

The Great Elf Adventure

by Deborah (G2)

Chapter 1

As I walked up the path to our gray house and opened the front door, the house felt a bit emptier than usual. I walked into the playroom where my five siblings were playing. I greeted them, then I continued into the kitchen to say hello to Mother. But Mother was not there. I immediately knew that this was not normal. Mother was usually in the kitchen cooking a big, delicious dinner. But not today.

I walked into the playroom saying, "Did Mother go to the store?"

"What?" My ten-year-old brother, Michael said, startled. "No. Is she not in the kitchen?"

"I checked, but she's not," I answered.

"Well, if she's not there then she's probably in her bedroom," Michael replied as if pushing the idea away.

I went into my parents' bedroom and what I saw was very strange. The closet was open a crack. Mother never left it open because it had her most precious things. The next thing I saw made me jumpy and nervous. There were some toddler-sized footprints that glowed with a greenish tinge and made a circle right near the door. Just to make sure that everything was ok, I opened the closet door a little more. What I saw made me frozen to the ground in fear.

Mother's favorite dress was parted to the left side of the closet, revealing what looked like a passageway. It had tall, flaming torches all along the sides to light a dim path, and at the very end of it, there were little creatures walking around on two legs. Where the path ended, there was a strange light. It looked like daylight that was almost as green as the footprints.

I squeezed my eyes shut and screamed for help. When I opened my eyes, I saw the creatures scampering away. As they ran, some of them started to become invisible.

I let out another shrill scream, and my siblings came running. Michael said, "What happened, Sydney?"

I pointed into the closet with my shaking hand. Just then, I saw the last creature going. I shifted my hand to point directly at him, saying, "There!"

Everyone had seen the creature. It was just then that we noticed that there was a pointed, green hat near the entrance of the passageway.

Now Simon, my five-year-old brother, loves reading books, especially books about imaginary creatures. For example, he loves the evil kind of unicorns, goblins, and his favorite, elves. After some time, he picked up the hat and said, "You know, this hat looks a lot like the elf hats in my books."

"And these look a lot like the elf footprints in your books," Michael pointed out. "What if they are evil elves? What if they took Mother?"

With that, Emily, who was only two, started to cry.

"Don't worry Emily," I said, picking her up. "I am sure they are not evil elves."

If only I knew how wrong I was.

Chapter 2

After our discoveries, there were only a few possibilities. One was that Mother could be somewhere in the house, but the most likely was that she had been taken away by those elves and into that terrible tunnel.

“L-let’s go and search the house j-just in case,” I said, trying not to sound too scared.

We all split up, calling her name as we went. But with no success, we came together again in Mother’s room. Now it was final. The elves had taken Mother, and we had to go after them.

“Wait,” Michael said. “We can’t just go without any supplies or anything.”

“I guess so,” I said. “But we will need to hurry.”

“All right then,” Michael said, taking charge. “Lilly and Sydney, you two go and get some food while I get some adventuring supplies and a backpack.”

I went to the kitchen with Lilly. There wasn’t much food since Mother had not gone to the store lately. All I found were six apples, a box of Club crackers, and a big water bottle. I quickly gathered these things and rushed back into the room where Michael had already gotten two blankets and a compass and was stuffing them into his backpack.

I added the food to the backpack and put on my shoes. Michael had already gotten Emily’s shoes on and was putting the backpack on his back.

With that, we started walking through the tunnel. As we neared the end of the tunnel, I felt some weird vibrations and echoes coming from up ahead. Then, when we exited the tunnel, I thought I saw the evil creatures going around the corner carrying something. It was the shape of a human, but that was all I could make out.

Since I had seen where the elves had gone, I tried to break into a run, but I immediately knew that would be too hard because of carrying Emily. The others had not seen where the elves were, and I thought speaking to them would be too dangerous, so I motioned for them to follow me.

When we turned the corner, I was taken by surprise. Right where the elves had gone, there was a field of tall, sharp metal spines. The space between them was so small that if we wanted to get past them, we would have to go in a single-file line. Now that would be easy if not for one thing: the soil was so loose that it was like quicksand, except that it didn't pull you down, but it made you slip. The only way to get past was either to go around them, which would take forever because the spine fields went on as far as the eye could see, or if we were careful, we could get down on their knees and form a chain so we would be less likely to slip.

"All right," I whispered to my siblings. "We need to form a chain. Michael, you take Martha on your back, then I will grab onto Michael's heels with Emily on my back. Lilly, you grab on to my heels. Simon, grab on to Lilly's heels."

There we were, everyone clinging to someone's heels with Michael proceeding slowly and the rest of us following. The soil under my hands felt soggy, damp, and squishy. As we crawled on, it seemed like the huge spines were looming over us like giants with very pointy

heads. After some time of making our way through soggy soil, the spines seemed to get shorter, as if we were nearing the end. But as we got to the exit, the spines didn't go in straight rows anymore. Now they made a twisting, jagged path. Because of this, we had to weave in and out, disconnecting our chain.

The first time I had to let go of Michael's ankle was fine, but on the second time, my hand slipped. As I slid backwards, I tried to grab something but could only grab sand. I tried to dig my hands into the sand. I got a hold and stopped. But as I slipped, my back must have jerked, because Emily lost her grip and started sliding backwards.

"Emily!" I shouted as I dove for her. As I grabbed Emily, I remembered Lilly and Simon were still connected to my heels, and we were all sliding together. Just then, I realized that we were headed right for a giant spine. As I was about to slam into the spine, I felt a hard tug on my heels. I looked back and saw that Michael had grabbed Simon's heels. Michael's legs were wrapped tightly around a spine, so he was able to stop us from sliding forward.

As we reconnected our chain, I realized just how hard this whole thing would be. I did not know how many more obstacles lay ahead and neither did anyone else.

We finally reached the end of the spine field. I saw that Michael's expression had changed from terror to a more determined look.

I noticed we were in an area like a pasture, but, instead of grass, it was cement that covered the ground. We walked on through the thick air, everything plain and open. Then, as we were walking, I spotted a dark, flowing stream. It was so thick and bluish black, it looked like

poison. We could not take any chances with that, so we resolved to go around. Unfortunately, the poisonous stream went on for a very long time, just like the spine field had.

We walked on and on along the river until we spotted a bridge. It didn't look very stable, but it looked like the river didn't stop for miles, and we did not have the time to go that far. So, one by one, all of us stepped slowly onto the little bridge.

Then, as I was helping Martha and Emily to the other side, the bridge started to crack under my feet.

I tried to scramble off as quickly as possible as I hurried Martha and Emily across. Just as the last of us stepped onto dry ground, the bridge crashed into the poisonous water.

"Whew, close one!" I said with a sigh of relief.

Michael nodded and took the compass out of his backpack, to get a sense of where we were.

"Oh no," Michael said as he looked at the compass. "The compass needle is spinning round and round because this is not our own world."

We wandered for miles and miles in the open cement plain, but there was no sign of elves. Then, suddenly, an enormous castle appeared right in front of us. Where the castle's towers were, there were little elves. Each elf had something like a jar and a tool like a bubble wand. The bubble wands had bubble-like things coming out of them.

I motioned frantically for my siblings to take cover. There were not many places to hide, but there was a cave about 25 yards from the castle. We all dove for shelter in the little cave. It was made of plain stone all around and was about four feet high and seven feet deep.

“Oh no,” I said. “This is not good. I think they have taken Mother in there.”

“We have to make a plan,” Michael agreed. “If only we could sneak into the castle and get Mother.”

“But the only way that we could do that is if we found a weakness,” I said, nervousness creeping into my voice.

While we were talking, I did not notice that Martha had left our hiding spot and was running out to pop one of the bubbles.

“No! Martha, come back!” I hissed after her. But it was too late. Martha had touched a bubble. Her whole body was frozen in place.

“Oh ho ho!” one of the elves said as he saw Martha frozen. “Looks like we’ve another one for our spells!” He disappeared from his tower and a few moments later, he came out of the big wooden door at the entrance of the castle.

I watched in horror as he carried Martha into their castle.

Chapter 3

I was so terrified by this sight that I could not hold back my scream. As soon as I did this though, I regretted it, because the elves, who had now returned to their towers, heard me. They turned to look at the cave that we were in, but they could not see us because this cave was slanted away from the castle. I knew that it would be only a matter of time before they came to look for us.

“Quick!” I said, as I swung around to look at Michael. “We need to go as far back in this cave as possible.”

“All right,” Michael said, but he sounded doubtful. “But I think they might be able to find us.”

“We have to,” I replied, as Michael grabbed Emily and his backpack and put them at the far back. “It’s our only hope to be safe from them.”

As I crawled to the back of the cave, followed by Lilly, Simon, and Michael, I heard a noise. It did not sound like the tap-tap of someone coming to the cave, but instead it reminded me of the creak of a door. I looked to the back of the cave and squinted. I wouldn’t have been able to see what was there, but there was a tiny bit of light coming in from the cave opening. I realized that what I was leaning on here, in the far back of the cave, was no ordinary stone. It was a wooden door!

“Michael! Look!” I said as I tapped him on the shoulder. Just as he turned to see, I heard the elves coming toward us. I only had to say one word, and Michael understood the plan.

“Escape,” I said.

As the footsteps came closer, I started to feel around for the knob on the door. After feeling around for about five seconds, I found the knob and turned it. Even though it was a little stuck, I managed to pry the door open. I didn’t need to say a word. As soon as the door gave way, we all scrambled as quickly and quietly as possible through the door. When we were all through and Michael had gotten his backpack, I shut the door behind us. After I had closed the door, I realized we were in complete darkness.

I listened as the elves peered in and then left. When I was positive that they were gone, I said to Michael, “They thought that this door was just plain old stone like we did.”

“Yes,” Michael answered. “And I’m very glad.”

“You know what,” Michael said. “I think this tunnel could take us into the castle.”

“Really?” I said hopefully.

This was a new idea for me because I had been planning to sneak out of here and get into the palace somehow.

“Yes, really,” Michael answered, his voice sturdy and calm. “Let’s just see where it goes.”

“OK,” I said reluctantly. “But how are we going to know when to turn? It’s so dark.”

“This is what we will do,” Michael said, taking charge once more. “I will go ahead of everyone, and I will feel around. Whenever I feel something, I will tell you how many feet or inches it is from you. That way, I can warn you about things like the ground slanting downward or the walls coming closer together. But, for this to work, Lilly, you and Simon have to go behind Sydney.”

“All right,” I said, as Lilly and Simon squeezed between me and the wall to get behind me.

“OK,” said Michael, then continued, “Now Emily, you get on my back and hold on tight. It might be a little lumpy because I have my backpack on too.”

With that, I started to go forward. Every few seconds or so, Michael would stop and feel around, making sure that we didn’t hit anything.

After a few minutes, Michael said, “The tunnel turns left in about five feet, and hold on tight when you crawl, because it dips down into the ground.”

I crawled a little bit farther and then began counting the feet. One, two, three, four, five—I stopped at foot number five and felt around. I felt the wall curve, and I turned left, making sure that both Lilly and Simon were right behind me.

As we continued through the long, stone-walled tunnel, I noticed that on the floor of the tunnel, there wasn’t just stone. There was also some flaky stuff that felt like grass, only more poky and stiff. Hay, I thought as we went on. It must be hay. Just then, I felt like I was going downwards. With every hand and knee that I put forward, I had to regain my balance because

the ground was tipping downward. For the next five minutes of crawling, the ground kept going deeper. Finally, the tunnel bottom became flat again, and Michael said, "I think we are almost there." But he said no more because as we went farther, I heard voices close by.

When we came to a place close to the end, Michael and I started feeling around again. Since I couldn't see anything, I had to depend on texture to find anything. At first, I only felt stone and more stone, but then, my hand banged against something wooden. Another door, I thought, as I tried to find the knob. But there was no knob. But how could this be? Then suddenly, as my hands were feeling the door, my finger stabbed a softer place of wood on the door. I didn't even have to force my finger through the wood. It just went right through, and when I removed it, a tiny stream of light poured in.

I put my eye right to the hole and looked through. At first, I couldn't tell what was there, but then my eyes adjusted, and I saw more clearly. On the other side of this door were two of the elves. They were walking around, talking to each other. As they paced, their shoes made little thumps and clunks, so it was hard to catch what they were saying. All I heard were a few words: "captive", "human", and "great for spells!"

I turned around and, for the first time since entering this tunnel, saw the faces of my siblings. Lilly and Simon were so scared that they were clutching each other as tightly as they could. Emily started to whimper softly.

"Shh, Emily!" I said anxiously as I patted her head.

I held my breath as I again put my eye at the hole in the door. The elves had stopped pacing and were now standing still like statues, listening. I saw them stare straight at the door, so I quickly removed my eye from the hole and ducked down.

“There are more humans around here, and we should get them,” an elf voice said. “Get the whole team together and form a search party. Tell them to look in every nook and cranny until they are found.”

“Yes, all right,” said the other elf. His voice sounded rough and stiff.

With that, both elves started walking away from the door. When I was sure they had left, I whispered to Michael, “we have got to get to the other side of this door and find a hiding place.”

“OK,” Michael agreed, “but they are searching for us in the building, and we are safest here.”

“I know,” I replied, “but then we can’t rescue Mother and Martha.”

“I guess you’re right,” Michael said. “And anyway, it’s kind of uncomfortable in this tunnel.”

“So do you know a way for us to open the door?” I asked hopefully.

“Well, let’s see.” Michael felt the door and then continued, “All we have to do is push on it, and I think we can open it.” Michael and I put our backs to the door and pushed on it with all our might. The door made a long, low creak and then opened. Michael picked up Emily, and I took Lilly and Simon by the hand. As soon as we were out of the tunnel, I couldn’t help but

stretch. Even though I couldn't see outside, I knew it was almost night. We tip-toed across the floor over to another door. I opened it and was surprised to see that it led to a staircase. The stairs went downward to another door.

I looked at Michael, and he nodded. Before we went down the stairs, I was careful to shut the door behind us. We crept down the staircase, and when we got to the last step, I opened the next door. I was so surprised at what was there that I practically fell backwards. Behind this door was a huge and stone-walled dungeon.

I peered in through the doorway and saw that no one was there except one person: Martha. Even though Martha wasn't frozen anymore, she was so terrified that she was hardly moving. She was shivering with cold and had a tear-stained face.

"Oh, Martha!" I cried as I ran to hug her. I didn't know what to say, so I just said, "I am so glad that we found you."

"I don't think it is safe to just wait here in the middle of this dungeon," Michael said.

I looked around for somewhere to hide and I saw a door in the corner of the room that was the same type of stone as the dungeon walls.

"It's like a closet," Simon said.

We all crawled into the closet and shut the door. In this closet, there were two boxes, so I sat down on one and took Emily from Michael while he unloaded the blankets and food from his backpack. I took one blanket from him and wrapped Martha in it, then I took the other blanket and spread it on the floor of the closet like a picnic blanket.

Next, I got the food and laid it on the blanket. Four of the six apples had bruises, and the crackers inside the box were crumbled, but nobody cared because we were all so hungry. Everyone gobbled up the food, and when it was all eaten, we all fell into deep sleep. I woke up to the sound of a high-pitched shriek.

I listened and heard one elf say, "They are gone!"

"What!" another elf said.

"Tell the search party to search for the little girl too!" the first elf said. "And go defend the grown-up person in dungeon eighteen! Place the guards there!"

By the time the elves had left the dungeon, everyone in the closet was awake.

"What on earth was that?" Lilly asked.

"The elves," I replied. "They discovered that Martha is gone."

I opened the closet door and then went to the only door that led out of the dungeon. I turned the knob and pulled. But the door would not open. I darted back to the closet and said frantically, "The elves locked the door so we can't get out!"

"There must be some way," Michael said. He got up and started looking around for an exit, but it was no use.

I went back to the closet to be with my younger siblings and look for a way out there. I looked around, hoping that there would be some way to get out in this closet, because it didn't seem like Michael was having any luck.

Then, suddenly, Simon said, "Hey, what's this?"

I looked over to see what he had found and saw that near his hand, in the corner of the closet, was a shiny golden key. I picked it up and examined the end that would go into the hole to which it belonged. The end had a few spiky little points that were sharp, and at the very tip, it had a long spike. Seeing the spike reminded me of crawling through the spine fields, farther back in our journey. I quickly pushed that thought away and started to look for a hole to fit the key.

I searched and searched for it but couldn't find a hole. Then it occurred to me. A hole might be on the ceiling. I stood up and skimmed the ceiling with my finger. Suddenly, my hand hit a depression. I took the key and stuck it into the hole, hoping that it would fit. It did. I turned it and pulled the vent down. Now, I thought, if there was only a way to get up there, maybe then we could escape.

I scanned all around the dungeon and the closet. Then I spotted the two crates in the corner of the closet. I quickly stacked one crate on top of another and called Michael to come over. Once he came, I said, "Michael, you get on top of the crates and see what's up there."

Michael did what I told him, and when he came down, he said, "Well, it's not much, but when I looked up there was another ladder on top of the first one. I think it might be a chain of ladders."

"Good," I said. "Michael, you take Emily, Lilly, Simon, and Martha up on the boxes and onto the first ladder. Then I will follow you."

As Michael took Emily and put her on his back, then started helping the smaller siblings up the ladder, I packed up the blankets. Even though all the food had been eaten, I wanted to make sure that we didn't leave behind any clues. So, I picked up the cracker box and put it in too. I shut the closet door and then started up the ladder. As I climbed the first ladder, I noticed that it only had eight rungs.

We climbed one ladder after another, but it seemed never-ending. After climbing some ladders, I decided to count how many I had climbed up. When it had been five minutes from when we had started ascending, I had counted that we had climbed ten ladders. After another five minutes, it was twenty ladders in all. Finally, I heard Michael whisper to me that they were at the top of all the ladders.

I am almost there, I thought. I climbed the last ladder and saw, to my surprise, that the ceiling above us was pointed upward.

"This must be a tower, I said.

I stood up and looked around. There was a small, foggy window, just the right level for someone to see us.

"Quick, Michael!" I said softly. "We need to duck down."

Once everyone was kneeling on the floor of our landing spot, I saw that there was a crack in the wall. I looked through it and saw that right under our feet was the elves' potion room.

I put my eye directly in front of the crack and peered through. I saw three elves walking around near a table filled with tall bottles and cans, which I suspected were filled with evil potions. I motioned for my siblings to be as quiet as possible, while Michael joined me in looking through the crack.

I couldn't hear their words, but I knew that they were talking. Finally, the elves went out of the room, and I whispered to Michael, "We have to get out of this tower, or we won't make any progress."

"Yeah, I know," Michael replied. "But how can we get out?"

I tried looking at the ceiling of the tower, but then I remembered that the best way out would be through the floor, because it was the potion room's ceiling. I pushed on each tile of the floor, just to see if one was loose. When I pushed on the tile in the very middle of the floor, it gave way and crashed to the ground below.

Now, we had to figure out how to get down, and quickly, before the elves came back. I looked around the tower for anything that would lower us to the ground, and I spied a long, coiled up rope. I quickly grabbed the rope and tied it to a hook on the window. Then I let the rope fall through the gap the removed tile had made to the ground in the potion room.

Next, I turned to Michael and said, "You take Emily in your arms, and I will guide Lilly, Simon, and Martha down. Once we're both down the rope, we'll find a hiding place."

Michael did that, and he went down the rope with Emily. Then I helped everyone else down and then slid down myself.

“Now we have to find a place to hide,” I said, as quietly as possible.

We looked and looked, but there were no hiding spots, so reluctantly, we decided that we would have to go out the door.

I got down on my knees and peered through the space under the door. Outside it was a hallway, and there were no elves in sight.

“Now!” I said to my siblings. “We need to go out now!”

Lilly opened the door, and we all tip-toed out. I guessed that the elves were still looking for us and wouldn't be gone for long, so we had to find somewhere to hide, but we still had to make progress.

Suddenly, I heard footsteps. I desperately looked around for a hiding place, and my eye caught sight of a door. It was the only door in this particular hallway, so we all ran to it and opened it. I was so worried to make sure that we all got through the door in time that I neglected to notice what the label on the door said: “Factory”.

As soon as I opened the door, I knew we had no escape. There, behind the door, was the elves' factory that made magical potions. And working to make these potions were about three hundred elves, laboring in assembly lines.

All of us dove for shelter. I chose a space behind a cart of potions ready to be shipped away, which, luckily, was right next to the door. I grabbed Martha and Simon and pushed them behind the cart with me. While I found my hiding space, Michael found his. He dove behind a conveyor belt line that didn't have an elf placed behind it and took Emily and Lilly with him.

Fortunately, we both got to safety in time so that we wouldn't be seen, but the elves nearest to the door had heard the door open.

"Hey," said one elf. "Who just came in?"

"Yeah," said another elf. "I heard it open."

I held my breath, but my heart was beating so fast that I was sure to be heard. Then, suddenly, a thought struck me. All it would take for the elves to discover me would be for them to roll away the cart that I was hiding behind. And, as for Michael, he could be discovered even more easily, because all it would take would be an elf going behind that conveyor belt table, and they would see him.

Then, what I feared happened. An elf walked in and took a step behind the conveyor belt that Michael was hiding behind.

Chapter 4

I held my breath as I peered over to where Michael was. Any second now, the elf would look down and see him. Then, it occurred to me. Wherever Michael went, I must go too, for we could not get separated. I watched carefully, ready to spring up at any moment. The problem was that the elf was blocking me from seeing Michael, and the angle of the cart made it impossible to reposition myself.

Just then, the elf stepped to the right, and I saw what Michael was doing. He was holding Emily tightly and taking Lilly by the hand. Then, he jumped up and started running for the door.

I was so surprised by this action that I completely forgot what to do. I just sat there for at least three seconds before realizing what I had to do. I sprang up, grabbed Simon and Martha's hands and darted for the exit.

By this time, Michael was at the door and had his hand on the knob. I sprinted the last few leaps and caught up with him. Michael turned the knob, and we all scrambled through.

While we were doing this, the elves had, of course, seen us. When I was running, I heard one of them squeal, "Hey, more humans!"

After that, I heard elves running after us, but I didn't look back at them. On the other side of the door was another hallway. Without a word, all of us knew what to do: find another door and find it quickly. There were no doors in this hallway, so we all ran. We turned corner after corner and, after turning three of them, we came across a big door marked "Storage

Room". There was no time to look for more doors, so I opened it, and we crowded into it. When we shut the door behind us, it turned pitch black, so I reached for a light switch.

When the light turned on, I saw that the room we were in was filled with glass bottles and cardboard boxes. Thank goodness no one is here, I thought, as I looked around for a place to hide. There were mostly just shelves with bottles on them filling the room, but the area behind the boxes could most likely fit all of us.

"Michael, quick," I said urgently. "Move the six boxes forward a bit and then get everyone behind them."

Michael did that, and everyone clambered behind them. I switched off the light again and, since there wasn't any more room behind the boxes, climbed into a box. The box seemed to contain bubble wrap as well as some clanking jars. It was big enough for me to curl up on my side, so I did that and also pulled some of the bubble wrap over myself to avoid being seen.

From inside the box, I heard the elves outside the door, in the hallway.

"Duck!" I whispered to my siblings, as the door cracked open.

The room was partially filled with light as two elves stepped in. They flipped on the light and looked around. I closed my eyes tight as if it would make me invisible, but of course, it wouldn't make a difference. The elves quickly glanced around the room and then one of them said, "Well, I guess they're not in here. Let's look in the other rooms."

Then both elves headed out the door. I sighed with relief as we all climbed out of our hiding spots.

“That was close,” I said, as I dusted myself off.

“Yeah,” said Michael. “But where do we go now?”

I glanced outside the door, but there weren't any doors near this one. I sat down on a closed cardboard box and tried to think, while Michael looked around the room. I was so relieved that the elves hadn't seen us and was trying to think so hard, that I didn't stop to notice the light. It was on, and, apparently, it normally wasn't on unless an elf was there. I also didn't hear the elf coming toward the door, which was wide open.

When the elf came close to the door, he saw the reflection of the light on the glass-paned window outside the storage room.

“Ahh!” the elf screamed. “I found them!”

A whole troop of elves came to the door, and then the elf who had screamed stepped in front of the door frame. All of us were so frightened and startled that none of us could move a muscle.

When I had regained my composure, I decided what to do. I grabbed Emily and caught Simon's hand, then I started running as fast as I could through the doorway and past the elf, then darted down the hallway. When I was halfway down the hallway I shouted, “Michael, come on!”

Michael came dashing behind me with Lilly and Martha, and we both picked up our pace. Even though running with Emily in my arms was hard, I was so scared that I didn't pay attention to it. By this time, we had turned the corner of the hallway and had started down the

next. I looked over my shoulder to see how far back the elves were. To my relief, the closest one had just turned the corner and was half a hallway behind us.

By now, Michael had started to get ahead of me because I was carrying Emily. I looked around desperately for a door, and I saw something that seemed like a door but was different. An elevator, I thought. Even though we were close to it, it seemed like forever before we reached the elevator and pushed the button. Thankfully, the door opened quickly, and we all crowded in. I pushed the down button on the inside, and the elevator lurched and started going downward. I leaned against the side of the elevator, catching my breath.

“What if they’re waiting at the bottom?” Michael said in a worried voice. Just then, the elevator dinged, and we came to a stop. The door slid open, and the hallway on the other side was empty.

“Quick!” I said. “Let’s find somewhere to hide before they come!”

Since there were no doors in this hallway, we ran to the next one. In this hall, there was only one door. That door was labeled “Dungeon”. Beside that word was the number eighteen.

“This is the dungeon that Mother is in!” Lilly exclaimed.

I put my hand on the knob and opened the door. Like the other dungeon, there was a set of stairs and another door at the end of them. We stepped down the steps, and I shut the door behind us. Michael opened the door at the bottom of the steps, and we all walked through.

There was Mother. She was unfrozen and looking helplessly around. Even though I had been expecting to see her, I was so stunned by my own mother sitting on a stool in a dungeon, so much that I couldn't say a word. However, Mother could, and when she looked at us, she was so surprised that she thought that her mind was playing tricks on her. The first time she saw us, she exclaimed, "My goodness, I..."

Then she closed her eyes and said, "Oh great, now my eyes are trying to deceive me!"

Then when she opened her eyes, of course we were still there. "What in the world? Children?" she said. "How did you..."

She was too stunned to go on, but she ran to hug us.

"There isn't time to explain everything," Michael said frantically. "We just need to hide."

This dungeon also had a stone-walled closet, so we all crowded in there.

"Here, Mother," Michael said as he handed her a blanket. "You must be cold."

"Why, um, yes, as a matter of fact I am," Mother replied. "But how did you know?"

"Well, it's a long story, but Martha got captured when we first got here, and we had to rescue her, and when we found her in a dungeon just like this one, she was cold."

"Oh, I see," Mother said. "Why, Emily, you're here too!"

Emily nodded and reached out for her. Mother sat down and took Emily in her lap.

"Quiet, everyone!" Michael commanded. "Here they come!"

I heard footsteps coming into the dungeon, then a voice saying, "Oh no, now the grownup person is gone too!"

"It is absolutely needed that we find them!" said a determined elf voice.

Unfortunately, this time the elves did not miss the closet. "Well, what is this?" a sneering elf voice said, as he came to the closed closet door.

My eyes darted around for an escape. The door opened and, once again, there was an elf standing in front of it. This time, it was Michael who had to run first. He dodged the elf and sprinted out of the closet, followed by Lilly and Martha. Mother hurriedly picked up Emily, and we both ran. By now, there were about ten elves planted firmly around the dungeon, so we had to dodge all of them. Michael quickly reached the stairs, and everyone else was right behind him. I flung open the door at the bottom of the staircase, and we all stampeded up it. When we were at the top, Michael pushed open the other door. Behind it was a huge army of elves.

Michael, again, was the first one to take action. He edged himself along the wall right near the top of the stairs, only to realize that he was cornered. Luckily the elf nearest to him turned his head, and he made his escape. This was the signal to the rest of us, even Lilly and Martha, because they hadn't gone with Michael. We all scampered along the wall, scooted past the elf looking the other way, and started running.

The first corner that we turned led to a hall that was different from the other halls we had seen. This hallway only had bedrooms. By this time, Michael was way ahead of us. I saw him dash into one of the bedrooms, so the rest of us followed. Inside the room was a bed, dining table, coffee table, and another door that probably led to a kitchen area.

“Okay,” Michael said in a hurried voice. “Everyone find somewhere to hide.”

He took Emily from Mother and crawled under the bed with her, while Lilly, Simon, and Martha crowded into a closet in the corner of the room, then Simon shut the door.

I looked desperately around, and I caught sight of the puffed-up curtains. I ran across the red and brown striped rug to the curtain, then I snuck behind it. As for Mother, she chose the pantry and hid behind the doors. I heard the army of elves walk by, and there was silence.

“Come on!” I whispered, coming out from behind the curtain. “We’ve got to get out of here.”

“Hold on,” Michael said. “What’s this?”

He crawled out from under the bed with something in his hand. It was a map of something. “This must be a map of this place,” he said.

I walked over to him and studied it. “Look!” I exclaimed. “Here’s where we are, and here’s the exit.”

I pointed to a thin strip of boxes marked on the map that said “Bedroom Hallway”.

Apparently, the exit was on the first level, and we were on the second level. The closest elevator was in the next hall to our right.

“Now we can go,” Michael said, as he folded the map up as small as it would go and stuck it in his pocket.

Everyone else came out of their hiding spots and was ready to go. We all crept down the hallway to the next one, where we all ran quickly to the elevator. I pushed the button on the outer part to call it, the door opened, and we all went in. Mother pressed the button with the number "one", and we started to go down. We reached the first floor, and the door of the elevator opened. Thankfully, this hallway was empty, too. We all went sprinting to the door. We were just about to exit when I saw a figure's back on the other side of the door.

"Oh no!" I said. "They've got guards here!"

"We will have to distract them," Michael said. "It's the only way."

I looked nervously as Michael knocked on the glass. The elves turned abruptly and flung open the door. Everyone took a step to the side. Both elves came further into the building, reaching out to touch Mother and Michael. But we were quicker. I dashed around both of them, followed by Lilly, Martha, and Simon.

The outdoor air felt fresh and free. Not long after I started running, Michael and Mother, carrying Emily, followed me. The elves, of course, ran after us.

"Over here!" I called over my shoulder to my other siblings. I ran straight over to the cave that we had been in earlier. We all ducked into the cave and crawled right to the back of it.

"Come, Mother!" I called urgently. "Over here!"

I opened the same door at the back, and we went through. I shut the door, and just like before, it was pitch black behind us. Now if they would just miss this door like before, I thought.

The elves looked inside the cave, then turned back and left. Once we were sure they were gone, we all scrambled out of the cave.

“I think I know the way back,” Michael said to Mother. “Just follow me.”

With that, we began to retrace our steps. We traveled through the open cement plain, then we reached the river of poison.

“How are we going to get across?” Lilly asked. I was about to reply to her that I didn’t know when, as I was walking, my foot banged into something. I knelt down to look at it and discovered that it was a glass bottle. I picked it up and studied it. It had a thick, black, gooey liquid inside it, and the label on the side said, “Flying Potion”!

“This is the answer!” I said excitedly. “All of us will drink a little bit of this, and we can fly across the poison river!”

“Hold on a second,” Michael said. “Look at the fine print.”

The fine print read, “Will only last 30 minutes.”

“Then we will have to hurry,” I replied.

Each of us (except Emily) took a sip of the potion, and in a second, we were all flying! We all flew over the river and kept going. When we came to the spine field, we flew over that too, but time was running out. It seemed like forever before we reached the passageway. We flew through that, and just in time, because as soon as we came back through the closet, our flying powers ran out.

I shut the closet door hard and sat down on Mother's bed. Then we all told Mother about everything that had happened, and she told us her side of the story too. Oh, the wonderful feeling to be safe and sound!

About the Author

Deborah Bowman is a 4th grade student at Classical Consortium Academy. She is one of five children and loves to play chess. Her family has a standard black poodle and two African Dwarf frogs.