

The Gribble's Eye

A novel by Dave Cline

Illustrations by Yulian Mulyono

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THE GRIBBLE'S EYE

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Illustrations by Yulian Mulyono.

"Ara?" Sadie bent down and carefully brushed away the leaves and roots that littered the narrow cave's entrance. "Do you get lonely down there?"

The sound of Ara's exotic voice echoed up through the tunnel, "I'm not like others you've met. I'm happy with my solitude."

"Maybe the sunlight is too bright for you?"

"Yes, it often is."

"Is there room for me down there?" Sadie craned her neck to peer into the hole.

"Don't even suggest such a thing." Ara's tone came across as a threat.

"Oh, okay."

"But I do enjoy a midnight stroll," Ara said, more cheerfully.

Sadie gazed back up the path through the forest to the old, but safe country home in which she now lived. She

considered Ara's suggestion, looking back to the tunnel's entrance which opened beneath a large oak tree. "Um, I suppose I could come back then. I have been anxious to meet you," she said, yielding to the idea. "Father has a flashlight with a red glass shade so as to protect your eyes."

Ara continued, "Tonight would be a good night for a walk. Did you enjoy the wild onions and chestnuts?"

"Oh, yes. Father and I used them in a lovely salad. Thank you for your advice."

"You're most welcome." A rustling sound rose from the cave. "I have a gift for you," Ara announced.

Sadie pulled back from the entry. "For me?"

Rolling up from the tunnel came a large, sapphire marble. It stopped just inside the shadow.

"My, that's beautiful. Should I take it?" Sadie paused while reaching in.

"Of course," Ara said. "If you leave it there the Gribble might come and steal it back."

Sadie's brows knit at this strange name. "The Gribble?" She lifted the vibrant blue sphere and marveled at its weight. "It's heavier than it looks. Thank you."

Ara ignored the girl's question. "You're welcome." She seemed to reminisce. "I find the Eyes as light as breath, heavy as a sigh."

"The Eyes?"



The sound of pattering feet dwindled down the tunnel. Sadie waited for a reply. The midsummer sun dipped behind a cloud. A furry bumblebee, black as coal, its waist painted yellow, looped around Sadie's head, its thrumming half warning, half invitation to follow.

"Hello?" she asked politely after what seemed more than enough time for Ara's reply.

"Midnight. I'll be waiting at midnight," Ara said eventually, distant as if from down a well. "Be sure to lock up that beast of yours."

Sadie gripped the sapphire marble tightly. "Harry's no beast!"

"Midnight," came Ara's final reply fading up through the dangling roots and dried worm castings.

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"There's something about a child." The Professor's lecture voice rose as he warmed to his subject. "They innocently suspend all judgement. Children have few predispositions or prejudices. They're open and inquisitive. Adults, on the other hand, are crammed so full of their

learned and self-imagined views of the world they can't possibly be taken in by the concept of whimsy or the spurious flight of a fairie creature." He flurried his hands like flapping wings. "Or even wishes made upon stars. Only starlight wishes, evoked by children, carry weight. A wish by one such as you or I is nothing but a careless desire brushed aside as impractical. But, to a child, a wish upon a star sends shivers into the world. Vibrations through existence. And deep within, entities exist, beings that listen to such vibrations, beings who hear the wishes of children."

Professor Brimson's mustache twitched repeatedly.

After the full meal of dumplings and stewed oxtail, its remnants dotting the napkin on his lap, Richard, the Professor's guest, realized he'd allowed his thoughts to wander. With his silence drifting toward the impolite, he blurted out, "If wishes were fishes, and all that. Is that what you're getting at Professor?"

"Richard... How much of my brandy have you consumed?"

Richard's eyebrows rose in alarm. "Only as much as you, I believe, sir. Three or four drams I'd wager."

"A dram too much is my guess."

The Professor, his grey eyebrows converging, assumed a grim expression and bore down upon his guest. He shoved the soiled plates and cutlery onto the red tablecloth. Pushing his chair back, he stood and pressed his hands down on the

edge of the table and, leaning forward, stared through the dim candlelight. “Richard, have you not heard a word I’ve said?”

“I...I’ve heard every one, sir.” Richard nervously dabbed his napkin to his lip and youthful beard. He leaned away from his looming host, a parallelogram tilting to match; his chair starting to tip.

Disturbed by the raised voices, the Professor’s Irish wolfhound entered the salon and whined up at his master.

“Ah, Harold of Ire, have you come to intimidate our guest?” said the Professor. “Richard has a plate for you, I think.”

The great beast circled the table and plopped his heavy muzzle onto Richard’s lap. Richard lifted his arms and hands in alarm. The dog, its long snout nestled in the folds of the napkin, whined piteously.

“Shall I leave him my plate then?” asked Richard, as the dog’s head shifted deeper into his lap.

“I doubt you could do otherwise.” The Professor returned to his seat, reclined and stitched his fingers across his vest, a faint smile easing the tension in the room.

Sighing audibly, Richard set his plate on the floor, stood and began to wander about the dining room.



Harold's mop-wide tongue made quick work of the leftovers. The dog ambled from the room, tail wagging, apparently to seek out the Professor's daughter. The clicking of its nails echoed down the hallway.

The Professor wasn't finished making his point. "Richard. Wishes, not fishes, cast by children, have power. Haven't you felt that yourself? Or imagined it? Yes, a child's dreams can influence them their whole life. But beyond that, I'm saying that a wish, made by a child, seeds the universe with a desire. A desire that, gone unfulfilled, will fester into an evil. A malfeasance that will simmer and eventually boil over into our world bringing discord and chaos with it."

His guest's attention reacquired, the Professor let his latest words settle before continuing. "Speaking of chaos, horrible situation that earthquake in Chile. Nine point three I believe it was."

Richard nodded solemnly. "I hear one of the larger volcanoes in Indonesia has begun to signal a pending eruption."

The Professor shook his head. "You see. Signs of Chaos rising."

One of the candles flickered and went out. The Professor frowned as the light dimmed. "I wish the damn school would get this house sorted out. Third time this month the power has failed. I know these northern England colleges have their troubles, but this is too much. And, I've got to get that wi-fi

figured out.” He got up and rummaged through a cabinet for another storm candle which he lit from one still burning, setting it in a vacant saucer. “Many thanks, Richard, for attending to that search. You seemed better suited for it. Also, my thanks for catering this fine meal. Without electricity, dinner would have been a challenge. Send me the bill.”

“As you say, sir,” said Richard, making to leave.

“We’ll call it even on the brandy, eh?” quipped the Professor, showing his guest to the door.