

Life as a Giant

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Editorial staff
Proc. of the Med. & Mag. Soc.

Dear editor,

Attached please find a draft of the article you requested I write as a follow-on to the letter I recently sent relating the circumstances by which I became a giant. I suggest you do a little more editing this time than you did last, possibly putting the front matter in the letters section since it is not integral to the rest of the letter.

Regards,

name withheld

Some two months ago I wrote a letter to the Proc. of the Med. & Mag. Soc. describing my change from human to giant. The journal received so many responses to that letter that they asked me to write a reply they can publish, hopefully putting many of the queries to rest.

First, I must apologize for genuine oversight on my part. I had not considered that the broad readership of this journal would not all be familiar with the creatures known in my area as bullets. These are not small projectiles, as many of the letters implied they might be. They are a species of roughly humanoid savages, also called “gambados” or “springing skulls of death,” a somewhat flowery term I personally would avoid. Whatever the name, Figure 1 is my (rather poor) attempt to draw one of these creatures.

Second, there were a number of complaints about my parenthetical commentary about stone giant waste product. Most of these were directed to the editor, not myself, and none were signed by a member of the society. I had no idea this journal circulated so widely among non-members, but if you are one of the concerned readers I would encourage you to remember that this journal is written by medics for medics, and completely normal, healthy bodily functions are not a matter to excite comment, disgust, or amusement among us.

There was also one writer, actually member of the society, who raised a much more reasonable complaint about another parenthetical. He was concerned that I expressed



Figure 1: A sketch of bullet in a human skull.

distaste at expectoration. I might defend my statement by stating that the body is not designed to expectorate, it being a practice quite against the natural order of things; but to be quite honest I was adversely conditioned against spitting early in my childhood and, while I recognize the distaste is irrational, I have been unable to overcome this conditioned reaction. That said, the writer was correct in that I should have stated this as a personal feeling, not as a categorical value judgment. My apologies for that oversight.

But most of the letters were neither critiques nor expressions of confusion. Most were requests that I write about my experiences as a giant, not just the process of becoming one. Before I provide an account of these, let me encourage any future correspondence to be addressed to my home (I have asked the editor to include the address with this article) rather than to the *Proceedings*, as the editorial staff of this journal has better things to do than sort through letters not even related to their own work.

Alright, that's enough front matter I suppose. On to the meat of my article.

If I recall correctly, my last letter was written at sunrise from inside my newly remodeled house. The observant reader would have noticed I *began* writing at sunrise;

rest of his life, and he can't talk so if he needs to say something he'll have to write it but he can hear, so it's alright, you can talk to him normally."

Then someone asked where I slept now that I was so huge and it came out that I didn't, so the explanation added in "And he doesn't need to sleep anymore! Weird, huh?"

After that the butcher offered me breakfast and so "He doesn't eat, either, which is good—think how much a giant would need to eat!" got added. It didn't take long for people to start asking why I couldn't eat and after that there was a part of the explanation where I would crouch down and let people look at my lack of a throat. And so it went.

At first it was really weird to be talked about like some sort of a freak show, but after a few hours I got used to it. Then it started to get really boring, and I would play with sticks and things or do pushups or try to balance on the town wall or just about anything to keep myself amused.

This continued without a break until early afternoon. However, there was finally a change in the program maybe three hours past noon. I was lying on my back staring up at the clouds speculating on how it was that my feet had healed themselves without any scabbing and acting as a chair for a swarm of schoolchildren as one teacher explained to another that I lacked circulatory, respiratory, and digestive tracts and that, as a consequence, I must have a lot of spare room in my torso if only they could get at it, but since the normal passages into the body were part of the digestive and respiratory tracts, and since I didn't have those tracts at all, there was no way to get in at the space they hypothesized must exist, when the whole scene was interrupted by the arrival of a pair of elves dressed in the elaborate black suits and enormous green cravats which are used in elfin circles to signify members of the press.

The arrival of the elves interrupted all the various activities of the preceding moment. The children all rushed into a circle around the elves and stared in awe, as none of them had ever seen an elf in real life before. The teachers broke off their speculations and made a scene of gathering up the children in order to appear efficient and helpful. I, on the other hand, though not predisposed to be overly friendly with elves, welcomed this intrusion as a variation from the monotony of the day and sprang to my feet with a real feeling of pleasure.

The elves introduced themselves, explained that they were investigative reporters for *The Enchanter*, and asked if I would be disposed to having them run a few harmless tests on me to ascertain the nature of my enchanted state

(I would record their exact words, but anyone who has ever spoken with an elf knows the impossibility of doing so).

Now, I do not wish to state an absolute valuation where only a personal preference is justified, but I am none too fond of enchanters nor of elves. Enchanters I consider too ritualistic, lacking the scientific basis of good solid magicians. This view, no doubt, comes from my scientific background as a medic where most incantations are accompanied by proofs of validity and clearly defined characteristics, but still, the preference remains. Elves I dislike for less obvious reasons which I won't go into here; suffice to say that, all things being equal, I would rather not deal with elves.

However, say what you will about elves and enchanters, they both definitely have a good deal of power when it comes to magic. They may not have a clear notion of why what they do works, but there is no gainsaying they can do a lot of things that science still doesn't understand and cannot reproduce. A long day of being a mute spectacle for people to ogle over was wearing on me and, even though I was pretty sure the irreversibility proof applied to my transformation, there was still a chance that the elves could cast a spell that would let me speak or something, so I decided to humor them. Accordingly, I led the way to my house where they began their "tests."

Of the remaining hours of that day I remember only snippets. There were glowing rune circles, puffs of acrid smoke, hot raspberry-currant wine poured over my head, strange incantations in languages that sounded like wind in the forest, et cetera. I do remember clearly the growing confusion of the elves as test after test proved inconclusive. Some time after sunset the elves finally took their leave, informing me that there was no hope of any further changes in my state, even using temporary charms.

Before they left I asked them if they could give me a voice again. They said they could, but that they could not attach it to my mind, so it wouldn't help me much. I was so disheartened by their visit that I took a long walk before sitting down to finish the letter.

I will spare you the details of the following days. Suffice to say that I determined not to be a mere spectacle ever again, and so I found myself working on a variety of tasks. I hauled stone at the local quarry, dug graves in the cemetery, carried a custom-made chandelier to the neighboring town and returned with a six hundred pound bag of onions—generally, I made myself useful.

I need to add here a comment not directly related to my story, but integral to my experience as a giant. I mentioned in my last letter to this journal that I now stand over nine feet tall, six feet broad, and four feet deep.

A simple calculation shows that this means somewhere on the order of a thirty-fold increase in volume. A six hundred pound bag thus feels to me much like a twenty pound bag used to. The idea that such massive objects would feel so light took some getting used to, but over time I grew quite fond of the feeling of power it gives.

I was still engaged in the aforementioned daily tasks, happy to be busy and useful and growing accustomed to the limitations of silence, when I received a letter from this journal requesting this article. Accordingly, I wrote the front matter and the account of my first day in my spare hours. This done I was faced with trying to decide how to portray the daily grind in which I was then engaged, as I presumed it would become my standard way of life for some time.

One night I was pacing back and forth in the darkness of my home, thinking about the possibility of a diary-style presentation of my current life and testing various phrasings in my mind. The eastern sky was just beginning to lighten and I was looking forward to finally getting the pair of shoes which the cobbler had assured me would be finished that day. He had actually made me a pair only a week after my transformation, but the soles had ripped to shreds soon after I had put them on. The pair he was currently working on were made of much tougher materials and promised to finally complete my wardrobe. My feet were pretty well calloused by this time, but I still wanted a pair of shoes.

As I was thinking of shoes and debating various phrasings my house detonated around me. I was somewhat surprised, but this had happened twice before. There's a fairly standard destabilizing incantation used by invading armies to destroy enchanted gates and wards, but which unfortunately also destroys other structures that have seen too many charms as well. Our town had been invaded several times and my frequent in-house incantations had meant my home was destroyed every time.

I didn't know who was attacking us this time, but I did know what to do. I pushed to my feet and brushed off my clothing, then dug around in the rubble until I found this manuscript. The last invaders had burned the rubble as part of a post-conquest cleanup effort and I did not want to lose another article. I shoved the papers into my pocket along with a supply of blank paper, a couple of pencils, and an old copy of the Proc. of the Med. & Mag. Soc. I found while seeking the pencils. I then walked over to Mr. Gourley's house.

Mr. Gourley was already awake when I arrived, which was not surprising. After all, when the house next door reduces itself to rubble it tends to wake one from one's nightly slumbers.

"Ho! What's all this? We're under attack again, are we? Well now, I'll go rouse people and see about making a posse."

I made motions to join him in this, but he had other ideas.

"There ain't much you can do to help in spreading the word, is there? Why don't you go scout out the forces while I round up the men."

I saw the wisdom in this, so, without further ado, I jogged down the street, scrambled over the town wall, and ran around the perimeter of the town looking for the invading army. I saw no such force, however. If they were nearby they must have been out of sight someplace. More likely, I supposed, they had sent a small force up by stealth to cast the incantation, planning to bring in the army later.

The possibility of such an advance force had just occurred to me when I thought I saw a solitary human figure maybe a half mile off. It was not yet light enough to be certain, but the distance seemed about in keeping with the timing of the attack. Could it be that this was the enchanter who had detonated my house?

I am somewhat embarrassed to admit what happened next. I have always been known as a calm, reasonable sort of medic, weighing my options carefully and never acting in haste. True, I am capable of quick action in times of need, but this was *not* one of those every-second-counts situations. Despite this, I didn't even pause for a moment; as soon as I saw the figure and connected it in my mind with the detonated house, I took off after it as fast as my feet would go.

Running to about the point where I thought I had seen the figure, I stopped to look around. For a moment saw nothing, but then, just as I was about to give up and turn around, I saw it. About a hundred yards off to my right there was someone crouching behind a clump of reeds.

This time I actually paused to consider what to do. I wanted to call out to it, engage it in conversation if I could, but that was impossible. I considered returning to the town, but my pride didn't let me just desert my goal like that. I could try to circle around closer to it indirectly and hope it didn't run off, or I could move straight toward it. I was just about to pick the circling route when it suddenly jumped up and took off running. Startled at the speed with which it was getting away, I took off after it.

Well, to make a long series of events seem succinct, I chased that thing all day long, all the following night, and for two more days and nights after that. After a while I began to wonder what this thing *was*. We ran for over seventy-two hours without a break, slowing to a walk

occasionally but never coming to a stop. For three days and nights it didn't eat, drink, or sleep. It never got all the way out of sight, but neither did I ever get closer to it than about a hundred yards. It must have known the lay of the land very well, for except crossing two roads the first day I saw no sign of civilization the entire time.

During the run I frequently thought of turning back, but I had no idea where "back" was. We did not run a very straight path; my quarry would change course any-time the lay of the land ensured I couldn't cut it off by clipping the turn. For the first day I was still sure it was a scout for an army and that sooner or later it would try to make its way back to the army, and thus to civilization. By the time I had given up this hope there was little to be gained by *not* following it since I had absolutely no conception of which direction I should go instead.

On the morning of the fourth day we were running across a dry savanna. I had no idea there were any savannas anywhere near my home, but then I suppose we had run at least three hundred miles by this time, probably farther. About two hours after noon I saw ahead of us dry mud flat with a shallow pool in the middle. My quarry came to the water only a hundred paces in front of me. No sooner had its feet touched the water than a huge crocodile lunged at it, snapping its jaws around it. There was a brief struggle and then I watched the crocodile recede into the water with its prey firmly in its grip.

I cannot describe my feelings as I stood there, a dozen yards from the pool, watching the ripples die as my quarry disappeared under the mud. I was more tired than I knew it was possible to be. My muscles had given up aching days ago and were now merely numb. For three days and nights I had spent every bit of energy I could muster on the single goal of catching this thing, whatever it was, and now I watched helpless as it disappeared.

For a moment I toyed with going in after it, just to find out what it was; but I had heard that crocodiles can take on creatures many times their size, and besides, now that I had stopped running I was far too sore to move at all. Helpless, I sank down on the cracked, dried mud and waited.

You have no idea what a blessing sleep is! I lay there, too sore to do anything, as awake and alert as I have ever been. I longed for the sweet forgetfulness of sleep, but even the idea of closing my eyes was almost impossible to imagine.

Still, it was many hours before I could move again. A few hours after sunset I got up and began to walk, guessing at the direction and trying to keep a fairly straight path. I apparently didn't guess very well, for when day came I saw almost directly ahead of myself a tiny village

outpost. Walking up to it I was initially met with hostility, but by being as disarming and cooperative as possible I eventually gained entrance.

I found the villagers to be pleasant people. I could not understand much of what they said; they had a very heavy accent. However, they appeared to speak the same language as I, for we managed to write back and forth without too much difficulty. They had heard of the Proc. of the Med. & Mag. Soc., but none of the cities, towns, or landmarks I asked about were known to them. I must have come even farther from home than I had thought.

I have stayed in the village for two days now, using that time to finish up this account. I have also done what I could to help them out and repay their hospitality. It's amazing how useful people find a giant.

I am leaving this letter in the village. The head man seems to think he can get it to the journal, though I confess I don't understand how. It appears they have a system of messenger birds here or something; anyway, I hope it gets to you.

I am now going off to find the city the villagers say lies about a week's march off across the desert. Once I reach full civilization again I will probably rewrite this same tale, plus its ending, just in case this letter doesn't make it. But if it does, I hope it answers some of the questions that have been asked.

EDITOR'S NOTE: We received this letter in our normal mail and have been unable to trace its origin. We have verified that the author's home was destroyed and that he has not been seen since (the disappearance occurred thirty-nine days before the publication date of this issue). Since the author's address no longer exists and, even if it did, he is not there, we will not publish his address as he had requested we do.

We urge you not to send inquiries about this article to the *Proceedings*. As new information comes to light, we promise to publish it. If any of you wish to supply relevant information regarding this article, please address you letters to the Giant Tracking, Office 37b, Proc. of the Med. & Mag. Soc. Make sure to supply all relevant information and sources; as a scholarly journal, we will not accept anything which we deem to be speculation or hearsay.