

Hot Leaf Dishwater

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Servants entered the great hall of the royal palace, approaching the table laid out in the centre with an assortment of drinks and dishes. The high priest beckoned one servant over, who poured him a cup of tea. "Would you care for some?" he asked Lili with a smile that she was sure was forced.

"What's in it?" she asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Oh, we don't mean to poison you with jasmine tea, no, no, no." He took a sizeable sip from his teacup. "See, perfectly harmless, and prepared by the best tea maker in the temple."

At this, the servant grimaced. Evidently, he did not share the priest's opinion.

"Alright then, I'll have some of that tea," said Lili. This appeared to worry the servant, but he complied and made his way around to the other side of the table nonetheless, supplying her with a tea cup of her own, before hurrying off to pour tea for a lesser priest.

Lili took a sip of tea, then promptly spat it out and set down her cup. "Ugh, what is that? I thought tea was supposed to be hot leaf juice, not lukewarm dishwater. Are you sure you're not trying to poison me?"

A vein bulged at the high priest's temple and his smile became even more strained. "I'm sorry that it's not to your liking, my lady. Would an elven tea be more to your liking?"

Lili waved him off. "No, I'd rather not have that ruined for me as well. I'll just take water, thank you."

The servant who'd poured her tea returned with a goblet of water. "Thank you," she said. As he took the tea, Lili could see the faintest shadow of a smile tugging at his lips. She gave him a slight wink and sent him on his way.