

Chapter 18 **End of an Advisor**

No sooner had the guardsmen got to their feet to return home, than Lord Flapoon came bursting into the room, looking worried.

‘What now?’ groaned Spittleworth, who very much wanted his bath and bed.

‘The - Chief - Advisor!’ panted Flapoon.

And sure enough, Herringbone, the Chief Advisor, now appeared, wearing his dressing gown and an expression of outrage.

‘I demand an explanation, my lord!’ he cried. ‘What stories are these that reach my ears? The Ickabog, real? Major Beamish, dead? And I’ve just passed three of the king’s soldiers being dragged away under sentence of death! I have, of course, instructed that they be taken to the dungeons to await trial instead!’

‘I can explain everything, Chief Advisor,’ said Spittleworth with a bow, and for the third time that evening, he related the tale of the Ickabog attacking the king, and killing Beamish, and then the mysterious disappearance of Nobby Buttons who, Spittleworth feared, had also fallen prey to the monster.

Herringbone, who’d always deplored the influence of Spittleworth and Flapoon on the king, waited for Spittleworth to finish his farrago of lies with the air of a wily old fox who waits at a rabbit hole for his dinner.

‘A fascinating tale,’ he said, when Spittleworth had finished. ‘But I hereby relieve you of any further responsibility in the matter, Lord Spittleworth. The advisors will take charge now. There are laws and protocols in Cornucopia to deal with emergencies such as these.

‘Firstly, the men in the dungeons will be given a proper trial, so that we can hear their version of events. Secondly, the lists of the king’s soldiers must be searched, to find the family of this Nobby Buttons, and inform them of his death. Thirdly, Major Beamish’s body must be closely examined by the king’s physicians, so that we may learn more about the monster that killed him.’

Spittleworth opened his mouth very wide, but nothing came out. He saw his whole glorious scheme collapsing on top of him, and himself trapped beneath it, imprisoned by his own cleverness.

Then Major Roach, who was standing behind the Chief Advisor, slowly put down his rifle and took a sword from the wall. A look like a flash of light on dark water passed between Roach and Spittleworth, who said:

‘I think, Herringbone, that you are ripe for retirement.’

Steel flashed, and the tip of Roach's sword appeared out of the Chief Advisor's belly. The soldiers gasped, but the Chief Advisor didn't utter a word. He simply knelt, then toppled over, dead.

Spittleworth looked around at the soldiers who'd agreed to believe in the Ickabog. He liked seeing the fear on every face. He could feel his own power.

'Did everybody hear the Chief Advisor appointing me to his job before he retired?' he asked softly.

The soldiers all nodded. They'd just stood by and watched murder, and felt too deeply involved to protest. All they cared about now was escaping this room alive, and protecting their families.

'Very well, then,' said Spittleworth. 'The king believes the Ickabog is real, and I stand with the king. I am the new Chief Advisor, and I will be devising a plan to protect the kingdom. All who are loyal to the king will find their lives run very much as before. Any who stand against the king will suffer the penalty of cowards and traitors: imprisonment - or death.'

'Now, I need one of you gentlemen to assist Major Roach in burying the body of our dear Chief Advisor - and be sure and put him where he won't be found. The rest of you are free to return to your families and inform them of the danger threatening our beloved Cornucopia.'

Wednesday 8th July 2020

Q1) Do you think Spittleworth and Roach will be able to maintain their lie? Explain with a PEE answer.
