

# A Templar Explains

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Hi, it's us, the giant and the imp. Together. We decided we ought to write together because the more we associate the more we find that we have very different ways of viewing the recent developments. As we are writing for a scholarly audience, we feel it better to counter each other's views and write only that which we both can agree on.

As you might recall, the last we related had us hiding from the socks in a little canyon somewhere in the desert vastness. Well, we didn't hide for very long. After maybe two hours we found ourselves surrounded.

"I'm done," said Plug in behalf of the giant.

"What are you talking about?" asked Plug in behalf of Plug.

"No more of this running. I am waiting right here to face the horde."

"Oh."

And we did. Their welcome was not very nice; they filled the giant full of javelins like a pincushion, which had about as much effect as pins do on said household device, for a narrow skewer has little impact unless there are internal organs to pierce. Once we were sufficiently perforated they advanced and began speaking to us.

"Who are you?"

"I am Plug, the imp; and this is the giant."

"How are you still standing after we killed you?"

"Flat-footed," Plug voiced for the giant. "And I'm actually sitting," he added for himself.

There was a moment of conversation amongst several of the men, then the same spokesman continued.

"Is the giant actually dead? Is that why he isn't talking?"

"Treat me as if I am dead and you might find yourself becoming dead earlier than expected."

"I wasn't talking to you, imp."

"And I didn't answer. The giant did."

"Ha! I'm not that dense."

"Look," said Plug for the giant as the giant moved toward the speaker menacingly. "I don't have a voice, so the imp says what I want to say for me. If you keep up this little game, I think you won't like the outcome."

This apparently gave the men pause, for they fell back with frightened looks on their faces and one of them said,

"What do we do now?"

"An excellent question, and one we would be happy to help you with. However, first we'll need some idea what your goal is."

"To kill the giant, of course."

"Congratulations," said the giant\*, "you have succeeded. You would find, if you were brave enough to investigate, that I have no pulse and am not breathing; all vital signs suggest I am dead."

"You seem to be up and moving about," observed one man needlessly.

"Is a wagon dead or alive?"

There was a pause while no one decided to answer this question. After a bit, the giant began plucking the javelins from his body and tossing them in a heap at his feet.

"Next time you feel like a little target practice on a target too large to miss," he said, "Might I suggest the side of a barn instead? It probably doesn't cause the barn this much pain."

It was at this juncture when the surrounding horde's restlessness grew to the point where it could not safely be ignored. The small group of men we were talking with began to move about the crowd, yelling orders and trying to get the army to wait more patiently. At this point, while we were as alone as you can be when surrounded on every side by hundreds of armed men, we began to discuss the situation.

"I think giving in was an excellent choice."

"*You* can say that, because you're not the one that has dozens of spears sticking in your chest."

"Does it really hurt that bad?"

"I can show you if you want," said the giant, plucking a javelin from his side and holding it, poised to throw at Plug.

"No no, that's okay. I believe you."

"So, brainy, if you are so certain giving in was a good choice, what do you think we should do next? After I de-perforate myself, that is."

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\*where no ambiguity will result, we will write that the giant is speaking when it is really the imp voicing what the giant wishes to say.

“Well, what is it you want?” This was a cop-out, of course, but it must be remembered that the imp’s only mission was to remain with the giant and speak for him. He had no plans of his own.

“I want to be home and work magic again. I want to be normal sized and I want to feel hungry and fall asleep and I really really want to eat a big bowl of fried noodles.”

“Then,” said Plug thoughtfully, “I suggest we see if we can get these chaps to escort us to their leader. He seems to be specially powerful, and may be able to reverse your problematic incantation.”

“He can’t”

“Why not?”

“Are you familiar with Charlene’s Lemma and the three Grant theorems?”

“No. . .”

“Then the proof wouldn’t mean anything to you even if I gave it.”

Plug was silent for a bit as he internalized this. Then he shouted out, “Hey, you! Yeah, you, in the frilly hat-thing. No, not turban-dude—you! Come over here, I want to talk at you.”

The indicated officer approached, with a small group of men at his heels. Once they were close enough, Plug addressed the officer.

“What are you going to do with us?”

“I don’t know, yet. We thought the giant would die when we killed it,” he said, eyeing the giant warily as he pulled javelins from his torso and heaped them on the ground, “and we don’t have any orders about what to do now that it hasn’t.”

“I suppose that means we are going to get lugged into the presence of your superiors?”

“Oh, you already are. But if you mean my superior’s superiors, yes, I guess so, unless general Clark decides otherwise.”

“Who would those people be?”

“Probably Templar Grey, the one who ordered this hunt.”

“Templar?” echoed Plug.

“Yeah, that’s what the stretchers call themselves,” replied Plug for the giant.

“‘The Stretchers’ doesn’t help much either. . .” Plug objected.

“The junior topologist guys,” said Plug for the giant to Plug. Then, to the officer, “You’ll have to excuse the imp; he doesn’t know much about this area.”

The officer and his men stared at the imp as it carried on this conversation with itself in a kind of dumbfounded disbelief. “Do you always talk to yourself?”

“Never. Silly thing to do.”

“But. . . Oh, dear. Men, stay close enough to these two to hear what they’re saying; I’m going to get the general.”

“I think,” the giant said thoughtfully, “that I will come with you. Cluster round, men, we are going for a walk.”

“You stay here!” shouted the officer, gesturing to his men to draw their swords.

“Gentlemen,” said the giant, looking as many of the crowd as possible in the eye, “I think you will understand when I suggest that interfering with my movements would be. . . unwise.” He plucked the last javelin from his stomach as he said this and casually snapped it in two as he tossed it aside.

“Men,” began the officer, but was interrupted by Plug.

“Sir, is it wise to sacrifice a squadron when we are not hurting you in any way? I doubt the general would approve. . .”

“Men,” continued the officer, “Keep the giant and his imp surrounded, but don’t interfere with his movements unless he tries to damage something.” This order issued, he turned and walked off.

We followed close on his tail. As we walked we offered a stream of helpful suggestions, feeding off of one another in a growing sequence of eloquence. The result of this bilogue was that, by the time we got to Gen. Clark, the poor officer we were following was partially convinced and otherwise confused. A brief conversation with said commanding officer and we were on our way to. . . um, we can’t even guess how to spell the name of the place, but the city where the sock people live.

Not much to say about the trek. Short, bland. No one seemed to know what was really going on, and conversation was rather strained.

So, we get to this city place. Quite the impressive exterior it presented, though the streets were narrow, smelly, and grey. The strange thing about the city, though, is how it is shaped. I mean, all the streets are straight enough, but they don’t go where they ought to. Bing street, for instance, is straight enough to see from one end to the other (if you’re tall enough to see over the crowd), but intersects itself twice. It’s kind of weird standing in the one of the intersections and looking at yourself in the same intersection half a mile off.

Well, Templar Grey lived on Bing street, in the middle-length stretch between Bing and Bing. It had the appearance of being a very official sort of neighborhood, lots of big stern buildings and uniforms. Templar Grey was standing outside an unassuming stucco box, dressed in a russet poncho and baggy grey trousers. She opened the conversation, addressing the general.

“General. . . Bellman? Clark, right, sorry. What can I

do for you?”

“I’ve brought the giant, ma’am.”

“Right, I can see that.”

“We, uh, couldn’t seem to get him to die.”

“You must not have asked politely enough.”

There was an awkward pause while Gen. Clark tried to come up with an answer to this. After watching him squirm, Templar Grey spoke again.

“Clark, take your detachment to the south gate and prepare for a demonstration this evening. We are expecting company. I’ll take care of the giant.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

Once the general and his men were well away, Templar Grey spoke to us.

“So, a corpulent man half-again my height and a wiry little imp managed to so cow an entire detachment of the royal army that they not only didn’t slaughter you, but decided to bring you home and give you to me? Charming.”

“You’re easily charmed,” Plug replied.

“I appreciate your candor,” answered Grey. “Do, come in and have a bite to eat. I’m afraid I don’t have more than an appetizer for you,” she added to the giant. “I only have one roast pig and a few dozen loaves of bread. But it should make a nice snack for a man your size.”

“I actually don’t eat food,” said the giant through Plug, apologetically.

“I wasn’t referring to you, imp,” countered Grey.

“No, no, look lady,” said the giant, waving his arms. “I don’t have a throat or voice box, so I talk through this imp. No throat also means I can’t swallow, and thus can’t eat or drink.”

“I actually think a bit of roast pig sounds lovely,” added Plug. “It’s just the giant who can’t eat.”

“Ah.” Grey looked at us thoughtfully, then added, “Well, come in. There might actually be enough to feed an imp.”

Inside, the little stucco box turned out to be a regular mansion. We didn’t see a whole lot of the place, but even the foyer was at least twice the size of the entire outside of the house. We were led to a dining hall, passing what looked like another dining hall as well as a handful of other rooms on the way. In the hall Plug was given a plate of goodies, which he was unable to eat much of because the giant kept making him talk.

“Tell me, miss—”

“Grey”

“Miss Grey, then, Why did you order our demise?”

“I didn’t”

“Ah. Well, the army seems under the impression that you did. I know it isn’t my place to offer suggestions, but

on the topic of communication. . .”

“. . . we are in need of a little direction? You really think so?”

“It did strike my mind.”

“But surely you realize, poor communication is how I came into power?”

“No, I confess I had not made that connection, though now that you mention it, I see there is little else to suggest you to the office.”

There was a pause long enough for Plug to fill his mouth before Grey responded, “Your directness is somewhat arming.”

“Threaten all you want. You don’t honestly expect my situation to get much worse, do you?”

“It had crossed my mind to make it so.”

“So to make it.’ Never end a sentence with a preposition. Like I said, a little lesson on communication. . .”

“Oh, sure, rob me of my power.”

“If you insist. Though I can’t see how it is to be done.”

“You know the limp rag?”

“You refer to. . .”

Here she said the name of the Big Sock, which unfortunately neither of us can remember as we are writing. Sorry.

“I have heard the name,” replied the giant, “though I always thought him more the scientist type.”

Grey smiled. “You know those freaks that bit off chicken’s heads and things?”

“I have seen them.”

“That’s (name of the Big Sock),” she laughed.

“I’m afraid I don’t quite follow.”

“Follow what? Let’s not get sloppy in our communication, sir!” She laughed again. “He’s a limp rag, no people sense at all, who lives for nothing except his art. He has no sense of expedience, no mind for finances and organization at all. There’s no way he could be of any help in expanding the world if he didn’t have us templars to help filter out, er, extra information for him.”

“All of which is extremely interesting (and somewhat dangerous to know, I suspect), but it doesn’t answer my real question. Why try to rub me out?”

“Imp, you explain it to him.”

“What, me?” said Plug, surprised.

“Sure. Describe the way he gets about.”

“Oh, well, he just kind of twists his destinations closer to his feet. Quite an efficient thing, really.”

“I do what?” the giant almost yelled “Wait, are you talking for her now?”

“No,” replied Plug, “I noticed it shortly after we met. Right after you sewed up Sam’s head, in fact.”

“You ‘noticed it’? What are you talking about?”

“The imp is right,” Grey said. “⟨the Big Sock⟩ noticed it too, over a year ago. Which is why we sent a few . . . tools, to search you out. He never mentioned you were a giant, though. I wasn’t positive our folk had gotten the right one till the imp here confirmed it just now.”

“I have no idea what either of you are talking about.”

“No? Well, more’s the pity. I really can’t take the time to tell you any more; your termination is long overdue.”

Well, of course you know we were not terminated; after all, we are writing this account, aren’t we? Possibly you are saying to yourself, ‘it’s a message from the other side.’ Ok, we can give you that point, but if so, is death really a termination? Of course not.

However, for the writer, running out of ink is termination, or as good as—which is what we are about to do. We are in disagreement as to whether we ought to put a brief summary of remaining events here, or hold off until we can find more to write with and give a full account later. Since team writing when the team disagrees is . . . unwise, the hold off policy seems destined to win. Thus, we leave you, until further ink,

—*The large and small of it.*

Isn’t it a shame we have all this unused paper?

Oh well.