



* PASTAFAZOOL *

A STORY OF A PRINCESS, A BOY,
AND A VERY TALL SPIRE.

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PP. 93

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TO

MOLLY

(My Princess)

AND

JASON LILOVICH

(Her Reluctant Prince)

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*A*long time ago, in a land not too far away, lived a Sultan named Boodacheck the Third and a Princess named Mahleeba. They lived in a palace, just like every other Sultan and Princess, but their palace was very different than any other palace you might have seen. It had four spires, each one taller than the one before. The first spire was as tall as the tallest tree in the world. The second spire was twice as tall as the first. The third spire was twice as tall as the second. And the fourth spire was so tall that you could not see the top of it. No one in the entire land knew how tall the spire was. In fact, the palace was so old, no one in the land could even remember when it was built or who had built it.

Sultan Boodacheck had everything that life had to offer. He had so many elephants that he could ride a different one every day for the rest of his life. He had so many servants that he needed ten of the kingdom's best mathematicians just to keep track of how many servants he had. Of everything else, he had even more. But, there was one thing he did not have and that was a son. Which means that the land Boodacheck ruled, called Agloompa Land, had no Prince.

The Sultan, like all fathers, believed that Princess Mahleeba, his daughter, was the smartest, most beautiful, most eloquent, most athletic girl in the entire

world. In short, he thought that she was the best girl that had ever been born or ever would be born.

Since it was almost time for his daughter to be married, he wanted her to marry the best man in the world. There was one other thing that the Sultan wanted. He wanted to know just how far up his tallest spire went and what was at the top.

Sultan Boodacheck issued a proclamation throughout Agloompa Land, asking the "best" men in the world to come to his palace and try for the hand of his daughter. He declared that they must be exceptionally bright, stunningly handsome, and, even more importantly, amazingly strong. All of these men would compete against each other in contests of intelligence, beauty and strength. The man who came out the winner would then be allowed to climb to the top of the spire. Should he make it to the top and find out what was there, he could marry Princess Mahleeba and become Prince of Agloompa Land.

On the day of the challenge there were smart, handsome, and strong men as far as the eye could see. The competition was fierce. It lasted all day long and looked as if it would go on throughout the night. But just at the end of the day ... there was a winner: Garagon of Gant. He was as smart as a fox, as beautiful as a cat, and as strong as an elephant. He went to the Sultan and asked for Princess

Mahleeba's hand in marriage.

"Not so fast," said Sultan Boodacheck the Third. "There is one more challenge you must take."

"Ask me anything," declared Garagon of Gant. "I am smart enough, lovely enough, and strong enough to succeed at everything I try."

The Sultan scratched his small, bristly beard and mused, "We shall see. I want you to climb my tallest spire and tell me what is at the top."

"Consider it climbed, my Sultan," said Garagon of Gant. "I am smart enough, lovely enough, and strong enough to overcome any difficulty."

"But to make sure that you make it to the top, you must carry my daughter the entire way. She will tell me whether you succeeded or not."

"It shall be done," said Garagon of Gant. "I am smart enough, lovely enough, and —."

The Sultan cut him off. "You might want to conserve your strength, Garagon," said the Sultan. "It is a *long* way up."

Garagon entered the palace. He was, everyone in the palace admitted, the strongest, smartest and most beautiful man they had ever seen before.

"All the way to the top," reminded Sultan Boodacheck.

Garagon of Gant picked up Princess Mahleeba and started quickly up the

stairs. The Sultan listened to Garagalon's footsteps as they went higher and higher up the spire. His footsteps got softer and softer and softer and softer and softer until they could not be heard at all.

An hour passed. Then two. Then two more. Everyone listened very closely, but they heard no footsteps. Two more hours passed. Then four more. The Sun went down. It came up again.

"Surely they must be at the top by now," said the Sultan to his advisor. Just then, they heard footsteps coming down the spire. The footsteps got louder and louder and louder and **louder** until, finally, at the bottom of the stairs appeared Garagalon of Gant and Princess Mahleeba. Both were sad.

Garagalon spoke first, "I have failed, my Sultan. It is too far up for even me. I counted stairs until I could count no more. I walked until I could walk no more. I was smart enough and beautiful enough, but I was not strong enough to climb all those stairs. I return your princess and leave your palace." Garagalon looked so sad that no one said a word.

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*T*he next year, the Sultan held the contest again. Many men came, but not as many as the year before. The most beautiful, strongest, and smartest of them was presented to the Sultan. His name was Hant of Haragalon. He was very eager and

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spoke very quickly. *"I-have-come-to-marry-Princess-Mahleeba,"* announced Hant.

"But first you must climb to—," the Sultan began.

"to-the-top-of-the-tallest-spire," finished Hant of Haragonal quickly.

"And you must carry—" the Sultan started again.

"Princess-Mahleeba-with-me," finished Hant of Haragonal. *"I-have-been-practicing-running-up-stairs-carrying-girls-for-almost-a year. I-will-not-fail."* And with that, he quickly picked up Princess Mahleeba, ran into the castle and started up the spire stairs.

Up, up, up he went until his footsteps could no longer be heard by anyone at the bottom. One day passed. Then two. Then three. Then an entire week. And finally, Hant of Haragonal and Princess Mahleeba appeared once again at the bottom.

"What did you see?" Sultan Boodacheck asked quickly.

"S t a i r s , " said Hant of Haragonal very slowly. "S t a i r s , s t a i r s , a n d m o r e s t a i r s . T h a t s p i r e d o e s n o t h a v e a t o p . T h o s e s t a i r s a r e e n d l e s s . " Hant of Haragonal put the Princess down and left the palace sadly, and very, very slowly.

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The next year, the same contest was held, but even fewer men came. All through

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the land the brave and beautiful men had heard about Garagalon of Gant's and Hant of Haragalon's failures. Yet one of the men who came was smarter, more handsome and stronger than both Garagalon and Hant combined. His name was Moorick the Gazelle-footed. He easily won the contest and wasted no time with the Sultan. He picked up Princess Mahleeba, ran into the castle, and quick as a, uhm, a, uhm, a, well..., as a *gazelle* he started up the stairs. Faster than the swiftest horse he ran. Faster than the fastest bird, he climbed upwards. Before anyone could even think to listen for his footsteps, he was too far up the spire to be heard.

"If he cannot do it," declared Sultan Boodacheck, "I fear no one can."

A day went by. Then a week. Then a month. Then Spring turned into Summer and Summer into Fall and finally, after many people had forgotten all about Moorick the Gazelle-footed and Princess Mahleeba, they returned to the bottom of the spire. But, Moorick, too, had failed.

"My Sultan," Moorick said between gasps for breath. "Your spire must go all the way to the top of the sky. I climbed as many stairs as there are stars and still I did not reach the top. It is unreachable." With that, Moorick the Gazelle-footed left the palace.

"I shall *never* know what is at the top of my spire," sighed the Sultan.

"I shall *never* be married," sighed Princess Mahleeba.

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*T*he next year, only one person showed up for the contest. He could hardly be called a man, since he was only fifteen years old, the same age as Princess Mahleeba. His name was Pastafazool, the rug merchant's youngest son. He was not as strong as Garagalon, Hant or Moorick. He was too young to be called handsome, though Princess Mahleeba did think he was cute. As for how smart he was... *that* we shall soon see.

Pastafazool was dressed very simply in light brown pants and a light brown shirt. He was wearing a small, light brown sack upon his back.

Pastafazool presented himself to the Sultan. "Since I am the only person in the contest," he said, "I must be the best. Therefore," continued Pastafazool, "I ask for Princess Mahleeba's hand in marriage."

"The rules state that you must also climb to the top of my tallest spire," said Sultan Boodacheck.

"Carrying your daughter with me," added Pastafazool proudly.

"But you are just a boy!" declared the Sultan. "How can you climb to the top of the spire when strong, grown men like Garagalon, Hant and Moorick cannot?"

"The rules state, my Sultan, that I can try," said Pastafazool.

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The Sultan consulted his wise men. They read the rules very closely and saw that the rules stated very clearly that whosoever won the contest could try to climb the spire stairs. Therefore, the Sultan had to let Pastafazool try. "You may try," said the very discouraged Sultan. Princess Mahleeba, however, was not so discouraged. There was something about Pastafazool that gave her hope. And, anyway, she did think he was cute.

"Well," said the Sultan, "if you plan to try, go ahead. Don't stand there all day."

Pastafazool slowly lifted up Princess Mahleeba. She was not heavy, but he could barely carry her. He struggled with her to the stairs. And step by step, very slowly, he started upwards. He had to rest every third step. The people listening at the bottom of the stairs heard a thump, thump, thump as he walked up three steps. Then they heard nothing for a while as he rested. They soon got tired of listening and they left. Soon, even the Sultan got tired of listening and walked away, shaking his head.

As soon as Pastafazool heard the Sultan walk away, he took the small, light brown sack from off his back. He opened it up and pulled out a small carpet. The carpet was mostly red, but it had orange stripes, yellow polkadots and bright blue fringe all around it. He placed the carpet on the ground and, still holding Princess

Mahleeba, sat on it. "Fly to the top!" he commanded. The carpet rose up off the stairs. At first it began to fly slowly. Then it picked up speed. Then it picked up more speed. Then it went faster and faster and faster and faster until it was going so fast that Princess Mahleeba could not feel it moving at all. Further and further it climbed. Up and up and up. Past the stair where Garagon of Gant stopped. Past the stair where Hant of Haragon stopped. Past the stair where Moorick the Gazelle-footed finally stopped. Past stairs where no one had ever climbed before. Then, finally, the carpet stopped at the top of the stairs. There was a large, dark wooden door with a doorknocker shaped like a stallion.

"Go ahead, Princess," said Pastafazool. "Knock at the door and see if anyone is home." Princess Mahleeba knocked. Nothing happened. She knocked again, this time louder.

"Hold your horses!" a voice called back. "I heard you the first time." The door opened to reveal a small, old man with a long, white beard that reached all the way to the ground. "I thought you'd never get here," he said. And then he looked at them very closely. "Who are you?" he asked.

"I am Pastafazool," replied Pastafazool, "and this is Princess Mahleeba."

"Never heard of either of you," said the old man. He looked very confused.

"Who are *you*?" asked Princess Mahleeba sweetly.

"I am Tally the Spirebuilder," said Tally the Spirebuilder with a deep bow.

"Architect for Sultan Boodacheck the First."

"That was my great grandfather!" exclaimed Princess Mahleeba.

Tally looked very upset. "Then I have been up here quite a long time! You see, I promised Sultan Boodacheck the First that I would build him the tallest spire in the world. I built it so tall that I could not get down."

"We'll take you down," said Pastafazool, "on my magic carpet. But first, you have to tell us one thing."

"Anything," said Tally the Spirebuilder.

"What's up here?" asked both Pastafazool and Princess Mahleeba at the same time.

"The largest, best playrooms in the world," Tally announced proudly.

"Filled with toys, games and pets beyond your imagining. There are marbles as big as houses. There are rocking *elephants*. There are a thousand puppies and a thousand kittens for every puppy and thousand goldfish for every kitten. There twice as many India red rubber balls as you would every be able to play with. And that's only in the first room. I built these playrooms for Princess Beelahma, daughter of Boodacheck the First."

"My grandmother!" exclaimed Princess Mahleeba.

"I guess I didn't build them fast enough," said Tally sadly.

"That's okay," said Pastafazool. "I'm sure there are still plenty of children who will want to play up here."

So Pastafazool, Princess Mahleeba and Tally the Spirebuilder all got onto the magic carpet and rode down to the bottom of the stairs. Actually, they stopped just before the very bottom, where nobody could see them. Pastafazool quietly folded up the carpet and put it back into his light brown sack. He then carried Princess Mahleeba to the bottom of the stairs.

"Hello!" he yelled. "Is anyone here to greet us?"

Sultan Boodacheck and some other people walked over to Pastafazool and Princess Mahleeba. "You have given up so *soon*?" asked the Sultan.

"No, my Sultan," said Pastafazool. "We have been to the top."

"That cannot be true," said the Sultan. "You were gone for only a few hours."

"We have been to the top," repeated Pastafazool.

"Is this true?" the Sultan asked Princess Mahleeba.

"Yes," said the Princess. "But don't ask me," she added pointing behind her, "ask him."

Just then, Tally the Spirebuilder appeared at the bottom of the stairs. "It's

true," said Tally the Spirebuilder. "By the way," he said, looking very closely at Sultan Boodacheck the Third, "you look *just* like your grandfather."

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*I*n the Spring, Pastafazool and Princess Mahleeba were married. Pastafazool became Prince and then, after a time, the Sultan. He and Mahleeba had four children: two sons and two daughters. Each day, the children rode the magic carpet to the top of the spire and played in the playrooms. They played ball every day, but they never were able to play with *all* the India red rubber balls.

* *THE END* *