

# *The Judges Chronicles: The Teacher of Goshu*

## *Introduction: The Prisoner*

Come God, to this troubled world.  
Come God, shed your light abroad.  
Come God, save the lost where they stand.

Few to begin with; millions to end  
Come God, spare not your grace.  
Send the workers into the race.

God has come into this trouble world.  
God has shed his light abroad.  
His work is always grand.  
God saves the lost where they stand.

The poet of the inspirational verse was sitting quietly on a stool with feathered pen in hand and writing gracefully with ink paying no mind to the beggarly elements around him. The elements, of course, had to be ignored for the prison in which he dwelt produced multiple sounds of anguish and pain. If it wasn't a prisoner howling from starvation, it was an inmate pleading for mercy from the copious beatings from the guards. Yet these sounds, which were once a terror to the poet, were now nothing more than mundane distractions. His cell was fairly large and despite the wardens dictum of overcrowding every cell, the poet; whether by grace or in earthly terms luck, was given a cell all to himself. The heavy stench of mold sat in the air that made most of the inmates sick to their stomachs. Light was provided by torches whose perpetual burning resemble a dance and provided the only means of entertainment. After finishing his last line to the previous poem, a tape on the cell bars interrupted him. He did not turn around in haste as most of the inmates out of fear, but calmly straightened his back to acknowledge the sound. A leopard, his assigned guard, looked over the captive with apathy and indifference. There was reason for this: the prisoner was an inciter of trouble in the land of Chetz.

The poet was an otter with silvery gray fur due to his old age. He was blind in his right eye, but never complained from the ailment. He wore a brown murky cloak with two pieces of patchwork along the back. Turning his head the leopard saw the right eye that was blind, the wrinkles in the face; and to the leopards dismay, the whimsical smile. "Is it time yet," replied the otter.

"Two days from the emperors command."

"Well, leave it to the Chetzians to be punctual." replied the otter sarcastically, "I was sentence in this prison three years, five days, and four hours ago. In which I was told I would be beheaded within that time. Why the wait?"

The leopard agape from the otter's lack of concern for his noggin, responded as any good

Chetzian leopard would.

“The Chetzians will make on their due on their promise, otter, be sure of that!” he said standing proudly, “As a Shavronite you should know that from history.”

“Oh,” replied the otter a little surprised, “You mean when God slew Lugar the greatest general in Chetzian history and destroyed him by the hands of a mere rabbit.”

The history lesson, which can be found in tale “The Rebirth of Shavron“, was a blow to the leopards ego; for it was known in the books of Chetz that Lugar was defeated by a great force on the infamous day, but none of the leopards; from the emperor to the common peasant, rarely spoke of the story and when one did it was always putting the beloved general in the greatest of praise and prestige. The leopard whacked the prison bars with his short sword, and then pointing it directly at the otter.

“Watch you tongue, Shavronite!”

“You’re right, I should.” said the otter. “My apologizes for insulting the mighty army that won every battle except one.”

This calmed the situation and the leopard returned his sword to its sheath.

“That’s better,” said the leopard rolling shoulders with an air of conceit. “Next time I come in there and finish you off myself.

A slight giggle came from the prisoner who had heard the threat numerous times with his three year, five days, and four hour sentence. However the smile on his face turned into a expression of concern for the leopard. So the otter asked the only question to show his odd concern for his oppressor.

“Would you like to hear a story?”

“What?”

“A story,” said the otter scratching his head, “you know, a composition made up of characters, a plot, and a ending.”

“I know what a story is,” said the leopard angrily. “What is it about?”

“Listen and find out.”

The leopard was inclined to be on his guard about this otter. He knew, from gossip around the land, that this creature told a story of One God among lands of many gods. He told stories about a specific creature who was God in flesh and bone who willing perished for the sins of all creatures; and after being murdered, lived again! The leopard gave the otter a deep and loathing askance; however, with his assignment of guarding the otter for two days, there was little to do and it was better to listen to a tale than to suffer from ennui. The leopard found a stool, propped it near the cell door, and sat down.

“Start,” he said, “but if my ear catches even a hint of something I don’t like, I’ll come in there and beat you to a pulp.”

“Funny,” said the otter, descending from the stool slowly, “The last four guards said the same thing and yet not one has assailed me. By the way my name is Reiach and your name is?”

“None of your business.” replied the leopard.

“Well, Mr. None of Your Business, this story is about Gosha: The Kingdom of the Wolf. It’s a nice place, a peaceful place.”

“A boring place!” said the leopard rolling his eyes.

“It’s a good place.” said the otter correcting the comment, “Its good because of the Good is there now.”

“How does good find its place in that land?”

Reiach smiled and started the story.

## *Part One: Teacher of Goshu*

In which Riach tells of his change of heart, his meeting his best friend, his travels to Goshu and the divine reason for doing so.

### *Chapter 1: Changed*

Reiach awoke on a fine summer day in Shavron with the intent of carrying out one thing and one thing only: terror. He was dressed within the hour and after a short breakfast, he meet with his two colleagues: Seth and Nasson. The hyena and sloth bowed reverently, although it was only to the crest they paid their respect. Filtering out of the keeper's temple with a grand procession, they looked for any sight of Kleos's disciples. After the grand fire, a plot devised by the Judges themselves, the eleven (For Angus was dead) had been going about Shavron proclaiming "good news" that was "bad news" for Riach. In recent months they has burned a home where Aesop was preaching; for he was seen as the leader of the bunch and drew the greatest crowds to hear about the saving grace of Kleos. The other ten did the same, leading many Shavronites to God and away from the delusion that keeping the one thousand rules would get them to Heaven.

Reiach led his procession through the streets with a slow and morbid stroll that all the Shavronites knew. There were no great crowds that day around town, save one rooster who sung about Kleos so loudly that the whole country could have heard the praise.

"Should we jail this one," said one of the students of the temple.

"Leave him be," said Riach with little concern, "A fool's song is still a song. Besides it's quiet today. Not like the others. No crowds, no preaching, no---"

The otter stopped suddenly.

"What's wrong?" said Seth. "Everything looks fine to me."

"It's not fine," Riach replied with a snarl. "Those eleven misfits wouldn't stop preaching just like that. Despite all my threats they continued to preach about that deceiver: dying for sins--rising again!--a lie!"

"But if he said he would rise again in three days and he did its not a lie," said one of the students in the procession.

Reiach verbally attacked the student ferociously.

"Are you deceived too? Are you just as weak? ANSWER ME!" he yelled, and he continued without giving the student a chance to respond. "We know the truth because we are of God not that farmer!"

Reiach breathing was heavy; he nostrils were flared to the extreme: he looked like he was about to explode. No one dared to respond to him after that; and after regaining his composure, he paced through the procession as if they were pillars of a great pantheon.

"I know there up to something," he said abridging his walk at Nasson, "Those believers are quite tricky."

"There's no one here Riach," said Nasson wearily due to the day, "Let's just head back

and wait until tomorrow. I hate these converted Shavronites as much, I dare say, more than you. But invisible ones cannot be threatened, beaten, killed or jailed. Tomorrow, my leader, wait until tomorrow.”

Taking the advice Reiach returned to the temple saddened that he could not imprison any Shavronite who believed in Kleos, but his melancholy day would soon turn into a bright one, for one of his hired spies came rushing into the temple. His hands were open for his pay, which he received upon divulging any pertinent information.

“Where are the eleven and where are the crowds?” asked Reiach.

“Pay me first and I’ll tell you everything!”

The spy’s hand shook with such a twitter that he could have been mistaken for having a bad case of the shakes, but one the medicine of money was laid securely in his hand his disease was cured.

“Talk, were are they?”

“Where the farmer was born.” said the spy counting the coins, “The lot of them are all in Girgandale, the biggest crowd yet. I saw Aesop, Ricco, Poe, and” said the spy drawing out the last part, “Paskalo was there too.”

“He’ll be the first to die.” said the otter with a hint of disgust.

“Hey,” said the spy finishing up his count, “You owe me ten gold coins, pay up.”

“I have no further use of you, get out.”

“But my money.” cried the spy.

“I SAID GET OUT!” shouted the otter; and once he ordering the other keepers to kindly toss him out, Reiach called for Seth and Naasson.

“I want to head to Giragandale to arrest Aesop. We’ll make a public spectacle of him.”

The judge of instruction, Naasson, Seth, and a host of soldiers made haste down a beaten path to the appointed city . There was no conversation between Reiach and the other keepers. However the soldiers were speaking in low tones about the events of Kleos’s death. Reiach, although perceiving the conversation, forced himself to focus on the task at hand. The otter’s mind took him back to that day at the tearing post. The memory was still fresh and potent. Why didn’t the farmer run when given the opportunity? How could he forgive such treacherous deeds with such a love that Reiach had never seen nor could understand? It was of no matter of course, for the otter hated him and any who followed him: he was glad that the farmer was gone.

“A few more miles and Aesop will answer to me.” said Reiach to himself, “All those believers will return to keeping the rules someday.”

Suddenly a burst of light filled the area and the sky was parted. It was as if the sun had exploded into a million particles. All fell to the ground as if dead, no could move. The otter cried out for Naasson and Seth, but they could not answer. On his back, Reiach heard a voice.

**“Reiach why are you persecuting me?”**

The voice was familiar.

**“Do you not understand that it is impossible to fight against me?”**

It was a very familiar voice.

“Kleos!” said Reiach beginning to shake with fear, “Don’t destroy me--please--I beg you!”

**“Fear not, my aim is not to destroy you. Where sin abounds grace abounds even**

**more.” said Kleos, “There are many things you will suffer because of my name. Murder, hatred, strife, and malice has been your game. Today and forever this will change; for you will be my teacher to the nations abroad from Shavron.”**

Now the keepers and the soldiers were not able to see this, but they heard the voice, and once everything was said and done, they were so fearful that he left Reiach alone on his back in the middle of the road. The otter did not move from that spot. He could not contemplate the reason Kleos came to him after setting up the murder. He was left turning this and many other thoughts in his mind. Five miles away was Paskalo eating at his home in Girgandale. The greyhound has fled to the city from the Reiach wave of terror. He rarely traveled beyond the city borders and found refuge there. However during his meal God, that had changed his life from a menacing judge to a kind leader, interrupted his lunch.

**“Paskalo.”**

The dog stood immediately from his chair, placing his warm soup to the side.

“Lord!” he said.

God responded.

**“Go from Girgandale and take the northern road. Within five miles you will find Reiach. Bring him to your home and I will give him back his sight.”**

The greyhound was apprehensive from carrying out the command. He and Reiach had always been at odds. It was hard for Paskalo to forget the attempt on his life; and furthermore, why was God dealing with a murderous animal anyway?

“My Lord and my God,” said Paskalo calmly, “That otter has jailed, beaten, killed and mocked your followers. He murdered you---why are you sending me to him?”

**“I’m send you to him for the same reason I was sent to you and the others: to love you. I died for his sins as much as yours and I love him the same. Besides, I will show him what he must face to bring Me to the nations abroad. Go, to him and spare not the time.”**

Paskalo, obeying, hurried down the northern road as instructed. Exactly five miles from the town was Reiach sitting down in the middle of the road.

“Hello, there,” said Paskalo, “You look lonely.”

“Paskalo is that you?” the otter said turning his head from side to side, “What do you want?”

“What I want to do is not important.” replied the dog pushing away a bad thought, “God wants you.”

“Kleos?”

“Yes, Kleos.”

“Go figure.” said Reiach scoffing, “He would send someone I don’t like to assist me.”

“Well, I not fond of you either.”

“Fine!” said otter shouting.

“FINE TO YOU TOO!” returned Paskalo.

After the verbal squabble, Paskalo made the first attempt of reconciliation between the two.

“Here we go again acting like two children.”

“Yeah, I guess,” said Reiach, “I’m tired of disliking you. How about we try something

different.”

Paskalo walked forward and helped Reiach to his feet.

“Sure.”

“So, what did God say to you?”

“God will give you back your sight,” said Paskalo. “From there I guess I have a roommate until further notice.”

“Go figure,” said Reiach frowning, “God would set me up to be a roommate with someone I used to hate.”

At Paskalo’s home, Reiach received his sight as the Lord has commanded. He knew that he was different since the moment along the Girgandale road, but would the Shavronites, especially the other ten disciples find favor with him. His time with Paskalo proved to be a rough road. No one in Giragandale trusted him, and he of course, did not blame them for their reactions. On this account, Reiach found himself to be somewhat of a hermit and refused to travel away from the house unless it was absolutely necessary. He found that private prayer had become a discipline for him, nearly refusing to eat or drink. After a months time, Paskalo thought that it was time to have the otter to meet the ten over a homemade meal. The ten disciples arrived apprehensive of the gathering, but once the smell of hot bread, stewed fish, crisp vegetables, and cake for dessert filled the air they quickly forgot the gravity of the meeting. Reiach was already seated at the table, under the guise of blank faces. Ricco wouldn’t even look at him, knowing the many attempts on his life from the otter’s hand. However, the otter found a gracious gesture from Theafan the fennec fox, who sat by him, shook his hand in greeting, and talked kindly to him. It was an example to all of how to treat a repentant soul--it is what God would do. Ten minutes into the meal, Reiach felt it necessary to ask for forgiveness from all of them, with Paskalo’s permission he stopped the meal.

“Before we go on,” the otter said clearing his throat, “I am honored to have all of you to show up. I not only have wrong all of you in some way, but our Lord as well by persecution those that have trusted him. I was wrong. Please forgive me.”

There was a deafening silence that was telling the otter that he move was too premature. No one knew what to say, until Pottermer the platypus spoke.

“Ah, I forgive you. I was an enemy of God myself. If God can forgive you then he’ll help me to do the same.”

The others followed suit, except Ricco the ringtail. He was firm like stone; jaw clinched not once looking at the pleading eyes of Reiach. Paskalo called his name as to persuade a favorable response, but the ringtail simple said:

“A bunch of fools--all of you.” he replied leaving the table.

Aesop cracked his knuckles rising quickly to go after him.

“I take care of this.” the bear said.

“No need for a beat down, Aesop.” said Paskalo. “Please tell me you weren’t serious.”

“I’m not,” said Aesop, “but I was thinking about throwing him in the lake.”

“I’ll handle this. I don’t think the lake approach will help.” said the greyhound.

He found Ricco just outside the front door.

“Planning on coming back in?”

“When he is gone,” Ricco replied looking over his back.

“What’s your problem?”

“You have a murderer in your house and you want to know what’s my problem?”

“He’s changed, Ricco.” said Paskalo. “He not the same. God has changed him just like with us.”

“He’s lying like he always does. You should know that better than anyone else.”

Paskalo shook his head in bewilderment.

“I thought I would never take you as one who forgot that Kleos forgives, not just us---but anyone who repents of their sins and swears loyalty to him. God extended forgiveness to you; you should do the same.”

“Don’t school me, I’m not a child!” shouted Ricco pointing up to the greyhound, “I know what our Lord said.”

“Amazing!” said Paskalo, “You know truth yet refuse to follow it when its an inconvenience to you.”

Paskalo turned away, slowly closing the door behind him.

“Oh, so your going to lock me out now, eh?”

“No, the door is open. You’re the one keeping yourself out.”

The door closed leaving Ricco outside alone. Two hours later after the other nine were leaving, Ricco came inside and asked to speak to Reiach alone. In the side room, Paskalo saw the ringtail lower his posture almost ashamed to look up, but the otter extended his hand in friendship, which was kindly taken.

“That’s the way, Ricco,” said Paskalo to himself, “that’s the way.”

## *Chapter 2: A Friend and A Fire*

That night Reiach thought over what God has said to him:

**“You will be my teach to the nations abroad.”**

Reach had no idea of how to find the time or the money to accomplish such a task. It was already a month since he had seen the keeper’s temple. Indeed he had a great sum of money saved for himself, but how would he acquire it without raising suspicions or even a greater question: would God allow him to use money that was frankly stolen?

The next morning he had breakfast with Aesop. The bear was overjoyed that this enemy of God had changed, it was true what Kleos taught: He did come for the sick and to heal them. After breakfast Paskalo joined them and all three went into the streets. Needless to say it wasn’t difficult to engage in conversation about the death and resurrection of Kleos for it was a popular subject around Shavron. There were many misconceptions about the events. Paskalo and Aesop articulated clearly the truth of the matter, even Reiach himself witnessed about the truth of God’s salvation. This was the greatest evidence of all of Kleos; for if a murderous villain like Reiach could be changed then truly there is a living God. Who has a Son.

It must be explained that most of the witnessing was done in Shavron. It was by the command of Kleos that the eleven should stay in cities until he would send the Comforter to them all. This Comforter was the Spirit that dwelt among the Holy One and Kleos himself, He is also known as the Holy Spirit. Whenever a believer needed help, encouragement, discipline and strength in times of trouble, peace, joy, hope, and any

other virtue, the Comforter was there. So two weeks later the Comforter, the Helper of the believer's soul, came giving boldness and power. In that power came a gift to speak in a languages that no Shavronite knew. There was a reason for this: Shavron had become a metropolis over time allowing many foreigners to live in its borders. There were at least eighteen different nations trading and working in the cities. Since God's call was to have all nations to know of his Son's death and gift of salvation it would only make sense to tell it in the language a creature could understand, hence Paskalo, Aesop, Reivach, and the other believers( about a hundred and twenty)went about with the language they were given from God to tell the joy of salvation through the Holy One's son.

Now with all the dialects many came to assume that the believers were tipsy from liquor, but Aesop spoke boldly.

"We are not drunk, but have been given the power to proclaim the good news of Kleos to you, without fear."

That day many creatures became believers in the name of Kleos. The keepers had seen the whole escapade; and calling Reivach over, demanded an explanation.

"The explanation is God," said the otter. "The farmer was--I mean-- is everything he said he was. I was wrong--Kleos is God."

The otters demeanor had changed drastically. Naasson and Seth were dumbfounded.

"With all due respect," said hyena giving him an askance, " Why are you with these believers? Are you sipping some special wine we don't know about?"

"Stop with the jokes--this is real. God has revealed himself, he has walked among us, died for our sins and ---

"Stop!" said Naasson clinching his fist. "I think when you fell on your back you bumped you head a little too hard. Enough with the charade, come back to the temple you need to rest."

"I have no intentions on doing so."

"Then you have no intentions of being the judge of instruction," said Seth. "Off with the crest."

"God has not told me to give it up and you're not making me take it off."

"Then I'll cut you down right here you traitor!" said Naasson, grabbing the otter by the cloak.

Suddenly Aesop emerged. His very presence forced the hyena to step away. After a brief stare- down Seth and Naasson thought it wise to retreat, but not before a menacing threat to Reivach's life.

"A death threat." said Aesop confidently to the otter, "You'll get use to them."

"I might as well," Reivach said, " I've gave them out for years."

Over the next few weeks Reivach hardly went outdoors and when he did it was only within the town of Girgandale. Many times the keeper's spies were seen , but none made any attempts of causing an uproar. It was very hard for Reivach to hide; he did like it. God had given him a desire to tell the nations abroad about Kleos, but with the threat on his life his fear was getting the best of him. Paskalo saw this and took his friend on a much need walk. The greyhound believed that there was something that could help him.

"I've been praying, but I still afraid." said Reivach. "I've never been afraid of death threats before."

"That's because you were giving threats not receiving them," said Paskalo taking him



down a lane. "Stand here and look."

About fifty yards from them was an apple tree. Under that apple tree was the strangest creature Reiach had ever seen. To begin with, the creature was about the otter's height with a bushy tail as long as its body. The fur was wild and gangly looking to be in need of a good grooming. The face was supplied with a small mouth, small snout, and two eyeballs as large as sauce plates. One eye, the right one, was crooked which made this attraction stranger than it already was. Finally the hands were comprised of clawed fingers with two longer than the others. It looked like a lemur, but if Reiach had to guess the exact animal, he would have missed it completely.

"Who and what is that?"

"That is Phigaro," said Paskalo pointing. "He needs a friend. Phigaro is a new believer: very bold, but very rude as well. Most around Girgandale think he's a little obnoxious." Reiach gave the greyhound a long glaring look

"And you're introducing me to him because--"

"I figure that your grumpiness would go well with his obnoxiousness. You two will help one another grow in God, you know, iron sharpening iron." Paskalo said walking away.

"I'd like to hit you with an iron," Reiach said under his breath.

"I heard that!" said Paskalo from afar.

The weirdo, the name the otter gave the creature under the tree, didn't look dangerous nor obnoxious as Paskalo had said. The creature, an aye-aye to put your imaginations to rest, was eating heartily his apple when Reiach came near him. An immediate askance was given to the otter; for Phigaro did not want to be interrupted while eating. Reiach noticed that the aye-aye's right eye was crooked, which produced a smile on his face. He was the only creature, Reiach thought, that could see himself coming and going at the same time.

"You eyeing me!?" said Phigaro.

"Look, I just came over to say hello." said Reiach.

"Hello and good-bye," said Phigaro rudely.

"You're making this difficult."

"Paskalo has been trying to buddy me up with any creature in this town. The only friend I need is Kleos. I don't need another, so good day to you sir."

"But--"

"Good day!"

Now Reiach did something that he shouldn't have done. As he was turning away he spoke under his breath again. His curt and direct comment of calling Phigaro a "knuckle-head" was not taken lightly; it was the highest insult to Phigaro. The aye-aye tossed his apple to the side with a vicious throw. All the fury that a three foot five inch animal could muster was boiling inside the aye-aye.

"What did you call me?" said Phigaro gritting his teeth.

"If you must know," replied Revel unaware that he was about to get attacked, "I called you a knuckle-head."

"Nobody and mean nobody talks to me that way!"

Before Reiach could respond he found himself tumbling down the hill in a ball of dirt in the clutches of this mad creature. They fought like two unruly school children in need of a good spanking. A multitude came from their homes to see what the commotion was all

about. Paskalo and Aesop were among them. Aesop grabbed Reiach in one hand and Phigaro in the other, lifting them both off the ground.

“What’s the meaning of this?”

“He started it,” said Phigaro. “He called me a knuckle-head.”

“That’s because you are one.”

They began to bicker again, but a good shake from Aesop put all argument to rest.

“Ouch!” replied Phigaro grabbing his neck, “ I think you gave me whiplash!”

“Quiet the both of you. This is nonsense--no its ungodly--to be fighting another believer. Would Kleos approve of this?”

Reiach and Phigaro were silent.

“I’ll ask point blank: are both of you believers or not?”

“I am.” said Phigaro.

“Me too.” said Revel.

Aesop place them both back on the ground.

“Then act like it.”

The crowd dispersed back to their respective homes, leaving the two alone in the street.

“Who does he think he is, talking to us like that?”

“He thinks he’s bigger and stronger than us,” replied Reiach, “and he is.” After dusting himself off he said, “I’m sorry for calling you a knuckle-head.”

“Yeah, and I’m sorry for--you know--smacking you around.”

Apologies were accepted with a hand-shake. After talking both came to understand one another quiet well. Phigaro told his story of how he was once a pick-pocket around Eldos, the major city in Shavron. One day he was caught by the authorities and jailed for one year. It was in jail that he met Paskalo who told him of the life of Kleos and his death for sins. Reiach knew the reason Paskalo was in jail; for he had sent him there out of spite. Even when evil seemed to show its vicious head, the otter thought, God still used it for good.

“After telling me, I accepted God’s salvation.” replied Phigaro, “It nice knowing that you don’t have to go to Hell because of God’s mercy--it’s a wonderful feeling.”

From that day forward the two seemed to be inseparable. Wherever Phigaro went Reiach went and if Reiach went out, Phigaro was sure to follow. Most of the outings were aimed at telling any Shavronite about God. However the keepers were relentless in challenging Reiach and Phigaro publicly. One day they were at odds with the keepers, zealously debating the truth of their Lord. The words were heated with crowds gathering to see the judge of instruction; a once vile creature, becoming a advocate for the God he hated with a deep disdain. After the dispute, the keepers were the outright losers and many more Shavronites came to salvation, but some still refused to believe.

News of this victory came quickly to Naasson and Seth’s ear.

“The longer he lives the worst it is for us,” said Seth, “If he lives he’ll have every Shavronite a believer. We’ll be poor; we’ll have no control; we’ll--”

“Be quiet.” said Naasson, “Don’t worry.”

“Don’t worry?” Seth said eyeing him. “When Reiach is gone ,I’ll stop worrying. How long will you let your threat linger?”

The hyena smiled. The threat was still fresh in his mind.

“Tonight when the moon is at its full height in the sky. The Judge of Instruction will die.

And,” he said holding up a finger, “the town of Girgandale will be burned to the ground just for spite.”

There are many instances when God steps in to protect us, even if it comes from the most unlikely sources. Oblivious to Naasson or Seth was a young keeper listening around the corner. He had become a believer, but secretly hid it out of fear; for it was a rule that if any keeper was found to confess Kleos they would be publicly beaten. Nevertheless this young keeper left the temple in haste to relay the message to the town of Girgandale. The young keeper was already having doubts of how his presence would be received. His doubts were realized when a group of Shavronites approached him. He would have been easily escorted off the premises if it was not for Ricco’s careful eye. The ringtail wasted no words nor did the young keeper as he told every wicked endeavor that had been contrived by the head keepers.

“When?” said Ricco.

“Tonight,” the young keeper said, “The whole town and anyone left in it will be burned.”

“The keepers wouldn’t dare. They’re foul, but not that disgraceful.”

“I’ve have heard and seen worst,” said the young keeper giving warning, “The keepers will keep their word no matter what.”

“Point noted,” said Ricco. “Come we must tell Aesop everything.”

The message was relayed once again. A solemn expression came over the bear’s face. Calling a town meeting, he gave his most prudent advice for all to leave the town. The murmuring and complaining came quickly; it wasn’t until Aesop explained further that all disagreement abated.

“I believe that despite the circumstance that God will show His good through this. When we gave Kleos lordship over our lives, we understood the trials that would come upon us---He wasn’t making that up. I ask every creature here to pray with what little time we have. God will show you what do to. That is all.”

A final prayer was the closing and all returned to their homes. As the moon rose to its peak in the night sky, a group of keepers marched forcible to Girgandale. They were armed with torches, axes, clubs, and swords. If they had armor as well you would have mistaken them for a small army. But no war would happen, nor would any die on this night; for the entire town of Girgandale was disserted. Every home, every field, and every shop was left abandoned. Naasson and Seth led the band through the town setting fire to all the homes and crops. The flames reached like an arm towards the stars signaling this act in all its vulgarity. To God this was no loss, in fact, it was a great gain. With the threat being carried out to its full extent, the Holy One sent the believers, who would have been content to stay in Shavron, abroad. The eleven (to include other believers) went to different regions to preach of Kleos. To God the fire was no threat at all, but a perfectly timed event for His will to be done.

### *Chapter 3: Sold!*

Leaving Shavron was hard for Reiach. It was his birthplace and he was hoping to stay until he had seen ever Shavronite become a believer; but as divine providence would have it, he was gone. Phigaro had his lip poked out starring aimlessly into space.

“Are you o.k?”

“I’m bored. I need something to do.”

“How about a game?”

“Great, let’s play “I spy!” he said excitedly. “I’ll go first. I spy something all around us, it’s clear, and its good to drink.”

Reiach looked to his left and then to his right. With a frustrated expression, the otter rolled his eyes.

“Is it water, Phigaro?”

“Wow, you’re good at this!” said Phigaro happily.

Reiach’s roll of the eyes was due to the simple deduction that they were in a small sail boat in the middle of the ocean. It must be explained how all of this happened. After deciding to leave Girgandale. Phigaro believed that it would be best to travel by water than by land; and since you already know that if Phigaro decided to go somewhere Reiach was sure to follow, they jumped into a boat at Girgandale and left. Neither of them had experience with the sailing, but the aye-aye conclude that it shouldn’t be more difficult than learning to dress oneself. Needless to say, it was. Sailing was arduous for both of them and suddenly they had found themselves drifting further and further away from land. With little to no wind to carry the small ship along the sea they were stranded vulnerable to any outside force.

Both of them prayed for wind, a move in the current, or anything to push the boat along. But the hours went by and the boat stayed anchored to its chosen spot.

“Just one more game, Reiach, come on.”

“Water has been the answer for the past fifty times!”

“Come on, just one more.”

“Fine,” said the otter dreading the game.

“I spy,” said Phigaro looking around, “Oh, I spy something that travels on water, has a sail and is very close to us.”

Rubbing his noggin in anguish, the otter said,

“Is it our boat?”

“Not ours but that one!” he said pointing.

About two miles to the west a massive ship was quickly gaining ground on their position. Both of them saw it turn immediate towards them as if it was magnetized to their sail boat. It looked to have traveled many miles, due to the grime and dirt that clung to the ship’s hull. The sails that should have been a pearly white, were grimy and dappled with stains. No emblem on the sail greeted them, so neither Phigaro nor Revel could tell whether or not they were friend or foe. It was ten minutes before the large ship dropped its anchor about fifty feet away. The captain of the ship, a snow leopard, emerge to engage in conversation. He looked down upon the two with a smirk and kindly said, “I need of a lift? We spotted you stranded. Lost the wind for your sails, eh?”

“Yup.” said Phigaro

“I understand completely,” said the captain smiling, “When I was just a lieutenant I managed not only lose the wind, but half my crew as well. I’ll send two of my sailors over to help you aboard, how about that?”

“That will be great.” said Reiach.

A small row boat was lowered with two of the captain’s crew. Once in the small row boat they were guided gradually over to the larger vessel, but along the way Reiach couldn’t help but to feel that something was wrong. Maybe it was the way the slick smile emerged on the crews faces or maybe it was the first look the captain gave them, but with a slight laugh he put such thoughts aside. On board the Iron Cutlass, for that was the name of the

ship, the two were greeted by five members of the crew including the captain.

"I'm glad we found you." said the captain.

"I'm glad you found us," said Phigaro looking at the crew, "If it wasn't for you we could have been stuck out there forever."

"Now we wouldn't want that now would we?" said the captain laughing, "Can I show you to your room?"

"Might as well," said Reiach. "A good rest would do me good."

The snapping of the captain's finger initiated a turn of events that neither Reiach nor Phigaro could have foreseen. Suddenly from the crew, as if by magic, appeared a pair of chains with shackles. All possible escape was futile as another crew member revealed a spiked cudgel.

"It's the chains or the sharks," said the captain, "You decide."

Phigaro swiped at his assailant's legs, tearing some flesh but not enough to prevent them from binding him. One of the crew members had the notion to break his arm, but a word from the captain saved Phigaro from the deed.

"No damaged goods. I want as much money as possible at the auction block."

Reiach was kicked to the floor and pinned to the deck by the captain's foot on this chest.

"How much will these two fetch?" said a sailor binding Reiach.

"Both are intelligent and are healthy," said the snow leopard, "One thousand for every three months. We'll put them with the other hired slaves."

Brutally chained and quite perplexed, Reiach and Phigaro were taken down into the hull of the ship. An immediate stench of wet fur and other foul odors hit them with such potency that a phase of nausea came over them. There were other captives all chained in different sections of the ship. Most were emaciated from lack of food and the down-trodden faces were enough to place fear in Phigaro and Reiach's hearts. They were tossed into a large cell with another captive that stood idly by in the dark shadows engulfing most of the area.

"About time," said the figure, "I was beginning to get lonely."

"And you're going to stay that way too!" said Phigaro putting up his fist, "Back up!"

"Hold on, hold on. I didn't mean to offend."

From the shadows came a rooster. He was gorgeously embellished with sky blue feathers shaded with an orange underbelly. He was tall, five feet to be exact, and long feathery tail added to his commanding presence. His entire face, including his beak, had old scratch marks as if some animal had clawed him. After dropping his head in a bow, he continued to ease the captives' fears.

"I have no intention of hurting you, while we are together. My name is Horatio."

Phigaro's eyes pecked open as if the very name drew a vibrant memory to the forefront of his mind.

"Horatio the Hurricane! The top prize fighting rooster, the undisputed champion, and the great brawler who topple seven opponents in one round! I heard stories about you."

"That's me," said Horatio smitten from the accolades, "It's always good to meet a fan."

"So," said Reiach, "why are you here?"

With a dumbfounded look the rooster replied.

"I'm not that great. I can fight seven, but apparently not eight. I was attacked one night by a group of the captain's thugs. I tried to tell them who I was, but my name seemed to

make my capture even more tantalizing to them. Fame, like most things, is short-lived. I suppose the captain made you hired slaves, eh?

“Yes,” said the otter, “what’s that?”

“Well, you are one of the chosen few who will be sold to one master after another until you are worked to death or the captain deems you to be worthless. You’ll be sold in one country, picked up anywhere better three months to a year, and sold again.” replied the bird strutting around the cell, “Who knows: if one of your masters like you, you’ll have the pleasure of being separated from you family and friends for the rest of your natural life.”

“Could you be any more drear?” replied Reiach.

“Yup.” said the rooster bubbly.

Phigaro motion Reiach over to a corner in the cell.

“How are we to carry the name of Kleos abroad when we’re stuck in a boat ready to be sold to any creature?”

“I don’t know,” said Reiach hunching his shoulders. “The best thing to do is pray and let God work, and---”

“What are you two talking about?---there are no secrets when you’re a slave.”

Seeing that it wouldn’t hurt to give the rooster the details, Phigaro stepped forward.

“Glory.”

“Glory what?”

“That’s who we were talking about. His real name is Kleos, but we call him glory because , well, he’s that too. That’s why we were stranding in the middle of nowhere. We left our native land under heavy persecution to travel around the world to tell any, if not all creatures, about the wonderful thing Glory has done.”

“What’s so great about him?”

“He died.” said Reiach interjecting.

“So,” said the rooster scuffing, “Everyone dies.”

“But not for sins of the entire world! It’s like this, Horatio,” replied Reiach taking a deep breath, “In Shavron there was a farmer named Kleos who was God in full as well as completely animal as we. He performed miracles, raised the dead, taught, challenged all thinking; but even greater than that, when we were enemies to God He loved us by sacrificing himself willfully and came back to life to give any who comes to him total assurance that if we would confess our sins he would rightly forgive us and live in us.” The bird said nothing. He circled the cell twice before looking at his two cellmates again. Phigaro picked up where Reiach left off.

“It’s a change from what you were to what God makes you. That’s the truth---that’s the message!”

“Amazing,” the rooster said laughing with astonishment, “I never heard anything like it.” Horatio said staring pensively between the bars, “ A god who cares? A god who forgives the wicked? It must be a joke.”

Suddenly the rooster stood up straight, ruffled his feathers, and asked a question that startled Reiach more than Phigaro.

“He was an innocent creature. Who killed him?”

Since his conversion, Reiach had never spoken of his hand in the death of Kleos. He never thought about it because no believer ever challenged him. Now he was in a position

almost impossible to avoid. Would he tell the truth, risking be beaten up by a professional fighting rooster? Would he lie, sinning against his very Creator and Lord? Or would he change the subject completely, hoping the rooster wouldn't catch on? The third option was the best and wisest.

"Let's avoid past occurrences." said Reiach chuckling nervously. "The past should stay in the past."

"Well I don't want it to." said Horatio rolling his head, "Stop with all the fluffy talk. Tell me straight: who killed him?"

With a deep sigh, Reiach revealed the truth.

"I did."

"YOU!"

The rooster's jolly mien, which made him delightful company, suddenly turned sour. He arched his back, opened his wings, and scrapped the ground like a wild bull ready for a charge. Before Reiach or Phigaro was aware of this sudden change, the rooster sprinted toward the otter. Reiach stumbled backwards, slamming into the back wall just as Horatio pointed his beak four inches from the otter's face. For the first time, Reiach could see the deep scars across his face and beak. The marks of brutality, defeat, and victory had permanently burrowed themselves in his face, terribly disfiguring the bird. Eyes met; and if Horatio was engaging Reiach in a staring contest, the rooster would be the clear winner. Reiach quickly turned away. Phigaro stood awaiting the next move.

"All right, Horatio," said the otter. "if you're going to hurt me go right ahead----I deserve it."

"Nah," shaking his head, "I won't lay a feather on you. A thought came into my head: if this God of yours would forgive slime like you," he said looking Reiach up and down. "I suppose he can forgive any creature of anything."

"And you would be right." replied Phigaro jumping in quickly. "So how about giving my friend a little breathing room."

With a grunt, the rooster returned to his spot at the cell bars. Weeks went by on the Iron Cutlass. Once in awhile the captain would emerge to check on the health of his cargo. Their health, of course was only in comparison of how they were fed. The average ration for the slave on the Iron Cutlass was three biscuit's a day. If generosity ever touched the captain's heart, a fourth biscuit was added to the meal. Horatio despite to vile treatment, managed his health very well. However, his cellmates were so weakened by the meager meal that they hardly walked just to save as much energy as possible. The rooster, seeing the plight of it all, would share some of his food with them.

The ship came to a rest for three days. Horatio could tell by the movement of the ship: it was steady, which meant it was anchored at some coastline. The captain came down with three of his crew and nearly dragged a jackal from a neighboring cell. The animal gave no struggle: most likely from the fact that it was too weak to do so. What Phigaro and Reiach could not see was the transaction between buyer and seller. However, the jackal would not be the only slave sold today. Another buyer made her way to the ship. The captain politely bowed, knowing that this was one of his most loyal customers.

"Bertha, how goes the day?"

Bertha was a grey wolf of great girth. She stood at nine feet, three hundred pounds and she was known for her short temper. Her blue cloak was dirty with flour and pieces of raw

dough, which came with her profession as a baker. On her head was a small straw hat that adorned a withering daffodil, which was probably the nicest thing about her. She took the captain's greeting with little recognition by keeping her eyes fixed on the ship. Her gaze seemed to penetrate the hull, inspecting every slave still shackled inside. The captain repeated his greeting.

"Are you well, mad'am?"

"Fine," she said sharply. "I need slaves. Three of them died last month and I need new ones."

"I was hoping that you would return them," said the captain regretting his financial loss.

"I was hoping that they would live longer," replied Bertha boarding the ship.

Below Reiach and Phigaro were engaged in making up a song. Horatio listened contently as Phigaro came up with this verse:

In trials and trouble  
Let the winds come  
In pain and woe  
It brings fear to some  
But Glory will silence all  
On his name will I call  
And if the pain returns  
With God I'll stand tall

"Not bad," said Reiach, "You cut the rhyme, but it was well done."

"I like a good rhyme. Let's see what you can do," said Horatio.

"A challenge is it?" he said with a smirk

The otter cleared his throat and replied:

God is Light  
Day or Night  
With Him I have might  
Despite any plight

He died and save me  
Now all can see  
That my soul has glee  
And he can do it for thee!

Despite the glooming setting Phigaro and Reiach knew that it was always good to sing to God from the heart. Nonetheless the jubilant time would soon turn drier as Bertha entered the hull. She came to every cell with a scrutinizing eye asking every slave to come near the cell bars. There she pulled arms, grabbed ears, and yanked tails to her desire.

"These slaves are trash!" she said, snapping at the captain. "You're getting sloppy with your choices."

"I choose well, mad'am, besides a good slave is hard to find these days."

Finally she came to Horatio's cell. The rooster upon seeing the wolf did not flinch nor change his bold stance. Reiach and Phigaro tip-toed to the back of the cell, hoping not to



be seen. But Bertha's eye had already sized up the trio.

"I'll take all three of them," said Bertha. "Chain them together."

The trio left the ship unaware of the country they were in. The rooster looked around and with a smirk, that revealed he knew exactly where he was, he suddenly began to perk up. Bertha handed a bag of silver to the captain; and after signing a contract stomped her foot.

"Here, now!" she shouted to her newly purchased slaves.

The rooster, leading the train, confidently marched over to his new master. Bertha with hands on her hips gave her list of demands.

"Rule number one: when I tell you to do something, you mind your tongue or I'll beat you. Rule number two: Finish all my work, if not, I'll beat you even worse. Rule number three: If you run away, I'll find you and put you in an early grave. Do we all have an understanding?"

It was silent.

"Good!" said Bertha with a wicked smile. "If you do what I say, you'll stay alive."

"Hey," said Phigaro whispering to Horatio, "where are we?"

"Yelm." said the rooster, "One of the nicer places for a slave to work."

Bertha grabbed the slack around Horatio's neck, Bertha tugged on the chain and took her captives five miles to her home and business: Bertha's Baker. The Baker was on the first floor, while her abode rested snugly above it. It was late afternoon by the time they arrived so the wolf only gave them three pieces of bread to fill their bellies. The meager meal came with a meager living conditions. A large wall closet, that was in need of good dose of fresh air, was the sleeping arrangements for the trio.

The following morning, Bertha set her slaves to task, showing them all the techniques for making bread, pastries, rolls, and cakes. She also placed rusty braces around their legs to mark them.

"I need one pounds of fresh dough by the end of the day." she said directly, "And four cakes made and delivered to this address by four this afternoon."

With that she left the shop without another word.

"I can't believe this," said Phigaro kneading a lump of dough. "We're suppose to be telling creatures about God not making dough for a wolf who look likes she eats raw dough three times a day."

"God will give us a way of telling His story." said Reiach. " But for now we better get finish with our orders."

By mid afternoon all the cakes were prepared and the dough was kneaded to Bertha's standards. For the delivery, Horatio was hooked up to a cart. Reiach and Phigaro rode on his back through the streets. All the orders were delivered, but on the way back Reiach asked Horatio to slow down.

"What are you up to?" said Horatio, "We have to be back or..."

"I know, I know," said the otter descreying an object a few feet away from him.

That object that suddenly caught the attention of Reiach was a circular platform standing in the middle of the town. He dismounted and casually walked over to it. He circled it, smiling as he did so and his friends, who thought he had lost his mind, were hoping that no one saw him. The otter hopped on the platform and slowly spun around.

"Reiach, are you all right?" replied Horatio coming over, "What are you doing?"

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