

Critical Tits

Chapter One

“All right gang, good session zero!” Bobby chirped happily, waving to the camera. Across the table from him, Cynthia rolled her eyes. He was always so damn upbeat, and (blech) *peppy*. He’d been a male lifter in high school. If not for common interests and the small size of their class, she never would have said a word to him. Except maybe to encourage him to drop one of those anorexic cunts mid-lift. “We’ll get started with the actual Game game next session. Good work on character creation!”

She flipped off the back of the webcam. Those morons had barely understood how basic game mechanics worked last year before covid shut their sessions down. Now that they were finally reopening, she and Bobby had needed to handhold them through every last aspect of it, like their gaming virginities were as intact as their actual virginities.

“Cynthia says bye, too,” he lied, giving her a thin smile as he closed the zoom session.

“Can you believe those two? Brent didn’t remember what a feat was, and Andy required a fresh lesson in what 4d6 meant.” She shook her head, sweeping strands of her jet black dye job over her shoulder. “I didn’t know it was possible for the human brain to lose so much so fast.”

“Not everybody’s as hard core as you and me,” Bobby explained, standing and beginning to gather up the various books spread around the table. “Honestly, I didn’t want to tell you, ‘cause I didn’t want you to get even more... yeah. But they didn’t even want to play again. It took some convincing just to get them back to the table.”

“Not that they’re at the table,” she complained. “This half-live, half-digital crap is so stupid. Everybody talking over everybody all the time, sound quality going in and out, Andy stuffing his fat fucking face with a crinkly-ass bag of chips on an open mic.”

“Yeah, I’ll talk to him about that. That was sort of gross. But they’ll be home from school and vaccinated like us in a month or two, and then we can all meet up. For now, it’s this or nothing, and you said you wanted to play, so...”

“I know what I said. Doesn’t mean I don’t get to bitch a little, though.” She tucked her character sheet into her gaming folder, and then that into her black purse along with her dice set. They were a birthday present from her dad, a rare success from him, carved bone with pips made of chips of red stone. “Ah, well. At least my character won’t suck. Sintheigha’s gonna need those strong shoulders to carry the rest of the party. A melee bard and a sorcerer building to dragon disciple. So at least the second one will probably be worth a damn in, like, eight levels.”

“Don’t worry. I’m making an NPC party member to help supplement. It’s gonna be fine. Might be rocky in the combat, but they bring other assets to the table that, um, ‘Sintheigha’ lacks.” Normally she put more effort into a character name, but it had been her way of conveying her contempt for Andy’s lack of thought into his build. Bobby had not been impressed. “Teamwork makes the dream work. We’re all friends here.”

“I’ve told you a thousand times, Bobby. We’re not friends. We’re gaming buddies.”

“And I’ve told you, buddy,” he grinned brightly, but she could see it was a bit forced. “I don’t see a difference.”

“Bobby, we haven’t seen each other since pre-covid, when we shut down gaming. We don’t text, except about gaming. We don’t hang out, except to game. We don’t have mutual friends, except the other people at the gaming table.” She flashed a *duh* look.

“Well I like you anyway,” he insisted to her irritation. “Actually, I even got you something for the re-commencement, though now I’m not sure you deserve it.”

Cynthia grimaced behind his back and silently hoped he wasn’t going to start up with the flirting again. Bobby had been friends with a lot of the Cool Kids back when, while Cynthia had kept beneath the radar with her fellow goths. (Both of them, and neither exactly model gothizens.) Yet she was conventionally attractive, while Bobby was... friendly. She wasn’t a bitch enough to point it out, but the cessation of his “athletic” career as a male lifter hadn’t done his build any favors either. Still, the fact that he’d gone to the in crowd parties with those preppy assholes had made him feel like he was more than entitled to a less popular girl like Cynthia. She had not been gentle shutting that bullshit the fuck down, and hoped she wouldn’t have to again.

All this went through her mind as he left for the kitchen of his dumpy studio apartment. (She admittedly did like his grungy shithole of a pad.) He returned a moment later, hands folded behind his back. Mercifully he didn’t try to make her guess or beg; Bobby simply produced...

“Some dice?”

He nodded, holding them out further. It was a metal case with a glass – nope, make that clear plastic – lid. Inside were a set of seven dice set into impressions in some foam rubber, d4 up to d20.

They were... perfect.

She felt her jaw drop as she bent closer. The dice were solid black, but somehow blacker. Like holes in the case, holes that led into a bottomless pit. Except they weren’t quite pure black. The black parts were, but the numbers, and something else sprinkled sparsely throughout, were something glittery. White silver. It didn’t seem likely to her to be some cheap material. Definitely not, in fact. Whatever that black stuff was, it was somehow transparent, as if there were nothing there to see at all. The silvery flecks gave it the impression of looking into the infinite void of space.

Cynthia made herself glance up. Bobby was watching her reaction – or at least he was after he stopped looking down her neckline, easy as she'd made it by bending over. She didn't even care. Much. These were the most incredible dice she had ever seen.

"Thank you," she uttered, a bit more breathily than she had intended.

But Bobby shook his head. "Tut tut, my non-friend. These weren't exactly cheap, you know, so I expect you to earn them."

Something in his tone... Cynthia stood upright again. She tugged her black t-shirt back into place. It almost covered the broad raven crest tattoo that she'd gotten last year, shortly before the pandemic screwed her out of the parlor. Her other tattoos were small things, easily concealed since her jerkwad parents wouldn't sign off on them. This one had set her back a pretty penny, but the raven was her pride and joy. Its wings were spread over each breast, its tail hung between; all that was visible now was the top of its head and the crooked silver crown atop that. Bobby had been more than curious to get a better look at it ever since she'd gotten it; the little perv stalked her social media and slathered any post with a hint of sex appeal with flame emojis.

"Look, Bobby, if you think I'm gonna show you my tits for dice, you're fucking nuts."

Bobby laughed it off, though. "Look who's quick to jump to conclusions! Relax, Cynthia. Nothing sketchy. Really, it's more accurate to say 'Sintheigha' has to earn them. Week to week."

"Wait, so like they're... loot?"

"Sort of? Yeah, that's not a bad way to think about it. A little quest reward for what you bring to the table."

"So... what does Sintheigha have to do, then?"

"Right. Are you ready?"

"What the fuck did I just ask? Do I need to say it again?"

Bobby smiled. "First project: Very simple. I want a portrait for her."

Cynthia glowered. "What happened to theater of the mind?" They'd always been content with description alone. It was more immersive. The way things were supposed to be.

"Theater of the mind is great! It is. Only, now we have two digital players, so we have to use a virtual tabletop, which needs a portrait. Now I know, I know, finding fantasy portraits of female warriors is its own kind of chore, but maybe just... be more open-minded? This once?"

The glower deepened. That was the other reason she'd always resisted a call for portraits. "I'm not going to find you some skanky portrait of a blonde bitch in bikini armor."

"Did I say that? But remember, you sprung for the 16 Charisma—"

“For my Intimidate score, and only because I got some lucky stat rolls! So we don’t have to rely on Brent’s idiot bard to sing and dance our way to getting answers!”

“—so remember that’s also supposed to represent physical attractiveness. That’s all I’m saying, find something *accurate*.”

Her eyes went to the dice again, and she let out an exasperated sigh. “Fine. So what do I get if I do this? I want half.”

Bobby tried to pat her on the shoulder reassuringly, but she rolled it out of the way in the nick of time. She might flex on the stupid portrait, but she wasn’t going to let him touch her. “You get *one*. And you’ll find out which when you submit your portrait. Buddy.”

Submit turned out to be a more accurate term than Cynthia had originally supposed. She'd selected and sent a pic before even getting home, fishing out what was to her [a satisfactory image](#) at a long traffic light and hitting the share button.

Bobby's response?

lol very funny, but Sintheigha's not a dwarf

That's NOT a fucking dwarf! she answered.

His follow-up added Brent and Andy into the discussion. *What do you guys think?*

Andy replied in short order that the woman in the picture was "fugly af." Brent took until that evening to note, *If THAT is a 16 Cha then I need to slap another eighty pounds on Skuf's portrait.*

Bobby concluded the discussion with a shrug emoji. The jury had spoken.

Her next proposal came the next day. She'd taken most of her lunch break at her second job, fast food bullshit at Arby's, to look for something that might appease those apes. Her coworker Charlie snuck up behind her and peered over her shoulder. "Whatcha doin'?"

"It's a D&D thing. Finding a character portrait. Mind your fucking business."

Charlie was undaunted, though. She'd told him to fuck off so many times that it was basically their standard farewell. "Oh, that one's hot."

"That one's half-naked. She'll die the first time a goblin swings a pointed stick at her."

Charlie shrugged, popped a curly fry in his scruffy mouth. "Hot though."

Ultimately she compromised with [another image](#), obviously not the one Charlie suggested. The boob armor was stupid, basically engineered to guide a blade into the heart, but it was boobs, and the chick was otherwise pretty badass. She went ahead and wrote the hair and eye color down on her sheet to make it official.

Yikes, feminazi, said Andy.

Not very realistic-looking... said Brent.

Come on, don't just send the first pic you find, said Bobby. *Put a little effort in! I already wrote it on my sheet!*

That's why the gods provided us the eraser, the GM answered with a winky face.

The next day, after coming home from her first job at the carwash and doing her best to rinse that nasty industrial soap off of her – at least as bad as the roast beef and grease – she curled up on the sofa and spent the whole evening searching. Her parents tried to bait her into joining them for dinner, but she lied and said she'd already eaten. Probably all these starved waifs getting into her subconscious.

Tell me [this chick](#) isn't hot enough, she sent at last. It was after midnight. She fell asleep on the couch.

She awakened to the boys' responses. *That's Ciri from Witcher 3*, Brent countered. *She can't use someone iconic like that, can she?* Son of a bitch asked Bobby, as if she weren't also in this thread.

Not unless she uses one [like this](#) lol, Andy had replied. Jesus fuck, these trolls were openly sending her porn now? The fuck?!

I've seen worse lol was Bobby's reply to Andy's debauched suggestion.

Thank the gods for fucking erasers, she shot back. Why was it she was letting them do this again? For a fucking *die*? It couldn't have been that impressive, could it? Cynthia resolved to leave her suggestion as it was. If she didn't respond, Bobby would have no choice.

That night, she dreamed of an all-consuming starfield. Cynthia tried to dive in, but every time she felt like she was getting close, she felt a slap, and heard Bobby's voice telling her she hadn't earned it. The backs of her hands, at first. The front of her leg. Then her forehead. Eventually her ass. The dream was the same the next night, but this time she started bent over his lap and didn't even try to get closer. She wanted to, but it was time for punishment, not rewards.

She woke up so wet she thought she'd pissed herself. But no.

"Too much fucking fantasy porn," she grumbled as she renewed her search.

[Her next proposal](#) – which was only coincidentally the same one Charlie had endorsed the other day – earned a heart emoji from Brent. Andy, however, persuaded Bobby she could still do better. There was no guidance from either about what "better" explicitly meant, but it was obvious enough.

Time was winding down, and if Cynthia's dreams got any more intense she was going to have a hard time making eye contact with Bobby at the table on Saturday. With her eyes squinted shut, she pressed the Send button for [her raciest proposal yet](#). Skanky as hell, but it was at least gothy. Sort of. The knee pads, anyway. She practically held her breath waiting for Bobby's reply. In fact, she was checking her phone so often that her Arby's manager Doug had to yell at her. Twice.

Wow! Brent said simply. That was one endorsement.

That bitch is tasty, added Andy to her immense relief, though his addendum that *you could totally look that hot if you wanted Cynthia ;)* didn't help. She told him to shut the fuck up and waited for Bobby to weigh in. The votes were in, but she needed his thumbs up. He had the dice.

That's some pretty intense armor for 1st level, he answered. *Liking the spirit, but remember that it ought to be practical, too. Within Sintheigha's means, you know? But I like where your heart's at!*

Like that, democracy dissolved. After all, his was the only vote that really counted.

The morning of the session, haggard from fitful sleep punctuated by fevered searches and calculations of how much dignity was worth sacrificing for a simple piece of plastic, she sent [her final submission](#).

It was pathetic. A gif of a modded Skyrim skank, some playboy bunny in a thong bikini and a loin cloth turned sideways to make sure it failed at its only job. Sintheigha's nipples were bullseyes for any foe who wanted to ogle her before they ran through her totally exposed midsection. The only thing resembling protection to it was a shoulder plate atop an arm even more slender than Cynthia's own. (She made a silent commitment to work on that.) Big tits, perfectly coiffed blonde hair, a pussy practically revealed by default.

If Cynthia had seen someone cosplaying this crap she would have been unable to resist punching the bitch on principle.

Now, it was Sintheigha. Not Cynthia, just Sintheigha. She remade her character sheet, the lines for her appearance already worn through from previous erasures. For a moment, she considered swapping her Con and Charisma, but that was stupid. Hit points were a resource. Charisma was for a minor boost to one skill.

By then, it was time to go to the session. None of the boys had replied by then, and she found herself praying – not that she even believed in god – that it was enough. If she'd been through this whole rotten, degrading, son of a bitch of a week and didn't at least have the promised trinket to show for it...

Bobby greeted her at the door. "Hey, you made it." He hugged her. Somehow, she let him. Even hugged back with one arm. What the fuck. "You look nice, by the way."

"I didn't dress up for you," she retorted. It wasn't even that different from the norm. Instead of her usual black jeans and black t-shirt (sweatshirt, in the colder months), she was wearing black jeans and a black tank top. It showed a lot more of her chest tattoo, all of the wings and most of the body, and sure, a little bit of cleavage. Not that she could help it. Tits were gonna tit. She dressed like this regularly, in fact, just not for her gamer buddies, so they didn't get even a ghost of an idea about having a shot with her.

But Bobby hadn't approved her picture yet. It couldn't hurt to give him a tiny little nudge. Not like it cost her anything. Just some dignity. Her dignity had regen 2.

The DM said nothing, only ushered her in and went back to getting everything in place. Cynthia took her spot opposite him, where the mic would pick her up but not the camera. She wasn't here to be ogled by those creeps.

Well, not by two of them, at least.

Brent joined their zoom call, his doughy face taking its spot in the bottom corner of the TV, which Bobby was using to run the virtual tabletop for her sake. His own iteration was running separately on his laptop. Andy's face appeared atop the VTT soon after.

“Sup, folks. Just wanted to say Sintheigha looks smoking hot.” The first words out of his mouth.

“Yeah, way to go, stepping outside your comfort zone,” Brent added, nodding appreciatively. Cynthia flipped both of them off under the table, where Bobby wouldn’t see it. She couldn’t have their approval flagging here in the home stretch.

“So... it’s official, then? Finally did good enough?” she asked irritably.

Bobby smiled. “I have to say, I was pretty disappointed by some of the effort you put in this week. I knew that if we pushed you, though...”

“You’re pushing it right now, asshole.” She grimaced as soon as the words were out. This was no time to be proud.

“Right. So I remember how you hate to be made to wait for dramatic reveals. So cutting to the chase, drum roll please...”

“The whole point of a drum roll is for a dramatic reveal!” Her bitter retort was cut off by the thunderous sound of Andy’s drumming piping through his microphone.

Evidently Bobby had not had that talk with him about switching to push to talk, after all.

But then, there it was.

A d4.

Using the lid of the dice case to keep the other six in place, Bobby jiggled the case until the d4 tumbled loose and landed in front of her, bouncing until it came to a stop against her breasts. It landed on a 2. Not auspicious, but at least it wasn’t a 1. The number was etched somewhere inside the inky depths in the same silver as those flecks, only more solid. She’d been secretly hoping for the d20, or at least the d10, since that was her weapon’s die damage. Still, she picked it up, so elated that it was almost like she could feel it tingling in her hand.

Then she heard the boys applauding. Cynthia set her new treasure down, pale cheeks flushing in embarrassment. She could probably count on one hand the number of times she’d smiled in front of these guys, and all of them were because of lucky crits. Not smiling was something she was legendary for.

“Um, nothing uses d4’s, though,” she pointed out as she began to think it through.

“Nonsense,” Bobby said dismissively. “Daggers, nunchucks, sai, a halfling quarterstaff or shortsword...”

She threw her hands in the air. “Sintheigha isn’t a halfling! She uses heavy swords!” She’d gone for the d10 on purpose. The average was lower than comparable weapons with a 2d6, but with the right spec she could one-hand it.

“How’s that for gratitude,” said Andy, shaking his head.

Like that, the moment was over and Bobby was addressing Brent about something he’d been struggling with on his character sheet.

Meanwhile, she hastily made an adjustment, erasing her sword and replacing it with a dagger. Woefully inadequate DPS, but she could pick up two-weapon fighting later. She had the Dex for it. For now, a dagger would do. Almost half the damage, but it was a game, after all. Games were supposed to be fun. She would have more fun rolling her amazing new die. Yes, he would eventually give her other dice, but there was no guarantee he'd work up in size order, or how long he'd make her wait. For now, it was all in time for her new d4.

The backdrop on the VTT was solid black save for their icons. There was no sign of Bobby's party NPC as yet, but the rest were there. Skuf, with a broad grin on his rough face. Jerom, his clawed hand holding a ball of fire. And Sintheigha, animated, bobbling and jiggling into the adventure with a placid smile on her simpering face. She fixed her eyes on her new die so the embarrassment would be less palpable.

"So, we begin in the land of Hypheron..." Bobby began. Cynthia couldn't tell if the words were addressed to the web cam between them, or her chest beyond it.

With six more dice in that container, though, she didn't care.