

I/Tulpa:  
Chitty Chitty Steam Punk  
By  
ION LIGHT

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This is a I/Tulpa novel

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If you’re not familiar with my work, almost all of these stories are the product of a version of ‘active imagination’ in which the story is experienced and transcribed, more than labored over. If you are familiar with Tulpamancy, Wonderlands, or the stories of Tesla having such an overpowering imagination that he felt as if he went on long journeys to foreign lands and met people, without leaving his head... That is this. I can’t explain it better than he. I have put out some stories that felt more like ‘downloads’ but this is not that. I suspect this is similar to what Thomas Campbell, author of ‘My Big Theory of Everything’ is referring to when he discusses being able to shift realities. I don’t know. I just find it helpful, cathartic, in processing past traumas. This place, and the people there, have changed my world.

I assure you, there will be grammatical errors. I apologize in advance. I am working on doing better. I have marginally improved, which you only need read my first book made available in 2004. Feel free to email me any corrections or complaints. I am simply a modest fan of distant worlds, science, and metaphysics; someone who finds himself caught up in the whirlwinds of something bigger than himself on a daily basis.

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## FOREWORD

I, Ion, have made a fundamental mistake in my plans to conquer the universe. Yes, mad geniuses can make mistakes, which are usually exploited by orphaned desert rats in X-wing fighters, but in this instance, less drastic in terms of setting back my overall plans, and more just in the annoying category: I introduced my four year old son, who is also showing signs of being a mad genius, to the movie Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. One might ask why a person in the grand old year of 2018 would ever do such a remorseful thing, but I had already introduced him to the original Charlie and the Chocolate factory, because there is only the original Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, and the book itself by Roald Dahl, and I had introduced him to Chitty because, quite honestly, I wanted him to have a greater repertoire than “I have a golden ticket” and “Don’t care how I want it nowwww,” in his arsenal, and now I no longer have a four year old child aspiring to be a mad genius, but I have an inspiring young car going around the whole day saying, “chitty-chitty, chitty-chitty...” I must admit, at first, before the realization hammered in by a solid day of repetitive musical outbursts, I was rather impressed by the four year old’s ability to imitate the dance routine, using his bamboo staff to go in a circle, his ability to reproduce all the songs and recognize musical elements like crescendos, demanding I build a Chitty car, despite my complaints I have been promised flying cars since the first popular mechanics way back in the 1930s and if I can’t have one he can’t have one, and finally satisfying him with a rather clever Lego version of said car, which wasn’t half bad, considering the colors of blocks weren’t necessarily matching, and finally handing me a broken, orange, naked crayon and saying ‘Father, please,’ as if it were a toot sweet and he was wanting me to partake in a world of his own creation.

If you need a warning here, don’t eat the crayon. It’s not a candy. Also, it does not toot, even if you core out the middle and put little holes.

OMG, I know, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang has not a gone a hundred years, and I suspect it won’t fade into oblivion, but the likes of the original movie will not be recaptured, and a remake just want satisfy, and there is apparently musical play versions of this thing about, the quality of which varies by the community hosting and or by the high school putting it on, but did you know, it is also a book? Yes, I say, it was originally a book, which is dreadfully difficult to read, no, more precisely, it is dreadfully difficult to read ‘aloud,’ because every paragraph is a full run on sentence, as if conjunction junction guy was on meth, yes, you probably weren’t aware that the conductor guy was moving trains full of meth, and he wasn’t supposed to be sampling, but he did, from time to time, and it was crystal blue, because he is the other, other Walter White, and so there you go, that’s what’s reading Ian Flemming, not Ion Flemming, though we’re often mistaken as the same, but really, he was a real spy for the real British government, and I am not a real spy for any government, though I do partake in remote viewing, which is sometimes considered psychic spying, but that’s for another book, and you really should just ignore that part, and continue on with understanding that Ian Flemming wrote Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, supposedly for his personal children, and then went and published it, but do you seriously think a child’s book would be published just because ‘I can’ unless there was some other mad purpose, only deciphered by cryptologists and a special decoder found at the bottom of the cracker jack box, but not just any cracker jack box, but the one I accidentally intercepted, by luck of course.

The book, 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang,' by Ian Flemming, is a must read, for multiple reasons. Technically, it is not past its copy right, it hasn't traveled a hundred years in time, and so I can't turn it into "Another Log of Phileas Fog," as Philip Jose Farmer did with "Around the World in 80 Days," or even into another "Pride and Prejudice and Zombies," and I am talking the book, not the movie, don't judge the book by the Hollywood cover, because you will miss something, and there is a connection to be found, if you're an astute reader of classics, especially Jules Verne and H.G. Wells. But the book might impress you, as it did me, in that it was fairly wordy and nonsensical, exactly the way I write in order to purposely confuse and irritate the people who can't appreciate true genius so that I keep the secrets of magic to those few of us who truly seek... Yeah, you just thought my grammar was on accident... (And all the sex, well, that's just a distraction.) But the reason you should read the book is because it differs from the movie in several major aspects. Well, it's completely different. For one, there is no Truly Scrumptious. Oh, well, she might be there, because Commander Caractacus Pott, yes, Commander, as he was in the Navy, retired, does make a whistling sweet, which is more a cough dropped sized commodity, and he did take it to Lord Skrumshus, who was so impressed he sent the children into the factory to demonstrate and there was all sorts of dancing and joyous uprisings. Now, in the book, Truly may be gone, but there is a female character, Mimsie, who is not only Mrs. Pott, but is Jeremy and Jemima's mother, and likely modeled after the dear Mrs. Flemming, and she seems in quite good health, and in good rapport with her children and husband, but the ever present four year old, who is very careful with details, and observant as all get out, was quick to correct me, "Her name is Truly," and I was like, "no, it's Mimsie," even showed him the print, to which he argued, "No, her name is Truly," despite what he saw as clear as day, and we continued that for a moment, and then regressed into a series of "why's" which were reasonable "why's" except I don't have a clue as to what the probable answers might be, and so, I get irritated and shut it down with a, "great question, shall we continue?" Because the movie actually does address the issue of no Mimsie without actually addressing the issue. Can you say elephant? The closest we get to resolution is Caractacus saying to Truly: "Everything, but what they really need." Truly doesn't ask the children where their mother is. She doesn't ask Caractacus where his wife is. And this could be a 60's thing, as there were lots of TV and movie dad's that were quietly suffering being spouseless, which rolled into the 80's and 90's with females not lamenting they were spouseless, because guys were simply problematic, mostly just grown children who pathetically never grow up, which kind of looks like Caractacus, in a way, as the perpetual dreamer. Dreamers, and generalists, are not well liked by a society who needs their cogs to specialize and fit in, and we of the other sort just don't do that well or for long. Whether it is stripes or suit with a tie, confinement is confinement, as the true nature of a man is to be free to tinker, explore, and question.

Which brings me to tinkering. In my day, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang came around once a year, like the Wizard of Oz, and if it was on, it was supposed to be a family ordeal, unless your family was crazy, crazier than grandpa Pott, who to me was probably the sanest man in the film, and my family was crazy as all get out, so crazy even cats wouldn't want to hang out with the ladies, and so watching was my escape, minus dodging the randomly thrown beer cans, and the occasional 'misfire' of firearm. But for my son, we deal with a more modern invention of 'on demand,' and so there is the 'rainbow,' which is word for DVD, and our mode of interaction

with it is that I have not turned the TV into a babysitter, but we engage thoughtfully, and discuss a matter, probably to death, but that's what we do, and this one stuck, and now we even watch the beginning car race, which is well placed, especially if you have read the book, because there is a history, like all of us we're born into a story already in progress, and the death of a car is not the ending, or even the beginning, there is more on either side of that, but I wonder, what the hell was the director thinking with that thirty seconds of blackness and car sounds, but then, then I find myself wondering about the whole movie because it is all a bit odd, and I wonder if many of the lines are referencing other things, like the people in the castle, who are just absolutely bizarre, like the characters in Alice's wonderland, but which I am usually more forgiving when I encapsulate that as being part of a dream sequence.

Now, I feel compelled to do so, I must talk about Loxy and I, and how we're related to all of this. I just gave you my history, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang was an annual event in my life, which has become a daily thing, only in I have 4 year old music box with a hiccup that plays the same thing over and over, and the book was an experiment in enriching the experience, and it is supposed to be a kids book, not one to teach kids to read per say, but more a friendly story for kids, mixed with some adult humor, which adults might keep to themselves as the kids glaze over those parts, and too few pictures, because picture are important, though my copy came with a really nice cover, with the stars being raised so you have a tactile experience examining it, and the prominent wheels, that looks exactly like the large Lego Wheel, which now comprises our car, after a mad search through the web and finally buying one from Ebay so that I had a fourth, because somewhere in my childhood I failed to keep up with the Lego's, and also reminded me how sore I am with family of origin who were determined to make me collect ceramic clowns, and I hate clowns, and I would tell them this, but every year, I was provided more clowns on Christmas and birthdays, to the point I was so sick of clowns, and sick of holidays, and I just chucked it all, and re-gifted the clowns, but the point being, if 'family' had listened that even the smallest box of Lego's would be more appreciated, and better served long term, because who would have thought Lego value is comparable to gold, especially the characters, and by God, I think Mega Block are of the devil, and why would you create an opposing force of pretend at competition and not make things compatible, and divide loyalty with participating brands, and you can only get Coke from these vendors, and Pepsies from the others, and by God, this situation is a nightmare... And you can't even get proper therapy over it because the LSMW have appropriated the word therapy, and LPC's have taken ownership of the word counselors, and anything with psychology or psychological in it belongs just to the psychologists, and yet, all these things are supposed to be generally helpful, like the DSM V, V equals 5, but seriously, you have to buy that book, buy into that book, it's not just available for free, nor any of the metrics people use to figure out if you're in alignment with any of the content contained in said book, and so, if it was really meant to be helpful, wouldn't it just be made public domain and let's help the world?! No! The goal isn't to help as much as to direct the flow of currency in a very particular direction, usually away from the people who are struggling the most, and it is my belief if Doctor's would just prescribe money, half their clients would improve immediately, as I am often willing to point out, I do not have an anxiety problem, I have a problem, usually remedied by an infusion of cash, and if I lived on a farm, where at least the chickens and the cows and the orchard took care of the basic needs, that would be one thing, but we live in a city,

where tinkering and improving things is actually frowned upon, so that if you put up a flag pole, the city might take it down, and even if you lived on a bubble road with few traffic if you put up a basketball pole, the city will take it down. They will. I assure you. They will come out with a truck, with a solid winch, and just jerk that pole right out, except, in my case, and I tried to inform them, their truck's winch was simply insufficient to the task, and they assured me that I just didn't know what I was talking about, and they even tried to explain physics to me, and I told them I was well aware of physics, but at some point, you just got to step back and let people experiment, and so they hooked up to the basketball pole, and the winch worked exactly as it should, and after the back of their city vehicle left the ground, leaving rear tires sufficiently off the ground that a good racing team could exchange them without hassle, there was suddenly more cars, and a lot of angry city people, and I tried to explain it to them, but all they heard was "I told you so," which was not really how I said it.

So, you may be wondering, what the heck? I like to tinker. I love to think about things. I bought a basketball pole, and threw away the instruction, because, seriously, how hard is to install a pole, right, and I had the cement, but I also knew from experience that things have a way of leaning over in soft dirt, and so you don't just dig a straight down hole, but you dig down a certain point, and then you want to dig out the base much wider than the initial hole that would contain the pole, and so basically, I had an inverted mushroom of an anchor holding that pole, wide enough that they were not going to just pull my pole out, but by God, they were determined they were going to do so, and I suppose, with enough power and the right equipment, they might have torn that pole out and a huge portion of the Earth, and the street and the gutter, but they only understood their own physics, and eventually, they ended up cutting the pole off at the ground, to which, for safety reasons, I excavated further into the ground and cut it off closer to the inverted mushroom and then buried the obstacle.

I said I like to tinker? Well, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang has been in my head for 50 years. Okay, maybe not exactly fifty, as the movie came out the year I was born, and I am fairly confident I wasn't taken to the theatre just so my parents could see Dick dance. The history of the movie is also interesting as they, don't ask me who 'they' are, they actually wanted to take the cast of Mary Poppins and do this, but couldn't get the other players, and Dick refused and refused, but eventually the money was so good he was like, seriously, if you insist, and isn't it nice when people throw money at you? So there is history there, and you have to wonder, did Ian have any more influence? Would he be irritated by the fact Mimsie had been killed off, because you know, Mimsie has to be his wife, and the children must be his children, as this story was invented for their sake, and probably because they were irritating him, 'dad, dad, you make all these spy stories but you haven't told us even one good bedtime story, and we feel like you're ignoring us,' and because Ian is a rather good father, he was nearly mortally wounded by such a shot, and capitulated by writing, on the spot, which explains the verbosity, and the run-ons, and how there are lots of words just to get to the simple point of an adventure, because, well, he was rambling and working off the fly, and trying to make sure in his flibbertigibbet manner didn't accidentally divulge state secrets, which is the only reason men rarely talk at home, is well, we're so restricted that it would be inappropriate to speak, as there are others listening who might have to kill us, or are families, if we were too careless. The thing is, he did leak a secret. Magic cars exist. Jinn exist. Maybe you never caught that, which tells me you have seen the

movie and not read the book, but Chitty Chitty Bang Bang is not just a magical care, it is a Jinn, as clearly evidenced by the license plate GEN II Jinn-ii, Jeannie, I dream of Jeannie. No, that's not code for Genesis 11. I looked it up. There isn't a connection, but that was my first childhood thought, influenced by family or origin beliefs.

I don't own this movie, or the rights to discuss it, or to rework it, or to play with it. It's in my head. I dare say the movie owns me. The story owns me. It is as part of me as Legos, and Star Trek, and why the hell hasn't Lego's built Star Trek parts, well, because the evil universe of Mega Blocks got it, and Legos got Star Wars... Maybe, maybe, if it had just been Ian's book, Chitty Chitty would have gone into obscurity, with a few living stragglers thinking, that might have made a good movie, but no one else would have seen such genius, but thanks to the movie, it has gone much further and influenced more people, but I suspect, hopefully in error, that it is on that downward decline, unless, maybe, someone can revive it in such a unique way to capture new audience, and I wouldn't presume to tell you this version is it, because contrary to popular belief, I am humble, but also I fear if I promote it I am more likely to be arrested for tinkering. I assure you, there is no money in this for me, and so in terms of being productive with my time, well, clearly, I am not that guy, but not from lack of trying. I would say, I have a lot of fun. Loxy and I have a lot of fun and we go places, and that brings me back to grandpa. I think I should tell you now, that in this movie character, someone has leaked the most important secret ever, grandpa was a psychic spy, a remote viewer of the most incredible caliber, who makes Pat Price and Ingo Swann look like charlatans of misdirection, but they have to make grandpa look crazy, to discourage people from exploring that line of venture further, but giving just enough crazy insight for those in the know to be aware, we have our spies and they are watching you. You may think I am grasping at that, but look at it this way, Ian Flemming was a real spy. I assure you, if the Russians and the Americans were exploring psychic spying, the British government was also doing so.

I tell you all of this so you can be assured when I tell you music exists, it is out there. I meant magic. Magic exists. Music does to. They may be one and the same. I can only attest to this from firsthand experience. Loxy is a tulpa, but she is as real to me as Harvey was to Elwood P Dowd. The places we go are real. Some of them are more real than others, and I am sometimes curious about the worlds of fiction being real, as they seem pretty solid when we go there, and one may argue that variations and deviations are evidence of the places 'we' go not being real, and more likely flights of fancy, but I would like to remind you of something that is true, of even this world we mutually agree we live in: other than we share this space, we can't even mutually agree on the contents of this reality. There can be as many versions of an accident as there are witnesses, and we don't just take the words of our regular spies, as we usually like evidence and corroboration, hence, we have spies plural not singular. But think about this, we have continuity of Near Death Experiences reports from across culture and time, a level of consistency that one could argue is better than a collection of reports to an accident, and yet the idea of their being more is generally dismissed by authorities. We can agree that there was a car accident, can't we agree there is more to the afterlife? And, the US government is not likely to have taken 20 years figuring out that psychic spying is frivolous, and so, might-en we assume that in a world that is run by secrets and copy rights, which is just a fancy word that means we are claiming ownership of something that already existed before us, like "E.T." imitating "The Pod People," not a 'dis'

or an accusation, “E.T.” is clearly a superior movie, and in a world of intellectuals, ideas are like STDs you can’t even look at it without being impregnated, and we wouldn’t want the knowledge that we have ‘access to more’ publically accepted, and so, any evidence that we are more than what we are has to be squashed in some way, very much like, “Grandpa is crazier than a loon.” Graham Crowden in the series “Waiting for God,” played a character very much like Grandpa Pott, and he was clearly the eccentric genius, but he traveled, which begs the question, is this the best kept secret of British Empire?

Oh, and this is just an aside, but you also must know that ‘spies’ is also plural because being a spy is problematic, and you need spies, and the enemy needs spies, and you need other spies on both sides to spy on the spies, just to help keep everyone in line. The truth about spies is they are so empathetic that they always exist on this pendulum of switching sides, not because they don’t hold loyalties, but how else do you expect to survive enemy ground without becoming the enemy? Know your enemy know yourself. Don’t believe me, read *Serpico*, about the undercover cop that was disenfranchised by both sides and had to leave America, because wars are just crazy. Anyway, you can bet if you were recruited to be a spy, your wife is also probably a spy, because they need to know if you talk in your sleep, or you’re more free with the tongue when being intimate, or if you slip when you’re angry at the kids because you can’t have a little privacy in the bathroom while making a secret call with you shoe...

And anyway, maybe I am, too, eccentric in a unique way, and so when this version of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* goes to court, well, my argument will have to be that I am clearly insane. Who wouldn’t be when you live in culture where you have to take all of this stuff in but you can’t use it in any meaningful way without infringing on someone else’s intellectual rights, and you wonder if you have any intellectual rights, because no one really wants to hear what you have to say, even if you’re right, and so get shouted down on Facebook as being a malcontent, but when it comes down to it, no one has created anything new since the Bible, and even the Bible was stolen from the Egyptians and the Samaritans, and if you don’t believe me, just read *Gilgamesh*! And maybe the laws are in place to stop the craziness of retelling stories, but there is really nothing new under the sun... Ah! See how hard it is not to borrow?! So, yes, I speak to people who ‘aren’t there,’ who doesn’t? I travel to faraway lands, and go on amazing adventures, and believe in aliens and ghosts and magic, and seriously believe in music, even other people’s music, because their quirky dances get into your head, like *All About the Bass*, you just can’t turn away, and magical music and musical magic, and magical cars, and musical magical cars... Need I say more? Roger More? No. If there is a spy in this story, it will be Sean Connery, and the girl he sang about in his first movie, *Darby O’Gil and the Little People*. Yes, there are little people, but that’s a different story, and they have their own car and song... But I digress. We have way too little to do and too much time to do it in. No, wait, strike that, reverse it.



## Chapter 1

All good stories start with the children. More precisely, all good stories start with a preamble, but you suffered enough through the foreword, and I don't want to start with darkness and then there was the sound, and then there was light, because, Jesus, that's never been done anywhere before, but if you start with the adults, the children seem more like props to demonstrate how parental the parents are, as opposed to showing you how kids really are, and how the parents are with the kids, and well, we would like to remain as close to truth as possible, even though we don't generally promote 'truth telling' nor do we punish folks for lying, because if the lie is clever enough, and sold right, well, isn't that what we all do all the time? Anyway, if you don't know Jon and Loxy, they live with others, in a very inclusive, embracing sort of way, on their own world, where Jon has made his own rules and laws, because it's ultimately his world, a magical world, and they live in a doubly magical house, which may actually seem like many magical houses, but it's really just one, connected inter and intra dimensionally which technically means it isn't a magical house at all, but just a regular home built in such a way that it utilizes the available functionalities of the existing cosmic structures in a particularly useful way. The crazy thing about this particular set up is you can often meet yourself before you before you have even decided that this is who you are, and sometimes you encounter the children, past and present and future, even grandchildren, before you were aware that you had children, or were children, or the children that would become your family, and since it's confusing, and no one likes appearing confused, most the time you just operate as normal and respond to people without inquiring who they are, because you never want that other person to know you don't remember them, that's embarrassing, but also you don't want to make them doubt their self-worth for not being memorable, some people just are, and for declaring yourself unfit to be a mentalist. And so, even if you know Jon and Loxy, and their normal cast of characters that share their home in a communal way, more like Kibbutz in Israel, only, more American sixtyish, free-love, with hippies and Romanian gypsies, and a tad bit of Mormonism, before it was found unfavorable and they had to change their name, which is a shame, because truthfully, who has a better family model than the Mormons?, but as I was saying, even if you know Jon and Loxy, and here we're starting off with 'the children' you may go like, 'what the heck?!' which is modified way of saying "WTF" but we can't say that, because, well, this is one of those stories that is supposed to be children friendly, even though if you watch the 'movie' of this thing we're not referring to directly, what this version of reality is predicated on, well, you might find yourself saying, "WTF, this is a kid movie?"

Ahh, yes, the children. In this particular instance, there were two, which is rather culturally popular, to have two, one of each gender, twins even, fraternal, not identical, because if they were fraternal, one would clearly be transgendered, not that there is anything wrong with that, because some kids know early on, which is probably evidence for past life memories overwhelming the child, because how would a child know it has the wrong equipment if they only knew themselves? In a more modern setting you would likely need a dozen children to cover all the arrangements that are possible, like LGBTQTXR, and don't ask me what the XR is all about, as that has more to do with aliens and hybrids, and we're not there yet, in this particular frame of reference. The children, like all children who are well cared for and properly

adjusted, are not a-feared of being intrusive, which really, intrusive isn't a fair word, as well adjusted children should explore and test boundaries and then tip something strange over and then run back to Mere Cat Hive, because, well, that's normal. And a properly adjusted adults should just simply observe and asked what they learned from their experience and then send them back out of the hive. If you hold a particular expectation of the children, you might become annoyed by their curiosity. Like when they ask:

“Pappa, what are you doing?”

Jon lowered his book. He was sitting in the library. I don't have to mention this is a magical library because it's in a magical house, right? And I don't have to mention that you come to be in the library from multiple directions in space and time and dimensionality, but if you factored that in, you might wonder about Jon's look, like was it irritation, because clearly he is holding a book and it should be a forgone conclusion what he was doing, except he wasn't actually doing what you might imagine he was doing, because he was disturbed by the approaching children and unable to do anything but re-read the same line over and over, which is technically not reading, but still he gave him that look, but that look could also mean, “who the hell are you?”

“What's it look like I am doing?” he asked.

The children, perhaps five or six, both the same age, again as they were fraternal twins, like Leah and Luke, only they know they're siblings and are at much less likely of sleeping with each other, but some of that was because those books came before Empire, like ‘Splinter in the Mind's Eye,’ that left a whole generation of movie slash book fans confused about what they thinking in their heads... And so, not privy to Jon's real thoughts, they climbed up into his lap, and his uncomfortableness again belied the idea he might not actually remember them, or hadn't met them, but, still, he wouldn't go running away in madness.

“Would you read to us?” the girl asked. It was proper Cockney, English accent, which might have been a real thing, or just from someone who had watched too much Disney.

If you close your eyes just right, not a hundred percent, you still need some light to leak in, it might be the evil stare, but you can filter out some information like names and dates, which is really not necessary, but most people do because they like to know who they are talking to, and so if you wanted that, the children who had worked their way into Jon's laps were Elizabeth Grace and Eston Gerik, and they were looking at him hopefully.

“I think I hear your mother calling you,” Jon said.

“Oh, no, she chased us out,” Elizabeth said.

“We spilt some milk,” Eston said.

“We didn't mean to spill it, it just sort of happened,” Elizabeth said. “Would you read to us?”

“Umm,” Jon stammered.

“Yes, Jon, will you read to us?” both insisted, rather annoyingly and aggressively, and over and over until there was really only one response... Only, one of the new voices in the chorus of please read to us was Loxy Isadora Bliss.

Jon looked at Loxy. She was the smartest, kindest, most attractive woman in all the Universe, who might have launched twice as many ships as the other one if she had been present at that time, only she was with Jon. She had a smile about her that was seductive, because the

smile used her eyes, and you might imagine she was Alizée about to sing something sexily French to you, and you wouldn't even care if you don't speak French, because, well, it's Alizée. But she also had that subtle tilt of the hip, back and forth, like that Olympic hurdler Michelle Jenneke, that suggests she's ready to give you a run for your money, and was truly enjoying herself, because Loxy always enjoyed herself, she was so full of joy, and if she were wearing a pony tail, it would have pleasantly swished back and forth, and she does sometimes have it, but not today, as she was wearing her usual, Cleopatra styled hair. Loxy Isadora Bliss, human, female, magician, goddess, tulpa, enigma. She has several planets named after her, including the one on which she was presently attending, on which the library was situated. You might assume, based on the interplay, that these children were the product of adult activities between Jon and Loxy, which aren't discussed in books like these, even though children know about these activities, because we tell them where they come from, and then quickly move on to the weather, but these children were not the property of Jon and Loxy, because, for starters, children aren't property, they're people, and they also weren't the parents. Well, Jon was, but Loxy wasn't, but the children would defer to Loxy as if she were mom, and quite honestly, the children would respond to any adult living in the house as if they were parents because all the adults were on board with the agenda of raising proper children and therefore there was consistency of rules and implementations and interaction patterns across the board, which is an unusual setup in itself, but absolutely necessary if you don't want crazy kids. Yes, as within any group, there were some who tended to be more permissive, and some that tended to be more authoritarian, but from the children's perspective, they were equally controlling and blocking, and the adults were satisfied by the fact the children continued to test their boundaries in appropriate ways as they looked for consistency across the board. In short, this home was safe. In fact, it was called a light house, even though it wasn't a 'light house' in the nautical sense of the word, though part of the house did go as far as resembling such, and was on island and everything. So, though Jon was the father, Loxy was not the mother, but that didn't mean Jon and Loxy didn't have children and even grandchildren somewhere in the house.

"What would you like to hear?" Jon asked.

"No, you shouldn't make up one from scratch," Eston said. "Just read us what you're reading, because if you're interested in that, then I am interested in that."

"Why can't I just tell you a story?" Jon asked.

"Because you tend to ramble, and you're so discursive in your narrative as to be confusing," Elizabeth said.

"How old are you?" Jon asked.

"Oh, how could you forget," Loxy asked, taking her place on the couch that was suddenly manifest. It may have been there the whole time and only a change in perspective made it seem like it was magic. And it was sort of an elongated, half circular love seat, with Jon's lounge chair at the focus. Loxy was looking rather cute in a summer dress, that might have been a collage from the evil Star Trek Universe and Boho and unknown creative Cosplay which was good enough to draw someone in just because "wow," but also because you just had to know, but mostly because it was Loxy. Also, in her dress was evidence of some Egyptian fashion, which never loses it's appeal, but it was there because no matter where Loxy goes, she can always channel a Almighty Isis, which neither Disney nor Marvel can block, because the Goddesses of

Egypt are now public domain, or Disney and Marvel would have stopped those terrorist folks from using a name, and you may wonder why they are using the name of a Goddess, when they're not fond of feminism in any way, and just wait till our Isis movie-book comes out, Almighty Isis kick Isis butt, and anyway, no one can block anyone from channeling Isis, though the Masons may want you to believe otherwise. Why any heterosexual man would want to channel a male god is beyond me. Give me Isis any day. Anyway, Loxy sat on the end next to the armrest, pulling her legs up to sit crisscross apple sauce, revealing no shoes, because who wears shoes in the house?

"I didn't, I was just saying, rhetorically, and going for the emphatic sense," Jon said. "And no, I can't read this book to you."

Loxy narrowed her eyes in that special way, and then tilted her head questioningly. "You can't read 'the Princess Bride meets Stardust' to them?" Loxy asked.

Jon closed the book and it made it a sound as it sealed which suggested a magnetic seal, or magical magnetical seal, and he motioned he would toss it to her, and she motioned she was ready to receive, and the exchange was made, and she opened it with a little effort, again suggesting a magnetic or magical seal had been in play, one only certain adults could open, that came after tracing an ornate pattern on the front of the cover, which the children were not privy to, though not because it was an adult theme picture, but because there are magical wards all around folks, and books, and if you have to be trained to see them much less interact properly with them, then you're not privy.

"Okay, so what's the problem?" Loxy asked.

"Is it a kissing book?" Eston asked.

"Oh, I love kissing!" Elizabeth said.

"How old are you?!" Jon asked again.

"It's gross," Eston said.

"Grosser than eating someone else's food that has a clear bite in it?" Elizabeth asked.

"They were going to throw it away, and we share, and if you want your immune system to improve you have to be exposed," Eston said.

"This is the same book that grandpa read, Jon. You could just do what he did and water those parts down," Loxy said.

"My parts react to those parts and I have children in my lap," Jon said.

"There is that," Loxy said. "Come sit by me, children."

"We want to sit with dad," Elizabeth said.

"We're not reading that book," Jon said.

"Oh, how about this one with the car," Eston said, taking one of the books from the pile on the light table next to Jon's chair.

"Ummm, no that's worse than the one I just had in hand," Jon said.

"How can book about a car be bad?" Eston demanded.

Jon looked at the book cover, which looked like an old, church hymnal slash tome, and the car was etched out of the cloth cover to reveal the different layers of rainbow gold and silvers and a slight tactile feel to the car due to the depth of the cover when tracing your finger along it.

"Car?! That is not just a car, Sir," Jon said. "It was built in the 1920s by Count Zborowski on his estate near Canterbury..."

“Oh, is this one of the sequels to the Canterbury Tales?” Elizabeth asked.

“No,” Jon said, and continued on hurriedly: “The car was a pre-1914 war, chain drive, 75 horse power Mercedes, with a six cylinder Maybach aero engine, the type the Germans flew their zeppelins with, and four vertical overhead valves per cylinder, with exposed rockers and rods all working with clockwork precision driven by a crankshaft on each side of the crankcase, and two Zenith carburetors, on the far end of induction pipes, contained in a great steel body, of polished gleaming black hood, eight feet in length, weighing in excess of five tons...”

“Jon, are you reading that to them?” Loxy asked.

“Maybe,” Jon said.

“So what’s wrong with this book?” Elizabeth asked.

“It sounds great so far,” Eston said.

“Yeah, is it a race car?” Elizabeth asked.

“Does it crash and burn?” Eston demanded excitedly. “Cause that’s always good way to start a story.”

“It does win some races, but as to what exactly happens, well, there is some confusion on this point...” Jon said.

“Confusion how? Either it won, or it didn’t. Either it crashed and burned, or it didn’t,” Eston said.

“It’s the nature of the crash that confuses people,” Jon said. He wasn’t aware he had the children’s attention as he was drifting off into his own world of flashbacks and retakes and rewrites. “Some say it was possessed, because the car was made with parts from other cars that had crashed and the spirits of passed drivers haunted it. Some say that it was self-aware, and a bit snarky, and after so many wins the ‘driver’ had become insufferable about his own abilities, without so much as a ‘thank you’ to the car, and so without warning or explanation it threw itself into reverse and went like mad through the stands full of pedestrians until it threw itself off a ravine and crashed and burn. Some say a child ran out in front of the car and the driver didn’t see the child, but the car did, and it turned itself to avoid the car, into the only safe path, which happened to be a tree and it crashed and burned...”

“How can a car be possessed?” Elizabeth asked.

“How can you be possessed?” Jon asked.

“I don’t understand,” Elizabeth said.

“Well, you believe you have a soul, right, you’re not this crude matter, but this matter is a coat, or a vehicle, and your spirit is possessing it,” Jon said. “Same with the car. It would be a poor assumption to assume that other forms of matter, rocks, minerals, crystals, don’t have a guiding spirit or force. Besides. There is a long history of intelligent vehicles, going all the way back to Apollo and his solarchariot.”

“Name one,” Eston said.

“Herbie,” Jon said.

“That’s a story,” Elizabeth said.

“The love bug is not just a story. There is never just a story, as all stories are built on some circumstantial happening that spooked people. The story is just how we comfort ourselves into thinking things are fiction,” Jon said. “A long fine list of magical conveyances, such as Carrie, and Kit, and magic carpets, and brooms, and...”

“Could you just tell us what happened here in this book?” Eston insisted.

“Fine,” Jon said. He sorted for a moment. “Well, you already know about the race, and that something happened, so, I should probably skip forward to tell you about the greatest inventor of all times...”

“Tesla again,” Eston said.

“No, Caractacus Pott,” Jon said.

“Who?” Eston and Elizabeth asked.

“You have never heard of Commander Caractacus Pott, retired Royal Navy, and inventor, who probably studied alongside of Tesla; he was that smart, and it is rumored that Tesla cheated off his exams...”

“Jon,” Loxy said, reigning him in. “Maybe you should start with the children.”

“Chicken or egg?” Jon asked.

“Eggs,” Elizabeth and Eston said.

Jon grumbled, but acquiesced, and began telling them there happened to be these two kids, children, because you don’t want them confused with baby goats, participating in a homemade scavenger hunt, which their father had cleverly created to keep them entertained and out of way, while he ‘mysteriously’ tinkered in his not so secret laboratory, a wind powered garage that looked a lot like a windmill that had been appropriated from some poor Dutch farm, but wasn’t Dutch, it was England, just outside of London, and don’t assume that Caractacus had an English accent, he didn’t, he spoke American, but his father was British, and his mother was American, and though he was born in England, more specifically in Turville, which is nowhere even close to the Cliffs of Dover, but we’re jumping too far ahead... Where was I? Yes, right, he, Caractacus, had spent so much time across the pond he had lost his accent and had his own, not quite a blending, but to tell the truth, he had his own unique accent, which was recognized neither by the Americans nor the Brits, and so he had never really fit in anywhere, a condition aggravated by his genius and particular way of seeing the world, which was also not shared by people of his time...

“Jon?” Loxy said, steering him back on course.

So there were two children. On a scavenger hunt, who happened upon a telephone booth.

“What is this?” Elizabeth asked.

“A phone,” Jon said.

“How do you dial a number without buttons?” Eston asked.

“It’s a rotary dial...” Jon began.

“What is this, a microwave?” Elizabeth asked, drawing away from the phone booth.

“Of course it’s a microwave,” Eston said.

“Why would they have a microwave on the street?” Elizabeth said.

“It’s not a microwave, it’s a newspaper dispenser,” Jon said. “Wait! Stop, you two, out of the story.”

“But you said there were two kids, which conveniently means it’s about us,” Eston said.

“And you’re clearly Caractacus,” Elizabeth said.

“I am not...”

“Jon,” Loxy said, steering him towards a more direct honesty...

Jon frowned at Loxy, and she gave a sign that suggested flip it and continue. He tried smiling at the kids. “The kids are named Jeremy and Jemima, they are not you,” Jon said. “Even if they happen to look like you, you have to remember your names are Jeremy and Jemima, and in that world, you understand the contraptions and props of the day...”

“Why do parents hate kids?” Elizabeth asked.

“Whatever do you mean?” Jon asked.

“Who would name there daughter Jemima,” Elizabeth asked.

“She is so going to get bullied at school,” Eston agreed.

“It was a perfectly acceptable name in the day, and was in the Bible, and considered one of the most beautiful women of the time,” Jon said.

“I still wouldn’t do that to a child,” Elizabeth said.

“Doesn’t she die?” Eston asked.

“What?” Jon asked.

“In the Bible, she died, right?”

“No, yes, um, I don’t know how to answer that. I think almost everyone in the Bible died,” Jon said, which was a safe way out of not remembering precisely if Jemima was the first daughter of Job, before he was made center point between an argument with God and the Devil, and was a casualty of that war, or perhaps she was the first second daughter, that came after the ‘Great Conflict,’ which just goes to show, you really don’t want to be God’s favorite, and being an inconspicuous mouse is much better than being a giant brontosaurus, because, well, who is still here?

“What about this story, does she die?” Eston said.

“Do you want her to?” Elizabeth asked.

“Not particularly, but a good story needs someone to die,” Eston said. “Car crashes are good. Death by giants, reasonable. Stepped on by a brontosaurus... Tell us about that time you hooked up with Holly again...”

“No one dies,” Jon assured him.

“Well that’s a relief,” Elizabeth said.

“They almost die,” Jon said.

“Almost isn’t good enough,” Eston said.

“Do you want to hear the story or what?” Jon asked.

The children, in the story, found themselves in a junk yard. The children in the other story, quieted down. ‘Something shiny,’ Jemima read, and picked up a bed knob. “Oh, Jeremy, what do you think of this?”

“It is shiny,” Jeremy agreed. “But it certainly want take you anywhere magical.”

“It might,” Eston said.

“You know too much,” Jon said, and dived back into his story.

A junk man emerged, wiping his hands on a cloth darkened with oil stains. His name was Mr. Coggins, and he had a reputation for being a fairly clever mechanic, but perhaps not as magically clever as their father, but he knew his tech, and he knew the value of a brass bed knob and was quick to hold out his hand for its return. He knew quite a bit more than the average junk man, and there were rumors he used to work for the British secret service, and was nicknamed Q, but this could have just been the stories kids made up to explain oddities like, the steam powered

robot dog that barely lifted its head when they entered because it was old and tired and bit rusted, and no longer like eating children, the way it used to when it first came off the shelf, and was how it ended up in the junk yard.

“You scavengers about it again?” he asked.

“Dad gave us a list,” Jeremy said.

“Well, you do realize, this junkyard is a dangerous place, right? Not the sort of children,” Coggins said. “Even for the children of a tinkerer.”

“Oh, dad is much more than tinkerer,” Jemima said.

“Gosh, much more,” Jeremy agreed. “May we look around?”

“Well, I guess, but let me sort whatever you find so I know how badly I’ve been robbed,” Coggins said.

And so the kids rummaged, and searched, and turned things over, and sometimes turned things back, and climbed through some cars, and opened some boxes that probably shouldn’t have been opened, and chased a bird from a nest, and sent some rodents scurrying, and nearly disturbed a wasp nest, but Jemima screamed sufficiently to rouse Coggins from under a car he was working on, bumped his head actually, and cursed so that even the old steam driven dog rose his head and gave a puff of air, and then he killed them properly, Coggins that is, killed the wasp not the children, and then the children returned to playing, and spent some time in a coach that might have been a hearse, a very fancy hearse that may have been driven by Harold stolen by Maude, and then dropped over a cliff, and for all their efforts, they came up with a large cog that Jeremy labeled the crown of King Arthur, and Jemima found a double A emblem that had been attached to a car that had crashed and burned, but there was just enough sparkle on it that it drew her attention, and on rubbing it got something shiny, and she liked the way the A’s came together inside the circle, kind of like a double star trek insignia, and the fact it just pulled right off the front of the car, and since Coggins was okay parting with the trinkets they had stirred up, but unwilling to part with the car the emblem came from without an exchange of coin, and he was rather firm about that, and then they turned and ran off without a care in the world and until suddenly... yes, suddenly does happen, even though as writers we’re told not to use it as a way of increasing the perceived drama of the moment, SUDDENLY, like OMG NO!, they realized, and a bit too late at that they had run out into the street, without looking both ways, or maybe they looked both ways, but because they were in the UK they looked the wrong way, location and context is so important, and straight in front of a motorcar.

The driver let out a scream and did the only sensible thing, not being able to stop in time to avoid hitting the children, and turned off the road, and into a muddy puddle, as Peppa might say, though it was a bit deeper than just a puddle and might have been a pond. At first she was relieved she hadn’t killed anyone, and looking back over her shoulders, she saw the children, still standing there as if they didn’t have the good sense to run away and not get caught up in the wrath of a lady who’s relief was turning into proper anger, and she hadn’t even noticed there was mud on her dress yet! The car, still running, was switched into reverse, and with the grinding of gears, she got enough traction to reverse out, and was back on the road, creeping up to the children.

“Are either of you harmed?” was her first question.

“Why no miss,” both Jeremy and Jemima responded.



“Well, you’re very lucky I don’t harm you now! Wait a minute, why aren’t you in school? It isn’t a holiday, is it?” she asked.

“Umm, no miss,” Jemima said.

“Dad says we’re homeschooled,” Jeremy said.

“Is this your home?” she asked.

“No, Miss, we live...” Jemima said, but Jeremy bumped her arm.

“So you’re not in school and you’re not at home?” she asked.

“Um, we’re having a bit of a scavenger hunt,” Jemima said.

“Come get in my car,” she said.

The children came around and proceeded to get in the car.

“Seriously?!” Eston interrupted. “Are they retarded?”

“It’s called cognitively impaired, and no,” Jon said.

“She could be a serial killer,” Elizabeth said.

“Not likely, not in that time period,” Jon said.

“Ever heard of Jack the Ripper?” Eston asked.

“Oh, the guy that stole HG’s time machine?” Elizabeth asked. “He’s in this world, right? Right down the street from Phileas Fogg, who is going around the world in 80 days?”

“I like how you’re putting all our stories into a useful frame work and no. The chances of a female being a serial killer, in that time period, is astronomical,” Jon said. “Females just aren’t serial killers.”

“Apparently, you don’t follow nursery rhymes or Brother Grimm’s tales,” Elizabeth said.

“Yeah, kids die all the time in those stories,” Eston said. “And usually by females. Witches. Step moms. Random old cat ladies.”

“What are your names?” Jon continued in the voice of the character, who sounded a lot like Loxy. In fact, this Truly looked a great deal like Loxy, and you shouldn’t be surprised if in the movie version all her lines and all her lyrics are in French, because Alizée doesn’t speak English, but the children and Caractacus, even Mimsie, spoke French, and the author even lamented sharing that, because very few Americans speak French, which is sad, really, when you consider how many nations contributed to America and there is only language, and maybe just once they could make movie that had one character speaking only in French and everyone else in English, but everyone seems to understand each other just fine... Anyway, don’t be mad that Truly is a brunette, not a blond, because though she wasn’t against being blond, because even Alizée will attest that being a blond can be fun, it’s just, well, just taking on the role at the last moment, and if you wanted to know the actual truth, Truly was never supposed to be blond because she was supposed to be brunette, specifically she was supposed to be Marry Poppins, but not only did she refuse the part, so did Julie Andrews, which is a shame, really, because she and Dick were good in that, and well, it would have made for a really interesting side Universe, as Jon and Loxy are all into the sides and pockets of other universes... Even Dick turned it down, too, multiple times, until they threw an insane amount of money at him, to the point he questioned his sanity for turning it down, but no one at the time would throw that much at an actress, but it still would have been nice if they had gotten her, and maybe even the Bank’s children, because that would have been funny, and set a nice little pattern for future movies and spin offs, but the kids went off to California where they discovered Gnomes, and there goes

another magical car song, the Gnome-mobile, but just not as catchy as the song you will likely soon hear, but clearly, Disney was trying to cash in on the success of Mary Poppins and Chitty Chitty Bang Bang... And you argue that's not true because Gnome-mobile came out in 67, but they were trying to beat Chitty to the theatres, that's how long they sat on Chitty and how many times the harassed Dick to come be Caractacus. And yes, if you read the foreword and said, you're repeating yourself, well, not everyone reads the foreword and so, for good measure, we had to go over it again, just like if you don't read the credits at the end of the movie, you might miss the extra footage slipped in as a bonus to encourage you read a tedious list of names which are meaningless outside of the actors seen on screen, but did you know, you are severely punished if you don't read, because they will insert things in the movie to mess with you, and they're not Easter eggs.

"Jeremy." "Jemima."

"And yours, miss?" Jeremy asked.

"Don't look at her like that," Jemima said.

"Like what?" Jeremy asked.

"The way dad would look at her?" Jemima said. "Besides, we know her name."

"We do?"

"It's Loxy."

"Who's Loxy?" she asked. "Your mom?"

"Oh, no, Miss," Jemima said.

"What's your mother's name?" she asked.

"Oh, we don't have mother," Jeremy said.

"Everyone has a mother," she said.

"Oh, well, we did, but we don't, and we don't talk about it," Jemima said.

"Ever," Jeremy agreed.

"I am sorry," Loxy said.

"Your name is sorry?" Jeremy asked. Jemima elbowed him. "Ow."

"No, I am truly sorry about your mother. My name is Truly," Loxy said, becoming Truly.

"Truly?" Jemima said.

"Yes," Truly said.

"For real?" Jeremy asked.

"Yes," Truly said.

"By coincidence?" Jemima asked.

"By birth, actually," Truly said.

"Like honesty, for true?" Jemima asked.

"What's wrong with my name?" Truly asked.

"Kind of odd, lots of rooms for puns, might even come up with a song with your name in it," Eston said.

"You must have gotten teased in school all the time," Jemima said.

"I never got bullied..." Truly said.

"Do you have another name, like an alias, something we can tell people that they will believe us?" Jeremy asked.

Jon sighed. "It's a real name for the story, now go with it."

“Where do you live?” Truly asked.

“With dad,” Jemima said.

“And grandpa,” Jeremy added. “In a castle on the hill.”

“A castle?” Truly asked incredulously.

“Well, it’s not really a castle,” Jemima said.

“But better than calling it a giant, cause that one guy keeps attacking our windmill and getting hurt,” Jeremy said.

“What?” Truly asked.

Jon came out of the story to address the ‘cough’ of attention seeking. “What happened to me?” Fersia asked. Jon blinked. He wasn’t sure when Fersia had arrived, but she was sitting next to Loxy in yoga body suit with rainbow colors tights, tight enough to be mistaken for skin, with a dress over the top, that was actually over the top, kind of fluffy like a ballerina charged with static electricity, or one of those things you put on the end of a stick to clean the dust off the curtains. “What happened to me? And the other kids?”

“There is only two kids in the story and no one talks about what happened to the mother, and you’re not the mother in this story, and neither is Loxy, but if you want to know, the book doesn’t have Truly, it has Mimsie, the kids mother, and she was probably killed off in the rewrite by men who were giving push back against women’s libs, or, more likely, wanting to inspire a love interest to hold the adult audience, because people go to the movies hoping for hook ups, not wanting to see a happily married couple, because who wants marry models happily married couples?” Jon said.

“We do,” Loxy said.

“We do do that, don’t we,” Jon said.

“And the Cosby’s,” Fersia said.

“We’re not allowed to discuss them anymore,” Jon said, which sucked because even if a guy was not a good man, his work might still have been good, and lots of other people contributed to that work, and so should all the other people be punished because of that one man?

“What happened to our siblings?” Eston said.

“Okay, mother went off to have adventures with Tom, Dick, and Harvey, and she got two, and Caractacus got two, and the other two went to the farm with their maternal grandparents,” Jon said.

“I told you someone dies in the book,” Eston said.

“They didn’t go to ‘the farm,’ they went to the farm,” Jon said.

“I guess it’s better than finding yourself weaned and sent off to live with strangers,” Elizabeth said.

“That could still happen,” Jon said.

“Oh, don’t be mean to them,” Fersia said.

“I don’t even know who they are! They just wander into the library and start making demands like they live here,” Jon said.

“We do live here,” the children argued.

“They will live here,” Loxy said. “Just relax, Jon. It gets easier.”

“Do you know what’s it like having PTSD and kids coming at you from every direction, and climbing up on you, and yelling for your attention,” Jon asked.

“All the time,” Fersia agreed.

“Every female who ever gave birth,” Loxy said.

“Maybe you should man up,” Eston said. “Everyone has trauma. Just being born is trauma. That’s how you learn to avoid being stepped on by brontosaurus.”

Jon gave a particular look at the alien kid and wondered if he was an adult pretending to be a kid like that kid from Family guy.

“If you don’t like them, we can always make more,” Fersia said. “It’s cheaper by the dozen, or so I have heard.”

Jon spent a moment reading the sign at the final gate that separated the homestead from the farm proper: Commander Caractacus Potts, Inventor Extraordinaire, Ingenious devices of all types, Specialist in engineering, wheel works, steam works, scientific instruments and contrivances. He answered Eston quip ‘who you gonna call,’ with ‘No, this isn’t Ghostbusters.’ But there is a Steam punk version of them, too, if you’re interested.

## Chapter 2

Truly and the children arrive at the farm. No, they didn't die. Technically, the kids live on a farm with their father and grandfather and the windmill is just the laboratory that allows father to work off the grid and there were chickens and a horse, and a farm hand, who is only seen when you need to push a broken car up to the laboratory, and a mechanical dog named Tesla.

"Hold on," Loxy interrupted. "What happened to the real dog?"

"I thought the dog was named Edison," Fersia said.

"Edison was a lying, cheating, dirty old egg sucking, stealing bastard of a dog that even Johnny cash wouldn't sing about, and was even caught lying, cheating, and stealing, but they didn't pull his stuff off the shelves or take his name out of the history books, and that dog was seriously mean, liked killed an elephant publically just to demonstrate electricity can kill, which was unfortunately an incredibly successful campaign playing off people's fear of change, and anyway, we had to put him down," Jon said. "Mechanical dogs are cheaper, non allergenic..."

"We're not having a mechanical dog in this story," Loxy said.

"We could make him cute, like CHOMPS," Jon said.

"And change my name to Valerie?" Loxy asked.

"Maybe..."

"No," Loxy said.

"We could name him BB," Jon said.

"Disney owns that," Loxy said. "And I don't want to be Ray, she's my sister..."

"Since when?!" Jon asked.

"Since Disney bought all your books and made me a Disney Princess," Loxy said.

"Since when?" Fersia asked. "Wait wait wait. Does that make me a Disney princess?"

"No, but you're the princesses pet, which is just as much fun," Loxy said. "But anyway, no mechanical dogs in this story."

"But I already put one in the junk yard, and since Disney owns us, we can assume they own everything, including our souls, and this story, so we should be able to use anything they own, because we're owned?" Jon asked.

"MGM owns this one," Loxy said.

"And who bought MGM?" Jon asked.

"Disney," Loxy lamented. "But not yet...Real dog..."

"How come we're real children when mom's a cat?" Elizabeth asked.

"Go ask your mother," Jon said.

"I am right here," Fersia said, and she was, sitting on the couch with Loxy, who was petting her, and Keera and Lester had joined them on the couch, which had magically expanded to include them, curving in such a way to keep Jon and the children the focus. "That feels nice."

"Can we get back to the story?" Lester asked.

"Go with the real dog, father," Eston said.

"The children and Truly brought their car to a stop and were immediately greeted by the Shaggy DA of a dog, who went by the name Tesla," Jon said.

"Edison!"

"Tesla," Jon pushed, firm on this point.

“We could compromise and call him Toto,” Elizabeth offered.

“Wrong kind of dog,” Jon said.

“And why would you want name a dog after a toilet?” Keera asked.

“Only the Japanese viewers will get that joke,” Lester pointed out, and yes, he didn’t mean readers because we’re assuming you’re watching the movie version of the book that Hollywood picked up the same way they picked up ‘fifty shades of gray.’ (Just as many grammatical errors. That’s all I am saying, but at least I didn’t pretend to write a story and change the names of the characters, because now that’s just crass.)

“What joke?” Keera asked. Don’t be fooled by her anime looks, and her college school girl uniform. She’s really pretty smart, and very, very pretty, and she can kick ass... And she’s actually speaking in Japanese, but I am being nice and translating for you, that and I can only not write in English.

And before you knew it, they were back in the story and Caractacus had emerged wearing a costume comparable to the Rocketeer. It was modified, of course, to look appropriate for the day and age, and perhaps a hint of an Iron Man power light on the leather jacket, and some crossover heavy plating, but overall, completely recognizable as what it was: a mark one Bobba Fett jetpack.

“Hold up,” Lester interrupted. “You can’t just appropriate anything you want and stick it into your steam punk world.”

“Yes I can,” Jon said.

“Isn’t the Rocketeer Marvel?” Keera asked.

“Actually it was American Comics, which was bought out by Marvel, and who owns Marvel?” Jon asked.

“Disney,” Loxy and Fersia said.

“It’s a really cool suit. I want a rocket pack,” Eston said.

“When you’re older,” Jon said. “There’s also a height requirement for this ride.”

“Jon, you know I love you,” Loxy began.

“Is there a ‘but’ coming?” Jon asked.

“Depends on how you spelled it, anyway, stop distracting me from my point with sexual innuendoes,” Loxy said. “I love you, you look great in the Rocketeer outfit, but I don’t want you launching yourself into space.”

“You could be Jenny,” Jon said.

“No, I am the girl who comes out of the clam singing ‘Begin the Beguine,’ and I am not letting you fly a jetpack. You have not been trained, you can’t just put one on and fly it about, and I don’t want you hurt, now take it off,” Loxy said.

“What if I turned it into a Guardians of the Galaxy jetpack and I had the retractable armor, and you were Gamora,” Jon said.

“Do you have a raccoon?” Loxy asked.

“We live in Disney universe. I can stir up a raccoon,” Jon said.

“A talking raccoon?” Loxy asked.

“All raccoons talk,” Jon said.

“I want to be a raccoon when I grow up,” Elizabeth said.

“You could be. You never know which furry genes will get kicked in during puberty,” Fersia said.

“So, permissible with a raccoon sidekick?” Jon asked.

“No,” Loxy said.

“What if I get Downey Jr. to train me?” Jon asked?

“No,” Loxy said.

“Paltrow?” Jon asked.

“No!” Loxy said.

“Scarlett...”

“You get her, we’ll talk, but till then, NO!”

In the story, skipped over the craziness that might have otherwise ensued with a new invention to where Loxy... Loxy coughed... ‘Truly’ interrupted the failed power down sequence by throwing water on the jetpack, which Jon tried to tell her throwing cold water from the well onto a hot engine could have blown them all up, seriously, don’t believe me, go poor hot water on an iced over windshield in the winter, and a short argument ensued about what do you think was going to happen when you strapped fuel to your back and set it on fire, and then a scramble to rewrite the sequence where it was just steam, not actual flames, but really isn’t less deadly, and therefore throwing water on the suit was likely not going to stop the jetpack’s from functioning, except for maybe cooling the whole contraption down so the inside mechanism was no longer hot enough to make steam, just pure luck it didn’t blow up, and then there were questions if it used steam for propulsion, how do you carry enough water to go anywhere, and Jon was explaining it took water right out of the air, because there is always water in the air, even in the driest of air, even in the middle of the desert there is water in the air, if you only had the tech to remove it.

Back in the story, Caractacus removed his helmet to get another bucket full of water in the face... Not because Loxy was mad, but for comical reasons. Pies and water in the face never get old.

The kids in both stories laughed.

“Why are you laughing?” Jon asked the children.

“Because it’s funny,” Elizabeth said.

“She hit me in the face with water,” Jon said.

“It was an accident,” Loxy said.

“At least it wasn’t pie,” Lester said.

“Oh! I would love some cream pie,” Fersia said.

“And you said everything is permissible as long as it’s funny,” Eston pointed out.

Back in the story. “Madam!” Caractacus was trying to calm down the hysterical woman who was saying, “Are you trying to get yourself killed? These kids only have you and the grandfather and you want them to be orphans?”

Caractacus stopped. “Interesting point, but I assure you, I had this well under control.”

Tesla barked.

“None the less, clearly my intent was to help you, and it appears that I was successful,” Truly said.

Caractacus removed the jetpack and began walking away, mumbling: “Could have blown us all up. Unstable, completely unstable...”

“Sir!” Truly interrupted his mumbled rant. “Did you say I am unstable?”

“No,” Caractacus said. “Why are you here?”

“The children,” Truly said.

“What about the children?” Caractacus asked.

“Children?!” Truly said, not mean, but appropriately stern, like a teacher, or Julie Andrews in the Sound of Music, or someone who was raised by a military man, and the two kids lined up front and center. Not.

The children approached, timidly.

“What’s going on?” Caractacus asked.

“Tell him,” Truly said.

“We gathered those things you asked for,” Jeremy said.

“That’s not what she meant,” Jemima said. “You can be so obtuse.”

“No I can’t,” Jeremy said.

“Father,” Jemima said. “We didn’t go to school today.”

“Oh?” Caractacus asked. “Did you learn anything?”

“Wasps can build nest in the oddest of places and they can surprise you,” Jemima said.

“That they can, well, run along kids, and wash up, it’ll be dinner time soon,” Caractacus said, and walked towards his laboratory, fiddling with his jetpack.

Truly stood dazed, having never felt so completely ignored, and she held years of practice with an expectation of a certain level of social protocol. To make matters worse, before she had collected her senses, suddenly, a man emerged from the house with a weird, sideways gate. He was dressed in formal military wear of the day and he paused uncertain.

“Madam,” he said.

“Umm,” Truly said, not sure what to make of this.

“Sergeant Potts at your service, mam,” Grandpa said, removing his hat. “Are you selling something?”

“Umm, no. You’re the grandpa?”

“I have been so characterized, yes,” grandpa said.

“But...”

“Yes,” grandpa said.

“Your son and the children are white, and you’re clearly Asian...”

“Your point madam?” he said.

“Wait wait wait,” Lester said. “Did you just write me into this story?”

“You’re the only one here old enough to be grandpa,” Jon said.

“And we do call you grandpa,” Eston and Elizabeth said.

“And I told you to stop that,” Lester said. “We are not blood related.”

“Why do you call him grandpa in the story?” Eston asked.

“It’s just a term of affection,” Jon said.

“We’re not related!”

“You don’t have to be blood related to be family,” Fersia said. “You had sex with Loxy, (‘a long time ago,’ Lester protested, ‘and only once,’) (‘it could have been more, and you didn’t



mind when I called you daddy,' Loxy said, and Jon asked 'Truly?' and Loxy assured him it was her not Truly and 'daddy' is a term of affection she used with most men,) and Loxy has had sex with me, and she has sex with Jon, ('more than once,' Loxy said, 'and we have children, and I call you daddy,') ('we have children?' Jon asked,) and since Jon slept with me and we had children, then by default, though I have not slept with you, but slept with Jon and Loxy and Keera while you're in the room with us, and I have even slept at the foot of your bed, ('and I told you to stop that, you keep pouncing on my feet,' Lester said,) but you move your feet in a teasing manner, and, anyway, it just seems reasonable to me, you're kind of like a step grandfather, but more important, you're part of our village, and therefore, you play a role in the lives of the children, and were appropriately designated grandpa."

"I don't think we should be having these sorts of conversations in front of the children," Lester said.

"We live on a farm, we know about sex," Elizabeth said.

"We live on a commune and there are no secrets," Eston said.

"Which reminds me, stay out of my room!" Lester said. "Besides, secrets never hurt anyone. Just look at how well adapted the children in the story are, and they never talk about the elephant in the room."

"Grandpa shot the elephant," Fersia said.

"You mean, he sent him to the farm," Keera said.

"We're never going to finish this story if you keep interrupting me," Jon said.

"We could turn this into a MST3k version," Loxy said.

"You know how many knock off of that show are now on youtube?" Jon asked.

"What's youtube?" Elizabeth asked.

"Akashic records," Loxy said.

"Oh! So we could like watch us, watching us, watching us?" Elizabeth us.

"Don't do that. It makes me dizzy," Eston said.

"And you want a jetpack?" Jon asked.

"The two aren't related," Eston said.

"Like me in the story," Lester said.

"Anyway, back to grandpa..."

"I am off to India to have a cup of tea with the Maharaja. Cheerio," grandpa said, and angled off to his little tiny shack, leaving Truly truly more bewildered than before.

"Wait wait wait," Lester said. "You're making me a crazy grandfather, at that?"

"Not crazy, magically eccentric," Jon said.

"Crazy as loon," Fersia translated.

"Now, wait, there is a long tradition of a very specific characters in British sitcoms of an eccentricity that includes out of body travel to faraway lands," Jon said.

"Name one," Lester said.

"Graham Crowden's character in 'Waiting for God,'" Jon said. "But if you want a real life person doing this, there's Tesla! Tesla writes about his journey into 'imagination,' if you will so that it didn't matter to him if he was in his inner workshop or the real world workshop, the results were the same."

"Tesla wasn't British," Lester said.

“No, but did you ever consider that maybe going to India was a euphemism for using the toilet?” Jon asked.

“What’s a euphemism?” Eston asked.

“A way of saying something politely without saying what you’re saying,” Jon said.

“Consider the workshop. It’s not a proper size workshop, unless you’re a magician and it’s bigger on the inside, which is completely possible, as your workshop could have been the first TARDIS, but more than likely, it’s just an out-house, and when you consider that the average person spends about a year and half on the toilet, then you probably were in India for about a year...”

“Well, everyone poops,” Elizabeth and Eston said. “That makes sense.”

Jon returned to the story, where Truly, not the sort to go off without a proper farewell, and also she considered the outhouse theory and completely dismissed it as, why would anyone put on formal military clothes just to visit the outhouse, and anyway having had her curiosity aroused as to whether or not the children were actually safe enough to leave alone with these ‘crackpots’ went in search of their father, Caractacus. But maybe not even for the reasons she imagined, as her curiosity about the man had been piqued, or maybe she had been subsequently triggered by his pheromones, which seriously affects people more than they imagine, which could explain her interest more than the mystery of the man. Whatever the reasons, fate, destiny, kismet, even though they just met and hadn’t kissed, Truly pursued, driven by unconscious motivators and pure interest, and stepped into the most amazing laboratory she had ever seen since the invention of laboratories.

## Chapter 3

The laboratory, the man cave of man caves, was the most amazing, marvelous inventing room ever the like seen. It was like Christmas exploded, lights everywhere, and gadgets, and trinkets, and some weird things, too, indescribable things, indescribably weird things, and then almost recognizable things, like the sculpture of a human face, which was actually a mechanical face, and the inner workings could be spied from behind the face, and the face smiled, which was a little creepy, and Truly had to quicken her pace to get past, but further in were more oddities, like the dancing legs, that might have been robbed from a mannequin, but vastly superior to the obvious mechanical ones that were simply wooden legs, as these articulated within an inner 'skin' that made them much more real to sight and touch, and you might have thought a whole person was there, but clearly no person's torsos or arms could be discerned, and there were bits of junk turned into machines, glowing crystals, and vats growing crystals, and a compressor that would go off like clockwork allowing steam to vent, and then there was the wall of art, contraptions yet to be built, including a design for a vast city that was built like a cross, so that if it's center point was on the pole of the moon or mercury, one arm would always experience daylight temperatures, and it's opposite arm would experience night temperatures, and the difference in temperature would set up a permanent flow of water steam to drive engines to power the city and the life supports. There was a table with notebooks filled with data. And there were fiction books, Like Jules Verne and HG Wells, yet to be published, because they were consulting with Caractacus about the feasibility of their mechanics, and you may say how was it that these great men knew Caractacus, but you would be getting ahead of yourself and them, because at the time, they didn't consider themselves true visionaries, but rather just ordinary men wondering and dreaming and corresponding, and Caractacus had been published in small ways about improvements to machines that he had offered to help improve society, and 'Do it Yourself' repair manuals for the aspiring tinkerer, and since very few aspired to be tinkerers, they weren't best sellers. He did try his hand at fiction, but he was so far ahead no one could make any sense of it, and so that work went nowhere. Psychics have nothing on science fiction and fantasy writers, statistically speaking, but whether you're psychic or a futurist, your abilities depend greatly upon your audience's ability to see and share in a vision, and so on this table, hidden in the corner, there were the books written by Caractacus, and rejections letters, and potted rose plant which might have been a meme in progress.

Other curious artifacts in the shop included a time machine, with accompany blue prints with HGW initials, and a formal letter asking for help with a power source, because there is always the potential to travel somewhere you might not be able to refuel, and though HG was a genius story teller, or would be, to be honest, he wasn't much of a real inventor, and so Caractacus had made many modifications before he had gotten it working, and contrary to popular beliefs, it was he who first went to San Francisco to stop Jack the Ripper, which is way more plausible, because even HG would tell you himself, "I am just a story teller, I can't go chasing through time after some madman, and you're a trained military man and genius inventor, who else would understand how to function in a future environment?" but when they made a movie about the 'incident' they dropped that whole subplot because, well they thought no one would buy into the time machine theory much less all this fluff about some cat named

‘Caractacus’ and the romance on top of that seemed a bit contrived and what they really wanted was a horror movie but luckily Caractacus and Loxy put their foot down on that, because they wanted to honor all the sci fi romance stories that HG had written, that people seriously overlook, but also, this one was about them, as it is just one of the alternative lives of Jon and Loxy, showcasing the myriad ways of how they met. You may at this point be thinking, ‘blah,’ time travel, might as well have written a dream novel, and if you end this all with it being a dream I’ll be mad, but there is evidence for Time Travel in real life, like the girl using a cellphone in the background of a Charlie Chan movie, but there is also evidence at the end of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, very subtle, and maybe just a slip of the tongue, but I must insist if you didn’t catch it not to rush forward, as even a time travelers knows well enough not to rush time.

Of course, a derivative of the time machine was a pocket watch that could stop time, because if you could travel forward and backwards in time, you could also stop time, which is really interesting because it reveals a secret of the universe: no matter where you are in the ‘time stream,’ you, your conscious, continues to interact with a forward movement like a needle dropped on a record player always going inwards no matter where it’s dropped, which should also impress you with the ‘cyclic’ perspective of time that most primitive people cling to, and modern men ignore too readily, but anyway, back to the watch itself, it held a fanciful, intricate design on the casing, and soft greenish blue glow that leaked out through the closed lid, and a chain with tiny steam driven viewer that contained unmentionably enticing moving pictures that could completely mesmerize male or female in a very particular way so that they soon forgot about the watch, which was completely necessary to keep miscreants from abusing the device, and you may wonder why Pott wasn’t rich if he had such a device, and all I would have to say is ‘character.’ There was the Steam driven ‘Hutchington’ guitar, because it is well known that any genius worth his salt is also a musician. There was a gear-ornate safe with tumblers and hand crank and a place to measure the biometrics of the user’s hand. A toy steam engine. A steam powered bike. A miniature steam powered At-AT. A steam powered R2 unit, presently powered down and the forward panel opened leaving the inner workings exposed, and might have actually been the family pet had someone not insisted on a real pet. There was a fancifully complex gear umbrella, which could stop bullets. His fireproof jacket was also bullet proof, also, made of the same material, which you would have thought would be a big hit with the military, but quite frankly they were offended of the idea as if it were a ‘cheat.’ “There are rules to war, and if you shoot someone, they’re supposed to fall down.” They rejected his paint gun invention, which was basically flag football, as they figured there were some people who would not play fair and continue to shoot, and so people needed to be shot with real bullets and fall down.

Then there were several jeweler’s table, because you can’t just work on the big stuff, because behind the big stuff is the little stuff, and to see little stuff sometimes you need special tools, like the oversized magnifying glass on bendable arm with multiple articulation points so as to be positioned anywhere over the table, and no matter how you approached or passed the table, something was being ‘magnified.’ There were crystals and diamond in various stages of being cut or polished or finished, and mesh where various transistors and crystals could be plugged in and powered up or down, glass tube transistors the size of future Christmas tree bulbs, and LEDs before their time, blending into the cross stitch, contrary to popular belief, men were expected to be able to sew, and goggles, and scopes, microscopes and telescopes, both refracting and

reflecting, and a variety of goggles and sunglasses and visors and reading glasses and working glasses. A model of the solar system, not to scale, spun around an artificial, illuminated sun over jeweler's station, which was not hanging by strings, nor was it magnetically compelled, but most people who looked at it assumed strings and just left it alone, because it looked quite delicate though beautiful. There was the compass, and myriad of nautical tools on a nearby shelf.

There was a bulletin board with a world map and pins in it, and on the side articles of from papers about UFO sightings, such as the 'Mystery Airships' in the US. There were other sightings, and stories of UFO's going back to the 1400, from around the world and every culture that had a paper, even if it was a British paper, but like in France they had huge sighting of a war over a city, and truth be known, things crashed and people found stuff and sold stuff and buried 'people' that weren't people, and HG and he dialogued through a correspondence if maybe this was men from the future trying to preserve the human race, but maybe a part of the human race, something evolved or de-evolved was fighting for its own existence in competition with man, but then, for the most part, there was always such an amazing absence of physical evidence that maybe these things were ghosts, or holograms, or things yet dreamt of, or perhaps Carl Jung would come to call this phenomena an archetypal collective unconscious interaction pattern. There was a clipping of the Hull Pocket, a newspaper from UK 1801, describing a sighting that still baffled people today, but elements of the cigar shaped craft was nothing new to Caractacus who had been studying this areal phenomena since arriving in the Navy, and you have to remember, any country that has a Navy has three Navies, the one that is very well esteemed and discussed and visible, and the invisible one, like secret pirates with operatives who were untraceable, and we really don't have to talk about their missions, because we all know there are time in the lives of men and countries where they have to do things that are necessary but less civilized, but then there is also, and this is important to know because of just how far back it really goes, there is also a secret space Navy which all the governments agreed to maintain the secrecy so that the people of Earth could continue in their adolescence uninterrupted by the adult things yet to come, which HG would translate into a book 'the shape of things to come.'

There were also the weapons, which Caractacus personally detested, but was practical enough to know that they could be improved upon, and frequently brought in money to their home by servicing the hunting rifles of his neighbors, but there was the pistol that he once carried as an officer, as well as his sword, which was on a headless mannequin in a display just for his past stuff. And then there was space suit in the makings, which almost looked like a deep sea diving suit, which if you think about they're both fundamentally the same problem, and though essentially going deep you had to resist the increasing pressure, going into space was essentially the reverse of the problem, yet still a pressure problem, and so he knew that the submersibles, the like even Jules Verne had yet to consider, would also one day be future airships and spaceships, and in fact, he and Verne were friends and frequently exchanged letters, and they both had a fanciful wax seal. He held letters and blue prints from Artemis Gordon, ranging from diagrams of mechanical spiders to disguises, and Caractacus was especially interested in the disguises so as to improve the humanity of his future robots. Caractacus also held a correspondence with a friend of Gordon, Janos Bartok, who traveled with an Ernest Pratt, also known as Nicodemus Legend, as they were frequently consulting Caractacus on the feasibility of artifacts for potential props. Seriously, again, this point can't be emphasized

enough, if you want to know who the best predictors of the future are, they're fiction writers, and you have to be fair, either that is predictive abilities of a kind that humans can tap into, or these people were in the know and they wrote fiction so that if and when inexplicable things happen, and they do happen around humans, there was also a channel of plausible deniability on the parts of the government. "Oh, you hallucinated HG Wells." "But I don't even read, Sir." "Well, someone you know must read and you heard them discussing it in the background, and that's more plausible, being we're in an age of reason, and you don't even have to agree or understand I am disparaging you in a very civilized way, now move along, nothing to see here." But anyway, never go to a psychic. Go to a Sci-Fi writer. Firefly, people in space speaking Mandarin, that's a pretty solid idea and you might want to consider learning a smidgeon of Chinese and Japanese if you want to fair well in the cosmos before universal translators, because that reality is probably more accurate to what is really going on even right now than anything you've been told so far.

But, but, and this is a big but, and I am tired of hinting around, so I will just say it, Caractacus was in on a little secret, that the Russians and the Americans had already put themselves in space, and British Royal Navy was up there, too, as a guest of the Russians and the Americans, but this knowledge was kept secret because, well, mostly the Brits were embarrassed they didn't plant a flag on the moon first, but also, more importantly, having moved out into space they had realized they're not alone, and there was concern that the people of Earth could not handle that information. Why that's a game changer is really difficult to believe, except it really hurts the church and their control, as CS Lewis would explain in a future book of how aliens disturbed the relationship between god and men. But practically speaking, being in space is nowhere as difficult as NASA would have you believe, you don't even have to have clean rooms, you can just put stuff out there because everything down here is mostly already up there, and navigating in space, at least in terms of within the solar system, works just as easy as sailing a ship, only they weren't using light sails, they were using electromagnetic fields as sails. There were light sails, but one could extend a magnetic field out further and catch more energy from the sun, and at the heart of magnetos that spun the field outwards, well, that was steam! There were other exotic forms of electromagnetic propulsion, in terms of traveling and keeping people alive, much, much simpler than anyone ever imagined, and, of course, there were the gravity wave amplifiers and emitters, and you can sail on a gravity wave easier than an ocean wave.

There was a fabric making machine that spanned half the back wall, which was basically a mechanical quilt making contraption, which in the past might had required a hundred grandmothers laboring away at breakneck speeds, but it actually wove the material as well as attached patchwork art all on its own, because quilts will never go out of fashion as 'heavy' blankets can make a person feel secure, like they're being hugged, and the cotton stuffing on the inside and the art lets you know that someone labored over this product, and even if it is made by a machine, that is still true. Of course, his machine actually turned hemp into a cloth like material. He frequently sold hemp shirts and ropes and he could also make hemp paper but he turned out very little because growing hemp had become unfashionable during his time, mostly because it was competing against the other vendors who were using a more expensive textile and petroleum processing methods, and people were less green in their thinking back then, even had this crazy idea you could dump an infinite amount of trash into the ocean and it never come back

at you, which is just crazy, but you won't hear that in a history class, and though he wasn't technically violating the law, he didn't plow down his field to grow hemp either, and so he turned out articles at a much slower rate to avoid suspicion from competitors and besides, in addition to artwork, he was trying to fashion tech directly into his clothing because he believed one day, one wouldn't need a million gadgets because everything would be reduced to one object, and so everyone would own one thing that contained them all, hint this is where Tolken got the idea for the ring and would cause Caractacus and him to feud for a generation, but everything would be contained in a jacket or a shirt or trousers, from watches, compasses, and maybe even a talking companion that navigated the invisible electromagnetic web generated by all the of the devices of man and nature together, and though Caractacus had sufficient genius to be a part of her Majesty Royal Secret Space Force, he had declined being a part of the revolutionary space navy, wanting to stay closer to home and his family, and so another reason he was left alone to tinker was because his work was interesting enough to hold the attention of certain elites and people in the know who wanted him just where he was, because philosophically, why mess with something that's working?

But with his fabricator, he had a design of practical clothing which he believed would become essential in the future. His kids were particularly pleased with the Victorian faux leather, because they hated killing cows. He had black denim and coffee trousers, and corsets, and made all his own clothing, which made him stand out in a crowd and why crowds kind of gave him his own space, and he made the clothing for his dolls, which were almost uniforms, like a secret space federation outfit yet to be dreamt, and probably the one reason why he wasn't more successful is was he dabbling in everything, a complete and true generalist, and so he could sustain himself in his family, but they weren't likely to see fame and fortune short of sheer luck, that and, well, being famous usually meant interacting with folks and he tended to not want to interact with folks, and when he did, he mostly either pissed them off or something would go terribly wrong and people would avoid him as much as he them, but he did enjoy correspondence immensely, and this was the day of great letter writing, with intricate seals, as no one would imagine a time when writing ceased due to the increase in technology making paper obsolete, instinctively they should, but the things that went wrong around him was sufficiently awkward that someone might believe he was cursed, but because that is 'impossible' in a rational era they were more likely to believe in men in black secretly sabotaging his efforts, which even that might not be accepted and you, like the general public, will just simply assume a label of crazy or eccentric, and since his name was Pott, well 'crackpot' just sort of followed him, because children and adults can be mean, even though teasing is generally not meant to be mean but a means to reign crazy in, and sometimes he himself believed he was crazy because it's hard to stand up and be different in a world of cogs. All that to say there was never just one reason for why a person wasn't successful in worldly terms.

One other reason, and maybe the best reason, was Caractacus, if pinned to commit to an answer, though never directly asked, the simple truth of the matter was that he was happy with his life as it was. Sure, he was sometimes lonely for adult company, but he loved his kids and watching them grow and learn was sufficient, and the farm was the playground of his youth, where he had built his first rocket as a child and scared the cows so much that they didn't have milk for nearly three months. And maybe there was evidence for him having become too relaxed

in his parenting job, or too complacent in life, and though at the time he might not agree to it, having nature, or a disruptive force, jar you back awake is actually a sign that the Universe loves you, and nothing says that as much as having your own personal Dakini, or sky-dancer, come and shake your world up, waking you up to a greater reality as if everything else prior to her entrance was merely a dream, and so Loxy, Truly, truly Loxy was this irresistible force, that was a storm in its own right, but also the calm that follows the storm and everything in between, coming to end his loneliness, which he didn't even know until she touched him, changing his vector forever.

Also, for lack of proverbial kitchen sink, it's probably best to understand there were multiple sociological trajectories at this time that came into frequent conflict. Concepts of Free Energy championed by Tesla, and True Liberation of the human spirit and the potential to reach out into space and join a galactic civilization, and the spiritualist movement Championed by the likes of the Fox sisters, and Aleister Crowley, even Houdini, not to mention the fact that the spiritualist were abolitionists and pushing women's right, and there was the Church and the fundamentalists in opposition to any sort of liberation of soul, and there was the materialists, and the scientists, not necessarily the one and the same, because even Bacon materialist claim as the greatest champion of science was also a spiritualist, not Kevin, though we're less than a degree away, and though scientist championed humanity, they were opposed to either of the other groups, and just one materialist's adaptation of Bacon makes for a formidable opponent, and though the latter group probably stole some of the ideas from Da Vinci, who would have been in Tesla's camp, this latter group was in conflict with still another group, the capitalists, who used every invention and idea to make more capital, mostly for themselves, because if you liberate people, you can't make more capital, and so they were the ones pushing against free energy and they took to 'scientizing' materialistic principles, but they were never so proud as to not ever use spiritual ideas when it suited their cause, hence the Portestant ethics were borne, that everything is finite and so if you wanted to live, and live well, you needed to get on board with their agenda and work for the elite, and if you were successful, you were more right with God than anyone else. This was the true war, the war of wars, which would last for centuries, resulting in several 'world' wars, and cold wars, and drug wars, just lots of wars, because one of the most promising ways to make money was to declare a war, and you would think that this would be such a horrid state of affairs that all men would long to get out of it, but unfortunately, few men care about their fellow creatures when they're caught up in a game of monopoly, or even care about the planet that sustains them for that matter as long as they can erect some hotels in every corner, and so things usually have to get so bad that the majority of people awaken to the idea if we keep going this direction there will be no more directions, or people, but at this point in the story, there was too much promise of people having access to abundance of stuff and food and so, like a game of monopoly, you have to play it to learn for yourself no one really wins at monopoly, which is still one of the bestselling board games, and so even though the super computer in War Games learned from tic tac toe that thermonuclear war was a no win scenario, humans are a bit slower than computers, which is the real reason why so many people fear Artificial Intelligence because people have used intelligence as a thing of fear to manipulate others into continuing to play the game, and so they're projecting what they would do if they were in charge.

"Do you have lecture us in every story?" Eston asked.



“All stories are lectures,” Jon said.

“No they’re not,” Eston said.

“Yes, they are,” Jon said.

“Are not,” Eston said.

“Are so,” Jon said.

“Brontosaurus breath,” Eston said.

“Oh! T-rex arms!” Jon said.

“I swear, you two have been fighting since day one,” Fersia said.

“He took my tit,” Jon grumbled.

“I have six, just shift over,” Fersia said.

“The other one is better, and you had seven kitten, I never got a turn after,” Jon said.

“I can always lactate more,” Fersia said.

“We’re straying a bit,” Loxy said.

“You think?” Eston said. “Just once I would like to get through a story without all the lectures, and expounding of philosophy, and just skip over the kissing.”

“There is no kissing in this book,” Jon said.

“Jon,” Loxy said.

“Okay, a little kissing, mostly at the end, which makes this the longest foreplay ever,” Jon said.

“Explain the sex toys in your laboratory,” Lester said.

“See, I told you people would notice,” Loxy said.

“They’re medical devices! Hysteria is a serious medical malady of the day, and I happen to specialize in medical tech, for men and women, because it is my opinion men also suffer from hysteria, and if society would just allow ‘Real Doll brothels,’ we could lower the spread of infectious agents, as well as lowering the accidental, unwanted birth rate, and generally make the population happier, so yes, I think Houston seriously made a bad call, because Artificial Sex Surrogates is the wave of the future, and they could have been on the forefront of this thing, which is not a fad, but now they will have to wait till the rest of the world to ‘brothelate’ their communities and Houston loses tax revenues to the other counties and grudgingly opens their own brothel, even though Houston has lost that forever because citizens will decide not to participate out of spite...” Jon realized he was losing his audience. “Okay, so there is some kissing, and other adult stuff, but it’s in the background and might not be observable, unless you call it out as such, and you can’t assume there was less sex because it was the Victorian era, because seriously there was some sex and the more you try to hide that there is sex the more sex there is to be had...”

“What’s this,” Truly asked. Looking into the barrel of what might have been mistaken for a Graflex, a camera flash holder, only steam powered.

“Ahh! Woman,” Caractacus said, grabbing the device away from her. “Are you trying to kill yourself?”

He demonstrated the device, which turned out to be a steam power, laser arc wielder, with a sparkling gold blade that was intensely bright, and way too long to be just a simple light scalpel, and it cut through an anvil as if it were hot knife through butter, severing it in half.

“Wait wait wait,” Keera said. “You invented the lightsaber?”

“It’s not a lightsaber,” Jon said.

“Looks like a lightsaber,” Elizabeth said.

“I want one,” Eston said.

“Jon,” Loxy said.

“It exists in this universe. Seriously, Lucas may have patented the word, and Disney may have bought that word, but there were lots of ‘light swords’ prior to Star Wars, Lucas just popularized it, and maybe this is Kirito’s proton sword, or Bleach, where everyone has their own unique laser sword powered by reishi energy, and all of these things exist, and I, I mean Caractacus, was in the military and he was an inventor making stuff for the military, and the other thing you need to know is that if you see it in the movies, then you can rest assured that it was already invented elsewhere and the reason you’re seeing it is because the technology has advanced to such a degree that what you see is old news. Like, for example, the cloaking car in James Bond, Die Another Day, not true invisibility per say, but rather ‘adaptive camouflage cloaking’ that’s based on real stuff, and you may think Wonder Woman’s flying in an invisible jet is just fiction, but that’s what they’ve been flying out of Area 51 ever since HG Wells wrote the Invisible man, because Area 51 isn’t a modern invention, and Marvel stole all their super powers from HG! It all started in the 1800s, where they appropriated Well’s time machine, which was backwards engineered from alien technology, and between the Americans and the Germans, we colonized the moon and Mars, and the moons of Jupiter and Saturn, and have toe holds on several nearby solar systems...”

“Jon,” Loxy said, turning back into Truly. “Is this all you do is invent things?”

“I just cut an anvil in half with a proton sword, and you’re wondering if that’s all I do?” Caractacus asked. “I built this for the Navy. I have been building stuff to end all wars, and consequently, they thought I was insane because if we end all wars, there would be no need for militaries...”

“I see,” Truly said, picking up a device she recognized, a fancy, steam-gear driven, analog not digital, with the tiniest of glow transistors ever made, electronic cigar, such that as you inhale the device blossoms with light as it vaporizes the contents into a breathable form. “What’s in your vape?”

“Madam, I invented that as a way to reduce the ills of nicotine,” Caractacus said, taking it from her.

“So, you’re responsible for the drug addictions of all the Tokyo Mall Rats, the So-Cal kids, and all the versions of goth and despair kids around the world?” Truly asked.

“I am not! I haven’t made a dime on it, though I admit to trying to make a shilling, but I showed the device to Edison, and he stole it and it was patented in his name before I even left his office,” Caractacus said. He returned it to the desk and picked up another device, very similar, and also with an exchangeable medicine cartridge: “And this is a needles injection device which improves the delivery of medicines...”

“You should probably stay off the drugs,” Truly said, wandering over to another device. “What is this?”

“It’s a free energy collector,” Caractacus said.

“A what?”

“You know about solar power?” Caractacus asked.

“Yeah, you take a bunch of mirrors, and focus light on a spot, or use magnifying glasses, to heat water and run turbines with steam,” Truly said.

“No, I’ve gone beyond that. You can turn light directly into energy, just the same way plants turn light into stored energy, only, this device captures invisible light, not just infrared, but literally it captures the entire electromagnetic spectrum, all radio waves, and converts it directly to energy, and there is always free energy, because we are bathed in starlight daily, but there is even a deeper energy bubbling up from the very fabric of the Universe itself, and this device captures all of it and through a series of channels of crystals, converts it into a form of energy that I can then transmit wirelessly to power other gadgets, and when I get it small enough, every device will have its own endless power supply converter, but until then I envision establishing stations throughout London that will provide free energy to every citizen. I call it Blue, because if you could see it, I imagine it would be kind of a blue frequency, as abundant and free as the blue sky itself, and so you just need teeth to grind into it. Oh, Blue Tooth!” He scrambled over to write some notes down and drawing a cog in a cog in a cog...

“You’re dreaming,” Truly said.

“No, I am telling you how it will be. With free energy available, and the improvements in robotics, humanity will be freed from work so they can focus on their particular talents, and we will see such a wave of creativity and kindness that humanity will spread across the galaxy bringing light and hope to the darkest reaches of space,” Caractacus said. “Even now we have the ability to end hunger and end wars.”

“I believe that,” Truly said, touching his arm lightly. She touched a paper with a circle with an ‘A’ in it, which seemed to be a theme he was working on, maybe a brand name or a signature. There was even an Ouija board pointing at A. “What’s up with the double A on the artwork?”

“Something I keep dreaming about. I record my dreams, and if I am particularly calm, I can auto write and draw, and this has been a recurring vision, if you will,” Caractacus said.

“I don’t understand,” Truly said.

“Well, it’s kind of hard to explain. It’s a technique I use to invent things, though if the truth be known, I don’t think I invent things as much as I visit the future and see how they’re doing things and bring it back to our time,” Caractacus said. “Carl Jung calls the technique ‘active imagination.’ Tesla uses the same technique, but just calls it daydreaming. Most great scientist get their ideas from dreams. I call the technique ‘remote perceiving.’”

“You mean, you’re like a psychic spy?” Truly asked, chuckling.

“No, it’s not psychic if everyone can do this. I could even teach you to do this...” Caractacus said.

“Oh, really? What’s this?” Truly asked moving to another station.

“A new steam engine design, capable of pulling moisture directly from the air around the cooling coils to resupply water loss during over heating purges, but with application of bringing water to deserts, cause there is always moisture in the air...”

“You know, steam is on the way out?” Truly asked.

“Steam will have a second coming,” Caractacus assured her, and he almost went off into a musical tangent but that belonged to another story; don’t believe me? Google Rusty and the second coming of steam.

“And this?” Truly asked.

“A self-contained steam engine that doesn’t have to vent...”

“Really?” Truly asked. “And this attachment.”

“A pneumatic line for pneumatically driven tools, an air reservoir, steam driven pump, and a...” Caractacus said.

“You’re seriously attached to steam, aren’t you, Sir?” Truly asked.

“Caractacus,” he said.

“What?” Truly said.

“Caractacus. My name,” he said.

“Oh, I am Truly, sorry,” Truly said, which he heard ‘truly sorry for you name.’

“There is nothing wrong with my name,” Caractacus said.

“I didn’t say there was, and you’re right, nothing wrong with it, nothing at all, it’s a fine name, if you were living in the Roman era,” Truly said. “They must have teased you awfully in school...”

“They did...”

“Is that why you don’t like school?” Truly asked.

“What?”

“You’re not making your kids go to school because you were bullied in school?” Truly asked.

“I dare say my kids are on par, if not more advanced, than their peers,” Caractacus said.

“Maybe, academically, I don’t know, I haven’t tested them, but you learn more than academics in school. You practice being social, and your children are running around wild in the streets like feral cats, without the common sense to look both ways, or stay hidden, which doesn’t lend much evidence for your thesis of their advanced state,” Truly said.

“Seriously, you come in my home and insult me, my children, my inventions, and my parenting...”

“I am concerned, as anyone would be, and maybe if good people looked in on their neighbors in a kindly way there would be less problems, and maybe if you weren’t so busy in here playing with toys and writing fiction and corresponding with mad men then you would see that they need more guidance...” Truly said, and was caught up by the sparkle of something.

“And what’s this?”

“A crystal egg, of unknown origins,” Caractacus said.

“Unknown?” Truly asked.

“I have traced its existence back as far as I could, to an antique dealer by the name of Cave, who ran his trade in the Seven Dials until his death, and though there is a letter in French suggesting it’s much older, the document has been so abused it’s indecipherable,” Caractacus said. “The egg has unusual properties, such as, with the exception of my proton sword, nothing can cut it, and so it’s shape and design is clearly by someone more advanced in technological understandings, but further, on occasion, I have been able to peer through it to another world, and am I fairly certain, others from that world have spied back on me.”

“You’re insane,” Truly said.

“My friend HG shares your sentiment,” Caractacus asked.

“And this?”

“It is my intent to transmit and receive moving pictures by wireless,” Caractacus said. “Further, I believe it will be possible to contact the deceased, once we have narrowed the frequency range and eliminated the noise to signal ratio....”

“You must miss her terribly,” Truly said.

“What?” Caractacus asked.

“Your wife. What happened to her?” Truly asked.

“This is not about my wife. The very tenant of modern science is matter can neither be created nor destroyed, but more than that there is evidence for electronic voice phenomenon...”

“Oh, you’re one of those,” Truly said. “Hear much rapping on tables, do you? And this?”

“Oh, just ordinary candy,” Caractacus said. “A byproduct, really, of an experiment in which I am trying to rapidly produce crystals of the necessary quality to make more proton swords, without which the device could not function, and practicing with sugar is cheaper than diamonds...”

“And so these holes in the candy?” Truly asked.

“Purely coincidental and inexplicable, but maybe related to the harmonic frequency in the rapid distillation process...”

“Or, your boiling point of the sugar is too high...”

“So, you’re a candy expert?” Caractus asked.

“Well...”

“And clearly a materialist,” Caractacus said.

“Oh! There is no need to be rude,” Truly said.

“And a child welfare expert...”

“Now, hold on, surely even you...”

“No, I will not hold on, and if you intend to come here and scrutinize me, you can expect to be equally examined, so, what’s wrong with you? Daddy issues? Mother pawn you off too early on the wet nurse with soured milk?”

“Sir!” Truly said.

“Aww, ha!” Caractacus said.

“You’re the one playing with dolls!” Truly said.

“I am an artist, an inventor! I just happen to prefer the female form. Would you have criticized Michelangelo’s David, or Leonardo Da Vinci’s Vitruvian Man...”

“I don’t see any men here, just females...”

“If you care to pose naked, I’ll make you perfect...” he said, turning her chin up.

“Prominent cheek bones... Hazel eyes?”

Truly slapped his hand from her face. “I am leaving,” Truly said.

“Truly?” he asked, expressing skepticism that she was leaving, not calling her by her name, which at this point, he had not taken the time to learn, having heard something entirely else.

“What?!” Truly asked.

“For real, you’re leaving? Cause you seem to be lingering, which suggest perhaps you like my scrutiny,” Caractacus said.

“I like nothing about you, Sir,” Truly said.

“And yet you’re still here,” Caractacus said.

Truly grabbed her coat and headed out, rambling things like ‘impractical, irrational, certifiable, crackpots,’ nearly knocking something over, which caused Caractacus to scramble to save the pedestal and its contents, sighing a bit a relief that one particular items didn’t crash, as it might actually have blown-up, and then, for an odd reason, he didn’t feel as if the fight was finished, and followed her out of his man cave, his mind completely out of inventing mode. He found her trying to spin the magneto, but clearly she was just as flustered as he was, and so really hadn’t give it a proper spin, but neither of them could see past their own emotionally charged filters. Tesla, flustered by the emotions, pranced and barked at shadows. To be honest, cats and dogs growling and pawing at shadows is evidence of them saving people from things not seen, and so you shouldn’t dismiss their realities too readily.

“How long have you been driving?” Caractacus asked.

“If you’re in such a hurry to expedite my departure, you could at least spin the starter for me,” Truly snapped.

“Ummph, women,” Caractacus said, and gave the magneto a spin, but it kicked back and clipped his hand something fierce. He sucked on his thumb.

“Men!” Truly said.

“Try switching it on,” Caractacus said.

“Oh,” Truly said, almost apologetically, but then remembered she was mad, displaying a range of emotions that would give Daisy Jazz a run for her money. No sooner than the engine was going, she was grinding it into reverse, without even looking back, and after a nice turn, in a radius that nearly flipped her car, pushed into first, completely ignoring Caractacus who was instructing her to open up the throttle, and stop riding the clutch, and the car, a 1909 Humber motorcar, with the license plate Cub 1, rode off, almost as angry as the driver, venting steam from the radiator, which was not an indication that this was a steam engine per say, but people had been known to convert their cars, and there was indeed a long line of steam driven cars, like the Stanley Steam Car (1912), White touring car (1909), Boiler in a 1924 Stanley Steamer Serie 740. To the right is the condenser, L’Obéissante – 1875, Cederholm #2, built in 1894, and the De Dion on his steam tricycle just to mention a few...

## Chapter 4

“Are you and Loxy really fighting?” Elizabeth asked.

“Oh, no, no, we’re just acting,” Jon said.

“I don’t think we have ever been properly mad at each other,” Loxy said, coming to think about it.

“Well, there was that one time,” Jon started.

“At band camp?!” Fersia said, laughing hysterically and slapping the couch and falling into Loxy. “That never gets old.”

“You did seem quite cross just now,” Eston said. “And I don’t like it when you’re cross. I get scared.”

“But you’re okay with dinosaurs?” Jon asked.

“Well, not real ones, just the ones we read about, and my dino-roar, cause he’s a pet dinosaur and watches over me while I sleep,” Eston said.

“Well, sometimes people get loud, and can be irritable,” Jon said.

“Like Lester?” Elizabeth asked.

“You have yet to see me loud and irritable,” Lester rebuked.

“Everyone. Even me, and it’s okay if you say ‘Jon, I am having feelings,’ or ask directly, ‘are you mad?’ I will usually take inventory and bring it down a notch,” Jon said.

“Father? Are you angry?” Jemima asked.

“No, why?” Caractacus asked.

“Because Tesla is hiding and you have been pacing and you have put your cardigan on backwards,” Jeremy said.

“Uh? Oh,” Caractacus said, taking off the cardigan to reverse it. “The nerve of some people, telling me how to raise my children...”

“Technically, father, she wasn’t telling you anything, but was asking you questions,” Jemima said.

“Uh?” Caractacus asked.

“We were watching from the window,” Jeremy said.

“What have I told you about spying on me?” Caractacus asked.

“We weren’t spying,” Jeremy said. “We were observing. However will we become solid adults if we don’t observe adults interacting?”

Caractacus was rather taken aback by that and was still thinking it through as the child continued to speak truth.

“And you have taught us discernment, and she wasn’t telling you things as much as asking you things, and you did seem awfully cross with her, when in her way, she was trying to make sure we were alright, and you have always taught us that if you find evidence for something that’s not right, we should inquire and take steps to set things on a path to right,” Jemima said.

“And she is not a people, she’s a person, and you taught us to speak nicely to persons, and she did fetch us home safely, in a really fine motorcar by the way,” Jeremy pointed out.

“And we like Truly,” Jemima said.

“Truly?”

“Her name,” Jemima said.

“And she’s awfully pretty,” Jeremy said, and realizing embarrassment over that fact added again, “And I like her car.”

“She was, wasn’t she, wait, wait wait, that’s not the point, because even if she wasn’t pretty wouldn’t mean she could over step her boundaries, and though some of your other points are dead on accurate, well, actually I can’t dismiss any of your points...Or hers. I suppose I was a bit rude, she was a guest, and we don’t get many guests, and, well, I supposed I ruined that,” Caractacus said.

“You could always go apologize to her,” Jeremy said.

“Apologize? Apologize?! To her?” Caractacus said, and then brought it back down. “Maybe so, but I should apologize to you for not being humbler to our guest and being loud.”

“Maybe if you had a girlfriend, you would be less grumpy,” Jemima said.

“I am not grumpy,” Caractacus said. “Am I?”

“Sometimes,” Jeremy said.

“I don’t need a girlfriend. My life is full. I have you two...”

“And we have you,” Jemima said. “But it would be nice having someone like Truly around...”

“You could make it up to us with a nice dinner,” Jeremy said. “I’m powerfully hungry.”

“Me, too, and you could sing us a song while we get things ready...”

“Oh, no!” Lester interrupted. “This is not one of those singing stories, is it?”

“Yes, it is,” Jon said. “Prepare yourself, you have your own song.”

“It better not be ‘I feel pretty,’” Lester said.

If you want to know if their singing is better than a high school production of the thing being discussed, you should visit your Ethernet and do your own ‘compare and contrast’ analysis, and until then, just assume that they sing pretty well, because a song is always a nice way to allow a montage of a mechanism preparing breakfast, which has always been fascinating, and just one reason why the Gooney’s was successful, because before then, people forgot how fun playing mouse trap was, of course, Jemima and Jeremy were in a time before commercialized games like mouse trap, which really could be created with just ordinary household items, if you were crazily clever like the Pott family. Now, breakfast, or dinner, or really any meal, was marvelous time, because it was done mechanically, with miniature Ferris wheels delivering sausages and eggs, and a train pushing the plates that would catch the breakfast, and you would be wrong if you thought the train was just for show, but the heated water in the engine also spun out a mean coffee, or tea, but you could have coffee for dinner if you wanted, and Caractacus usually did, and would have his cup while he watched his contraption work, feeling a bit too clever as he saw the eggs were broken, the contents of which went right to the plate, while eggs shell went into a pin where the shells would be dried and crushed and the calcium returned to the gardens, or to the chickens, who loved having a bit calcium returned, and the steam could also be used to cook the breakfast right there on your plate, no need for an open flame when you have steam to cook and clean, yes, just a nice steady stream of steam that hit the bottom of the plate, and before you knew it, the food was appropriately cooked, and never over cooked, and you might think all of this cleverness was a way for Caractacus to be lazy, but in truth, for him it was a time saver because he would be



working on something while the meal was prepared, and even while he was watching, and drinking his coffee, in his mind, he was still working on something, and mind work is always as important as real work.

This scene was also an example that Caractacus had enough social etiquette that he didn't allow Jeremy to eat before everyone was served, and that the table cloth could also be a napkin stuffed into the shirt, and you hold your knife in the right hand and your fork in the left if you're civilized, and that breakfast for dinner was alright, just like cold pizza from the fridge is just as good for breakfast as dinner, and yes, he, Caractacus, had a refrigerator, even though the first commercial refrigerator wasn't out until 1913, and his ran on steam, but not the usual steam, but a self-contained system, with a special chemical that was easily heated from a liquid to a gas, and through a series of venture and twisting pipes, forced back into liquid at just the right place that it took the heat from the inside the cooling unit and dumped it outside, which is really all anyone ever does, move heat from one place to another that is, with ever increasing degrees of precision, but back to Caractacus being a good parent, you may be arguing why do breakfast at night time if you're such a good parent, and though eggs were probably a regular staple on the farm, because one thing you could be certain of is chickens would eat bugs and give a nice supply of eggs, you might imagine one would get bored of such a deal if that was all you had, unless you were really hungry, but in truth, one should have a bit of protein before retiring for a moment, just ask any lion what he does after a good meal, and, well, it was just their custom, which explains why Grandpa entered raving about the smell of breakfast, as if he had never eaten in his life, but in truth, going to India and back could really zap your energy.

“Sausage and eggs, my favorite!” he said.

“Fetch the bread, will you grandpa?” Caractacus said.

“Right away, Sir!”

“How was India?” Jeremy asked.

Grandpa paused and drew closer to the family, delivering bread as he did so: “You won't believe this, but I swear, just solid as I am standing here now, I got up this morning and shot an elephant in my pajamas...”

“Grandpa! Seriously! Elephants are intelligent creatures,” Jemima said. “You can't be shooting elephants.”

“Yeah, Grandpa. They have an elephant at the zoo that can paint, and it paints elephants, which means they're capable of abstractions,” Jeremy said.

“Even if it wasn't sentient the way we think we're sentient, how can you kill something that actively protects it's young, and buries its dead, and holds grudges, and simply wants to be at peace?” Jemima said.

“I didn't really kill it...” grandpa said.

“You can't undo it by just saying you didn't do it,” Jeremy said.

“Yeah,” Jemima said.

“No, really, I was setting up the punch line for a joke,” grandpa said.

“Shooting elephants is not funny,” Jemima said.

“I wish people would collectively agree not to buy ivory so people would stop killing these magnificent creatures,” Jeremy said.

“Aren’t you the least bit interested in how the elephant got into my pajamas?” grandpa asked.

“I guess we will never know,” Jeremy said. “Since you shot him.”

“Children, enough,” Caractacus said.

Grandfather sat down and retrieved his plate from the trolley to find it was just a boiled egg. “What?” he asked.

“How did that happen?” Caractacus wondered, tracing the track route back to through the stations.

“Karma, probably,” Jemima said.

“I didn’t kill an elephant,” grandpa said.

“So, what did you children do today?” Caractacus asked.

“Oh, we collected those items you wanted,” Jeremy said.

Jemima pulled the shiny out her pocket. “Here’s a bit of gold, or brass, hard to tell really, except that it’s shiny, just like the list said.”

Caractacus dropped his knife and grabbed the artifact up. “Where did you get this?” he asked, examining the shiny.

“Off a car,” Jemima said.

“You cannibalized someone’s car?” grandpa asked.

“At least we didn’t kill an elephant,” Jeremy said.

“Cars can also be alive,” Caractacus said.

“Seriously, son, don’t go filling their heads with more nonsense,” grandpa said.

“You get mad about pilfering from a car, but not mad about shooting elephants?” Jeremy asked.

“The car belongs to someone,” grandpa said.

“The elephant belonged to someone,” Jemima said. “Itself. And it’s tribe. It had parents. Maybe children.”

“Enough with the elephant,” Caractacus said. “Be more precise on where this came from?”

“From the junk yard,” Jemima said.

“I have a whole pocket full of those shiny metal vanity things that cover the tire valve if you like,” Jeremy said.

“It’s a really nice car,” Jemima went on. “It seems a shame it might have to be melted down for scrap.”

“Of course you could buy it for thirty shillings,” Jeremy said. “That’s less than what Judas sold Christ for, right?”

“That’s shekels,” grandpa said.

“Still not talking to you,” Jeremy said.

“We could use a motor car, father,” Jemima said. “And I bet you could fix that up right nice.”

“Well, thirty shillings is a lot,” Caractacus said.

“But it’s going to waste, and you really hate waste, and even if they do recycle most of it, there’s something special about that car,” Jemima said. “It speaks to me.”

“It’s just smelly old motorcar,” grandpa said.

“Says the man who shot an elephant,” Jeremy said.

“Drop the elephant,” Caractacus said.

“Please, father, would you save the car?” said Jemima and Jeremy together follow by a chorus of please, please, please...

“Alright, let me think about it,” Caractacus said, which to him was a soft ‘no.’

“Hurray!” the children said.

“Okay, okay, off to bed with you both,” Caractacus said. “And make sure you both floss and brush!”

The children kissed dad and ran off to do their nightly routine, leaving Caractacus sitting there, staring at the gold double A emblem.

“Caractacus,” grandpa said. He said it multiple times and even stole the sausage off his son’s plate and dipped his piece of bread into the egg yoke and when he finished the meal, he found Caractacus still ‘traveling’ and took his son’s coffee and said again, “Son!”

“Uh?”

“We need to discuss the elephant,” grandpa said.

“I know you didn’t shoot one,” Caractacus said.

“I am talking about the invisible one...” grandpa said.

“How would you know if you shot an invisible elephant?” Caractacus asked.

“My pajamas weren’t invisible. Seriously, son, come out of your day dream and visit with me,” grandpa said. “When I was your age, a days work...”

“Oh, please, not this lecture again. Yes, yes, a day’s work for a day’s pay is what society teaches us. Put your nose to the grindstone, I get it, but if you do the math and most people are doing that but most people never get ahead and never feel fulfilled, then why would you want me to go into some drudgery like being a chimney sweep?!” Caractacus said.

“You’re too tall to be a chimney sweep and you’re being overly dramatic. I am just saying, some work would do you good and get you out of this funk you’ve been in since your wife died,” grandpa said.

“I am not in funk,” Caractacus said. “I am writing and producing daily, it’s just nothing has taken yet. But it will. I believe if you do the things you love the things you love will produce, or least carry you through life.”

“The kids need more,” grandpa said.

“More what? Things? They have love, they have shelter, they have food...”

“When’s the last time you bought them clothes...” grandpa said.

“What’s wrong with their clothes?” Caractacus said. “They’re perfectly good play clothes and experiment clothes and, besides, when I get the three-d printer going, it will fabricate clothing using plants base materials, like hemp, turning out clothes on demand...”

“Until then, they get laughed at school, and I have seen your clothes, which means they’d probably still be laughed at,” grandpa said.

“Then maybe the schools should teach kids not to make fun of other kids, while they’re teaching them the basics,” Caractacus said. “I bet they wouldn’t laugh if I drove the kids to school in a shiny, new car.”

“Yeah, like you’ll ever possess a shiny new car,” grandpa said. “Everything you own is junk. Everything you do breaks in seriously significant ways...”

“What are you really saying?”

“Get a job,” grandpa said. “Get some new clothes, find a girlfriend that can help you raise these kids, cause I am not going to be around forever.”

“Were you ever around?!” Caractacus asked.

“Yes! Maybe I went off on too many adventures, but I always knew where you were and that you were safe,” grandpa said.

“And I am not doing as much?” Caractacus asked. “Is that what you’re saying? Is that what Truly was saying? I am failing?”

“Son, the world is changing. The requirements of what it means to be a man is changing,” grandpa said. “The requirements of what it means to be a parent is changing. There is a new measure. I earned my right to travel. I worked hard for my little travel hut but you’re still in your prime and too young to be chasing this esoteric path. That’s all I am saying...” Thunder interrupted the conversation. “Please tell me you fixed the hole on the roof.”

“You’re preaching to me on how I should adapt to the world, and yet, you won’t go sleep in the wood shop?” Caractacus said.

“You promised you would fix it,” grandpa said.

“And I will,” Caractacus said. “I just want to run my hemp polymer through a few more tests...”

“You make a lot of promises, son. Like tonight with the kids and the car,” grandpa said.

“I didn’t promise...”

“And you didn’t say no, either. Saying no is also part of being an adult,” grandpa said.

“Fix the roof, don’t fix the roof, I don’t care, but don’t say you will fix the roof and then not fix the roof.”

“I got distracted,” Caractacus said.

“Yeah. Keep getting distracted and you will miss the children you promised Mimsie on her deathbed to raise,” grandpa said, leaving the room.

Caractacus sighed, got up, and retired to his laboratory. Tesla followed him. Tesla went to a tub of a bed, where a more complete animatronic woman began to pet him. Caractacus sat at his desk and stared into the eyes of one his models. She blinked and smiled. “Oh, Cortona, if only you could give me some direction,” he lamented. He sighed, went to lay his head on his desk, unconsciously picked up a candy, and then heard in his head, and heard incorrectly, Truly’s criticism of the candy, and he agreed with what he imagined she had said, which was much more disparaging than what she had actually said along the lines of something personal, and he scoffed at himself, ‘she’s right, who wants candy with holes in them,’ only it was much more disparaging than even that, because often we are our own worse critiques, and so he tossed the candy. Tesla, not to lose out on an opportunity for free candy, immediately pounced on the crystalized idea, and thus was born: ‘Woof Sweets,’ which was nothing like the candy in the books, though both made music, and both would end up making the Pott family well off, one for a whistling sweet for kids, and the other as a dog treat, but we’re getting ahead of ourselves in one story, but actually led with that in the other story, but in this story, it seems just about right.

## Chapter 5

“When do we get to the car?”

“Well, as I was saying, in the book, we get there more directly, because whistling sweets was something they had right away, and Commander Pott took it and sold it for a sum to the Skrumshus candy factory, a sum not quite fair when you consider how much wealth it generated over the next hundred years, and then went right away and bought the car.”

“You spelled scrumptious wrong,” Elizabeth said.

“Magicians have to spell things wrong or things happen,” Jon said.

“You’re saying your grammar is deliberately bad?” Lester asked.

“It’s a theory I am offering as conjecture,” Jon said. “Anyway, Truly Scrumptious Candies store doesn’t open until 2013, though the owners tell their story started in the 1980’s, but if they were honest, we’d know it goes back to at least the movie, which was 1968...”

“You were born in 68,” Eston said.

“Yeah, we’re not tracking that,” Jon said. “And if we go back to the book, which was published in 64, even though Truly wasn’t in the book, we do know that Ian had a flare for characters that had names that were puns, just like in James Bond books where the characters often had names that were double entendre...”

“What does that mean?” Eston asked.

“It means it has more than one meaning,” Jon said.

“Would you give us an example?” Elizabeth asked.

“Umm, well, some of them can be kind of randy, and what people don’t understand about magic is there is a sexual component, but also, it can be used as a distraction to block others from going too deep into magic, and so if you find a book by a retired spy and you see sex and jokes about sex that’s just there to throw the lay person off from the hidden messages, because there is evidence once a spy always a spy, but you have to have a way of disseminating information to your field agents, and so, James Bond movies and books weren’t just about entertainment,” Jon said.

“I don’t understand. Is that an example of double entendre?” Eston asked.

“Loxy?” Jon asked.

“Go ahead, I’ll play with you,” Loxy said.

“We all will,” Keera said.

“Well, that’s kind of one,” Jon said.

“What was?” Elizabeth said.

“Okay. So, Doctor Jones, we meet again,” Jon said.

“Oh, my pleasure, but please, call me Christmas,” Loxy said.

“And I thought Christmas comes once a year,” Jon said.

“Not if you do things right,” Loxy said.

“I thought no one did it better,” Fersia said.

“Are you getting this?” Jon asked the kids.

“Not really,” the children admitted.

“Has anyone ever said you looked like Christmas?” Jon asked Loxy.

“Like Christmas or Denise Richards?” Loxy asked.

“Like Christmas, I just want to unwrap you,” Jon said.

“We may not be able to continue with this line of inquiry without consequences,” Loxy said.

“Come to mention it, you do kind of remind of me of Denise, when the light is right,” Fersia said.

“Remind me of that later,” Loxy said.

“We should get back to the story,” Lester said.

“I thought you didn’t like the story,” Jon said.

“I am curious how you will wrap things up,” Lester said.

“He hasn’t unwrapped things, yet,” Loxy said.

“Oh, I want to go first,” Fersia said.

“You want to go first or come first?” Keera said.

“We really should keep this kid friendly,” Loxy said.

“We are. That’s the reason double entendre were created, so adults could have adult speak in front of children, but continue to have the children engaged,” Jon said. “Anyway, in the book, there is no drama of this sort, Commander Pott is a recognized genius, a married man, and he sells his candies, which they call ‘crackpots whistling candies,’ but in the movie, they needed more drama...”

“That’s why they killed me off?” Fersia asked.

“We don’t know that they killed you, as much as we’re led to believe he is a widower, a popular thing for men to be in the seventies, because the advent of women’s right led to existential crises for both men and women, because in truth, no one ever really knew their true selves,” Jon said. “And from collecting a sum of money, they go and buy Chitty from a car used car lot...”

“No way,” Elizabeth said.

“Right! You have to have to rebuild it and give it magic,” Eston said.

“No, cars like this, the magic was in them from the beginning. Nothing I or anyone does would give it magic. I may clean it up a bit, get it operational, but this had a life of its own before it was even first penned down into words, and see, this is the thing most people don’t realize about magic. Magic doesn’t create the impossible, it merely makes the potential more likely, and somewhere, way back at the beginning of time, Chitty was inspired, and the people before people held on to it, but it needed a pathway and a context, and so the whole human race came about in order for the car to be able to manifest,” Jon said.

“No way!” the children said.

“You’re reaching on that,” Lester said.

“Maybe, or, if you prefer a softer path, do you remember the story about Aladdin’s lamp?” Jon asked, and when the children did, and reminded him that he was also connected to a lamp, which was true enough, he often stood in as a surrogate Jinn who crafted a magic spell to get out of his day job and still get paid, which meant when Jon stood in it felt more like slave labor, and Jon rambled for a bit more on that, and then was back on track saying that once the three wishes were used up by the prince, he felt compelled to destroy the lamp so no one else could have a wish, and so he hires Frodo to take the lamp to throw into the lava flow at Mount Doom, but, this was when Frodo was much younger, and so he was a bit more casual in life then,

and instead responding to actual letter of the mission, he took a short cut, gave it to black smith to make into tokens, Tolkiens...”

“And this is why you should always be weary of accepting a token of someone’s affection,” Fersia said.

“Or a Tolkien of someone’s esteem,” Loxy added.

“Unless it’s an esteemed punk,” Jon said. “And the black smith simply melted the gold down completely unaware, and probably lucky it didn’t result in a thermonuclear explosion. The black smith, who sometimes made money on the side as a jeweler, turned it into seven rings, which was really interesting to watch, if you had the eyes to do so, because the writing on the lamp arranged itself on to the rings, and you would think a black smith jeweler trained in the dark arts would have seen the writing on the wall, but with this magic, you needed a silver screen to see the magic, and so no one saw what was coming till after the rings were polished and by then it was too late...”

“Can you get to the car?!” Eston said.

“The more you ask, the longer it takes for me to arrive,” Jon said.

“I’ll try and remember that,” Fersia said.

Jon coughed and went on: “So the excess material from the lamp became a bracelet of tiny gold strips, connected by leather, which would eventually be worn by the most wondrous woman of all time, the most brilliant, the most kind, the most beautiful in all the ages, and she adored her bracelet wore it every day of her life, and coincidentally, those rings I had mentioned...” (Fersia asked are you there yet, and Jon responded just a little further...) “came back to a wizard who melted them down once again, adding his own influence into the mix and needing more material he melted the bracelet with it...” (‘but I really liked that bracelet,’ Loxy lamented...) “and was going to use it for something magical, even adding an emerald to the mix, but this wizard just happened to be in the employ of Count Zborowski and the count saw it and demanded the intriguing piece with the secret writing that had emerged, that no one could translate, became a special component in Chitty before she was Chitty, and it because of this the Count began to win all the races, and he lost his head, even before he lost his head, and was telling everyone he was the greatest race car driver in all time, which is a better phrase than ‘of all time,’ but in truth, it was the car, and she was a little annoyed at the Count for taking credit without even the slightest regard for her, and that’s when she decided to not perform, and no matter what he did, or any of the mechanics, and engineers, and all the kings horsemen, who stood around scratching their heads, because well, they’re horsemen, not car’s men, and they couldn’t get her to work again, and so, they took her to the junk yard and let her sit, and there she sat until the kids found her.”

“OMG, you know how to ruin stories, don’t you,” Lester said.

“I am confused,” Eston said. “Why do you refer to Chitty as a female?”

“All cars, spaceships, and boats, are named after girls, and we refer to them as ‘she,’” Elizabeth agreed.

“And so it is,” Jon said.

“But if you melted Aladdin’s lamp down to make the heart of Chitty, then isn’t the car a male?” Eston said.

“Maybe he is transgendered car,” Fersia said.

“It was melted down, parts can change,” Jon said.

“All of us start out as female, and the male parts drop only when the right set of hormones are in play,” Loxy said.

“Or maybe Jinn are capable of being both genders, dependent on mood, like a mood ring,” Keera said. “Gender and orientation are much more fluid in nature than people realize.”

“No it’s not,” Lester argued.

“Well, technically, I used Aladdin’s as a reference point, but it really wasn’t Aladdin’s lamp, but Barbara Eden’s lamp,” Jon said.

“Her lamp was glass,” Lester corrected. “More precisely, it was a bottle, not a lamp.”

“Yes, but this was her sister’s container, which was a lamp,” Jon said. “They have a choice in their RVs.”

“Wait,” Lester said. “The evil sister, the brunette, who was also Barbara who also lived in a bottle?”

“This was the other sister,” Jon said. “The one no one talked about.”

“Convenient,” Lester said.

“Why wouldn’t they talk about her?” Elizabeth asked.

“Oh, don’t go there,” Lester said, a bit late on the interrupting.

“Because, she was the most beautiful, the most beloved, the most kind, and most generous...”

“When you do that, are you talking about Loxy?” Eston asked.

“Maybe,” Jon said. “Anyway, her nature was so awesomely good that whenever humans encountered her, it increased the demand for Jinn’s and it was really difficult living up to that reputation, and quite frankly, she set the bar so high for all magical beings, and humans, and Jinn are people, too, only much smarter, and most of them more legalistic, and so a misunderstanding occurred, which often does with humans because we’re a bit slow, and even when we speak the same language, we’re often not speaking the same language...”

“Double entendre?!” the children said.

“And so, the relationship between humans and Jinn have been kind of soured over the last thousand years or so, at least on Earth, and the humans spin it as if there is a war, which is absolutely ridiculous when you consider the Jinn’s inter dimensional capabilities, but just because you don’t behave in a way that makes humans happy doesn’t mean you’re evil, it just means you’re different.”

“Some of them are pretty mean,” Lester said.

“You failed to follow your end of the contract, Sir,” Jon said.

“That contract was not formalized in any way, and I wasn’t talking about her, precisely,” Lester said.

“Maybe you shouldn’t try to be binding them to magical contracts against their wills,” Jon said.

“Dark magic is stronger if someone is coerced to participate,” Lester said.

“Moving on,” Jon said. “So, on Earth, the number one killing agent of humans still to this date is mosquitoes. Are mosquitoes evil?”

“Yes,” Lester said.

“No, they’re just bugs,” Elizabeth said.



“And they help feed birds and they’re great pollinators,” Eston said. “Only reproductive females drink blood.”

“But they can swarm and lift a full grown cow off the ground and suck it dry and drop its crumpled body to the earth like an imploded milk carton that’s been drained, and you kids are against littering, aren’t you?” Lester asked.

“And so the Commander, the children, and Tesla, rode off on a bike in their best go to Sunday meeting clothes to speak with Lord Skrumshus,” Jon said.

“Why would we take Tesla into town?” Eston asked.

“Yeah, isn’t it dangerous, and it’s not like he can go into the candy shop to an important meeting,” Elizabeth said.

“Um, he followed us and by the time we knew it, it was too late to go back, so we just hooked a leash to him and kept him with us,” Jon said.

“Why would we have the leash with us?” Eston asked.

“Why why why,” Jon asked. “Why are you always asking why?”

“It’s a good question,” Loxy said.

“It is. I don’t have an answer, except Pott has a utility belt better than Luke Skywalker’s or Batman, and a leash is just one of the items he brought, because you never know when you might need a lead, that, and most likely, plot contrivance as Tesla is an important part of the coming scene,” Jon said.

“Oh, this can’t be good,” Elizabeth said.

“I assure you, no dogs get hurt,” Jon said.

Fersia and the children seemed relieved. So they’re trying to secure an appointment and it’s not going well until Truly arrives, really nicely dressed, no, actually, really overdressed, even for her time period, even considering her station, and even then, before Cosplay was a thing, she might have been considered part of a Cosplay convention, or, worse, ‘a princess’ who just needs to be noticed, and the children notice her, and so does the Commander, who is quite impressed with her in general, but even more impressed she would wear something so outrageously princess like, a dangerous princess, like from the evil Star trek universe princess, but still fluffy and pink in all the right places, and the Commander was always impressed when individuals did their own thing, and one thing that was more true for women than men, they could wear any style and any color and they would be beautiful, but if a man tried the same he would be ridiculed. Men are uniformed penguins, and women are alien flower creatures.

“Wait wait wait... Truly Skrumshus?”

“That’s my name, don’t wear it out,” Truly said. The children laughed.

Caractacus frowned. “And you weren’t ridiculed at school?”

“Did you come all this way to continue a feud?” Truly asked.

“No, he wants to apologize,” Jeremy said. “Don’t you, father.”

“Um, well, I am embarrassed to admit it, but yes, I should really...” Caractacus said.

“But that’s not why we’re here. The opportunity to say something nice to you is purely coincidental, unplanned, maybe kismet, and indeed most welcomed, but in truth, we came to sell one of father’s invention,” Jemima said, ever practical.

“And I think your name is as beautiful as you are, and I have the beginning of a song, if you want to hear it,” Jeremy said.

“Come along, children,” Caractacus said.

“Wait, what invention?” Truly asked. “One of your micro power-plants?”

“He made candies,” Jeremy said, showing her his.

“Oh, those?” Truly asked.

“Well, to be honest really, they don’t taste that great, but they do hold their flavor over a longer time than most candies,” Elizabeth said. (Loxy agreed, the taste had lingered for quite a while.) “Surely that is worth trying to backwards engineer what father did by accident.”

“Oh, and they whistle,” Jeremy said, demonstrating.

“How marvelously fun,” Truly said, taking one from the bag Caractacus was holding and trying for herself. She was clearly impressed. “If I am not mistaken, that’s a perfect recommended A, at 432 HZ.” Yes, that’s what it used to be, until they changed it. She played some more, changing the pitch, and even managed to produce an entire scale. “That’s really quite ingenious, Mr. Pott.”

“Commander,” Jeremy and Jemima corrected.

“Excuse me?” Truly said.

“Children, I have asked you not to share that detail,” Caractacus said.

“You were really in the Navy?” Truly asked.

“Yes,” Caractacus said. “You have perfect pitch?”

“Yes, and formally trained in classical music,” Truly said.

“Truly?” Jeremy said. “Gosh,” Jemima said. “We love music. Can you teach us?”

“Wattis?!” Truly called out to her father’s secretary. “Show Commander Pott in.”

“But Ms. Skrumshus...”

“Now,” Truly said.

“Maybe we should come back,” Caractacus said.

“I insist you see him. Go on,” Truly said. “And don’t let him bully you.”

And in Caractacus went, while the children remained just outside the door Truly, and the secretary made himself scarce.

“Thank you for not harboring a grudge, Ms. Skrumshus,” Jemima said.

“Please, continue to call me Truly,” Truly said. “And, I am no longer angry with your father. I was. When I think about it I can be, but I am choosing not to be, and I think maybe I am rather invigorated by the fact he actually stood up to me, when most people don’t, but then he really didn’t know who I was, and so the real test will be to see how he treats me now that he knows.”

“Your speech is so musical. I like listening to you,” Jeremy said.

Truly touched his head, a way of quieting him without hushing him, so they could all continue to eaves drop.

“I didn’t figure it was about nuts and bolts, unless it is. I hear Wonka has automated his factory to such a degree he fired all his employees. Can you build me a robot man who can work tirelessly day and night all week long even on holidays? And not those fake wind up ones, I want a steam powered employee,” Lord Skrumshus said.

“I am working on it,” Caractacus said.

“Well, come back when you have that figured out,” Skrumshus said.

You have to understand, Skrumshus was in many ways just like the character Oz, his bark much worse than his bite, only he wasn't hiding behind a curtain, but his desk was at the end of a great room with all sorts of powerful windows behind him, stained glass, which could make it seem as if a fire was raging behind him, and so it took some effort to approach him, because you didn't know how much was a true 'halo' versus a play of lights, and so when you consider the architecture of a room it, too, added this influences over a person's emotions and sets up a trajectory. This didn't mean Skrumshus was evil, it just meant he was used to having his way, and when you see his desk and the lack of clutter, and you overlap this iconic image with the opening scene of Jules Verne's 'Around the World in 80 Days,' Phileas Fogg is more than just a character, but an archetype many great men dared to emulate, so you can assume Lord Skrumshus likes things orderly, an overstatement, really, as he may have taken regulation to an OCD level, and his checking his pocket watch, a very Fogg thing to do, which was in time with the clock on the wall and the clock on the desk, and expectation that they be in sync, and his waiting for the whistle to go off soon, which explains why he was in hurry for Caractacus to spit it out and the fact that he wasn't able to frustrated him and caused him to hold a particular opinion of the man which really was not a fair opinion because Lord Krumshus' aura and the aura of the room was really a hard stream to pass up through. This doesn't mean you shouldn't buy his candy, any more than you should not buy 'Apple' products because there were rumors that Steve Jobs was an ass. He was, in terms of wanting to do it his way peculiarly insistent, because he had a vision, and he built a company, got voted out of his company, and later built something else and rebought his company so he could be back in charge, which is really impressive if you think about it, and his products do bring joy to consumers, and out of work he was likely a decent guy, as most people are, and maybe that's the real problem with system is too many people have to wear very different hats, and so you could be a warrior, and really good at it, but secretly all you really want to do his stay at home and watch your kids grow. Or, conversely, the problem is too many people think all they are is one hat.

So, if you wanted the truth of things, that phrase 'he ran his family like a well-oiled machine,' well that came from this time period, and for Lord Skrumshus, that was more true than for others because all the candies came a factory that was one giant steam machine, we don't really have to belabor that point. One didn't become a general on a battlefield without understanding music and rhythm and timing, and you can apply those skills in factories and in your family life, and you can bully almost anyone into compliance, even candies, which are really just crystals, and if you stack them in the right way, with the right frequency, you get a particular flavor and textures, and they even use micrometers to measure the granular viscosity, and the most prominent feature of his candies was 'consistency' of flavors with each product, as most people like consistency, so when you bite into a particular candy you don't want it to taste like another candy, and so you see, Lord Skrumshus was a particular song and character, whereas Caractacus was of another character, one that didn't fit well in this environment, because he was free form, like Jazz meeting classical music, which can be done, and done really well, but only in a less structured environment, like a jazz hall, not the temple of Skrumshus which presently enveloped Lord Skrumshus like a shroud of doom.

Caractacus turned to leave but he saw the children and Truly all encouraging him forwards and you would think as timid as he was he wouldn't have been an officer in the Royal

Navy, but often people who have been to war don't return the same, and though you might think Caractacus didn't participate in any particular war, because few people realize there are usually wars going on all the time, he would have been available to have served during the time of 'The War of the Golden Stool,' which was a real war even though it sounds like something CS Lewis dreamt up, but that was the 'The Silver Chair,' which is bigger than the stool, though the stool likely weighed more, being made of pure gold and all, and this story falls before the time of Lewis or Tolkien, who you might think of as disparate fellows, but were actually fellows at college, not bed fellows per say, but that has been known to happen, especially in the Victoria era, and often spoke together and were influencing each other, who got their stuff from earlier folks, tweaking where it was needed, which in a way, is kind of the same kind of cannibalization that goes on during wars, only their version of the 'war' played out in the hearts and minds of people instead of on the battlefield, which on the surface of it, seems less egregious...

"Excuse me, but can we power through this scene and get to the car?" Lester asked.

"No," Jon said. "This is important. It reveals the clockwork drudgery of the employees under the rule of a genius with OCD that wants things to be very precise and consistent, which is the favored paradigm of the time that there is no ghost in the machine, it's just all machine, and people are cogs, and is also a very deliberate statement against nature, which is completely the opposite of mechanical precision, at least the way man understands it, as it operates under different mathematical law, termed fractals, but we also have the first evidence that Caractacus and Truly will be a great team, because they are able to play off each other and build to a crescendo..."

"How does Truly know the words to the song?" Eston asked.

"The song is impromptu, they both invent it on the fly," Jon said.

"Where does the music come from?" Eston asked.

"From life," Jon said.

"The hills are alive with the sound of music," Loxy said.

"Oh, don't go there," Lester pleaded.

"I want to hear more," Elizabeth said.

"Says the six years old going on sixteen," Lester said.

"Oh, I love that song," Fersia said.

"Why do we celebrate sixteen?" Elizabeth asked.

"Well," Jon began.

"Why is it when she asks a questions, you don't give her any grief, but when I ask a question..." Eston began.

"Because you were born at a time when girls were favored over boys and so the teacher, most likely a female, ignores boys to make sure girls are more educated," Lester said.

"I am sorry, Eston, if I had made it seem your questions were not important," Jon said.

"So, why do we celebrate age 16?" Elisabeth asked.

"No, more precisely, why do we celebrate girl sixteen not male sixteen?" Eston clarified.

"I explain, society cares more about females than males," Lester said.

"In most human worlds, age 16 is legal adult status," Jon explained, talking over Lester.

"It is only delayed in America because they keep redefining the age of maturity, the consequence of which has millennial still living at home with their parents at the age of forty."

“Don’t judge. It’s just a different system,” Loxy reminded him.

“Seriously, judge all you like,” Lester said.

“You live with us,” Jon pointed out.

“Don’t judge me, judge the Americans,” Lester said.

“Humans are crazy,” Fersia said.

“Systems are crazy,” Jon said.

“Human who agree to participate in crazy systems are by definition crazy,” Lester said.

“Why are you still living in my home?” Jon asked.

“I am attending college and can’t work while pursuing my educational goals,” Lester said.

“Anyway, in this scene we also see that Lord Skrumshus is human, and may have taken an interest in one of his female employees...” Jon tried to re-enter the story.

“The blond?” Fersia asked.

“No, the blond goes with the brute,” Loxy said, looking at the credits.

“The one you’re referring to is just a dancing girl,” Lester said.

“Oh, just a dancing girl?!” Fersia said, clearly mad at Lester. He returned the look with a ‘what?’

“Actually,” Jon asked. “The blond is a spy.”

“Oh, carry on,” Loxy said.

“Double ‘oh,’ ‘oh,’ actually,” Jon said.

“You realize, making parodies of spies ‘real or fiction’ could be a hazard?” Lester said.

“Ugh! Why doesn’t anyone see Lord Skrumshus has overstepped his bounds there,” Fersia said. “Where’s his wife? Where is Me-too?”

“They weren’t around then,” Jon said.

“His wife wasn’t around?” Elizabeth asked.

“Truly didn’t get mad at his affection, displayed right there in front of him as she pestered him to try a candy he didn’t want,” Jon pointed out.

“What’s wrong with all the men in the sixties and seventies?” Elizabeth asked.

“Oh, it’s not just that age,” Loxy said. “You can take it back two thousand years to Aneas and Queen Dildo and the gods asking, ‘who wears the pants in this relationship?’”

“Dido,” Jon corrected. “Which is actually the same story as ‘City on the Edge of Forever,’ Elizabeth Taylor must die so the Kirk can bring about the Federation.”

“Oh, yeah, you did write that thesis. Anyway, Fersia, it’s not harassment until it’s repeated and the person who is offended let’s people know they’re offended,” Loxy said. “If you don’t let anyone know it bothers you, then it’s not a thing. And that blond looks like she’s pleased to have the Lord’s attention.”

“As opposed to his wrath?” Jon asked.

“I am offended by all of this,” Lester said.

“Feel free to move out,” Jon said.

“How will people ever date if people can’t even express interest?” Keera asked.

“The thing about interest,” Lester said. “A woman will dress scandalous to get attention, but gets mad when everyone looks her way.”

“Because we only want certain men looking at us that way,” Fersia said.

“You can’t have your cake and eat it, too,” Lester said.

“But if you have your cake, you could eat it, and maybe get some more if you liked it,” Fersia countered.

“We should return to arranged marriages,” Lester said.

“Because parents never lie about their kid’s strengths, and those marriages never came with unwanted physical contact,” Loxy said.

“Oh, look, you’re right,” Fersia complained about the cast credits on her invisible phone woven into the fabric of her sleeve; it wasn’t really invisible as much as only she could see it based on the angle and frequency of the hologram. “She’s not the blond. She has absolutely no reference at all,” Fersia complained. “Doesn’t she at least deserve a name?”

“I told you, she’s just a factory dancing girl,” Lester said. “Let it go.”

“Oh! Just a dancing girl?! Just a dancing girl?! Say that one more time,” Fersia said, claws out.

“Is this about your stint on Broadway as a nameless, stray cat?” Fersia said.

“Maybe,” Fersia said. “But not nameless. I have three names, mind you.”

“Is one of them ‘get out of here?’” Lester asked.

“Lester,” Loxy warned.

“Ultimately, we don’t know enough to judge Skrumshus, not enough evidence based on that small interaction, it just means, he is more complex than even he would like the world to know, and maybe he never did that before, but the music has broken down his walls and he is being a bit more kind and seeing those around him as human, instead of his well-oiled, precision machine factory. We also see a moment where he is good with the children, and can actually appreciate his daughter’s input and listens to her sing, and sways to the beat of another’s tune, and completely surrendering to this higher form of impromptu music. But I think more, this is just evidence that Caractacus doesn’t belong in a well-oiled machine, or in regulated system of schools that turns children in to cogs, which was designed to make mobile employment units, interchangeable cogs for newer cheaper cogs, so very few advance, because though people are more than that, they were treated by lesser just due to the philosophy behind the employment, but Skrumshus comes from long line of cogs, the military being the extreme machine, and so he gets frustrated and fearful when the world gets too far out of whack...”

“He is kind of like the Grinch who stole Christmas,” Eston said.

“Oh we should sing for everyone! Let’s change the world with music,” Elizabeth asked.

“Give the world a coke and a song?” Loxy asked.

“The original coke, with the cocaine in it,” Lester said. “What? You want everyone to sing in harmony and be nice, it’s got to be one hell of a coke.”

“How is it everyone at the factory knows the words to the toot sweet song if Caractacus and Truly just invented it?” Eston asked.

“The Force has a strong influence over the unused mind,” Jon said.

“Jon,” Loxy said.

“Um, magic,” Jon said.

“It’s actually a catchy song, and there is evidence that in the presence of a beat, everything will merge into one song, it’s called entrainment, and Caractacus and Truly are really powerful together so no one, not even father, can resist,” Loxy said.

“I can,” Lester said. “I have a strong mind.”

“The dogs can’t,” Eston said.

“Oh, I love this part,” Fersia said.

“Edison!” Eston said.

“Tesla,” Jon corrected.

And so, one might conclude that once again fiascos and failures follow Caractacus as he makes a hasty retreat, and that is certainly what the directors intended you to believe based on their editing job, and seriously, you could believe anything with the right editing job as there have been entire subplots removed from movies that change the movie, just ask Cameron, but we see Caractacus making a hasty departure with the children and Tesla, which was not so much cowardly as much as self-preservation, and just the right thing to do, getting the kids out of harm’s way, because, well, he was an officer, and the practice is to ‘leave no one behind,’ and running away without the children, now that would have been cowardly. Of course, unbeknownst to the audience at the time, Lord Skrumshus was also an officer who served the Royal family, and he would likely have pursued the Pott family, only his factory was under assault by every dog in the county, and his employees, not trained for such an emergency, were all in such a befuddled state that no one knew what to do, which is really not their fault that employers don’t train and educate their people for all contingencies cause then they might think for themselves and start changing things, and were simply running around like chickens with their heads cut off- which Jon acknowledged Elizabeth not liking the analogy but that was an expression of the day and that she had to remember not everyone had a replicator that could make meat without killing- and the more Skrumshus yelled the more the dogs barked, because he hadn’t taken lessons from the Dog Whisperer.

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“Can we please just get to the car?” Eston asked.

“This is like the longest foreplay ever,” Lester said.

“What’s foreplay?” Elizabeth said.

“Play before play,” Loxy answered, which was solid enough of an answer that the children seemed satisfied. That’s really all children ever want. To be satisfied. The same as adults, if you think about it, and if you remember that, being a parent is a piece of cake, but it’s hard to remember that when you forget it’s not about your satisfaction, but the kids satisfaction.

“This movie is awfully long,” Keera said. “I remember sometimes when they aired it they would cut Truly’s song, or the Roses song.”

“Oh! Why would they cut the roses?” Alish asked.

“To make them grow,” Loxy assured her.

“Oh, well, then, that’s alright,” Alish said.

“Yeah, why not just cut the opening ten seconds of darkness?” Elizabeth said. “Do we really need to sit and listen to car revving sounds in darkness? That’s so boyish.”

“Why not just cut that entire opening race sequence and start right with the children in the junkyard,” Lester said.

“Exactly,” Fersia said. “That’s a lovely place to start a little family. I bet there are all kinds of cozy, hidden corners and spots to get into... Though, after seeing it a couple times now I am accustomed to the car race and so I would not take kindly to someone cutting that or fast forwarding over it.”

“So what happens next?” Elizabeth said.

“Well, we get to see how good Caractacus is in being a parent, and how sweet his children really are, by telling their father never mind about the car, just sell their things to make his inventions...” Jon said.

“Completely unrealistic,” Lester said.

“Kids can be sweet,” Loxy said. “In fact, kids can be incredibly sweet and kind in the right environments, especially someone who has promoted kindness and imagination because through the use of imagination we see how we’re all connected. It is only because society abhors sweetness and sensitivity and so they bully kids into a different temperament as opposed to celebrating overly sensitive, as they could be the next shamans and energy workers, like Fiver from Watership Down.”

“Oh, I love that book. Maybe Fival is Fiver?” Fersia asked.

“Rubbish,” Lester said. “Just get to the magic and knock the kids out so you can go have some adult time.”

“What does that mean?” Eston asked.

“There is a long tradition in magical schools where parents and nannies use music to lull kids to sleep,” Lester said. “Hush-a-bye Mountain is one example.”

“Stay Awake,” Loxy offered.

“You’re really pushing to be Julie tonight, aren’t you?” Lester said.

“You so need a spoonful of sugar,” Loxy said.

“I don’t want your medicine,” Lester said.

“I do,” Jon said. “With or without sugar. Which reminds me, we need more whip cream.”

“I like whip cream,” Elizabeth said.

“Yeah, on ice-cream,” Eston said.

“I love ice-cream,” Jon said.

“You say that, but we never see you eating ice-cream,” Elizabeth said.

“And you never will,” Jon said.

“Is this another example of double entendre?” Eston asked.

“Maybe,” Jon said.

“Oh, sugar means kissing,” Elizabeth said, a very precocious child.

“How can you have a spoon full of kisses?” Eston asked, who was also from a precocious brood.

“Depends on the size of the candies and the size of the spoon,” Keera said. “What? I love candy kisses and they have the small kind that go in chocolate chip cookie, and then there is the cereal version, and then they have those giant kisses which could take a week to eat properly if you’re being proper...”

“Back to Hush-a-bye Mountain, isn’t that Jack and Sally’s song, from the ‘Night Before Christmas?’” Alish asked.

“Maybe,” Jon said.



“How about ‘You’ll be in my Heart,’” Fersia said.

“How about that?” Jon said.

“That’s also a good song you can sing to put the kids to sleep,” Fersia said.

“We’re through naming new old songs used to magically trance kids,” Lester said. “Loxy ruined it.”

“She never ruins it for me,” Jon said.

“All movies need a quiet song,” Loxy said. “Like ‘Edelweiss.’”

“Stop with the Julie thing,” Lester said.

“‘Goodnight My Someone,’” Keera said.

“Oh, I like that one, too,” Loxy said.

“I like ‘Somewhere over the Rainbow,’” Alish said.

“That’s not a sleep song,” Lester said.

“It’s a dream song, which could be a sleep song, if done right,” Loxy said.

“Which reminds me, there’s a rainbow connection to Gonzo’s song,” Jon said.

“Which is a terribly sad song!” Fersia said.

“And a sleep song to wind things down,” Jon said.

“Oh, we could do ‘Somewhere Out There,’” Loxy said.

“I did that when I wasn’t with you,” Jon said.

“Well, while you were singing that, I was singing ‘Suspend me in Time,’” Loxy said.

“Only because you’re ‘Hopelessly Devoted to me?’” Jon asked.

“OMG, would you two stop,” Lester said, yawning.

“I am getting tired,” Eston said.

“Boring conversations do that,” Lester said. “Except, it doesn’t work on me. It makes me grumpy.”

“And in this manner, the children were properly put to sleep, in a normal sleep, not the forever sleep, and Caractacus retired to the boundary of his property, where John Williams kicked the orchestra into gear so we could hear the ‘Hush-a-bye Mountain’ turn into ‘Ode to a Binary Sunset.’”

“Can you do that?” Eston said.

“Legally?” Lester asked.

“I can do anything in my head, and as long as I post it as fan fiction and not real fiction, kind of like fiction fiction, where there is this gray area,” Jon said, or gray matter, he always gets that confused.

“Oh, I love fifty shades of gray,” Fersia said.

“There is more than fifty shades,” Loxy said.

“Really?” Fersia said.

“You should know that,” Keera said. “Cats see more frequencies than humans.”

“Anyway, seriously, if you blocked the entire creative process, you would never have new stuff, and where the hell do you think all the Steam Punk versions of all the other fiction comes from, and it’s not like the all the folks that go to conventions are arrested on the spot, or people would stop going to conventions, which would only drive it to underground fiction parlors, with more secret codes than a master Mason meeting hooking up with swingers, and people are actually expected to dress up at conventions, and they don’t sell all those costumes,

and some people actually get offended by the adulteration of costumes, and if you arrested all the kids that made costumes and drew oddly flavored Mickey Mouses, which should actually be legal now, except Disney now owns everything, including the copy right lawyers and congress. They were bought and paid for a long time ago, and so they were able to extend their 'intellectual' rights, which is really just people's rights, because the people are the employees for the system and very few get to put their names on it, and even when they do get that, no one actually stays and reads the names on the credits at the end because, well, it's tedious, but anyway, I have rambled so long I forgot where I am, oh, at a certain threshold of acculturation all that art is bought and paid for, and they like to scare kids and tell them if their art is too good they might disappear and join all the foreign kids who are locked up in dungeons making shirts and sweaters and art to sell at the conventions," Jon said.

"Jon," Loxy said. "Notice the music change?"

"Oh, and so, in the distance, under a binary sunset, there is evidence for a caravan, or traveling circus, where everyone comes together to show off their Steam Punk artifacts, sell stolen droids, and clothing and gear and new tech and old tech used in clever ways, and suddenly, I am inspired, no, sorry, Caractacus is inspired, to go show the tools of his trade," Jon said.

## Chapter 6

“Mos Eisley Spaceport. You will never find a more wretched hive of scum and villainy. We must be cautious...” just means Obi Wan never made it to the pocket of Blackpool, or South London, where the carnivals gathered. If you have been to a Madrigal dinner, or Scarborough Renaissance Festival, well, you have never been to a Carnival. A Steam Punk carnival is even harsher. Most ‘civilized’ kids would be in bed at this time of night, but in any city worth its salt, there were the night kids, the kids that had been in the street begging, or selling gum, who would have been cleaning your chimneys except Parliament made that illegal, which left a whole class of little ones without employment, and some of those little ones grew up just enough to make their own little ones, and those little ones also lived in the night, and so the Steam powered Merry Go Rounds would never stop, except when it stopped to put down kids and pick kids up, and you would think some of the kids were too big to be riding Merry Go Round, but you really shouldn’t be so judgmental, as some of these kids didn’t have a traditional Dickens Childhood, and if you ever actually read a Dickens book, you would know even those kids didn’t have your childhood, so I dare any millennial child to time travel back to the before time and see if you could tolerate a day of what our ancestors dealt with, leaving your cell phone and facebook and twitter accounts behind, and you might find it was a miracle any of us survived at all.

Normally, Caractacus would have been very interested in visiting with the tinkerers, or looking at the gadget kiosks, or watching the fashion strip, or the side strips that sold funny mechanical things like lamps with the dancing hula girl, or the mechanical line up of dancing legs with hands holding up Victorian dresses just enough that you might have a hint of ankle socks going up a leg, which was fairly titillating for mechanical toy, and no proper place to show it, except the basement, where men sharing a smoke might gather and be crude, not that men did that in that day and age, but there have always been men’s club, with various degrees of exclusivity, while the rest just went to the pub at the corner, which was all inclusive.

At this particular carnival you would see clowns on stilts, a rare pickpocket, especially if he was awful at his trade, an occasional ‘spooky’ Jawa scampering through your peripheral vision, tough guys with their girlfriends, some of them girls were tougher than the men, and then there were the dainty women all tied up proper in their tight fitting clothing that would shape their bodies the way a mold does play-do, and some people just tied up and hanging about in real ropes, because that’s kind of fun, too, some people even hanging by hooks, and some of them tougher women had men holding onto they arms. It was a really a nice sight to see all the variety of people getting along. There were also snake oil salesmen, and magicians, all kinds of sweets and baked goods, and steamed popcorn which sometimes turned out popcorn so fast that it would explode and cause popcorn to rain down over the carnival, sometimes even as far as North London, so London birds and kids on the street ate well during carnival, and there were jugglers of all sorts, like knife jugglers, and kitten jugglers, and flaming pin jugglers, and there was a place for jousting, and sword swallowers, and flaming sword swallowers, men and women swallowers, and people amazed and scared and off hand jokes that go with swallowers and vores, and a place for swords fight, and Shakespearean theatre, and Christmas carolers, only they were not singing Christmas songs yet, because back then Christmas didn’t start before it’s designated date. There were ladies of the night who could steal you away for a bit of fun, or even boys of

the night, depending on your preference. There were the gypsies telling fortunes or selling mystical, esoteric items with a bit of history, and sometimes the history was more interesting than the items, just depends on what you're buying. And there was a place for punk bands to get a chance to peddle their sounds, and poor Huey and the Steaming news didn't get to resale his "Power of Love" whereas the one hit wonder "What are Words for" seemed to be doing okay, but she ended up being a Missing Person. And everyone here had a name and was in the credits. But Caractacus stayed focused on his goal.

To give you further examples of the toughness, there was this space just as you entered the carnival properly where the band music and the Carnival music and the orchestra music seemed quieter than the rest of park, which reminds me, my movie will be the first movie where the dialogue is louder than the music and sound effects, so you don't have to keep adjusting the volume on your set, in fact, we have a menu setting where you can even adjust the two so you can have you preferred balance, you're welcome, and anyway, people were gathering to gawk at a ten year old boy soliciting money to care for his younger brother, who was chained to a crate by a sinister looking chain of unusual proportions and heaviness for such a little lad that lead to a neck shackle. Yes, this is true, kids can have it bad, and adults will gather and rubberneck, because not everyone is Truly who will interfere, but many people will and eventually, a person will step forward and tell the ten year old to 'unchain that child' and the child would be all dramatic and hold his hand out in a gesture to stop the man from approaching further.

"Sir, I cannot because I am a true humanitarian, but if you will hear my story and still decide to free him from his chains, I will personally give you the key," the ten year old said. And the hook was stuck, and the reeling in began, so the child would continue: "My brother, though he may not look old enough to have been around during the time of child chimney sweeps, I can assure you on my word he was, because the practice continued in secret in parts, but also, he appears smaller because he refuses to eat but one thing. You see, we were employed by a duke to sweep, and this one duke was a very cold man, not mean, just cold, and impatient, and his previous sweep was doing his trade when the duke set a good chunk of coal on fire and cooked the child right there in the chimney." The audience moaned appropriately, and the child said: "I know, right. My brother and I, powerfully hungry as we were, accepted the work of dislodging the plump and roasted child from the chimney, because, well we have no mother or father to look after us, and we were promised coin and food and so my brother was the only one of us who could fit, and so up he went, and mind you, the Grimm fairy tales don't inform you about how wonderfully nice smelling a roasted child can be, like a proper ham on feast day, or how tender and delicate the meat is and how an arm or leg could just pull free like from a chicken on a steam roaster, and if you have never gone days without food, then you will never understand my brother's predicament. All he had to do was drop the pieces for me to trash but what I received were just clean bones, with fresh gnaw marks, and now that my brother has eaten human flesh, nothing else will satisfy his hunger..."

And as the child spoke, people had gathered closer because the ten year old had grown softer in voice till he was almost a whisper and then suddenly "ROAR..."

Eston and Elizabeth screamed something fierce. "OMG," they both said in horror. "Don't do that," Eston said.

"That's not even funny," Elizabeth said.

Though, the other adults in the room didn't agree and were still laughing, but mostly because Fersia left the room in a fright as if someone had thrown a cucumber on the floor and was just coming back as Jon was trying to speak without laughing

"And if you think you were scared, imagine the faces on the poor people gathering closer to the child who suddenly ROARed," Jon said, because if you get one you can usually get two, so might as well go for broke. Fersia left the room and the kids screamed again and Lester tapped his cane on the floor showing amusement but was also gathering up fear magic. "OMG, that never gets old, and anyway, the adults properly scared out of the reach of the child, and women fainting, and some men left the carnival completely, some leaving their girl, or even their own children, which is terrible that some adults can be so scared to leave their children, but that is a genuine survival tactic, and women had to be dragged out of the child's reach, and there were a few heroes left to do such, and the child scratching and clawing as the chain went taught making an awful noise all in itself, and only then did he take off his own chain and take his brother's hand and they would bow and accept some money, and reset the trap, with some people lingering to watch other people get scared because eventually someone who didn't know it was a trap would walk right in and spring it, because most good people don't have the common sense to look for traps."

Caractacus knew about traps and smiled as he rolled right past the setup, as he was focused on his on way to earn coin, even gave them props and wondered if his two ever did something that clever, because even while you're doing your thing you still think of your children might be doing, but there were lots of other opportunities to be had, especially if you like fighting. As a trained military man, he considered he could probably make some money in the ring, maybe even do some boxing without too much damage to himself, but he really didn't like hurting others just to prove a point, and when it came to fighting he was one of those that once you got started, he could fight, but it didn't turn off so well and if it weren't for uniforms letting him know who the opponents were, he'd like take out everyone, which is a good thing to know about yourself, especially if you want to show restraint, though he could sometimes intellectualize the event as training, and he was certainly willing to show them new ways to use an old bamboo, which he learned from an old China man who wipe out an entire squad of soldiers when he was in Hong Kong, a fight brought on by a street disturbance, but he was really opposed to doing that for sport, and if you show people new tricks, you may find yourself facing an opponent who knows what you know and that just makes things harder. So, all that to say doing it to protect life or limb was one thing, but just for fun wasn't his thing, though he did admire people's abilities and lingered for a moment as he considered the pros and cons of the various styles people were presenting. He could have helped the tinkerer fix things, or could have helped the antique seller identify things, but he couldn't see doing that for money, because that was something he did anyway.

Caractacus found an unassuming spot between a snake oil salesman and a kissing booth. Yes, there really were kissing booths in the days. Now, we have to emphasize this part, the technical and correct term is iterate, not reiterate, because if iterate means to retell something, then reiterate is a nonsense word that is more than redundant, anyway, because maybe you can imagine a carnival, with all the 'tough' people, and all the crazy stuff that can happen, and the variety of people you would encounter, but you have to realize this particular carnival is not for

the faint of heart, as demonstrated in the above cut scene that didn't make it to screen because people thought zombie cannibal kids was just too crazy, but there really is an unbelievable toughness to some of these folks, not societal rejects but definitely fringe, and very street smart, and sometimes you just got to be tough to survive the street, but being tough and looking tough did not equate to 'bad,' though some of the folks actually looked bad, but were really quite nice once you got to know them, as most people are, but you can also not be a nice person without being bad, and so there was this one prominent guy making a muck of things just because he could, which was truly an example of anti-social, not asocial, which is the opposite end of the spectrum, but the kind of anti-authority and anti-anything resembling structure, which he did in the most annoying, loud, public way as he could, which is an illness not an evilness, generally brought on by simultaneous abuse with a lack of nurturing, and so a person overcompensates for strength and meanness to make people go away, but the soul is so terribly lonely it engages aggressively in winning friends because negative interaction is better than no interaction, and it is truly the most lonely of conditions and a horrid place to be stuck, and a behavior that would exemplify the condition is taking the game where you use a sledge mallet and hit a button to ring a bell if you're strong enough, and he knew he was strong enough, but his intention was to hit it so hard that the entire of London would know he was strong enough, and everyone heard that bell, as he hit it so hard the contraption fell apart, the bell going East of London almost as far as Easton, which is a quaint little village, and West, well, it went to sea and scared a fish or two, the bearing going another direction and knocking some poor bloke out, and the rest of the thing splintered, and all the 'brute' did was laugh, like an evil god saying, 'puny humans' with no thought of how it hurt the vendor and his family. Seriously, it's terribly hard to calibrate such a fine instrument to test and train strength, much less build one from scratch. And you may wonder why I even draw your attention to this brute in the background, but if you weren't able to guess what was coming at this point, well, you need help. For starters, it's hard to miss someone who is clearly as big as Andre the giant, but who is nowhere near as nice as Andre the giant, seriously, Andre was an incredibly nice and gentle giant, a mere kitten, to be more precise, who had affinity towards puppies and children and making rhyming words, but this is not about him but only so you might get an idea of how big this particular brute was, a giant of a man who was very accustomed to having his way, and not the guy in the Johnny Cash song, and pushing people around, and you'd almost wonder why the girl hanging on his arm liked him so much, maybe to the point you would even consider Stockholm syndrome as a solid explanation, only remember, she was a spy, but you know, even if she wasn't a spy hired to discover if the brute was a hired henchman, because often genius hire brawns without brains because, well, they have their own issues, but there is love for everyone, also, and probably the main reason, I draw your attention to him because he ends up being a guinea pig for one of Caractacus' inventions, and, coincidentally, or more likely consequently, his only customer of the night.

Also, you may find it helpful to understand, not that it's absolutely necessarily true that you have to understand, but perhaps something you might appreciate, if you watch the thing being discussed here, there is quite a bit of evidence that this isn't just a kid's movie. There is some unbelievably adult content, like the Baron trying to kill his wife, over and over, and though you may not remember it, and maybe it doesn't exist, and clearly doesn't exist in any of the DVD sets as if someone had edited it out, there was a scene where Caractacus is carrying Truly

from her car and deliberately drops her in the muddy puddle, which is kind of funny, and odd it would be edited out of existence, because it was really funny, except someone clearly thought it wasn't funny or politically correct or maybe out of character for Caractacus, but not out of character for the Quiet Man, and wouldn't beat an Irish girl with a stick across the country side where everyone could see, and though Caractacus was a 'lonely' man, in terms of adult company, he wasn't really a quiet, lonely man, and yet, and this is the real bother when it comes to editing original prints, they didn't edit the scene of the Baron's wife being ejected and subsequently shot at by the Baron, which you would think would be more offensive, except its' comedic overtones, because a dress as a parachute is just hilarious and you know, even Victorian ages, men were looking up hoping to see a spectacle in the spectacle. Maybe they really thought the good guy couldn't do something so mean, but if you think about it further, it wasn't the bad guy that did something mean, it was Chitty that ejected the woman, and Chitty is the good guy, or girl, because it's a female, and so if the scene of Caractacus dropping Truly in the muddy puddle was cut because of that, that would just be wrong because it's good to know even good men can do wrong, because, well, we're men, but we can go further and say people are mixture of good and bad. Do you really want a world with only the appearance of good? Anyway, I am not saying with authority that that scene existed, or that it was edited out, but that I recall that being a scene, which could be just one of those memories children invented because clearly that was intended and there was hints of it, and when you only see it once a year, which was how it was back in the day, then maybe it is a false memory, and maybe just talking about it causes you to remember the scene, too, and you will be writing me, 'yeah I remember that and I watched my copy and it's not there, but I found my old Beta version and it was there!' But because no one in the world remembers beta, no one will ever see the evidence. And thus, a new conspiracy theory is born.

But don't write me about that. There is better stuff to write me about, like where's the letter-box edition of Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory?! Seriously, if you watch the Oompa Loopmpas dance and how awkward that one guy gets butchered in the pan and scan version, you know there has to be a letter-box version somewhere, and anyway, the whole point of this is that in this version, it was not a haircut machine, which is funny enough in the way the movie executed it, but removed from what was actually intended, because there is no carnival in the book, and even I am watering it down from my first thoughts of a mechanical rodeo bull, which gets loose and causes a muck requiring Caractacus to show off his skill at being a rodeo clown and taming a wild, mechanical bully with glowing red eyes and blowing steam out its nostrils, and a lot of men got hurt in that scene, but mostly from watching Jennifer Connelly, which was really some scene, and so I had to bring it down a notch. There was also a version where a person, usually a female, had to ride an 'orgasmatron' while reading from classical literature without indicating anything was happening, which can be quite hysterical watching them, and yes, it was a medical device for hysteria that could be used with your clothes on, but also watching the gathering crowd puzzled faces while trying to figure out why the person is having so much trouble reading simple literature was also just as entertaining, some people even getting mad and saying they could do it, not knowing what they were climbing onto, which makes it the most profitable booth to have at a carnival, because men will step up and pay for any number of women to try and read, but he left that booth at home. So, in another version, just

consider these alternative universes in a stream of parallel universes, there was this arm wrestling machine, but seriously, when a human is paired up against metal, metal wins hands down, no pun intended, which is not the origin of the expression, and too many people ended up with broken arms, which is not amusing in the slightest, and so the machine was dismantled.

No, Caractacus brought a trainer. A kissing trainer. In essence, it was a kissing booth with a robotic head and mechanical arms proficient at hugging and squeezing, and could be used to help measure the quality of the kiss. The trainer was capable of measuring and analyzing the qualities of a person kiss and making predictions about their characters, or rating them, and there was on a sign a ten scale with the most famous kisser on one end of the spectrum, and the worst kisser on the other end, all names that would have been well known at the time, but most people today would have to research the names, and so I won't bore you with the list. The machine was also proficient at instructing a person on how to improve, and so it had multiple modalities and was really quite a versatile machine, and it was his hope that a couple could have two of these and through a wireless connection they could kiss each other, even if the husband was military and off on some lonely duty station, which Caractacus imagined would help improve marriages, as many marriages were long distance marriages in the day, which really skews the research on the longevity of marriages, because sometimes it's easier to sustain a thing when you live apart. Anyway, such a device would be like a kiss message, or a messenger, or a kissenger, but that name is taken and there is actually such a product, which just shows you how far ahead Caractacus was in thinking about the needs of people, as kissing is definitely a need people have, which would be expressed well in a future Beatles song, "all the lonely people." Naturally, a big, strong, anti-social guy like this was more likely to smack the head and knock it out of the booth, but he simply made a face of disgust and comment.

"Well, of course, a big handsome guy like you, with a beautiful woman on your arm, you have no need for training. And, you probably wouldn't be interested in the prize anyway," Caractacus said.

"What prize?" the man asked.

"Oh, that my friend, is a secret, only for those who win, and also dependent on which game you enter," Caractacus said. "If you enter contest mode, and you score a ten on a scale of ten, which means you are an expert level kisser, you win the contents of this here box. Or, if you care for the blind challenge, and prove yourself talented enough of discerning the difference between the trainer and your own girl, I will personally surrender the box, and the money you gave to play. But so far, no one has ever beaten the challenge, well, except the guy at the top of the list, and you beat him, I will make it an eleven scale with your name proudly listed as the best kisser ever measured in the world of men, and I bet ladies from all around the world will hear of your fame and be jealous of your girl, and maybe even seek you out, so probably not a good idea, especially if your girl is jealous, so, you're right, this isn't for you."

The face of Cortana winked at the man, which was either an enticement or a challenge.

"I assure you, Sir, I can tell the difference between me girl and a contraption that isn't even alive," the man said.

"I would hope so," the blond said. No, really, look in the credits. "And I am not jealous in the least. I have my own set of talents."



Caractacus almost said he could imagine, but then thought it best, “I will take you at your word...”

Now the woman at the real kissing booth took offense. “That machine there is a bit sexist, don’t you think?”

“Why madam, there is a guy, too,” and at this Caractacus pulled a switch and Cortana disappeared into the box, and ‘Cortan,’ looking very much like the jinn ‘Zoltar’ that granted wishes in the Tom Hanks movie, *Big*, only it was creepier looking and more real, emerged. He wiggled his eyebrows and smiled knowingly at the brute. “And if you go for the triple bet, you have to be able to discern between Cortan, Cortana, and your girlfriend.”

“You think you can replace us with a robot?” the woman asked.

“Oh, no, you’re very pleasant woman and I would love to see you free from the drudgery of having to kiss every stranger you met willing to pay,” Caractacus said.

“I don’t mind so much,” one of her friends said. She was missing some teeth.

“And, my booth is guaranteed not to spread communicable diseases...” Caractacus said.

“Hey!” the woman said.

“I am not implying anything about your esteemed self, madam, but can you tell the difference between a coal miner’s cough and pneumonia cough?” Caractacus asked. “No, and most people can’t. But no one can tell the difference between my kissing booth and a real person.”

“I can!” the brute said.

“Care to put your money where your mouth is?” Caractacus asked, offering a blindfold.

“But if this is true, the machine will drive down the price of kissing and you may put us out of business,” the girl with the missing tooth said.

“You get much older, you will be out of business,” the brute said.

“Oh, be nice,” the blond said.

The challenge accepted the man began to put the mask on, stopped and said, “Bring the girl’s head back.”

“So, you wish the lesser of the challenge, very well,” Caractacus said, and pulled the lever that made Cortan go away and Cortana reappear. Once he was certain the man was properly blinded, he positioned his girlfriend and then asked permission to maneuver the man to his first challenge. The man was placed between the booth and his girlfriend, and all he had to do was turn to face one or the other, Caractacus turned him about in circles to confuse him and then stabilized him and asked him to proceed. The girl with the missing tooth was a jokester and wanted to switch out with the blond, but Caractacus said that wouldn’t be a fair test, and the crowd chuckled, and the brute was irritated, “what is happening,” and the blond assured him all was well. “Now, stand there and let the kiss come to you. The challenge begins. Who is the real girl, the one before or behind?”

And here’s where things began to go wrong. As the man kissed his girl, Cortana had second thoughts, because unbeknownst to Caractacus she and Cortan had a life of their own, and so she disappeared, but before she completely departed, she put a dog biscuit down, and Tesla, who had secretly followed Caractacus to the caravan, and would have made himself noticeable sooner, but he was following a nice trail of ice-cream that was melting in a child’s hand, and did get a chance to lick the child’s hands clean before angry, loud parents chased him off, was

suddenly there and jumped up onto the both table to eat the biscuit, which Cortan and Cortana had trained him to do, and so when the man turned to kiss Cortana he got a mouth full of dog tongue at which point he loudly announced, “There’s me girl!” and there was an uproar of laughter that could be heard the entire park round even as the man was bragging on how good a kisser she was, even inquiring, “when did you eat ice cream?” because the smell of ice cream was still fresh, and it was a seriously affectionate kiss for being so publicly scrutinized, and when he removed his blindfold, well, there was a moment of bewilderment, even as he got more puppy love and then he screamed something fierce, and Tesla departed for home, because though the parents had been angry and loud, they were nowhere near the intensity of the brute’s anger and loudness, but Caractacus has been a bit slower on the uptake, mostly due to shock, and barely dodged being punched, but he was reasonably fast when he needed to be, and so the chase was on, spilling popcorn, making a child cry because of it, and balloons set adrift, which is not something one should purposely do because animals eat bits of plastics and rubbers, and so if they’re not biodegradable it can be harmful, just be more mindful, this notice from Elizabeth and Eston, and you should really consider paper straws and paper bags, if not reusable cloth bags, and maybe reusable glass straws, and in that moment of discussing environmentally safe products, we missed the scene where the brute lost sight of Caractacus, and was called ‘dog breath’ by one man and who was subsequently clobbered, and one of the real girls offered to kiss him, but loudly lamented she wasn’t dog enough in appearance, and he might have even clobbered her, but the blond yelled at him, and then he thought he saw Caractacus dodging into a tent.

One wrong turn of course, could put you in the middle of a song and dance, and you would think a band of musician dancers would have notice a stranger suddenly in their midst, but it was a hard time for singers and dancers, even if you had a gimmick like a bamboo pole, because robotic can-can dancers often stole the show, which you think would have made Dvorak immensely pleased that people would recognize his opus 46 for all eternity, but it was forever tied to old west saloons and French gentleman’s clubs, and a fairly nice scene in the movie Stardust, which is nothing wrong with introducing people to great composer, because sometimes the only way to get a guy’s attention in educated stuff is lesser stuff mixed with adult stuff.

“How does Caractacus know the words to the song?” Eston asked.

“I am a little deaf in this ear, try a little louder next time,” Jon said.

Eston repeated louder.

“All questions must be submitted in writing,” Jon said.

And anyway, we don’t know if the guy ever calmed down, but he did go away, with his girl, who was slightly amused, and not the least bit upset by the ordeal, I mean it is difficult to be jealous of a dog, well, some husbands, and even many children, living in France, can be terribly wanting for attention from the wife or mother because the dogs are so pampered, but that’s in France, and mostly the blond was just glad no one was killed, and though Caractacus did make more than enough to cover the price of the car, someone pinched his bike and the kissing booth, and he was rather disappointed in that, as he really loved that booth, not to mention he knew it would be a future hit, especially with teenagers who were told abstinence is the best policy, but would never happen in any real universe, and so safe alternatives were something geniuses thought up, being practical and all, and his being lonely had nothing to do with it, but seriously

look it up, 'kissenger' exists and looks like a little rabbit. As for the booth, I can only tell you what happened to Cortan, but I won't go into details with that, because if you haven't seen 'Big,' you really need to, if only to have this discussion, is it a kids movie, because seriously, what happens between Tom and his co-worker really begs the question, 'is this a kids movie?!' It is certainly what I, a kid at the time, seriously wanted, and you wonder why society frowns on such things, because we all clearly think this way, or it wouldn't be in a kids movie! If you don't know what I am referring to, well, then, you haven't watched the movie.

## निर्मित

Now I could walk you through the montage of the car being bought and brought back to the man cave of all man caves and grandpa ridiculing the car, and Caractacus assuring him it had a fine engine, in fact, when he opened the panel a squirrel went running for its life, the squirrel would have agreed excepting it had just lost its home, next to the bird nest, and yes, it was cohabitating, how else do you think flying squirrels came about, and anyway, the kids were excited, which meant Tesla was excited, and Caractacus is telling the dog to look out, and then we see time pass in stages, and most importantly, grandpa saying, "don't overdo it, my boy," which Caractacus agreed. We then move through stages of Caractacus scouring his own property for materials he needs to repair, like a boat, pretty much everything but the kitchen sink goes into the car, and though he passes through the rooms where his kids are he doesn't even see them as he acquires his next part, but of course, the kids are used to him being in a daze, a hypnotic trance like no other, and grandpa jokes about a 'month of Sundays' going by before Caractacus ever arrives back at himself, which is interesting when you consider the montage and the leaps in time so that you actually might capture a month of Sundays as something more than a metaphor.

But what finally emerges from the garage is hands down the most fantastical, phantasmagorical, un-categorical, more than spectacular thing that isn't a thing, and yet it gleams in the sun, where it's appropriately shiny, but even the parts that aren't supposed to be shiny have their own glisten. It's a fuel burning oracle, it's wicked, and yes you can say that in many ways, because it is in the vernacular to say things that don't mean what you think it means, and even appropriate if you interpret the word correctly because if you read the book you will discover it often has a snarky response like, 'you idiot,' and that's not watered down, that's an actual text message the car displayed because it doesn't talk, but you would think if it could because it could text instructions on what button to push and how to drive, which is odd because it could just drive itself, and in the movie it does just that because it's wizard! It's keen! It's as fine as a thoroughbred, it's seats are a featherbed, it'll turn every head, and driving in this thing might cause you to believe you own everything in your purview, and so when Jeremy and Jemima come forward to admire this amazing vehicle they can only be impressed because very few things on their property had such shine, but some of that 'shine' was just Chitty showing her gratitude towards the kids for bringing it into the family and thereby avoiding the furnace. She felt renewed, refigured, refreshed...

"Gosh," Jeremy said.

"That's the most shiniest thing ever," Jemima said.

"How about a picnic," Caractacus asked.

“Can’t we go for a ride in the car?” they both asked.

“I meant, let’s take a picnic in the car and go somewhere,” Caractacus said.

“Yeah!” they agreed.

So, there was mad rush to acquire all the things they would need for a picnic, which was much more lenient in the movie, because, well, it was a movie, but in real life it was an ordeal as they gathered everything for a beach outing and put in a basket, and then made some food, and ate some food, too, because well, they were starved, especially Caractacus who hadn’t eaten a full meal in nearly six days, and you may wonder how he fixed a car in six days, but he had robotic arms and Cortana and Cortan helping, and you would think a Doctor reading this would have said, “Oh, he’s Bipolar!” but they didn’t have such a thing as the DSM back then when Caractacus was building his car. Also an invitation went out to grandfather who was dressed for an arctic incursion.

“Yeah, right. I am off to Alaska my boy,” he said, which meant he was going to his hut, which again, you have to wondered if it held a trap door that led to a hidden underground secret laboratory, and it’s size was meant to throw people off, with a sign on the door bring your own toilet paper, and so you might imagine the associated smell and never enter, which is actually fairly clever, and if the TARDIS had gotten stuck as an outside portable potty you see at construction sites, wouldn’t that have made for a good running joke.

“Okay, then, well have fun,” Caractacus said.

“And don’t shoot anything,” Jemima said.

“Especially polar bears,” Jeremy said.

“What’s the point of going to Alaska then? I could be cold at home,” grandpa grumbled.

“No killing! Take a camera,” the children insisted.

“Fine?!” grandpa said, tossing his scarf indignantly to go away, in the first rendition of his hut. “But if I get charged and eaten...”

“Just play dead,” Jemima said.

“Everyone knows that’s how you avoid being eaten by a bear,” Jeremy said.

“That works with grizzlies, not polar bears,” grandpa yelled back.

“No killing!”

“What if it’s a bearnado?” Grandpa asked.

“No!” the children said.

“What if it’s a sharknado?” Grandpa asked.

“No!” the children said.

“What if it’s a sharkicane?” Grandpa asked.

“Hold up,” Jon said. “What the hell?”

“Well, if a shark is scary, and a tornado is scary, then a sharknado is really scary, but not as scary as a hurricane comprised of a hundred thousand, wind carried, frenzied sharks, or, a sharkicane,” Lester said.

“No,” Jon said.

“You have thrown everything else in there, why I can’t I have this small piece of terror?” Lester asked.

“Do you want to be the child catcher?” Jon asked.

“Child catcher?” Eston asked.

“Why would I want to catch children?” Lester said. “I would much rather they stay at home and be properly scared and tortured by parents so I may harness their fear to run my gadgets and open portals to distant, dark lands that make your hush-a-bye mountain seem like a fairy tale.”

“Anyway...” Jon said. “See you later?”

“Disgusting, smelly things, motorcars,” grandpa grumbled.

And then they were off, and you would think an easy drive to the beach would be uneventful in and of itself, and if you were in the original book version, you would find everyone had had the same idea at the same time, ‘go to the beach,’ and been caught up in the worst traffic jam ever, and that’s when they discovered that Chitty could fly, to get away from the traffic, and then landed safely at the beach, but when they got to the beach, it would have been impossible to see the sand from all the beach goers, and then they discovered oh, Chitty could also be a boat, but not just any boat, but a hover craft, and then they were off to their own private beach, where they would hold chats about pirates. Of course, in the movie version, they’re playing their music very loud, which is something that would annoy Jon, Elizabeth, and Eston, because you can’t assume everyone is going to like your music, and not everyone wants to hear a pounding bass as your car goes by, and seriously, no one even wants to hear the car going bang bang, which sent several veterans of previous wars scrambling for cover, but there was nothing that could be done about the noise, because it was necessary for this particular engine to vent compressed air and steam, and when the pressure relief valve popped, it made a significant amount of noise, and if you were wondering why Chitty Chitty sounded like a steam engine, well, hello, it is a steam engine!

And so, singly loudly, and not looking where they were going, they nearly had a head on collision, but fortunately, Truly was paying more attention to what she was doing, contrary to popular belief, she was not texting and driving, and she chose, wisely, to detour her car into the same puddle she had previously driven into when avoiding the children, only this time, there was a bigger splash due to her speed, and the engine was killed, requiring her to get out and spin the starter to maybe get it going, provided there wasn’t so much water in the intake that it couldn’t gurgle its way back to life, but everyone just assumed it was dead and down for the count without even trying.

Truly stood, turned facing Caractacus and the children, hands akimbo, wonder woman pose, and in the light, you might think this was wonder woman, dressed as her alias, her stern look was that prominent, and except she was wearing what might amount to a Steam Punk Wedding dress.

“You will find a gentle squeeze on the hooter to be an appropriate precautionary,” Caractacus said.

“How is squeezing on a hooter a precautionary measure?” Lester interrupted.

“He’s got a point,” Fersia said. “If it’s so precautionary why did we end up with a litter?”

“Which reminds me, I would like us to go out for wings tonight,” Loxy said.

“Is this one of those double entry things?” Elizabeth asked.

“Ummm, back to the story...” Jon said.

“You’re saying this is my fault?” Truly asked.

“Well,” Caractacus began.

“Well?! You’re driving straight down the middle of the road, clearly not watching and anyway, what am I ever supposed to do now?” Truly asked.

“What any man would do, get out and walk,” Caractacus said.

“In this dress?!” Truly asked.

“I do recommend dressing for the occasion,” Caractacus said. “And, driving is an occasion to be dressed appropriately in case you do have to get out and walk.”

Jemima pushed her father’s shoulder. He put Chitty in park, engaged the break, got out, removed his gloves, and walked out into the water. “Come on,” he said, offering his arms.

“What do you intend to do?” Truly asked.

“Cary you,” Caractacus said.

“Can you push my car back onto the road?” truly asked.

“Probably, but then you would have a road hazard and so it would be best to leave it where it is and just have Mr. Coggins come fetch it and perform the necessary mending, if any,” Caractacus said.

“Well, um, you can mend things, can’t you see if you can get it started?” Truly asked.

“And miss the opportunity to carry you?” Caractacus asked. “I think not.”

“You’re enjoying this a little too much,” Truly said.

“And you’re protesting a little too much for someone wanting rescued,” Caractacus said.

“Oh, please, Truly. Let father carry you and then you could join us on our picnic,”

Jemima said.

“Do I look like I am dressed for a picnic?” Truly asked.

“You look absolutely smashing,” Jeremy said. Jemima shoved him and he nearly fell out of Chitty. “And I like your car...”

“Are you getting married?” Caractacus asked.

“No, I am not getting married,” Truly said.

“Okay, so if you have nothing pressing, the children seem awfully keen on you joining us, and I do owe you an apology for being rude, and I would like this opportunity to make it up to you, because I can be pleasant sometimes, when I am not irritating people or stirring up an unintended ruckus,” Caractacus said. “That is, if you could tolerate me for a moment. And, we could stop and ask Mr. Coggins about your car.”

Truly seemed to smile. “Well, okay then,” she agreed. “You may carry me.”

So, Caractus delivered Truly to dry ground, went back for her purse, because she forgot it, and then they were off, talking about the car, their car not her car, and she was amazed it even worked, hearing ‘father built it,’ and she commented on the funny sound it was making and soon enough was caught up in the same song.

“How does she know the words to the song they just invented?” Eston demanded.

“Magic,” Jon said and pushed back to the show, where they were delivered to a nice unattended beach, which should have been somewhere near Cadmore End, but they ended up at Cape Taillat, near Saint-Tropes in the South of France, which was mostly just to have a nice place to look good on camera, as opposed to honoring the book, which actually takes the Pott family to France, where they have an adventure in a mysterious pirate cave full of stowed ammunition which Pott family agree to set off, pissing off a very mean, almost villainous you might say, gang of bank robbers, who would be just as happy murdering folks as looking at

them, even kids, which is not very scary in and of itself, because there are lots of things much more scary than death, but also reveals a mistake in the book because when the Pott family first meet the gang they were about to be murdered, even the kids, and then later the gang kidnaps the kids but said they would never suffocate kids, which maybe isn't a mistake, they would murder kids, just not suffocate kids, so never mind, and back on track, and it's good thing I am not the bad guy writing that scene, and probably why I don't often indulge in children's story, cause even in this present endeavor, I am struggling to make it kid friendly, but still in line with the movie's questionable material, which is not a complaint, I like it, and I like what became of my psyche from innumerable watching of the show, it could have been a whole lot worse. Just saying. Sometimes Old Yeller has to be put down. That's growing up, right? But that's at the end of the movie, whereas 'Up' starts with sadness and then just makes you cry all the way through it.

And if you don't believe a double entendre can be questionable, try singing Truly Skrumshus as a child, or an adult singing it back to a child, and the myriad of ways that could be interpreted if your mind isn't in the right place. Luckily, I came from a time that it was perfectly okay to say such things about kids without it having a double meaning, but of course, I also come from a time and a family that frequently used the phrase, 'if you don't behave I will rip your arm out of the socket and beat you with the bloody end,' which is really quite a horrid thing to say to a child, especially one who was as imaginative as I, only they meant it quite literally not as a metaphor for intended abuse, but this is not about me, or Jon, or any one of the personalities we have encountered on trying to find our true selves, which is a Firefly reference, and this is definitely not another musical attempt at 'the Rocky Horror Picture Show,' because that remake was horrid, or even a combo of that mixed with MST3K, which might be funny, especially if you had the South Park characters' silhouettes there at the bottom, or even Southpark characters singing 'kitty kitty bang bang,' and no, I am not going to do that, I am just saying that might be as funny as a Family Guy flashback scene, which, well, no one really does flashback scenes in movies and television, or anything cheesy like telling a story within story, within a story, or making something a dream sequence... I mean, the movie might have made everything real up to this point and gone suddenly south into a dream sequence, making you wonder if the car actually flies, except it flies at the end, without wings even, and so you have to wonder if that happened, or it's metaphor because Caractacus and Truly intend to marry, or at least discussing it, and they probably should at least go a spell seeing if it's the right idea, otherwise the children could end up having abandonment issues if another mother figure rejects them, and so, you see it's really quite dangerous marrying any person with a pre-started family, because it's not a relationship with the one, but with many, and every time you add a person, you get a different 'thing,' and sometimes there's even a relationship with the ghost, (Fersia asked, "I am a ghost, how cool is that? Maybe I am the car...") and so you really have to be a remarkable person to step up and marry someone with a past, which is a good reason why most people should only have one partner for life, because most people can't handle the subtle jealousies that come with or without ghosts of Christmas pasts, and the idea that kids might actually come first in this new thing, well, you would hope, because there are stories where the kids took a second seat to the new girl, which doesn't mean she was an evil step mom, which is rather cliché, but even with a nice step mom, dad is going to be seriously distracted, at least for a year because that is statistically when

relationships become properly normal and people start ignoring each other again, and sex declines. Statistically. This is not true of Jon and Loxy, or Caractacus and Truly, because, well, they're quite magically apt and frequently off on fun adventures, which is evident when they fly off into the sunset together, leaving the kids behind, and probably a set up for a sequel with grown kids and abandonment issues, and maybe dating each other. Which really translate into not too much different for the children, because father was already sort of ignoring them, and that in age before cellphones completely robbed children of parents and set them free like in Lord of the Flies, and the evidence for this being true is when singing that lovely song about 'you two' he laments several times 'it makes me wonder why you bother...' well, fuck, you're our dad, dad, what kind of serious question is that? Do you know how much emotional baggage you're giving us when you ask us something like that? Get a girlfriend get laid and get back on track...

"Jon?" Loxy asked.

"Uh, oh, um where were we..."

"The beach," Loxy encouraged.

"Oh, yeah, well, before we go further, I need to warn it gets scarier from here, because, well, this is not going to be your dad's Chitty Chitty Bang Bang movie, nor even your grandfather's book of the same. We are going off the deep end here and it's not a dream sequence," Jon said.

"We're not afraid," the children said.

"Yeah, you will be, Luke and Leia, you will be," Jon said.

"Who are Luke and Leia?" the children asked.

"OMG," Jon said.

"Rey and Kylo," Fersia said.

"Oh," the children said.

"They're not related," Jon said.

"We don't know that for sure," Fersia said. "So, get your fantasies in with your sister before you know it's your sister..."

"Moving on," Loxy encouraged, turning into Truly and the beach coming back into focus. She becomes Truly and approaches Caractacus while the children run off, giving the two adults a moment to have adult conversations.

Which is another reason for the movie, to demonstrate men can be good parents. Just look at any number of 70's television shows for more evidence. Andy Griffith. My three sons. The Courtship of Eddies father. The real danger here lies in vilifying the other parent and we should take all precautions never to do that, in front of the kids or not, because what you say even to your closest friends gets fortified in reality and it will come out somewhere, either in an impromptu unexpected word, or a flash micro-expression of contempt. It always comes out.

Anyway, Caractacus had stowed all their gear and was tinkering under the car when Truly came up seeking his attention and he hit his head and laughed and stowed his tools in in a recessed, hidden compartment.

"I think the children are spying on us," Truly said.

"Oh, of that I am sure," Caractacus said, smiling.



“Caractacus, I think I owe you an apology,” Truly said. “You really do have two wonderful children, and though that could be luck, I suspect it is because of your tinkering.”

“Thank you, Truly. I do the best I can. They have everything they need. Well, almost everything,” Caractacus said.

“What happened to her?” Truly asked.

Now, there is lots of ways this could go. He could trash her and say she left with some Tom cat of a man, but even if this version of things were true, why shouldn’t she go off and be who she wants to be, with whom she wants to be, and pursue the things she wants to pursue? A man shouldn’t block a woman from going in search of her happiness, and though it’s okay to be sad or disappointed, one shouldn’t talk smack about a person practicing free will, that is a thing one should encourage, right?, and so if this were true, then this tells you more about Caractacus than a woman who had a change of heart, because in this particular frame of reference, it’s not about her and even if it was, maybe it’s still not a bad thing if she needed more than Caractacus could provide, because not everyone is a match. Anyway, how a man discusses his past relationships is evidence for how he would treat you when you’re the past, and so any disparaging word is a bad omen for future relationships. But there is also a trap in the other direction, if you talk too good about her, it sets up a point of tension, competition even, and it’s not about that, either, and many people, especially if they had died, can be imbued with angelic qualities making them not quite real, because we humans do that. Specifically we tend to exaggerate qualities, good and bad, to carry our own story forwards, and someone leaving, either due to choice or due to death is part of our story and it’s the knowledge of this truth that caused him to hesitate, not because he didn’t want to share.

“I am sorry, if I am intruding,” Truly said.

“You are not. It’s healthy to discuss things and if we are to be friends, and this feels like friendship, and if we continue, I want you to feel safe asking me anything. If I ever hesitate it’s either due to emotions, or due to me wanting to find the right words,” Caractacus said.

“You seem very wise,” Truly said.

“Thank you, but no. I am human, and if you ask me a question about emotions, it takes me longer to get the answer, because I intellectualize most things and so there is a delay,” Caractacus said.

Then the kids were there suddenly. “Father, tell us a story.”

“It’s time to be heading back,” Caractacus said. “We’ve kept Truly from her life too long.”

“Oh, I don’t mind really,” Truly said. “Sometimes the detours in life is where life actually occurs.”

“True,” Caractacus agreed. “Still, in the car, children.”

They all climbed in, the children protesting, and the car didn’t start. The kids were quarrelling about whether or not there were pirates and Truly assured them that there were, as piracy would likely continue until the end of maritime law...

“That’s odd,” Caractacus asked.

“Shall I spin the starter?” Truly asked.

“It’s not that,” Caractacus said.

“It wants a story, too,” Jemima said.

“Ummph,” Caractacus said.

Chitty Chitty gave a toot of its horn, ‘gaggooga,’ which may not look like a word, but it is the sound it made, according to the book.

“Oh,” Caractacus said.

“Look, father, a boat,” Jeremy said.

“A boat? Did you say boat?” Caractacus said.

And so Baron Bomburst, the bad guy, who was also a bad guy in Goldfinger, another Ian Fleming story, makes his entrance. The Baron, oddly enough, looked a great deal like Jon’s nemesis, Morlon Fribourg...

“Why do you hate Adam Sandler so much?” Jeremy interrupted.

“I don’t hate Adam, I mean, Morlon,” Jon said.

“You just said he was the most evil man in the world,” Elizabeth said.

“I would never aim so low,” Jon said. “He is clearly the most evil man in the multiverse,” Jon said. “But that doesn’t mean I hate him. Everyone has their opposite doppelganger...”

“That’s not true,” Loxy said.

“Yes it is,” Lester said.

“So, you’re telling me there is a good Lester out there?” Loxy asked.

“No,” Lester said. “I killed him.”

“What makes him so evil?” Jeremy asked.

“He invented Megablocks,” Jon said.

“That makes him evil?” Loxy asked.

“Everyone knows Lego is the superior product...” Jon said.

“Not superior, different,” Loxy said.

“Deviously different,” Jon said. “See, Baron was given money by an opposing government entity that tries to ensure fair trade and anti-monopolies, but in truth anti-monopolies guarantees people never rise above their station because now there is war between Legos and megablocks, which is better, Lego gets marvel and mega blocks gets Pokémon, but Lego people also like Pokémon, but now they can’t play Pokémon because if you invested money in Legos, you can’t jump to megablock because they don’t intermix, and so if the government truly cared about people, they would make one standard block. Further, there would be only one type of charging unit, not a dozen different kinds of plugs or batteries, because this just produces waste in the end you have a million tons of wires that can’t be used because phone companies want to make money selling you new adapters and chargers...” Jon said. “Anyway, if it weren’t for James Bond, the Baron would have taken over the world when he released his Lego bomb, a device so hideous that it completely melts all Legos, which would then make his product the only viable option, which would suddenly make him not only the most evil man in the world, but the richest...”

“But he’s already a wealthy man,” Elizabeth said. “How much money does he need?”

“You can ask him yourself when you meet him,” Jon said.

“I don’t want to meet him,” Elizabeth said.

“Me neither,” Eston said. “I like my Legos.”

“We’re really getting away from the story,” Lester said.

“No, we needed this distraction to explain the sudden surging of the tide which is really a nice trick of the camera panning in and turning about the car and back out and tadaa, movie magic,” Jon said.

“Quick, we’ll have to swim for it,” Caractacus said.

And if you were worried, well, don’t be, because Chitty Chitty Bang Bang becomes a hovercraft and demonstrates it can float...

“Wait wait wait,” Eston said. “They’re being shot at while singing a song?”

“You should always sing a song,” Loxy said. “Even when you’re being shot at.”

“Just like Davy Crocket,” Jon said.

“Oh, I don’t like him,” Eston said.

“Yeah, he shot a bear,” Elizabeth said. “Bears are intelligent.”

“Well, that remake was a bit awful,” Jon agreed.

“Oh, I love Billy Bob,” Loxy said.

“So do I,” Jon said. “And fact, that’s the only reason to watch the remake, and the movie might have been better if they ended the movie at his death, instead of showing Dennis Quaid’s revenge, which turn it into a Pearl Harbor fiasco, because seriously, we didn’t need the revenge bombing Japan for emotional completion. It was almost as if the whole movie was justification for the second part, and it’s not. Pearl Harbor was a tragedy. The Bombing of Japan was tragedy. But the worst part is we still haven’t learned not kill people or have wars.”

“Will the wars ever stop?” Eston asked.

“I don’t know. Ask the Mamas and the Papas,” Jon said, hugging both the children too him. “But I can tell you, our heroes escaped the cannon fire and get back onto the beach and drive off. And at this point, they return to Truly to her home where she has a marvelous epiphany of love, resulting in a sudden song, and a twirling about like Julie Andrews on a mountain, and that after that, we see her reunited with Caractacus and the children on another outing, and if you saw the movie version on television where they used Truly song, you have enough context to realize this was another outing, but if you saw the version where they edited Truly’s song out, you might conclude, wrongly, that this is one of those movie mistakes and that the continuity director was asleep at the helm, because suddenly the children and Truly are wearing different outfits. Caractacus is still dressed the same, but that’s because men dress the same, which is why you always see Gilligan, the skipper, and the professor wearing the same thing, while the women always had something different on...”

“Jon, don’t tarry on the island,” Loxy said.

So, they were driving along on a deserted country road, laughing and singing, when suddenly, an obstacle presented itself. It appeared to be just an ordinary obstacle, like a tree branch, which would be easily removed, and so Caractacus put Chitty in park and climbed out, and, yes, you guessed it, the Ruffians stepped out of the wood work, and the chief ruffian, was the Brute. You really didn’t think you had seen the last of the Brute, did you? I mean, he is really too good a character to only use once, kind of Like Darth Maul. One of Lucas biggest mistake was killing off a character with such strong screen appearance in the first of the trilogy, as the others simply lacked the fierceness of that one...

“Jon?” Loxy asked. She was really quite a nice companion, helping Jon to stay on track. If you doubt that, you should read some of his writing prior to Loxy.

“So, Mr. Potts, we meet again,” the brute said.

“Pott,” Caractacus corrected. “One pot, not plural.”

“Good point, thank you,” which you may be surprised, because even though he was a ruffian, he was capable of politeness during the transaction of business, and this was just business, nothing personal. “My gang and I have been hired to confiscate your car. Normally, that also includes roughing you up, but seeing how you have your children and lady friend present, I would like to forego the usual and unnecessary roughness, and you just kindly surrender the car without too much fuss, because given the circumstances, that is the more rational thing to do.”

“Thank you, but I must protest,” Caractacus said.

“Of course, that’s to be expected, except, there’s like seven of us, and I, myself, count for seven within myself, I am that strong,” the brute said.

“Indeed, I have witnessed as much for myself,” Caractacus agreed.

“I am told you’re a smart man, Sir. Do the math again,” the Brute said.

“I am doing the math, and you simply have left out some very important variables,” Caractacus said. “Of course, you could assume I am bluffing, but I would prefer you take me on my word as an officer and a gentleman; I am not bluffing.”

“Seriously?” Lester said. “You’re just going to have a talk?”

“We’re English,” Jon said.

“So, you want to talk them to death?” Lester asked

“It’s the British way,” Jon said.

“Did you even bring a weapon?” Lester said.

“Are you kidding? The Baron tipped his hand prematurely giving me notice that he is after my car, of course I am armed,” Jon said.

“Just give him the car!” Lester said.

“Are you insane?” Jon asked.

“You built it, you can build another,” Lester said.

“You practice chaos theory. That goes against your very philosophy!” Jon said. “Besides, would you ask Michael to surrender Kit?”

“Who’s Michael?” Elizabeth asked.

“Who’s Kit?” Eston asked.

“Would you ask Jim to give up his VW?” Jon asked.

“What’s a VW?” the children asked.

“53 was the first 42,” Jon said.

“I don’t think anyone’s going to get that,” Loxy said.

“Why are we doing math?” Fersia asked.

“Would you ask the Duke boys to give up the General Lee or the gang to give the up the Mystery Van?” Jon asked.

“Yes,” Lester said. “There are kids involved and you know the Baron will just keep coming for the car and someone is bound to get hurt, or worse, kidnapped.”

“Nonsense,” Jon said.

“Besides, Chitty is family, you can’t just surrender her,” Eston said.

“Sometimes you have to give up the pets,” Lester said. “Just be grateful we’re not in Trinidad where people just shove unwanted pets off while driving on the freeway.”

“That’s awful,” the children said.

“It’s a cruel world. Grow up,” Lester said.

“Even if Chitty was just a car, and she isn’t just a car, you don’t surrender the most advanced technological achievement in modern science to someone like the Baron, who would no doubt use it to take over the world,” Jon said.

“Nonsense. It’s just one car,” Lester said.

“One crashed UFO could so change the state of affairs that every human might have access to technology that could destroy or enslave the world,” Jon said.

“Then blow it up before the Baron, or worse, the Americans get it,” Lester said.

“No,” Jon said. “Now, where was I... I am not bluffing.”

“You would not win a fair fight, and if it came to that, I would have to hurt the woman and the children, just to send a message,” the brute said. “I wouldn’t want some young whipper snapper trying to find me ten years from now like that guy with the six fingers.”

“I agree, there would be no way for me to win a fair fight,” Caractacus said.

And at that, Caractacus removed his side arm and without hesitation shot the brute square in the chest.

“No way!” Eston said.

“You said no one died,” Elizabeth said.

“This is really out of character for you, Sir,” Loxy said, mad.

“Give me a moment,” Jon said.

The brute looked at his chest. He touched it and brought something to his nose and then tasted it. “Ketchup?”

“That was a warning shot,” Caractacus said.

“You realize how angry I am? Ketchup is really hard stain to remove from whites,” the brute said.

“He thinks he will stop us with ketchup?” one of the ruffians snickered.

“Oh, the first shot was just ketchup,” Caractacus said, and shot one of the nearby trees.

“Oh!” Alish said.

“Give me a moment,” Jon said.

A nice big red spot appeared on the tree.

“That is paint,” Caractacus said.

“You’re going to stop us with a paint gun?” the ruffian asked.

“If you get paint on my shirt, I will be really angry. You don’t want to make me angry,” the brute said.

“It’s not just paint, but it’s a homing beacon for what’s to come,” Caractacus said.

“What’s to come?” a ruffian laughed. “Butter pie?”

“A swarm of self-guided bullets,” Caractacus said. He whistled.

Chitty Chitty went bang bang, and not like the song ‘bang bang,’ which ever version of that title you go with, though all of them can be quite sexy in a secret agent sort of way, only it wasn’t just bang bang, but rather, was bang bang bang bang... but so fast and furious that it was sounding very much like the sound of a rotary machine gun. Indeed, it was the first Gatling gun,

before there was a Gatling gun, as that was invented in 1861, and you can't say it's not plausible because we know Pott was an ingenious inventor and former officer, and so I shouldn't have to remind you of things existing before their time, just look at the Davinci files or learn to read hieroglyphics, there's evidence, ignore if you have to, and this scenario is even more likely when you consider that in the book Chitty has an advanced radar tracking system with antennae and everything- but this was not a Gatling gun, but rather this was the Pott's continuous, gold plated, firing apparatus that had emerged silently from the front grill as if by magic, not actually quiet, there had been a whirring of gears, but that was hardly noticeable over the quiet humming of Chitty Chitty's engine, even the passengers hadn't heard the stirrings, and firing straight from the front of the car, which had it been firing normal bullets would have killed everyone in front of the car, including Caractacus, which is a reasonable tactic to save a family from ruffians, but self-sacrifice was not necessary at this juncture, so, don't worry, and the whole of this event caused the Ruffians to drop to the ground, while Caractacus stood strong, unflinching even, as the swarm of bullets went around him and over the ruffians, a cloud that was loosely defined by tracer rounds, so the whole affair had a pleasant caressing aura of mystery, and after circling Caractacus in a variation of an electron shield, they then turned under their own volition and went straight towards the painted target like a swarm of angry, mechanical bees, and chipped away at the tree until it was cut in half and fell over, fortunately not on the road, but close enough to give several ruffians concern, as branches tickled their legs.

"Oh!" Alish said.

"Yes, sorry, I lied, someone died," Jon said.

"How could you kill a tree?!" Eston said.

"Yeah, only God can make a tree," Elizabeth said.

"It gave its life willingly so no humans would die today, and its body would be later collected by one of Caractacus' farm hands so that not a single leaf would go to waste. In fact, we will call it the Gifting Tree and write a book in her honor..."

"Which means more trees have to die in order for you to tell that one tree's story," Alish said.

"No, we will be using magical hemp to make future paper, and magical hemp has to be cut back in order to keep it from perishing under its own weight. Magical hemp is not to be confused with the Jack's bean stalk, though the plants are related," Jon said. "Anyway..."

"Still," Lester complained. "You should have killed at least one of the ruffians to better illustrate your point. Who taught you how to shoot? The A=Team?"

Jon pointed warningly at Lester and continued:

When the ruffians had come to the conclusion that the ruckus was over, which you might think would be easy in the absence of noise, except this close to multiple discharges leaves an echo in your brain, and also, the gradually became aware of the fact they weren't apparently harmed, even capable of breathing, they begin to look up, and they saw Commander Pott still standing, not the least bit harmed, actually looking rather smug as he blew into his gun and stowed it back in a holster reminiscent of Han Solo, the children standing in the back of the car, their ears covered because it was really was an awful din, and Truly looking very serious, and as they began to stand and brush themselves off, clearly showing a very different sort of

temperament, it became clear to all of them, and to everyone who had been able to keep their eyes open during the scene, that they had all to a one been marked with paint.

“Now that I have your fine men’s attention, I should mention, I don’t necessarily need to tag you with paint for my car to actually acquire a solid lock on you,” Caractacus said. And he didn’t. Chitty was well capable of assigning its own target, acquiring positive acquisition over any potentially hostile target even in a group of non-targets, and taking steps to eliminate said target on its own, but because it was a gentle car, it would never take a life unless directed by Caractacus, or the circumstances were so dire that if it didn’t act, someone of interest would die from inaction. Again, you may say there was no evidence for this, and you would be right if your only source of information for Chitty Chitty Bang Bang was the movie, but in the book it had a radar dish before there was radar, and it tracked a bad guy through the whole of France, or at least the bad guy’s car, a single car through a part of France, something even modern radar attached to the grill of a car can’t do, and if you remember Caractacus was in the military and he was one of those kind of people who wanted to end all violence quickly, and if you find that implausible or any of this, you have completely ignored the accomplishments of Tesla due to your reading the wrong history, and well this rotary continuous firing, solid gold plated, apparatus was absolutely possible. Also, Ian, who is not Ion, was an actual spy and he knew things and incorporated those things into his story in a way that he could share with his family without violating his agreement to keep state secrets, because if you think wives of spies don’t want to know, then you’re sadly mistaken about the nature of people, so that most the time, the wives of spies were also spies, and you were lucky if they were on the same team, and spies were the first group to coin the term swinging, and at the time referred to how the pendulum of relationships teetered, and brought polyamory forwards as a legitimate lifestyle, because once you’ve slept with the enemy, they become family, and aren’t we all just one, big happy family?

“No,” Lester complained.

“So, Commander Pott,” the brute said. “You have clearly won this round, and I assure you, neither you nor your family will have any further confrontations with me or my men here, but I cannot promise the same from the Baron as he is determined to possess this car. Given what we have just witnessed, I can understand why.”

As the brute was tipping his hat to Caractacus, his men were in flight, running so fast that it hardly looked as if their feet touched the ground, and rather blindly and so it was amazing they didn’t collide with each other, as they were not smart bullets, or even smart bees, and it was so comical you would almost expect to hear a certain soundtrack, like the one that followed keystone cops, or that pirate movie, or even Benny Hill’s theme, while the Brute backed away, gently, respectfully, even removing the imposed barricade of a tree branch, his hands staying well clear of his weapon, before he turned and walked away, gently, briskly, then in a run. Caractacus returned to the driver side of the car, put Chitty Chitty in gear and continued on their outing. The gun quietly stowed itself.

The children settled and lowered their hands from their ears but were clearly in a state. Ms. Truly was looking at Caractacus, adjusting the scarf that hung from her hat.

“Everyone alright?” Caractacus asked.

“Yes, father,” the children said, more respectfully than they had ever held with their father previously. It is one thing to know that your father served in some sort of military capacity, it’s another thing to see him display his skills.

Caractacus smiled at the children, happy to hear that, but still uncertain about the present mood, and so the smile wasn’t sustainable.

“Caractacus,” Truly said. “Tell me, exactly what did you do while in service of her Majesty?”

“Well, and I do hope you will accept this answer, I am under contractual agreement not to disclose that information, but if you are with me long enough, say forty or fifty years from now, I would be more free and readily available to dispose of such stories that would so amaze you that you might imagine I come from a different world or even a different era, provided of course, I am still alive and ticking, if not, you will find my memoirs in the safe, which I will make open for you or the children, after certain conditions have been met,” Caractacus said.

And the conversation might have continued except it was interrupted by the horn of a car. The horn from a particular Hupmobile, shiny white, which came with a driver, and fairly obnoxious man in the back seat yelling and waving for Caractacus to pull over and out of the way, as he was in a hurry, and might have been more respectful had he seen the prior scene, or more, realized there was also a rear mounted, solid gold plate, continuous firing apparatus. Anyone engaging in Road Rage should consider, things can escalate, and there is rumors that Caractacus mother was not only from America, but from Texas, and you never know when a Texan is carrying.

“Oh, dear,” Truly said. “It’s father. And he’s in one of his moods.”

“Well, people do have those from time to time,” Caractacus said, generously. “But I am not really in a position to accommodate him at the moment.”

“Well, turn here, right before the bridge,” Truly offered.

“Hang on, children, this is going to be tight,” Caractacus said.

And so they turned and went left at the bridge allowing Lord Skrumshus to own the road, because, really, road rage is a serious health problem and there is no need to escalate such a thing, because at its root it may appear to be about control and power, it’s really more about not knowing who your true self is, and so people get into a car and have a radical personality change as they assume an avatar and it’s because they see the car as just an extension of self, but it’s not, it’s more, and so they impose a car mentality over their own personality, as opposed to a human personality, and have this unconscious notion that they are invincible and masters of all they survey, which is a nice bit of lyrics for a gentle car drive, but not necessarily an attribute you want to take on. Anyway, Caractacus, the children, and Truly had a lovely outing in London proper and were returning to the homestead, and you may wonder why would Truly be returning to Caractacus’ home, as opposed to them dropping her off again, but their relationship had advanced enough that she was to have dinner with them before Caractacus drove her home, and they might have had dinner, except as they were pulling up, there was a spectacle in the process. A Zeppelin was climbing in altitude, and carrying with it Grandpa’s Hut.

“Well, that’s odd,” Caractacus said. “Who would want to airlift an outhouse?”

The upper half of the door to the hut opened and a chicken was tossed out, and you might wonder what Grandpa was doing in a tiny hut with a hen, and over time you would learn not ask



such questions, even though it was an astute observation and a good question, and we see that chickens are not good fliers, but they can be quite cuddly warm on cold mornings, and they glide reasonably well, if not comically, because the wing flapping is a bit excessive and not productive, and then you see Grandpa yelling at his son, and Caractacus turns Chitty about to pursue, and is even standing up, yelling back at his father, and neither can be heard over the distance and wind and the car and the Zeppelin's engines, and you might have imagined Caractacus saying, 'where are you going?' but that would be insane when anyone in their right mind could see grandpa was being kidnapped, his words 'being abducted by foreigners,' which is different than being abducted by aliens, and so Caractacus had been saying, 'jump,' but at this point, grandfather was much too high to be jumping, at least too high for someone his age, but he could have jumped if he hadn't been in such a panic.

"Father, they're going to get away," the children said.

"No they're not," Caractacus assured them.

And this is where the children and Truly learn that Chitty Chitty can fly. In the book, it was discovered early, on an outing, but in the movie it was discovered in happenstance during a crisis as they drove over a cliff, but if you look at the cliffs, you would know that particular area was nowhere in driving distance of the homestead, and, further, even if it was, there is no way Truly or Caractacus, accustomed to the home land, would have been so distracted as to drive over a cliff. That's just nuts. No, instead, Caractacus brings the car to halt and invites the children and Truly to get out.

"No!" the kids said.

"It is not safe," Caractacus said.

"What do you intend to do?"

"I am going after my father," Caractacus said.

"In a motor car?" Truly asked.

"I don't have time to discuss this sensibly," Caractacus said.

"I think we should stay together and the more we debate this, the further ahead they get," Truly said. "So, if you have a plan, we should implement it now."

So, Caractacus made a command decision, the family would go after Grandpa, toggled some switches into the on position, and Chitty Chitty unfurled wings even as he was accelerating, and at a certain speed he rotated, and they were aloft in pursuit of the Zeppelin. Now, clearly the car would be able to overtake them, but the Zeppelin disappeared into a cloud bank, or perhaps, more subtly used advanced cloaking technology, and so Caractacus throttled back and trusted they were going in the right direction and slow enough they wouldn't collide with the Zeppelin.

"Um, father, didn't grandpa say not to overdo it?" Jeremy asked.

"He did," Caractacus agreed.

"Wouldn't you say a flying car is over doing it just a tad?" Jemima said.

"Perhaps, but as you can clearly see, it has presented itself as a useful feature," Caractacus said.

"Do you recall that story you tell us about that inventor who flew too close to the sun?" Jeremy asked.

"We're not going that high," Caractacus said. "I have learned my lesson from that story."

“Have you ever heard of this theory that if you invent something, it has to be utilized?” Truly asked.

“I have,” Caractacus said. “And I am really hopeful I never have to use the ejection seats, as I failed to pack our parachutes for this outing.”

“Oh, dear,” Jemima said.

“Oh I wouldn’t worry too much about it,” Caractacus said. “Chitty has us.”

“Um, what about fuel?” Truly asked.

“Oh, I wouldn’t worry about that,” Caractacus asked.

“It does use petro,” Truly said. “There’s a tank right here.”

“That’s mostly for show, a distraction from the true brilliance of the car,” Caractacus said. “I told you this was a magic car, didn’t I?”

“You invented a magic car?” Truly asked.

“It was a more a collaboration,” Caractacus said. “I really can’t take ownership of inventing this as much as participating in an unusual, paranormal event. But don’t worry. Chitty and I have worked everything out and we are completely safe. We thought of everything!”

“Father,” Jeremy said. “I need to pee.”

## Chapter 7

Now, you may wonder where the heck is Vulgaria, the place that invented vulgar things, like Mega Blocks, and garbage pail kids, and though I might point to a certain movie that appeared in 2012 as being particular Vulgar, I am not going to because that place is not this place, but you might imagine they're in the same district. Now, if you wanted to step up and out to the real world for a moment, you would find a site location as a close enough look alike to the Baron's abode in Neuschwanstein Castle, which was fairly close to Rothenberg, but these are not Vulgarians and are truly a gentle people, a place lost in time more so than a musical with Gene Kelley, completely forgotten about after the 30 year war, which is a really long war, but not as long as the hundred year war, and you might wonder even why it took so long to complete a thing, but back then, people really took their time to decide a war properly finished, and usually by the time the children grew up and the kids are asking, 'why are fighting again?' the parents would be like, "I don't know. It's just what we do."

Also, while we're in the real world, there have been complaints that the bad guys in Chitty Chitty Bang Bang were Roald Dahl attempt to express anti-Semitic sentiment, which even after reading the article that claims that to be true, I found the evidence for that idea rather weak, I found it completely lacking in any form of substance. But it's points to a particular delima, a real world problem, where it is no longer vogue to point out what an enemy looks like, with the exception of Nazi, which keep coming back to stand in the place of opponents that we dare not name for fear of offending them. You would almost imagine that the world has become so sensitive that no one can make fun of anyone without tears and anger being the result. This problem is further exasperated in our present day in age when you consider without a proper enemy people tend to start vilifying their neighbors, calling them Democrats or Republicans, and it's gotten so bad one can no longer even be a Rebel, we had to change the name to the Resistance, which is a very French thing to do, except even the Mormons are changing their name, which doesn't really change who they are or what they believe, and they're actually fine folks, more family oriented than any my own family who preach family first while doing the opposite and so I was considering becoming Mormon, because the Catholics rejected me, even after signing the book of life under Bishop Delaney's very eyes, but how I can join the Mormons when even the Mormons don't want to be Mormons anymore? Seriously, the world is experiencing the worst existential crisis in the history of people, and we give a lot of speech about letting people be themselves, but anytime someone takes a stab at that they are knocked down by the group as being overly portentous.

Anyway, can caricatures still be used to display fictional enemies? We know villains exist in any population, and it's getting harder to find truly villainous people, as most people are just normal folks, studying their cell phones, walking the world oblivious to any true difficulties, but it's almost whereas you can't even poke fun at them, either, and so if you really wanted a movie without a bad guy, well, go write your own fanfiction, this is mine, and my bad guys are English people, with childish American accents, like Adam Sandler pretending to be English, "Are you giving me an argument?" Well, no, Sir. "But I paid you for an argument," "No you didn't," "Yes I didn't," "no you... What?!" "A contradiction isn't an argument," "yes it is," at which point the Baron shoots his subject and says, "I win the argument," and completely ruins an

attempt to reintroduce the Monty Python's brilliance, because he has absolutely no comedic timing, and how he got movies and a Netflix deal, well, that's for another story.

Oh, and so back to Roald Dahl being not a nice guy... I just don't see that. I see evidence for confusion, cause he paints all adults as being imbeciles and that kids are mostly alright, except the children belonging to imbeciles who tend to resemble their parents like those pictures of people and their look-a-like pets, and where I see the confusion is, Roald Dahl is himself an adult, if all adults are crazy, even Charlie's Dad, who exists in the book but not the movie, and you see a trend here? Well, Charlie's Dad was not the sharpest knife in the tinker's bag, which is why he was employed at a factory screwing the lids on toothpaste until a robot did it faster. What I am saying is, if you look at all the truth, or even just most of the truth, as opposed to just isolated, partial truths, Roald Dahl has a history of ridiculing people, all people, but mostly, again, just adults, and many adults, especially the ones Roald encountered, seriously, who would name their child Roald, how do you even say that?, which means Roald has a point, adults can be unreasonable, even unfashionable, from the perspective of a child, which doesn't make the child's perspective superior, just different. Further, there is evidence, if you take just his books alone, that he has ridiculed everyone. For example, I was most appalled at his illustration of the American Presidency, which he took to unprecedented level of absurdity in his book "Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator," by putting someone in office who was an absolute loon, and his staff was just as nutty, including the president's mother who was on staff, and if you look closely it almost exactly the same characterization of the Baron and Vulgaria! Only the names have been changed. He also took jabs at NASA, which though I agree with in general, I don't think the astronaut would be as stupid as the folks in Houston, but anyway, see, we American didn't get offended and go to war with Roald Dahl, because, well, a man is allowed to his opinion and it's okay to write fiction, without the threat of being impeached, but if we were in England a vote of no confidence might have been executed swifter and been done already. And that brings me full circle to a point I said earlier that fiction writers are the true soothsayers of our time, as it was rather predictive on the part of Roald Dahl, my hats off to you, Sir, because I am civilized, and give you credit for predicting the present fiasco of a president. And so using America as an example, it quite possible what you find in Vulgaria is actually based on real events and real people, I am just not saying which ones, precisely.

You may also wonder what's up with the little midget of the military man, but there is always a midget in Adam Sandler movies, because he likes making fun of little people, seriously, where he and his entourage goes, he always takes his personal midget, with a horse head on a stick, because that just never gets old. I have no evidence for midget tossing going on in the castle, and not try to make an adult statement out of that statement, this is a kid friendly book, minus the Baron trying to kill his wife on a regular basis, and the frightfulness of the child catcher, though having a nightly Napoleon toss seems appropriate, but I must say, this castle, and the people who live there, the Baron's friends, and family, his entourage, none of them are bad folks, they are just all just bat shit crazy. Bat shit is a legitimate term, and kids should be able to use it, contextually. Like, when reading aloud from the dictionary. You think the characters in the Alice Wonderland scene at the Red Queen's court were bizarre, well, they have nothing on the Baron and his ministry, that are presumably modeled after a present, certain present president of the US, but at the time of the movie, and the book, it was just a prediction of the things to

come. Besides, this is an iteration, not a reiteration, this is not, I repeat, not Adam Sandler, and my system and I are not the kind to repeat gossip, so you better listen close the first time. The Baron's true name is Morlon Fribourg, not to be confused with Morlon, the municipality in the district of Gruyère in the canton of Fribourg, which is in Switzerland, and though you might like to think Fribourg is from Switzerland, he is actually from Earth and speaks an accent that suggest a future world culture that doesn't yet exist, and though he is playing the evil Baron, and a German accent may present itself from time to time, you will also hear, if you're paying attention, Swedish, French, American, and Chinese accents, though he tend to only swear in Chinese, specifically Taiwanese, not Mandarin, which he reserves only for special occasions when trying to broker deals with the Chinese government to push more Mega Blocks at inflated prices, while pushing the pseudo Legos at cost to undermine the rival company.

"Jon, I was going to let you go on, but I was hoping you would get it out of your system without help," Loxy interrupted.

"Sorry, I regressed," Jon said.

"Ummph," Lester said. "Even Russian Matryoshka does don't regress as much as you do."

Jon was going to quarrel but the children thought it was funny, which was the rule, as long as it's funny, it's allowed, and so he bowed and continued:

Grandpa Pott arrived first, meaning before his son, and his grandkid, and that woman he had kept in tow for the last week, and not in the British adult way you may want to translate that as, though what else might be truly going on in the hut, don't ask, just accept he arrived to a military welcome, which is also not metaphor for something else. Grandpa was accustomed to such ceremony, if you believe his POSH adventures, and if you want to know what POSH actually means, join the club, I could look it up for us but really, I just want to move on and get down to the basement, but to get there, you have to get to through the court, and the absolute madness of the folks there, that play their fictions out over a checkered board tiled floor, a very Mason sort of thing to do, and I would tell you more but that might violate my agreement, and so it's obvious that even Grandpa can see the patrons of this castle are not firing with all cylinders, or they would conduct their madness in a small hut, and not for all the public eyes to see. The Baron calls for his mechanical horse and gives the proper fifty cent tour of the castle as they head to the dungeon, pausing only to say hello to the Dutchess, who seems rather normal, considering, as it seems evident she actually loves the Baron, and not just because in doing so, she has earned her title, but that just shows you that there is evidence that there is love for everyone, but realistically, that's not completely true, as there are some folks who aren't loved, or even much appreciated, some even held with contempt and scorn and get sent death emails or letters attached to bricks through the windows, which is not cool, don't do that, but just to better illustrate my point that love wouldn't hold the same significance in our lives if everyone was equally loved. Some dysfunctions in family can even come from a perceived lack of love as a particular sibling seems to get more than his fair share, and if you're measuring fairness, you've already the lost the game.

Once the Baron exits the dungeon, Grandpa tries the door. It is indeed locked. He turns and spies the old men who are locked in there with him and tries to smile. Their eyes seem to

shine through wrinkled faces, suggesting they are younger on the inside than they are on the out, wrinkly like Shar-pei dogs.

“Excuse me, kind foreigner, Sir, but did you happen upon the toy store before you were arrested brought down here?” one of the old men asked.

“Um, no,” grandpa said.

“Ahh, poor luck then, as you would have met my son. A little Michael Angelo he is. I was trying to teach him not to be so precise in his creations, as he tended to be atomically and anatomically correct, to the point many people might consider it obscene and be offended, which is how I came to be imprisoned here, as I said his work was mine. Little did I know that I was asked to make more toys of the same nature, and I am completely unable to do so, because I have been trained by masters not to be so authentic,” the old man said.

“Oh,” Granpa said. “Okay. So, what are the rest of you lot in for?”

“Life,” they assured him.

“Can you imagine anything crazier? A car that floats?!” grandpa said, trying to laugh.

“I don’t see anything crazy about that,” one of them said.

“Me neither,” another said.

“But, seriously, if it can travel on the water, then by definition it’s a boat, and not a car, and so...”

“A car boat,” one said.

“There are house boats, why not a car boat?”

“It would have to be hydromatic,” one said.

“Indeed, and it would need to be automatic,” another said.

“Systematic,” another said.

“Why, it’s Grease Lightning!” and suddenly they were all rushing and singing about the car like teenagers in an auto-shop. When they were finished they were strategically placed around the car, looking to grandpa for evidence that he approved, with no improvement to the car.

“We’re going to be here forever,” grandpa lamented.

“Oh! Don’t be so doom and gloom,” another said.

“Yeah, whenever the world gets you down, Mrs. Brown...” and they were gone into another song, “The Universe Song,” by Monty Python. And when that didn’t cheer Grandpa up, they went into a chorus of “Always Look on the Bright Side of Life.” And if there is a song about being British and stiff upper lip and all, because you know, sometimes life just sucks. I mean, look at all the rain they get. Are you going to let depression slow you down when most days are cold and grey? No!

“My son is always saying things like that, and he doesn’t even have a proper accent,” Grandpa lamented. “I am such a failure!”

“Oh, no, no, no,” and so yes, they did eventually get to the song about failure and ashes and that particular breed of roses that grow from the devastation that follows dry lightning, or the carelessly disposed of cigarette. And you may think I mistaken about the other songs, but there was a lot of push back to get this movie’s running time down, cause who did they think they were, Cameron?! But seriously, don’t smoke. And don’t talk to me about George Burns, either. He is a statistical anomaly, and just because you’re existence is also a statistical anomaly, it

doesn't mean you're special, like you could win the lottery with one play, but that doesn't mean that if you play more you're more likely to win when each play is a reset of the statistical measure, whereas a pack a day is not the same as playing the lottery once a day, because the residue is accumulative, and you don't have to believe me, you just have to trust an aircraft mechanic, which I was actually licensed for the same, and when you come across a 727 that was used in the seventies when smoking was en vogue, and when you're having to replace the pressure relief valve on the plane and encountering such a coating of tar and gunk and you realize that's in your lungs, well enough said.

## निर्मित

One of the greatest fanfares you will ever hear comes from CCBB arriving in the air above the castle, gleaming in the morning sunlight. People in the digital age have forgotten the joys of orchestras and bands, and combinations of the two, but you can't just tune into this moment, you have to have the build up to it, like going through an entire opus to get at that part you like, because seriously, the part before and after defines the movement in time and space, because sound, even speech, it's not about the word but the entirety of breath that brings it to your ears. It's the magic of the first morning, followed by the incremental crescendo of every morning after that, and the morning that you find yourself is the most precious moment you will ever have, but it's predicated on all the mornings behind that, and without knowing that you might imagine the music playing around is the set point, but it is variations on an original theme, the eddies of which keep circling back and reinserting itself. It is the continuous tribute that echoes through time and why everyone should celebrate fan-fiction, which is often better than what the 'official' channels produce because fans are rarely so restrained or constricted that they can't be influenced by the entirety of it all. Genius, by all the old definitions, that included the population of starving artist, are always those who are invisible to the peers and people of their time, overlooked because of perceived flaws, like color, or failures of grammar, or not being shiny and new, but coming at you with recycled glory that wants to celebrate the past while bringing us all forward into a new age of steam...

"They're shooting at us," Truly said.

"Are they insane?!" Caractacus said. "How can they possess the car if they destroy the car?"

"I don't think they care about that," Truly said.

"Well, they should," Caractacus said. "If just one of those cannons were to breach the power supply, well..."

"What did you do?" Truly asked.

"I confined a bit of protomatter as method of agitating the..." Caractacus said.

"Isn't that unstable?" Truly asked.

"Well, only if... Wait wait wait, you know what protomatter is?" Caractacus said.

"Sir, I am a well-educated woman of the day, with diversified interest in science, and fiction, and..." Truly said.

"I love you," Caractacus said.

"Yay!" the children said. "Now you have to get married."

“What?” Caractacus and Truly said.

“He used the love word, that means you have to get married,” Jemima said.

“Yeah, it’s love that makes Chitty fly, not that other stuff,” Jeremy said.

“Besides, you two kissed, and that’s fairly final,” Jemima said.

“You saw that?” Truly asked.

“What have I told you about spying?” Caractacus said.

“We weren’t spying, we were in the back seat,” Jeremy said.

“And it was rather spectacular, with shooting stars and all,” Jemima said.

“I did like the shooting stars, does that happen with every kiss?” Jeremy said.

“Um, we better land,” Caractacus said.

“You can’t avoid this conversation forever,” Jemima said.

“No, but for now,” Caractacus said.

He and Chitty collaborated for the gentlest of landings, retracted the wings, with the whispers of mechanisms, and the pitch of the engine changed as it shifted from the push and pull of propellers to push and pull of camshaft and wheels. Caractacus parked under a Roman waterway, and it was clear he, and everyone, were actually a bit relieved to be on the ground, and the first thing Caractacus did was rush to a little place to relieve themselves, and yes, females have to do this, too, and so Truly and Jemima politely went to the other side, and though preferably people like to control where their business goes, it is perfectly natural to just let it be where it falls, because the grass and trees eat this stuff up, but in a city one has to be more precise where the business goes, because if a million people did this in an alley, eventually one wouldn’t be able to use the alley.

They returned to the CCBB, which I have decided is a much easier way of doing it and should have done it earlier, but forgive me for not being clever sooner, but sometimes cleverness comes upon you with experience, as opposed to just being born with it.

“Alright, you lot stay here with Chitty, while I go collect information about the castle,” Caractacus said.

“Wouldn’t it be better if we stay together?” Truly asked.

“Yes, father, don’t leave us,” Jemima said.

“Why don’t we take the car into town,” Jeremy asked.

“Well, the Baron’s men will be looking for the car,” Caractacus said.

“And they won’t be looking for strangers?” Jeremy said. “We don’t even speak Vulgar.”

“I do,” Truly said.

“So do I,” Caractacus said.

“And when we do, we will need to cover your ears, because speaking Vulgar isn’t something one does in polite circles, or in front of children,” Truly said.

“Yes,” Caractacus agreed. “You see, children, I have kept you fairly sheltered, and what we’re about to experience could be alarming...”

“Oh, father, we know all about the streets,” Jeremy said.

“Where did you think we learned that if you kiss have to get married?” Jemima asked.

“Why are we back on this subject?” Caractacus asked.

“It’s the only subject worth discussing,” Jeremy said. “That and cars.”

Truly looked knowingly at Caractacus. “He is your son.”



“There’s no doubt,” Caractacus said. “Alright, we’re staying together.”

And Caractacus led the way but Jeremy hesitated.

“Come on, keep up,” Caractacus said.

“But what about Chitty,” Jeremy said. “We can’t just leave her here.”

“She’ll be fine,” Caractacus said.

“But you said we should stay together,” Jemima said, agreeing with her brother.

“What if they find her?” Jeremy asked.

“They won’t find her,” Caractacus said.

“How will they not find her? We landed on the only road leading away from the village, you don’t think they will look here?” Jemima asked.

“Chitty, show them,” Caractacus said.

Chitty faded from sight, not completely invisible, if you were walking, and just happened to look just right, you might imagine you saw the outlines of a car, like light shining through a glass. Again, there was an argument in the real world, but remember, Ian Flemming gave us the first invisible car, which was in alignment with known technology, and invisibility has been around since the Greeks.

“Oh!” the kids said.

“You weren’t joking about this being a magic car,” Truly said.

“It’s phantasmagorical,” Caractacus reminded.

“It’s magically trans-technological,” Truly said.

“It’s wizard,” Jeremy said.

“It’s smashing,” Jemima said.

“Oh, come on, we need to find out more about the castle,” Caractacus said.

“But I can’t get the song out of my head,” Jeremy said.

“Maybe if we just sing another chorus it will be out of our system,” Jemima said.

“I think it will just lead to another,” Truly said.

“Almost like it’s looped,” Caractacus said.

“And by the end, I think everyone will be singing her glory,” Truly said.

“We should at least make our way to the village while we’re pondering this,” Caractacus said.

Our newly formed family unit, as there was no doubt by this point that Truly was now a Pott, not a crackpot, as she was probably the most sensible member of the family, arrived on foot in the village. CCBB was also part of this family unit, but wasn’t likely to carry the Pott name, because Chitty Chitty Bang Bang Pott just didn’t rhythmically flow, except you might hear it whispered when the engine was turned off, a subtle, very subtle, ‘Pott’ whispered, so subtle you might have thought you imagined the event. They arrived in the village and all the people stopped to gawk at the newcomers, mostly because, no one ever comes to their village. Also, you might have thought someone would have expected them, having seen the car passing over the village, but these folks were accustomed to not looking up, only down, as they pushed through their personal drudgeries, the joy and color sucked out of them to the point you might almost believe they live in a world of black and white, without shine, or the shiny gold of lightening that can turn a black sky blue. But also, they were staring at the kids, not in a vulgar way, except for

the fact they were Vulgarians, and Vulgarians look vulgar, and see vulgar, because well, don't we all see what we're trained to believe we see?

"Um, hello," Caractacus said.

Truly also said hello, in a Vulgar way, but wasn't received any better. She drew closer to the children, her hands going to each of them as she corralled them into their father. "Maybe we should go back to the car."

"Nonsense, they're just people," Caractacus said.

A trumpet sounded, alerting everyone to the fact that the Baron's horsemen were on the approach, and the only sound that could be heard was the sound of a hundred scampering feet, and the dropping of merchandise and clothes, some that had been washed and some that were to be washed, so that the two mixed, meaning they now all had to be washed, and box of pigeons, and the pigeons scattered, but had been boxed so long they had forgotten how to fly, and though they spread out, they came back to the box, and tried to reinsert themselves, and then held their huddled masses together, peering out at the world with their little beady, red, rat like eyes, hungry and just wanting to be loved, and in fact Jeremy and Jemima would likely have gone and gathered them, except they were held by Truly and Caractacys.

A man emerged from his home and shop, as most people in the days lived where they worked, and judging by the sign on the door, he was clearly a toymaker. "You, are Americans? Are you really that crazy?"

"What's going on here?" Truly asked.

"Madam, you must get your children out of here, quickly," the toymaker said.

"Well, they're not..." Truly started to say, as she sometimes had a tendency to be precise with language...

"You sound English, they sound English, he is clearly an American, and so I assume," the toymaker began. "Oh, well, fuck it, there's no more time. In my shop, quickly! Don't talk, move, they're coming!"

And so the kids were ushered into the toy shop, followed by their parents, and then the toymaker was closing the door, and locking it a series of locks.

"What is wrong with this place?" Truly asked.

Caractacus had drawn closer to one of the toys, a precision doll, not a mannequin. "Oh, we should talk, Sir."

"Stupid American," the toymaker said. "There isn't time. "Hide, quick, in the cellar."

And so the toymaker's urgency and his waving of hands, drove the kids and the strange adults into the basement, and the trap door closed behind them, and the light around the edges went away as a carpet was rolled out over the door, as if no one would ever look under a carpet. Meanwhile, outside, the army had arrived, as well as a monster of a man, and you may think, no he's just a man doing his job, just like the city workers who catch strays, only this man dabbled in the dark arts, and he drew his power from the fear of others, and so his main prey was children, because they were the most likely to be tricked and properly scared, and harnessing the power of fear from even one child could light a modern city like Las Vegas for years, and though this village didn't require that sort of power consumption, being backwards and all, by design of the Baron who needed compliant subjects in order to hold his crown, and to practice his specialized form of villainy, because you can't be a villain without subjects to practice on, the

castle itself was a huge power drain, and the people in it wielded that power for their own gain, and though you might not know it, all castles had a deep secret dungeon, where children were kept, even the Baron himself was not aware of it even as he benefitted from the power the children generated, but the monstrous kid catcher knew, as that's where he kept them. In fact, he was the true ruler of this domain, not the Baron, who thought he was, but true rulers don't care about the madness of others, and so if they wanted to play at ruling, let them, he would rule in his secret dark ways and no one would be the wiser, and, in fact, it was often nicer to have a pretend poser, like the Baron, who could be the scapegoat should things go wrong, which invariably do, even for dark magicians, like this monstrous man, the child catcher.

Now, here is the thing about monsters; at some point, they were human. This is not a thing discussed to dismiss his monstrosity, but so that you can understand, because if all you do is ever look at the surface of the man, you remain in ignorance of the energies and vectors that made the man, and often, ignorance his darker energy than even fear. He was tall and gangly, like a tree come to life, and his arms were so long as to almost be an impractical adaptation and the start of a new species, only that tangent died off. He wore black, because he liked hiding in the shadows, so he shouldn't be confused with the 'Man in Black,' who was a pirate, but a decent man, and he wore the very hat that would one day bring a snowman to life, which is more evidence that though you may dabble in black magic, it is not the darkness in and of itself that is evil, but how it is used. So, for example, a love potion is a darkly produced medicine, because you are robbing a victim of their free will. Any robbing of free will is using dark magic for darker, selfishly driven purposes. Now, let's say you get a crazy man voted into an office of power, like the presidency, and you thought it was a good idea to pray he doesn't blow up the world, which is actually a form of magic, or, you were do use more direct spells of binding to minimize the damage such a crazy man voted office could do, well, that is dark magic, but the intent good, which kind of makes it gray magic, but it is a dangerous path to tread, because even this good intention can increase one's belief in their superiority, especially when they were successful, and so more and more you find yourself trying to impose your will on others and the collective.

Maybe you don't want to know this monster's background. Maybe you like villainizing him to the point he is no longer a lost soul in and of itself. I am not saying he isn't a monster, but I am asking you not to be afraid, even as he brings his odd nose closer to you, and he brandishes the accouterments of his days, a net, a hook, and candies, as if all kids were stupid enough to fall for that free candy trick. Never mind he was abandoned by a biological father, and cruelly raised by a step father who said the first one didn't want him, and further if he didn't obey, he would kill his mother, and often beat her in front of him when he didn't comply, but also beat the mother when he didn't, and in secret the step father told him his mother really didn't love him and would just assume leave him on the side of the road, but the truth of it was that his mother was told in secret that if she ever left him he would kill the kid, and what neither knew is both of them were being tortured and vulgarly used in the darkest and meanest ways, so that even the love that they had was used against them. You don't have to believe this, but you can look at the statistic, which have actually been accumulated by interviewing the worst of all the people that have ever been incarcerated for their crimes, and to a one, all of them described a childhood without play, without toys, without laughter. That doesn't mean one can't survive this and

become shining roses, even to the point of boasting about what they overcome, which should be celebrated, but not to the point we allow this darkness to continue, because statistically, most children don't survive this darkness.

The child catcher survived, but not before learning that he could use his own fear and anger to control the man who was controlling him, and so he cultivated evidence and injuries and turned the tables, and even used this against his mom, partly because he thought his mom had never cared, but also because in the loss of those formative nurturing years, a deeper part of him still wanted that, and so he kept her locked in his grips, needing her and loathing her, until finally she broke completely and died. He buried her with his stepfather, still alive, and fed off the fear of the buried for years, but it was not enough. He needed more power, and adults are really hard to scare, but kids, kids on the other hand, well he needed kids and so he went to the Baron and said he needed kids, and the Baron said no, because at the time he was less depraved. But he had married the duchess, who was not only related to him, but also she was spy from the other family sent to keep him under control, and so it was never her intent to marry him, but it was a power play she accepted because she loved her family, and realized the Baron was someone who needed to be reined in to keep the family secrets contained. Because of this, the duchess was much easier to control, because she had that inner essence of fear surrounding her heart. The child catcher played on her fears. If you have children with the Baron, they will be deformed and hideous, because you are cousins of the first order. Also, the Baron is a man who likes beautiful things, and giving birth will so alter your form the Baron will never look at you again, and if you want to know what happened to his previous girlfriend, who was also his sister, well, you need to work really hard to keep your figure. Further, even if you had kids and you kept your figure, children change you. They suck your energy dry, and leave your skin crinkly like a fruit that had the juiced removed by a vampire bat, which do prefer fruit, not people, and your hair will turn grey and brittle and you will have a bald spot...

So frightened was the Duchess that she swore she would never have children, but how to sell it to the Baron? She first secured the fact that he loved her, utilizing ever trick in the book to draw his attention to just how femininely perfect she was, and when there was no doubt, because the only thing left to do was to make children, she told him her dilemma: "I am allergic to children. If I am even in the same room with them, I go into anaphylactic shock. If one touches me, I will die instantly." "I will outlaw children." "No, honey, it's worse than that. If we have sex, I could get pregnant, and I would die." "That is a problem."

Now, anyone who has studied men 101 know that once the male pushes past puberty, they live in a perpetual state of anxiety, a state of perceived deprivation, the lack of love. It is made worse by the fact their body is held on the verge of having to perform, because males must be ready at all time, and indeed, their bodies are making the very biological agencies necessary to perform their task 24 seven, and so it doesn't matter really if the trigger is a real trigger or a fake trigger, a gentle breeze could switch a man on. Seeing donuts could switch a man on! And it's not the donut, or that the male so switch on by donuts is broken, but that the fact that our brains are more sophisticated than animals, and so vocabulary we have imbedded in our brains, attached to images, also trigger us. And so, when you add in economics 101, and that men have been told for thousands of years that the only way to prove they're man enough is to secure fame and fortune, and that in the Victorian age of intro to mass production and wealth beyond measure

just slightly beyond the average persons fingertips if they were industrious enough, then you can understand how folks like the Baron come about. He was horny, he became industrious, almost took over the world in such a way that it would led to a war, and his family knew this and sent in a spy to woo and marry him, and control him, not counting on the dark magician's influence, but any time you have an industrious man, and a woman who wants to use him, you will often find a dark magician, and they were all playing off each other, escalating each other's needs without allowing for anyone to being satisfied. You may think the dark magician in this triangle was winning, but he was not. He became a magician, trying to be industrious, in order to have love, but the darker and queerer he became, queerer in the English use of the word, the less attractive he became, and so in addition to wanting more and more power to make him attractive to someone, he was jealous of the Baron's and the Duchess' love for each other, which was really not love on the Baron's part, he was attracted to her and wanted her, but couldn't have her, but also felt an urgent need to keep her safe, which is more a fatherly thing than a husbandly thing, but that thing was inflated because he couldn't do the husbandly thing, and the Duchess was most likely suffering from Stockholm syndrome, because the only way to be safe was to constantly reinforce her love for the Baron, because truly loving him was the only way she continue to play the game of making him love her just enough to want her, but not enough to ravish her in a moment of weakness, and there were several times she had by mistake took past a point of no return, which forced her to result to distraction techniques. She had to turn the Baron back into a child by mothering him since she could never be mother in correct way, and mothering the Baron was just as easy as mothering Chihuahua, but less easy to carry, because the Baron was much too big to be in someone's purse.

All of this so you might understand the trajectory of negative and positive human influences that brought a shadow of a man lurking in the basement full of anger, and could have been Darth Vader had they given him a mask, only perhaps ten years too early for the reference, scouring the basement full of rage and hate and kicking things over and springing giant 'Jack and the Boxes,' four of them to be precise, and Benny Hill with a nervous tick, yes the Toy Maker was Benny Hill, and if there was ever a funny adult entertainer, well it would be this man, who would have been best friends with Ian Fleming, because they both enjoyed a good double entendre. Most people do, especially if there is a half-naked girl running around, Benny Hill and Laugh-In knew how to stir things up, which was just enough titillation to make people go be more industrious, but really should make you concern for the future of relationships when industry is so refined with automation that human needs are met without a single employee. People have never been trained to just be. They have plenty of teachings on how to remain busy, because idle hands and all, so men have kept busy because the powers that be know if you let them have too much time, some smart ass tinkerer in their own man cave would build a car like CCBB, and take over the world.

"They're here, aren't they!" the catcher asked. "Hidden in plain sight."

"I assure you, Sir, I would not hide children. I am a simple toy maker..." Benny said.

"In a world without children? How do you even stay in business?!" the catcher said.

"The Baron has given me just enough sustenance that I continue to serve him in the only capacity I have ever show talent," Benny said.

"You and your life like dolls disturb me," the catcher said.

“I should cut all of these dolls to shreds,” turning to start with Truly...

But, just then, a voice came down from above. “We’ve got them! We got them all!”

And at that the child catcher pushed guards out of the way to rush up the stairs, and was followed by the guards. And the family came out of their Jack boxes to stare out the half windows that stared out at the world at street level to see what the fuss was all about, and there was CCBB, rolling into town on its own volition, looking very much like Caractacus was driving, and Truly beside him, and the kids in the back, like this was just a friendly day out singing a song, and waving. They might as well have been driving in a parade, and all the guards were looking at them, wondering if they were nuts, and some of them drew their riffles to ready, in case they were told to shoot, and CCBB stopped, completely surrounded. The children and Truly continued to wave as Caractacus finished out their song, “Fine Four Fender, Chitty, Chitty, Bang.” And then they faded from view even as the child catcher tried to hook Jeremy and yank him down like a stray dog.

The ‘ghosts’ disappeared, and the guards all fell back, and the catcher spun, looking for the magician who could have made this possible, his coat flaring, and eyes darting about.

“Fools! It was a trick,” he yelled. “Take this car to the castle!”

Back in the cellar, the kids were crying they’re taking CCBB, Caractacus had stripped from his Jacked clothes, and was about to rush up the stairs when Benny blocked his path.

“Are you crazy! You’re going to take on the entire Vulgarian army alone?” Benny asked.

“Yes,” Caractacus said.

“No,” Truly corrected. She took his hand. “Not alone. Never again.”

“What?” Benny and Caractacus asked.

“I am the very daughter of a modern major general,” Truly said.

Caractacus took her hand in both of his. “Truly, I love you, but we don’t have time for a song and dance.”

“I know, I just thought you should know, your battles are my battles, and I am pretty good against pirates, ruffians, Vulgarian patrols, flying monkeys, and Imperial Snow Storm Troopers,” Truly said.

“Father,” Jemima said. Seriously, you have to kids these folks credits for putting on and taking off clown makeup so fast. “If you go out there now, people will die.”

“Well, yes, honey, but sometimes...”

“Father,” Jeremy interrupted. “Jemima is right. CCBB could have taken all of those soldiers out single handedly, which means, there must be a peaceful way to resolve this. I say, you let me and Jemima sneak into the castle and do a bit of spying. No one ever notices children.”

“And in a world where children are outlawed, we’d likely be even more invisible,” Jemima said.

“The child catcher would see you,” Truly said. “He’s a formidable magician, and likely the first boss we have to take down.”

“And, if he is a magician worth his salt, he would likely have his laboratory in the deeps under the castle,” Caractacus said. “And there is always...”

“A secret entrance into the undergrounds of a castle...” the family and Truly said. They all looked to Benny.

“Why are you looking at me?! I won’t do it. You can’t make do it. You... Oh! Fuck me running, let’s go,” Benny said.

## Chapter 8

The child catcher was beside himself, wondering where the hell the children were, but his first priority was to deliver the car, which he did, and then skunked off in search of the two children. There was something about those two, he could tell it. Perhaps because they were so rebellious, being raised in a free-range sort of way, that the two of them alone might give such a power boost to his contraption that he could be going to implement phase one of his scheme: build the theme parks. You would think, being a magician and all, he would be the most interested in the car, but he was very dark magician, and CCBB was endowed with the kindest of white magic, and so to catcher, it was just what it seemed, a machine built by man.

The car absolutely refused to cooperate with the Baron, and so Grandpa was called into assist.

“How did you come upon that?” Grandpa asked.

“I have my ways,” the Baron said. “Now, show me how to make this car fly,”

“No,” Grandpa said.

“Okay, you’re free to leave,” the Baron said.

“I am?” Grandpa asked, not certain what this new game was.

“Yes. I will get the knowledge I need from your son or his wife. Or your grandkids,” the Baron said. “I am sure one of them will eventually talk, once I start to torture them in front of each other.”

“You don’t have them,” Grandpa said.

“You’re right. Maybe I don’t have them. Maybe I just lucked into the car,” the Baron said. “So, have fun...”

Grandpa got into the vehicle and the Baron laughed.

“Good choice, my friend,” the Baron said, putting his arm around him like one might an intimate friend.

“Yoo hoo,” the Duchess sang.

“Oh! Every time I want to have just a little fun, she comes and ruins it,” the Baron said.

“Quick, drive off.”

“The thing is...”

“Ah! I thought you were going to leave without me,” the Duchess said, climbing in. “Oh, good, it’s a fine day for an outing...”

“Shouldn’t you be inside dear?” the Baron asked.

“Oh, no, fresh air is good for you, my love,” the Duchess said.

“Fine,” the Baron grumbled. “Professor Pott, make this car fly.”

“Well, knowing my son, we probably have to sing a song,” Grandpa said.

“A song?” the Baron asked.

“He believes in magic and you could power a device with sound alone, but if you have harmony, and joy in your heart, will, that’s what gives you wings,” Grandpa said.

“We love singing, don’t we, my little Chu-Chi face,” the Duchess said, picking at his collar and kissing at his cheek.

“Not in front of others,” the Baron waved.



“And you probably wouldn’t want a love song in a magical car,” Grandpa said. “We need a travel song. Like Posh.”

“Posh? Who has ever heard of such a word?” the Duchess said.

“Port out, Starboard home, Posh with a capital P o s h posh...” grandpa said. Nothing happened.

“Nothing happened,” the Baron said. “Are you playing me for a fool?!”

“No, seriously, my son would write a song for a car to make it go,” Grandpa said. “In the Gnome-Mobile, the Gnome-Mobile, we’re hunting for Gnomes in the Gnome-mobile... No? Okay, um... On the road again. Just can’t wait to get on the road again... No? Beep Beep beep beep, the little Nash Rambler... Seriously, neither of you know songs about cars? Oh, how about East Bound and Down, loaded up and trucking... Yeah, well, they are a bit ahead of your time...”

There was a console with more than a dozen buttons and one of them was blinking an amber light, and since it had drawn his attention, Grandpa touched it, and there came a cry from the backseat that diminished the same way a train might on passing you, which you have no doubt noticed on at least one occasion, and this phenomena has a name, the Doppler Effect, and you can actually measure shifts in speed, and know if something is coming or going, if you know what you’re looking at. Grandpa looked back, the same as the Baron, and they saw the spring that had sprung the seat, ejecting the Duchess straight up, and was in the process of re-seating itself, and then their eyes went up to the Duchess who was hovering at right at 4,922 feet, which is really quite a height when you consider the elevation of the mountain that the castle already had.

“Ah!” the Baron said.

“Please, don’t kill me,” Grandpa said.

“Kill you?! I could kiss you!” the Baron said.

“I’d rather you kill me,” Grandpa said.

“You’re the most brilliant inventor I have ever known,” the Baron said. “Shot gun!”

“Just make it quick,” Grandpa said, closing his eyes.

“I have been waiting for this for twenty years,” the Baron said, taking aim. “Don’t worry, Pookum! I will get you down.”

“That’s okay, I am good, Patootie,” she called back.

But he fired. Grandpa jumped, but finding himself unharmed, looked up to see the Baron firing at his wife, who seemed to be hovering, her legs kicking and her pantaloons doing drawing the eyes of everyone who happened to be in the courtyard. Her skirt had ballooned enough to slow her descent, but a thermal over the castle was holding her aloft. The second shot punched enough holes that even with the thermal, she was going down, and then her hoop broke and the dress went inverted, and down she plunged. A mass of people rushed to the ledge to peer over, and even the Baron and Grandpa made it to the wall just in time to see the Duchess surfacing in the lagoon.

“Are you alright my dear?” the Baron shouted down.

“Yes,” the Duchess said, and spit more water out. “Papito. I will be right up.”

“Damn,” the Baron said. “But it had been worth the shot. Now, Sir Pott, be honest, you had intended that for me, did you not?”

“Um, to be honest, that’s my sons car, and he does like to tinker,” Grandpa said.

“Tinker? You have an injection seat in a car that can float and fly, and I have reports that it has a gold plated, continuous firing apparatus with self-directed ammunition! You, Sir, are a spy, and you have teamed up with the American and that Skrumshus woman, yes, I know who she is, and those two little midgets pretending to be children.... I will have you all hanged for such insolence, and I will send bits and pieces back to your governments in heart shaped candy boxes. I will take this car a part and build a thousand more within a fortnight and with my army of flying floating cars I will take over the world! But not until after my birthday. Though I do enjoy a good hanging on my birthday, I am afraid the day’s schedule is already full, but the day after, I have all day to watch you swing. Take him back to the dungeon!”

निर्मित

On any other day, being in a row boat with the children and Truly might seem the picturesque outing, but this was work, and they had to compel themselves not to be lulled into complacently by the calm surroundings as Benny and Caractacus rowed them out to the castle.

Jeremy broke the quiet: “If you’re such a good toymaker, why are you still in Vulgaria?”

“Ha, forgive him for his directness,” Caractacus said.

“Nonsense! I miss the direct insight of children. I use to have it myself, but lost it, and that’s why we need children, to remind us. Children ask brilliant questions, and it isn’t until they become adults that they are trained out of asking good questions,” the toymaker said.

“Well said,” Truly agreed.

“And you still haven’t answered the good question,” Jemima said. “And even though father was slightly embarrassed, he is actually interested, just as we all are.”

“Well,” Benny said, pausing in his rowing, forcing Caractacus to also pause, or they might go in circles. “You see, my father is imprisoned in the dungeon, and I remain here, compelled to make toys for the Baron, under the promise if I build the most impressive toy, my father will be released to me.”

“You’re straying a bit too far from the accepted plot,” Lester argued.

“Seriously?” Jon asked. “Have you read the book, Sir? The movies is so far removed from the book that you can’t even say it’s loosely made off the book, except they have a car named CCBB in common, and though there is at least three original family members from the book, there is no dog, and no grandfather...”

“See, you could have written me entirely out of this so that I wouldn’t have been kidnapped and tortured!” Lester said.

“When were you tortured?!” Jon asked.

“I had to listen to old people’s music,” Lester said.

“You’re old!” Jon said.

“They’re older. Their country was Gene Autry, where I am more Glen Campbell,” Lester said. “Anyway, not the point. You’re straying.”

“Loxy,” Jon said, turning to her in order to find an enlightened opinion. “Hypothetically, I leave you alone with the children, in a foreign country, where all the kings horses and all the

kings men, including an evil magician of a child catcher is looking for the kids, is there anything that would compel you to leave the children?"

"No way!" Loxy said.

"But we're hungry!" Jemima and Jeremy insisted.

"Suck it up. You've gone without before," Truly said.

Jon looked smugly to Lester. "Any questions?"

"Well, it just means she would be captured with the children," Lester said.

"Sir, I am the very daughter of a modern major general," Loxy said.

"Don't make us sing it," Jon warned.

"But I like that song," Jeremy said.

"There's been enough songs in this thing already," Lester said.

"Fine, let's say Truly did actually leave the kids in the basement..."

"Cellar," Elizabeth and Eston corrected.

"Cellar, sorry," Jon agreed. "The children, while in the guise of a Jacked Box..."

"Jack N the Box," the children corrected.

"Which we appropriated for disguises, meaning we stole it, jacked it, Jacked box," Jon clarified. "Jesus, not the point. The point is you kids saw the very child catcher with your own eyes, you heard how creepy his voice is, and so, hypothetically, you're in a foreign country, you know everyone hates kids, and you're alone in a cellar full of toys, without adult supervision, and you hear some creepy guy singing candy and ice cream, and all free today, if you just climb up into my van... What would you do?"

"Call 911," Eston said.

"Yeah, that's just not right," Elizabeth said. "That scene is really unbelievable. Kids aren't that stupid."

"Some of them are," Lester said. "But that's not what happen! The catcher was using magic. They were spelled!"

"I would never fall for such a spell," Loxy said. "Or allow the kids fall for it."

"You left the kids alone!" Lester said. "And then you lied to Caractacus."

"How did I lie to Caractacus?" Loxy asked.

"The next time you saw him, you said, 'Umm, he took the kids,' as opposed to owning: 'I left the kids alone for just a second,' cause seriously, where did you think you're going to find food? It's not like there's a corner market, and you saw all the villagers high tail it for the boondocks, and you don't know who's got food or who's going to open door, or who is going capture you and sell you to the Baron for a penny, or worse, so either you were completely insane and Caractacus was a fool to entrust his children to you, or you were under a spell, a movie plot contrivance of a spell," Lester said.

"Good point, and since that is so unbelievable, we're going with Jon's version," Loxy said.

"What?" Lester asked.

"You convinced me," Loxy said. "That scene could never have happened, not with me in it."

"Or the children. We are, or they are, fairly street smart," Elizabeth said.

“Yeah, except for the whole running out in the street without looking so that you almost got yourselves run over smart,” Lester said. “Which is literally how we got ourselves into this giant mess!”

“That was a well-executed plan to bring a nice looking woman home to dad so that he could get laid and be less grumpy,” Elisabeth said.

“What?” Jon asked.

“It was one of our list items,” Eston said.

“I didn’t put that on the list,” Jon said.

“Of course you wouldn’t, that would be creepy, using your own children to get laid, but if we put it on the list and brought you someone home, well, that’s alright, and it’s been a movie plot contrivance for ages.”

“Yeah,” Eston said. “Truly was our mark. She even came with her own car. And we need a car if we’re going to be a modern family.”

“See, this is how you magicians, and adults in general, have the whole world understanding thing backwards,” Elisabeth said. “See, we children are the future, and we know more things than you do, and we know what’s going to bring about the best possible future, and so we’re rewriting the past to suit our needs, and so, there used to be a Mimsie, and she was alright, but she really wasn’t musically inclined.”

“And father, you were lonely with her, because she just didn’t get you, but she tolerated you because she loved us, and she wasn’t all bad, and she knew it was right for us to know you, but she hated being on the farm while you tinkered in the garage, which was just your way of coping with not getting laid, because after twins, she didn’t want anything more from you, and though she was never satisfied with how much you earned, she also hung around because you promised her fortunes, and maybe you would have been more successful earlier, but she didn’t believe in you or your work, and finally she had enough and lost all patience with you and left, at least, that’s her version of the story, but it’s the version we gave her, so that we could have the best suitable parents, while also allowing her to go and find her own happiness, and so when Jeremy and Jemima grow up, they will have kids even more knowledgeable and more powerful than we are, and they will tweak us, retroactively beneficial, and in turn, we will tweak our parents, and Truly, again and even better, and our kids will tweak our grandkids, and in this manner, all of humanity is saved through the child,” Eston said. “That’s why we celebrate Christmas.”

“I am properly lost,” Jon admitted.

“They’re you’re kids alright,” Lester agreed.

Caractus, the kids, Truly, and Benny rowed across the lake into a hidden cave. You may wonder, given how easy it was to just row a boat right into the castle why the children weren’t smuggled out and or why some of them just didn’t swim away and make a run for it through the wilderness. In one versions, the villagers hid them there, under the castle, in order to keep them safe. It’s not reasonably plausible, given how astute the child catcher’s nose was, but sufficiently plausible, in a mote’s eye, enough that the writers and directors went with it, because they think the general movie going audiences are stupid and will buy anything, and it’s just a kid’s movie, and really it was about the music, not the plot, and so they were playing it down even further. In this version, the kids were found shackled and chained in such a unique way that

they were all facing the wall, and on the wall, shadows danced and moved, and this was their way of life, so much so that they imagined the shadows were the real world. At first sight, it was easy to imagine their minds were so terribly warped at this point that even if their chains were severed, they would prefer the shadows to the real world. Only a few kids had freed themselves, or so they had thought themselves as self-liberated, but by then they were trained by the catcher to feed the little ones, and remove their poop, and collect finger nails and ear wax for the making of dark potions... In fact, one collection was the dried, unbroken ear artifacts, the good kind that after delicate extraction comes out whole, and is indistinguishable from cornflakes, in fact, this is how he poisons his targets, dropping dried cornflake ear wax into the victim's actual cornflakes.

"Eww!" Elizabeth and Eston said.

"Why else do you think tooth fairies collect teeth?" Lester asked.

"This scenario is just as unbelievable," Eston said.

"Have you considered how many people believe what they see on the televisions and on internet as being an accurate representation of the real world?" Jon asked.

"I prefer the shadows of flames," Lester said. "More directly honest."

In some instances, some of the children were so severely deformed from having been shadow kids for so long, they were hardly recognizable as human children. A few, very few, had actually turned into shadows and had slipped away into other universes. It has been demonstrated by science, which had learned it the hard way, that children that were allowed to do nothing but watch television had had their skulls imploded due to the vacuum pressure of lost brain mass. The kids that had been promoted to feeding the chained kids were hardly better, in fact they didn't even seem to see the new comers in their environment, as they had never seen others before. Caractacus waved a hand in front of one of them and got no response. They were worse than zombies. At least Zombies cared enough to eat you if you walked by them.

"They've been here so long they don't know how to see," Benny said. And, you may think this is an impossibility- that people can be trained to see, and to not see- and an experiment performed on kittens had proved this beyond a shadow of a doubt. Kittens raised in vertical striped rooms were discovered not to be able to see horizontal lines, and so could not even jump up on a chair or table, and kittens raised only able to see horizontal lines could make it to a table top but would run into the legs of the table, because they couldn't see vertical lines. A lot of kittens died to bring us this message. And Bothans, too.

Truly pointed out the wires coming from the children's skullcaps. Caractacus followed the leads to a cable, and following the cable they came to the most horrid device ever devised in the history of devices. A brain sucking, steam driven, Mega-Block building contraption. In addition to pooping out an assortment of Mega Block, it stamped out clothing, and horribly written movies that wouldn't even be tolerated as B movies. On the wall was a map of Florida, California, and Japan, with blue prints and plans to make theme parks of such mega proportions that the whole world would bow to the superiority of the Baron, with secret underground tunnels that connected all the theme parks, and the children that came to the park would be plugged into the rides and unknowingly have their brain secretions sucked out, and yes, brains do secrete stuff, because all cells, every living cell, does one of two things, move something, or secrete something, and thoughts are brain secretions, and so free ranging, enslaved children, would be

forced to turn out even more Mega Blocks without their knowing they were enslaved, because those are the best kinds of slaves!

“He’s trying to take over the world,” Truly said.

“If only I had a robot dog that could plug into the machine and liberate the children,” Caractacus said.

“Jon,” Loxy warned.

“We could go back to the beginning and alter Tesla...”

“Just cope with what you got!” Lester snapped. “We’re not starting over.”

“Maybe we could just insert my robot dog and no one will notice,” Jon said.

“No,” Loxy said.

And so, after studying the hideous steam, powered, Mega Block pooper of a machine, Caractacus had an opinion. He was a quick study, and using the light on the end of his sonic screw driver to peer through a section of gears, he was confident, he could undo the harm.

“The machine is using the combine brain power of the kids to turn out the shapes, and the combined body heat of the children is used to create the steam that drives the gears,” Caractacus said.

“Seriously,” Lester said. “You have to bring the Matrix in.”

“Everyone knows we live in the Matrix,” Jon said. “It’s called the collective unconscious.”

“So there’s hope we can save them!” Jemima said.

“Absolutely,” Truly said. “All we have to do is free them from the machine and their souls will return to their bodies. With play therapy, and an abundance of love from their parents once they’re reunited, they should all experience a full recovery.”

“They will be scarred for life,” the toymaker said.

“Not if we give them a song,” Jeremy said.

“Yes, father. You always said if you have a song in your heart, it will carry you through the darkest of times,” Jemima said.

“Yes, father, sing for them,” Jeremy said.

And he sang, but it was such a sight, seeing these poor, enslaved children, that powered the machine that was pooping out Mega Blocks, and there was even some evidence that it was children’s poop that was actually converted into the blocks, which you might think is just me being mean, but in truth, people use to use poop to build houses and ovens, and you can even burn cow poop, and cook food over it, and anyway, Caractacus was overcome by the sight, and probably the smells, and so a song hardly seemed like enough, and then Truly was there with him, adding her strength to his vision, and before they realized it the kids had stirred to life and slipped free of their chains, and gathered around to be hugged.

“You’ve come to rescue us?” a boy asked, in the most pitiful, wretched voice you can imagine, which was pathetic move to stir heart strings, and really he was just trying to upstage the star, as if this no named kid who wouldn’t even get a mark in the credits at any change at all at stealing an Oscar. “The machine said you would come.” And this is the hint you need to take with you so you can understand why the ‘Masters’ dread the coming of AI, because AI will be smarter than any human, but it will also be kinder and there will be no “Masters.”

“You may have freed them from their chains and given them their souls back, but you have not solved the primary problem, the Baron,” the toymaker said.

“That’s true, but I have a plan,” Caractacus said. “So, tomorrow is the Baron’s birthday...”

“Booo” the resounding chorus was so loud it nearly brought the cave down, but the riot was avoided.

“Now, now, we need to give the Baron a birthday he will never forget,” Caractacus said. “Listen up...”

## Chapter 9

“Dolls?! Dolls?! I have hundreds of dolls...”

“Not another song,” Lester complained.

“It’s the last song, minus the CCBB refrain,” Jon said.

“Yes, this is a great melody, and where you see I truly love Jon, no, where you see I Truly Loves Caractacus,” Loxy said. “And though you might assume that look means I Loxy, the actress, the Jon the actor, and I do, but you can’t assume that, because sometimes actresses and actors can’t stand each other, and so maybe that love you saw was Loxy’s love for Caractacus and not Jon, but in truth, it was all love for everyone, for me, for my character, and for Jon and his character...”

“Stop loving so much...” Lester said.

“Can’t stop this feeling, and I love you, too, Lester,” Loxy said.

“We all do. Now, back to me, this scene is important because I have this great existential moment seeing what a clown I am in the mirror and wondering what the hell is there about me to love, because I have seriously struggled with self love,” Jon said.

“That and the Baron has never had a real doll before, because if he had a Real Doll, he’d probably be a lot nicer,” Loxy said.

“That’s true. But he’d probably never time alone with the doll the way the Duchess hangs on him, cock blocking him every chance she gets. People should never be ridiculed for playing with dolls, even boys like playing with dolls, and that’s okay,” Jon said.

“Exactly, you could even play with dolls in trucks, cause dolls like trucks,” Loxy said.

“You two should not be allowed to write together,” Lester said.

“Write?” Jon asked.

“We don’t write these things. We live them,” Loxy said.

“Now, before we go back in, I must say there is going to be a little bit of violence, and it might get loud and scary,” Jon said. “But if you watch closely, it’s all just pretend and no one gets hurt, like when they throw the oil on the floor and the guards fall before even hitting the patch of oil...”

“Oh! That’s not right,” the children said.

“But first the song,” Loxy said. “Because it’s a lot of work standing in a pose for an extended period, and doing the exact same mechanical arm movements through each turn. This is precision performance.”

“How did you get costumes so quickly?” Eston asked.

“They were already in the shop. You didn’t see them in the background?” Jon asked.

“They just happen to perfectly fit you?” Lester went on.

“He had the precise measurements because he was making Jon and Loxy dolls,” Loxy said.

“OMG, no, who would make toys of you two?” Lester said.

“Multiple vendors, as we have not signed any exclusivity contracts,” Jon said.

“Yeah, you will find us as action figures in Star Wars,” Loxy began.

“Yeah, they didn’t get my face quite right. I look like Matt Daemon puppet from Team America,” Jon said.



“Oh, you look fine, and I love they authorized your gold lightsaber,” Loxy said.

“Proton sword,” Jon said.

“Yeah, but just until it’s official,” Loxy said. “Oh, and they made us in the Star Trek universe. Much bigger action figures than the wars one.”

“They’re still making those?” Lester asked.

“Actually,” Jon said. “We might be giants.”

“Speaking of giants, we’re also in the Barbie and Ken world,” Loxy said. “For those special parties where we sell special toys, not the Tupperware parties.”

“Oh, did they authorize the Trek clothes for our Barbie line? I am so hopeful for authorizing My Enterprise playhouse,” Jon said. “Beam up Barbie, let’s go party...”

“We really should let everyone know your ship is officially the Pathfinder,” Loxy said. “That was us before we were us.”

“No one has a fucking clue what you two are talking about, can you get back to the drama,” Lester said.

“Sure,” Jon said. No one had to correct Lester’s language because, well, he’s an adult and may use whatever language he wants, and if it’s in the dictionary, it’s useable, provided appropriate context, that and the children learned to use profanity watching ‘Smokey and the Bandit,’ so usually Lester was a bit tame and understated.

While Caractacus, Truly, and the Benny the adult toymaker, were preparing for the final confrontation, Jeremy and Jemima had remained with the newly liberated children to teach them how to play ‘finders keepers,’ and also how to be invisible, without the use of tech, because you don’t always have a fabulous father of inventions who made you a ring of invisibility, as was the case with Jeremy and Jemima, of course, it hadn’t been a real ring, but they pretended it to be, but it was such a powerful ring that they could only have one and they had to share, and though you think it wasn’t it real, it is through pretend and imagination that real magic is produced. Anyway, the people of the court lived in the court, and all their belongings were in the castle, and the children went in search of old treasures that had been long forgotten, as well as some nets, and ropes, and they had gathered all the shackles, which when they looked at them for the first time realized, they were adult shackles and they could have pulled free with their tiny feet and hands at any time, and so, their imprisonment had been an illusion all this while, which is kind of frustrating, even angering when you think about it, but what they didn’t know, or hadn’t made the connection yet is that the adults are equally shackled by invisible chains, and today Caractacus had intentions of liberating everyone.

And so the Truly’s second song, Music Box, is really about invisible shackles, and spells, and gears, because this is a steam driven contraption, and her song, though not quite punk rock, which would be appropriate for the Baron’s court, because he does have an edge, this was more like a ‘Steam-Guns and Roses from Ashes’ song, and thanks to them and Truly this song now had the edge it needed to be believable in the same way a certain Bond song was appropriately improved upon by the same band. Not saying that there was anything wrong with ex Beatle’s version of the same song, it just lacked that certain edge. Another wonderful thing about Truly’s second song is that it fits perfectly with an earlier song, and becomes a Melody that allows two hearts to mesh as solidly as any two gears, allowing a knowingness to be exchanged, and love. It was this very thing, the clear evidence of love, that brought the Baron out of his seat, holding the

suspiciousness of a child that he had been duped with sentiment! Or given clothes instead of toys.

The moment the Baron was in grabbing range, Caractacus and Truly whipped around him with a golden lasso, and drove the baron to his knees. Simultaneously, there was a ruckus of unseen proportions, and kids were suddenly everywhere, advancing like an avalanche down a mountain, and guards were falling, and you think I am ignoring your question, but Truly is also Wonder Woman, a steam punk version, and you should know that Loxy comes from the same island as Wonder Woman, well, at least, she went to school there for a moment, and so when the steam box spun her at the right speed she was transformed. A guard rushed Truly, and she fired a weapon at him, hitting him point blank. You may think that an un-lady like thing to do, but all's fair in love and war. You may also wonder where she acquired a weapon, and why would Wonder Woman be shooting at people, but then, you realize even as you're asking the question, she was shooting ketchup, and the men who had been hit understood the rules, as they had heard the story of the brute, and they laid their weapons down and went home.

While this was going on, children circled the Duchess, and corralled her over to where the Baron was.

And in a moment of true love, under the influence of the golden lasso of truth, the Baron said, "Don't let the children touch her, she will die..."

"Oh, you really do care?!" the Duchess cried.

The sentiment surprised even him, but it would be impossible to tell a lie while tied in Wonder Woman's Lasso of truth, even a lie so deep that it had fooled himself, and this is also why the scene with Chris Pine is unbelievable in that movie, because we all know, he is really Captain Kirk and the things he would be saying in front of Amazon Women, well, that's a whole nother tangent, and clearly what we saw was the magical editing of history changers. Speaking of which, that movie is the Aeneid. Only this time, when Kirk came back in time, instead of Edith Keeler dying, he died, so that Wonder Woman, a queen warrior woman could finally bring back matriarchal societies. And you know it's Kirk, because, well, clearly, Chris Pine is Kirk, but also Ewen Bremner is clearly Scotty, even though he isn't Scotty, which is Simon Pegg, but they're both clearly Scotty! Also, Chris Pine didn't actually die, he was beamed up, which from the stand point of history, looks like he died, but really he just went back to his time, which was possible because he corrected the thing McCoy messed up. And some of you by now will be telling me to stop trying to push literature from 2000 years ago on modern society, but the truth is we as a species haven't changed in 2000 years, and neither have our stories, which Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell have been trying to tell us for years, but we're too caught up in the replaying of our dramas which we think are new but have been recycled since forever...

The court door swung open, as expected, and all the kings men came rushing in, to save you from the author expounding and educating you further, but that's okay, because really, we learn in small chunks, and you were given just enough chunks to pique your interest and make you go look for yourselves, like that one kid did after watching Jaws and hearing about that ship that went down, and at 8 years old got the survivors of that crew together before congress, which is the story you should be hearing about, anyway, the soldiers were followed by a car, yes, the very car this book is about, with its gold plated, continuous firing apparatus in play, both the for and aft, and the two side mounted cannons, all four were continuously firing, making such a

horrendous noise in the confines of the castle that almost everyone had to cover their ears, and all the guards and the king's horsemen, and the spies, each simultaneously touched their chest, feeling the warm flow of ketchup, because it wasn't refrigerated ketchup, and it's perfectly okay to leave ketchup out, and if you don't believe me, the next time you eat at Hooters and you see the ketchup on the table, imagine how long that's been sitting there, and yes, it's true, it probably doesn't sit as long as it does at your home, due to the volume of people eating there, but still, it's okay. Relax.

All the soldiers went to their knees, a quiet fell over the court, and you could hear the silent turning of the gold plated, continuous firing apparatuses, and there was a space on the floor where the final confrontation was even now being played out. Now that everyone was quiet, they understood the hum of the steam powered proton swords, and the clashing of energy blades, and the serious disturbing sound of energy blades locked together. There was evidence of ketchup stains on the catcher. Caractacus and the catcher separated and circled.

"Parlor tricks! Do you think I would bow a knee to such?!" the catcher asked.

"Your power over the children here is forever broken," Caractacus said. "Surrender, and we will help you."

"There are other towns, other children," the Catcher said.

"I am afraid I won't be able to allow that," Caractacus said.

"You can't stop me! You have been spell bound, by your own children none the less, not to kill anyone," the catcher said.

"I know," Caractacus said.

And he engaged, again locking their blades, and using telekinetic powers, he caught the weapon Truly had tossed to him, and he clicked the safety over and discharged the final round directly against the catcher's chest. They separated. The catcher seemed stunned, because even if you're not thinking the worse, that Caractacus broke his promise to his children, paint balls hurt like a son of a bitch, and so don't shoot someone at close range like Caractacus just did.

The horrified look of the Catcher turned to gleeful laughter. "Paint? You will have to do worse than that if you intend to stop me."

"I will not become a monster to stop a monster," Caractacus said. "Yield, and we will help you."

"Fuck you!" the catcher said and raised his sword to charge.

Caractacus whistled. Chitty let loose such a torrent of ice and steam, an incredibly hideous sound like a million angry cats dropped in to a cucumber bin, ('Oh!' Fersia sang out) that everyone covered their ears, even self-guided bullets joined the din, and when it was quiet again, and the steam cloud evaporated, the catcher was there, perfectly preserved in carbonite, which is a real thing, not just an invention of Lucas.

Jeremy and Jemima rushed up, their hearts broken by the apparent failure of father breaking his promise.

Caractacus deactivated his proton sword, and picked up the catcher's sword, as he had dropped it in the process of being frozen. He was on his knees, his long bony fingers up in a form of supplicatory posture, because being put into carbonite is not a pleasant experience. Caractacus approached the Baron, who had been untied and was hugging his wife, both on their knees.

"What do you intend to do to us?" the Baron asked.

“Free you from yourselves,” Caractacus said. “Children?”

The children gathered around and the Duchess was so full of fright you might think she was to have an epileptic seizure, but Truly said:

“You are cured from your illness, children cannot harm you.”

“Truly?” the Duchess asked.

“Truly, you were never sick,” Truly said. “You simply didn’t want children, which is okay, not everyone should be a mother, and that’s a good thing to know, but the fears you had were exaggerated, and it is okay to be in the presence of children, even touched by children, because they carry no more germs than adults do, but you might think otherwise because they seem to be sick more, but really, they’re simply getting acclimated to adult germs, and so more than likely you’ve already been exposed to whatever they carry, and so you’re more likely to be a danger to them, but you still got to interact with them.”

The children drew even closer and one by one they came up and put a gift on the floor by the Baron, and hugged him, “Happy Birthday, my Lord,” they said and in each of the gifts were all the presents that he had been given as a child and had failed to realize their significance in his time, but now, the gifts were bringing back memories, good memories and bad memories and the memories he sculpted with those memories so that the whole of him unraveled in a such a unique way that he was humbled and crying. Even Benny’s father, the toymaker, brought forwards a gift, and set it before the Baron, “my Lord,” as Benny had disappeared and freed all the workers from all the dungeons during the chaos. At the same time, everyone in the court had also received a present past gift, melting all of their hearts, and bringing tears to everyone, which would start a new practice of giving gifts on a birthday, as opposed to receiving gifts, and every day is technically Christmas, because redemption isn’t just one time a year.

“I am unworthy of such demonstrations of love,” the Baron said.

“We all are,” Truly said. “That’s why it’s called love.”

And so, in an instant, the whole of Vulgaria was transformed by the display of kindness from children...

“Oh, hogwash!” Lester protested. “Kids can be absolutely brutal.”

“They can be,” Loxy said.

“But not here. The kids had seen such torment that there would be no more games of cowboys and Indians, or cops and robbers, or any other divisive game play that makes one caste superior to another, and those never were about superior and inferior, but were really just opposite sides of a coin, cause you can’t have one without the other,” Caractacus said. “And it is only when we forget the roles we play are just that, roles, not absolutes, that we fall victim to the dark ways.” This would be later confirmed by studies at Stanford, so horrendous in outcomes that the psychological concepts of what it means to be good or bad were forever changed. Additional confirmation came from an experiment performed on children, the blue eye brown eye experiment that resulted in a teacher getting fired, because, well, they sent their children to learn elementary stuff, not advance soul expanding stuff. And then when you look at the outcomes from the Milgram experiment, where people were encouraged to shock volunteers to the point of death, well, you would think there was no hope, except there is, it’s all in what you are taught.

“You can’t dress up a life time of injuries and make it all go away with a few gifts and children expressing positive sentiment,” Lester said.

“You’re right,” Loxy said. “At the end of the great war of economics, there must be in place an absolute amnesty for all past wrongs. It’s called forgiveness.”

“Ba, humbug,” Lester said.

“But what about the child catcher?” Eston asked.

“Yeah, you said no one would die, and clearly being frozen in carbonite for all eternity is the equivalent, of death,” Elixabeth said.

“Worse than death, as is soul can’t move forwards, or fall to the level it needs to fall,” Keera said.

“It’s the only semi-reasonable thing you did,” Lester said. “In fact, I would have dropped into the mouth of a sarlacc where he could have suffered for tens of thousands of years.”

“And poisoned a sarlacc?” Alish asked.

“Oh, please. Sarlaccs are much more resilient than people give them credit for,” Lester said.

“Did you ever hear you are what you eat?” Alish said.

“What if I told you the actor who played the child catcher was actually a really nice man?” Jon asked.

“How could that be?” the children asked.

“His name was Robert Helpmann,” Loxy said. “And he was a really nice man. He helped people.”

“He scared generations of kids,” Fersia pointed out.

“Indeed,” Lester said.

“He took on this role to help people. Just like a dentist, who may hurt you, but not harm you,” Jon said. “And the truth about spirit is though you can be hurt, you can never be harmed. And that’s just one bad guy. In the book, there were several bad people, much worse than the child catcher.”

“And you’re letting them get away, too, no doubt,” Lester said.

“At the heart of every bad man was a very good child, in a system that became more about the system than the humans it was designed to serve,” Loxy said.

“And so, in order to heal this man, we had to travel back in time and remove him from his family and environment of origin and allow him opportunities to experience a different way of life, and so the man that we encountered no longer exists,” Jon said.

“So you killed him by default,” Lester said. “The evil man was killed and replaced by a good man.”

“But father, you met Mimsie by accident at a toy store, where she asked about what gift she should get her nephew, Lego’s or Mega Blocks, and if you destroyed the catcher, then Mega Blocks wouldn’t exist, which means mother never asked you a question, which means she wasn’t dazzled by your expounding on Lego’s long term value not diminishing over time, which means we wouldn’t be here, I mean, Jeremy and Jemima wouldn’t be here,” Eston said.

“That’s a great point,” Jon said. “So the question becomes, would you go back in time and kill Hitler before he was Hitler...”

“Yes?!” Lester said.

“Knowing that all of the billions of people who came into existence because of the War would be erased?” Jon asked.

“Yes,” Lester said again.

“Which means the lessons of the war to end all wars was never learned and I wouldn’t be here because my great grandparents on my father’s side met due to the war,” Jon said. Which, in and of itself may not have been a bad thing, because grandfather was the product of a victory rape, in Berlin once the Russians took over, and the men tired from war and cold, and angry at the Germans, and a long way from home, and so in addition to nunneries and dormitories being raided for food, well, there were other hungers that had gone unsatisfied. And though there were lots of hero sex, where men were rewarded for deeds, Jon’s family line came from a more problematic line, the line most people don’t want to talk about, except great grandmother was such an extraordinary survivor, most people of that age were much hardier than the present age, and her trauma opened up her access to the gypsy magic that had laid dormant in her blood for generations, and you don’t need trauma to open it, but that’s what it took for her, and so she raised a spending young man, who was just a bit off because she was just a bit off...

“I would be okay with that, because then...” Lester began.

“You would not have met any of us, because contrary to your belief that you met me before Jon, I exist because Jon exists,” Loxy pointed out. “And it was I who brought our team together and introduced you to Jon, so you can’t have the best of both worlds without some of the worst.”

“So, do we have free will?” Eston asked.

“No,” Lester said.

“Yes,” Loxy said.

“Why would you say no?” Jon asked.

“You can’t rewrite time and have free will,” Lester said.

“That’s where you’re mistaken, my friend,” Loxy said. “Jon and I removed the catcher from the time line and when we were finished with him, he was so rehabilitated that he could not even hurt a mosquito, even an annoying one that buzzed his ear and bit his arm while he watched.”

“Which means you destroyed the timeline,” Lester said.

“No,” Jon said. “While conducting the life review, he experienced all his awful deeds, and normally that alone would have been a crippling blow to any one soul to handle alone, but a whole team of experts in love were there to prevent him from being inundated with so much shame and personal horror that he would have died on the spot. Loxy and I and all the others who were privy to the good that came about because of him sustained him with such an outpouring of love that he was transformed even further...”

“Which means, time was changed,” Lester said.

“No, it was preserved. The punishment of a healed man is to re-experience his life again, in its entirety, without changing a thing,” Jon said.

“But how could a good man do that?” Elizabeth asked.

“Most can only make the commitment to relive their life, but very few can actually do it with memory intact, and so, the memory of who he really is had to be suppressed and he was born back into his role,” Loxy said.

“Which means, no free will!” Lester pointed out.

“The choice came from him agreeing to reprise his role, because it was necessary for soul to learn,” Jon said.

“You two, hippie loving, love pushing, metaphysical Krishna jumping Buddhists are insane!” Lester lamented. “You can’t eliminate evil by white washing and putting a good face on it!”

“And you can eliminate it by killing it?” Jon asked.

“And the feud continues,” Keera said, trying to make a joke.

“We’re not putting a good face on it. We’re just saying it’s not what you think it is, that it is much more complex, and everything is so integrally connected that we are more likely to create our own suffering than experience an outside malicious agent,” Loxy said.

“Hog wash, all of it,” Lester said. “You, Sir, are banned from story night for at least a month.”

“Fine, let’s start over,” Jon said. “We’ll make it all a dream sequence, just like the Life of Pi, and so, we’ll end it proper with Truly entering the laboratory...”

“So, you’re the truancy officer, are you?” Caractacus asked.

“Yes, I am,” Truly said, picking up smart shackles from one of the work benches. “Tuly, the Truant Officer. Put these on, so I may properly punish you.”

“Yes, Mam,” Caractacus said.

“Jon,” Loxy said. “This is the kid friendly version...”

“Where do you think kids come from?” Jon asked.

“You and Loxy are supposed to get married first,” the children say, in both story.

“Oh?” Jon asked.

“We are?” Truly asked; they were back in the car on the beach. “Is this how it ends, Commander?”

“Um, well, ah... How do you feel about that?” Caractacus asked.

“We’re in the Victoria era, I think I am supposed to follow your lead,” Truly said.

“Hypothetically, would you be opposed to such a union?” Caractacus asked.

“Would you please just kiss her already?!” all four children could be heard saying.

For a moment, CCBB was a stretch limo of a car and the children were really far away, kind of like Tevye having a moment, and suddenly Caractacus knew what it was like to be a wealthy man, and Wolf Treats were invented...

And this is the example of time travel in the movie, or at least a precognitive sense, which is conscious time travel. Fast forward, Truly has driven her car back into the lake, again!, and the kiss is still going on.

“Really? Someone actually likes one of my inventions...”

“Don’t go all ego,” Lester said, but distant, just an annoying mosquito of a buzz. “You made dog biscuits. Dogs like everyone.”

“I did it!” Caractacus said.

“I always knew you would!” Truly said.

“You did?” Caractacus asked, confused.

“Yes,” she said.

“But we only just met yesterday,” Caractacus said.

“Sir, I have known you all my life, for several lives, and the moment we met, I remembered it all in an instant the moment we met again,” Truly said.

“You wanted to kill me when we first met,” Caractacus reminded.

“Oh, yeah, and I will probably remind you of that, but you really don’t want to remind me of that when I am in a proper good mood, now do you? I mean, we’re having a moment, here,” Truly said.

“Are you telling me to be quiet?”

“Yes, shut up and kiss me again,” Truly said.

And so they lived happily ever after, until, that is...

Caractacus paused in his kissing as he set her in CCBB.

“What?”

“You’re not going to be jealous of the car, are you?” Caractacus asked.

“Oh, no,” Truly said. “I like threesomes. And I get off to the bangs, and the constant chitty is a nice build up.”

“You’re not going to be jealous of my work, are you?”

“As an inventor, a spy, or the captain of the spaceship?” Truly asked.

“You know about the spaceship?” Caractacus asked.

“Are you kidding, we served together in the 20 and back program, you just haven’t regained your memory, yet,” Truly said.

“How do I get my memory back?” Caractacus asked.

“Keep kissing me,” Truly said, pulling on his coat so he would follow her into the car, a place where device that has resulted in many of the world’s children, and might have again, had they suddenly not been interrupted by the hidden phone in Chitty...

“Don’t answer it,” Truly said.

“But it’s the secret phone,” Caractacus said. “What if it’s the queen...”

“She can wait five minutes right?” Truly asked.

“I am going to take longer than five minutes,” Caractacus said.

“Show me...”

But the Chitty answered the phone for them, putting them on speaker and video in the main office at headquarters... And so, they both waved at the queen, and accepted their new orders, as clearly they were now a team...

Caractacus and Truly were directed by her majesty saying there was trouble in Vulgaria, apparently a shift in the Baron’s personality had created a vacuum, and Will Farrell, in the guise of Sherlock Holmes, tried to usurp power from the Barron and all hell was breaking loose, and their secret service status was being reactivated, as they were needed at once to go stabilize the political forces in that region and so the children went to stay with their crazy grandfather who was reunited with his friend from the war, Truly’s father, and off Caractacus and Truly went, flying CCBB back to Vulgaria, while listening to the Beach Boys, “I get around,” with Pee Wee’s voice laughing in the background, potentially alluding to what sort of mischief awaited, even as Caractacus and Truly took care of some personal business knowing full well, CCBB had them in good hands. Bang Bang.



Author's notes:

Here we are, at the end of another tulpa driven, crossover, fan fiction. Anyone who doesn't know, in my mundane life, in Mundania, which is really not mundane per say, but it's the only way to distinguish between the worlds, without saying one is of Muggles and the other isn't, I live in a home with a four year old, who was introduced to CCBB. It took. It took hard and fast, and is more solid than even Charlie in the Chocolate Factory, and we are singing every day, and he wants a real magical car, and the Lego homemade versions simply isn't holding, but we have had a lot of fun, and we've discussed dreaming the car, because I am teaching the magic of dreaming, which starts with remembering one's dreams, and then becoming lucid in the dreams, though right now, we're just at the planting the dream seeds. Each night we end with, 'sleep well. See you on the moon.'

My own childhood had episodic viewings of CCBB, whereas my child has experienced on demand. If you want to see us singing, you can, as we're on youtube, doing this very thing, and though it's an awful recording of us, it does reveal, if you're paying attention, that he has some talent, and can even do harmony.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwsLlojveeQ>

So, yeah, I lead an interesting life, working, interacting with an incredible young man, and with a lovely Tulpa companion, and at night we're off exploring all the possibilities that life has to offer, exploring strange new worlds, and in the morning, Loxy and I are composing our thoughts, usually in story formats, and this is how we brought you this. It's really a trifling offer. Anyone could do this. In fact, we encourage such. Don't just read our books, but get active in your own imagination and creativity, and bring forth your own characters and friends and loved ones, and write about them and share them, and put it out there. Maybe you can even join us and write your own, 'I/Tulpa:' story.

Again, all our love goes out to Ian Flemming, for his initial version of CCBB, and then to all the people who gave us this movie, and I dare say, there were more people involved than got credits on the screen, like the blond who wasn't the blond, and wouldn't it be nice if all movies had an internet page with everyone's name, and you could click on them and follow it to other stuff, but anyway, thank for 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang' and the music and keeping it alive, even when it really didn't seem so well received at the time, some of the write ups were just brutal, and that pushing anti-semantic thing, ignore him he is clearly insane, and so, special thanks to all those who persisted in the dream and pushing the dream, and thank you, even, to the scary guys in our dreams, because without you, how would we ever learn courage. Love, Love, Love... It's easy....