

“It’s just a target. Not even moving. Come on. You want to prove those humans wrong, don’t you? You bet your clothing on this, you don’t want to have to walk through a human town naked, do you?” Enoki whispered into her friend’s ear while brushing the other elf’s hair out of the way. “Don’t let me distract you. By all means, just keep concentrating. Look at that target. So far away~ Don’t let your mind wander and think of the humiliating walk directly through town. We won’t be going around it after all. I still have errands to run. A few in the town square, too.”

“Shut up.” Birch kept her eyes on the target. It was at least a kilometer away. A shot that would be impossible for a human, but one she could probably do. Maybe. Not that she’d ever attempted a shot like that.

The dark elf, Enoki, smiled and stepped back, finished with teasing her wood elf friend. Aside from their skin, they were both quite similar in appearance. They wore the same outfit – finely made black leather with elven script across it. They had figures befitting warriors! Each was two meters tall, letting them tower over the men around them. But despite their size they didn’t lack elven grace.

“You gonna shoot?” a human man grinned. His gaze lingered on Birch’s rear. He was a gentleman of extraordinary tastes, and both of these elves fit those tastes. He just couldn’t wait to see a powerful, naked wood elf blushing and trying to cover herself. The grizzled, bald man with a long red beard looked over to Enoki, wishing he’d managed to bring her in on the bet too.

“Yeah! You’ve been aiming all day, just shoot already and miss! We know you’re stalling!” another said.

About ten humans started jeering. Birch clenched her jaw before releasing the tension with a deep breath. She was going to miss. No one could make a shot like this without some serious magic, and even then, she promised she wouldn’t use any. Just elven eyes and elven skill. And soon to be elven embarrassment.

“You can do it!” one voice piped up. Birch glanced back to see a green-haired half-elf with a big smile on her face. She didn’t share their warrior stature, but it was clear from the exposed midriff that the half-elf was fairly fit herself.

Well. At least someone stupid believed in her.

Birch took one deep breath before exhaling. She let the arrow fly. Time slowed down – she could almost see it. And see it fall dreadfully short. Not even half the distance.

It was harder for the humans to see where the arrow ended up, but all they needed to see was that the target was still standing.

“She missed!” one shouted.

“Hah! I wanna see what an elven pussy looks like!” another blurted out.

“How’d you talk an elf into such a stupid bet, Dane?” another asked while laughing.

Birch tried to hide her blush by turning away, but the humans had already seen her reddening cheeks. More of them started laughing.

Finally Dane stepped forward with the most shit eating grin he’d ever held in his life. “Well, we had a deal. You take off your clothes, and I keep hooting after elven ass, no punishment.”

Birch fumed. She couldn’t believe this was about to happen to her! Her, of all people! She was the best archer in the clan! Why did she have to make this stupid bet! There was no way she was going to win.

“Well, well,” Enoki chuckled. She appraised Birch with a cruel smile. Letting her go through with this might have some long lasting repercussions, but for now it was all fun and games.

“Double or nothing!” the chipper half-elf called out from behind the crowd.

“Eh?” Dane turned and inspected the half-elf. “You’re kinda short. Especially compared to these two. And what’s wrong with your ears...? They’re kinda pointed outward... Never seen an elf like you.”

Unlike the leather the wood elf and dark elf wore, the half-elf wore less battle ready clothes – a green breechcloth and a matching green chestwrap, both held together with braided vines that looked as fresh as if they were still growing.

“She’s a half elf,” Enoki corrected. “But a rather cute one. Maybe you should take her up on the offer. That green braid would look nice swaying over a naked butt, no?” Though her affections were cruel, Enoki liked the half-elf immediately. She always did have a thing for fools. It wasn’t like she would just abandon her, of course, once she failed, Enoki would keep her from anyone being too untoward.

“You are pretty cute. And I do like those muscles you got. But since you’re half-human, I’m gonna level with you that this shot is impossible. I’m an archer myself, and I’ve seen enough elven archers to know what they’re capable of. Even specimens as gorgeous as the wood elf there.”

“Yeah, but have you even seen a half-elf archer!” The green-haired girl stepped up and took a bow off her back. The bow itself was rather ornate with elven script carved right into it along with a living vine wrapped around it with a pretty pink flower at the end of it.

The other men started laughing. “Yeah! Have you? Look at her! Let’s get a real good look at her, eh? She’s more than pretty enough, sure the whole town will enjoy seeing her.”

Dane raised his hands to settle the crowd. "Alright, I hear you all. If she's fine with the bet, then I'm fine with it too. Double or nothing. You land the shot she missed, and neither of you have to remove your clothes. Fairs fair?"

"Fair!" the half-elf chirped. "Oh wait! I forgot something super important!" she blurted out. "I just—I'm supposed to introduce myself before I make a deal! Hi! I'm Lilah!" she said with a curtsy.

"Ah... right. Yeah. I'm Dane," the man said awkwardly. "Let's get you shooting. That the bow you gonna use? It looks a little... dainty."

"It's a great bow!" Lilah said. "Well, not a greatbow, but a great bow, you know? It's actually just recurve bow."

Dane laughed. "I like you. You're funny. But you're not getting out of the deal, so get that butt up there and shoot. But I wanna make sure – that bow ain't magic, is it?"

"No, the bow isn't magic," Lilah held up the bow. "It's homegrown!"

"Ah, good enough! Get up there."

"Right!" Lilah said. She looked up to the smiling Enoki before she glanced at Birch. Birch covered her face while Enoki winked. Both knew what was about to happen.

Lilah stepped up to the line, nocked an arrow, tilted her head once to make sure her sights were set, stuck out her tongue slightly, and loosed the arrow. It was like a bolt of lightning. Even Enoki and Birch didn't see it. In the blink of an eye, the target at an impossible range to hit was flung back like it was hit by a ballista bolt.

Everyone, elves and humans, looked at the short half-elf with amazement and confusion.

"H-how did you?" Dane was the first to ask.

"You said no magic bow," Lilah smiled. The answer was obvious – at least to Dane. Everyone else just stared in confusion.

"A-ah... I see," Dane shook his head before he laughed. "I feel like I just got played! My fault for not wording the rules of the game better. You little cheat!" He reached over and gently placed a hand on Lilah's shoulder.

"Sure is!" Lilah giggled. "I totally cheated!"

"Oh, I see. A magic arrow," Enoki finally clued everyone else in. "He only told her no magic bow."

Dane and Lilah laughed together while the crowd dispersed. They all got a show, but not the one they hoped for.

Birch finally managed to pick her jaw off the floor and stepped forward, wrapping the little half-elf in a big hug and lifting her off the ground. "You saved me! You little trickster, I'm so glad you saved me!"

"Aye, guess she did," Dane laughed. "Suppose it was worth it to see that shot. Never actually seen a magic arrow before. How many do you have?"

Lilah dangled from Birch's arms. She sort of half wrapped an arm around her to hug back, but given she was pressed tightly against Birch's breasts, she wasn't sure what she was supposed to! "Just the one, a bit of a silly use thinking about it..."

"Silly use?! You saved my pride! I'm going to take you home and show you exactly how much I appreciate it. You're so cute I might never let you go though~" Birch gently sat the half-elf down and ruffled her hair. "So young and so cute! I just want to dote on you. But really, you do deserve a reward, and I think I have something in mind."

"She gets this way with people she likes," Enoki laughed.

"Uh, right," Lilah looked up to the two smiling elves. "So, what kind of reward? You don't need to pay me back for the arrow." she asked.

"Just come with us," Birch giggled. She slipped behind Lilah and put a hand on her back, urging her forward toward the forest.

"Oh no you don't. I still have other errands. Let her go collect her things, then we will meet her at the town entrance," Enoki lectured.

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"Is your village really only this deep in the forest?" Lilah couldn't help but be curious. "The elven village I came from was really, really deep in the forest, and they didn't like people much. That you two go into town is really weird! My clan only did that when something big was happening."

The trio walked through a well traversed path. Lilah was sandwiched between the bigger elves. Birch kept a hand on Lilah at all times, doting over the small, at least in comparison, half-elf.

"Really? Was your village that secretive? Our clan is fairly open," Enoki said. "We protect the forest, act as guides for travelers, sometimes as mercenaries, and we occasionally celebrate with humans. Most human men in particular stay away from us, but some do have a particular taste as you've seen."

“Yeah, they never really left the forest. Sometimes they’d bring someone to the city, and sometimes one of the elves would leave the forest, but it wasn’t super common.”

“Then how about you? Did you stay in the forests?”

“No, I’ve been to a bunch of places and met lots of people!”

“I can’t get over how cute you are,” Birch squealed. “I’ve never seen a half-elf in person. Are they all as cute as you?”

“I dunno! I guess I’ve never met one. Do you really think I’m that cute? Everyone in my clan makes fun of me for being stubby.”

“Fools,” Enoki sighed. “You might not have the same elven grace as us, but *stubby*? What, do they think of you as a gnome? No. You’re beautiful, and no one should make you feel anything less for a moment.”

Lilah giggled. “Thanks!”

“Oooh, even Enoki is feeling protective of you! She’s usually such a hard sell!” Birch nudged Lilah with her elbow.

“Enough. I can see our home in the distance. Why don’t you go ahead and explain the situation to the others, I want a word alone with Lilah.”

“Oh, yeah, sure thing?” Birch raised an eyebrow but shook it off. “I’ll let the others know not to get too excited.”

Enoki waited for Birch to get far enough away, not wanting to risk Birch’s elven ears listening in. “Half-elves are rare. Even with a clan as friendly with humans as us, none want to risk carrying a half-elf. But our clan has a tradition of teaching any half-elves we come across an important lesson – one that often gets quite intimate.”

“Uhm... okay...?” Lilah didn’t know how to react. She hadn’t met many other elvish clans – maybe only hers saw her as a burden. “How intimate, I guess? Is this going to be a sex thing? You and Birch are really pretty, and I’d love to and all but–”

Enoki laughed and placed her hand on the top of Lilah’s head. “What I mean to say, Lilah, is can you trust us with your safety?”

“Oh! Yeah, sure! I mean, at least with you. I don’t think Birch makes good decisions.”

Enoki placed her hand on Lilah's back. "Agreed. Let's see if she made a good one in how she talked about you."

As they walked further into the forest, Lilah saw the clan's village. It wasn't all that different from her own; what amounted to a bunch of tree houses connected by rope bridge and larger platforms. Aside from the bridges, all the material was simple groomed trees. Giant, alive, and now acting as home for the elves.

"You don't seem impressed." Enoki chuckled.

"Oh, sorry! Yeah, it's super neat! It's all, uhm... it's all...!" She searched for something nice she could say without lying. "It's definitely sturdier looking than my village!" They could really use some more flowers...

"Don't get a headache." Enoki walked toward a tree and grabbed a rope that was hanging from a platform. "You don't need help, do you? I can carry you up if you like."

"Oh, no, I'm good!" Lilah grabbed another nearby rope and started scaling the tree with it. She hefted herself up onto the platform without too much trouble.

"Good job," Enoki called out. "Entertain yourself with the women, there's one last thing I need to check on."

"...the women?" Lilah turned to look at the village proper. There didn't seem to be anyone around. She wandered higher up the tree village, finally hearing a bit of life coming from just a little higher up.

"I'm telling you, a real half-elf!" Birch shouted. "And she's adorable! We have to have the ceremony!"

"You seem pretty taken with her," a low and melodious voice replied.

"You will be too, she always has the dumbest little smile on her face. She's just so adorable, and I think she'll be perfect for the ceremony."

"I wanna see her! Why didn't you bring her?" another elf said.

Lilah tiptoed up the stairs, peeking her head just high enough to see what was going on. A group of at least fifteen elven women, all as fit as Enoki and Birch, stood around a more mature looking elf that Lilah could guess was the elder. Even she was quite strong looking. These elves were so strange! So big and tall and pretty...

The elder looked over toward Lilah, and their gazes met for a split second. Lilah ducked her head down. She wanted to learn more before she even tried to talk to that group of women.

