




Rescue the Peasants



*(the Princess can take
care of herself!)*



by Elizabeth Dover

*with Illustrations by
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RESCUE THE PEASANTS (THE PRINCESS CAN TAKE CARE OF HERSELF!)

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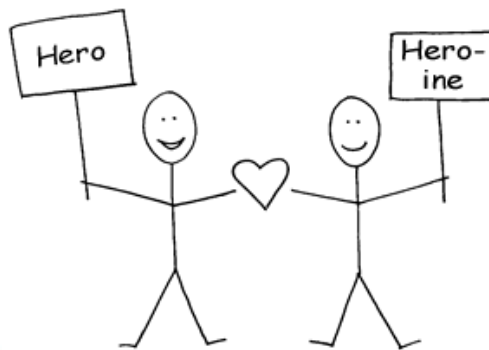
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*To human canaries everywhere
and the heroic souls who care for them.*

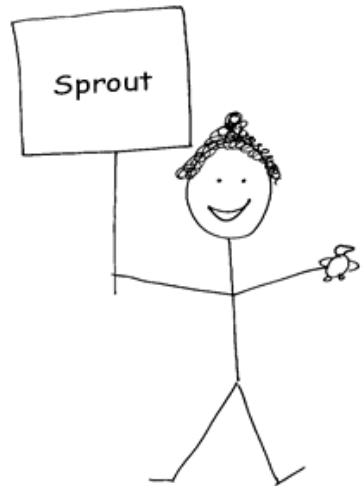
Once upon a time in a place not too far away—well, okay, Right Here actually—there were two pleasant young peasants who met and fell in love and decided to make their way together through the journey of life. (We'll call them Hero and Heroine, because this is their story, and everyone ought to be the hero or heroine of their own story.) They didn't have a pile of money, but they were rich in every other way that mattered, and like everyone else, they came with a unique set of gifts and talents that only they could contribute to make *The Whole Thing* work.





With the help of a down payment from Hero's Fairy Grandmother, they bought a house in a Friendly Little Village and settled down to make their modest fortune and raise their modest

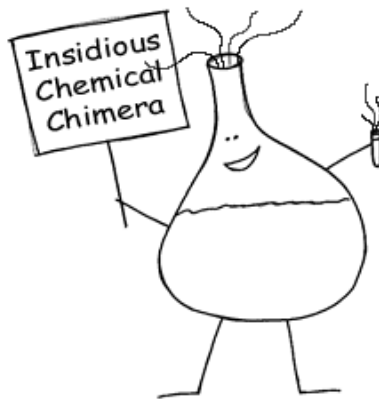
(though incredibly talented and attractive) offspring. (We'll call her Sprout, because that is what she wants to be called, and all children should have a name that suits them.)





Everything seemed fine for the Peasants. Sprout was growing like a weed (albeit a particularly talented and attractive one), and Hero and Heroine had good work and good friends and good fun just hanging out together. The whole Peasant family looked forward to a Rosy Future in the Friendly Little Village.

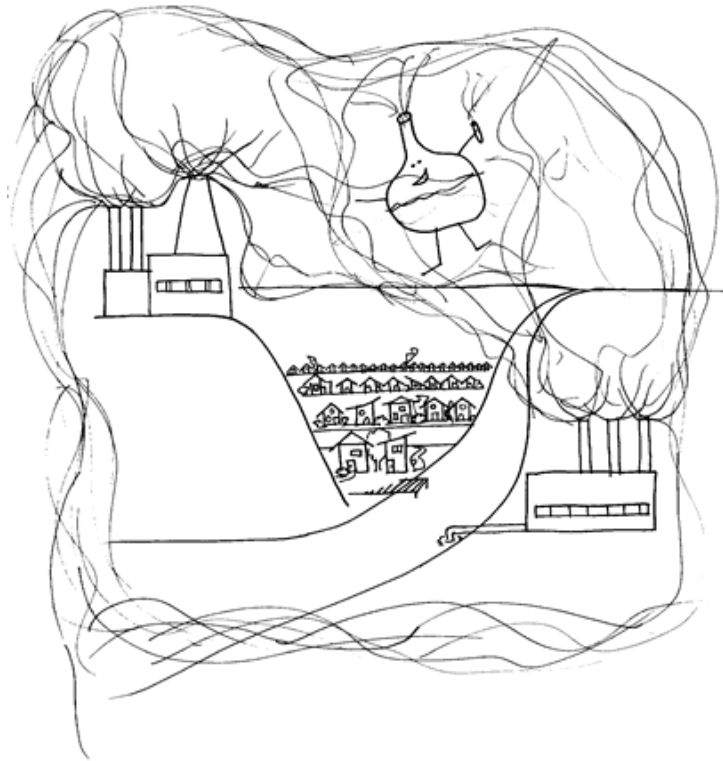
But all was not fine, for unbeknownst to Peasantkind, the Powers That Be had visited a scourge upon the land in the form of a helpful and agreeable looking creature that they called Progress—but we'll call it the Insidious Chemical Chimera, for that is truly what it was. The Chimera, being an insatiably curious and creative sort, delighted in generating ever more



numerous and elaborate versions of itself, and soon it was growing even faster (and decidedly weedier) than the talented and attractive Sprout.

Day by day the Insidious Chemical Chimera grew bigger and more prolific, churning out helpful and alluring devices that Peasantkind was rapidly convinced it simply couldn't do without. And the most insidious thing of all was that the Chimera, whose sole purpose was to make life easier for the peasants, was so fascinated by its own cleverness that it was paying absolutely no attention when things started to go decidedly wrong.

Blissfully ignorant of the harm it was doing, the Chimera spread its Affluence throughout the land, eagerly assisted by the mesmerized peasants. But with each new convenience it created, it exhaled a barely detectable whiff of poison, and as the Chimera advanced, so did its venomous breath. Slowly but surely the Chimera's malignant emanations multiplied until they coalesced into an Invisible Toxic Cloud that blanketed the towns and spilled into the countryside.



Among the first to succumb were those peasants with exceptionally keen senses, the descendants of a special group of Ancestors known as ESPs. In ancient times, these Environmentally Sensitive Peasants were responsible for insuring the welfare of their people by locating safe sources of food and water, and warning of potential contaminants in the environment, and their sensitivities were regarded as valuable gifts to be nurtured and honored. But with the birth of Progress, the peasants began to spurn the natural wisdom of the ESPs as inferior and old-fashioned. Their sensitivities, now considered a nuisance, were eventually relegated to the status of myth, and their very existence was all but forgotten.



Which is why, when their descendants began to fall victim to a mysterious illness, hardly anyone noticed (except, of course, the ESPs themselves, who couldn't help but notice). The effect was subtle at first. Things that once gave them pleasure—their favorite foods, the smell of perfume—started to make them feel sick, and they grew tired and achy. Day by day, their senses grew more acute, until it seemed that there was nothing safe to eat, nowhere safe to go, and no one safe to be around. The Chimera's Invisible Toxic Cloud assaulted them from every side, and their world became smaller and more hostile as they retreated from an enemy whose face they could not see and whose existence only they could detect.

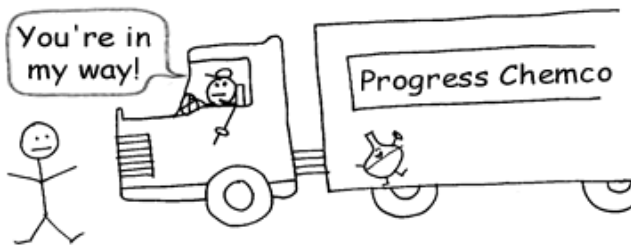


The healers of the realm, baffled by the ESPs' ever-multiplying array of symptoms, declared that their illness



was "all in their heads." Friends and neighbors, irritated by their requests for help in avoiding the cherished Chimera's poisonous effects, complained that they were "standing in the way of Progress,"

and refused to accommodate them. Even their families, frustrated by their worsening health and the growing burden of dealing with their sensitivities, began to turn their backs. Unable to work or care for themselves, they became increasingly isolated and filled with despair, and many lost their homes and their families and all that was dear to them. The ESPs, once so revered by Peasantkind, were becoming Exceedingly Sick and Poor.

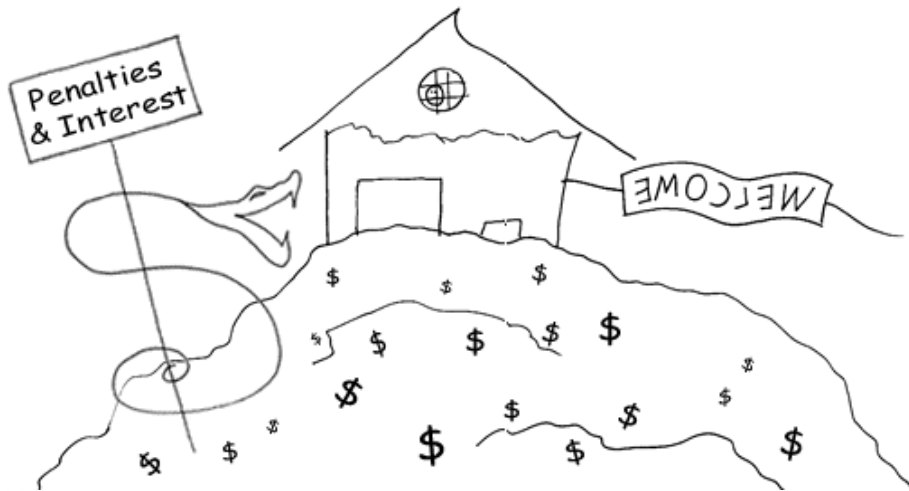


As luck would have it, Heroine was an ESP. Always a sensitive child, she had nevertheless been a very healthy sort and rarely suffered the frequent colds and other maladies that had afflicted many of her friends. Just like Sprout, she had grown to womanhood as a bright and gifted girl with an apparently rosy future, until, weakened by a difficult (though brilliantly successful) pregnancy, she succumbed to the spreading influence of the Chimera. Thus, as Sprout grew stronger and more vibrant, her mother grew progressively weaker, leaving Hero to assume more and more of the load of responsibilities that she had once helped to carry.

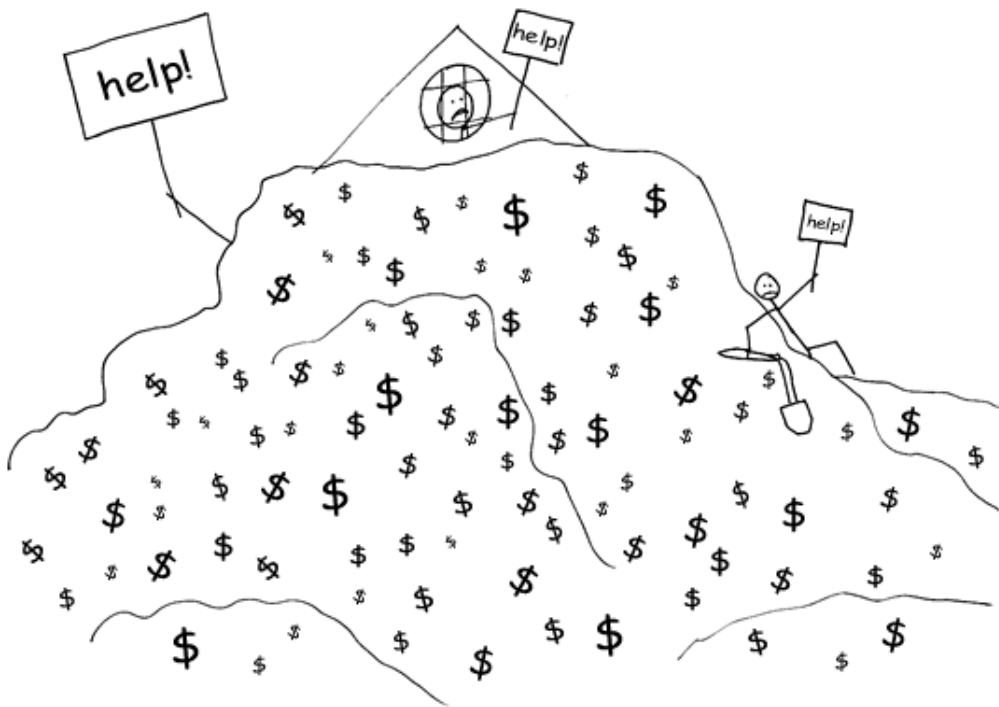
And so it went. Sprout grew up and went forth in search of her own Song. Heroine, no longer able to sing her Song, spent her days in retreat from the Chimera's ever-widening influence, searching for the keys that would enable her to understand and overcome her illness, and desperately seeking refuge from the Invisible Toxic Cloud that permeated the once Friendly Little Village and penetrated every crack and crevice, driving her ever deeper into an exile from which there was no apparent escape. The house that had been her sanctuary now became her prison.



Hero, desperately working to Make Ends Meet, abandoned his Song altogether, to focus all of his energy on digging out from under a steadily growing Mountain of Debt. But his shovel was small and the Mountain was zealously guarded by an Insatiable Penalties and Interest Monster which took great delight in building it up even faster than Hero could reduce it. The only things separating the Peasants from total despair were their love and devotion to each other and the joy they took in their precious Sprout.



Day after weary day, Hero battled the Mountain and struggled to appease its voracious Monster, only to watch them grow so large and powerful that they threatened to bury the once-fortunate house and Heroine along with it. He dug and he dug with all of his might until his little shovel, never adequate to the task, broke under the strain and he could dig no longer. Broken willed and broken hearted, he cried out for help, and though Heroine cried with him, their voices were so weak that nobody heard and nobody answered...



Well, that's the Story so far. As you can see, things are looking pretty Grimm(!) for the Peasants. Ordinarily, this would be the part of the story where Hero's Fairy Grandmother would magically return to Set Things Right. Unfortunately, Fairy Grandmo has long since relocated to the Heavenly Acres Retirement Village, leaving a critical gap in our Cast of Characters.

With no Fairy Grandmo to banish the Penalties and Interest Monster, demolish the Mountain of Debt, and whisk the Peasants away (in an environmentally friendly Hybrid Chariot, of course) to their very own Healing Woodland Sanctuary far removed from the clutches of the Insidious Chimera, this Frog of a story will never have the Handsome Prince of an ending it deserves.

That's where you come in. Your mission (should you choose to accept it) is to assume the role of Surrogate Fairy Grandmo and use the Power of Your Prosperity to repair this woefully fractured fairy tale and give the Peasants their well-earned Happily Ever After!