

Fantasy Worlds
Fantasy Stories
Traditional Tales
Enchanting Beings
Magical Worlds

by Tygo Lee

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Note from the author:

This 2018 eBook is a third edition of the previously published Fantasy Worlds (second edition) and Wunza Ponna (first edition).

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Magical Tale 1: Rita the River Runner

Once upon a time in a faraway mystical land of enchanted beauty and wonderment there lived a curious little girl named Rita the River Runner. Hers was the territorial domain of the Flow, a clan of serious, amenable little elves who had made these parts their home since time immemorial. The oldest in their village lived to celebrate almost 200 birthdays, and because of their many years of experience and acquired wisdom, they formed a Sacred Elders Council that was available to advise others on any and all issues related to the survival and wellbeing of their kinfolk.

The words of the elders were always carefully thought out and measured before spoken and thus were paid heed to without questioning. In fact, ignoring their advice or not following it exactly was taken as an affront and the offenders would commonly be admonished by receiving the silent treatment accompanied by piercing, disapproving glares by the others until the guilty party came to their senses and carried out the recommendations of the Council. As we all know, emotional punishment can often be more jolting and hurtful than the physical variety.

With the elves, that's the way it was, the way it always had been, and the way it always should be. To question the exalted ones was thought to be the same as questioning the divine spirits of the woods themselves. It would be unthinkable, and there would be none of that in those parts!

The Flow lived in the Land of Dogma, a beautiful, rolling landscape high up on the Misty Mountains. Their homeland was blanketed with lush trees and other abundant green plants, with plentiful, never-ending supplies of fresh, clear water meandering through the numerous riverbeds that cut into the rich black soil. These simple and non-assuming beings generally spent their days occupying themselves with basic chores related to their survival, and both the male and female elves participated equally in whatever was needed to be accomplished at the moment.

For example, water had to be scooped up from the rivers in wooden buckets and carried to the center of the village to be stored in a large, round, wooden holding tank that had spigots on each of its four sides. This permitted quick, easy access to anyone at any time of the day when the life-giving liquid was required for cooking or direct consumption. An oval, pointed-roof structure made of sticks and a gooey leafy substance was set on top of the tank to keep the water clean and cool year round for everyone to enjoy.

Also, food had to be gathered every morning so they could collectively prepare their daily meals that were shared among the group, each eating only the quantity required to maintain them in a strong, healthy, physical condition. Taking in more sustenance than was warranted was labeled as gluttonous behavior and highly frowned upon since a shapely, lean figure was interpreted to be indispensable for sustaining a pure and righteous soul. The Flow were a vegetarian community, merrily consuming a great variety of nuts, roots, berries, leaves, and other nutritious elements found abundantly in their forest.

Finally, certain carefully selected and trusted adult members of the elves were commissioned with the searching out and collecting of special herbs that were meticulously stored under strict, hermetic conditions. These were used by the few shamans of the clan for many types of medicinal treatments when someone became ill. This was the most difficult and challenging on-going task since they not only had to know where to look for these herbs, but also assure themselves that these herbs were found in the quantity and quality demanded by their traditional medical practitioners.

And so they occupied their days in the Land of Dogma—all elves going about their assigned chores in a nonchalant, unemotional fashion—faithfully complying with duties that had been defined by strict custom many generations ago. From sunrise to sunset, the Flow busied themselves with tasks related to the preparation and intake of food and water, the maintenance of the wood and grass huts they used as living structures, the caring for and raising of the youngsters, and the healing of the sick. From sunrise to sunset, day after day, week after

week, month after month, and year after year they reverently fulfilled their self-defined destiny, without hesitation or complaint.

Yes, that's the way it was, until...

Rita the River Runner was indeed a curious little girl. "Curious" because with whatever simple chores she had been entrusted, taking into account of course her young age, she never seemed to be able to carry them out as expected. For example, if she were told to head out on the twisty trail to gather a big bag of crunchy nuts, she would come back hours later with perhaps just two or three of the specimens jiggling around in her pocket. If she were asked to follow the prickly path to fill a big bag with juicy berries, she would return hours later with maybe only a small handful stashed away in the depths of her knapsack, and nothing more.

Rita's parents became so exasperated by her unusual and disrespectful behavior that they felt obliged to ask for a special session of the Sacred Elders Council to be held in order to see if these wise beings could get to the bottom of their child's inexplicable conduct. The request was immediately approved and the meeting was set for the early waking hours of the next day.

This Council, comprised of twelve of the wisest elves to be found in those parts, came together punctually at the appointed hour the following morning. In meditative silence, they were seen to be sitting cross-legged in a circle around a crackling, mystical fire that was streaming a wispy, bluish smoke all about the thatched roof of the large meeting hut. The conditions were perfect, the participants were ready, and Rita...was not to be found.

An hour passed, and another, and yet another. The wise Council elders—although greatly tiring and somewhat weakened from the very long wait in those awkward, cross-legged positions they had assumed on the floor—patiently held their ground without uttering a word, as was expected by elves of such a sublime status. One hour more passed by and then all at once a rustling sound was heard from nearby in the woods, getting closer and closer and closer. The flap of the meeting hut was suddenly flung open, and an out-of-breath, bubbly, exuberant little elf girl sauntered onto the scene.

"Hi, I'm Rita! My friends call me Rita the River Runner, but you can just call me Rita if you like. Or you can call me River, or call me Runner or well, really it doesn't matter much. A name's just a name and Rita is fine, I guess. Whatever you like, okay?"

"Sorry I'm late, but hey, are you sick or something? I mean, you all look sort of tense and tired and well, maybe you're not getting enough sleep, huh? Aren't you sleeping well, huh, aren't you? And the whole bunch of you look sort of stiff and creaky and your eyes are all dazed and that's maybe because of all this strange bluish smoke floating around in your hut. And aren't you sleeping well, huh, or is it that...?"

"Rita, dear child, please come on in and sit down with us, won't you?"

"But you see, I was just worried about your stiff, creaky bodies and bloodshot eyes, being super old and sort of decrepit like you all are, and that's why..."

"Yes, yes, of course. How *considerate* of you, Rita. But we *kindly* request that you come join us in our circle so that we might have a nice conversation about..."

"But gee whiz, I don't know if that's a good idea or not, if you know what I mean, because if I come sit with you, maybe I'll end up all stiff and creaky too, with my eyes clouded up and..."

"Rita, please! We *understand* your concern, but you must believe that we are fine and that you will be fine too, my child. There is no reason to be alarmed. Please come sit with us. Come sit with us, will you not?"

“Well, I suppose I can risk it. I guess I could, and well, I could maybe come in and hang out with you just a little while, wise, old, creaky duffers, but...”

“Elders, Rita, *elders!*”

“Yeah, whatever. Well, *elders* then. Sorry. I meant no disrespect. Really. But you all *are* really old, and well, sorry about that.”

“But I must warn you that if I come sit with you in your rigid circle in your smoked up hut and I feel any signs of stiffness or creakiness starting to come on, I’ll be out of here in a flash, okay? If I don’t do that, golly, I could end up looking like...uh, well, uh, it’s just best not to take any chances, if you know what I mean.”

“You are without a doubt a very *curious* little girl, Rita, and...”

“*Curious?* What does that mean? I think...”

“Rita! Just *listen* for a little while, will you please? Listen, *please!* We are becoming less and less convinced that this is actually possible for you to do, but we ask that you make a great effort to remain calm at least a few minutes, perhaps for the first time in your very short life.”

“Well, I could do that. Sure I could. Yeah, of course I could! I can just *listen* all the time you want—a whole lot of time, big gobs of time, and I can just be listening and listening, and listening some more, and listening until...”

“Yes, yes, yes, and why don’t you begin that *right now!* My gosh. This is quite disconcerting. Quite disconcerting, indeed.”

“It’s becoming evident—in fact, indispensable—that we should get directly to the point with you and express ourselves quickly, hoping that there might be enough silence on your end to be able to adequately outline our concerns without interruptions. Having said that, Rita, it has been brought to our attention that you are routinely sent out for your daily chores of gathering a bag full of certain nuts or berries and...”

“Yeah, nuts and berries. Nuts and berries. More nuts and berries. They want me to go out and get a bunch of nuts and berries all the time and...”

“Yes, *nuts and berries*, Rita, and as we were going to say, it seems that you *never comply* with the requests made of you. You always come back with just a few...”

“Yep, just a few. You’re right. Just a few. That’s because I’m running along the rivers in the mountains. That’s what I’m doing. I’m running along the rivers.”

“Hmmm. You say that you are *running along the rivers* in the mountains. But *why* do you do that Rita, when you have been sent out to...?”

“I *have* to do it! You see, old duffers, I mean *elder* duffers...I mean, *elder folk*. It’s really very easy to understand. The rivers are running and I have to run with them. I have to do it. Don’t you see, *elder duffer folk?* I *have to* do it!”

“Well, no, we do *not* really understand why you *have to*...”

“You see, I go out there thinking about the nuts and berries and more nuts and berries and all about nuts and berries, but soon the rivers begin to call out to me. They *call out* to me!”

“They *call out* to you? And what do they say to you, Rita?”

“They tell me to *come run* with them. They say that they are free to run about wherever they want, all day and all night long. And because they are free to run about, they are happy, and they want me to be free and happy too. And to be free and happy like the rivers, I have to *run* with them up here on the mountain. Don’t you see, duffer elders? I *have* to do it. I have to *run* with them!”

“Well, Rita, that, well, that *is* a strange story, but regardless of what the rivers say to you, you must be aware that you have responsibilities to comply with. You are responsible to your parents, to us, and to our clan in general. We all accept our responsibilities without questioning, and we do so cheerfully, while completing our assigned chores. Now do you understand, our dear child?”

“Cheerfully? No, I *don’t* understand. Cheerfully? I don’t get it. No, I don’t get it at all. Maybe my vision is failing me due to the super thick smoke floating around this hut that is burning my eyes and making them water like crazy. But if you wanna know it, you all look much more stiff and creaky and tired than being cheerful, even though you’re completing your assigned chores of making me sit all uncomfortable like in this circle, and that’s why I don’t...”

“Rita, sweet child, you must understand that we are discussing a very serious issue that has arisen in regard to your behavior, and for that reason we may not have smiles on our faces, but we...”

“But elder folk, the rivers are always smiling, no matter what might be happening around them. They’re always happy because they’re always free and...”

“Yes, Rita, but...”

“You see, I once asked my great, great grandmother why our clan was called “the Flow” and she told me it was because we *used to be* a carefree, happy people that sort of took things as they came. And she said that the nuts and berries and leaves and roots and herbs and all that stuff was important and was gathered up as it should be, but our ancestors spent much less time doing that and much more time wandering around the woods talking to the trees and bushes and admiring the flowers and playing with the animals and...running with the rivers.”

“Are you listening, huh, are you? Yeah, that’s what she said. That’s what she told me, elder duffers. She said that’s the way it *used to be*. But *now*, she said, in the Land of Dogma the elves have become all routine and somber and serious and that everyone does what everybody else does and only what they’re supposed to do and nothing else. And she said that they do these things day in and day out and it’s more of the same old stuff without end. And she told me that our smiles have been carried away by the wind spirits to other parts to be on the faces of those elves who still *do* run with the rivers whenever the rivers call out to them to do so. Yeah, that’s what she said. That’s what my great, great grandmother told me.”

“That was *quite* a story, Rita—all of which was apparently recounted to us without your even stopping to take a breath! And to be honest, we’re not very sure *how* to respond at this moment. No one else has ever come to us to speak of the rivers calling out to them, and therefore...”

“The rivers are *always* calling out, elder folk, but maybe the other elves are just not paying attention to them. Maybe they’re just not *listening* to the rivers? What do you think, huh? Maybe they’re just not listening because they’ve got their minds all tangled up with nuts and berries and...”

“Well, Rita, we, well, we believe that this is going to require *hours* of serious reflection on our part to be able to...”

“Hours! I’ve got a better idea. Hours? Yeah, I’ve got a *much* better idea. Do ya want to hear it, huh? Do ya, huh? Do ya want to hear it? Huh, do you, old...I mean, elder duffer folk? Should I tell ya, huh? I could tell ya...”

“Rita, we...”

“Look, you are all stiff and creaky and filled up to the ears with blue smoke from sitting around here for hours on end like a bunch of frozen statues. And after all that if you are still able to get up without falling down again and crashing your heads on something hard and breaking them open so your brains ooze out and...”

“Rita! We get the drift. My gosh! Our brains oozing out and...! So *what* is your idea?”

“How about this? You can accompany me *now* out into the woods and we can spend some time talking to the trees and bushes and admiring the flowers and playing with the animals and...running with the rivers. I’m sure that even though you’ve maybe ignored all the wonderful beings of those parts for years on end that they have kind hearts and forgiving souls and that they will accept you with open arms and they will call out to *all of you* to go running with them like they do with me. What do you say, huh? Will you come with me? Huh, what do you say? Will you...?”

“Rita, you are so kind. Truly so. And quite frankly, your idea is actually very enticing since we have distant but rather cloudy memories of what your great, great grandmother related to you. But as you say, we are *old* folk, maybe very set in our ways, and thus to even consider the possibility of going *running* with...”

“It’s okay. Don’t worry about it. Really. It’s okay. You see, the rivers will understand if you can’t *run* much with them, but they would surely be very pleased if you just *walked* along their side, accompanying them in their journey for the time your legs will hold up. They’ll accept you exactly as you are, even all stiff and creaky like, and all filled up with blue smoke that is clouding your eyes and pouring out your nostrils. I mean, they’ll accept you *exactly* as you are. Well, just as long as your brains aren’t oozing out of your heads because that would be really disgusting and well, what a sight that would be, so...”

“Rita!”

“Sorry. But that *would* be really disgusting, and anyway... You see, the rivers don’t want to be ignored. That’s all. They just don’t want to be ignored! They want *you* to be free and happy like they are, and their only desire is to share that wonderful feeling with you. As I recall, that’s what my great, great grandmother called “flowing,” and I think that’s maybe why we’re called “the Flow.”

With that, slowly but surely all the elders of the Sacred Council managed to get up from their cross-legged sitting positions and accompany Rita the River Runner on the path that led out into the very heart of their beautiful, enchanted woods, high up on the Mystic Mountains. And from that day onward, the Land of Dogma was never quite the same since the oldest and wisest of the elves began to enthusiastically teach all the others what had been lost in clouded memories of their ancient traditions. With the passing of time, the rivers were calling out to, and being *heard* by each and every one of the Flow, and the elves were seen to be running alongside the watery pathways, freely and happily ever after.
