

## CHAPTER NINE

### K.O. Bolt – Out for Revenge

The dragon-dogs were cool – if a cross between a golden retriever and something akin to a Komodo lizard is your idea of cool. Solomon was obviously quite fascinated by these odd creatures. He sat up and stared at them, wrinkling his nose at the foul breath that was coming from one of the dragon-dogs. Lillian was fascinated too, but for completely different reasons. “These poor creatures are from a horror movie about cross-breeding gone wrong,” she thought. She wondered what kind of a warped mind did these kinds of things. It was as if someone had literally cut in half a Komodo lizard and a golden retriever and then stuck half of them back together. The front of one was a steely-eyed, teeth-flashing Komodo lizard, but it had the wagging, plumed-tail back end of a retriever. The other was the reverse – a grinning, lolling-tongued happy-to-see-you pooch face with the strong-clawed, whip-saw tail of a lizard. Lillian looked past the dragon-dogs. Her gaze followed their heavy-chain leashes. She looked up, and up. Grinning quite evilly back at her was, she could only assume, Kimmeridgian Orlando Bolt.

“Well, well, well, lucky me, the last of the Corrigan brats have decided to pay a visit. I see you like my little pets.” K.O. Bolt let the leashes out just a little and the dragon-dogs moved towards Lillian and Solomon. Lillian took a step back. Solomon quickly got to his feet and stepped back as well. The dragon-dog with the Komodo lizard front torso pawed at the ground to get closer to the two children, puffing and breathing out as it did. The foul stench from its jaws was nauseating. Its back end was wagging

furiously, as if getting ready to play. The other dragon-dog lurched forward as well, but its front matched the back of the other beast – a golden retriever wanting to play. “If this wasn’t so sadly ludicrous,” thought Lillian, “it would be funny.”

As K.O. Bolt moved further into the cage, both she and Solomon noticed what an awkward wobbly gait he seemed to have. K.O. Bolt was clothed head to toe in a long, dark green cloak. It made him seem almost cone-shaped. Indeed, his head seemed impossibly small for the length of his body. He had a roundish-face with what looked like dark-auburn hair. K.O.’s mouth looked like it was permanently down-turned. “Why does he seem familiar?” Lillian thought. He held out his arms, as if he was trying to steady himself and Lillian noticed that his hands were small and plump – not the size of hands you’d associate with someone who looked to be over six feet tall. K.O. wobbled to the centre of the cage and then it happened. The edge of K.O. Bolt’s cloak caught but he seemed to keep moving. He started swaying back and forth – sort of like those punching toys that you can knock-over but they keep coming upright over and over again. He waved his arms frantically trying to regain his balance, but then toppled forward. The rest of the cloak went with him and he landed on the floor, face first. The golden retriever front part of the dragon-dogs rushed over and started licking his face.

“Gus, stop it!” K.O. shouted as he shoved the slobbery dog away from his face. “Stench! Stay!” He barked at the other dragon-dog, as it strained at its chain to move forward.

Lillian and Solomon stared in disbelief at the small person lying at their feet. Then they looked over at what had been underneath the cloak. K.O. Bolt’s apparent height was a circular platform on wheels – big enough for him to stand on. Maneuvering

the platform were four small ugly creatures, similar to, but yet slightly different to the ones that had been sitting on the Throttles front lawn. Lillian half-giggled, half-gasped; Solomon on the other hand laughed out loud. “You’re short and those gnomes are hysterical!” He kept laughing.

K.O. Bolt stood up, brushing himself off. He unbuttoned the cloak from around his neck and let it drop to the ground. He looked coldly at Solomon, “They’re trolls and I suggest you stop laughing, or you’ll never see your brother again.” K.O. picked up the dragon-dogs leashes, gave them a yank and started pulling them towards the open door of the cage. “Not that any of you will ever see each other again” He turned to face Lillian and Solomon and the down-turned mouth was now stretched across his face in an evil grin.

“Please Mr. Bolt, where’s Darwin? We didn’t mean to laugh,” Lillian said pleadingly.

“He’s safe enough, for now.”

“Could we see him?”

“No, absolutely not.”

“Please Mr. Bolt, he hasn’t done you any harm, none of us have. Why can’t we just go home?”

“I won’t even play your game again, if that’s the problem,” volunteered Solomon, looking solemn. He wasn’t laughing now.

K.O. Bolt stopped grinning. His face slowly turned red and his eyes narrowed. “No harm? You think you’ve done me no harm? Didn’t your families ever tell you what they did? How they annihilated my father? Destroyed my family? Ruined my life?”

Lillian and Solomon stared blankly at K.O. “We’re not sure what you mean,” Lillian said cautiously.

“Really?” Said K.O. Bolt, glaring at them, “well it’s time you were enlightened.”

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“Bipity-boop, bobbity-bipp,” went the Dewberry Stink as he held out the van window.

“Whoa, slow down Coach, I think we’ve got something!” Stink said excitedly.

The bipity’s and the boopity’s became even faster as the Coach slowed the van to a crawl and Stink aimed his device at a wooded area off the roadway.

“Does any of this look familiar?” Asked Martin, as he spread the map out on his lap.

“Yup, yup,” said the Coach slowly. “I remember looking at that fallen tree over there and thinking it must have come down in the ice-storm a couple of years ago and then Gladly told us to turn off just a few hundred meters further.”

All three of them strained and peered intensely at the dense woods while the van crept along. The road was, thankfully, traffic-free, so they weren’t slowing anyone down with their snail’s-pace.

“There it is!” Tinkled Stink. And sure enough, there was a sharp left turn off the roadway. Coach guided the van down the narrow gravel road and then made an immediate right turn. Within fifty feet the van was completely blocked by the woods from the roadway. No wonder anyone travelling at the speed limit would have missed the turn off. The gravel road itself was quite wide, once you got past the turn off and the canopy of trees above made dappled patterns on the road. The woods were quite still. The

only sound was from the Dewberry which continued to bip and boop.

“These woods should be full of forest fairies and wood pixies,” said Stink to no-one in particular.

Finally, about 1000 meters down the road, Stink’s little device bipped and booped furiously. “I think we’re close,” said Coach as he slowed the van.

“Well, according to the map, if this is even remotely accurate, once we go up this little hill ahead of us and then curve around to the right, we’ll hit a clearing and the mines should be directly in front of us.” Martin continued tracing the gravel road on the map with his finger.

Coach eased the van up the hill. Took the right turn and as Martin predicted, straight ahead of them was a clearing. The van rolled into the sun-filled open area. They all squinted in the bright sun light. Coach pulled down the van’s sun visor while Martin and Stink shielded their eyes with their hands. It took a few seconds for their eyes to adjust.

“Oh no!” Moaned Martin. “Look!”

As they peered out of the van windows it became apparent that directly in front of them there was no mine or mine opening. Martin, Stink and the Coach stared at a mass of dark, leafy and very tangled shrubs.

“Maybe we took a wrong turn,” fretted Martin as he scrutinized the map.

Coach scratched his head. “I sure don’t remember all those shrubs, but the rest of it looks the same from this morning.”

“Guys!” Chimed Stinknose. “It’s an illusion! Listen to my Dewberry!” Indeed, the little device was bipping and booping so frantically it was vibrating in Stink’s hand.

“Remember? Gladly used fairy dust! And it’s so still in here, no breeze or anything, that my guess is that the dust is just hanging in the air! So Coach, just drive straight ahead!”

“But the van, the paint job! This is a loaner from a local car dealership for the centre!”

“Those shrubs look awfully substantial to me.”

Stink breathed a tinkly little sigh. “I guess I’ll just have to prove it to you.” With that he jumped out of the van and headed towards the dark shrubs.

“No, wait,” yelled Coach. “Stink, come back, we can’t all get separated!”

“Oh dear,” managed Martin. “Is this really a wise thing to do?”

Stinknose ignored both of them and kept heading towards the dense foliage. He stopped in front of the dark leafy mass. “Come on!” He waved at them. Stink then took one step forward and disappeared. Coach and Martin sat in the van, blinking in disbelief.

“Great, now what?”

“I dunno, Coach. Maybe he’s right.”

What they saw next made them both jump back in their seats and let out a shout. Thrust out, between the jumbled and twisted branches of the shrub, was a tiny hand beckoning them forward.

“I’ll be darned,” snorted Martin.

“Let’s go!” Coach grinned at Martin, put the van in gear and drove straight ahead through the illusional foliage.

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“Where to begin, where to begin. It’s such a sordid tale of corruption and greed that your family and so many others perpetrated on my poor family that I really don’t

know where to start, but how about with that venomous seductress, Leonora Buckhorn, later known as Leonora Boughtom.” K.O. Bolt snapped his fingers and the four trolls formed a chair for him to sit in. One got on all fours and became the seat, the other stood behind and became the back and the remaining two stood on either side of the first troll to become the arms. Lillian and Solomon heard a small moan as K.O. flopped himself onto the back of the troll. He adjusted his garments and smoothed back his hair. “Let’s see, where was I? Oh yes, Leonora Boughtom.”

Solomon sidled over to his sister, “who the heck is this Leonora?” he whispered in her ear.

“Just listen,” Lillian whispered back, “I think you’ll figure out who she is, but I have no idea about the rest of the stuff he’s talking about.”

“From the research I’ve done, the records I’ve found on-line and the people I’ve talked to she actively pursued my father all through high school. She was infatuated with my father, but that dreadful Aggie Boughtom and Leonora’s own guardian pushed her into marrying that bumbling, butterfly-loving idiot S. Marvin. Even after the despicable Aggie died she loyally stuck with that fool, S. Marvin.”

“But didn’t they have a daughter?”

“What? Yes, yes,” K.O. said irritably, “but that shouldn’t have stood in the way of true love, a minor inconvenience really.”

Lillian and Solomon looked at each other with that ‘is this guy for real’ look on their faces. K.O. continued.

“My father even purchased the mine from Aggie before she died to secure his and Leonora’s future.”

Lillian looked puzzled. “But I thought I’d read in our local history class he actually had only a small interest in the mine and that he acted as the spokesperson for a consortium of businessmen who’d bought the mine. It was actually really a very bad investment because the mine had been declared unsafe and was detrimental to the environment. He only gets a footnote in our text book.”

Solomon nudged his sister with his elbow. “Lil, cool it, I don’t think you want to get this guy mad,” Solomon said under his breath.

Luckily, it appeared that K.O. had not even heard Lillian. He was off in his own reverie of the past.

“Then finally that idiot S. Marvin went scampering off to some god-forsaken island to commune with butterflies and that’s when my father knew it was a signal from Leonora that it was safe to become part of her life again. He even went so far as to intercept letters from that butterfly obsessed nitwit to keep Leonora from pain.”

K.O. Bolt sat back on the gnome-chair with a satisfied look on his face. He was obviously enjoying his own story immensely and appeared to be oblivious to Lillian and Solomon.

Lillian leaned over to whisper to Solomon. “But I know from the gossip at Flora Green’s shop that K.O. Bolt senior was married to a pixie named Felicia or something like that. She was this guy’s mother. I still don’t know how our family is involved.”

“So do you think the Corrigan’s have some deep dark secret?”

“Solomon, get real, like totally not. I’ve never heard anybody say anything.”

“Well, well. Are you two having a nice little chit-chat over there? Have you even been listening?” K.O. Bolt glared at both of them.

“Yes we have.”

“Yes we have what? Been having a nice chat or actually listening to my tragic story?”

“Listening to your story, really,” Lillian said quickly. “I was mentioning to Solomon that your mother, uh,” the name suddenly came to her, “Felicity was a pixie.”

The colour drained from K.O. Bolt’s face. His dark-auburn was now in stark contrast to his porcelain-white skin. His eyes darkened and from the movement in his jaw, you could tell he was fiercely clenching his teeth.

“Don’t ever mention my mother again,” he hissed. The chill in the air was sudden and palpable. The retriever part of the dragon dogs assumed a submissive pose and the faces of the trolls Lillian and Solomon could see were fearful.

“Sorry,” both Lillian and Solomon mumbled. They moved a little closer together.

Then just as suddenly, the colour returned to K.O. Bolt’s face. The far-away look returned to his eyes and his features softened into an almost pleasant expression. “Now where was I before I was so rudely interrupted? Ah, yes my father and Leonora. You see she used all her feminine wiles to keep my father entranced. Her enchantments kept him away from his own family and from me. I realize now that it wasn’t my father’s fault. She was jealous of my mo..” He stopped. K.O. Bolt sat blinking and looking confused.

Lillian and Solomon looked quickly at each other and then looked back at K.O. Bolt. They waited for him to resume his story. K.O. continued to look confused. Finally Lillian spoke.

“Mr. Bolt? Are you okay?”

He stared blankly at Lillian and Solomon.

“Lil, this is creeping me out,” whispered Solomon. Lillian nodded in agreement.

The rattle of the dragon-dogs chains brought K.O. back. He shuddered and then looked menacingly at the two children.

“Ah yes, the Corrigan progeny; so, now you know how your family was involved in ruining my family.”

Solomon nudged Lillian. “This guy is nuts, say something to him,” he whispered.

“Like what? I have no idea what to say. Oh gee Mr. Bolt, that’s the strangest story I’ve ever heard and it seems to be riddled with inaccuracies? We still don’t know how our family harmed you? He’s got his own take on what happened years ago and I don’t think anything is going to change his mind.”

“Children, I can see this has affected you deeply. I understand how difficult it is for you to realize that your family destroyed my family, but greed and revenge make people do strange things.”

“I, er, what I mean to say Mr. Bolt is...” Lillian didn’t get a chance to finish before her phone erupted in her knapsack. Darwin had cleverly programmed a series of different rings. This one sounded like ‘We Will Rock You’ performed in farts. Solomon stifled a laugh. Lillian looked horrified.

K.O. Bolt actually giggled. “How very amusing; aren’t you going to answer?”

“May I, I mean can I? Is that okay?”

“But of course, I’m always polite and accommodating to my guests.”

Lillian flipped open the phone, “hello?” She quickly looked at Solomon with an ‘oh no’ expression on her face. “Aunt Ina, good to hear from you. How is everything? Oh, we’re just fine. Uh-huh. Hmmm. Oh good. So we’ll see mum and dad on Monday

morning? Give them smooches for us. Okay. Bye.”

Solomon let out a huge sigh of relief. Lillian slumped in relief. She stuffed the phone back into her knapsack. Both of them looked over at K.O. Bolt.

“Ina Corrigan and her greedy, deceased husband Jack; what perfect timing, just as I’m filling you in on the corrupt Corrigan clan.” Any semblance of pleasantness had disappeared from K.O. Bolt’s face. If anything his expression was now harder and colder.

Lillian took a deep breath. “Mr. Bolt, would you, could you, please go over the last bit of the story about our, uhm, corrupt family? We didn’t quite get the details, right Solomon?” Solomon nodded in agreement.

K.O. Bolt stared at them. He finally made a derisive snort. “Neither one of you were actually paying attention were you? You’re both so typical of kids today; selfish, self-centered, semi-illiterate game playing louts. I thought you two might be a little smarter. You certainly look more intelligent than the Flatchett boys – they’re quite a pair of pimple-faced, long-haired morons. They’ll be a perfect pair of ugly gnomes once I put them through the Gnominator, even uglier than these two.” K.O. patted the heads of the two trolls that were acting as the armrests in his ‘troll’ chair.

“Solomon, what is a Gnominator?” Lillian whispered out of the side of her mouth.

“I dunno” Solomon whispered back, trying not to move his lips. He didn’t want K.O. Bolt to think they weren’t paying attention.

“You mean it’s not in the game?”

Solomon shook his head back and forth.

“Fine, you don’t deserve to have it explained again, but I suppose I could add a few details about Ina and Jack Corrigan.”

“Mr. Bolt?” Lillian asked timidly, “could we sit down?”

“Yes, yes,” K.O. said crossly, waving his hand in a sit-down motion.

Lillian and Solomon sat down, both of them hoping that they would get at least a bit of how the Corrigan's fit into K.O. Bolt's seemingly warped history of Derry Dell.

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Martin and Coach could barely believe their eyes. After the initial shimmer from the fairy dust wore off, they realized that they were staring at the opening to the mine. Stink was standing at the open, dark mouth, fiddling with his Dewberry.

“Wow! Stink, was right,” said the Coach, gazing in awe at the mine entrance.

Martin got out of the van and turned to look back at what they'd just driven through. “Coach, check this out! You're not going to believe it!” Martin said excitedly.

The Coach got out of the van and looked back. He let out a long whistle.

“Jumping medicine balls, I wouldn't believe it, if I wasn't looking at it.”

Martin and Coach both stared at the clear roadway. No tangled, leafy shrub. No blocked route, just a few residual sparkles from the fairy dust.

“That's fairy dust for you,” chimed Stink as he joined them beside the van.

“Incredible,” said Martin. He was truly impressed.

“So, now what?” Asked the Coach, clapping his hands together in that ‘let's get going' kind of way.

“Well,” tinkled Stink, “I think I have a reading on my little beetle friend, so why don't we take a look at the layout maps of the mine and see if where he seems to be pinpointed makes any sense?”

Coach grabbed the maps from the back of the van and spread them out on the

ground. There were three fingers to the mine, none of them particularly very deep. One seemed to stop abruptly and there were no apparent tracks laid into the mine. The other two looked more promising. They both had tracks for carts and went slightly deeper and farther into the hillside than the first one.

“How does this compare to your bug reading Stink?” Martin lifted and turned the map so he could get the correct compass reading.

“Well, I think if we look at it this way...” Stink put his small Dewberry device on top of the map, “I think we’re lining up with the second tunnel into the mine.” They all leaned over and peered at the blinking blip on the tiny screen.

“Yep, my little beetle is right about here...” Stink poked his delicate right index finger on the map. Martin and Coach nodded in agreement.

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K.O. Bolt settled back in his troll chair. “Let me see, I’ve told you about the seductress Leonora and how she lured my father away. Then of course there’s the issue of her illegitimate son which was just her way of trying to keep my father from his real family.”

Lillian looked at K.O. Bolt with a puzzled look on her face, “what’s he saying,” she thought to herself. She looked down, trying to concentrate and listen at the same time.

“Add to that the out right persecution by the Corrigans it’s no wonder my father finally had an accident at the mine that was totally stress related.”

Now Lillian was completely puzzled. “You mean our parents Mr. Bolt?”

K.O. Bolt gave Lillian a withering, disdainful look. “Of course not, they were mere children, although I’m sure they’d been indoctrinated into putting down the Bolt

family. No, I mean your grandparents, May and Alfred.”

“Grammie May and Pappy Al?” Now it was Solomon’s turn to be puzzled. “But they died when I was really little. In a bus accident. Somewhere.”

“I know that,” said K.O. Bolt, visibly irritated. “But before they died they’d conspired with Ina and Jack to bring the Bolt family down by getting the mine closed and then buying all the land surrounding it to turn it into a golf course.”

“But Mr. Bolt, the mine was dangerous, even the miners said so and didn’t even the owners think it was too risky to keep open?” Lillian said, cautiously.

K.O. Bolt suddenly sat very still. He stared, stone-faced at Lillian and Solomon for what seemed an eternity, then he abruptly stood up.

“Well I can see there is little point in telling you the true story of my family and how they were persecuted and harmed by the despicable Corrigan and the rest of Derry Dell. You’ve been fed the same lies as the rest of them, just like the Throttle boys. No, you’re not about to listen to the real story. I thought I’d at least give you the opportunity to understand your families past wrongs, but I’m wasting my time.” He grabbed the chains of the dragon-dogs and gave them a hard tug. He snapped his fingers and the trolls fell in behind him as he walked out of the cell.

“So can we go home now? Can we see Darwin?” Solomon had stood up and was walking towards the front of the cell.

“You really are thick aren’t you?” K.O. Bolt turned and faced Solomon. “What part of no and no, don’t you understand?”

“Please Mr. Bolt,” begged Lillian, “we’d just like to know if our brother is okay and when we could possibly go home. We’ve done you no harm.”

K.O. Bolt focused on Lillian. “No harm? You’ve done me no harm? Thanks to your family, a few others in Derry Dell and those vile businessmen my father got involved with my whole life has been harmed. Do you know where I grew up? In orphanages. No one wanted me. My father was dead, my mo...my family gone. When I was old enough I watched from a distance the family life that should have been mine. I vowed I would get even. I vowed I would destroy your lives, like mine had been destroyed. I was smart. I studied hard. I’ve created all the devices in here. I wrote the program for the game that all you greedy children took willingly. I devised the chip in the game so I could track who had it and send my gnomes to retrieve them. I’ve captured every last child of the people who destroyed my father. And I’ve created quite a lucrative business with my gnominator producing garden gnomes that are marketed world-wide. So the short answer is no, you can’t go home, ever. I want you to experience the loneliness I suffered as a child and I’ll make sure your parents understand why their children were taken.” With that he turned and was gone. The cell door slid into place and Lillian and Solomon were alone.