

Qura finished the food in front of her and smiled as Simeon took the plate away and placed a tankard in front of her

She'd been at this tavern for a few days now and was enjoying the company.

She glanced around the other tables, noting how so many people were present – a mix of locals and a couple of parties of adventurers by the look.

She felt someone looking at her and turned slightly, catching the eyes of a blonde gnome sat with a group of warriors in the corner.

He smiled and then his attention was diverted by the large barbarian sat by him laughing before clapping slowly "go on! Go on! Go on!"

Soon the rest of the table had taken up the chant and clap until Qura could almost lip read the gnome's response of "fine then!"

To the cheering of the table the gnome climbed up onto the table and placed a hand on his chest, the other raised theatrically as his voice rang out across the tavern, flowing like gold as the lyrics of Rhapsody Of Sembia filled the room

Qura smiled as she joined the applause from regulars and visitors, someone handing the gnome a lute and he followed up with Free Byrd and Stairway to Celestia

Qura happily accepted another tankard from Simeon and froze as the musician launched into Pearl In the Soil in it's original Havlin

The warm music slowed the crowd and Qura spotted several members sitting closer together as the love song reverberated around. While she didn't doubt no-one else understood the lyrics the gnome's tender tones certainly got the feeling across and Qura sighed at the familiar lyrics. As the song came to it's end the gnome had a long pause before launching into Sioni Bod Da, the sudden change of pace electrifying all the patrons.

Qura cheered with the rest of the crowd and clapped as loudly as she could when the gnome bowed and clambered down from the table.

"what was that one in havlin?" the dwarf Snorri leaned toward her "sels san shee?"

Qura smiled at his attempt "nearly! It translates to Pearl in The Soil... it's about love and shared being"

"was very good, reminded me of home"

Qura reached for the tankard that was placed in front of her and a familiar voice answered the dwarf "Thanks! It's always good to put something emotional in, especially when I know someone'll understand the lyrics!"

Qura turned and found herself looking wide-eyed into the gnome's bright blue eyes

As she felt a blush working its way up her face, it was dispelled by his warm smile and proffered hand "hi! I'm Maximal, please call me Max"

Qura squeaked her reply "i.. i'm Qura!" realising he was still holding his arm out she reached forward to shake his hand and was surprised as he took it and kissed her knuckle "an absolute pleasure!" Max gestured toward the raised bench she was propped up on "may I sit?"

Qura shuffled sideways as the gnome hopped up onto the bench alongside her thanking the rest of the table as they also congratulated him on his performance

soon enough the whole table was chatting, Qura included and before she knew it she was deep in conversation with Max about their travels

"so, where are you staying?" Max asked as they both lifted fresh tankards in cheers

"here! i've been doing some work and have a room rented"

"what's it like? Any good?" Max asked casually

"oh yeah! Apparently it's a single but that's in Human so it's pretty big!"

"Humans aren't that big!" Max countered "could I see?"

"sure!" Qura replied before she knew what she was saying, her blush returning as her ears caught up

while the conversation continued, it was as they finished their drinks Max gave her a smile

"how about that tour?" he slid off the bench and offered his hand out to Qura

She took his hand and tried to slide off the bench too but where he'd made it look effortless she half fell, ending up pressed against the gnome

He seemed not to be too bothered and stepped aside, waving for her to lead the way

Qura chatted aimlessly as they climbed the stairs, from the artwork on the walls to how big the stairs were for smaller races, until they were stood in front of the room she'd been renting.

Struggling with the key she opened the door and let Max into the room first, pointing out how much room there was and how even simple rooms had a ton of storage.

She carefully closed the door behind them and turned to find Max stood toe to toe with her as she took a breath his hand had already cupped her cheek and before she knew it their lips met

The kiss seemed to last a lifetime and as he pulled away she couldn't help but sigh

"was that too forward?" Max sounded worried "i'm terribly sor..."

he was interrupted by Qura grabbing him and returning with another deep kiss

there was a flurry of kisses and gasps as the pair moved toward the bed, Qura pulling at his shirt buttons as his lips caressed her neck and her top came off in his hands

She squeaked as with a kiss he lifted her bodily and placed her on the bed, her boots and leggings hitting floor in quick succession, Max clambering up to join her both sets of skin pressing together

she gasped and wrapped her legs around his midriff while the weight of him pressed against her while both moved together

Qura grabbed Max's back and pulled him as close as possible and relished his body heat against hers

"you're really hot!" Max gasped as he moved

"you're hot too!" Qura muttered, a confused look on her face as Max pushed himself up onto his arms

"you're glowing, like literally!" the worry in his voice breaking her rhythm

she held her hand up and squealed at the sight – as he had pointed out her body was glowing faintly

as Max moved away Qura rolled to the side, misjudging her position and gasped as she fell off the side of the bed, scrabbling at the covers with little effect other than to cover herself as she hit the floor

"i'm so sorry!" she gasped "i don't... That's the first... it's not..." she pulled the covers around herself protectively

She heard Max climb down with a gentle "hey! Don't panic!" and felt his arms wrap around the bundle "i was worried, but you're fine"

He carefully pulled at the cocoon and helped Qura to her feet with a smile "up you get!"

He steadied her as she climbed up onto the bed and in a single action flung the covers out and slid in behind her before the duvet had settled, spooning her gently in his arms "we both had fun and that's the important bit!"

Qura felt something poking into her back and turned to face Max, staring into his bright blue eyes

"can I help?" she gave an innocent look as she reached down

He smiled in return and repositioned her hands "well, far be it for me to argue with a beautiful woman..."