The Glove of Indolence

Warpo Marks*

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Abstract

THERE dwelt in the land of Burigupp, beyond the known -*- latitudes, a Prince of Frogs. Mlagum he was called, the the Just One. Throughout the lands he cared for all; where there was no food, he fed; no shelter, he built. His name brought honor to every lip, and the Frogs were content...
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Now it was in the eighth autumn of Mlagum's reign that the citizens were called together to celebrate, for it was the year of the Locust, and the Legions had reaped a bountiful crop. When each was called, the Frogs danced into the great dining hall and took their places. High above, a cattail was lit and shimmered its aura through the fly-wing chandeliers; the feast had commenced.

Prince Mlagum raised his glass; his subjects mirrored the gesture, repeating the words of his toast. Thereafter, all were seated, and Barifnius, Census-taker and the Earl of Gurp, took his seat of honor at the right hand of Mlagum, and Mlagum spoke to him.
“It does my heart kindly to see that none of the Burigupprians have needs that are not satisfied. Is it not so with you, Lord Barifnius?”

“Alas, Noble Prince, it cannot be so; for there is one in the Frogdom who has naught of these joyous feasts. I long to have him share a glass with these, his people.”

“Whence has he gone and been detained?”

“Nowhere, Sire. He dwells in his house, and answers not any beckoning upon his door. Nor does he accept his just share of game when your Legions return from the hunt. Rather, he will take nothing.”

“I am grieved to hear of this. Which of my subjects is this?”

“Sire, he is a Feeble who dwells on the brink of the Cattail Bog, seldom venturing from his walls and never toward the Castle. He is called Greeble, of the House of Grask.”

“Then let us go unto his house immediately, and pluck the thorn which pierces my heart.” So Barifnius followed Mlagum from the Castle, and the Burigupprians went home, for they could not feast without Mlagum the Provider.

Now the day had been long, and the heat-swelled lily pads in the Bog swarmed with flies. Greeble crouched behind a thicket, firing wasp stingers at his prey until all but one dart had found its mark. This he saved for a blue horsefly which had caught his eye. Growing impatient, as the fly would not land, Greeble let fly a stave that severed the soaring insect at the throat.

It was at that instant that Prince Mlagum passed the thicket, and he marvelled at such marksmanship, beckoning, “By whose hand was this worthy prey felled?”

Greeble rose unconcernedly to his feet, and Barifnius studied his features.

“We are in good fortune, Sire. This is he whom we seek, the Feeble Greeble.”

“Enlighten us, Greeble,” said Mlagum. “From whence did you learn such expert marksmanship?”

“The Wild has taught me. To eat, I must hunt as my prey hunts.”

“But why, then, must you hunt when my Legions provide all that is needed?”
Greeble thrust his bow forward. "I provide all that is needed. I eat by my own hand, not out of a royal glove which fits me not, and by my own hand will I live and die!" Stabbing the ground with his bow, he turned without anger to gather up his game; and Mlagum beckoned once more.

"Turn back, Greeble of Grask. I have words yet with you." And the Feeble Greeble faced the Prince once more and awaited his thoughts.

"I came not to make you an enemy, nor to lead you a life which pleases you but little. Thereby we are done. But there are none in my Frogdom who can wield a bow as well as you. I ask you to teach your art to my subjects so that each may provide for himself, and I may put my Legions to better tasks."

"Such a favor do I owe my Prince, and will I gladly grant. At sunrise I will present myself at your disposal."

When the morning sun peeked through the tree trunks, the Feeble Greeble led a small band of frogs into the Bog, and here they drilled so that they might learn the ways of the Wild. Time passed quickly, and each morning Greeble took a few of the Buriguppian to the Bog until, after a few days with him, they could shoot well; and there was always another group waiting to learn, and Greeble became weary.

"My Prince," he bid of Mlagum one morning before leading another group, "for five weeks now I have taught your subject my skills, and they learn well, but I have no time left to hunt for myself, and my shelves are barren."

"You have taught well, Greeble of Grask, but yet not all in Burigupp can shoot so well as you. Come, take freely what you need of my stores, and make use of your time with my subjects."

And so every day, when the lesson was over, the Feeble Greeble ate of the royal glove, and he squirmed his hand into it until it fit. When all the Buriguppian could provide themselves with food, Prince Mlagum decreed that the finest game must be brought to the Feeble Greeble who had lost the whims of the wild. Throughout the land he welched from all; where there was food, he ate; shelter, he slept. His name brought venom to every lip, and the Feeble Greeble was content.