waist far overreached the circumference of the mobile cell. She could probably fit about four of them inside of her belly at the moment...

Gellius looked up at her. “How long do you reckon it will take for you to return to normal size? Or, at least, manageable size?”

She thought about it. She’d been given the whole pouch, a very highly concentrated dose. She would be rendered a blimp for a good while... “W-week, **BBBBBBUUUUURRRRRHHHP**, m-maybe two.”

Gellius sighed. “That’s unfortunate. If it was a day, or perhaps two, I might have been lenient enough to let you deflate beforehand. But a week or two, no, that simply won’t work. Tomorrow morning then. I’ll have the cage affixed with ropes and straps to hold you down to the top of it, and some blocks of lead to stop the cage floating off. For now we’ll have to move you into the largest cell we have.” Gellius did not enjoy doling out punishment, but when he knew he had to do it, he was very strict. Xaviette simply nodded, horrible images running through her mind of how the townsfolk would treat her naked spherical form, especially the ones she’d been threatening curses on to collect debt from. Not to mention, it was cold. Very cold. She didn’t want to think about what it would be like to be paraded around with her round body totally exposed to the air for hours, unable to do anything to warm herself or protect against the elements.

Gellius turned to Frenen. “Fetch some servants for me, would you, Knightmaster? Tell them to bring some rope... And a very large ladder.”

Knightmaster Frenen grinned and bowed before the king. “Of course, your Majesty. Right away.” He turned to leave, but not before flashing a smug wink at the witch. It may not have been the banishment and effective execution he was seeking, but it was more than enough for him to know that the cat would be paraded around town in this ballooned form and pelted with horrible things. He would have to prepare some things himself to participate...

Xaviette could only belch in response.