

A GNOME, ALPACA, AND BARD WALK INTO A BAR...

Written by  
Pardeep Aujla

pardeepsaujla@gmail.com

INT. THE BUM AND BOOT - DAY

The tavern is quiet. The scant and dreary patrons silent in slumber or depression.

A noise - barely audible at first, but loudening as it nears - slowly rouses those patrons.

The noise sounds instrumental. The 'bh' of a bass drum, the 'ts' of a cymbal, the 'kh' of a snare.

Bh ts-ts kh ts-ts, ts bh-ts kh ts-ts.

The bartender lifts his weary head from off the bar, leaving a miniature puddle of drool upon the rough-hewn surface.

Bh ts-ts kh ts-ts, ts bh-ts kh ts-ts.

The tavern doors swing open.

A foot-tall female Gnome, YAJJA enters atop a chestnut alpaca. The camelid wears an upturned tin funnel askew upon its head, and trousers covering its rear portion.

Beatboxing a step behind is B-GOB, a human woman from faraway climes.

B-GOB

Kh-ts-ts bh kh-ts-ts bh ts-ts-bh-ts-  
kh-ts-ts-ts vip-voop greetings!

The motley trio stop at the bar.

All patrons join the bartender in staring wide-eyed at the strangers.

YAJJA

A thimble of your strongest brandy,  
you filthy human pig!

B-GOB

Bh-bh-bh-beer for me chkka-ch-chsh!

The alpaca perks up at this.

GERNARD

Ooo! Can I have one too?

The bartender's eyes gape further at the talking alpaca.

YAJJA

Unicorns drink not of beer!

GERNARD

I keep telling you -  
 (to bartender)  
 I keep telling her, I'm not a  
 unicorn, but will she listen to  
 reason? Will she heck!

BARTENDER

Y-You're a --

GERNARD

Adventurer, yes. Hence the  
 trousers.

BARTENDER

No but --

GERNARD

Ignore the funnel, that's the  
 gnome's doing.

BARTENDER

But you --

GERNARD

Would really like a beer. So if you  
 wouldn't mind --

BARTENDER

You talk?!

GERNARD

Well I don't moo, do I! Actually  
 I'm not sure what sound alpacas  
 make...

The bartender strives to steady his swirling mind.

BARTENDER

Why's there a talking alpaca in my  
 tavern?!

GERNARD

Ah right, s'pose I should er - long  
 story short, a mishap via magic  
 made me this way, two moons back.

BARTENDER

Wot sorta mis'ap?

GERNARD

I... may have made improper assertions about a wizard and his wand - anyway, fact is I'm on a quest to correct my unfortunate condition, which is partly why we're here, the other part being that beer, so --

BARTENDER

And the Gnome?

GERNARD

Is a few eggs short of --

Yajja draws a sword the size of a letter opener.

YAJJA

A lone warrior! Banished by kinfolk who deem females unfit for anything other than scrubwork! I find myself now allied with an ungrateful unicorn, and skilled bard to take account of my heroic deeds.

GERNARD

Ungrateful?!

YAJJA

Did I not save you from ravenous wolves?

GERNARD

All you did was spook em when you fell out the tree you were hiding in!

YAJJA

Regardless of my methods, a life-debt was made.

Gernard grumbles to himself.

B-GOB

A life saved, tsh-ts-ts tsh-ts-ts, is a bond made, tsh-ts-ts chk-cha!

BARTENDER

The 'ell sorta bard are you?

B-GOB

The sort that's gonna turn the bard game on its head, bh-bh-bh-bucko!

The bartender turns to the talking alpaca for answers.

GERNARD

Me and the Gnome had the mother of all benders a week back. At some point in the night we acquired a bard.

(turning to B-Gob)

She's just sort of stuck around ever since.

BARTENDER

Never seen a bard wot don't use an instrument.

B-GOB

I am the instrument, friend.

(to Gernard)

Did he not see me with the bhs and the khs and the bow-wown bssh?

GERNARD

(shaking head)

Some folk, ey?

(to bartender)

Anyway, seeing as that beer ain't happening, any idea where I can find the lair of Zooga-Yam?

The until now silent patrons come alive with gasps.

YAJJA

Me thinks they all have an idea.

BARTENDER

Don't even say his name!

GERNARD

Why?

MYSTERY MAN

Cos to say his name, is to draw his gaze.

The trio turn to a shadow-swaddled corner of the tavern.

The severe face of a bearded fellow emerges from those shadows, one eye agape, the other tightly squinted.

MYSTERY MAN (CONT'D)

And his gaze travels far.

Beat.

GERNARD

Is it you?! Are you Zooga-Yam?!

Yajja points her sword and snarls.

MYSTERY MAN

What?! No, you idiot!

GERNARD

Oh... I just - cos of your ominous words and crazy eye, y'know.

MYSTERY MAN

I'm not he, though, like you, I've fallen afoul of his magics.

The mystery man pulls his left hand out of his coat pocket, revealing it to be the head of a duck. It quacks.

B-GOB

D-D-Damn, must make going to the toilet an ordeal.

The duck-hand spots and plunges itself into the man's goblet.

MYSTERY MAN

His lair can be found to the north.  
Through the forest of tortured  
souls, across the lake of a  
thousand red teeth, and beneath the  
cannibal foothills.

GERNARD

Cannibal?

MYSTERY MAN

(nodding)

Cannibal. And know this, if you say  
two moons have passed since your  
transformation, then you've only  
three days to reverse the spell,  
else an alpaca shall you ever be.

The duck-hand quacks drunkenly.

YAJJA

Hear that, companions? The call to  
adventure! Do we heed?

Gernard lets out a tired sigh. He turns to the bartender.

GERNARD

Any chance I could get that beer to  
go?