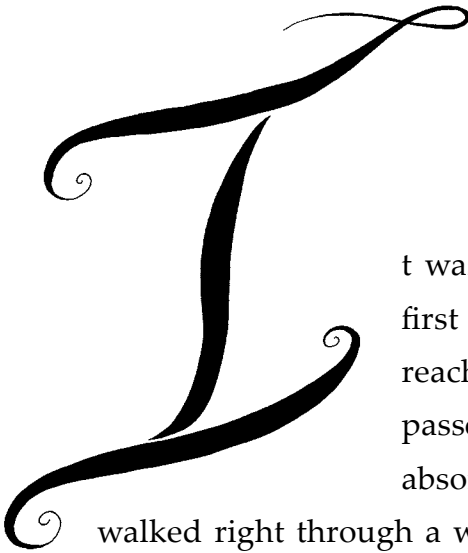


Note: Sir Gillygad was dropped on his head as a baby and this, so his mother believes, is the reason he speaks with an odd syntax ... so yes, his speech a little unnormal is.

~ *Chapter 5* ~
The Rumored Egg



It was not long after this that the first rumor of the Gruesome Egg reached the Pile. A Mumbly Mew passed along the shore. He was so absorbed in his mumbling that he walked right through a whole passel of mice without noticing them.

“Oh, it’s horrible, horrible,” he mumbled to himself. “That egg ... horrible ... definitely ... definitely gruesome ...”

That was all they heard before the Mew passed out of hearing, dragging his tail behind him.

They ran to Sir Gillygad.

“He said it was horrible,” they reported.

“What was?” asked Sir Gillygad.

“The egg.”

“An egg?”

“Yes, an egg. He said it was gruesome.”

Sir Gillygad hopped on Gorf’s back and chased after the mumbling Mew. He almost had him, but lost his trail on the bedrock lining the Lillyplum Gorge.

“Mew! Mew! Mumbly Mew!” he shouted—but there was no reply, only the sound of rushing water echoing off the canyon walls.

A few days later a flock of quail passed through the area. They were unusually skittish.

“Quail,” asked Sir Gillygad, talking to them beside a bramble bush, “why so skittish?”

“We come from the Daark Forest, and there is an egg,” said one.

“Yes, an egg,” said another. “It’s horrible. You should have heard it.”

“An egg?” said Sir Gillygad. “Just?”

“But he was gruesome,” said one, visibly quailing.

“Or she,” said another.

“Yes, he or she,” agreed the quailing one.

“Or it,” said a different another.

“Skies alive! What does it make a difference?” cried Sir Gillygad impatiently.



“But it was terrifying ... gruesomely terrifying!” the flock cried in angst, and they flew away, their wings whirring and vanity plumes fluttering.

The last straw for Sir Gillygad was when the Bard spent the night at the Pile. He was on his way to the gorge.

“What news, fair Bard?” asked Sir Gillygad when everyone had gathered in the hall.

“An egg has come to the forest;” he declared in his slow, sonorous voice, “the Daark Forest where the lilies lurk. It resides where the forest borders the land of the Mumbly Mews and the valley of the gerwine Greneff.”

A silence fell on the hall. The gerwine Greneff was a foul name, and to have an egg, a Gruesome Egg, in the same vicinity sounded ominous.

“Tell more,” said Sir Gillygad. “No need an egg to fear. Who’s afraid of a big bad egg?” and he laughed.

The Bard narrowed his eyes. He examined Sir Gillygad carefully. This was the first time he’d met him and he was trying to take his measure. Sir Abogad had been stout and strong, and this new Gad was a mere youngster.

“The egg,” he said slowly, weighing his words to see their effect, “is causing consternation—big consternation. It has two leggs (so it is said), a left leg and a right leg. And the leggs are bird’s leggs,” he added, “which makes sense in an eggy sort of way.”

The hall was silent. This was unexpected and no one knew what to say. A shudder ran through the community, but when the Bard looked up he saw Sir Gillygad smiling.