

Taken from the website <https://www.theickabog.com/the-kings-lost-sword/>

Chapter 12 The King's Lost Sword

Within seconds, it was as though each of the king's party was wearing a thick white blindfold. The fog was so dense they couldn't see their own hands in front of their faces. The mist smelled of the foul marsh, of brackish water and ooze. The soft ground seemed to shift beneath their feet as many of the men turned unwisely on the spot. Trying to catch sight of each other, they lost all sense of direction. Each man felt adrift in a blinding white sea, and Major Beamish was one of the few to keep his head.

'Have a care!' he called. 'The ground is treacherous. Stay still, don't attempt to move!'

But King Fred, who was suddenly feeling rather scared, paid no attention. He set off at once in what he thought was the direction of Major Beamish, but within a few steps he felt himself sinking into the icy marsh.

'Help!' he cried, as the freezing marsh water flooded over the tops of his shining boots. 'Help! Beamish, where are you? I'm sinking!'

There was an immediate clamour of panicked voices and jangling armour. The guards all hurried off in every direction, trying to find the king, bumping into each other and slipping over, but the floundering king's voice drowned out every other.

'I've lost my boots! Why doesn't somebody help me? *Where are you all?*

The lords Spittleworth and Flapoon were the only two people who'd followed Beamish's advice and remained quite still in the places they'd occupied when the fog had rolled over them. Spittleworth was clutching a fold of Flapoon's ample pantaloons and Flapoon was holding tight to the skirt of Spittleworth's riding coat. Neither of them made the smallest attempt to help Fred, but waited, shivering, for calm to be restored.

'At least if the fool gets swallowed by the bog, we'll be able to go home,' Spittleworth muttered to Flapoon.

The confusion deepened. Several of the Royal Guard had now got stuck in the bog as they tried to find the king. The air was full of squelches, clanks, and shouts. Major Beamish was bellowing in a vain attempt to restore some kind of order, and the king's voice seemed to be receding into the blind night, becoming ever fainter, as though he was blundering away from them.

And then, out of the heart of the darkness, came an awful terror-struck shriek.

'BEAMISH, HELP ME, I CAN SEE THE MONSTER!'

'I'm coming, Your Majesty!' cried Major Beamish. 'Keep shouting, sire, I'll find you!'

'HELP! HELP ME, BEAMISH!' shouted King Fred.

'What's happened to the idiot?' Flapoon asked Spittleworth, but before Spittleworth could answer, the fog around the two lords thinned as quickly as it had arrived, so that they stood together in a little clearing, able to see each other, but still surrounded on all sides by high walls of thick white mist. The voices of the king, of Beamish and of the other soldiers were becoming fainter and fainter.

'Don't move yet,' Spittleworth cautioned Flapoon. 'Once the fog thins a little bit more, we'll be able to find the horses and we can retreat to a safe—'

At that precise moment, a slimy black figure burst out of the wall of fog and launched itself at the two lords. Flapoon let out a high-pitched scream and Spittleworth lashed out at the creature, missing only because it flopped to the ground, weeping. It was then that Spittleworth realised the gibbering, panting slime monster was, in fact, King Fred the Fearless.

'Thank heavens we've found you, Your Majesty, we've been searching everywhere!' cried Spittleworth.

'Ick - Ick - Ick—' whimpered the king.

'He's got hiccoughs,' said Flapoon. 'Give him a fright.'

'Ick - Ick - Ickabog!' moaned Fred. 'I s-s-saw it! A gigantic monster - it nearly caught me!'

'I beg Your Majesty's pardon?' asked Spittleworth.

'The m-monster is real!' gulped Fred. 'I'm lucky to b-be alive! To the horses! We must flee, and quickly!'

King Fred tried to hoist himself up by climbing Spittleworth's leg, but Spittleworth stepped swiftly aside to avoid getting covered in slime, instead aiming a consoling pat at the top of Fred's head, which was the cleanest part of him.

'Er - there, there, Your Majesty. You've had a most distressing experience, falling in the marsh. As we were saying earlier, the boulders do indeed assume monstrous forms in this thick fog—'

'Dash it, Spittleworth, I know what I saw!' shouted the king, staggering to his feet unaided. 'Tall as two horses, it was, and with eyes like huge lamps! I drew my sword, but my hands were so slimy it slipped from my grasp, so there was nothing for it but to pull my feet out of my stuck boots, and crawl away!'

Just then a fourth man made his way into their little clearing in the fog: Captain Roach, father of Roderick, who was Major Beamish's second-in-command - a big, burly man with jet-black moustaches. What Captain Roach was really like, we are about to find out. All you need to know now is that the king was very glad to see him, because he was the largest member of the Royal Guard.

'Did you see any sign of the Ickabog, Roach?' whimpered Fred.

'No, Your Majesty,' he said, with a respectful bow, 'all I've seen is fog and mud. I'm glad to know Your Majesty is safe, at any rate. You gentlemen stay here, and I'll round up the troops.'

Roach made to leave, but King Fred yelped. 'No, you stay here with me, Roach, in case the monster comes this way! You've still got a rifle, haven't you? Excellent - I lost my sword and my boots, you see. My very best dress sword, with the jewelled hilt!'

Though he felt much safer with Captain Roach beside him, the trembling king was otherwise as cold and scared as he could ever remember being. He also had a nasty feeling that nobody believed he'd really seen the Ickabog, a feeling that increased when he caught sight of Spittleworth rolling his eyes at Flapoon.

The king's pride was stung.

'Spittleworth, Flapoon,' he said, 'I want my sword and my boots back! They're over there somewhere,' he added, waving his arm at the encircling fog.

'Would - would it not be better to wait until the fog has cleared, Your Majesty?' asked Spittleworth nervously.

'I want my sword!' snapped King Fred. 'It was my grandfather's and it's very valuable! Go and find it, both of you. I shall wait here with Captain Roach. And don't come back empty-handed.'

Q1) List the phrases that the author has used in the first paragraph to create atmosphere.

Q2) *'Have a care!' he called. 'The ground is treacherous. Stay still, don't attempt to move!'*

In this part, what do you think 'have a care' means?

Q3) Which synonym is the best match for floundering?

a) struggling b) caring c) laughing

Q4) Are Lord Spittleworth and Lord Flappon true and loyal friends to the King? Give a PEE (point, evidence, explain) answer.
