

The Personal Journal of Basil Woodchip

by A. Jacob Cord

7 Eog

I hate my life. I hate cutting wood, but working in the forest with da is better than staying at home with mum, and much better than looking for odd jobs in the village. I was meant for greater things in life! I studied much harder than the other children in the village school, but somehow I'm stuck in this dead-end life. But I'll show them all. Some day I'll be rich and famous, and they'll all wish they were like me.

10 Eog

Da and I were cutting wood all week's end, and today was my turn to drive the cart to the village and sell the extra firewood. I've made the trip to the village on my own many times since I reached the age of majority, and old Lepu, our trusty load-beast knows his way around anyway, so I admit I wasn't paying much attention when Hrubb jumped out of the bushes and started beating me with a stick. So I grabbed up my Giifu stick and after snapping his twig in half, I gave Hrubb a few bruises he won't soon forget. For some reason, I've never gotten along with the village kids my age.

21 Eog

Another trip to the village, but things were different today! Sir Almik, our Knight-Regent, brought a declaration from the king to all his subjects, promising the hand of his daughter Umi (King Wulp's daughter, not Sir Almik's—Sir Almik had an accidental brush with a dragon's tail about 10 years ago that left him...childless) to the man brave enough to rescue her.

Rescue the princess? Marry her and live the good life? That was for me! I couldn't wait to get home and say goodbye to mum and da and head out to save Princess Umi. I rushed home and told da, and much to my surprise

he was all for the idea. Whether it was due to having one less mouth to feed or whether he just wanted a rich son to live off of, I don't know. He'd often said he wanted me to succeed in life, but the way he'd pause afterward with that odd glint in his eyes made me wonder every time.

22 Eog

Left home today. Mum baked me some Pano bread for the road. I didn't have much else to carry other than the clothes on my back and my trusty Giifu stick, so I wrapped the bread in my old coat and hung it from the end of my stick. I walked all day and my feet are tired.

23 Eog

My spirits high, I walked even further today than I did yesterday. When I rescue the princess, she'll fall in love with me and we'll live in our own castle with servants and peasants to work the fields, I can just see it now!

24 Eog

Perhaps I was a bit too hasty. Today I walked back to the village to find out exactly where the princess was being held and by whom. I had never heard of the Wizard of Nugor, but I copied a map to his "Tower of Ham" on my coat with a bit of charcoal and set my feet back on the road to destiny.

25 Eog

It rained today, and I ate the last of my bread. It was really starting to get soggy. The map looks like a gray blur on my coat now, but I think I can remember the way. How many roads can there be out here?

27 Eog

I spent the last two days traveling down every crossroad that looked like it went in the right direction until I finally found a small, windswept sign pointing the direction to the Tower of Ham. I'm almost there!

28 Eog

Ran in to some fleeing peasants today. I wasn't sure what they were fleeing from, but they did stop to talk for a minute. I found out, much to my chagrin, that the Tower of Ham was not the pillar of pig meat I had envisioned, but instead was named after the decidedly porcine man who built it. They were kind enough to point me in the direction of the tower.

29 Eog

I found Sir Almik's horse today, and while looking for Sir Almik found a great smoldering pasture with a lump of charred metal in its center, which, I presumed, was the mortal remains of Sir Almik. I stopped to say a prayer to St. Sefa, the patron saint of people that tend to have bad run-ins with dragons, then took his horse and camped just out of sight of the tower where my true love lay captive.

30 Eog

Hooray! Today I rescued the princess from the evil Wizard of Nugor. I fought him valiantly with my Giifu stick. I beat him fair and square, broke his wand in two, and sent him away with his tail between his legs. He ran like the demon of the pit itself was on his heels! Princess Umi is the most beautiful woman I've ever seen! Her hair is the color of the inside of a burlap sack used to carry coal and her cheekbones are graceful and high. She has the cutest little button-nose and the way her lips pout makes me want to kiss her all day long! Her voice is like the pure ringing of the church bell, but not like on Worship-day when you don't want to hear it, more like on Ketamas morning when the air is still and calm. We will be married as soon as we get back to her father's castle!

2 Vorm

After two days of carrying Princess Umi over trails and listening to her complain about how the horse's hard

leather saddle makes her want to puke I'm starting to wonder how much of a good idea this was.

3 Vorm

Princess Umi wanted Sida meat and Lemi pie and just couldn't get it through her little head that I have no money and no food other than what I took from the Tower of Ham. Her voice is starting to get on my nerves.

4 Vorm

Her almighty princess demanded a hot bath today, but after trying my best to heat up some water all I heard in return was a scathing torrent of unholy terror from her lips. As she was heatedly scolding me, I realized her face was a little too thin and bony for my liking, and her nose looks small and scrunchy like a Joga berry that got left out in the sun.

5 Vorm

I am now convinced I was deceived! My fight with the Wizard of Nugor did seem a bit easy, but I'd never fought a wizard before. I think he took the beating from me rather than stay with the princess! By the time I got back to the crossroads, her High-and-Mightiness decided she wasn't going a bit further. That's about the time I finally lost my temper and tied her up. Leading her back through the confusing crossroads (that I had figured out from my last trip), I turned us around and headed back to the tower. I sure as hell wasn't going to spend the rest of my life with Princess Umi, king's daughter or not!

6 Vorm

I kept Umi tied up all day today, but quickly realized that wasn't enough: I needed to gag her. Even now, every time I hear her scream through the torn fabric of my gray coat it makes me cringe. Princess Umi wasn't too happy about being divested of her jewelry either, but her complaints fell on deaf ears. I wasn't going home empty-handed.

I found the spot where Sir Almik fought his last dragon and followed the trail back to its lair. I cautiously crept up to the cave opening, then threw Princess Umi in as far as I could. I didn't think I would be able to toss her as far as I did, but my arms were fueled by days of frustrated, pent-up rage. If the village has a princess-heaving contest next Festival, I'm a sure win.

The dragon wasn't too happy about the noise, but fresh princess quieted him up a bit. I ran out of there faster than the Wizard of Nugor ran from the tower where I "beat" him.

10 Vorm

I dreaded returning to the castle of King Wulp to share with him the sad tale of his daughter's demise. How do you tell a father that his youngest daughter was fed to a dragon by an evil wizard?

Upon presenting Princess Umi's final earthly possessions to her father, he frankly expressed his gratitude. As I attempted to explain my part in the story, he interrupted me saying "I'm sure you did all you could."

I can't help but wonder if he didn't want her back, either. Surprisingly, King Wulp rewarded me with the plot of land promised to his daughter's rescuer (which, coincidentally, was a long distance from the castle).

Epilogue

I've decided that I'm just not cut out for an adventurous life. Today I live a simple life on my own...well, almost. I did pick up a pet dragon a while back. You feed them once and then they never leave you alone!