

by Raia

Beneath the Well

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# CHAPTER 1

## The Escape

It was there, real for a moment, a big bed with silk curtains the warm sun on my face and the smell of fresh bacon sizzling on the griddle. But it vanished when I opened my eyes, same jail cell, same hard cots, and same old barred window and the cries of other prisoners being beaten, in some cases to death. I sighed, I had this dream before and I longed for that life again.

“Why did I have to be here?” I thought. “Why did they take me?” But I knew what the answers were. I was here because I was a thief, and I was taken because I was caught.

The daily flurry of excruciating memories struck as usual. The fire that took my mother and my brother . . . the terrible screams and cries of pain . . . I was in the yard playing. That was years ago, 5 to be precise. My father came home from work on that dreadful day and went on to raise me on his own for 4 happy years of soft beds, silk curtains, and good food. I didn't appreciate those 4 years were until they were over.

Unfortunately those years came to an abrupt end when my father died of fever and I was orphaned.

Living on my own, without a stable home, thievery was my only chance for survival. I ran through the streets and scavenged for food and shelter. It felt scary to steal at first but I quickly accepted the necessity and had no bad conscience about it. I also became accustomed to the challenge of having sleeping fights with the rats. The best shelters were always dumpsters and as you might image rats don't easily yield their sleeping spots easily.

One day the cops saw me nab a hotdog from a street vendor's cart and I was put here, all for a hotdog, into a prison of doom.

I knew I would have to escape soon before starving to death, less food every day. I devised a plan to make the getaway during “chore time” which involved hauling buckets of water to drink. I would dive into the well, swim to the bottom, and travel along the river that flows underneath the well. I would surface in the bay outside of the prison.

“Today is the day, I will finally escape!!”

My plan, so simple, should work. Before taking the plunge, I had the idea to carry along my remaining morsels. This turned out to be a bad idea. Before I enacted my plan to a point of no return, I checked to make sure no guards would see me dive into the well. Unfortunately, I didn't check thoroughly and a guard gave a shout and aimed his gun at me. I wasn't yet emotionally ready to take the plunge, but if I wanted to save my life I had no choice. I dove. When I leapt into the well, the food, which I had strapped to my thigh, ripped away from the pressure. As I fell I screamed but the wind drowned it out, swirling around me. Just then a thought occurred, “What if the well isn't deep enough?” All of a sudden I saw a little spot of blue. As it got bigger I realized it was the well's water. I was in a flat position so I had to get myself into a dive and fast! As I was in my dive at the bottom of the well I saw a rock!



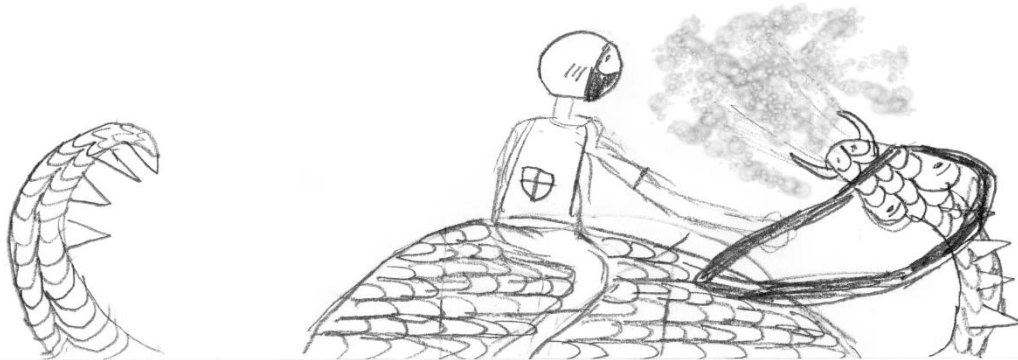
When I woke up, after my crash into the rock, my head was throbbing and I tasted blood in my mouth. It was so thick I almost choked on it. Putting my hand up to my mouth, I spat and something that looked *suspiciously* like a tooth covered in blood fell out. Not wanting to find out what the object actually was, I threw it aside. All of a sudden I realized I was breathing and not holding my breath. All of a sudden something didn't seem quite right. I was standing on gravel. (In the bay there is no gravel on the bottom, just dirt and the bay is too deep for me to touch the bottom.) I wondered what had happened so I thought for a while. Suddenly it hit me, I had been falling down the well, and I had hit a rock. I then became unconscious and the current in the river must have pulled me in the opposite direction .So instead of coming up in the bay as I had planed I had came up here. At first I was frightened but then I realized this was for the best. The farther away from the prison the better. Now no guards could see me and try to capture me again.

I decided to explore my peculiar situation. I looked around and realized I wasn't in the bay! Instead I was on the shore of a vast lake with little fish. They were nibbling my toes, their scales sparking in the sun. On a hillside I saw a big castle and a dragon with a knight on its back. I stepped out of the water, shaking. (I wouldn't have but the water was cold). The knight stepped down and said, "Do not fear, the dragon will do no harm," just as the dragon burnt a whole forest with its breath.

"We need the dragons to fight the night-goblins, our enemy," said the knight, not noticing the burnt forest.

"Will you help us," he asked?

"I don't know," I said with great hesitation in my voice, but changed my mind when I saw the knight give a really disappointed look (I thought the look was fake, but it really wasn't).



# CHAPTER 2

## The Castle

"I'm not so sure," I said as the knight climbed onto the dragon behind me.

"Oh you'll love it," the dragon said.

My eyes widened, "They speak!"

"Of course," said the knight, laughing at my surprise.

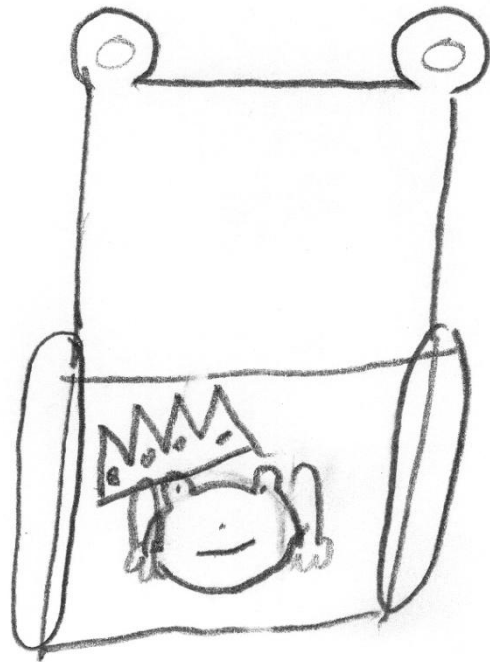
As we flew off towards the castle I looked down; the hills and valleys with beautiful flowers were flying below us. I had to hang on tight as the dragon was not very tame, and it kept plummeting down and rocketing back up. The wind nearly blew me off its back. Its scales shimmered like magical gems illuminated by every burst of flame that roared from its nostrils. The shrieking growl nearly burst my eardrums. I had never experienced such raw power before, and was completely in awe. I have to admit I enjoyed the dragon ride and was sorry when it was over. As we headed toward the door of the castle, it opened as if by magic. Walking in, we heard a symphony of small squeaks.

"Quick, hide!" said the knight. Without question we slipped behind a hanging tapestry until the squeaking stopped.

"What was that?" I asked as we continued walking down the hallway.

"That was the night-goblins stealing out winter food supply," explained the knight. "When winter comes we will get snowed in, and our supply must last us for months. But with the night-goblins swiping our food supply we will starve to death at winter's arrival."

Just then we came to wall of bricks. "Step aside," the knight said. He took out his sword, cut off a brick, and threw it over the wall. The wall opened and we stepped through. On a throne sat a toad. A big fat toad.



# CHAPTER 3

## The King

"That's the king?" I asked with surprise as we stared at the toad.

"Yes," replied the toad in a gloomy way. "They bewitched me." He started to cry.

"Should I get the wizard?" inquired the knight.

"Yes," grunted the toad. "But who's that?" he inquired, pointing to me.

"She popped up in the lake sire," replied the knight. "But she isn't a serpent."

"Will she help us from the night-goblins?" the toad king asked.

"Yes," the knight said, answering for me. I glared at him for I didn't like to fight.

"Well don't stand there," the toad said. "Get the wizard and show her the guest room."

Once I got to my room I fell asleep almost at once for the bed was soft like the one from my dream.



# CHAPTER 4

## The Prince

I woke up to someone poking me in the ribs. "Stop it," I mumbled and rolled over. The poking continued. I sat up and saw the person who was poking me. It was a boy, about 10, with bright red hair.

"Who are you," he asked.

Rather than stating my name, I shared my purpose. "I am here to help protect your food from night-goblins."

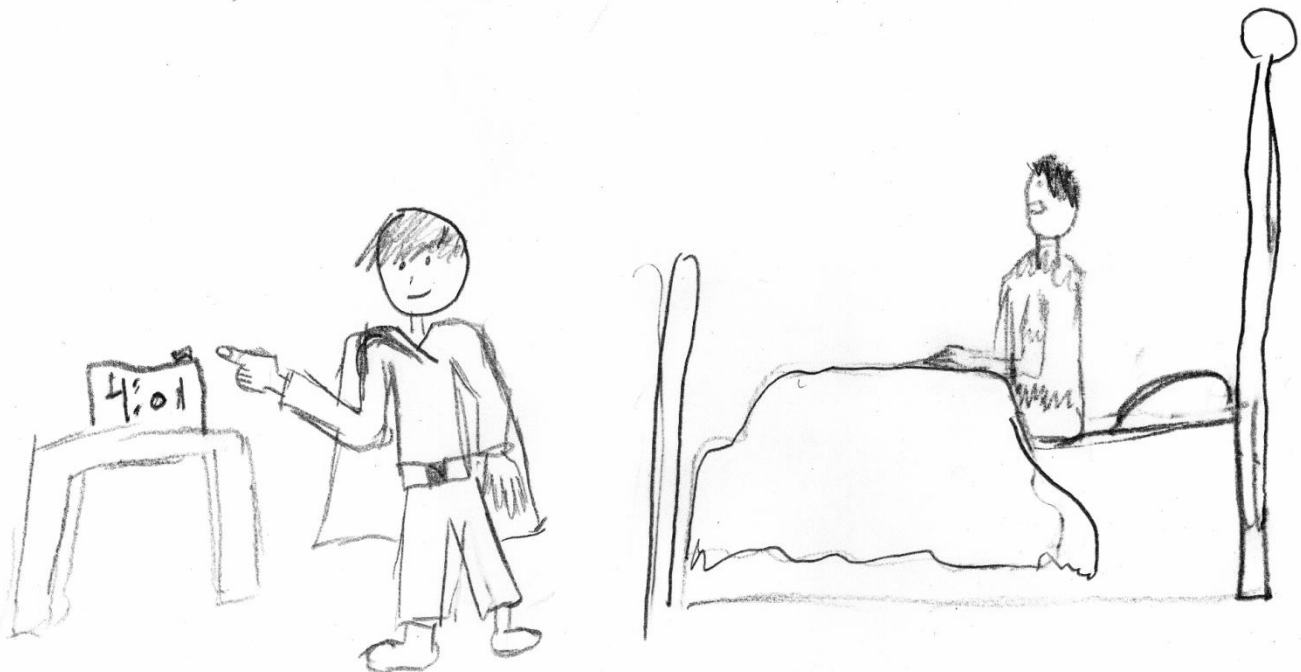
"About time. Father said we will starve to death when winter comes if the night-goblins keep stealing," the boy said.

"Who is your father?" I asked.

"The king," replied the boy with a hint of pride in his voice. "Enough with all this talk, let's do something fun like going for a dragon ride" said the boy "Its 4 am; no one will see us."

Not knowing what to say, I said, "OK. But on one condition ... tomorrow let me sleep in."

"Well come on; we haven't got all day," was the impatient reply from the prince.



# CHAPTER 5

## Attack at Dawn

"You are right, this is fun," I said as we flew over the sleeping kingdom. "What's that?" I asked as I pointed to something that looked like thousands of little lights below us.

"Oh no, the fun is over. Night-goblins are attacking," whispered the prince. "We must alert the kingdom."

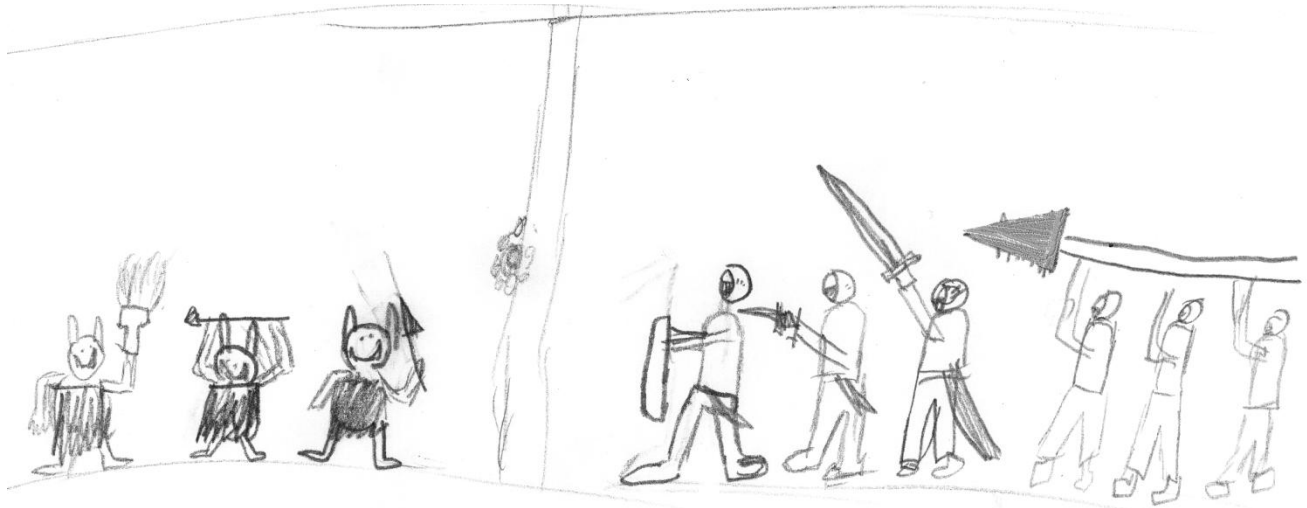
We flew back to the castle and ran through the halls screaming, "THE NIGHT-GOBLINS ARE ATTACKING AT DAWN! GET UP AND SAVE THE FOOD!"

A few minutes later the front doors were chained and bolted. They did this because the night-goblins would have had to break down the door to get in thus wasting their energy on the door as they tried to gain entry. Half of the knights, swords out, ready to fight, were behind the door. The other half of the knights was guarding the food supply.

I was offered two rooms, my old one if I wanted to fight the knight goblins in combat, or choose a stuffy little room if I wanted to help in other ways besides fighting. I chose the stuffy little room. In the stuffy little room there was a blanket and a little cot. So I lie down and fell asleep.

Before long the night-goblins launched a full scale battering with clubs spears and screaming at the top of their lungs. The night-goblins were ferocious fighters and they attacked the knights with all their might.

I was sleeping so I didn't hear any of the racket. When I woke up, I couldn't hear anything and hit my head for the ceiling was low. I noticed that I wasn't in the same place where I went to sleep in. I guessed that it was about 4:50 am so I fell back asleep. I was tired for that dragon ride had stressed me and the prince wasn't a very good driver.





# CHAPTER 6

## Kidnapped!

When I woke up again, a voice said, "Boop beep boop."

I said, "What are you saying? I can't understand you." I thought this was the prince playing another trick on you.

"Meeep," the voice said.

Then in a strange way the voice said, "M-m-m-e n-ot good with your talk."

"Oh I will speak more slowly," I said.

I waited as the speaking animal translated to his friends. "Beeep Mooob wooga shoopa." Then the voice said, "Me show." There was a fairly long silence, then "Me self," then it stepped out of the shadow. I saw a night-goblin! The knight had described how the night goblins looked so I knew that it was one. They have scales like a fish and overly long toenails. Though only the height of a toddler, they are quite stout. Sharp fangs stuck up from their under bite. "We steal you to help get us eats. Us no eat you - you help us no starve?"

"What?" I said.

"We no eats, we lots trap in winter long ago."

I could not help feeling sorry for the night-goblins, even though I realized they had kidnapped me.

These creatures have big eyes, skin like a fish, and long fingers and toenails, but the most surprising thing was that they had tails! I knew how to catch fish because when my father was still alive we went fishing with our hands.

"Where am I?" I wondered out loud.

"You in goblin valley hole," was the reply from the English speaking night goblin. I waited as the goblin translated, "Meep ooooooga mo."

I said, "How did I get here?" Big mistake. All got quiet. I changed the subject. "I know how to get food," I said. That calmed the goblins down.

"Then we go eat food!" said the goblin. The other goblins let out a big cheer!



# CHAPTER 7

## Back at the Castle

At the castle it was an uproar; everyone was panicking. They thought I had been captured and taken to be eaten by the night-goblins. The king, who was still a toad, had ordered a search party (which I had heard about from the prince later on). As the sun's rays warmed the hall, all the knights mounted dragons and flew off. Each of the knights was fully armed and carried a flaming torch and a banner which had a bow and arrow on it.

They ran about like crazy calling my name. I couldn't hear anything because I was underground, but it sounded like this from above ground.

“ARRGH YOU RUN OVER THERE” pretty crazy. Such a fuss!

I was creating a net with the help of the night-goblins deep underground so I could not hear the noise and neither could the night-goblins.

It took quite a while because I required translation since I can't speak night-goblin language, which they call “spoof.” The night-goblin who could speak English was named “Motley” which meant “fat.” The language training went something like this

Me: “Hold the rope out flat.”

Motley: “Sceep lolalaaa sheep kata.”

Me: “Hold all of the other ropes like that.”

Motley: “Agle blagle wooga.”

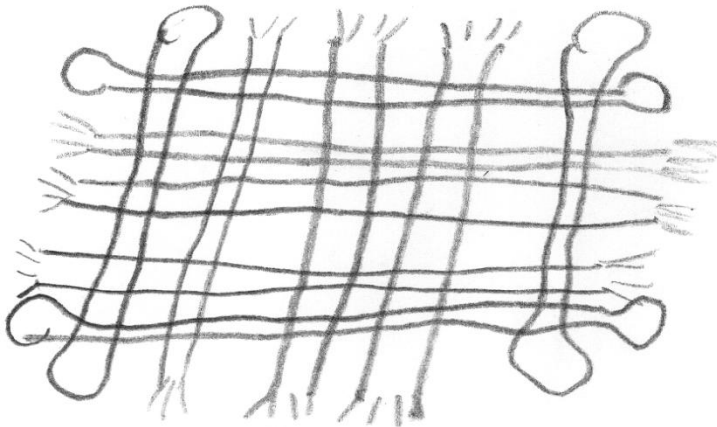
Me: “You, Pomegranate, don't eat the rope!”

Motley: “ANAR! Mo Mo Mo Mala cho!”

Translation: (Pomegranate! No no no not food!)

As you can see the night-goblins were not that cooperative.

After the net was made, it was night and we went to sleep.



# CHAPTER 8

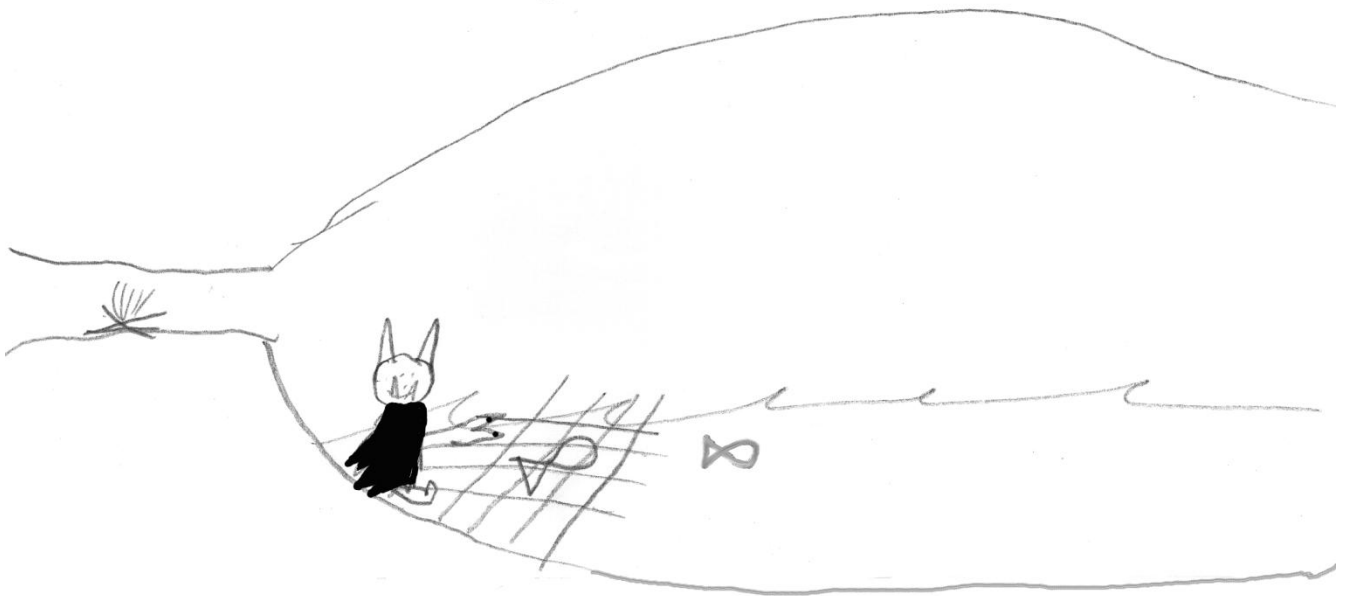
## Meep or Fishing

When we got up the next day, we went fishing. I was now able to understand some spooft. We went to the river in a tunnel the night-goblins had made. The tunnel ended right above the river. At once the night-goblins seemed to say “Now what?”

I tried out my spooft and said, “Mega lamar shobar, Am choool” (Now we start, Mango, over there).

All of the night-goblins had names related to food so “Mango” was quite a popular name, which was a bit of a problem because when I said that name three other goblins came running over.

We spread the net out and caught many fish. After that we fried two fish and ate them. My “visit” ended when I said I had to go back to the castle. They were sad, I could really tell, but I had to go.



# CHAPTER 9

## Peace?

When I got back to the castle everyone thought I was a ghost. I told them of my little “visit” and why the night-goblins were stealing the castle's food. Then I was told to get the night-goblin who spoke some English.

When Motley came he was asked to give back all the food he and the other goblins had taken. He started to cry.

“But then we will starve; no food we have you all have.”

So the king was again human thanks to the wizard, who had brewed up a potion for him. The king made a regal statement. “All night-goblins may live in this castle; we will hunt together and be friends.”

At once Motley rushed off to tell the other goblins the good news.

\* \* \* \* \*

# EPILOGUE

The kingdom is in peace. The night-goblins have taught everyone spooft and humans have taught them English. The night-goblins have given every one spooft names. Mine is Zeera or “Cumin seed.”

Having fulfilled my task in this magical land, I am off to the next journey to far off lands with my own dragon to look for a castle that is only visible on one day of the year for one hour. And so ends this story.

You never know what you might find beneath a well. . .