

# Eric and the Öresund Lamp

Book One

Into the light

August 15, 2001

By Theodor Christianson

All rights reserved; no part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without the prior permission of the Author or Publisher.

First published by the Author in Lund, Sweden, July 26, 2001  
CHIPS International Publishing Services Inc., 36 Unterriethstrasse, 65187  
Wiesbaden Germany

Copyright © Text: Theodor Christianson, 2001

The moral right of the author has been asserted.

Written and edited on a Dell Latitude Notebook using MicroSoft Word™

## Dedication

For Tobias my son, editor and literary critic, and for Pia, my wife, sponsor and guide. I would not have started writing this book, if it had not been for their inspiration and support. Thanks guys.

## Table of Contents

Dedication.....	3
Table of Contents .....	4
Dramatis Personae In order of appearance .....	5
Chapter 1 A message for Eric.....	6
Chapter 2 A ghost in the machine.....	15
Chapter 3 3000 years of boredom.....	23
Chapter 4 Genie without bottle .....	30
Chapter 5 Emails and Bananas.....	37
Chapter 6 The search for the lamp .....	46
Chapter 7 Into the light .....	51
Epilogue .....	57

## Dramatis Personae

### In order of appearance

#### Eric Emberson

Discovers a ghost in the machine

#### Anita Emberson

Eric's mom. Must never find out who Jeeny really is.

#### Henrik Emberson

Eric's dad. Computer wizard, but quite clueless when it comes to ghosts and genies.

#### Patrick Martens

Eric's best buddy, brilliant in math and logic but not necessarily the fastest runner on the planet.

#### Jeeny

Genie, ghost in the machine, can see the future but, unfortunately can only speak in rhyming riddles.

#### Sylvia Martens

Patrick's little sister, a bit too smart for her age.

#### Rudy (the rude) VanDerClaas

Eric's arch-enemy, class-bully and keen on teaching Eric further lessons in futile self-defense.

#### Carl Olsen

Museum Janitor. Current unsuspecting owner of Jeeny. Uses her as a flashlight.

## Chapter 1

### A message for Eric

“Switch that thing off now, you have 10 seconds! 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5 ..”. Anita, Eric Emberson’s mother continued shouting the countdown from the office room where she had been discussing something obviously important with Henrik Emberson, Eriks’ dad.

“Okay Mom, just a second ..”, Erik shouted back.

Eric made a sour grape face. “*Oohhh*” he thought. But he complied and hit the <Escape> key of the battered keyboard of his dad’s old laptop computer to interrupt and save the battle he had been fighting for the last hour or so. The old machine took a while to digest Eric’s decision to end the game. Eric listened to the strange humming and buzzing sounds that always seemed to accompany the starting and stopping of games. Especially games with lots of videos and graphics, like this one. Eric always wondered when the machine would finally give up. After a while, the laptop stopped whatever it was doing inside of its plastic casing and finally displayed the <Save Game> screen of the game. Eric was relieved. He was glad that he had this old clunker. That was the good news: he had been given his own machine last month. It did not look like very much. Steel gray plastic case, about as thick as a good adventure book, regular color screen, mouse, joystick. The basic set up. An old beater, but that did not matter. The important part was that it was powerful enough to run BattleZone. Not the latest version, mind you, but a pretty recent release. The one that went up all the way to level 12 and had plenty of advanced weapons to chose from. He could be any one of seven different warrior types, and he could tell the game in what historic period he wanted to fight his battles. Vikings, Romans, Crusades, Middle Age knights: they were all in there. The battles and the opponents became harder at each level. BattleZone 3000 was a great game and he loved to play it. So much for the good news. The bad news was that his mom always seemed to interrupt when he was getting ready to win a major battle or to advance to the next level. When his mom had shouted the final

warning and had begun the countdown, Eric had just beaten Tantor in a sword and dagger duel for the first time and now only needed to get three more energy-crystals to open the gateway to level 7. “*Oh well...*” Eric sighed, pressed <Control-S> and watched how the machine saved his game files. “*Still level 6*”, he said to himself, “*I’m going to see everyone after a long weekend and I’m still level 6. Bummer*” But then he had an idea. Maybe he could squeeze in half an hour of BattleZone tomorrow morning, right after breakfast and before the ring of the doorbell announcing the arrival of Patrick? If he got up early, he could be a level 7 before he got to school. Cool. The exit menu of BattleZone 3000 appeared:

<Are you sure you want to exit BattleZone?>  
<**Yes**, exit BattleZone>      <**No**, continue BattleZone>

*“No, I’m not sure but Mom will be really angry if I don’t finish my homework.”* Eric thought. Hit the <Y> key for “Yes, exit BattleZone”, shut the computer down, closed the lid of the machine and shuffled over to the opposite corner of the living room where his math homework had been waiting to be finished off for the last 3 hours. Eric sat down on the sofa, grabbed his notebook and pen from the side table, reviewed the assignment again, and began writing down the answers to the 5 questions that were still outstanding. 10 minutes later he was done. *Patrick can always check the results on the way to school tomorrow*, he thought.

“Ready Mom, can I play some more now?”, he yelled. He did not really expect a “Yes”. It would be the same as every evening after 8:00 p.m. He could already hear his mom’s standard answer in his head: *“No, not today Eric, you have been staring at that thing for 3 hours already. Why don’t you get a book and read something. Plus it’s a school day tomorrow; you know the rules.”* But this time, instead of his Mom’s voice, he heard the voice of his dad from the office room:

“Stop yelling, Eric, you know how much I hate it when you guys are shouting at each other across the house. Behave like civilised people and look at each other when you are having a conversation!”. Eric chuckled. *“Who’s shouting now, dad?”*, he thought, but he did not say anything. Dad did not like it very much when Eric pointed these things out to him. His mom came over to the sofa, took the math notebook from Eric, and checked the results. She frowned, looked at Eric and said:

“Are you sure you have done your best here? Especially on question 10? Oh well, it’s getting late. Leave it for now. We’ll just have to work on this some more on the next weekend. Go get ready for bed now”.



“Phew” Eric thought. He was glad he had gotten off that easy this time and went downstairs to his room. He dumped his day clothes into the laundry basket and lifted the blanket of his bed to find the oversized Darth Maul T-shirt he used for a pajamas these days. Ten minutes later he was in bed, reading Tolkien’s “The Two Towers.” He had just seen the preview of the film on TV and wanted to know a bit more about the characters he had seen. Another half-hour later he heard the expected “Lights-out” command from upstairs. He marked his spot with a bookmark, checked again that the alarm clock was set to 7:00 am instead of the usual 7:30, and turned off his reading light. “*Level 7, tomorrow morning. Only three more energy crystals and I will beat Patrick’s record of getting to level 7*” he thought. He ran through his strategy one more time: Avoid the energy traps, hold back on the use of sleep dust, sharpen the sword, collect more arrows for the cross-bow, yawn ...” Eric fell asleep dreaming of Tantor, sleep dust and gateways filled with orange and blue energy crystals.

Bleep, Bleep, Bleep. Eric woke up with a start. “*What the.. ?*”, he thought, looking at the big 7:00 on his digital alarm clock. But a few seconds later, after his brain had finally managed to leave sleep mode, he realised why he had wanted to get up that early and said to himself: “*oh yeah, the plan, level 7.*” Eric jumped out of bed, went to the bathroom for a quick cat-wash-routine -no need to waste water here- , went back to his room to put on his clothes and jogged upstairs, fully dressed for school, shoes and all. His mom was already busy in the kitchen; his dad was not there, he had probably already left for work. Eric’s dad worked in a computer company in Copenhagen and had to drive about an hour back and forth every day. Eric did not see him very often in the morning.

“Hello, you’re up early today” said his mom, “any reason in particular?”

“Well..,” Eric responded, still thinking about how exactly he wanted to handle that question. He decided to *take the bull by the horns*, an expression he had just recently learned from Patrick. Patrick was his best friend and really smart. Somehow, math seemed to be totally easy for Patrick, and he also knew many more

fancy words and sentences than Eric. He continued: “Well, you know, mom, I thought I could get in some more time on BattleZone; I really need to become a level 7 this week or Rudy will just make me the laughing stock of the whole soccer team again.”

“We’ll see”, said his Mom, who was always alert when Eric talked about Rudy. She continued: “You take another look at your math homework first. See if you can come up with a better answer for the last question. If you can do that, and finish your breakfast, and I mean ALL of it, I’ll think about it, okay?”

“Yesssss”, Eric thought. He grabbed his backpack, went to the living room, plopped down on the couch, unpacked his math notebook, worked on question number 10 some more, corrected his result, walked over to the breakfast table, gobbled down the buttered toast, the scrambled egg and half of his orange juice, closed his eyes, inserted the gigantic slice of tomato into his mouth, closed it, counted 1-2-3, gave the tomato slice three quick chews, and washed the whole thing down with the rest of the OJ. “Yuck”, he thought, but then again, that was the price warriors had to pay for half an hour of BattleZone, the price for level 7. He went to the kitchen door and presented his open notebook.

“Ready Mom!”

His mom poked her head from the kitchen, surveyed the situation, and gave him an encouraging thumbs up. Eric jogged to the computer desk, hit the <On> button, waited for the system to go through its start-up thing and double-clicked on the red-and-black Triple-Skull-Icon that would launch BattleZone 3000. At the level selection screen he typed in his name: “Eric Emberson” and his password: “Wizard”. He was just getting ready for his next battle with Tantor, when something entirely different and completely unexpected happened. The image displayed on the screen of the laptop computer changed from a colorful medieval battlefield into a uniform, dull gray background. And then the following words appeared on the screen:

**Words of wisdom, words of light**

**Follow the seeker, avoid the fight!**

“What?” Eric said and reread the message. This was new. He had never seen this part of the game before. But before Eric could make up his mind about what to think about this, the text vanished and the familiar start-up screen of BattleZone appeared. Eric had already forgotten the message. He loaded yesterday’s game, found a forgery to have his sword sharpened, collected four more arrows for this cross-bow and launched himself at his archenemy, Tantor. Tantor fought like a fox, trying to lure him into his energy traps but Eric beat Tantor two more times, got all the crystals and had actually made it though the 7<sup>th</sup> gateway when the doorbell chimed three times: Patrick’s signal. *“Patrick won’t believe I’ve made it!”* Eric thought. Then he shouted in the direction of the kitchen where his mom was packing his lunch bag. “Can you get the door Mom? Please?” Eric printed off a game certificate that would prove he had actually achieved level 7, and closed the game down. Then he guided the mouse pointer to the Start-Menu to shut off his laptop when it happened again. The screen went a dull gray and the same text appeared:

Words of wisdom, words of light  
Follow the seeker, avoid the fight!

“Hey, what is that? A new game?” Eric heard the voice of Patrick behind his left shoulder.

“Hi Patrick, I have no idea, why don’t you tell me, you are a level 10 on BattleZone, not me. But look here ..” Eric replied, proudly brandishing his freshly printed level 7 certificate of accomplishment. Patrick pulled his lips together to let out his signature whistle:

“Not bad, level 7, in less than a month. Not bad at all. But that thing on your screen, words of wisdom whatever, I have never seen anything like it. It certainly has nothing to do with BattleZone. Maybe you caught a virus”.

“A virus?” responded Eric, finally managing to shut the computer down. “I have not installed anything on this machine for weeks. I’ll talk to my dad about it.”

“Yeah, better do that,” said Patrick, “these virus things can really mess up your machine. C’mon we have to go if you want me to take a look at your homework before class starts.”

Eric grabbed his backpack, picked up his lunch bag from the kitchen, stuffed it into the side pocket of the backpack and headed for the door. “Bye mom”. His mom shouted back: “Bye Eric. Did you take your gym bag? It’s soccer this afternoon!” “*Oh man*”, Eric thought, turned on his heels, sprinted downstairs, collected his gym bag with the shorts and shoes he would need for soccer practice, and ran after Patrick who had already started walking towards the main street. His mom closed the door behind him, smiled and said to herself. “*I just hope he does not have another run-in with Rudy today. I don’t think I feel like calling Mrs. VanDerClass again this week.*”

Around 3:00 p.m. Eric’s mom heard the door open and close, the familiar voices of Eric and Patrick. “I know, Patrick, but there was not much I could do, he provoked me, didn’t he?” she heard Eric say to Patrick. There was an edge to Eric’s voice she did not like. Eric and Patrick had gone to the kitchen; she heard the sound of the freezer door opening and closing, water splashing in the sink, ice cubes tumbling from a tray. “Eric”, she called from the office room, “You okay?” “Yeah, yeah, mom, no big deal, I just had a little “discussion” with Rudy VanDerClass again. Guess who won?” Eric’s mom got out of the office chair, switched off the flat screen to the family’s “big” computer and went to check on Eric. Eric was sitting on the living room couch holding a wet towel, most likely containing a couple of melting ice cubes to his left cheekbone. Patrick was sitting across from him on the other sofa, holding both backpacks and gym-bags. The area of Eric’s face under his left eye was sporting a bruise the size of a kid’s fist. The red impact-site had already started turning the familiar colors of the rainbow. “What happened?” his mom demanded, worried, but also a bit angry. She could imagine what had happened. Both Patrick and Eric began

babbling at the same time. It took Eric's mom about 10 minutes to figure it all out from the various bits and pieced of the story. "So..", she said, after she had fetched fresh lemonade for the two boys, "here is what I heard. You and Rudy "talked" after soccer. Rudy did not believe you had made it to level 7 in BattleZone faster than Patrick, and then started yanking your chain a little bit. Patrick was not there because he was looking for his gym bag and could not help you. You gave Rudy a push, Rudy pushed back, you pulled your arm back to punch him and then you ran into a straight left from Rudy. Sound about right?" Eric nodded, reluctantly, ".. but he provoked me, Mom, I had no choice". Anita Emberson frowned. Eric had to learn his lesson this time. In a fight like this, there were no winners. Getting into fights was one thing. That could happen to anyone. But starting one? Especially against the well-known school bully? Not her son. No way. Not again. She launched her speech: "Well, Eric, I think this was your own fault. You took the first step. You swung to try to hit him. You know Rudy likes to get into fights. I wish you would have been a bit more wise this time. I wish you had just gone with Patrick to help find his gym bag like he asked you to." She sighed and continued: "I think it's better if Patrick goes home now. We still have some things to discuss in private. Your dad will be home soon, too." Eric and Patrick exchanged quick glances, and mouthed to each other: "*Oh-oh, lecture time*". "I saw that" his mom admonished, her tone slightly on the angry side now. Patrick grabbed his backpack and gym-bag and took off to leave Eric to his own devices and to the serious family discussion he would surely have with his mom and dad about starting fights in school. Three hours later Eric was in his room, grounded for the rest of the week. He fully understood the details of his punishment. Even his dad, usually not that strict in these matters, had confirmed the plan: Early to bed every day and no BattleZone at all for a whole month! Educational computer games only, one hour a day only, 30 minutes in the morning, 30 minutes in the evening, only if the homework was done. Get into another fight, lose the lap top computer completely for a month. "*Bummer! This was not my fault!*" Eric fumed to himself. "No fair!", he shouted at the ceiling, not too loud, lest anyone could hear him. He had clearly gotten the short end of the stick here. He grumbled on for a while, but then, for lack of an audience, he lost interest in the grumbling routine and

took out a book instead. Erik let the events of this morning and afternoon run through his head again. Maybe he could have avoided the fight if he had helped Patrick find his Gym bag. “Maybe, schmaybe, whatever” he thought and got ready for bed. Then, all over sudden a thought struck him like a bucket of cold water. “Now wait a minute...” he tried to recall the message on the computer screen in the morning. Something about wisdom, light, seeker, avoiding a fight. The words appeared in front of his “inner eye” again.

Words of wisdom, words of light  
Follow the seeker, avoid the fight!

If he had followed Patrick to seek for his bag, the fight might not have happened. If he had listened to the mystery-message of this laptop this morning he would now be playing BattleZone and would be able to fight his way towards level 8 now. “Neah”, he said out loud. This was surely nothing more than pure co-incidence. But then again, what if it was not a co-incidence? Maybe there was more to it? Had Rudy sent him a message? Or his Mom? Or Patrick? But how? His PC was not even connected yet! This was weird and deserved further investigation. Eric could not wait until the next morning to find out if there was another message and what it would say. Eric was excited. He did not know that he would be in for the surprise of his life. What he saw the next morning was way much better than trying to go for level 8 certification in BattleZone 3000. It would be the start of a wonderful adventure.

## Chapter 2

### A ghost in the machine

Eric had not changed the setting of the alarm clock which beeped him out of dreamland at 7:00 am. He got up, went to the bathroom and stood up on his tiptoes to lean into the bathroom mirror to check his bruise. Rudy's knucklebones had made a clear, multicolor impression in his face. Knuckles 1, 2, and 3, they were all there. "*Marks of honor! Battle scars!*", Eric thought. At least he had stood up to Rudy. Maybe it would earn him some respect with the rest of the team. Eric finished his bathroom chores, got dressed and ran upstairs. He sat down in front of his breakfast, cleaned every single food item off his plate and asked his mom: "Mom?" "Yes Eric?" came his mom's voice from the office room. "You're still angry with me?" "A little bit" she answered. "It wasn't my fault!" Eric whined, knowing very well that that strategy usually didn't work. But he had decided to try it anyway; one could never know. His Mom replied, not entirely happy with Eric's renewed attempt to change her mind. "Let's not start that discussion again, okay? I have already locked away the BattleZone CD-ROM. You still have LearningPlanet and MathAdventures III installed on that machine. You can use your 60 minutes on that if you like." "Okay", Eric thought, at least he would still be able to use the computer. It was a start, at least. "Okay Mom, Eric shouted, I'll just play a bit until Patrick arrives". "Sure," his Mom replied, "it's up to you to decide when you want to use your computer time. What do you want for lunch today?" "Whatever" Eric yelled, already sitting in front of his laptop. Eric did not have a mind for food right now. All he really cared about that second was what message he was going to see on his computer today. He started the laptop and fired-up a session of MathAdventures III. Nothing. Just the normal screen was shown by the computer. No gray background. No spooky message. Eric tried LearningPlanet. The same result. Nothing unusual. "Hmmm", Eric thought, "*maybe it only works with BattleZone, but then I won't find out until a month from now. Dang!*" Eric kept trying. Still nothing. All of the other games he started just showed the familiar screens. Eric thought. And thought. "*How was BattleZone different*

*from all the other games?”* Eric did not even hear the doorbell. He almost fell out of his chair when Patrick slapped his back and said: “You’re ready buddy?, you know there is a verbal math test today, we better get in some practice of the tables and formulas before the lesson starts.” Eric turned his head, beamed. Exchanged the secret clan-shake with his best buddy. “Patrick, hi man, good to see you, I have to ask you a question.” Eric had spontaneously decided to let Patrick in on his secret, if there was any secret at all. If this was what Eric hoped it would be -some kind of spooky ghost in the machine that could see the future- he would need a really good ally. Someone he could trust with his life. Someone that knew a lot about computers and science. Someone with an excellent detective’s nose. In one sentence: Eric would need Patrick. Eric explained to Patrick what he had seen, the relationship to the fistfight with Rudy and his suspicion about mystery-messages that could predict the future. Patrick listened patiently and carefully, thought about it for a few seconds and said: “Well there are only three ways to explain this. (A) Either this was a complete coincidence; in that case, we don’t worry about it anymore. Or (B) someone planted a message in your computer; in that case we have to find out who had access to your machine and has fun writing rhyming riddles. Or (C) something really weird is going on with your machine, ghost or not. In all 3 cases we need to find out if your laptop will show up another message. He thought about this. “One question, Eric”, Patrick asked. “Yes?” Eric responded. Did you type in your name and password before you started BattleZone? “Yes, why, I always...”. “*That’s it*”, Eric thought. That was the difference to all the other games. Only BattleZone required a user name and password to get him to the right level. He turned around and typed:

Eric Emberson  
Wizard

The screen went a dull gray. Yellow, ornate letters began to appear:

```
Welcome back Eric, Wizard of light  
You did not listen, you lost the fight  
Hear me this time, or fail in your quest
```



Don't follow your footsteps, advance from the West

Eric and Patrick stared into the screen, google-eyed, as if they had seen a real ghost floating by, white bed sheets and all. Patrick said: "Option C, clearly option C." Eric did not say anything. Just kept staring. "Kids, you're going to be late!" Eric's mom's voice reached Eric's and Patrick's position in dreamland and yanked them back into reality. Anita, Eric's mom was looking over their shoulders and said: "What are you staring at in the first place? I did not know the start-screen of MathAdventures was THAT interesting!" Eric turned his head to face his mom, smiled and said: "It's nothing, Mom. Patrick and I decided that he would help me with math on the weekend and Patrick just could not believe I was running such an old version of MathAdventures. But we have to go, come on Patrick, we're out of here now. Seeya mom". The boys headed out the front door. His mom waved them goodbye, shut the system down and thought: "*Oh well, maybe Patrick is right, this is an old clunker. I could go and trade this in for a better machine at the used computer store down main street. We'll see. It might make a great birthday present. His 10<sup>th</sup> is coming up in three weeks anyway.*" Anita Emberson made a mental note to talk to the owner of the computer store right this week. Eric would be so surprised and pleased when he saw his new machine for the first time.

Eric and Patrick walked to school, constantly talking about the mystery message all the way. Actually, they half-ran to school, because they did not want to be late. "*Don't follow your footsteps, advance from the West*", Eric repeated in his mind. He asked Patrick: "Do you have any idea what this could mean?" Patrick seemed to be lost in his own thoughts: "Hmmm? Oh, yeah, the message. I don't know, I'm still thinking how the message could have gotten into your computer. Is your computer connected to the Internet?" "No", Eric answered, "my Mom thinks I'm not ready to connect to the Internet by myself, too much stuff out there that is not fit for kids, she says". "Oh, come on", said Patrick, "my dad has set up my computer so it only allows me to see things that are okay for kids. Plus I can only mail to people on a special list of friends. It's, like, totally safe. I can ask my dad to call your dad to tell him how he did it". "That would be great", answered Eric, "there are a

lot of cheats for BattleZone out there, and you can even get new versions of the game, you know!” “I know, I know” said Patrick, “but now I really don’t know who could have put that message into your machine. It really did not look like it came from one of the games you are running”. All over sudden, Patrick fell silent; they had almost arrived at the school building. “Is that Rudy-the-rude down there? I wonder what he’s waiting for?” Eric formed pretend binoculars with his hands. “Detecting enemy forces, captain, Rudy the kid and his 3 desperados! What is the battle plan?” Eric did not really think it was all that funny, his bruise was still hurting a lot. “I don’t know Eric, I think we are better off avoiding Rudy and his gang for a while. After all, you swung at him first. I don’t think you need another bruise, and you probably want to keep the use of your computer.” “Right..”, said Eric, thinking of this punishment. “..but what are we going to do?” “I think they have not seen us yet. Patrick checked his digital watch. “School is about to start in 2 minutes. If we run around to the back entrance, wait until 30 seconds before the bell, we can sneak in just before school starts. And Rudy will still be out there waiting for us. What do you think? They surely are not expecting us at the back entrance?” Eric saluted: “Battle plan confirmed, Captain. Transfer your cargo. Engaging boosters”. Eric grabbed Patrick’s backpack - Patrick was not the fastest runner he knew, especially not when loaded with a full backpack. Eric shouldered the extra load and fell into a light trot, carefully watching out for Patrick who was trying to follow him, panting heavily. They made it just in time. Eric and Patrick had taken the route through the park, past the old play ground, leading directly to the back entrance of the school building, thereby carefully avoiding Rudy and his 3 henchmen. Eric and Patrick had just sat down behind their benches when the school bell rang and Rudy and his gang burst through the classroom door and were stopped by Mrs. Hansson, the 4<sup>th</sup> grade class teacher. “Who do we have here? Aha, Mr. VanDerClass and the 3 Musketeers. Late again. As usual. You three, sit down and unpack your homework, I’d like to take a look at your results.” Rudy and his gang were beginning to shuffle back to their seats when Mrs. Hansson continued: “Not you Mr. VanDerClass. Since I was planning to do a couple of tests this morning, we might as well get started with you. Here is a piece of chalk. Please show the class how you would go about calculating the

area of a circle with the diameter of 10 centimeters.” Eric and Patrick were having a great time. Pure bliss. “Serves him right”, Eric said to himself. Patrick just smiled, avoiding the angry glances of the 3 Musketeers who were busy looking for their homework in their workbooks. Mrs. Hansson grilled Rudy for about 3 minutes before she allowed him to sit down. “Not bad Mr. VanDerClass, but not particularly good either. I think you might want to spend some time in the class room after school today, to make up for lost time this morning, don’t you agree?” “Yes Mrs. Hansson”, Rudy answered. He was not that impressive when he was dealing with people taller than he. He was clearly steaming with anger and shot Eric a glance that was obviously meant to say “just you wait buster, I’ll still get you one of these days.” Eric just avoided his stare and kept focusing on Mrs. Hansson who had begun to explain the wonderful world of mathematics. “Rudy will calm down again”, Eric thought, especially if he and Patrick continued to be successful at avoiding him. He always did.

Eric was right. When the bell finally announced the end of this seemingly endless school day, Rudy had to stay behind anyway; and without him, his loyal Gang-of-3 would not dare to take any action. Eric and Patrick collected their stuff and started on their 15-minute walk back to the neighborhood of freshly-built, 3-story town-houses where both the Emberson- and Martens families had recently made their homes. Eric had liked Patrick from the first day they had met. They had met each other and then gotten used to walking to and from school together. Eric thought they made a great team. Eric was good at sports, languages, and arts, and Patrick had a real knack for math, computers and anything science in general. They both shared a passion for history, especially weapons and battles. Their conversation would usually center on games like BattleZone and Age-of-Kings and things like that. But today, they had a different topic. “So what do you think that message meant?” Eric asked, looking at Patrick. They had arrived at Eric’s house. “I don’t know yet, but I have an idea. I have to check something on a map at home. I’ll call you as soon as I know. See you later buddy.” They exchanged their secret handshake: Fist-Fist-Elbow-Fist, just like some of the Roman warriors. Eric went inside, announced his arrival “I’m home, Mom” and sat down in front of the computer desk. “Oh

no, you don't" said his Mom. "Remember the game plan? Homework first, then 30 minutes. No exceptions. Your snack is ready in the kitchen. How was school today?" his Mom asked, carrying a pile of books from the living room to the study. "Fine", Eric answered, already nibbling on a long slice of carrot. "*No reason to upset her with another Rudy story*", he thought. Two minutes later the phone rang. His mom picked up:

"Anita Emberson? Who is speaking? ... Oh hi, Patrick, just a second. Eric, it's Pa...."

Eric grabbed the mobile phone from his mom's hand so quickly that Anita had had no chance to finish pronouncing the "...trick" part of Patrick's first name. His mom raised her eyebrows, as usual when she strongly disapproved of something Eric did or said, but said nothing. Eric took the phone, galloped downstairs to his room and closed the door behind him.

"Soooo?"

"You won't believe this," he heard the excited voice of Patrick at the other end of the line. Clearly, Patrick had come up with some interesting information.

"Oh yeah, just try me. What is it?" Eric was bursting with curiosity, now. What was it going to be? Theory A, B, or C? "*Jeez, let it be C*", Eric hoped, "*let it be something weird going on with my computer.*" That would make the 60-minute daily computer time allowance he had been granted by his parents so much more fun.

"Well, do you still remember what the message said this morning?" Patrick asked. Clearly he was leading up to something. But what was it? Eric was just about ready to explode.

"Yeah, something about Quest, and Footsteps and West. Tell me ..!!!"

“Patience, my young apprentice, Patience”. “Oooaahrgh”, Eric thought, groaning, “... *not that really bad Darth Sidious voice-imitation again.*” Both Patrick and Eric were huge StarWars fans and knew the dialogues of Episode I by heart. If Patrick had been right there with him, in his room, Eric would have jumped him now, grabbed him by the shoulders and shaken him for the answer like an apple tree.

“Teeeeaaaaallll meeeeeeeaaaa”, Eric howled.

“Ha, ha, ha, okay, okay.” Patrick was clearly enjoying this. He continued: “The message said, according to my memory:”

```
Welcome back Eric, Wizard of light  
You did not listen, you lost the fight  
Hear me this time, or fail in your quest  
Don't follow your footsteps, advance from the West
```

“Yes, that sounds about right, and ...?” Eric pressed on for the answer.

“Well, I looked up the position of our school building on a map. Guess what direction the back entrance of the school is?”

“Wait a minute, you mean it’s West, we were coming in from the West, right?”

“Right! Now the only two questions I have are: (A) No matter who or what is sending you these messages. How did they know we were going to bump into Rudy this morning? And (B), how did they know the back entrance of the school was facing West? Not even my dad knew this and he works for the city construction department. It almost seems like your laptop can see the future!”

“Wow, wow, this is really cool. We’ve got to talk. Do you have time now?” Eric asked.

“I have to finish my homework first. Why don’t you come over here, we do homework together, and then we can go back to your

house and see if we can get another message from your computer. And this time, we will write it down!”

“Hang on, let me talk to my Mom”, Eric said. He put the phone down onto his bed, and sprinted upstairs. He came back down 30 seconds later. “All set! We do homework, I show my work to Mom, we get 30 minutes on my machine. I am sooooo curious!”

“Me too, me too”, Patrick said. “I still can’t believe this is more than one huge co-incidence, but if there is a ghost in the machine it will be the sensation of the town! Just imagine what we could do with this!

“Yeah”, Eric’s head had already begun spinning. “Cool, cool, cool.”

He grabbed his backpack and headed over to Patrick’s house.

## Chapter 3

### 3000 years of boredom

Jeeny was overjoyed. She looped-the-loop 345 times in her plain, tiny metal cave. Being a 2-mm ball of pure, compressed life-force energy had its advantages in a prison cave of this size. Finally, finally. Someone had heard her. Someone called Eric Emberson, Wizard. A real wizard! E of E. How wonderful. Jeeny had almost given up hope. And who could blame her? For the past 3000 years - 2997 years, 312 days, and 13 hours, to be exact, give or take a couple of hundred sand corns in her Time Crystal - she had been locked in this cursed copper lamp. Locked in to wait until a wizard with the initials EE would hear her and free her from her spell. Locked in with nothing to do than practice the 143 standard spells she had learned so far, and to try to improve on the one unique trick that had caused her to be locked into this lamp in the first place: Her Future-Eye trick. None of the other Genies or Wizards of her time had been able to do that. Only her. Only Jeeny had been able to look into the future. The Future-Eye trick had scared the living daylights out of her friends at school and the inspectors from the UCWWDGORMA. Jeeny could still see the future from inside her prison, but not very clearly, mind you. All she usually saw in her minds eye was a flow of vague images. But she always clearly heard a strange rhyming riddle that went with the fuzzy images. She sighed. The problem was: she could always hear the riddles in her mind, but often she could not understand them. Maybe she was still too young, too inexperienced, lacking the guidance of an older Genie. But then again, no other Genie had been able to do this before her, it had been a brand new trick. When the local chapter of the Universal Council of Wizards, Witches, Druids, Genies and Other Related Magical Arts - in short the UCWWDGORMA - had found out about Jeeny and her new trick, they had immediately decided to ban her into this lamp. No trial, no jury, not even a chance to say goodbye to her friends at school, her siblings, her family. From one moment to the next, she had found herself in this miserable little cave, obviously the inside of an old fish-oil lamp - she could tell from the smell. All she had received as an explanation was this

message that sounded like the 1000-year old standard letter the council sent to anyone banned into a lamp.

J of Y, do hear your fate  
You broke the code, now it's too late  
The council spoke, there's no appeal  
The Everfire's your eternal meal  
Outside of here your powers end  
Not one more code or rule you'll bend  
Until such time that you be found  
To this small cave your life be bound  
A magic crystal will keep the time  
To remind you to regret your crime  
There is one chance, you may be free  
By wizardry of E of E

In the beginning there had been nothing but shock. How could they? How could her mom allow this to happen? Where had her dad been? Clearly this was a bad joke, a prank. Banning into lamps had been a common practice in the olden days, when the light and the dark sides were still having daily battles. These days, it was only done for the severest of crimes and violations. Jeeny did not it know then, but pretty much had figured it out over the past 2000 years, that practicing the Future-Eye trick was such a crime in the eyes of the UCWWDGORMA. By seeing the future you could potentially become all-powerful. You simply would know everything. Nobody would be able to attack you, or steal things from you, or control you. That was what they must have been so afraid of. Why they had not even given her the chance of a fair trial. Little did they know how limited her abilities were, that she could only see a little bit of the future, that she could only see the rhyming riddles. But, it just had happened. After a while her shock had changed into fear. What would she eat, where was her real body? Then, when she had discovered that the Everfire was taking care of her needs, fear had turned into anger. How dare they do this to her? Then anger had turned into hate. She would get back to them, just wait, she just



had to find a way out of here. Then, desperation. This was useless. She would just die in here, when the EverFire ran out in another 3000 years or so. It had been a miracle that she had not gone insane with boredom. Maybe the EverFire and the Time Crystal had some magic attached that helped her keep her mind in balance. They probably wanted her to be sane, to be able to regret her crime. The crime she had not known she was committing when she had begun looking into the future. All this time, Jeeny must have been through this emotional roller coaster of shock, fear, anger, hate, desperation, shock at least 20 thousand times. But she learned how to keep herself occupied. She repeated the poems she had learned, made a thousand new ones, thought of a million things to do when E of E would free her. And she practiced her spells and worked on her Future-Eye trick. Although she could not see much, she clearly saw that things outside must have changed a lot. For some reason, the past 2000 years seemed to have seen more change than all the centuries before she had been born. Luckily for her, the language still seemed to be similar. The language spells she had learned in school seemed to be working. The words had changed a lot, and some works plainly did not make sense at all, but she was able to understand the riddles that were being sent to her. So Jeeny was waiting, learning, looking at the future, but getting bored all the same. No matter how many riddles you saw, or how many languages you learn, nothing would ever replace running around in the real world, counting gold fish, picking a fresh apple from a tree, tripping up her brother, or, even going to school. One day, when her boredom and anger had reached almost record levels, she decided to think some more about her judgement, and how she might be saved. What had the poem said?:

There is one chance, you may be free  
By wizardry of E of E

It somehow seemed to her that those two lines did not fit with the harsh language of the rest of the poem. In addition, judgment poems were usually only 10 lines long. The last two lines seemed to have been added, to make the poem twelve lines long. Twelve was a much more gentle, friendly and complete magic number. The

number of moon cycles in a year. Jeeny was 10 years old now, which was two hands, or 10, times 12 Moon Cycles. 12 could be divided by 6 numbers: 12, 6, 4, 3, 2, and 1. And 6 was one half of 12. Twelve was the favorite magic number the Elves of the south liked to use in spells. Maybe her mom had put the two extra lines in there to give her some hope? Maybe her clan would work something out for her? The message said that she would be imprisoned until a certain Wizard called E. of E. would free her. In the UCWWDGORMA language that meant: Pretty much never. No wizard in their right mind would chose a first name and a last name starting with the same letter. Let alone starting with an E. That would be very tasteless and potentially unsafe as well. But if her family had a hand in this, then things might happen for her. She would just have to be patient and wait. So Jeeny waited, learned, waited, looked into the future, learned a bit more, played around with her spells, and waited some more. One day she had been particularly lucky. Jeeny had come up with a fantastic new spell, a new magic word. "Cadabrium". This word seemed to be able, when combined with the right chant, to speed up time for her. "Muirbadac", the exact opposite of "Cadabrium" would slow time down again. Now, with the new spell, time was beginning to fly by more quickly. Seconds turning into minutes, minutes into hours, hours into days, weeks, months, years, decades, centuries, millennia. And then it had happened! Jippee again. Another 345 loop-the-loops. Jeeny could not wait to talk to Eric again, to teach him more. Maybe just maybe, Eric would be able to free her. Aah, just the thought of it. And then. Revenge. Sweet revenge. All the others would suffer her fate. Lock them all up in a lamp, the whole UCWWDGORMA. Pow. With a single spell. Jeeny had refined her art in the past 3000 years of boredom. The UCWWDGORMA would be in for the surprise of their lives. Jeeny settled down to wait for E of E to call again.

Actually Jeeny's name was not Jeeny at all. Her full name was Jasmine Elvira Elvensdotter Novina of Yggdrasil, short J of Y, fully anointed Genie-apprentice of the 3<sup>rd</sup> mystical order of the South. The initials of her names had formed the name Jeeny, which, being a Genie, sounded better than J of Y for an abbreviation. Jeeny had always liked short cuts, abbreviations and the easy way out in general, like looking into the future what the next test series was

going to be about. Jasmine was the name of her mother, 23<sup>rd</sup> queen of the Elves of the South. Elvira was her given name. Elvensdotter just meant what it was supposed to mean: daughter of Elves. Novina was the name of her aunt, her teacher, and Yggdrasil was the name of her clan. The reason her name was so short was that Jeeny had still been a child, barely 10, when she was banned into this tiny copper lamp, her prison for the past 3 millennia. She had never been given the chance to complete her education, to pass all the tests, which would have given her the chance to choose all the other 996 names appropriate for a genie of her powers. “Oh well”, Jeeny sighed, “ just get me out of here Eric, and then we’ll see about those tests.” Jeeny had already begun to make a list of all the names she would be able to choose from. Agneta, Benicia, Celia, Dorothea, Elvira (she had to keep the ones she already had), Fantasia, Gabriela, etc. etc. She could not wait until her newfound master contacted her again. All he had to do was say the magic combination again. Eric Emberson, Wizard. She wondered what Eric, E of E, looked like. Surely the fashions would have changed quite a bit in the last 3000 years. Would he wear his sword on the right side or on the left side of his chain mail? Where would he keep the bag with magic dust? What color would his cloak be? Was he of the visible or of the invisible kind? Jeeny began to make another list. Questions. So many questions. However, no matter the fashion of the day, she had already decided that she would appear in her favorite outfit: Simple, but impressive. White dress, golden belt, no wings, diamond hair combs, her traditional Genie-school outfit. He would understand immediately. She checked her reflection in the dim purplish light of the sparkling ball of Everfire that had been her only source of food, and of light in all that time. Although Jeeny was just a tiny ball of energy right now, to her mind, her imagination, she still looked like the healthy, slim Genie-apprentice girl that had been sitting by a small river counting gold fish when she had been yanked from her life, her family and friends into her exile in this stinky little copper lamp. But now this was going to come to an end. She turned and fixed the diamond combs in her braids. Not bad, not bad at all she thought. Jeeny breathed in, relaxed and waited. She had waited for such a long time, another few hours would not make the difference.

On the outside of her prison, everything was dark. The copper lamp - an ancient fish oil lamp used by the nomadic fishermen of southern Scandinavia about 3000 years ago - stood on a dusty shelf in the basement of the National Museum of History in Copenhagen, Denmark. It had been there for quite a long time, probably for more than 3 years. Someone had found her lamp in southern Sweden while digging one of the huge holes needed to anchor the Öresund-Bridge that now connected Copenhagen to Malmö across a narrow passage of ocean. Jeeny, of course, knew nothing of such modern things. Inventions such as concrete suspension bridges and diesel-driven monster-drills that could dig holes of such size in one week that would have taken 10,000 slaves more than a year to achieve the same result in her time. She knew nothing of Carl Olsen, the janitor of the museum, who had thought it a great idea to use the old, beaten-up, useless fish-oil lamp as a basis for an electrical lamp. Carl was quite the handyman. Give him any old artifact that was earmarked for being thrown away, a vase, a lamp, an old sword, whatever, and Carl would come up with a nifty idea of what to do with it. In the case of Jeeny's lamp, Carl, not knowing what powers he was really dealing with, had decided to fit a light bulb into the front end of the oil lamp, and to connect the whole thing to a power outlet in the basement. So, there it was. A great flashlight to help Carl look for things in the endless rows of shelves full of artifacts he was guarding. Jeeny's millennium prison, turned into an electric lamp. How pathetic. Waiting to be switched on when, or should we say if, Carl came back to this particular basement to look for something or the other thing. All Jeeny did know, the minute Carl had plugged the lamp into the power outlet, was that she had begun to feel something. Something different. Something that reminded her of the lightning bolts she used to ride with her aunt Novina. And this something, this lightning bolt sensation had connected her, through magic completely unknown to her, with Eric Emberson Wizard. She could not know how. She could not know that the same electricity lines that were feeding power to the small bulb in her lamp were also connected to the power lines feeding power to the Öresund bridge train that ran between Copenhagen and Malmö in Sweden. That in Eric's world, electricity lines pretty much connected anything to anything these days. All Jeeny knew was that she was very grateful for that kind of magic.

Ah, there it was again. Very clear. Eric Emberson, Wizard. Calling her again. Jeeny concentrated. She wanted to show off her best trick again, the Future-Eye trick she had worked on so hard. The trick that had cost Jeeny her freedom. The trick that would now surely help her to gain her freedom back. But first Eric would have to take the first hurdle, master the first challenge. The UCWWDGORMA had surely built the customary barrier spell into her prison that would make it impossible for anyone that did not know any part of her name to free her, or even speak to her. It would not make a difference what part of her name they would use, Jeeny would work as well as Jasmine, Elvira, Elvensdotter, Novina or Yggdrasil. Until she was freed she would only be able to speak to Eric in riddles, in rhymes. But then, once Eric had said her name and rubbed the lamp, he would just have to use some of his Magic Dust, say he traditional Genie-Free spell together with him, and - pop- she would get her body back. And once she had her body back, her magic would work in Eric's world. If he let her have some of his Magic Dust. But why wouldn't he. He had contacted her, hadn't he. It would just be a matter of time now. Jeeny focused on Eric, and sent him a rhyming riddle spelling out his task. Soon, as soon as Eric had mastered this challenge, as soon as he had understood, and begun asking her questions, she would tell him more. Soon, so soon.

## Chapter 4

### Genie without a bottle

Eric and Patrick stared at the screen. They had waited until Eric's mom had approved of the homework results, and had left for a short shopping trip to the local super market. Eric's dad was not due back home until another hour or so. Perfect timing for this all-important experiment in Ghost-hunting. Paper and pencil were ready. Eric had even borrowed the digital camera of his dad to take a snapshot of the next riddle. "Ready?", Eric asked. A nod from Patrick, camera ready to shoot. Eric typed:

Eric Emberson  
Wizard

The gray screen appeared almost immediately. Even faster than last time. The script had now taken on an older look, almost looking like the old scriptures Eric had seen in the Viking museum in Stockholm during the last family vacation. The text was longer now, too; 6 lines instead of the 4 he had seen last time. Clearly, this thing, the ghost, messenger, the whatever, was becoming more talkative all the time.

```
Welcome back Eric, Wizard of light  
This time you listened, you avoided the fight  
You may ask me questions, but one at a time  
For I see the future, but can only talk rhyme  
There is one condition, one riddle to tame  
I set you this challenge, please call me by name.
```

Click. Patrick was taking pictures. Eric was taking notes. He glanced back at the screen. Gone. Vanished. No trace of anything. Just the boring background of the computer start screen. "Did you get that?", Eric said, almost shouting at Patrick. "Yeah, Yeah, relax", said Patrick. He brought the picture up on the small screen of the camera. There it was. Patrick connected the camera to the computer, brought up the special picture software, loaded the

picture and printed off a copy. Then he deleted the picture from the camera and from the computer. Patrick said: “Just to be on the safe side, we don’t want anyone else to know about this, right?” “Right”, responded Eric. The boys sat down on the sofa and began to work on the riddle. When Eric’s mom came back from the shopping spree, she dumped her bags in the kitchen and went to the living room to check on the kids. It was just a bit too quiet there. The computer was off. Were the kids sick? She could not believe her eyes. There they were, paper and pencil in hand, frantically writing something down. “Hey kids, want some ice-cream? I have choc-choc-chip sensation and raspberry vanilla swirl, your favorites?” “Neah”, came the boys’ response, in near unison. “Maybe later”. Anita raised her eyebrows; clearly there was something going on. “*But*”, Eric’s mom thought, quite pleased with herself “as long as the computer is off, it’s okay. What harm could come from writing something down on paper?” She walked over to the sofa and peered over Eric’s shoulder. “What are you writing?” she asked Eric. “None of ..” Eric stopped himself. He did not need another set of restrictions this week. He looked at Patrick, picked up where he had stopped. “None of these names seem to make much sense. What do you have, Patrick?” He looked up at his Mom, smiled: “Patrick has found this old riddle. We need to figure out a name of a wizard that can see into the future. We’re just going through a list of names to see which names would make most sense.” Eric’s mom smiled back. “Oh okay, sounds like fun. Dinner will be ready in one hour.” Erik said: “Can we switch the computer back on for 20 minutes, Mom? We have only used it for 10 minutes, honest. I think we can use a special software to find out more about these names. Please?” Eric pleaded with his Mom. Anita had no problem with that. Solving riddles was clearly better than fighting Tantor and collecting energy crystals. Maybe Eric would get used to these kind of games and play less on the computer. After all, what could a computer offer to the right imagination of a 10-year old in the long run? “Okay, go on” she approved, “but only 10 minutes, okay?” Eric and Patrick grinned. “Sure, 10 minutes”. They switched the computer back on. Eric typed the magic words.

Eric Emberson  
Wizard

The gray screen reappeared, this time with only the last line of the riddle visible:

```
I set you this challenge, please call me by name.
```

Eric began typing the names on the list of wizards and druids he and Patrick had collected over the past hour or so.  
Gandalf, Miraculix, Gollum, Delphi, ...

No result. Still the same line:

```
I set you this challenge, please call me by name.
```

Eric kept on typing. Still no result. Time was running out. They had already been typing for about 15 minutes, according to Patrick's digital watch. His mom called, her voice urgent. "Dinner in 10 minutes, Eric. Switch that thing off now. I have given you more than enough time" Eric looked at Patrick, panic-stricken. "Genie", said Patrick, "try Genie". "What kind of stupid name is that?" said Eric annoyed. Patrick could have such weird ideas some time. "Come on try it out, what do we have to lose?" Erik shrugged, maybe Patrick was right. Eric typed Genie, as in genie in a bottle.

Genie

No result. "Let me try", Patrick said, barging in. Eric yielded his seat. This was unusual. Patrick never butted in like this. "Okay, okay, your turn, Captain, just take it easy, okay?". Eric watched, as Patrick hammered away at the keyboard, reading from another list he had produced from somewhere.

Gieny, Genny, Geanny, Geannie, Jenny, Jennie, Jeannee, Jeeny, Jeanie, Jeannie ...

The screen changed. A new set of lines appeared. "You got it", Eric shouted excitedly. "Yeah, it sure seems so", said Patrick, "I just wonder which one it was?" They read the text:



Welcome my Master, wizard of fame  
You answered my question, you called me by name  
Proceed with your questions, but one at a time  
For I see the future, but can only talk rhyme  
There are some conditions, I have to explain  
You may not seek answers that fortunes would gain  
Until you have freed me, I'm already found  
To answer your questions, my powers are bound.

Click. Another picture. This time Eric had taken it over the shoulder of Patrick who was just staring at the screen, spellbound. "Come on Eric, time for dinner. Patrick, I'm sure your mom is waiting for you, too." Eric's dad, Henrik had come from the office to the living room, had reached over Patrick's shoulder and hit the off-key. Eric and Patrick just exchanged quick glances. Surely neither one of them was going to get much sleep tonight.

The next morning, Eric and Patrick walked to school together, bleary-eyed. Both had spent most of the night up, trying to figure out what had happened. Eric had tried to contact the mysterious messenger again, had tried the last combination of names, one at a time. He had found that "Jeeny" was the name of the messenger, the ghost. Obviously some kind of Genie, a Genie without bottle. But how could this be? Eric still had no idea what he or she was, exactly, where it came from, where it could be hidden, how it was able to send him messages and what he was supposed to do next. There had not been a new message. When he had typed in his name, password and then "Jeeny", the message from the night before had re-appeared. Some things had become clearer to Eric, other things still remained a mystery. It seemed that Jeeny could see into the future, but that she could only speak in unclear rhyming riddles about what she had seen. That he was allowed to ask questions, but that he could not ask about anything that would gain him a fortune. That someone had found Jeeny already, but that she not not been freed yet. "*Found what, found her how?*", Eric kept repeating in his mind. Maybe he should just ask Jeeny? That's what she could do, answer his questions. "*That would be a*

*lot of fun,*” Eric thought! But, he did not dare to ask the first question without speaking to Patrick first. Eric said: “ So Patrick, did you find out anything? What did you do after you went home?” “Yeah I think I figured some things out. After I had talked to my sister”, said Patrick. Eric opened his mouth in shock. “Excuse me? You did what? What? You talked to Sylvia? Are you completely nuts? She is only 6 and a half, she will spill the beans to everyone, and then we will be the clowns of the century ..”, Eric exploded and stopped walking to stare at Patrick. Patrick stopped too, and looked at Eric, annoyed, Eric was so emotional all the time, no patience whatsoever. “Chill out man!” Patrick said. “I did not tell her everything, okay? I just asked her if she believed that there were Genies in this world any more. I just wanted to see what younger kids thought. Maybe we are missing an angle here, maybe we are just too old to figure this out. Maybe the answer is really easy, but we just don’t see it.” Eric calmed down. They walked on. “So what did she say?” Eric asked. Patrick continued: “Well, she said something like this: If there are any Genies left, they must have been hidden somewhere deep, in some really, really old bottles or lamps. Otherwise they would have been found already.” Eric shrugged. “Makes sense to me, but so what?” “Well, I have been thinking about this all night,” said Patrick, “Jeeny said that she had already been found, but not freed. But it must have happened recently, otherwise someone would have already set her free, obviously. If they have dug up an old bottle or lamp just recently, it could be that Jeeny is still locked in there. Nobody would suspect a Genie in a bottle or lamp any more. Not even kids believe in ghosts or genies and more. But Sylvia still does, and this made me think about this. The construction workers or whoever dug up Jeeny would have probably just thrown the thing away, or stored it in some basement. Maybe that’s what Jeeny meant with *found but not freed*. I don’t know. I’m just confused.” “Me too”, said Eric, “but we can always ask her tonight. I’m sure she can give us a clue.” They arrived at school. Tired as they both were, this was going to be a very, long day. After school, they ran home. “Hey, I’ve got an idea”, said Patrick. “What?” responded Eric tiredly. He was just thinking of going to bed soon. “We could try to contact Jeeny from my computer, I don’t have a 30 minute limit”. Eric’s face brightened. “Great idea, let’s try it!” Eric and Patrick ran to the Mertens home,

switched on the computer, typed in the right names: Nothing. They tried again, maybe they had misspelled something. Again, zip, nada, nothing. Clearly the magic only worked on Eric's beat-up laptop. "Jeez I hope that thing does not give up the ghost", said Eric. "No kidding", said Patrick, smiling. Eric got it, laughed out loud. "Let's go, let's use our 30 minutes". They went back to the Embersons' house, sat down to finish their homework, which went twice as fast as usual, showed the results to Eric's mom, who approved, went to the computer desk, switched on the machine and entered the names. An empty gray screen appeared. "Now what?", Eric asked. "Type in a question, anything", said Patrick. Eric thought, typed:

"Who is going to win the European soccer championship this year?"

There are some conditions, I have to explain  
You may not ask questions for personal gain

"Dang, I forgot, bad question. I guess someone could make a lot of money by betting on that team", said Eric. Patrick nodded and asked: "Let me try one". Eric nodded and shifted the laptop over to Patrick. He typed:

"Jeeny, how can we find you?"

My prison wall's copper, its purpose is light,  
My eyes see but darkness, my shelf out of sight

"Cool", said Eric, "an answer, but honestly, I don't get a thing!" "Me neither", said Patrick, frowning, "not yet, that is, not yet." Patrick had already begun making notes. Eric pulled out his pen and paper as well, jotted down the answer that had already disappeared from the screen again. This would be another long night. Eric said goodbye to Patrick, agreed to meet him earlier than usual the next morning, to discuss things, and went to bed to work on the riddle. His mom came down to switch off the light in his room around 8:30. Eric had already fallen asleep, pen still in hand, dreaming of genies, bottles, magic dust and flying carpets. When

his mom bent over him to pull up his blanket a bit, she heard Eric whisper in his sleep: “Jeeny, Jeeny I cannot wait to finally get together with you.” “Whoops” thought his mom, “a girl friend? At Age 10? It is a bit early for girl-friends but, hey, kids these days are just more advanced than we were.” She smiled and went upstairs to break the news to Henrik, Eric’s dad. Was he in for a surprise, or what? One thing was sure. Jeeny was a big surprise to anyone. It was just that Eric’s mom had no idea how completely and deeply wrong she was that night.

## Chapter 5

### Emails and Bananas

A week later, Anita Emberson got up at 7:00 a.m. She crawled out of bed, waddled over to the bathroom, brushed her teeth, threw on her bath robe and went to the kitchen to get started on breakfast for herself and Eric. The usual set up. OJ, toast, one egg, scrambled, some veggies on the side. It was Friday today. Anita yawned. The end of a long week. And now, two nice, relaxed week-end days lay ahead of her and her family. She would be able to sleep in, have a late brunch, maybe go on a bike tour with Eric and Henrik. She stretched, looked out the window at the still rising sun. Aahhh. Not bad at all. The weather report had announced 25 degrees and blue skies. Perfect. She frowned. What was that sound? Did she hear the soft ‘clickety-click’ of the old laptop keyboard? Could it be? She peeked around the corner into the living room. Yup. Unbelievable. Eric, still in his Darth Maul T-shirt, typing away on the computer keyboard.

“Erik? What are you doing up this early? Are you trying to weasel your way around the computer allowance?”

She frowned. This was not good. She did not like these tactics at all. She would have to have a serious talk with Henrik about this. And the new computer for Eric that Anita had planned to secretly buy this week was most certainly off, now. Birthday or not. If Eric was using these kinds of tricks to bypass her rules he would have to be happy with the old clunker for while. *“If I let him use the computer at all”*, she thought. Erik turned around, clearly embarrassed.

“Ehh, hi Mom, it’s not what you think. I’m just trying to figure out the answer to some questions”.

“Oh, what kind of questions? Cheats to BattleZone?” Anita’s frown deepened.

“No no, it’s, it’s ...”, Eric was struggling for an answer. An answer that would make sense, that would be true, but would not give away the biggest secret he had ever had. The most exciting thing that had ever happened to him.

“Yeah, Mr. Emberson junior, I’m still waiting for an answer. I just hope it’s a good one or you can kiss this computer goodbye for at least a month!”

“Oh-Oh”, Eric thought. “Mr. *Emberson junior*”. Eric knew this meant trouble, real trouble. “I know Mom, don’t get angry. You know, it’s, it’s, it’s for Jeeny!” Eric said, relieved with his own answer. The frown on Anita’s forehead disappeared. Her eyebrows were raised high, now, showing her great deal of interest in this matter. Eric almost laughed, Mom always looked funny that way, google-eyed, curious, her eyebrows almost touching her low-hanging, still unkempt morning hair-do. “Oh, I see.” Anita continued. “And who might this Jeannie-person be? Is she a new girl in school? Do you want to tell me a bit more about her?” Eric’s mind raced. He saw what she was getting at. This could be a good angle to take. A risky one, but clearly his Mom was more relaxed now. And, hey, it was not so far away from the truth. After all, Jeeny was a girl, and he and Jeeny had become good friends. He and Patrick were going to rescue her. Bring her here. Eric answered his mom’s questions: “Well, mom, you know, the answer is kind of yes and no. Yes, Jeeny is a girl Patrick and I met recently, and no, she is not in our school yet, although I’d say she’s about my age and she would probably be in my class level. Jeeny is planning to move here soon but she knows nobody here except Patrick and me. She needs some help to get adjusted to her future home, and Patrick and I have decided to help her out” Eric paused to catch his breath. “Hmm, that sounds nice Eric, what kind of questions does Jeannie have?” Anita asked, clearly very interested in finding out more about this mystery-girl that seemed to have suddenly appeared in Eric’s life from nowhere. Eric smiled: “Well this and that, how things work around here, what people do on the weekends, what to do for fun, that kind of stuff. “I see” his mom said, “and why do you need to use the computer to find these things out?” Eric continued smiling. He had already thought of the answer to that

question. “Oh okay,” Eric replied, “well I’m not really using the computer for finding the answers. You know, we are sending each other emails, playing this game. I ask questions of her, she sends back a riddle for me to figure out. It’s a lot of fun, mom. Jeeny really knows a lot of things I don’t know and I know a lot of things she does not know”. The frown reappeared on his mom’s forehead. “Email? You mean you met Jeannie on the Internet? I told you to be careful with this, you don’t know who you are really talking to!” Eric sighed. “Mom, remember, dad fixed the computer so I can send emails to my friends now? And Jeeny is really okay, you can look at the mails if you like!” Of course, Eric seriously hoped his mom would not do that. How could you explain a question-and-answer game you were playing with a 3000-year old Genie-in-a-lamp to a grown up? But Anita remembered the set up, of course - after all Henrik had worked pretty hard on this - and relaxed again. She had not liked it, Eric being online, even if it was just for an hour a day. There was simply too much stuff on the Internet she did not approve of. But Patrick had protected internet access too, and Patrick’s dad had discussed it with Henrik. Patrick’s dad had even brought over and installed some special software on Eric’s old laptop. So Anita and Henrik had finally approved. Anita smiled and told Eric: “I see, well, okay then.” Eric was so relieved. His mom seemed to have calmed down again. Then she continued: “But the 60 minute per day rule still stands. How long have you been on?” Eric decided to stick to the absolute truth. “About an hour and 20 minutes”, he mumbled. “What?” his mom said, “You got up at 5:45?” this Jeannie person must be pretty special to get you out of bed that early” Eric smiled again. “She sure is, mom, unfortunately it will be a while before she really moves here. Until then I am only talking to her online”. His mom turned to step back into the kitchen and yelled “Okay, 3 more minutes and then that thing is off again, okay? And the 20 minutes overtime will count towards tomorrow! So, no more computer today, and nothing at all tomorrow morning. Clear? Eric nodded. “Sure mom, no problem, I have most of the answers figured out anyway.” Eric felt good. He had handled that pretty well. It would not happen again. From now on, he was sticking to the schedule.

The past week had been a lot of fun. Step by step, question by question, riddle by riddle, Eric had found out more about Jeeny. How she had been locked in the lamp about 3000 years ago. That she could see the future, but only in very hazy images and riddles. How much she longed to get out of that prison. But neither Eric or Patrick had been able to figure out where exactly the old copper lamp that served as Jeeny's home, prison, castle, whatever, was stored. Patrick had come up with the best guess of all, after speaking to his dad who was working for the city's construction department. According to what Patrick had told him, the talk between Patrick and his dad had been similar to this:



“Dad?”

“Yes Patrick?”

“Are you guys still finding ancient artifacts around here?”

“Sure, all the time, there is a lot of history buried in the south of Sweden you know”

“So, what kind of stuff are you finding?”

“Oh, that really depends on where, and how deep we are digging. Mostly it’s swords, knives, pottery, woodwork, fishing hooks, etc.”

“Oil lamps and stuff too?”

“Sure, in digs out by the ocean, they come up with old fish oil lamps ever so often.”

“How old are those?”

“Again it depends, the oldest ones can be a couple of thousand years old. Why are you asking? Do you guys have a school project again?”

“No, just personal curiosity, Eric has seen this old lamp in a museum and wants to know more about it. One more question dad.”

“Sure, fire away.”

“Has there been a recent, deep dig, maybe close to the ocean around here?”

“Not close to Lund, but out there, towards Malmö, when they built the Öresund-bridge, remember?”

“Oh yeah, the bridge, sure. I bet you these pillars needed some pretty deep holes!”

“You bet, I think some of these holes where a couple of dozen meters deep before they filled them in with concrete”

“You think they found some artifacts?”

“I’m pretty sure they have. If they have, they are either in the History Museum in Copenhagen or in the Öresund Exhibition building at the foot of the bridge on the Malmö side. But I don’t think so, I cannot recall seeing anything in the papers. But I might be wrong. Does that answer your questions?”

“Sure, that’s all I needed, thanks Dad.”

“No problem, Patrick, I’m sure you’ll be able to find plenty of more information on the Internet.”

“Okay dad.”

Of course Eric had not been there to hear the actual conversation, but Patrick had a pretty close to perfect memory for these things and had retold the conversation with as much details as possible. So, now, all they needed to do is find out where the lamp was hidden. Eric decided to speak to Mr. Eleen who was teaching history and geography to grades 6 and up. Eric waited until lunch break, still carefully avoiding Rudy-the-rude who still seemed to have an urgent need to “discuss” things with him, and approached Mr. Eleen as he was heading towards the teachers’ break room on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor. “Mr. Eleen?” Eric called. The teacher heard his name, stopped and turned around, saw Eric, smiled and said:

“Yes, what can I do for you?”

“Oh, hello Mr. Eleen, my Name is Eric Emberson, from Mrs Hansson’s class, I just have a quick question for you. If I wanted to find out which artifacts had been found in southern Sweden in the

past 3 years, and where they have ended up, where would I go?” “Interesting question” said Mr. Eelen, scratching his beard. “As a matter of fact, I would just call the National History foundation and ask them. If you are lucky, they are even keeping a list of these things. Any reason in particular why you are asking, Eric?” “Oh no, not really” answered Eric, “I’m just curious about where these things end up, that’s all”. “Okay then”, said his teacher, turned and disappeared in the lunch room. “Good”, Eric thought, “We’re getting closer and closer to a solution. He headed back to his classroom to eat his lunch. What had Jeeny sent this morning? Another one of these really tough riddles.

Three warriors leaving alone, their leader’s chase in vain,  
The fruit’s old coat you’ll use, for slipp’ry cause of pain

Eric had really no idea what Jeeny was getting at. But so far, she had been right on every time with her future-eye predictions. He opened his lunch box, checked the content, sandwich, banana, yogurt and opened the door to the class room. Clearly he would be undisturbed. Rudy-the-Rude would be in the yard, bullying someone else. But then. Shock. Rudy was right there, in the class room, waiting for him. “Aha, Emberson, finally we meet again. Now we can finish our little conversation. I can see your bruise is healing nicely, I think you could use a re-fresher.” Oh no. Eric flinched, clearly recalling the pain from the straight left he had collected from Rudy VanDerClaas a couple of weeks ago. Surely Rudy’s henchmen would not be far. Rudy was already taking off his jacket and rolling up his sleeves, getting ready to attack. “Quick”, Eric thought, “I have to think of something”. He could not count on Patrick today, he was home sick with the flu. Nobody else was in the classroom. The teachers were all in the break room. Yelling for help would not do. “Wait”, he thought, maybe that’s what Jeeny had meant. He played the lines through his mind again.

Three warriors leaving alone, their leader’s chase in vain  
The fruit’s old coat you’ll use, for slipp’ry cause of pain.

Could it be? Yes, that’s it. Eric quickly grabbed a chair and shoved it into Rudy’s path. That distracted Rudy for a second. He was used to

easier prey. His helpers, clearly the “three warriors” Jeeny had been referring to in her riddle, were most likely waiting down the hallway to block Eric’s path back to the teacher’s quarters. So, “*run the other way, towards the yard*” he thought. He sped off, opening his lunch box. He would only have a few seconds. It was a good thing Eric was one of the fastest runners in his grade level, in all of Lund, for that matter. But Rudy was not exactly a slow runner himself and was already in hot pursuit. “*The fruit’s old coat you’ll use*”. Eric peeled the banana, looked over his shoulder. Now. He dropped the peel. What happened next, Eric would replay in mental slow motion for years to come. Rudy looked at him, then at the falling banana peel, then at Eric again, then at the peel again. His eyes became wide. He had finally understood. Rudy tried to slow down, but he had too much momentum already. He put his heels down to try to come to a sudden full stop, and that’s what did him in. His left heel came down on the banana peel exactly when the peel was making contact with the freshly waxed hard-wood floor of the school building. Eric saw Rudy skating by at about 20 kilometers an hour, arms flailing, desperately trying to regain his balance.

“aaaaaaaaaaaaAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHAAAAAAAAAAAAaaaaaaaaa”

Eric’s eyes followed the glide-path of Rudy-the-Rude, now freshly converted into Rudy-The-Banana-Rocket. It ended precisely where the red fire extinguisher had recently been mounted under the sign “Do not touch” by Mr. Anderson, the school’s janitor and handy-man. DENNINGGGG!!! Rudy’s nose connected with the red cylinder. “Owww!” Rudy howled. The fire extinguisher detached from its wall rack and landed on Rudy’s left foot. Yowowow! Rudy was clearly in pain. Eric was not sure if he should feel happy or very sorry for poor Rudy, but if anyone had seen Eric that second, they would not have been sure what to make of his reaction. Eric was laughing, no crying, no laughing so hard that rivers of tears were streaming down his face. This had been better than any movie, any slapstick comedy Eric had ever seen on Video or DVD. Rudy was sitting on the floor holding his nose with his right hand, his left shoe with his left hand. The fire extinguisher was on the floor in front to him, right on top of the “DO NOT TOUCH” sign. Meanwhile, the running, the commotion, the loud DENG of Rudy’s nose impacting

on the fire extinguisher, the even louder CA.DENG.DENG.DENG.DENG of the bright-red, heavy metal-cylinder rolling along the hard-wood floor, and Eric's laughing-crying fit had alerted the Three Musketeers. They had come running to watch Rudy serve it up Eric. But now they could not believe their eyes. Rudy, their invincible leader: Utterly devastated. Eric, the easy victim: laughing so hard that tears were streaming down his face. Clearly they had underestimated Eric, and overestimated Rudy-the-Rude, now Rudy-the-Red-Nosed-Not-So-Impressively-Rude-Anymore. Meanwhile, Mr. Ericsson, the teacher assigned as break supervisor was sprinting up the staircase leading from the yard to the 1<sup>st</sup> floor where the drama had been taking place. "What is going on up there?" Eric heard Mr. Ericsson from downstairs. Eric quickly stepped over to Rudy, picked up his banana peel, stuffed it into his lunch bag and took off. The three musketeers were right behind him, not to chase him, but to avoid a stern lecture by Mr. Ericsson who did not take running and fighting incidents during his shift very lightly. So, when Mr. Ericsson had made it up the two flights of stairs, all there was left to behold was Rudy, hopping on one leg, at the end of a long skid-mark on the freshly polished floor, trying to re-attach the fire-extinguisher and the DO NOT TOUCH sign to the green wall. Mr. Ericsson put his hand on his hips. "Mr. VanDerClass", he fluted. "Strike three, I'm afraid. This time we're going to have a nice, long chat with Mrs. Lind, the headmaster. I'm sure she will be very understanding and will give you a bit of an early vacation break this year. Don't you think, Rudy?" He helped Rudy up from the floor, re-attached the fire-extinguisher and the sign and headed back to the teachers quarters. "*Rudy, Rudy, Rudy*", he thought, "when will you ever learn."

## Chapter 6

### The search for the lamp

Vacation time, finally. Eric and Patrick were ready to go. They had done all the research, narrowed the possible location of the lamp to one museum. The National Museum of History in Copenhagen, Denmark. They had asked for permission to go take the bus over there to “do some research”. Jeeny had been very excited too. All of her future-eye sessions had confirmed it. Soon she would see her new Master, would be able to fulfill his three wishes and would be free, free, free. Free to do whatever she wanted. And, most importantly, free to hunt down the members of the UCWWDGORMA, the Universal Council of Wizards, Witches, Druids, Genies and Other Related Magical Arts. Jeeny would conjure up enough copper lamps, one for each one of the council members, swoosh them in there with the revenge-spell she had made up, and then send them and their lamps to the deepest depths of whatever ocean happened to contain the deepest depths these days. It annoyed Jeeny that she knew so little about Eric’s age. Jeeny had already tried to learn as much as possible from Eric’s questions. But Eric had not mentioned swords, or magic dust, or spells or any of the other familiar things to her at all. Instead, his questions had sounded even more complicated than her riddles. Mentioning crazy-sounding things like soccer, computers, telephones, emails, skate boards and so on. Clearly some new kind of magic had taken over the world. But, she thought, there would be plenty of time to learn all this. Once she was free. She considered her dress code again. No. It was fine. White, gold, no wings. Diamonds. She would stick with the classics. She wondered what he would be wearing.

Eric and Patrick said almost nothing on the one and a half hour bus ride from Lund to downtown Copenhagen. They arrived at the bus stop, which was not far from the central station, and walked over the bridge and past the Tivoli amusement park in downtown Copenhagen to look for the bus stop of the line that would take them to the Museum. Another 10 minutes later they had arrived. They got off the bus and walked around the main building to find

the side entrance that was used for deliveries and for the museum staff. They rang the bell. Now they were getting a little bit nervous and began exchanging nervous glances. “What if Carl is a grumpy old guy that does not like curious kids?” Eric asked Patrick. Patrick just shrugged. “Let’s just hope for the best”. They had made an appointment with Carl Olsen, the janitor of the Museum. It had taken them almost 4 weeks to track him down. After all other questions had lead to dead-ends, but one option had remained. Thanks to Patrick’s superior detective logic, again. (A) An old oil lamp had been found in the Öresund dig and had been sent to the Museum. (B) Because the Museum already had 3 similar oil lamps on display, and because this particular lamp had not been in good shape, the museum had initially put it into main storage. (C) After one year, the lamp had been offered to other museums in Denmark and also in Sweden, but all the other institutes had declined as well. They too had plenty of old, beaten up oil lamps as well. (D) The museum had not shipped the lamp anywhere, had not sold it, and it was not on display anywhere inside the Museum either. It had to be somewhere. Jeeny had confirmed that they were onto the right track. So, they had ended up with the lead to Carl Olsen, who seemed to know everything about every single artifact ever held in miles and miles of shelves of the museum. The only problem that remained now, was how to avoid tipping Carl off to the true nature of the lamp. If he found out, Carl might try to find the lamp himself to use the Genie for himself. But then again, Carl did not know Jeeny’s true name. And only if you knew that would you be able to free Jeeny. But, thank goodness, things went much smoother than Eric had hoped. Carl turned out to be a really nice guy, much older and bigger in any direction than either Eric’s or Patrick’s dad. Carl spoke excellent Swedish with that funny Copenhagen accent, and he offered the boys peach-flavored Ice tea. After he had poured the boys and himself a large cup of ice-cold tea from a huge, yellow plastic carafe he had taken from the refrigerator in his Janitor’s office, he asked: “So you’re looking for this old oil lamp? May I ask why?” Eric had expected that question and had decided to go to for full frontal truth attack. “You know, Mr. Olsen, Patrick and I have made contact with this 3000-year old Genie from the Yggdrasil clan. She was locked into this copper lamp because of her special gift of looking into the future. Mind you, what she sees is very fuzzy and

she is only allowed to answer any questions in rhyming riddles. And you can't ask any questions that would bring you a fortune. But Patrick and I decided to look her up, free her, and cash in on our three wishes. Maybe we'll only cash in two and keep her as company. Can you imagine how valuable a fully trained Genie could be to a team of 11-year old adventurers and historians?" Eric smiled at Carl, curious to see his reaction. Carl stared at him, then at Patrick, eyes open wide. Then Carl started shaking, his mouth opening ever wider. A major earthquake was taking place in his tummy. But no sound emerged, Carl just sat there, shaking, his eyes blazing with amusement. Then finally: Ho Ho Ho, Ha Ha Ha Ha. Almost like in the old Santa Claus cartoons on channel 3 during Christmas. As a matter of fact, the more Eric thought about it, the more Carl Olsen began looking like Santa. Maybe there was a connection? The huge storage halls! The Nordic dialect! The huge beard! Eric pushed that thought aside. He was 11. Santa Claus was just a story, anyway. We were talking real Genies here now. Carl kept shaking with laughter for a little while, spilling at least half a cup of peach ice tea over his work apron. "Kid's", he said after some time, wiping tears from his eyes with a not-so-clean-anymore handkerchief. "This is the best story I have heard in 55 years. I love it. Just wonderful. You know what, I'll let you look through the storage shelves all by yourselves. I would be of no help, laughing all the time, now that you have let me in to your "secret". Everything down there is properly sorted and labeled. It should be easy. After all, you just have to pull out the lamp, knock, and your Genie will knock back from inside the lamp, right? Ha Ha Ha Ha". Eric winced, forced a smile. Clearly, Carl was having the time of his life. But, great, the trick had worked. Eric had learned the full-frontal-truth-attack from his mom a long time ago. She had said something like this when he had been about 8 years old:

*"Eric, I don't want you to lie. Ever! I know this is going to be hard. Sometimes even the most honest people will "stretch" the truth a little bit: to protect people, to prevent people from getting hurt and things like that. But, Eric, if you ever need to hide some facts from someone, you can use this trick. Just look them in the eyes, and then you tell them the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Say it with conviction. People just will not believe you, because*



*they never expect the full truth. So sometimes the best way to hide the truth, is to tell the truth. Truth is stranger than fiction. Trust me. Remember this, always!"*

And Eric had remembered. All Eric had done to fool Carl was follow his mom's advice. And Carl had fallen for it: Lock, stock, and laughing barrel. Carl guided them downstairs to a long hallway leading to the large storage halls. He opened a door labeled "1", and switched on the dim ceiling light. The huge metal door slowly swung in its creaking hinges, opening a view to a vast storage hall. "Oh no". Eric's and Patrick's hearts sank. Stretching out in front of them: row, upon row, upon row of artifacts. Dozens of rows, dozens of levels. Going on endlessly, it seemed. Carl smiled. "This is room 1, there are 5 more. Start here and see what you can find. I'll be down the hallway in that little office reading my paper. Just shout if you need help or something, okay? Good luck" Carl turned around, still smiling about the joke he thought he had heard. "Genie in a lamp, wonderful, wonderful," he thought, "I just have to tell Tilde about this when I come home". Eric looked over to Patrick. A helpless shrug. They were here now, they might as well get started.

"First thing we need is more light" said Patrick, and pulled a huge flashlight from his backpack. He switched it on. The lamp flickered, throwing a fading cone onto the shelves, blinked, died. "Oh no", Eric sighed. "Did you read Tolkien under the blanket last night?" Patrick made a grim face. "Mmm". "Dang", Eric said. Now what? He looked around the shelves. Maybe they could use this? A strange-looking electric lamp, plugged into a long extension cord, which in turn connected to a wall outlet. The lamp looked really old, a bit like the oil lamps they had seen in the online catalogues of the museum. But clearly, the people roaming this part of the planet 3000 years ago did not have electric light bulbs and extension cords now did they? So this could not be the one. But it would come in handy. Eric picked up the lamp, switched it on with the sliding switch attached to the extension cord. The lamp flickered to life. "Good enough" Patrick said, and put his useless flash light back into his pack. "Wait" said Eric, "there is something engraved here". Eric

could only 6 runic letters that did not seem to make any sense. Maybe there was more? He rubbed the lamp with the sleeve of his fleece sweater to get off the dust. “S”, he saw. Then, he rubbed more vigorously with his thumb to get off some of the old muck and grime. “I” and “L” were now visible as well. Now the engraving said “YGGDRASIL”. Strange, where had he heard that before? Wasn’t that about the old Nordic legend about the tree of life? He pronounced the word: “YGGDRASIL”. “Huh?” Patrick said, and then “Whoa”. What happened next, was clearly and completely unexpected. The lamp started vibrating, emitting a low humming sound and a thin blue cloud of smoke. “Oh oh, this is not working”, said Eric and put the lamp back onto one of the shelves, thinking there was something wrong with the electric connection. But things now had already been set in motion, there was no turning back now. Out of the blue haze peeled the transparent image of a 10-year old girl in a white dress with a golden belt. Her shoulder-length hair was held into braids by two combs that looked like they had been made from diamonds. “Hello”, the image said, which one of you is Eric, my new master?” Patrick and Eric first dropped their jaws, then their backpacks and then their behinds onto the cold, dusty concrete floor of the storage room. “Jeeny”, they said in unison.

## Chapter 7

### Into the light

Eric was first to find words. “I, ehm, I mean, hello Jenny, I’m Eric, I mean, eeh, how are you doing? Eric felt completely stupid, this was not what he had intended to say at all. Patrick was still silent. His jaw was still hanging open. “Everything okay in there?” came the voice of Carl from the small janitor’s office at the end of the hallway. Patrick found his wits again. “Ehh, sure, no problem, we found your search lamp. It’s great.” He yelled at the top of his voice. “Good” Carl yelled back, “I’m glad you did, I meant to tell you about it, but forgot because you made me laugh so hard with your Genie-story.” Patrick pushed an elbow into Eric’s rib cage. “Yowww”, Eric whined. “What did you do that for?” “Ask her for your three wishes,” insisted Patrick. “Remember, it’s now or never. If this is a classic Genie, playing it by the book, then she will think you have set her free if you don’t ask your favors now.” Eric remembered, he had planned it all out so carefully, but now, now it seemed like he could not remember a single thing. “Ehhh, Jeeny, can I have my wishes now? “Sure Eric, you can mention as many wishes as you like. It is me who has the limitations in fulfilling them. Let me explain it to you. I’m not a regular Genie yet, remember I was locked in here before I was able to finish my school? I can do a lot of things, but mostly to or with the help of other Genies or Magicians. Judging from your lack of sword, chain mail, Magic-dust pouch, and cloak, you are not a real magician yet, or no Magician at all. So we cannot team up to get things done. You’ll have to give me some time so I can complete my education. Do you know where the nearest UCWWDGORMA is?

“Huh?”, both Eric and Patrick intoned in unison.

The image of Jeeny laughed: “The Universal Council of Wizards, Witches, Druids, Genies and Other Related Magical Arts, you know. Because you are not a magician, I will need their help to get a body, to finish my education. Have you not heard of them?

“Eh, no, not really.” Eric said, shrugging. He was a bit disappointed now. First the huge surprise, now, the revelation that Jeeny would not, could not fulfill any wished for real people yet. This was going to be very interesting. He asked:

“But Jeeny, clearly you have some powers, what can you do for me?”

“Oh, many, many things, master. For example, I can still see into the future for you, but, until my education is complete, and I have a full body, I will have to continue to bring you this information in the form of rhyming riddles, just like you have seen before.

“Great”, Eric thought. “more riddles”. But, hey, better than nothing. Which other 5<sup>th</sup> grader could look into the future? “So,” Patrick chimed in, “the rules are different though now, right, we can now ask questions for our personal gain, get a fortune right? Jeeny laughed again. “You humans, you have not changed a bit in 3000 years. No, I’m afraid the rules still apply. She sang:

Proceed with your questions, but one at a time  
For I see the future, but can only talk rhyme  
There are some conditions, I have to explain  
You may not seek answers that fortunes would gain  
Until you have freed me, I’ve already been found.  
To answer your questions, my powers are bound.

Eric and Patrick remembered the song. They had learned it by heart. They joined in the in the last part of the chant, once they had gotten used to the melody:

“.. To answer your questions, my powers are bound” they crooned in unison.

“Hey, what’s with the boys group singing in there?,” came the voice of Carl Olsen from his office, accompanied by the klunk, klunk of heavy work boots approaching. Eric was getting nervous: “Quick, Jeeny, how do we get you back into the lamp?” Jeeny smiled. “You know so little, my master, just rub the lamp again and say my clan

name, YGGDRASIL, or any other part of my name. That's how you called me, that's how you can send me back. Please promise that you will call me out again soon, okay? Please? It's so awfully boring and lonely in here!" Eric heard the boots approaching, coming closer and closer, and pushed Patrick towards the door mouthing "slow him down". Eric turned back to Jeeny. "Sure, I promise, I will call you again, I think we can help each other. One last question for now, when you are out, who can see you? "Only you can decide that, Eric" Jeeny answered. She continued. "Until I have my full body back. Then I can decide for myself who gets to see me or not. What do you want for now?" Eric thought quickly: "Only me and Patrick, nobody else, okay? And Jeeny, is there a way that you can talk to me so only Eric and Patrick can hear you?" "Yes there is, it is done, goodbye Master", Jeeny said, with a sad tone in her voice that almost prevented Eric from going through with the imprisonment. "See you soon, bye, Jeeny!" Eric rubbed the lamp, said "YGGDRASIL", and watched in awe how the blue-cloud smoke thing magically reversed and undid itself in slow motion. Just like on his DVD player when he pushed the reverse button. Eric was still shaken. He could not believe this, so pinched himself. "Ouch", he had pinched a bit too hard, but yes, no dream, this was real. This was entirely, completely and wonderfully real. Jeeny had disappeared not a millisecond too soon. Patrick entered the storage room talking to with Carl. "So everything okay? Did you find anything?" Carl asked. "I heard you guys singing and I thought I had better check on you. I thought that I might have given you some Aquavit instead of lemonade." Carl chuckled again. "Aqua-What?", said Eric and Patrick at the same time. With their synchronized voices and outfits, they had started to look like a British boys pop-group to Carl. The earthquake was hitting Carl's huge tummy again. "You boys will do me in, if you go on like that. No, not aqua-what, ha ha ha ho ha ha ha, Aquavit, Schnaps, Alcohol, Booze get it? I thought I had given you boys a swig from the wrong bottle. But it seems like things are okay. Anything I can do for you?" Eric's mind was racing now. He had to get that lamp, but he could not, would not really steal it. Neither would it make sense to tell Carl the whole story again. This time he might actually believe it. What to do? What to do? Eric was wrecking his brain but it seemed his old thinker had gone on a long vacation to la-la-land. Again, his brilliant

friend and savior had the key idea, using his proven, unbeatable A-B-C approach.

“Mr. Olsen?”, Patrick asked. Eric held his breath.

“Yes”, Carl put his hands to his hips to be prepared for further quakes and aftershocks. One could never know with these two.

“I have three questions for you,” Patrick continued. “Question A. If we find anything down here that we like, can we just take it with us home?”

“Hmm, I’d say yes if it is nothing important and the value is less than 50 crowns, I’ll give it to you as a gift, as a thank you. I haven’t laughed this hard in years, honestly.

“Okay, question B is. What would you say the value of this lamp is? I mean this oil lamp here that someone has turned into an electric lamp?”

Carl had to think about that one for a while. The museum had wanted to throw it out, he had salvaged it, bought a bulb and socket for it, had attached a cable. He shrugged and said:

“I would guess about 100 crowns with the extension cord, about 50 without? Why?”

“Okay”, Patrick continued on his flawless path of reasoning. “I have to admit, Eric and I are really a bit overwhelmed with the size of this room. Clearly we need more preparation. What we would like to do is take this lamp back as a model, make some sketches and do more research on the lamp we were looking for. When we have more information, we call you up again and ask for another appointment, if needed. This time with a sketch of the actual lamp we were looking for. So question C is: Could we have this lamp? We would leave the extension cord behind?”

Eric was still holding his breath. Any minute now he would simply faint from lack of oxygen.

Carl was mulling this over, scratching his beard again. He had put quite a bit of work into it. He had grown used to it over the last year. But, hey, the kids liked to have it, and he had a much better lamp in the making, made from a real fossilized skull. That would be way more fun than this beat up piece of bent copper.

“Okay, sure kids, you can have it”

“Pffffffhhhhhhhh”, Eric said.

“You okay kid?” Carl asked worriedly, maybe the air down here was just too stale for the kids. He would bring them back up, into the light. The continued. “Let’s go back up, I think there is a bus leaving every hour. You can hang out with me for a while, I have the bus schedule hanging over my desk. I hope you’ll have a good trip, just make sure you stay in touch. I want you to come back and keep looking for that Genie thing of yours. I’d love to have my three wishes, too. One of them would be to have two great boys like you visit me every day. Boys that can make me laugh like this. Ha ha ha ho. Come on boys, get your lamp, pack your bags, I’m throwing another round of Ice tea and you can tell me that story again. Ha ha ha, hoo, hoho ho” The earthquake had stuck again. At least magnitude 7. Carl guided the boys out of the room, lamp and all, switched off the ceiling light, slammed the door into its frame, locked and walked the boys back upstairs to his main office, the one with the refrigerator. He was grinning all the way. But the real joy was in the faces of Eric and Patrick. “Yessssssss, yesssss, yesssss”, they were repeating to themselves. Eric had put the lamp into his pack to avoid rubbing it by accident. No risk now, there would be plenty of time on the bus and tonight to talk things over. An invisible, future-seeing Genie. With almost unlimited potential once she had grown up. This would be really something. Rudy-the-Rude would be Rudy-the-Clueless from now on. If Carl had had even the faintest idea about what Eric and Patrick were really smiling about, he might not have not laughed quite the same way on the way back to his office.

**- End of Book 1 -**



## Epilogue

Patrick had come back from the trip to Copenhagen beaming. Sylvia Martens could not remember seeing him that happy before. Not even when Patrick had gotten his new science lab for his 10<sup>th</sup> birthday. Patrick was whistling, and he was really friendly to her, most of the time. Something wonderful must have happened over there. She needed to find out.

“Hey big brother?”

“Yes Sylvia, what’s up?”

“I was wondering, you seem really happy. I think it started when you came back from Copenhagen. Did you find what you were looking for?”

“Oh-Oh.” Patrick thought. Sylvia was on to something. Obviously she had inherited that detective’s nose also. He had to be careful now.

“Yes, we found what we were looking for”

“Is it fun?”

“Yes dear, it is fun”

“Can I see it?”

“No, I’m afraid not, it belongs to Eric, it’s over at his house”

“We can go over and look at it, what is it, a toy?”

“Eh, well no, it is more of an old lamp, a really old one, something we can use for our school project. You know the one we are working on for next term, about the South of Sweden, the fishermen there, you know?”

“A lamp, what kind of lamp, a genie-kind of lamp? Like the one you asked me about some time ago?”

Patrick was beginning to sweat. This was not going in the right direction. He did not want to lie. She would be on to him like that. He snipped his fingers.

“Why are you snipping, Patrick. Is it a Genie-Lamp or not?”

Patrick remembered the basement of the Museum. Remembered Carl. The trick Eric had used. Maybe, just maybe Sylvia would fall for it too.

“Come here” said Patrick. Sylvia grabbed her favorite doll and idled over to her big brother. She made big eyes, now the truth would come out. “It’s like this” Patrick began. And he told the whole story to Sylvia. About the messages on Eric’s computer. About how the ghost in the machine had begun to tell them about things in the future. About how they had suspected that it might be a Genie. About Eric and Patrick had teamed up to track down the lamp that was home to the Genie. About Jeeny herself, what her name meant, why and how she had been locked up in a lamp for almost 3000 years. About how Eric and he had tricked Carl Olsen into letting them have the lamp. How they were going to help Jeeny find the nearest chapter of the UCWWDGORMA so she could return into her body and finish her education. How Jeeny was going to help them stay away from Rudy and maybe help some other people too. How Jeeny would not be able to bring them money and stuff, nothing to earn a fortune. How only he and Eric would be able to see Jeeny. Sylvia had listened to the whole story. Paid attention to every single detail. Now, she sighed and said:

“You know, big brother, this was a very, very nice story”. Sylvia hugged her doll. But you know, I’m really not 5 years any more, bro, you can feed this to the kids in kindergarten. I’m in first grade now. If you don’t want to tell me the truth about your fancy new toy, fine! Have it your way, but don’t expect me to tell you anything any more.” She huffed, and she puffed and she made her

way back to her own room to feel miserable for a while. But just a little bit and for a little while. One day, soon, she would sneak over there and find out what Patrick and Eric had really brought back from Copenhagen.

Patrick exhaled. Wow. He would have to use that trick more often.

Truth was stranger than fiction. It really was.

---