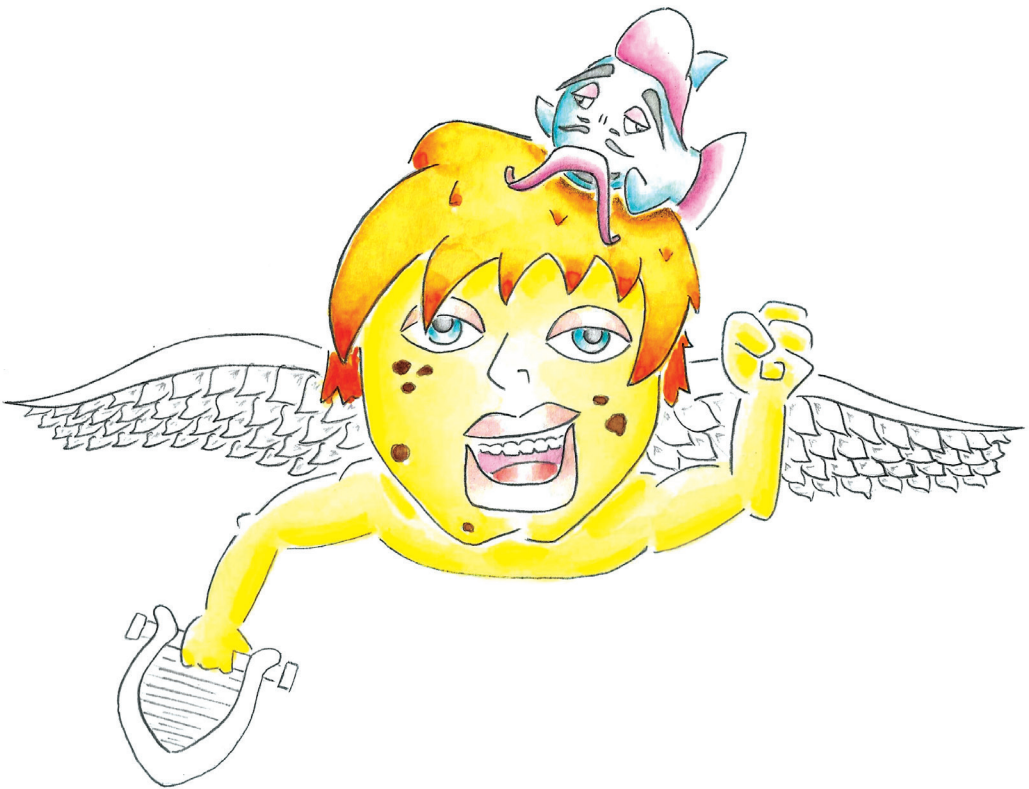


# The Rise of the Baker's Dozen

## Chapter 3:

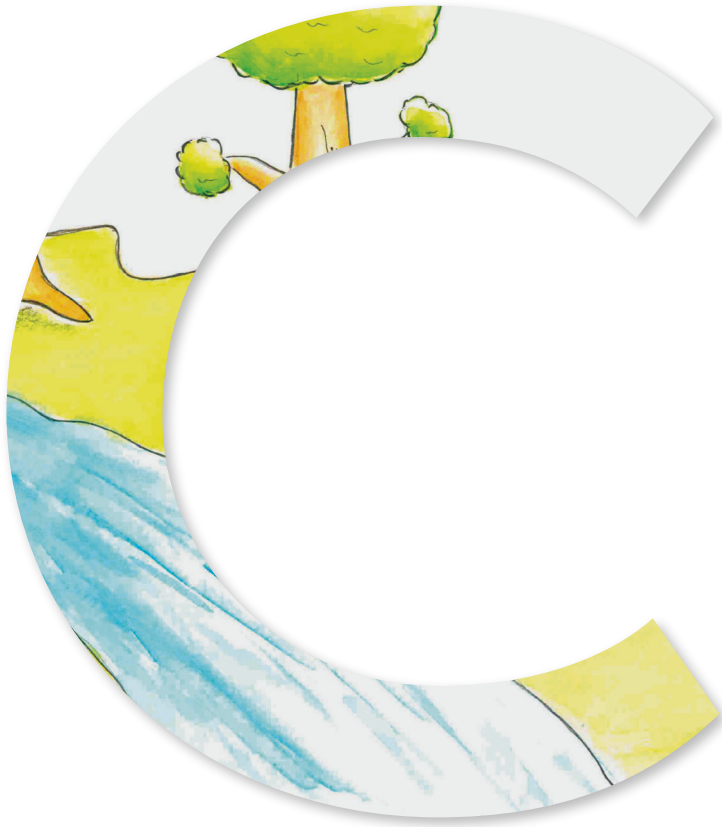
### Chip the Cupid Cookie



By Arnu Rausi



Avatar  
English



Chapter 3:  
Chip the  
Cupid Cookie

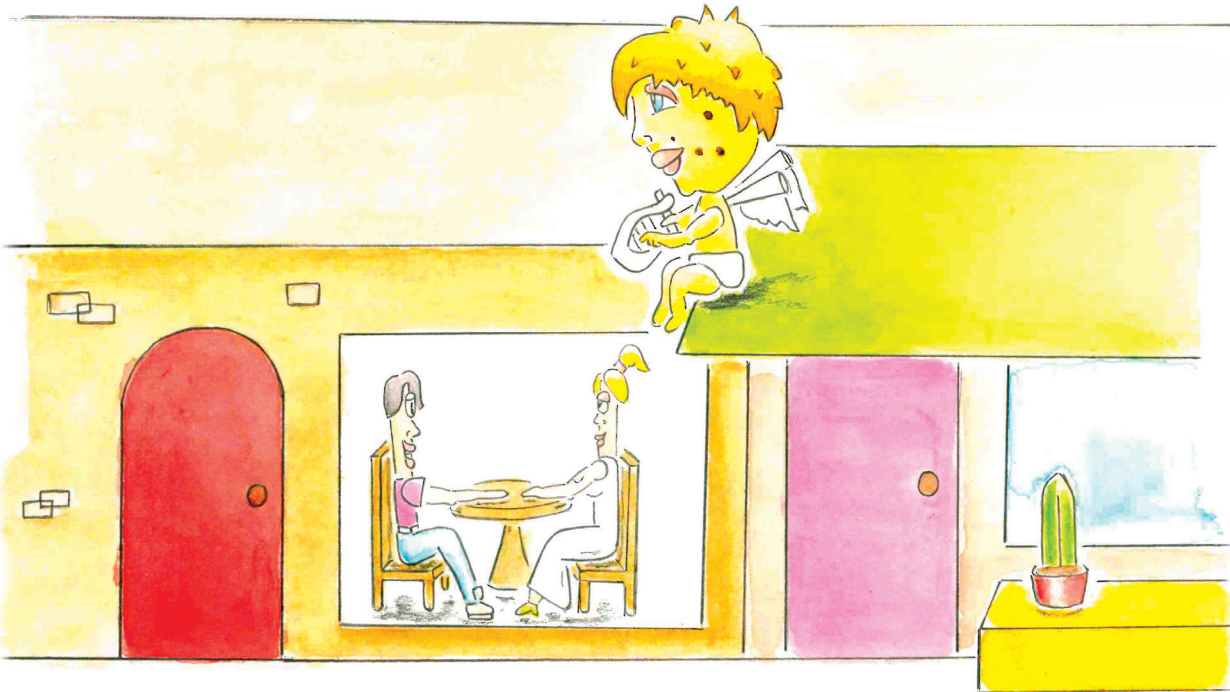


# Chapter 1

Chip was on the cusp of pairing another perfect couple. A match made in heaven—a bond that would change two lives forever. The newfound lovers would thank him eternally for his matchmaking masterpiece.

Sitting on the awning outside the bistro, he got comfortable and tuned his harp. “One final love song for today; their skies shall turn blue while mine remains grey.”

As the two unknown lovers made first contact, Chip played *Hold On*, a song the pair had separately declared their undying love for. Note by note, they disappeared into another world—starry eyes glared at each other, transfixed by every aspect of the melody. The duo again fell in love with the song, but this time, face-to-face, they fell deeply in love with each other. Their hands extended across the table and touched.

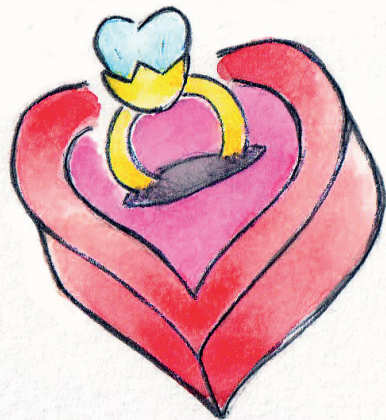


Chip had seen enough. He jumped down from the awning and flew home. "Thank the heavens the day is done. My love awaits while others won."

He opened his front door and rushed to his bedroom. On his bedside table was a velvet heart-shaped box. Inside, a quite delightful jewel awaited—a gold ring with a heart-shaped diamond. He had spent the last six months getting the finest jeweller in Biscuitville to design it. Six months of sleepless nights, wondering if he had made the right choices. The ring had cost half of his life savings and would now decide the happiness of the rest of his living days.

Looking in the mirror, he got down on one knee. "Dear Becky, my heart beats for thee. Will you marry me and make me the happiest cookie? We can live happily ever afterly."

There was only an hour to spare before his planned proposal. He rubbed his face while pacing up and down the room. How he wished to have a magic cupid matchmaker just like himself. He figured a quick work-out and a shower would cool his nerves and maybe improve the possibility of his dream lover saying yes.



## Chapter 2

Chip breathed deep as he took a seat with his darling Becky in the Tea Bar. There were so many biscuits crammed into the place, it was near impossible to have an intimate moment. Rowdy customers filled the room, pushing and shouting and cheering. It was far from the romantic setting Chip would have liked. Nevertheless, he knew it was Becky's favourite location, and that was all that mattered.

For the first hour, he followed the convention of small talk, yet through it all, his mind was distracted by one overriding question. It could wait no longer.

With his legs wobbling, he got down on one knee and opened the velvet box. "Becky, my heart beats for your thee, will you...?"

Before he could finish, Becky hurried over to him and closed the box. She lifted him to his feet and looked around nervously. "No, Chip. Not here. Not yet."

Chip took her by the hand. "What's wrong? Have you fallen in love with another song?"

"No, it's not that. It's just that ... I have some doubts."

"Let your tongue hold no fear. Express your deepest thoughts to my attentive ear."

"Well ... and don't get offended when I say this ... but you look so young that I look like I could be your mother!"

Chip huffed. "How many times have I told you before?! I know I look young but I'm really fifty-four!"

"That makes it even weirder!"

He placed his hand on Becky's cheek. "My dear, after all the loves that I have served as mentor, after my previous relationships which exist no more, let me tell you for sure, you're the one I have always been looking for."

Becky held his hand. "That's so sweet. And what about my dream? How am I ever gonna fly with you while your wings can't carry the both of us?"

Chip took his hand off her. "That never bothered you when we first met."

"Things change, Chip."

"My love for you hasn't."

A long silence caused quite the moment of discomfort.

Becky's hands clenched together. "Can you give me just a little more time? Please?"

Chip's head slumped over his crossed arms on the table.

Becky stroked his hair. "Don't be sad. Play my song for me, honey."

Chip closed his watery eyes. "Not right now, my love."

"What's the matter here?" a husky voice said. Chip raised his head to see Bean the Teabag at their table with his arms crossed. "I see two empty glasses of illuminice-tea and not one happy face! That ain't right!"





Chip slammed his fists. "We're fine, Okay? So go away without delay!"

Becky clipped him round the head. "Chip! Don't be so rude!"

Bean removed the empty glasses from the table. "Only trying to help. Maybe some more tea will cheer you up?"

"Fine. Make it two illuminice-teas with a dash of lime."

As Bean returned to the bar, Becky expressed her disappointment. "That was very rude and embarrassing! I'm going to the bathroom. Can you try and calm down by the time return, please?"

She made her way through the dense crowd towards the toilet, soon disappearing between the sea of bodies. Chip placed the rejected ring back in his pocket and cried a single tear. Bean returned with two fresh glasses of illuminice-tea.

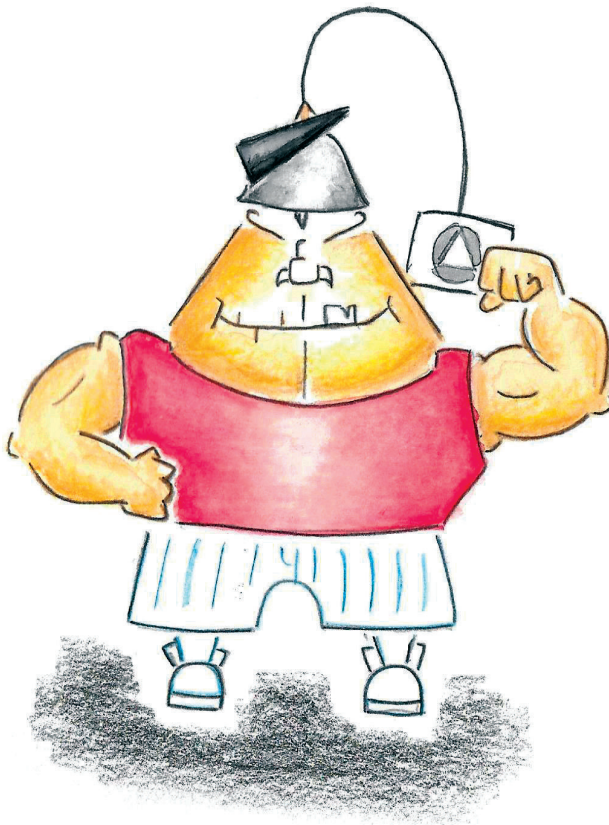


Chip sniffed and wiped his eyes. "Sorry, Bean, for the way I've been. My behaviour was totally obscene."

The large Teabag patted him heavily on the back, knocking him forward. "Don't you worry, mate. We all have our moments from time to time. We can help you wif any personal problems. Remember, whatever the flaw, illumince-tea has the cure."

Chip took the drinks. "My girlfriend thinks I look juvenile and wants my body to have more might, with giant wings to take us both on a flight. Could you make that magic work in just one night?"

Bean laughed. "It would be a piece o' cake!" He placed his arm around Chip and pointed at his friend Butter who stood a few paces away. The giant teabag flexed his arms, impressing some female biscuits. "Butter's got more muscles than anyone else here. And do you know how much he works out?"



Chip observed Butter's mighty figure. "Well, I suppose, every day to the gym he goes."

"HA! He's never worked out a day in his life. Butter doesn't even know what a gym is! I'll even prove it to you! Oi, Butter, come over here."

Butter marched towards them, his heavy footsteps vibrating the floor. "What do you want, Bean?"

"A quick question, mate. Do you know what a gym is?"

"Yeah, of course."

"Do tell us, then."

"It's a boy's name, like Jeff or Tom ... or Tim, only with a J. Jim."

"Is that the only gym you know?"

"I don't know any Jims. I just know it's a name."

"Thanks, Butter. You can get back to work now."

Bean pointed at Butter as he walked away. "We can make you that muscly, yet not that dumb, in the blink of an eye. Come have a private meeting wif us and I'll show you exactly how. Your lady is on her way back now so I'll leave you alone. Don't worry, mate, it can be our little secret." Bean nudged Chip with his elbow, his brutish force nearly knocking him off his chair.

His darling Becky walked towards him and returned to her seat. She moved as graciously as she looked, marvellous in every aspect.

Chip passed her a fresh glass of illuminice-tea. "Sorry, my dear. All this wedding doubt has me acting queer. Can you forgive me and join me in cheer?"

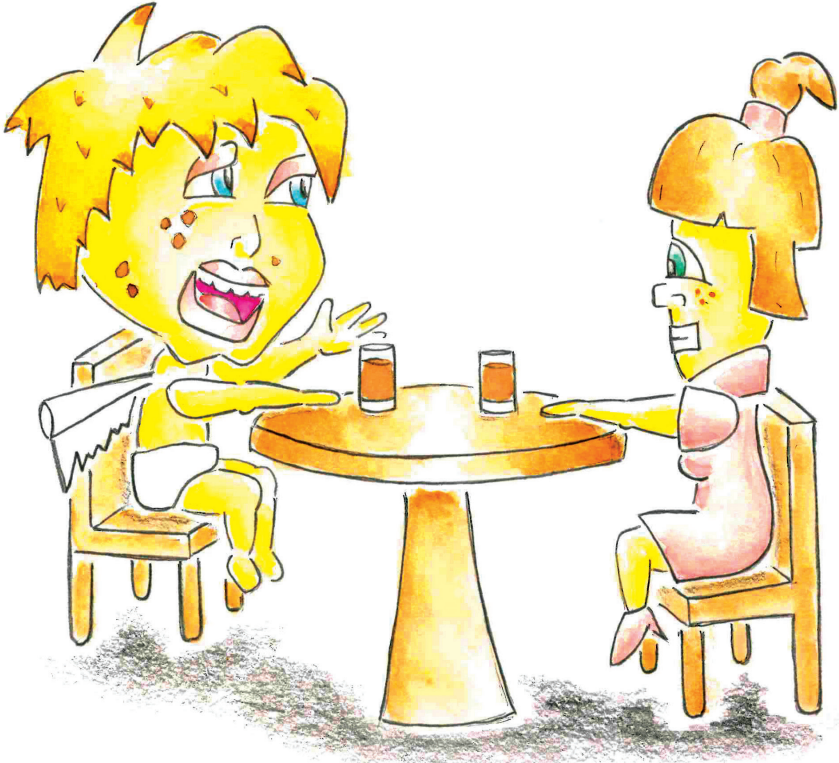
The two picked up their drinks and clinked their glasses.

Chip took a swig of the refreshing tea and his mind relaxed. "Let's say, hypothetically, that I could change my look aesthetically, so that my wings could take us both on a ride ... high, far, and wide. Would you more likely be my bride?"

The two held eye contact. Chip begged the gods for a positive reaction.

Becky smiled and nodded. "Yes, Chip. But that isn't going to happen overnight."

"In this world you never know. Miracles can put on quite a show."



# Chapter 3

During the early hours of the next morning, Chip returned to the Tea Bar, alone.

Bean stood behind the bar and called him over. "Welcome back, mate. Good to see you again." The giant Teabag grabbed his hand and shook it vigorously. "I see you've come without your lady this time. Is it a private meeting you're looking for?"

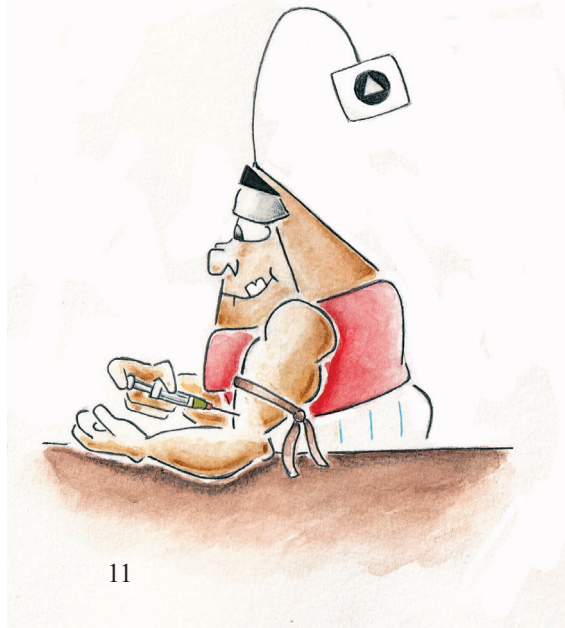
Chip nodded. "I was wondering what exactly you possess that can save me from my unproductive morning bench press?"

"Boy, we have the perfect product. Follow me out back."

Behind the bar was a padlocked door. Bean removed a key and twisted the lock numerous times before it finally released. The teabag then led Chip down a hallway and towards a door that was slightly ajar. Bean knocked before entering.

"Come in, if you dare," Butter said from within the room.

Chip froze on the spot at the sight of Butter injecting himself in the arm.



Butter waved him over. “Don’t be scared. It’s only medicine. Or are ya afraid of needles?” He put down the empty syringe and walked over to a giant barrel of illuminice-tea in the corner of the office. “Come here, Chip. Try and move this.”

Chip stepped up to the barrel, which was almost equal to his size. His skinny, short arms could barely wrap around the broad cask. Full of tea, there was no way he could lift it off the ground, his only achievement was to drag it no more than a foot backwards, scraping it along the floor. He huffed and puffed afterwards, dizzy from the exhausting effort.

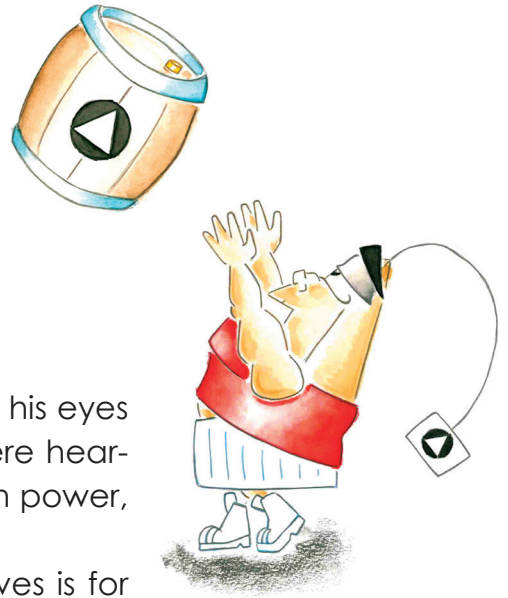
Butter chuckled at Chip’s pathetic attempt and brushed him aside. “Let me show you what us big boys can do.” He crouched slightly and placed his hands firmly on either side of the wooden cask. Instantly, he lifted it from the floor and tossed it into the air with the ease of an adult playing with a baby.

Each throw sent the barrel higher and higher, with Butter breaking no sweat throughout the show of strength.

Butter laughed. “All I gotta do is inject myself once a month and I’m stronger than a bull!”

Chip could not believe what his eyes were seeing, or what his ears were hearing. “And if I inject myself for such power, will it come within the hour?”

“The reason we inject ourselves is for instant effects.”



Bean put his arm around Chip. "What do you say, mate?" Don't you want some more muscle? Let's turn those chicken wings into eagle wings!"

"How much does it cost?"

"400 doughs."

"400 doughs for just one dose?! Don't you think that's rather gross?"

"Miracles don't come for free, Chip. Think about how impressed your lady friend will be when she sees you next time. Or do you wanna stay a feeble little boy with butterfly wings for the rest of your life?"

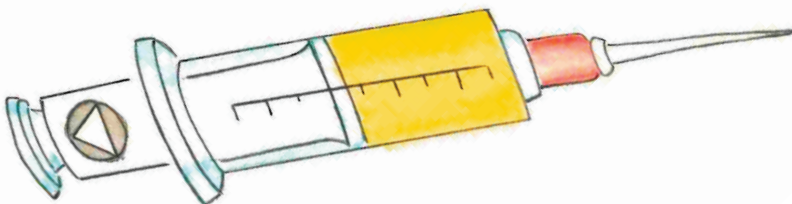
"I'm not a boy! I'm fifty-four years old!"

"Yeah, but you look twelve and have the strength of a little girl. Real women want real men. You can take it or leave it."

Chip had already spent a large sum of his money on the ring and was saving the rest for the possible wedding. Yet, when he looked at his pathetic excuse for a body, he wondered why Becky was even with him, never mind why she would consider marrying him. He had waited his entire adult life for his body to mature, doing multiple work-outs to no success. Now, the possibility was just one payment away.

He took out his chequebook and signed over the last of his savings. "Give me the injection to end this lifelong rejection."

Bean took the cheque and smiled. "Take a seat, mate. This might sting a little." He wrapped a strap round his arm just above the elbow, making a vein pop out. Butter then passed a syringe to Bean, half-filled with a fluorescent green liquid.



Chip flinched as the needle pierced his skin, and when Bean pressed down on the syringe, a deep shiver ran through his entire body.

Bean removed the needle and covered the small hole in his arm with a cotton pad. "That wasn't so bad, was it?"

Butter sneered. "Yeah, but now comes the real fun."

Chip shook. "What do you mean?"

"You're about to find out!"

Rushes of energy made Chip's vision tremble and his muscles spasm. A stinging migraine had his head throbbing like his brain wanted to escape his skull through his ears.

He fell to the floor, screaming. "Make it stop!"

"You're nearly there, boy," Bean said.

Chip screeched and heaved, face down on the floor with his eyes closed. His back felt like it was about to rip open.

When the pain finally subsided, he felt weak and swollen. A heavy weight rested on his back, as if Butter and Bean were holding him down.

"Why didn't the liquid work fully?" Butter said.

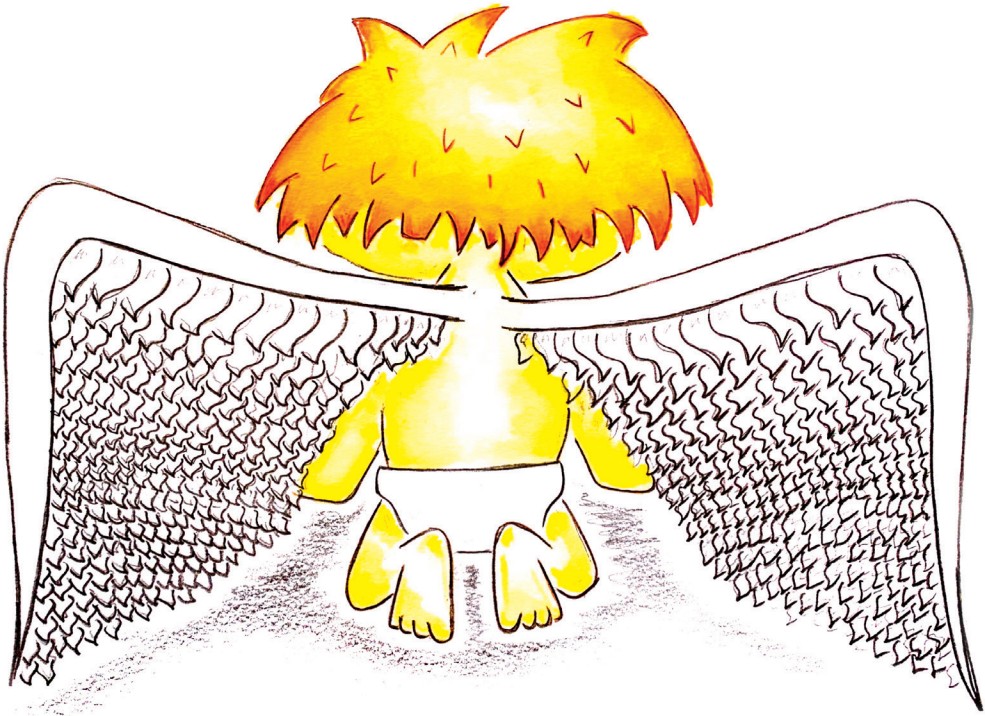
"Shut up, Butter!" Bean said.

Chip panicked. "What do you mean?"

"You better have a look in the mirror."



Chip slowly rose onto his hands and knees. Every slight movement hurt as he stumbled over to the mirror in the corner of the room. His reflection caused an immediate gasp of horror. His body remained the same weak figure, yet his wings had grown monumentally, now spreading to a tremendous span.



Bean cleared his throat. "At least something grew! Give them new eagle wings a try."

Chip hunched his shoulders, lifting the tips of his wings from the floor. He tried to give them a flap, but his movement was slow and uncoordinated, lacking the necessary power and rhythm required for flight. Even worse, he could only extend the wings to half their full stretch. With such restriction, there was no way he would be able to fly again.

Chip stared at his reflection. "What have you done to me?"

"Only what you asked," Bean said.

"Why didn't my body also grow?"

"Looks like your angel body didn't react with the mixture."

"Then put your spell into reverse and remove from me this evil curse!"

"Sorry, mate. It doesn't work like that. Anyway, at least now you have something big on your body to boast about!" Bean and butter laughed.

Chip fumed. "You think this is somehow funny?! Fool, give me back my money!"

"Forget it, mate. You got what you wished for and it ain't our fault that your angel body keeps you so young. Now, unless there's anything else we can help you with, you can be gone, little boy!"

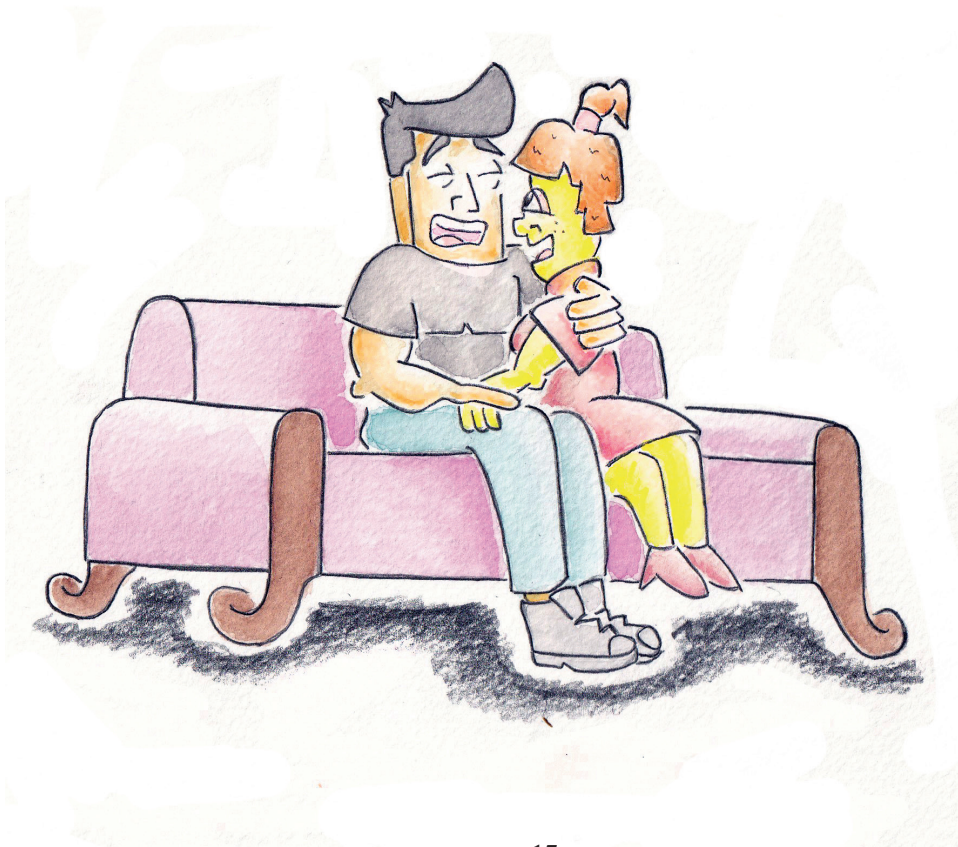
Bubbling with rage, Chip charged at Bean headfirst and smashed into his giant beer belly. He threw numerous punches, but Bean grabbed his wrists and wrapped his arms around his back.

The Teabag held him in a lock while returning him to the Tea Bar. "Why don't you have a nice cuppa tea? That should cool you down." He pushed Chip forwards and locked the door behind him.

Even though it was early, there were many biscuits present in the Tea Bar and Chip did not wish to cause a scene. More importantly, what could he do? Bean had just proved he was powerless. He considered how things could get no worse, until a torturous image tore his heart apart.

Sitting on a sofa with another man was his darling Becky. Their hands interlocked and a seductive smile stretched across her face. Her butch companion wore a tight t-shirt over his giant muscles. The man was probably half Chip's age, yet looked twice as old. He was also more than double his size, and his bear-like hands wrapped around Becky's shoulder, pulling her closer.

Chip wished to drop dead right there on the spot. The sorry sight smashed him into a thousand worthless pieces.



His traitorous girlfriend finally caught eye of him. She quickly parted hands with her secret date and made her way over to him. "Look, I know what you're thinking, but he's just a friend."

Chip scoffed. "If he's just a friend, then why didn't you tell me about the time with him you were to spend?!" Becky had no reply and looked down at the floor. "Don't fill me with your lies! You can forget about me and stay with your super-sized prize!"

Becky grabbed his hand. "Please, don't go! Tell me, what happened to your wings?"

He pushed her away. "Nothing for you to care about, even though this is all your fault! I'll think of you as I embark on my final vault. I wish I'd never met you; you have ruined my whole life. Silly me with my great desire to one day make you my wife! Time has only served to show I can't rid me of an eternal spell. So, from this day forth, I bid you my final farewell."

He stormed out the Tea Bar, slamming the door behind him. The forest was the safest and most discreet place to commit the act he had in mind. Getting there would be quite a long walk, especially with his new weighty wings, but leaning against a wall was a bike of perfect size. There was no lock and no-one looking.

"What's one crime when my final bell does chime?"

He mounted the bike and rode towards his final destination as fast as he could.

## Chapter 4

Hidden among the tall trees, deep in the forest, Chip mourned his loss of flight, loss of love, and loss of will to live. Head in hands, he considered his predicament. The world had become an environment where the pleasures he sought were only for those he served. He took to his feet and began to skim stones down a river.

"Heather, Rita, Emma." Three stones went bouncing over the water.

"Becky, Hannah, Gemma." Three more skipped into the distance.

"Oi, Mister, can you watch out?" shouted an unknown voice. "All those stones nearly gave me a clout!"

Chip looked around yet saw no other biscuit. "Who said that?"



“Me, down here,” the same voice spoke from the water. Approaching in the current was a fish in a can floating down the river, distracting Chip when shouting loud...

“Help me friend,  
come hither.”



A deep frown ran across the fish's face as he viciously slapped from side to side. The can rattled and shook, yet gave no release.

Chip crouched over the riverbank. "What's wrong with you, my slimy friend? What's driving you around the bend?"

"Why, can't you see I'm stuck in a can floating down the river, no room for me to slip and slide or room for me to slither? I want to escape this prison and not be all alone. I must get back to my lovely wife and shoal of sprats at home."

To Chip's surprise, the fish spoke English well and fine ... and more than that, each word he spat was told in perfect rhyme! "Can it really be true? A talking fish out of the blue?!"

The fish splashed with its tail. "The mystery is not that we animals can speak, but why you biscuits refuse to listen. Now, can you help me out this trap using your intuition?"

"But why is this can a problem? You have a world that is your own? Nothing that can bother you and a place to be alone."

"Oh no, my confused cookie, your theory is all wrong. Solving problems and resolving issues are acts that make us strong. Avoiding all your problems doesn't mean they go away; in fact, they just get worse and ruin your whole day. If you never face your fears, your life will only lead to tears; it leaves you wet behind the ears and makes your long days seem like years. You can choose not to believe me, but only yourself you will deceive, as every life has its dilemmas, and that you must believe."

Chip scoffed at the words of advice, but the fish seemed to care little for his denial; freedom was its only concern. Chip grabbed the metal container, turned it upside down, and returned the fish to the flowing water.

The fish danced and splashed, rejoicing in its release. While it roamed free, Chip remained trapped within his depression, and with no visible escape, the anxiety had him weeping wildly. He buried his head between his legs, fed up of watching the world enjoy all the luxuries his existence could not afford. A life of saving others yet not himself rubbed salt into a sore wound—one that was now too infected to cure. He cried until he was again distracted by the fish.

“In return for saving me, I wish to put your mind at rest. Yet, in order to do so, you will have to pass a test.”



Chip slowly raised his head.



“I think you need a challenge,  
something to make you think.  
In this life you have two  
options—you can choose to  
either swim or sink.”



Chip huffed. “Well, swimming was never my forte, I was made to fly. But now the power has abandoned me, I think I’d rather die. I was made to find love, but never for myself. My strongest powers have been invested in everyone else’s wealth.”

“Existence is not easy, that is clear for all to see, yet overcoming problems makes us the beings we wish to be. The only failure in life is failing to try. Glory lies in the attempt, even if it brings a tear to the eye. There's no shame in falling short or losing a battle fought; just get up and thank the lifelong lessons taught. Win or lose, it's the experience you gain, a healthy way of thinking to keep the brain more sane. The tall mountains push the birds to fly at higher peaks; the harshest of conditions refine their best techniques. The cruelty of life drives the forces of greater love. There is dark matter and light even in the skies above.”



Chip's vision blurred as his eyes filled with moisture. "Through the lessons life has taught me, the blessing's hard to find. And after today's class, I have made up my own mind."

The fish spread its fins. "Then go and take your life ... bring an end to all your strife. Let's hope no-one awaits you like a mother, friend, or wife."

Chip punched the water. "THERE IS NO-ONE WHO AWAITS ME! MY LIFE IS ALREADY DEAD! There's a cliff edge up ahead to turn this cookie flat like pita bread."

A gust of wind whistled through the valley, flapping Chip's feathers.

The fish shrugged. "Then I say to you goodbye ... go take to the sky. It seems my words of wisdom aren't enough to satisfy." It then dove beneath the water's surface, leaving Chip all alone again.

Chip walked to the cliff's edge and looked down—the huge fall would be more than sufficient. One small step was the only thing between him and the end of all his misery.

Chip wiped away the tears. "Goodbye world."



Suddenly, a wet slap on the back of his head startled him and nearly pushed him over the cliff edge. The fish had somehow traveled from the river and was now attached to his head!

"What are you doing?!" Chip said.

The fish grabbed his hair. "If you're going to the afterlife, then take me with you!"

"But what about your wife and your shoal of sprats at home? Surely you don't want to leave them fatherless and your lady all alone?"

"If this is our fate, then there's nothing to debate. My wife will recover from my death and find another fish in time. My kids will grow and fight to show they can shine and stay divine."

The fish then slapped the back of Chip's head with his tail, throwing him forward and over the cliff edge. The ground beneath his feet disappeared and he instantly fell at a phenomenal pace.

Chip shut his eyes, too afraid to observe the oncoming horror. The wind howled like a pack of separated wolves and his heart sank to a nauseous, empty stomach.

Regret filled his entire being. His life was much more than just a collection of rejected loves, and although his stubbornness had previously denied it, there were many friends who would be devastated by his departure, none of which he had even honoured with at least a goodbye. There was also a wider world with endless frontiers to explore, but a momentary depression had brought all possibilities to an end.

Tears streamed up his face. The fall seemed to continue forever, much longer than expected, giving him unwanted time to further repent his fatal act. However, descending at such speed, death would surely arrive soon.

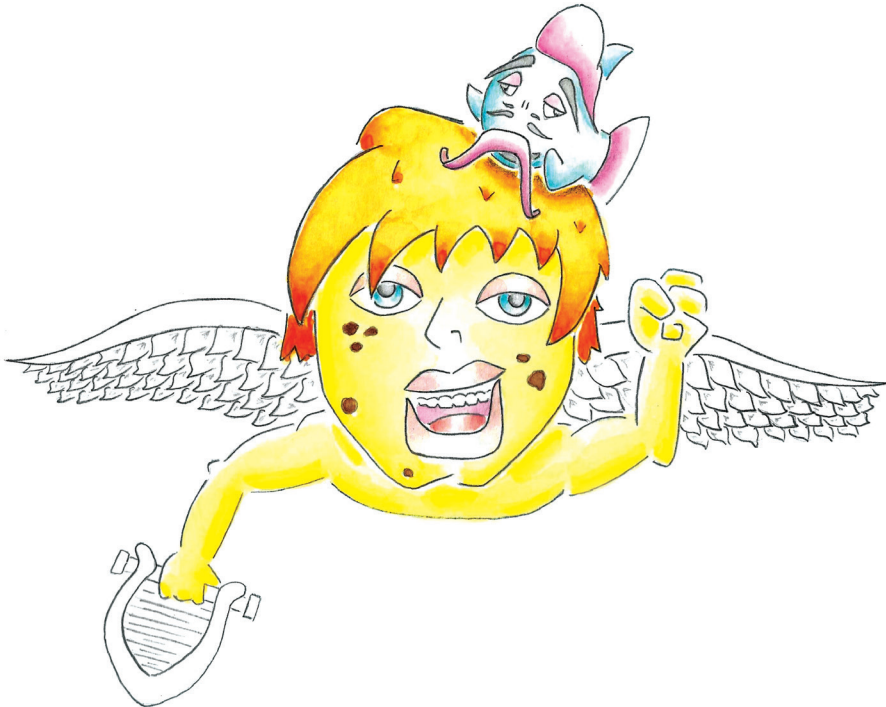
The fish repeatedly slapped Chip's forehead. "FOR THE SAKE OF MY WIFE AND CHILDREN, LOOK IN FRONT OF YOU!"

Chip reluctantly opened his eyes. To his great surprise, they weren't falling at all, but effortlessly gliding at an incredible pace across the valley, yet heading directly into a rock face! Chip angled his body and the pair zoomed up and avoided a near death collision by a matter of centimetres.

The fish puffed numerous times. "Thank the lord your body is small and light for you to have such agile flight!"

Realising the true beauty of his figure, Chip twisted and turned and flipped in all directions. His new wings caught the air and extended to their full span without him even breaking a sweat, allowing him to move at speeds and heights that were previously unattainable with his smaller wings.

He was once again airborne and where he belonged, the art of flying now literally a breeze. He raised a fist and thanked the skies that his angel body had remained the same size.

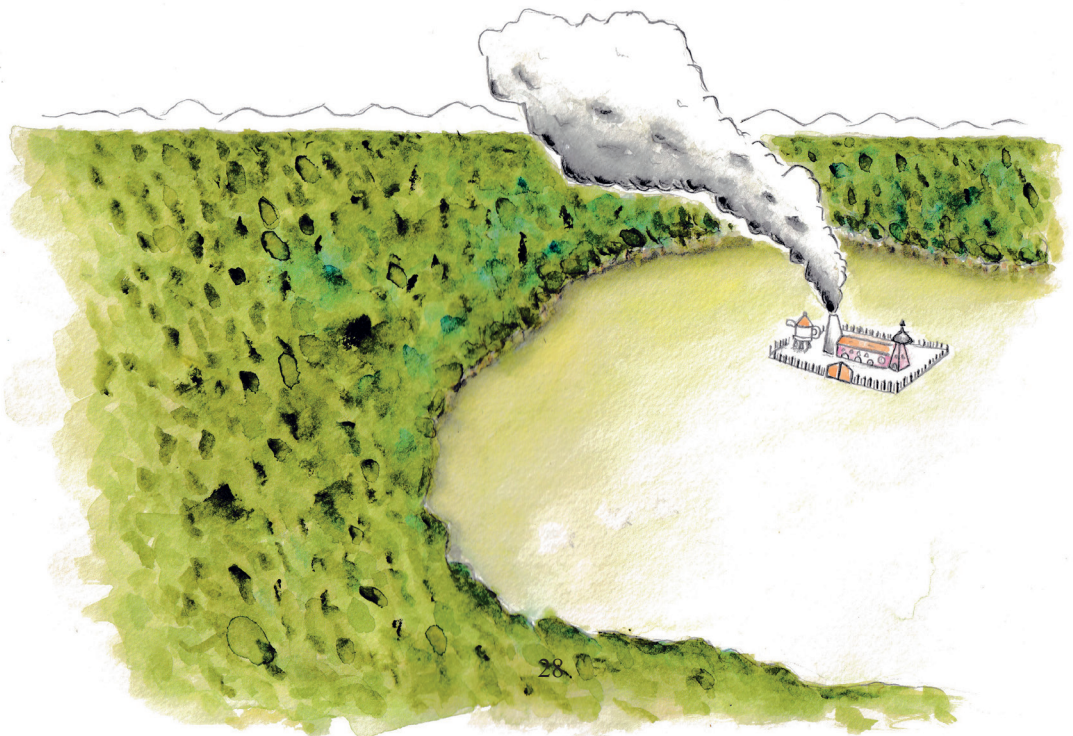


Splitting the valley beneath him was a river, flowing through the land with equal grace and ease as Chip was gliding through the air.

The fish patted him on the back and pointed at a pipeline running from the river. "Your biscuits consume nature's abundance more and more each year ... so much so that our habitats swiftly disappear. Thanks to you, our rivers are now shallow, the once wide river banks have turned extremely narrow. Many animals have migrated due to the destruction that they see ... birds and squirrels, deer and bee, all scream mercy from a beast you biscuits call 'tea factory.'"

Soaring at a great height, Chip saw the tea factory below. A huge plume of smoke came out the chimney, and not one bird dared to fly near the choking cloud. Barren land surrounded the building, leaving nothing in its wake.

In the far distance was Biscuitville. The entire town was just a small stain on the vast landscape, the buildings nothing more than tiny dots. The powerful imagery delivered Chip a whole new outlook on his own problems. Just like his hometown, they seemed so small and insignificant compared to the suffering that nature was experiencing.



The fish was now struggling to breathe and was surely desperate to return to the river and his family.

“Shall I drop you off in that stream below?” Chip suggested.

“It’s far from home, but the route I know. Against the current, I shall go.”

“Do you want me to take you somewhere closer?”

The fish pulled Chip’s hair. “My friend, do you know why a salmon’s meat is so fresh and lean?”

“No.”

“Because they choose to swim upstream!”

Chip landed and dropped the fish into the water. “Words alone cannot express my gratitude for your assistance in changing my attitude.”

“By means of minor altercation, we have both found our liberation.”

Chip ran back to Biscuitville, happy to be alive and desperate to inform the residents of the destruction he had witnessed.



As he approached the Tea Bar, he noticed a trail of bright pink and white lilies spread across the ground. They continued up the alley separating the Tea Bar from the music store. He poked his head around the corner and saw the most charming sight.

Surrounded by flowers, his friend Reed bent down on one knee in front of Coco with a ring in his hands. The sight was a complete shock. Only last week, Chip had tried to matchmake the couple, only for Reed to completely hide away from the opportunity.

Reed placed the ring on Coco's finger. "Love of my life, will you make me the happiest biscuit alive and marry me?"

Coco placed her hands on her heart. "YES! And what a fantastic location to choose, my love!"

What was so special about the grimy location was beyond Chip. Nevertheless, he took out his harp and played the love song the pair had yet to hear in each other's presence. The two embraced during the whole melody, their grip on each other tightened as each note passed.

When the tune ended, Reed approached Chip. "I suppose this must be quite a surprise for you, considering the last state you saw me in!"

Chip nodded. "The sight is quite a shock to say the least, but a pleasant one for my eyes to feast!"

Reed laughed. "The last time I saw you was my darkest moment, yet it turned out to be the spark for me to shine the brightest."

"When we hurt and suffer, we learn how to fight and heal. Only when we push our limits can we become as hard as steel."

Reed tipped his hat. "Agreed. But not all suffering is justified. The Teabags gave Coco a lotion which has left her blind. They then dumped her on the street. Something must be done."



Chip explained what had happened with his wings and the destruction illuminice-tea was causing to nature. "We must expose the Teabags, no matter the cost. If we fail to take action, our livelihoods will be lost."

Reed returned to Coco and hoisted her into the air, carrying her down the alley. There was a fresh confidence about the biscuit that was light years away from the feeble figure he'd previously cut when Chip first met him. How had he had transformed into a brand-new biscuit in such a short time?

Chip had to know. "What has made you shine so bright? Was it love that made you see the light? I would fight with all my might to hold a love that treats me right!"

The question was aimed at Reed, but it was Coco who answered. "Chip, you must be one of the most loved biscuits in the whole of Biscuitville. Yet, until you learn to love yourself, it will all count for nothing."

