

Sir Gabriel and the King's Riddle

By Tamara Kula



Chapter One: The Meeting

Everyone was excited. All of the knights in King Joshua's kingdom were invited to a very important meeting today. Today was the day that King Joshua was to announce who would be the next king.

My name is Sir Gabriel. I am a very young knight, so I am sure that I will not be the next king. But still, I am very eager for the meeting to begin.

That afternoon, all 30 knights were seated around the great table.

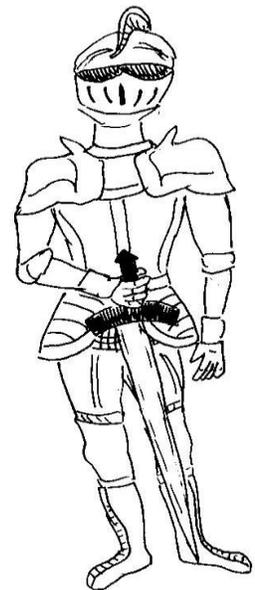
"As you know," began the king, "I am very old and I have no son to become king after me. I have decided that the best knight in my kingdom will wear my crown when I am dead."

The knights started to whisper excitedly to each other.

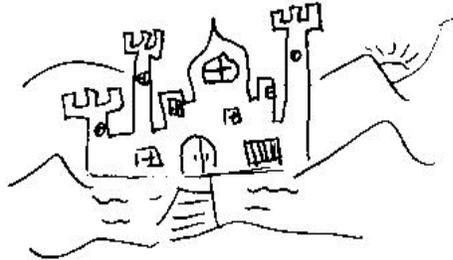
"Silence!" commanded King Joshua. "Now, who is the best knight in my kingdom? That is a good question. To decide, I have created a riddle. You all have one year to find the answer to this question. After one year, we will meet here again and see which knight is the cleverest in my kingdom."

I couldn't contain myself. "And what is the riddle?!" I exclaimed.

King Joshua looked at me sternly. "Patience, Sir Gabriel," he told me. "Listen carefully – here is the riddle:



*"What is more powerful than God
Rich people need it
Poor people have it
And if you eat it you will die?"*



Chapter Two: The Talking Bog

How I wished I could solve the riddle and be king! I would be the cleverest in the land! I imagined myself as a kind, powerful king, living in the castle and ruling my people as justly as King Joshua.

But first I had to find the answer. What could possibly be more powerful than God? I had no idea. And what do rich people need? I couldn't think of anything.

As I was leaving the castle, another knight, Sir Rex, passed me.

"I hope you don't expect to be king," Sir Rex said laughing. "You're much too young and stupid to solve the riddle!"

"We will see in one year!" I said angrily. I was determined to show the world how clever I was.

First, I decided to visit the Talking Bog. I have never been there, but I have heard that the Bog knows many things. Sometimes it mumbles nonsense, but sometimes it speaks the truth.

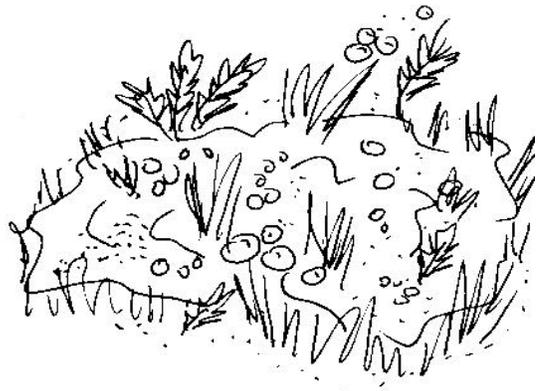
It took me one month to reach the Bog. Finally I stood before it and asked my question.

"Oh Talking Bog," I said. "Please tell me, what is more powerful than God, rich people need it, poor people have it, and if you eat it you will die?"

"Hmm...", the Bog bubbled. "If you eat it, you will die? Maybe poison!" The Bog started to laugh and small bubbles filled the air.

I sighed. "No, no," I said. "Poison isn't more powerful than God! And rich people don't need poison."

I tried and tried to make the Bog understand, but it only laughed at me. I was so disappointed. I had come so far to see the Bog and I had learned nothing about the riddle. I have already wasted one month.



Chapter Three: The Three Doors

I decided to see the Three Doors. The Three Doors always spoke the truth. The only problem was that it was very risky.

It took two months to find the Three Doors. Finally I found them deep in the woods. One door was made of shiny glass. The second was made of old, rotting wood, and the third was made of stone.

A tiny, ancient man greeted me. "You may ask your question," he said, "but beware. You have only one chance. If you choose the wrong door, you will become the guardian of the Three Doors."



I did not know which door would answer my question. I was taking a big risk. But I had to find out. I asked my question and chose the shiny glass door.

I closed my eyes. Did I choose the right door? Suddenly I heard joyful laughter. I opened my eyes and saw the ancient man transforming into a young boy. "I'm free!" he shouted happily. "At last I am free!"

I chose the wrong door. I was terrified. I felt my body shrink and grow very, very old. I was now the tiny, ancient guardian of the Three Doors. I have lost my chance to become king!

Days and weeks and months passed. Nobody came to visit the Three Doors. I felt hopeless. I would never escape!

Chapter Four: The New Guardian

One day a beautiful princess came to the Three Doors. If she chose the wrong door, I could go free and she would stay in my place!

The princess looked very sad. She wiped her tears and said, "I must know. Does he love me?" She pointed to the old wooden door and waited.

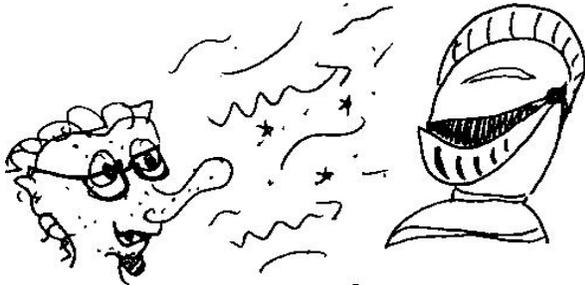
Suddenly a voice boomed, "YES." The princess was overjoyed. "Oh, thank you!" she exclaimed and ran away through the forest, leaving me even more hopeless than before. How did she choose the right door?

Time was running out. The year was almost finished and I had not solved the riddle.

Finally, only one day remained until the meeting with King Joshua. Sadly, I could not go because I was the guardian of the Three Doors. I had to stay.

But wait – who was that? Someone was coming! It was a knight. As he came closer, I recognized this person – it was Sir Rex.

Sir Rex looked closely at the doors. Then he said, "Please tell me what I want to know. I have searched for a year and found nothing." He asked the famous question and pointed to the stone door.



He chose the wrong door! I was free at last.

Sir Rex howled in anger as he transformed into the old guardian and I became Sir Gabriel again.

"I don't think you will be able to come to the meeting," I told Sir Rex. And I set off for the castle.

Chapter Five: The New King

All of the knights except Sir Rex were seated around the great table. King Joshua smiled. "Now I will know the future king," he said. "What is the answer to the riddle?"

Each knight gave an answer. One said Love, another said Time, and yet another said Death. But each time King Joshua shook his head.

Finally he came to me. "And you, Sir Gabriel, what did you discover?"

I looked down. "Nothing," I said quietly.

"That is CORRECT!" boomed the king. "NOTHING is the answer to the riddle!"

I looked up. How did I know the answer?

King Joshua continued. "What is more powerful than God? Nothing! What do rich people need? Nothing! What do poor people have? Nothing! And if you eat nothing, you will die!"

And he set the crown upon my head. I was now King Gabriel.

