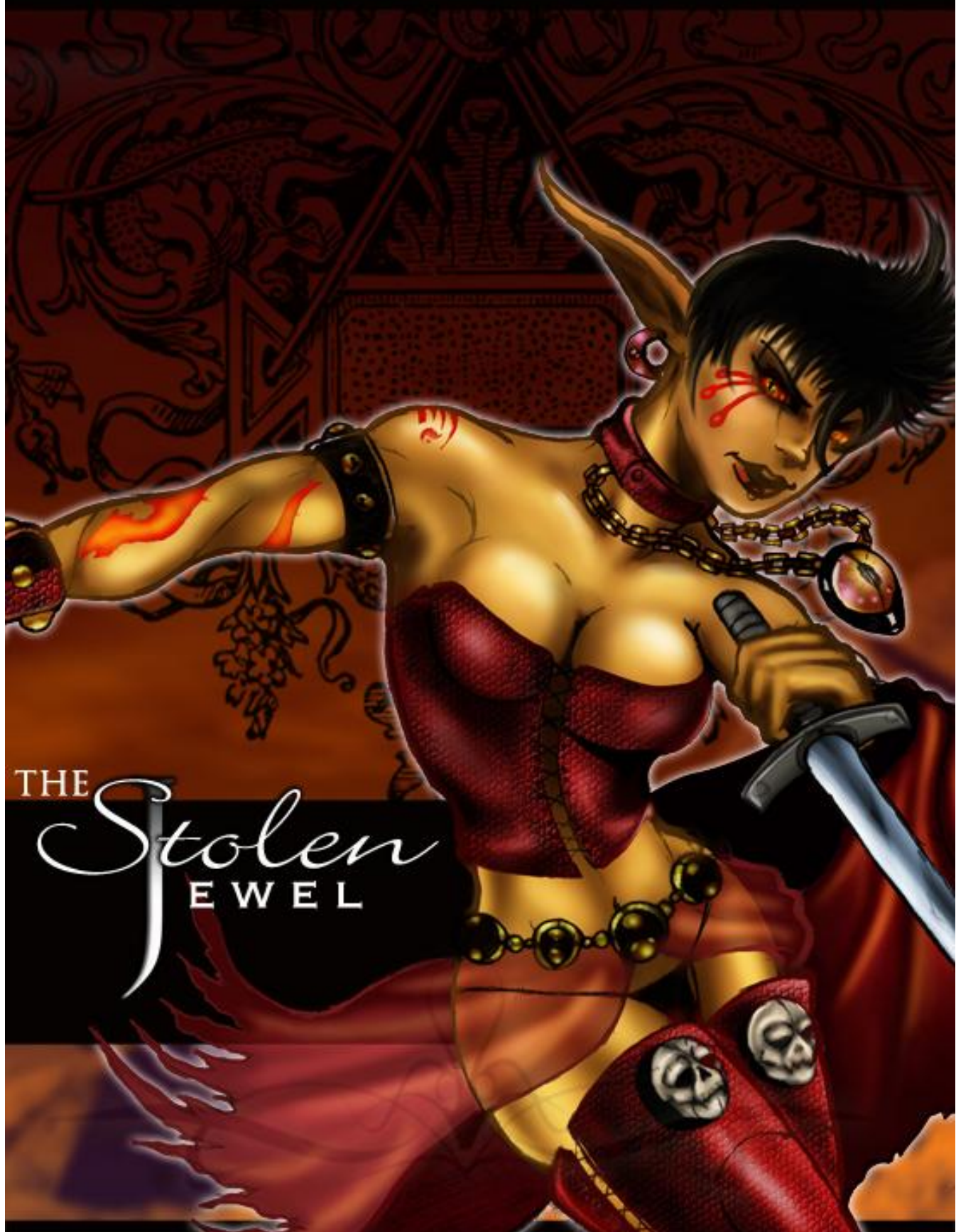


TATIANA CALDWELL



THE
Stolen
JEWEL

THE STOLEN JEWEL

A Short Story



The night was still and quiet. Few souls were out within the vicinity. Jewel strode easily towards her destination, enjoying the wind blowing through her hair and the freedom of running with the open ground below her feet. Sunset was rapidly approaching, but she would beat it. She had been staking out this target and his extravagant, secluded home for weeks. She knew within the next few minutes, he would be leaving his house and his guard would be arriving to watch the manor in his absence.

She smiled with pride at her own cunning, and her long ears twitched with giddy anticipation as she thought of all of the riches she would gain with this loot. Once she finished this task, she would have no need to work for quite some time. Jewel certainly would welcome a vacation.

But she was almost disappointed that this job would soon be over. She had thoroughly enjoyed following this particular mark around, as he was quite the optical treat from head to feet. She had even

lingered outside of his window to watch him bathe on more than one occasion, with extreme interest at the way he seemed to have jewelry *everywhere* on his chiseled body.

As she neared her destination, she saw her victim exit the house and venture off, waving at the warrior who was arriving to stand guard at the door. Jewel withdrew her short-sword. She loved the weight of it in her hand. It made her feel formidable and invincible. Although she was very skilled in handling it, she was stealthy enough that she rarely had to actually resort to violence.



She moved silently and efficiently, as light on her toes as a lioness hunting her prey. Feeling mischievous, she sneaked up behind the guard who was standing tensely outside the manor, and just waited for him to slowly become alerted to her presence. When at last he swung around, he met her sword at his throat and a devious smile upon her face.

Eyes wide, he did not bother to reach for his own weapon. Instead, he shook with alarm and fury.

Her smile grew wider. “Relax, big boy. You will not die this night. At least not by my hands.”

“This is a crime. You will pay for this,” he said between gritted teeth.

She laughed. “I would have to get caught, first. Now sleep.” She waved her hand across his face as she cast her spell. Instantly the guard fell to the ground in a deep, enchanted snooze.

Unnecessary bloodshed was not Jewel's style, and there was no need to take this elf's life. There was only one thing she had come for, and she knew exactly where it was. She would be in and out of the house and long gone hours before he would wake up and the master of the house would return. Jewel was not worried about the guard seeing her again. She was a solitary rogue, and often remained reclusive and unseen, the way she preferred it. Even if this guard were to find her, she was more than confident in her capability to take him down.

Jewel slipped on her leather gloves and picked the lock to the door with ease, having disarmed countless ones just like it before. Adrenaline flowed through her as she slipped into the lavishly decorated house in silence. She listened for any telltale sound that someone may unexpectedly be home, but as she had anticipated, she heard nothing but the excited pounding of her own heart.

With grace, she glided through the impressive house until she found the heavy door which guarded the treasure she was seeking. This lock was stronger and more complicated than the one on the manor's front door. But Jewel was a Master Rogue. She had yet to encounter a lock which she could not undo. A wide smile spread across her face when a few tries and one broken lock pick later, she heard the click.

She swung the door open. The sight took Jewel's breath away.

All of the wondrous prizes the master of this manor had collected were kept in this treasure room. Crates and chests full of gold and silver, necklaces of diamonds and gold, the teeth, tusks and fur of exotic creatures, exquisite robes and gowns made of the most luxurious silk and vials of the rarest magical potions all filled the room.

She found the thing she was looking for. The giant, flawless ruby that he had brought home the second night after she had begun stalking him. The gorgeous stone was slightly larger than her head. Her fingers trembled and her breathing slowed as she tenderly wrapped her hands around the precious gem. With care, she lifted it and brought it close to her and wrapped it in her cloak.

With her objective obtained, all she had left now was to make her escape. As she turned back towards the door her heart slammed into her chest and she gasped as she stumbled, nearly dropping her loot.

The home owner stood there in the chamber, casually leaning against one of his crates as he looked at her.



The shock of being discovered froze her in place. How had this happened? She had carefully watched him for weeks and recorded his schedule to memory. He was not supposed to be home. And by the way he was dressed – or rather undressed – it was clear that he had not simply left and returned. He was practically naked, save for the leather sleeves which decorated his massive arms and a cloth lazily wrapped around his waist that failed to cover much of anything.

“Stop. Thief.” He spoke without alarm.

Jewel snarled at his teasing. “Try and stop me. And I prefer the title rogue.”

He raised an eyebrow at her. “Did you really think that you were going to just sashay out of here with my property?”

“It is not yours. You stole this jewel.”

“Not from you.”

“No, but still you stole it just the same.”

“And so you intend to steal it again, from me?”

“There is no honor amongst thieves.” Jewel smirked.

He snickered at her. “Do you know how much effort it took me to get that gem?”

“I would imagine the effort was monumental for an amateur.”

He laughed aloud at that. “I can assure you, I am no amateur. Now you on the other hand, appear as though you could use a few tips.”

Jewel huffed at him and shook her head. “You are not supposed to be here.”

“I live here.”

“I have studied you for some time, *Sage*,” she deliberately emphasized his name to prove just how much preparation she had indeed taken. “This is the time you normally leave to meet with your band. I even saw you leave.”

He grinned at her. His eyes full of amusement. “I did not leave this time. And I have no band, *Jewel*. Only a ruse with which to study *you* as you persistently went snooping about my business.”

Jewel’s eyes grew round as discs and her jaw dropped. How did he know her name? “You tricked me?!”

“I am a rogue,” he shrugged. “That is what I do.”

“Why let me get this far? Just what do you intend to do with me?”

His eyes roamed over her, the fire in them burning as they traced over her every curve. “Keep you.”

Without haste she tossed the gem aside and reached for the hilt of her sword. But Sage moved just as swift. He shackled her wrist with his hand, and though he was not hurting her, his grip was firm and unrelenting.

She moved her other hand to cast sleep upon him, but he captured her wrist before she could even flex her fingers. He locked her arms behind her back with his hands, the gesture forcing the front of their bodies together in an aggressive embrace.

Jewel's heart raced. Not so much in fear as in stimulation by his closeness. He was a strong, hulk of a man, dark and handsome, his muscles rippled with strength as he moved. His masculine scent filled her nose, and she could feel his sex pressed against her abdomen. Heat and moisture gathered between her legs, but she scowled to try to hide it.

“Keep me for what purpose?” Her query came out much huskier and sexier than she had intended.

“Have you not noticed that I collect treasures? I am particularly fond of pretty jewels.” He eyed her lips hungrily as he spoke.

She glared at him. “I am flesh and blood, not some object to be possessed. Surely, you would *not* hold a living being captive!”

His smile was a dangerous, seductive one. He lowered his head and leaned towards her, crushing his hard wall of chest against her breasts. The bass of his voice as he whispered into her ear sent shivers down her spine. “There is no honor amongst thieves ... remember?”

Jewel tried to pull away from him, but she was no match for his strength. Her pulse raced frantically as he traced the length of her ear with his hot mouth.

“You can ... not ... you can not keep me here against my will, Sage!” She could barely get her protest out.

“Then I will just have to find a way to make you a willing prize.” He moved his mouth down the side of her neck as he headed towards the exposed tops of her bosom, his hands spanning her small waist and curvy hips. He used his teeth to pull away the fabric of her blouse from her nipple and took it

hungrily into his mouth. She gasped and grabbed his head, pulling him closer to her, all thoughts of escaping fleeing her mind.

She could not believe what was happening, or more so that she had no desire to fight it. She pushed away the cloth from his hips as he tore at her clothing. He took her to the floor, his large body blanketing hers, and she welcomed him into her arms. Electricity arced between them when their mouths met, kissing with a ferocity like none Jewel had ever experienced before. His hands were all over her, kneading her full breasts, then holding her hips. His fingers stroked her thighs, and she parted them to allow him access.

Sage smiled down at her. “See. You are willing already. You are mine now,” he said, his fingers exploring her, making her hot and slick.

She opened her mouth, wanting to protest again or to at least utter an insult, but her very breath was being stolen from her by his touch. Instead, she spread her legs wider and wrapped them around his waist, eagerly offering him her every treasure.

**** The End ****

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