



THE LADY OF STAVOREN

Chapter 1

Once upon a time there was a small town in the northwest of the Netherlands. It was named Stavoren. The town was an important trading city. There were many merchants, who were doing good business in their own country and abroad.



The merchants earned a lot of money. So much money that they were very, very rich. They were so rich that they did not know what to do with all their money. They even made their front door from gold and they placed goldengarden fences. Wealth made that the people behave differently. That was also the case with the merchants of Stavoren. They were very stubborn.

The worst was a woman, a widow of a merchant. She was so rich that she lived in a beautiful palace with gold plated floors, ceilings and walls, all trimmed with sparkling gems.

She was the owner of a large fleet of ships that sailed around the world. She had so much money and possessions, she did not know exactly how wealthy she was. The woman felt that everyone should have lots of respect for her and now everyone had to address her as "Lady of Stavoren".

Even though she was very rich, she remained dissatisfied. She wanted more and more. And... she wanted to find the most precious thing in the world. She did not know what that was, but she desperately wanted to have it.

One day she called the most experienced captain of the best ship of her fleet, and ordered him to load his ship full of gold. "Why, Lady", he asked. "and what's my destination?"

"That your own choice, "said the lady. "As long as you come back with the most precious thing there is in the whole world. Then I am richer and more important than all the kings and emperors in the world."



The captain went to sea. He came in many ports in many countries. He saw wonderful things, but nothing was special enough.

After a few months he arrived in a small town, and he went to a small store. He asked a owner if he could show him the most precious object he possessed. He would pay with gold. The man walked into a stockroom behind the shop and came back with...

Chapter 2

..... a goldfinch.



The captain was very surprised because it was only an insignificant bird.

The man told him that the goldfinch belonged to his granddaughter but she was very ill and she could not take care of it.



- What a pity!- exclaimed the captain. But I do not think that a bird is the most precious thing there is in the whole world.

- I don't think so – answered the old man. This goldfinch not only is the most important thing to my granddaughter, but also it is a special bird because of its singing. It's wonderful because it's able to change the hardest heart into the most merciful person.

The captain was thinking about that and asked:

- If this bird is so wonderful, why do you want to sell it?
- Because I could pay the best doctors in the world and she got better – answered the old man.



The captain gave him the gold and took the small bird cage thinking about.....

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Chapter 3

He was not sure if the bird was good enough for her. He therefore decided to head for Uganda in the hope of finding the biggest and most precious diamond in the world.

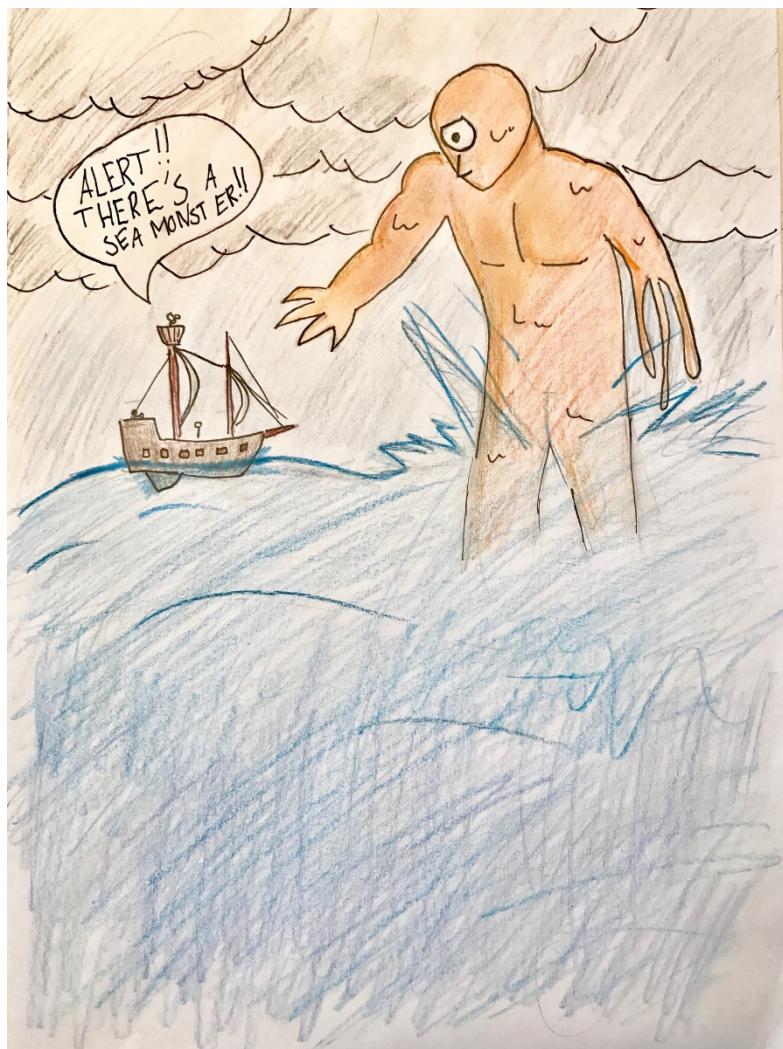
He never made it to Uganda, though.

When his ship sailed into the dangerous Bermuda triangle a huge slimy sea monster with only one eye, a big nose, two arms, and a bold head appeared from the sea.

It took the ship deep under the water and crushed it with its arms.

The captain was lucky enough to end on a floating piece of wood.

The goldfinch flew until the captain appeared and then it landed on his shoulder.



They floated until the next morning when the captain spotted an island and swam towards it.

Of course the goldfinch didn't swim, but flew instead.



Together they ended up on the shore of the island.

They were very thirsty and worked their way deep into the island looking for water.

After a while the captain saw a native girl on the ground.

He walked closer to the girl, who was about to wake up from her sleep.

She was very beautiful. He asked where she had come from.

"I come from a tribe nearby and they sent me away because I did something **very** bad", the girl replied.

The captain wondered what the girl had done since she was send away.

The girl saw the bird and thought about stealing it, but she knew that in order to do that, she would first have to kill the captain.



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Chapter 4

At the moment the captain decided to take a nap after an exhausting day, the girl grabbed the goldfinch and she was ready to leave the island. Then suddenly, something happened that she never expected, the goldfinch began to sing sweetly. It softened the girl's heart and she regretted fooling the captain in such a devious way. The captain, who was in a deep sleep, woke up when he heard the goldfinch singing. Seeing the girl in the sea with the goldfinch on her shoulder, he started to call them back.



captain understood why initially her heart was so cruel. Then he remembered what the old man told him about the goldfinch, and smiled satisfied about the choice he had made. The goldfinch might have been worth more than he thought.

“All you told me got me upset and I decided to help you. You are coming with me,” the captain told the girl.

“But I am so scared. I think my life is in danger, if I go back to Stavoren,” the girl answered.

“Don’t worry at all, you will always be safe with me. You won’t have to worry about putting yourself in danger.”

With the girl’s help the captain made a boat using logs of trees in the

The girl was already on her way back, and when she got out of the water, she approached to the captain crying. She told him in detail about how her tribe wrongly accused her and exiled her to this desert island. Far away from her family. The



island. Soon after a few days, the boat was ready for the great return back. As soon as they arrived, the captain went straight to see the Lady of Stravoren, having the goldfinch and the girl with him.

"At last, I have been longing to see you! Who is with you?" asked the lady.

"You can't imagine the adventure I had. I came across a sea monster that ruined my ship and I landed on an island with his girl."

"Your adventures don't interest me. Did you bring what I asked you to?"

"Yes, Madame. I brought what you asked."

"Where is it then?"

The captain nodded to the goldfinch to come to the lady.

"What is that?!" she shouted.

"It is the most valuable thing I found during my journey," said the captain.

"What is so special about this bird? You fooled me! You spent all my money on one little bird! I trusted you. I don't need you anymore in my fleet!"

But then suddenly, the goldfinch started singing. The song was so beautiful and sweet. As the goldfinch was singing the lady's heart softened. She called the captain back. She took the girl and the captain, who became a couple, under her protection. Every time the goldfinch sang the lady became more and more gentle and she helped everyone in need. She

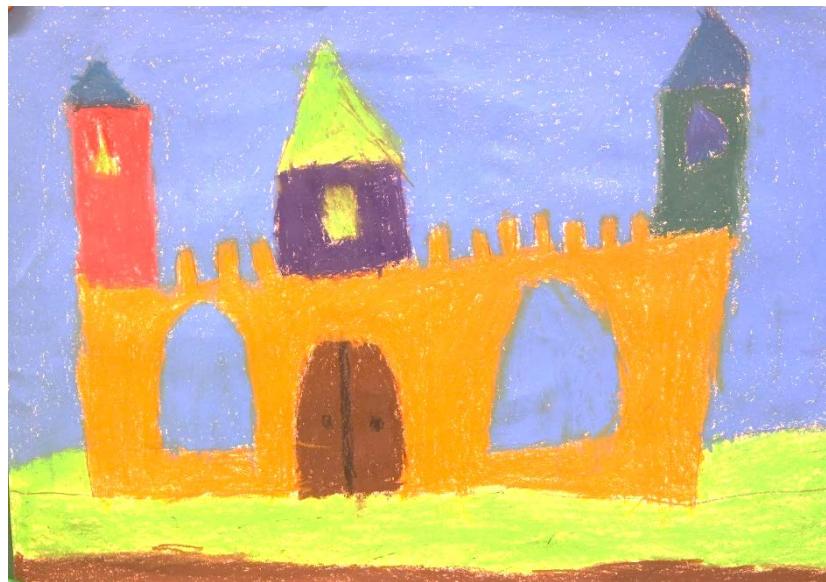


allowed the girl and the captain to stay with her, and they were the most valuable things she had because the girl and the captain were her only friends. Their friendship was more valuable than all the riches in the world.

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Five years later

January 25th.



The captain and the girl ran hand in hand towards the palace of the Lady.

"How are you, Lady?" the captain exclaimed while entering the palace. "I'm fine, thank you", the Lady answered. "We have splendid news for you", the girl continued, "We're going to get married next Wednesday!"

"Holy sausage! Well, congratulations!" the Lady answered and kissed them on the cheek. But in her mind she thought of taking revenge on the girl, because she was deeply in love with the captain. She would like to poison the girl, but didn't know how to. And before she could get an idea the captain interrupted her thoughts and asked: "You will come to our wedding, won't you?" "Of course, I will", she answered.



The next day

"I just got an idea! I will put rat poison in the bottle of expensive champagne I bought for them!", she cried out loud. But unfortunately for her one maid servant heard it.

The Wedding Day

Just before the wedding ceremony started the maid servant found the girl and tried to tell her what the Lady had said: "Wedding.... Lady poison" she stammered. The girl didn't understand any of this and walked towards the church altar. When the captain and the girl had pronounced their wedding vows, the Lady approached the altar and proclaimed: "Drink from these cups as a celebration of love." She gave the captain a cup without poison, but the girl a cup with rat poison. But just at the same moment as the girl wanted to drink from it, suddenly appeared a



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Chapter 6

...the goldfinch

The girl drank the poison, but right then the goldfinch started singing. And what a wonder! Nothing happened to the girl. The lady couldn't believe her eyes and was very nervous. Suddenly she wanted to attack the girl, but the goldfinch started singing again. Then suddenly the lady's arm stopped and the sword fell down. Surprisingly the lady apologised for all her mistakes and cruelty. The guards wanted to catch the lady but the goldfinch stopped them and told the guards:

-The lady has changed for all her life. She will be good forever.

The guards let her go, but if she doesn't stand three trials, she will have to go to the desert island for the rest of her life.

According to the first trial she had to help the poorest people in the city. She arrived in the city and found a lot of people who didn't have home, food, money or anything. And as you already know, in Stavoren they had so much money that they didn't even know what to do with it. So the lady remembered it and she gave them money, food and built houses for them. It made people very happy. They were grateful for it because they weren't cold any more, they didn't starve because they had houses to live in and they had enough food to eat. So they lived happily from that time.

She stood the first trial. Then the captain told her the second trial. She had to clean the city, because it was very dirty and polluted. With the help of her crew and people of Stavoren she cleaned the city. In the city there was a lot of trash, there were oil spills on seas, lakes and rivers and plastic bottles were thrown everywhere in the city. They took all the trash to the dump. And they had a good time, meanwhile they were very happy because the city was clean and beautiful again. It was a hard work but she did it.

The third trial was the most difficult as she had to catch all the pirates of the world because they stole a lot of money from people everywhere in the world. She built a fleet of ships with the captain and with the help of those people who were grateful to her for their homes in Stavoren. They knew she was their good lady of Stavoren now. They got on board and started their cruise and fought against the cruel pirates. They caught lots of pirates, but most of them ran away from the fleet. But they won by the force of numbers and the oceans were free in the end. The pirates became outlaws on the desert island. She could stand the third trial.

The girl gave the goldfinch to the lady. She lived in her palace and became the best empress ever so everybody lived happily ever after in Stavoren ...often listening to the goldfinch singing.



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