

HEADS UP: This story contains inflation

“Double kill!”

The ominous voice rang out across all of Summoner's Rift, the dwarvish minions creeping from the blue team's platform without wavering from their chosen path, always staring straight ahead. They felt no newfound courage in their hearts as the mysterious lady's call came thundering through every lane, through the twisted jungle routes and into the fountains.

To the tiny Yordle standing over the body of the hulking Noxian knight, his brother merely yards away, it was just another day on top lane.

Never underestimate the power of the Scout's code, he thought with pipsqueak chortles every step of the way to the bush to his side, an evil grin spread wide across his face. Although the pockets of his camouflage jacket had swelled to an enormous size after his recent combat, gold and silver coins dripping from the tiny gaps, his swift steps were not slowed in the slightest. He did wish that they would just give him the spoils of war back at the fountain rather than in the field; the hefty stacks of treasure, a reward for vanquishing the opposing champions and slaughtering minions by the dozen, did sometimes interfere with reloading, the miniscule darts getting buried under stacks of gold and explosive mushrooms. He did recall having one of those volatile fungi go off in his pack during a frantic chase with an obnoxiously loud knight the previous week, the burly man screaming 'DEMACIA!' at the top of his lungs as he scampered from bush to bush, round and round Baron Nashor's lair and all the way through the middle lane. Many tense moments of sifting through his pockets lead him to accidentally drop one beneath his feet the very second that the knight had prepared to descend his mighty sword through his helmet and goggles.

The explosion had blown the two of them apart- only away from each other, not their bodies- but had left the little Yordle in somewhat of a predicament. His body had developed a resistance to the poison that oozed from the green and purple spotted caps of the mushrooms, the lethal fumes that proved deadly to the champions unlucky enough to trod on the floral mines only provoking a light headache for him, one that quickly passed from a good old mug of Bandlehop Brew.

The stench from the explosions, however, was another thing entirely. It was humiliating enough to smell as bad as that insane rat that lurked amongst the shadows, only emerging to hurl crude flasks filled with virulent goo at unsuspecting fighters and pop a few bolts from a broken crossbow into them, but it also put him at a major disadvantage. Stealth was the Yordle's forte. He could stand motionless with his blowpipe at the ready for hours or even days on end, watching his prey go about their business, unwary of his presence mere inches away from their feet. He showed no mercy to those too blind to see him. But with stinking, poisonous oil seeping from his packs and pockets, the element of surprise was

hardly an option, especially with a ravenous werewolf stalking the jungles in search of his next meal (fortunately, said werewolf did not have an appetite for contaminated meat, doubly so when it had such an offensive odor).

Teemo had learned much from his encounter with the zealous Demacian. It seemed that his newest batch of mushrooms were highly unstable, which turned his duel with the Noxian brothers from a suicide mission into a great tale to tell at the pub. Not only did those fungi make effective mines, they were also exceptional grenades. As such, he always made sure to carry at least one or two of the little death traps with him in any conflict, dubbing it as simply 'The Big One', and only ever using it in case of dire emergencies.

It was a shame that this game was merely a practice run. No stakes, no summoners, no worries. The league often held games like these at least once per month to keep all of its champions in fit and fighting order for when any men or nations in dispute would require them to be at peak performance. Teemo took these battles to heart, like all military exercises that he happily marched off into with a merry whistle; once he was on the frontline though, all song would cease. Comrades would describe him as being rather 'flippy' in his attitude, those being told this not to confuse that with 'flippant', and when they said that they meant his uncanny way of getting into and out of the mood for war. In the moments when all was calm and still, Teemo was just another one of the guys, but the second the fighting would start, he would vanish without trace into the wilderness, lurking amongst the shrubs and sticking enemies with his poisonous darts, leaving them to a quick and silent end. That would be put behind him quickly, often in mere moments, a friendly smile as he regrouped with his force sometime after. Some questioned if he was capable of feeling remorse at all.

But today was slightly different. He took the advice of the league administrators and decided to treat it how it had been designed; this was strictly a game, and thus was just as much about the thrill of combat without the strife of pain while giving the competitors the exercise they required. Not that it stopped Teemo from being as ruthless as ever in the lanes. Just a few more steps and an eight second wait were all that kept him from home, sweet home. Until it was time to head back out into the fray, of course.

"Let's see," Teemo whispered as he hopped along, removing a Puro-hide mitten to count on his cream-furred fingers, "eighty seven times twenty plus another six hundred is..." He chuckled. "A new record for a deathcap!" He picked up his pace, eagerly sprinting to the edge of the brush, recall stone in hand.

Wait until Trist gets a load of--

He was whisked away to the fountain with a shrill squeak. It seemed awfully empty... no shopkeeper, no nexus and no inhibitors in sight. Or turrets. Or even the cobbled stone platform with glowing runes intricately carved into the surface. Just a lot of trees and grass. Upside-down trees at that.

Why did his head suddenly hurt? Did it have something to do with that metal claw clutching his boot? And just who was that sitting up...

Teemo groaned, trying to regain his bearing with blinks. He felt the blood rush to his brain as he dangled helplessly in mid air, although it took him a little while to figure out why a crude hand made of rusty scrap was arching right over his body. The grabber was bolted to a hulking monstrosity of a machine, the two-legged construct operating as well as it looked; spewing steam, shaking like an earthquake, spluttering with oil at the feet, just a mass of junk cobbled together into a humble, yet complex weapon. The thing looked like it would fall apart at any second, the two arms at either side being held by a couple of cracked rivets each, one of the junked limbs having a spiked ball welded to its end and the other arm having a blackened tip of a flamethrower protruding from an armoured shell.

If that wasn't enough of a giveaway of who had managed to get the jump on Teemo, the snarky, obnoxious laughter of the walker's pint-sized pilot definitely told him everything he needed to know.

"Well would you look at that?" the blue-furred Yordle said, his beady yellow eyes glistening with awe and with a hint of devious intent, looking down on Teemo. "I head out fishing, and I catch a little shrimp!"

Teemo dusted off his camo jacket and light cream fur as best as his position would allow, straightening out the straps on his helmet. He almost forgot about the claw grasped to his leg, his attention more focused on his captor. The culprit stood just as tall as Teemo, perhaps taller given the spike his hair made at the top of his head, and taller still had he not decided to perch himself on the creaking, leaky machine, although his appearance was much scrappier and scruffier than the scout's uniform.

This Yordle, the notorious Rumble, known amongst other champions as the mechanized menace, was an inventor of sorts, although he was a far rarer breed than those of a similar profession. His concern was developing his pride and joy, keeping the bucket of bolts that he had christened 'Tristy' primed and ready to incinerate the foes of Bandle City, no matter the cost. Often times, that cost was good karma with his kin, the mechanic being well known for his abrasive manner and 'trial-and-error' method of testing his gear, usually erring on the side of error. More often than not, his fellow Yordles were on the receiving end of his mechanical mishaps. Though his loyalty to Bandle City was well respected, his somewhat less desirable qualities were met with suspicion by some, caution by others and outright anger by the rest. Teemo was undecided as to which category he belonged to. Perhaps 'rival' was the more appropriate title.

"Isn't that funny," he replied with a cheeky smile, "considering you were the runt of your litter?"

Teemo looked upwards as he was lifted higher into the air, the rusty arm arching over him ominously as it strained and screeched every single inch of the way, all the way up until the little scout's face was level with Rumble's. The mechanic snorted. "Yeah, *were*," he said. "Can't argue with the league saying I'm worthy though." He hopped up onto the back of his machine, to where the arm connected with the rest of the walker. Leaning against the metal pole, he shot Teemo a grin. "Impressed? A pretty little device, don't you think? I got the idea a little while back, and all it took were a few little tweaks here and there to--"

"Hey, I recognise it! I've seen another person here using something like that," Teemo said. "Well, another robot actually! Let's see... Blitzcrank, if I remember rightly." He couldn't resist folding his arms in a smug manner as Rumble scowled, the captain undeterred by the fact that he was hanging upside-down, totally at his mercy.

"Well, aren't we an observant one?" Rumble said, giving the base of the arm a light kick with the heel of his boot. A rattle reverberated along the pole, rocking the Yordle from side to side, Teemo swinging like a poorly grandfather clock. With a flick of his hand, Rumble twirled a tiny wrench through his fingers to quickly tighten a loose nut on the elbow of the grabber. "At any rate, does it really matter where the inspiration came from? What works, works. Can't believe that I never thought of it sooner, actually."

Teemo burst out into laughter, Rumble giving him a raised brow. "Maybe that's why Heimerdinger is thought of as the superior inventor?"

"Heimerdinger isn't even half the Yordle that I am!" Rumble shouted, thrusting his face into Teemo's with sudden bloody murder in his eyes. He slammed a lever down hard on the walker's control panel, the flamer arm whirring to life and moving dangerously close to the captain's head. With a fierce roar, the ignition light jumped across the end in a tiny, white hot cone, gas hissing from the innards of the iron construct.

"That hack wouldn't dare to pit his 'science' against mine!" Rumble growled, angrily pointing his finger at Teemo as if he was Heimerdinger himself. "If he dares to cross me in this field, now or ever, he'll be roasted, diced, sliced and served up to one of those alien freaks from the void in three seconds flat! And you're dumb enough to compare me to that sellout?!" He spat over the side of the machine, incensed as Teemo feigned intimidation. The scout captain dared not to test Rumble's temper any further, the flickering flame inside the machine's spitter reminding him of the gravity of his predicament. Not that pushing Rumble's buttons was never amusing though.

"Compare?" Teemo chuckled, reaching across and giving Rumble's cheek a squeeze. The mechanic was less than impressed. "There's no need to get so upset, it was only a joke."

Blinking once, Rumble's rage seemed slightly relieved, him only responding with, "Joke?"

"Sure!"

A rift of awkwardness persisted, Teemo staring at Rumble, a friendly smile meeting a thin frown and squinting eyes. That was until Rumble seemed to find his sense of humour, a short, snorty laugh, growing louder as he kicked the lever for the flamethrower again. Teemo winced as a deafening clunk sounded from the arm, but his eyes shot open when all that followed was silence, peppered with Rumble's light chuckles. The hissing of gas had stopped and the ignition light was extinguished, the scout glancing up to the robot's seat; Rumble has his back turned to him.

Time to fly! he thought with a beaming smile dripping with slyness, easing his hand up to the pouch on his hip. He carefully watched Rumble tinker with a loose wire on the control panel, staring cautiously, fumbling around in the leather bag, poking each tiny item with the tip of his finger while taking care not to let anything drop past the flap.

Let's see... Coin. Coin. Dart, that smarts!

He gritted his teeth, pulling his hand away instantly and pausing in statue-esque stillness. Rumble was still beaver away with the frayed threads of plasticked copper. With a whisper of a sigh, Teemo continued his search.

Coin. Photo. Dart flight. Wait, blowpipe!

He smiled, momentarily going back over his plan; if he timed everything right, Rumble would be helpless against the blinding speed of the shot and might even fall off the machine altogether, just enough for Teemo to swing himself to the levers, release the claw and let him scamper off down the lane. Maybe he could even slam on the lever so hard that it would send the claw high into the air, flinging him far across the Field of Justice! He had to act quickly. With a twirl of his fingers, he deftly slotted a dart into the hole of the pipe, slowly and silently drawing it, bringing the end to his lips, holding it steady with both hands and taking a deep breath.

He almost choked on the dart when Rumble snap-turned on the spot, blocking the end of the weapon with his wrench. Teemo's eyes widened to their limits as Rumble gave him a devious grin, his other hand snatching his blowpipe away.

"You know, that is pretty hilarious," he said in a low growl. "I almost died, it was so funny!" He snapped the thin reed of bamboo in two and undid the strap on Teemo's hip-pouch, the scout speechless as his possessions fell with a dull thud on the ground. He was almost playing dead, his eyes still agape and his lips still anticipating the end of his

weapon, Rumble tipping the contents of the bag out carelessly whilst nudging aside the coins and the few darts with his feet.

“Oh my, what’s this?”

Of all the little knick-knacks and stray ammo that Rumble leafed through, he had to pick the one that made Teemo sweat, the one that put a curious smile on the mechanic’s face. On a smudged piece of paper barely bigger than a stamp was a black and white photo of two Yordles- one furry and one not- standing together casually at the counter of a pub, a mug of ale in each one’s hand. One, unsurprisingly, was Teemo. The other Yordle, a rugged but relaxed female, had her arm wrapped around his shoulder and squeezing him closely, the both of them beaming for the camera. Teemo had been meaning to stick it in his scrapbook, one of his minor hobbies being a spot of photography now and again. Champions leaping and diving, casting and calling, charging and brawling, all of it was golden material for the popular fan magazines for the League and for the newspapers, but Teemo preferred taking snaps for fond, personal memories. That little, wrinkled photo was one such memory he’d want to remember for a long, long time.

The other Yordle’s name was Tristana, a crack shot with her signature cannon that was twice her size, and she and Teemo had a somewhat quirky relationship that he had thought of as ‘complicated’ when asked if rumours of a behind-the-scenes romance were true. They’d both had a little talk a few days ago. Just small talk leading to friendly banter leading to a request for a date. Nothing too fancy, a walk in the park and dinner. They’d definitely had a good time, although whether he’d want to go out and confirm rumours of love to other nosey Yordles was still a tricky question. Things were ‘complicated’ before and they were just as ‘complicated’ now.

The only issue was that Rumble felt that exact same complication.

He clenched his fist, crumpling the paper into a tight ball. He was still laughing though. The reason why was made clear to Teemo when he clambered up to the walker’s chair, flumping down with a bounce; nipped between Rumble’s pinkie and thumb in his other hand was small mushroom with a chubby stem of creamy olive-green and a green cap blotched with purple splats. His eyes transfixed on the spotty pattern, he turned it in his palm delicately. Teemo half-braced himself for it to explode, but he knew that Rumble wasn’t so stupid as to let that happen. A guy with a short fuse, maybe, but not short on brains. The mechanic turned to him, a look of intrigue and a smile on the corner of his lips.

“You know,” he said, tugging lightly on the fluff of Teemo’s chin, patting his cheek, “I always did wonder what these things taste like. Not that I’d ever want to put one in my mouth... But...”

When he dangled the mushroom right above his head, Teemo stammered heavily with a nervous laugh, waving his hands in front of him as he hurriedly said, "What? A-Are you serious? Come on, th-that's just.. That's just sick!"

"Oh?" Rumble said. "Are you volunteering for a little taste test?"

Rumble pinched Teemo's nose. Not too tightly, just enough to make him exclaim in surprise and open his mouth, all which was needed to pop the fungus in his mouth with the stalk sticking out through his lips like a cigar stub. Teemo immediately spat it out, shouting, "Don't, I'm being serious!"

"And you think I'm not?" Rumble replied with a deadly grin, gently raising the flamethrower's lever bit by bit, the hissing of the gas and the low roar of the ignition light growing louder and brighter. Pointed directly at his eyes, Teemo stared down the barrel. What the hell was going through that crazed Yordle's mind? He'd been tinkering with his toys in the junkyard for too long amongst the pools of leaked petroleum, the fumes twirling the innards of his brain into a volatile state blended alongside the hammering and screeching of his contraptions. At least, that was general consensus amongst those who knew him. They thought that was why he had a few loose nuts in the machine, as well as a broken one or two, although he was perfectly sane... most of the time anyway.

"Come on Teemo," Rumble said, forcing the mushroom into the dangling Yordle's mouth. He formed a tight seal around his lips with the palm of his hand, the oil and smoke that clung to the fur choking Teemo's senses. "We can be civil about this for the sake of a scientific experiment, or..." With a nudge of the lever, a small gout of flame gushed from the thrower. A millisecond of the searing heat was enough to make Teemo yelp. "...perhaps there's someone out there in the mood for broiled Yordle garnished with wild mushroom? A little stringy and delicate but I know quite a few champions who'd love a snack of--"

Teemo bit down on the cap. It was thick and rubbery, like taking a bite out of an eraser, and the bitter oil that oozed made him gag and wretch, Rumble twisting his face and shaking his hand of saliva and foul-smelling fungus juices. Eraser, earwax and stagnant swamp water; Teemo almost spat the disgusting cocktail of poison out a second time, but the only direction that he wanted to spit it in was directly in front of him. Square between the eyes of the smug Yordle right in front of him who had a front row seat to watch him squirm with his snack. Rumble's hand still rested on the control panel. Teemo swallowed hard, not letting the mix stew on his tongue for any longer. The horrific taste still lingered as the chunks of fungi scraped the walls of his throat, the poor Yordle spluttering and coughing with dribbles of mushroom oil dripping from the corner of his lips. Clapping like a king of a court mindlessly enjoying the antics of his fool, Rumble broke out into hearty chuckles.

"Well then?" he said, squeezing Teemo's cheeks in one hand, making his lips puff out. "What's the verdict?"

A rancid belch from the pit of Teemo's stomach crept up his throat and past his moist lips to answer Rumble's question. The renewed vileness mingled on his tongue, coughs and cries ensuing. Rumble grinned fiercely. "Guess that means the fun's over," he said, strapping on his goggles.

"Just you wait," Teemo growled, staring razors at the Yordle opposite to him, "it's only a twenty second wait until I come back onto the field. You'll never see me coming."

Rumble snorted with laughter, drumming his fingers on the control panel and inching towards the flamethrower lever. "And by then I'll have some shiny new gear to use, courtesy of the gold *you're* so kindly handing to me." He grasped the stick. "Playtime's been a pleasure, Tee--"

Another burp made the mechanic flinch slightly, if not from the deep and bellowing roar that blew from the gut of the tiny creature hanging helplessly in the claw, then most certainly from the noxious smell that curled the hairs inside of Rumble's nose. Teemo quickly covered his mouth. Did that really just come from *him*? The glare of disgust from his captor suggested so, but it was so sudden. Until there was another low, gurgling rasp from the depths of his belly, forcing its way through his fingers. Then another. And another! He was belching almost rhythmically in rapid succession, each and every gassy eruption brewing bubbles in his stomach like a cauldron of vile and volatile potions. Rumble said nothing, lifting his goggles slowly. Teemo saw the glint of awe in his eyes, but he wasn't looking at the captain's face. When Teemo glanced upwards, surprise turned to panic when he realised what he was looking at.

He had definitely gotten fatter since the last time he'd checked-- just a few moments ago. What really made him sweat and whimper was the pressure. The *growing* pressure. It felt like a bad case of gas and hiccups induced by gulping down a pint or two without pause, but with a lack of pain. It was the tightness... The buttons. The buttons of his jacket were stretching! Teemo hadn't just *gotten* fatter, he was *getting* fatter!

"W-What the hell?!" Rumble shouted as he scrambled to the back of his machine, his foot catching the grabber's control stick in his haste and the claw releasing with a rusty snap. Teemo didn't so much hit the ground as bounce from it, landing on his read with a tiny burp escaping him. All he could do was stare in horror and clutch at his rounding, swelling form, his fur and skin stretching slowly at a steady rate. The seams on his jacket ripped and tore against the growing bulge that was Teemo bit by bit, tufts of hair poking through the tears and holes that multiplied by the second. Before, he was only a little bit pudgier. Now, he was the size of a cow.

"H-Help me!" he squealed as the camo-jacket fell into two halves, lying in tatters at his sides. He desperately looked up at Rumble, who was standing behind the claw pole, peeking

out and staring with shock. What could he have done to help? Teemo wasn't just getting fatter, he was actually inflating like a balloon! He prodded his rounded form on the front and sides, the cream fur bouncing back to its ever expanding position. "M-My fur! It's a-all rubbery!"

Rumble leaned out his leg and gave him a poke on the belly as well for he could reach easily from the front of his machine; Teemo had grown to the same size as his construct and he was showing no signs of stopping! The scout was quite correct though. The fluffy tufts of hair that normally covered his body were nowhere to be seen, instead replaced by a glossy sheen and a squeak after the mechanic scraped his boot along the latex-like surface. Teemo tried to reach up to his face but the sheer volume of gas welling up inside of his belly would not allow him to do so, forcing his arms out to the side by trapping them between huge rings of air like swim supports, just like around his stubby legs. His cheeks began to puff out when he found himself totally immobile, his body numb and weakened by the ordeal, and when Teemo could feel himself on the verge of bursting point and poking the armoured carapace of Rumble's walker his with body, the swelling stopped.

Teemo could barely breathe. It was not that breathing was more difficult-- it was no more difficult than it never was-- but rather it was the shock that wracked his entire being. His head and lungs felt tied into a tangled knot, the end of a balloon, and he could only rock from side to side with a great amount of effort on his part, which tired him quickly. Light-headed, he tried to flop backwards. He needed rest, and quickly. Those mushrooms did always cause the funniest hallucinations after intense exposure to the spores. A lie down always made him feel more chipper than ever...

"Mmph mh mmmph?!"

...but he wasn't usually upside down. His face mashed against his rubbery body, squished against the dusty ground, Teemo frantically waved his arms as best as his blown-up self would allow him to. His new frustrations were soon short lived though. As if by magic, he felt himself be lifted up into the sky, inching upwards like a loose bubble caught in an updraft.

And then it hit him. Something wasn't lifting him. He was floating.

The air was not like water. Teemo couldn't swim back down to solid land, although his kicks of panic did make him spin like a globe, one that was not fixed onto a single axis. Flailing helplessly in the air, rising above the chest of Rumble's machine, Teemo screwed his eyes shut. "Do something!" he wheezed, the tension in his chest still tight and his bloated cheeks smushing his lips. But what was he expecting? That menace was the reason why he was starting to take off for space in the first place. He could hear the laughter. That snorty, snarky laughter. It would be the last thing that he would ever hear, along with the whistling of the wind in the clouds.

It sure was taking a long time to reach that wispy cloud that was floating by lazily, the one that looked like a mushroom. *Way too long...* Teemo thought, accepting his fate. He couldn't actually *feel* the floating sensation anymore. The only feeling was that struggle for easy breaths, which was a battle he was beginning to win now that he had resigned himself to his now shortened life as a balloon. Everything else was numb and cold against his cool and smooth rubber exterior.

If he had been able to feel anything, he'd have felt the claw grasp his foot again.

"Now this is a beautiful day in the name of science, isn't it?"

Teemo quickly opened his eyes. He could see high above the trees of the Field of Justice, tiny armies in the distance to the south clashing against one another one after the other. He could still see the lanes, and yet they were not below him. They weren't getting smaller at all. With futility, he tried to poke his eyes up past the bulk of squeaky skin in his face to get a better look while he was trapped in stasis but his search for an answer to where his new anchor had come from was soon answered, along with the whereabouts of that smug sounding question too.

The miniature lasso of frayed copper wire looped itself around Teemo's neck limply. His look of surprise turned into a piercing glare in an instant the very moment the spike of blue entered his limited field of vision; Rumble was clambering up onto his new balloon, slipping against the slick rubber but soon finding his grip. All that followed was a pregnant silence between them, the mechanic looking down his nose with a sharpened grin at the puffy-cheeked, red-faced Yordle he was standing triumphantly on.

"I think I can declare this little experiment a success," Rumble said, a signature laugh of his coming right afterwards. "Now if only I could turn this into an idea for a new toy! Imagine the power..."

Teemo wriggled and writhed as best as he could, but no matter how hard he tried to knock him off of his inflated self, Rumble found standing up and staying stable all the easier with the scout's foot firmly locked in the iron claw.

That flamethrower didn't sound quite as nasty anymore. Teemo realised that as the clanking contraption chugged itself back into life and did a sloppy about-turn on the spot, Rumble back in the driver's seat and chortling every step of the way to the purple team's fountain.