

Deep Mag

In the dawn of Narnia during the reign of the great-great grandson of the first High King Frank, whose coronation occurred in a tale called *The Magician's Nephew*, in a little house on a small bare patch of green land surrounded on three sides by trees and on the fourth by a great pool, there lived a Red Dwarf by the name of Gruffle. He was about three feet high with a huge red beard that flowed down to his ankles. He always wore a scowl on his face as if he had just bitten into a lemon, and his over all character usually reflected this expression, which is why he chose to live beyond the western border of Narnia, Lantern Waste, with his closest Narnian neighbors at this time living to the east of the lantern.

Gruffle, as on every other day, woke up early, ate breakfast, and then proceeded to clean his house from the floor to the rafters, making sure everything was spotless as though the King himself was coming to visit. (This of course was always highly unlikely.) To Gruffle nothing was ever right. In fact he mumbled to himself how dull every thing looked, even when he could see his reflection in his dishes and in the windows as clear as if they were mirrors. (Everything of course just reflected his own scowl, and thus his own hatred of everything.)

After Gruffle finished his household chores, he would have tea and then go outside and spend an hour bathing himself in the great pool, Caldron pool, the big pool right under the cliffs at the western end of

Narnia. The great waterfall pours down into it with the noise of never ending thunder, and the River of Narnia flows out from the other side. The waterfall keeps the pool forever churning and bubbling as though it were boiling, and that of course is how it got its name. This entire ritual was a very Un-Dwarfish thing for him to do, especially for such a long period of time and before going to his mine where he spent hours way into the night digging into the earth and covering his recently cleansed person in grimy black soot.

On this particular day his routine was altered slightly, and thus his life changed forever. Rather than bathing in the pool, he decided to climb the cliffs and bathe in the river water above. While he lay in the water, wearing his usual lemon scowl and complaining aloud with every breath how cold he was in terms that are not printable, he heard a strange sound, musical to his ears. (To us it would have been sickishly sweet and brought the feeling of having eaten too much cotton candy at the fair.) To Gruffle it was tantalizing and he almost, but not quite, smiled. He got out of the water, dressed, and followed the noise. It led him further west, down a valley and over a steep hill. Just over the hill Gruffle turned to the right and seemed to be heading straight for the side of a mountain, when suddenly the sides of the mountain seemed to open in front of him to reveal a chasm wide enough for three dwarfs to walk together closely side by side. Gruffle proceeded between the lime stone walls. With each step the chasm grew wider until before him he saw a small box canyon, barren except for one gnarled old tree. From the tree's branches hung not a single leaf, but from some of the branches hung black shiny fruit shaped like apples. Though their color was unusual, the fruit gave off a strangely

honey sweet smell. On the trunk of the tree there were carved, as deep as a spear, words in an unknown language. By the great size of the tree, it must have been there since the beginning of all of Narnia. It was as tall as the Tree of Protection that was planted on the banks of the Great River farther to the East to protect Narnia from the Nevil, an evil creature that was suppose to live somewhere in the north- western mountains, who actually was an evil White Witch. (In the time of Narnia's birth, language was new to the beasts of that world, and so they mispronounced words as does an infant learning to speak in our own world.) Beneath the tree stood a woman taller than any human Gruffle had ever seen, with skin as white and still as marble. Only the red color of her lips and a slight vibration of them over a wooden reed instrument with a bell shaped end foretold that she was more than just a statue. Though the melody she played varied, her fingers did not alter their hold on the instrument. Her face was beautiful, but proud and cold and stern. When the woman sighted Gruffle she removed the instrument from her lips, and simultaneously the music that had drawn him there stopped.

"Who, pray tell, are you?," spoke the Queen, for that is how she perceived herself.

"My name is Gruffle, and who are you?," grumbled the Dwarf. "What are you?"

"What am I? You little arrogant-" She rose up suddenly as if she were going to strike him. But then she seemed to change her mind and lowered her arms to her sides. She smiled coldly and changed her tone to him.

"Dear sweet Gruffle, I am the one who can make your life

wonderful. I am Queen Jadis. I can give you power, wealth. If you do me one service, I can give you slaves to do your chores and enough jewels so you will never have to enter a mine again."

This idea fascinated Gruffle and played on his mind, but he wondered how this giantess could possibly give him all of that.

"How do I know you can do what you say?"

With these words the Queen's eyes seemed to burn for a minute, but then they calmed and she spoke, "I can because I have power myself. Watch!"

The White Witch, for that is what she truly was, seemed to mumble something that sounded rather unpleasant, similar in feeling to the sound of finger nails drawn over a slate, and raised her hand over a pile of small rocks about the size of acorns. There was a flash of light and in the place of the stones there rested five perfectly cut rubies, each the size of the rock it replaced.

"But what is the job I have to do for you?"

"All you have to do for me," said the Queen, "is give a piece of fruit from this tree to the High King. It will not hurt him, in fact it will help him gain valuable insight, enlightenment into an untapped part of his soul."

"But why can't you give it to him?," asked Gruffle.

"I do not want him to know it is from me, that way its knowledge will be a surprise to him," answered the Queen. "You ask to many questions for a Dwarf. Now go and do what I ask, that is if you want treasures like these." With these words the White Witch, waved her hand over the precious jewels and they again appeared as stones.

Gruffle plucked an apple from the tree and placed it in a brown

sack he carried over his shoulder. He bowed to the Queen and turned and left.

As it so happened at about this time peace reigned supreme in Narnia, so the High King Colin had let his youngest brother Cole lead an expedition to the West to explore the unknown mountains. Cole was a tall young man, lean and strong. His face always shown with a light of mischief, but without a hint of evil intention. A happy excitement seemed to glow from him at the thought of new adventure. He and his followers were presently encamped around the lighted lamp post of Lantern Waste. Amongst his band were four centaurs, three faun, a handful of Red and Black Dwarfs, several distant partially human cousins, and several nymphs. There were also several Dryads, spirits of trees: tall men and women like humans, but also like trees. It is hard to explain a Dryad unless you have seen one, but unmistakable once you have. Prince Cole had decided to rest his party here for a day, before setting off early the next morning into the unknown beyond the great waterfall.

Gruffle decided to follow the Great River of Narnia to the King's palace of Cair Paraval on the banks of the Great River where it poured into the Great Eastern Sea. Several hours after leaving the Queen, Gruffle could not help but come across Prince Cole and his chief advisors sitting around a campfire in front of the entrance to the Prince's pavilion. The group sat or stood in a circle around the fire, with the sound of the Great River, a hundred yards from the flames, ringing in their ears. Gruffle knew Cole's companions, as did most of Narnia, at least by name. They were the same group who had helped King Colin chase the giants of the North back to their mountain forts several years before. The members consisted from the

black haired blue-eyed Prince's right and around, Glide, the great-great-grandson of the first flying horse Fledge, Rillor, a black bearded centaur with gleaming bare chest and shining chestnut flanks, Tremus, a faun wearing a forest green vest over his chest, and sitting with his goat legs folded beneath him, and sitting right to the left of Prince Cole was his best friend Beatrice, a beautiful fair haired nymph of the forests. Gruffle would have liked to have gotten around this group without being seen, but unfortunately he was spotted by Beatrice as she gazed into the western woods to her right.

"Dwarf, come here please," said Beatrice.

Gruffle started to back up from the clearing, when Cole, in a tone, not of anger, but that few of Narnia could disobey, said, "You heard the Lady, come before us. We wish to be known of your purpose this far West."

Gruffle, grumbling to himself about his poor luck, stumbled up to stand before the Prince.

"Now first, tell us your name," spoke Cole, now in a warm and friendly tone.

"My name is Gruffle, and I am on my way to give the High King a present from the West," growled Gruffle. "And if you don't mind, I am wasting time here. I will be on my way."

"There is no rush dear Dwarf," said Beatrice. "I am sure that Glide can get you to Cair Paraval quickly, if he does not mind giving you a ride."

"If it is urgent and if it is for the King, I will do all I can, as my great ancestor Fledge did at the beginning of Narnia," said Glide. "That is if the Prince so orders it, and I am not needed here."

"What do you think Rillor, Tremus, can we spare our valiant

companion for a day?"asked Cole.

"Well on his strong wings he can certainly catch up with us in no time," said Tremus. He would have added that they could probably do without Glide for just a day, but he saw that the horse was looking at him directly in the eye, and he did not want to offend him.

"Well Rillor, what do you think?" asked the Prince.

"Sire, you know how long I have lived and studied the stars; for though you are the fourth generation from the first High King, I am only of the second generation of centaurs since Narnia began. We centaurs live much longer than you Men. Never since the Dawn of Time, have such misfortunes been written in the skies. But the stars tell of the coming of Aslan, and thus the uprighing of all that is terrible that I read, yet the future will hold a negative occurrence as a result. Perhaps then we could afford to let Glide take this Dwarf, but only if it is urgent."

"The stars tell you of the coming of Aslan, son of the Emperor-Beyond- the- Sea," said Tremus.

"Yes, and that a traitor will be found and will be turned over to the evil, the White Witch, who was banned from Narnia at the beginning. All will never again be exactly as it was," stated Rillor, with an air of sadness.

Every ones gaze then turned to rest on Gruffle.

"What do you take to the King, Gruffle?" asked Cole.

"Some food that will help him. I have been told it will cause him no harm, but will enlighten him."

Then something wonderful occurred, at least in the eyes of the Prince and his friends. Both Beatrice and Cole's eyes grew wide with

wonder and fear, but their hearts beat with joy. Across the Great River of Narnia, standing on the opposite bank, was a large lion, as big as a horse. He may have come from the trees behind him, but years later Beatrice insisted that he had simply appeared there as if from the air.

"Aslan!" exclaimed both Cole and Beatrice at once, for that is who it was. Everyone there turned to see the great King of all Kings as soon as this word was spoken, except for Gruffle. The first mention of that name had caused Gruffle's stomach to begin to churn, and now the idea of possibly seeing that beast made him quake with fear from head to toe. Slowly he gathered up his courage and thought to himself, "It is probably just a big cat." He repeated this over and over again in his mind and then slowly turned to face the King of Beasts.

"Gruffle, I am more than just a big cat. I am me," boomed a deep voice from where Aslan stood, though his lips seemed hardly to move.

In one leap Aslan bounded over the river and stood towering over the Dwarf. All but Gruffle bowed down before the Great Lion.

"You can't hurt me," said Gruffle, in a shaky voice. "You are just a lion, and the worst you could do would be to eat me."

"Gruffle, your words are betraying you," said Aslan. "You have chosen your path. Prince Cole arise. You must tie this dwarf up, but do not hurt him, and treat him kindly."

The Prince raised himself up.

"Tremus, call the Black Dwarfs, Minark and Gohart, to bind the Dwarf."

Gruffle turned as if to run, but tripped over a root that seemed not to have been there moments before.

Meanwhile, Tremus had entered the pavilion and now returned followed by two dwarfs. These two of Gruffle's height and stature, but with flowing black beards, each grabbed one of Gruffle's arms and lifted him up. But before they could carry him off, Aslan swiped the bag containing the black apple from around Gruffle's neck and threw it into the fire.

"Aslan, if I may ask, what was in the bag?" asked Beatrice.

"Young one that was a gift to the High King, and what might have been part of his story, but not your own. Prince Cole, approach me."

"Yes, Aslan." The young prince came before Aslan and felt an inner strength he had never felt before as Aslan's warm breath touched him.

"Young Cole, you will need all of your courage tomorrow, for you are to meet the White Witch. You must take the traitorous Dwarf to the West, and up over the great waterfall with you. There you will find the gift giver who would have given Narnia what it shall not have until the end of all in this world, disbelief. You must give Gruffle to her so she may kill him." With these words Cole looked up a bit shocked. Aslan seemed to be able to read his thoughts when he replied, "There are rules even I must follow. The White Witch has discovered a source of deep magic, knowledge which was placed here at the Dawn of Time. The very presence of the intended gift around the Dwarf's neck," said Aslan, as he raised a paw toward the now burning bag, "caused Gruffle to commit the first traitorous act of this world by a true Narnian. It is from a similar magic that rules my actions in this matter."

All eyes turned toward the now blazing fire. When they again returned to where Aslan had been, the Great Lion had vanished.

The following morning after a meal, which was taken by the fire, the Prince and his followers were busy for a while taking the pavilion down and packing things up. (Gruffle was untied and offered food, but he refused to eat so he was retied.) Before nine o'clock they were on the march and set off to the West, paralleling the river to their south, walking at an easy pace to save their energy for the climb over the cliffs over which fell the great waterfall.

When they reached Caldron pool and the cottage of Gruffle, Minark and Gohart climbed onto Glide's back and flew to the top of the cliffs to the right of the falls. They then lowered a rope halter by which they were able to hoist up the rest, and all of their packed supplies. The packed pavilion they left at Gruffle's house below.

They followed down the same path that Gruffle had taken just the day before. Soon they heard a sickly sweet music floating softly in the air. They followed it into the chasm and saw standing below the branches of a gnarled tree, the Witch. As they approached she lowered the reed from her lips.

"So you are he. See this lovely apple," said Jadis, as she plucked a black apple from the tree. "If you eat this you will have knowledge and power beyond your wildest dream."

"We do not want your gifts," said Prince Cole. "I am Prince Cole, and this one I believe you know." With these words those behind the Prince parted and two red dwarfs brought forward Gruffle with his hands tied behind his back.

"What! You are not the High King?," exclaimed the White Witch.

"Your friend here did not get through," said Cole.

"I see. But not all is lost." Jadis seemed to say this more to herself than the Narnians before her. "Do you, Young Prince, see the writing on the trunk of this tree?" said the White Witch as she extended a white finger toward the tree. "Gaze at those words and you will understand."

The Witch took several steps back, while the Prince approached the tree. Though the shape of the strange letters never seemed to alter, he could suddenly understand them. They read something like this, though the poetry when you read it there was better:

All traitors, no matter whom you be,
Read this for your fate to learn.
Jadis must pour your blood for all to see,
Or all Narnia in fire and water will overturn.
This is the Emperor's deep magic,
His solemn decree.

Cole backed from the tree and turned to face his companions.

"Leave Gruffle here, and let us leave this place now."

"Prince—" said the Witch.

"You have won him, Witch, but that is all you have won," said Prince Cole.

"We will see," answered the Witch.

Cole and his companions turned and left the canyon with the centaurs taking the rear to keep an eye on Jadis.

As Cole walked out through the chasm, Tremus walked by his side, for awhile not speaking, each in his own thoughts. Finally Tremus decided he must speak.

"Prince, he was a traitor to Narnia. This is what Aslan instructed and so this is what must be best."

"Tremus, he was a Narnian and I have just now committed him to his doom. Words will not cleanse away the way I feel."

"There is probably a wider view that we do not see. Some good will probably eventually come out of this. We may never know, but we must believe."

"Shall we continue West my Prince."

"No Tremus, let us head back to Cair Paraval."

The two walked side by side back out to the river.

Here to get her out of the way, at least for a few centuries or so, I'd better tell you what happened with the Witch. She became known as the Executioner from The West, and she luckily rarely, in fact never, played this part again, at least not until soon before her own demise. The Witch kept this role close to her heart, if we can assume that she had one (at least for physical life giving purposes), until she was finally convinced even more than before that she was Queen of Narnia. Even so, she stayed to the North and West until the death of the Tree of Protection, about seven hundred years later. But that is another entirely different story called *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*

As for Gruffle, he was never heard from again, as was the Tree of Black Apples, or the World Ash Tree as it was later to be known. But on a hill to the far south east of Lantern Waste, by the southern banks of the Great River, appeared a large giant-size stone table on which are written letters that many say are exactly the same as those on the lost tree. The table seems to have appeared on its hill on the very day that the Witch claimed her first victim, and that night it has been told that the woods surrounding that hill were silenced temporarily at midnight by Dwarfish

screams.

Prince Cole and Lady Beatrice never really stopped wanting to explore. He and a small band of men, women, wood-gods, and nymphs travelled through a pass in the southern mountains to the land that would become Archenland. The Prince and his followers built the castle Anvard, and he married Beatrice, and their children ruled Archenland peacefully for many centuries. One of their descendants, Ram the Great, became the most famous king of Archenland. Tremus, Glide, and Rillor lived happily in Narnia, but there weren't many months in which they did not visit their friends in the South. Usually Tremus would ride on Glide's back and sail over the mountains, for his little legs were too short to carry him very swiftly through the mountain pass. Rillor visited less frequently, and usually on his own. It was Rillor's great-great-grand son who prophesied that Cole's descendant Cor would save Archenland from a great danger. But yet again that is another tale called *The Horse and His Boy*.