

The town was quite large, wood frame, plaster buildings for the most part with the odd stone foundation or solid stone ground floor. Moving through the early morning traffic Vikris thought it looked quaint and harmless but he kept his hood up and his scaled snout hidden from view. This world was less than friendly toward kobolds unless the townsfolk were familiar with them. Even then there was a distinctive third class citizen air to being a kobold in a primarily human town.

Regardless of what dimension he was in humanity had a habit of bad pack mentality. Casting aspersions at those who were different to themselves and when there weren't other species around to be disparaging about they took it out on each other. Vikris had got past the gate guards by simply not talking to them and teleporting himself beyond the town wall. Now all he had to do was find the alchemist shop, it had been months since his last visited.

Moving out of a side street, bare scaled feet hidden beneath his cloak the red kobold paused to let a wagon roll past. It's iron studded wheels clacking on the cobblestones as it rumbled toward the gates. Once the street was clear Vikris hurried across toward the small building set inside its own little garden beside the river. It was a rustic looking, two story building made of heavy oak beams and plaster with a heavy thatch roof. A sign by the front gate into the garden declared this was the home of an apothecary. As Vikris moved down the flagstone path toward the door he could see the garden was full of herbs, spices and a variety of shrubs that presumably all had medicinal and alchemical properties.

Knocking on the door Vikris didn't have to wait long before it was opened by a blue scaled, white horned kobold wearing brown leather shorts, a linen shirt and heavy leather vest.

"Max, it's been awhile" Vikris greeted them, pushing back his hood partly so the kobold could see him, "My Master said you were expecting me?"

Max smiled and stepped back, holding open the door, "Vik yeah it is good to see you, come on in."

Vikris moved into the alchemy shop and wrinkled his nose at the sharp, dry, dusty scent of chemicals, unguents, dried herbs and under it all the faint dry scent of kobold.

"Looks like you are doing well for yourself," Vikris said as he looked around the shop, removing his cloak hood all the way, "Shop and house by the river, garden, much nicer than last time I saw you."

Max grinned and moved toward the door leading into the house, "Well this town needed an alchemist, I'm the best around so they have come to accept me. I also don't cheat them like half the they meet elsewhere so I get a lot of customers."

The blue kobold motioned with his tail, "Come into the kitchen, I'll make some tea, I assume you have the stuff Tsochan promised?"

Settling down at the table Vikris removed a box from a pouch in his cloak and set it on the table, "Yes, the master insisted I deliver this in person, which is odd, he doesn't usually make me run delivery boy. I assume it is valuable?"

Max opened the box and lifted out a small velvet pouch and a scroll, he snapped the seal and cast his eyes over it, "Why is it unusual he'd send you?"

"Because it usually means he's up to something," Vik muttered, "There is no way to tell if he's sneaking off to do something stupid or is about to foist me into something."

"Must be a real pain," Max replied as he moved to grab a cloth and remove it from the boil, "Having a master you have to obey."

"It's not that bad," Vik accepted a cup of tea from the blue kobold, "We owe him everything and it's usually good fun," sipping his tea the kobold grinned, "and it is nice to get out sometimes."

"Good," Max smiled and watched Vikris, not touching his tea which made Vik frown, "I'm sure you'll make a fine apprentice," he tapped the scroll then slid it across the table, "Tsochan has paid up front for a full apprenticeship so looks like you get to learn alchemy."

"Oh for, Master why..." Vik muttered with a yip as he stared down at the scroll, "Why do I need to learn alchemy," reaching for the scroll the red kobold found his hands suddenly tangled in his cloak. Pulling his arm back he dropped the suddenly heavy tea cup and scrabbles at the edge of the table as he found it sliding past.

He was shrinking, rapidly reducing in size and stature, his clothing sliding off his body to pool and flap and collect in a heap on the chair. Vikris wasn't so lucky, his rapidly diminishing body slid off the front of the chair and he found himself sliding down the folding, collapsing fabric of his cloak.

He'd passed two feet so rapidly he'd almost missed it, and now he was rapidly descending. It wasn't gradual, his whole body was just shortening, limbs, torso, head, shifting in size and perspective as he descended in height, stature, weight.

Landing with a bump on the floor the kobold stood up and tried to call on his magic, to halt this shrinking process. But his spell fizzled, he felt a constricting, tingling sensation as he passed one foot tall and continued to shrink. It was a familiar sensation, a twisting, dark, presence that emanated from the echo in his soul.

"Oh damn it Master..." Vikris yipped, "This is aagghhh...." the world went dark as his kilt slid off the chair above and landed atop him. Struggling and squirming to break free the red kobold stumbled out of the cavern of cloth and bumped into a chair leg.

Looking around and then up he sighed, he was at best five inches tall, four... stopping at about three in the end. The world was a massive, cavernous expanse of empty sky and chair and table legs that looked like giant redwood trees.

The ground shook and echoed and Vikris stumbled and found himself staring at a massive cliff of white bone and blue scales. Tilting his head back he found himself staring up at Max who reached down and gently offered him a small glass vial, half full of a vibrant potion.



"Well there we go Vik," he whispered, a rumbling crash of thunder that made Vikris go cross eyed, "Your first taste of life as my apprentice."

"Thanks" Vikris grumbled and grabbed onto the vial, balancing himself carefully, "Why shrink me?"

"Because I wanted to see if you'd recognize that I'd spiked your tea," Max laughed softly, "I guess you didn't no apprentice of mine would have missed the contents of that tea, have a smell, see if you can work out what is in it?"

Vikris sniffed the potion in the vial then shook his head, "No idea," he wiped his snout as the thick, sweet, cloying scent boiled his sinuses clear, "It smells like sugar to me."

Max gently picked the red kobold up and started to leave the kitchen, "Well we will have to work on that," he rumbled, his voice making Vikris shake. The world was reeled past, massive walls, ridiculous sized pots and pans on the range and then they were through a door into a room that was thick with the scent of a hundred different spices, herbs, unguents and reagents.

"Well, why can't I do magic?" Vik asked, "Did Tsochan explain that, and where is my ruby necklace that thing is meant to change size with me."

Max chuckled, "That's my doing, the shrinking potion also had Arcana Seal in it, a very rare herb that makes it impossible to cast spells, I didn't want you to turn me to stone or blow the shop up by lashing out."

"Yay, thanks for the warning," Vikris grumbled, "So Max, I get to learn alchemy?"

"You sure do," the blue kobold climbed up onto the stool at his work bench and dragged a large pestle and mortar over, "This morning you get to watch me mixing up some of the basics, it's easier if you watch, listen and smell from up there."

"Ok," Vikris settled in on the workbench as Max set him down, "As long as I don't have to spend my whole apprenticeship at this size..." settling down Vikris peered between Max's horns, listening, watching. He didn't mind when his master sent him on these fact finding, educational trips, he just wished he'd given him more warning sometimes!

Still apothecary, alchemy, they all sounded fascinating to him, he couldn't wait to see how he could mix alchemy with his magic. It was bound to have fascinating and interesting results! The red kobold watched and listened and asked questions as Max mixed and poured, ground and stirred, boiled, whisked, weighed and measured. He was handed leaf after leaf, sticks of spice and ground mixtures and told to taste them, smell them, to try and remember the look, colour, touch, scent and feel of them as well as their names.

After a few hours the blue kobold set Vikris down on the table and handed him a small vial, "Here have a whiff, see if you can work out what it is going to do."

Vikris took the vial, it was huge and he had to balance himself carefully whilst holding the slippery glass vial. Sliding it down he stuck his snout over the top and inhaled, the pungent scent made his eyes water and the kobold sneeze.

"Careful," Max called out, reaching down to steady the tiny red kobold with one clawed finger, "What do you smell?"

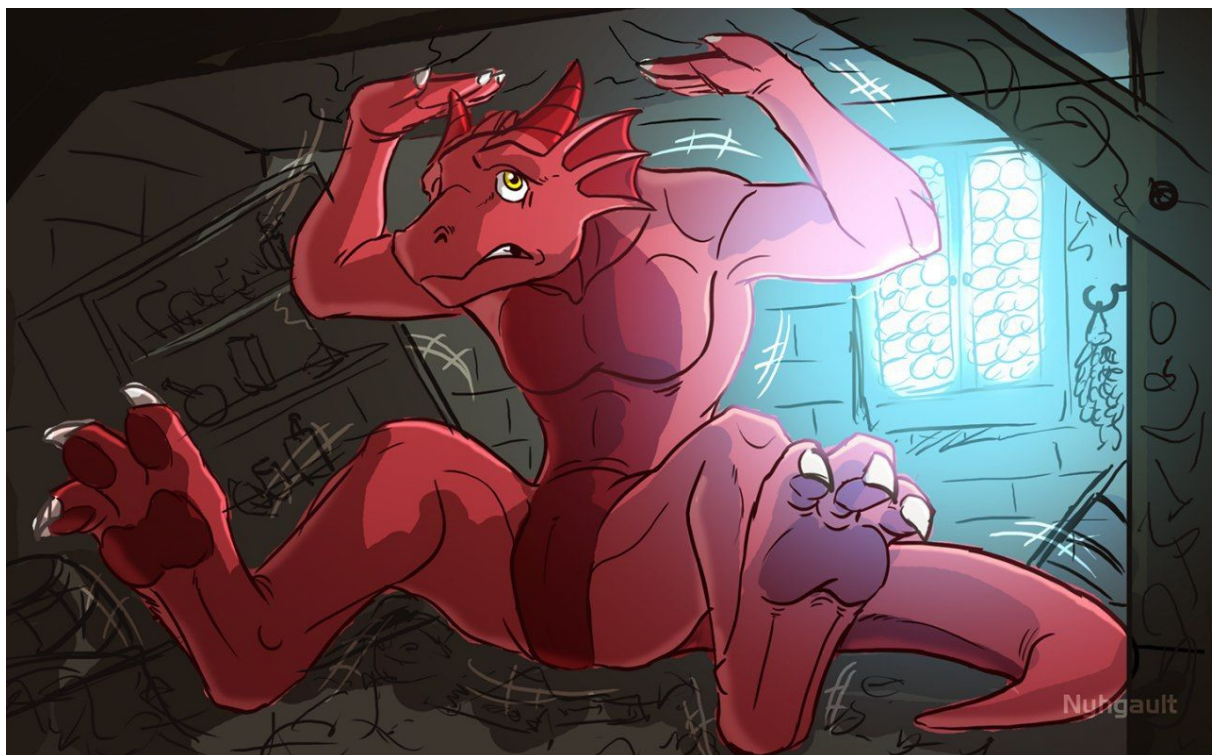
"I smell... cloves, and I thing argan weed and uhm.. I'm not sure," without thinking Vikris lifted the vial and took a huge gulp, swallowing he stuck

his tongue out and made a face, "That tastes foul, sasil and vorelen root and i think anchovy paste."

"No, Vik you weren't supposed to drink it," Max cut off as Vikris' head suddenly jerked up level with his waist, "It's not a real potion just a bunch of stuff thrown together to see if you'd been paying attention!"

"I only had a small sip!" Vikris shouted as he lurched upwards again. He swelled in size, growing from inches to over eight feet in a matter of seconds. He dropped the vial and continued to swell, to grow, limbs stretching out as he fell onto his rump and crushed a table.

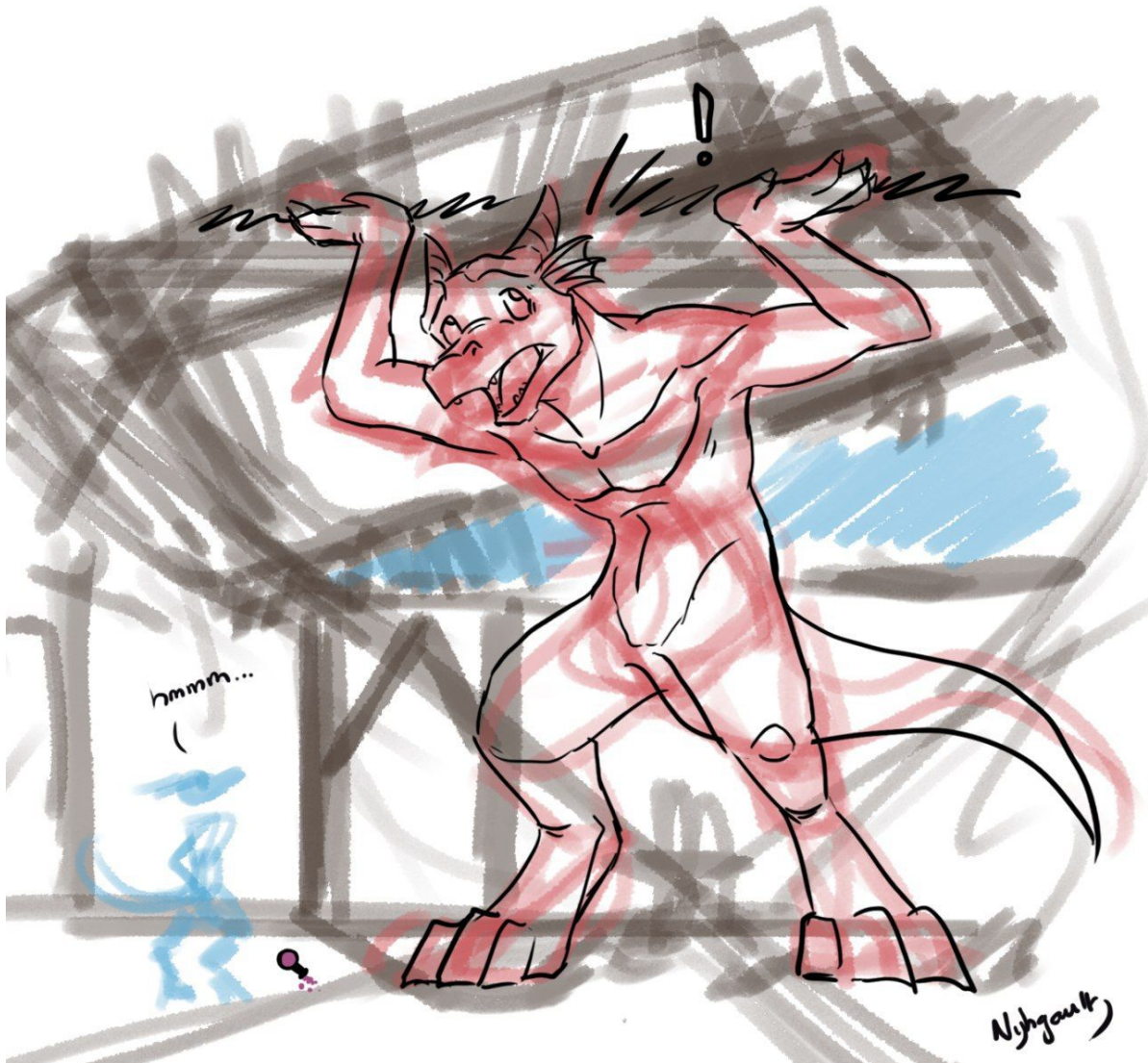
Max scampered out of the way as a bookcase was dislodged and stood watching as Vikris continued to grow, "Well great... hold on I'll try and mix a universal cancellation!"



The red and maroon kobold reached above his head, bracing his hands against the plaster ceiling of Max's workshop, "Uhm Max it isn't stopping!" he called out in alarm. Vikris then started to shift and squirm back and forth, tail, legs, back bashing, smashing, crushing things left and right, "It itches too, I need to stand up."

"Do not stand up!"

Vikris ignored him, the swelling kobold managed to get his feet under him and pushed upwards. With a crack the cottage roof detached from the walls as Vikris next spurt of growth took him higher. He crouched, balancing the roof and looked down at Max sheepishly, "This is so your fault."



Max laughed and shook his head, "Oh no apprentice," he smirked, "It's never my fault, though... you're going to have to stay big to fix that!"

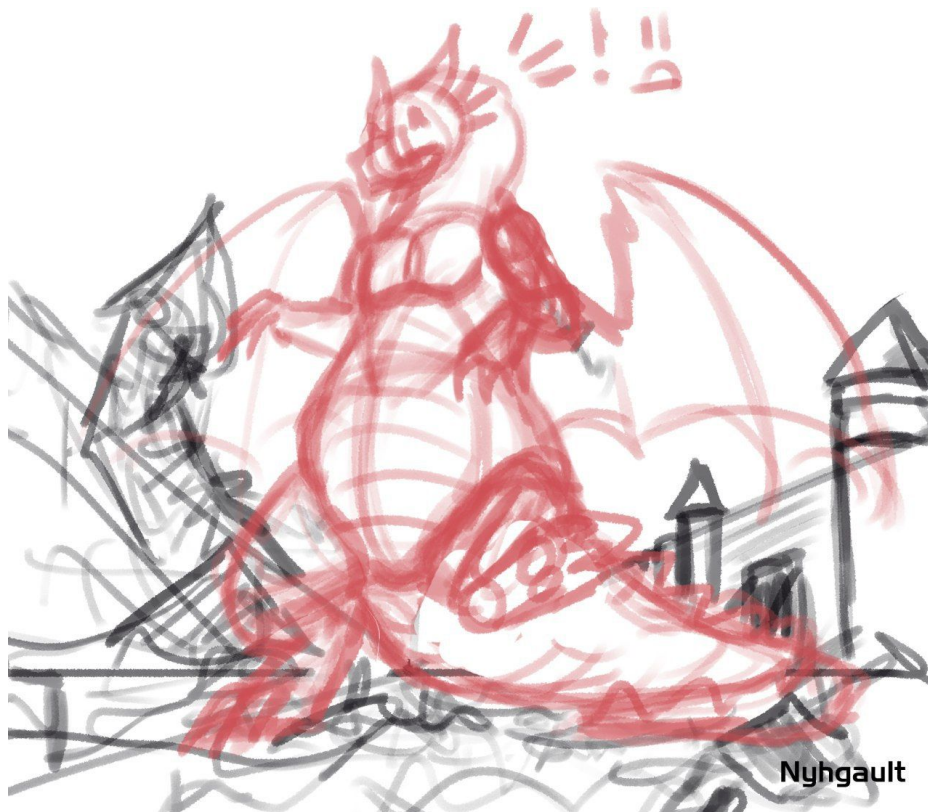
"Ok, Ok," Vikris carefully lifted the roof and looked out into the garden. He could see over the river and the town from here, the neighbours and people in the street already looking over to see what the noise was pointed and talked excitedly amongst themselves.

"Ahh," Vikris rumbled, one hand raising up to his snout, "Aaaah Max... I... I..."

"Oh no, Vikris don't you dare sneeze," clambering over the rubble Max hurried out into the garden. He'd taken have a step, voice raised, "Don't..." and then Vikris' sneeze hit him.

The wind tossed Max backwards off his feet, leaving him sprawled atop a bush as Vikris swelled. His body got larger, his tail smashed the greenhouse before slithering in size and bulk across the path and knocking over the city gates nearby.

His new wings cast a shadow over the town, people were screaming, the tower next door wobbled and then started to fold in on itself in a crash of bricks and mortar. The massive, red scaled dragon looming over the town looked at its hands, lifted one of its huge feet and stared at themselves in bafflement.



Max stared up at Vikris then tugged at the collar of his shirt, "Oh boy... this is going to take some cleaning up."

Vikris moved, one of his feet stomping down and a cart parked in the road exploded into splinters, cupping his hands Max shouted, "Stop moving Vikris!"

It was going to be interesting having an apprentice around, this wasn't quite what he'd planned for their first lesson. He'd been planning to see what he could make Vikris drink before the kobold got the hang of recognizing potions.

Now they had a bit of a mess on their hands, he had to get Vikris back to normal, soothe the town, fix the damage and concoct a good story of who to blame it on. But it was off to a good start, Vik was smart, he'd been picking up ingredients by scent and taste after just a few hours. Just... he had to drum home that age old lesson of don't drink random mixtures!