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GATEWAY TO THE FOREST

by

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(Year 5 – Age 10)

George got into the car.

'Hurry up, Peter!'

They were going to Grandpa's.

'How come you get the comfy seat?' moaned Peter.

'Because I was first in the car,' replied George.

'Muuuum, tell George!'

'Just get in the car,' said Mum.

'I'm not going until I get the comfy seat,' said Peter.

'George, give Peter the comfy seat.'

'But..!'

'George, you're three years older than him, you should know better than to get into silly arguments like this.'

George moved out of the comfy seat. Peter jumped in and beamed at Mum. George put his seatbelt on as Mum started the engine.

Following a tedious and sickening car journey, interrupted only by some arguments, they arrived at Grandpa's house. Mum knocked on the door. Peter shoved George out of his way and stood in front of the door. The door opened and they were greeted by Grandpa.

'Hi Dad,' said Mum.

'Hi Grandpa,' said Peter.

'Hello,' said George.

'Ah, hello Sweetpea, hello Pumpkin and, er, hello George.'

'And how are you?' asked Mum.

'Oh yesterday I had the most awful toothache. The dentist had to give me medicine, something called Chalamynsiado, and a week ago...'

'Yes, but today?' said Mum.

'Oh yes, today I'm fine and, oh, where's John?'

'Out on a business meeting.'

'Same old baked bean factory?'

'Yeah.'

John is George's Dad. Mum, Peter and George walked into the house. They were greeted by Pitch and Putt, Grandpa's cats.

'You go into the living room and I'll make some tea.'

Peter sat down. George picked up Pitch, put him on his lap, and started stroking him.

'Mum, I want Pitch on my lap,' moaned Peter.

'You can have Putt, dear.'

'No, I want Pitch.'

'Mum, I had him first,' said George.

'No you didn't!' protested Peter.

'Yes I di...'

'BOYS!'

Everything went silent.

'George, put the cat down!'

'But...'

'Put it down!'

Reluctantly, George put the cat down. Grandpa walked in holding two mugs of tea.

'Now, what's all this commotion about?'

'Oh, nothing,' said a rather embarrassed Mum.

'Fight a lot, do they?'

'Yes'

'Why don't I tell them a story?'

'Oh, please, please!' said Peter.

'Yeah, that would be nice,' said George.

'OK. It all started on a nice, sunny day...'

One day, I decided to go for a hike. I packed my bag with all the things I might need.

'Make sure you are back in time for dinner, and no acting the wild man!' my Mum had said.

'Yes Mum,' I said as I walked through the door.

'Bye, lovie.' My Mum waved to me.

'Bye!' and I set off.

It was five hours till dinner. Plenty of time. I walked and walked and walked when suddenly I came across a gate. There was a small man, dressed in green, sitting on it. As soon as he saw me, he jumped off the gate and ran into the forest beyond. I opened the gate and went through. Beautiful green

trees surrounded me. My foot snapped a twig. Something stirred. And then I saw it: a white centaur. At least, I thought it was a centaur, darting through the trees and then he was heading right for me. At the very last minute he jumped – WHOOOSH! A white streak flew past me as I stumbled. The centaur galloped back into the wood.

I stood up, dazed. I spotted something. A sort of small tree. I came closer. Suddenly it lifted one of its four roots out of the ground and started waving frantically and making the most unpleasant noise. Then...

'What noise exactly?' asked Peter.

'Well it was something like 'brlllabrllioa!''

'Eek!' Peter jumped.

'Anyway, let's get on with the story.'

Then it ran away into the wood. I looked around There was the little man again. He was picking up little twigs. I crept up and picked him up by his collar.

'Doh, you caught me!' he said.

'What are you?' I asked.

'I am a leperacorn!'

'You mean a leprechaun?'

'No. Leperacorn. My name is Mulberry.'

'What's the difference?'

'Leperacorns live in peace and harmony with nature. Oh, and we haven't got any gold, in case you're wondering.'

'Do you still grant wishes?'

'Yep.'

I thought about this as I carried on walking. Suddenly, I fell into what looked like a rabbit hole, but wasn't. It was expanding rapidly and I was falling down and down.

'You clumsy fool! You've fallen into a gumbowarp!'

'A what?'

'A gumbowarp. It looks like a common-or-garden rabbit hole but in fact it's a never ending pit. Mind you, you've still got a wish...'

My mind was whirring as I tried to ignore the wind. If I wish to get out of the hole I won't have a wish left, but if I don't I'm stuck here forever. Then I had an idea.

'Right,' I said. 'Here goes. I wish that I could have another two wishes.'

'Wish granted.'

'Now I wish I was back where we started, in the forest.'

'Wish granted.'

I was back on the forest's ferny floor. Back with the trees again. I was glad.

'You've still got one wish!'

'OK, I wish you would guide me out of this forest.'

'Hmm, well OK.'

And so we started off, avoiding the gumbowarps and leaving the small trees alone. We walked and walked and walked, the tireless Mulberry leading the way. It was then that I saw it, a gate.

'Look, look!' I exclaimed.

I ran towards the gate, jumping over the gumbowarps and small trees. I opened the gate and... I saw surroundings which I had never seen before.

'Where are we?'

'Well you said out of the forest, but you didn't say which end! So, bye-bye for now!' And with those words he vanished. Silently I cursed him. I decided to walk back. I was lost. There was nowhere I could go.

Suddenly I heard galloping. It was another centaur. It jumped over the gate and stopped in front of me.

'What are you doing here?' I asked.

'I could ask the same about you.'

'I got lost.'

'You're lucky you didn't fall into a gumbowarp.'

'I did.

'Really? How did you get out again?'

'I picked up a leperacorn on the way...'

'Ah, I see.'

'So why are you here?' I asked.

'Every year we turn into horses to find mates. I'm just about to do change myself.'

'Oh I see. Well, do you think you could give me a lift?'

'Sure, just wait a minute.'

I watched in amazement as the astounding creature changed into a beautiful white stallion. He signalled to me. I guessed that he meant 'jump on!'

I had never mounted a horse before, so I found it extremely difficult. Steadily, I clambered on. He whinnied, and we were off, the wind shrieking in my ears, the centaur's soft mane bristling in my face. It felt as if the world was leaving us behind. Everything was a blur. Suddenly a signpost zoomed past us.

'STOP!' I shouted.

The centaur stopped and turned around. I jumped off and ran towards the signpost. It said 'Godalming 1KM'

'Thank you very much!' I said. 'I know the way from here now.'

The stallion bowed his head and galloped off into the fields.

'And then I went home and made it just in time for dinner!' Grandpa had finished the story.

'Oh that was brilliant!' said Peter.

'I can't wait to go riding a centaur!' said George.

'So you believed me? Most people said my story was just a bucket of lies.'

'Oh I believe you, I believe you!' said Peter.

'Well, thank you very much Pumpkin!'

'Oh golly, look at the time,' said Mum, looking at her watch.

'Oh yes, you'd better be off. Bye Sweetpea, bye Pumpkin and, er, bye George.'

They all walked out of Grandpa's house. Mum unlocked the car and went in. George sat on the hard middle seat, because he knew Peter would only make a fuss otherwise.

'Muumum, why does George always get the middle seat?' moaned Peter. George just shook his head.

'Come on, get in the car,' said Mum.

'I'm not going until I get the middle seat!'

'George, give Peter the middle seat.'

'But..!'

'George, you're three years older than him, you should know better than to get in silly arguments like this.'

George sighed. This just wasn't his day.