

The Archivist's Adventures

Short Stories By : Alyssa B. Newbon

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ARCHIVE ENTRY #017

Title: "The Turnip That Knew Too Much"

Filed by: Estella Wormwood, Apprentice of Orlin the Wise

Date: 4th Bloomtide, Year 623

Location: Turnwell Village

Security Level: Moderate

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This record details the events involving a sentient root vegetable, a disgraced village, and an attempted sautéing by one Varric Skell.

Filed for posterity and the next poor apprentice visiting Turnwell.

Signed,

E. Wormwood

(Note: Bestiary has added "Cognitive Vegetables" as a new subsection.)

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Turnwell was usually the sort of place where a wagon's arrival brought out half the town—baskets in hand, children chasing chickens, someone always shouting about stew.

Estella was not greeted with the usual fanfare.

The cobbled streets remained empty, dust and dirt undisturbed. No boisterous children played in the clearings. Even the livestock, usually noisy and nosy, stood oddly still in their pens, blinking like they'd forgotten how to chew.

She turned back to the wagon. "Are you sure this is the place? Seems like no one's home."

The wagon groaned and snapped its curtains shut in offense.

Estella raised her hands in surrender.

A lock clicked behind her. The lantern hanging from the canopy flickered, then went out.

"Fine. Message received."

Estella sighed and adjusted the satchel on her shoulder. "Right. Exploring the haunted farm village it is."

Turnwell's silence wasn't just unsettling—it was suspicious. It had the feel of a place that knew it was hiding something. She walked on, the soles of her boots the only sound echoing off the shuttered windows.

It took half an hour and two false turns before she found *someone*—a wiry man perched on the edge of a crumbling fence, straw hat pulled low, pipe unlit.

"Afternoon," Estella said, friendly as she could manage.

The man blinked slowly, like he hadn't spoken to another soul in weeks.

"You with that... thing?" He gestured vaguely in the direction of the wagon, as if afraid it might hear.

"That thing has a name," Estella said. "But yes."

He grunted.

"I'm Estella. Apprentice to Orlin the Wise. I was hoping to offer some assistance. Maybe trade. I hear your fields have gone barren."

The man tensed. "No one said that."

"You haven't harvested in two seasons."

His jaw clenched.

Estella smiled, gentle but persistent, pulling some parchment from her satchel. "I'd be happy to take a look. We've got supplies. Potions, enchanted compost, sunstone mulch—"

"No need." He stood abruptly. "Land just turned on us. Happens. You can't fix dead earth."

"You'd be surprised," she said, tone still light. "Magic's full of rude awakenings."

He narrowed his eyes, finally noting the antlers poking out from her head. "Don't go nosing around. The land's cursed is what it is. Nothing natural grows there anymore. You'll get yourself turned inside out if you meddle."

"Noted. Just offering to help."

He spat into the dust. "You want to trade, trade. Otherwise keep to the road."

Estella bowed her head just slightly, writing "*Curse*" under *Suspicious Deflection*, and turned to leave.

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The village was a few paces behind her when she caught the scent—fresh soil, blooming mint, something vaguely nutty and... buttery?

Estella paused.

To the east, just beyond a thicket of dry hedgerow and a bank of turned soil, the village's supposed "cursed land" spread out like a forgotten dream. Fields—lush, thriving, *unreasonably* green—sprawled across the low valley. Cornstalks taller than men bowed in the breeze. Vines thick with blossoms choked old stone walls. Something glowed faintly in the furrows.

"Right. Very cursed," she muttered, ducking through the hedge.

She didn't get far before her boot nudged something unusually firm in the soil.

It *yelped*.

"Good heavens, watch the leaves!"

Estella stumbled back.

There, halfway unearthed in the garden bed, was the face of a turnip. A very annoyed, very expressive turnip, with delicately furrowed brows and a ridiculous monocle jammed over one golden eye.

"I say, *finally* someone with manners," it huffed. "Do you have any idea how long I've been stranded among these buffoons? If I have to hear one more cabbage scream about root rot, I swear I shall compost myself out of sheer boredom."

Estella crouched slowly. "...Are you enchanted?"

"Enchanted?" The turnip sniffed. "No, madam, I am *ennobled*. I am Sir Rudius Baga, heir to the Verdant Vale, fifth son of Duchess Marrow of Carrotria. And you—" He paused, squinting at her golden eyes. "Oh! You're fae-touched. Delightful. That explains the cheekbones."

"I have so many questions."

"And I shall answer all of them, in *excruciating* detail—over tea. Chamomile, preferably. Loose leaf. With honey. I've been eating nothing but soil and gossip for three weeks."

"You eat gossip?"

"Figuratively, dear girl. Though I did nibble on a radish who claimed to be a reincarnated queen. Terribly spicy."

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Estella soon found herself sipping lukewarm tea, seated at a table outside the wagon, asking questions to a turnip...wearing a monocle. Rudy insisted on real porcelain, which he claimed "heightens the bouquet," though he had no nose and couldn't drink.

"I must say," Rudy drawled, "I do appreciate the civility. Most peasants I've spoken to simply scream. Of course, the villagers *here* were so grateful for my blessings. I advised them on crop rotation, pest management, a few simple rituals—just the basics!"

Estella stirred her tea. "Has anyone tried to cook you?"

"Oh, please. I am *quite* charming company."

From the wagon steps, Varric snorted. "Charming doesn't sound like moldy cheese with a superiority complex."

Rudy gasped, his leaves wilting in offense. “You again! You unwashed slab of fur and bad decisions! Of course you’ve found a new hand for your leash”

“Still want to roast you.”

“You tried to pair me with rosemary, you barbarian!”

“I was hungry. You were annoying.”

Estella nodded to herself, agreeing with her own assessment. It’s not shocking to hear of their history given his former employment to another sorcerer. And if it were anyone, it would certainly be a young Varric.

“Touch me and I’ll tell everyone about the time you cried during that symphony.”

“It was a *good song*,” Varric growled.

Estella pinched the bridge of her nose. “Enough. Rudy, you said they used to bring you tributes?”

“Gifts,” Rudy corrected. “They brought me *gifts*. You must understand, I was their spiritual advisor. They came to me for agricultural counsel, relationship woes, the occasional weather dispute... Naturally, gratitude flowed.”

“They buried things at the edge of the field?” Estella asked.

“Oh yes, quite the odd habit,” Rudy said breezily. “Maybe it was ancestral reverence. Or perhaps they thought I was lonely.”

Estella stared at him. “You’re telling me you didn’t *ask* for sacrifices?”

“I never said ‘sacrifice.’ That’s such an *ugly* word. But one day, the mayor brought me a chicken. Honestly, I said nothing! I assumed it was a cultural thing.”

Estella scribbled furiously in her journal. Rudy was humming what sounded suspiciously like a baroque waltz from his spot in a tea tin.

That night, the Bestiary refused to house him. The Kitchen tried to slice and serve him. The Archive had let him alphabetize himself under “N” for “Nobility.”

She was going to need to file *several* new categories after this.

Archive Note:

Sir Rudius Baga is *not* a vegetable, he insists.

“I am an *entity*,” he said, “of considerable depth and social importance.”

Proceed with caution. And perhaps silverware.

The next day, Estella found the farmer where she'd left him: hunched on that same splintered fence, pipe still unlit, watching the empty road like it might bite him.

He didn't turn when she approached.

"You again," he muttered. "Didn't take the hint yesterday?"

"I'm persistent," Estella said, folding her hands behind her back. "And curious. The field to the east—lush, green, glowing in a vaguely suspicious manner—you say it's cursed. But you also say nothing grows."

He didn't answer.

"So." She paced slowly in front of him. "Help me out. Is the land dead, or unnaturally thriving?"

The man spat into the dirt again. "It's both."

Estella tilted her head. "That's not how dirt works."

"That's how *he* works."

A pause.

"...You mean Rudy."

He flinched at the name.

"I knew it," she said quietly. "What is he?"

The farmer's eyes, bleary and bloodshot, finally met her golden gaze. "He's hunger. Wrapped up in charm and leaves and lies. We brought him here with a bargain we didn't understand. Should've known better than to make deals with the Fae."

Estella's heart sank a little. "What kind of bargain?"

He hesitated. Then stood, motioning with two fingers. "Come on. You want answers, you'll get 'em. Just don't touch anything."

They walked in silence through the old orchard, past a moss-covered well and a rusted plow swallowed by roots. At the edge of the lush field stood a half-collapsed tool shed.

Inside, behind moldy sacks of seed and a shelf of bone-dry potions, the farmer lifted a false wall to reveal a shallow pit—lined with old stones and offerings long abandoned. Half-buried in the center was a pile of yellowed bones, crusted with dried mint and something darker.

Estella crouched beside it.

“This was... the mayor?” she asked softly.

The farmer nodded. “Got it in his head, Rudy was divine. Said the turnip whispered in his dreams, told him how to fix the crops, save the village. Said we owed him.”

“And you believed that?”

“We were starving,” he said. “For a year, not a drop of rain. Half the livestock died. Folks were digging up bark and chewing moss. When the fields came back... we didn’t question it. Not ‘til we realized the cost.”

Estella touched the blunt head of a femur, feeling a faint thrum of residual magic—old, tangled, wrong.

“No one’s fed him since,” the farmer said. “No one dares. But we couldn’t pull him up, neither. He was rooted deep.”

She stood. “What do you feed him?”

The farmer didn’t answer. Outside, the corn rustled ominously, though there was no wind.

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Back at the wagon, farmer in tow, Rudy was humming a lullaby and organizing sugar cubes by pyramid height.

“Oh, there you are,” he chirped. “I’ve been thinking of new ways to aid the harvest. Have you considered the possibility of a spring festival? I could draft invitations.”

Estella set down her satchel, in no mood for his courtly machinations, “You were brought here by a Fae bargain.”

“I was *invited*,” Rudy said with a sniff. “Summoned, technically. Which is rather impolite if you ask me.”

“You eat life force!”

“Eat is such a vulgar word,” Rudy said. “I... incorporate it. Redistribute it. Very economical.”

“You’re the reason this place is dying.”

“I’m the reason this place *lived*,” Rudy snapped, his leaves twitching. “I merely... suggested methods. Efficient ones! What’s a little blood for a banquet of golden grain?”

Estella exhaled slowly. “You convinced these people to murder their own.”

“I never asked them to,” Rudy said, looking offended. “They offered. I’m not ungrateful.”

“Rudy,” Estella said, voice low, “they gave up their lives. Their families. Their souls. That’s not a thank-you gift.”

He went quiet. In the shadow of the tea tin, his monocle gleamed faintly. Estella stood for a long moment basking in the flame of her temper, watching the tiny glint of metal and pretense.

“Varric,” she said at last.

He didn’t look up from where he was sharpening a butter knife. “Hmm?”

“Get the tongs.”

The turnip flinched.

—

The farmer didn’t argue this time. He just led her from the wagon, down a side path behind the grain store, past a tree with rope marks too old to be recent and too deliberate to be innocent.

“Tell me the whole deal,” Estella said. “No riddles. No metaphors. I’m fresh out of patience and I’m halfway to conjuring a root rot plague on your entire pantry.”

He didn’t smile. Just exhaled like the words had been stuck in his lungs for years.

“It wasn’t supposed to last. The mayor called him up after the drought—said the earth needed a steward, a caretaker with… deeper roots.” The man winced at his own phrasing.

“We thought we were getting a spirit. Got a politician with delusions of grandeur.”

“And the bargain?”

“Life for life. One to start the cycle. One each season to keep it spinning. Blood soaks deeper than water.”

“Nice motto. You wanna put that on the town banner?”

He didn’t answer.

Estella looked back toward the wagon. “Alright then.”

She rolled up her sleeves.

“Let’s remove a parasite.”

—

It took salt, iron filings, a bottle of Varric’s ‘special blend’ whiskey, and the mayor’s old pocket watch—still ticking, disturbingly slow—to set the ritual circle. Rudy sat in the center, placed rather firmly in a soup bowl.

“I feel this is all deeply unfair,” he muttered. “You’re treating me like some common curse. I’m an institution.”

“You’re a moldy root with an ego problem,” Varric said, tossing dried mint into the fire. “And I’m hungry.”

“Touch me and I swear I’ll haunt your seasoning rack.”

Estella didn’t look up from the chalk runes. “Do turnips have souls?”

“Mine is magnificent.”

“I’ll take that as a no.”

The fire flared. The runes burned green, then gold, then a slick, unpleasant color not found in the rainbow. Rudy stiffened.

“No,” he said. “No, no, no. You don’t understand—I improved things. I brought prosperity. You were all so *grateful*—”

“You ate people, Rudy.”

“I didn’t *chew*! I’m refined!”

The wind shifted. The cornfield groaned. From deep underground, something growled—a sound like rotting roots and regret.

Estella pressed her palm to the final glyph.

“You’ll regret this, you know,” he croons, voice thick with static and soil. “Your fields will wither. Your stew will be bland. And no one, no one, will ever compliment your compost again—”

“Shut up, Rudy,” Varric mutters. “You’re going in the pot.”

“I revoke the invitation. By sun and soil, by debt repaid and names remembered—I cast you out.”

The soup bowl cracked.

Rudy screamed.

It was not, as one might expect, a high-pitched squeal, but a surprisingly musical baritone—like a disgraced opera singer tripping down a flight of stairs made entirely of accordions.

The earth shuddered. Vines shriveled. The air tasted briefly of overripe nectarines and unresolved tension.

Then, the field returned to silence. Real silence this time. The kind that didn't hum with suppressed guilt or supernatural gardening tips.

Estella slumped against a barrel.

"Well, that was... unsettling," She said, rubbing her temples as if to scrub away the echoes of the ritual. "I can't say I'll miss the turnip, but I think I might need a drink after that."

Varric held up a slightly charred turnip. "Still edible."

"I'm not eating sentient produce."

"He insulted my stew. That's personal."

Now, for the first time since their arrival, she laughed in earnest.

—

The villagers emerged, tentative and sun-starved, blinking at the sky like they weren't sure it would still be there. Turnwell may not be saved, but it has a future now. The soil is quiet. The kitchen is full. The curse is broken.

A modest celebration unfolded—modest in scale, less so in culinary creativity. The stew was excellent. Rudy, for the record, was seasoned with rosemary.

Estella filed her final note in the Archive entry two days later,

"False Idols and Fae Influence – Subcategory: Root-Based"

"Turnwell will recover. The land's still shy, but willing. The villagers are planting again—real crops this time. No blood. Just honest work.

As for Sir Rudius Baga: he will not be missed.

Though he was, in fairness, absolutely delicious."