I

Aemple is not normally the sort of place where anything interesting happens.

Up until recently, Aemple had been a sleepy town. Quietly growing over the course of generations, its most noteworthy landmarks include the Shirewood Shipping warehouse and a respectably large church dedicated to Belladonna—the premiere Goddess in the Common Faith. Nestled beneath the mountainous regions and kept safe by a series of wards and incantations designed to keep the monsters at bay, the most that anyone could truly say about Aemple was that it had been a pleasant, if dull, place to rest one’s head.

With one notable exception in recent history, of course.

“GABRIELLA YOUR SISTER IS ABSOLUTELY INSUFFERABLE.”

“DON’T *YOU* CALL HER GABRIELLA YOU HEEL, ONLY *I* CAN CALL HER THAT!”

“IT’S HER *FULL NAME,* YOU FAT WAD OF SNOT—”

“*I KNOW THAT YOU DIDN’T JUST CALL ME FAT YOU PILE OF BIG BLUE BLUBBER!!”*

The introduction of a fourth member of their Coven would have been tricky from the get-go. The Grimoire sisters were just that—*sisters*. They had known one another all their lives, and they *still* barely got along. With three strong personalities such as these under one roof, adding a fourth one was always going to be a recipe for disaster regardless of who it belonged to.

But even with the vast changes (that’s vast in more ways than one) that had come about since the Great Devouring had been circumvented, not everyone was quite so ready to accept the fact that their coven wasn’t quite done growing. Perhaps no longer growing *outwards,* but in *number*—and the last thing that anyone had expected was for Gabby to offer forgiveness to the treacherous Starkin Elf that had helped to set such a disaster in motion…

But then, Belladonna *was* all about forgiveness. Gabby wouldn’t have been a very good Anointed One if she didn’t follow her new patron deity’s number one rule, right?

“It’s *your* fault that we’re both in such sorry states anyway!” Griselda the Elder screeched, “If you hadn’t thrown your lot in with Calahree, trying to *backstab* the three of us when all we ever did was—”

“Hey don’t blame *me* for that giant gut!” their newest member Malary barked back, “All it took was a little stroking under your chins for you to—”

No matter *how* difficult forgiveness might have been. For either of them, given how they had acted during Calahree’s climb to power. For months it felt like Gabby was the only one with her head screwed on straight, all while Griselda fell for the corrupting influence of one of the worst demons in any of the Six Realms… and Malary helped push her there!

“Come on guys, there’s no need to fight!” Ginny the Prodigy raised her voice and physically stepped between the two larger personalities and their equally large frames, “There’s nothing that we can’t talk about over a nice hot bowl of stew, right?”

And Ginny… well, Ginny hadn’t exactly been helpful either. While most of the people who were affected by Calahree’s growing presence were coerced to consume everything in sight, a select few of them were bewitched into thinking that that sort of thing was arousing. Something that, unfortunately, hadn’t been as simple as *un*bewitching everyone who had been affected. Some months after everyone was still struggling to slim down, and Ginny had been Griselda and Malary’s biggest hurdles to getting back into their peak shape…

Because *boy* had they been less helpful than ever now that their shapes were stuck in “round”.

In the aftermath of Calahree’s failed takeover of the Mortal Realm, both Griselda and Malary had suffered greatly for being on her side. And while neither of them were *quite* as rotund as they had been during the zenith of Calahree’s power, they were far from the slight and svelte spell slingers that they had been in their prime.

“There’s plenty of reason to fight!” Griselda placed her hands on her hips and puffed out her chest, belly bobbing in front of her as she took a few lumbering steps forward, “All she does is eat our food, dismiss my ideas, and take up a perfectly good bedroom!”

The oldest of the Grimoire sisters and by far the loudest, she was also the widest—at least among those members of the Coven who were related. Her vast, barrel-built physique was considerably less so than when she was acting as an anchor for Calahree’s presence in the Mortal Realm, but that still wasn’t saying much. By the standards of a few months ago though, Griselda was positively petite. Her great green stomach no longer pooled along the floor—it didn’t even touch it! Instead, she was batting it between her buried knees with every swaybacked step. Her ham-sized biceps forced her sausage arms out at an angle even when standing, and her swaddling double chin softened her sharp and intimidating features; she painted quite the different picture than she had by this point last year, and she was not one to take the comparison lightly.

“I’ll have you know that Ginny *gives* me those extra portions because *you’re* on a diet!”

“*You’re supposed to be on a diet too, you fathead!”*

“Yeah, well, your ideas are still stupid!”

Malary was only a few years younger than Griselda, but held a firm edge on size by a good thirty to forty pounds depending on how well Griselda had been resisting temptation. She had already been different enough with her dark blue skin and her silver-white hair, but Malary was easily set apart from the other members of her new Coven by just how *big* she was—even after having shed several hundreds of pounds once the brunt of Calahree’s magic wore off. Her dark eyes sunk into her face as she frowned and pouted behind those chubby softball-sized cheeks of hers, only just recently having gained back some semblance of the mobility that she had lost when Calahree had tossed her aside.

The sheer size of them alone would have been enough to make anyone look twice, if ninety percent of them hadn’t also been struggling to shrink down to more manageable levels of “fat”. Individually, they were two morbidly obese witches who couldn’t so much as see their toes, let alone run after one another when they got on each other’s nerves. But together, the two of them were a half-ton of not-so-fun; bickering over who was following what diet, fighting over what ingredients went into which spell, and constantly testing the patience of damn near everyone.

And in two very sharp, very scratchy voices that got *very annoying* to listen to after months and months of this.

“Alright, that’s *it* I have *had it* with this place!”

Grabbing her pointy white hat off of the rack and pulling her white leather coat over her arms, Gabby Grimoire made a dramatic break from the Main Corridor of their new and improved tower. Storming towards the Teleportation Circle with her heels clicking against the stone floor, the rest of the Coven instantly stopped their bickering to bear witness to Gabby’s explosive exit.

And then followed her.

“What do you mean you’ve *had it*?!”

“You’re not just going to *leave me* here with these idiots, are you?!”

“Gabby wait do you mean that you’ve had it with *us* or the tower? We can spruce it up!”

The four of them being crammed together in this tower was the worst idea that anyone had ever had, ever. Ginny and Griselda used to drive her crazy *before* they were both obsessed with food (granted, in their own ways). Now that Malary had been added to the mixture permanently, she was just as annoying as any of her sisters! She might not have been trying to summon an eldritch demon from the Void, but she was just so… *needy*! Thousands of pounds lighter between Malary and Griselda, and all of the fat had somehow found its way between their ears!

“I’m going out.” Gabby grumbled, “And I’m not coming back until I don’t want to strangle you all.”

“Ooh, is this a Belladonna thing?” Ginny asked helpfully, sandwiching herself between the rolling lovehandles of her fellow coven members, “Can I come?”

“Uhh…” Gabby touched her head, closed her eyes, and pretended that she was getting divine wisdom from the Goddess of Temperance, “Sorry, Big B said no.”

“Aww.”

Griselda folded her arms over her squishy poundcake breasts. Her scowl might not have been as intimidating as it used to be back when she was skinny, but she could smell Gabby’s bullshit from a mile away.

“You’re not going on some holy mission at all.” Griselda narrowed her eyes as she looked her silver-clad sister up and down, “You’re just using that as an excuse to get out of the house!”

“Am I really that obvious?” Gabby smirked, tapping her feet twice in the center of the teleportation circle drawn into the stone below her, “Oh well—I’ll think of a better lie next time.”

With the click of her heels, the large etching on the ground began to glow with Belladonna’s bright blue aura. Gabby had enough time to give a sarcastic little wave goodbye to the triplicate of troublesome coven mates as she made a quick getaway for some much-needed peace and quiet. In all of their clamoring after her, Griselda and Malary found themselves face-down into the circle just after the activation; their noses not even touching the ground thanks to the ample amounts of padding that the two of them had up front and up top over the shoulders.

“That little brat.” Griselda growled face-down into the rock, “I’m gonna give her a piece of my mind whenever she gets back.”

“I think you giving her a piece of your mind too often is what chased her away in the first place.”

Malary propped herself up with two pillowy petrol colored arms, her fat, punchable face resting in her palm as she drummed her chubby fingers along the stone. Seeing that she had once again gotten the better of Griselda’s nerves, Malary put on her best shit-eating grin. She often reveled in getting one over on Calahree’s Chosen One, after all of the waiting on her she had been forced to do.

It was just a shame that it was coming at the cost of Gabby’s patience.

“Okay guys, come on.” Ginny wisely intervened, bending her knees and hunkering down so that she might have a *chance* at getting the two of them up on their fat little feet, “Don’t make it worse.”

“I’m not—*uff*—doing *anything*.” Griselda grunted as she struggled to rock and roll herself onto her back, “Ma-*lard-*y is the one whose been instigating—”

“I haven’t been instigating anything you jerk!”

“Guys—”

“I’m a *jerk*?” Griselda struggled to scoff as she took Ginny’s hands, “You’re… phew… you’re getting*…* hnnn… you’re getting *sloppy*!”

“I thought calling you a jade-colored jumbo jerk would sound corny.”

“Well it *does*.”

“Guys!”

Ginny pouted, her bright baby blues welling up as the eldest of the Grimoire sisters situated herself now that she was back on her feet. Malary looked up expectantly for the same level of assistance, only to be met with Ginny’s puppy-dog eyes in the process.

“What’s your problem?”

“Same as the rest of us—that she has to share a tower with *you*.”

“I swear to the Old Gods, I am going to *sit* on you, you—”

“STOP FIGHTIIIING!!”

Ginny bawled out, clenching her fists and throwing her head back as she wailed. Fortunately for her, it was enough of a show to get the two loudmouthed Acolytes to hush. For the moment, at least.

“You guys’s fighting is what made Gabby leave in the first place!” Ginny harrumphed, “You guys *have* to find a way to live with each other, or she’s just gonna leave again when she gets back!”

Griselda and Malary gave each other a side-eyed glare.

The two of them, get along?

Never.