

Lab Assistant

A Story in Arvos

by Cerine Hero

The marten sat perfectly still on the edge of the table, her dark, shaggy tail wagging anxiously behind her. There were a lot of eyes around her right now, which grated against her secretive nature. But she clasped her paws together between her knees and bore it. She understood why everyone was confused, at least in theory. In short, they were all skeptical of her “gift.” Even if she claimed she was fine, the others had no real reason to *believe* her. So she played nice. To a point.

“I don't see a thing,” Gray grumbled. He was exasperated as he let go of Mito's head. The half-canin, half-catfolk priest had checked all over the marten's skull, parting her fur with his thumbs to inspect her skin.

“I told you,” Mito replied, turning her blue-and-green eyes towards him to offer a flat stare.

The acolyte shook his head. “There's nothing there. No skull fracture, no signs of internal trauma, there isn't even a bruise. This is absolutely not what I witnessed yesterday afternoon.”

Cerine was standing nearby, one arm wrapped across her chest and propping up her other elbow while she held her chin in thought. Behind her, Zaress held up one of the walls, her hands on her hips. The drake watched with mild interest, but mostly she was waiting for breakfast to be ready. On the opposite side of the dining hall was a long bar with wooden stools, and an older mare with braided, graying hair was preparing food.

“So is this the stray you picked up?” the unguled asked, peering over at the rest of the group while she fried some meat. Mito's brow furrowed, but Cerine spoke up before she did.

“Hey! Who's going around saying that?” The vixen turned and looked at Zaress, who shrugged. Rolling her eyes, Cerine looked to Gray and took a step closer towards the table. She relaxed her shoulders and asked the priest, “So you didn't heal her?”

“I literally explained thi-”

“Cerine,” Gray answered, speaking over the marten, “if I did, you know arbitrators would have kicked the doors down already. It would trip the scrying wards immediately. So no, I didn't.” He gestured towards Mito's head and then pulled his fingers back smoothly when she nipped the air in front of them. “But nothing short of healing magic could have done this. And it's well beyond the capability of one of your rejuvenation potions.”

The vixen nodded, slowly swaying her tail down by her ankles. Mito turned to look at her and tilted her head.

“Are we done?” she asked. “I didn't know you guys were going to make a whole surgeon's office out of this...”

“I'm sorry,” Cerine replied, dropping her arms to her sides. “We're just trying to... understand. And eliminate any other possible explanations. We've never heard of anyone with a gift like yours before. And we're a bit of a naturally wary group.”

The mare whinnied as she set a couple plates laden with food on the bar. “If that was so, then you shouldn't be bringing strangers here, should you? No matter, what's done is done, and I won't turn away a hungry belly. Come here, stray. Ms. Sarelna will fatten you up.”

Mito's spine straightened and she leaned to look around Gray at the plates of food on the bar. Hopping down from the table, the marten trotted over to the bar and claimed one of the wooden stools. Sarelna whickered softly and placed a plate with some bacon, scrambled eggs, and fruit pieces in front of her. Mismatched eyes went wide and she sniffed deeply. *A meal!*

Sarelna planted her hands on the bar and leaned forward, looking Mito over from ear to tail while she dug in. The older horse was powerfully-built, if somewhat soft with age, and the marten's eyes were drawn to her hefty arms. Indistinct, blue-ish tattoos were inked into her white fur around her biceps, but with her coat somewhat grown out, the shapes were too blurry to read very well.

“Too thin,” Sarelma said, shaking her head. “Looks like I’ll be putting meat on you and the fox both.”

“Good luck with that, apparently,” Cerine replied, taking the stool beside Mito. The marten glanced in her direction around a mouthful of bacon. “She says you can’t.”

“I will take that bet,” Sarelma replied, scooping more eggs and placing a biscuit on Mito’s plate. She packed more food onto Cerine’s, as well, before handing a plate to Zaress as the drake passed by. The horse spared a particular glance at the fox. “You both need meat on your bones. I heard what you did with the minotaur. You’re lucky you didn’t get hurt just parrying that hammer.”

“I did alright!” Cerine protested, her fork in her mouth. “I mean, I wasn’t going to win, but I was doing okay.”

Sarelma grabbed Cerine’s arm in one meaty hand and squeezed. The fox’s soft muscle squished around the horse’s thumb like jelly. “You’ve gotten flabby. Too much time in your lab that you should spend exercising and training. Maybe if I *do* fatten you up into a big butterball you’ll finally get your butt in gear and start taking things more seriously.”

A red blush spread across Cerine’s face and beside her, Mito began to giggle. “Do it,” the marten told her. Sarelma put more bacon on the fox’s plate and Cerine shot a glare at the mustel beside her, looking mortified.

“You hush.”

Sarelma rattled the plate in front of her. “You eat.”

“Goddammit, I’m stuffed,” Cerine mumbled, leaning on a wall halfway across the guildhouse with Mito standing across from her. The brown-furred marten just beamed innocently at her. Cerine slid her paws underneath her tunic and rubbed her swollen belly. “You know she’s – *uurp*, ugh – good to her word, right? She’ll make me fat out of honor and *spite*.”

“How’s that any different from having a fatty potion in your bag?” Mito asked, cocking her head to one side. Her dark brown hair, hanging loose from her ponytail, drifted across her shoulders. Her hair framed her light-colored face and neck well. Cerine could follow the flow of color from the marten’s collarbone down under her top and over her ribs before it blended into her main fur. Then she realized she was gazing at her chest and blinked.

“I can’t just fission away overeating,” the fox answered. “I don’t have time to be working out or training all day. It’s honestly lucky I haven’t ballooned up already...”

Mito nudged Cerine’s paws out of the way and started rubbing her belly for her. That blush spread across the pink fox’s face again as she looked down. Smiling, the marten told her, “Well, just sneak all the extra food she gives you to me.”

“Was that your plan?”

“No... I think you’d be pretty cute fat.”

Cerine ran a paw through her hair and brushed it back, biting her lip. “Right, uhm... let’s talk about something else! Before I explode. Oh! I guess I should show you around the guildhouse a bit and get you your room and everything.”

“I want to see your lab,” Mito told her, massaging her thumbs into the fox’s tummy.

The vixen struggled to keep down a purr. “Not that I’m really minding, but changing topics included the belly rubs,” she said, taking the marten’s paws and handing them back to her. Turning, Cerine started to walk down the hallway with Mito at her side, bouncing along on the pads of her feet. “Well, let’s see here... behind us is the dining hall and the kitchen, obviously. Around us here on the first floor are the instruction rooms. We don’t use those anymore, they’re for storage. The others have converted one of them to a martial hall. Maybe Gray will show you around sometime. Upstairs are the dormitories and the offices. We stay in the instructors’ rooms, there’s more space. The students’ rooms were... well, I lived like that once. That was plenty.”

“I live in a bell tower.”

Cerine stopped and looked at her. Her brain buzzed, trying to think of how many bell towers were around the city. “Which bell tower? The Kolean temple?”

“Yep, that one.”

“Huh... the Veil didn't seal the temple up as tight as they thought, then.” Cerine rubbed her chin and kept walking. “Well, I'll let you pick out a room later tonight and you can get your things set up.”

“And what about your lab?” Mito asked her, looking up expectantly.

“We're almost there. It's on this end of the guildhouse. The building is kinda long and narrow, and they said I had to put it on the opposite end from the kitchen. Just to prevent any accidents.”

Mito stepped to a door ahead of them and tried the knob. “Is this it?”

As soon as she began to open it, there was scuttling and hissing in the dark space beyond the door. Something with red eyes came lunging towards the door, but Cerine grasped it and slammed it shut in the nick of time.

“Sorry,” she said, wiping her paws. “That's not it.”

“What... was that?”

“Rats,” Cerine answered, baring her fangs uncomfortably. “Really big rats that, uh, got into my stock of leviathan root and... well, that's why I was buying the hellscap spores.” Her face tilted upwards and she stared into the distance for a moment. “Dammit, I still forgot to get filter paper yesterday... maybe I can ask Zaress to go get some. Anyways, the lab is right over here.”

Cerine opened the door across from the first one and stepped inside. Like the vixen explained, it seemed like to be one of the guildhouse's old instructional or work rooms, converted for her use. It was a bit dim inside the lab, with tables filling the center of the space. There were glass jars and copper devices scattered around them, as well as papers laying loose in various places. It looked like it was in the middle of being used by a whole gaggle of alchemists, or just one very disorganized one. A wide bookshelf along one wall was stacked with instructional tomes and scrolls, and beside it sat a writing desk with a glow-stone lamp and a textbook laying open to a dog-eared page about body transmogrification techniques.

“You can nose around, but – probably goes without saying – don't touch,” Cerine told her with a grin. Mito nodded and clasped her paws behind her back as she began to look around. She admired swirling glass tubes full of green liquid and beakers caked with sludgy mixes waiting to be refined. The green liquid was the same color and texture as what was in the bottle she swiped the other day, so she followed the floor of the coiled tubes over to where they dribbled into a conical glass jar. About a pint of weight gain potion swirled inside the jar and Mito licked her muzzle, just imagining how much it could do...

“Double don't touch,” Cerine told her, clacking a wooden spoon on the table beside the marten's paws. “I'm replenishing my stock thanks to you.”

There were wooden shelves bolted along the opposite wall, with holes cut into them so that clay pots with thick rims could hang inside of them. Mito peered into the rows of pots, finding them all filled with bright, colored powders. They were arranged in rainbow order, with a rich, vibrant red on one end and an almost black violet on the other. “What are these? Ingredients?”

“Actually, those are pigments,” Cerine explained, walking over. “They're for adding to potions if the color is unpleasant, or making dyes for labels. I make them out of by-products from some flowers and occasionally bug shells.”

“What?!”

“It's just the shell!” the fox replied, laughing.

“What else can you dye with them?”

Cerine shrugged her shoulders. “Most stuff. If I want, I can mix them into a solution that's pretty potent. I actually used to dye my coat and hair black. It's a long story.”

Mito looked at Cerine, inspecting her arms from her paws up to her shoulder, imagining her with solid black fur instead of the pink. It was hard to fathom. “I'd love to do something like that.”

“Can you?”

The marten ran a paw through her hair and over her round ears. “Actually, yeah. My hair is the one thing that can change. It grows and I can cut it.”

The vixen nodded along as she explained. Then, without saying anything, she pointed to the stool beside the nearby table. Mito took the hint and slid her tush onto the seat, watching as Cerine set a glass beaker on the table and grabbed a few tools. With a metal spoon, she scooped out a fingertip's worth of azure powder and poured it into the beaker. She added a bit of water and a generous helping of some kind of creamy liquid to the mix before stirring it all together with the spoon. The solution took on the color of the daytime sky. Fetching a pair of tongs, Cerine scooped up the beaker and held it over a lit candle for a couple minutes to reduce the solution down to a darker blue color.

“Okay, lean forward and hold still for me,” Cerine told her. She let the hot beaker cool back down on the table for a moment and grabbed a brush. Gingerly, she brushed some of Mito's bangs forward and then dipped the brush into the dye. Mito tensed a bit and strained to look upwards as Cerine brushed the dye into her hair. Once she was done, the vixen got a small handkerchief and ran it through the marten's bangs to dry them. The linen looked as blue as blueberries when she was finished. “All done. With the ogan oil, it's very fast-acting. Let me get you a mirror.”

Mito waited while Cerine went over to find a small hand mirror. The vixen brought it to her and put it in her paws. Blinking, the marten lifted it up and looked at her face, seeing her blue and green eyes blinking back at her from her pale fur. Cerine had put an azure-blue streak into the marten's hair, right over her eyes. A smile spread across Mito's face as she reached up to run her fingers through the dyed hair. Blinking away tears, she said, “I like it.”

“I thought the blue would suit you,” Cerine replied, smiling. “But green would, too.”

Mito lowered the mirror down to her lap, holding her paws between her thighs. She looked up at Cerine's face and squinted, waiting for the catch – for the dye, for the food, for a room with them. As she stared at her, the vixen's smile cracked and her brow furrowed.

“Is something wrong?” she asked.

“Why have you been so nice to me?” Mito asked her, tilting her head. “I don't deserve any of this. I robbed you! I said I wanted to help you, try to make amends for what I did, but... you're like, 'Here, Mito, here's your room, let's dye your hair for fun, come have breakfast, rub my belly.'”

“I did not tell you to rub my belly.”

Mito dropped her shoulders. “You let me do it, though.”

Cerine blushed and crossed her arms under her bust as she looked away. “Well. For a bit.” She gave the marten a sidelong glance. “You know you took a hammer to the face to save me, right?”

“I remember,” Mito told her, shaking her head. “It didn't hit me *that* hard. But you were going to fight that minotaur for me. You don't even know me. You were going to die.”

The fox shrugged. “In that situation, I'd do that for anyone. Zaress would, too, but she'd grumble a lot. And... I honestly think so would you. You proved that. I think you've got a really good heart. So yeah, Zaress and Gray might have their misgivings, but that's just how they are. Zaress doesn't really trust anyone. But I trust you, though.”

Cerine barely had time to react before Mito hopped off the seat and buried her face into the fox's chest. Her arms circled around Cerine's waist and gripped her tightly. Shaking off her surprise, Cerine smiled and wrapped one arm around Mito's shoulders and the other behind her head. She listened to the marten's quiet sobs and just held her gently, smiling.

“Come on, now, you'll get me going,” Cerine said, holding Mito out to elbow's reach. The marten looked up at her and nodded. “You okay?”

Mito nodded, still pawing at Cerine's stomach. “Yes... sorry. This is all just a little much.”

“Well, did you forget why we came to the lab? I said I had a lot to show you... come here, let's have a little fun.”

Cerine led her over to a strongbox in the corner and knelt down. She fished a key from her

pocket and unlocked the padlock, setting it down on the floor beside the chest. Inside was a dazzling array of glass bottles, all tucked into neat partitions for protection in the box. There were so many colors, sizes, and shapes that it boggled Mito's mind. And there were multiple layers! Some of the potions looked the same, but it was a huge selection nonetheless.

"Are these all...?" the marten asked, crouching down beside the fox.

"All fun ones? Yeah. This is my stash. All the stuff I make for business is stored elsewhere. So the green ones, these here, are weight gain. You know that. The blood-red one is elixir of vigor, it's for muscle. Yellow is an elasticity potion for your stomach, so you can eat a ton. And there's a vial of fission. You remember that one, too."

Mito reached into the box and grabbed the neck of one of the bottles Cerine didn't point to. She lifted it out and swirled the milky white substance within. "What's this one?"

Cerine's cheeks flushed and she looked away. "Ah... that's dragon milk. It's for... ahem." The fox cupped her paws around her breasts with a wry smile.

"You're kidding," Mito breathed, her mismatched eyes going as wide and bright as polished mirrors. She clutched the potion to her collarbone. "I'm picking this one! I want to see you do it."

"Well, I guess I *was* saving it for a special occasion..." Cerine murmured, taking the potion from Mito's paw. "Can't get much more special than this. But not... here, though. We'll head up to my room so we can have a little privacy."

Cerine led the way out of the lab, holding the elixir behind her back in case they bumped into anyone. Mito beamed excitedly at her side the whole way up the stairs and into the room, where Cerine shoved the wooden bolt the lock. The room had a desk, a bed, and a wardrobe for changing, as well as a few personal effects belonging to the fox. Mito tossed herself onto the messy bed. Cerine hadn't actually had time to straighten up her room since the day before, being too busy trying to catch Mito, then watch over her all night, and now playing potions with her.

Things were kind of flying by, Mito thought.

Then Cerine took her tunic off and tossed it onto one of the handles of her wardrobe doors. Mito's heart skipped a beat at the sight of pink fur plunging down the fox's back, from the nape of her neck down to the base of her long, thick-furred tail. Long white hair fell back down over Cerine's shoulder blades as she turned around, fidgeting with her black brassiere. Mito couldn't help but stare. Probably would've been rude not to...

"You're beautiful," the marten blurted out as she squeezed her paws around the edge of the mattress beneath her. "Guess it's not a surprise for me to say that at this point, though, huh?"

Cerine smiled and looked just a bit coy. "I sorta figured when you kissed me this morning." She held up the potion of dragon milk in one paw and rest the other on top of her right breast. "I'd use this one a lot more, except it's hard to get Zaress to hold still..."

"What?"

"Uh... nothing. The other thing is, this potion can't be counteracted with fission. It's not made the same as the others. It's pretty much just actual dragon milk with some icono root extract to help it take effect faster. So I'm only going to drink a little bit of it. Just to demonstrate, because otherwise I'll be out to *here*. So I'm just going to get a little bigger."

Cerine pulled the cork out of the bottle with her fangs and set it on the nightstand beside the bed. She stood close in front of Mito, whose face was a little bit underneath her bustline. The marten smiled and placed her paws around the fox's midsection, rubbing gingerly up and down while she waited. A soft purr rumbled in Cerine's throat, making the sip of potion that rolled down her throat tingle as it vibrated. Mito watched closely, her eyes on the fox's fluffy, white cleavage as she lifted up one finger to gently tease along the curve of one of the fox's breasts.

Then, as promised, Cerine's chest suddenly swelled. Mito found her fingertip now sunk deep into the cleavage, rather than teasing it, as the vixen's breasts expanded to lightly overflow her brassiere. They bounced heavily in front of Mito's nose, weighing the front of her underwear down.

Cerine looked a little too stuffed into the brassiere now for comfort, so the marten slid her paws up her back, feeling the thick fur between her fingers, and she unclasped it. Together, they took it off, and the vixen's full breasts bounced free between them.

"I picked the right pocket," Mito whispered, cupping the vixen's breasts in her paws and squeezing gently. Her heart was racing as Cerine ran her free paw over the marten's head. The vixen affectionately brushed her thumb around the rim of Mito's ear as she smiled, soaking in the attention on her fuller chest.

Cerine gently petting her reminded Mito to look over at the fox's other paw, which was still holding the glass vial of dragon milk. Well, if she wasn't going to drink the rest of it, because it would make her too big...

Mito tugged the bottle from the fox's fingers, stuffed the end of it in her muzzle, and sent the bottom straight up. Cerine squeaked in surprise, but didn't try to take it away. The milky solution rolled down Mito's throat as she chugged. It almost felt like drinking something spicy and rich, the way it danced along her tongue and tingled all the way down.

It didn't take long for the effects of the full potion to become apparent. Mito felt a tightness in her chest at first, and then a sensation like pressure being released. She felt her breasts becoming heavier, rounder, and fuller, and then they pressed their way into her half-top. The garment didn't keep them under wraps for very long, giving way quickly once the marten's bust was bigger than Cerine's. Light brown fur spilled out of the bottom of her shirt as her breasts more than tripled in size and kept growing. Perky pink nipples spilled into her lap, and the unexpected weight of her chest forced her to lean forward. Fortunately, a pair of dark-furred paws cupped her boobs from underneath and lifted, taking some of the weight away. Cerine climbed down onto her knees and heft Mito's still-growing chest up as the marten dropped the empty bottle, eyes wide at her incredible size.

"I'm huge!" she squealed, pressing her paws into the sides of her watermelon-sized breasts. Her palms sank in deeper by the second as the giant breasts continued to grow. Two excited nipples thrust out in Cerine's direction as the fox lifted up her hefty, weighty chest.

"Let's... goddamn... lay you back," Cerine said, leaning the marten onto her back. Her expanding bust continued to balloon, and the marten bit her lip, watching her breasts rise up higher and higher above her. Mito struggled to wrap her arms completely around them, massaging her fingers in slow circles around her stiff nipples. The vixen smiled at her and leaned over her and the bed, brushing her dyed hair back with her fingers. "Having fun?"

Mito nodded emphatically, speaking between panting breaths. It was hard to inhale with this much weight pressing on her chest. "Ab... sol... utely..."

Cerine shed her trousers and climbed into the bed with her, using her body to help prop up one of the marten's enormous melons. The fox's swollen chest now looked incredibly slim in comparison. She rest her muzzle across Mito's breast and purred, hugging the entirety of it. It was a strange sensation for Mito, feeling paws and arms sink into the soft flesh that had suddenly blossomed on her chest. Cerine embraced her tenderly, keeping her claws retracted into her fingertips as she kneaded them into the fullness of Mito's bosom.

"I probably would've caught you sooner if I had this potion in my bag," Cerine teased, gently patting the marten's other breast. Mito whimpered playfully, feeling it jiggle. "So we've got these all day, huh?"

"Uh-huh," the marten answered, trying to adjust her body underneath her potion-boosted bust, "until sunrise."

Cerine snickered. "Well, *yours*, at least. Mine will stay plump for a bit longer."

"Lucky you..."

The fox's snicker turned into a full laugh. "Oh, if I drank as much as you did, we'd be having a very different conversation."

Mito raised her eyebrows curiously and looked over at the vixen. "So how do you, like, test all

these? I mean, I'm sure your books tell you what to do and what will happen-

"To a point."

"-but you don't *really* know until..."

Cerine massaged a paw around the marten's thick, sensitive nipple. "Until I drink them, yeah. Or when rats chew their way into my lab and eat all my ingredients... So what I do is I try to do really small doses and try to figure out the results, like so, or if I have extra fission, then I'll do a big test. Not for this, though. Like I said, fission won't work on this one because it's *just* milk." Cerine's voice trailed off as she looked up at Mito, who was beaming mischievously, all teeth and bright eyes behind her swollen cleavage. "...What?"

"It sounds like you need an assistant," the marten told her, squeezing her full chest playfully. "A very special assistant who can do new tests every day... especially on a potion like this."

A knowing smirk curled along the side of Cerine's muzzle. "We'll *talk*."

"Good enough for me!" Mito squeaked, hefting her weight over to bury the fox in cleavage.

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