

Prim in “A Tale of Perspective”

By: Wyland

Author's note: This Tale occurs after both “Gnomish Plunder Tale” and the as-yet incomplete and unreleased Tale set in the northern regions. It is approximately ten years before Prim and Tia meet.

The ocean roiled in the storm, sending waves crashing against the wooden hull of the ship. Rain deluged the crew as they worked feverishly to see the vessel through the rough weather. At the helm, a gnome barked orders as her rain-soaked blonde hair whipped about in the winds, giving her an appearance which was – when one took a moment to consider it – only slightly wilder than what she usually wore.

At the prow of the ship another gnome stood witnessing the battle between the forces of nature and the captain and crew of the *Scurvy Plunder*. Prim watched as a large wave approached the ship. She felt the deck tilt as Captain Lilly spun the wheel, turning the vessel to face the wave head-on. Prim held on to the rails as the ship pointed higher and higher, climbing the wave. And then the bow came crashing down as the ship crested the wave, the spray of the ocean washing over the redhead, momentarily hiding her from view.

She let out a few coughs after the water passed. She checked the rope at her waist, its ends anchoring her to the rails. She felt the deck tilt again. Looking up, she saw another wave coming at them, Lilly driving them to it with a mad determination Prim admired in the pirate captain.

The bard's face lit up with a wild smile. After her months of idleness in the frozen northern regions, she could not express the joy she felt at being on the move again. Her cheer had lasted all through the weeks of the journey to date, infecting the captain and her crew. When the storm had been sighted a few hours back, Prim had immediately demanded to see it firsthand. She had defied Lilly's orders, tying herself in place with unimpressive knots the pirate had grumpily re-tied.

Once again, the ship crested, and the ocean momentarily buried Prim. After the water passed, Prim laughed a laugh comprised of one part excitement, one part defiance, and perhaps more than a little part insanity.

She had never felt so free.

An hour later, Prim plucked at her fiddle, trying to perfect a few measures of a tune she was composing. She sat cross-legged on Lilly's bed in the captain's quarters. Her clothes were all hung on a line, drying out. She had wrapped a towel around her wet hair.

She nodded to herself with a smile, satisfied with her latest effort, and set the bow to the strings. Before she could start her tune, however, the door to the cabin swung open with a crash.

Lilly furiously strode in, pausing only to turn and slam the door shut behind her. She stomped over beside the bed, where she stood, water dripping and pooling beneath her.

“Do ye want to be explainin' what ye be thinkin', Primiphi?” she demanded.

“Whatever are you on about, Dandelion?” Prim asked, moving the bow. The music of the fiddle filled the room.

“Don't ye be playin' that when I be hollerin' at ye!” Lilly shouted, leaning closer and bringing her hand up as if to knock the instrument out of Prim's hands. She caught herself and stopped well short, but her meaning was clear.

Her behavior earned her a cocked eyebrow from the redhead. “Goodness, Dandelion,” Prim said, lowering the fiddle. “You really are annoyed.”

Lilly thrust a finger at her. “Annoyed? I be furious, Primiphi! Ye be riskin' yer life – fer what? A lark?”

“I told you,” Prim answered calmly. “I wanted to see the storm. After my recent trip to the north, I am quite thoroughly tired of being stuck indoors, kept out of sight. Our current voyage has had little to commend it for excitement beyond the weather. And yet, you always hide me in here when a storm comes through.”

“Of course I be movin' ye in here!” Lilly said. “Ye be useless in a storm! And me crew no be needin' yer distractions!”

“Your crew performed admirably, as you always knew they would,” Prim said. She raised her fiddle to her shoulder again. “You pay them enough when I am onboard, after all.”

She began playing again, the music filling the cabin. Lilly ground her teeth.

“Ye could've been washed overboard,” she growled.

Prim rolled her eyes. “With the knots you tied?”

“Riggin' could be fallin' on ye.”

“You take care of your oddly-named ship, Dandelion. I trust the *Scurvy Plunder*. And I will not be tucked away like a fragile doll anymore,” she finished with a tone of finality, interrupting her song to point at Lilly with her bow for emphasis.

Lilly stomped her foot irritably as Prim resumed playing. “I should be stringin' ye up on the decks and whippin' ye in front of everyone, I should be,” she said.

Prim laughed, the music stopping as she brought the instrument down once again. “Is that a threat or a promise?” she asked lightly.

“Ye always be makin' jokes,” Lilly said, shaking her head. “I do be serious, Primiphi.”

“I know. You always look sexy when you get so serious.”

Lilly sputtered, blushing. “I – ye – Blast it all, Primiphi!” she finally cried out. “Ye be makin' me look silly in front o' me crew!”

“Oh, goodness,” Prim said, waving off Lilly's concerns. “I do that no fewer than four times a day.”

The pirate let out a roar of frustration. “Why do I be puttin' up with ye?” she demanded, glaring at the bard.

Prim gave her a seductive smile. “Because you know the more I annoy you, the more playful I am in your bed,” she said with a wink. She resumed playing.

Lilly stood watching Prim for a moment before pushing her eyepatch up. She gazed at Prim, looking her up and down. The pirate grinned. “Oh, how I do be forgettin' just how dangerous ye can be when ye be gettin' trig and wantin' somethin',” she said. “Tho' I be warnin' ye, Primiphi: Do be careful what ye be wishin' fer.”

Prim frowned as she considered Lilly's words. “Is that some sort of threat, Dandelion?”

“It be a promise, it do be,” Lilly said. And the pirate began laughing, a laugh of wicked delight, the sort of laugh which sets a person on guard rather than at ease.

Prim's skin formed goosebumps at the sound. “Dandelion, just what – ”

Lilly started yanking her coat off, eyeing Prim with a primal expression which caused the bard to unconsciously scoot back on the bed. “Ye do be wantin' to put that away,” Lilly said, nodding toward Prim's fiddle.

“Woa! Wait just a moment!” Prim protested as she wisely took Lilly's advice and set the fiddle aside. “You are soaked through, you know!”

“Yarr, ye no need be worryin' 'bout catchin' cold, Primiphi,” Lilly answered as she tossed her a boots into the corner. “I do be thinkin' we'll be warm enough, we will be!”

And with that, she jumped into the bed after Prim, who let out a playful squeal.

The next morning, they arrived at an island known by the crew to be a good source of fresh water and citrus fruits. With the *Scurvy Plunder* at anchor, Lilly and a select squad gathered in a boat and headed to shore.

Prim had invited herself along, of course. “I find it rather ironic we are on a mission to gather fruits,” she had said. “On the *Scurvy Plunder*, I mean. Since the citrus is to avoid coming down with scur – ”

“Yarr, we do be gettin' it!” Lilly had shouted.

Now in the boat, the crew sang as they rowed. Prim led them in a silly (and suitably vulgar) shanty. As usual, they quite enjoyed her singing and antics as she playfully danced on the gunwale. As the bard had a knack for breaking out lesser-known tunes, the men also knew they could count on her to keep the material fresh – in multiple meanings of the term.

The boat hit the beach. Prim deftly jumped into the shallow water. While the crew dragged the boat ashore, she made her way to the dry land and fell forward, eyes closed. Laughing, she rolled onto her back and swung her arms and legs across the sand.

“Oh, Dandelion!” she cried as she felt a shadow fall onto her. “You may be a creature of the sea, but ever will I prefer the land! And after so long in the cold lands, this warmth is simply divine!”

“I do suppose, when one has been chilled for an extended duration, a small island in the temperate regions would seem uncommonly warm,” an unfamiliar voice answered in a dull tone. “Fair enough.”

Prim opened her eyes to find a man looking down at her. He wore a robe made of dozens of patches stitched together, no one quite like any of the others in either size, shape, material, or pattern.

“Hello, up there!” Prim said, grinning. “I must say, that is surely the most delightful outfit I have ever seen.”

“There are many more so, and many less so,” he said, his voice still flat, and Prim wondered if he ever expressed true interest in anything. “Then again, what delights some would doubtless disturb others.” He continued as he looked toward the rowboat.

Prim followed his gaze. The pirates were now approaching, hands on weapons. “Yarr, who be ye and what be ye doin' to Primiphi?” Lilly called out.

“I presume your second question is the one you are most interested in at the moment, considering the state of your friend,” the stranger answered. He turned back to Prim. “Some would appreciate assistance, and others would prefer none,” he told her, offering her a hand up.

Smiling, she took it. “Thank you. Does that properly categorize me?” she asked, eyes twinkling as he helped her to her foot.

“In a certain manner, it would, Primiphi,” he said, releasing her hand and idly wiping sand from his own on his robes.

“Just Prim will do.”

“Very well, Just Prim,” he said as Lilly arrived, the other pirates fanning around the trio.

Prim let out a merry laugh. “You are a most intriguing individual, are you not?” she said.

“If one has not met many individuals, perhaps,” he said.

“Ye no be answerin' me first question,” Lilly said.

“Yes, many would be upset at not knowing someone's name, especially after having just revealed a compatriot's to said person.”

“Ye be mocking me, ye be!” Lilly fumed as Prim giggled.

“I do not think he is,” she said. “Rather, I think he just has a different point of view on things.”

The man perked up, the first sign of interest he had yet shown. “You are unusually perceptive, Just Prim,” he said, emotion now in his voice. “Or is it merely a lucky guess?”

“Do I look like I ever guess?” Prim asked with a mischievous grin.

“You look like one who is used to keeping others off-balance,” he answered. “You prefer they do the guessing.”

“I do not know if I should be tickled or insulted,” Prim said, laughing.

Lilly nodded to her crew, who all drew their weapons. “Enough foolishness. Ye be tellin' us yer name now, ye scar-faced bilge drinker, or we be stringin' ye up.”

“I see you are a dreadfully singular-minded person,” he said, his voice toneless again. “Then again, such determination could prove useful in combat, which might explain why you all look so rough. With Just Prim, here, excepted, of course.” He courteously nodded toward the redhead.

“Yer name, ye flounderin' sluggard, or yer head!” Lilly cried, drawing her own sword.

“Such crudity,” he said. “Though it is rather effective, as I do prefer my head remain unharmed and in my own possession.”

“Do you always take the back route to your point?” Prim, who had been watching him with great interest, asked.

“There are many paths to destinations,” he said. “Some are quicker than others, yet still may not be the best – ”

“Yarr, that do be it!” Lilly shouted, stepping toward him. Prim quickly slipped between her and the man. “Outta me way, Primiphi!” the captain snarled.

“Calm down, Dandelion,” Prim said before turning toward the man. “I think what the Captain here is saying, in her own way,” she told him, “is the best route at this juncture happens to also be the quickest.”

He studied her a moment before answering. “I judge you are wise on this topic, Just Prim.” He coughed into his hand. “Ahem. I am called *Perspectivus*.”

“Great!” Lilly said, shrugging Prim aside. “Now ye can enjoy the view as ye hang from yonder tree.”

“There is no need for that,” Prim said. She grabbed the irate pirate in both arms, holding her back from attacking him. “Our new friend here simply has a different approach to the world, is all.”

“He can be havin' whatever approach he desires once he do be swingin'.”

“Forgive – mph – Dandelion,” Prim said to *Perspectivus*, straining as she held the pirate back. “She can be rather direct even in the best – hey! Stop that! Or keep it up ... – the best of times.”

“There is much to commend the forward approach,” he said. Dandelion stopped trying to shove Prim aside.

“Ye do be *agreed* with me?” she asked him.

He shook his head. “No, merely noting how some would view your methods with approbation. Others, meanwhile, would consider them the techniques of the fool.”

“So now I be a fool, do I?” Dandelion cried. Prim quickly resumed holding her back as the pirate swung her sword wildly, striking only the air. The other pirates roared and moved in.

“Dandelion, stand down, please!” Prim shouted.

“Why you be defendin' the lice-infested, yellow – ”

“We cannot simply leave him without understanding what is going on. And he just thinks differently. I find it fascinating.” The bard cocked an eyebrow and grinned at Lilly. “And I think you know how studying such things improve my energy and performance later.”

The pirate stopped struggling and looked at Prim, a small blush forming on her cheeks. “I do be sayin' it before: Ye be a trig one,” she said softly. “Yarr, fine!” she angrily declared, sheathing her sword and crossing her arms.

“Thank you, Captain,” Prim said delightedly.

“Ye no best be thankin' me, Primiphi. I do be havin' several ideas for yer recompense tonight.” She grinned wickedly. Prim and the other pirates laughed.

“I shall keep that in mind,” Prim said as the pirates put away their weapons and resumed their work. “So, why are you here?” Prim asked Perspectivus.

“Why are any of us – ” he began, but Prim quickly cut him off with a wave.

“No, no, how careless of me,” she said. “I meant, why are you on this island? How did you come to reside on it? And how long have you been here.”

“A long time, or a short time,” he said. “Some would say not long at all. Others would say a pair of moons. As for how I arrived, it was most uncomfortable, though others would say 'most' is an exaggeration, for there are certainly worse ways to arrive. In a deceased state, for example. Meanwhile, the *why* of it is rather simple: I preferred it to drowning.”

Prim laughed merrily. “Yes, I expect one would.”

“I no be certain,” Lilly mused. “I do be thinkin' I would be preferrin' he be drowned and done with.”

He nodded gravely. “I do not doubt you are the only one, young captain. Not the youngest of captains, of course.”

Lilly put a palm to her forehead. “I think I do be seein' how he be thinkin' now. It do be givin' me a headache.”

“It is the nature of my magic,” he solemnly intoned.

“What kind of magic is it?” Prim asked.

“I am a seer, Just Prim,” he said. “I see things in many ways, as others of different outlooks and backgrounds would.”

“Which explains your name.”

“That it does. I chose it myself, much as you – ”

“And do you have to know the people,” Prim interrupted, “the ones whose viewpoints you consider? Do you have to have met them, or does your magic present it to you?”

“The latter,” he answered. “It is how I knew you are one who is used to keeping others off-balance. You are quite skillful, though others possess more. Then again, I wonder if you truly seek mastery or if it is merely a means to an end. Perhaps it is just amusing to you.”

Prim laughed. “The only things I wish to master are my music, my dance, and my discoveries of the beauty of the world.”

“All very fine endeavors. Or fanciful fritterings.”

“Frittering is just fine with me,” she said, dancing and singing.

Lilly and Perspectivus watched her for several minutes. The other pirates started returning with various stores of fruit and fresh water. They paused their work to enjoy the show, as well.

“Was that not a delightful show?” Prim asked when she had finished.

“It was, I should say,” Perspectivus agreed. “Though the nobles of Petiga would turn their noses up, no doubt.”

“Their loss,” Prim said. “I shall simply have to avoid Petiga, then, and they shall never enjoy the sight of my exquisite ass.” She winked.

“It is a fine one, as such things go, or rather plain, really,” he said. Prim stood frozen as he continued. Lilly looked back and forth between her and Perspectivus, astounded. “The Bondage Ninjas would doubtless have seen more exquisite, having much experience with capturing and securing young damsels.” The crews' jaws gaped. One man dropping a barrel – no one noticed. “The Tråkgigt nomads of the Varmtorr desert are renowned for the lovely curves of their maidens. And the Knights of – ”

“Captain, I do think I am getting a chill,” Prim said coldly. She spun on her heels and walked toward the rowboat. “I think I shall return to the boat while you work. I find this disappointing isle to be dull and pointless,” she declared. “There is not a thing on it worth a bother.”

“Now, whatever has upset Just Prim?” Perspectivus wondered aloud. “Oh, I see. Some would be proud of the backside she possesses.”

“Yarr, some would be,” Lilly agreed. “And others would be gettin' mighty angry if some empty-skulled blowhard do be callin' her anythin' less than perfect.”

The crew surrounded him, several holding daggers out, one holding ropes, all muttering angrily – to a man, they felt highly protective of their visiting bard. Perspectivus put a hand to his chin in thought. “Once again, some would say my social skills are lacking,” he mused.

Hours later, after the pirates had gathered their supplies and left him on the beach, Perspectivus sighed. He was hanging naked from a tree, his chaotic outfit now scattered in pieces across the beach, the wind taking much of them out to sea. A dagger was sticking out of the trunk nearby, a gift from the pirates. Several welts on his skin provided evidence of the lashings the pirates had inflicted on him, though they had been careful not to do any real damage. Lilly had reasoned Prim may be angry but would still not wish true harm on the man.

He looked around at his situation again, then out to sea, where the rowboat had arrived at the *Scurvy Plunder*. “Some would say this is quite fair.” He considered a moment, then chuckled. “Most would, actually, as she was right: It really *is* exquisite.”

Prim had remained quiet as the pirates finished their work. She sat in the rowboat the entire time, facing away from shore, arms crossed, her back ramrod straight. She said nothing still as they set back out hours later.

“Come on, do be speakin', Primiphi,” Lilly said in the mess hall later as the cabin boy brought over plates and mugs.

The redhead merely grunted.

“The crew do be needin' a song,” the captain continued. Prim said nothing. “And they do be lovin' yer *exquisite* dancin',” Lilly added.

Several crew members cheered. Prim grinned despite herself.

“Oh, very well,” she said with a laugh. She stood, prompting cheers from the crew. “But only if you all cheer – and cheer loudly – at the proper and exquisite moments!” she said, hopping onto a table. “Do not worry – you will know when they are!”

They all laughed as she hopped onto a table. “There once was an idiot with no sense of taste! Hey, ho, tie the man down!” She began singing, dancing merrily to laughter and cheers once more as the *Scurvy Plunder* continued to sail straight and true.