



Barley, the Stallion

After the last event the family went through, The Lightfoot's lives were still going through some minor changes. Three years had already passed, magic seemed to be a common thing in the land now, Lauren and Colt Bronco formalized their relationship even more getting married and the latter became even closer to the brothers. Ian had become an example to his peers and friends, he continued to cultivate his intelligence and demonstrated a self-confidence he could not have imagined before, Barley was still an effusive boy, though he tried to get into less trouble with Colt, who had tried to be more flexible with his stepchildren. Still, there are hard-to-unlearn habits, the old policeman had deep-seated discipline and even though the friction between them was getting less and less an issue sometimes it was difficult for both of them to stop seeing themselves as opposing forces.

Perhaps it was some fear or insecurity that made Bronco behave particularly demanding sometimes with Barley, maybe he started to expect a lot of him suddenly, or perhaps he hadn't assimilated the idea that his role was already another. These attitudes eventually frustrated the Elf, who found no better way to deal with the situation than to return to his old ways, but the actions that in the past had a "noble" justification for him became now just simply acts of vandalism. He ended up distancing himself from the police man, and with it also from the family. Thus a change that appeared to be the beginning of a new happy phase for the Lightfoot/Broncos seemed to become rather a dark chapter.

Concerned, Lauren spoke to her now husband and Ian did the same to his brother. Such a talk led Barley to conclude that he didn't want to lose his characteristic rebelliousness as it would be like losing an important part of his identity, the fear of not recognizing himself was something within. The younger brother tried to remind him of all the things he stood out for, his altercations with authority were really the least important part.

He set out to make amends, at least on his regard, not without first thinking deeply about what he would do, what he would say, and why he would do it. He had already been unwilling to use magic before, but this had to be a solo adventure as it would be one within himself. Covered by the dark of the night he took the Wizard staff and searched among his things some artifact that could help him to potentiate the spell. He wanted to know better his stepdad, to understand each other better, so he decided to use magic to get inside his mind, he found in a box in his van the sunglasses the policeman used to wear those days.

The will to do so and the necessary objects, he had gathered everything. He raised the staff in the air, focused on getting the mind of his stepfather, a moment of doubt, wasn't this the easy way? The one he had always avoided taking? It was too late to turn back, a burst of light blinded him for a moment...

His eyes were open but he couldn't grasp a look, he needed a couple of minutes to start focusing while the remnants of light dimmed in his pupils. He felt an intense headache, fell to his knees trying to contain the nausea, touched the rough ground and looked around, he was still in that empty alley, Guinivere 2 was waiting for him a few meters ahead. He was surprised at how badly he had parked his van in an area where he probably shouldn't have, took a couple of steps, didn't really know what to expect from the spell but seeing no signs of any side effects he assumed it should be working fine, and then it happened.

All of a sudden his eyesight blurred again and he began to feel an intense pain all over his body, it was slowly descending from the head to the soles of his feet and it concentrated especially on the lower back. Breathing was coming out of his lungs slowly and with difficulty, as if some force were pressing on them, his bones and muscles weighed and sore as if he had been beaten. He stopped under the light of the nearest lamppost, which would be the only witness to the events that happened next.

The pain in his back became more and more intense, he felt imprisoned by the garments he was wearing, he noted with surprise that it was because his body was slowly becoming wider, he gained mass in his chest as well as in his arms and thighs, the shadow casted near him made him notice this increase in size. Barley was unmistakable, he was a chonky blue Elf, maybe not very tall but quite stout, so the sudden increase in size surprised him almost with terror because he also felt suffocated, tight in his own clothes, The T-shirt and the vest pressed on his growing torso, though nothing really compared to the twinge on his back.

A familiar sound made him know that the cloth was torn, his poor legs began to feel a slight relief at the expense of his favorite pants, he looked down only to notice how the seams gave way while his thighs were fattening like hams, The weight he gained was so unbearable that he had to strive to stand when the most grotesque part of the process began. A bump began to inflate at the height of his butt which looked huge and bulging, such swelling ended up destroying what was left of the fabric.

The lump swelled at a steady rate, growing like a soft, blue mass, just like his skin, he couldn't feel it or notice it in the projected shadow but another two small bumps began to grow from it. What he did feel and noticed was his torso that continued expanding itself acquiring greater volume, he was already fat, but now he was in the limits of obesity. At the same time his feet started to get bigger, he could tell by noticing them tight inside the shoes, he tried to bend down to free them but noticed his clumsy

and uncoordinated movements, The weight added to his back prevented him from crouching without losing his balance and causing a feeling of dizziness, he also realized that his body was heavier, not only because of what was happening above, but because the increase in the thighs came accompanied by another change. The knee had become a thick, hard knot but everything below it had become comically thin up to the bones in the ankles, which were bulging in the same way. He had no choice but to endure the pain in his feet as they grew larger than the footwear could conceal by tearing and releasing that which could no longer be called a foot.

They had grown almost twice their size from heel to toe and the color blackened, once free he moved his fingers to make sure he could still feel them, he was able to control them, indeed, but he couldn't feel it in the same way, the toes had increased in thickness like the rest of the body but the other fingers seemed to have joined together, as if a very intense heat had melted a piece of plastic and now they were united in a uniform mass.

He looked at his hands, tickling, from his arms a slight layer of brown hair started to grow, nothing alarming, unlike what was starting to happen on his hooves (previously feet), slowly, upward a thicker and thicker layer of hair stretched out, Filling the blue of his skin with brown, he began to feel the same itch on the bump on his back that was already twice the size, the appendages that were growing on the sides began to take shape, tiny muscular legs coming out of there, slowly lengthening.

He took his hands to his face, his nose also increased in size, it became round as a thick moustache grew under, he felt a tug in his ears as they lengthened, filling himself with the same hair that grew up to what could be called his waist, Following the upward path the torso continued to change, not with hair, it was the skin that paled losing its color, being slowly replaced by a whiter tone.

Suddenly his weight was too much to carry and he sat down, the hindquarters of a horse, though with human feet, were too heavy to bear without being used to them, sitting in despair he finished the rest of his transformation.

His T-shirt barely covered half of his huge belly, the bulging pectorals and the fat but strong arms contributed to him being squeezed by the clothes of a smaller adult, the vest had also become a useless accessory, The only thing that had remained apparently intact was the hat he was wearing over his head. He now looked exactly like Officer Colt Bronco on Barley's clothes. Below, majestic as a horse, above an obese middle-aged man, there was no longer any trace of the blue of his former skin.

Making an enormous effort he rose, and walked clumsily toward Guiniver away from the place. The results were definitely not what he was looking for although he had changed his physique, and not only with a simple disguise spell, his mind remained the

same, it would be very difficult for him to get home and explain it. Luckily the spells he used to cast with his brother were not permanent, he would have to wait a couple of hours to return to normal, although he did not know that this time things would turn out somewhat different...