

Mountains and Moles

By: Futurewesty and RaddaRaem

The old oak floorboards creaked and groaned beneath the weight of the well-dressed flamingo as he paced back and forth frantically. "It's horrible! Horrible! To make such sweet, innocent custom- I mean, ah, people do such a terrible thing..."

"Wait? They were forced to?" Cocking his head to the side, the mole's green hood slid forward over his smooth noggin. Fabric flapped against the side of his muzzle, his eyes clouded by the fields of lint rolling about his clothing's stitched interior. Grunting, he flipped back his hood and turned his attention upon to the Senior Merchant.

"Well, in a manner of speaking, yes!" He paused, tapping his pink, feathery fingers together nervously. "You see the, ah, sleep-walkers... They'll wake up the next morning with no knowledge of what they've done! Many of those who have been caught stealing so far were good, reliable people who've lived in town for years. Worst of all, they don't know what happens to the goods after they've been stolen! All we know is that they're not in the house, and the afflicted individual has no idea where they might be."

Hand pressed against his forehead, the flamingo shook his beak side to side sadly. "It's practically epidemic in scale now! Businesses and homes that HAVEN'T been hit are becoming endangered and fast." Taking to pacing once more, the merchant's scaly talons clacked against the knobbed floor loudly. "This guild I oversee being one of the few holdouts left in town. My dear loyal cccccccccccccc-

Exchanging awkward glances, the mole and ferret before him wondered just how long he could hold that vowel. Easy there fella, there's only so many words that can start off like that. This submission is rated General after all! Kids might be reading this!

"-uuuumpanions. Companions. Yes." He patted at his lavish crimson robe and coughed uncomfortably. "My dear sweet loyal companions fear entrusting to me their wares and life savings, all but guaranteed that it will be absconded with." Clasping his feathery fingers together, the flamingo shook his clenched together digits feebly at the monk before him. "Surely you can understand why this has me concerned?"

"Well I gotta admit, this is a new one on me." The ferret remarked, tapping a finger against her cheek as she met the flamingo's gaze. At seven feet tall she matched the lanky bird's height easily, while towering over her companion by a head and shoulders... and maybe the upper portion of her chest. "Tyla and I can certainly understand your worries," she not so subtly bumped hips with the ranger, rattling the bow slung over his back, "and I promise you we'll do all we can to catch the culprit behind all this! If there is one."

Calista scratched at her fuzzy chin, hrrmmmming loudly. "Of course, any evidence you could give us would be a big help. Like, have you found any traces of magic on the victims? Or perhaps your town is built on an ancient burial ground of some sort? Vengeful spirits are kinda weird with how they exact revenge sometimes."

The Senior Merchant blinked at her and shook his head. "No, no, nothing like that I assure you! Magic was the first thing we checked for when this all began, but we found none." He paused and scratched at the underside of his large beak. "I hadn't considered the second one, though I believe the town was built on a bog." He found another itch and moved his hand to scratch at his forehead, making the pink feather on the blue wide-brimmed hat he was wearing bob up and down. "And that truly is all we know. Even the town doctor cannot pinpoint exactly what the disease is, since it apparently leaves their system once they awaken."

Long pink arms thrown up to his sides, he continued squawking at the duo. "Some locals have even been struck by this malady multiple times! They'll be fine for weeks, then suddenly, someone will find themselves slouched over a jewelry display, the glass smashed open and shards twinkling on their fingers."

"Great so there's a mystical disease that makes people steal from shops, disappears without a trace the next morning, and then reappears without rhyme or reason? Sounds like a piece of cake." Tyla said, his voice dripping with sarcasm.

"Oh? Is it? Well that's wonderful then!" The Senior Merchant beamed at the two, not catching Tyla's tone at all.

"I was *kidding*. It's more like the opposite of a piece of cake... Uhh, a piece of not cake? A piece of rotten cake? Hard candy?" He paused and shook his head. Similes were not his strongest suit.

"Er, anyways, we'd have to spend some time looking around for clues just to know where to begin." Tyla said with a frown, wrinkling his forehead as he tried to think of some kind of theory for what might be causing this. "Of course, any assistance your guild could lend us would be very much appreciated..."

"Mmmmmmm?" The flamingo replied, suddenly silent for the first time since he'd begun ranting at them.

"Yes. Funny as it might sound, staying at an inn is expensive. And so is food, especially with how much Calista can shovel down in one sitting."

Eyes cast up to the ceiling, the Senior Merchant inexplicably realized that the most interesting ceiling tiles in the world adorned his fine establishment.

Shoulders slouched forward, the mole let out an irritated sigh. "Help us help you, so to

speak.”

“Oh! Well! Yes, you see I would, but I must keep the vault tightly locked until all of this is over! Opening it even once could tip off who or whatever might be behind all this on how to get in, you see.” He explained hastily, giving a strange combination of a squawk and a laugh, and threw his hands up to show his helplessness in the matter.

Resting an elbow on Tyla’s head, Calista ignored the empty threats her armrest spat out at her. “Look at it this way fella, it’s all about weighing the costs against the benefits! You pay for our lodging for a few nights, and we make this problem disappear. It’s a minor cost to pay now for continued money-making in the future.” She brought a hand up to her cheek, the ferret’s clawed fingers combing through her facial fur at the rather persistent itch that seemed to have spread from the flamingo.

Arching her brows, she rubbed together her padded fingers. “I mean, time spent looking for lodging is time spent not rooting out the cause of these robberies.” Tail swishing back and forth, it teasingly tickled at the mole’s backside more often than he would have liked. “And time spent not stopping crime means that much more criming that we were just too busy comparing prices between inns across town to stop! The kind of criming that oh say involves robbing merchant’s guilds?”

The Senior Merchant seemed to lose some of his pinkness as he thought about it, and finally conceded. “Oh... Oh very well!” He waddled back over to his large finely made desk, mumbling things about ‘adventurers today’ and ‘desperation’. He stooped down and out of sight, followed by a series of loud clicks and clunks, and finally a slight ‘creeaaaaak’. He stood back up, looking depressedly at the handful of gold and silver coins in his palm and making a kicking motion with his foot, the series of clunks and clicks from before replaying in reverse before becoming silent. Stroking at the smelted metal with his long feathery fingertips, he whispered sweet nothings to them, the edges of his eyes creasing together as he held back the tears.

“Here!” He moaned, holding out the coins to Calista and completely unable to watch what would come next. “Just get it over with!”

Calista rolled her eyes and grabbed his beloved currency out of his hand and put it into her side pouch for safekeeping. “Thank you very much. Your, uh, ‘sacrifice’ will go a long way to help us out.”

He sniffed and nodded slowly, biting the tips of his feathery fingers nervously as he stared at the pouch. Oh to think, he could still pick up their dull metallic taste! Every little thing reminded him of his coin children. “Please, take care not to jostle them around too much. A-and make sure you polish them each and every single night!”

“For cryin’ out loud...” Tyla mumbled under his breath and then tugged at Calista’s toned arm. “Come on, Cal. I think we’ve gotten all we need from here.” He then turned to the

distraught flamingo and bowed low. "Thank you for everything, I promise you we will find a way to end all of this."

"Don't worry sir, this capable couple is on the case!" A thick and fluffy arm tossed over Tyla's shoulder, Calista pulling him close against her chest and donning a toothy smile.

"I thought we were going with dynamic duo?" Mumbling under his breath, the mole attempted to disengage the hug.

In response to his vain efforts, no doubt playing hard to get, the ferret snuggled her ranger closer. "Dating dynamos?"

"Can we please not have this conversation here?" He wheezed, said snuggles squeezing the air out of Tyla's lungs.

"Oh fine, fine. Spoilsport." She smirked, releasing her friend from her bone-crushing hug.

Tyla took a deep breath and smoothed out his cloak, blushing slightly as he looked back up towards the Senior Merchant. "Um... Yes, well then. We'll just be going."

The flamingo nodded slowly, feeling rather awkward at witnessing a display of affection towards something that was not money. "Ahem. W-w-well then." Goodness gracious these youths today, so uncouth! "Do recall that your funds are intended for bringing these wave of thefts to an end, not for some passionate pants on hugging!" Flapping his wings, he trotted after them out the heavy iron double doors marking the merchant guild's sole entrance and exit.

Sounds of steel rods sliding against one another registered in their ears, a nest of locks cradled and curled in and around the ornate handles used to gain entry. Jangling a ring comprised of keys sporting every hue and color attainable from years of rust, be it a molten red or moldy blue, the Senior Merchant tucked it away deep within his robe's inner pockets. The two shared a look as the doors slammed shut behind them, the flamingo giving them one final indignant huff before leaving them to their own devices.

"I thought we discussed your unbridled displays affection in front of potential employers?" Tyla said, staring up at his well-built lady friend. A startled eep escaped his maw when she shifted her body towards him, the ferret's generous chest pressing into the underside of his chin.

"Unbridled? Nonsense, that was me being very held back." Calista grinned widely at him and leaned down slightly, her chin pressing down upon his noggin and giving him a rather incredible view of the bountiful and fleshy valleys jutting from her torso. "Of course, if you want to see me unbridled we can certainly arrange that..."

Tyla's black fur simmered, tips of his fur hissing with heat as an embarrassed red glow

spread across his cheeks. Stuttering, he pressed up on his tiptoes, lifting up her chin and forcing her to stand back up. "C-come on, you know I'm not ready for any kinda commitment like that. A-and anyways, we've got a job to do first and foremost."

"Hmm, I guess you're right. A friend of mine told me about an inn in town called the 'Electric Sheep' or something. Apparently it has decent prices, clean rooms, and a really good turkey sandwich! I'll go and see about getting us a room there." She gave him a wink and turned around quickly, making sure to bop the mole on the nose with her tail as she sauntered away.

"M-make sure you get a room with *two* beds this time, please!" Tyla called after her, doing his best not to stare at her shapely rear as she walked away. Those wondrous fleshy globes nestled tightly within her stockings jiggled gently with every sway of her hips and dammit she was sashaying like that on purpose!

"What was thaaaat? Can't hear youuuu!" She called back over her shoulder before turning a corner and heading out of sight.

Tyla sighed and shook his head. Admittedly he DID find Calista quite attractive, in fact he had felt so since the day he'd first laid eyes on her during one of the 'field days' that the ranging academy and the local monkhood liked to host for their students. Of course, that initial awe had been quickly replaced by a sore head after she whacked him with her quarterstaff. Turned out the ferret was not above getting in a free hit while the mole stared slack jawed at her assets. Yes, as far as first impressions go, picking a practice fight with someone who was your physical superior was probably a bad idea. The ogling certainly didn't help, in retrospect.

Despite the sweltering bump on his noggin, he actually managed to put up a fairly good fight against Calista before a few more well-placed whacks brought him down. However, Tyla had apparently made a good enough impression on her during the not entirely one sided beatdown. She specifically requested that he be put on her team for the next 'combined-school' mission that they could be sent on. After they'd graduated they decided to stick together and make a name for themselves as an adventuring duo (or couple, as far as Calista was concerned) and the rest, as they say, was history.

Tyla sighed, shaking his head to dismiss the thoughts. He could think about this more tonight with Calista, but for now he had to try and figure out what was going on around here. "These robberies... who could benefit from such a bizarre turn of events?" Piles of gold, silver, and jewels were vanishing off to somewhere. "Maybe that's how we should proceed, lay some bait we know we can track!" His brows creased flat upon his forehead when a tired groan tumbled out from his lips. Easier said than done.

Shaking his head, Tyla smacked his palms against the side of his face, bapping the bad ideas out of his noggin. He'd need to brainstorm with the monk later. Before then though, the mole figured that the marketplace would be a good place to start, since it tended to be an ideal place to pick up on the rumours that were circulating around town. People just couldn't help

gossiping, for better or for worse. Better to exhaust any and all leads before jumping to conclusions. “Just mosey on through the crowd like I know what I’m doing...” Bringing out the bows, elbows, to be precise, Tyla deftly navigated through the crowds. Nudging and shoving with poise and grace, the mole burrowed his way across the sea of furs with ease. He doubted that he would hear anything incredibly useful right off the bat, and his pessimistic expectations were soundly met. “Gonna have to kick it up a notch!” Intensifying his eavesdropping, Tyla put his short stature to good use. Maneuvering himself so that he was oh so conveniently pushed, pressed, and bumped around the crowds. At least now he might hear some hushed whispers, mayhaps some hints or clues that could point him towards some sort of evil entity or organization that was recruiting new members/peons/cannon fodder.

“Young man! I sense an aura about you!” Came a voice from his left. Paying it no heed, Tyla continued skulking about the masses. “*Ahem* I say, young man!” He looked in the direction it came from and saw an old rabbit woman gesturing for him to come to her with a single, bony finger. She could’ve been hawking at anyone. With a shrug, the mole once more ignored the lapine’s hoarse yells. “YOU. THE MOLE.” Tyla’s eyes shifted side to side. There were plenty of moles in the crowd. “THE RANGER.” Okay that kinda narrowed it down. “IN GREEN.” Awww crap. Darnit why did he ever make eye contact. Rolling his eyes, the irritated ranger shoved his hands into his cloak pockets and trudged on over to the rabbit. She leaned forwards over the bright yellow stand she was standing behind as he approached, the various bangles and beads in her hair clinking together as she did so.

She narrowed her eyes at him and nodded slowly. “Hmmeemehhhkkk,” Bringing a balled up fist to her mouth, the rabbit wracked out a rib rattling cough. “Bleck horf. Bluh.” Wiping her hand against the table, a slick of spit and bile was left behind. “Hmmm, yes... Oh such things I can see... And how strange and wonderful they are, for a young adventurer such as yourself!”

Normally he would not have even bothered with such nonsense, but he was in a decent enough mood to entertain her today. That and her haggling was preferable to her screaming at him over a crowd. “Oh yes, like wh-”

He was suddenly silenced as she held up her hand and pointed towards the sign above the stand. Painted crudely in black paint were the words “FORTUNE TELLING BY IRMA. FIVE SILVER FOR ONE READING. no refunds.” Seriously? Tyla rolled his eyes and placed five silver coins into the old womans palm. Huh.

BLOO HOO HOO! SOB!

Weird. Tyla could’ve sworn he heard a familiar flamingo wailing in the background, almost as if triggered by money exchanging hands.

Irma closed her grasp around them quickly and bit down on each coin with her single buck tooth. She simply giggled at the faint blubbering registering in her long floppy ears. After

their authenticity was assured, the rabbit placed them carefully into one of the pockets of the patchwork dress she was wearing where they clinked together noisily.

“Goood, goooooood! Now we may begin.” She gave him a wide smile and shut her eyes.

Tyla stared blankly at her. Wait, was she taking a nap?

Irma hrrmmed loudly and clenched her eyes shut even tighter, indicating for the mole to do the same.

“Do I really have to?” With a huff, the rabbit answered for him as she leaned over her stand and dragged a hand down across his face, flicking his eyelids down. Grumbling, Tyla made sure to keep a hand on his coin purse and another on the small dagger he kept tucked at his side, should this turn out to be some sort of scam.

“Yes... Ahh I see a woman. Strong and mighty, quite beautiful too! Ahh... She dotes on you very much, doesn't she? I can see that you have travelled together for a very long time, for her aura and yours is very much in sync... Mmm, and a touch of red too? Oh yes! Something greater than friendship exists between you two, though you push it away...”

Tyla cleared his throat, suddenly feeling rather warm under his cloak. How on earth was she able to know all of this? Most of the ‘fortune tellers’ he’d seen gave very vague and general prophecies that could be easily fulfilled by any number of things and let you go on your way! Wait a minute... drat! Shoot he practically just told her that’s exactly how things were between he and Calista! Grumping loudly, he more or less confirmed Irma’s suspicions. “Lady you better not have been stalking us.”

“I see I see... But now the future. I see a blackness inside of this woman. A sickness that overwhelms her and consumes her mind and spirit. It is the very blackness that has infected this town recently... Ahh, but this is not absolute. No, it seems as though you can intervene, should you so choose.”

“Intervene?” She had his attention now. If this rabbit was a con artist, she wasn’t half bad. “How so? You’re saying that Calista is going to get afflicted by this disease, right? And that I’m the only one who can stop it? So how would I do that?”

She let out a low chuckle “I did not say any of that, my young friend. Predicting the future is a difficult business, for the future can be any number of things, or pan out any number of ways. However, in this case... I think I have something that can help you. Open your eyes.”

Once more he felt a furred palm slide over his face, the mole’s nose bent up as Irma’s rough fingers pulled back up his eyelids. “Was that really necessary?” Blinking a few times as his eyes adjusted to the light, Tyla found that the old woman had a vial of some bright blue liquid in her hand.

"This..." She said with a wide smile. "Will solve your problems."

Tyla raised an eyebrow as he looked at the suspicious looking liquid, fingers twiddling against his dagger's sheathe. "Will it now? For all I know, you could be the one behind all this, trying to off me with poison before I get close to whatever you're playing at."

Irma laughed loudly in strained, wheezing gasps and shook her head. "That's right, dear boy, you have no reason to trust me. But by no means are you obliged to drink this... though perhaps you might still take it with you? I promise that if you were to examine it, you would find no trace of poison, nor anything malicious. It will simply... help you, when the time comes."

All this unnecessary vagueness did little to soothe the mole's fears. "How much will this cost me?" asked Tyla. Squinting his eyes, he leaned over her stand and pressed his nose against the curved glass. He'd taken a couple of courses in poison-making back at the academy, and it didn't look to resemble any kind of poison that he knew, at least on the surface. He would have to perform a few more in-depth tests on it as well, since it was fairly easy to disguise the true nature of a poison with a few colouring agents.

She smiled slyly and ran her fingers down the smooth glass of the vial. "Well, normally I would charge one gold piece for a potion of this calibre. But since you've been such an attentive listener... I'll give it to you for twenty silver."

For a moment Tyla was tempted to laugh at her and do an about face, powerwalking the hell away from this ramshackle ripoff as fast as he could. Even if this wasn't a poison, he was just asked to shell out twenty silver for what was likely just lakewater with a bit of colouring. And yet, he had a strange feeling in the pit of his stomach. Something deep inside him was telling him to accept this woman's offer. And so, despite every instinct of his telling him this was a scam, his fingers pulled loose the threads pulling taut the mouth of his coin purse. "Gee, what a bargain." His tone dripping with sarcasm, Tyla placed twenty silver into the rabbit woman's hand.

The rabbit's smile grew even wider as she looked over the bits of metal in her palm, not even bothering to check them before shoving them in her pocket with the five coins from before. Patches in her coat sagged under the weight of her payment. "You've made a wise decision, my young friend." Irma said, handing the vial over to Tyla and pushing his fingers closed as she patted his hand. "A word of advice though... Drink it indoors."

"Indoors?" He frowned and glanced down at the bright blue liquid inside the vial after pulling his hands away from the fortune teller's fingers of questionable sanitation.

"What do you me- Oh Gods damn it!" Tyla cried as he looked back up to see that the stand and the fortune teller had completely vanished in a poof of noxious smoke, accompanied by the sounds of someone blowing a very wet raspberry!

“Great. Just great. This stuff’s going to turn me into a lamp or something, isn’t it?” he grumbled out loud to no one in particular. Turning his head this way and that, he still slipped it into the pouch at his side when no one was looking. Lamp-turning properties or not, he’d paid good money for this and he wasn’t just going to throw it out.

Tyla brought his fingers up to his forehead and rubbed at his temples. The sun was hanging low in the sky now, and what had he managed to do so far? The mole had gotten a potion of dubious authenticity and shelled out twenty five gold to a fortune teller of all people. If Calista ever found out about this she’d never let him live it down. Oh well, the one silver lining to all this was it wasn’t his own money he’d been fleeced out of.

He supposed that the best thing to do would be to watch the merchants guild for any suspicious activity tonight since it was likely the next building to be hit. With any luck they’d be able to figure out the cause of the sleepwalking, or at the very least follow the sleepwalker to where they were hiding the valuables. Now that’s an idea!

Groooooaannn...

But first he would have to eat, as his stomach helpfully reminded him. Poking and kneading at the rumbling only angered his tummy, prompting it to demand food even louder! He rubbed his stomach and brought a small blue crystal out of his pocket. Spinning round his padded palm, it gently floated off of his hand and rotated around a few times before stopping, indicating the direction of a similar crystal that Calista kept with her. Walking in the direction that the crystal indicated, Tyla smirked softly as he remembered one of the first lessons about adventuring with Calista that he’d learned: never ever head out with an empty stomach, lest you incur the wrath of the hungry ferret!

“Gahhh, this darn itch!” Scratching furiously at her arm, Calista practically rubbed her right forearm raw. If that Senior Merchant gave her fleas somehow, then he better... “Hmm?” Pupils straining at the sides of their sockets, something shimmered at the periphery of the ferret’s vision. To her right was but a simple fruit stand, manned by a tired and weary rough collie. Snoring softly, an ocean of drool emptied out from his muzzle, drowning half his stock in slobber! Splinters sticking up out of the fraying and blackened boards making up his stand wobbled under the waves of saliva batting relentlessly at their sides. At the very edge of his stand though, taking refuge on what little dry land remained and practically teetering over the edge, twas an apple. A marvelous one at that! Its red waxy surface practically glowed in the sunlight, unnaturally so compared to the other fruits wailing out their goodbyes as they vanished into the depths of doggy drool.

“Hehe, I’ll take one please.” Calista whispered, balancing a coin on the edge of her thumb and flicking it up into the air. It landed on the stand with a wet splat, the monk’s padded

fingers curling around the fruit and yoining it away before spittle could rain down upon it.

Already halfway across town, the flamingo clutched at his chest, gasping for air. A chill wind rattled at his very soul, a faint voice inquiring how he could be so cruel to let such a terrible fate befall them? His secretary gave him a lopsided look and asked what was the matter, to which he replied "It's as though a small voice called out in fear and was suddenly silenced."

Rubbing the apple against her chest, Calista smiled at seeing her own reflection on its shimmering surface. "I mean honestly, how could Tyla say no to a face like this?" Fusses and tuts spilled forth from her lips, the girl just couldn't help but feel sorry for him! "Ah well, he'll come around one of these days." Sinking her teeth into the apple's waxy skin, she hummed in delight, juices pooling around her lips. Subtle tremors wracked her body at every gulp and swallow though the ferret paid them no mind, too entranced with quite possibly the juiciest deliciousest apple she'd ever had the sweet fortune to nom! "Deliciousest? Is that a word?" She tossed the remainder into her mouth, devouring the core and all. "If it wasn't it should be!"

Standing before the 'Electric Sheep' Calista struggled to squeeze herself through the front entrance. Honestly seven feet wasn't that tall! Why did every inn have to be like this? Hunched over, she pressed her arms to her sides. Fluffy biceps nearly scraping the doorframes out of the walls as she forced her way inside. "Bright side is the more room I take up, the less room Tyla has to resist and escape my snuggly advances." Plodding over to the front desk, she could only hope that the wooly sheep shrinking away behind the counter would tell her exactly what she wanted to hear. That they were down to their last room, a tiny hole in the wall with one of everything, forcing the mole to share a bed and cuddle up tight into her broad and muscular frame.

"W-welcome to t-t-the Electric Sh-sheep!" the sheep managed to squeak out as Calista loomed over the front desk, her thick shadow swallowing up the quaking fellow. "Clean beds, f-fast service a-a-and good food!"

Lips curled up and parted to reveal a toothy grin, the ferret plonked her heavy hands down on the the desk. Her eyes locked with his own, the monk slowly pulled herself closer and closer towards the shivering clump of wool. "I'd like a room for me and my man, single bed and as tiny a room as I can get!"

The attendant let out a tiny 'baah!' as the ferret invaded his personal bubble. Quirking his head, he dared to inquire of her. "T-tiny?"

"Mmhmm! Small enough so that he has no choice but to be pressed up against my body, powerless to resist my natural feminine charms and strong, loving embrace... He'd look me in the eye's and then..." She trailed off as she envisioned her moment of triumph in her head. Hands pressed against her cheeks, Calista's rear wiggled happily behind her.

"W-well we do have a room that might suit your, er, 'needs'." He piped up before she

could get into anymore detail about her already weird and vivid fantasies. Back turned to her, he stood up on his tip-hooves. Arms pulling at their sockets, he stretched his limbs to reach the keys that were always just a out of reach for him. Swatting his hand at the rack of hooks behind his desk, he managed to knock down a rusty looking key. He wiped the dust off with his nubby little fingers and handed it over to her. "H-here we have our 'heritage' room."

"Heritage?" She asked as she grabbed the key from his hand and placed two gold coins on the desk.

He gathered up the coins and stuck them into his wool, nodding quickly. "Y-yes! It's the only room that remains from the old inn that this one was built on top of. Very popular with those who like a rustic feel and want some historical accuracy."

Calista scrunched her toes up in joy as she listened to his description of the room. Cramped, dark, and apparently smelling faintly of fish... PERFECT. Moles liked fish, right? Or was it bugs? Well in the end she supposed it didn't really matter. So long as she had the little cutie to snuggle close to her it would be the most wonderful room in the universe.

"Uh... M-ma'am?" The still nameless sheep bahh'd at her, waving a nubby arm in front of the goofy smile creeping up along her face. "W-would you like me to take you to your room?"

The monk blinked, her grin fading as her overly fantastical and passionate daydreams were brought back down to earth. Darnit, that had been a particularly snuggle and cuddle minded fantasy too. "Oh! Yeah, sure! Thanks a lot!"

With a nod, the sheep indicated for her to follow him as he lead Calista down a rather cramped hallway.

Slouched over, the ferret's ears brushed against the ceiling, her thick toned arms and legs scraping at the wooden paneling lining the walls.

Reaching the end of the hallway, the sheep bleated when he found himself trapped between a wall of a ferret and a small wooden door that could easily have been mistaken for a broom closet. "H-here we are, I hope you find e-everything to your liking."

Calista poked her head in after squeezing by the sheepy, practically flattening his wooly form against the wall in the process. She grinned her widest grin of the entire day, tail wagging happily as she examined the cramped room. "It's peeeeeerfect! Thanks a bunch!" She didn't even bother looking at the wooly attendant before closing the door behind her and walking towards the edge of the bed. She set up her quarterstaff and the rest of her supplies up against the wall, taking care to make sure that it wouldn't fall over in the middle of the night again. Last time her staff had rolled over to Tyla's bed and the poor mole had tripped on it when he awoke the next morning. She'd gotten quite an earful from him afterwards about being responsible with her equipment and such.

Of course... She mused as she slipped down to her undergarments and kicked her battle gown beneath the bed. *It only took a few close snuggles for all to be forgiven, which means his resistance is getting weaker and weaker!* She grinned and ran her arms down her curvaceous sides, giving her rear a good wiggle as she examined herself. *There's no way he's going to be able to resist aaaalll this!*

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Ribbons of oranges, purples, and pinks had spread across the sky by the time Tyla found the inn, the sun having just dipped past the horizon. The crystals were a great way of finding each other in a crowded city/dungeon, in theory. Unfortunately, poor city planning made proceeding along in a straight line far more difficult than it should have been. Only after navigating countless twisting and branching back alleys and dead ends did the ranger finally reach his destination. It was a humble looking building, a picture of a strange looking blue sheep with black and yellow horns hanging from the front with the words *Electric Sheep Inn* written beneath it. Pressing his hand against the wooden door, chipping green paint flaked off onto palm. Tyla tapped his boots against the ground before entering, shaking free some mud and pebbles.

A tired looking sheep perked up slightly as he noticed the mole walk in. "Welcome - yaaaawn- to the Electric Sheep! Clean beds, fast service and great food!" He rubbed at his eyes tiredly and shook his head. "Mmm, excuse me. I've had an... interesting day."

Tyla couldn't help but smirk as he approached the desk. "Let me guess, you had a run in with an extraordinarily tall ferret woman?"

The sheep let out a bleat of surprise, but nodded quickly. "Y-yes! Oh! You must be, um, her 'man'. You have a lot less grey in your fur than I would have expected."

"Hmm, you know... Now that you mention it I have to wonder why I don't resemble an albino." Tyla smirked at him, and for a brief moment the two shared a level of understanding the likes of which had only been rivalled by Isaac Newton's encounter with the apple.

"Well, she's been in the room since she arrived. Dinner's going to start in a little while, chef's going to be happy that he'll finally have someone to eat all his food." The sheep nodded towards a door on his right. "The dining room is there, and your room is at the very end of that hallway behind me."

Tyla thanked him and gathered up as much courage as he could before venturing down the hallway. He hesitantly set one foot down before the other on his approach to their room.

"Oooooooooooooog." Rubbing her hands along her bloated belly, Calista let out a

monstrous urp. So much for seducing Tyla with her feminine wiles. Closing her eyes, the monk tried to ignore her throbbing temples. Like clockwork they pulsed painfully, filling her ears with the sounds of her blood pumping and thumping to the tune of her heartbeat. Every time she shifted in place in bed, her veins pulled at her neck like bungee cords stretched painfully taut.

"Never should have eaten that apple," Calista mumbled aloud. Darn collie could have drooled over his wares earlier in the day even, wiping them dry the last time he woke up! Rolling onto her side, the bed groaned and buckled under her generousness.

Furred fingers wrapped around the doorknob, Tyla forced down the lump in his throat. "I really hope she isn't 'coincidentally' changing right as I happen to barge in this time." Such had been the case at the last three inns they'd stayed at on their travels. He didn't think it much of a coincidence since every time prior he could hear her paws scrabbling across the floor immediately after he knocked. Breathing in deeply, he steeled his nerves and pressed his weight into the door.

Eyes clenched shut, he worriedly waited for a exaggerated gasp or a pair of broad bulky arms to wrap themselves around him. Said hug nor unwanted groping came. "Calista?" Daring to open an eye, Tyla's pupil darted back and forth across the room. Okay, this wasn't like her at all. "Calista?" If she wasn't trying to smother him with affection something was up. "Oh no..." His eyes went wide as his gaze settled on the ferret curled up on the bed. That hackjob fortune teller was right! "Calista! Come on, if you're playing sick again just so you can hug me when I get close it won't work! Three times is too many!"

"Tyla? Nnf, no... My stomach... Urgh..." Calista moaned pitifully from the bed which creaked horribly beneath her weight as she tried to roll herself up to look at him and failed miserably.

Plopping down on the bed beside her, Tyla's lips curled back at the sound of the frame splintering under their combined weight. "Take it easy, Calista." He rubbed at her broad muscular back, the ferret groaning softly at his touch. After a time she quieted down, the only sounds to be heard the whistling of air steadily being sucked into and blown out of her nostrils.

Frowning, Tyla flicked open the flap on his pouch. "This better be worth it, Irma." Padded fingers wrapped around the blue vial, he popped off the glass top letting it clink at his feet. Swirling the liquid inside, he brought it up to his nose and took a few good whiffs of it. Didn't smell like any kind of poison he knew of. He took another sniff. Or... much of anything, really! "Do it for her, do it for her, do it for her," the ranger repeatedly told himself as he brought the curved glass container up to his lips and chugged its contents. "Hmmm." Tyla smacked his lips together. "Blueberry!"

At first, he felt nothing at all. Tyla continued to rub his sparse tongue along his lips, savoring the berry blast of flavor. Eyebrows arched, the mole kicked his legs back and forth in the air. "Anyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy time now." In fact, it took so long for him to feel anything that

he had to wonder if it was a fake after all. "Well," he curled his fingers around the vial and held it up to his muzzle, "even if it was a ripoff, at least it tasted good." However before he could reflect more on how delicious the drink was, Tyla's vision began to cloud and he felt a heavy haze come over him.

"Great..." He mumbled as he flumped against Calista's broad lower back. The mole's limbs went numb, flopping against the mattress beneath them. Fingers loosening around the vial, it rolled out of his grasp and off onto the floor. "It's some kind of weird dream sequence... I haaaaaaaate interpreting. Inter- Interpreting those." His eyes fluttered shut and the world went dark.

Tyla let out an ear splitting yawn when he roused himself from his impromptu nap. "Not very professional," he groggily reminded himself, "but sleep does the body good." Eyelids still too heavy to lift, he rolled the back of his head side to side against his pillow. Goodness it was just so supple and warm. This pillow... it was firm yet gave just enough for his skull to sink into the tiniest amount, conforming gently to the shape of his head. "Mmfff, the Electric Sheep doesn't cut corners." With a happy sigh, the mole dragged his hand up alongside him to let his fingertips scrape against such high quality bedding. Squeezing it gently within his grasp, the pillow case covering it was just silky smooth and soft as could be, warmth radiating out from its interior. "Heated pillows? Isn't that something..." Turning his head to the side, Tyla nuzzled into the luxurious clouds he had been fortunate to rest his weary head upon.

Suddenly a name popped into his head: Calista. Why was that important again? Something about her stomach... Did she eat too much fish again? No, no that wasn't it. There was something about a vial too. He groaned, not yet wanting to leave the luxurious bed he was pressed up against.

"Okay. Gotta get up. Let's just try one eye..." Tyla mumbled to himself, sloooooooooooooowly opening up his right eye, blinking as it adjusted to the dim light of the room. The first thing the mole noticed was not so much a pillow, but a wall of white. Eggshell white to be exact, and it encompassed the entirety of his limited vision. Head swishing this way and that the mole found his mattress and pillow were one in the same, both hailing from the monolith of gentle fabric before him. Tilting his head back, the ranger discovered that his bed, if it could still be called that, stretched up towards the sky and replaced nearly the whole horizon! Fields of brown and cream colored stalks shimmered and swayed at the edges of the wall of white, much to the mole's confusion. "What on earth..." Reluctantly, Tyla reached forward and pressed his hand into the soft and convex monolith, its curves expanding out and then back in. Waves rippled out beneath the fabric from his touch. "Oh no."

Thunder rumbled in the air as another wall of white piled on top of what was already there, sending massive ripples of energy rolling down towards him. Two convex walls of luxurious fabric pressed against each other, warm and delightful to the touch. Tyla's jaw went slack when the realization dawned. What he was looking at were a pair of what seemed to be rather thick, mountainous, shapely thighs in front of him. His second eye snapped open to

double check what the first had seen, and both agreed that they were indeed seeing the same thing. "Agh!" the ranger cried, pushing away from what he now realized was Calista's shapely behind. Not that the action did him much good, as his hands simply sank into his friend's plush tush as he tried forcing himself away.

"C-calista!" Tyla cried as he tried to scramble back to the other side of the bed, the large claws on his footpaws catching on the individual threads of the fabric within the sheets. "Oh gods, I didn't mean it! Please don't be mad..." He paused, remembering exactly who he was addressing. "Oh who am I kidding, she'd love this."

The only response he got back from the landmass of a ferret was a snore that resembled an earthquake and some incomprehensible mumbling. There was a fairly tumultuous *wooshing* sound behind him, a gale of hurricane force wind tossing him forward and embedding him into the monk's rear. When he peeled himself away from his fleshy prison, Tyla saw what appeared to be a wall of fur sliding back and forth across miles of bedding. Immense strands of silky looking fur bent and groaned as they slid across the loops of the thin bedsheet. "*Her tail,*" he thought to himself as he stared at it. "*Well, at least she's having a good dream.*"

So apparently that vial was filled with some sort of shrinking potion that had brought him down to the size of a grain of sand. While the alchemist in him wondered exactly how one could concoct such a potion, another much louder part of his mind was screaming one simple question. "Well how the hell is THIS supposed to help!?" cried the tiny mole, looking towards Calista's continental rear as if expecting it to answer.

However, much to Tyla's surprise, it did. The wall of white fabric began to stretch and groan as the outline of Calista's rear began to push against it. "Oh Gods no! How is that even possible!?" he screamed, realizing that by some cruel turn of events the already immense ferret was growing. "Wait." Though his heart pounded its way out of his ribcage, clarity had shined down upon words lingering at the back of mind. "Is this the blackness Irma warned me about? The one infecting Calista and the town at large?" Threads as thick as his arm snapped and cracked violently as fur and flesh spilled out from the gaps in her undergarments. Then, like the most monolithic tidal wave imaginable, she began to roll over onto her back. The cheek that she had put most of her weight on before began to ripple and shake as the weight shifted off of it, the vibrations throwing the infinitesimal ranger onto his stomach before it.

Tyla braced himself for the inevitable as the world around him went dark. A thick wall of fabric threatened to crush him first, tragedy averted as it was torn asunder from the inside out. It split apart from the flood of butt gushing out from the multiplying wears and tears spreading across Calista's underwear. Instead, an incredible forest of fur crashed down around him, burying him beneath the acres of flesh spanning the ferret's swelling rear.

The pressure that surrounded him was intense, restricting most of his movement. Calista's rear conformed around him, walls of booty flesh pressing upon him from all sides. A passing ripple freed him from his prison, bouncing him up over his spot, giving the ranger a

quick chance to look around. Mole's having naturally wonderful eyesight in the dark combined with his training as a ranger allowed him to get an idea of his surroundings fairly quickly. Several strands of cream and brown fur were pressed down around him, giving the impression of sleek trees that formed a low canopy over the expanse of flesh that he was stuck to. Save for the peculiar fact they dropped down from sky of butt above.

You know something? This is really nice! Cried some small, traitorous part of his mind.

"What? No! This is very dangerous! In fact, it's especially dangerous since she doesn't even know I'm here." He replied, appalled that his brain could even fathom such an idea.

Hmm, you're right. It would be much better if she knew we were here! Then she could reach back with those strong, soft hands of hers and press us right up into it. Ooh, that's a good one, I'm gonna write that down.

"Nooooooooo no no no! Shut up! I am most definitely not enjoying this! Wait, write it down? Where would you even get a piece of paper or a pen?!"

Mmhmm. Scribble scribble.

"You're just making sounds now! " He humphed and crossed his arms over his chest as the next ripple of rear flesh passed over. "Darnit at least let me pretend I'm not enjoying this while I'm in eminent danger!"

After the fact then?

"...Maybe."

However before he could have any more metaphysical arguments with himself, the world around him began to shift once more. Tyla found himself being bounced around by Calista's bootyflesh as it began to shift and turn. The trees of fur tipped on their sides, lying flat against the fleshy ground. Calista groaned and rolled about in bed, flumping flat onto her tummy. With a creak, the ferret's individual strands of fur peeled itself off her rear. Standing tall, the fluffy trees loomed high over the mole, swallowing him up in their shadows.

Tyla took a deep breath of air into his lungs as Calista turned over, relieved to finally have a full range of motion back. "Guess I should figure out where to go from here." he mumbled to himself. Staying here wouldn't really help anything, especially if she decided to roll over once again. The best course of action would probably be to make his way up her back and to her ears. "Hope I can make it there before she wakes up." The ranger grimaced, definitely not enjoying the thought of her waking up and going about her day without knowing he was there.

Sooooooooo... we good to revel in the presence of this bountiful booty now?

“Stop that.”

Divine derriere?

“NO MORE ALLITERATION.” Swatting at the air as if to dispel his thoughts, Tyla yelped when he felt the ground give out beneath him. Without warning Calista’s acres of bountiful booty vanished in a suffocating whoosh of air, having up and suddenly relocating what felt like miles away beneath the mole’s feet. Flailing his arms in the air uselessly, Tyla’s screams were overshadowed by an explosive rumble echoing through the room.

Calista’s bloated and swelling form had proven too much for the already strained bed, it having spilt asunder in a shower of springs and splinters. Sleeping right through the fall, the monk nuzzled into her mattress as her thick fat toes pressed into the opposite wall. The ferret’s digits leaving indents in the wooden paneling.

Closing his eyes, Tyla could only pray for a swift death while he uselessly flailed his arms in the air. He had already screamed himself hoarse during the tens of seconds of freefall, much to his embarrassment. Trying to mumble out your last words with a dry and scratchy throat was no way to go out at all! “Oh Calista, I’m sorry I never told you how much I IOOOOOF!” Confessions of affection were cut short as the mole made landfall.

Embedded between the ripples of flesh cascading across her behind, a rich and suffocating warmth enveloped Tyla. Slamming softly into Calista’s rear, the mole could only blink while his facial fur transitioned between hues of crimson and beet red. “O-okay, so maybe this isn’t all that bad.” He opted to allow himself time to catch his breath, the ranger hesitating to pull free from his gal pal’s safe and snuggly entrapment. “It’s not like I want to stay this way forever, after all...” Shaking impure thoughts free from his mind, most of them anyway, Tyla steadied himself on his feet.

Now all he had to do was figure out which way the ferret’s ears were...

“BWAHAHAHA!”

...Orrrrr he could go investigate the ominous sounding laughter he just heard. Tyla’s mind drug up fond memories at the Ranger Academy. Ah, this was something straight out of Villain Identification 101! Ominous laughing tended to be a sure sign of ne’er do wells, especially if accompanied by evil sound effects. Monologues were also a dead giveaway. “Wait. What would a villain be doing on Calista’s shapely rear?”

WHO CARES. SOMEONE’S HORNING IN ON OUR TURF! The mole’s naughtier thoughts irately screamed out.

“Yes! Yess! This buffoon will be the perfect for my biggest haul yet! So nice of her to drop me off right into her cleavage straight away, too... Much preferable to dealing with that

insufferable bird's head. Never met anyone with such sensitive skin before!" There was a pause as whoever it was seemed to consider something. "Mmm, you know at the end of the day, I guess this really more about the journey than it was the rewards. I mean, who would think that a mere flea could bring an entire town AND it's greatest hero to their big, stupid knees!" Said flea dusted off his chest with one of his many arms. "... huh." The insect's shoulders drooped. "I really don't know what I'll do with myself after this. Maybe I should pick up basket weaving?" Snapping his thumb and index fingers together, he nodded knowingly. "Yes, that sounds like a fulfilling hobby!"

"Wait a minute. A flea?!" Yelled Tyla, bursting into a 'clearing' in the thick forest of fur, right into sight of the bloodsucker.

"Yes, a flea! Oh damnit! Why'd you have to ask that!? I had this whole routine planned out and everything..." The insect threw up all of his arms at once, glaring at the hooded ranger in annoyance. "Honestly, I spent a good two hours practicing this whole speech out loud! I had flashcards and everything!"

"Oh, uh... I'm really sorry man. Look I can just leave for a bit, and you can restart and I'll burst in after you finish?" Tyla offered helpfully, blushing at how terribly rude he'd been.

Huffing grumpily, the flea tapped his feet against a stalk of hair impatiently. "No, you threw off my flow and everything!" Tugging at his sleeves, tiny scraps of paper fluttered down like confetti, each and every one filled to the brim with notes and cues for his monologue. "Geeze, I don't even remember where I was at now. Thanks a lot, you bum!" After a moment, he giggled at his own barb. "Haha, okay given where we're at right now that was a pretty good jab."

Hehehe. Bum. Tyla rolled his eyes at the stray thought.

"Ahh, I'm sorry, see Calista's usually the one who does all the confronting. I'm usually the one who makes sure their 'shadow assassins' or whatever aren't going to appear behind us all of a sudden." Tyla explained, rubbing the back of his head in embarrassment and wishing that Calista was here to think up the heroic puns like she usually did. Well, okay technically she WAS here, but not in any way that would help him with comebacks.

"Hmmpf." It was better than nothing, the flea supposed. "Apology accepted." Sighing to himself, the insect hopped down from his eye in the sky, springing around Tyla like a crunchy blur. "I suppose introductions are in order."

"Ahh, r-right." Replied Tyla as he struggled to follow the flea's rapid movements. "My name's Tyla. Ranger, poisons-maker, and the partner of the owner of the derriere we're on right now!"

"Oooh! Aren't you a lucky fella," the blur congratulated him as it bolted by, bouncing between the stalks of ferret fur.

"It's not like that, w-we're not a couple!" The mole whined aloud, his cheeks burning hot at the mention. "Well not yet, anyway."

"Uh huh." Slamming into the supple flesh before the ranger, the flea's knees wobbled. Ripples in the booty beneath him were throwing the miniscule villain off balance. "Well then Tyla, it's a displeasure to make your acquaintance. Standing before you is none other than the one, the only, Titus the Terrible!" His four arms held out to his sides, Titus cocked his head back and smirked at the mole. The flea's smile faded at the sight of Tyla's blank expression. "Let me guess." Titus' arms draped against chest. "Never heard of me?"

"I can't say that I have! I wasn't aware there were any flea villains at all, actually. Seems like it'd be kind of difficult." Retorted the mole as he slowly reached back for his bow, carefully balancing himself as the flesh underneath him shook and wobbled.

Taking in a deep breath, Titus' chitinous chest expanded while he clenched his fists together. "Come on Titus remember the classes, steady breaths." Exhaling loudly, he splayed out his fingers and shook his head. "Bwahaha that's right, just like I expected!" Head tilted back the flea cackled at the sky, his forced laughter tapering off into a tired sigh. "Can't say I'm surprised." Bringing his hands up to his cheeks, he slapped away that frown creasing his crunchy visage. "But that's okay, I just have to keep focused on the silver lining to being completely ignored!"

"You don't have to pay taxes?" Tyla asked. *Hey, this 'snappy retort' thing isn't so hard after all!*

"Yes! Wait, no! NO." Titus cried in frustration, his four fists clenching and unclenching as he stared at the loathsome mole before him. "I am a criminal genius, you see! By working my own breed of magic into these poor fools, I can force them to do my bidding! Although..." The flea brought a hand up to his chin and stroked his chin in thought. "You are right about the tax evasion thing." That was neither here nor there though. "Anyway, as I was saying. People's complete and utter lack of acknowledgement has worked to my complete and total advantage! Think about it, people don't pay attention or care about villains as...welll," Titus gestured to himself, "people as insignificant as me. And..." Goodness where were his manners! "Actually, you don't mind if I start monologuing right now do you? You do kinda owe me."

"Uhhhh go for it?"

"Great!" This kid wasn't all that bad. If he kept it up, he could be prime nemesis material! "Anyway, it's just really frustrating, you know? I make people itch and scratch and pilfer their valuables and all I do is get shrugged off and ignored!" Titus crossed his arms about his chest and scowled. "It'd be nice to be acknowledged for my evil-doing now and then. At first I cursed the gods for my short and pathetic stature, thinking I was doomed to irrelevance as a villain. But then one day during my anger management counseling, it hit me!" The flea clasped a curled fist

against an open palm. "Being so utterly and easily ignored was my greatest strength as a bad guy! I can evil without worry since no one will notice or care."

Scratching at his rumbling stomach, Tyla timidly raised a hand.

Titus' antennae flicked to attention. "Hmm?"

"Not to be rude or anything but uhhh are you going to be at this much longer? I kind of missed lunch and dinner and well..." Tyla's stomach finished for him by grumbling loudly.

"Ah what kind of villain would I be if I didn't cater to the heroes who opposed me! One sec." Turning his back on the mole, Titus mumbled to himself as he fished through his pockets. "Care for a turkey sandwich?" His carapaced fingers clenched around two bread crumbs, a tiny piece of turkey wedged between them. Pulling an arm back, the flea lobbed it towards the ranger.

"Certainly!" Tyla cupped his palms together, catching the foodstuffs at the bottom of its arc through the air. Opening his mouth wide, the mole hungrily dug into his meal. "Thanks!" He mumbled between puffed out cheeks. "Carry on," Tyla spoke between chews.

"Right! So like I was saying, being a total unknown is my greatest strength. After some anger management classes, soul searching introspection, and some more anger management classes, I finally dived back into my nefarious calling with renewed zeal!"

Sitting cross legged on but a fraction of Calista's vast booty, Tyla merely nodded as he continued to chow down.

"As is, someone like me can break into any store or home that I please. Now breaking and entering is all fine and dandy but come on." Once more Tyla tossed his hands out to his sides. "Look at me, I'm a flea. Just because I can sneak into places doesn't mean I'm actually strong enough to sneak stuff back out."

Tyla nodded in silent agreement, wiping away the crumbs of crumbs collecting on his muzzle.

"So I think to myself 'Titus! There has to be some way to put your amazing ability to be completely ignored to better use.' And turns out I was right! I may not be big enough or strong enough to burgle." Arching his brows, the flea tapped a foot against the supple flesh wobbling beneath them. "But it's not like I was left wanting for help, voluntary or otherwise."

Chewing his food slowly, the mole narrowed his eyes and locked stares with the diabolical bug.

"Using my magics, I was able to compel these lumbering locals to do my dastardly

deeds for me. I've gone and put being overlooked to good use making it so that even as I commit more and more visible crimes, no one suspects a thing!"

"So it was you!" Indignant, Tyla was tempted to rise to his feet but man oh man this sandwich was just too good. Couldn't hurt to let Titus monologue on for just a little bit longer. "Magics? When Calista and I questioned the Senior Merchant about these rash of robberies they said magic had been ruled out as a cause."

To that, the flea harrumphed. "Great so they even gloss over my magic too? Err..." Titus shook his head. "Silver linings, silver linings..." he repeated over and over again in his head. "I mean, bwahaha just as I thought! Even now my amazing ability to be ignored works wonders!"

Plopping the last of his sandwich between his lips, the ranger hrrrmed aloud. "Building up your fortunes for some nefarious endgame I take it?"

Titus' head bobbed side to side as his two left arms rubbed at his two right arms. "Ehhhhhh not exactly. Honestly when I first got started it was mostly just to prove to myself that I could do it. Then I did do it. And just kept at it from there, hitting every shop, stand, and store in town that I could!" Tugging at his collar, the flea smiled contentedly, proud of his notable accomplishments that were the talk of the town. "All that remains is to clear out the merchant guild." Titus chuckled. "Your rather large and well built girlfriend will be the one to help me out with that!"

His meal finished, Tyla rose to his feet and put on the meanest look of righteous indignation he could muster.

"I've been tailing that flamingo for days, just waiting for him to drop a hint or spill the beans on some sort of secret passage or back entrance into the place to no luck. But then you two showed up, much to my eternal delight!" He proceeded to hop circles around the mole. "I jumped ship from merchant to monk and bided my time, waiting for the perfect moment to work my magics into her. Nothing too tricky, just enchanted an apple and that was that." That had been a close one though, the flea had almost drowned in the ocean of drool surrounding it! "She was already plenty strong to begin with. Just mix a sleeping spell in with a buff or two and she'll be more than big enough and bulky enough to rip those bolted doors right off their hinges and abscond with that place's entire stock in a single run!" Titus' evil plan laid bare he laughed his evil laugh, twiddling his fingers in the air. "Tonight, the merchant's guild! Tomorrow the... well I haven't quite figured that out yet."

Tyla brought the bow over his shoulder and had an arrow nocked and pointed at Titus within seconds once the flea became distracted by his own thoughts. "Well you'll have to understand that I cannot allow you to continue in your evil and slightly creepy ways!"

The flea's rolled his tiny eyes and shook his head at Tyla. "Slightly creepy? You think I enjoy this kind of thing? Listen bub, for every attractive young lady I get to control there are at

least ten grey-furred old merchants and shopkeepers.” He paused to shiver as he remembered how bad of a headache the pink hue and grating voice of the Senior Merchant had given him.

“As good a point as that is, the first part of my statement still stands! Now let Calista go this instant.” The ranger pulled back on the drawstring of his bow, feeling it tighten in his grasp.

“Oh very well, I suppose we’ll have to have our glorious final battle now, right? Would you mind if I asked one thing before we started?” The insect asked, stretching his four arms out and cracking his neck in preparation.

Tyla nodded, not taking his eyes off the villain for a moment. “What’s that?”

From his sleeve Titus produced a small rectangle of paper and handed it over to the ranger. “My business card. If we’re going to be nemesi then we ought to keep in touch. I also moonlight as a motivational speaker. Y’know, tell schoolkids that size shouldn’t hold you back and whatnot.”

The mole cautiously accepted the card and placed it into his satchel, pausing briefly to consider just how a flea would get a business card and then deciding it probably wasn’t worth thinking about too hard. “Er, thanks. I’ll make sure to keep it on hand.” Tyla returned to his former position, keeping the arrow trained on Titus’ form.

“Wonderful, now let our battle begin!” Titus exclaimed happily as he bent his legs and took off high into the air, launching himself at a strand of fur.

The speed at which the flea moved caught Tyla off guard and startled him enough to accidentally loose his arrow, which shot forward and embedded itself into the side of another fur strand. “D-dammit!”

“Ha-HA!” Cried Titus from on high as he hopped between strands at a dizzying speed, easily avoiding Tyla’s shots. “My exoskeleton is like a thumbtack! My teeth like needles! My claws, flypaper! The jump of my legs, like moonshoes! My magic, a personal fan! And my laugh, a bath!”

Tyla felt his frustration grow as shot after shot failed to hit the speedy flea. “Why don’t you just hold still?!” He was a good enough shot, but this was ridiculous! Darn flea was moving too quickly to get a proper bead on, and on top of that Titus kept changing up his movement patterns so that Tyla couldn’t predict where he was going to end up next.

“Now, take this! And this! And what the hey, I’m feeling charitable, so have some of this too!” Yelled the flea mage as he flew overhead, launching three spells one after another from each of his hands.

The mole reacted quickly and dove out of the way as the spells impacted and formed a

spear of ice, a burn mark, and a chunk of earth where he was just moments before. "Gah! This is insane. I need time to think..." He grumbled to himself as he dodged another barrage of elemental spells. "I need a distraction!"

Far above the tiny battle, Calista was still gripped by the throes of Titus' magically induced sleep. She dreamt about Tyla finally giving in to her advances, throwing himself into her embrace and engaging in some very passionate pants on hugging. There was only one small thing detracting from her enjoyment of her triumph over the adorable little mole, and that was a slight sensation on her behind. She subconsciously reached back and scratched at the spot a few times before it went away. Satisfied, the ferret put her hand back beneath her head and continued to dream. 'Mmmmph Tyla, I never thought you could be so fresh...' Calista demured, a subtle smile creasing upon her lips.

Tyla had never before considered what an entire mountain coming down from the heavens towards him might look like; but he had to admit that the sight of Calista's enormous claws, with their worn, flat face that had looked so sharp when he was normal sized, was probably more impressive than one could possibly imagine. The seemingly unbreakable stalks of fur relented to its wide berth as the obsidian monolith tore across the pinkish ground, smashing through the remnants of Titus' earlier attacks. The mole himself had almost got caught up on the vast structure, but it had thankfully had retracted back into the skies just before it hit him.

"Heh, thanks for the save there, partner." The ranger quipped, grinning in spite of himself at how well timed that was. Titus' attacks seemed to have stopped for the moment at least, so now he could try and concentrate on a way to beat him. Proud as he was of his abilities, Tyla had to admit that the odds of defeating him the way he dealt with most of his enemies were pretty low, not a single one of his arrows having managed to hit the flea. That and the flea was proving quite formidable being able to multicast. The ranger had been having a tougher and tougher time of dodging the barrage of spells. Much as Tyla hated to admit it, Titus had a major advantage here. The mole just wasn't used to fighting without Calista to back him up, and on top of that the jiggly field of battle was one that he wasn't used to, whereas Titus was right in his element.

"Grr, if only I could keep him still long enough to- Wait!" He snapped his fingers as an idea occurred. "That's it!" It was genius! Why hadn't he thought of it before?

"Heeeey Titus!" Hollered the mole into the forest of branchless trees, hands cupped around his mouth.

"Whaaaaat?! Oh, that's where you are. Just a moment!" Called the dastardly flea moments before he jumped onto the top of a nearby fur strand. "Thought she'd have a thicker skin than that. Ah, well! Are you ready to continue then?"

"Actually I was wondering something! Tell me a bit more about yourself, where were you

born, for instance?" Asked Tyla, an innocent smile on his face.

"Goodness me, you certainly have an odd sense of timing for these questions of yours." Titus replied as he smoothed out one of his sleeves with a couple hands and looked up towards the sky dramatically. "Still, I cannot blame you for being curious, every good villain needs an interesting backstory after all! For the tale of how a mere flea became a mighty wizard is truly an amazing one. You see it all started when my parents emigrated to a Braixen who was studying magic at a local school..."

"Hmmm hmmm yes... veeeery interesting." Tyla made sure to reply periodically with some generic response as he sorted through his various 'special' arrows. *Hmm, should I use the inferno arrow? No, too messy... Maybe the grass binder? Nah, Cal would get mad if I grew a tree on her butt.*

"... five years ago when I accidentally set fire to that hay store while practicing with my fire arm. I mean, honestly, who even keeps a store like that?! That's just so weirdly specific and flammable a thing to devote an entire store to!"

"Must've been terrible..." *Ohh! I could try that new lightning arrow! Hmm, but that might make her scratch at us again.*

"...Met the first love of my life, a mayfly. Unfortunately our romance was cut tragically short..."

"Oh how sad for you..." The mole grinned happily as he found the perfect arrow for the job. Now he just needed a badass closing line. "Oh hey, Titus?"

"Mmm? What?!" The flea looked back towards him, annoyed at being interrupted after getting so deeply into his monologue. "Come now Tyla you don't just ask someone to start monologuing and then go and interrupt them!" Squinting his eyes, he quizzically regarded the notched arrow tugging at the ranger's bowstring. "Oh, you-"

"Think fast!" Tyla shouted, letting loose a silver arrow that sunk itself into the fur strand just below the flea mage. Throwing himself to the ground, the ranger pulled down his hood and covered his head as the arrow exploded into a furious storm of wind that made the stalks of fur bend and strain at it's intense power.

Titus clambered at his wavering foothold, digging all of his fingers into the tip of the monk's hair. One by one his fingers were plucked free until finally he was carried up into the sky. The flea let out a scream of terror as it blew him off of Calista's voluptuous rear and into the darkness of the room, shaking his fists at Tyla as he fell away. "Thiiiiis blooooo00wwwwwwwsssss!"

"Whoo! Hell yeah! 'Rangers are just for support' my ass! Chew on that, *dad!*" Tyla

whooped and threw his hands up in the air as he danced around in a circle.

Suddenly, a flash of sparks and smoke appeared before the mole accompanied by the sound of a wet whoopie cushion. "A fine battle indeed, young adventurer!" Irma coughed as she swatted away the smoke from her entrance. "Bleck, I-" Hacking loudly, the rabbit's silhouette bumped inside the billowing smoke. "Okay I really need to cut down on the gunpowder."

"Waugh!" The victorious mole jumped, mostly from the shock at being caught in such a lame dance and spun around to see the fortune teller from earlier. "Wait a minute, you're the lady who sold me the potion! Listen, not that I'm not grateful or anything... but next time could you tell me what it does before I'm the size of a flea and beneath the shadow of my partners arse?"

"Potion appraisals cost five silver," the fortune teller replied without missing a beat. Tossing up her shoulders in defeat, she finally ventured free from her suffocating stage show entrance. "The terrible blackness that blanketed this town has been lifted!" Tilting her head to the side, the rabbit stroked her chin. "Maybe more it's been swept into the corner but good enough."

"Well that's just wonderful. Now change me back before Calista finds me back here! There's no telling what she'll do with me at this size." His face reddened beneath his hood a bit as he considered the possibilities. "W-what if she wants to hug me?!"

Irma rolled her eyes and shook her head at the mole's frantic display. "You're not even going to ask why I'm here?"

"What? Oh, I dunno... You're some kind of spirit who did this all for my own good so that I could realize my 'true feelings' for Calista or something? Now I assume you're going to congratulate me on a job well done and grow me back to normal." The ranger replied, crossing his arms over his chest with a huff. He had been through far too much today to want to carry this out any longer.

Hands held up in the air, Irma twiddled her fingers as the soothing siren song of somebody blowing a raspberry preceded more displays of smoke and sparks shooting up from her sleeves. "Don't have to go and suck the surprise right out of it you know." Rolling her eyes, she swatted away the wisps of smoke curling around her. "How right you are. I always look out for the best concerns of mortals, you see." Irma gave him a wide smile. "And if I get to make a few silver out of the process... Well then that's just fine too. By the by, the antidote will run you fifty silver." Holding her palm out towards the ranger, she made grabby hand gestures. Tapping her foot impatiently, Irma waited for a cold dull weight to press down upon her digits.

"F-fifty..." Tyla mouthed, barely able to believe his ears before breaking into a full on shout. "Fifty silver?! You must be crazy! I'm not going to pay you for the antidote to something you already sold me!"

With a shrug, the rabbit turned her back on the mole. "Suit yourself! Enjoy an eternity at flea-height then. If you do reconsider though, just call my name and I'll come back. Might take me a bit though, see I'm getting hard of hearing in my old age." The old woman gave him a wink and then disappeared in another fart of smoke.

"H-hey wait a minute! I thought we were negotiating here!" Tyla yelped and ran into the smoke, grabbing at the gassy contrails before they disappeared. "Aww, crap. I need to stop being so cheap when it comes to things like this." However before the mole could reflect on his actions any further, the largest ripple yet came across Calista's rear, flinging him up through the air before coming back down onto the jiggly, soft surface with a 'WHUMP'. Straining his eyes he could make out the rest of the ferrets body starting to stir, his very world rumbling and reshaping before his eyes. There was no bed, no room, no town. Only Calista, so utterly massive was the size disparity between them. Far, far above him he heard a yawn emerge from a mouth that could have likely held everything and everyone he ever knew and loved.

"Huuuaaaaaaah!" Calista let out a big yawn and stretched out her arms as she emerged from her wonderful dream. "Good morning, my little... Tyla?" The ferret blinked as she scanned around the bed for the little mole that had confessed his undying affection for her only moments ago. "Oh no! It was a dream, wasn't it. Darn it, brain that is really rude y'know!"

"Please don't see me, please don't see me, please don't see me," Tyla pleaded to himself. Scurrying across her broad behind, he took shelter behind a single strand of fur.

The monk frowned and crossed her arms over what she realized was a much wider chest than she'd had before, her morning completely ruined by this realization. "What the..." Glancing around, Calista realized that her thick, fluffy ears were brushing against the ceiling while her now far chubbier toes were pressed up against the door, warping the wood beneath their intense weight. By the gods, she had grown in her sleep! And not just height-wise she noted as she examined her now much wider hips that filled up what little space there had been in the room to being with. "This is.... This is AWESOME!" Calista squeed and clasped her hands together. "There's no way he can resist me at this size!" *Or escape*, she sneakily addended. "Now I just need to find a way to get out of the room..."

Before she could embark on her genius and in no way dangerous or costly plan of turning herself around, she felt yet another sensation on her rear. At first she tried to ignore it, thinking it was the crumpled furniture or maybe her staff poking into her voluptuous booty. However, as the curvaceous ferret tried to realign herself, said sensation would just not go away. Finally with a resigned grunt and a roll of her eyes she reached back and scratched at whatever was back there, expecting to feel some formerly well-built construct but, in fact, feeling nothing! "Hmmm?"

The tiniest of tickles wriggled at her padded finger, prompting the ferret to bring the digit in question up before her eyes. Her pupils went wide at the sight, a mischievous mile wide smile

curling up on her lips soon after. "Tyla?"

"CALISTAISWEARIWASN'TDOINGANYTHINGSEETHEREWASTHISOLDLADYANDSH
EGAVEMEADRINKANDTHEREWASAFLEAAND" The speck of a mole on her finger tip took a
deeeeeeeeeeeeeeeep breath. "Please don't hurt meeee!"

"Hurt you?" A warm wave of air washed over the mole from her simple utterance. "I'd
never dream of it!" Tail wagging behind her, layers of wallpaper were peeled clean off as it
brushed against them. "You're my beloved itty bitty teensy mole after all," she giggled. "Gonna
keep you nice and safe until we can figure out how to fix this!" Bringing her hand down to her
bosom she clasped both hands over him and cuddled him close into her mountainous
mammaries. "Assuming we do want to this fix this," she smirked, correcting herself out loud.

Somehow, Tyla's brain managed to form a simple question as he was surrounded by
miles upon miles of Calista's generous boobflesh. "W-we are going to fix this,though, right?"

Humming loudly, the ferret pressed him deeper and deeper into her chest.

"IIIIIRRRRRMMMMMMPPHHHHHHH," Tyla feebly yelled before being smothered into
Calista's soft snuggly self.