

Chuck the Fey Colossus:

Another day, another waste of his time and energy. Sighing Chuck squatted down in the scrubby bushes lining the edge of the scrublands and peered over the field of tall wavering grass toward the buildings. He'd been hunting for days, he was no master tracker but he had enough skills to track most animals and move silently through the desert like scrublands. Problem was no amount of skill was enough if there were no animals to hunt and the most he'd seen in two days were some newts which hadn't even fed him.

Grumbling quietly to himself Chuck wiggled forwards on his stomach and watched the buildings, heedless of how his thick tawny fur picked up dust and burrs from the grasses. After nearly a week living in the wilds his fur was a mass of dirt anyway. His brown furred hands and feet didn't blend into his tawny body fur anymore he was dirt and grime all the way from paws to shoulders and thighs. Running a paw through his short red mohawk Chuck tried to push his bangs out of his eyes; all he managed to do with it was change the manner in which it stuck up in clumps of unkempt red fur. He'd have to find a pond or river to roll about in soon, it was starting to get itchy. His stomach growled reminding him that the last thing he'd eaten had been that newt two days ago so he turned his attention back to the farm.

There were humans walking about and they had small enclosures from which the faint whiff of animals reached Chuck's nose. The humans had spread everywhere in the valley now, forcing Chuck's tribe back into the sparse swamp and scrublands that made up the eastern edge of the valley. They'd fought back but humans were tricky bastards and there was always so many of them. Now the fertile fields, rivers and forest that filled the centre of the valley were theirs.

He could go home, but between the cubs and bigger gnolls Chuck wouldn't get much to eat. He was thin for a gnoll, his biggest dream was to find enough food for the tribe and be able to eat enough to get big and strong to help protect everyone.

Did he dare risk a raid on the human farm, they were always so vigilante and treated gnolls as monsters. They didn't talk or trade, not normally but ugh he was so hungry and humans always had so much! Settling down in the dirt, head on the ground, crude spear resting under one of his hands Chuck watched the farm.



It was far away from any other human's, right on the edge of the fields of sere grass and scrubby brushes were the tribe had been forced. Few humans wanted to live here but there was a spring, a deep natural well that the humans had diverted into one of their buildings.

It stunned Chuck how industrious such weak creatures could be, on their own humans were puny. Get several of them together and they were lying, sneaky bastards who built things and pretended friendship only to betray people in the night. At least that's what the stories Hyra and Vesky told. His tribe had lived in the woods near the Grawrfth Deep river back before Chuck was born. They'd been forced out when the humans came in the night using magic and axes and now that forest was gone, chopped down by the humans to build things with. They never stopped, now humans were encroaching on this land, they had marked off big squares of dirt with fences and turned over the ground with machines. Peering at the sky Chuck decided to wait for sunset, he thought it might rain, he'd sneak in and see what he could steal and sneak away under the cover of darkness. Digging out a small hollow in the sandy ground Chuckle wriggled into it and settled in to nap, it was a couple of hours until sunset so he could sleep and dream of food.

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Raindrops splattering over his brown muzzle woke him, with a start Chuck opened his eyes and looked around. He hadn't meant to actually fall asleep like that, he was weaker than he had thought if he'd slept all afternoon. The sun was an angry looking red ball on the horizon and the rain was lashing down out of the sky. It was a thick, nearly horizontal stream of water misting through the air as it was tossed about by the wind. It would be perfect for sneaking into the farm and seeing what he could grab.

Pushing himself up out of his narrow gully Chuck crouched and peered forwards, paws slipping in the slight layer of mud already forming under the rains onslaught. It was making the dust compacted into his fur run and drip but Chuck didn't mind. It felt good after days of dry dusty sunshine. Creeping forwards, crude spear held in one hand and loincloth clinging to his thighs the gnoll headed in towards one of the pens. It was easy enough to sneak forwards and the rain would keep his scent dampened so he didn't have to worry about the wind. Crouching down beside a fence Chuck peered through the wooden bars and stared,

"Blow me," he growled, "So many... why they so greedy!"

The pen was full of sheep, big, fat, woolly sheep that were huddled up miserably from the rain against one end of the pen. There had to be over thirty, maybe a hundred sheep in the big pen! It was so unfair, humans had all this food and his tribe starved! Peering around through the lashing rain Chuck slunk across the yard to the next pen, it was full of pigs! They were young, healthy but full of meat! Without hesitating Chuck jumped over the fence, squelching up to his ankles in the mud and walked over to the nearest pig. It looked up at him with an indifferent

snort, black beady eyes flat and uninterested, the gnoll didn't hesitate, just stabbed it with his spear, grinning in satisfaction as it dropped.

"Sorry pig, but gnoll gotta eat," he grunted as he yanked his spear out and reached down to heft the animal up by its hind legs. It was quite dead, it's friends however all set up a massive raucous of squealing and oinking. It set off the sheep in the other pen, causing them to bleat and cry and something large bellowed from one of the barns and then dogs started to bark!

Lights in the farm house flickered on and Chuck yelped and leapt over the pen, dragging his stolen pig behind him as the whole farm seemed to erupt into life. He could dimly see silhouettes moving inside the farmhouse but the humans were slow. He'd be well out of here before any of them got outside. Vaulting another fence he started back the way he came only to yelp and throw himself sideways as a gnashing wall of barking teeth lunged at him. Sliding through the muck of the farmyard Chuck rolled over and lashed out with his pig, twatting the dog sideways. It gave him time grab his spear and scramble back to his feet but the dog was soon back on him, harrying him across the farm yard. Treacherous muck slipped and slid beneath his feet as he backed away hurriedly. Mud covered his whole right side and squelched underfoot, he got stuck for a moment and had to use his spear to knock the dog back. The whole yard outside the house was a thick slurry stirred up by the passage of many animals and Chuck growled to himself as each step sank him up to his ankles. Pulling his pig carcass over his shoulders Chuck battered at the dog with his spear butt. He couldn't stab it like this and then in a flash the tawny furred gnoll kicked the dog square in the chest.

It went flying and smacked into a fence post and Chuck slipped over backwards. Landing in the mud with a sickening squelch, oozing filth bubbling up all around his body he watched in shock as a crude metal trident stabbed through the air where his head at been. Snarling Chuck stabbed the human looming over him and they keeled over with a cry, several more humans were running over but the gnoll ran for it. Thankfully the humans gathered around the fallen one and the gnoll fled across the fields on the other side and into the lush wood that marked the beginning of the valley proper.



Running through the leaves and branches of large shrubs Chuck laughed loudly, yipping ecstatically in the manner of his people as he dodged around the trees. Thunder grumbled overhead, rain lashed through the canopy of branches and lightning flashed. He was soaked but he'd done it, stolen from the humans and shown them what for. Dodging around a tree Chuck froze and listened for sounds of pursuit. His green eyes were sharp in the gloom, he could see every leaf and branch but no one was following him. Rainwater ran down his body, washing off some of the mud and making his mane hang in a shaggy wave down one side of his head.

Scouting around Chuck found a hollow tree trunk that was mostly dry and settled down to feast on his pig. He'd rather have cooked it, but raw was just as good and after a little work with his belt knife the gnoll was chomping down on a haunch of sweet pork. It really hit the spot and

Chuck ate way more than was good for him. But he was starving and only once he'd fill himself so his stomach was bloated did Chuck settled back and drift off, lulled to sleep by the rumble of thunder and hiss of rain.

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Howling pulled Chuck awake, the baying of hounds hunting, the sounds of humans shouting to each other. Bolting out of his hidey hole Chuck looked around wild eyed with disheveled matted fur sticking up in every direction. The hounds howled again and his ears pricked upright, trying to determine how close they were. The fact he could make out the humans meant they were pretty close now. Barking to himself Chuck grabbed his spear and after a moment's hesitation abandoned the rest of his pig.

Picking a direction that led away from the hounds Chuck ran as hard as he could, pounding over damp grass, cursing his bad luck. How had they found his trail after that storm, the sneaky bastards must be using magic or some other human trick. Running was the best defense Chuck could come up with and it wasn't long before he saw dark furred shapes pacing him. They had short brown fur and sleek bodies armed with slavering jaws and sharp teeth; for a second they kept pace with Chuck then the one on the left leapt for him. Slashing with his spear Chuck cut them down and yelled as the other dog rammed into his legs, jaws snapping at his ankles. Yelling in pain the gnoll stabbed the other dog and rolled into a sitting position and froze as two humans hurried out of the woods.

One of them cried out something in the human language about beasts but it was mostly hooting and warbling. Chuck had never bothered to learn it but he understood the human with a sword and with a bestial roar surged to his feet to meet his lunge. The hardened wood of his spear haft turned the first sword stroke but the second cut open a gash on his arm. Wincing as blood poured through his fur Chuck used his larger size to shove the human backwards then fled into the woods. Humans where one of the few creatures he was actually bigger than, by a whole half a foot! The other human was casting some sort of spell over the dogs but Chuck couldn't stop the swordsman in time to stop it. Soon enough the baying of the hounds returned, the crash of people running through the woods, they were catching up on him again.

The first dog to appear got a spear in the side and then the human was on him again. Chuck desperately parried the first attack, the haft of his spear shattering as he threw himself to one side. It left him holding maybe a foot of spear, this would be useful for fighting with but it was still better then his knife. Scrambling away on all fours Chuck yelped as that sword blade bit into his back. Only a swift kick with one of his back paws that sent the human tumbling gave him time to escape this time. Staggering upright Chuck plunged into a small river, wading across the slow running stream; the water came up to his chest at its deepest point. On the far bank Chuck hurried into the trees, the humans were right behind him, a glance backwards showed him them hurrying over the river too. They couldn't catch him, this couldn't be how it ended, all this for a

pig! Tears stinging his eyes, chest heaving as he started to run out of breathe Chuck staggered off amongst the trees, wounds stinging, he had to get away from them!

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Watching the gnoll fleeing Ritmico tucked her xylophone under one arm leant forwards to watch him as he went under the trees. Glancing backwards she frowned at the two humans and their dogs crossing the river, this could not stand, humans invading their domain. Dropping to all fours she raced forwards, leaping from branch to branch amongst the thick tangle of foliage as the humans started to cast around for the gnolls track. It wouldn't take them long, their dogs would have his scent soon, which she could not allow.

Swinging down a series of vines Ritmico leapt down onto a rock. Pulling her xylophone out she struck a chord; blanketing the forest in a faint whispering melody. For a moment the air to her left stirred, trees and leaves rustling as a new trail wove off amongst the woodlands. It wouldn't fool a tracker using their eyes but it would bamboozle the dogs and lead them off in the wrong direction. Bouncing from paw to paw she jumped down off her rock and hummed a series of notes and with a gentle rippling motion the earth opened up beneath her feet.

Sinking down underground Ritmico was carried down the small tunnel, seemingly falling feet first. Turnings and chambers flashed past on either side, all of them illuminated by glowing fungus but she didn't stop. The chamber she wanted was under the central clearing of the forest. A good twenty minute run from the river or just a minute if you knew the trick of using the old burrows to travel quickly. Her brother was waiting before the large entrance to the city, lounging on a massive toadstool and seemingly snoozing. Like her he was short, barely a foot tall but unlike her yellow and orange fur his was dark green with splotches. His massive ruff of thick neck fur and tousled unkempt mane was a light mint green. His muzzle and chest fur however matched her own being a light creamy colour that trailed down his stomach as well.

He opened one eye and gave her a lazy smile, rolling onto his back, paws tucked into the pouch that covered his stomach and lower abdomen, "Sis, what brings you back down here in a rush?"

"Humans," she chattered, scampering over to his side, "There is also a Gnoll, I want you to go up top and keep the gnoll in the clearing whilst I deal with the humans."

Nellico frowned as he sat up and flicked his stubby tail, "A gnoll, what do we want a gnoll for?"

"I have a plan," Ritmico said grinning widely and kissing him on the snout, "Just keep him in the clearing until I get back. I got some humans to sort out and I don't want him getting away from us."

"Sure, sure," Nellico stood up and yawned and pulled his clarinet out of his pouch, "Have fun with the humans, do something fun to them for me!"

Ritmico nodded and scampered out a side tunnel away from the city entrance. The humans were getting closer and closer every year! And now they were actually invading their island, drawing close to the secret glade and the city entrance... they had to do something to stop this! But for now Ritmico had a plan, surmelle's were tricky, devious, clever little fey creatures and she wasn't going to let these interloping humans traipse around their island unchallenged!

Scampering back out into the forest she found the first human doggedly following the gnoll's tracks. He was alone, it looked like the dog handler had fallen for the false trail. Hopping from rock to mushroom to gnarled tree root Ritmico hummed, spinning a small illusion. Her voice took on an irregular piping sound, a teasing tune to cloud sight and befuddle sight. It didn't have to be strong, just subtle enough to make the human go left, to see a clear path instead of the sheer drop where the bank of a pool had collapsed.

His foot plunged down, his eyes saw flat land, the reality was open space and with a startled yell the human plunged into the pool of thick clay beneath with an almighty splat. He floundered around in the thick muck, hauling himself up to his knees, one hand wiping his eyes clear whilst he searched for his sword. Blinking his eyes clear he saw Ritmico as she perched on a rock, xylostar held in her lap, paws plunking the metallic keys, amplifying her voice for his weak human ears.

"You know this forest is ours human, why do you persecute the gnoll?"

Shaking mud off his hands the human wobbled slowly back to his feet, "Surmelle! Begone and leave me be, that foul beast attacked a farmer and stole a pig! These woods belong to Baron Briena Trollslayer and you fey beasts have no right to them, less than the gnolls."

"Oh little man," Ritmico teased, shifting chords, grinning at the human, "I repay what was taken and pass it forward," fur fluttering in a breeze she raised her voice in song and watched with dispassionate eyes as the human squealed and fell forward. Fey magic coursed through his veins now, shoes burst, hands clenched into trotters and his panicked shouts grew shrill, transitioning into hog squeals in less than a minute. His body bulked up, bristles sprouted along the length of his dark skin, tusks pushed out of his elongating boar snout as he rolled back and forth in the mud. It was quite satisfying to watch that moment when his eyes changed, all the fear and human emotion draining out of those piggy brown eyes. His Mohawk was quite impressive, thick upstanding bristles running down his back from between his ears. Bringing her song to an end as the boar slipped and slopped about in the mud Ritmico holstered her xylostar over one shoulder and watched the pig, smiling softly.

"There, I've paid for the pig the gnoll stole, I suggest you go home now," grinning happily the surmelle lass turned and scampered up a tree and headed off after the other human. The pig was no more concern for her, his new life would be an eye opener for him at least, her concern now was to ensnare the dog handler.

She found the wretch standing in a clearing with her dogs heeled close to her. They both started to growl as soon as Ritmico reached the edge of the clearing and their heads swung around to stare at her. The human turned and frowned, lifting one hand, palm out flat and Ritmico span her xylostar out of its sheath on her back and struck a chord. The bubble of magical force she conjured rang with a jarring sound as the lightning bolt the dog handler conjured blew her from a perch. She landed on all fours and ran, she could feel the dogs racing across the clearing but Ritmico knew these woods and darted down a rabbit burrow.

The dogs scrabbled at the entrance for a moment then retreated as their owner whistled, "You fey will learn not to interfere with human justice. I'm leaving ... but we will be back and drive you and your monster friend from these woods!"

Panting heavily Ritmico waited for her heart to stop pounding in her chest, the damn humans were getting stronger at resisting their fey magic. Shaking her head the surmelle dug into her pouch and pulled out a huge wedge of cheese, devouring it swiftly to satisfy her hunger. All that magic and running about had worked up quite an appetite but thankfully the magic in her pouch let her carry a lot of useful stuff. Once she'd eaten she crept out, alert for treachery before scurrying quickly off. She was heading to the clearing at the heart of the island where hopefully her brother had the gnoll captive, yet unaware that he could not leave.

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Lounging on a tree branch Nellico watched with fascinated interest as the gnoll slept. His lower half was submerged in the warm waters of the pool. Cores, pits and skins lay in a scattered heap beside him and the fur of his muzzle was sticky with fruit juice. He'd bathed and bound his wounds using mud and various herbs from the edge of the pool then gorged himself on fruit.

Ritmico landing on the branch made it bend slightly but Nellico never took his eyes from the sleeping gnoll. He fluttered his little tail however in greeting to his sister before speaking in his slow drawl.

"He's so small, for a gnoll, you sure we can make use of him?"

Pulling out her Xylostar the yellow and orange surmelle smiled at her brother, "Of course, besides the other human got away. They are growing bolder, I'd rather use this gnoll then have them ruin the forest further."

Humming softly Nellico started to patter his front paws against the tree branch. Standing up on all fours he began to weave his back paws into the patterning rhythm and directed his tuneless humming toward the sleeping gnoll. Ritmico knew her brother, this was his way of telling her he'd go along with her idea. Striking a chord on her xylostar, metal keys plunking beneath her

claws Ritmico started to spin her music and magic into Nellico's. He was going to be a very useful gnoll when they were finished with him.

The song swelled in power, reaching out and down, engulfing Chuck, surrounding him in its tune. He stirred in his sleep, water splashing gently as he groaned quietly. He didn't wake, just continued to slumber as the music sank into him and the sun sailed through the sky overhead. As the song continued Chuck settled down, his head lolling back, soft snores lifting from his muzzle as his body reacted to the fey music. The water splashed as the gnoll's chest slid up out of the water exposing his stomach as inches were added to his height. Arms and legs bulked up slowly, noodle thin arms from near starvation developed muscle definition and bulk. Not too much but a slow addition over the hours Chuck slept and the music played. He was growing and it only stopped as twilight fell on the forest and the music stilled.

He was maybe seven foot now, with broad shoulders and muscular arms to match. His thighs where chunky slabs of muscle and his chest strong and subtly defined by the hints of developing abs and pecs. To grow more he needed to eat but alone in the forest with nothing but trees to measure himself against the surmelle's reckoned he wouldn't notice the new size until he'd already eaten enough to make the spell resume. It wouldn't do for their new guardian beast to freak out after all.

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Muttering to himself Chuck slowly pulled himself out of the pool, shaking water from his shaggy unkempt tail. Blinking in the gloom of twilight he grumbled and scratched at his soggy stomach fur. He felt groggy and his paws were clumsy as he stumbled naked up the bank to where he'd dumped his meager possessions. He'd not meant to sleep all day, moving around this forest in the dark would be tricky. Rubbing his muzzle he eyed his bandages of leaves and emitted a soft bark of distaste at the way his wounds stung and his head hurt.

Picking up loincloth he hesitated before trying to put them on. He could hear something, snuffling and grunting and moving towards the edge of the clearing. Abandoning his clothes Chuck grabbed his spear and crept forwards. His green eyes pierced the darkness, revealing to him the glint of tusk, a crest of pig bristles. Snarling the gnoll leapt forwards, spear stabbing, it never even had time to look up, Chuck's speed allowed him to drive his spear into the pig's neck. It died squealing, trotters kicking wildly and then fell still and with a happy growl the gnoll dragged back towards his makeshift camp.

Making a fire was easy enough, there were a lot of fallen branches for him to make use of around the edge of the clearing. Stones from the pool made his firepit and once he had heat and fire everything felt a bit more homely. Branches and vines made a makeshift spit and the gnoll took his knife to the pig carcass. He hated skinning things but if he wanted to cook the pig properly the skin and bristly fur had to come off. It was surprisingly easy, usually Chuck struggled with the physical effort needed to pull and tear and rend but tonight it went quite well.

Flexing his arm Chuck admired the small amount of muscle he'd built up and grinned, "Must be long nature trips; builds muscle like Vesky said would," the gnoll commented.

Barking and growling happily to himself Chuck finished dressing his pig and hoisted it up above the fire. Settling down to let it cook, occasionally turning the spit Chuck checked on his bandages. Washing in the water he cleared away the gunk and made new poultices out of herbs and mud, it was the best he knew how to do to keep them clean and help them heal.

"Stupid humans," the gnoll grumbled to himself as he crouched by his fire and turned the roasting boar, "Stupid hairless apes, get Aeli use magic on them, turn back into monkeys, stupid..."

Using his knife the gnoll sliced a bit of meat off the pig; it was still not quite as cooked as he wanted. So he left it to roast and wandered around the clearing gathering up fruit. Once he had a large armful he sat by the fire and munched his way through a large melon, stuffing his face with the sweet fruit. The scent of roasting pig filled the air however and the gnoll stared longingly at his prize. Turning it every minute or so to expose another side to the flames. Soon enough Chuck was rewarded for his patience it was ready! The young gnoll devoured the pig, rich, warm grease oozing through his fur as he ripped off hunks of pork with his knife and claws, chewing through it eagerly. He stripped one leg down to the bone and started gnawing on it to get at the marrow inside before it occurred to him he didn't have to! There was no one to share this pig with, sure he'd try and take some of it home but for now it was his kill, his food!

Ripping off another leg he growled in the fire-light and devoured the pork, stuffing his face with fruit occasionally. He even had a hollowed out watermelon husk to fill with fresh, albeit slightly warm water from the pool. It was great, he'd never had such a feast in all his life. Food was scarce, he was a runt and the other bigger members of his tribe always got the first pick of the food. Tonight it was all his so he ate, and ate, not caring how much of a savage he looked or what a mess he was making of his fur; it tasted too good.

Eventually he fell asleep again, stomach somewhat distended, snores reaching up into the night sky. Sprawled on the floor next to his fire dead to the world the gnoll started to grow again. It was a subtle change, legs lengthening, paws thickening, stomach flattening out as his spine and torso grew. His shoulders widened, his muscles bulked up and his snores slowly grew deeper, the timbre of the gnoll's voice dropping as he swelled.

"He's a greedy little thing isn't he?" Nellico commented as he stood on Chuck's stomach and looked up at the growing gnoll, "How we going to keep him here tomorrow?"

"I've got something ready for when he tries to leave," Ritmico said as she walked around the remnants of his fire and his pig," she stopped and looked up at her green furred brother, "We are going to have to do something about his desire to go home though."



"I've got an idea," Nellico muttered, "But it is going to need some preparation and I want him to have finished growing before we try it, he's taking forever to get big."

"Yes," Ritmico frowned, "Leave that to me, I've got some tricks that'll speed his growth, I'll work them into his food now, you make sure he stays asleep."

Nodding his head Nellico settled comfortably atop the bulging, jiggling gut and started to sing to the gnoll. His sister meanwhile was working her magic into the remnants of pig and the pile of fruit the gnoll had collected. Tomorrow would be another interesting day for their newest toy and guardian beast.

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Chuck was up early, the sun shining through the trees woke him up. After a quick wash in the pool the gnoll was now standing by the side of his fire grumbling at the way his loincloth didn't

quite fit properly. It wasn't the best of outfits but it was all he had and now he could barely do it up when before it had been baggy enough to hang halfway to his knees. Muttering under his breath and scratching at his damp mane the gnoll stared at it for a while then tied it on as best he could before setting out for the river.

His great plan was to find out if it was safe to try and make a break through the woods to the scrublands and then get back to his tribe. Hefting his spear in one hand Chuck frowned at it, it felt lighter than normal, had it always been this short. It had broken he guessed he'd not noticed by how much, it was nearly useless in his paws. He'd had such a weird night's sleep too and now he just wanted to get out of here and get home! The others must be wondering what had happened to him, he'd never been gone this long on a hunt before!

Soon enough Chuck was crouched in the bushes at the edge of the river. Chuck stared at the far side in consternation. There were dogs over there, big brutes patrolling back and forth, growling to each other. The damn human was penning him in, clearly stabbing that farmer human had been a big mistake, they weren't giving up. Scouting left then right along the length of the river just revealed more dogs. They were ringing the island he had trapped himself on. The air was growing thick and humid and the poultices tied over his wounds were starting to itch and feel weird. So with his tail between his legs and his ears pushed flat against his skull Chuck retreated back to his little haven by the pool.

Once back at the fire Chuck helped himself to a melon, devouring the sweet, juicy fruit whilst he tried to come up with a plan to sneak past the dogs. He'd have to try it at night and see about just running for it. He hoped he could get past the dogs and the humans quickly enough to lose them in the dark. He'd need someway to mask his scent though and the best thing he had to hand was the boar pelt from his prize pig! So with determination Chuck set about using his belt knife to make it into something he could wear, he didn't have the tools for sewing or any decent work. The best he could manage was a sort of long kilt that wrapped about his stomach and hung down to his knees. He'd worn similar in the past and he always thought it made him look properly wild!

Of course treating the inside of the pelt was icky and sticky and he hated it. But he had a fire and wood so he scraped it and heated it as best he could so it was at least wearable. Once he was satisfied with his new outfit the gnoll fell on the remains of his pig and devoured it. Tearing off strips of meat with his claws and stuffing them in his maw. It smelt so good, and it'd only spoil if he left it out in the sun all day! The sun wasn't even halfway to Noon when he started eating and he lost track of time. He stripped every piece of edible flesh from the pig and stuffing it down his throat. Groaning softly Chuck flicked away the last piece of bone and lay backwards, panting happily and resting his paws on his stomach. He felt so full, and warm and the sun was good on his fur and his new outfit was rugged and wild and fitted perfectly!

Cracking his jaw in a huge yawn Chuck snuggled down in the mossy grass surrounding the pool and closed his eyes, drifting off. He'd nap until sunset and then make a break for it past the dogs. Hopefully they would just smell pig in the dark and not be able to see him.

Next time Chuck opened his eyes however it was to find himself being dazzled by the sun shining in his eyes as it lanced amongst the tree trunks to the east. With a curse the gnoll sat upright and glared toward the sunrise, he couldn't have slept the whole day and night away!

Climbing to his feet Chuck winched as the torn scraps of boar-hide that had been his toga slid off his body and landed on the ground all around him. For a moment he stared in confusion at them then reached down to pick one up. He paused as he caught sight of his arm, it was... buff, he had muscles, thick fur, the poultice of vines and mud was gone leaving smooth, unblemished fur and skin.

"Wot..."

Staggering over to the pool Chuck splashed a few steps in and froze as it barely rose above his ankles. Wading cautiously out into the pool the gnoll reached the point where previously the water had reached up to his neck. Now it barely covered his naval and as he stared at his reflection Chuck goggled in shock at what he could see. It wasn't just his arm that was buff, he had broad shoulders and a rugged, square, manly muzzle to match. Muscles bulged beneath his tawny, brown spotted fur! He had to be nearly fifteen feet tall, and he was all beef, rippling pecs, bulging abs, powerful legs and strong, rock crushing paws!

Smirking at the sight of himself Chuck stretched his arms above his head and cracked his fingers, rolled his shoulders and roared! It felt great, his fangs gleamed in the morning sunshine and with a laugh Chuck reached out from his spot in the pool and pulled fruit off the branches that overhung the water. They were tiny compared to what they had been before but he tossed several of them down and waded back to shore. Now there had been something important he was going to do today, something special... striding out of the water he shook out his fur and looked around with a frown as the air sighing through the trees made his ears perk.

Pushing through a couple of the oaks he stopped as he came upon a huge sheet of vines and moss all tangled together where they had grown as one. Grinning happily Chuck grabbed the sheet of plant matter and wrapped it about his stomach so it hung down to just above his knees. It was comfortable and covered him up and Chuck nodded in satisfaction. It felt good and proper big guy like him needed some wild clothes!

Lifting his head Chuck sniffed the air, he could smell the stench of humans on the breeze and quickly he took off in the other direction, lumbering between the trees. He had to get away from them, humans kept hurting him, and their dogs too! He bounced into a large oak and caught hold of it before pulling himself upright and cracked his head against one of the oaks big branches.

Whining he rubbed his head and ducked under the tree branches into a small clearing where an old bronze statue stood. It was slanted sideways, the slender looking creature with pointed ears looked serious and stern and its hands held a huge bronze axe. Chuck stared at the statue for a moment, wind chimes seeming to play in his ears as the wind blew through the leaves. Except wind in leaves didn't sound like metal chimes usually but... shaking his head Chuck growled and grabbed the axe, wrenching it out of the statues hands. He was sick and tired of running from humans! They would respect him, respect his size, he was Chuck, he was gnoll he was strong!

Growling he turned and ran through the woods, galloping on all fours, axe stuffed between his jaws. This let him race beneath the branches, dodge and weave or trample right over bushes until he came to the river bank and leapt over it, leaving the island behind. He'd taken maybe another step before four human figures rushed out of the trees and confronted him.

"Halt giant!" the tall human with the sword and shiny armour shouted, "You will terrorise the land no more beast!"

"They never said it was this big," one of the other humans wearing robes muttered, "It's huge!"

"There is weird magic at work here," the human with the mace muttered, "Lewis quick shrink the beast!"



The robed human cast some sort of spell but Chuck just gripped his axe and stood back up onto his hind legs and roared at them, "This forest MINE!"

Moss kilt flapping around his ankles he charged and the humans panicked. The one with the sword leapt forward to attack, slashing at Chuck's feet and legs, he was barely as tall as Chuck's knee! It was a pitiful attempt the sword cuts barely tickled his fur, they were like grazes. Annoying and stinging but hardly life threatening! With a savage growl the giant gnoll swung his axe down and bisected the human in robes. They screamed once as their bright blood splashed over the undergrowth and the other three shouted and redoubled their attacks.

The human in black leather started to fire arrows at him but they were like pinpricks against his thick fur. The one with the mace was chanting and the sword wielding human was trying to drive its sword into his foot. Chuck laughed, they were so pitiful, how dare they think they could threaten the forest and him. His axe interrupted the spell casting mace wielder and he kicked the sword human. He rolled across the ground, thumping into a tree and before he could get back up Chuck smashed one of his feet down atop him. Bearing down with all his weight Chuck snarled in satisfaction as he felt their armour crumple and weak, puny human flesh pop!

Mr bow and arrow tried to run but Chuck dropped his axe and lunged after them. Grabbing them in both of his paws, the gnoll squeezed them with the pads of his fingers and palm as he lifted them up. They whimpered and squirmed and shook and shouted but Chuck didn't care. Roaring into their face he let them get a good look at his teeth before he snapped his jaws over their head and tore it off in a spray of blood. Chewing his meal, crunching bones and brains between his jaws Chuck squatted down at the edge of the river and stripped the clothes off his meal.

Shaking his head as the metallic sounding music tinkled in his ears Chuck frowned and stuffed the human into his mouth, crunching on him as he thought. The wind leaf sound was annoying and he looked around trying to track down the source. But there was nothing, just him and the trees and... looking down at his reflection Chuck smirked. He really was huge, properly beefy, a real monstrous gnoll! Why should he go home to the tribe, there was barely any food for him there at the best of time, let alone now he was this big and strong! But here in the forest there was plenty of a food... and humans, lots of humans. He could drive the humans out, smash them, eat them. He was a wild gnoll giant, big and strong and... and he could bring the tribe, once the forest was his they would be safe, Chuck would protect them, protect the forest!

Lifting his head he sniffed, scenting the air... the nearest group of humans where to the south, he could smell their rank scent on the air. It was disgusting, filthy, it had no place in Chuck's forest. Growling and with his axe in hand the gnoll stalked off amongst the trees, this was his forest...

~fin