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Opening extract from

Urgum and the Seat of Flames

Written by

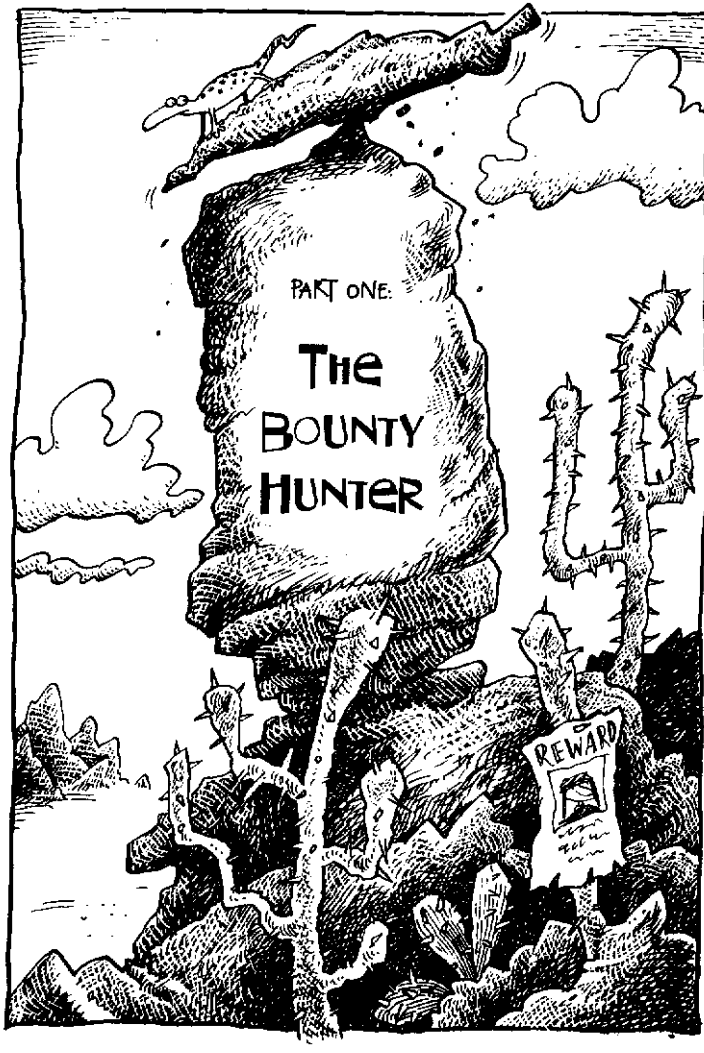
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PART ONE:
THE BOUNTY HUNTER
REWARD

The Wifiest Wife

Urgum the Axeman was the fiercest savage the Lost Desert had ever known. He was very big, very strong and very, very smelly and proud of it. He lived in a cave with his wife and his seven savage sons and he spent his days happily charging around the desert fighting and eating, sometimes both at the same time. It was a satisfying and simple life, or at least it was most of the time.

Occasionally it got complicated, such as the time when Urgum went away for a few days and got back to find he had a ten-year-old daughter. (The gods of the Lost Desert can make a few days ten years long when they want to.) Urgum was very fond of his daughter, even if she did complicated daughterish things such as

catching a blue-feathered hand-footed creature and keeping it in the bear pit and feeding it bananas like she'd done yesterday. But most of Urgum's complications came from his wife Divina.

Although Urgum was the fiercest savage the Lost Desert had ever known, Divina was the wifiest wife the Lost Desert had ever known. Divina never charged around the desert picking fights with as many people as possible at once, she never played silly games such as who can fit the most porcupines down their trousers and she certainly never ate anyone to death. The reason



Divina didn't indulge in the traditional savage pastimes was that she was the daughter of one of the rich soft-hand families that lived and worked in the fabulous Laplace Palace. Divina despised the rich, lazy softhand life, and so when she and Urgum first got married, she had abandoned everything to live in Urgum's cave, and had provided him with his seven savage sons without a word of complaint. (Well, obviously she'd shoved his dinner in his face a few times, and dropped his favourite axe down the toilet hole... PAD-DINK-A-DANKY-SPLUDDOOSH ... and on the odd occasion she'd set fire to his feet when he was asleep, but no words of complaint. Words of complaint were what softhands tried to frighten each other with, but it didn't work with savages. If you went up to a savage and folded your arms and stuck your nose up and said, "I intend to lodge a strongly worded complaint about you," by the time the words reached the savage's ears, somehow they would have changed into "I'm a whining little snot, so please punch me on the hooter." Divina knew this and respected it. That's why she never uttered a word of complaint. And besides, dropping an axe down the toilet hole is a lot more fun because it goes PAD-DINK-A-DANKY-SPLUD-DOOSH.)



Of course it hadn't been easy starting life as a softhand and then going off to live in a cave with savages, but Divina had done it and survived. It had taken guts, trickery, sarcasm, a sense of humour, an extremely frightening left eyebrow and enough attitude to make a charging rhinoceros back off and take up knitting. That's why Divina was the wifiest wife that the Lost Desert had ever known.

One Simple Little Job

It was early morning in the kitchen at the back of Urgum's cave. Urgum's biggest son Robbin had gone out to grab a couple of ostriches while Divina was poking the fire. Urgum was helping by standing in the corner dribbling.

"We've nearly run out of firewood," said Divina.

"Never mind," said Urgum. "I like raw ostrich."

"Well you might," snapped Divina, "but I don't!"

"If you're going to be fussy you can pull the feathers out first," said Urgum.

"Urgum!" snapped Divina. "Go and get some logs and be back soon!"

It all sounded simple enough, so Urgum grabbed his axe and set out to get some logs and be back soon. It was

a boring job, but being snapped at by Divina was even more boring and the only other thing he could think of doing was hiding down the toilet hole all day so she couldn't snap at him, but that would have been the *most* boring. Poor old Urgum. When he was younger there used to be lots of exciting things he could choose to do, but these days he found himself having to choose what the least boring thing was and today it was chopping logs. Boring boring boring.

Urgum's cave entrance was just one of several dotted around the inner walls of Golgarth Cragg, which was a big rock basin that only had one way in and out through a large crack in the wall. Over on the other side of the basin his oldest and ugliest friend, Mungoid the Ungoid, was sitting on a rock outside his own cave.

"Fancy coming to get some logs?" shouted Urgum, waving his axe.

"I'm a bit busy right now," said Mungoid.

Just then, a tall savage in tight skirmish armour stepped out of the cave next to Mungoid and flicked her long flame-red hair away from her face. As she put an arrow to the bow she was carrying, a much smaller and completely hair-covered savage dashed out and stood next to her, holding out a large metal pan. The tall savage

raised the bow over her head and fired the arrow straight upwards.

"Good morning, Grizelda!" said Mungoid, licking his hand and smoothing down the three hairs that stuck out of the top of his head.



FWEEE – DANK!

An eagle dropped straight into the pan with the arrow through the middle of its head.

"Another perfect shot!" said Mungoid admiringly.

The tall savage glanced at him. She didn't smile, but she didn't not smile either. With another flick of her hair, she disappeared into her cave, followed by the little savage with the pan. Mungoid sighed happily



and *twink plink dink* the three hairs on his head shot up again. He got to his feet.

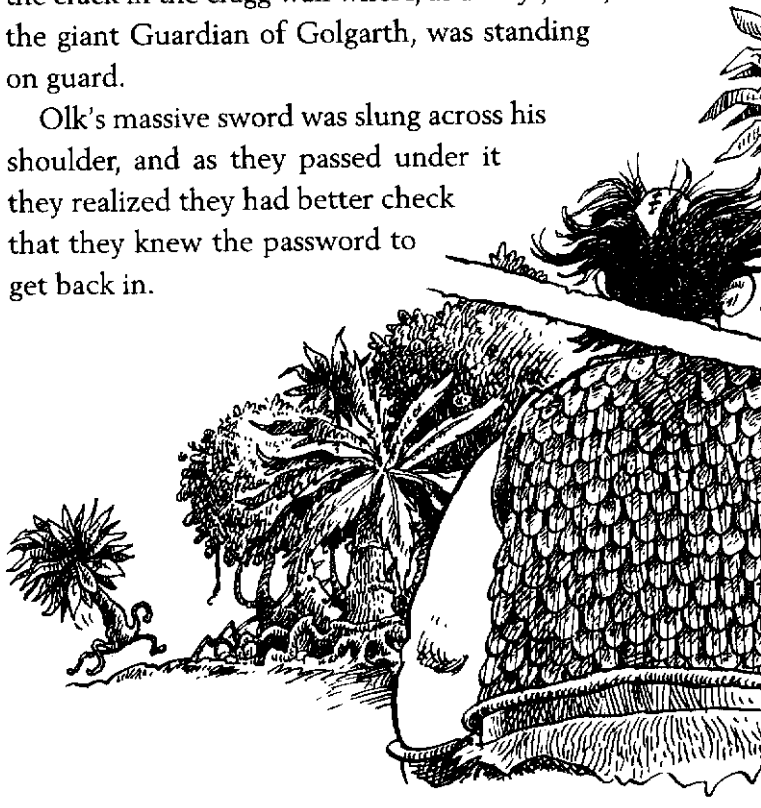
"Right then," he said. "Logs!"

"And we have to be back soon," said Urgum.

"That sounds simple enough," said Mungoid. "The Wandering Jungle's stopped for a rest just outside the Cragg. So logs, soon, no problem."

Urgum and Mungoid set off across the basin to the crack in the cragg wall where, as always, Olk, the giant Guardian of Golgarth, was standing on guard.

Olk's massive sword was slung across his shoulder, and as they passed under it they realized they had better check that they knew the password to get back in.



"Enormous-strawberry-fool-ice-cream," they said together. Very slowly Olk's neck bent and straightened again. He'd nodded, so they'd got the password right. Phew! It wasn't exactly their choice of password, but as Divina was the only person that Olk ever took orders from, they'd let her choose it. Mind you, it was a good password. Who'd ever guess that?

So all they had to do now was get some logs and be back soon. The important words were *logs* and *soon* and just to make sure they didn't forget what they were supposed to be doing, as they marched along they repeated "log-soon ... logsoon ... logsoon ..."

What could be simpler? That was early in the morning.

