

Prim & Tia in “Lessons Tale”

By: Wyland

“Oh, look, Hot-Tits! Is that not the most interesting clump of grass – Ow ow ow!”

“Focus, Prim,” Tia said, holding her friend by a pointed ear. “What are you supposed to be doing?”

“Umm, looking exquisite?” The bard shook her hips despite the warrior's grip on her ear. When Tia did nothing more than glare at her, unimpressed, Prim sighed. “I am supposed to be tracking an elk we saw pass by earlier.”

Tia let her go. “That's correct,” she said as the bard ruefully rubbed her ear. “And there are a solid half-dozen traces of its passage right here in plain sight. How many have you found?”

“Do you want precise counts, or would an approximation suffice?” Prim asked with a grin. Tia raised an eyebrow, crossed her arms, and said nothing.

Disturbed by her companion's silence, Prim turned back to the path the elk had taken, having seen it walk through the grass earlier. But Tia had been the one to bring them to it, so Prim felt it unfair to count it. Which left the total the same, regardless of how one measured it.

Zero. Which Prim was certain Tia knew.

The redhead looked up at the sky in annoyance. A Ranger friend of hers every now and again taught her a few tricks to tracking, but those were usually discussions brought up in bars or beds. In plain fact, Prim had never had anyone show her how to track rather than tell. And the differences were proving to be quite consequential.

“I'll give you a hint,” Tia said. “It didn't fly.”

Prim looked over to give Tia an irritated look, sighed, and turned back to the ground. She dropped to her knee for a better look. Scratching the back of her head, she tried to remember everything the Ranger had told her.

“This is so boring,” she complained. “I am staring at dirt, which has very little appeal by its nature. Would you not rather find something else to do?”

“We can do something else after you track the beast,” Tia said.

Prim rolled her eyes. “That was not my point.”

“I know. And quit stalling.”

The bard looked around again. “I am feeling rather lost, which reminds me of the time you got yourself captured by goblins,” she said.

“Yes,” the warrior said. “I recall it was a band of them, a few dozen. So many, even you could follow their trail with little skill.”

Prim blew a strand of her out of her face, getting thoroughly annoyed. Tia was clearly ahead of her excuses and counter-examples. “This is all so silly!” she said.

“Do you remember when you had me practice escape training?” Tia asked. She uncrossed her arms and walked over, kneeling beside Prim. “You wanted me to at least have a slim chance of using a skill which – to put it plainly – we've both needed plenty of times. And also to try and get in my bed, but that's neither here nor there.”

Prim smiled and said, “it is rather a shame that is not here. A warm, comfortable bed with wonderful, smooshable pillows would be an absolute delight right now.”

Shaking her head with a grin of her own, Tia continued. “My point, my irrepressible friend – ”

“Oh, did you memorize another fancy word to try on me?”

“ – is you actually had a good point.”

“Of course I did! Getting into your bed is always good.”

“And I'm doing the same for you – ”

“Getting into my bed? That would ow ow ow not the ear again!”

“Focus, Prim!” Tia reprimanded before letting go of her. “You may be good at following folks in a city, but when we get you out in the wild, you're nigh-useless.”

“Hey, I do have *some* knowledge of tracking,” Prim pointed out as she rubbed her ear.

Tia nodded in agreement as she took a moment to find the words she was looking for. “I know when it comes to skills not involving song and dance – or causing mischief – you're more interested in dabbling than mastery. But some day, there may come a time when you need to track someone and I'm not around to do it for you. When that happens, I don't want you relying purely on the basics when I know I could have taught you more. So, pay attention and learn what I can teach while I'm here!”

Prim was taken aback by Tia's lecture. She looked into the warrior's eyes and found not anger but earnestness. Prim saw a burning intensity there she had seen only a handful of times.

Her mind blanked. She felt her legs go wobbly and her face flush as her heart raced. She could not look away from those eyes.

Tia smiled and relaxed. Prim blinked, the spell broken, and found she had been holding her breath only when she suddenly exhaled. The thought struck her whoever had once instructed Tia in her youth had imparted quite the ability to hold a student's attention. *Or was it the other way around?* she wondered. *Were you always the strong-willed one, and did you teach the teacher? I would wager you did, my dear Hot-Tits. What an experience he must have had with you.*

Tia took Prim by her shoulders and turned her toward where the elk had disappeared. “Just focus,” she told the bard, “and tell me what you see, ya ninny.”

Smiling at Tia's pet-name for her, regardless of the insulting nature of it, Prim looked where directed.

Tia's speech had worked. Despite her lack of interest, Prim found herself focused on the task rather than idle curiosities like that lovely butterfly – she shook her head as if shaking the thought out of her mind. *Focus, Prim*, she told herself. *Your Hot-Tits clearly wants you to learn this, so learn it you shall!*

“There are prints there,” she said, pointing. They were so clear, she had to wonder how she had missed them. And now that she actually looked for the path the animal had taken, she found she could not unsee it. “That looks like a bit of fur caught on that tree.”

“Good,” Tia said, sounding pleased. “Let's follow, shall we?”

“After you, O Mighty Tracker,” Prim said, bowing and gesturing her forward.

“Oh, no, the lesson's not over,” Tia said, giving Prim a shove down the path. “Ninnies first.”

“Aw, phooey,” the bard pouted. Suddenly, she brightened up. “You know, after I have practiced your skill, we can work on one of mine this evening!”

Tia laughed. “I have a feeling I know what you're talking about. But fair's fair. You keep at this, and if we catch up to our friend over yonder,” she nodded her head toward where the elk had disappeared, “you can have your evening practice session.”

“Yay!” Prim cried, throwing her arms around Tia's shoulders. “Just you wait, Hot-Tits! We will have such fun! But first, onward to the task at hand! Why are you dawdling, silly?”

She set off down the trail, keenly watching for signs of the elk's passage. Behind her, Tia followed at a slower pace, shaking her head and smiling. “And with a promise of a treat, we suddenly have your full commitment,” she softly mused aloud. “So predictable.”

An hour later, the pair quietly crept along in dense foliage. Tia put a hand on Prim's shoulders, stepped forward, and carefully pushed a branch aside. Below them, beside a creek, they saw the elk.

"Well done," she whispered. Prim found herself smiling, and not just at the beauty of the creature she had successfully followed.

That evening, Prim was unusually efficient with her chores. She all but dashed about their little camp as she worked. She would have even done some of Tia's tasks if she had not also picked up the pace, quite aware Prim was in a hurry this evening. Clearly, the warrior's pride refused to allow someone else to shoulder her responsibilities.

"Right!" Prim said, clapping her hands together. "That is taken care of. You know what that means!"

"We settle in for a quiet evening under the stars?" Tia asked hopefully.

Prim blew raspberries at her. "You wish!"

"Yes, how silly of me to ever expect peace and quiet when you are around," Tia said, standing beside the tree she had been laying back against and rolling her eyes

"Time for my training!" Prim said with undisguised glee. "Where is the rope? I am certain I set some aside – ah, there it is!" She gathered the coils up, then walked over to Tia. "Are you ready to learn, Hot-Tits?"

Tia smiled and reached out to pull a surprised Prim close. "Yes, it seems it is my turn to be the student," she said. She looked into Prim's eyes.

The warrior's gaze was filled with warmth and companionship, and the residual feelings from earlier blossomed again inside Prim. "Umm, yes, student," she stammered.

Tia held up the rope Prim had been holding. "Now, then, what tie will you teach me to use on you?"

Prim started. "Wait, what?" she asked, looking down at her now-empty hands....

"This is so unfair!" she said ten minutes later as Tia wrapped another coil of the rope around the bard's waist. Her hands were tied in front her and secured to a rope around her waist. Her legs were cinched together in two places.

"You've mentioned that a time or two," Tia said.

"My plan was so perfect! *I* was supposed to tie *you* up! And make sure to slip two fingers under there. You do not want to cut off any circulation."

The warrior grinned and did as directed. Despite her frustration at being tricked, Prim still felt obligated to instruct Tia on proper technique.

"If I was not supposed to practice restraining, why did you hand me the ropes?" Tia playfully asked as she finished tying the last knot.

"I did no such thing!" Prim said, pouting. "You distracted me and took advantage of my confusion, that is all."

"I learned from the master," Tia said, sitting down beside Prim, her back against the tree.

Prim laughed lightly, smiling despite herself. "If I was not so irritated, I would be proud of you," she admitted in a soft voice.

"You're still irritated?" Tia asked, smiling. "Well, we can't be having that. I think we can find a way to help you relax."

"I daresay you owe it to me," Prim said, sticking her tongue out playfully.

"I daresay I do," Tia agreed. She gently helped Prim lie back at a right-angle to the warrior, resting her head in Tia's lap.

"Well, I must say this is much more comfortable," Prim said.

“That is good to hear,” Tia said. “And from this vantage, I have an excellent view of your . . . practice.” She looked along the helpless Prim down to her bare feet and slowly back up her bound legs, her hips with her hands secured to her waist, up to the low cut showing off her cleavage, and at last to her smiling face.

Their eyes met again. Neither said anything, each now lost in the other's gaze. Almost unconsciously, Tia began idly twirling Prim's hair flame.

After several minutes – despite feeling she could remain there quietly forever – Prim broke the silence. “You are getting quite good, Hot-Tits,” she said.

“I have an excellent teacher,” Tia replied.

“I truly am helpless this time. I might be stuck here for quite a while.”

“Mm-hmm. Well, I will be here with you however long it takes, my ninny.”

Prim reached up and gently stroked Tia's cheek.

Tia laughed and took Prim's hand in her own. “How quickly did you get yourself untied?”

“I did not track the time.”

“So much for being helpless,” Tia said, cocking an eyebrow.

“On the contrary, I still am,” Prim said. “For it is not the ropes keeping me so.”

They silently smiled at each other. Tia again began twirling Prim's hair flame. The pair shared one another's company and chatted about pleasant things, and they found it was enough.

Overhead, the stars slowly traveled across the sky.