

Treetop Shorts Collection
Hungry for Glory 4

By Smokescale Aquatos

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"C'mon kitty, you can do better than that!" Elisha cried.

She leaned back against a nearby tree, her huge stomach sagging all the way to the ground as her new pet dragon turned about inside. He was anxious, wanting to join the fight. That was exactly why Elisha had swallowed him and opted to keep him there, as well as stay out of the fight.

"Miss Katiyanna! I... I don't think... I am meant... for this... kind of... role!" The smallish tiger mage cried out in response, breathless.

His normally trim stomach was large and round, no where near as big as Elisha's, but certainly bigger than hers was after her first couple of attempts using the 'vore mod'. He was having trouble with the latest mob. It wasn't a difficult one since they had traveled back to a lower-level area. But his gut was big enough to impede his mobility. He just couldn't move fast enough to avoid being hit, even against something less than half his height and ten levels below him.

"You're doing fine! Don't worry about healing yourself! Let the digestion take care of that!" Elisha barked.

Salano groaned and held his stomach as he continued his fight. Again and again the tiger traded blows with the little goblin. They weren't doing much damage to one another, but with the striped cat's belly as large and active as it was, he was able to replenish faster than the goblin could. It was a war of attrition at this point. Eventually, the goblin dipped in his stance, indicating his health was critical.

"Now! Swallow him!" Elisha shouted.

"I can't!" Salano complained. He was getting awfully full.

"Yes you can! You're at level 3 consume and level 2 capacity! You can fit him in!" Elisha encouraged.

Salano whined and followed orders. He gripped the goblin, successfully grappling with him. The little creature shrieked and wriggled angrily, dropping his weapon in the process. The tiger opened his mouth and began stuffing the screaming thing in. Had this not been a game, and the goblin not anything more than a bunch of code, Elisha would have felt bad. Thankfully it wasn't real, and there would be thousands more exact copies of the goblin. The striped cat gulped and swallowed loudly and briskly until he was done. His belly surged out as the goblin landed in side along with two other copies of himself, all three now wriggling and fighting to escape.

"Yeah!! Way to go!!" Elisha cheered.

She stood up from leaning on the tree and waddled over to the now uncomfortably bloated tiger. He landed on his rump with a heavy plop as he held his angry, churning stomach.

"I feel like I'm going to explode. Miss Katiyanna, please, this is not the sort of job for me. I beg you, no more." He whined.

Elisha settled next to the poor tiger, rolling forward to lay on top of her own heavy gut. She reached out and began running her hands over the tiger's stomach, rubbing it gingerly to try and sooth it. The dragon underneath her finally settled, disappointing her somewhat. She had come to enjoy feeling him wriggle around in there.

"You're gonna be just fine. I had some issues when I first started. You'll get past it." The wolf said.

"But why? I do not understand the reasoning of this. Why must I endure this torture?" Salano whined, then stifled a burp.

"Don't hold it in, let it out. You'll feel a lot better. I promise." Elisha said with a grin.

The tiger hiccupped and nodded, then let loose a hearty burp. Immediately, his stomach began to slow, pulling tighter around the three little monsters inside. The look on his face relaxed. He was still uncomfortable, but nowhere near as badly as just a moment ago. She was certainly knowledgeable about this sort of thing. And the rubbing did seem to help to sooth both him and his belly.

"Thank you, miss. But please, tell me why you are training me like this?" Salano asked.

"Well, I need to train up my digestion resistance. Mr. Dragon here is already too high level in that department for me to use without dying. I'd have to keep the settings window open all the time and toggle 'digest friendlies' on and off rapid fire and you'd have to heal me way too often. It's just not worth it yet. I need someone who's lower level. That's you." Elisha explained.

"But... I could not possibly hope to swallow someone your size." The tiger said.

"Not yet. But you're getting there. Another level to your digestion skill and this'll go faster, then you can level capacity, then consume. Once all three of those have gotten one dedicated level, you ought to be able to fit me in and actually damage me through digestion. You just heal me from time to time and we can just lounge around, killing time while I grind the skill." The wolfess smiled, still kneading away at the feline's gut.

A quiet purr began to rise up from Salano. Clearly he was enjoying her attention to his overstretched tummy.

"Miss, I could never bring myself to harm you." He said.

"Sure you can, it'll just be little bit by little bit. And then you heal me back up before I get too low. The plan's foolproof!" Elisha beamed.

"If you are sure." Salano said, relaxing as he lay there next to the vast, white orb of an engorged belly while its owner helped to ease his indigestion.

"Shouldn't take but another day or so and you ought to be ready." The paladin said.

"Another day?" Salano whined anew, "Miss, I must make my way to the Marble Palace. It has been far too long already. Can we not make the journey now? You are powerful enough to fend off any monsters we might face along the way."

Elisha frowned and blushed softly, not wanting to answer. But for some reason, she felt an odd bond with this NPC. She knew all his responses were pre-programmed, and his AI was pretty sophisticated, but he had been asking to resume their trip for the last three days. Her willpower was wearing down.

"Just... just a little bit longer, okay? Then we can go." She said.

"Miss, please. I beg of you, I must go to the Marble Palace." Salano replied, the same way he'd said it a hundred times before.

"Yeah, I know. We go to the palace, and your quest ends. Then, you're out of my party forever and I lose my healer." Elisha snapped, a little more harshly than she meant. She managed to stop herself from saying 'and I lose my friend'. Often an NPC looking to be escorted simply vanished once the quest was complete. She'd invested a lot in this kitty, and she didn't want to see that end. It was stopping her from exploring more of the game though, so it would have to happen sometime.

"Forgive me if I have offended you. I am grateful for your service." Salano said, reacting only to the tone of her voice. His AI was sophisticated, but not that sophisticated.

"No, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have gotten short with you. I just... I... I like having a healer around. You're handy to have on a trip. And... I kinda like you," Elisha said. At this point she assumed it didn't much matter what she admitted. He was just a program, and likely not designed to process a person's eccentric tendency to grow attached to an artificial person. With a sigh, she looked away, "Fine... once you're empty again, we'll go to the Marble Palace and finish your quest."

"Oh thank you, Miss Katiyanna!" Salano cried happily. His belly gurgled and churned just before he belched again.

A couple of hours passed before the tiger was trim enough to be under the 'encumbered' condition. Once he was mobile again, they were off down the road. It took most of the day to make the trip, and even though Elisha was about to give up her partner, she couldn't help but try to keep leveling him. He'd managed to increase his digestion skill so she felt comfortable helping

him grind a little more. This time, she stepped in to help whittle down a target, then help shove it down Salano's throat. He was still somewhat unhappy about his training, adamant that he wasn't cut out to be a predator, but she just kept going. Just as he gained the last level needed to enact the wolf paladin's plan, they reached the border to the territory of the Marble Palace.

Elisha sighed, the irony weighing down on her. There wasn't much point in delaying any longer. She just ushered them on. The deep, dark forest gave way to an open field of rolling hills. In the distance, a tall structure was just visible. It was quite large, but it wasn't exactly a castle. It was more a temple, composed of white stone and crystal, soaring high and narrow like the head of a spear pointed skyward. There were numerous small towers centered around a central spire that looked as if it could scrape the sky itself. It was a sight to behold. Its appearance was a rather stark departure from the architecture found elsewhere in the game, but then that was often how the designers wanted it. It made a place like this stand out that much more.

"Well, there it is, the Marble Palace. It's been fun, Salano." Elisha said, already feeling a sense of mild depression. She really did wish she could keep the tiger in her party.

"I thank you for your assistance, brave paladin. I could not have made this journey on my own." He said to her, his words soaked in gratitude.

"Yeah... s'kinda the idea. Anyway, let's get this over with so I can-" Elisha froze as a new prompt appeared in front of her.

--New Quest Objective Available--

--Monsters have attacked the Marble Palace. There are too few people to fend them off, and none of them are warriors. You must hurry and come to their aid before the temple is overrun. If the priestess is kidnapped or slain, the quest will end.--

"Well crap!" Elisha said, "They're under attack! We need to get there quick!"

"The palace is under attack!?" Salano cried in dismay.

"Yeah! And we can't let the priestess die or get taken, else I fail the quest!" The wolf said.

She opened her mouth wide and began pushing the dragon out of her stomach. He growled happily and squirmed, working to wriggle his way out. Soon, the big red beast stood before the two furred things he'd come to be in the surface of and swished his tail behind him.

"Get on! We'll ride him all the way to the palace! I'll jump off and distract whatever's attacking! You and Mr. Dragon go find this priestess of yours! You find her, you stay close to her, you keep her safe! No matter what! Whatever it takes, you protect her!" Elisha cried as she began climbing onto the red drake's back.

Salano gave the wolf a soft nod and the dragon roared, flapping his large wings to get them all airborne. In moments, they were streaking towards the palace. Elisha kept her gaze fixed on the towers as they loomed closer and closer until she could make out figures swarming the stairs and

entry hall. The paladin removed a length of rope from her inventory and slung it around the dragon's neck, then swung off to one side, hanging under him as he raced towards the palace.

"Get me close to the floor at the doorway! You keep going! Stay with Salano, find the priestess!" The wolf shouted.

The red dragon roared as if to say 'yes sir'. He was clearly giddy, aching for battle.

Elisha watched as the ground grew closer and closer. Lord her dragon was fast. She was beginning to question if she could land safely. Just as she was starting to think it wasn't a good idea, she crossed the final step leading up to the grand entryway and she took a breath. One hand released the rope, which slid along the dragon's neck, letting her fall. It vanished back into her inventory almost immediately and she drew her sword. She loosed a mighty battle cry as she came crashing down on a number of rather surprised and confused trolls.

The battle was a vicious one. The paladin screamed and swung her sword, slaying a good dozen of the relatively weak monsters before deciding it might be a good idea to make good on the name she chose for herself. She began devouring many of the trolls, eager to let them refill her health and magic. It was a rather nice little perk to the mod, one she was quite pleased to have available. To her dismay, however, they were not high enough level to be worth much more than that. It was rather embarrassing how easily and quickly the trolls were dealt with.

When the palace was once again safe, Elisha stood proudly over the 'battlefield', her belly sagging down to her knees and churning away. The last few meals were still fighting to escape, but she knew they'd give up eventually. The wolf burped heartily and began wandering about the palace. Eventually, after calling out for the tiger, she heard groans that could only be Salano's. He hadn't actually tried what she thought he had, had he?

As she rounded a bend, she caught sight of the big red dragon, laying politely atop his own bloated stomach, nosing gently at the deeply uncomfortable striped feline leaning back against him. The mage sat there, holding his enormously swollen stomach, complaining loudly. Elisha raised her eyebrows as she took in the scene before her.

"Well, I didn't think you had it in you to do it without me ordering you to! Congrats on taking the initiative and eating some bad guys!" She laughed.

"I... I didn't... devour... any of the... trolls." Salano said breathlessly.

Elisha paused, frowning thoughtfully for a moment.

"If you didn't eat any of the monsters... then--oh no, you didn't." The wolf said.

"I did... what I had to... in order to... protect... the priestess." The tiger managed to spit out before he belched loud enough to make the paladin proud of him.

"So you ate her!? That's... actually really good thinking! You can let her out now. All the monsters are dead. The palace is safe." Elisha said.

The tiger shook his head with a whine.

"I don't think I can at the moment, my lady. I... I don't think I learned that skill." Salano almost burped.

"It is quite alright, my child." Said a voice, muffled and very close by.

Elisha paused and slowly lowered her gaze down to the tiger's large, round gut.

"Uh, hate to break it to you, but if he doesn't know how to let you out, then we're kind of at an impass." The wolf said.

"On the contrary. Every problem has more than one solution. Are you the one who taught my pupil this skill?" It was the priestess, clearly. She seemed very at ease about being trapped in someone's stomach.

"I am. I suppose I pushed him a little too hard. He wasn't feeling it and I should have listened to him." Elisha said, sounding a little ashamed.

"It is your insistence that he learn how to safely house someone inside him that protected me from being taken. For that, I thank you," The priestess said, "Tell me, what is your name?"

For a moment, Elisha remained quiet. She had almost answered with her real name. She actually did feel bad for forcing Salano through his training, and it had gotten a little too real. It had drawn her out of character for a moment. The wolf paladin cleared her throat and donned her online persona once again, trying to keep to the spirit of the game.

"I am Katiyanna the bottomless. I humbly beg your forgiveness for putting you in such a vexing state." She said.

"My dear Katiyanna, you've no need to be forgiven. This skill that you taught my pupil, do you find it useful?" The priestess asked.

"Incredibly useful. And in truth, I do take pleasure in practicing it." A faint blush crossed Elisha's cheeks in the real world, her in-game sprite mirroring the shift in hue. It was odd that she felt embarrassed admitting that to what amounted to a computer program. It wasn't like she was talking to a real person.

"It is easy to understand why one might. But what if I were to tell you there were other skills you could learn similar to this? Skills that you might find just as useful if not more so? Skills that you might take greater pleasure in practicing?" The priestess asked.

Elisha narrowed her eyes. She wasn't sure where this was going, but she had a feeling it would lead to another quest.

"What sort of skills?" The paladin asked.