

# STOLEN ESSENCE

BIWEEKLY STORY #128

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Fern felt a little tired but she was doing *okay*.

A state that was unsurprising considering everything that the party she was part of had been up to. They had still been traveling on their way to Äußerst for the First-Class Mage Exam when an opportunity for a detour had arose. Her Master, the elven Frieren, had sniffed out a small dungeon. Having been with Frieren for so long, Fern was a little more than familiar with her passion for dungeon exploration. Or at least her fixation on the idea that she might find a rare tome somewhere inside.

And so they had ended up exploring it. As Frieren had assessed early on, it hadn't been *that* deep. Only five moderately sized floors. But those five floors had been *filled* with traps and monsters. It hadn't been easy to get to the very bottom. If *anything* was exhausted her more than anything else, however? “**Sir Stark? Please stop whining.**” The warrior of their group, Stark, had gotten a little cut up during the final battle.

“**B-But Feeeern!**” For a man as tough as he was, he sure had a penchant for acting like a child. Fern could be harsh with him at times but it wasn't like she hated him or anything. Those feelings were *complicated* and she didn't really know what to do with them. The two had been hanging back as Frieren examined a chest, but once she had finished? She beckoned the two of them over.

Frieren, almost immediately once they had gotten closer, held up a tome that must have contained a spell. “**And to the victors go the spoils!**” It was rare to see the elf *this* excited. It was a reaction that only new magic could prompt on her facial features, and Fern couldn't help but

smile in response. At least until she held the book out to Fern. **“Cast it, Fern. It might lead to some interesting results.”**



**“Um... Okay?”** The purple-haired woman *was* a little curious. Frieren only usually asked her to cast without explaining the spell if she thought it would be amusing. And she thought that in this case, too. But the description of the spell in the tome that the elf had read? It was a misdirection that was meant to trick any mage that found the tome into casting something a little more harmful than they'd believe.

After taking a moment to read the technique Fern summoned her staff and channeled the mana in the pattern necessary to evoke the spell's effects. She hadn't known *what* to expect, but what *did* happen certainly hadn't been what Fern had expected. Both Freiren and Stark had suddenly begun to glow a white light and that energy then *shot into* Fern's body before the two fell unconscious on the dungeon floor. **“Lady Frieren! Sir Stark!”** She was naturally panicked by this, but she also felt... *odd*.

What had that energy been?

If anyone could have been able to answer this question of hers then it would have been Frieren. Who was, unfortunately, temporarily incapacitated by the process. The best Fern could do was try and work things out herself, but was she on a timer here? A strange warmth was spreading from her chest and radiating out to every corner of her body. She could have identified a *physical* toll that this was taking on her flesh early on if she *hadn't* been one to dress herself from head to toe in comfortable clothing.

But once the tingling crept into her hands and face, the only areas that *were* exposed, the reality would have become apparent if she had checked. After all? The pale coloration of the young woman's body was *darkening*, a copper tan radiating in its place and delivering a healthy sheen to her skin. This tan wasn't a trick of the light nor a product of the sun, but instead a coloring reflective of the melanin in her skin. What's more? Her nipples were now brown and a number of scars had etched themselves into her arms, legs, and torso where they hadn't been before.

**“They aren't waking up. Should I just wait and see...?”** Was there anything else she *could* do? She still didn't know what her body had absorbed, but if it had come from both her master *and* Stark? Then could it have been... **“Hm?”** Fern *had* been lost in thought, but something odd had prompted her eyes to peer upwards towards her

bangs. Eyes that had seemingly had the blue removed from their purples, rendering them a pure *red* instead. “**My hair?**”

Was the purple lighter than she remembered or was it just the lightening in this part of the dungeon? Her natural reaction was to reach a hand up to move some of her hair into her view, but... “***EH!?***” The mage almost stumbled back and cried out with a shrill voice that wasn’t quite her own. A voice crack? In the thick of things she didn’t really care about how she had sounded. She could only stare at her *hand*. “**Wh-Why is my hand tanned?**” Tanned and *calloused*. Her fingers didn’t become that rough while wielding her staff. They looked more like *Stark’s* fingers in that regard.

She rolled up one of her sleeves onto to see that the tan traveled all of the way up it, not to mention noting several deep scars that she had never earned in combat. But she was so fixated on all of this that she had forgotten about her *hair*. The dark purple had faded from it, leaving in its place a deep silver instead. The length of her mane didn’t change at *all*, but the style? Her hair wasn’t *as* well kept now. It was a little coarser and dirtier, while her bangs were swept to the right so you could see some of her forehead.

“**So is the spell changing my body? *That’s weird! ...Eh?***” Fern’s expression portrayed her shock well. Why had she blurted that out in such a bubbly tone? It didn’t suit her usual personality at *all*. But it was, in fact, beginning to suit her *expression*. Her default expression was being changed by both an improving mood *and* changing features. Her face earned sharper corner around her cheeks and a narrowed chin. Lips were juicier, her eyes narrowed, and her nose was better defined. She’d always been a pretty woman but this new beauty her face carried was practically indescribable comparatively.

But those features *did* seem closer to Frieren’s facial features than her own for *some* reason.

Her mind raced. Knowing what she did about magic, the spell could possibly be... could possibly... could... “**Oh no. *I can’t remember my training!?***” Her voice was slowly deepening, but the ‘mage’ ended up thinking about other problems. Namely the fact that she could no longer remember how to cast a spell, much less the fundamentals behind doing so. Instead? When she thought about her training *other things* came to mind. Like how to swing an axe, or the ideal workout regimen for keeping one’s body muscular. “***I sound like a real musclehead! N-No, calm down...***”

She was telling herself to calm down, but now she couldn’t stop herself from *smiling*. She felt extremely energetic and her commentary about

being a musclehead? It was more or less becoming on the mark. Fern's dress felt tighter and tighter, but not because any of her body's curvature was changing *yet*. It was the *bulk* of her body. Any excess fat upon her soft form *hardened* instead, arms bulging with rippling strength and thigh growing hard beneath a thin layer of softness. Perhaps the most noticeable change was her stomach, where her core tightened and abs became so defined that there was a one-inch deep crevice between every individual bulge. Was she as strong as Stark now?

No, Fern was probably *stronger*. She didn't really look like her age had changed at all, but in truth? Hundreds of years had chronologically poured itself onto her flesh, and hundreds of years of memories of training filled her brain. That kind of longevity wasn't possible for a human, but... Well, the features that revealed the truth *had* begun to spring up. Long, pointed ears slid out from behind her hair.

*Elven ears.*

**“This is like, super weird! I'm really old now? But I can still kinda remember *not* being that way! But I'm an elf like Frieren now, right?”** She was tearing at her dress with her own two hands to try and make things more comfortable. Bulging muscles made things too tight, and things only worsened in that regard once her limbs and torso began to elongate so that she grew about *six* additional inches. She would tower over the rest of her party with an increase *that* ample.

The elven woman pulled at the cloth around her breasts just in time for them to *swell*, weight growing a singular cup size as if to retain the fact that they were larger than average even despite her being taller and more muscular now. Brown nipples were fully exposed and she didn't seem to mind at all. Fern would never have wanted to even *risk* Stark seeing her naked, but now? She kind of wondered how cute his reaction would be if he woke up and saw her bare tits! Or her *ass* for that matter, because it *and* her thighs gained an increase of softness around their otherwise rock hard, muscular surfaces. *Thunder thighs* indeed. **“Mmn! Feels good! And I look good!”**

Ultimately the tearing of her cloth seemed to have been in vein, for the magic that had altered her body and soul had a new outfit in mind for the woman as well. It was *barely* an outfit in the end, mind you, for it consisted of a black armor bikini with pauldrons, armored fingerless gloves, and thigh high armor boots. *So much* of her sexy, buff body was exposed. And she wouldn't have had it any other way now.

Stark's strength as a warrior and Frieren's elven background. Both of these things had merged with Fern's own biases about how 'stupid' she thought warriors were and had completely changed her into this new

form. And she didn't seem to care an iota about it having happened, even though she could recognize that she *had* changed in the end.

**“...I see. I was misled. It seems the spell was designed to extract the essence of others. You're Fern, aren't you?”** Frieren's voice snapped the buff *warrior elf* out of her stupor and prompted her to look over her shoulder. Fern was *smiling*? Frieren wondered if it the process had taken more of a toll on the mental side of things than she had initially assumed. Stark was still out? That explained why she looked so *strong*.



Fern was still a little confused. **“Essence, Frieren!? Is that why I'm all huge now!?”** *Yup*, she wasn't talking at all like the Fern that Frieren knew. She didn't look an iota like her old self either. Evidently she'd inherited Frieren's elfdom and Stark's physical prowess. **“It's kinda weird though. I can't really remember how to use any magic? But I'll be fiiiine! I bet I'm stronger than Starkie now!”**

The short elf blinked with surprise. **“S-Starkie...?”** The old Fern *definitely* never would have given anyone a nickname. This elf woman was *far* too casual. It was almost unsettling. Had she inherited too much of Stark's essence? **“...Correct. Your body has inherited parts of Stark and me. It seems its taken a toll on your memories and, um... your intelligence as well.”** She wasn't wrong. As she was now, Fern wasn't very bright. She was a musclehead through and through.

**“Oh! Well, like I said... No biggie! I feel fine! Better than ever, actually!”** So what if her skills had shifted? There was nothing wrong with being a warrior, right? **“Besides, now that I'm an elf that means I can stay with you forever, right?”** She wasn't *wrong*. If she'd inherited the same lifespan then she didn't need to worry about parting with Fern anytime soon. But if she wasn't acting like herself then was it worth the tradeoff. **“Are you hungry? I can carry Starkie out of here and we can get a salad in town!”**

**“A-A salad?”** That might have been the most terrifying thing the warrior woman had said in this entire exchange. After all, Fern... **“D-Did you not want to have something sweet? Don't you love desserts?”** If it was as bad as she thought then poor Stark was going to have a heart attack when he woke up.

**“Hm? No way! Waaaay too many calories!”**

Oh, so they were *doomed* doomed.