



REIGN OF
ZOULVISIA

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BOTHERSOME BOG

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Once upon a time, in the kingdom of Zoulvisia, a terrible deed had been done. While looking for wildflowers, a little girl had been snatched away by the evil goblin Merlock. He liked to make stews out of the children he captured, and the little girl was in great danger.

Her distraught parents searched far and wide, but no trace could be found. Hearing of this, the heroine Isabel and her trusty companion Unicorn Bob set forth to find the girl and return her home.

They hunted up mountains and through fields of daisies, until one day a blue heron saw them coming and flapped his wings to get their attention.

“I know where Merlock took the child,” the heron explained, “he went right past me as I stood in the mud of a bog out eastward from here.”



The two continued on into the boggy swamp, both getting sticky with mud. They squished and splashed their way for a long time, and Bob grew very hungry. He began looking around for some nice plants to snack on, and finally saw a few bright flowers. Without thinking what they might be, he took a big mouthful, looked a bit ill, then fell right over onto his side with a big crash.

Isabel whirled to see what had happened, and instantly noticed the flower he had eaten was magical. She recognized it as causing a deep sleep for half a day to any who touched it, so after giving Bob a pat on his mane, she decided to continue on. He would be fine there until he woke up again, and she had a little girl to rescue.

Hopefully Unicorn Bob had learned his lesson about eating unknown plants without asking first.





Creeping on into the murky swamp, looking for any sign of Merlock or his captive, Isabel saw nothing and was getting frustrated. Just then, to her right, an odd glow erupted from under the swamp, bobbing off as if moving underwater. She began following it.

Now almost covered with slime and mud with each step harder as her feet stuck to the bottom of the bog, Isabel kept on. The light seemed to be leading her into the deeper, darker areas of the swamp.

Soon happy birds, frogs and other animals were no longer visible, and an eerie silence grew. Only evil creatures would venture into these black half-dead areas. It was just the sort of place Merlock would like to live. Just then the light she had been following winked out. Trapped in mud and weeds, she glanced around, but saw nothing but vague shapes of branches and water plants.



Without any warning, in a gurgling of green mud and water, a slime-covered hand snatched Isabel and pulled her under the leaf-covered bog. She could no longer breathe, gulping in only mud.

The evil Merlock swam on, until they were in a deep hole. Knowing she was slowly drowning, Isabel tried to reach for her sword, but multiple arms pinned her. Our brave heroine did not lose courage for even a second, but fumbled for the secret dagger which was always in her boot. She hacked and slashed blindly in the dark waters, hearing piercing shrieks which echoed all over the swamp.

Finally able to wrestle her way to the surface, she took a big breath of air, then saw the cruel Merlock float up to the surface. He glowed once with a blinding greenish light, then vanished. The little girl, however, was not there.





Isabel was determined not to give up, and after a few minutes, she heard a small voice crying. The heroine slogged her way over through the muck and saw a blonde little girl hugging a tree.

“You’re safe now,” Isabel called out, “I’m here to bring you home!”

Drying her eyes, the girl smiled and ran to hug Isabel, getting mud all over as a result. By the time the two returned, Bob had woken up and they took the girl back to her overjoyed parents.

Merlock never dared steal any more children for his stews after that, but became a reformed vegetarian, although unlike Unicorn Bob, he never learned the peril of eating unknown plants and suffered many accidents as a result.

THE END (for now)

A dense forest scene with sunlight filtering through the trees. The foreground features a large, textured tree trunk on the left. The background is filled with numerous thinner trees and a thick canopy of green leaves, creating a dappled light effect.

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