

The Apprentice

In the World of the Fairie, nothing is quite as it seems—especially when Kiki, a well-meaning but wildly clumsy gnome, is involved. One dropped vial leads to an explosive disaster, a runaway moment of doubt, and a strange message in a bottle that might change everything. With rubber gloves on and a heart full of hope, Kiki sets out to prove that even the messiest gnomes can become master alchemists.

Nothing is as it seems in The World of the Fairie. Our story today follows one little gnome who makes a big mess. Oh, here she is now, let's check in on her.

The glass vial slipped from Kiki's pudgy grasp, shattering on the cobblestone floor. She looked sheepishly to her teacher, Master Remmity, who simply sighed, stroked his beard, then handed her a pair of bright red rubber gloves. Kiki pulled the gloves over her small hands and up her forearms with a snap, and retrieved a new vial for the master to pour his latest potion in. She watched, transfixed, as the red liquid swirled, filling the vial.

Kiki set the new potion down next to the rest of the potions they had spent the last 45 minutes working on before turning to her master, "Sorry about the other vial, I'll clean it right up!" She smiled brightly though it didn't quite reach her eyes and grabbed the broom wedged between the Alchemy table and the doorframe to the sales floor.

Master Remmity waved her off, "It's fine Kiki. I'll have Shrey clean it up on his shift. Why don't you take care of the sales floor? I think the bell on the door rang a bit ago, whoever it is, they are probably done browsing what elixirs are available".

Kiki bit her lip, feeling Remmity's exasperation with her. Despite all her efforts, she wasn't getting any better and was wasting the master Alchemist's time more than she was helping him. Not to mention that she was costing him a fortune in not only broken vials, but ingredients too. Luckily, he had a pretty good deal fleshed out with the glassblower and herbalist in the small gnome town of Gnormal Gnome Village.

Kiki opened the door to the sales floor of the modest shop and paused when she saw who had come in. In typical Gnome attire, Mayor Gnornady was wearing a large pointed red hat, his bulbous nose was poking out from his wrinkled face and his long white beard was hanging to his knees in a neglected fashion.

“Mayor Gnornady, what can I do for you?” Kiki asked the gnome.

“I’m looking for Master Remmity. My daughter has fallen ill again and the herbalist sent me here for a list of ingredients and instructions for a potion that will help” The gnome handed over his list and Kiki scanned it.

1 dragon tooth

7 drops fairy saliva

3 drops unicorn blood

a pinch of Black Salt

2 Anise Hyssop leaves (finely chopped)

“This is an unusual list. The only ingredients we have in stock are Anise leaves and Black Salt. I’ll see what Master Remmity wants to do about the rest.” Kiki turned to go into the crafting room, re-reading the list and thinking of where she could possibly get a dragon’s tooth and some unicorn blood. She bumped into one of the tables, sending several potions rolling. She let go of the list and tried her hardest to catch the rolling potions but she was only able to get one before the rest fell to the floor, shattering with a twinkle.

As a noxious fume started to waft from the mixed liquids, Master Remmity popped his head out of the crafting room to see the commotion before shouting at everyone to get down.

Kiki and Mayor Gnornady dropped to the floor with flopping thuds and Remmity pulled his head back into the craft room seconds before the liquids combusted, sending shards of broken glass around the shop.

After several heartbeats of silence, they lifted their heads from the floor. Kiki took in the destruction she caused. Where the potions had mixed together, there was a small fire blazing. Mayor Gnornady had several glass shards sticking out from his red hat but otherwise is un-scathed, Master Remmity also seems unscathed. And enraged. Before he took a breath to start to chastise Kiki, she ran from the shop, eyes glistening with unshed tears.

She walked until her feet hurt. She was no longer in Gnormal Gnome Village, she had walked two villages over to the small bay. She paced up and down the beach, watching fae children run in and out of the waves, some taunting the sunbathing Selkies, others trying to ride a Kelpie. She finally sat with weary bones and disappointment in herself coursing through her life's blood.

As the sun set and parents rounded up their mischievous little ones, Kiki ran her hands through the sand. Up and down, back and forth, finding the sensation soothing as she pondered if Alchemy was right for her. After all, she broke at least one vial a day. (Which is better than the 5 a day she used to break, mind you) She dug her fingers deep into the sand where they connected with something cold and solid. Her curiosity piqued, she kneeled to dig out what she found. To her disappointment, it was not buried treasure but a bottle with a piece of parchment in it.

She uncorked the bottle and worked the rolled paper out. She unfurled it to read, but found nothing had been written. Kiki scoffed and tossed the bottle and its contents to the side, raising her weary eyes to the rising moon, kissing the water's horizon.

The cooling waves of the rising tides tickled Kiki's toes, jolting her awake. At some point during the night, she had fallen asleep. She sat up stretching feeling invigorated by the new day, until she recalled yesterday's disaster.

She placed her hands firmly on the ground to hoist her rotund body from the sleepy sands and her hands once again made contact with the bottle and paper. Only now the paper was soggy. And there, in a scrawled mess of glowing blue script, was a message.

"Failure is a requirement of success. Giving up is the only true failure."

It seemed this message was made just for her as she was ready to give up her dream of becoming an alchemist. She broke just about everything she touched when she was in the store. Master Remmity made so many accomatatin to help her through her clumsiness, from rubber gloves so glass doesn't slip through her fingers to most tables having little covers on them and on the corners so she wouldn't bruise her hips running into them. Master Remmity hadn't given up on her, he helped make an environment where she could thrive. He saw potential in her, through her klutzy trait. He saw someone worth his time and his knowledge.

Kiki's eyes started to water with emotion as the realization that Master Remmity didn't see her as a failure. She made her way back to his shop, taking up most of her morning as her stubby legs didn't move as fast as the other, taller faerie-folk.

She entered the alchemy shop to see yesterday's mess cleaned. Most likely Mayor Gnornady sent the Brownies over to help take care of things. She sulked into the crafting room with her head bowed.

“I see you've come to your senses.” Remmity commented. “There is some fairy spit on the lower left shelf that I picked up after yesterday's debacle. Please bring it over.”

Kiki went to do as he asked of her, “Gloves first Kiki,” he stated with his back turned to her, mixing something in a copper cauldron. Kiki grabbed her red rubber gloves, pulled them over her hands with a snap and set to work helping Master Remmity make the unusual healing potion for the Mayor's daughter.

Ah, welcome back little spectator. Did you enjoy my story? Did you find yourself wanting to pat our poor gnome on the back through her trials? It's okay, I did it for you. Kiki found it in her tiny self to keep trying in the face of adversity and you'll be ecstatic to know that after several years, (and a couple thousand broken glass vials) She did become a Master Alchemist. After Master Remmity retired, he gave the shop to Kiki to run and she now has her own apprentice that is almost as clumsy as her. My dear reader, be you fae or foe, look into yourself and know that nothing is ever as it seems.