

Prim & Tia in “Bitter and Sweet Tale”

By: Wyland

“Look what I found, Hot-Tits!”

Tia sighed at her companion's loud cry. “Must you alert the entire forest?” she complained. “And let me guess, it's a vine that quickly wraps and strips victims up. Especially gnomes.”

Prim giggled. “That would simply be a marvelous find!” she agreed. “No, what I have discovered is both more mundane and yet astoundingly beautiful: Cranberries!”

She thrust them under the warrior's nose. “What's so astounding about cranberries?” the warrior asked. “Bitter is more like it.”

“It is the bitterness that is the delight!” Prim said, picking out one and moving to pop it into her mouth.

Tia grabbed her wrist. “Hold it,” she said, taking the berry.

“There is no need to fuss, Hot-Tits; there are plenty for all. I already put several handfuls into our bags.” She nodded toward their packs, resting against a tree fifteen feet away.

“That's not what I am concerned about,” Tia said, examining the berry. “Your herb-lore has always been a bit off, is all,” she said.

“Always so cruel!” Prim said, laughing. “And when have I ever – ”

“I haven't forgotten when you glued our tits together because one blue flower's the same as any other, ya ninny,” Tia said. “But you at least got this right.” She ate the cranberry, then winced, grinning. “Yes, quite bitter.”

“A fitting treat for you, Hot-Tits,” Prim said, winking and eating a berry.

They heard a crash, followed by what sounded like a large creature barging through undergrowth. Tia drew her weapons. “What have you managed to bring our way, this time?” she asked the bard.

“Me? I am just here enjoying a treat!”

“Come off it, you were squealing so loud, it's no wonder the entire forest isn't after us.”

Before Prim could respond to this, the source of the noise came into view. It was a large troll, and it bellowed as it spotted them.

“Great, just what we needed,” Tia said, knocking her club and ax together in anticipation of combat as the troll approached.

“Nonsense,” Prim said, tossing another berry into her mouth. “Look at him, all alone. He just needs friendly travelers to swap stories with.”

“Are you mad?” Tia asked.

“Not at all,” Prim said as the troll stopped by their packs and bellowed again. “Hello, up there!” she called to him, waving. “We were just enjoying some tasty berries! Why do you not join us?” She plucked a berry from her hand. “Here, try one!”

She threw it at the troll's mouth. Unfortunately, he lowered his head to get a better look, and her gift lodged itself inside the creature's nostril.

“Oh, dear,” Prim said as the troll shook his head and sneezed. “Terribly sorry about – ”

The troll grabbed his nose and let out a roar. In a fury, he shoved the tree over, crushing their backpacks.

“Right, then,” Prim continued in a softer voice. She took a step back. “We shall just be off. Would you like to lead the way, Hot-Tits, or shall I?”

“You. Ninny.” Tia spoke through clenched teeth.

The gnomes turned and high-tailed it as the troll roared again and pursued the pair.

“And once again, you have us running for our lives from some monster!” Tia yelled as they ran.

“To be fair, the bear was not a monster,” Prim pointed out, sliding under a log crossing their path. “And a pack of goblins hardly qualifies, I should say.”

“Is that really the point?” Tia asked as she scrambled over it. “You always find a way to do exactly the wrong thing!”

“It is not my fault trolls dislike cranberries,” Prim said as they continued to run, the troll still hot on their heels.

“I daresay they like them fine enough when they aren't shoved up their noses!”

“I threw it at his mouth with perfect aim. It is not my fault he decided he would much rather inhale it, instead!”

“Woa!” Tia cried, pulling to a sudden stop. Prim came up alongside her.

“This would be quite inconvenient,” she said.

The pair found themselves on the edge of a bluff. It was not a particularly large drop, perhaps two dozen feet. However, with an angry troll behind them, it might as well have been a castle wall before them.

The troll skidded to a halt a few yards away. They turned to face him. He let out another angry roar.

“Oh, come off it,” Prim said cheerfully. “You are not fooling anyone, Bittersweet!”

“Bittersweet? What are you babbling about now?” Tia asked.

“Our friend here who likes bitter cranberries but is really just a big sweetie,” Prim said, smiling merrily.

“A sweetie?” Tia asked, astounded. She pointed with her club to the troll. “What part of that says 'sweet' to you?”

“He just wants our attention,” Prim said. “Here, have a berry, big guy!” she called to the troll. She tossed another cranberry at him.

The little sphere hit his eye this time. He grabbed it and roared in pain.

Tia dropped her weapons in shock, mouth agape. After a moment, she put her hands to her face. “I didn't think it possible you could make it worse,” she said.

“Nonsense, Hot-Tits,” Prim said brightly. “Things will turn up soon. You should not be so negative!”

“I'm positive you cannot make it worse,” Tia said.

“That is the spirit! Positivity and cheer are what you need!” And the bard danced along the edge of the bluff.

The troll finished rubbing its eye and glared angrily at Prim, letting out another roar. It charged at her.

“Watch yourself!” Tia shouted, reaching down for her weapons as Prim, to the warrior's horror, continued her silly dancing.

The troll raised an arm to strike at Prim ... who suddenly turned her dance into a roll directly at the troll. He looked down and around in surprise as she tumbled between his legs and stood behind where he had been.

Meanwhile, his momentum carried him over the bluff. With a cry of fright, he fell, crashing through tree limbs and landing on an unfortunate sapling with a loud crunch.

Prim skipped to the edge and looked over. The sound of the troll's groans rose from the bottom of the bluff. “Farewell, Bittersweet!” she said, waving. “It was fun meeting you! Maybe next time we can share stories.

And you can have the rest of these. I know how you enjoy them so!” She tossed the last few berries she had managed to hold onto over the edge. Tia looked down to see them hit the stunned troll on the head.

The bard dusted her hands together. “Come along, Hot-Tits!” she said brightly as she walked along the ridge. “Let us see what beauty lies this way!”

Tia stood rooted to the spot, her mind reeling. Finally, she gathered up her weapons and jogged to catch up with her companion.

“That was insane,” she told Prim.

“I found it quite exhilarating, myself,” the bard answered. She grinned at the warrior.

Tia could not help herself and smiled back, shaking her head. “It was that, for sure,” she admitted, chuckling.

“Good cheer from my Hot-Tits!” Prim cried. “Oh, what a glorious day! I feel like singing!” She took up a merry song, dancing alongside Tia as they walked.

“Perhaps you could sing us up some supper?” Tia asked after Prim had finished. “Only you managed to get our provisions destroyed by our 'new friend', after all.”

“Oh, pish-posh, Hot-Tits,” Prim said, airily waving a dismissive hand. “Are you going to blame everything on me today?”

“No.”

Prim stopped, surprised. “Oh. Good, then.”

“I’ll only blame you for the things that are your fault,” Tia said, grinning and playfully punching the redhead on the arm as she walked past.

“Ow!” Prim complained, rubbing her arm. “You have the oddest ways of showing your affection, Hot-Tits,” she said as she began walking again.

Tia let out a bark of a laugh. “Ha! You’re one to talk! How many demented ways have you shown me you –” She broke off suddenly, blushing as she considered what she had nearly said.

“I have shown what?” Prim prompted, eyes alight with eagerness.

Tia avoided her gaze. “Come on, let’s find ourselves something to eat.”

Prim danced around to Tia’s other side, staring into the warrior’s eyes. They both stopped walking. “What have I shown you, my dear Hot-Tits?” she asked intently.

They looked at one another, the redhead burning with desire, the warrior confused and shy. Tia found her thoughts swirling aimlessly, her vision filled only with the image of Prim’s face before her, knowing Prim wanted her to say it, the one word they had each avoided.

A sharp prick on her backside snapped her out of Prim’s spell. “Ouch!” she cried in surprise.

“Ow! My exquisite ass!” Prim complained. They looked around to find several goblins surrounding them, spears toward them. Two were pointing their spears at the gnomes’ backsides. All the goblins were laughing.

“Well ... crapbiscuits,” Prim said. “And perfect timing, as ever,” she added, rolling her eyes and looking up at the sky.

The goblins took Tia’s weapons, then forced the pair back to back, poking and pawing and generally behaving in a most ungentlemanly manner. One goblin wound a coil of rope around the gnomes as they all laughed wickedly.

Tia growled in frustration and irritation at what she knew her companion was going to say.

“Hot-Tits,” Prim said.

The warrior bit her tongue.

“Oh, Hot-Tiiiiiiiits,” Prim prompted in a sing-song.

Tia turned her head to glare at her. “What?” she snapped.

“I bet you think this is *my* fault,” Prim said.

Tia raised her head to the sky and let loose a cry of rage. The goblins stopped their game, stunned. Tia tugged at the rope their goblin captor had yet to finishing tying, freeing her hand to grab his hair. She pulled his face down to her knee.

The next few minutes went quite poorly for the goblins.

Hours later, dusk fell outside the *Rusty Pint Inn*, with reds and pinks lighting up the clouds on the horizon. Merry voices and the aroma of food drifted out from the inn. The sun slowly sank, and the sky turned gray.

Two gnomes quietly walked down a path from the nearby hills toward the inn. They approached the door and entered. Without a word, they found tall stools at the bar and sat on them.

The room fell silent as the locals examined the strangers. The redhead appeared apprehensive, looking side-long at her companion while removing her sandals and flexing her toes. Her companion, meanwhile, simply looked furious and glared at the bottles behind the bar.

The innkeeper approached, took a pair of glasses, and set them before the pair. A kind-hearted man, he could see they were in a right state. He poured their drinks. “Will you ladies be staying the evening?” he asked.

“We shall, my good man,” Prim said, taking up the glass and enjoying a sip. “And you need not fuss about charity.” She smiled, and seemingly from thin air produced a fiddle and bow. “For, as you can see, we have the means to pay.”

She winked and hopped onto the bar, her hair and toga dress flowing now as if a breeze was blowing across the bar. With a few strokes of the bow, she tuned the fiddle, knowing the patrons would be watching with anticipation at the rare performance to come.

Tia, for her part, simply stared at her glass and thought angrily of all the misfortunes the pair had suffered. Once again, they had no packs. No food, again. No money, again. A tiring day of running like mad and escaping bondage. Yes, again.

And through it all, Prim had been unconcerned, unserious. And she had refused to admit she had done anything wrong! The thought of it all burned inside Tia, clouding her mind to all else. She closed her eyes, and she saw Prim throwing the berry at the troll. Clueless, flighty Prim. Days of wandering aimlessly, losing everything they managed to gather, and still Prim danced with joy. Such foolishness, Tia thought.

And then Prim's fiddle softly sounded, the music intruding into her thoughts. The tune was slow yet not sad, bringing to her mind images of beauty and wonder: mountaintop views, undisturbed pools in forests, flowing waters falling over tall cliffs, herds of beasts grazing in prairies, fields of flowers.

The music shifted, and she lost the images, finding herself alone. An ache built inside her, a desire to again see the beauty she had lost. But it was gone, gone, and she could only wander in a hopeless search.

And the music changed once again, and now Tia was filled with an unexpected hope. She looked up at last. For more than ever in all her time with her, she felt Prim herself in the music the bard played. She danced as she fiddled, her feet avoiding the glasses and lamps on the counter.

The vision of Prim blurred, and Tia realized tears were flowing freely down her face. She thought of the times Prim had been there for her, cheering her up, rescuing her, encouraging her as she rescued the bard in turn or else struggled to escape whatever madness Prim had gotten them into.

The music shifted at last to a final, hopeful defiance. A promise to always seek the beauty. Tia now knew Prim was playing for her and her alone, defying and banishing the darkness within her and healing her of the wounds of frustration at losses. Reminding her of the joys and wonders of the world.

And Tia realized what they had lost was trivial, for so long as she had Prim by her side, what more did she need?

Prim ended on a long note, the bow slowly moving back and forth before she removed it from the string.

She looked down at her Hot-Tits.

Tia gave a small smile through her tears and nodded.

Prim's smile in reply was simply radiant, the warrior thought.

Then Prim turned and began playing an upbeat, merry tune. The crowd cheered and clapped in time to the music. Prim pranced about, singing merrily. Her gift to Tia received, she now took to earning their room and board.

Still smiling, Tia turned to the drink before her. She had watched Prim perform for their supper many times before, and she always enjoyed it. This night, however, her heart simply was not interested in a performance meant for others. Her mind heard not the crowd or Prim's antics. Instead, she heard the tune Prim had played for her, while her vision was filled with the intense gaze of the bard who wanted Tia to utter one word, the one word Tia knew would so forever change their fates, she had avoided even thinking of it.

Until now.

Love.