

## Mana Potion Curse

### A NSFW short story by TeSculpture

*\*ting ting\**

Hefting the bag with one hand, Hazel shook it to make the coins within rattle, smiling in satisfaction at the noise.

He was a man in his early twenties, dressed in a combination of furs and leather armour. A bow and quiver were slung across his back, while a short sword hung from his belt. Currently, he was making his way down a cobblestone road, lined on both sides with forest.

Hazel gave the bag another shake. “Well, as dungeon runs go, this one has been particularly rewarding!”

“Hmm...”

The response to his comment was more than unenthusiastic; the undertone of displeasure was obvious. His satisfaction faltering, Hazel looked at the woman walking beside him.

Close to the same age as him, she wore attire typical of magic users in the region; a bodice with a knee-length skirt, and a pointed hat with a wide brim. At present, the face visible beneath the brim was frowning, her bespectacled eyes locked on the ground.

“Berri? Is something wrong?”

The woman responded without looking up. “*Ugh...*I'm just dissatisfied with my performance during the run.”

“What do you mean? Those magic missiles you used on the monsters were lethal!”

“Yeah, out of the dozens of battles we had, they were useful the *two times* I managed to use them!”

Berri raised her arms to emphasize her annoyance. “It's been like this every single dungeon! All my spells consume my entire mana supply, so I get to cast *one* thing, *once*, and then I'm helpless the rest of the run!”

“But you cast it twice before...”

“Because I chugged every single mana potion I had! That gave me enough for the second time, but now I've got no mana and no potions!”

One of her hands dropped back to her side, while the other cradled her forehead. “It's so frustrating. You pretty much had to carry me the entire run.”

Hazel raised his own hand to scratch his head as he processed her outburst. Since he and Berri had teamed up, he had grown to like her a lot. As a good friend, as a reliable teammate...and, lately, if he were to be honest, as something a

little bit more than a friend. The last thing he wanted to see was her feeling down.

“Hey, that's not true. Yeah, you only used your magic twice, but it was pretty damn crucial both those times. And you helped lots of other ways too. There's no other mage I'd want to partner with more than you!”

This did elicit a smile, but only a sad, brief one. “Thanks...but it's still frustrating. I graduated top of my class at the academy. I've done every exercise and meditation there is to improve my body's natural reserve. And I've got my hands on every trinket that can store extra mana. And I *still* can't do more than one spell at a time!”

Her melancholy expression became an aggravated one. “You know what makes it worse? After I graduated, I continued to do extra-credit studies, learning a whole lot of ancient spells that are too difficult for most students to be part of the main curriculum. I even learned the really tricky mage-craft technique that allows casting without gestures or incantation. I mastered everything...but I can't *use* any of those spells because they require more mana than I can even store!”

Her steam blown off, Berri returned to a depressed look. “*Sigh*...I suppose I'm going to have to spend my cut just replenishing my potion supplies...”

*Damn it, this is no good, Hazel thought. There must be something I can do to help out...*

He glanced around for inspiration – and at last spotted a dense cluster of buildings, visible in the distance over the tree-tops. “All the potions you've had up to now were the low quality sort, right?”

“Yeah...that stuff was so weak, a whole bottle of it barely gave me anything.”

“So what you need are some stronger ones; ones that restore more mana each.” Giving an encouraging smile, he pointed the buildings out. “We're coming up to the next city now. I've heard of this place; the markets here sell everything, in every price range. There are bound to be some higher quality supplies there!”

Berri looked up with interest. “It certainly looks like a big town. And the bigger the town, the more valuable the wares...”

“Right! And despite what you said, with all the gold we got from this run, I think we can afford more expensive things now.”

At last, some cheerfulness found its way to her face. “Yeah, maybe you're right!”

“It's settled then!” Hazel grinned back. “Once we've checked in with the Adventurer's Guild, we'll hit the market. We'll have you casting more-than-once yet!”

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“Nope, they only have the crap stuff.”

Berri slumped like a zombie as she surveyed the merchandise in the stall before her.

Having reached the metropolis, they had opted to postpone their other obligations and head straight to the largest, busiest market in the city. But despite checking every single stall and store in the place, they had found nothing but the cheapest of wares on offer.

Hazel could hardly believe their bad luck. “Is this town in a recession or something?!”

A dirty look from the stall's proprietor warned them this may not be far from the truth.

Retreating into the bustling centre of the market square, the pair made their way through the crowds until they found a quieter parapet where they could talk.

Berri still looked like death; there was a smile on her face, but it was vacant and hopeless. “I'll just buy a crap-ton of weak potions. I guess I'm doomed to live this way forever...”

“Why don't we try looking elsewhere in the city?” Hazel insisted. “Maybe there's another market, or a corner shop, or-”

“Everyone we've asked said this is the place for anything expensive!” Berri's arm swept the scene, her voice rising in aggravation again. “This is it! There is nothing better than this!”

“We could try the next city.”

“It's too far. We can't go that far without at least some form of resupply.”

“Well why don't I resupply here; then I could protect you until we reach the...”

As Berri began to glare at him, Hazel trailed off, belatedly remembering that the source of his friend's frustration *was* needing to be protected.

Before either could say anything more, a new voice made itself heard. “*Ahem*, excuse me.”

Turning in surprise, they found the voice belonged to a short figure, barely coming up to their waists, wearing an ankle-length hooded cloak. A pair of cat ears poked through holes in the top of the hood, and a human face wearing an entrepreneur's smile was visible beneath the hood's opening.

Despite the newcomer's short stature, their manner of speech was that of an adult. “I'm sorry, but I couldn't help overhearing you earlier. You are looking for high quality mana potions, correct?”

Berri straightened. “Er, yes...?”

“I may have what you are looking for.” An arm moved beneath the orange cloak; then a hand emerged, holding something out. “Would you like to try a sample?”

The object was a glass vial, no larger than the tip of one's thumb, filled with a deep-blue liquid.

Taking the vial, Berri inspected it, then removed the cork and hesitantly downed the contents.

Hazel and the newcomer watched her, one anxious, the other silently confident.

“.....Hey, this *is* good stuff!” Berri broke out in a look of joy. “That restored a lot of mana!”

Hazel spun back to the stranger. “Do you have any more like that?!”

“Well as it happens...”

They lifted one side of their cloak open, the action accompanied by the noise of clinking glass. Lining the inside of the cloak were dozens upon dozens of pouches, each holding a jam-jar sized bottle filled to the brim with the same blue liquid.

“...I do.”

Hazel and Berri looked at each other, their faces ecstatic.

Five minutes later, Berri was stowing numerous mana potions away on her person, and the peddler was doing the same with handfuls of coins.

“Thank you,” enthused Hazel. “You have no idea what a big help you've been!”

“Glad to be of service,” was the reply. “Would I be correct in guessing you two are adventurers?”

“Yes!” confirmed Berri. “...At least, I'm trying to be. My attempts at adventuring have been held back by my mana running out all the time.”

“Oh?” A tone of interest rose in the peddler's voice. “You like to cast a lot of spells in battle...?”

“I wish. One small spell is all it takes to obliterate my mana supply. Then I'm stuck doing nothing until I recover it somehow.”

“I see...”

They thought for a second, then turned back to Berri. “...What if I told you I could offer a *permanent* solution to your mana woes?”

Berri looked surprised. “A...permanent one?”

“Yes,” Suddenly the peddler's affable professionalism was replaced by doubt. “Although, it will take time, and require travel to my premises. If you two need to be somewhere else soon...”

“N-no!” Berri waved her hands. “If you can help me, I can definitely do it!”

“But Berri, we still haven't checked in to the Adventurer's Guild.” Hazel interjected. “We were supposed to report as soon as we arrived in town. Shopping was one thing, but...”

“Couldn't you report on my behalf?” Berri looked on the verge of scooping up the tiny figure and running away. “Please! This might be my one chance to get over this problem!”

Before Hazel could answer, the peddler's smile returned, and they extended their hand again. “What if I give you my card? It has my address on it; you can go to the Adventurer's Guild, then catch up to us at my premises.”

Berri was frantically nodding her head, willing him to comply.

Unable to resist, Hazel took the business card. “Okay Berri, I'll see you later. A pleasure meeting you, uh...” He glanced at the name on the card. “...*Catver*?”

The peddler curtsied. “The one and only!”

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Berri's concerned eyes roamed the street as she followed the peddler. “...This place...looks kinda run down...”

“Run down” was an understatement. The buildings lining the road way looked completely abandoned, with broken windows, doors hanging off their hinges, and roofs shedding tiles like dandruff. It had also been some time since she had witnessed any other pedestrians or residents.

The peddler spoke over their shoulder. “The city has sadly fallen on hard times. A lot of people left to seek their fortunes elsewhere. The remainder consolidated into the upper districts to be closer to the markets, which left these lower districts empty.”

“But your...business is still here?”

The response was a shrug. “What can I say? The place is an eye-sore, but the real estate is cheap.”

Suddenly the diminutive figure stopped and turned. “Here we are!”

The place Berri had been led to looked just as shoddy as the rest of the street. The building however was much grander, with Greek columns lining the front and a roof almost a story taller than its neighbours.

Berri peered at the sign above the entrance. Several letters were missing, but had left behind outlines on the sun-bleached paneling, allowing her to read it anyway.

“A *bathhouse*...?”

“It's an odd choice, I know; but it's the only property with enough room to suit my purposes.”

The interior, once they entered, proved to be every bit as dilapidated as the facade. Varnish cracked and peeled from wood, plaster crumbled from the walls, and everything was filthy.

Weaving a path through the detritus strewn across the floor, the peddler lead the way past the foyer and the changing rooms, heading for a hallway that lead deeper.

Unable to figure out why she had been lead here, Berri's curiosity boiled over. "So, what exactly does this "permanent solution" involve...?"

"Ah! Forgive me, I should've explained on the way!" The peddler's tone was apologetic. "Basically, it involves creating a portal to another universe."

"A...portal?"

"Yes. Your problem is that you never have enough mana to last through a whole run, correct?"

"Yes..."

"Well, the spell creates a one-way portal to a *very specific* alternate universe; one that is filled with nothing but highest quality mana potion. The potion then flows through the portal into our universe, giving you an infinite supply!"

Berri slowed to a stop. "That...is possible? Such a thing...is *possible*!?"

"I didn't believe it either until I saw it...but I can assure you, yes, it very much *is* possible."

"That is...utterly insane...but utterly ingenious..."

The peddler was smiling again. "Oh, that's not even the ingenious part. Rather than creating a portal in *mid-air*, so that you have to catch the potion in a container or something, it creates a tiny portal inside *your stomach*, feeding mana potion directly into it. You cast the enchantment on your body, and once created, the portal is stable, so it doesn't need any upkeep. No mess, no fuss, just unlimited mana! It's basically cheating!"

Berri stood in a daze as she processed the peddler's spiel. She had been taught at the academy never to doubt the claimed capabilities of other magic-users; magic, after all, made all things possible. But even so, this was so out-there...

"...Did...did you come up with this?"

"Oh my, no!" The peddler gave an embarrassed wave. "Several years ago, a local master wizard passed away, and a part of his estate was auctioned off. I got my hands on some of his old notes, which included this spell. There's no way I could authour something this visionary!"

"Ah..."

Learning the true origin of what they were talking about made it seem slightly more believable.

The peddler was moving again. As Berri rushed to catch up, they emerged from the hall into one of the bathhouse's pool areas.

Dirty skylights above illuminated the space with tarnished orange light. Trash still covered the floor in drifts, and the walls were once again crumbling. The pool was empty, forming a rectangular pit twenty five meters long, eight and a half meters wide, and about one and a half meters deep.

But while it was bone dry, it didn't look abandoned like the rest of the place. The tiles had been scrubbed clean, and also seemed to have been painted; the patterns and colours glazed into them overwritten with a complex pattern of red circles and symbols, radiating outwards from the very center of the pool bottom.

Then Berri noticed what she had originally thought was rubbish piled around the pool's edge was spell-casting paraphernalia; candles, curios and the like.

She could see now. The entire pool had been converted into a ritual site.

“So,” said the peddler, facing her with their usual affable look. “Are you in?”

Berri hesitated. *Was she really going to perform a ritual with someone she'd only just met?*

Then her mind went back the dungeon run with Hazel...the frustration...the feeling of impotence...the dissatisfaction at the end of it.

“Yes, I'm in.”

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It took less time than Hazel expected to conclude his business with the Adventurer's Guild. Stepping out of the Guild branch onto the street, Hazel pulled the peddler's card from his pocket and scanned the address.

“I think I saw that street name not far from here. I'm kinda curious to see what kind of store this miracle merchant runs.”

Taking one last glance at the card, Hazel set out in the direction of the street...

...then did a double take.

Holding the rectangle of cardboard up, he flipped it over...flipped it over again...then began repeatedly flipping it, his expression becoming more and more confused.

*The name and address were different every time he looked at it.* Sometimes it wasn't even a proper address, just nonsense like “La-la-land” or “Your mama's house”.

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The poolside candles had been lit. Far from providing illumination, the contrast of their brightness only made the far edges of the room appear even darker.

Since this ritual was unfamiliar to her, Berri had no way of knowing if everything was set up correctly. She did notice that one statuette, identical to numerous others positioned in a ring around the pool, was out of line compared to the others. But when this was pointed out, the peddler assured her this was normal.

With preparations complete and Berri having memorized the part of the spell she needed to recite, she had been instructed to stand in the pool, on the center point its painted markings radiated from. The peddler meanwhile had taken up position behind a pulpit made from an old soapbox, set up on the side of the pool.

Only just visible over it, the small figure peered down at her. “Ready?”

Loosening her shoulders and taking some preparatory breaths, Berri held her right hand out at arm's length, and her left hand over her navel. “I'm ready.”

The peddler began to chant. Their normally high vocal pitch had been lowered, each line announced loudly, almost melodramatically.

As each word was spoken, the circles and symbols marking the pool began to glow, creating a strong cyan light that drowned out the dim glow of the candles.

As the peddler finished the first part of the spell, Berri began to chant next. As she spoke in a clear, even tone, the markings began to move, sliding and rotating across the tiles like a projected hologram.

From a small, fast rotating set of symbols directly under Berri's outstretched hand, a column of light rose, climbing upward until it met her palm.

Both Berri and the peddler were chanting now. As her right hand remained touching the column of light, a similar light stream passed from her left hand to her stomach. Wincing slightly, she continued to chant, and as the the glowing markings of the floor spiraled and shrank into the base of the column, they reappeared on her waist, glowing through the fabric of her bodice.

As the last syllable left Berri's lips, she dropped her hands. Glowing markings continued to shift around her midsection, resolving into a circular formation centered on her navel.

Craning over the pulpit, the peddler studied her expectantly. “So? Has it worked?”

Berri remained where she stood, her eyes closed and focus inward. She had refilled her mana prior to the ritual. Casting the spell had depleted it again...

...Now...



“I think it's working! *It's working!*...Oh wow, just seconds, and my reserve is completely full again!”

The peddler broke out in a wide grin. “Congratulations!”

Bending forward, Berri studied her navel. The glowing symbols were still visible through her clothes. “I guess I'm gonna have to consider my clothing carefully if I'm planning on sneaking through the dark.”

“Yes, I guess you are. No pain? Nothing out of the ordinary? You have got an open portal inside you, after all.”

Berri took a second to analyze. “No! It feels fine!”

“Oh, good...still, maybe wait a few minutes to get used to it, before you climb out of the pool. You don't want to make yourself nauseous.”

Nodding, Berri remained where she was. She couldn't feel any unusual sensations..but paying attention, she found she could *hear* a noise coming from her midsection. It was unlike anything she had heard before; like trickling water from a faucet – overlaid with the bubbling of a kettle.

Nonetheless, her eyes were sparkling as she thought of all the possibilities. *No longer am I restricted to just one spell. No longer do I have to sit out most of a dungeon-run. No longer do I need Hazel to carry me! All my old class-mates are going to be so envious...*

The peddler meanwhile was no longer behind the pulpit. They were now were using their foot to nudge the out-of-line statuette into position.

Berri continued to muse in delight for another minute...until the trickling, bubbling sound began to intrude increasingly on her thoughts.

Far from subsiding, the sound was growing louder by the second. What had previously been a trickle now sounded like a torrent from a fully-opened tap, alongside an intensely boiling cauldron.

Further, contrary to her initial thought, there *was* a sensation; some kind of...bloated feeling, as if she needed to burp. Except, the feeling was not confined to her stomach; it seemed to be radiating through her entire body, to the tips of her extremities. Mercifully, the sensation wasn't painful...

...Instead, it was presenting the opposite problem. Inexplicably, not to mention embarrassingly, whatever was happening to Berri was making her feel...aroused.

“Okay, this could take some getting used to...a lot of getting used to...”

Self-consciously, she clasped a hand on her stomach – only to experience that hand moving slowly forward.

“...Huh?”

Again Berri glanced down.

“HEY!”

Her navel, still bearing the glowing circle, was *swelling outward*. It was like watching a pregnancy in fast forward; her flat stomach was transforming into an exaggerated bulge, pressing against the drawstrings of her bodice.

Her eyes flying to the peddler, Berri found the diminutive figure was now brandishing a long handled broom.  
“Wha...what's happening to me?!?”

“Well, there are a couple of issues at play,” was the cheerful response. “Firstly, your body cannot absorb excess mana potion when its reserves are full. Secondly, the portal doesn't *stop* producing potion just because you can't absorb it. I suspect that's why the old wizard never used the spell.”

“You mean I'm filling with...?!?”

Wrestling with her bodice, Berri exposed a small section of the hem of her blouse and pulled it up – and sure enough, a stain of colour, the same cobalt hue as the potions, was welling up through the exposed skin. At first only a vague tint, it was rapidly intensifying, overwhelming her normal skin tone. She tried to tuck the blouse hem back in, but in moments her flesh was bulging so much through the gap it wasn't possible.

Furthermore, her stomach wasn't the only thing getting bigger. Before her shocked eyes, her breasts were beginning to grow as well, the shape of her bust deforming as they pushed up and out over the constriction of her brassiere. Feeling her skirt begin to ride up on her behind, she twisted and stared down – to find her butt joining the expansion as well. Everywhere that was swelling, the telltale blue stain was starting to show through.

*Okay, don't panic. If it's happening because my reserves are full, then I just have to cast a spell to deplete them...*

She raised her hand, spoke an incantation – but nothing happened. Instead, the statuettes ringing the poolside flared to life, their eyes and markings glowing.

“A magic-sealing barrier?!?”

“Yep!” Crowed the peddler. “No casting for you!”

The torrent was really loud now; Berri could feel as well as hear it, roiling within her. Her drawstrings and brassiere were becoming painfully tight, her filling flesh starting to bulge through the gaps. Simultaneously, she was having to contend with the sense of arousal, which only intensified as her body became more swollen.

“Ugh...

*...aahhn...*

...L-Let me out of here!”

Berri ran forward to try and climb out, but the peddler pointed the broom like a spear and thrust it at her, using it to keep her away from the poolside. “Yeah, *no*, I'm afraid I need you to stay in there!”

“What?! What are you – *what is going on here?!*”

The peddler was still grinning...but the friendliness had been replaced by malevolence. “Where do you think I get the mana potions I sell? You're not the first I've done this to. You are going to be my latest living potion factory!”

Other parts of Berri were swelling and changing colour too. The sleeves of her blouse were becoming less and less baggy as her stick-thin arms assumed a more sausage-like form. The same was happening to her legs; her thighs in particular ballooning to keep up with her derriere, her thigh-highs desperately stretching to accommodate their mass.

She tried running for the opposite side, her weighed-down body and increasingly chunky thighs reducing her flight to laboured jogging. The peddler however moved like greased lightning, sprinting round the edge of the pit and blocking her there too.

Berri's bust and belly were in agony from being constrained by her bra and drawstrings, her inflating mass spilling over, under and between the absolutely taut clothing features. One by one the drawstrings began to snap, her belly bursting forth further and further, until its full, unrestricted circumference bounced free, covered only by her blouse. In just a few minutes She had grown beyond the appearance of pregnancy; it now looked like she was pregnant with a fully grown adult.

Inside her blouse, her bra strap failed as well, releasing her enlarged chest to assume a more natural shape. Resting on top of her belly, her breasts were each as large as her head, and as her belly lifted them higher, she was beginning to have trouble seeing over the top of them. Even her nipples had become erect, visibly protruding under the fabric, each bump large as a thimble.

At the opposite end, her butt had surged in size, and was as wide at the back as her belly at the front. The swelling of her derriere had lifted the hem of her skirt higher and higher, leaving her panties and her equally rotund thighs in full view. She was having to stand with a wider and wider stance; even with her legs spread apart, their inner surfaces were pressing against one another.

Up her back and under her arms, the flesh was starting to bloat outward too, any visible muscle tone or skeletal structure disappearing beneath a layer of soft cushion. Even her cheeks were swelling up, making her look like she was dramatically holding her breath.

Through it all Berri was floundering in a sea of pleasure; the bubbling cacophony from her stomach echoed by an ecstatic feeling of pouring liquid, filling every nook and cranny of her innards. The pressure was growing especially bad in her private parts, and to her humiliation, she registered a growing feeling of wetness inside her underwear.

Sure enough, two stained patches began spreading outward on her blouse from the location of her nipples, the fabric becoming soggy with sapphire liquid. Beneath her skirt, an identical stain was overtaking the crotch of her panties.

There was no way Berri could out-maneuver the peddler. No matter what direction she tried to escape in, the cloaked figure was there to shove the broom at her. Her jogging had devolved into a brisk waddle as her legs grew too big and heavy to move.

Abruptly, the peddler stopped zipping after her; hope surging, Berri lolloped toward a section of poolside...

...but as soon as she got close, she knew why the peddler wasn't stopping her. Her belly was so big now it extended further than her outstretched arms, preventing her from getting close enough. Reaching forward was barely even possible; her arms' growing rotundness was making them collide with her distended belly and chest before they were extended all the way. She couldn't even see the edge, due to her bust rising in front of her.

Desperate, Berri launched herself forward, hoping to compress her belly enough to get the leverage with her arms to climb...but she simply bounced off the tiles and staggered back.

By this stage, she was barely recognizable as the spell-caster who had walked into the room minutes before. Her churning belly was so colossal the underside hung as low as her knees. Behind her were her buttocks; together so large she would have filled three chairs if she sat down. Above that, her back had lost all trace of a human silhouette, curving outwards in a fractional imitation of her belly at the front. At the sides were her arms and legs; swollen tubes almost as wide as they were long, any definition of their upper and lower sections long gone. On top was her head with its cartoonish chipmunk cheeks. In front of that, now completely blocking her forward view, her breasts were only marginally smaller than her buttocks.

Her blouse still covered her belly, breasts and back, but the material was stretched and buckling, tight to her skin over every centimeter. Her skirt, its waistband somehow surviving the expansion, emerged from beneath her belly and draped over the top of her butt, its length now woefully inadequate and leaving only her tightly stretched panties to cover her lower parts.

Mana potion leaking from her nipples had dripped and trickled downward, creating two blue stains that ran down her blouse. Between her legs, her panties were soaked through, the ultramarine liquid splattering the inner surfaces of her legs and staining her thigh-highs. Puddles were starting to form on the pool bottom around her feet.

Berri could barely think over the twin feelings of fullness and euphoria. Waddling in a circle, she tried to face the peddler again, to demand, to negotiate, to *beg*, to do anything. But as she took one hurried step, she didn't judge the shifting of her weight correctly. For a moment she teetered, her sausage-like arms windmilling, until she overbalanced forward and landed with watery *glunk* on her belly.

Even as her roiling stomach squished under her weight, resting on top of it left her head at hip level. She had so much mass now, there was no way she could get up. She could barely even plant her feet to support her weight; the circumference of her bulbous legs resting against the underside of her belly - and against each other - left them angled backward with her heels off the ground.

And as she lay there, she could feel her body and every other part of her continuing to fill, her perspective subtly rising higher as her bloating mass lifted her. As her near-spherical legs rounded out, her feet rose higher; Berri strained to keep her toes touching the ground, but they soon lifted off, leaving her teetering on her belly with nothing rigid to balance her.

Her body was little more than an enormous blob now. Now that she was resting on her stomach, her head with its oversized cheeks was at the front. Beneath it her breasts jutted out forwards, bigger than her head and still leaking potion through her skintight blouse. At the back, her panty-clad butt crowned her mass up top, while beneath sapphire liquid continued to ooze from between her legs. Her arms and legs had gone beyond being spherical; their forms were now wider than they were long, their mass both eliminating any possibility of movement and holding

them up perpendicular to the ground. Almost all of her skin, save for the top of her scalp and the tips of her fingers and toes, had been recoloured mana potion blue.

Helpless and humiliated, Berri peered up at the orchestrator of her undoing. “*Ooohh...help...when is this...ah, aaahh...when it this going to stop?!?*”

“Stop?” The peddler's tone was patronizing. “It's never going to stop. The portal inside you is stable and self-sustaining, remember? You'll just keep filling and filling, until you can't hold anymore.”

“W-what hwappens, thwen...?!?” Berri gasped. Her cheeks were so enlarged, they were interfering with her ability to talk.

The evil grin grew wider. “Well, that's why you're in the pool. It will catch it all when you explode.”

The pleasurable fog in Berri's mind was instantly replaced by terror of what was to come. *I'm...going to explode...?!?*

Her torso was starting to round out. What had once been her back, now her topside, was swelling upward, matching the roundness of her belly beneath her. Her torso was likewise growing heightwise, now lengthwise; her crotch pushed out between her legs, the measurement front-to-back rapidly increasing to match that of top-to-bottom.

The peddler was waving a hand, talking in a mockingly upbeat voice. “Try not to move too much; it'll cause you to burst sooner, and the bigger you get, the more potion I get to sell later! I wonder if you'll get as big as the elf I lured in last time? Her bloated face looked *soooo* funny right before she popped!”

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Making his way down the derelict street, Hazel alternated between staring at the object in his hand and scanning the surroundings for any sign of his partner.

Having quickly determined all the addresses offered by the bogus card were fake, he had been left with no way to find Berri or the peddler...at first. But while Hazel was not a professional magic-user, he still had a trick or two up his sleeve.

Among the loot he had acquired from previous dungeon-runs, he had got his hands on a magic compass. As magic compasses went, it didn't have the power to locate Berri directly. What it could do, if shown an inanimate object, was locate identical objects in the surrounding area.

It stood to reason the peddler carried multiple copies of their business card for giving to people. Sure enough, when offered the card, the compass's needle had immediately found a target.

*But why would they trick me like that? Is it a prank?...For some reason, I have a bad feeling about this...*

\* \* \* \* \*

The transformation of Berri's human body to a spherical form was complete; she was just as big front-to-back and top-to-bottom. Her arms and legs had gone from orbs wider than they were long, to bulging domes on the surface of her body, before merging into her mass. Her butt had gone the same way, merging with her back and flattening out to form the curving rearward of her current form. Her breasts on the other hand remained separate, swelling before her, huge in their own right. No trace remained of her original skin tone. Only her head and hands at the top, and her feet at the bottom, remained as proof that this engorged blue entity was actually human.

Mercifully, her blouse had stretched to cover the entirety of what was now the “upper hemisphere” of her body, breasts included. The upper half of her lower hemisphere was covered by a maroon band of material that had once been her skirt, and each foot was surrounded by a fabric circle that had once been a thigh-high. But below the skirt, the only thing maintaining her dignity was her equally stretched underwear. And even that dignity had been washed away by the mana potion still gushing from her privates; both the front of her blouse, and the front of her panties were sodden and sopping, the blue liquid welling through the fabric and splashing on the tiles.

She was still resting on her navel, watching helplessly as the peddler prattled and cavorted before her. The fattening of her cheeks had continued, leaving her unable to speak or offer any retort to her captor's continuing monologue. What vague, muffled moans she could make were drowned out by the sloshing, effervescent storm brewing within her.

\* \* \* \* \*

Eventually Hazel noticed the compass needle was increasingly pointing to his left.

Looking up, he stared in disbelief at the filthy, disintegrating structure it had led him to. “A *bathhouse*? They can't be here! This place looks like it's been condemned!”

He twisted and turned the compass, but there was no denying it – the needle was directing him into the open door.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Wow, you're even bigger than the elf now!”

What had once been Berri's waist was approaching five meters in diameter. The growth of her breasts was no less extreme; each was two meters across by itself. The surpassing of her arm and leg-spans by her massive proportions had left her hands, feet and head sunken into divots, her head in particular packed tight into its surrounding flesh by her bloated cheeks. Her skirt, the stretched material barely holding on, was little more than a narrow strip encircling her girth just below her equator. Fed by her constant output, the puddle that had formed around her feet originally now filled the pool bottom to the corners.

There was no pain from her body's distention...only confusion-inducing arousal and serenity born of repleteness. But

what her consciousness *couldn't* ignore was a growing pressure inside, rising higher and higher alongside the noise and sensation of the portal's torrent.

She knew what the pressure meant - her skin was becoming too taut to expand further. This was slowing her growth down but by the same degree, the gushing of potion from her body was becoming a series of pressurized fountains, spraying with force even through the barrier of her clothes. If the pressure became too much to hold...

“Uh-oh, is that a *creak* I hear?” The peddler exaggeratedly cupped one of their cat-ears. “You've held on impressively well, but I think you're nearing the end of the road now. Still, thanks for getting so big! I'm going to eat *very* well after selling all the-”

“WHAT THE HELL?!!!”

A male voice consumed by shock and bewilderment yelled without warning from the periphery, causing the peddler to jump.

Hazel was standing in the doorway, his mouth unhinged at the giant blue ball his partner had become.

The peddler stared in disbelief. “H-how...how did you find us...?!”

Berri tried to yell “Help me”; but her lips, squashed between her engorged cheeks and somewhat engorged themselves, were unable to comply.

Hazel took a step forward, but the peddler's cat ears flattened, and their mouth bared a set of fangs. A hand emerged from the cloak, this time holding a karambit knife, and with a feline yowl, the small figure shot across the floor and lunged at him.

“ARGH!”

The attacker was clamped to his head before he could reach for a weapon. He managed to grab the knife-hand's wrist, preventing the weapon from finding its mark, but the peddler held on, leaving Hazel staggering as he tried to pry the snarling creature off him.

Berri was still expanding; her head, hands and feet sinking further and further into their divots as her surface was forced further outward millimeter by straining millimeter. The pressure within was becoming so great, the churning and boiling of her body so loud, she felt like she only had seconds before she ruptured.

*Hazel isn't going to fight them off in time. But even if he does, there's nothing he can do to stop this...*

*No.*

*Not like this.*

*It can't end like this...*

Hazel's attempts to dislodge his foe had carried him closer to the poolside. Catching his foot on a candle holder, he

tripped and sprawled.

As he did so however, he broke one of the statuettes forming the magic-sealing barrier. With the ring broken, the lights on all the statuettes flickered out.

Seeing this, Berri's eyes went wide. *I should be able to use my magic again! If I can just deplete my mana supply, I'll be able to absorb some of this damn potion! But there's no way I can recite an incantation or gesticulate like this...I'll have to use the special technique that allows casting without them!*

Closing her eyes, she fought to concentrate. The erotic euphoria had been distracting enough; on top of that now, the cataclysmic pressure within chewed and tore at her focus. Making a huge effort, she willed her thoughts into order.

The peddler was straddling Hazel's chest. Lunging forward, they sank their teeth into the fingers clamped on their knife-hand. Hazel roared and his grip slackened, and wrenching free, the peddler raised the karambit high to strike.

Before they could do so, a rumble like thunder filled the air, and several flashes of light dazzled their vision.

Looking up, the peddler noticed the destroyed statuette...then found themselves staring at Berri. Arcs of electricity ran over the surface of her orbicular body, growing in intensity with each moment.

“Impossible...how can she use magic when can't use her arms or voice?!”

Hazel responded by driving a fist into his distracted assailant's chin, the blow knocking them clean into the air.

At that moment, the whole room seemed to explode. Lightning blasted in every direction, smashing wood and destroying tiling.

“AAIIIEEE!!!”

It also struck the airborne peddler, ricocheting them into a far corner and engulfing them in an explosion of rubble and dust.

Debris raining down around him, Hazel rolled over and covered his head.

The lightning storm spell had emptied Berri's mana reserve. It instantly began filling back up, but...

*...Yes! I can feel the pressure dropping! It's using up some of the potion! If I keep going...*

Once again electricity began to arc across her form; a moment later, the room exploded again. Berri began casting non-stop, the world around her reduced to a maelstrom of crackling lightning, flying wreckage and billowing smoke. With each use, she could feel her body contracting as it managed to absorb some more of the potion.

After what seemed like hours, the thunder and lightning and collapsing masonry ceased. Hazel, extricating himself from beneath a wooden panel, found his eyes clogged by dust. Wiping them, he looked around...and gawped.

He was out in the open. The bathhouse had been completely destroyed...



...along with the entire lower half of the city. All he could see was rubble in every direction, up to the forests at the city edge and the non-abandoned upper districts.

On an upturned slab nearby, the peddler lay. Their face beneath the hood was wearing a traumatized expression, and they were repeating themselves in a mewling voice. *“Make it stop...make it stop...”*

Remembering his partner, Hazel spun his head, anxiety seizing him. “BERRI!!!”

*“Cough cough...OVER HERE!!!”*

Stumbling and slipping over the wreckage, he scrambled toward the voice, until his eyes found her.

She was on her knees in a charred crater. Her skin was still deep blue...but her body was a normal again, both in size and proportion. Her clothes had survived the return to normal size – although between the potion stains, scorch marks from the lightning, and dust from the destruction, she looked desperately in need of a new wardrobe.

Rushing to her, he gave her a hand up. “Are you alright?!”

“Yeah, I think so, I...” Berri froze as she noticed the devastation around them. “...Oh...!”

“Yeah, I...” Hazel peered toward the upper districts. Despite the distance, he could see uniforms of the Town Guard furiously rushing in their direction. “...think this is going to be hard to explain...”

Berri was looking down and putting a hand on her stomach. The glowing symbols from the ritual were still there. “Oh...”

“Huh? What is it?”

“The portal...it's still open...”

“Portal?...*What?*”

Even as Hazel's questioning eyes swiveled back to Berri, her belly was already swelling again.

“...WHAT?...!”

\* \* \* \* \*

The next day saw Hazel standing outside the front entrance of the Adventurer's Guild, fidgeting nervously.

The Town Guard had fortunately been more surprised than outraged at the demolition of the lower city. Being an abandoned ghost town, its loss was largely inconsequential. On the other hand, they had been investigating the suspicious disappearances of magic-users for almost a year without success; they were very happy to finally have the

culprit.

Once the cat-eared little terror was taken away, Hazel and Berri had then been accosted by the Guild demanding answers. Berri was whisked away to be examined by healers, leaving Hazel to give his statement alone. She was still being looked at once he had finished his side of the story, and when someone came and told him she was going to stay in their care overnight, he had had no choice but to check into a nearby inn. Questions about her well-being and whether she could be cured were met with “It’s too early to say.”

Suddenly the entrance door opened. Hazel immediately whirled to look, hoping it was her – but it was just a Guild official.

“Mister Hazel, Miss Berri has requested to be released from our care. She is leaving via the storehouse door; you can meet her by heading down the cart-way at the side of the building over there.”

Before Hazel could question, the official disappeared back inside.

*It sounds like she is okay...but why is she leaving via a side door?*

With no other choice, Hazel walked to the end of the building and descended the path there.

The cart-way ended at a large set of double doors, obviously used for the mass delivery of goods. As a pair of workers pulled both doors open, Hazel saw why Berri wasn't using the front entrance.

She was once again an enormous, cobalt orb. Not quite as enormous as when she had almost exploded, but still at least four and a half meters across.

She emerged from the double doors head first, somehow floating in mid-air like some kind of airship. Her upper hemisphere was outfitted with a new bodice that matched its size and shape, while her lower hemisphere was covered over its entire surface by essentially cup-shaped pants. Mana potion once again welled up through her clothes and dripped to the ground, but since all of her new garments were coloured the same deep blue as the liquid, its presence – and where on her body it was coming from – was less obvious. The noise from her stomach also seemed quieter than before; a subtle, steady simmering.

Spotting Hazel, her chipmunk-cheeked face smiled, and one of her hands gave a wave.

“B-Berri...!”

He tried to speak, but his mind was demanding so many questions be answered, he couldn't decide which to ask first.

As her colossal form drew close, a notepad and quill floated through the air and took up position before him, the latter writing a sentence on the former. *“Hi, how are you doing?”*

Pulling a tiny part of himself together, Hazel pointed at the pad. “This is you speaking?...!”

*“Isn't it obvious? Anyway, are you alright? How's your hand?”*

Hazel fingered the bandage that covered where he'd been bitten. "F-fine, but...why are you...big again?! Couldn't they cure you?"

*"No, I asked them not to."*

"Why?!"

*"Because this finally solves my problem of running out of mana all the time! I can finally use all those ancient spells I went to the trouble of learning!"*

"But...aren't you worried about..."

*"It's okay, I've got the hang of this now. As long as I keep my size regulated by expending mana, I won't burst. This levitation spell is perfect, for example. It consumes mana at the same rate the potion restores it, **and** it allows me to get around without the use of my legs! I can use it to interact with stuff without my arms too!"*

Berri's face beamed as the pad displayed this.

"Okay...but...what I meant was...you're okay being like..." Hazel pointed at her spherical body. "...this? Wouldn't you rather be...smaller?"

*"Well, the less potion I carry in myself, the fewer spells I can cast before it's used up and I have to wait for it to refill...I figured it would be better to have more."*

Berri's face suddenly fell. *"Do you think I look gross like this?"*

Hazel hastily backtracked. "No! Not at all! On the contrary..."

Looking at her, he realized he truly meant what he said next. "...I think you look cute like that. Like a big soft pillow. I bet...you would feel great to hug..."

Nothing appeared on the pad, but Berri blushed and turned away, her features crinkling in an embarrassed smile.

Hazel changed the subject. "Well, if you're happy with this, that's all that matters. Besides," He flashed a grin. "I'm not going to say no to more fire support during a dungeon run. Especially from a mage powerful enough to level half a city."

Berri was beaming again. *"Hey, be nice! That was an accident! But yeah, I'm excited to try out my new power too."*

"In that case," Hazel said, turning toward the exit then looking back over his shoulder, "No time like the present, right?"

**The End**