

Name _____ Date _____

The Ogre that Played Marbles

The terrible ogre had a head as large as a barrel. His great black eyes were sunk deep under long bushy eyebrows. His mouth was full of long teeth. He lived in a huge castle in a valley. All the people had to pass by his home on the way to the king's palace. Naturally the king wanted to get rid of the ogre. He sent out some soldiers with a cannon to knock down the ogre's castle. The ogre sat on the wall and caught the cannonballs in his hand. He tossed them back at the men. The balls broke the wheels of the cannon. Each time the cannon sounded, the ogre roared. He roared so loudly that the windows in the king's palace were broken. The king tried other ways to get rid of the pest. No matter what he tried, the ogre was not afraid.

Now there was a little boy named Pennyroyal in the king's palace. He took care of the king's horse, Hurricane. This boy was not afraid of anything. He said he would go and tell the ogre to leave the country. The boy went down the valley to the castle of the ogre. The ogre sat on the wall and scowled at him. The boy was not afraid. It did the ogre no good to scowl. Pennyroyal knocked on the ogre's door. "Please, Mr. Ogre, may I come in?" he said.

The ogre opened the door, and the boy began to walk round the castle, looking at all the things. There was one room filled with bones. The ogre was ashamed of it and did not want to let the boy see it. When Pennyroyal was not looking, the ogre changed the room full of bones, it became just a box of marbles. The big elephant he had kept to guard the room was made into a lap elephant. The boy took it in his hand and stroked its tiny tusks. All things that could scare the little boy the ogre made small and pretty. The boy had a great time there.

By and by the ogre himself grew smaller and smaller. He took off his ugly old face with the long teeth and bushy eyebrows. He sat down beside the boy, and they began to play with marbles from the box that had once been a room full of bones. Then the elephant he had made small snuggled down between them on the floor. As they played with each other, the castle itself grew small. It shrank away until there was just room enough for them and their game.

Up in the palace the king noticed that the ogre had stopped roaring. He looked out and saw that the ogre's castle was gone. The king's son took Hurricane and rode down the valley to where the ogre's castle had been. When he came back, he told the king that the ogre and his castle were all gone. Where the castle stood there was nothing left but a tent. In the tent Pennyroyal and another small boy were playing marbles. Between them on the ground lay a sugar elephant.

That was all. For the terrible ogre was one of those that will do to folks just what folks do to him. After all, there isn't any other kind of ogre.