

Midnight Chicken

By C. Jade Wyton

Olivia Stoneclaw can't sleep, so she sneaks downstairs to cause some problems (and eat some leftover chicken).

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Uneven snores and rattling windows echoed through the quiet tavern hall, broken only by the creaking of floorboards as light, padded feet crept from the far room to the stairs.

Slowly descending to the dining hall below, the dark-furred tabaxi paused to catch her breath and touch her bulging belly.

She couldn't sleep. The baby had been kicking too much. She thought it felt like the baby was playing soccer with her organs.... And then, it found her bladder.

So even though the bed was soft and her husband's arms were strong and warm, Olivia'd had to get up to use the bathroom.

That had been an entire *ordeal*, too. She'd made the mistake of not waking Daimon to help her and gotten stuck for... what? Five? Maybe ten? Minutes, unable to heft herself up without something to brace herself with. She was just lucky Volante had found her when she did; because Olivia had been on the brink of simply sliding to the floor and rolling her way out of the bathroom to find help.

But being stuck upright for so long had woken her up completely and so she had decided that, instead of attempting to lay back down and settle, she would get up and *do* something.

But what, though?

It was raining outside. And though it was only a light drizzle, Olivia remembered how slippery Thistlebond was in the rain— She didn't fancy getting stuck on her arse in a mud puddle overnight, so she knew she had to stay in the tavern.

She supposed there could be some chaos to make, here. Even if it wasn't a lot.

Olivia sniffed, looking around, and then made her way over to one of the nearby tables. She flipped the chair over (perhaps a little loudly, as it was heavy and she had trouble manoeuvring both it and herself and she almost dropped it a few times) and examined the underside of its legs.

Ahah! Just as she thought; it had little feet pads, to stop it scratching up the floors! Removing one of those would make it wobble, and it would annoy the *hell* out of whoever sat in it next!

Unsheathing her claws, Olivia scraped off one of the chair's footpads and flicked it to the floor before rightening the seat and pushing it back into place.

*Take that, Thistlebond!*

Olivia felt a rumbling purr escape her as she went to another table, took the knives and forks out of their display box, and mixed them all together before flipping them all upside down and replacing them.

*Get wrecked!*

Perhaps a little too proud of herself for her mischief, Olivia made her way to the kitchen; knocking a picture on the wall askew as she did.

She looked around for things she could mess with and then grinned before leaving her mess:

She half-unscrewed the salt lid, so it would come loose next time it was used. And she switched the contents of two cupboards, so the plates were where the cups had been, and the cups were where the plates belonged. And then she undid the twine holding all the measuring spoons together and hid each one in a different location!

She opened the fridge to hide the last one and, with a gasp, felt her eyes grow wide as she saw a beautiful sight:

An entire roast chicken sat, already cooked, on the highest shelf.

'I'll take that, thank you!' she said aloud as she switched it for the measuring spoon.

She placed the chicken on the bench and then, with *very* little grace, hefted herself up beside it and began to tear it to pieces and devour it with vigour.

It was a messy process; the chicken was *very* juicy and fragile and she ate with so much excitement, she was sure more of it ended up smeared into her face fur than actually went in her mouth.

Then, as she was attempting to rip off one of the legs, her hand slipped and she launched the chicken to the floor where it bounced several times before rolling to a stop.

Damn it! She'd been enjoying that! But she couldn't just eat off the floor....

Or *could* she?

*It's not like Sheshalan's here to stop me*, Olivia thought; awkwardly slipping off the bench and making the difficult journey to her knees so that she could retrieve her half-eaten chicken.

She examined it and, happy to see that it was mostly clean (a single hair that looked like it was her own sat on its top, easily picked off), looked around and realised she had made a mistake and had no way to get back on her feet.

*Oh well. That was a problem for her in five minutes!*

Olivia bit into the chicken, tearing at it like an animal, and then froze as she heard a chuckle from the door.

She glanced up to see the tavern owner Terrance, an orcish man with a wide smile and disgustingly kind heart.

'Can I *help* you, old man?' she snapped at him, her mouth still full.

'Oh, darlin', y'know if yer hungry yer can just ask me t'make ya something! I ain't gonna leave a poor pregnant girl eating leftovers off the floor.'

'I'm not hungry,' Olivia lied, taking another bite of her chicken. 'And I don't know *what* you're talking about!'

'Darlin', I can make ya something fresh—'

'I'm not hungry!' Olivia pushed, continuing to eat. 'I've never been less hungry in my entire life! So get lost.'

'*Get lost!*' Terrance laughed, making his way over to Olivia. 'Liv, love, I ain't leaving ya on the floor. Gimme yer hand.'

Olivia, rather than taking the hand that was offered to her, placed a greasy, meatless bone into its palm and then returned to eating.

Terrance, clearly humoured, rolled his eyes and disposed of the bone in his kitchen's bin before washing his hands and opening his fridge. 'Do y'want some eggs?'

'Nope, I'm not hungry.'

'Hows about some bacon, hm?'

'*Nope!*'

'Y'sure? I'll be making it anyway fer the breakfast rush.'

'No, leave me alone,' Olivia mumbled through another mouthful. 'Also. Don't tell Sheshalan about this or I'll sneak into your room and claw holes into all your underwear.'

Another laugh, and Terrance removed a tray of eggs from his fridge and placed them where Olivia had been sitting before.

And just as he finished retrieving the bacon, Olivia finished eating her chicken and attempted to stand— Though, she couldn't seem to get off the ground.

'Need help?' Terrance asked, offering her his hand again.

'No!' Olivia lied. Then she took his hand. 'But *fine*, I'll accept it anyway because you keep offering and I don't want *you* to feel bad and useless!'

'Oh, yes,' Terrance chuckled as he helped Olivia to her feet. 'We wouldn't want that, would we?'

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