

Prim & Tia's Adventures
By: Wyland

Adventure 11

“He seems to have quieted down,” Tia said. “Perhaps he got tired a little early?”

It was early afternoon of the following day. The pair had remained quiet in their little alcove, hardly moving. As each was experienced at hiding, they both knew their best bet to remain undetected was to move as little as possible.

“I doubt it,” Prim said. “He is probably off to get a drink from a lake or just stretching his wings. The trip may cool him off, however.”

“So, he might start using his brain again, you mean,” Tia said with a frown. “Suppose he reckons we weren't likely to get far?”

“That is when he will start tearing the hills apart,” Prim said. “We would probably prefer to not be in the local vicinity when he does, I might add.”

Tia stood, wincing as she moved. “I'm not sure my muscles will ever feel quite right again. Two days ago, if someone had said the one thing I would long for most in life was a chance to properly stretch my legs, I would have punched him in the face.”

She walked to where they had sat their gear. “Ugh, what is that disgusting smell?” Prim complained behind her.

“Us, you ninny,” Tia answered, pushing aside her weapons and rummaging in a pack for some food and water. “Or did you forget our little lark in the swamp? I should think with all your complaining you would have remembered it. And don't think I didn't hear you muttering about the stench all night long. You think we're staying in a ritzy hotel? Ah, here we go.”

She pulled out some cheese and stale bread, then wrinkled her nose as an odor of decay and death struck her. “Whoa, something really does smell awful,” she said, giving the food a sniff. She turned toward Prim. “I wonder what – ” she began, then froze.

Her companion was engulfed in a thick, murky green liquid. Tia could see small bones and assorted debris in the substance. A section of the foul liquid extended above, with the skull of some poor beast (*a raccoon*, Tia's subconscious supplied) floating within, as if it were the head of a beast. A dark line of muck ran up the back of the cave where the creature had moved to attack Prim.

For there was no doubt in Tia's mind this liquid filth was indeed a creature. She dropped the food and picked up her weapons, though a part of her wondered what good an axe would be against a foe of made of slime.

Prim flailed and struggled ineffectually inside the creature. Tia could see her eyes were closed as she grimaced and held her breath. The warrior brought her ax down into the slime, doing her best to avoid her friend.

She need not have bothered. The weapon sank mere inches before being stopped by the viscous liquid, which then swarmed around the stone head and worked up the handle. Tia let it go before it reached her hand, and the weapon was pulled into the murk.

The creature lashed out at her, the liquid extending like a whip to grab the gnome. Tia ducked it, then sidestepped a second attack.

Frustrated, she considered her foe, seeking a means with which to harm it. She dodged another lash, then saw a large bubble escape Prim's mouth. The redhead was down to the last of her air, and Tia felt as if there was nothing she could do to help. She merely danced about as if awaiting her own turn to be absorbed by gooey death.

She angrily threw her club at the thing. It sank in, uselessly. Prim shuddered, a spasm wracking her. She was almost out of time. Tia drew back her fist: She determined to fight the creature to her own last breath, even if it meant she would simply follow her friend to the grave. The familiar anger arose within Tia, coursing throughout her body. Years of training kicked in, and she focused all her strength into her hand for the strike. And – to her utter surprise – the fury within her obeyed as if she had commanded it, as if it was a natural part of her. It moved down her arm, and it her fist burst into flame.

Tia did not have time to think about this new development within herself. It existed and responded to her will. More importantly, it might aid her effort to rescue Prim. As far as the warrior was concerned, that was enough.

“Let her go!” she screamed, louder than she had ever spoken before – even when annoyed at Prim, which a small part of her mind registered as quite the feat. Her punch struck the creature, and the liquid touched by her flames shattered as a tree struck by lightning.

The creature recoiled from her as if in pain, muck from the blow splattering against the cave walls and Tia. It lashed out at her again with another whip-like tendril. Without thinking, Tia caught it in her hand.

“I said, let her go!” she said. She sliced at the the whip with her other hand, meaning to cut it in twain. However, the flames of her rage remained in her hand holding the tendril. Her other merely lodged itself into the muck, which then began running up her arm.

She stepped back in disgust, swatting at her arm. The flames did not burn the muck, but she found herself able to touch it without her hand getting stuck. She tore apart the connection from the goop on her arm to the creature, and the muck attached to her stopped its movement.

The creature lashed out at her again. She swatted aside the attacks, then saw Prim spasm again. In seconds, she would be gone.

Without thinking, Tia leapt forward and buried her goo-covered arm inside the creature. She felt it's surprise at her action, seemingly trapping herself. It squeezed around her arm, holding her in place.

But now the creature provided Tia what she wanted – leverage. Screaming with her rage, she drew back her flaming fist and began pummeling the muck, blow after blow landing on it, using her locked arm to add more and more force to the punches. The slime splattered from where she hit the creature, coating her and the wall of the cave.

After a dozen or so blows, the creature had had enough. It split apart, and Tia's fist slammed into the cave wall. The muck slid up the wall, leaving Prim behind. The redhead gasped as she was released, falling to her hands and knees and retching.

Tia reached for her, then stopped, worried about the strange aura around her hand injuring Prim further. Yet even as she paused, the flames faded. She held Prim as the redhead gathered her breath.

“Sorry ... Hot-Tits,” she said.

“What in blazes for?” Tia demanded.

“Should have ... noticed it ... earlier.”

“Whatever. We got rid of it.” The warrior looked at her hand. “Somehow.” She thought about how she had felt as the aura radiated from her fist. “That ... Teacher once mentioned ...” She trailed off, trying to remember everything her Teacher had said about it. “I thought he was joking, creating a fairy tale to trick me into practicing harder. A power the strongest, most determined warriors would develop. What did he call it? The Rage, or something.”

“‘Gift of the Rage’, most likely,” Prim said, seeming to have recovered. “I found several names for it, most rather full of themselves, if you ask me. I mean, the Fury of the Righteous Warrior ... come on, really now.” She shook her head in disgust. “Regardless of what you choose to call it, you have used it a few times in front of me.”

“You mean you knew?” Tia asked, jaw agape.

“Of course I knew,” Prim said in a casual, care-free tone. She began to squeeze out the slime out of her hair. “The question I always had is how you could not.” She smiled playfully at Tia.

“Are you making a mock of me? You enjoy keeping secrets from me? Do you laugh behind my back as we travel?”

Prim rolled her eyes and sighed. “Hot-Tits, are you getting hot-headed with me again? If so, I beg you to at least consider a single question for me. One single, solitary question. Can you do that?”

Glaring, teeth clenched, the warrior considered Prim's request for several long seconds, struggling to keep control. She decided her friend deserved a chance to explain herself, though the warrior expected the usual harebrained if not outright ludicrous excuses. She nodded, ready to disbelieve whatever trick Prim tried to pull.

“Would you have believed me if I had told you?” Prim asked.

Tia was taken aback. Had Prim been reading her mind? Her anger at Prim once again keeping secrets dissipated, confusion replacing all her fury. After a moment's hesitation, she let out a little laugh. “No. Not a chance,” she admitted rather sheepishly. “I would have thought you up to another trick.”

Prim grinned and spread her arms. “Always with the accusations!” she said, laughing. “Meanwhile, what was a girl with an exquisite ass to do? Telling you would gain nothing. You probably would have just given me that angry look you have been getting of late. Perhaps you would have then stomped off without paying attention where you were going, landing us both in some sort of goblin-based bondage mayhem.”

The warrior let out a derisive snort. “That's more your style than mine, ninny.”

“With an inability to tell you what I had observed,” Prim continued as if Tia had remained quiet, “I elected to study up in various libraries as we traveled. I am certain you thought our course random, my dear Hot-Tits, but there was a method to my madness.”

“Right, a method. You always claim to have some bizarre foresight – after the fact, of course. ‘Oh, Hot-Tits, I (of course) knew they could not focus on proper binding when I so annoyed them with my blather they hustled to gag me, doing a shoddy tying job on my wrists.’ Probably my favorite of them all, that one.”

“My 'blather', Hot-Tits? That certainly does not sound like something I would say to describe myself,” Prim noted with a grin. The warrior shrugged.

“Well, I may have put my own twist on your words.”

“Yes, you certainly may have.”

Tia leaned back against the cavern wall, feeling physically and mentally drained. She shut her eyes, trying to come to terms with everything that had happened. In just a few days, Prim had dragon powers and she had ... something. It felt like her entire world had flipped upside-down.

She grinned despite herself. *As if my world has been stable since meeting Prim*, she noted wryly.

Prim, meanwhile, quietly worked to clean herself as best she could, giving the warrior time to process her new knowledge of herself. Tia could feel the bard's eyes on her. It would seem the redhead was nervously waiting for the next shoe to drop. A wave of irritation coursed through the warrior. She knew Prim feared a “hot-headed” response, and that knowledge only served to annoy her further. Yet, she found the negative feelings were feeble, fading almost as quickly as they had formed. For though Tia certainly felt fury would have been justified, she also found she simply did not want to argue with her friend right now. Not after all they had been through. “We're in this together,” she had said. She had meant it.

What would Prim do if the situation was reversed?

The thought just popped into her mind. She first reacted by considering the notion of behaving like Prim akin to lunacy. Then she allowed herself a mental grin.

“Let's just cut to the chase,” Tia said in a serious tone as she gazed sternly at her friend. Prim looked over, and the warrior could see the fear of one of her outbursts. Doubtless, Prim had been hoping to ease into the main questions, cooling off Tia's concerns with inanities and distracting her with annoying barrister-speak.

“Firstly, the biggest question of all,” Tia said solemnly. “The crux of the issue, it would seem.” She paused. “When did you ever find time for study between all your mad schemes and mischief-making?”

Prim's mouth dropped open in shock at the unexpected question. "Huh?"

"You never can sit still, after all," Tia continued. "How could ever research anything?"

"What?" Prim said, blinking stupidly.

Inwardly delighted to have rendered the normally-verbose Prim to single-word responses, Tia continued. "I mean, you're always causing trouble and getting us thrown out of towns faster than – ow!"

This was last in response to Prim punching the warrior's arm. "If my reward for researching my Hot-Tits's power is to be slandered and insulted, then perhaps I should keep all the information I found to myself. And here I thought you would be just dying to have answers. I suppose I was just being foolish."

Tia laughed, thinking Prim's response was very much akin to how she would have reacted. Her own punishment for playfully swapping roles, she supposed. "Okay, okay," she said. "I admit you usually wait a few hours before getting us chased out. You could probably find some smidgen of information in that time."

"I suppose that is the best apology I will be getting from my irritatingly-playful hot-head this day," Prim said.

"Most likely," Tia agreed. She put a hand on Prim's shoulder. "Seriously, Prim: What is this power inside me?"

Prim sighed, much to Tia's consternation. She had expected her companion to be ready to burst from having to keep quiet about the volumes of information she had learned, not express disappointment. "Very well. I shall tell you everything I discovered in my research." She dusted herself off, then fussed with her hair flame.

Tia waited, arms crossed, for her friend to finally explain. She tapped her foot with growing impatience. "Well?" she finally demanded.

"It varies," Prim said.

Several seconds ticked by, with Prim continuing to work on her hair. Tia put a hand to her forehead, trying to avoid getting too angry at her companion's vain nature apparently overwhelming her ability to answer.

"What does?" Tia asked, forcing her tone to remain calm.

"What does what?" Prim asked distractedly, flinging muck off her arm against the cave wall.

"What varies, you ninny?" Tia shouted.

Prim blinked a moment. "Oh, I see. You misunderstand."

"I truly hope so."

"That was pretty much all I found, other than the ridiculous names. I admit I am putting my findings into my own, highly-eloquent words."

"Yes, 'it varies' is quite ... eloquent," Tia sarcastically agreed, taking a moment to get the word right.

"Sometimes simplicity is best."

"True, but you are never simple," Tia said. She eyed Prim suspiciously. "Ah, I see now. You're pulling my leg. Petty revenge for my little joke, is it?"

Prim shook her head. "I am afraid not. To my immense disappointment, I found nothing concrete which would help you. It appears the nature of the power manifests according to the wielder. Or else the writers had no clue what they were witnessing. Perhaps there is a personality aspect to it." She tilted her head as she considered. "Yet it would seem the flames in your hand were not heated, which one would presume would be a characteristic of my *hot-headed* Hot-Tits's powers if that were the case."

Tia once again put a hand to her forehead as Prim prattled on, willing her friend to just shut up. *It's all or nothing with her*, she thought.

"But it did seem as if ... I wonder," Prim continued. She brought a hand to her chin in thought, then blanched. "Goodness, but that foul thing stank, and now I stink worse than ever," she complained as she shook her hand as if to rid it of the odor.

“Give it up, ninny,” Tia said, grinning and grabbing a handful of muck from the wall. “You’re covered in the stuff, anyway.”

“Do not remind me,” Prim sighed. “And just what are you doing with that foul – UGH!” She cried out as Tia threw the muck onto her chest. “Hot-Tits! What was that for?”

“Keeping secrets from me, that’s what,” Tia said, arms crossed. “And you know you deserve worse than that for what – ”

A soggy mass of ooze struck her in the face.

“Ha!” Prim cried. “You should know my aim is amazing, much as everything I – ”

The bard was interrupted by another ball of gunk hitting her in the face. She reached up to wipe it off.

“Oh, Hot-Tits,” she said softly. “It is *so* on!”

Laughing merrily, the pair flung more goo at each other. Soon enough, they were rolling about the cave, wrestling and rubbing the gunk into one another’s hair.

And then Tia found herself straddling Prim below her, pinning Prim’s wrists with her own hands. The pair’s eyes met.

The laughter in Prim’s eyes faded, replaced by a hungering need. Tia felt a matching urge within herself. The anger she had felt for months rose up within her, yet it had seemed to have changed somehow. She did not care. Her entire world was focused on Prim. Almost unconsciously, Tia reached over and wiped aside a streak of ooze from Prim’s face and then cupped her cheek.

She slowly leaned down. Prim leaned up to meet her. Their eyes closed as their lips neared ...

The ground shook as a loud crash sounded outside their little lair. Pebbles bounced down the walls, dirt trickled from the ceiling. Tia protectively covered Prim as a few rocks fell from the roof of the cave tumbled around them.

“Come out of there, Little Thief!” a deep, angry voice boomed from outside.

The gnomes looked at one another, the blood draining from their faces as they realized the dragon had found them.