

LITTLUNS

Chapter 9: Ginumgagap continued...

“What now?” Modsoginie thinks aloud under his breath as he ponders what to do next. “I’ll wait. Yes, I’ll wait until Dragon goes to sleep,” he whispers to himself. “And then all I have to do is slip in, take the Fife and...and...but what if Dragon doesn’t sleep? Maybe serpents don’t sleep. Who knows! No one has been around a serpent and survived long enough to tell.”

He really has no choice but to wait and hope that Dragon will eventually tire and fall to sleep. Minutes turned into hours and hours into what seemed like days, but it is Modsoginie, not Dragon, who slips into a deep sleep. Modsoginie’s heavy breathing grows to a light snore that suddenly jumps into a loud, protracted snore that resonates throughout the entire cavern.

Dragon jerks his head up, blinks, and then looks around trying to pinpoint the source of the echo.

“Who’s there!?” Dragon commands angrily, smoke escaping through his mouth and nostrils.

Modsoginie jumps awake to Dragon’s voice reverberating throughout the confining space of the cavern.

“I don’t see you, but I know you are there,” the Dragon says, looking around. “Are you dinner? The Master promised dinner. Dinner, is that you? Show yourself!”

Modsoginie gulps several times trying to figure out what to do and then it comes to him. He sits up straighter, takes a deep breath and, with everything he has in him, yells out, “Dragon... I have come to free you!”



“I just got here,” a perplexed Dragon replies. “The Master puts me here and then you show up and say you want to free me? Why would Master’s food want to do that?” The doubtful dragon queries with a raised eyebrow.

“Because you are the last of your kind. You’re the last of the great serpents that once reigned over this land.”

“True!” a less than humble serpent boasts, examining one of his talons as if he just had a manicure. He then drops his arms, leaning down while swinging the upper portion of his body around, searching for the invisible voice.

“But Master is very powerful,” Dragon grimaces, straightening upward, shaking his head as he adds, “No, nah, no, no, no, I don’t want him to turn me into a lizard again. Very humiliating, very small... it was scary.”

Dragon suddenly jerks his head up, eyes darting around the cavern. “How will you get me out of here? How can you undue what The Master has done? What gives you the power?”

Modsoginie has to think quickly and does.

“I am a Spirit!”

“A Spirit!?” Dragon shouts, perking up excitedly. “Show yourself, Spirit!”

“I can’t. He cast a spell that prevents me from doing that.”

“Ah-ha! You, too, huh? So how can you help me when you can’t even help yourself?”

Dragon challenges doubtfully, now sniffing the air.

“We can help each other.”

“How?”

“How much is it worth to you?” Modsoginie’s voice echoes.

“I’m-m-m-m listening,” Dragon replies, raising one eyebrow.

Modsoginie peers around slowly, seeing that Dragon is now looking away from him. He looks around trying to spot the Golden Fife. He finally sees it, lying toward the bottom of the treasure mound, partially obscured by jewels and coins. He then quickly shifts around into the cover of the tunnel.

“You’re sitting on a lot of stuff there. Would you be willing to give me something in exchange for your freedom?” the Dwarf asks.

Dragon looks down and around at the treasure below him, he blinks several times and then, shaking his head frantically, says, “Oh, no, no, no, this belongs to the One. He would be very angry. A lizard again I would be. No, no, no, too dangerous!”

“What if I only choose one little thing? You know, something he would never miss.”

Now, this is a very smart serpent that survived many a challenge to be too quick in making such an important decision. Dragon is now looking toward Modsoginie’s cave location when he questions, “What would a spirit do with a bauble?”

Modsoginie sighs, searching for an answer and then emphatically states, “Whatever I want! And if you don’t give me what I want, you will be here forever and as a spirit I could make things even worse for you with another curse!”

Now, Dragon has already had a very bad day and is not prepared to make it worse. At the same time, he’s no fool and is not about to take any unnecessary chances.

“Free me first, and then take what you want,” replied Dragon with a raised eyebrow.

“If I do that, what guarantees do I have that you will hold up your end of the bargain? I mean, you could take my bauble and fly away, then what would I do?”

Dragon thinks for a moment and curiously asks, “How do you plan to undo the curse? How will you get me out of here? I’ve already tried to blast and pound my way out. Too much force could collapse the entire mountain down on me. That would be a crushing blow, to say the least. How can you succeed where I have failed?”

“I am a Spirit.”

Modsoginie had prided himself on always telling the truth and now is feeling bad that he has lowered his standards. Even The Howlings didn’t possess the power to move mountains and that is what it would take to release Dragon from his tomb of solid, impacted granite.

“But what guarantees do *I have*,” Dragon asks flatly. “I could give you what *you* want and you could leave without fulfilling your part of the bargain. So, it would seem that we are at an impasse. Tattle if we do and tattle if we don’t,” Dragon sniffs the air as he takes one step off the treasure toward Modsoginie’s hiding place.

Dragon was right, and now Modsoginie finds himself searching for a solution when suddenly and unexpectedly, Dragon shouts out, “Come, and take your bauble!”

Modsoginie realizes that he is now in a bigger pickle. If he shows himself, Dragon will know that he’s a Dwarf and not a Spirit and just might eat him out of sheer spite. This is a most disturbing situation and he can only think of one thing to say.

“Okay, but you mustn’t look. To look upon me would have disastrous results. You would be turned into a toad!”

Well, Dragon had already been turned into a lizard and was not about to take a chance on diminished capacity again, so he agrees and turns away. “How’s this?” he questions glancing over his shoulder.

“Farther. Go over to the wall,” Modsoginie commands, urging him away.

Dragon stomps over to the wall pressing his head flat against the rock.

“How’s this?”

Modsoginie peers around his hiding place and says, “Now, you mustn’t look!”

Dragon rolls his eyes, nodding his head slowly in agreement. Modsoginie cautiously moves out of the cave on his tiptoes, quietly making his way over toward the Golden Fife. Dragon stays pressed against the wall puffing steam over the rocky surface. His eyes shift over trying to get a glimpse of the spirit, but he would have to turn his head to be able to see anything. What Modsoginie couldn’t see was Dragon’s firm grip on a large slab of rock in front of him, against the wall.

Modsoginie reaches the treasure mound, but just as he bends down to pick up the Fife, Dragon shouts out, “Times up!”

He whirls around with the rock slab in his hands and sees the Dwarf bending over the Golden Fife. “You’re not a Spirit! You’re a-a-a DWARF!!!!” His playfulness turns into a raging inferno as he exhales fire and smoke at Modsoginie. Modsoginie grabs onto the Golden Fife and

whirls around, scrambling over the treasure and running toward the tunnel as the entire cavern fills with flames and smoke.

Dragon raises the slab of rock over his head and then heaves it across the cavern at the Dwarf. The slab flies over Modsoginie's head smashing into the cavern wall just above the tunnel and then dropping down with a crash, sealing off his only exit. Dragon runs through the dense smoke in the direction where he last saw the Dwarf. He skids to a stop and fans the smoke, trying to clear the area to be able to spot the Dwarf. And then, at the tunnel entrance, he sees Modsoginie trying in vain to move the slab. Dragon approaches the Dwarf with a cocky waddle. He bursts forward picking the Dwarf up by the scuff of his shirt. Struggling, Modsoginie grabs onto his knife and swings it around at Dragon.

"Oh, my," Dragon says with his other hand to his cheek, mocking Modsoginie. "Is that a tooth pick, or is this the part where we fight?"

"Let go of me! I'm not your enemy. I really am here to free you...and...and get the Golden Fife."

Dragon looks closely at Modsoginie with a satisfied grin.

"Me thinks that you're here for that Golden Fife and nothing else, eh?"

"Okay, okay, you're right. That's the way it started, but now it's different," the Dwarf says.

"Oh...really. How is it different?"

"You're not the only one that's held captive. On the other side of this cavern are spirits that are also held prisoner."

Dragon raises an eyebrow with a touch of sarcasm, "You mean like you?"

"No, no. I'm not a Spirit. I just said that because, well...I didn't know what else to say. You don't exactly seem the type that would talk first and then eat."

"Well, yes that is my way," Dragon nods agreeably, and then continues, "Besides, what can you and them outside do that could free me from this spell? Are you as powerful as the One?"

"I don't know, but together, we can try."

"Very interesting, but I don't think so. The Master would be very angry and I wouldn't want to be on his bad side. When he needs me, he will be the One to grant me my freedom. He giveth and he taketh away. He is the One. He told me so in a nightmare. I must be loyal to The Master!"

Dragon's eyes narrow as he leans in close to Modsoginie, "And besides...all of this excitement has made me hungry. So here I am, and there you are...dinner as promised." Dragon is now nose to nose with the Dwarf when quick as lightning, Modsoginie jabs Dragon in the nose with his knife. Dragon rears back in pain, letting go of the Dwarf. Modsoginie drops to the ground, jumps up, and runs toward the back of the cavern searching for any possible cover or exit...

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