

Fiordlings.



Einar Petersen



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By Einar Petersen

Edited by Damien Mccaffery



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# Fiordlings.

## The golden eye.

Once in a time before the world became what it is today, there lived a people known as the Fiordlings.

They were an industrious people living in harmony with the world surrounding them.



Their world knew no poverty or wants. *But one day everything changed!*

Like rolling thunder, the door to the Coral Castle came tumbling down and the evil laughter of Havgrími of The Abyss filled the hearts of the guests in the Throne Room with fear and anguish.

Havgrími's soldiers rushed inside, brushing aside the palace footmen who protected the king and the greatest treasure of the Fiordlings; and even though many a man tried, no one was able to stop them.

"Halt, this very instant! No blood shall be let, not for for gold nor anything else," the king's voice boomed through the hallways, "Bear forth your errand!"

An eerie silence fell over the Throne Room. The princess Havdís, who had been playing hide-and-seek, peeked out from under the table, lifting the table cloth only high enough to make out what was happening. The sight filled her her with horror.

Havgrím pointed at the king. A murmur filled the Throne Room when it dawned upon them what the dastardly ruffians were after, but the king held up his arm. As quickly and unexpectedly as they had forced their way inside, the thugs disappeared, and with them they took the prize possession of the Fiordlings, the "Golden Eye". But before he left, Havgrím promised certain death to anyone following them to the Castle of the Abyss.

You might wonder what the Golden Eye is.

I can relate to that, but it is a little difficult to explain, so listen carefully!

For the king and the Fiordlings, the Golden Eye had become an icon and a way of life.

If someone had questions or was pondering a dilemma, puzzling over a conundrum or just feeling lost in a quandary, then The Golden Eye showed the hapless person the way, and it had been that way for generations, ever since the first king of the Fiordlings had his workmen forge the Golden Eye from precious metals brought from mines in and beyond Black Smoker Forest.



Now you shouldn't misunderstand, the Golden Eye was not some all-seeing eye that could warn you of any danger.

That would have been pretty neat but if it had been, well then the Fiordlings would have been able to hide the Golden Eye before the goons from the Castle of the Abyss came crashing in.

In fact the Golden Eye was a kind of a textbook containing information as to how people should behave towards each other and the environment around them. But it was not a book like others, no sirree.

The Golden Eye was no less than a shiny pearl mounted atop a magnificent sceptre made from the purest gold you can imagine.

For hundreds of years artists had carved all the teachings of the Fiordlings onto the pearl, so that everyone who needed to, could learn from their peers what they should know.

But when the Golden Eye disappeared everything changed.

The Fiordlings began forgetting what they had learned over centuries.

As the older ones faded, the younger ones began treating each other and their environment and the world around them worse and worse. People became fixated on their own needs and completely forgot or didn't care for what others might need.

As days became years things became truly horrendous.

In the end crying and pain was all you heard when you dared to take a walk through town, but only if you were allowed to do so unscathed, because thugs, thieves and brawlers tended to prey upon nearly everybody who dared to venture beyond their home!

The old songs and joy were all but gone, all seemed abysmal and without hope, and in the remains of the once proud Coral Castle sat the King, his eyes heavy with sorrow as his life's work lay in ruins as well as the work of every king before him... all disappearing, fading to oblivion.

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## **The princess and the king.**

One day as he was sitting there reminiscing, his daughter, now a young woman, strode into his presence.

“Father you must do something – you cannot let the kingdom fare in this way.”

The king looked up and huffed, “I'm too old, my sweet daughter. If I was 50 years younger I would follow Havgrím to the Castle of the Abyss and the people would be there by my side.”

“I thought we would get by without the Golden Eye, but alas it was not to be. If we don't have the Eye we have nothing...”

The princess became extremely annoyed; “If you won't do anything, then I will!”.

She spun on her heel and marched out of the throne room, closely followed by two members of the royal guard.

She thought feverishly. Was that truly the way things were? Was there really no one who could help them?

Suddenly it dawned upon her — Old Erling, was he still alive?

When she was younger she had heard about Old Erling. A lot of people thought him an oddball if not a veritable crackpot.



He didn't like to be among people and he was one of the few who, long after the Golden Eye had disappeared, still maintained that someone should have gone after taking it back.

People used to tease him, saying, "Well if you think it is so important, why don't you just go and fetch it?"

"One day I might just do that" he'd usually reply, before striding off in anger.

Exactly where he went she could only speculate, however odds were that he'd head into the seaweed forest to the east where she had heard he resided.

"Where precisely does Old Erling live?" she asked one of the bodyguards.

He gazed at the princess with a rather inquisitive look on his face, "Old Erling?" His voice didn't falter.

"You heard me, Old Erling, the one everyone laughed at when he talked about recovering the Golden Eye from Havgrím."

It became clear the guard knew something, but held back.

"All right, if you won't say anything, maybe you will," she cast her gaze upon the other bodyguard. His face went gray, but he didn't answer either.

"Well well, neither one's willing to talk, eh?" The princess's brow looked very strict.

"I see... but that just means I will have to find out by myself," and before any of them could react the princess had swung onto a seahorse whose flapping wings took her towards the thick seaweed forest with incredible speed.

The bodyguards ran after her but were out of breath before they even managed to catch up. She disappeared into the outskirts of the thick seaweed forest.



The bodyguards glanced briefly at each other – if they lost her they would be in a heap of trouble, but there was nothing else to do. As fast as their legs would carry them they hurried back to the stable and ripped the lead rope from a stable boy who was leading three animals into the stables. Before he could utter a single word of complaint the bodyguards strode away with two animals, one for each of them.

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## **The princess and Old Erling.**

Hours later they came upon the princess. Through a window they could see her sitting inside an old house opposite an old and bearded Fiordling, and realised that she was speaking to him.

They knocked courteously on the door and when it opened they went quickly inside.

“You are coming home with us this very instant,” one of them said briskly.

“Oh, you think so?” the princess answered in a cheeky voice.

“Yes I do,” the bodyguard replied.

Old Erling smiled.

“Fascinating, and what do you plan to tell the king when the princess tells him she has been sitting here for hours talking to me, and that she was almost swallowed by a huge cod just before I met her in the forest?”

“I can, of course, not help myself thinking about this.... What do you think he will say? You know I'm just asking...” the old Fiordling added.

The royal guards both turned pale. They knew full well what would happen should the king be told that his daughter had seen any peril and that they had not been at her side.

“You know, I just might keep quiet with respect to my father. I suppose you two wouldn't mind that at all,” she cocked her head and looked at them with a gaze that pierced straight through even the thickest layers of their protective garments and washed away all their training in an instant.

The bodyguards nodded and looked down; there really wasn't anything they could say.

“I suppose you might want to assist me with certain matters?” the princess added.

They both nodded, for she had them right where she wanted them.

“Very well, here's a list of things I need you to procure by morning before we leave. Tomorrow we go forth and shall not return until we have the Golden Eye.”

With trembling hands the bodyguards read the list. There was no doubt that the princess was being very serious about this matter.

Old Erling felt warmth in his heart; he was perhaps the proudest man alive at that moment. The king's daughter, bless her heart, had chosen to take her fate in her own hands here in his home and by that she had chosen to take responsibility for the fate of all Fiordlings.

They would rise again if it was up to the princess. That much Old Erling knew for sure.

With trembling hands the bodyguards read the list. There was no doubt that the princess was being very serious about this matter.

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## **Going downtown.**

The following day, the four of them were all walking down main street.

The heavily armed bodyguards were enough to keep most people at a safe distance as they strode down the street, but there was one who seemed unaffected by the display.

Watching this unusual group walk through town was a young boy, barely in his teens, but old enough to know how he ought to behave when folks of finer lineage were about.

He didn't seem to have a care in the world, but swift as the wind he edged his way in between one of the guards and Old Erling, swiping a small bag from the old man's pocket as he slithered by.

“Bring that back!” Old Erling yelled, somewhat surprised at the theft.

One of the bodyguards darted after the boy and caught him by the neck, but he didn't manage to more than blink before he was standing with nothing but a jacket in his hand as the boy disappeared through a narrow gap between two buildings standing so close together that no one in the party had a chance to follow.

Old Erling checked his pockets, and the others noticed a smile creeping upon his face.

“Why are you smiling like that?” the bodyguard asked, still holding the jacket in his hand with disbelief.

“You just wait a second,” the old man answered in an all knowing manner while gazing in the direction in which the boy had disappeared.

It didn't take long before a black cloud rose above the rooftops.





"Hurry!" the old man yelled as he dashed off toward the dark cloud.

It resembled the fog when it rolls in over the mountains, but the sea darkened much faster than fog would be able to roll in, and the dark cloud only grew to a certain extent before it began to dissipate.

From the cloud came the boy, zig-zagging like he was completely blind and directionless.

He walked straight into the arms of the party who had all followed Old Erling towards the dark cloud.

## Flógvi.

The old man grabbed the boy by the wrist.

“Didn't I tell you to bring that bag back?”

The boy was terrified. “I can't see!” he cried.

“I know,” the old man answered, “your vision will return in a while.”

The boy stiffened when he realised that he was hearing the very same man speak whom he had robbed just moments ago.

“Who owns you?” the old man asked, planning to have quite a serious discussion with the boy's parents.

“Nobody,” the boy answered. “My parents are both dead.”

The princess, who had kept to the background, felt her heart soften. It was true that the boy had stolen, but did he really have no family that could care for him?

“Is there no one who cares for you?” she inquired and put a hand on Old Erling's arm, who in turn loosened his grip on the boy's arm.

“No,” the boy hiccupped.

“Are you telling me you have no family?” The princess felt a sting in her heart; she had herself at the age of four lost her mother, and she knew how tough it could be not to have parents or just having one.

“I only have my grandmother,” the boy replied.

“Hmm,” Old Erling mumbled. “Then you could perhaps tell us where she lives?”

“No she can't know, her heart would shatter to pieces,” the boy began.

“Well stealing is simply wrong, it is not something which is alright, and if nobody watches over you then you'll just do it again,” Old Erling insisted.

The boy tried to rebutt “If I don't do it she doesn't get anything to eat; nobody wants to hire a boy like me to work and I can't very well let her starve, can I?”

A silence fell. In some twisted way the boy was right; Looking at the boy they could see how his clothes hung in threads and how he seemed soiled inside and out, and the black ink from the octopus that had been hidden in Old Erling's satchel, shooting a jet into the boy's face when he opened the bag in order to inspect the loot, just added to the force of his statement.

After a while Old Erling started talking:

“Nevertheless stealing is not the way forward, if you promise not to run, then I will let go of your arm, but you must promise to take us to your grandmother.”

“In return for that, I will not divulge a thing about this incident. But I will talk to her so that we can find a solution which does not involve you stealing any more.”

"A boy your age should go to school and learn in order to become a real man, how about that?"

"Go to school?" the boy began.

"To become a real man – that is something you can choose, you know... yes you can run about stealing and living hand-to-mouth and rough-housing your way through life, or you can choose another way – the right way!"

"A road without deception and thievery; it's a rough road but a path you will be happy you chose when you grow older."

The boy, who was regaining his eyesight, tried to look closely at the old man.

He liked what he heard, but how could that man know how hard life was? It was obvious that he had everything, food in his mouth, clothes and a home in which to live, and what did his grandmother and he himself have?

A house that was falling apart, food, sure if there was something left over after his grandmother had eaten - he often had to lie to his grandmother about having eaten when she inquired.

Old Erling showed him his arm.

## **Otto.**

The boy counted seven marks that looked like those an octopus can inflict on a whale and other beasts.

"Do you realize what this is?" the old man inquired.

The boy nodded "Octopus?" he tried with an inquisitive look upon his face.

Old Erling didn't answer but just nodded. "That is how hungry I've been; I have been forced to fight Black Otto for the right to food."

The boy looked at Old Erling. Black Otto... He'd heard stories about an octopus older and more dangerous than all others and this old codger had fought him and won?

This was too much to believe.

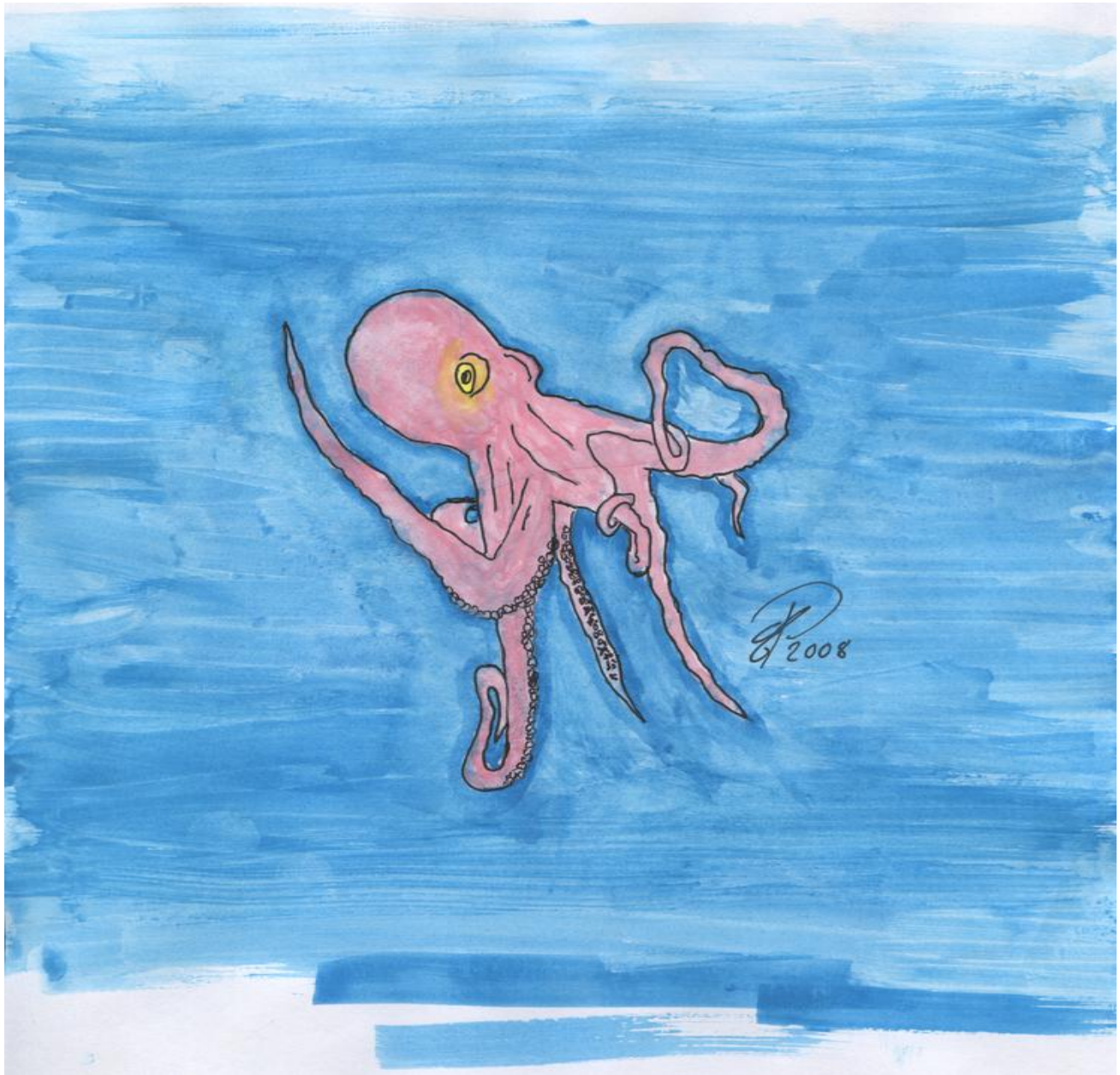
"So you are telling me that you have fought Otto?" the boy stated with disbelief.

"Yes," the old man replied.

"But both you and Otto are alive – nobody has engaged in mortal combat with Otto and walked out alive..."

"Did I say mortal combat? No. I said I had been in a fight with Otto; those are two entirely different things."

"Yeah but Otto?"



There was no way around it, Old Erling had to tell him the entire tale about how both he and Otto the Octopus had found a nice seaweed forest. Otto had planned to use it for hiding and Old Erling a younger man with big plans at the time, well he'd planned to harvest the best leaves as food.

It wasn't so odd that the two of them could not agree on the utilization, as each of them had opposing needs.



Otto was younger then and somewhat naive. The old man had tricked Otto into using only one arm by telling him the story of the Gordian Knot. And demonstrating the knot using Otto's arms as rope, he'd bound up the beast in a last ditch attempt, since he knew that Otto loved a good story — and what better way to dine than with a good story in mind?

“The Gordian Knot?” the boy inquired.

“Another story I will tell you some other day if you have an interest.”

The boy nodded, it had been a long while since anyone else other than his grandmother had cared about what he wanted, or even talked to him. Maybe it was a good idea to listen to the old man after all.

## **At grandma's.**

A while later they arrived at his grandmother's house, and while the boy fixed something for his grandmother and the “guests” to eat the old woman and Old Erling had a serious conversation.

They talked for quite a while, but when she finally came into the kitchen, she had a smile on her face and hurriedly embraced the boy.

“Erling has told me you are a boy with great ability and that he wishes to take you as an apprentice. I am so proud of you my dear Flógvi. She gently stroked his head.

Flógvi was still a little unsure. What exactly was he supposed to learn?

“Teacher...” his grandmother seemed to taste the word as it flowed from her tongue. “Your grandfather was a teacher, did you know that?”

The boy shook his head. A teacher - how would he ever become a teacher? He had never gone to school, but not all teachers have gone to school themselves, Old Erling insisted when he tried to argue against the idea.

However the decision was made; Flógvi was going into apprenticeship with Old Erling and his tour of duty would begin immediately.

Old Erling explained to the boy that the princess would secure his grandmother's living expenses and some extra, and added that once they came home carrying the Golden Eye, she would see to it that all Fiordlings would have contented lives, and as they grew old nothing would be missing, not food, a home or any form of assistance, so that they could grow old with joy and happiness.

## **The second day.**

The day after, the preparations for the quest were still going on and Old Erling had been spending a little time eyeing the twins Flógvi's grandmother had pointed out, Brimil and Tara.

They were renowned in the neighbourhood for being expert stingray riders and could certainly be of help if the party needed to travel far.

The twins were a boy and a girl, and as different as night and day.

Brimil was big and definitely not someone you'd want to brawl with, and yet he moved as if he was carrying an egg.

Tara on the other hand was small and quick, talked like a running stream, unstoppable and her behaviour was that of a regular tomboy.

Tara smiled brilliantly as they the twins came floating towards the party. They were standing on the back of a big stingray approaching with great speed and they did not stop until they were mere inches from a collision.

Tara jumped from the stingray's back, "Hey there!" she shouted, while turning a somersault which landed her right next to the princess.

"Wow, you have such nice clothes!" She let her fingers run down the princess's dress.



One of the bodyguards was about to grab Tara to lift her away but the princess stopped him.

"Thank you," the princess said, "and by golly, you guys can ride that stingray, I don't think I ever saw anyone so capable of handling the animal so well."

"Well thank you!" Tara said, lighting up in a brilliant smile.

Brimil, who had climbed down from the stingray's back, nodded as he tied the halter, if you could call it that, to a pole which made it possible for the stingray to slowly swim in a circle.

"We were wondering if you might like to help us..." the princess said.

“Really? And might I ask with what?” Tara replied in a playful tone.

“Well you see, we are going to the Castle of the Abyss.”

A quiet fell upon the bystanders who'd been enthralled with the procession. The twins eyed each other. Tara being quiet was a most unusual event, but the Castle of the Abyss, this was an adventure bigger than any she had ever dreamed.

As she let her gaze wander from face to face as if to gauge the seriousness of the proposal, her eyes fell on Flógvi.

She let her gaze stay on him for quite a while and didn't look elsewhere until a small smile appeared on the boy's face.

“The Castle of the Abyss... far away if you ask me. Even if we use stingrays the trip is going to take a few days... are you sure you would like to do that?” Tara asked.

“Yes,” Old Erling replied, “We are also willing to pay you well for your services.”

“Money is not the question,” Brimil said. “The question is rather if our father will let us go, there is so much work to be done with the seahorses and the stingrays.”

“I understand, but then we'd better go ask your father - am I right?”

Tara was up on the stingray's back in a single leap “Come on, let's go!”

Moments later the party was on their way to the twins' father, travelling at tremendous speed.

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## **Headed for the Castle of the Abyss.**

“NO, NO CHANCE WHATSOEVER!” their father yelled. “I have never heard such nonsense. One thing is that you, Old Erling, are talking such madness, but there there is no way my children will go with you. They have plenty to do with the animals and payment collections for Goldfin.”

Old Erling was baffled. This man dared call his plan mad, accused him of leading the princess and Flógvi astray while at the same time he allowed his children to work for the biggest moneybroker in the kingdom, a man who was anything but a gentleman when it came to treating his customers fairly. Old Erling had heard how he had squeezed the nice old widow for everything she had and then taken her house from her - how could this man even consider calling anybody anything - was he not afraid how his behaviour and attitude would be understood in time to come?

Old Erling understood that they'd get no further with the matter. The best course of action was to rent some seahorses and take the long road; once they arrived at the outskirts of Black Smoker Forest they'd have to find someone who could lead them through it.



It was very clear that the twins were anything but happy about their father's antics and it was with great dismay they saw the party off as they strode into the horizon on their newly rented seahorses.

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## Ollie the farmer.

When Black Smoker Forest appeared in their field of vision they also saw a couple of tiny houses. One of them they'd heard was the home of a farmer who knew the forest and his family. And the information turned out to be correct.



Ollie, as the farmer was called, was not happy with the thought of leaving his wife and six children alone, but the glittering stones the princess lifted from her purse decided the matter, and so he had no choice.

For the price the princess offered his wife could clothe the kids and feed them well for quite a while, and the party had promised him even more once he had shown them the way through Black Smoker Forest, something that shouldn't be too difficult, after all the crabs had not ventured that far south yet.

## Black smoker Forest

Black Smoker Forest as it was formally called was not your average picnic resort, and had the journey around it not been too long and dangerous as well the party would not have set foot there.



“Is it still far to the Castle of the Abyss?” Flógvi asked, for the third time, the farmer observed; it seemed that when it came to patience the boy could certainly do with a lesson or two.

There was a sudden shudder and one of the black smokers cracked open.

Bubbles thrust from the break and the surrounding water suddenly got very warm.

“Hurry and take care, things will get very hot if not boiling pretty soon. Quickly, this way so you don't get scalded!” Ollie yelled.

The party gazed at the big smoke stack which lay broken and from which smoke-filled bubbles violently gushed.

They passed by as quickly as possible and moments later the broken smoke stack disappeared behind other pillars of Black Smoker Forest as they passed them by.

“What are all those pillars?” Flógví asked, still somewhat affected by the violence of the event they had just passed. Old Erling tried his best to explain the phenomenon.

“Well you see, all these pillars are kind of like the blowhole of the world.”

“Imagine the world is like a kettle that is boiling and the pillars are the spout where the steam is trying to get out.”

“In this forest you can find all kinds of materials: food, minerals and metals, you name it, but everyone is afraid of the horrors from the Castle of the Abyss. Havgrím and his men hold the area in an iron grip and stories are told that they will slay any man on the spot if they come upon him, and thus we can't use these free resources that nature is giving us... it is truly a shame.”

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## **Captured!**

And on they rode, how long Old Erling couldn't say but had it not been for Ollie's shout, they would surely have slipped into misery.

Ollie could never understand how he himself was able to do it, but he had in the blink of an eye noticed that a pillar was falling and that it would hit the princess and surely kill her.

Ollie had been able to drive his seahorse forward with immense speed and while pushing the princess aside, he and the seahorse were flung aside as well.

Clearly, thanks to Ollie's quick wits, the whole party had just gotten immensely lucky.

When the debris swirling around settled, Havgrím's men had captured and carefully bound them all, with the exception of Ollie, to prevent any of them from escaping.

Havgrím's men were laughing — it was not every day they made such good a catch. Havgrím would be most pleased.



Unbeknown to the captors Ollie was lying alive under the pillar which had fallen and could peer at what was happening from a tiny crack between the pillar and the sea floor. He was terrified. Not only was he trapped here under the pillar but all his comrades had been captured by Havgrím's party, leaving him completely helpless.

He was only alive because the seahorse's body had saved him from the rock avalanche started by those thugs who had abducted his traveling companions.

The seahorse was suffering terribly, and it pained the farmer to see the proud animal caught like this by his side.

He patted the horse's neck, "Lie still, I will find a way to get us both out of this."

If Bessa, as the horse was called, could sense whether he was lying or not he didn't know, but it was as if something he said stirred the creature into one final gesture. The seahorse used every fiber of her body to lift the pillar so that Ollie could wriggle his way out from beneath the fallen rock.

He quickly cleared enough of the rubble so that he could wrench the seahorse free, but it was too late. Bessa closed her eyes while Ollie held his arms around her neck.

He couldn't tell for sure but he could swear there was a hint of a smile on the animal's face as she drew her final breath. But one thing was for sure — Havgrím was not going to be allowed to get away with this.

## **The crab and the mooray.**

It didn't take Ollie long to find their tracks. He sped forward in hot pursuit. A tough night ensued, but eventually he caught up with the raiders and the captive party, eyeing them from a concealed crevice, one that it would turn out concealed more than just your average farmer.

Had the claw caught properly the first time death would have been sure, however the crab only caught Ollie's cape and the farmer was quick to slip it off.

He thrust through a small gap through which he had been peering and almost didn't dare to check on the crab, which he had seen when it got hold of the cape, but he had to know if the monstrous thing was following.



The face that met him was horrific.

The black eyes seemed to stare straight into his soul and he felt an icy chill come over him.

For a brief moment he stared – it seemed like an eternity before he managed to pull his gaze away, fleeing as fast as his legs could carry him.

He scurried towards what looked like a small coral reef, and lost all sense of time playing this dangerous game of hide and seek with the king crab which seemed always to be only a few steps behind.

The cave entrance looked tranquil and a sense of security came upon him, and spurred by this he hurried towards the opening even faster than before.



He had no sooner arrived at the entrance than another beast reared its menacing head.

A moray eel bigger than any Ollie had ever seen stuck its head out into the open. Ollie knew that the moray must have felt something stirring the waters outside, and for an eel like this that meant dinner was served.

So the farmer stood absolutely still as the moray slithered out, his whole body frozen in sheer terror. This was probably a good thing at that very moment, as the moray would otherwise have had no problems locating him much faster, but eventually it did and steered right at him.



But just as the giant mouth opened up and Ollie threw himself to the ground, a giant claw unexpectedly came to his assistance.



The king crab had noticed an even better meal than the small Fiordling and the farmer, who did not plan to stick around to wait for the outcome of the battle between these two titans, ran.

It was with a trembling heart that he finally managed to get back on track and began following his friends and captors, and the feeling got worse as he tracked them all the way to the Castle of the Abyss where the thugs had been headed.



If he had to climb, he was certain he would be in trouble, and who knew what was hiding in those gaps and caves between him and the castle. Caves and gaps looked downright menacing, especially after his recent brush with death.

Not far away the farmer noticed some animals known to the Fiordlings as seaweed-fliers. You probably know them better as jellyfish.

If he could manage to capture one of them he should be able to ride it up to the castle walls.

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## **Into the dungeon - the marriage of a princess.**

Old Erling, Flógví and the bodyguards tried all they could, but tight hands gripped them and there was nothing to do except to march ahead until they came to the cell.

Forward and down on all fours they flew, one after the other, onto a floor that seemed to tilt further as they landed.

“Stay in the middle, or you shall all fall into the abyss,” the biggest of the jailors yelled with a laugh, and the prisoners luckily did, because he had not more than shouted this than the whole room seemed to tilt first one way and then the other until it found its equilibrium. And if they fell into the abyss, nothing could save them.

The door to the dungeon was heavy and the hallway filled with a thunderous sound as it was slammed shut.

The dungeon itself was moist, dark, dirty and not very pleasant at all, but the princess was not much better off herself.

While the others in the party had been led to the dungeon, she had been led into one of the towers [place the towers for the reader somehow? “in the castle” or similar?].

When she entered Havgrím's room, closely followed by two of his thugs, the eerie feeling she got sent shivers through her body, yet the beauty almost hurt her eyes. The red curtains gave a royal feel, but nothing could hide that this was the room of a robber baron who was only in the position he held because he had thieved, committed atrocities too bad to speak of and used others without the slightest concern for the consequences and without any form of remorse.

A table was neatly placed in the middle of the room, and Havgrím had placed himself at one end.

“Sit down my precious,” he said with a smile, pointing to a chair at the other end of the table.

A servant pulled the chair out but the princess refused to sit down.

Havgrím waved his fingers and the two thugs forced her into the seat.

“Why so difficult? Everything will be so much easier if you just do as you are told,” Havgrím said in a harsh manner.

“You are not my master. You are nothing but a thief and a ruffian,” the princess answered without hesitation or doubt in her voice.

Havgrím couldn't help comparing the princess to her father. In his time the king had been a proud man, but when his wife the queen had died the king lost his shine and it had been easy to take the sceptre; the sceptre which would make Havgrím the king of the entire ocean floor.

“There there, don't be so feisty, I know for a fact that you care for your people and not least for those who are in the dungeon sitting upon the logan-stone floor.”

The princess said nothing but Havgrím noticed the effect of his words.

“Please eat, we can't have your highness going to bed on an empty stomach the night before our wedding,” Havgrím said with a dastardly smile.

“Wedding? You are insane!” the princess snapped.

“Well I beg to differ,” Havgrím said with a look on his face that bode ill.

“No, you are insane – I will never marry you, not now, not in a thousand years!” the princess replied.

Havgrím laughed. “Be mine and your friends will be freed, if not I shall let them perish and you shall be mine anyway.” The princess shuddered. His evil knew no bounds and she realized that this would be the only way she could save her friends. If only she had never embarked upon this adventure. Why had she been so hasty in this matter? What was a sceptre when all you really need as a good leader is a good heart and concern for your fellow beings?

“So if I marry you, my friends will be spared and they are left to leave here as free men?”

“Naturally,” Havgrím answered, with a smile that brought anything but ease of mind to the princess.

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## **In the cell.**

Old Erling was scratching the stone surface with his cane, thinking frantically.

Flógvi had somehow managed to snatch the key from their keepers when they were thrown into the cell, but it didn't make much of a difference since the keyhole was on the outside and there was no way to insert it nor turn it from the inside, and to make matters worse the logan-stone floor would keel over at almost the slightest movement, sending them all into the abyss below.

A small crack was the only indication that the wall and floor were not connected and that they were mere inches away from the abyss below should the logan-stone tip the wrong way, but none of them had really dared to begin investigating the dungeon closer.

They just sat there, awaiting their fate.

They had heard from their captors what had happened in the tower.

If the princess married Havgrím they'd be saved, but if she refused...

The thought was unbearable.

It almost didn't matter what happened, because even if they were saved then the princess

was still doomed to stay with the vile prince of this castle.

To imagine, that beautiful soul married to Havgrím.

The thought was horrendous; it would almost be better to fall into the darkness.

Outside in another room their guardians laughed, not knowing about the feats of Ollie.

After much brouhaha Ollie had actually managed to get on top of a giant jellyfish and after an even bigger fracas he had managed to get the jellyfish to carry him up to a window through which he had snuck inside.

How he was to find his fellow travelers he didn't know, and how he should find his way in this maze he still had to figure out. It was sheer luck that he passed by the guards' lounge where he overheard a conversation that gave him the chills:

"Yes, they are sitting there nicely, just waiting..." the laughter which followed was filled with evil.

"They truly believe that they'll be saved if the princess marries Havgrím."

"Fools – they ought to know that the moment those two are married, he will take the sceptre and pronounce himself the sole ruler of the sea and he shall send those fools to the very bottom as his first act. Naturally the princess will be allowed to see them leave from one of the windows."

Another voice added, "Yes, and once the princess is his, there is nothing to stop him. The king of the Fiordlings has already announced that once the princess is married she shall inherit the kingdom. Nobody will oppose him as they will think the princess has married of her own free will and that the nice princess should certainly be allowed to get her inheritance".

The jailers laughed again.

"And who better than Havgrím himself to put things straight?"

The laughter boomed through the hallways and Ollie realized that he'd best find the others sooner rather than later.

And what was it the jailers had said, that they were waiting...



Behind one of these doors perhaps?

## A glimpse at the Golden Eye.

Ollie snuck up to the first door. It was not his friends that he saw but the Golden Eye. It was lying in the middle of the room, but the only way anyone could get to it seemed to be by tipping a stone to cover the hole.

The door was locked with a big lock. He would have to figure out how to pick it. He had a feeling that something terrible had to lurk in the darkness otherwise it was such an elaborate setup, but maybe if he quickly grabbed the rope that was hanging on the wall, he could reach the fixture he had noticed earlier, and if he could get the rope fastened, well...

He stretched as far as he could and reached the fixture, tied the rope onto the fixture and pulled. The rock wavered a bit.

Screams from the room next to him stopped him in his task.

Laughter rumbled from the jailers' lounge. For a while he just stood there not knowing what to



do.

Then he tried again and the screams grew louder and the laughter as well.

He was baffled — the gap between the Golden Eye and the door seemed to have narrowed. But his curiosity made him halt his endeavor for a moment and sneak over to the door from where he had heard the screams.

He peered through the small barred window and saw a terrible sight; his companions were standing all the way up against the wall on the floor which seemed to tilt, while something stirred in the depths below under the gap which appeared to widen more with each passing moment. It suddenly dawned upon him how close he had been to pulling his companions to an early demise, as the rock and fixture he had tried to manipulate were all part of the mechanism of the tilting floor.

He opened the shutter in the door's window a little more. "I'll get you out," he whispered as loud as he dared, so as to make sure the jailers would not pick up on him.

"You can't, I have the key," Flógvi replied disheartened.

"Then throw it to me. Try to hit the slit under the door."

Flógvi straightened up. Maybe there really was a chance of escape after all.

He aimed and threw. The key sailed forward and slid right under the door.

"Huzzah!" Flógvi mumbled, making a victorious fist.

Ollie saw the key slide under the door and out across the hallway floor. But before he managed to catch it the key continued right past him and ended up in a crack in the floor.

The time between the key disappearing into the crack and the time when Ollie heard it hit the bottom told him that this was not going to be easy.

He scurried across the floor and looked into the crack. Okay, he thought maybe it wasn't going to be too hard after all.

...

## **Whispers of the past.**

He laid flat on the floor and stretched his arm down, reaching into the hole.

His fingers searched the dark crack but eventually he could feel the key. Had it not been for the tremor that washed over the Castle of the Abyss, he probably would have grabbed the key at the first instance, but alas.

A piece of the ceiling came loose and fell straight onto his head.

Luckily however he was wearing his shell helmet; as without the helmet he'd probably have

been much worse off.

It took a while before his vision cleared, and when he got onto his feet an old man was standing in front of him.

The farmer shuddered in shock.

The man in front of him was clearly a Fiordling but his clothes looked like those worn by elders, hundreds upon hundreds of years ago.

Ollie blinked and shook his head — the stone had hit him hard.

“No, I am here – just like you are here,” the old man said.

“But where did you come from?”

“I’ve been here all along!”

Ollie didn’t quite understand, but wouldn’t let that throw him off. The old man smiled as if he knew which thoughts raced through Ollie’s mind.

“You were doing something, am I right?” the old man asked.

The farmer suddenly remembered the key which he was clutching. The farmer looked at the old man, who pointed at the door wherein Ollie had seen the scepter.

“The Golden Eye?” he asked.

“Your choice; if you bring back the sceptre you could probably feed your family for the rest of your life and save the farm, because there can be no doubt that the king would reward you well. As it is you could easily get away with the scepter.”

“You want me to choose between “The Eye” and my companions?”

“It is not I who want you to choose – it is fate!”

“But there really is no choice...”

A smile came upon the old man’s face when Ollie gave his answer and then the old man disappeared in a flash of light.

Ollie blinked a couple of times and when his vision cleared again he realized he was still lying on the floor with his hand down in the crack, his hand clutching the key. Another small quake sent tremors through the castle.

Ollie jumped up... his friends!

...

## The escape.

Not a fraction of a second too early, he managed to unlock the door allowing his companions to scramble out. For right before his eyes a moray bigger and more terrifying than any Ollie had ever seen before, reared its ugly head, squeezing up through the opening that had appeared in the dungeon floor.

They tried to close the door, but to no avail: the moray was too strong.

To their great luck they were all on the correct side of the door when the moray pushed its way into the hallway and turned right.

The screams from the jailers' lounge where laughter had been heard just moments ago were horrible. By another stroke of luck for the companions the dungeons were located deep within the Castle of the Abyss, so nobody seemed to notice what was going on.

"This way, quickly!" Ollie shouted, and the company followed him down the hallway and into an adjacent hallway that could be closed off by a door. He slammed it shut and not a moment too soon because the moray had their scent and was right on their heels.

The door shuddered as the moray tried to break through in hot pursuit, but luckily the material was indeed very strong and it witheld the moray's attack.

"The stairs are this way!" one of the bodyguards shouted, and hurried off.

"What now?" Flógvi yelled as he tried to keep up.

"We have to find the princess before Havgrím marries her," the other bodyguard replied.

"Yes, Havgrím promised to spare your lives if she married him, and she said yes, but asked to be allowed to sleep until morning."

"He agreed, but he has no intention of honoring his promise. His plan was to marry her and let you rot or fall into the abyss, whichever came first," Ollie added.

"How do you know this?" one of the bodyguards asked.

"I heard his men discuss it," Ollie answered.

This prompted Old Erling to speak. "Nobody should believe anything Havgrím says. His words have never been something one should trust, believe me, for I have both heard and seen what Havgrím is capable of."

...

## Underwater paragliding.

They stood there silently for a while. They had all felt with their own bodies what Havgrím was capable of. But this was no time for silent contemplation, this was a time for action.

After searching for quite a while they finally found the room where Havgrím was keeping the princess incarcerated.

The two guards who were keeping watch outside the chamber were quickly overcome by the princess's bodyguards.

Their years of practice finally came in handy and shortly thereafter the entire party was assembled in the princess's room. It was clear they had to flee — but how?

The only ways out were either through the courtyard where most of Havgrím's henchmen were sleeping or through the window, but there was naught but the abyss below.

"I know, the bedsheets!" the princess said urgently.

The bedsheets? – They looked upon her with confusion painted in their faces. "Yes the bedsheets, if we hold onto the corners we can use them as wings..."

"How?" a bodyguard asked somewhat puzzled.

"Look here!" The princess grabbed a corner, pointed at the other, and asked Flógvi to grab it.

Old Erling caught onto the idea and passed another corner to Ollie while he himself took the other.

"Exactly, and in order to turn you pull down in the back... Don't think too much, we'll have no problem sailing around to the front and landing some distance from the castle."

It didn't take long before the party was floating outside the Castle of the Abyss on their way towards freedom.





Shouts and lights in windows indicated that their escape had been noticed.

In a stroke of sheer bad luck, one of Havgrím's henchmen looked out the window just as they sailed by.

"They have got out!" Shouts repeated and men began pouring out through the front gate.

...

## **Running the gauntlet.**

The party veered down a good distance from the gate.

"Quickly – get going!" the bodyguards insisted.

"It's no use, we can't escape, they are too fast."

"Don't give up now – that way," Ollie was pointing towards Black Smoker Forest which could be seen in the distance.

They ran, but the henchmen were closing in fast and had almost closed the gap when dark shadows whooshed by above and beside them, heading straight for the pursuers and caused them to come to a complete stop.

One of the shadows turned about and came rushing towards the escapees.

As the shadow came closer they noticed the distinct form of a stingray and two figures on its back — the twins had arrived.

“Hurry, get on!” they shouted in unison, and the party did as ordered.

The pursuers, emboldened when they saw that the stingrays had merely put themselves between the escapees and themselves and were not attacking, they slowly began to approach.

To make matters even worse one of the henchmen had managed to get up on the back of the main stingray. It didn't look pretty, but he managed to get the animal to veer away, making an opening between the party and their pursuers as the rest of the rays followed the main ray with interest.

...

## **Goodbye to Havgrím.**

Suddenly a strong quake rippled through the ocean floor, the twins pushed their stingray hard and they swiftly sailed away from the Castle of the Abyss.

The pursuers on the other hand had a hard time even remaining on their feet.

The henchman who had managed to get up on the lead ray fell to the bottom as it veered away from the epicenter.

When the seabed tore, screams of horror washed through the night but there was no one to hear it, for they drowned in the thunderous noise of the quake.

Behind them the quake increased in strength and the Castle of the Abyss tilted dangerously.

As the seabed ripped apart, the castle tilted even more. The towers reached their breaking point and tore from the walls while falling apart, and eventually the abyss swallowed the castle as well as Havgrím and all his followers.



Brimil turned his eyes to the rear and as a result more or less brought the stingrays to a halt. He yanked a little and the stingray turned about and they saw that the danger was gone. A gaping wound in the seabed and a little sand slowly whirling away was all that remained.

## Rebuilding.

The trip home was a lot more comfortable than the trip out; not only did it take place far above Black Smoker Forest, but it also completely avoided king crabs and other beasts lurking below and the twins could tell the tale about how Tara had pleaded, begged, and coerced her brother until he had finally agreed to help her find the party, his stubbornness making them all laugh which, at least in this case, was merited.

Once they returned the farmer's wife met them. Even as far away as this they had felt the tremors, though luckily no one had been hurt, and they all helped to fix Ollie's house.

The princess herself, the bodyguards, even the stingrays toiled away and in less than a day the house was in a condition that allowed the farmer to stay there with his family.

"We'll be back to help you further as soon as I have been at my father's and told him about our voyage," the princess declared as she mounted a stingray.

"I'll stay here in order to help Ollie, but I'd prefer if Flógvi went home to see his grandmother," Old Erling announced.

"I think that is a very good idea," Tara said with a smile.

Once they arrived in town the princess asked if the twins and Flógvi wanted a tour of the castle, but Flógvi answered evasively and said he'd probably best go see his grandmother and tell her everything... well maybe not everything he had experienced, otherwise she might get so scared she'd never let him go outside a door again.

The princess laughed and the twins suggested they'd just drop the princess and her bodyguards off and take Flógvi to his home, but first ensuring they'd get a rain check regarding the castle tour invitation.

The princess thought that was a splendid suggestion and so it should be.

Once back at the castle the princess entered the throne room.

...

## Reunion.

The king, who was sitting there in utter dismay, lit up when he saw his daughter and even though they had failed to retrieve the Golden Eye the king said, "Daughter I appreciate the fact that you have faithful friends, and the most important matter is that you are alive. With Havgrím gone we can rebuild the realms to their former glory and things will be like they were in the good old days.

But the princess rejected his suggestion. "No not like in the old days! In the future all our citizens shall share all of the resources of the realm and we must like everyone else do our part to make this a good place to live."



The king nodded thoughtfully. He would take her words under consideration, but seven days from now there should be a feast, and he sent forth tidings to everyone in the realm that better times were ahead.

And on the eve of the feast the finest craftsmen in the kingdom handed the princess a new sceptre.

Inscribed on top of the crystal pearl you could read the words:



**“Of all the things which wisdom provides to make life entirely happy, much the greatest is the possession of friendship.”**

The princess smiled, because she knew that friends truly are the greatest treasure, and though they are a treasure one cannot own, if you have them you can win every time trouble comes along.

The feast lasted for days and the companions had all been invited, Old Erling, Flógvi, Tara and Brimil, Ollie, his wife as well as their kids, and never before had any of them had such a good time, because better friends one couldn't find and the princess promised that it should be like that for all time to come.

*And the Fiordlings, where are they now? I do not know, I suppose out on some new and exciting adventure.*

*Should you take a walk along the beach you might see something that reminds you of a Fiordling in the surf, but be careful and always remember to take an adult if you go on a quest to find the Fiordlings.*

**The End**

I hope you liked this story and if you have not done so already a small contribution would be appreciated in order to allow me to continue my endeavours. You can do so by clicking [here](#) or on the button below.



*And don't forget to share this story with your family, friends and the rest of the world!*

*All the best! – Einar Petersen – <http://einarpetersen.com>*

# Fiordlings.

By

EINAR PETERSEN



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## About the story

You are about to set forth upon a quest for lost treasure, set in an adventurous underwater world created by Einar Petersen populated by characters that have grown out of a set of figurines created by the author's father Børge Petersen.

This is a wondrous story by an author split between the fairytale country of H.C. Andersen and the saga-filled, wind-blown waters of the Faroe Islands.

A gripping tale about people doing what is right in times when everything else is wrong.

Premise of the story: "Of all the things which wisdom provides to make life entirely happy, much the greatest is the possession of friendship"

Quote from Epicurus - Greek philosopher, BC 341-270