MISADVENTURERS

"Stick Bug"

by Amaya Tenshi

FADE IN:

ENTER FLASHBACK--

EXT. - CASTLE GATE -- DAY

EMBRY approaches the castle, enters through the gate, and steps into the main room

EMBRY
Wizard! I have answered your summons! Reveal yourself!

There is no response. He presses on into the castle. IZOL steps forward, grinning menacingly and holding out his hands to look large and grandiose.

IZOL
Ah, you received my summons. Excellent! Welcome, Sir Embry.

EMBRY
I have come on your offer, Izol, to lift my curse. Nevertheless, you are a man of certain reputation. I find it doubtful that you would offer to aid me without asking for some payment in return.

IZOL
How very right you are! The fact is, I've heard that you're indestructible, and famous throughout the land for your sword skills. I wanted to lure you here so I could find a way to steal your armor or make you my slave.

As Izol cackles evilly. Embry draws his sword and holds it ready.

EMBRY
That is regrettable.

He lunges forward, and Izol quickly teleports out of the way. Embry SMASHES the wall behind him, and turns to see where Izol has gone. The wizard pulls a wand from inside his sleeve points it at Embry.

IZOL
I thought you might feel that way. How about I let you think it over. Let's see how you like being trapped for a hundred years or so?

He fires a bolt of magical energy at Embry, who deflects the bolt with his sword. The impact throws him backwards into a wall which collapses on him, burying him in the manner he was discovered by Reese and the others. Meanwhile, the beam bounces off a wall and hits Izol in the

back. He screams, glows, and is sucked into the brick which the beam had hit.

END FLASHBACK

INT. KITCHEN -- MORNING

REESE is in the kitchen excitedly assembling a pile of plantains and other foodstuffs while AURELIA is looking the kitchen over.

REESE
Check it out! We've got these plantains; we can cook up a real treat with some coconut oil and a few other things.

AURELIA
Bananas are fine as long as they're not green, but those things? They're way too starchy. Besides, I already told you, we can't eat any of this stuff.

REESE
That's because they need to be fried or baked. Coconut oil is great for it because it's sweet and doesn't burn at lower temperatures. I've been trying to find some...

AURELIA
How do you know this stuff? You seem to take such odd things and make really good use of them.

REESE
Mom and dad taught me that there's lots to learn from the locals as we traveled all over the place. Cooking and food was one of them.

Aurelia plays with her hair.

AURELIA
(shyly)
...What would your mom have thought about, you know, uh, this place?

REESE
She would've thought this place was awesome, and deserved more investigation. I'll bet she wouldn't believe how lucky we were that Embry knew about this castle. Why were you saying we can't just eat this stuff?

AURELIA
Remember there's a stasis spell active here that has to be

dispelled. Anything in here is fine so long as it stays in the area of stasis, but when you take it out, it'll age however many years the stasis has been in place. Even if you've eaten it first.

REESE
Eugh! Good for some vintages of wine, I guess, but I see your point.

AURELIA
Anyway, we should recruit the others before I...now where did they go?

ANGLE ON - ZOOM IN ON BRICK WHERE IZOL WAS TRAPPED

We hear Izol's thoughts.

IZOL
(V.O.)
All I do is wait, and soon enough I'll be free of this confinement.

CUT TO:

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD

The courtyard is overrun with vines, long, tall grass, small trees, and some wildlife. Elric is busy gathering firewood.

ELRIC
Well, this looks like enough for cooking breakfast. Should burn nicely with little smoke.

He checks the pile of wood in his arms.

ELRIC
Though I could just save the best for a snack.

ANGLE ON - ELRIC'S FACE AND HIS EYES WIDENING

CUT TO:

INT. - CASTLE FOYER -- MOMENTS LATER

Reese and Aurelia have found Embry and are walking towards the entrance when they hear an uninterrupted stream of incoherent screaming coming from outside.

REESE
Oh, snap! What is it? Monsters? Dragons? More food?

AURELIA
That sounds like Elric! He was outside, come on!

CUT TO:

EXT. - CASTLE GROUNDS

Reese, Aurelia and Embry arrive on the scene as Elric is chasing something long and thin whizzing across the ground. Elric wields a stick bug as a weapon, and its eyes are poking out of either side of its head and its antennae wave.

ELRIC
You think you're so smart. You are LIES! LIES I tell you! No one would WANT to eat you!

He suddenly notices that his stick he's holding has eyes. He shrieks and releases the giant stick bug, and reaches for another stick. This one also grows legs and runs away before he can grab it.

ELRIC
Liars and frauds and cheats every one of you...you...evil little... reprobates!

REESE
Whoa, whoa, dude! What's going on? Is it poisonous? Are those things poisonous here?

ELRIC
What? No, of course not! They are just…
(suddenly losing his composure again)
MADE OF PURE EVIL AND MALICIOUS INTENT AND VILE UNTRUTHS!! GET BACK HERE YOU VILLAIN!

He makes to run after another one, armed with his boomerang and his staff. Reese grabs his shoulder to stop him.

REESE
Did I hear you right: that you eat sticks? Dude, you can't eat sticks.

ELRIC
Not *raw*, you can't, obviously. Honestly, Reese, were you raised in a barn?

AURELIA
Well, you obviously were. Or maybe you ate the barn?

ELRIC
Shows what you know your perfection-ness. See, first you have to boil 'em for a few days, then you have to scrape off all the bark, boil 'em again, mulch 'em,

boil 'em...'course, all the flavor's gone by then...

Reese, Aurelia and Embry look astounded and disgusted. In the background, Darling is very carefully gathering up stick bugs and bundling them as if they were real sticks.

ELRIC
...Then you have to throw some leaves on there, mash 'em, stew 'em, and then drain off the excess fluid and then you eat stick porridge. Three days of work ruined!

REESE
Oookay…well, we were actually trying to put breakfast together, so you don't have to worry about eating sticks, man.

ELRIC
Hmmph! As if I would. Sticks are disgusting.

EMBRY
It suits us not to be astounded by this elf's tale of woe. He is given to these fits of mania, no doubt thanks to his sometime diet.

REESE
Dude. I respect you. But you SERIOUSLY need to learn how to talk.

AURELIA
He said that we shouldn't get worked up about anything Elric says because his brain's probably broken from eating nothing but sticks as a kid.

REESE
Well, why didn't he just say that?

They all walk into the castle except for Darling. She goes to a gap in the wall and carefully opens her hands, letting the bundle of stick bugs loose. They fall on the other side of the wall, near a drain which leads into the castle, and begin crawling in.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN

The group has reassembled in the kitchen. Reese is checking the oven, Aurelia is studying the surroundings, Embry is standing to one side looking bored, and Elric smiles when he sees Darling come in behind them all.

REESE
So Embry, You were here for a long time. What happened to that wizard you encountered?

EMBRY
He was as true a villain as any sorcerer which drew breath. We engaged in battle, and though the wall collapsed on me, I did not see what became of him. Yet he must have been defeated, or else I am certain he would have exacted vengeance against me, and the castle would still stand in full repair.

ELRIC
Exactly how I would have put it. Say, these look tasty!

Elric reaches for a basket of muffins, and downs them all in one swift gulp.

ELRIC
Not bad if I say so myself. Let's see if there are any more...

Nobody is paying attention to him, as all eyes are on Aurelia. Aurelia concentrating, her hands held out in front of her. Finally, a faint aura starts to glow around her and floods the room, then the whole castle and the surrounding grounds. The glow changes to a brilliant flash that envelops the area, and fades.

REESE
Did it work?

AURELIA
I think so. Take a look around and see how things change.

Already, things start to tarnish and age. Many of the organic items like baskets and food dissolve into rot, then dust. The basket that Elric ate all the muffins from turns ashen, then black, then grows fungus, before dissolving into ash. Elric turns green and looks sick.

DARLING
Oh no, is something wrong? You aren't normally that color.

Elric covers his mouth and rushes from the room. Darling looks concerned and goes after him. He retches off screen.

EMBRY
Friends, I should remark that I believe that was the wisest thing yet to come from his mouth. Let us rejoice that he might yet improve.

REESE
Aww, man! There's nothing here to eat, then.

AURELIA
Well, what did you expect? All the food has been in stasis for 300 years. Once the spell was lifted, it all aged-

A bolt of ragged, red, magical energy suddenly catches Embry from off screen and lifts him into the air, then freezes him in ice. The hunk of ice slams into the floor with a THUNK! Reese and Aurelia look up. There is Izol, wielding his wand. Darling and Elric reenter the room from a different doorway and freeze when they see the stranger.

DARLING
Oh! ...Are you the exterminator?

REESE
UHHHHHHH…

AURELIA
I think we should run!

She and Reese run out one way, and Elric and Darling run out the other. Izol grins evilly.

IZOL
Run all you want, intruders, you'll never leave here alive.

CUT TO:

INT. - CASTLE FOYER -- MOMENTS LATER

The portcullis falls. Windows snap shut, etc.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Izol walks to Embry, trapped in the block of ice.

IZOL
As soon as I deal with your little friends, we can pick up where we left off. With you becoming my slave.

Embry's eyes can still move, and he glares at Izol, but can do no more.

CUT TO:

INT. - LONG CURVING HALLWAY

Reese and Aurelia are running as fast as they can through one of the castle's many hallways. They pass room after room.

REESE
Holy mackerel, Batman! What just happened?

AURELIA
Embry told us he was fighting a wizard when he was trapped here. I think that was him. He must have been in the field which I disenchanted. Maybe he was sealed up somehow, and I released him.

REESE
Great. So now what do we do?

AURELIA
He has a wand. That means that he has to use it to channel his power.

REESE
So...that's...is that bad? Or good? What does that mean? Is it good?

AURELIA
It might be good. Think of it this way: let's say you had a raging river, but you wanted to direct it somewhere. The river is magical energy, and your directing it is casting a spell. You'd need a channel to keep the water going where you want, and not too much. That's what the wand is.

REESE
Not seeing how this is going to be of use to us.

AURELIA
If you need to rely on a wand and it isn't there, sometimes the spell won't go off or it'll go off wrong, or it'll backfire. Sort of like some of your plans that haven't been thought through.

REESE
Hey , come on, they worked out, didn’t they?

AURELIA
That's why I try to practice magic without it. I have to go slower, and it's much harder to cast spells without more practice, but I can't afford to lose the wand and have trouble casting spells.

REESE
OK. So we need to take his wand. And if we do, then we can beat him?

AURELIA
Maybe. Come on.

CUT TO:

INT. - CASTLE INTERIOR - REESE'S ROOM

Aurelia and Reese get to Reese's room. They quickly grab his gear.

AURELIA
I thought you didn't know what most of this stuff did.

REESE
I don't, but there's no time like the present, right? Hopefully there's SOMETHING in here that can help.

CUT TO:

EXT. - CASTLE GATE

Elric and Darling run to the main gate. It is shut. Elric hooks his hands under the bars and tries to lift it himself, straining with all his might. He tries several positions and grips, and finally tries to lever it open with his staff, but it still won't budge. Darling grins and leans down to lift the portcullis. She strains and it begins to slide upwards. At that moment, Izol appears, sees what she's doing, laughs, and waves his wand. Red magic shoots out from it and envelops the portcullis. It slams shut again, dragging Darling down with it. She looks baffled, and keeps trying to lift it, now repeating Elric's series of failed attempts. Elric turns to confront the wizard. He looks more focused than his usual.

ELRIC
I don't know who you are, but I would like to let you know you have the pleasure of facing off against Elric, the famous gentleman of the road.

He pulls holds out his staff and boomerang.

ELRIC
I am well known in over seven realms, both as a rogue extraordinaire, and as a bard of exceeding magnificence-

Elric's eye twitches suddenly and he turns his head. There is a stick bug perched on a pile of rubble just beside him. It blinks several times. Elric stares at it before he loses his cool.

ELRIC
LLIIIIIIEEEEESSS!!

Elric throws his boomerang at the stick bug. The stick bug tilts its body, seemingly without realizing the danger, and the boomerang misses. Elric screams again in frustration, drawing Darling's attention. Izol sees the stick bug and smiles. He casts a spell on the stick bug and it grows to titanic size. Darling looks at it.

DARLING
Oooooohhhhh! THAT'S what they mean by speak softly and carry a big stick. Right?

ELRIC
Of course it is! Stand back, my darling! I'll take care of this!

He throws his boomerang again. The boomerang hits the giant stick bug in one eye. It blinks the eye a few times, but is unharmed. Elric's own eye twitches. Darling looks at Elric's face, looks at the stick bug, and looks back at Elric.

DARLING
Don't worry, I'll get it!

As she steps forward she cracks her neck and swings her club to warm up. Elric holds up a hand with an air of magnificence.

ELRIC
Darling. This is something a gentleman must deal with on his own.

DARLING
OK!

CUT TO:

INT. - CASTLE FOYER -- LATER

Reese and Aurelia burst into the foyer. Elric is covered in bruises, because he keeps throwing himself at the stick bug's legs and smashing his face or arms, etc. The stick bug is standing on its back legs, the fore held out before it in confused fashion. It is clear that nothing Elric has done to it has done it any harm. Before Reese or Aurelia can comment, Elric knocks himself silly and collapses.

ELRIC
Uhhhh…

Darling steps forward. She whacks the bug in one toe. The stick bug’s eyes water, and it and shrinks to normal size. Reese picks it up. It twitches its hurt foot and looks sad. Izol looks around at the group.

IZOL
Well, my little intruders, looks like we're all present and accounted for. Now I'll teach you to invade my castle!

He fires a shot of magic at Reese and Aurelia, then at Elric and Darling. Darling grabs Elric and dodges out of the way, and Aurelia raises a magical shield for herself and Reese. Izol smiles.

IZOL
Very well, I'll take you out first!

He gathers himself and fires another blast of magic at her, shattering her shield and throwing her against a wall. Reese looks horrified and runs to her side. Aurelia tries to say something, but can’t quite do it. Her eyes glaze over and she faints. Reese holds her close and looks up to see what else is happening. Izol looks drained, but he pulls out a vial from his pouch, drinks it, and revives. Reese places himself between Aurelia and Izol and dumps out his backpack. The items scatter on the floor in front of him. Enraged, Darling charges Izol.

IZOL
Sweetheart, I have something for you.

Izol reaches into his pouch and retrieves something in his fist.

DARLING
My name isn't Sweetheart, it's-

Izol, smiling knowingly, opens his hand to reveal what he has hidden in it. Darling freezes, and blanches at the sight of them.

DARLING
BEEEEEEEAAAAAAAANNNNNNSSS!!!

Reese is rummaging desperately through his things, while in the background Darling runs by in a blind panic. Izol throws the beans after her, laughing. Elric wakes up when he hears Darling's girlish screams. He shakes his head then jumps to his feet. He sees the beans, and scoops them all up and eats them. Reese waves to Elric.

REESE
Hey! Elric! Get his pouch! I think he's out of power after taking out Aurelia!

Elric grins, throws his boomerang, and effortlessly knocks the pouch off Izol's belt and halfway across the room. Izol glares at Elric.

IZOL
Why you--! Fine! It's time I stopped playing with the lot of you!

He lifts his wand, pauses to think for a moment, then fires a shot of magical energy at Elric.

IZOL
You might have stolen my power

potions, but I'm not helpless!

The shot hits Elric, and he glows briefly with red energy. It settles on his eyes, which remain glowing. Izol points at Reese, but addresses Elric.

IZOL
Get that loud-mouthed troublemaker!

Elric turns at once and throws his boomerang at Reese. Reese blocks with his surfboard, then has to dodge again to avoid Elric's staff, which has stretched across the room. Reese only had time to grab the flashlight as he dodges. He looks down at the flashlight, and sighs. He flicks it on, but it lights up with a blue light in the shape of a fish, which is solid and flexible like a flag. He grins. Elric throws the boomerang again, and Darling comes to Reese's side now. Elric pauses.

IZOL
What are you waiting for? Attack her!

Elric readies his boomerang, but stares into Darling's giant, watery, doe eyes. Suddenly, he turns and throws his boomerang at Izol instead. Izol barely ducks in time.

IZOL
What! Impossible! What force could that simple-minded, weak-willed fool possibly have which is strong enough to break through my mind control spell??

REESE
I dunno. True love or something?

Reese jumps towards him now that he is distracted. He uses the flashlight fish flag to yank the wand clean out of Izol's hand. Izol realizes his hands are empty, and is horrified.

IZOL
Wha?! HEY! GIVE THAT BACK!

Reese laughs and runs off, but Elric is still under mind control, and trips Reese with his staff. The wand and flashlight fish flag go flying out of Reese's hands.

REESE
Aw, snap!

Izol laughs, picks up his fallen pouch and pulls out three more vials and drinks them. He glows with magical energy.

REESE
No! Stop! Hey, why are you even attacking us anyway? What did we ever do to you?

IZOL
You freed me.

REESE
...Seriously, dude? We do you a favor so you attack us? Not cool, man!

IZOL
What? I'm just thanking you. Once I'm done here I'll pick up where I left off with that knight. Maybe, just for fun, I'll try trapping all of you in bricks. Let's see if he'll do what I want if all his friends are under my power...

Izol picks up a brick and lifts his wand. He laughs maniacally. Darling has picked up Elric and cradles him protectively. Izol glows with magic, and points his wand at Reese.

IZOL
I hope you like not moving around too much, loudmouth!

He tries to fire, but the spell shorts out at his wand. He blinks in surprise and stares at it. A stick bug eye pops out, then another, and then the legs. He screams in horror, but the brick he's holding is glowing with the energy he just tried to use. He screams as he is sucked into the brick. Elric blinks away the red glow, and Darling hugs him so tightly his eyes bug out. Reese runs to Aurelia, who is waking up.

AURELIA
What happened? Where is he? We have to defeat him!

REESE
I got his wand.

Reese smiles and shows that he pocketed it in his backpack.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN -- SIMULTANEOUS

The ice around Embry evaporates away, and he stands up.

CUT TO:

INT. - CASTLE FOYER -- MOMENTS LATER

Reese pats Elric on the shoulder.

REESE
Hey Elric, you know we got saved by a stick bug? How do you like that?

ELRIC
A WHAT?! WHERE!?!

They all gather around the brick Izol got sucked into.

REESE
What do we do about him? Put him back in the wall?

EMBRY
No. I have a better idea.

CUT TO:

EXT. - THE SHORE, AT THE DOCK - SUNDOWN

Embry tosses the brick into the water, then claps his hands together.

EMBRY
There.

He walks off.

TAG

EXT. THE BOTTOM OF THE RIVER -- LATER

Fish, dracodiles, and other strange river and sea creatures swim back and forth over the brick with Izol trapped in it. The brick has settled at the bottom. We can once again hear his thoughts.

IZOL
(V.O.)
Drat. Well, at least I have something more interesting to look at this time.

A giant fish sees the brick and swims towards it, its toothy jaws open in anticipation.

IZOL
NO! NO! NO! NOOOOOOO!

CUT TO:

BLACK