

## The mage will rue this day

Jet awoke to the birds whimsical, joy-filled songs beyond his window; the morning sun creeping through partially drawn curtains, scarcely illuminating the quaint inn room.. A faint draft slithered its way into the room as it seeped through the failing seal of the window ledge, carrying with it the indistinct scent of spent incense sticks and a fragrant blend of luxurious oils and perfumes, elegantly dancing and intertwining on the bitter draft that permeated the room.

Rubbing the last remnants of stubborn sleep from the corner of his eyes, Jet stifled a yawn as he sat up from his relaxed position. Through groggy vision, he looked over the expanse of the room he had found himself in for the night. When he entered the room, it was shrouded in darkness, leaving its contents a mystery. However, with the aid of the morning sun, he could finally lay his eyes on its interior. It was decorated most tastefully, with extra attention paid to ensuring a warm and inviting vibe. The room's walls were coated in shades of deep red, and the furniture was made of the finest quality materials, further adorned in red with gold accents along the frame, adding to the overall grandeur of the room—a standard reserved only for those of nobility or high status.

Jet remained nestled into the impression his tiny frame made on the plush, white, feather-filled pillow, which yielded under the light pressure, melding to his form like the softest of memory mattresses. The pillow Jet currently resided on lay perched at an angle, resting against the stern, grandiose wooden headboard high above the thick woolen blankets, enveloping Jet in a warm embrace from all sides, offering ample warmth to see him through the night, especially at his reduced size.

Having had one of the best night's sleep in a good while, Jet unfortunately had to cut the basking in the afterglow of a restful sleep short. He needed to make a swift exit from the room and the inn itself as the sound of the innkeeper's bass-filled voice resonated throughout the room, marking the beginning of his rounds and the possibility of him intruding into the room he had not paid to stay in.

You see, Jet was a sly and cunning adventurer. He had 'borrowed' a set of potions from a friend who happened to be an apothecarist in training. The effects? Shrinking. One small vial of the most foul, bitter liquid Jet had ever tasted was enough to last him for a minimum of a month, and a mere sip of the potent concoction was enough to shrink him for at least a week. The shrinking potion, however, indeed proved most versatile with uses when out adventuring one example; the need to secure a place to stay for the night, especially if he was lacking the coin required. The reduced size afforded Jet the ability to act as if he were a meek mouse, sneaking his way into places he shouldn't by fitting through cracks under doors or slithering through windows with relative ease—much like the room he currently resided in. A top-notch inn room like this would cost upwards of 700 gold a night, and all it cost Jet was a sip of his potion and some deft sneaking under the door, remaining out of sight.

Disembarking from the warm confines of the pillow, Jet slid down the soft fabric and landed with a delicate plop onto the undisturbed and tightly tucked-in sheets below. Briefly collecting himself and taking the time to limber up his loose muscles, his joints popping and creaking in agreement as he stretched high into the air. Satisfied and feeling invigorated, he began his trek for the edge of the bed, lazily trudging across the expanse of soft fabric.

As he walked along the edge of the bed, the deer's eyes scanned the lengths furiously. He was looking for one thing in particular—his discarded travel sack. He had wisely left it in place as a key marking spot to indicate his way off of the bed. It didn't take him long to come across his discarded pack; it lay there next to the grappling hook he had used to ascend the side of the bed, the four sharp blades of the hook remaining embedded firmly in the fabric of the thick duvet. Reaching down and tugging his travel pack up and over, a yawn escaped his lips. The thought of sipping on a rich coffee rushed through the deer's mind as he pondered his next course of action after leaving the room. Some exquisite coffee and a sizable breakfast seemed like a good start to the day.

Before beginning his descent, Jet took hold of the rope, giving it a few firm tugs to test its slack, lest he take an unexpected plunge to the floor below. It seemed to hold steadfast, with the hook showing

no signs of coming loose. Satisfied, he could begin his venture down to the floor. Uneasily, he lowered himself downwards over the edge of the bed the rope tied around his waist line as he began his climb. The firm mattress below his feet allowed him to speed up his advance, enabling him to leap and bound downward, the soft cushioning of the mattress offering ample impact absorption.

Touching down on the soft carpet, Jet breathed a deep sigh; that was the hardest part over and done with. Now, all he needed to do was slip under the door, drink the second potion, and he could be on his merry way. With a few rough tugs and flicks, the grapple loosened its grasp on the fibers of the duvet above, coming loose and falling into a pile atop the coiled rope. Swooping in and picking up the sharp instrument, Jet carefully placed the protective tips on the ends of the hook and stashed it away back into his travel pack.

Jet set his sights on the solid wooden door, which stood but a short trek away from him. It would take no time at all for him to reach it, even at his size, so off he set. As he strode across the fibers of the carpet, he couldn't help but notice that it was kept immaculately clean—free of any bits of detritus and devoid of stains or blemishes—as if the utmost care was taken in cleaning the floor and rugs, not to mention the quality of the strands used to weave the carpet being of the highest caliber.

Reaching the door, he laid a hand on it, taking a brief pause to listen for any sign of foot traffic. Lest he walk out and unwittingly be mistaken for a bug, and end up being stomped flat on the spot. Not hearing anything, uncertainty still plagued him, nagging at him to wait. So, he leaned in closer, resting his head against the solid wood, just like before. Silence.

Taking his head from the wooden door, Jet slipped off his travel pack, letting the bag fall to the ground, making a ruckus as it hit the cold, hard floor. Positioning the beige bag between the small gap between the wooden door and the floor, just like he had done the night prior, he used a foot to push it through the tight space, giving it quite the vigorous push to inevitably get it through after it seemed to not want to go through. With his bag now on the other side, it was his turn to slip under. Laying down and opting to crawl under on his stomach, Jet dexterously wormed his way through the tight space with surprising ease. It was very different compared to the first time he did it, as if his body became fluid, effortlessly slipping under the door.

Jet, upon reaching the other side of the door, clamored to his feet. It didn't occur to him to think too heavily about why it was easier for him to slip under the door compared to the night before. His thoughts instead drifted to envisioning a warm mug of coffee and a large, tasty cooked breakfast that was soon to be his.

Before Jet could even take a step, the thunderous sounds of footsteps swiftly making their approach fell upon the deer's ears. Thinking quickly on his feet, he pressed himself tightly against the door behind him, trying not to draw any attention to himself. Instinctively holding his breath, he watched on. The rhythmic, bass-filled strides of an unseen person escalated further until the pair of monsters made from leather and rubber made their appearance. The pair of boots didn't slow their stride even for a moment as the floor quaked with the passing steps of the oblivious giant. Jet remained plastered to the door, watching as the hulking boots made their swift entrance then exit, the floor itself announcing their departure as the person gained distance from the deer.

Jet released the breath he was clutching onto instinctively, sucking in as much air as he could muster trying to get his breathing back under control. That was too close; he needed to grow back... now. Walking over to his pack that lay next to the door, he knelt down, unclasping the bindings that fastened it shut. He rummaged through its contents, looking for the second of the potions he had packed.

This potion was almost like a cure; it nullified the effects of the shrinking and brought the person back to their normal height. The potions themselves were brewed by a mage in training and a close friend of Jet's who... isn't too fond of the deer raiding his potion cache. But that's what friends do, right?

"Where is that potion? It's gotta be some—aha!" Jet clasped the two vials in each hand—the green potion for shrinking and red for growing. Dropping the shrinking potion back into his pack, he stood back up and put the pack back over his shoulder. The magic infused into each vial would also grow the drinker's attire and any accessories that made contact with their skin. It would be awkward, after all, running around naked and tiny, not to mention missing vital tools and equipment.

Popping the cork with a resounding GLRK, the red liquid swirled and bubbled in the vial, its luminous shade of red almost like that of a vigour potion. Holding the vial up, Jet hesitated. He'd done this multiple times and knew all too well what was to come—the vile taste, the sense of nausea, and not to mention the overpowering feeling of vertigo. Sighing into the top of the vial, "Well... bottoms up, I guess..." With that, he chugged, grimacing in anticipation of the foul taste.

But the bitter unpleasantness never came... instead, he was treated to a vivid sweetness that danced on his tastebuds, the subtle aftertaste of berries and fauna lingering in his mouth. The agreeable taste of the potion was most unexpected; he smacked his lips, savouring the saccharine taste. As he stood there, he awaited the effects of the growth to kick in; if memory served, they were spontaneous after taking a sip of the potion and should kick in any moment now...

As every second passed, Jet felt his heart rate begin to fluctuate, and a cold sweat enveloped his entire body. He was supposed to have started growing... something was so very wrong. He yearned for the stomach-churning nausea, begging for the sense of vertigo to overtake him... but alas, there was nothing.

Popping the lid off the vial of growth formula once more, he took a curious whiff of its contents. It yielded nothing out of the ordinary—no unpleasant odor, no sweet scent, nothing. It didn't make any sense; he followed the mage's instructions and only sipped the shrinking potion, not a drop more...

That's when Jet noticed it. On the side of the bottle, a folded piece of parchment weakly hung by light adhesive, stuck to the vial, easily pried off by a slight tug. How did he miss this, he thought... Pinching the folded paper between his thumb and forefinger, he pocketed the vial of "growth formula" before proceeding to unfold the parchment. His eyes furiously scanning its contents, his brow furrowing as he did so.

*"Hey Jet!*

*You may be wondering to yourself: 'why am I not growing right about now.' Well! the answer is quite simple... that was not, in fact, a growth potion... but fear not, I wouldn't poison you... too badly. That was a durability potion, something new I'm testing! And what better way to test it than a spot of field testing! Thank you for volunteering yourself for my test! You should 'mostly' be indestructible... don't get eaten though! Not sure how well it would fare against stomach acid if you somehow unfortunately find yourself in somebody's digestive tract... or something of the like, haha.*

*Any-who... if you make it back to my study before the shrinking potion wears off, I'll happily supply you with growth formula... oh, and side note, that was my most undiluted and most potent shrinking formula to date that you took, so even a sip can leave you shrunk for, eh... a month... at least...*

*So farewell Jet and good luck, oh! and one last thing!*

*Stay. The. Fuck. Out. Of. My. Potion. Cache.*

*Chris"*

Jet watched in horror as the ink upon the parchment transformed from a snarky message into a doodled face of the mage wearing a hat, blowing him a raspberry. Scrunching the parchment up in retaliation, he clenched his fist tightly into a ball, gritting his teeth. Chris was so dead when he got his hands on him.

How on earth was he going to make it back to Chris's study at this size... it would take him weeks... no, months... his blood furiously pumping through his veins, now more akin to fire coursing through them, a stern scowl etched across his face.

Venturing forth, he began to ponder on what to do. There was no possible way he could reach Windshade on foot. He was going to have to enlist some aid, possibly part with what little coin he had to have them transport him safely.

Jet darted from wall to wall, hugging them to remain unseen. He did not want to be found just yet, as he doubted he could explain what he was doing upstairs without having paid to rent a room or, even worse, be snatched into a room for who knows what unspeakable things.

Coming to the edge of the stairs leading down to the entrance of the inn, he peered down them at the vast amount of people coming and going. Fortunately for the small deer, there was a distinct lack of people actually going up and down the stairs. Figuring his best course of action would be sticking to the sides of the stairs avoiding the center area, he took the first leap down without stopping to reconsider, his first step, not wanting to waste time.

Descending the stairs with agile hops, Jet reached the entryway of the inn. However, he dared not dawdle there. With a steady flow of people coming and going, the risk of being spotted was too high. Sticking to the shadows, he navigated the hallway, moving slowly and methodically. He halted his advance whenever people arrived inside the inn, careful not to draw attention to his movements.

Jet arrived at the bustling bar, taking a moment at the doorway to survey the large, open tavern. The room was well illuminated by proud hanging chandeliers, sturdy wooden tables placed around sparingly, providing ample room to navigate the hardwood floor. The air was thick with the stench of food, smoke, and copious amounts of mead. Slinking into the bar as the flow of foot traffic seemed to alleviate for a brief moment, he sought some cover and found impromptu shelter under an unoccupied table, watching the many pairs of shoes and boots pass by.

The raucous chatter among the many patrons drowned out everything else, making it hard for Jet to even think. Doing his best, Jet listened intently, trying to pick up any useful information that might guide his next move. All the while, his eyes scanned the many pairs of legs occupying the stools of the bar, ruminating over his next course of action.

Jet's train of thought was completely derailed by the ear-piercing shriek of wood scraping on wood as a chair right beside him was pulled out from beneath the table, giving him an up-close experience of the equivalent of nails on a chalkboard. Backing away and taking cover behind the sturdy leg of the table, he watched as a blue robe draped over the chair and a pair of boots came rushing towards him as the seat's occupant took a seat. The pair of boots rested idly one over the other as the owner reclined leisurely.

Breathing a deep sigh, Jet continued his scouting of the bar, paying no heed to the human whose boots now rested idly under the table. The raucous chatter and the clinking of mugs provided a chaotic symphony making it troublesome as Jet continued his search for any conversation or information that could aid him in his predicament.

The ground beneath Jet's feet shook unexpectedly, a jolt of panic surging through him. An earthquake? he thought. No, impossible... people would be panicking, and sheltering under a table... Yet, another shake followed, growing in strength, as Jet struggled to maintain his balance. Gripping onto the firm wood of the table, he felt the floor shake once more. This time, even the sturdy table faintly trembled in response.

Jet's eyes widened as he laid them on the cause of the trembling floors—two monolithic monstrosities of leather and fur, making their approach directly toward his location. The occupants' strides were slow, lethargic, and heavy. The hardwood floor creaked and groaned in protest under the sheer girth of the boots' occupant.

They encroached upon Jet's position, each step sending shockwaves reverberating through the floor and up through the leg of the wooden table. His brain told him to run, flee, get away, but there was a clear disconnect as Jet's legs refused to budge. He watched on as they stopped next to the slumped human, not a word spoken between the two as a chair was pulled out beside him. The new arrival lowered their bulk onto the wooden chair that screamed in agony as the large figure settled into it. The leather monsters rested flat, firmly on the ground.

As the titanic occupant settled at the table, taking up a vast amount of Jet's free space, he was forced to bide his time and lay in wait for the opportune moment when the two giants began to chat. As the conversation between the two picked up, it was the perfect time for Jet to seize the opportunity and get out from under the table. He moved swiftly and dexterously, avoiding the predicted path of the burly giant's movement, taking a wide exit to account for any ill-fated misstep or unforeseen movement of the brute.

"Hey, Danathius, yer rested, right? We need to hit Windshade by nightfall." Jet froze mid-stride, now hanging onto every word uttered by the deepest voice he had ever heard, trying to eavesdrop on their conversation. "Do you have all of your stuff ready to go?"

Realizing he was just standing out in the open in the middle of the floor, Jet hastily retreated to his prior position, scurrying back into place behind the table leg. "Yes, Kherrox, I have made adequate preparation," the voice of the brute's companion spoke, his tone relaxed and dripping with both confidence and poise. "We can set off at once. I will retrieve my things." With that, he got up from his slumped position, treating Jet to that awful sound of nails on a chalkboard once again as he pushed his chair in. Wincing and clutching his ears, he watched the human begin making his exit.

So the mountain with legs was named Kherrox, Jet thought to himself, looking the red-skinned mass of muscles up and down as he remained seated at the table...

"Oh, by the way, I'll need a rub down later. You know how my stompers get after walkin' around all day, harhar." Jet might not have been able to see it from his position, but he could hear the clear smirk sitting upon the giant's face, his smugness clinging heavily to every word spoken. It appeared however to hit home with his small companion as he sped up his exit, disappearing in the blink of an eye, leaving Jet and the brute alone at the table.

Walking out from behind the table leg, Jet stepped into the open, getting his first look at the behemoth. He appeared to be some kind of hulking musclebound dragon with red coloured skin, broad in every essence of the word. Scantily clad, lacking any real clothing—not like any could possibly accommodate his bulk, leaving nothing to the imagination regarding the actuality of his girth.

A simple leather-like strap wrapped around his well-defined pectorals and muscled torso, with a tuft of fur upon the shoulder, seemingly offering no real protection for the mighty dragon and possibly just for utility to strap things to. His sturdy legs, hardened from many years of adventuring, lay bare, and a modest-furred pair of short-like garments covered the red dragon's lower half, obscuring his nether regions, as he would not be permitted to walk around exposing it all for the world to see. However, the shorts did little to hide his prideful bulge, protruding unassumingly, leaving little to the imagination.

Then comes the thing that Jet had laid his eyes on first—his boots. The definition of huge, a pair made of dense high-grade leather adorned with patches of fur, his thick calves barely able to be contained by the sturdy pair of footwear, threatening to tear them asunder with a minor ripple or simple display of their might. The width of the dragon's wide foot strained the leather as they attempted to contain the sizeable paw inside their confines.

It was all well and good with Jet being able to see his unsuspecting travel companions, but the one thing Jet saw a distinct lack of was places where the shrunk deer could stow away. The dragon was

barely wearing any clothing and was not transporting anything he could hide among the contents of. Jet was stumped. Maybe he could wait for the human to return, he thought, but there was no guarantee he'd take a seat to the table again or even present an opportunity for Jet to climb his attire or stash away in his pack.

The pressure was mounting for Jet. The realization of what lay ahead hit him like a ton of bricks dropping on his head. As his gaze shifted to the dragon's boots, a sinking feeling formed in his stomach. Was he seriously contemplating this? But it seemed he had little choice. He had to make it to Windshade to reclaim his height, and if hitching a ride inside one of those monsters made of leather and fur was the only way, then so be it...

Taking slow, reluctant steps, Jet left the safety the cover the table provided and made his approach towards the dragon's boots. The layers of mud, dirt, and seemingly dried blood encasing the sides of the boots spoke of triumphs over hard-fought battles and many miles traversed on foot.

Being this close to the mighty warrior's boots, the gravity of the situation grew heavier with each passing second. Jet's heart raced, and his palms grew clammy. He reached a shaky hand out and touched the boot. Making contact with the beast really hammered home the point that this was not some fever dream, and he was indeed going to find a way inside that boot...

Looking at the grizzled and muscled calf that the boot wrapped itself around, Jet discerned there was no way he could slip inside, as the snugness of the fit was apparent even from this position. Then, an idea sprung to mind, a deep exasperated sigh escaping from his lips. It was only for a day, and the dragon had to remove his boots sometime tonight... right? Doing his best to muster the courage and ensnare his fleeting determination, Jet considered the risky plan ahead.

Walking to the side of the boot with purpose in his steps, Jet stopped next to the boot and drew his dagger. Staring at the pointed weapon for a few seconds before using all the might he could muster, not taking time to dilly-dally, he pierced the boot with a strong stab. The dagger penetrated the leather with ease, not to Jet's surprise, for his trusty dagger had torn into the backs of heavy plate armor like a hot knife through butter countless times. Dragging the dagger downwards, he cut through the tough leather with relative ease, taking care not to do it too abruptly not wanting to draw unwanted attention from the looming titan.

Jet took an instinctual step back as humid, muggy air rushed out from the slashed boot's confines. It poured forth like a volcanic vent, letting out air hot enough to cook food upon. The stench erupting from the depths of the warm boot was fiercely potent—a heavy odor of a warrior, strong, masculine, and powerful. Jet wrinkled his nose in response as the odor overpowered his sense of smell and clung to his sinuses. It was indeed most potent, but strangely not unpleasant. It was as if the hormonal stench mixed with pheromones, entrancing the deer with a smell he never anticipated to find even remotely bearable.

Fighting past the constant stream of humid air and taking his first look into the confines of the boot, squinting, Jet could not really make out anything that awaited him on the inside, as the depths lay enshrouded in overpowering darkness. Uncertainty filled his brain as he was unsure whether it was a good thing that he did not know the true experience that awaited him on the inside of the boot.

Walking forward once more, Jet got his first glimpse of the dragon's paw through the slit he had created. The low light refracted off the sheen on the sweat-coated red and cream skin. It was going to be a snug fit in that boot indeed, but he had no other choice...

Clumsily clambering into the opening he made in the monstrosity of leather and fur, the air itself was heavy, dense, thick. Jet had to endure; this was just minor discomfort... it was going to be fine, he tried to reassure himself. Stepping foot on the insole, he stumbled, struggling to stay upright. It was slick, slippery, offering Jet very little purchase or grip on the surface. The urge to dive back through the slit rushed to his mind, but he had to dig in—it was only for a little while...

Taking hold of his dagger, he whispered words to the instrument—a simple spell which would suffice for the current predicament he was in: mending. Bringing the now glowing dagger forth, he traced the incision he made, the fibers of the leather instantly responding, dancing along to an inaudible tune, following the dagger and closing the hole. In the act, entrapping the deer inside the boot. Light gradually disappeared with each passing second as the dagger did its job of sealing off the outside world.

Finding himself now in pitch-black darkness, except for the stray light that went around the hilt of his dagger, Jet went to pull it free from the leather. To Jet's horror, it was stuck. The fibers of the leather had enveloped his blade, its point protruding from the boot, the hilt trapped inside like a handle on the wall. Panic enveloped Jet; he was now trapped, unable to cut himself free. Frantically, he began tugging with all his might, trying to pry the tool of his own freedom out of the embrace of the leather fibers. However hard he tugged, it would not budge.

The heat inside the boot was quickly becoming sweltering. The small hole left by the blade offered no way for the heat to escape, thus only naturally it began building up. Jet was now slick with sweat, unsure if it were his own or the red dragon's; regardless, he was coated in the salty substance from head to toe.

One final tug on the stuck dagger had the hilt slip free from his grasp, sending Jet flinging backward to land with a wet squelch as he collided with the warm flesh of the dragon. Jet froze, taking slow breaths of the humid air that remained hard to breathe in.

Agonizing seconds passed with Jet holding his breath, hoping the dragon didn't feel him making contact with the side of his foot. The colossal paw didn't stir at his touch the dragon remaining oblivious, affording Jet to breathe a sigh of relief.

Now that Jet was actually inside the boot, the foolishness of his plan hit him. There was nothing to protect him, nothing to clasp onto. He was going to be thrown around like an insistent pebble or, worse, end up pinned under that immense expanse of the dragon's paw. The worst part of it all... there was no going back, as his only means of escape was also lost; he was unable to pry his dagger free, no matter how hard he tried.

Jet began trying to think rationally about what to do in his now dire situation, but alas, an intense, lingering sense of lightheadedness plagued his subconscious. The intoxicating smell of the dragon's paws lay heavy in the air, consuming Jet's mind and swaying his thoughts, not to mention the heat radiating from the immense brute's body, feeling as if it were hot enough to cook Jet in the confines of the boot. It was this bad, and the dragon had yet to move from the table he was sat at.

Slinking around the expanse of the paw in the dark confines of the boot, Jet felt around above his head, looking for a fold in the leather, a loose piece of fur, or even a loose strand—anything that he could clutch onto for leverage during the arduous journey that was in store for him.

Jet found nothing after traversing the entire interior of the boot; unfortunately for Jet, it was perfectly sealed and airtight. The smell of the hardy dragon's feet was the only thing he found inside the boot, hanging like a dense smog, radiating from the practically smoldering paws.

Jet was at the toe of the boot when his luck had run its course. His world suddenly shifted, the boots front being tilted upwards, off the ground. Reaching his arms out for anything, he already knew wasn't there; gravity wrapped its unforgiving arms around Jet and began to tug. The insole below offered little grip as he felt himself slide backwards.

Trying to prevent the seemingly inescapable fate of heading straight for the crevice between one of the dragon's plump, bulbous toes, Jet tried to scramble back towards the toe area of the boot, hoping to wedge himself on anything to prevent falling between or under those toes. But inevitably, his frantic and panic-riddled movements would be his downfall, as he felt himself fall. In mere moments,

he had gone from unbridled confidence he could make it through this ordeal to gravely regretting everything, his naivety being his hubris.

Jet landed with a dull squelch on the moist, sweat-laden insole. The taste of the warm, salty fluid forced its way into his mouth and up his nose, causing him to cough and splutter. His body started its descent, sliding downward across the slick surface, directly toward the flesh of the sole. The dragon's toes elevated, as if waiting and mockingly welcoming his insignificant body beneath. Of course, on the outside of the boot, it was merely Kherrox repositioning his foot, choosing to rest it on his heel, all the while unknowingly toying with the tiny deer who foolishly entered his boot. Desperation fueled Jet's movements as he reached, clawed, and scratched at the insole's imprint for something, anything, he could latch onto and pull himself away, but he knew all too well he was in a dire situation.

Jet couldn't see a thing, but he knew what was happening. He felt his body collide with the warmth of the dragon's flesh—a firm collision with the sole. Not daring to waste a vital second, he began crawling, dragging himself across the insole to get out from under the paw that loomed overhead, hoping the dragon did not feel his body making contact.

Unfortunately, this impact upon the supple flesh of the sole did not go unnoticed as Jet had hoped. Before he could make it out from beneath the foot, he felt the world shift once more, and the foot came down atop him unceremoniously flattening him. First, his legs were pinned, then his lower back, and then his torso—the moist flesh enveloping his form, smothering him. The soft insole yielded to Jet's form, the idle weight of the dragon more than enough to firmly press him down into the insole below, which welcomed his minuscule form with open arms, offering him purchase into the squishy, begrimed surface.

Jet's arms flailed from under the paw, the only thing he was presently able to move freely, his body firmly pinned and forced to fill his lungs with the most potent of the dragon's foot musk with every inhale, practically singing his lung. Ultimately, unbeknownst to Jet, his flailing had dire consequences as it only served to irritate the colossus, stirring a troublesome itch. The weight of the dragon increased tenfold atop Jet, the three-toed foot bearing its full weight and easily flattening his form entirely as he became two-dimensional—his organs, his body thinner than paper. The potion he had ingested earlier was working its magic as he became pliable and stuck to the dragon's sole.

The immense paw of the dragon shifted from left to right, toes flexing idly as he absentmindedly ground Jet into the insole below, giving him a faceful of year-old foot-sweat and a taste of his sole. Kherrox was too focused on snuffing out the irksome itch to even consider the possibility that he might be torturing a shrunken adventurer underfoot, as it was normally only Danathius who found himself under his paws.

After an agonizing minute of grinding, it finally ceased. The dragon had satisfactorily suppressed the itch that plagued his sole. Jet, on the other hand, was now nothing more than a discombobulated smear on the dragon's supple paw. His form resembled a sticker, his body shifting and twisting in unnatural ways with every minor flex, contort, or wrinkle that rippled on the dragon's flesh as he carelessly flexed and splayed his toes.

His senses were overwhelmed by the warm flesh and the salty taste of the dragon's sweat – the only things he came to know in his current state. Yet, to Jet's fortune or misfortune, he was completely unharmed. His body functioned as if he were perfectly normal, experiencing no pain whatsoever. Of course, there was discomfort, more akin to the worst friction burns of his life. His body went from solid to flat in seconds with every lift and fall of the dragon's foot, Kherrox idly tapping his toes, inadvertently shifting the tiny deer between and under each of the bulbous digits giving him a taste of every inch of his broad sweaty foot.

During his turmoil at the foot of the oblivious barbarian, Jet couldn't help but think that the potion's effects were surprisingly effective, for which Jet was rather grateful. But Chris was going to pay for the hell Jet was currently experiencing...

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After lounging at the table for what felt like an eternity, unknowingly toying with the tiny deer below, eventually, the time came, and the dragon was rejoined by his small traveling companion. The pair finally disembarked from the inn and onto their trek for Windshade. Of course, unbeknownst to the pair, they were bringing along a small tagalong sealed in the confines of Kherrox's boot. Every step Kherrox took was a little more cushioned, thanks to the constant reforming and flattening of the deer brave enough to hitch a ride.

Jet, on the other hand, was experiencing a cruel and unusual torture at the hands of the oblivious dragon on the grueling venture. His own brain hurled insults at himself for not coughing up the coin and paying to be carried in a pocket. Under the sole of the dragon, he held onto the hope that his human companion would find him on the brute's promised rubdown, potentially plastered to his sole. A fire of pure rage burned inside Jet, thinking of all the things he intended to do to get revenge on that stupid, large hat-wearing mage...