

THE NEW BEGINNING

THE NEW
BEGINNING

A fairy tale
for grown-ups

by ♥

THE NEW BEGINNING

For
Lucy Fur
and
all of her friends

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This story is a gift to the world.
Please distribute it accordingly.

Usa is pronounced "OO-suh".

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In the green land of Usa, now long ago,
in the settlement of Cinnabound,
round which cinnamon trees grow
lived a preacher, Geoffrey Shrub,
who was never quite satisfied with ordinary grub.

He was quite keen for the taste of fresh meat,
and he would gladly tell you that no meal was complete
without choice cuts of venison, pork, mutton, or beef,
and that's what caused the preacher to turn into a thief.

One night at supper, to his wife he did shout,
"A meal must have meat, but this one is without!"

His wife rolled her eyes and sighed,
"The tithes are down. Are you surprised?
The coffers are empty. The money's run dry
so now it's our lot to eat vegetable pie."

Geoffrey the preacher frowned in dismay.
"Now listen here, woman! Don't speak to me that way!
God hears your words, and God knows your heart.
This supper you've served will make a fine start,
but without meat, a meal it is not.
I cannot believe this is all that we've got."

"There's no meat," said his wife.
"Sorry."

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Through the pantry he searched high and low, low and high,
but he found not what he wanted and let out a sigh.

“I must have meat, for I’m hungry
for venison, pork, beef, and sundry.”

Then he looked at the knives on his counter with care,
and he had an idea that relieved his despair.

He ran to his shed and found some old gloves,
and pushed in the knives with a tremendous shove.

“I now have claws with which to tear meat.

I will run to the herd of sheep I hear bleat.

The shepherd will think it was the work of a bear.

What a wondrous way God has shown me through this affair!”

With great stealth, he crept to the farm of Joe Smith
where he diced up a sheep with his claws, sharp and swift,
but just as he was gathering his ill-gotten gain,

in his skull he did feel a sensation of pain,

and looking behind him, Joe Smith’s shadow did fall.

Raised over his head was a wood-splitting maul.

“What do you think you’re doing?” growled the shepherd.

In a moment of panic, Shrub leaped like a leopard.

He ripped into the man with his claws and his temper
and gutted Joe Smith, who fell with a whimper.

Feeling worried, ashamed, and afraid

Shrub fled the scene and left the meat to decay.

In the morning came running to the preacher's front door
a farmer named Martin Rascal LaScore.

"Preacher!" he shouted. "There's been a disaster!
You need to come quick, faster than faster!"

When they arrived at the city-hall meeting,
the elders of Cinnabound together were seated.

"Preacher, we thank you for coming so fast.
Something quite awful has come to pass."

They showed him the remains of Joe Smith and the sheep,
and for a moment Geoffrey Shrub did not speak.
The elders were worried, confused, and uncertain.
Shrub walked to the window and drew closed the curtains.

A plan for a ruse grew clear in his mind.

"It's the work of a bogeyman. I know the signs."

The elders were frightened. "What shall we do?"

They turned to Shrub. Of course, he knew what to do.

"We must pray to God. We've ignored that of late.

With the people of Usa, God might be irate.

We must make an offering. Choice veal will suffice.

To be safe from this evil, we must sacrifice."

To the altar a calf was brought with great speed
for blood to slake God's sin-offering need.

When the meat had been cooked, Shrub privately ate.

The veal his appetite nicely did sate.

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He went to the elders to tell them the news
of the enemy they faced, a most fearsome brute.
He gave it a name and brought it to life,
the king of the bogeymen, Figment von Snipe.

Across the land of Usa went out the cry,
at the hands of a bogeyman, a shepherd had died.
In the mind of the preacher, clever cogs kept on turning.
He knew how to get the meat to keep coming.

“Von Snipe will not rest until all Usans are dead.
We must raise an army to bring back his head.”
The Usans all nodded and lined up in droves
to form up an army in the cinnamon-tree groves.

They looked to the preacher for thoughtful advice,
and Shrub saw the offerings of meat were quite nice.
The soldiers were ready to go hunting Snipe.
There was not a moment to lose. The time was now ripe.

Shrub spoke to the soldiers from a podium high
about the habits of bogeymen who wanted Usa to die.
“They sleep high in trees, and they love creature comforts.
In the quilted forest they dwell, to me God reports.
We must burn down the forest to be rid of the lot.”
And the army of Usa followed that plot.

They burned down the forest and left not one tree standing, but their thirst for revenge was quite demanding.

They wanted to see the bogeymen dead so they searched the stumps for the bogeyman king's head. When they were finished, to the preacher they complained, "We found no bodies. Not one bogeyman's been slain."

Shrub pointed east past the now-ruined forest.

Toward the land of Heran, his finger did rest.

"They have fled to our enemies in the city of Badgab.

There they will hide and take what they can grab.

"The people of Heran are not like us, as you know.

Their culture is backward. They obey other laws.

We must share our culture with them over there and show them it's nonsense to grow facial hair.

Their women keep covered from head down to toe.

Their unwholesome lifestyle is the root of it all.

"A safe haven for bogeymen our enemy does make.

For our safety, there is nothing left to do but attack with cursed-metal weapons and kerbloomity bombs,

which I've learned how to make by reading God's songs.

We must free them," he said, "from profound ignorance.

We must protect ourselves. We cannot take a chance."

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Under the guidance of Shrub, the Usans did labor, making kerbloomity bombs out of fat, pitch, and hair, and mining cursed metal, they hammered and forged weapons the world had not seen before.

When they were ready, they set out on the track.
To the land of Heran, they marched and attacked.

“KERBLOOM!” went the bombs that they threw in the air.
“SWISH!” went the swords that they’d forged with great care.
“MOMMY!” yelled the people of Heran.
“Onward holy soldiers!” shouted Shrub.

When they’d conquered the land, the Usans all roared.

“Mission accomplished,” said Shrub.

“Now we search door to door
for the bogeymen who hide wherever they may
down in cellars, and in wells, under big stacks of hay,
and the fact of the matter, as everyone knows,
is that these people hide bogeymen under their clothes.
Be thorough when searching young children to grannies.
Carefully examine each nook and each cranny.”

For ten years this went on, the hunt for von Snipe.
For ten years they hunted and bombed, taking life.
The Usans kept fighting and searching Heran
and soon they heard they must invade Candyland,
for the bogeymen had made off to there in the night.
To the neighboring country, they had taken flight.

But just as the Usans were getting discouraged,
Geffrey Shrub said something that calmed their rage.
“We have discovered von Snipe in the place he was hiding.
Our forces have killed him, swift as the lightning.”

The Usans all cried out to see Figment’s head,
but the preacher just said, “Be content that he’s dead.
To respect his religion, he was dumped in the sea.
Revenge has been earned for you and for me.”

Then the Usans all gathered and cried, “Let’s go home,”
but Shrub shook his head, “Did you think we were done?
The Heranians are still enemies, and bogeymen yet live.
They’ve got a new leader named Fib Slander Jib.

“We must stay here in Badgab and teach all the people
about our culture, our homeland, its shining church steeples.
We must continue this war. We must stay and fight
until our enemies all see that our might makes us right.”

The Usans agreed that what Shrub said was true.
They must secure the homeland and other places, too.

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One day in the morning, Shrub was planning more war when the mayor of Badgab walked in through his door. He came with a baby tucked in his arms. He showed Shrub the infant who was born on his farm. "Look at what you have done," said the mayor with grief. "This poor child has no chance at a regular life. He was born without eyes, which is something that happens quite often now since the cursed metal's been hacking. "This war that you're mongering is vexing us sore. You've torn up our city right down to the floors, and my people are worried about learning your culture. Your soldiers sometimes are behaving like vultures. You search under our clothes with prodding and gawking, but the schoolgirls have been searched far too often." Without looking at the bundle of joy that was offered, Shrub shrugged his shoulders and huffed and turned red. "Now listen here, you worthless boor. Let me tell you about this war you abhor. I will monger and monger and monger some more, and just when you think you can stand it no more, I will monger your carcass right out of my door." Then Shrub shoved the man right out of his space so hard that the mayor fell down on his face.

While Shrub was planning the Candyland War,
a girl with two legs and no arms bounced in through his door.

“Don’t be alarmed. I can do you no harm.
As you can see, I have come here disarmed,
for your soldiers removed them with kerbloomity bombs.
I am Lucy Fur. My parents are gone.
They were lost with my arms to your soldiers and bombs.

“Your country, I’ve heard, grants the right to bear arms
so I’d like to move there and live on a farm.
With arms I can work and be useful and such.
I can be quite productive. I’m not a klutz.
I’ve already learned to do a lot with my feet.
I can dance. I can bike. I can fold up the sheets.

“Bearing arms that your country supports as a right,
I could do so much more than turn on the lights.
I could shovel. I could hoe.
I could chop up the firewood before the snows blow.
So please kind sir, please grant my request.
Send me to Usa, and I’ll do my best
to deserve the arms that Usa grants as a right.
Ask me for anything. I won’t put up a fight.”

The preacher looked up from his work, and he smiled,
showing his teeth like a grinning crocodile.

“You silly girl! To bear arms is a right for Usans alone.
I care not for your plight. Leave me alone!”

And with that, he gave her a swift kick in the rump. He kicked her so hard that she yelled, and she jumped right out of the door to the guards who were waiting to teach her a lesson about what's wrong with complaining.

Lucy was undaunted. She hustled on back to find Geoffrey Shrub planning an attack. "Please sir," she said, "I am only nine, and without my parents, I feel sad all the time so I've come back to you with a different request. Just help me this once, and I won't be a pest. I humbly ask one simple thing. Could I have my parents back? Please?"

Shrub looked at the girl and felt ill at ease. He answered her swiftly, silently, powerfully. He bent back his knee and kicked her again. Lucy flew through the door, such speed did she gain. She flew out of the building to the city square and landed in the fountain that was sitting there. She stepped out of the fountain, dripping and wet and said to herself, "I'm not finished yet."

Then out by the fountain, Lucy Fur made a plan.
She knelt on the ground with her knees in the sand.
Then closing her eyes, she prayed and she prayed.
She just sat there kneeling and praying all day,
and when the sun went down and the moon rose high,
she stayed.

She prayed in the wind. She prayed in the rain.
She prayed through a dust storm that swept in from the plain.
For three days she sat kneeling, thinking just one thought.

And you know what?

It worked.

Exactly what happened, no-one can say.
Suddenly the Usans were all carried away,
over hill, over forest, over river and mountain,
to the center of Badgab right next to the fountain
where Lucy was waiting with her friends all gathered
to tell all the Usans what they thought was the matter.

Lucy took a deep breath, for she had much to say.
It was time to be serious, not time to play.
She looked at the Usans all gathered around.
She smiled, and she thanked them for coming to town.

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“I’m Lucy Fur, and these are my friends.
We’ve lived through your war, and we want it to end.
We’ve all had to learn to take care of ourselves.
Our parents all died when your bombs took their lives.

“These two lads are named Jerry and Mel.
They were both fast runners until the bombs fell.
They each lost a leg, one left and one right.
When they found one another, it was a wonderful sight!
They hold onto each other and work as a pair.
Last week, they won a race at the fair!

“My friend Daphne here lost half her face
when explosions tore through her living place.
She searched for her parents for more than twelve weeks,
but so far the end of her quest appears bleak.
She keeps herself busy and works to compose
songs about wearing glasses with no nose.

“We’re too young to remember lives without war,
but we’re pretty sure things here were better before
you came with your culture to teach us a lesson
in a manner against which there is no contesting.

“I can live without arms. They can live without legs.
Daphne wears a mask when she goes place to place,
but there’s one thing we’re sure that can never be mended
that will haunt us each day until our lives have ended,
the one thing at last which bothers us most:
we can never replace the families lost.

So as you are planning your next attack,
please keep in mind, WE ONLY WANT OUR FAMILIES BACK!”

Though none could be quite sure in what way,
some kind of miracle happened that day.

The people of Usa saw what they had done,
and those at the fountain were at first all quite stunned.

Everyone was quiet. Not even a whisper
could be heard among the people assembled.

Then one voice, one very small voice, whimpered a reply,

“I’m sorry.”

For a moment, all was still again
as the words sank into the crowd,
and then...

a murmur, a mutter, some of them stuttered,
but in the air, the sound rippled. It echoed. It tripled.
It worked its way round the crowd like a wave
until nothing could hold back the sound of the word.

“Sorry,” was the only word that was heard.

Then tears of regret with sobs of great pain
fell to the ground like a great, soft, sad rain.

“We’re sorry,” they said again and again
in melancholy voices that resounded through the land.

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Then Lucy looked out across the sea of glum faces like flowers that had wilted while sitting in vases.

“It’s okay,” she said. “We’ve studied your culture. We read your holy book, and we understood it.”

“Better than you did,” piped in Daphne.

“We know what God wants us to do,” continued Lucy.

“We forgive you.”

“But you have to stop,” added Daphne.

“And you have to make sure it never happens again,” said Lucy.

“YEAH!” shouted all of the orphans together.

The Usans agreed that what they had done was the worst possible thing under the sun, and they made a new pledge that they keep to this day to follow the lesson of love, “Hooray!”

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to write or draw what happens next!**

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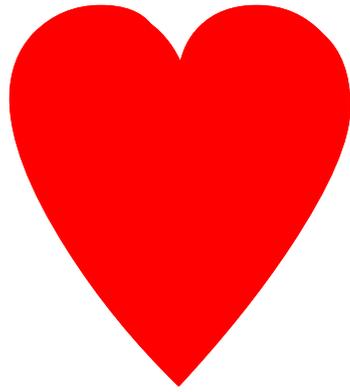
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