

## The Adventure of the Eye Gem

It was a day like any other day in the surroundings of the Eternity Lake.

Fedolo, Elilo, Gabbolo, Ludolo and Pittolo had just woken up from their long sleep. Outside, the weather was warmer than usual even if the sky was grey and full of clouds; in the distance the sun was shining behind the mountains. The five little dwarves lived together at Oakmie, a huge treehouse in the middle of Mountdwarf Wood. Oakmie was such a comfortable and welcoming home that they couldn't imagine a different place to live. There was a round fireplace in the middle of the living room where the dwarves loved staying together, having no other trouble than thinking about what to cook.

That morning everything seemed normal; after a big breakfast with scrambled eggs, bacon, and raspberry juice, Fedolo and Ludolo took the elevator to their outdoor library where they wanted to spend the rest of the day reading and chilling. Around midday Gabbolo convinced the others to go for a walk in the woods to enjoy the blooming flowers and go fishing.

While they were sitting on the banks of the lake throwing stones in the water, hoping to catch a trout or two to barbecue in the afternoon, Elilo suddenly found a strange piece of rock. He had no idea about what it could be, it was tiny and smooth, but it was completely different from the rest of the gravel.

“Hey come here, guys! Look what I found” yelled Elilo excited.

“What's that? A marble?” asked Fedolo out of breath for rushing to see what his friend was holding.

“It emits a greenish light” whispered Ludolo.

“I don't want any trouble; we should leave it there!” said Gabbolo nervously.

“Why don't we ask Artifus instead?” suggested Pittolo. “He is mad about uncommon artefacts”.

All of them instantly agreed with Pittolo so they decided to pay a visit to Artifus Oldsword and find out more about the tiny piece of stone.

Their old friend Artifus Oldsword was a wizard who lived a few miles north of the lake, in a gloomy and messy laboratory where he was always trying out new potions and spells while studying ancient magical stones. Artifus opened the door before they could even knock, as if he was waiting for them to come.

“My dear fellows, come in. We have so many things to discuss”.

“I don't want any trouble” said Gabbolo.

“Well, I’m not sure about that. I know you’re here for the stone! Let me tell you that it isn’t an ordinary rock. It’s a piece of the Eye Gem an ancient and extremely powerful stone. The creature who takes it has the power to destroy or to protect Mountdwarf Wood. The legend says that the Eye Gem is hidden somewhere in the Intertoux Glacier. The Dark Ogres have been looking for it for centuries. I suppose they have an evil plan to use it against us.”

“Oh, no! We should have left it where it was”, said the dwarves in unison.

“Oh well, I’m pretty sure this tiny little magical piece of stone chose you, it wanted to be found” continued the wizard.

Artifus Oldsward explained that they were about to undertake the most amazing adventure of their lives, they had to find the rest of the Eye Gem before anyone else. The wizard had spent weeks arranging the dwarves’ trip. He gave them a map to reach the Intertoux Glacier, a few Zurgos, weapons, supplies and five beautiful winged ponies. Ludolo kept the tiny Eye Gem in the pocket of his coat. Fedolo, Elilo, Gabbolo, Pittolo and Ludolo felt confused and scared. They just wanted to go back home, but they couldn’t.

On the next day they set out on their journey, according to the map they had to stop on the Cynthian Alps and find the passage to the Icyland World which led to the Glacier. The weather was freezing and foggy on the peak of the mountains. The ponies lost their bearings because of the impetuous wind, it started snowing heavily. They decided to try to find a shelter, but suddenly a huge amount of snow came. The Dark Ogres, who had been warned about the presence of the dwarves on the trail of the Eye Gem, tried to slow them down by causing an avalanche which swept the dwarves away violently.

It took a very long time before the dwarves could continue their journey, they lost most of their supplies and the Zurgos, four gold coins that they needed to pay the toll to access Icyland World.

When they reached the door to the Icyland World, they realised there was no way to enter without paying the toll, the entrance was sealed. In that moment they knew they had no other choice than fight the Dark Ogres and get the Zurgos to enter. But there was no sign of the Dark Ogres in the surroundings, so they looked at the map Artifus gave them to try to locate the direction where the Dark Ogres came from. After a few days-journey they managed to track some of them down. In fact, three Dark Ogres were going west, trying to find a shortcut to the gate to the Icyland World.

The dwarves didn’t know how to use their weapons properly, but they fought as bravely as they could; unexpectedly Ludolo caught the Zurgos while Elilo and Fedolo were fighting against two of the enemies and Gabbolo and Pittolo were trying to distract the other one. When Ludolo realized that they could enter the Icyland World, he just yelled at the rest of the group and whistled loudly. The

winged ponies rescued the five little dwarves, they flew back to the magical door on the Cynthian Alps.

Once on the other side of the door, they found themselves in the middle of the woods, it was dark and too silent, but following a narrow path they saw a weak light in the distance. It was a sign which read '*Inn of the Phoenix*'. Finally, they found a warm shelter for the night and a proper meal, they were starving. The place was full of strange creatures, all of them seemed to enjoy each other's company; they were eating and singing. They sat at a small table and asked for stakes, fries, sandwiches with butter and jam. They were about to have dinner when a group of elves sat at the table next to them. They were tall and elegant, their clothes were made of gold and silver, their weapons looked precious too. They introduced themselves to the dwarves as May, Sarago, Mun and Sulbo, the Elves of the North. They all began to share the story of their journeys, the dwarves soon discovered that the elves also wanted to reach the Intertoux Glacier to defeat the Master of Death, an evil wizard who apparently had already managed to locate and steal the Eye Gem.

After resting for two days at the '*Phoenix Inn*', Elilo, Fedolo, Gabbolo, Ludolo and Pittolo got back on the road to the Intertoux Glacier. The journey lasted a few days which seemed endless until they finally arrived near the Glacier. They felt exhausted and discouraged, but they managed to find a cave and camp for the night. There, they immediately discovered that they weren't alone. In fact, they met Milout, an ordinary man who had found shelter there for the night because he got lost during a hike. They helped him to set the fire and they all shared some food, chatting so intensely that the dwarves told him about their mission.

Unfortunately, Milout wasn't who he said he was, on the contrary, he was the Master of Death who used black magic to hide his true-self and get the information he needed. During the night he put an evil plan into action. He set fake road signs to the Intertoux Glacier and switched the dwarves' map. He wanted to attract the five little creatures to his lair where the Eye Gem was hidden. Once there, he had planned to use a powerful spell to immobilize the dwarves with a set of traps and steal the last tiny piece of the magical stone.

As the sun came up the dwarves wished Milout good luck on his way back home and they flew to the Glacier riding their beautiful ponies. According to the new map, they were really close to their destination, but that place didn't look like a glacier at all; it was too late, they found themselves facing the mysterious and extremely dangerous hidden traps. The dwarves suddenly felt paralysed. The Master of Death had planned everything in advance, but there was one little detail he couldn't foresee: Artifus Oldsword appeared unexpectedly to help his five little friends. The good wizard had

a magical stick, thanks to which he deactivated most of the traps, unfortunately one of them risked blowing up Gabbolo's leg.

When the dwarves managed to get to the Master of Death's lair, they discovered an armoured door. The little piece of the Eye Gem which Ludolo had been keeping in his pocket began to shine vividly; the door magically opened, and the little dwarves managed to put the stone together.

The Eye Gem was finally completed, it emanated a green bright and powerful light.

Fedolo touched the magical stone with his sword, instantly the green rays started to fluctuate around the weapon. It began to shine as well; all the power of the Eye Gem was channeled into Fedolo's sword. Elilo and Pittolo destroyed the stone and tried to escape the room together with the rest of the group. The dwarves were attacked by the Master of Death's guards, they tried to fight them back bravely. At the same time Artifus tried to put a spell on them, he wanted to protect his little friends making them invisible. Unfortunately, he couldn't finish the spell properly, the Master of Death took Elilo who fought back using his sword and his ability to run extremely fast. Unfortunately, his enemy was incredibly strong and pulverized him using black magic. A strong gust of wind came, the dwarves were in the middle of the battle, suddenly the Elves from the North appeared to help them.

Fedolo, riding his winged pony, flung his sword against the black wizard, the Master of Death was defeated, and the battle ended.

Ludolo, Pittolo, Gabbolo and Fedolo felt grateful to be alive and they knew their little friend Elilo had died as a hero, trying to protect them. The dwarves could finally go back to Oakmie, together with Artifus and their new and loyal friends, the Elves from the North. The dwarves decided to give the powerful sword to the wizard, as a sign of respect and gratitude. They knew he would keep it safe, ensuring peace and tranquility for everyone at Mountdwarf Wood.