

**Tolgar (draft)**  
**by Josh Fontecha**

"Wake up." said a muffled distant voice. "Wake up! C'mon!" It was louder now. "C'mon! WAKE UP!" She could feel the cold earth underneath her and now arms shaking her. "We need to MOVE! He's coming for us!" She slowly opened her eyes. Before her she saw a brown rabbit staring at her frantically. As she moved her head, she saw what looked like a man's body holding a torch attached to it. The man-rabbit continued to stare intently at her as if wanting to say something. She started to scream but one of the man's hands was on her mouth before she could let out a sound. His hand was rugged and salty. "You don't need to scream girl. I won't hurt you. I'm here to help. I'll take my hand off your mouth but you must promise me not to scream. Now nod your head if you're ok with this, yes? " She stared into his black beady eyes trying to gauge whether he was lying but saw nothing but a void. With not much else to do, she nodded and he removed his hand. "Look, I know you have a lot of questions but right now we need to move away from here and FAST. The beast, it's coming. It knows you're here so we need to move and now." He offered his hand out. She hesitated for a moment but ultimately took it. As she got up, it dawned on her that his lips hadn't moved at all. The voice, HIS voice, was coming from inside her head! Around her the pale moonlight radiated enough light to let her see the dirtied white dress and boots she was wearing. In the distance she thought she could make out stone walls and large towering trees. "Follow me and be swift!" The man-rabbit started walking hurriedly towards their rear. With nothing else to do, she began to follow him, albeit untrustingly. As they walked, she observed more bizarre things. For one, there were no animals sounds, not even crickets cricketing. Second, although the moon shined enough to let them see where they were going, the man-rabbit seemed to know where he was going or at least seemed to. They walked for what seemed like hours without saying a word. The girl after much hesitation finally asked "How is it you can talk to me without you know, talking to me? And where are we and how did I get here? And what are we running away from, and just WHO ARE YOU?" The man with the rabbit's head looked back at her and then turned his head forward without stopping. She heard his words then "I can't talk, you're only hearing me "speak" because I want you to hear me. This place, this place is called Tolgar. It is..." he hesitated, "the kingdom's biggest labyrinth. As for how you came to be here, I do not know. The thing we are running away from is THE BEAST. As for my name you can call me Hel..." His voice was suddenly cut off. "Mmmmmuhhhhhhhhhhhrrrrrrdddddhhhhhaaaauurrdddhhaaaa!  
Mmmmmuuuuuuuhhhhhhhhhhhrrrrrrrrggghaaaaaaaaddduuuuuhhhrrrr" The sound was distant but audible enough to stop them in their tracks. It sounded like a man and a bull screaming out in both great anger and pain. She turned behind her, trying to search for the loud wail but there was nothing to be seen... or so she thought. In the distance a small fire ball of light had started forming. "What's that behind us?" she asked. Hel turned, and as he did they heard another scream break out, only this time closer. "It's here! Get on my back NOW!" She climbed. He started to run gliding

through the black forest it like a bat. The fire ball however had started to move swiftly becoming bigger and bigger and bigger.

They made their way deeper into the forest until they reached a large stone wall with head carvings on each of its stones. "Dead end. Get off my back now." said Hel. She jumped off but blurted "But the thing's coming! What are we going to do?!" Hel extinguished the torch's flame letting only the shade of night surround them. "Stand still and be quiet. Whatever happens, DON'T MOVE. If it helps, close your eyes. But DON'T MOVE." In the distance the fire approached. "Mmmmmuhhhhhhhhhhhrrrrrrdddddhhhhhaaaauurrdddhhaaaa!  
Mmmmmuuuuuuuhhhhhhhhhrrrrrrrgghhaaaaaaaaaddduuuuuhhhrrr"  
uuuuuuurrrrrrr. Uuuuuuuuuuuurrrrrrrrrrrrhhhhhhhhhh" She saw it then. A mammoth sized being treading the ground with its bull like feet. It had a human torso and what seemed like a bull's face with fiery red eyes. It was running and screaming and had what seemed like blood coming out of its mouth. In one hand he held a large torch, in the other a large spiked club. It stopped half way through to them. She realized that the creature and Hel were both staring at each other. The thing, the man bull pointed at Hel with the torch and screamed "Mmmmmuhhhhhhhhhhhrrrrrrdddddhhhhhaaaauuggghhhhhhaaaaa!  
Mmmmmuuuuuuuhhhhhhhhhrrrrrrrgghhaaaaaaaaaddduuuuuhhhhaaaa!" The ground started to tremble as it approached. She wanted to scream and to run and to cry. She wanted somebody to hold her, to tell her everything would be alright. "Everything will be alright" she heard Hel say as he put a hand on her shoulder. She looked up at him, and for a moment, she thought she saw him smile.

"Dad! Daaaad! You better not be telling Andy any of your stories, he has school tomorrow!" In a room, just like any other 10 year old's room, an old white haired man with a few days growth of beard stood holding an equally aged leathery book. In the bed, a young boy sat eagerly. "Awww shucks grandpa! You stopped at the best part! I gotta know what happens!" A young svelte woman with sandy blond hair entered the room. She was dressed up in a low cut dress and looked far younger than she appeared to be. "Dad, I told you last time not to read him any of your stories before bed. You know he never sleeps. "It's okay Eva. We were just about done. It's only eight and I promised I'd have him to bed by nine" She looked at her watch and begrudgingly said "Fine. But it's your head if he doesn't wake up tomorrow."

Eva then slowly made her way to Andy's bedside and kissed him goodnight. As she made her way out, she stopped by the door and turned back and lovingly looking at her son said "Be good kiddo. I love you." Her father, stood up slowly and also kissed her goodnight. He then jokingly said "Don't break too many hearts tonight" and winked. She laughed and smiled "I'll try". With that she exited the door and shouted down the hall: "And remember, bed before nine!".