

On Buttered Rolls

Once upon a time, there was a king. Most people would expect a king to live in a castle, or a palace, or something grand. I'm sure that this king expected that, too. But, this particular king (let's call him Reggie) had just gotten kicked out of his castle by a giant troll and was sitting on a bench beside his palace gardens. Until then, the king had no idea that giant trolls even existed, outside of myth. So, you can only imagine what a shock it must of been for Reggie when the assailer showed up one evening.

The only troll he had ever met before was two feet tall and in possession of a bridge. This was certainly not that troll. The giant troll showed up unannounced right before King Reggie usually ate his supper. The troll, who was easily twice the size of poor Reggie, went straight to business -- he plucked the royal crown straight off Reggie's head and placed it on his own with a malicious smile. Next, the troll marched into the dining hall to consume the king's supper. This he did without difficulty or good table manners. The troll then picked up the much-astonished Reggie, who was so disgusted and horrified that all he could do was stand and gape. Reggie was flung high over the castle wall and into the moat with a tremendous splash!

And so, this is where we find him now -- homeless, soggy, and dethroned. He sat down on a nearby bench outside his garden, wishing that he had never fired his royal guard.

Presently, a general leading one hundred knights in glistening armour came along. King Reggie instantly recognized the general's rank, and hailed him as such.

"Hail, general! 'Tis I, your King Reginald! I have been overthrown by the most ruthless and barbaric of creatures -- a giant troll! He is in my castle now, eating my supper and sleeping on my pile of riches, as giant trolls are fabled to do."

“Hail, king, though not my own!” was the general’s enthusiastic reply. “I have just come to conquer you and your kingdom myself and claim the pile of riches you tell of. But, it would appear that this troll stands in the way of both our plans.”

The general studied Reggie and his sorry condition before continuing. “The more I look at you, the more I pity you. I shall send my men to take back your throne instead.”

At that, the king’s face lit up.

“You would do that for a king you came to conquer?” he asked, his voice full of hope.

“Indeed, I would. After all, I have come to overthrow your rule. That I cannot do until you are ruling once again.”

“Oh, thank you! The beast is just over the moat. You shan’t have trouble getting in, seeing what miserable condition the troll has left yonder gate.”

The general looked across the moat and replied, “So I see... Do you always leave your drawbridge down?”

Reggie was slightly puzzled by this question and, with a matching expression on his face, answered, “Of course. ‘Tis all the easier for me to come and go when I please.”

The general sighed, and thought to himself, “You, and any intruder who might want to pay a visit.”

And with that, the procession made its way into the castle -- all one hundred knights. King Reggie followed anxiously behind, curious to see how one hundred men would take on a giant troll, despite his hesitation to see the creature once again. The king followed the army all the

way to the treasure room's gilded door.

"Hark, ye!" said the general to his knights. "All we must do is drive this troll out, then the riches shall be ours! To battle, men!"

At that, all one hundred burst through the door, shouting "to battle!" and waving their swords high over their heads.

Much has been said about strategy, and much more has yet to be said. But if there is one thing time has taught military leaders, it is that missions of stealth should be carried out with silent haste. The battle cry awoke the giant troll with just enough time to react. He picked up a golden plate of ridiculous proportion (he was surrounded by such luxurious trinkets, after all) and thwarted the hundred blades before him. Then, with one sweep of his great arm, he knocked over a dozen men.

The general, realizing all too late how poorly executed his mission was, gave a cry of "Retreat" and rushed back down the hall, heading for the castle's gate. King Reggie had fled as soon as the giant troll awoke, however, and was already through the gate by the time retreat was called. He waited outside for the general to return, but the man never did; neither did any of his one hundred knights. Instead, they had been herded by the troll into the dungeon and there secured. A great screech and clank of iron delivered this news to poor Reggie.

He returned to his garden bench across the moat to mourn his sorry fate.

After sighing and moping for a while, he saw his former advisor Lawrence Bellwright coming down the road. It is worth pointing out that King Reggie's garden serves as a lawn, separating his castle and moat from a well-traveled road. Lawrence saw his king's dejected state

and hastened his arrival to give what comfort he could.

“Is all well, sire?” he asked.

“Alas, all is not!” Riggie replied. “I have one matter of great importance that troubles me.”

“Perhaps I could be of help,” suggested Lawrence. “What is amiss?”

“A troll -- a giant troll -- has taken over my castle and left me to live on this hard bench. A general and his hundred soldiers came to attack, but instead chose to oust the troll and restore me to my throne. But, alas! They are now all locked in my dungeon.”

“Well,” said Lawrence, “it does not sound all bad...”

“It doesn’t?” said the king, his voice again rising with hope. “’Tis a comforting thought. Tell me, what do you advise?”

“I advise...” started Lawrence. He paused to consider every option. “I advise you get rid of this troll.”

“A splendid idea! But, I don’t see how I could do it. An army of a hundred has failed, and we’re but two.”

“Oh!” Lawrence said. “Then perhaps we should wait for a knight more valiant to come and assist us.”

They did not wait very long, because King Reggie’s court jester was just coming down the road. The jester (let’s call him Ronald) was planning to make his routine Saturday evening performance and was completely oblivious to his sire’s sad situation. He saw King Reggie and Lawrence sitting on the garden bench. Evidently, they saw him too, because there arose a cry of

disgust.

“Oh, lovely!” said the king. “Here is a fine knight to slay our troll.” He turned to scowl at his jester.

Unfortunately, Ronald misinterpreted the king’s sarcasm. Actually, he misinterpreted the entire sentence.

“Aye, ‘tis a fine night for slaying a troll, your highness! In fact, I can’t think of anything I’d rather do than slay a troll!” said Ronald, who began impersonating a valiant knight in a duel.

Reggie turned to his advisor and whispered, “How can I get rid of him, Larry? He plagues me!”

Larry -- er, Lawrence Bellwright -- replied slyly (and so Ronald could hear), “Let him slay the giant troll that is in your castle, sire.”

“Yes! Let me slay a giant troll!” chimed in Ronald, who must have thought the troll was only a big joke. They were, after all, known chiefly through myth.

Reggie was about to protest sending his court jester to face the dangerous beast, but then he recalled how the army of one hundred was merely locked in his dungeon. With feigned reluctance and an “as you wish,” he allowed Ronald to walk through the splintered gate and into the castle. Once he was out of earshot, King Reggie and Lawrence shared a cruel chuckle and continued their wait for a knight to come.

Night did come, and the two waiting became two sleeping. Reggie had fallen to drowsiness first, and was using his advisor’s lap as a pillow. All was quiet until the stroke of ten, when -- without warning -- a great thumping noise, followed by a great splash, and more thumping came

from the castle.

Both Reggie and his cushion awoke with a start. In the dark, they heard the fast approaching grunts -- of a giant troll!

“FLEE! FLY! FOES! FIENDS!” hollered the creature, though not to anyone in specific.

The duo upon the bench scrambled to run away from the giant in the dark. One of them screamed, the other tripped over the bench. They both ran around in chaotic circles, their heads not quite cleared of sleepiness. Then, as quickly as the giant troll had come upon them, the creature was gone. Reggie and Lawrence resumed their seats on the bench to catch their breath and wonder what had just happened.

Eventually, Lawrence spoke. “That was your troll.”

“Indeed... but look -- he has fled! What on earth could have caused him to leave?”

Then came the sound of Ronald the Jester’s horn playing Reggie's royal anthem. Ronald’s voice soon followed, exclaiming, “Have no fear, your majesty! I have rid your home of its pest irreparably!”

And so, by morning, everything was how it should be. The dinner hall was cleaned, the kitchen restored, and the crown placed back upon King Reggie’s head. Over breakfast, the question burning in everyone’s mind came out:

“How did you do it, Ronald?”

“Twasn’t hard at all, your highness,” replied the jester. “When I saw the beast, an ancient rhyme came to mind:

‘Remember well that giant trolls
are wary of their ch’lesterol,
for if one’s in your house or hole,
then ward it off with buttered rolls.’

“And then I saw that the brute had left a whole sick of butter on the table, where last night’s meal was set. So, I picked up the butter and chucked it straight into the troll’s mouth while he snored.”

“That is incredible,” exclaimed Reggie, who enjoyed a good story. “But I’ve almost forgotten -
- I have an entire army locked in my dungeon, and they want to invade!”

Just then, Lawrence Bellwright entered the breakfast hall. It was technically the dinner hall, too, but they were eating breakfast right then.

“I bring good news, sire,” said the advisor. “Those hundred men -- and their general especially -- have pleaded for mercy and wish that no one hears of their embarrassing defeat by a giant troll.”

“What do you suggest I do?” asked Reggie.

“If I may, your majesty,” said Ronald. “I recommend making them promise never to invade again and then sending them back home.”

“Then that,” said the king, “is what I shall do.”

The End.

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