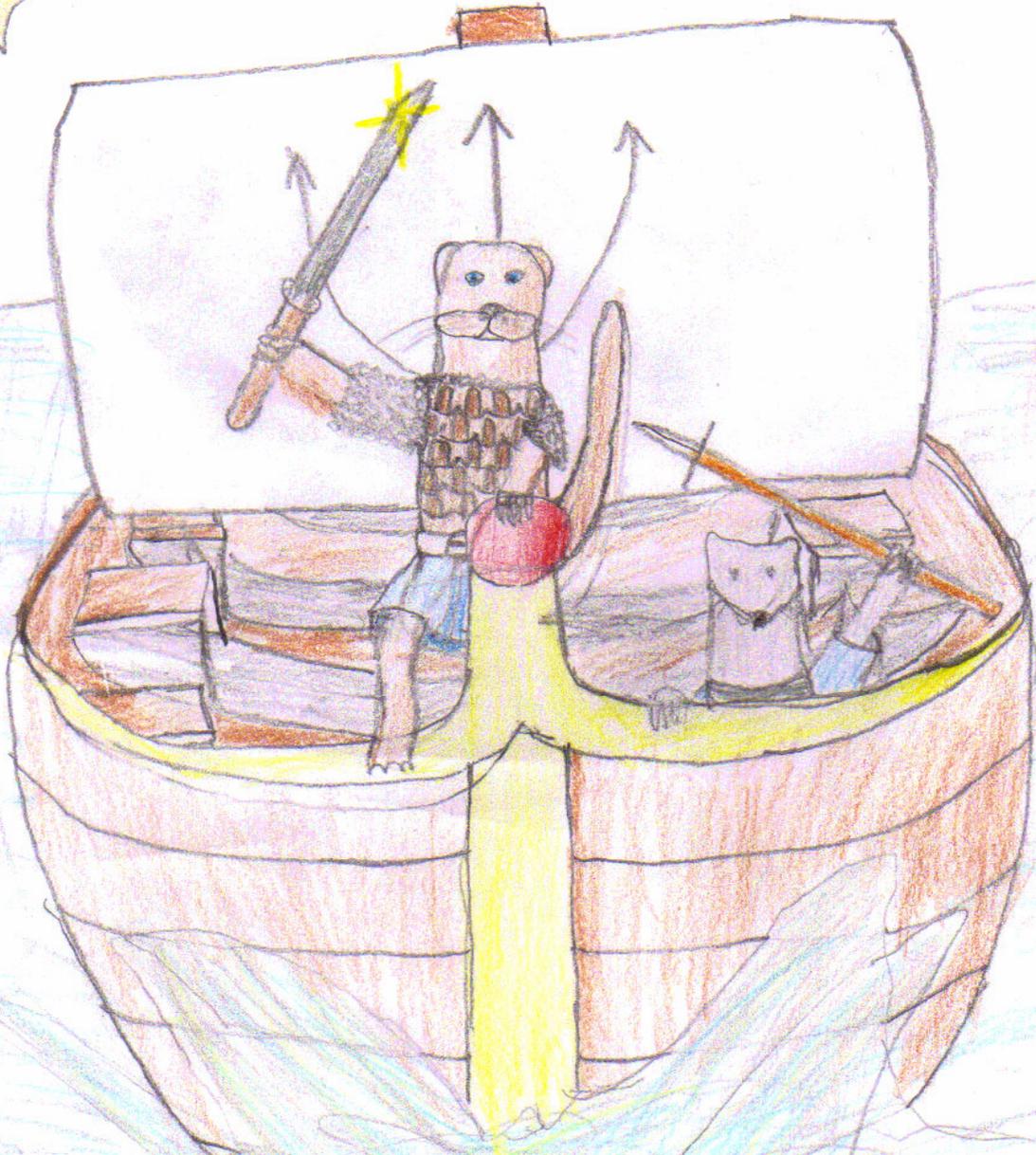


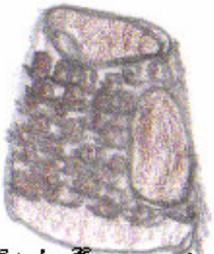
The Adventures Of Labby and Trappid Thor's Breast-Plate



By A. C. Wilson

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Thor's Breast-plate



Chapter 1

Monnorck Invaders

The sea was calm and peaceful. A long-tailed weasel named Trappid Bushwhisker sat by the tiller of the longboat *Windsckimer*. The boat was manned by two score Lappids¹. Each Lappid, including Trappid, wore their typical uniform: chain mail with a shiny breast plate over the top. A trident, the Lappid's symbol, was engraved on the front of the breast plate. Each wore a green, plaid kilt, and the officers wore light blue capes, except the high general, Labby Freshpad, who wore his armor over a light blue tunic.

Labby marched around calling out orders.

"Bring in the sail; there isn't enough wind! You there, Lieutenant Ripple, get together a rowing party. Trappid, don't fall asleep there! Pull 'er back on course... no, other way, slightly east!" Trappid quickly adjusted, pointing the ship towards the just-risen sun. Just then, Lieutenant Ripple marched up to Labby with twenty Lappids.

"Good! Ten on the right side..." he began,

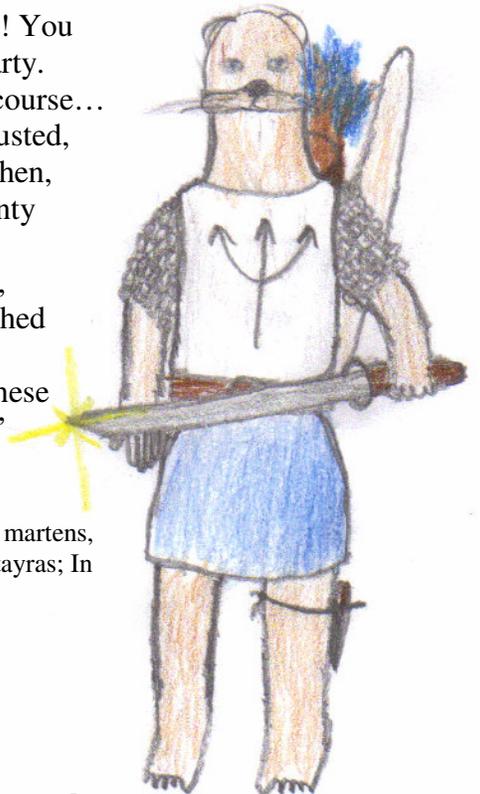
"And ten on the left, very good sah!" finished Ripple, a young male otter.

"Right," Labby said, "I'll take charge of these Lappids; you go and relieve Tidal in the lookout."

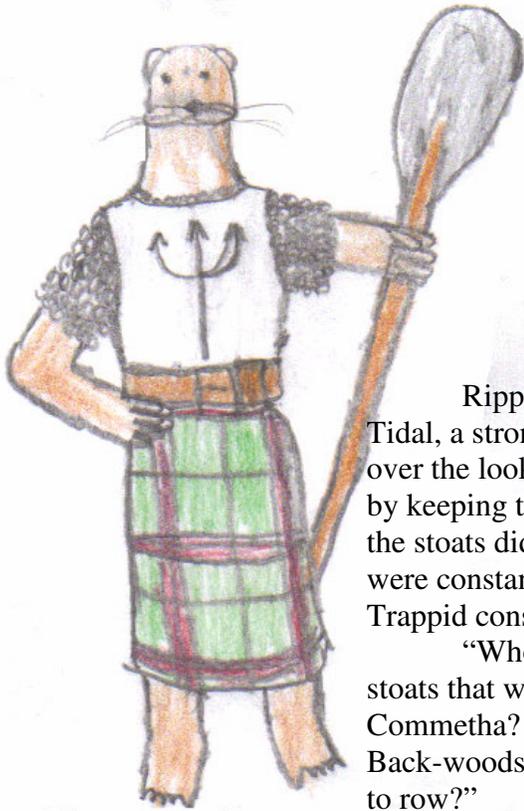
¹ A fighting group of otters, weasels, stoats, ferrets, fishers, martens, polecats, minks, ermines, badgers, wolverine, grisons, and tayras; In short all animals classified under family Mustelidae.



General Trappid Bushwhisker



High General Labby Freshpad



Lieutenant Ripple Salttail

Ripple climbed blithely up to the lookout and told Tidal, a strong, male pine marten, that he would be taking over the lookout. Labby was getting the rowing underway by keeping the beat of the oars with a hand drum. Most of the stoats didn't know very much about rowing, so they were constantly turning the boat off course. This made Trappid constantly adjust the tiller to compensate.

"Whoa, there!" commanded Labby to one of the stoats that was turning the ship "Are you trying to go to Commetha? We're supposed to be heading towards the Back-woods. Pip and Tip, would you kindly show him how to row?"

Pip and Tip, the two fisher twins, ambled over to the stoat.

"Now, put your back into h'it Stoaty!"

"Paddle h'as 'ard h'as the rest h'of your group,"

"Make sure your group h'is paddling just h'as 'ard h'as the h'other group!"

Labby turned his attention to Trappid, who was one of his closest friends.

"So, how's everything going here?"

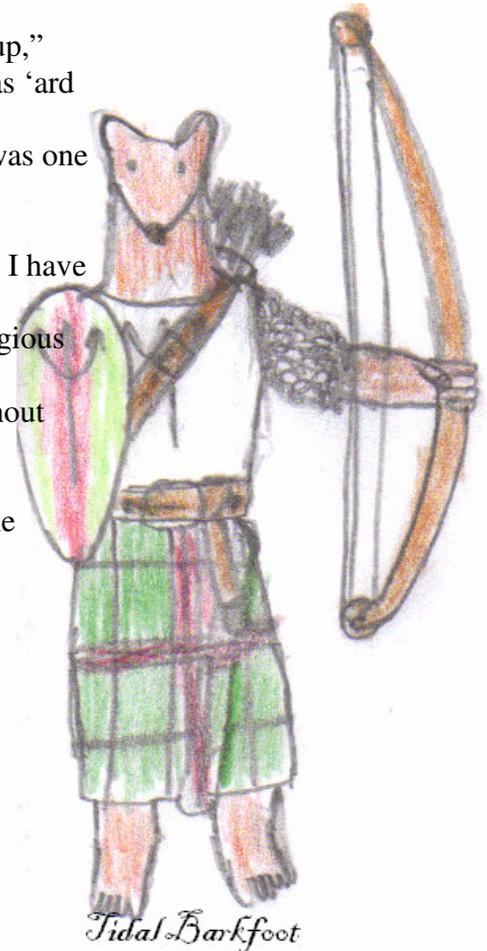
"Well, now that you straitened out that stoat, I have plenty of time to enjoy Gods creation."

Labby snorted, he had never been a very religious animal.

Before Trappid could reply, Ripple gave a shout from the lookout.

"Ship ahoy!"

Labby looked up and asked, "What flag is she flying?"



Tidal Barkfoot

“A green dragon on a blood-red background!” came Ripple’s reply.

Trappid froze; a cold chill ran down his back.

“Monnorck,” was all he could mutter. Labby went into action.

“General Spiicklaw!” he yelled.

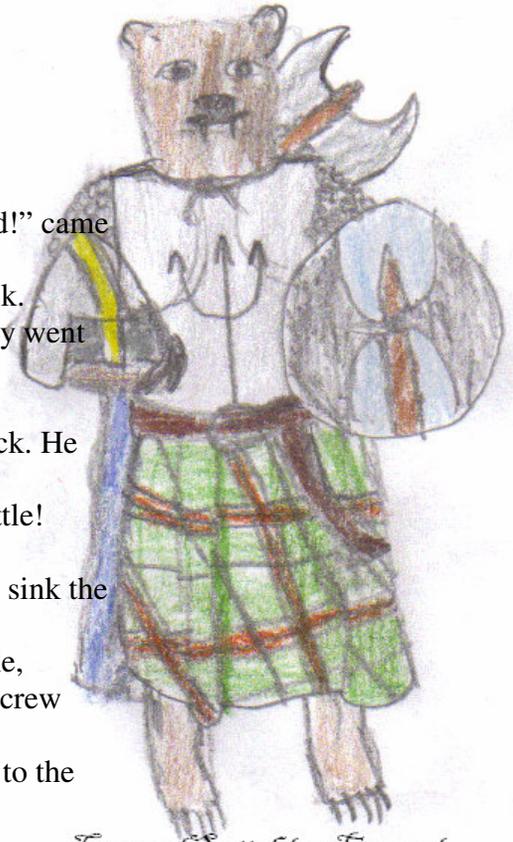
A huge, strong wolverine walked out on deck. He faced Labby, “Aye Sir?”

“Get the men together; prepare them for battle! Hugga!” Labby’s younger brother saluted.

“Get some of your otters ready with axes to sink the Monnorck’s ship.”

Hugga Freshpad saluted and called to Ripple, “Ahoy, there! Come on down and help me get the crew ready!”

“Check, Hugga!” he answered as he swung to the deck.



General Spiicklaw Fangtale

The Monnorck ship was made in the style of a Viking longboat, with everything from the dragon on the prow to the fourscore round shields hanging off the sides of the boat. All the Monnorcks were rowing, except for two - the general, who was also serving as lookout, and the helmsman.

“Harr, Sail on the hchizon², Loochhs to be a mehchent ship!”

“Hchare ye shure? It hchas a trident on the sail!”

² The three letters, hch, represent the sound of the Hebrew letter het, a sound similar to that of someone clearing their throat.

“Well, hchit doesn’t matter; we still ouhcht to get ready fohch battle!”

“They’re closing in fast, sir!” a ferret called to Labby.

“Spiicklaw,” roared Labby, “Get the men on deck and the women in the cabins!”

“Aye, sir!”

“General Omocron!”

“Yes?” answered a badger

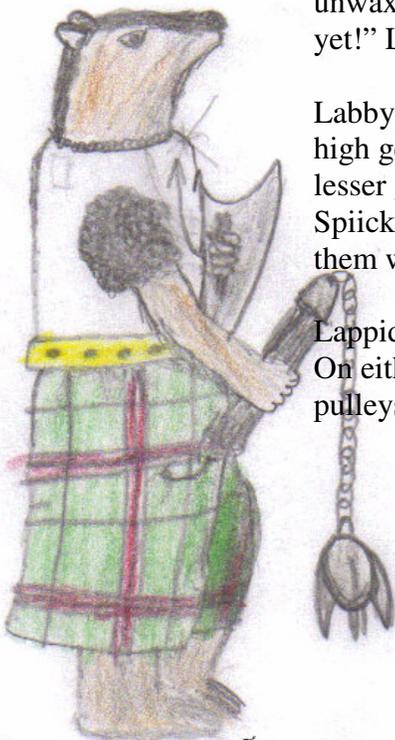
“Make sure all of the Lappid’s weapons are oiled and well-kept.”

Omocron saluted and marched off. Labby could hear him on the other end of the ship.

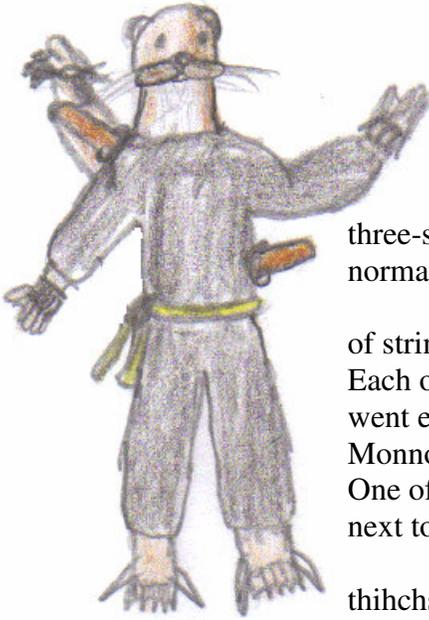
“And you think you could hurt a Monnorck with that sword? It’s too dull to break an egg! I’ve seen spoons that were sharper than that! ...Shame on you letting your axe get that rusty! ... Now, what do we have here, an unwaxed bow string? Tell me why you haven’t waxed it yet!” Labby didn’t hear the reply.

The Monnorck ship was now two bow-shots away. Labby called everyone out on deck in fighting formation, high general Labby in front; behind him were his three lesser generals, general Trappid Bushwhisker, general Spiicklaw Fangtale and general Omocron Digyere. Behind them were a score and a half of Lappids.

“Bows at the ready!” roared Omocron. Each Lappid, including the generals, produced a curious bow. On either end of the bow was a pulley, and connected to the pulleys were three strings. These were the famous Lappid



General Omocron Digyere



Captain Hugga Freshpad

three-stringed bows that were many times stronger than the normal longbow.

“Fire!” bellowed Omocron. There was a twanging of strings, and thirty-four arrows whizzed through the air. Each one seemed to be laser-guided as they all in unison went extremely high, and then plummeted down onto the Monnorck longboat, rendering one dead and six wounded. One of the arrows sunk up to the shaft into the wood right next to the Monnorck general’s foot.

“Wahcht was thahcht; no arrowhchs could shoot thihchs far! Put on some morhch speed!”

Hugga was not dressed in the same uniform as the rest of the Lappids. He wore the garb of a ninja. His weapon of choice was a hatchet, and sharp metal claws that fit over his paws. He, Ripple and four other champion otter swimmers dove off into the sea. Their lithe forms cut through the water like arrows as they headed towards the Monnorck ship. They reached it in good time. Each otter pulled out a hatchet or an axe and in Ripple’s case an assp, which is a weapon that was basically a sharpened metal oar, and went to work on the longboat’s wooden underside.

The Monnorck ship was now within ten feet of the *Windsckimer*. It was now the Monnorcks turn to fire arrows, and at this distance it was hard to miss. Labby was seeing the results of the Monnorck archers as Lappids fell on his right flank and on his left flank.

“Get grappling hooks; pull the ships next to each other before we lose too many more Lappids! Omocron, get our archers and slingers to send a volley to cover!”

Labby's orders were obeyed almost instantly. Arrows pelted the Monnorck long boat, making it look like an over-grown swimming hedgehog. As soon as the Monnorcks ducked, several grappling hooks were hurled onto the Monnorck long boat. Then the ships were rapidly hauled together. Before the Monnorcks knew what was happening, their ship was flooded with Lappids, headed by a large otter wielding a Samurai-like sword, a badger who was wildly swinging a flail with four sharp blades on it, and a huge male wolverine, with a double-bladed battle axe.

The Monnorck general was standing behind all of his troops, urging them on, when suddenly he heard a strange sound by his left foot. He instinctively leaped aside, and not a moment too soon. Where he was standing a moment ago was ripped out of the bottom of the boat by an axe.

“We'hchr sinking, gehcht on thahcht other boahcht!”

The Monnorcks seemed to find new strength in knowing that if they stayed on their boat they would drown. The Monnorck general charged through his army in hopes of getting through to the *Windsckimer* before the rest, but his way was blocked by Spiicklaw Fangtale, who in one blow shattered his shield. The Monnorck general had his sword out in a second and dealt Spiicklaw a blow to the shoulder, which was blocked by Spiicklaw's axe handle, which promptly broke in two. Spiicklaw then fell upon the Monnorck general with his teeth and claws. Spiicklaw tore wildly at the Monnorck general's leg. However, he was

soon knocked senseless by a blow from the Monnorck general's sword handle.

Labby was on another end of the boat stopping the Monnorcks from coming over onto the *Windsckimer*. Out of the corner of his eye, he noticed a Monnorck that was about to throw a knife at him. Labby had been the champion mathematician of his family, so much so that he had invented a formula that was fool-proof to know at what angle a knife would land. He had memorized this formula and was able to come up with the right answer to any problem in a split second; it was this amazing skill that saved him from death. He reached his hand forward and caught the knife out of thin air by its handle. The Monnorck that had thrown the knife was so surprised that he took a step backward, tripped, and was captured by Pip and Tip. Labby turned and saw Spiicklaw go down. He charged toward the Monnorck general and tripped on a bit of spare rope; his head hit the deck so hard that it knocked him out.



Chapter 2

The quest

Labby was jolted awake by a sudden noise. He didn't know what the noise sounded like; all he knew was that there was a sound. He lay still, waiting for his eyes to adjust. Then he heard the noise again, *Whizz, crack!* Labby instinctively twitched, even though the whip didn't touch him. It hit some beast a few feet away. The beast groaned, and when he did, Labby caught his breath. It was Spiicklaw! Labby's eyes finally adjusted. He could see a Monnorck standing not two feet away from him with his back to him. In the Monnorck's hand was a short, wicked-looking whip.

Labby moved quicker than lightning, kicking the Monnorck in the back of the knee. The Monnorck crumpled, and then Labby leaped up, stamped on the Monnorck's hand and grabbed the whip. But before Labby could do anything else, he was suddenly knocked over. Someone placed a heavy boot on his jaw. Labby strained his eyes to see his opponent and found himself looking into the eyes of the Monnorck general.

"I hcheat thahcht you're the genhchral of this ship, did I hcheat correctly?" he asked.

Labby tried to answer, but he found it hard to do so with a boot on his jaw.

"Hchanswer!" the Monnorck general demanded as he kicked him to his feet.

"Yes," answered Labby "I am High General Labby Freshpad."

The Monnorck general only smiled.

“HchI hchave no use fohchr you, wehch hchave hchall the slaves wehch need.”

“So, why don’t you let us go free? We could pay for our release.”

“So you shahchll!” remarked the Monnorck general. “You shahchll pay fohchr your hchrelease by finding Thchor’s Breastplate!”

Labby had heard of Thor’s Breastplate; it was supposedly unable to be pierced.

“How will we know where to find it, and how do you know that it even exists?”

“Behchcause hchof this!” the Monnorck general answered as he handed Labby a slip of paper.

“Wehch wihchll keep thahcht hchwolverine, and hchif you are not back hchere in two hchweeks, then hche will be done hchaway hchith.”

“OK, then, if we are going to be looking for Thor’s Breastplate, then please get off of my boat so that I can get started.”

“No, no, no, hchwe take youhchr boat, hchand you take hchour boat. It hchas been repaired.”

“Fine, any other twist?!?” Labby asked in exasperation.

“No, Good lhchuck!”

Labby and the rest of the Lappids, with the exception of Spiicklaw, were herded onto the Monnorck’s longboat. Many of the female Lappids were crying, including the head pine marten cook, Wave, and Labby’s sister Cherryblossom. In fact, the only Lappid doe that was not crying was Mae, the long-tailed weasel.

Labby was frustrated, and it didn't help to have a bunch of weeping women around him. It was then that he looked at the piece of paper that the Monnorck general had given him. He found the following lines written on it.

Take a come with four humps,
One in eight and fifty,
Similar to twenty,
Right hand of tea at thumps,
Recycled in captain,
Now you add a mixed up free!



Labby's heart fell. *Where is Thumps?* He wondered.

Wave Pynepaw



Chapter 3

Riddles

By this time all of the women folk had calmed down and were trying to put together a dinner for everyone. Labby had told all the Lappids of their plight, and now he was reading the riddle out for all of the animals that were not cooking.

“Take a come with four humps,
One in eight and fifty,
Similar to twenty,
Right hand of tea at thumps,
Recycled in captain,
Now you add a mixed up free!”

There was a silence followed by somebeast muttering

“We’re doomed!”

“No we’re not,” retorted Labby, “All we have to do is look at each line individually; that should make it easier. So what about the line ‘Right hand of tea at thumps,’ does anybeast have an idea what that means?”

Trappid sat down and started to think hard, “What’s tea’s right hand man?” he wondered aloud. He was suddenly showered with suggestions.

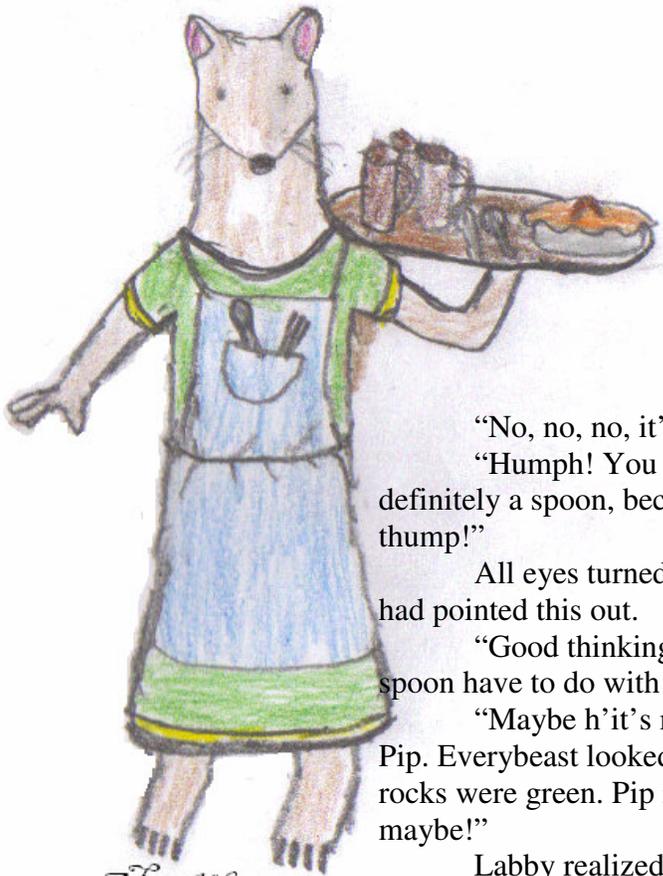
“Milk!”

“Sugar!”

“Cream!”

“Coffee!”

“Toast!”



Mae Wytethroat

“No, no, no, it’s obviously chocolate!”

“Humph! You guys know nothing, it’s most definitely a spoon, because it’s used in tea and it can thump!”

All eyes turned in wonderment on the Tayra that had pointed this out.

“Good thinking,” said Labby, “But what would a spoon have to do with Thor’s Breast Plate?”

“Maybe h’it’s made h’out h’of spoons!” suggested Pip. Everybeast looked at Pip as if he had suggested that rocks were green. Pip instantly got defensive, “H’I just said maybe!”

Labby realized that they were getting nowhere, so he promptly changed the subject,

“What about the line, ‘Recycled in captain’?”

“Maybe the writer of the riddle was a captain, and then he was promoted to a general, and then demoted to be a captain again,” suggested Trappid.

“It can’t mean that!” the Tayra commented indignantly, “What’s that got to do with spoons?!?”

“Maybe this riddle has nothing to do with spoons,” suggested Trappid.

Tip liked the idea, “Yeah, and they just threw that line in there to make you think that it was talking about spoons!”

Labby tried desperately to think of some way to change the conversation, and he was saved as the weasel-maid Mae walked in with a huge tray of food.

As Mae was serving Labby food, she noticed that he was studying a piece of paper.

“What’s that?” she asked politely.

“A riddle, that none can seem to solve,” answered Labby, “Are you any good at riddles?”

Mae blushed. “I doubt I could solve one that you can’t,” she commented shyly, but she read the riddle all the same.

“Oh, I thought it would be a hard riddle,” she muttered.

Trappid heard her, “You mean you know the answer?” He grabbed her paw and stared into her eyes, “Would you please tell us, Mae?”

Labby tried hard not to stamp on Trappid’s Foot-paw. *Great, he thought, The only beast among us who knows the answer to this riddle is shy, and here Trappid is embarrassing her in front of all of the Lappids!*

Mae pulled her paw away from Trappid, and the tips of her whiskers turned bright red.

“Please Mae, will you tell us the answer to the riddle, so that we can find Thor’s Breast Plate?” Labby urged.

Mae began, slowly at first, but picked up energy as she went along.

“The first line is, ‘Take a come with for humps,’ now the only thing in come that has humps is the ‘M,’ so to give come four humps would mean...”

“To have two ‘M’s instead of one!”

“Right,” Mae began again, “The next two lines go together. ‘One of eight and fifty, similar to twenty,’ so what letter do eight, fifty and twenty have in common?”

Labby was catching on. “‘T’” he answered.

“Now then, we have ‘Commet.’ The next line is ‘Right hand of tea at thumps’...”

“The answer to that is ‘Spoon’,” the Tayra commented officially.

Mae raised one eyebrow, “Where did that come from?”

Labby didn’t need much time to think, now that he knew he was dealing with letters.

“The answer’s ‘H;’ it’s the letter to the right of ‘T’ in the word thumps. And ‘T’ could easily be mistaken for Tea.”

Mae nodded eagerly, and tried to continue, but Labby had already taken control.

“The next line is, ‘Recycled in captain,’ so what letter is used twice in Captain?”

“‘P!’” shouted Pip excitedly.

Omocron cleared his throat, “‘A,’” he corrected.

“Correct, so now we have the word Commetha,” Labby continued, “The last line is, ‘Now you add a mixed up free’ . . .”

Trappid had already figured this line out. “First off,” he began, “This line is different from the others, because this one has seven syllables in it, while the others only have six. This would indicate that what comes next is a different word.”

“I hadn’t thought of that,” admitted Mae.

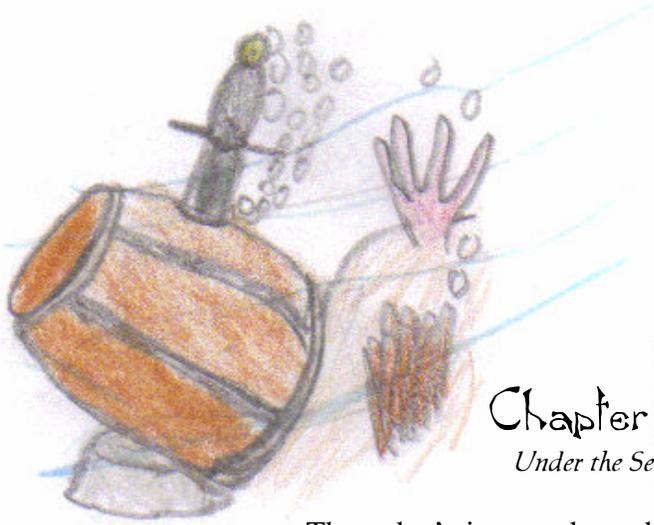
“Now we’re supposed to add a mixed up free, so what is the word free mixed up?”

“Reef,” answered Omocron shortly.

“So that means that we’re supposed to go to Commetha’s Reef!” Tip said excitedly.

Labby turned towards the stoat that he had called down earlier that day for steering them off course in the direction of Commetha.

“Sorry about what I said to you earlier, it looks like you were right all along to steer us off course!”



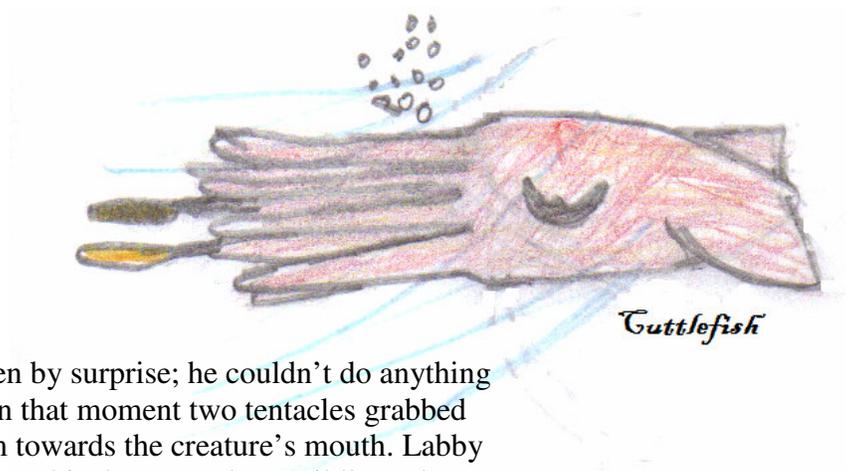
Chapter 4

Under the Sea

Three day's journey brought the Lappid's boat to the coast of Commetha. They circled the island until they found Commetha's solitary Reef. Labby prepared to make a dive into the water. He took off all of his armor and his tunic. It was much easier to maneuver under water with only his fur. Then Trappid lowered a diving bell into the water³. Labby slid a large dagger into a sheath that was tied to his leg, and dove overboard. Labby was an amazing swimmer; he dodged hither and thither through coral and anemones, searching for Thor's Breast Plate, or any other object that might contain it. Every ten minutes or so he would stop and get another breath of air from the diving bell. By mid afternoon he had searched the entire upper part of the reef. Then he had to go to the surface to refill the diving bell and refill barrels, and to have lunch. When he came down again, Hugga and Ripple joined him so that they could cover more ground.

Labby worked his way farther down than Hugga and Ripple. He saw something out of the corner of his eye and swam over towards it. Suddenly out of the semi-darkness, some lights started to flash, something loomed over him, and all over its body lights were flashing. Labby

³ A diving bell was invented in 1721 by Dr. Edmund Halley. It was built by taking a large barrel turning it upside down, and weighting it down with rocks so that it would sink in water upside down, trapping air inside the barrel. Some models of the diving bell had refill barrels to fill the diving bell with air when it ran out.



was completely taken by surprise; he couldn't do anything for a moment, and in that moment two tentacles grabbed him and yanked him towards the creature's mouth. Labby acted quickly. He drew his dagger and cut wildly at the tentacles that had him; finally he cut through the rubbery flesh. No sooner did he do so than the creature in the blink of an eye turned bright red. Labby now knew what he was combating, the dreaded giant Cuttlefish!

The Cuttlefish sped towards Labby, who ducked quickly and slashed across its lower belly with his dagger. The Cuttlefish turned and charged again. This time however, it suddenly swerved down, then up, and caught Labby's arm in its mouth. Labby gasped in pain, but there was no air in his lungs! Labby wriggled and squirmed, trying to get away. Suddenly an idea occurred to him; he slashed the Cuttlefish across its 'W' shaped eye. The Cuttlefish let his arm go, and when it did, Labby was speeding towards the diving bell like a light particle. Labby reached the diving bell and gulped air greedily. Then he dove back under. The Cuttlefish was coming towards him, but it was not the only one come towards him; Hugga and Ripple had noticed the speed at which Labby was traveling, and had come to see why. It didn't take them long to find out. The Cuttlefish grabbed Ripple and attempted to swallow him. Hugga crashed into the Cuttlefish and dug his ninja claws into its sides. Labby could see that they would need help; He took a huge breath of air that inflated his lungs like a balloon. When he came out from under the diving bell, all the air in his lungs brought him to the surface so fast that he nearly launched three feet into the air

when he came up. All of the Lappids could see something serious was going on.

“Giant cuttlefish,” Labby gasped, “About to eat Ripple!” Every Lappid had been trained to swim, even the tree-loving Tayras and Pine Martens, but only the Otters could swim as far down as necessary. Labby only took time to grab his bow before he dove back down. When he reached the place, he saw Ripple half-way into the Cuttlefish’s mouth and Hugga tearing unmercifully at its underside. Labby notched an arrow to his string and fired. The arrow went through the Cuttlefish’s left eye. The Cuttlefish opened its mouth, giving Ripple just enough room to shove his dagger into the back of the Cuttlefish’s mouth. The Cuttlefish jerked away, spit Ripple out, and fled, knocking Labby out of his way. Labby spun through the water uncontrollably and landed just inches away from a Portuguese Man o’ war. There was something poking into his back, but he didn’t have time to think about that, because the Jelly fish didn’t seem to like Labby very much. It slowly raised one of its tentacles to sting Labby, however, before the tentacle touched Labby, the Man o’ war was slain by a well-thrown Otter spear. Labby got up and was about to go to the diving bell, when he realized what he had been lying on, a barrel with a sword stuck through it, the perfect hiding spot for Thor’s Breast Plate!

Labby and the rest of the Otters lugged the barrel up to the surface. It took them a good half hour before they could get the barrel open. And when they did, they were sorely disappointed.

“Where’s the Breast Plate?” demanded Cherryblossom, Labby’s sister.

“I never said that it was in there,” Labby pointed out, “I only said we think that it’s in there.”

“Should I prepare the diving bell?” asked Trappid helpfully.

“I guess,” Labby said disappointedly.

Mae, however, had noticed something no one else had; she grabbed hold of the sword that had been stuck in the barrel, and pulled something off its tip. It was a ball of wax. Everybeast watched in amazement as she pulled a small slip of paper out of the ball of wax, and read what was written on the paper:

*Forget the free
Add a mixed up Golde*

“Not h’another riddle,” complained Tip.

“This one’s simple enough,” Labby commented, “All we have to do is to figure out what word Golde is mixed up.”

Omocron had the puzzle figured out in the blink of an eye.

“Lodge, the answer is lodge, Commetha Lodge.”



Chapter 5

Searching for the Golde

The Lappids had decided that a lodge would probably be located on land, so they had split up into several groups. Labby and Trappid were one group; they were supposed to search the Southeast corner of the island. They walked along for several miles, and stopped for lunch by some raspberry bushes. They continued on and soon found a path. They decided that a lodge would probably have a path leading to it, so they followed it. They hadn't walked five miles before they turned a corner and were suddenly confronted by a rabbit, who was about as long as Labby's tail. He had a cutlass drawn in one hand, and a patch over his right eye. All he wore was a red plaid kilt, and a round shield slung over his back.



McFalfa

"Halt, whence and whither bound?"

"We come from the coast of the Back-woods, and we have come here to look for Commetha Lodge; Do you know where it is located?"

"Why are ya' lookin' fer Commetha Lodge, Green kilt?"

"We're looking for Thor's Breast Plate. We hear that it's in Commetha Lodge, did we hear correctly?"

"I can't figure how ya' can hear anythin' with those ear stumps of yourn."

Trappid exploded, "Now look here you little rascal!"

“Calm down, Trappid,” Labby said as he pulled Trappid back. As he did so, the Rabbit caught sight of Trappid’s tail.

“Don’t see why ya’ wear your suit so spankin’ long, might trip on it.”

Labby swung his rudder and knocked the Rabbit neatly over, “Actually it’s quite useful this long, so why don’t you wear your tail long?”

The Rabbit came up boiling mad.

“No one has ever crossed McFalfa and lived to tell about!” He swung his sword high and attacked Labby and Trappid. Trappid blocked the blow neatly with his spear and knocked him backward with one kick.

“Well, there’s always a first time for everything,” Trappid remarked. McFalfa charged again; he knocked Trappid over with the flat of his blade and then attacked Labby. Labby swung his sword, and hit McFalfa’s sword so hard that his long ears vibrated. McFalfa took a few steps backward and then whipped out a throwing knife flipped it in the air once and then threw it.

Labby’s mind worked out the formula almost instantly. He took one step back and extended his hand, the handle of the knife landed in his hand. McFalfa leaped backward in surprise, his long ears standing up on end. His facial expression slowly changed into a smile,

“I does know where Thor’s Breast Plate is, Laddie. In fact I’m supposed to give it to ya’.”

Labby wondered at the sudden change, but he followed McFalfa anyway, and he kept the throwing knife.



Chapter 6

Thor's Breast Plate

Labby and Trappid followed McFalfa to a rabbit hole, with the words 'Commetha's Lodge' inscribed above the door-way. Inside there was a table, two wooden stools, a bunk bed and a fire place.

"Why is this lodge built for two animals, if you are the only animal who lives here?" Labby questioned.

McFalfa sat down at the Table and answered, "It used to have two beasts: me an' ol' Flatrudder."

Labby's eyebrows shot up. "Who was Flatrudder?" he asked.

"He was the gran'son of ol' Thor."

"Thor, the Demon?" inquired Trappid.

"Naw, Thor the Otter which made Thor's Breast Plate."

"Are you telling me," Labby began, "That Thor's Breast Plate was made by otters?"

"Yep," answered McFalfa, "And not only was it made *by* an otter, but it was also made *for* an otter."

"So how did you get to know this Flatrudder chap?" asked Trappid.

"Well ya' see, I used to be part of a pirate crew. We were the fearless lagomorphs of the sea. I was first mate, and would ya' believe it? One day I got mad at the Captain and dumped me wine on his head. He took this move as mutiny an' marooned me on this yere island. So there I was sittin' there when along comes Ol' Flatrudder; he was rather old at that point an' was lookin' for a somebeast to

look after the Breast Plate. So He took me in, an' taught me to be a gentlebeast. When he passed on, he told me to guard the Breast Plate well, an' only to give it to the otter which could ketch a knife out'ta thin air, an' that's you."

"So is it true that Thor's Breast Plate can't get pierced?" Labby asked excitedly.

"Naw," answered McFalfa.

"Than what is the use of Thor's Breast Plate?" asked Trappid disgustedly.

"Supposedly, the otter that wears it will become the leader of a great army," McFalfa answered, "So what made ya' want to search for Thor's Breast Plate, if ya' didn't know it was made for otters?"

"Some Monnorcks captured us and said that they would let us go if we could get them Thor's Breast Plate. They're currently holding one of our Generals captive until we give the Breast Plate to them," Labby explained.

McFalfa looked disappointed, "Ya' mean to say, that as soon as I give ya' the Breast Plate you'll just turn around and hand it to some Monnorck scum?"

"I see no other choice," answered Labby.

"Well I do, and I'll tell ya' how you can get your friend back an' how to keep the Breast Plate! But first things first, I got'ta give ya' Thor's Breast Plate." So saying McFalfa grabbed hold of the table cloth and yanked it off. He passed the table cloth to Labby as he turned it inside out. When he had, Labby could see that the table cloth was actually a tough leather vest with slots all over it. Labby stuck his finger into one of the slots

"What are these here for?" He asked.

“Fer holdin’ throwin’ knives,” Answered McFalfa, as he opened up a secret compartment that held about fifty knives. “Thor’s Breast Plate is both a knife holder and armor.” Trappid leaped on the knives and started to sheath them into their slots. Labby picked up one of the knives and flipped it into the air. The knife was perfectly balanced; it was made out of the highest quality metal, with a nice leather handle. The edges were sharp as razors and were freshly oiled; it was obvious that McFalfa had been taking good care of the knives. Labby sheathed this knife into the vest and noticed that every knife was identical.

“It looks like we’re missing one,” Trappid noted.

“Naw, I just always keep one of them around Me.” replied McFalfa as he searched his kilt. He started searching frantically, “It’s gone, and I can’t’ve dropped it!”

“Is this it?” asked Labby as he held up the knife McFalfa had thrown at him.

His eyes narrowed in suspicion, “How did ya’ snitch that, Smarty?”

“You tried to kill me with it.”

McFalfa paused, “Oh yea, now I remember; no hard feelings, I was just testin’ ya’.”

“But what if I hadn’t caught it in time?” Labby asked.

McFalfa winked, “Then I would’ve known that ya’ weren’t supposed to get Thor’s Breast Plate, now wouldn’t I, Laddie?” Labby was shocked at the callousness of this “gentlebeast.”

Labby made it back to the ship before any of the other search parties. When the rest started to arrive, they all

wanted to see the knives, and some tried on the vest. Every one was very excited. They had a great dinner that night, and every one had lots of fun watching Labby play with his knives. All, that is, except for three Lappids that had been sent out as a search party: Omocron, Pip, and Tip. They had not arrived at the ship yet. Pip and Tip were sure that they were going the right way, and swore up and down that they'd lead Omocron to the ship. However Omocron could tell by the position of the sun that they were traveling east, while the ship was in the south. He told Pip and Tip this over and over again, but they would always say, "You can go your way h'and get lost h'if you want, smarty pants."

Omocron didn't want to leave Pip and Tip alone, so he had trudged along with them. At about 5:00 Omocron realized that they were going in circles, so he exercised his authority as general and commanded them to follow him, but they didn't make it to the ship that night. It took Pip and Tip an entire hour to build the fire, and when they realized that they didn't have any food, Pip and Tip blamed Omocron.

"Told you that your way was wrong. If you had followed h'us we would be back h'at the ship, h'enjoying some shrimp soup, h'instead h'of siting 'ere with out h'any food h'in your starvin' belly."

"H' And you call yourself h'a general, huh! H'if you was h'a real one you would 'ave let h'us lead you to the ship, h'instead of stranding h'us h'in the middle of nowhere."

"H'I say we demote 'im till we lead 'im to boat, that'll teach 'im to strand 'is crew without any food."

Omocron Leaped to his feet and swung his flail menacingly, "Let's see which one of you is the first to demote me. Come on and try it." It was a good bluff, Omocron would never have harmed a living creature for just getting him lost and making him go without dinner for one night, but Pip and Tip didn't know that; they collapsed at the ground by his feet.

"Oh mercy, Captain! H'I mean General."

"Yeah, we'll follow you, h'even h'if h'it means staving to death from going the wrong way!"

"Good," said Omocron, suppressing a smile, "We are going to start tomorrow's march at the crack of dawn, and we're not stopping till we reach the ship!"

As it turned out they weren't more than a mile from the ship, and they made it there before the sun had stopped rising. As soon as they got there, McFalfa outlined his plan of how to free Spiicklaw and keep Thor's Brest Plate.



Chapter 7

The contest

Spiicklaw lay on the deck of the *Windsckimer*, more dead than alive. He was whipped every night, partly for the Monnorcks enjoyment, and partly to 'pay him back' for tearing up the Monnorck general's knee. He had lost all track of time; the only thing that he could feel was his throbbing head and back - and his rumbling stomach. Suddenly one of his only senses that was working, his hearing, picked up the voice of the lookout, "Ship hchon the hchorizon, Sir!"

"Hchwhat's her flag?" asked the Monnorck general.

"Hchone moment sir!" came the reply, "Hchit's hchour ship sir!"

"Good yhchets see whchat that hchotter's come hchup with."

About twenty minutes latter the two boats drew up next to each other. Labby leaped over onto the *Windsckimer*. He was wearing Thor's Breast Plate without the knives. Spiicklaw was dragged up to where Labby stood.

"HchOK, you give us Thor's Breast Plate, hchand we give you your friend."

Labby pulled the vest off and handed it over to the Monnorck general.

The Monnorck general looked at the vest and then said, "You can't fool me, thchat's not Thor's Breast Plate;

hchI could pierce that hchold piece hchof leather with my hchquill pin!”

“Really,” Labby pretended to explode, “I bet you couldn’t shoot an arrow through this from ten feet away!”

“Tell you whchat, you can wear that ‘breast plate’, hchand hchI’ll wear mine, we’ll stand ten feet hchaway from hcheach hchother hchand hchI’ll shoot hchan hcharrow hchat you. Hchif hchit doesn’t kill you, than you can shoot hchan hcharrow at my breast plate.”

“Deal!” agreed Labby, “And if I win, you have to give us back our ship, and our friend.”

“Done!”

The sun was high in the sky when the combatants came out to meet each other. The Monnorck general took one look at Labby and accused him of cheating; he never said Labby could wear knives in his vest.

“I never said that I would *only* wear my breast plate, these are just part of my uniform, and besides, your breast plate is still stronger than this,” countered Labby. The Monnorck general consented. Labby put on a helmet in case of a bad shot, and the contest was on.

The Monnorck general notched an arrow to his long bow, and let fly. The arrow struck true, but it ricocheted off of one of the sheathed dagger blades. A hush ran through the crowd as the Monnorck general put a helmet on and Labby strung an arrow to his bow. His muscles bulged as he pulled back the taunt bow string of his three-stringed bow. He aimed carefully and let fly; the bow string hummed an out-of-tune E flat. The arrow cracked the Monnorck general’s breast plate and knocked him over. For

a moment every one thought he was dead, but the arrow had lost so much momentum from breaking through the breast plate that it only wounded him skin deep. The Monnorck general yanked the arrow out of his breast plate and stood up.

“Cheater!” he cried, “You hchave on armor hchunderneath that vest.”

“I have done no such thing; see for yourself.” Labby started to take off his breast plate, and all the Monnorcks crowded around as if they wanted to see. Omocron knew what they were up to and was about to warn Labby, but a Monnorck that saw he was trying to get to Labby and stepped in his way.

Labby removed the Breast Plate, and no sooner did he do so than the Monnorck general flipped a knife into Labby’s chest. Labby crumpled to the ground. Omocron bellowed and in one blow felled the Monnorck in his way.

“For Labbyyyyyy!” he bellowed, “Charge!”

Trappid headed straight for Spiicklaw; in one slice of his spear he snapped the ropes that held him to the mast. Although Spiicklaw had lost most of his strength, it all seemed to return to him when he felt a battle axe pressed into his paws. Spiicklaw leaped to his feet and roared. He charged straight for the Monnorck general. The Monnorck general was fighting for his life; Spiicklaw had gone berserk, and it was vary hard to stay alive under his battering blows. The Monnorck general finally managed to put in an offensive blow, and, being a human and much bigger, his blow knocked Spiicklaw half-way across the deck. He was about to charge and finish Spiicklaw off when he was suddenly tripped by some unseen creature.

Then something hopped on top of him and said, “Give it up scum!” There, standing on his chest was a vicious-looking rabbit, with a cutlass pointed at his neck.

When the Monnorcks saw their general go down, most of them gave up, and the ones that didn’t only put up a feeble fight before they gave up. Omocron thought it was a funny sight to see a full-grown man cowering to a rabbit; McFalfa was telling the Monnorck general what he planned to do with him: “The only thing you deserve for such treachery is death, a slow painful death, so this is what we’re going to do: first we’ll hang ya’ upside down over a roaring fire, no first we’ll...” Omocron knocked McFalfa neatly off of the Monnorck general.

“...Let Labby decide what to do; he isn’t dead, they only pierced his right lung. Cherryblossom and Mae will probably be able to fix him up in a month or so, I hope. Meanwhile we’ll lock these scum up down below.

Thus the Battle was won with only the loss of two lives, both on the Monnorcks side.



Chapter 8

And last

Labby had not opened his eyes for three weeks; he had been hanging on the edge of life and death for this entire time. Mae and Cherryblossom had to force-feed him, and were constantly changing his bandages. One would sleep, while the other would attend to Labby. It was a trying time for the Lappids aboard the ship, especially Trappid. He couldn't bear the thought of his best friend dying without seeing him one last time. So one night he decided to go and visit Labby. Previous visitors had been turned down, but Trappid was sure that the women would let him in.

He reached the cabin that Labby was in, and when he reached the door he ran slap bang into Mae.

"What are you doing here?" she asked shyly.

Trappid stared affectionately at Mae in a way that she pretended not to like.

"I was wondering if you would let me in to see Labby."

"I'm sorry, but we can't have any visitors."

Trappid was very disappointed, but he didn't want to press Mae, and besides there was more than one way into the cabin.

Labby's chest was throbbing... throbbing... throbbing, he didn't know if he was floating, lying down or standing. His ears had been half working for a little bit, and he was sure that someone had been in the same place he

was. Suddenly he heard a large sound, and without thinking twice he opened his eyes. He was lying on his bed, in his own room. The window was open, and somebeast was climbing through it.

“Trappid?” he managed to ask feebly. The figure was at his side in a moment.

“Yes Labby?”

“What are you doing here?”

“Oh, I was just coming to check on you.”

“Why did you come through the window?”

“Because Mae wouldn’t let me through the door.”

“You know she likes you enough that she would have let you in if you pressed her?”

“Yeah,” answered Trappid. The two of them just sat together for a little, but then Trappid broke the silence.

“Well, I should probably tell Mae that you’re up; do you think you would be strong enough to stand out on the deck and deal out justice on those Monnorcks?”

“Lord willing!” he answered. “The Lord kept me alive till tonight, and you never know if he’ll take me by morning, but I’m praying.”

“Well, I hope you do survive, and I’ll be praying too.” So saying, Trappid stood up and walked toward the door. Before he touched the door, it opened and he ran slap bang into Mae for the second time that night.

“What are you...?”

“Your patient’s awake; I thought I should tell you.”

“Wha...?”

Labby propped himself up on his elbow.

Mae rushed to his side, “Are you OK; do you hurt at all?”

“Well, it still sort of hurts when I breathe, and it’s a wonder I haven’t starved to death.”

“I’ll get you something to eat, and I hope you will be able to feed yourself.”

“I think I can.”

Mae got Labby some dinner, and Labby started to eat as if he had been starved for three weeks, because he had.

Trappid tapped Mae on the shoulder, “While Labby is eating, do you think that we could take a walk out on the deck, I have a proposition for you.”

The next morning Labby stood out on the deck, being supported by Omocron and Ripple. All of the Monnorcks were led out, guarded by Spiicklaw and McFalfa. Labby started his speech in a loud, strong voice: “All of you must be put to justice for pillaging and plundering the creatures of this coast. Your punishment will be to pour the ocean, into a leaky barrel for one year.”

All of the Monnorcks groaned.

“And for those of you that joined in the treachery against me, you shall swim to shore.”

The Monnorck general was shocked; he looked out across the water at the small bit of land that could be seen on the horizon; it was the coast of the Back-Wood.

“No hchone could do that!” He exclaimed.

Labby smiled, “Spiicklaw, Ripple and Hugga will join you on the swim, to make sure that none of you drown.”

As Labby stepped down, Trappid and Mae walked up to him, Mae was obviously feeling shier than usual.

Trappid spoke for her, “We were wondering if there are any pastors on the coast of the Back-Woods, do you know?”

When the good ship *Windsckimer* reached the coast, Trappid and Mae had a marvelous wedding. Afterwards, the Lappid army moved further into the Back-Woods. Everywhere they went, members of the Mustelidae family joined the army. Within two years, The Lappid army had grown from its original two score Lappids, to four hundred Lappids, not including women and children.

McFalfa had been right; the otter that wore Thor’s Breast Plate had become the leader of a great army. But that wasn’t the real reason that Labby was the Leader of huge army. The real reason was that God was blessing him for trusting in him that night when Labby had been lying on his bed with a terrible wound in his right lung.