

The Wee Hávamál

Adapted & Illustrated by Nelson R. Elliott

DEDICATION

To my children. Be adventurous.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

The Wee Havamal is an adaptation of the original work for fun and easy reading by children. I've re-written selected stanzas into modern English and adopted a rhyming scheme to make the reading as engaging and memorable as possible.

I mostly included themes like wisdom, friendship, martial virtue, and hospitality, as these are recurring themes in the original work and understandable for all age groups. The seduction and magic themes largely did not make the cut, as these will have limited relevance to kids.

What was chosen for adaptation has been re-ordered to reflect the visual story told by the illustrations. The original stanza number is shown in the scrollwork header for easy reference.

I've tried to keep this work as close to the original meaning as possible. I don't know any Old Norse, however, so this work was based on Olive Bray's translation. Where that translation proved difficult to adapt to children's rhyme, other translations were consulted, but all stanza numbers are derived from Bray's work.

The Cast



Bjørn
Bold and brave



Knud
Who acts a fool



Leif
Loyal and wise



Frida
Caring, but fearless



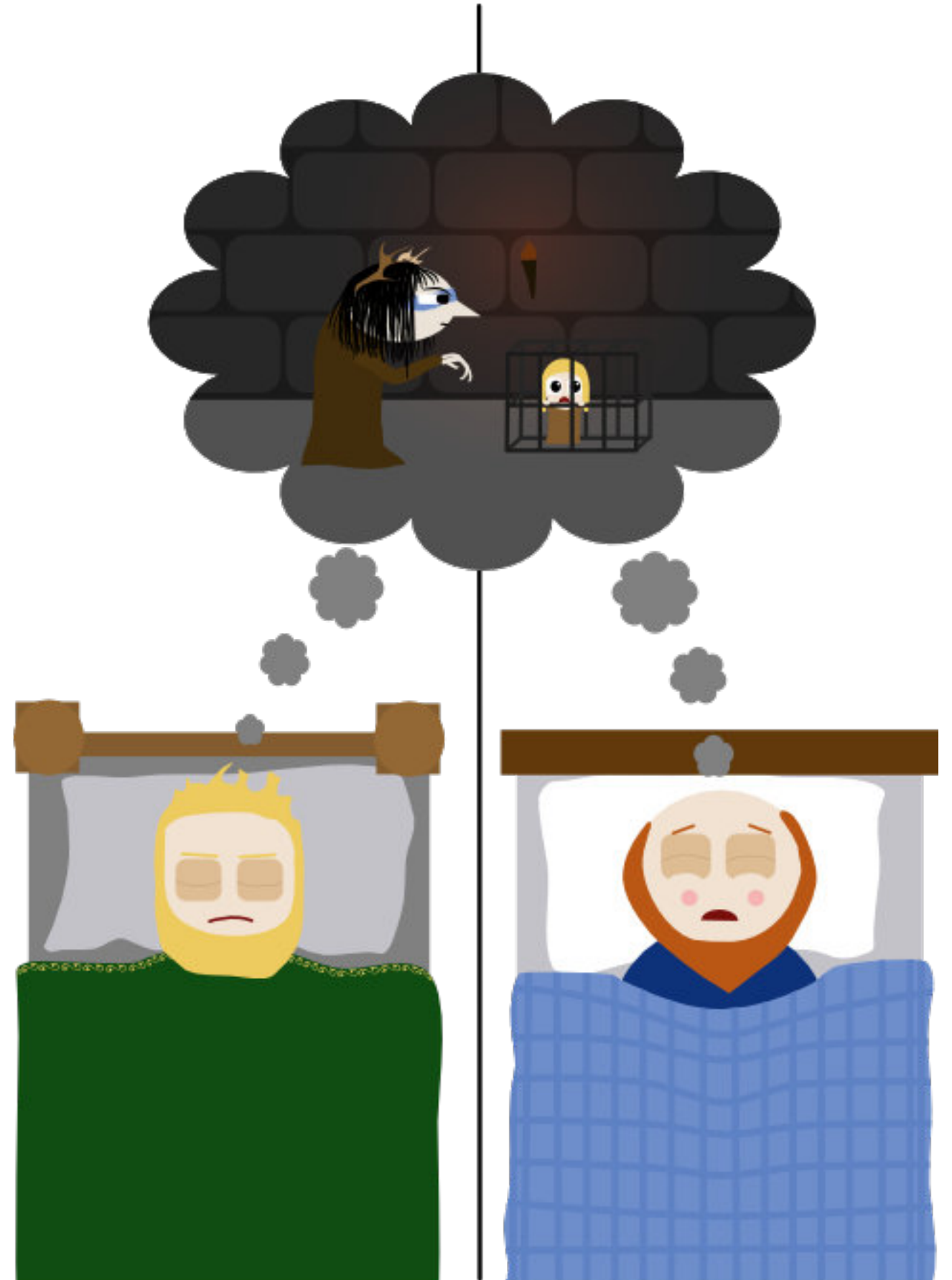
The Witch
Kidnaps, steals, and curses



Witch's Goon
Does the dirty work



Listen, little traveler, to what I have to say
If you listen and obey it may help some day





Those who would win fame, or praise,
Or wealth must rise to meet the days
Slumbering wolves will catch no meat
And in strife the sleeping meet defeat





The foolish lay awake all night
And worry until morning light
When morning comes, the problems stay
And now they're tired all the day



Wise travelers when they leave their fields
Always bring their spears and shields
They know not when they'll need their arms
Or what they'll meet that means them harm



The foolish think they know it all
While they sit behind their own four walls
When they are out, they're often bested
They cannot answer when they are tested





When I was young, alone I walked
Until the way I soon forgot
I was glad when by another ran
For man is indeed the joy of man





The foolish ones make lots of fun
Of everything and everyone
It's as though they never saw
That they themselves aren't free from flaw



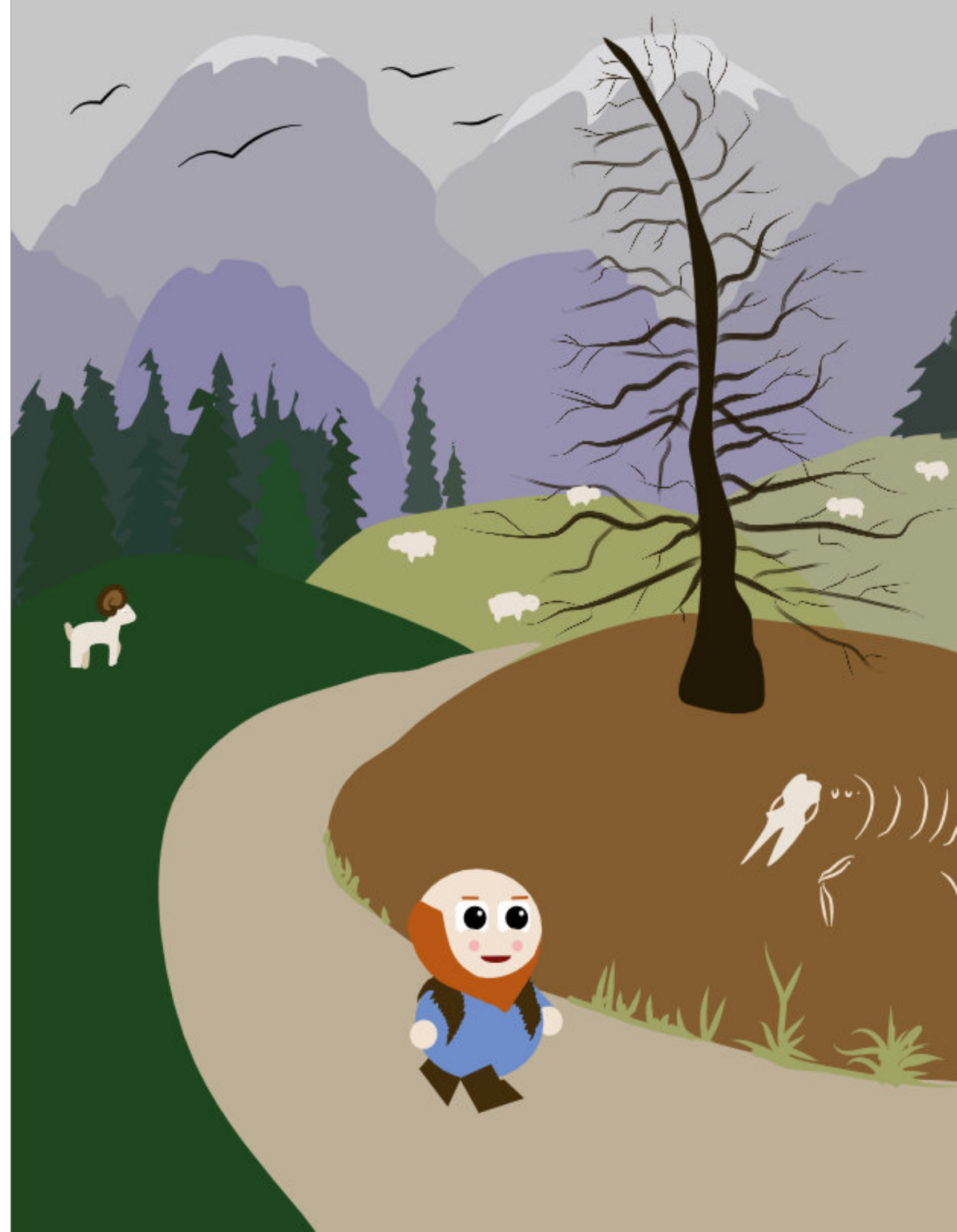


Gifts need not be great at all
Oft praise is earned for something small
With half a loaf and welcoming sound
Many's the friend that I have found



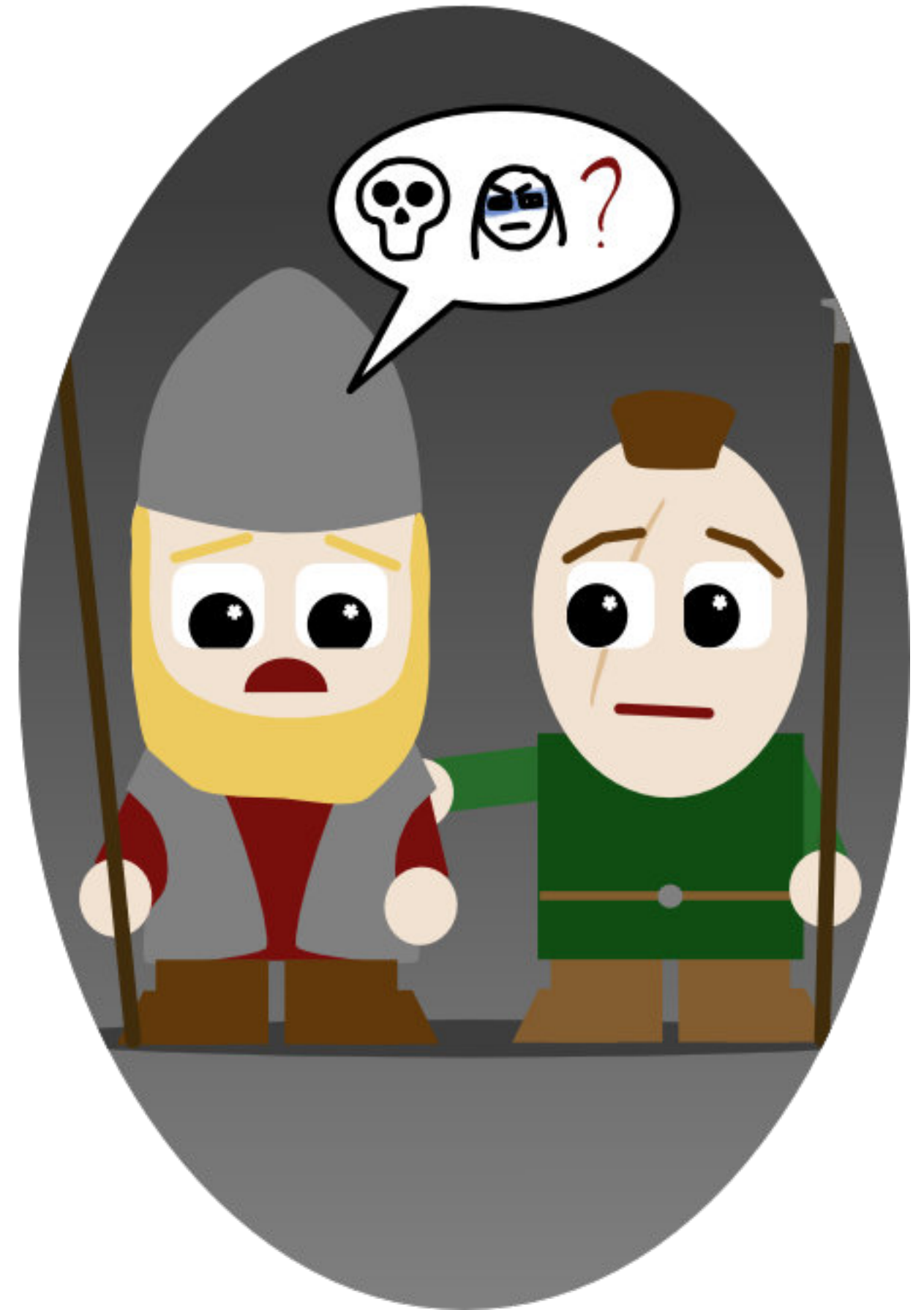


A tree with no leaves on its limbs
Stands alone on a hill in the wind
Such is the man who is loved by none
How long can his life go on?





True is the friendship when a man can utter
His whole mind unto another
And share thoughts good and bad on matters
No good is one who only flatters

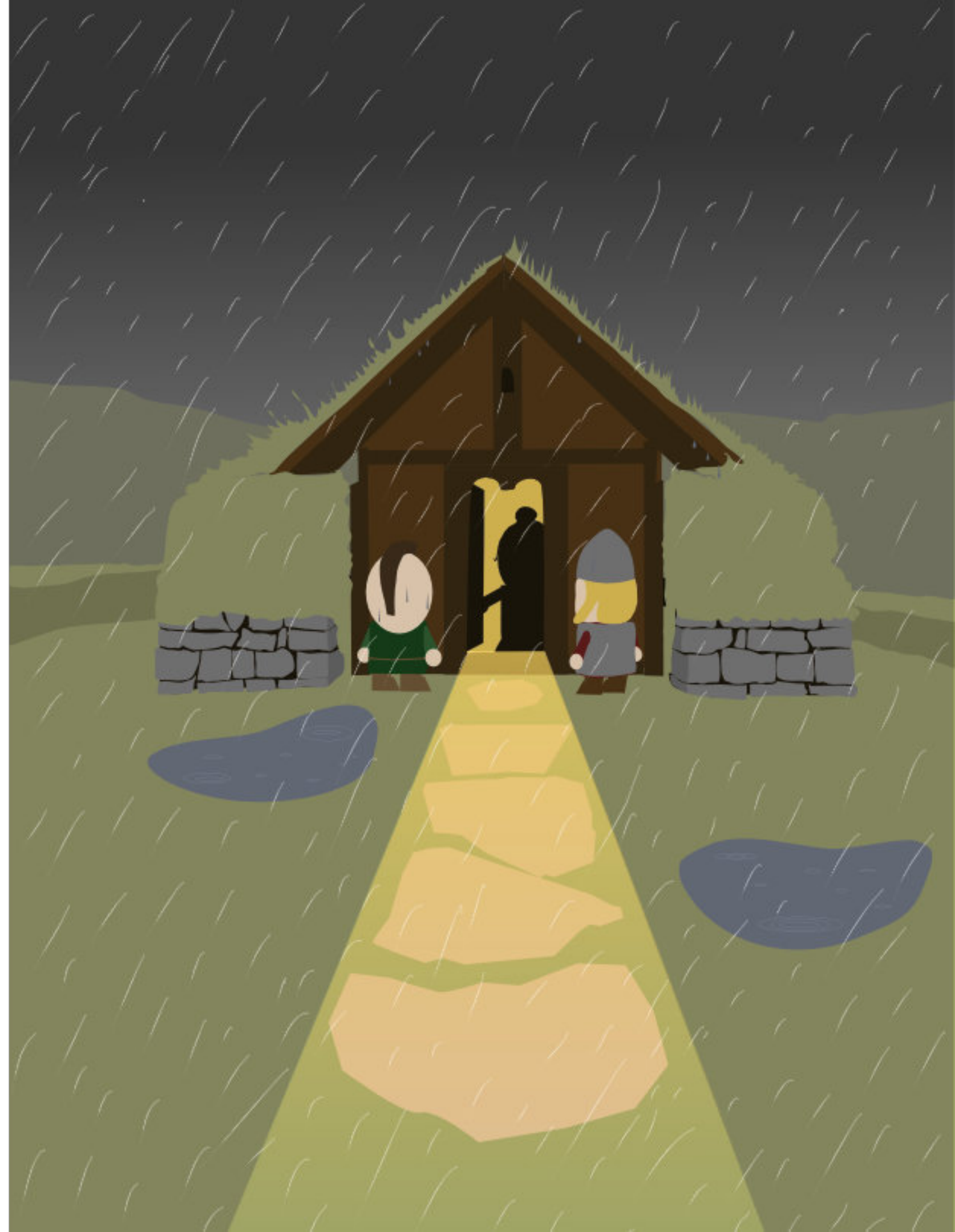


The gladdest of the friends are those
Who give each other arms and clothes
Friendship will the longest live
Between those friends who give and give





Stray Singer, do as I advise
It will do you well and make you wise
Be kind to guests found at your door
And be kind to the weak and poor





Be generous with those you host
Talk discreetly and listen most
Much wisdom will you learn this way
And only the simple have naught to say





It's not good for a guest to stay
Too long, but should be on the way
Even loved ones cause ill will
Too long across another's sill



Only those who've widely roamed
And ventured far away from home
Know the hearts and know what lies
In the minds of dim and wise





"Ale is good", so some men say
But ale is not good every day
The more you drink and drink
The less you watch your wits and think





Those who would be known as wise
Must ask and answer right when tried
Secrets you may share with one
But share with two, the secret's done





The foolish think that all who smile
At them are friends, but all the while
They'll find that when they are in need
These friends may not be friends indeed





Some would do well by speaking less
They talk themselves into a mess
A tongue that's fast when it should be slow
Will surely bring itself to woe





Little the sea, little the sand in grains
Little are the minds of men, little are some brains
For people are not all wise alike
The world is shared by dull and bright





Blessed are they whom free and bold
Seldom do a sorrow hold
For fearful do the cowards live
And misers mourn the gifts they give





You need to be smart when you wander and roam
A simple mind serves well at home
But when you meet people who know
The fact that you know naught will show





A traveler found at your door
May be hungry, thirsty, sore
He may badly need the warmth
That can be found upon your hearth





Stray Singer, do as I advise
It will do you well and make you wise
Never rejoice at news that is bad
But let good news make your soul glad



Stray Singer, do as I advise
It will do you well and make you wise
When you see peril, declare it so
And never give peace to your foe





A coward thinks avoiding strife
Will help him live a long, long life
But he'll find no peace in all his years
Simply by avoiding spears



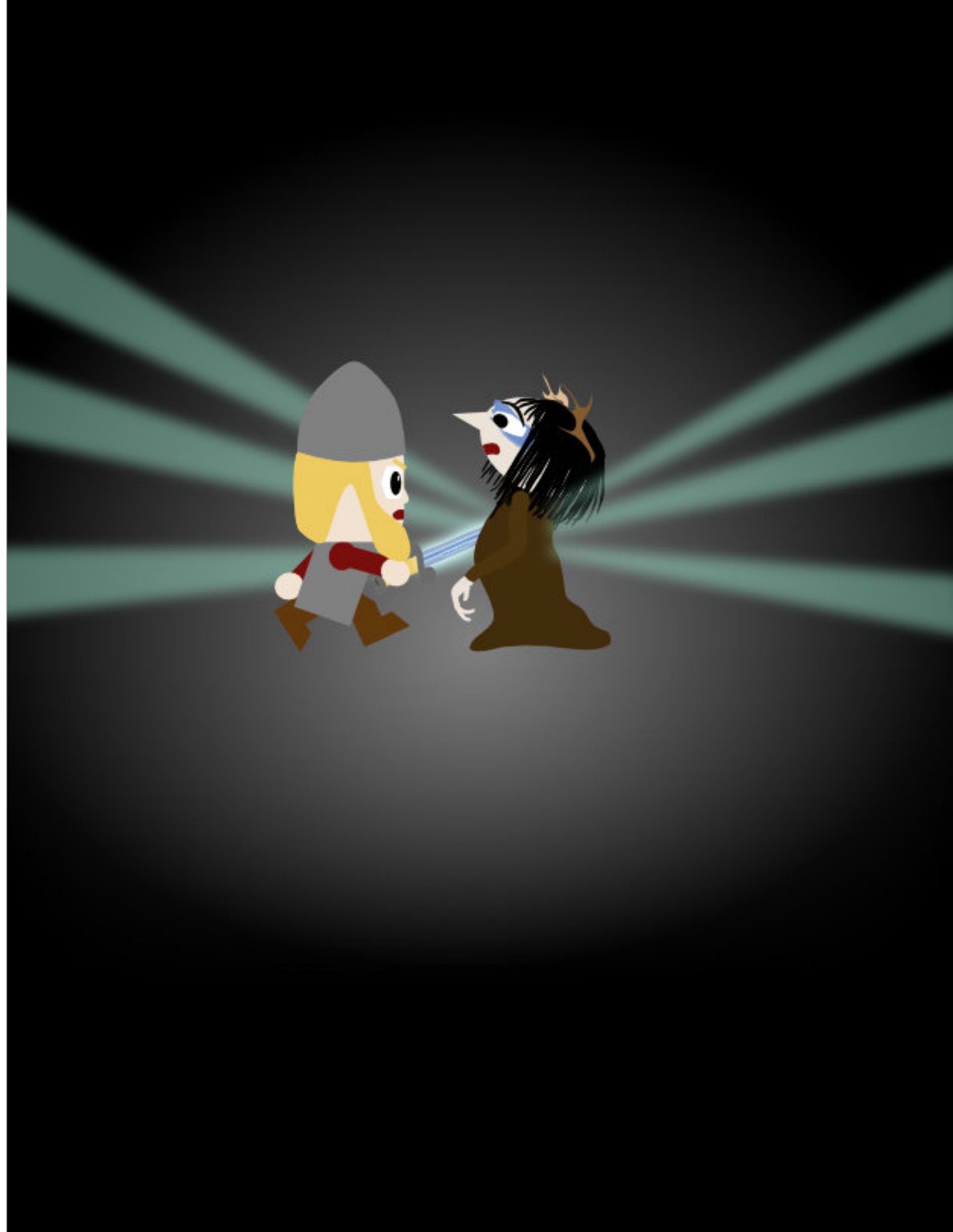


I have seen a man wounded to death
By an evil woman's lying breath
False words overcame his might
Without even being right





Praise those who have passed away
At nightfall praise the day
Praise ice when crossed and maid when wed
Praise a weapon when your foes are dead





More blessed are the living than lifeless now
For the living inherit the things and the cows
Burning I saw the rich man's hall
And in the fire I saw the rich man fall





Every traveler should have wisdom measured
But let wisdom not be over-treasured
For seldom will joy and happiness touch
The heart of one who knows too much



If, by chance, a fool should gain
Wealth, or love, or even fame
Pride within his breast will rise
But never will he grow more wise





Although it's good to walk and roam
The best place is to be at home
Even if it's just a little thing
There at least a man is king





Best to have a daughter or son
Even if you die and they live on
Seldom are monuments raised by men
Except the case from kin to kin





Some men once were thick and rich
But now they beg from in a ditch
Brief as winks are wealth and ends
The least reliable they are of friends





Have you got a friend you trust?
To keep a friend like that you must
Share a gift or thought is all
And often make the time to call





Our kinsmen in a grave will lie
We ourselves one day will die
Immortal is one thing, I have learned
Fame that's fairly won and earned



LOOK FOR THESE OTHER GREAT COPPER JUNGLE TITLES!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nelson lives in Texas with his wife and growing family. He works in advertising during the day and writes little fairy tales for his children at night.

