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By : **Sambelini**

An elf named Mittlebutter and a fawn (that's a young deer, like Bambi, not a goat-man like Mr. Tumnus) set off through Giant's territory in search of something and I don't even remember what it was anymore... This is a very stupid story that I started and then I forgot about and then I found today and so I figured I may as well share it on here.

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Chapter 1: A Brief History (prologue, maybe?)

There was, in fact, a world that was not quite unlike our own. What I mean to say is: There, every thing was birthed from the land and all Things that lived did their living on that land, surviving by means of Things that grew up out of the land (that is to say plants and fruits and vegetation, though some Things fed off of other Things). But in the end whomever the carnivorous ones should feed off of it was sure that, somewhere down the line, that food was originated from an energy that only the Sun can give. This energy was, as it is in our world, soaked in by a lot of chlorophyll and photosynthesized into eatable Sun energy. And so it might be said that the common denominator linking our world to theirs is that they are both solar-powered. But I would not suggest that this be said because it isn't often thought that our world is a solar-powered world, though it is true.

Perhaps I ought to start again anyhow, because I did say, "There was, in fact, a world not quite unlike our own," yet it wouldn't have been wrong of me to say, "There were, in fact, many worlds, some of which were not quite unlike our own. But as for the others they were not quite like our own at all." The reason I did not say this was because I wanted to point out one world in which a marvellous adventure happened, and that adventure, I believe, has a right to be shared (I must say though, many adventures also happened in the other many worlds but a good many of them happened in those worlds that were not quite like our own, and those worlds are very hard to describe since we have only invented words thus far to describe things which happen in our world.) And so, although there were many worlds and some of them were not quite unlike our own and some were, we shall now concern ourselves with one particular world.

Its name was Sophistica, and that has nothing to do with our English words "sophistic" or "sophisticated". Why not? Well, because it wasn't sophistic or sophisticated. It was a happy world, and very punctual I must say, which is quite unlike our own world where seasons, though they have set dates on which they "begin," are not at all bound by our calendar. In Sophistica, it only rained in the wet season and was always dry in the dry season and in the winter it always snowed and only for a very short time would the weather get nasty and blizzardy and it was always certain to calm down on time in order for a marvellous spring. The summers were always summery and the heat was usually dry but there was a short period (which always showed up at its proper time) when the summer would be humid and the air thick and the fog would roll in at night and last until just after dawn. You might say that Sophistica was well balanced, since she (for it was a girl world, which is almost a common factor between her and Earth, except ours is a woman world, because she is getting a bit older) had a good deal of different seasons and climates and a place for everyone. It was certain that with all her different temperatures anyone must have been able to find somewhere they liked, if not more than one somewhere. Well, that is, anyone but the giants.

The giants knew it was risky when they signed up to join this world (for this world was became inhabited by means of sending invitations into other worlds whence all sorts of creatures gladly joined). Giants often have trouble finding a place in worlds that weren't particularly designed for them - this is often a cause of their unkindly nature. If you know a bit about our own world, you will know that the air thins and cools as you rise to higher altitudes. This was also true for Sophistica, and what's worse is that she was a much smaller planet than our own, meaning her atmosphere was a good deal nearer than ours (though luckily this also meant it was weaker). And so for the Giants this caused three main problems, firstly: they hadn't enough air to breathe. If the atmosphere thins as you rise, it stands to reason that where a Giant's nostrils spend most of their time there would be hardly any air. And if we need a good deal of the thick air down near the land, then a Giant ought to have needed thicker air than ours, rather than thinner. That is why most Giants' worlds are those that are not quite like our own. Their worlds often have more oxygen in the air so they do not suffocate. Secondly: their heads (primarily their ears and noses) were always quite cold, seeing as the air also gets cooler up there. Their worlds solve this problem by being placed closer to the sun or being turned inside out. By that I mean that many Giants live inside a planet, rather than outside, and the land part of that world would be very thin so the

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Sun could heat it right through to the inside. And lastly: on high ground the Giants were always stooping, like you might while walking in a crawl space or dwarf's house only much worse because if they bumped their head on the atmosphere (as you might on the ceiling), this not only hurt but stung like a burn (for that was what it was). Naturally, if a Giant bumped his head on our atmosphere its ear could be seared off, which is why I said it was lucky that the atmosphere of Sophistica was a good deal weaker than ours.

Really, the Giants wouldn't have survived on that world if it had been too much like our own. In the first place, Sophistica was meant to be a sphere, as Earth, but when the news came that Giants were coming (it was only Giants from worlds that were not well suited to them who signed on) the Designer set to work immediately to make space for them. What he did was cut a deep valley right around the middle of the planet, having the world gently slope down from the West into a much thinner midsection and then sloping back up and around to the East Pole (which would be similar to our North or South pole). The result was that Sophistica looked for all the world like an enormous peanut spinning gracefully on her horizontal, like a goose roasting on a spit over a fire (if only geese were shaped like enormous peanuts). It has been quietly disputed that perhaps the Grand Canyon was originally meant to house Giants at one time, but nobody really knows whether this is true.

This arrangement did help the Giants a lot because they were distanced from the atmosphere (though it followed a small bit when the planet was cut away) and more of the air sunk into this great valley that spanned around the whole world. It didn't help much with the cold; in fact it may have made the winters harsher in the valley. Yet Giants tend to be fairly lazy, what with not having enough oxygen to sustain themselves, and eventually took to hibernating anyways. And it was during their yearly hibernation that our story began.

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Comments and **criticism** are welcome (encouraged/wanted/much begrudged actually)

Thanks for reading

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Chapter 2: A Long Story

"I don't suppose you remember where to turn after the statue of Derion?" a voice once inquired on an early winter's day in Sophistica. That voice came from an elf by the name of Mittlebutter, who stood in the light frost and a thin yet warm coat of forest green, near to a fawn called Tardence (that's fawn, F-A-W-N, meaning a young deer like Bambi, not F-A-U-N, meaning half goat, half man like Mr. Tumnus) Between them and behind was a lot of rubble from a marble statue, once a very majestic looking mole. You may wonder how a mole might look majestic, and I will say it took a lot of work from the sculptors, but ultimately you would have to see the statue in tact to understand.

"Well, would you like to go the easy way or the hard way," answered another voice, coming from an older marten. He said this sounding as if he were thinking very hard.

"I should think the easy way would be easiest," answered Tardence very patiently and humbly, seeing that Mittlebutter was getting to be restless. The fawn, it was easy to see, was very calm and level-headed, as most deer are though they usually grow into it whereas he was this way already, though young.

"Well, curiously enough, the easy way is harder for some and yet for others it's easier," replied the Marten again in a very thoughtful manner, "Why do you wish to find the Giant's orchard?"

"Because," began the elf crossly, "it's just very important. You oughtn't be so curious, you know." As he said this, his friend gave the rodent a look of apology.

"Well, why do you say that?" he said just as inquisitively as before, "Curiosity killed the cat, but the wood marten? No, never," obviously he hadn't quite understood the phrase, "Well, do you think you'll like the easy or the hard way?"

"If the easy way isn't always easy and the hard way isn't always hard, what is the difference?" quietly asked Tardence.

"Fancy calling one the easy way and the other the hard while they're really both hard and easy all at once!" said the flustered Mittlebutter. You mustn't be too harsh on him, for I'm sure you would be a quite a different person if you'd grown up with the name Mittlebutter. You can imagine he'd often heard jokes about butting Mittles.

"Well, it's not I that called them easy and hard. Or rather it wasn't me who first called them that. Curiously, that is truly their names - you can see them on any map," said the creature shortly to the elf before answering the fawn's question, "Well, I ought to say I would say the hard way would do best for climbers. I mean steep climbing, and a lot of forests too. But then the easy way would be faster if you'd rather swim or portage - and you wouldn't have to bring along water, because you'd pass more rivers."

"I should think the easy way then, since we haven't got any water," stated Tardence, "though I'd have preferred the forest path. I don't much want to swim as it gets cooler either."

"Well, you'll turn North-East for the easy way. And I should say that by the time you get to there it'll be two weeks and the rivers will have begun to freeze. It shouldn't be a terrible problem; the rivers are smaller at first. You'll be able to cross them quickly before they freeze and as you get on the bigger ones will be frozen by the time you meet them. By then you should be able to walk across."

"But sir, if the ice is thick enough to walk on then how shall it help us if we need to drink the water?" Tardence asked. By now Mittlebutter had fairly silenced, as he was trying his best to calm himself.

"Well, I suppose that's a problem. You could break the ice and drink from it that way, but that's awful dangerous. Or you could ask the otters and the beavers as you pass. They are usually hospitable animals. But then you might as well take the hard way if you're to go door to door."

"Except that most of the river animals aren't as likely to eat us if we knock at the wrong door. Suppose we disturbed a wolf or a fox? The easy way is sounding better all the time," the elf now put in anxiously. More than anything, what disturbed him was that he wanted to get on and go. Elves aren't ever very patient creatures.

"Well, then the easy way it is," said the marten and he began describing what lay ahead of them.

It was a very complicated amount of rivers to keep straight. As the world was shaped like a peanut, all the waters pooled into the Great River, which was along the bottom of the Giant's Valley. Since Tardence and

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Mittlebutter were to the West of Sophistica, just nearing where the ground began to slope into the Giant's Valley, then they could expect many small streams to begin making their way down to the lowest ground. And later, as more of the small streams gathered together, they would find a lesser number of rivers steadily increasing in size. This is what he said,

"Well, firstly you will reach the statue of Derion as you have said, and secondly you will turn North East, as I have said, and there will be a path there for you to follow but it will be cut across by Tawny Spring. You will recognize it because it will be tawny and it will be a spring, of course. It is only a young spring, and you, fawn, may be able to nearly jump across it. But I warn you, the banks are not strong but the current is. It won't be bad now, for winter is setting in and the water and ground are both freezing up, but I don't know when you will return, so be careful if you go by this way in Spring.

"After Tawny Spring, you will continue on the same path until it comes to a fork where you can choose from three directions. There will be other paths off of yours before this and when these come you must continue straight, that is North East. But when you meet two more paths (that is to make three, including the one you are on) you must choose the Eastern-most of these. It will lead you over the creeks Chloe and then Choley. Do not drink Chloe Creek's water, but follow Choley Creek (it will be going East-North-East) and you will be able to drink from it. You will follow Choley Creek for about sixteen days and all the while it will be widening as other streams and springs and creeks join it, some of these you will have to cross. But around the sixteenth day you will find a bridge across to the far side..."

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