

Change is never easy. Especially, when you're still only a child at heart.

Lulu's first few steps beyond the boundaries of the mythical glade were heavy. After what had amounted to several centuries she still felt she wasn't ready to return, but the fae were insistent. *The time is now*, they would whisper into her ear. Even during the most inconvenient or out of place times, like when she was just about to sleep or in the middle of a rousing game of pin-the-tail-on-the-Yordle with her other fae friends.

Until, one day, she simply couldn't deny them any longer.

*At least I'm not alone*, she thought, just as Pix alighted on her shoulder. He tried to offer her waves of encouragement, but she wasn't having any of it.

She trudged through the mud of the foggy marshland that opened out before her, mourning the vibrant colors and saccharine aromas of the Glade, the further she went. When the mud eventually came up so high as to touch the bottom of her chin, she sighed.

Pix flew over to a nearby embankment and danced energetically above a tent there, next to what looked to be the remnants of a campfire.

Lulu groaned, wishing he could just show her the way back to the Glade. Back where she didn't have to wade through mud, and there *were* no dead trees, like the countless many skeletal twigs that featured across the dreary landscape. She was thrilled, therefore, to find a nice, warm blanket in the tent to curl up and cry herself to sleep in, wondering why the fae, who she thought were her friends, would be so hasty to be rid of her all of a sudden.

*Let me show you*, she could hear Pix hum, just as the last bits of her consciousness faded.

Lulu's mind's eye was whisked through space and time, to a stool at the bar in an unknown tavern. Loud, with drunks bombarding about the room to a backdrop chorus of raccous percussion and string, she immediately yearned for the solace that the dead marsh had at the very least afforded her. Curiously, however, many more of the patrons were crowded around the front of the establishment, to see out through the windows.

Before Lulu could ask what the commotion was, Pix pulled her attention outside.

A big, swarthy looking fellow in leather mail was standing by the road, huffing more out of anger than from the cold.

“Best get out of town,” the man growled, with one hand reaching for his sword in its scabbard.

To Lulu's surprise, the man's ire was being directed at a Yordle! Another *girl* Yordle, with twintails at that. Dressed in plate armor, holding what was an astoundingly large hammer for one so small. And although she stood no higher than up to the giant's knee, she looked up at him without any semblance of fear.

“I won't turn a blind eye to all you've done!” The Yordle girl said, boldly taking up a fighting pose. “The villagers have been living in fear of you long enough!”

*So brave, Lulu contemplated with a shudder, but she's gonna get squished!*

The Pix equivalent of laughter, like a warm vibration, filled her senses before she was transported again. This time, to the mouth of a cave on a mound encircled by untouched forest.

*Hey, wait...it's that girl again!*

Indeed, the same Yordle with the hammer was there in front of the cave when a horrifying beast – like a bear, only with two sharp, curved tusks – emerged from within standing tall on its hind legs, viciously swinging at her with its clawed front paws.

*No! Leave her alone!* Lulu pleaded, drawing from the vast well of knowledge about the natural environment she'd gained from her time with the fae. *Rockbears only fight to protect their young!*

The Yordle dodged the beast's strikes until it grew tired, then brought her hammer down hard on its skull. Lulu winced at the moment of impact, but could do nothing to evade the sickening *smack* of the rockbear's several ton body as it hit the ground. Nor, the solemn silence that followed.

*Why are you showing me this?* She urged Pix, but there was no answer.

Lulu watched as the Yordle with the hammer looked upon the bear's still body with a frown. Then, a shrill cry came from in the cave, prompting her to investigate.

*Oh, no, Lulu and she said at the same time. Sure enough, there was a cub that had been left behind. The fae sorceress, due to her deeper connection to the natural world than most mortals, wept as she felt its pain. As she was on the verge of expressing her anger at the Yordle's thoughtless actions, however, Lulu was surprised to see her crying too.*

The Yordle tried to grab the cub, but in a heartbreaking twist it bit her hand then slipped away through a tiny hole in the wall.

Lulu gradually formed an idea of this Yordle girl, as Pix lead her through several more scenes depicting her engaging in various acts of heroism. Time after time, taking on far bigger and tougher adversaries. Even though at times she would stumble, faced here and there with dilemmas well beyond her understanding, Lulu was content that she would never *purposefully* act with any ill intentions, and even grew to admire her for all her shining qualities.

All this *steadfast presence* lacked, it would seem, was a friend.

By the time Lulu stirred awake, finding herself back again in the tent on the marsh, she'd realized what the fae wanted her to do.

“Poppy,” she said like someone withholding a surprise as she popped her head outside, instantly recognizing the figure seated beside the newly kindled fire. *Use our magic and all that we've taught you,* Pix chimed in Lulu's ear gleefully, in a voice that only she could hear.

*Guide her toward greatness.*