

## **Contents:**

### **Stories:**

**The tale of Greta Gumboot - 3**

**Gilby and the hall of statues - 9**

**Mr Bumble the wizard - 16**

**Bridge across the sky - 22**

**Holly and the unicorn - 37**

**Inkerus Haventower and the mysterious marooned mog - 41**

**Smitten the kitten and the mighty Israh Kazoo - 46**

**The Fairytale Baker - 50**

**Benny Beaver and the whistling fairy - 54**

### **Rhymes:**

**The Epheline - 56**

**The Ephelines' new friends - 58**

**The bear with the magical jewel - 63**

**The Ephelines' Christmas whistle - 66**

**The Ephelines' new House - 68**

**Alfie Gobbleton - 70**

**A pup in your handbag - 72**

**Domble the dreadfull - 73**

## **The Tale of Greta Gumboot**

Greta Gumboot was a particularly plump, rather wicked little witch. She had a lonely life, living in a stuffy little cottage at the edge of a large, lush green forest. Greta had quite peculiar taste in cloths. She always wore a large black pointy hat over her bright red hair, a long purple dress and big brown boots. Greta devoted her life to searching for the perfect tasty treat. Every day she went out into the woods and by the power of her dark wand an unlucky forest creature would become her next delectable bite to eat.

Last Tuesday she changed a chubby old rabbit, who was actually a rather nice fellow, into a Belgian chocolate bunny. Then she nibbled his ears off one by one. The following day it was Cyril the snakes turn. In a bright flash of light he became a very large, very sticky, particularly sweet candy cane. Greta loved candy canes and gobbled it down as fast as she could, along with three jelly worms, which a few minutes earlier had been real slimy wriggling earthworms. She topped of the day with some crunchy butterfly biscuits, with purple and white icing. Only moments before they had been pretty butterflies fluttering about joyfully, enjoying the sunshine and the forests beautiful bluebells, primroses and daffodils.

Now on that Thursday something very strange happened to Greta, while she was in the woods. She was creeping her way through some beautiful rhododendron bushes, with their large, sweet smelling bunches of pink, blue and white flowers. She hoped to find some poor unsuspecting soul to turn into her next mouth-watering treat. She sprang out into a little clearing, hoping to catch someone unawares, and instead she got a surprise of her own. A deep bellowing voice from nowhere, echoed all around her.

“I” said the voice “Am Julius Beetroot, keeper of the ultimate treat!”

“Ahh!” screamed Greta, with shock “who’s that?”

She raised her wand to defend herself.

“I’ll tell you again.” Said the voice “I am Julius Beetroot! And if you lower your wand I may allow you a taste of heaven itself. A treat far greater and more magical then anything any witch could ever conjure!”

Greta lowered her wand slowly.



“I’m listening,” she said with a sly smile. A cute, little red squirrel skipped out from among the trees dressed in a blue cape. Greta was greatly surprised when the mighty voice of Julius Beetroot echoed from its tiny lips

“Follow me!” he instructed heartily.

Greta raised her wand

‘Mmm chocolate squirrel.’ she thought ‘My favourite!’



“I wouldn’t do that if I were you!” said Julius, waving a finger at her.

Greta looked into the sparkling eyes of Julius Beetroot and lowered her wand. Something told her she’d better listen to this squirrel, at least for now! But she’d have to keep a close eye on him.

Julius led the witch to a clearing in a deadly silent part of the woods where, sunken into the ground was a huge slab of smooth pale yellow stone. There was a large sparkling pool of water hollowed into it that looked cool and refreshing.

“If you wish a taste of the greatest treat, you must swim in this sacred pool!” said Julius in his strong, deep voice.

Greta cautiously edged herself to the side of the pool and peered down into the depths. She aimed a glare at Julius.

“It looks very deep.” She said accusingly.

“Your wand must stay behind!” said Julius sternly.

“No thanks squirrely boy” said Greta, placing her hands on her hips “My wands stays with me! What’s in there anyway? Pike fish? Dark eels?”

“Fine if you do not trust, take your wand and enter the waters, but you shall never taste the sweetest treat in life while you possess such dark magic!”

“Well” said Greta “I’ll just check the waters safe before I put this baby down. Now you wouldn’t trick me, would you?” she asked.

She looked at him suspiciously. Julius gasped at the accusation

“Madam” he said. He placed his right paw over his heart and said, “You have my word. I will do you no harm!”

“Alright” said Greta “I could do with a dip!”

She held her nose and jumped in with a plop, finding it was not as deep she had first thought”

“Hmm, quite nice this!” she said. “Warmer then you’d think, and I can touch the bottom!”

“Now you see there is no danger, will you relinquish your wand?” asked Julius tapping his foot impatiently on the bank.

“Ok, but just for a minute mind!” replied Greta.

The moment she put the wand down at the pools edge the water began to swirl. “Waaaaa” she shouted grasping out for her cruel device.

But it was to late. She was swept away, further and further down into the pool

“Curse you Julius Beetroot!” she shouted.

As she sunk deeper, she found herself becoming very calm. Suddenly the water became still and clear. Greta was lying motionless at the bottom of the pool, unable to move. You’d think she’d feel short of breath, but she felt no need to breath at all. Her hat had come off, and bobbed gently on the surface above her. She thought it odd that the hat, and the forest above seemed to be getting bigger and bigger.

She woke up suddenly, feeling a little drowsy, in an enormous, mysterious, astoundingly beautiful forest glade. There was short, lush grass that seemed greener than anything Greta had ever seen. Huge Bees buzzed merrily about, collecting precious pollen for their queens' honey. Bright, warming sunlight streamed down from the cloudless blue sky over head. All round the clearing were gigantic trees and bushes, with flowers of red, blue and shimmering gold. The trees were decorated with fruits of all shapes, sizes and colours. Greta was sat at the end of a very large, very long table covered in wonderful, mouth-watering tasty snacks. Or at least it seemed like a large table. Greta suddenly realised that the table was actually very small, but she was even smaller. Sat along the sides of the table were a number of animals that Greta found very familiar. For one there was a large, old rabbit, happily eating away at his dinner, and a snake seemed to be deciding whether to eat the food or the mouse sat between him and Greta.

"OH NO" she gasped "Am I dead?"

*Its Robert the rabbit and Cyril the snake, she thought, and all the other animals I ate. How is this possible? What will they do to me?* She was very surprised when the mouse sat next to her offered her a piece of sticky, golden brown honey cake. Greta took the cake with a little distrust but gobbled it up quickly when she caught a whiff of its wonderfully sweet aroma. Robert the rabbit looked up from his meal.

"Hello" he said cheerily, "Nice to see you!"

Greta looked anxious

"Don't worry, we've forgiven you already!"

"What?" asked Greta, wiping her mouth. She was rather surprised to say the least.

"We're all friends here!" said Robert

"Why would you want to be *my* friend?" asked Greta suspiciously.

"Julius says you just need to learn a lesson, and we're here to teach it to you!"

"What are you going to do to me?" she asked, beginning to cry.

"Just relax." Cyril cheerily hissed. "Eat some more cake. Luckily for Stuart here its better than mouse!"

"Ah...yep." said Stuart with a nervous smile.

Greta felt better now. She sat with all the animals for hours and hours talking, laughing and eating honey cake. She had never known anything like it. The cake was so magically moist that she didn't even need to drink anything. It never even occurred to her to eat anything else, even though there was plenty of choice. Greta was having the time of her life. The entire group were very calm and relaxed. Then while the other animals chatted amongst themselves Robert had a serious talk with Greta.

"I had a wonderful life you know," he said, in a friendly but firm manner "before you zapped me with that watchamacallit of yours, and popped me into your mouth! Now, it's a bit late to hold a grudge, so I forgive you, but look at Peter the pigeon over there. He had a clutch of younguns on the way. He'd have made a great father! None of us deserved what you did to us, did we? And I'd hate to think that it was going to happen again to some other poor soul!"

Robert gave her a friendly smile

"Maybe it's just time you had a little think about things.... Ok? "

Greta had a funny sensation in her tummy, the feeling was guilt, but she didn't know that. She'd never felt anything like it before. All she'd ever known was greed and loneliness.

"Now eat up," said Robert "Before that cakes all gone."

A little while later Greta was once again chatting merrily, she had nearly forgotten about the feeling, when she received a sudden tap on the shoulder. Greta jumped. It was Julius beetroot, seeming a lot larger than before.

"Julius!" said Greta. "Is this wonderful cake the treat you spoke of?"

"No my dear," he responded, with authority " That is not the sweetest of treats! What do you think of these fine creatures before you?"

"They're, they're...wonderful" said Greta "But I feel ..."

"You feel what my dear?" prompted Julius "A touch of guilt maybe?"

"Yes... I think that's it!" said Greta

"Well, this is not the time for that," said Julius "But how does it feel to be one of us?"

For the first time Greta realised she had a tail, a very long bushy tail. She was a squirrel like Julius, but strangely she didn't mind at all. She loved her lovely soft tail and couldn't help stroking once or twice.

"Do you have another idea what may be the ultimate treat? Perhaps something your new friends here have inspired?"

"Friends?" said Greta. "Friends - Your right I do have friends, and *they're* the sweetest treat I've ever tasted!"

"My dear, your insight serves you well!"

"I never had a friend before!" said Greta, her eyes streaming with joyful tears, "and now I have lots! Oh I love you all! Whatever can I do to make things up to you?"

"My dear" said Julius "You are now much more than just one of us by fur or tail! You are good, and we have become one in spirit! You already know what it is you must do. Now you must go back to your own life, and forever remember that which you have learned today!"

Greta gasped for breath as she burst through the surface of the forest pool, back into the woodland air. She was herself again, and she knew she had one task that could not wait. She

turned to her wand and without a moment's hesitation flung herself on the evil instrument, and snapped it in two. The wand disappeared in a puff of black smoke and around her appeared all the animals from the table. There were mice doing laps of the pool, and rabbits diving in all around her. Birds soared through the air above, chirping and tweeting merrily. Then behind her appeared Julius Beetroot.

"Three cheers for Greta Gumboot, the good witch of the forest!" he shouted. She turned to face him and all the animals joined together in a chorus of ,

"Hip, hip, hooray!"

Greta's hat seemed to be missing but the creatures presented her with a brand new one, identical to the old hat in shape, but of purest snow white!

"I think" said Julius "This will serve you better."

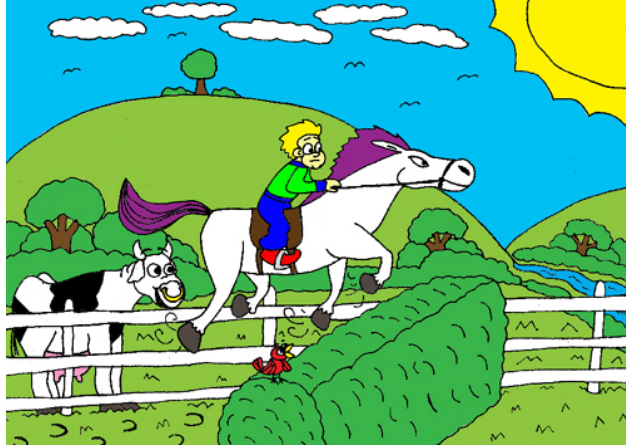
"OH MY FRIENDS" she called out loud "I LOVE YOU ALL!"



And from then on Greta Gumboot was the kindest, sweetest white witch there ever was. She fed the hungry, healed the sick, and was a great friend to everyone she ever met...

**ENDS**

## Gilby and the Hall of Statues



There once was a very gifted boy named Gilby, who was apprentice to a great and powerful wizard called Gulliver. Gulliver had long, messy grey hair and a lengthy beard to match. He wore a beautiful blue robe with gold and silver embroidered stars. Gilby lived in his masters' grand old medieval house in a good, but kingless realm. A great tragedy befell the last of the royals, what it was had been lost in the passage of time.

Gilby was a slim lad of eleven, who Gulliver had cared for since the death of the boys' parents when he was just a baby. He had a golden mop of hair on his head and wore baggy, navy blue trousers and a lime green shirt with blue collar and cuffs. Gilby's clothes were always a little dirty from doing his chores. He wore a pair of red leather shoes that curled up at the toe, like that of a Christmas elf. The boy was amazed by the wonderful magic he saw every day, like the summoning of ancient spirits and the first flight of a newborn fairy.

Gilby was a good student and little by little learned a thing or two about magic. His very first spell was to bring a teensy toy soldier to life by saying the word 'Animatus.' out of his masters' spell book. The soldier then proceeded to chase him across the room shooting its little musket at him, which Gilby thought rather stung.

One morning Gulliver had gone out on an errand. Gilby was at home alone polishing his master's collection of crystal orbs. Suddenly there was a tap, tap, tapping at the window. He jumped with surprise and turned round to see Gulliver's grey and white messenger pigeon flapping his wings like mad trying to get in. Gilby rushed over and opened the window. He was presented with a scroll marked urgent. Unrolling it quickly, he was met by his master's face on the paper.



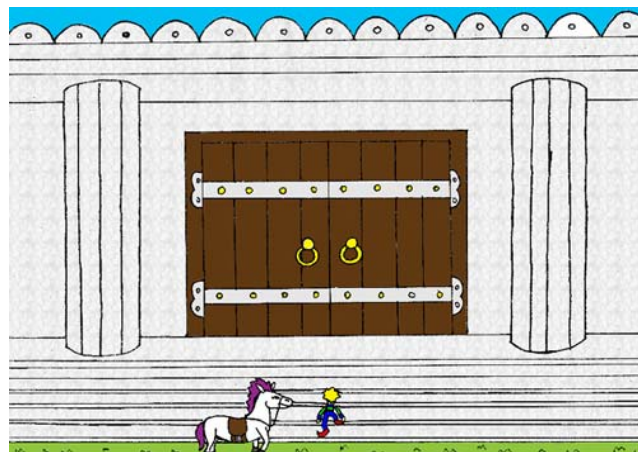
“Gilby.” it said woefully “I am in great danger and only you can help. Come to the hall of statues immediately or I fear it will be too late! Hurry boy, hurry or when it’s done with me, it will come after you!”

Gilby gulped and wondered whatever *it* might be. The hall of statues was said to be a very magical, very dark place. Gilby wondered what he could possibly do against anything so powerful that could hurt a great wizard like Gulliver.

Gilby picked up his trusty silver apprentice’s wand and ran out to his master’s stable. The warm horsy smell reminded him of all his carefree summertime adventures on his trusty horse Henry, and instantly made him feel more at ease.

With a pinch of magic mounting dust the fine white beast with violet tail and mane was saddled and they were off at a fast gallop. Many people tried to stop him and ask why he was in such a rush, but there was no slowing the boy.

The message said hurry so he was hurrying. Even the birds in full flight couldn’t keep up with Henry. Every day a touch of magic was added to his food to keep him strong and fast. He galloped through meadows, hurtled over hedgerows and swam a river with the speed of the mightiest merman.



Soon Gilby arrived at the hall of statues. The building was an enormous, solid marble construction, with great stone pillars across the front. It had a gigantic set of solid oak doors, un-aged through the centuries. They were held together with huge, shining steel straps, and fitted with two large, gold door knockers. The hall had a great marble staircase leading up to the doors. It was said to have been built thousands of years ago, but no-one knows why! Gilby thought it looked like it had been intended as a place for grand parties full of joyous laughter and celebration, but now it had the unwelcoming feeling of a giant graveyard.

'This place gives me the creeps!' he thought, but Gilby knew he had to enter. His master's life was at stake, and maybe even his own.

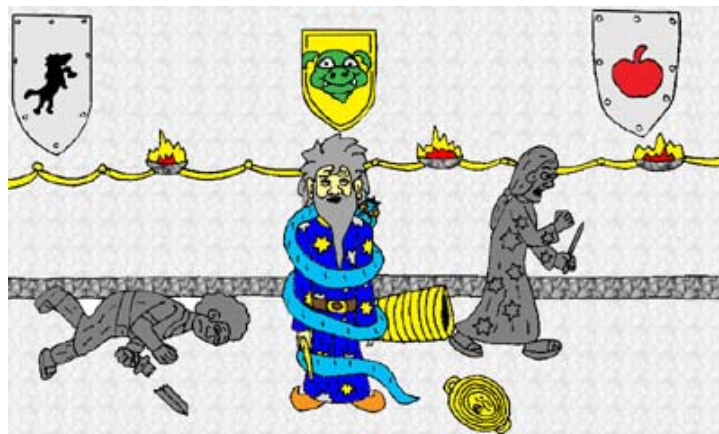
Gilby dismounted his horse and clambered up the giant sized steps to the entrance, then pushed against the gigantic doors. He found himself stumbling right through them, as if there was nothing there.

Inside Gilby wished he had worn some warmer cloths. The boy gave a shiver and it wasn't just because of the temperature. The floor inside was solid marble like the outside of the building, so were the walls, which were lined with decorative shields and magically burning oil sconces. They must have stayed alight for centuries. He found himself faced by hundreds of perfectly life like stone statues. None of them looked very happy. Some were angry and some wore expressions of fear on their faces. Some even lay face down on the floor awkwardly as if they'd fallen in mid run. Some were dressed in long flowing robes, and some wore short, knee length togas. They looked a bit like they were wearing little white sheets, with a belt at the waist. The men in togas carried short swords, which were already drawn against some unknown enemy. They all wore sandals, which Gilby assumed were meant to be leather.

Directly in front of Gilby was a statue of a very brave looking fellow with a short curly beard. He was wearing a crown and waving a stone wand. The wand was engraved all over with delicate vines, leaves and berries. He was one of the men wearing a toga, but his hands wore a number of jewelled rings, and he had a necklace to match.

Suddenly Gilby heard a scream that sounded like his master's voice, accompanied by a bright flash of light. It came from the far end of the room.

Gilby ran with all of his might, ducking and diving in between statues, till a horrible sight met his eyes.



It was his master, but he looked very weak. He was wrapped up in some kind of thick, clear blue rope. Beside him was an empty basket that seemed to be woven from pure gold,

but Gilby was more concerned with Gulliver. He touched his master's bonds and they were bitterly cold, even colder than the room. He grabbed the rope to untie it. Gilby jumped back as he discovered that the rope was in fact an icy snake that hissed and lashed out at him. Gulliver opened his eyes and said feebly

"Remember the soldier!"

Then he held out his golden wand and the snake gave off a blinding flash of light as Gulliver turned to stone, but for some reason the wand didn't change form.

"Master!" cried Gilby "What have you done to him you evil beast?"

The snake hissed again and replied

"It's his own fault. He shouldn't have let me out! I am the great and powerful demon Stonevenom. I was sealed in that snake basket over there for thousands of years, but this stupid fool used his magic to remove of the lid!"

"Why ever would he do that?" asked a scared Gilby.

"Oh!" the snake laughed, "just a little trick I played when the king and his men locked me away in that cruel, magic draining prison. I used the last of my power to turn them all to stone and make a little inscription on my tomb. Some tried to run but they couldn't escape me. My message read 'In here lies great good'. I knew a fool would take the bait eventually, and now you've saved me the trouble of searching out his apprentice myself!"

Gilby's heart jumped to his throat, but he swallowed it back down.

"You're why we don't have a king!" he yelled, "You monster! Using my masters loving heart to give him a heart of stone!"

"Yes, and a head too." sneered the snake "He was strong and hard to turn. I must admit they don't usually lose their mind first. Although with that talk of a 'soldier' I'm not so sure. There's no soldier that can defeat me. It took an army before and it will take an army again. Ha, ha, ha" he cackled.

Gilby thought 'Wait a minute....soldier? Maybe he meant the toy soldier? And an army? Maybe with my masters' wand I could...'

The thought was cut short by the snake slithering towards him. Its eyes glowed red at the thought of a fresh life to feed on.

Gilby did the only thing he could do. He jumped over the snake and made a lunge for his masters' golden wand. He got hold of the wand, but the snake had taken hold of his legs in its coils. They quickly began to turn numb with cold. Gilby could feel the life draining out of him. 'Quick, quick' he thought 'what was the word?' He raised the wand and made a desperate cry.

“ANIMATUS!!!”

Pulses of blue light began to burst out from the wand like a beacon, and Stonevenom recoiled with fear. It sped towards the doors to escape, but as he moved through the hall, the statues began to awaken. He was met at the exit by the previously frozen King Frune, who Gilby had already seen on his way in. He was once more flesh and blood, with a shining gold crown and beard of radiant earthy brown hair.

“Now foul creature,” said the king boldly “I don’t know how long I’ve been gone or you’ve been free! But the time has come for your reign of terror to cease! I sense an animator in our presence. My army has not one of these! Come forth young one and we shall banish this beast for all eternity!”

By this time Gilby had caught up with the snake and the other wizards from the king’s army. The sorcerers were dressed in snow-white robes, embroidered with gold and silver stars like Gulliver’s. The group had the beast totally surrounded.

“I’m here!” said Gilby, out of breath and panting. Not just from the run but also from the life the beast had drained out of him. “What can I do?”

“Nothing!” hissed the slithering creature Stonevenom, eyeing up the wizards around him

“I’m invincible! You couldn’t stop me before Frune! You can’t stop me now!”

“I beg to differ!” smiled King Frune. “Young lad” he called to Gilby “Focus your wand on this beast and call out the phrase ‘Disanimatus!’.

Gilby held out his master’s sparkling, golden wand and called out with all his might “DISANIMATUS”.

“NNOOOOOOO!” cried the snake as it tried to resist the magic. Then all the other wizards held out their ancient wands and focused their magic on the beast. Bolts of blue lightning from all the powerful wizards shot into the vile monster. These were accompanied by a bright orange, fizzling, crackling, pulsing disanimatus beam from the wand in Gilby’s hand.

Together they were able to transmute the demon Stonevenom into a somewhat more agreeable form. The slithering beast writhed and hissed wildly as it became smaller and smaller, until it was no bigger than your average hen’s egg. Then it became solid stone like all its victims had been.

Gilby rushed across the hall to check on his master, who was lying weakly on the cold marble floor.

“Are you all right?” asked the very concerned Gilby.

A smile came on to Gullivers face

“You did it my boy!” he chuckled.

“Why are you laughing?” asked Gilby.

“Today is a joyous day!” said Gulliver “We have survived a great trial!”

“Thanks to your advice!” smiled Gilby, “If you hadn’t said about the soldier I wouldn’t have known what to do! How did you send for me in the first place though? And more to the point what made you come here to start with!”

“In the early hours of this morning,” explained Gulliver “I decoded a magically disguised message in an ancient book. It told me that the statues here were in fact real people! So I rushed here to rescue them. Then I realised, I couldn’t free them without your gift. I had my pigeon in my hand ready to send for you, when I noticed that gold basket. I read the inscription. It said a good soul was imprisoned inside. I couldn’t just leave them to rot, so I broke the seal, and was met by that cruel demon Stonevenom. He was too strong and fast for me to escape, so with a wave of my wand I changed my message on the scroll. Then I sent my bird to find you.”

“How did you know your wand wouldn’t turn to stone with you?” Gilby enquired.

“My wand is made from alchemists gold that can resist all enchantment! I thought you knew that!”

A merry voice boomed from behind Gilby. It was King Frune.

“The time for talk is over!” he laughed heartily, “We must rejoice! Let us eat, drink and make merry!”

The newly awakened king ordered a great fire lit to warm the ancient building. He told them the hall had once been a place of celebration, just as Gilby had thought.

A great feast was arranged in honour of Gilbys good work and the awakening of the ancient army. All the local people were invited to celebrate the return of their king.

The men drank wine and Gilby had several cups of creamy hot chocolate. They all ate hearty helping of fresh meat and bread provided by the local butchers and bakers.

At the end of the night King Frune presented Gilby with something very special to remember the day by. It was the little stone snake, which was now just the right size for his pocket.

King Frune also granted Gilby a knighthood.

These days Gilby is a great and powerful sorcerer. He serves the king loyally and is deeply valued for his skill and sound advice. He still keeps the little stone snake as a reminder

of his first great triumph, but now his days are busy as Gulliver is retired and Gilby has a young apprentice all of his own.

**Ends**