

Expanding Horizons: Enchanted Chapter 11

Desperate to find any information about Minerva's whereabouts, Eris and Tria fall for the whispered promises of a local soothsayer, who brings a troubling message from her crystal ball.

“Minerva!!!”

Eris raced down the alley. At Tria's direction, she dove around a corner to face the dark back streets of Lhystra. Shadows jumped from every nook and cranny. The scholar wasn't about to let her trepidation stop her, even as the area grew thick with beggars and the less-fortunate.

“Hey! Stop!!” Eris yelled at an escaping man. Minerva could be seen struggling over his shoulder. It was shocking how fast he could run given his age and load.

Tria flitted ahead in pursuit. *“Come back! She still hasn't given me my--Oof!!”*

An annoyed hand of a passerby swatted Tria from their face. The stricken fairy fell to the ground in a puff of light. Eris caught up in an instant to take her in her hands. Upon standing back up, however, she found no sign of Minerva or her captor among the throngs of people. The alley diverged into a handful of directions.

“Where did they go?! I can't see her!”

They were lost in the crowd. Eris wasn't even certain she could find her own way back to the main road.

“What's he going to do to her?” Tria whispered.

Eris chewed on her lip and stashed the fairy in the front of her dress for safe keeping. “I don't know... But we can't stop looking. Someone has to have seen her.”

The two began their search of the alleys. Hours passed of them poking their heads into seedy-looking taverns and black-market dealings. Many passersby were questioned, but none knew or had seen anything helpful. Many recommended the famed brothel when Eris mentioned they were looking for an extremely busty girl.

The sun was setting after a day of fruitless searching. Dismayed, Eris approached a lively tavern. At this point she was grasping for straws. Short of hiring a sorcerer for help, she was out of ideas.

The tavern door opened to a sea of boisterous yells and laughter. Tria shrank into Eris's cleavage and used her breasts to help muffle the noise. “It's so loud in here...”

“Hopefully we won't be long.”

All inquiries proved useless. Their future was bleak and unknown. Minerva could have been taken out of Lhystra for all they knew. Eris was stranded with no funds and no transportation. She was aimless without Minerva at her side.

Tria glanced up at her ride. “Now what...?”

“Now...” Eris sighed. “Now we buy a drink and then run before we have to pay.”

Approaching the table, Eris ordered a tankard of mead. Despair caused her to lift it clumsily to her mouth and spill several streams down her front.

“Hey!” Tria shrieked, drenched in Eris’s wet cleavage.

“Sorry... I just feel lost. I don’t know what to do. How are we supposed to find her?!”

“Hic!” The fairy squeaked from her small dose of alcohol. “*I could fly through everyone’s houses while they sleep! And look for the scent of her milk!*”

“Maybe... Lhystra is massive, though. We might as well run around screaming about how thirsty we are for milk and hope she blows out someone’s wall. That could take weeks before we even--*Cut it out!*”

Tria drunkenly snapped her hand away from Eris’s nipple. “Sorry!”

Eris sighed and righted her dress from the fairy’s alcoholic playfulness. “Let’s get out of here. You can’t hold your booze and I don’t really feel like drinking.” She made for the door before the bartender could notice her leaving.

“Ye lookin’ for someone, girl?”

A craggy old voice caught their attention. Eris turned to see a woman at the end of the bar motioning towards them. “Yea, our friend was taken...”

The woman’s eyes sparkled. “Madame Shirley can find her! They say no amount of walls can stop her vision!”

“Madame Shirley?”

“A soothsayer! Her shop is in Dremor alley! She’ll help you! For a price...”

Eris was cautious but didn’t want to discount any assistance. “Where is the alley?”

“South on the main road and left at the butcher’s shop!”

“Thank you. We’ll go there right now.”

They left in a hurry. Under the setting sun, Eris didn’t dare waste a minute if the shop were closing soon. There was no telling what may happen to Minerva if she spent the night in someone else’s clutches.

“We’re going to Madame Shirley’s?” Tria hiccuped as cool wind rushed around her face. Eris’s cleavage was more than enough to keep her warm.

“We don’t have a choice! We’ve tried everything else, and the city’s guard won’t give us the time of day.”

Following the woman’s directions, Eris ran down a lantern-lit street until she found the darkened windows of a butcher’s shop. A quick left turn placed her in a street of oddities and strange wares. Down the way she could see a sign reading *Soothsayer: Fortunes and Fates*.

Candles burned in the window but the interior was dark.

Tria nestled deeper into Eris’s bust. “Is it closed?”

The scholar tried the handle. A bell chimed when the door swung open.

“Hello...?”

Light was dim and dark tapestries hung from the ceiling. In the center of the room sat a circular table surrounded by drapes. A woman sat at the table gasping for air. A bead of sweat fell from her nose.

“*Oh dammit!*” Eris swore. “*You’re just the same woman we saw at the tavern!*” She turned to leave.

“No! Wait!” the woman beckoned.

Eris couldn't believe the woman's trickery. “You just told us to come to your own business!!”

“Yes, I am Madame Shirley! I can help ye!” Still trying to catch her breath, she insisted that Eris stay. “I just needed my crystal ball!”

Uncertain, Eris stared ahead.

“Please, please! Ye and your fairy companion, come sit! Let me find yer missing friend.”

“But we have no money...”

“Money is not the only thing of value. Madame Shirley shall tell ye what she desires as payment. Now come.”

Eris knew her back was against a wall. If it would help them find Minerva, then it was worth it. She sat at the table and the drapes closed around them, throwing the trio into darkness.

“Now tell Madame Shirley whom ye seek.”

“Her name is Minerva. She was taken by some older man. A mercenary, I think.”

“Is there anything special about her? Something unique?”

Eris stammered and averted her eyes. “Uhh... Well, she kind of--”

“*SHE MAKES MOUNTAINS OF MILK!!!*”

“Tria, shh!!”

“What??” the fairy shrugged. “She does!”

Eris looked up to meet the soothsayer's eyes. “It's true... She kind of has this problem where she lactates if you say you're thirsty.”

“Interesting... But Madame Shirley does not judge! Instead she will ask to see this gift in person.”

“Excuse me?”

“I wish to see this girl's bountiful bosom! Breast milk can be quite healthy! Especially for an old woman. That shall be yer payment to me.” The woman leaned forward and waggled a bony finger. “And Madame Shirley always gets her payment.”

Eris didn't like making a commitment for Minerva, but she saw no other way to continue. “Very well. When we find her, I'll make sure she comes back to show you.”

“Wonderful. Now let me gaze into the void.”

The old woman placed her hands around a crystal orb. Closing her eyes, she brought a dull glow to the ornament. The room became engulfed with a cloudy darkness. Eris had read about soothsayers, though she'd never experienced one at work. The experience was enough to send a chill down her spine.

“Ahh... Yes...” Madame Shirley cackled. Her eyes glowed a dull silver to match her hair. “There is a prison... I see a horse and a bull. Fountains bound in shackles!”

Eris raised an eyebrow. “Horse and bull...?”

“Are there any cows??” Tria gasped, always thirsty.

“Shh.”

Madame Shirley continued and tilted her head back. “A dragon is trapped. She’s in need of relief...and pregnant with anger.”

Eris frowned. This wasn’t leading anywhere useful. “Minerva isn’t pregnant. Not that I know of, anyway...”

FWOOSH!

Madame Shirley’s eyes widened in surprise and ushered a rush of dense darkness around the table. “*Ye... Ye must not continue this quest!*”

More chills raced down Eris’s back as her neck hair stood on end.

“Return home!! Before ye meet your doom!! This path leads only to yer demise!!”

Tria shifted in Eris’s dress as she leaned into a breast for support. “I don’t like this...”

Above them, a clouded vision faded into view. Eris, bloody and limp, lay lifeless in someone’s arms.

“Only death awaits!!”

The room delved deeper into inky darkness. Eris couldn’t take her eyes off the cloudy vision.

“Doom!!! Doom will come to ye!!!”

“S-Stop it!!” Eris yelled in horror. She pushed away from the table to send her chair clattering to the floor. Dense clouds grabbed at her as she sought the exit.

“DEATH LIES AHEAD!!”

Even as she fell into the street and ran from the soothsayer’s shop, Eris could still hear Madame Shirley’s voice.

“Ye must not continue!! Return home, young scholar!! Before it is too late!!!”

(.Y.) (.Y.) (.Y.) (.Y.) (.Y.)

What does Eris do?