

Quest Expired (Hero to Busty Tavern Wench MILF)

By FoxFaceStories

A party of adventurers have spent the last year looking for the means to break a curse placed upon one of their former members, which has left him stuck as a gorgeous woman without any magic. Now they return to the village where they left their friend to wait, only to find that not only has their friend adjusted to their new life and become a tavern wench, but that she's also become a mother in the meantime, too!

Quest Expired

The great rockwurm roared, its gemstone tooth bared as it bore down upon the heroes. This was it, the moment that would decide everything. The powerful half-orc Helga smashed her gauntleted fists together, ready to pummel the monster into submission. Her grey skin rippled with muscle, and her shining paladin armour was ready to absorb any blow. Pyra drew upon the power of the land itself, cracking it open and pouring forth hot magma to engulf the creature. Her skin glowed like the sun, the light-skinned elf becoming one with the earth, her long red hair lit up by the lava she summoned. And last of all there was Lancel, a young man with blonde hair and agile leather armour. His aim was steady as he pulled back the drawstring of his bow, readying his shot. Then, the moment the creature began to slow, he let it loose, piercing one of its four eyes.

The beast howled, and in its distraction it slipped in the magma long enough for Helga to leap forward, smashing a magically-powered fist straight down upon its crystalline skull, breaking it apart in places.

"We can do this the hard way!" she declared, punching again. "Or you could just let us have one of those teeth of yours. What will it be, tough guy?"

The rockwurm roared again, burrowing forward and knocking the half-orc aside.

"Hard way it is, I guess!" Pyra exclaimed. She jumped backwards, summoning a vine to carry her away, all while wreathing hot wind from her palm and using it to scorch the creature's remaining eyes. "Lancel, can you get its soft underbelly?"

"I'm t-trying!" he grunted, overheated by the magma and trying to catch up to the creature's movements and avoid being crushed by them at the same time. "This would be a hell of a lot easier if Bastian was with us!"

"We're doing this for him, remember?" Helga cried. She grabbed the creature by its tail, halting it momentarily.

"Of course I remember, I just miss his magic! The man could swing a sword *and* cast!"

“He will again,” Pyra said, just avoiding the creature’s jaws. “We’re nearly at the end of our quest!”

She reached out with her vine and pulled the enormous creature to the side. It was as long as three carriages, and as big as such too. But it rolled over long enough to expose the soft of its belly. Lancel didn’t waste time, even if he was brimming with nervousness. He loosed a bowshot, then grabbed his shortsword and sliced along the creature’s belly. It gave a terrible roar, smacking him backwards with its tail and definitely fracturing a rib. But then:

“We did it!” Pyra exclaimed. “It’s dead!”

Lancel just managed to sit up a little, despite the delirious pain. Helga was already punching the creature to make sure, but it wasn’t moving. Its gemstone teeth were exposed. The last magical ingredient they needed to put things back to how they should be.

“Finally,” he sighed. “We can get Bastian back.”

The group of three adventurers chattered eagerly as the village of Westriver came into view. It had been almost a year to the day since they’d left, and it had been a tearful parting, even if it was a necessary one. Before all of this, the adventuring party calling themselves the *Invincible Three* had actually been the *Invincible Four*. Their former member was Bastian Steelguard, a powerful melee mage who was not only their leader, but their charismatic speaker as well. With his unflappable auburn hair and impressively athletic figure, not to mention his six-foot-one height and dashing smile, Bastian pulled the Invincible Four through more near-fatal moments than any of them could count. He was their confidence and decisiveness, their team spirit and zeal. And, on a personal level for Lancel, he was also a mentor, the one who had found him as a failed squire and helped raise him up to a competent warrior with a place on the team.

Lancel worshipped him as a result, whereas Helga was an old war buddy of his who trusted him in every decision, willing to follow Bastian into the nine hells. Pyra, who had joined their group not long before Lancel, had a powerful crush on him. The spiritual druid elf had found it hard to resist therman's magnetic draw, and there were moments between danger that they had shared beneath the stars, hands so close together, that she believed he felt the same way, too.

Pyra had nearly even told him, but then all had come to calamity when the Invincible Four had defeated the foul hag Gretchen the Wicked. Even as she died, her poisoned green blood splattered upon Bastian's sword and robes, she had grinned maliciously.

“You may have won, dearie,” she'd sneered, “but even in defeat a good hag knows how to make victory turn to ash. Such a manly hero you are, Bastian, so vital to your little

team of heroes. What a shame it would be if this were your last act with a sword - any sword, hee hee - because my dying blood will unman you, Bastian, and what a pretty flower you will be."

The foul witch continued to cackle, her blood starting to glow. Suddenly, Bastian was wrapped within her dying energies, and his body began to transform.

"Damn you!" he declared, hacking at the witch. "What infernal magic is this?"

"Fey magic, dearie. Enjoy your new curves! I wish I could live to see them . . ."

As she expired, Bastian's body lit up in a tunnel of arcane light. He screamed, flesh changing and twisting, his very outline shrinking, becoming more slender. Lancel, Helga, and Pyra all tried to rescue him, but the pillar of light was like a wall of pure magic, unbreachable. But then it suddenly faded, and a red-haired maiden wearing Bastian's now-oversized robes fell into Helga's arms, clearly weak and confused. Even in the sickly light of the hag's hut, it was clear that this woman was beautiful, with full freckles and vibrant fiery hair. Her robes were loose, except around her chest, which Lancel and Pyra both stared at with shock.

"Wh-what did she do to me?" Bastian said in a sweet, female voice. She looked down. "By the Gods, she's cursed me! I can't feel my magic anymore!"

It was more than that, as it turned out; not only was Bastian completely disconnected from his magic, but his fighting skills were heavily reduced. His new body was that of a rather pretty and somewhat buxom woman, his fiery red hair now much longer and more vibrant. It was still Bastian, of course, nothing mentally had changed within him, but his ability to lead the party had been compromised severely. Not only could he not fight or use his arcane powers, but his feet were unused to walking long distances, his muscles underdeveloped for an adventurer's lifestyle, and his unfamiliarity with own body overwhelmed him with indecisiveness as he constantly second-guessed himself.

For a time, he tried to keep up, even as they searched futilely for an easy cure. But when the Invincible Four discovered that the components to undo his transformation would take them far and wide across the world, the choice had to be made: Bastian had to be left behind.

It wasn't an easy decision. Lancel didn't want to lose the man he looked up to, and Pyra still wanted to find a way to bring him along. But it was Helga who made the hard call. She sat down with Bastian, who still insisted on wearing his ill-fitting male clothing, and shared an ale with him, talking about old times and the sacrifices they'd made.

"I get the message, old friend," he finally said. "I'll stay. I've been talking about taking some time for myself anyway, right? I didn't imagine it would be as a woman, but I'll make the best of it here in Westriver. Just promise me you'll find a way to change me back."

Well, the promise had been kept. An entire year of adventuring and travel, roaming the far corners of the earth for magical items and ritual ingredients to change Bastian back.

The Invincible *Three* struggled at times without their leader, and no one truly stepped into that role, but they'd had many victories and few defeats, and could always draw on their temporarily-absent friend's lessons from the past. They'd fought hydras and necromancers, cruel tyrants and selfish brigands, and at times their mission had to veer off course in order to make a living as well.

Now they were here, at the edge of Westriver, having accumulated not just heavier pockets of gold but even more heroic equipment.

"He might not even recognise us," Lancel said, putting on a grin to ease his nervousness. "Do you think he'll be proud?"

"Of course he will be, kid," Helga said, patting him on the shoulder. "We all are. He'll be happy to see you too, Pyra."

The elven druid blushed, holding her staff. "That would be . . . nice. I just hope things haven't been too hard for him here. It's been a year for him, stuck here and cursed as a woman."

Helga grimaced. "Not a fate befitting a warrior. Any orc would rage at such an insult. But Bastian is stern, and will have seen it through. Come, let's go see how things have changed."

They descended as one into the village, and a number of the locals looked at them with awe and interest, gossiping amongst themselves. The heroes introduced themselves, gave out a few gold coins, and promised to stay a while after they'd seen an old friend, which quickly made them the talk of the town.

"Come have a drink!" a town council member exclaimed. "Please, it would be our honour to host you!"

Lancel tried to gesture otherwise, but Helga overrode him.

"An ale would do us good, boy," the paladin said. "It'll good to let a room first and get clear of this armour, and we could all use some food in our bellies before we visit Bastian."

Reluctantly, Lancel agreed, seeing the logic in this. Pyra was a little more eager; she was already thinking about her own appearance and how to enhance it with a little private time in a let room above the tavern.

"And who knows," Helga said with mirth in her voice. "Bastian was always a big drinker. Perhaps we'll find him there!"

The Invincible Three sat down at a large table, sighing as they were able to rest their backs for the first time in hours of travel. The tavern was bustling today - it was a fairly bustling

village, and might well be a town one day - and the three of them enjoyed the sensation of being in a civilisation once again.

“What are you nervous about?” Helga asked Pyra, who was fidgeting.

“Oh, I’m just trying to figure out what I’ll say to Bastion. When we see him, I mean.”

“Ah, I’m sure the words will come, girl. Same for Lancel, you’re looking quite nervous.”

Lancel nodded thoughtfully. “I just hope it hasn’t been too hard on him. I can’t imagine the pain he’s been through.”

“Aye, the life of an adventurer hardly suits a backwater like this. Still, an ale can see us through many trials.”

She raised her hand to get a drink, but a roar of approval from other patrons made it hard for even the large half-orc to be noticed.

“Bridget!” one cried. “Finally, our favourite tavern girl is here!”

Another actually *clapped*. “Will you give us a dancing jig Bridget?”

“Maybe later, when we’ve all had a bit more fill in our bellies!” a soft voice cried.

The men cheered, and the three heroes shifted to try and get a view of who was being talked about.

“Callum, would ya care for a round of ale for you and your brothers? And some nice lamb stew on the side?”

“Surely would, Bridget, you know us too well.”

A flick of red hair could be seen across the tavern. Another man stood, blocking the way. “Bridget, I don’t suppose you’d be wanting some fruit from my patch, would ya?”

“I can’t turn down your tomatoes, you know that Elrich. I’d be more than happy to take them off of you.”

“And maybe we can have a drink together?”

A laugh rose up from several others. There was a flash of a woman’s smile as the barmaid withdrew a little from the man, amused and polite at the same time.

“Oh, I’m always up for a drink, Elrich, you know that, but I’m afraid my schedule is fairly full today. A lot of lovely ladies and gentlemen to serve today, isn’t that right, folks?”

Another cheer rose up.

A woman spoke this time, an older figure seated next to a man who was likely her husband. “And how’s the little one faring, Bridget?”

A hand gestured outwards to show there was no worry to be had. “Oh, she’s an absolute marvel, she is! Out cold upstairs right as we speak. Don’t worry, if she kicks up a fuss I’ll bring her down and we can all start clucking.”

A few women tittered happily at that.

“Does that mean milk is on the tap then, Bridget?” called a young man.

There was a mix of laughter and roars this time, and this 'Bridget' seemed to provide a mix of both.

"Who said that? Give them a job on the ear for me!"

But then she laughed, rolling her eyes, and finally she came entirely into view as she stepped up on a table near the bar top. The woman had gorgeous fiery hair and a smiling face that simply emanated a mischievous and charming joy, her eyes a sparkling emerald that you could note across the room. Her blouse was white and rather low cut, allowing the tops of two rather magnificent breasts to be displayed. The fact that she was wearing a dark red corset only served to push them up further, and her forest green skirt fell to just over her knees, swishing around her lovely legs with each excited movement. She was, in many ways, the archetypal tavern wench of every man's fantasies, only she was clearly infused with the wit, charisma, and self-confidence of a woman who knew exactly who she was. In many ways, it would have been exactly the kind of lass that Lancel would have lusted after, too nervous to approach but unable to stop gazing at, and Helga would have found her a great drinking friend, no doubt.

The only problem was that this woman was Bastian.

"Nine hells," Pyra said, her eyes wide. "It can't be . . . can it?"

"There's no way," Lancel said. "Bastian wouldn't become like . . . *that*."

Helga leaned forward, staring at her best friend, who had just hopped down from the table and was already serving up drinks to the expectant patrons. She still had that beaming smile upon her face, chatting eagerly with her customers, leaning over just a little upon the table in a way that seemed to emphasise her bust; cheeky and flirtatious without being outright promiscuous.

"It looks so much like her, though," the paladin said, her voice low. "Same hair, same face."

"She wasn't so . . . well endowed, though," Pyra said. "It's been a year, perhaps this woman just *looks* like her. Bastian would never act so-"

Bridget suddenly cackled in response to something a patron said, tapping the man on the shoulder and placing the other upon the bare section of her chest.

"-so forthright. As a woman, I mean."

"I agree," Lancel said. "Bastian would never be like that. This is some other woman. Or maybe the hag's influence. Was there a second part of the spell?"

"None," Pyra whispered. "I know fey magic, even if I couldn't cure the curse. There were no effects upon his mental state. It was *him*, Lancel."

He set his jaw. "Then this isn't."

But then Bridget turned. "Well, it looks like we've got a trio of new adventures here in - *Helga!? Lancel!? Pyra!?*"

“Bastian!?” all three said at once, looking at the vivacious barmaid.

She nearly dropped the tray of set ales, barely managing to right them again, though a bit of beverage was spilled upon the wooden floorboards. Her eyes were wide, mouth still agape. She immediately set them aside, passing them to a table and not even bothering to hand them out.

“Sorry fellas, I can’t stand on ceremony at the moment. I’ve got some old friends who’ve dropped in to surprise me.”

Before any complaint could be made from the table she *raced* forward, chest bouncing in her overly exposed top, and gripped Helga in a mighty hug. The half-orc paladin had barely managed to stand up, and even with all of her strength she was almost knocked back from the sheer surprise of it.

“My old friend!” Bastian declared. “Oh, I’ve missed you! And Pyra, come here!”

Pyra was rigid straight, not knowing what to do as Bridget/Bastian rounded the table and wrapped her in a hug as well. One thing was for sure: the elven druid could certainly feel the rather large bosom of her former crush pressing against her own meagre chest. To her shock, Bastian even placed a big kiss against her cheek with an empashsied, “*Mwah!*”

Then, Bastian shifted to Lancel, catching his confused gaze.

“Lancel! Dear boy, you’ve grown already! I see more hairs on that face than I can muster these days. Come here, you!”

The young warrior could scarcely believe that this woman was his mentor, especially given how eager and lively she was, or how she giggled just like a woman happy in frivolity. But then she rubbed her knuckles in his hair, mussing it up as she always had back when she was a man, and he instantly knew the truth.

“By all the Gods and the Black Mountain that looms over them, it *is* you.”

“Sure is, sweetheart,” she replied, putting her hands on her hips. “In the lovely flesh!”

A few customers cheered, and Pyra squeaked. Lancel noticed also, going deep red in the face. “Um, Bastian, you’re chest . . . it’s showing a bit more . . .”

Bridget looked down and smacked her forehead with her hand. Nothing too scandalous was bared, thankfully, but her expansive bosom was threatening to spill over her white top. She adjusted the material by pulling it up, still leaving her bosom fairly displayed.

“Oops! Thank you truly. This used to all fit spick and span but lately I’ve been bursting out of my clothing, I swear. I should have seen it coming; I really need to see a tailor.”

“Bridget, our drinks!”

She turned and barked an order like she had as leader of their adventuring party.

“Get your own drinks from the bar for now, won’t ya!? I’ve got friends here, and I aim to see them. Martha, can you take over for me for a spell? Ta!”

She turned back to face the table, grinning down at them as they sat in awe.

"I can't believe you're all back. I won't lie, I spent some time afearing you to be dead or harmed or simply split up. I sent letters, though I don't suppose many made it, and I stopped after a time."

Pyra recalled one of them. "Y-yes. You said you were missing us, and finding it hard as a woman. That going under a false life like this was undignified. Bastian, what happened?"

The gorgeous tavern wench pulled back a seat and sat down with a thud, causing her bosom to tremble in a way Lancel was trying very hard not to notice. She sat as Bastian always had; the back of the chair facing away from her so that she was leaning upon it, as if ready to tell a story.

"Call me Bridget," she said. "It's who I am now. As for what happened, would you care to guess?"

"Hypnosis," Helga said.

"No."

"A charm spell," Lancel said. "A side effect of the Hag's curse."

"Nope."

"Another effect," Pyra said. "Wait, you're on an undercover mission. No, you heard us coming and decided to play a prank on us. That's just like you."

But the beautiful barmaid just shook her head, leaving her lovely red hair to spill all about her shoulders. A grin emerged upon her freckled face.

"No, nope, and not even close."

"Then what could it possibly be?" asked Lancel. "This is so unlike you!"

"Would you believe I just fell in love with this new life of mine?"

"No," Helga said flatly.

Bridget sighed. She excused herself for a moment, and returned with a tray of four ales; one for each of them.

"On the house," she said. "Trust me, you might want to drink up. I won't lie, I'm fairly embarrassed my own self to be telling the story, but a bandage has to come off, and I'm right glad to see you all again. Look, I know it sounds almost impossible to believe - I wouldn't have believed my own self a year ago if she could go back and tell that poor new female sod where she'd end up - but there really is nothing magical or cursed or secret about it. I've just . . . gotten used to this life, and really come to enjoy it."

Pyra crossed her arms, definitely not believing this. The man she had begun to fall for during their travels was actually *happy* as a barmaid?

"But . . . you're Bastian!" Lancel said.

Helga scoffed. "Have been as long as I've known you. Had a thing for pretty women too. I can't just believe my oldest friend suddenly took to being a woman himself after just a year."

Bridget took a drink of her ale. "Bridget, please, I go by Bridget, even among friends. And trust me, Helga my friend, there have been . . . other developments. Ones that *really* made me throw myself into this life of mine. Look, I've been wenching for most of the year here in Westriver, it's not a recent thing."

"We left you in the care of a cobbler!" Pyra protested.

Bridget raised one eyebrow. "And I don't blame you for that, boring profession though it was. I know you were in a rush to find a cure for my condition, and none of us expected it to take so long - that's not a judgement, by the way. But cobbling - by the Gods! And weaving! My darkest days after becoming a woman and being left alone were working with Petyr in his shop. The only bright moments were when I served customers and they introduced me round the village. That's when I switched my name to Bridget, by the way. It's no secret who I used to be, though I don't imagine they realised you were my old travelling companions when you arrived just now."

Helga put up her large grey arms. "Wait a moment, are you telling me that this entire village knows you used to be a man?"

Bridget winked and took another swill of her drink. "Hag curse and all. They're really quite lovely about it; helps that I look lovely, I suppose, ha! But it took a month for me to reach that point; I was lonely and lost, reliving my glory days in my memory, weeping at my new condition: it's a lot easier to weep as a woman."

"That's true," Pyra said at the same time as Helga said, "That's bullshit."

Bridget chuckled. "Well, it was for me. And wearing my old clothing just became a reminder of who I'd been and what I'd lost. Petyr was no use, though bless that cobbler's heart for trying to lift my spirits. No, in the end I decided to drink my woes away. I finally came out of hiding, entered the local tavern here, and decided to damn well have a few ales, no matter how embarrassed I was of my condition. I thought if I could drink until I pass out, that would be a success.

"But instead, I found this place lively and animated, filled with townsfolk I'd yet to meet or only met sparingly while helping Petyr out. They wanted to know my story - it's a village thing, they're all curious, hence why half are looking in now - and after a few ales I told 'em. Well, they all pitched in to help me, believe it or not! Martha up there offered to take me to the local seamstress Bessie to get some proper fitting clothes. Haribald served me ale on the house, a service I still enjoy, so long as I could swap stories with him. Gayle offered to put me up in quarters among other women so I could learn a thing or two about how to take care of things, particularly the plumbing."

Lancel went a little white hearing this, but Pyra and Helga only exchanged an awkward look with one another; they both knew they *really* should have given Bastian tips on that.

“There was flirting and interest, of course. Before my story had fully come out, Tom Hillingtonp pinched me on the bum, and I gave him a walloping that almost made me feel like a knight again. But the flirting wasn’t all that bad, I found. Look, it was embarrassing still, just as it’s embarrassing to admit, but after so long spent in shameful isolation I was just cheerful that others were seeing me with interest. Who cares if a few men wanted to get a look at my bosom, eh? It’s a standard part of the female experience, right girls?”

Pyra took a peak at Bridget’s melon-like chest. Her own was delicate and beautiful, but rather flat.

“Not as much as you, I imagine.”

Bridget actually blushed this time. “Yes, I did get a bit bigger there. More on that later. Anyway, I kept on coming to the tavern, enjoying the company of the villagers as much as I could while away from the cobbler. Well, Haribald has always been an insightful one to hear the other folk tell it, and he spotted out my disdain for my job pretty quickly. He offered to have me on as a barmaid, a tavern wench, I guess you could say, and I took him right up on the offer, even if it meant wearing a dress.”

“He asked you to dress in that?” Lancel asked, gesturing to her somewhat showy outfit. “The villain!”

Bridget put a hand on her young friend and gave him a playful shake. “Fear not, young Lancel, I wore something much more conservative before. I guess a year of being an admittedly magnificent looking barmaid makes you lose a bit of modesty in the dress sense. Besides, I’ve learned that showing the girls a bit and leaning over the tables a little more than necessary will get you some great tips. Do a little jig on a table and my room above is paid for the whole week alone!”

She said this as if the much greater riches she’d acquired as an adventurer, the ones they’d helped her bury outside town in case of emergency or desperation, mattered not. She seemed to catch Helga’s curious glance.

“Oh, I haven’t touched the stash. You see, I planned to move and leave notice for you all, or even track you down. But after just a couple of weeks of being a barmaid, I frankly found myself starting all over again. I figured if I was Bridget for a spell, then I’d *be* Bridget. Make my own way in life and enjoy the fruits of it all, without looking back. And it served me well indeed; my prizes from adventuring were there if I needed them, but for now I was making my coin and, more importantly, making good friends. And loyal customers; who can blame them, with me looking like this?”

She stood up and gestured to herself. Helga managed a laugh.

“You always were a vain one, Bastian. Bridget, I mean.”

She patted her orc friend on the arm and sat back down.

“Well, I was a physical specimen before, and I still am now, just in a very different way.”

“I suppose I can make sense of that, I guess,” Helga said. “I mean, when I committed my life to the righteous god Netheria and took on my paladin powers, it was a rebirth for me. From a wild she-orc youngster to a devoted warrior of truth. I didn’t change in body, though. I can’t quite picture myself as a burly male orc, for one.”

“Oh, that’s because you’re burly enough already. But I hope you understand, old friend. A year has been a long time to just bloody well accept my lot in life and have some joy in it. Particularly with alcohol involved.”

Pyra wasn’t satisfied, though. The pale-skinned elven druid waved her hands, as if trying to steer back the conversation.

“Wait, wait, wait. I can’t just accept this. You’re a woman, and you just . . . went with it? I mean, I suppose I can understand ‘having fun with it’ as you say, but that’s a very different thing from what we saw when we came in.”

“What did you see?” Bridget said, though her tone concealed a smirk in it.

“The - the flirting! The carrying on with the men as if they know you . . . like we might have known one another.”

Lancel coughed. Helga looked away. Even Bridget paused. She extended a callused but feminine hand over Pyra’s own.

“I know what you’re referring to, Pyra. I felt that too, that connection between us. But, if I must be completely honest with all of you, I did in fact discover one other part of the hag’s curse, or perhaps just an unintended side effect of becoming a woman. And that’s . . . well, my attractions are a lot more open now.”

“What does that mean?” Lancel asked. He was a bit naive on such matters.

“Well, I always fancied a good looking woman. I still do now. It just turns out that I also, ahem, quite enjoy a good looking man as well.”

Pyra squeaked, and Lancel’s jaw fell.

“You’re kidding!” he said.

“I wish I was. No, that’s not true, I absolutely am okay with it.”

“But - but how do you know? How can you tell?”

There was a long pause, one that left a blush on Bridget’s cheeks and sheepish smile on her face. Helga was the first to clue in. She gave a deep hearty laugh that temporarily silenced the tavern, or at least eclipsed the other noise.

“By all the Gods, you really went there?”

“Went where?” Lancel asked.

Pyra squeaked, realising what this all meant. Lancel still didn't get it, and continued to ask just what in the nine hells was being referred to here.

"Lancel," Bridget said. "Remember all that advice I gave to you when we were in Port Landsmouth, readying to fight that giant undead rat plague? The advice about how to treat a girl, and even more how you should approach making love to her? What to expect?"

Lancel nodded. "Yes, and you'll be proud to know I've used it since, in the last year. Several times, in fact."

Bridget leaned forward against the table, so that her ripe bosom pressed against the table, emphasising them even further to the group.

"Let's just say I've also used that advice many, many times since. Only, ha, I've applied it in reverse."

Lancel blinked. "No."

"Oh yes."

"You can't have. Is this a joke? One of your wry moments?"

"Oh, I've been wry, and I've been spry. Very spry. But it's no joke, kid. This body, as I came to discover, has some damn powerful needs. Again, it's not a spell effect. The hag changed my body but couldn't change me mentally, so I do suspect that this female version of me just happens to be really, very quite . . . randy."

Pyra grabbed her drink and began downing it in one giant series of gulps, needing liquid courage to brave her way through this revelation. Helga slammed the table and cackled again.

"This has to be a charm spell," Lancel said.

"C'mon, kid," came the response. "I set you up with that dark elf girl back in Lysia and you blew it. You might remember I was chatting up her older sister rather effectively, and didn't come back to our camp at all that night. I've *always* been a bit of a dog."

Helga puffed. "Not wrong."

Pyra grimaced. "But . . . you were changing. Weren't you?"

Bridget shrugged. "I was settling down some, Pyra. I won't lie, I really was starting to carry a torch for you, truly. But things just headed another way. I'm sorry, truly. I really did try to get word to you."

She clutched Pyra's hand. The druid sagged a little, but nodded.

"I . . . I understand, I think."

"Thank you. I couldn't bare you being angry with me. I really couldn't. It's just . . . I ended up in a body that made my old one look like one of those puritan Jezbath worshippers, and I had a whole new buffet of experience before me. And with every single man - and a few married ones - that were in the village or passing through it laying eyes on me, and a bit of extra ale in my belly, it didn't take long for me to fall to the inevitable. And

you know what, I enjoyed it! I really did. I do still! I didn't become the town whore or anything, gods forbid *that*, but I won't lie and say I didn't start confirming all the stories you hear about beautiful tavern wenches in places like this. I even had a tumble between the sheets with Alex of Durane."

Lancel almost spat out his drink. "Sir Durane!? He's - he's an adventuring rival! You said he was a cur and moron."

"Well, he's not all that bright, but the man knows how to treat a lady, as it turns out. And he's quite the generous lover, as well."

She beamed, clearly enjoying making the trio just a little uncomfortable, as she often had with her stories and jokes to lighten their mood on adventures.

"You're fucking with us," Helga said.

Bridget put a hand on her bosom, steadying it as she laughed.

"Okay, so I didn't sleep with Durane. I did dance deliciously with his cousin, however. He's actually nice, and *does* know how to treat a lady. Well, after I slapped him for trying to give a sneaky squeeze of my ass."

Pyra shook her head. "This is certainly not how I expected all of this to go. Helga, can we finally tell him? Her?"

Bridget furrowed her brow. "You - you did it, did you? You found what you went out for?"

"That we did," Helga said. "We have all the ingredients for your cure."

Lancel became excited again. "We went far and wide, across the known edges of the earth, Bastian! I used every bit of advice you ever taught me. I think . . . I think you'd be proud of me."

"I always am, kid, but . . ."

Bridget bit her lip. "Well, see, there's a problem. I don't want to change back."

There was another uproar, except from Helga, who just regarded the barmaid curiously.

"You don't? You can!" Pyra said. "We can make you Bastian again, and then we-"

"Pyra, I just can't. Besides, you don't need me anymore."

"We do!" Lancel exclaimed. "We need our leader back. Someone to guide us."

Bridget's ears pricked up. Upstairs, there was a muffled wail. She sighed, standing up. "And I've got someone else / need to guide," she said. "Hold on, I'll be back in just a moment."

She left the trio, moving through the crowd and sharing a joke with a patron before ascending the stairs.

"What did she mean by that?" Lancel said.

But Pyra was already starting to piece things together. The expanded bosom, the slightly thicker middle Bridget now had, disguised mostly by her corset, the comments other regulars at the bar had made to her.

“By the Gods,” she said, the words almost a whisper as Bridget returned. She had a wrapped but wriggling little thing in her arms, and as she sat down again before them, several other women clucking in the background, it was exceedingly clear that she was holding a little baby. A little baby with a surprisingly thick mop of fiery hair.

“Helga, Pyra, Lancel, meet little Esmerelda. My Emse.”

She was writhing a bit, clearly comforted by her mother but wanting more than just her company. Trembling, the infant reached out, pawing at her mother’s breast.

“I can’t believe it,” Lancel said.

“Believe it. Now look away for a moment, kid. Little girl wants to latch.”

She exposed one large breast from her top and planted Emserelda against it. The former male sighed a little as her child took a second to latch, and then her milk began to flow.

“Ahhh, that’s getting better. I was worried my tit was about to explode. Seriously, you have no idea how full up I am right now. There’s a reason the grosser men passing by keep asking for a ‘drink from the tap.’ I give them a good kick in the shins; I’ve managed to train myself up a little more in your absence.”

Pyra stared at the baby, astounded. “She’s . . . Bridget, she’s *beautiful*.”

“Isn’t she just? She’s my whole world, right here.”

Helga, warrior that she was, still had her feminine side. She reached out and stroked the baby’s cheek softly. The baby girl looked at her with bright emerald eyes; fitting for such a name. She then turned her attention back to her feeding.

“Remarkable,” Helga said. “I never imagined you having children.”

“Well, just the one child so far. Birth was too recent for me to get too clucky, but who knows?”

Lancel managed to venture a question. “Who - who’s the father?”

Bridget bit her lip. “A very good question. I think one day I might even find out.”

“You don’t know?”

“Well, like I’ve said, my new self is quite randy, and I had a number of male companions across the month I fell pregnant. It could have been any of them, though I hope it’s not a local! Truth be told, I’m not very interested in tracking him down, whoever he is. To him it would have just been a romp under the sheets or in the hay when I was particularly excitable. For me . . . it gave me my girl.”

“You were pregnant,” Lancel stammered. “You’re pregnant and a mother. You gave birth.”

“Oh, by the Gods, I did. Screaming and everything. Basilik poison has nothing on birthing pains, let me tell you kid.”

“Was it strange?” Pyra asked, becoming genuinely curiously.

“Strangest thing there ever was! I was in a panic when Martha first figured out what was happening to me. Let me tell you, it’s one thing to suddenly find yourself a woman, and a whole other stew of rabbit to find yourself swelling up with a baby inside you. And I do mean swelling up, I was huge by the end! If you think these udders on my chest are big you should have seen my belly the day before I went into labor. I had to take a break from tavern wenching just to stop knocking the food off of all the patrons’ tables. Of course, I think I’m recovering rather well, but as you can see I’ve certainly stayed bigger in *other* places.”

She glanced down at her chest, which was certainly larger than how they’d originally left her, and then grinned when she returned her gaze up.

“Honestly, with the way this pair have blown up and filled with milk, I’m starting to think having a pair of bloody *twins* would have been easier!”

Helga chuckled at that. She stroked little Esme’s cheek again.

“Well, well, well, we finally found out what could make the great hero Bastian finally settle down,” the half-orc mused.

“And make her happier than she’s ever been,” Bridget said. “So you see, I can’t go back. Adventuring is no life for a child, and besides, what mother to a gorgeous little girl would I be if one of my first acts after having her was to renounce my own womanhood? I don’t much believe in fate, but she’s a girl for a reason, I figure. I’m proud to be her mother. I went through labor and birth with her. I carried her in my belly for nearly nine months. And who knows, maybe I’ll give her a sister or brother some day. Probably will, given I’m almost back to my old excitable self. Well, female self, at least. But this girl, she’s my new adventure.”

Pyra actually wiped a tear away. Helga placed her hand on Bridget’s shoulder.

But Lancel was agitated. He could see that his mentor truly did want to stay, but it stirred up other feelings and worries.

“But - but Bridget, if you stay, who’s going to lead the team? How will we cope?”

The tavern wench mother had to hold her baby carefully while she wheezed out a laugh. “Oh, Lancel, you never did appreciate your own strength. You’ve crossed the world for me, and I’m sorry I never was able to tell you that you didn’t have to. But you would have faced danger, puzzles, situations that tested your mettle, am I right?”

“We, uh, did kill a rockwyrn.”

“A rockwyrn! Ah, now I am a little jealous, though not enough to take up the sword again. But that’s exactly what I’m talking about, kid. You don’t need a leader anymore, and if

you do, Helga is more than capable. You don't need me, you've more than stepped up, as I knew you would."

Lancel mentally chewed on that for a moment. "I guess you might be right."

A flashing smile. "I'm always right, remember? Now, how about we celebrate our reunion?"

Pyra suddenly squeaked. "Wait, you're breastfeeding!"

"A brilliant elven eye as always, Pyra."

"You were drinking ale before! You've got an ale before you now. You can't do that while you're feeding a baby."

But Bridget just winked, and rotated her hand a little. There, on her middle finger, was a small ring with a little pale gemstone. Helga recognised that immediately.

"Wait . . . is that the Ring of Sobriety we found when we raided the Vampire Lord Elsteth's castle? We buried it in the stash."

"Okay, I admit I dug it up just once to retrieve it."

"That's the ring you said was bloody useless, because what's the point?"

The tavern wench grinned. "Well, looks like I found a use for it after all. C'mon, let me get your three adventures another round. I demand you stay upstairs in the other rooms, at least for a few days. Hells, a week! Trust me, you'll have the best service from the best tavern wench on the continent, at least so I'm told I am."

The Invincible Three exchanged a quick glance, still bewildered by all these revelations.

"I guess we can hardly say no," Helga replied.

"Damn straight, old friend. Let me go put this one back down - look, she's tuckered right out on the boob - and I'll be back in moments." She rested the child on her lap and pulled her shirt up again. "Trust me, you'll want to be around for the jib. Just keep your eyes north, kid."

Lancel realised he'd been looking at his former mentor's bustline again, and blushed a deep shade of red.

"S-sorry, Bridget."

"Don't be!" she said lightly, standing up. "I'm a tavern wench, remember? I'd be failing my job if I wasn't easy on the eyes. Now rest up, you three, and I'll be right on back. I've told you my story, and now I want to hear all about yours!"

She headed off, clutching her child and stopping occasionally so the locals could fuss over little Esmerelda. Helga watched her go, then shook her head.

"You know, I don't think any of our stories, however wild, are going to top that."

The End