

Travelling ever onward, Fidget flew through the treetops. She'd tried to find something to forage for a while now yet the few promising things she'd seen in the jungle had put her too near to dangers she wasn't ready to contend with, from predators that would happily add nimbata to their diet to other herbivores who were protective and jealous of their food supply.

'What I wouldn't give for a properly cooked meal.' she thought while murmuring grunts of annoyance.

Along her flight, a road caught her eye, still rugged and rough but obviously cleared and kept well enough for a full carriage to trundle through. It was a small reminder to her that even when things seemed silent, there was a chance for civilization to spring up. She also felt something magical about the road though, the plants kept away without encroaching on it, yet they hadn't looked to have been pruned for a while. She followed it, curious as to where it might lead while still staying in the boughs, out of sight of any potential observers. A few minutes later, as the track began to wind uphill she confirmed that earlier assumption, a carriage sat beside the road, or rather, had crashed there. The front of it was splintered, a show of the sheer speed of its impact, with an axle shattered and its wheel loose.

"Oh gosh!" She gasped, flying down. "Anyone there, are you okay?!" She asked, flapping to the windows, even fitting through the broken door. There was no sign of violence or injury, nor any person left inside, judging from how ruined the exposed interior and the luggage within were, it had been exposed to the elements for some time. "Hello?" She called again, listening out for a reply.

Nothing. It made sense, the whole thing looked like whoever had ridden it had just grabbed what they could carry, what was too important to leave behind and left with just that. With her curiosity hooked, she flew on, grateful that her wings saved her having to force her way up the steep hill. As she crested the top, she saw the only place the cart could have come from, a small dwelling nestled in a clearing.

Travelling there by wing was easy, though she had no idea how to get there on foot. That same feeling of magic was thicker in the air here, likely an illusory labyrinth to help shroud the place.

The door to the place also hung ajar, flung open previously and then landed wherever the winds and rains had pushed it. A small cottage, more than homey enough for a humble couple. The more she explored the more sure of the narrative she had. While the nature of the exodus was something she couldn't guess, whoever lived here had got up in a hurry one day, packed all they could take and left the rest behind. Some things were cleanly stowed and folded, others strewn as though taken out of a bag and then abandoned by someone who showed no intention of returning.

Definitely a mage or wizard of some sort had lived here. With any luck they had some magically preserved food.

To be sure, she'd need more light and rather than opening a window, the nimbat stretched out, rolled her neck and then tried a touch of her pyrokinetic magic letting out the magic infused utterance with her gesture. Flames flicked to life, finding multiple candles and even a lantern to light up.

"Oh that is cosy." The lighting of all the candles was wonderfully welcoming and from there she saw the likely pantry entrance and even somewhere for her to cook. She was no chef but even she could drop food in a pan until it looked cooked.

One curiosity caught her eye, however. A candle flame that was different from the rest, bearing a green tint to the flame. "Huh?"

She drifted closer, it was obviously some kind of magical or alchemical piece, given the colour, though the wax of the candle barely still held the wick, looking almost like something had exploded from the inside. Even the wax itself seemed to shimmer, like it was moving.

The nimbat shook her head. "No chemical poisoning, thank you very much!" She told it, worried of what might cause that green burn and leaning forward to blow out the wick. Rather than extinguishing, the flame bloomed into a sizable puff, almost as big as Fidget herself, making her gasp in alarm, her eyes raised to make sure she hadn't accidentally set fire to anything behind it.

A soft noise like viscous liquid dropping on itself hit her ears as out of the corner of her eye she saw sudden movement. Something hot slapped against her left foot, right hand and chest, sloshing over it and then tugging back toward a fixed point; the base of the candle!

The wax was now completely molten, yet still opaque, she'd been tragically correct in her earlier assumption that it looked to be moving. "No, no, get off, get off!" She yelled, taking a deep breath to conjure the flames and fight back. A thick splat struck right into her open mouth wedging behind her teeth to hold it open and resist her hands from pulling it free, further miring and merging with the wax covered fingers so that she couldn't pull that hand away.

In a desperate shock she tried to flap her wings and escape that way, yet despite being gooey enough to spread, when she moved away the wax immediately grew solid, making her jerk in the air before falling down on her rump, a molten puddle catching most of her buttocks in that tumble.

The solidified wax softened again and with the part over her rear, it scooped her along at a fast pace, pushing her gunked up foot into the centre, the wax forming a solid ball which it glued her foot to. As it grew, it pulled her up with it, rolling off the surface until she was perpendicular to the table, her foot caught in a curve so that her wax-laden toes were nearly en-pointe. She kicked her right leg out desperately, trying to keep it clear while the left arm reached for anything nearby, seeing a small metal rod, part of some alchemical stand but not able to reach it.

The wax continued to spread, from her rump it moved across her sides and down the back of her thighs, from her hand and face it covered up her right eye and trickled down the forearm, even tickling inside her ears and over her nose. “Mmmmh!! Mmm-~~nnnn~~.” With both of her airways blocked she could barely even whine, holding her breath and reaching desperately.

The wax shell hardened around her leg, forcing it to stretch and go stiff, slowly defeating her once free thigh as it coated along it. While it squeezed enough to compress her fur and fluff, the wax itself imprinted the spots on her flanks on the surface, to look carefully whittled in. Similarly it fluffed up around the ruff at her chest and preserved the thick look of her appearance.

She felt the wax stiffen at her mouth, thinking this was her only shot, her left hand came round, fingers trying to dig to her nostrils. The gooey pool of wax in her mouth behaved like it had been waiting, ambushing the hand and then swiftly welding her fingers together as it encompassed all the way down the forearm, the blockage in her nostrils filing out, giving her room to breathe at least but at a heavy cost.

Her mind was racing, trying to cry out for help louder now that she had an airway but also baffled and panicked. She felt as though the candle’s magic had choked her on purpose to try and find any last means she had of helping herself. The stiffening wax piloted her like a doll, lowering and hardening on her hand, tilting it upright, slowly moving to cover her other eye, even folding over her wings.

She’d managed to close her eyelids in time, but the candle recreated her expression at the moment of her catch, hardening and hollowing inside her mouth, preserving a wide eyed squeal of shock, in wax that was slowly colouring in to become a glossy deep green with light and darker streaks like marbling.

The right knee, the last bit of defiance she could pilot, was slowly encroached on, brought to stand next to the right, mirroring its position.

It filled her ears, all she could hear was a strange creaking and her own echoed moaning for help as it set. A warm flush traced up her back, the wick of the candle resting between her ears before, of its own devices, it winked out again.

Fidget was in a blinding panic, her muscles straining and twisting, trying to rock the shell, to escape from it by simply knocking it over and hoping it would shatter. Whether her own muscles were insufficient or the candle wax was grounded magically, the coating around her didn’t so much as vibrate, even her muffled cries felt claustrophobic, like they weren’t escaping the polished containment her form was in.

She tried it all, yelling, pleading, falling quiet, trying her magic, threatening- admittedly through her thoughts-, even trying to see what else it had planned for her.

It had no further intentions beyond constricting her body such that if she thought about it too much she could feel the cramped pressure any time she took a breath.

In darkness and the quiet of the ambient jungle the nimbat lamented within a waxen prison.

How long had it been? Weeks? Months?

In Fidget's helpless state she learned that the wax was both totally immobilising but also somehow sustaining. Her hunger was trapped at the light pang she felt on stumbling into it, she was able to sleep though she didn't need to but it was her main source of escape. Each pleasant dream was inevitably dashed by waking to dark, near silent solitude.

She'd mused over the candle, all she could assume was it was meant to be some kind of trap. The exploded remains she came across might have been a previous victim bursting out or being released. Given after all the time she'd spent it hadn't diminished in strength she doubted it would free her on its own. Did it need to burn for that?

She'd woken up? She wasn't rightly sure. A rummaging and skittering sounded in her hearing, ah that dream again. The one in which she dreamt of a rat investigating the table and knocking over the candle, either freeing her or when it turned nightmarish, shattering her with it. No, it was different. Her breath caught, it was bigger and rummaging with purpose.

Dimly she was no longer sure if she heard a voice in truth or was hoping for it, her mind filling in to keep her together.

"All the candles seem burned out." One of them muttered. "Shine that lamp over here." He said, revealing another figure.

"Oh, would you look at that!" Another voice gasped in shock, Fidget felt herself lifted up in a two handed grip, felt gravity shift as she was tilted this way and that. "Isn't this a Nimbat?!"

"Whoa, I think you're right. First one I've seen. It looks just like the one that accompanied that hero a while back."

"Yeah! Damn, the wizard who ran this place was messed up. Imagine carving a life-like creature out of wax and then giving it a screaming face." He said, setting it down on the table.

'No no no, don't put it down, pick me up, get me out!!' she tried to squeal, but was outright unheard, certain now the figures were real.

"Maybe they imagined what a candle would think as it burned. Who knows with wizards." The other one replied.

“Mmmh, I’d hate to damage such a treasure. Maybe it’d do something magical when you burned it but... look how cute it is.”

The voices dwindled as they spoke and went back to searching, the quiet broken with a victorious laugh punching through the air as they found the object of their search. Fidget was yelling frantically in her head, begging them not to go, afraid of what might happen if they lit the candle but desperate to try it in case it was the path to salvation.

The voices trudged back, there was rustling, clanking and other objects hitting each other as they filled their own bags. “Alright, that’ll do, just enough room left for you.” The voice said before gravity’s sway gave Fidget that sense of vertigo again. With utmost care as if afraid it was a fragile object the handler placed what he assumed was simply an artistic candle into his laden satchel.

“Maybe we should snip that wick off, turn it into a wax figurine or something? Since you seem opposed to burning it.”

“Heh, maybe-” he replied before drawing the strings shut.

As she was jostled with each step, she still found no weakness to exploit or capacity to move. She hoped that they were the wizard’s assistants or hired by him, sent to retrieve things he’d left behind as surely he’d know how to free her, yet with how they spoke, she doubted they were anything more than passing adventurers.

While being found and taken was better than being left in a shack until it fell to ruin. It seemed her hopes of freedom might still be some way off..