

The Knight and the Golem

Sam Huffer

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Syr Carah, the Bold, a princess and knight of Castle Embereth, loved hunting in the forest. One day, while tracking a white stag, she came across a giant stone golem, a Henge Walker from Castle Garenbrig. He had been attacked by a mischievous fairy, and was now lost.

"Do not worry," said Syr Carah. "I'll help you find your way home."

She brought the Henge Walker back to Castle Embereth, and took him to see Embereth's Prized Griffin, who often went to see his brother at Castle Garenbrig.

"I'd carry you over the impassable mountains myself, but you're much too big," he said to the Henge Walker. "The only way through is the Great Tunnel. But there's a cavern in the middle, guarded by a great dragon, Korvold, the Fae-Cursed King. He used to be human, quite arrogant and rude, so his merfolk wife had a fairy curse and imprison him."

"How shall we get past him?" asked Carah.

The Prized Griffin gave her a green and gold shield. "This shall protect you from his breath. It won't last forever, but will hold him at bay long enough for you to strike. Good luck."

Carah and the Henge Walker travelled for a week, eventually reaching the Great Tunnel. Shortly, they reached Korvold's cavern.

"I smell an overgrown stone," the dragon rumbled from atop his hoard of gold. "I smell a tin knight." He uncoiled to face them. "I smell . . . dinner!" He roared and belched fire at the two. The Henge Walker shrank back, but Syr Carah was ready. She raised the griffin's shield before her, and though the flames danced and strained, they could do her and the golem no harm.

Korvold reared up, shrieking with fury. As he raged and blustered, Carah drew her lance, enchanting it with fire and lightning. She raced forward and pierced the dragon's belly. Upon his death, the fairy's curse broke and his false, draconic form exploded in a rush of flame. The shock collapsed the Great Tunnel and cleaved the ground in two, swallowing the knight and the golem whole.

They fell through crevices in the mountain into another cavern, falling on a pile of golden beans and scattering them. Regaining their feet, they heard an angry buzzing, and spotted a fairy zip-ping about, rapidly counting the beans. Before she could finish, the beans jiggled and hopped on their own, scattering themselves again.

The fairy tried three times more, but eventually screamed with frustration, and turned to a tree that Carah and the Henge Walker had not noticed at first.

"Can't I just count the beans without them jumping here, there and everywhere?" she pleaded.

"Nope," the treefolk shrugged. "A deal is a deal."

Presently, Carah noticed a giant, vine-covered stone looming behind the treefolk, a portal swirling in a shallow cavity. "Could that portal send us back to Castle Garenbrig?" she inquired.

"Certainly," he replied leafily. "If you complete a challenge, of course, courageous knight, steadfast golem. Answer me this, and you may pass through: I have a body of stone and a fiery heart, and sooner or later my head and I will part. What am I?"

Carah and the fairy looked at each other, stumped. The Henge Walker, though silent for a moment, stepped forward and answered quietly, "A volcano."

The treefolk smiled and nodded. He stood aside and let the two through the portal – the fairy slipped through when he wasn't looking. They walked out just outside Castle Garenbrig.

The fairy thanked Carah and the Henge Walker, and vanished. The two then sought out the giant Yorvo, Lord of Castle Garenbrig. When he saw the Henge Walker, he heartily embraced him and gladly thanked Syr Carah.

"You're very welcome," she smiled. Their journey over, she bid fair well to the Henge Walker, and rode back out of the Castle to hunt once more. The Henge Walker made sure to never get lost again. And, of course, they all lived happily ever after.