IV

“I know that you’ve been practicing with that book of spells and all, but I really don’t think that I like the idea of you trying to cu—”

“Shhh! I’m reading!”

Grace and Glory had been at this for some time now. The year that they had spent away from their home at Castle Godfrey had translated into so many strange adventures and broadening their horizons so widely that it was almost depressing to realize that the latest solution touted to be able to cure Glory’s pound-a-day curse might have just been with them since they defeated that witch in the Inn all that time ago.

But then again, they were getting increasingly desperate.

As Glory’s weight only continued to rise with each passing day, after one year on the road, she was well over five hundred pounds of princess that had to be hauled, wheeled, and escorted pretty much everywhere. She became exhausted just walking from place to place when in towns, clothing her was near impossible, and keeping her fed while on the road meant that almost any and all rewards that found their way into their pockets went straight towards feeding Grace’s sister.

Which of course, only served to further her outward expansion.

It felt like every single obstacle that they ran into over the course of this journey was designed to only further pad Glory’s waistline. From an Orc that fattened up his wives to a monastery that believed Glory was the reincarnation of a gluttony god, to a witch that released everyone’s “inner desires” which just led to Glory eating enough food to feed an army over the course of several days, not to mention the various warriors and bandits and highwaymen that they’d come across that seemed inexplicably attracted to her weight, and it was absolutely not shocking at all that it felt like Glory was gaining far more than a pound a day.

Glory now rode in a cart that they had purchased from a farmer along the way, riding in the back like the heavy burden that her presence was becoming on their journey to free her from this curse. Steadily, she grew more and more rotund while taking up a majority of the cart for herself—to the point where the big, belly-heavy blonde riding in the rear was beginning to stress the suspension of the thing.

Wheels were breaking and going uphill was a long, arduous struggle. The horses could only pull so much weight and, with Glory on top of two other passengers as well as the camp and various items that they carried with them on their journey, it was becoming clear that there was very little to be done *other* than to try something desperate.

That being the book that had been in the witch’s den back at the hotel.

“Could we at least get her *out of the cart* while you’re… drawing on the ground there?”

“Sure, sure…”

Thora rolled her eyes as she took a big step up into the wagon, grabbed Glory by the hand, and used the momentum to help haul her up. Muscles or not, Glory was getting to be a pretty big girl, and she needed all the help she could get when it came to helping her onto her feet.

“Hff… oogh…” Glory panted as she stepped gingerly onto the little ladder, “Alright, easy…”

Coming down on her full weight would have surely hurt her. Which would have just made her more immobile than she was already becoming, or have forced them to drive off-course into town. Once she was firmly on the ground, Glory was already dreading hefting her leg up and hearing the wheels groan as she hauled herself back into her carriage.

“That’s… getting a lot harder… than it used to be…” Glory panted, laying both hands on her uppermost tummy tier, “Hff… is there a place to… you know… sit down?”

“Yeah, it looks like there’s a log over there that could hold you…”

Glory’s heavy overhang swayed slightly with her every labored step as she waddled towards the log. Massive, pillary legs quaking and sending wobbling reverberations behind her as she trotted towards a little release from being on her feet for such a short period of time. On such a hot day, being caked in such insular rolls and folds, there was hardly anything that she could have done other than just tried to bear through it—and that was before she’d been hauled out from the back of the wagon so that they could set up camp.

“There we go…”

Glory huffed gratefully as her poor little feet were given some respite. Her stomach hung lower to the ground than she thought it might—and as she rubbed the flanks of the mighty behemoth, her swaddling double chin creased sadly as it gurgled.

“Again?” Thora asked, more out of a hope to lighten the mood than really to chastise her traveling companion, “Something tells me you’d be this big even if you weren’t cursed to gain a pound a day.”

“Hey Grace, can your… thing… be done when she’s had something to eat?”

“Hmm? Yeah, sure.” The would-be mage said as she continued to draw her complex summoning sigil, “I’m gonna be here for a while, so you’re more than welcome to do the whole shebang.”

Grace had been practicing with her “liberated” book of spells both in and out of combat, and it had done well to foster a sense of magical affinity that she hadn’t realized was there before her adventuring had begun in earnest. Her affinity for spells had changed in the past few days though, pointing her towards a potential solution to ending their journey. One that she had become increasingly convinced of the more that she poured over it, and the more that Glory’s weight bared down on her metaphorical shoulders.

“Well, you heard her.” Thora put her hands on her hip and arched her back, “Back to work for Thora, I guess…”

“Do you think that she can really cure me?” Glory asked skeptically, her voice so much shier and thicker than when they’d first met, “Like… do you think that whatever’s in that book can—”

“Look, I don’t do magic.” Thora held up her hands, “Never turns out right for me. What I *do* know how to do is set up camp. So that’s what I’m gonna do.”

And with that simple admission of inexperience and distrust, Thora accidentally said what both she and Glory were thinking. Distrustful of magic but not knowledgeable enough to put a stop to Grace’s hypothesis, both of them knew that their options were getting increasingly limited.

And so, Thora set up camp, and she let Grace work on her circle.

\*\*\*

It would take a little over an entire day for Grace’s circle to be completed. The various intricacies of the chalk drawings were difficult even for an advanced mage, perhaps even the witch that had originally owned the book. But through sheer will and dedication, she had been able to complete her task at the cost of food, sleep, and sanity.

“Have you… did you work all night again?”

“Yeah, just… figured… you know…”

Grace had never been as prim nor as proper as her sister had been before the curse had ravaged her thin physique and stamina. But she had always maintained a sort of soft femininity about her—definitely moreso than the more brash and increasingly blobby Glory or the tomboy adventurer Thora. But after so long working straight, not sleeping or eating, that had faded quickly. Kneeling over in the dirt, her hair a mess, dark circles under her eyes—Grace looked more feral now than she ever had after a year on the road.

“Jeez, Gracie… you, uh… you should probably take a break.” Thora ventured with a warm hand on her shoulder, “I know you’ve been practicing and all, but shouldn’t you make sure that you’re, you know, well rested before you try anything this complicated?”

“No way, I’m… I’m good, I promise.” Grace said dismissively, rubbing at her eyes, “You know that we can’t afford to wait. Glory’s just gonna get bigger with every day that passes—”

“Yeah, buy *one pound*.” Thora sternly affirmed, “It’s not like we can’t afford to wait to make sure you get rested up and back to one hundred percent.”

“—we’ve been at this *for a year*, Thora.” Grace’s tone escalated from tired but firm to insistent and brash rather quickly, “In another year? This will be *impossible* and she’ll be *stuck* like this.”

“Yes, but at the same time—”

“Listen, we all know that you get *something* out of watching my sister get fatter, okay?” Grace snapped, “And it’s getting *really hard* not to think that you’re just trying to sabotage this so that you can keep—”

“Ex*cuse* me?!”

The two friends, normally so in sync with one another, found themselves in the middle of their first real argument. And over this of all things—something that Grace and Glory had both agreed to not bring up, and something that Thora wasn’t consciously aware of herself. Fingers were pointed and chests were poked, the only thing that stopped them was the sound of Glory calling out from her tent, needing to be helped up.

“Um… guys? I don’t want to interrupt whatever’s going on out there, but… a little help?”

Thora and Grace stared at one another for a brief, tense moment, before Thora called back to the puddle of princess and entered her tent for aid.

\*\*\*

The idea behind the summoning spell—an advanced sort of magic that probably shouldn’t have been used by a novice like Grace in the first place—was that this particular spell was broad enough to summon “what you need”.

The broader a magical term, the less specific in its cause, the easier it is to cast… supposedly.

After happening upon the spell in her casual studies of the magic tome that had been liberated from the witch so long ago, she’d become obsessed with using it to break the curse of her sister. Logically, if she could summon “what she needed” to break the spell, then it would mitigate the need of having to haul Glory around and they could get back to the castle.

However, as Grace would soon learn, there were a few jumps in logic that she hadn’t quite accounted for when she put all of her eggs into this one basket.

“Can’t I at least get a *chair* or something?”

Glory’s massive ass spread along the flat ground, her stomach coming to rest between her thighs as they spread out wide across the dirt. Her huge, doubly-tiered stomach billowed outwards while her breasts rested lazily on her meaty spare tire, double chin creased as the swell of her chest forced it up. With her arms leaning backwards to support her tremendous shape, getting her back up was going to be a two-person job and both of them knew it.

“We can’t risk contaminating the spell.” Grace said in a hush as she lit the three candles that had survived in their travel bag, “The focal point of the “want” has to be the only thing in the circle—and that’s you.”

“Am I the thing or the circle?” Glory joked lightly as she rubbed her hand along the fleshy flank of her fat gut, “It’s getting kind of hard to tell these days.”

Glory couldn’t help but think that her attempt to lighten the mood hadn’t helped much. Especially as the clouds grew heavy overhead and the candlelight began to shift to an ominous purple tint. A feeling of dampness in the air created a humidity with the Summer heat, as if a great storm was beginning to make its way towards them—not unlike how the inn had felt those months ago when they had almost been forced to stay there for all eternity…

“Grace… are you *sure* you know what you’re doing?”

“Of *course* I’m sure…” Grace furrowed her brow and slitted her eyes as she tried to focus her energies into the circle, “Just gotta… make sure that I say the right things…”

The spell that she was attempting to cast was complicated. Honestly, Grace wasn’t as confident in her abilities to cast it as she had convinced herself that she was. But the frustration of having been at this a year with little to nothing to show for it had gotten to her in a way that she hadn’t expected. She *needed* this to work at any cost.

“Grace, I… I feel…” a deep gurgling began to churn within the vast and voluminous gut of the princess plopped down on the ground, “Something’s not right…”

“Just bear with me, Glory—I swear, I know what I’m doing!”

However, as a *figure* formed in the purple haze that descended upon the traveling party rather than a *shape*, Grace was suddenly overcome with a supreme lack of confidence in her magical abilities. One that the two people who hadn’t been present at the initial moment of Glory’s cursing couldn’t possibly have recognized, but Glory…

“Uh… G-Gracy?” Glory asked, her eyes wide with terror, “What’s this spell supposed to summon again?”

“The, uh… it’s supposed to summon what we need to break the curse…” the younger of the Godfrey siblings gulped, “I don’t… I don’t know exactly what’s—”

“*Grace I need you to stop summoning now!”*

But, as the figure became more and more opaque, solidifying into existence out of the thick dewy mist that had sprung up in the hot and the wet, Grace soon learned that despite her sister’s sheer terror she was unable to halt the summoning spell. Not because she didn’t want to, but because it was already too far in—whomever or whatever she had summoned into the circle with her sister was now there, and the spell required to send it *back* was at least a few pages away.

“Oho… it has been some time, Glory of House Godfrey.”

It had been some time since Glory had come face to face with the witch that had cursed her to gain a pound a day. And for her to be brought to her once more under the notion that she was what was needed to break the curse that had been placed upon her made it that much more disheartening to see her—was she the *only* thing in the world that could have popped into that circle with her? The only way to break the curse being to confront her with the woman who had ruined her life once more?

“I see that I have… worked my magic on you.”

\*\*\*

Grace hadn’t left the side of the summoning circle since her sister disappeared.

Despite all of her magical training, she had been reminded very quickly that for all of her practice and all of her determination, she was still just a spoiled princess with a spell book. There was nothing that she could have done in the face of that which she had summoned in the name of solving her problems, and there was little to do in and of as far as tracking down just where her sister and the strange figure that she had summoned had gone.

“You ready to pack up?” Thora asked of her friend of just more than a year, “We’re gonna need to get a move on if we want to find out where Glory wound up, you know.”

“I… I did this…” Grace sniffled, “All I wanted to do was to help, but… I brought the person who caused all of this here… and she took her. She took my sister…”

Thora sighed, a long and drawn-out breath of air that was hardly as sympathetic as it perhaps should have been if she wanted to motivate Grace out of her stalled psyche. But one that was genuine in its anguish and frustration, as well as the sadness and fear of not knowing where the Princess had wound up after being teleported away.

“Yeah, you kinda did.” Thora finally said after a long pause, “But… I mean, you were only trying to help. You were right. Hauling her around at more than five hundred pounds wasn’t going to be feasible. We had to do *something* and… well, I guess you had a couple of good points.”

“Yeah, well… look where that got me.”

“Hey, come on.” Thora’s outstretched arm palmed her friend by the shoulder, “We’ll find her.”

“Yeah, with what, my magical abilities?” Grace rolled her eyes, “Just because I’ve got a book of spells doesn’t mean that I know how to make use of any of them. All I’m good for is slinging the occasional fireball when you can’t take care of whatever monster we’re fighting.”

“I mean… you *did* summon a witch in a summoning circle—a pretty powerful one too…” Thora offered in condolence, “And you sling fireballs pretty well.”

“…I guess it’s our best shot, isn’t it?” Grace stood up and dusted herself off, “Alright. No more princess. No more half-assing magic studies. From here on, we devote our time to getting Glory back from wherever that woman took her. Sound good?"

"Sounds good."

The two women hugged, with the younger princess struggling not to fall apart right there in her guide’s embrace. It would take time, and it would take effort, but eventually the three of them would be reunited. They were confident in that fact. They had to be.

But there was no way of knowing just how long that would take. Or how big Glory would be by the time they came face to face with her again.