

Denchik

in equal collaboration with friends in Velikoretskoye, Russia
on November 6, 2017 and written November 18-19, 2017

featuring the creative contributions of
Vanya, Nadia, Valya, Zita, Nastya Kh.,
Karina, Roma, Denis, Dima and Nastya F.

creation impossible without the excellent
translation of Svetlana Estrina

humbly written by,
Stephanie Mutert

His eyes became drenched with sadness as he stared around the village while his stomach rolled over threatening to expel itself on the ground at his feet. He had seen this one too many times throughout the entire realm of Narnia. Hobbit village after hobbit village had been destroyed, the entire community and all of the hopes and dreams of all its' occupants completely pulverized into an ashy haze. No survivors. No witnesses. Logically it seemed impossible, but somehow someone was wiping entire villages off the map. It had gotten to the point of bordering on genocide, since there were only a few villages of the Narnia hobbit community left and he was failing at protecting them. Unable to comprehend why someone would want to kill the entire hobbit species, it had become an obsession for him to stop whoever it was. While it wasn't his job to protect them, he had been created to fight for those who were unable to fight for themselves.

He sniffed, trying to pick up the trail and smelled a distinct, familiar scent. This was the work of Denchik and he had to be stopped.

It was only a name that had been whispered among the communities of Narnia. No one had ever seen him. No one knew why. No one knew how he was doing it. No one had ever been left as a witness in the aftermath of death and destruction he left behind. But he had earned a name, 'Denchik,' meaning 'Destroyer' in the ancient language of the hobbits. He almost had Denchik at one point in this hunt, but was only able to grab a piece of his clothing, and unable to kill him. The clothing had proven most helpful in following Denchik's scent in many regions throughout the realm of Narnia he had traveled, but he was getting exhausted at only following the scent of so much destruction.

Sighing, he tossed his belongings once again on his back and followed the scent that he was determined to eradicate. The next time their paths crossed, he was ready. Too much life had already been lost. Denchik would die.

.....

Disgusted, Denchik checked his map again while shaking his head. He was almost finished with his quest, yet one of the last villages was proving hard to find. And he had to hurry, because he knew something was on his trail, but he wasn't sure who or what it was. A few villages ago, he had barely escaped before being overtaken by the annoying follower and Denchik would not be stopped after getting this close to finishing.

This journey had taken him all over Narnia, and he would finish eliminating the entire race of hobbits if it was the last thing he did. It had taken him an entire lifetime to devise his plan. He had only

known this blind rage he had against the hobbit vermin since he was a small child. Nothing else had ever mattered and his focus on his goal was intense. His rage had led him to create the weapon that would eliminate everything in every hobbit village in existence and it had been performing exactly as he envisioned it would. If he could only find the last three villages, his lifetime quest would be complete.

.....

A few days later, Denchik stopped again, confused by why he wasn't locating the last villages as easily as he had the previous twenty. This forest was tricking him, he knew it. Deep in the trees, without a horizon line in sight there was little light and only the sound of the leaves around him as he once again consulted his infuriating map. He had been through every meadow, over every mountain and every type of landscape known to man in his quest across Narnia, yet this forest was what was halting his progress. This close to the end of his quest, he was getting increasingly frustrated. He thought he would have been done weeks ago in eliminating the hobbits, yet here he was, still looking for the last three villages.

Sensing something completely out of the ordinary, Denchik gasped as he turned around slowly. Scanning the trees, he saw nothing, but he knew something was there.

"Your quest is finished. It ends here," Denchik heard, yet still unable to place where it was coming from.

"No one ends my quest. Show yourself!" Denchik shouted in a low baritone that rattled the leaves around him.

"The only thing that matters is that you will never finish killing hobbits," Denchik heard as a whisper in his ear. "They will live on, and their race will continue to grow."

"I am not afraid of magic! Show yourself!" Denchik again yelled uncomfortable with how close the voice had been to him and he still hadn't seen anything.

At that moment three elves silently and slowly stepped out of three separate trunks of trees. Denchik immediately recognized them as Nastya, Vanya and Roma. Known as the elven Triad, they were powerful, but he had fought them before and knew that there was no possibility they would be able to stop him. Their magic had no effect on him when he was a child testing his strength and it would have no effect now. Denchik, raised by a community that believed magic should have power over no one, and had given him the ability to be unaffected by magic with an ancient rune tattooed on the

back of his shoulder to protect him from all magic. The Triad might out number him, but with their magic rendered useless, his strength, focus and incapability to surrender would defeat them again.

His raucous laughter reverberated through the forest causing birds to be ejected from their nests in nearby trees.

"You three? Again? We've done this before. You know you cannot stop me," Denchik said through his laughter.

"They can't, but I can," said the same tiny voice Denchik had heard whispered in his ear.

Intently looking throughout the forest, Denchik finally found a small figure standing defiantly at the feet of the Triad. Noting ears and the tail, Denchik's laughter increased.

"You?!?! You...are a...mouse...there is...nothing...you...can do to stop me. You...you are...t-t-tiny," Denchik eventually voiced while doubled over as laughter continued to burst out of him, and had his entire body shaking.

Realizing he had forgotten one key intimidation factor, the 'mouse' immediately pushed a button on his suit and grew to the size of a large man. Elven magic was a wonderful thing when you had the right elven friends. The Triad had created his suit many years ago in an effort to end evil in the realm of Narnia. Known as 'Mouse Man' to the commoners of Narnia, he had muscles the size of small mountains, eyes the color of red lasers, a tail as sharp as a blade flawless in battle and superhero strength with the ability to fly through the air for short periods of time.

"I am a mouse," Mouse Man stated emphatically. "You will never defeat me and you will never complete your elimination of the hobbits."

Seeing someone equal in size startled Denchik. Stepping back, he assessed his opponent. The weapon could work on him, but he would need to know how fast Mouse Man could move before his final calculations. The weapon would be useless if it only hit near Mouse Man, in this close range, it would have to be a direct hit to the annoying rodent. The only way to find out his speed would be to engage the gargantuan creature before him.

"You've been following me for weeks," Denchik reasoned. "Why have you not shown yourself?"

"Things needed to be put into place for your demise," Mouse Man replied in a much deeper and powerful voice than what came from his smaller size. He had stayed in his original mouse size to track Denchik. In his stealth mode, it was impossible for Denchik to see him or track him, so it had

taken him longer to get here, but eventually he had caught up to him thanks to the help from his elven friends.

"My demise? Between you, and these three that couldn't even defeat me as a child, how exactly will you accomplish my demise?" Denchik said as he stood as tall as the trees surrounding him with his shoulders back and chest flexing every muscle it had. He planted one foot forward ready to attack or defend himself, whichever came first with this annoying rodent in front of him.

"Do you really think it has been an accident you have been walking around the forest for weeks on end?" Mouse Man challenged.

Denchik's body became as still as a rock, "You don't have the power to keep me contained to the forest. Magic has no effect on me."

"I don't, but Nastya, Vanya and Roma are perfectly capable of keeping you confused by changing the forest around you," Mouse Man casually replied as the eyes of the three elves flashed and the corners of their mouths simultaneously raised in a smile. The triad of elves had known they could never defeat Denchik on their own, as they had recognized his pattern of destruction from their confrontation with a young boy many years ago who had tried to destroy their forest while testing a weapon. As soon as he had entered their forest, all the magic at their disposal could change all aspects of the forest around him. Confused by the map not matching his surroundings, he would be unable to exit the forest and get to the next hobbit village. All they had to do was wait for Mouse Man to arrive and slay Denchik, and centuries old elves had all the patience in the world.

For a brief moment, fear glinted on Denchik's face, then the fierce villainous face was back and rage was glaring through his eyes.

"I will complete my quest!" Denchik sneered as one corner of his lip twitched into a snarl.

"I've wondered," Mouse Man said with a sarcastic raised eyebrow, "why the hobbits? They are the least harmless of all Narnia creatures. They hurt no one. Most of the time, they live for decades without anyone even noticing their tiny villages. I had to explain to a herd of horseman what a hobbit was and why I was defending them. They hadn't even known there was a hobbit village that had been annihilated on their property."

"Innocent hobbits?!?!?! Hobbits are not innocent. Do you even know how much they eat? That same herd of horseman have been in war with their neighbors for centuries, because each think the

neighboring clan is stealing food of each other's properties. The hobbits have been stealing food and starting wars for centuries," Denchik said, spitting out his words.

"Now THAT, that is absolutely impossible," Mouse Man said chuckling. "They are tiny creatures. They can't possible eat THAT much."

"Clearly, you do not know hobbit culture. Have you never heard of first breakfast, second breakfast, third breakfast, first lunch, second lunch, third lunch, afternoon snack, second afternoon snack, first dinner, second dinner, third dinner and late dinner?" Denchik reasoned.

"That would be 12 meals in a day," Mouse Man sardonically replied. "No hobbit can eat that much."

"12? No, it should be 14, I've missed two...let's see, oh, yes, o-o-oh, I missed the third afternoon snack and the late, late dinner," Denchik said rolling his eyes up while thinking out loud and counting on his fingers.

"You know what, it doesn't even matter that you are lying. I will not let you commit genocide of an entire Narnian race," Mouse Man said as his patience ran out.

"You are the one believing lies if you think the hobbit race is innocent and a positive contributor to this realm!" Denchik passionately yelled. "Even as a small boy, when our family would repeatedly go out into the fields to gather what we needed to survive, those fields would be stripped bare. No one knew how it happened until I small these small beings at the edge of the field running with a huge load of potatoes. Our family went hungry for months on end, all because those hobbit vermin robbed our fields. Chickens would disappear, entire herds of livestock, a field would be completely empty of even a single head of cabbage. They have been traumatizing me since I was a child, and it is time to end their raiding!"

Mouse Man was speechless as he processed what the assumed villain in front of him was saying. Was he even a villain if he was trying to save the food stores of Narnia? Maybe his end game was less genocide and more protecting. Struggling with a confused conscience, Mouse Man remembered back to the last time a hobbit village held a victory feast for him. There had been a large amount of food, but it was a feast and the hobbits had always been so warm, welcoming and compassionate to him.

"We recognize it may be unbelievable, but Denchik is correct in his analyzation of the hobbit race. We agree they are valuable and adorable beings, but they eat an extraordinary amount of food and their feet are very large and hairy," the Triad contributed.

"See, now that is what I am talking about!" Denchik shouted, "Now let's get on with ridding Narnia of these vermin!"

"You idiot! They are not agreeing in eliminating them," Mouse Man said. "They state facts. They are elves and protectors of Narnian memories. Maybe this is more about communication than anything...have you confronted the hobbits about not stealing? Or have you just been terrorizing them?"

"There is no need for communication. They are ruthless devils and they will be exterminated," Denchik shouted as he launched himself at Mouse Man and they both rolled to the ground. Mouse Man, caught off guard, didn't have the time to flash his laser eyes at Denchik and instead repeatedly stabbed his tail into Denchik's back, eventually landing the razor-sharp tail in the back of his neck.

Roaring in pain, Denchik's fists incessantly landed in the sides of Mouse Man as the stunned Mouse Man struggled with deciding his next move before he was knocked unconscious by the powerful man.

Quickly grabbing his sword from its sheath, Denchik sliced through Mouse Man's tail separating it entirely from his massive body. Angrily yanking the remains of the tail from his neck, Denchik tossed Mouse Man into the nearest tree.

Mouse Man landed in a crouched position at the bottom of the tree, realizing they were both equally matched in strength. Flashing his laser eyes toward Denchik, the large sword fell to the ground in two pieces, sliced in half by Mouse Man's eyes.

As the Triad changed the surrounding forest to shield Mouse Man from Denchik, branches consumed Denchik's face, leaving him blind to the attacks of Mouse Man. Continual, sharp kicks to his abdomen caused him to fall to the forest floor as he felt Mouse Man's staccato movements with his fists into his body. Rage consumed him and all his strength collected in his arms and legs as he wrestled the branches from his face and hurled himself into the direction he sensed Mouse Man was standing. In a flurry of kicks and punches that distracted Mouse Man, Denchik quickly set his sights on the button in Mouse Man's suit that would transform him back into a tiny mouse. He needed Mouse Man to move slower in his original, tiny form so he could aim the weapon accurately and take him out. He was moving too fast and landing too many punches and kicks in his large form. Denchik needed more time to get the weapon in place.

Pressing the button on Mouse Man's suit, Denchik grabbed the weapon that had reduced so many hobbit villages to ash from his side and pointed it in the direction of Mouse Man, whose face only registered surprise as he shrunk to his original, tiny form.

"You will end up just like the hobbits," Denchik swore.

"And you have one last opportunity to give up your quest. It does not have to end this way. You have the ability to change," Mouse Man squeaked in his original form.

"It's been too long on this path. The only way to bring myself peace is to rid Narnia of the hobbits," Denchik laughed.

"Then I have no choice, but to stop you if you refuse to believe forgiveness is possible for you and the hobbits," Mouse Man said bringing his own weapon around to the front of his body, planting his feet shoulder-width apart to bear the force that he was getting ready to send at Denchik.

"No weapon that small will end me," Denchik chuckled.

"This is much more than a weapon, Denchik," Mouse Man squeaked. "It is a cheese canon created by the Triad to destroy you. It took time for them to create what would end you, but finally we are ready to destroy you."

"A cheese canon? Really? You think you can take me down with a tiny cheese canon? They would have been more helpful to you if they had created a magic suit that didn't use a button someone else could reach and make you small again," Denchik said as he rolled his eyes.

Undeterred by Denchik's attempt to verbally spar, Mouse Man said confidently, "Anything you are allergic to?"

"I am definitely not allergic to cheese."

"What about what grows on cheese?"

Denchik's eyes became wide orbs as he understood what Mouse Man was saying, and he clicked the weapon into the firing position.

Before Denchik could click the trigger of his elaborate mechanical weapon, Mouse Man aimed his magic weapon right at Denchik's face. As the hard pieces of old cheese forcefully flew at Denchik and bounced off him, the mold on the cheese landed directly on Denchik's face and began spreading rapidly. Denchik's body immediately responded to the massive amount of mold and he fell to the ground with his entire body convulsing.

Satisfied his magic weapon had accomplished what it was created for, Mouse Man lowered his weapon to his side and scurried on all four legs to Denchik's body.

"You had a choice. You could have ended your quest on your own, but you refused to see reason," Mouse Man whispered in Denchik's ear.

The Triad made their way to Denchik's body and stood beside Mouse Man.

"Forgiveness is always possible, but you were unable to accept that for yourself, Denchik" Roma said with great sadness.

"You will see...as those vermin repopulate...Narnia will be overcome...by them again...you will see and then...then you w-w-will know...what you did here today was a...m-m-mistake and...and they could have been s-s-stopped," Denchik rasped slowly as the mold overtook his entire body.

"Annihilation of an entire race is never the answer, Denchik, if you could have heard reason, you would have understood that. Everyone contributes to the story of our realm," Nastya calmly said.

As the Triad and Mouse Man stood there, Denchik wheezed his last breath.

"Friends, please use the forest to bury him and make sure his story is forgotten. It is not one we want others to ever remember," Mouse Man told the Triad.

"Small friend, you know every story has its' place and we are responsible for those stories to be remembered. You may not see the usefulness now, but Denchik's story will need to be told and remembered by all the races of Narnia," the Triad spoke as one.

"Not his, friends, not his story," Mouse Man argued.

With their many centuries of patience and compassion coating their words, the Triad said serenely, "You do not know the memories we have collected and retold. Every story counts and every story has something to be learned. Denchik will be remembered as a man who let hate and revenge consume him and then attempted to end an entire race. But he will also be remembered as a man driven by actions that were cruel against him. We cannot negate the actions against him and ignore his perspective. In Denchik's perspective, the hobbits were creating the starvation he experienced as a child. The hobbits need to be told how their traditional actions were a part of what began these heinous crimes by Denchik. Denchik may have been stopped, but the hobbits need to correct and atone for their own actions that caused the near end of their race. The realm will remember."

Turning, Mouse Man scoffed and started running away.

"Your actions will be remembered as heroic and saving of an entire race, small friend," the Triad spoke toward Mouse Man's back.

"Our actions, friends, it was our actions," Mouse Man yelled behind him as he continued to scurry away and the Triad blended back into the trees. "I could never have done it without the three of you. Until next time, friends, until next time."