

Chapter 1

A Harrowing Fall

Brebbles had stubborn auburn hair, unruly sideburns, and a thin, wiry frame. He lived at the edge of the forest and fished on a nearby creek.

One early autumn morning, he woke and gathered important belongings. “Always bring the least which gives the most,” he muttered, grabbing hooks from a nearby shelf. He gazed into his kitchen pantry. “A peach, some lettuce, some cabbage...Twine, a basket, and an apple...A jug, a jar, some paper, and more string.” He grinned. The storeroom was small, and lit in just enough light to see by, and some of the shelves were slightly bent, since the dark wood grew old. Also, the floor was cobblestone, so it made for chilly feet. Brebbles didn’t mind any of this, since he knew where things were, and searching the storage room never took long. He tucked everything inside his basket, returned to the kitchen, and sighed. “Well, that’s finally done,” he said.

The kitchen, unlike the pantry, spoke of a lighter pine, and the floor was a series of wooden boards of various shapes and sizes, all neatly hammered in place. Where the pantry was cold, the kitchen was warm: a tiny stone fireplace fit into the north side wall, and a wood stove crackled in the center of the room. Both gave enough warmth for Brebbles to toast his feet. Pots, pans, spoons, and tongs hung from hooks along the ceiling, like a wooden jaw with different length teeth. Two oak tables crouched on each side of the room, one large, the other small; a large plank for fixing things, a small plank for eating things; and the little one was Brebbles’s favorite place to sit, read, and think. Sometimes he’d light his pipe and daydream about faraway places he’d like to go.

The library, originally Brebbles’s favorite place to sit and think, stood past the small table, through a dimly lit hallway leading north. On the left, an oak doorway with a black ring for a handle led to a bedroom; on the right, a smaller oak doorway with a brass knob led to the study. Inside the library, neatly carved, gray stone shelves climbed fifteen feet along four walls, where books of various shapes and sizes rested. Most presented a hard material, some light beige, others faded blue, and all had dust. A ladder, often neatly left by the doorway, rode across a metal strip bolted to the masonry and provided access to the entire collection. Brebbles could reach any book, no matter how low or high.

Besides all of this, something horrible occurred, changed everything, and the small kitchen table rose in the respective order of Brebbles’s best-loved spots. As always, he woke, made breakfast, poured himself another large cup of tea, and made his way to the study. (It was an exciting morning: he had uncovered an extremely unique volume titled *Lux Sit! Gigantes Sit!*, which meant *Let there be Light! Let there be Giants!* Apparently the volume was written *by* and *for* giants, and earlier, Brebbles had excitedly rubbed his hands throughout his eggs and toast, thinking this. Most books about giants were written *by* and *for* humans, and so far, knowledge was limited. A typical passage written by people included something like this: *Aren’t they remarkable? But don’t walk under their feet!* Or this: *Oh! They’re twice our height! Try not to cause them to be vexed!* All of which Brebbles found extremely lacking.) Reaching the small door at the end of the hall, he entered; lit the lantern, hanging just inside to the right; pulled the chain; and the lantern ascended, spilling light from the chamber’s ceiling. It was good fortune Brebbles habitually gripped the ladder as he proceeded, for the floor opened into an abyss. His heart skipped; his feet slid out; and the fact that he held on was nothing short of miraculous. The once familiar chairs, tables, and cobblestone, now tangled into a mess of tree roots and earth, descending under the lantern’s dim flicker

into darkness. Still shaking, Brebble swung from the ladder to the entrance, put out the light, and returned to the kitchen.

Several days included tapping fingers and pacing about. On the fourth day, Brebble decided he *had* to have the book, even if it meant facing the harrowing chasm. He entered the small doorway, lit the lamp, pulled the chain, and examined the room for some time. He wrapped a rope around his waist with fifteen feet of slack (the librarium's height), and the other end, he fastened to a nearby rung. "From ladder to flying chariot," he said, patting it. "We'll rejoin shortly, my leafy tome!" Once on, he reached the metal track and pulled; the ladder's rollers squeaked. "Lux Sit, you're in my grasp!" Retrieving the book, he returned to the doorway, undid the rope, and made for the kitchen.

Each morning, for the past month, Brebble had fetched *Lux Sit! Gigantes Sit!*, returned to the table, and rifled through its pages. It covered everything from giant history, giant mythology, giant tribes, giant geography, and giant branches of government. Presently in our story, since Brebble enjoyed books while fishing, it seemed the perfect opportunity to retrieve his favorite thing. "Hello, precious book!" he cried. "Care for a picnic by the river?" He started down the hall. "Was that a *yes*?" He chuckled as he worked the brass knob. He attached the rope to the ladder, mounted it, and pulled himself to the usual section. But then a dreadful thing occurred. The ladder had crossed the metal rail over many years, since before Brebble was small, and the wheels squeaked for a good reason: they were tired and coming loose. The moment he touched the heavy book, the ladder creaked, then groaned, and Brebble cried out as it broke free and tumbled. With tremendous luck, the lower portion of the ladder slid and caught into a stone ridge on the opposite side of the opening. The upper portion lighted onto a shelf, but the whole thing flipped on its side, and he fell.

The rope reached the end of its fifteen feet with a jolt, knocking the wind out of Brebble. He looked up through the opening, and the many rows of books glowed back, as if to say: *Sorry about this, Brebble . Even with all our collective information (Not to brag, but it is quite vast!), there's nothing we can do. However, hang in there. Sincerely yours, The Librarium. Postscript: Write back soon!* He clung to *Gigantes Sit!*, the rope clung to him, the ladder held the rope, and he swung like a pendulum in the black void. Brebble grew sad. He quickly realized that returning to the study above, meant letting his favorite book fall into the abyss.

There are stories much like this dilemma: the full mouthed goose, with its head caught in a long necked jug; the young, coconut carrying hippopotamus's struggle on a steep, muddy river bank; and most famous and well known, was the greedy llama who made off with a bushel of corn, only to find its untimely demise in a swamp. The lessons on the stone shelves above Brebble's head, however, were of no use: all were grisly, with a sound cautionary ending, but none gave a solution for climbing up a rope with a large book. *Gigantes Sit!* grew heavy, and his arms shook, and yet, he held on. Finally, the burden overtook him, and it slid from his grasp. He listened as it fell and tumbled into the dark.

Clutching the book gave Brebble weak arms, but after several failed attempts at climbing, a racket descended from above: a loud series of raps, the front door squeaked, and then, a woman's voice: "IS ANYBODY HOOOOOME...?"

Brebbles heart quickened, and his mouth grew dry. Out of anyone living by the Forest of Mahrm, Rani Rashmi was the greatest, and she liked spending time with *him*, of all people. *Rani Rashmi and her singing voice*, he thought. *Rani Rashmi and her delicious bread! Rani Rashmi and her deep, amber colored eyes! Rani Rashmi and her black, flowing hair! Rani Rashmi and her pretty, silver ringed nose–*

“Brebbles Broxworth! Great heavens! What are you doing?” Rani’s head became visible in the doorway; her worried look caught the glow of the lamp as she frantically peered down; and now her eyes were dark, endless pools; and yet, somehow Brebbles responded.

“Uhhm-er-uhhmm,” he said.

“Yes?”

“Um. Um. Uhhm-er-uhhm.”

“Brebbles!”

“Geological research.”

“Goodness, I feel gray hairs beginning on my head.”

“Please don’t be frightened, Rani. I’m...examining roots. I’m looking for them...under the ground.”

“Yes, Brebbles, I can see that – Hold on, what’s this?” Rani cautiously leaned past the lamp chain, retrieved a thick, white book, and then sat, legs dangled over the ledge. “*The Librarium: An Owner’s Manual*,” she read aloud. She flipped through, biting her lower lip. “*Chapter One, The Librarium and You*,” she continued. “...*Chapter Two, Librarium and Cleaning, Chapter Three, Librarium Lamps, Chapter Four, Librarium Shelves, Chapter Five, Librarium Ladder* – Here it is, Brebbles! – *Librarium Floor Disappearances!*”

Brebbles groaned.

“*If the floor of the Librarium should disappear, do not fret, for this is perfectly normal. First and foremost, promptly examine the ladder’s wheels on the metal track, and be certain they are secure...*”

Brebbles groaned again.

“Are you listening to this? Why so many groans?”

“Yes, I’m listening.”

“*The ladder may come loose. Be sure to use a rope as a protective measure, since the ladder is made up of a strong wood, and is designed to catch onto the masonry as it falls – Ah! That is helpful! – To raise the ladder back to its original position, pull the lever located to the right of the entrance downward.*” She examined the edge of the doorway. There, in the corner where the stone shelf met with the frame, was a small, wooden panel. She ran her fingers along it and gave it a tap; the lid fell; and out sprang a brass handle, which she pulled. From behind the masonry walls came a metallic grinding. Thin wires appeared at the top portion of the ladder, and with more grinding, both the ladder and Brebbles rose toward the metal bar, until everything fell into place. He only needed to climb a few feet to reach the bottom rung. All of it was hopelessly simple. He groaned again.

“What’s the matter with you?” asked Rani. “Maybe you’ve had too much geology?”

Brebbles dragged the ladder across the metal bar, wheels reluctantly spinning, and Rani grabbed his hand and assisted him into the doorway.

“Uhhm-er-uhhmm,” he said.

They returned to the kitchen. While the water boiled, Brebbles set out cups and plates, and Rani sliced the pumpernickel she had brought. When they finished, the two reunited at the small table. The wall fireplace

hissed and popped; a nearby cuckoo clock ticked away; the autumn wind outside brushed the wooden home; and the rafters responded by gently creaking above.

Holding her cup in both hands, elbows resting on the table, Rani peered over at Brebble. He examined the bread on his plate. They continued like this, taking occasional sips.

“No need to be sour,” said Rani. “I happened to catch *The Owner’s Manual* out of the corner of my eye. It’s a light colored book. I’m sure you’ve seen it before but just forgot.”

“That’s not why I’m upset,” said Brebble. “If you’d only gotten here sooner...” He lowered his head to the table and spoke into his lap. “I held as long as I could, but the book written by giants and for giants, was just...well, it was just *too* giant.” Brebble told the story about *Lux Sit! Gigante Sit!*, while Rani quietly listened.

“But there are many other books in your study,” she said. “Surely you’ll find another that you like, just as much.”

Brebble shook his head. “It won’t be the same.”

Rani’s face softened. “Give it time.”

After finishing their bread, Rani helped Brebble clear the table. “I’ll see you in a few days,” she said. “I have more deliveries to make. Thank you, again, for the tea.”

Brebble thanked Rani for the bread and bade her farewell. He watched after her, and reaching her wagon, where the yard and the road met, she turned and waved.

“Rani Rashmi,” Brebble whispered to himself, but then, remembering the book, he lowered his head and returned inside.

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