

Here's Looking at You, Kid

For Geneviève Rose

Words by Tom Portegys

Once upon a time, a little boy and a little girl lived in a big house by a lake, far in the north, with a deep green forest all around. The girl's name was Jane, and her younger brother's name was Peter. It was an old house with many secret places for them to play in. They had not lived there long, so exploring kept them busy all the long winter days, when the snow was too deep to play in, and when it was too cold to go skating on the lake.

One afternoon, as Christmas was coming near, Jane and Peter were up in a corner of the attic. It was a fine old attic, with lots of interesting things left there from the people who lived there before. There were chests full of clothes and pictures, and an old rocking chair, and a beautiful bird cage for a very large bird. Peter said it must be for an eagle. There was also a great mirror with a fancy carved wooden frame propped against a wall. This afternoon, while Peter stood munching on a mouthful of candy he had sneaked out of the kitchen, Jane watched the sun going down over the lake from a window. She was feeling a little sad today, because her favorite doll was missing, and no one could seem to find it.

Soon she turned away from the window and began to play in some of the clothes chests nearby. She tried on a particularly smart looking soldier's uniform, and marched over to the mirror to admire herself. But the mirror was all full of dust and so she couldn't see herself very well at all. Peter volunteered to wipe it clean with his sock. So he took his shoe and sock off and rubbed and rubbed but nothing happened. The mirror was still murky. And now if you looked very hard, you could see certain shapes in the dimness, like trees and rocks - a sort of forest. Peter gave up rubbing and sat down to put his shoe back on. But, as he did, he lost his balance and fell backward - right toward the mirror! Jane screeched and closed her eyes, expecting to hear the horrible noise of crashing glass. But nothing happened. She opened her eyes and saw - no Peter! Only his shoe was left on the floor.

You can imagine how surprised Jane must have been, and very soon, afraid for her brother. She called out, she looked all over the attic, but still no Peter. Soon she began to cry, and sat down in front of the mirror.

After a short time she stopped crying long enough to look up right at the mirror. And what do you suppose she saw? Her own face? No! It was her brother's face! It was fuzzy, but definitely his. What was more, she could faintly hear his voice inside of the mirror. Jane felt very strange then. She wondered how this could be. How could her brother be inside of the mirror?

Jane knelt on the floor and put her nose close to the glass. When she did this, she could understand some of Peter's words. He wanted her to come with him. He did not seem to be afraid or hurt, she was relieved to see. She decided to go with him. Peter always did need his big sister looking out for him, she thought. He was certain to get into trouble in time without her. So, she gently reached out her hand and put it on the glass. It felt kind of rubbery, not like glass at all. She pushed harder, and her hand went right through! She could see it on the other side in the same fuzzy sort of way that she had seen Peter's face. But, to her dismay, she soon discovered that she could not pull her hand out again! Well, there's only one thing to do now, she thought, and that was to jump right through as Peter must have done. It rather seemed a lot like jumping into the pool at the YMCA (which she did not really care for at all), but she knew she had to do it anyway. First she thought, I'd better bring Peter's shoe with me, in case it is cold in there. Then, she held her nose, closed her eyes, and, jump!, through she went.

The next thing she knew, Jane felt two small but sturdy arms lifting her up to her feet. They were Peter's arms, she thought, and she wrapped her own arms tightly about him to give him a big hug. "Jane, isn't this great!", exclaimed Peter, his mouth still covered with sticky candy. "It's a whole new world to explore!" For the first time, then, Jane looked around her, and this is what she saw: They were in a forest of some sort, although the trees were different from those she was used to. They were very tall trees, and had

leaves that looked like dark green velvet. Some of the trees had odd fruit on them, which looked like colored crystals and glass spheres, and which seemed to have a light all of their own. The forest was illuminated by the fruits in a soft display of multicolored light. And, even though she could see no sun or moon, the forest was lit up by a sky full of the brightest stars she had ever seen. The air felt warm, and smelled of something delightful, sort of like warm hay, and there was a breeze coming up a little path of Purple stones which they both stood on. The path wound its way through the wood between huge gray boulders and disappeared from sight in either direction.

As she looked down the path, she could hear a singing and twittering sound. This she soon noticed was coming from a multitude of large butterflies which seemed to be everywhere. Singing butterflies? What was more, the butterflies had the strangest patterns on them, like checks and stripes, and if you looked at them closely, they seemed to have tiny faces. How very odd, she thought.

When Jane turned around to look back in the direction she had come from, she saw a small cave in the rock. And in the back wall of the cave she saw what must be the backside of the mirror in the attic. She walked up to it and could see the inside of the attic in the same fuzzy sort of way. But, when she reached out her hand to touch the surface, it was hard and smooth, and her hand could not pass through. "Oh dear", thought Jane, "this may be a great place to explore, but how are we ever going to get back home?". Then she saw a bit of writing near the bottom of the mirror. It looked like: "TIXE ON". Jane was pretty good at reading, but this did not look like anything she knew.

Well, Jane, being a curious and playful little girl, and quite resourceful, (at least she thought so), quickly made up her mind to do some exploring with Peter in this new world. She felt confident that they would eventually get out, or that her Daddy would come to their rescue. The air was so fresh and nice, it was impossible to feel worried for long. Peter was already halfway up the path, skipping along, with a handful of the pretty

shining fruit, and so she followed him.

About a half an hour later, and much further down the path, it began to rain steadily. This made all of the butterflies disappear into the forest to fold themselves up on the tree trunks like tiny umbrellas. It was a warm rain, and not really uncomfortable, but it made things seem somehow somber and quiet. A little way further they came upon a stream, and a graceful wooden bridge which crossed it. There was a high railing on the bridge, and on this sat a queer looking creature that looked a little like an owl and a little like a fox. That is to say, it had the ears and the tail of a fox.

"Well, Peter, I think we should be looking for a way back home now.", said Jane, eyeing the bird-thing curiously. "I mean, this is really a fun place and all, but we'd better be at least telling Mommy and Daddy where we are so they don't get worried, don't you think?".

"Oh, but Jane, I think we have at least an hour before suppertime.", replied Peter, poking at the bird-thing with a stick. But Jane knew that they had been having such fun exploring that she was sure it was closer to suppertime than they thought. And now that they had stopped chasing those butterflies, she again began to feel weird about this place. It was like no place that she had ever heard of.

"Where do you think we are, Peter?", she asked, looking up the stream, which seemed to come out of a fog not far up ahead.

"You are on the border of the land of the Pomboos, about to cross over into the Kingdom of the Bingo-Bingos.", said Peter. Peter? She turned around quickly and saw that it was not Peter who had spoken, but the bird-thing. And now it was sitting on top of Peter's head! Peter was white with fright and could not move a muscle.

"Let go of him!", she yelled, and waved her arms to shoo him away. But the bird-thing only responded by laughing and flapping its wings, which lifted poor Peter up by his hair!

"Who are you, and what do you want?", she pleaded, jumping up and trying to catch Peter's legs, but not succeeding.

"Oh, isn't it wonderful!", it cackled. "It jumps, it cries, and it even asks questions! What TOYS these are. Oh yes indeed. How the Purple Witch will love them. Too bad I can't take both now. Ah me, too bad". It finally settled on top of the bridge railing again, and set Peter down up there. He began to rub his painful head.

"Since you seem to be such an intelligent TOY, perhaps you could tell me what sort of TOY you are, so I will know what to say to the Purple Witch when I present you.", the bird-thing asked Jane.

"We are not TOYS!", replied Jane indignantly, "We are children!".

"Children?", it mused, "What an strange name for a TOY".

"Please let my brother go!", she repeated, searching secretly for a stone to throw at it.

"But why? I want to take this one, and you too sometime, back to Friendship City and the Purple Witch, because if she finds out that I left it here, she would have all of my feathers pulled out for sure!".

"You keep talking about this Purple Witch.", said Jane. "Who is this Purple Witch?".

"Oh my, you really must have just dropped out of the sky, haven't you? The Purple Witch is the Queen of my people, the Bingo-Bingos". Then it whispered, "But she has gone quite mad of late, it seems. It all began with the TOY being dropped down upon us from the Fuzzy World".

"Well what is this TOY you are talking about, and where is the Fuzzy World?", asked Jane, trying to delay the bingo-bingo, who looked like he was getting ready to take off again.

Just then, a sort of barking noise was heard in the distance. The Bingo-Bingo got very excited and started to fly off with Peter still held by his hair!

"Oh please don't take him away! If you stay I will tell you a story about Hansel and Gretel or anything you want! I don't even know your name!". Jane was frantic with worry.

But the Bingo-Bingo did not stop. He only looked back as he rose up higher and higher, carrying a kicking and yelling Peter with him. "If you know what's good for you, you will run and hide, because that barking sound you hear is coming from a pack of Pomboos which are coming very fast in this direction. Too bad I can't take you both. Those Pomboos are coming on a raid into the land of the Bingo-Bingos to steal the TOYS of our Queen. I must go to warn my people. Oh, yes, and if another Bingo-Bingo finds you, tell him that Tooky found you first. Goodbye". And away he flew over the treetops, leaving Jane alone there, with a pack of ferocious Pomboos closing in!

Soon up the path that she and Peter had come before she began to see a number of large furry orange shapes. They looked like big orange dogs, but they all had six legs and a pair of long sharp green horns on their heads.

Now Jane was really afraid. She knew right away which way to run, since there was no choice in the matter. Across the little bridge and away from the Pomboos and off in the direction that the Bingo-Bingo had taken Peter she went. Soon the Pomboos were in close pursuit. She ran into the forest on the other side of the stream and encountered a confusing maze of branching paths. The forest on this side of the river was also much darker and forbidding than on the Pomboo's side. Not knowing which way to turn, she picked out any path at random, and soon became hopelessly lost. But at least she managed to get rid of the Pomboos, for at some point they must have figured that to chase her further would take them too far out of their way. One of them did get close enough to poke her sharply in the butt with a horn, which made her cry out in pain.

She stopped running when she became too tired to run any further. When when she looked around her she noticed that she had gotten to a very very dark place in the forest, where the trees were so tall that they blotted out the stars above. These trees had none of

those shining globe-like fruits on them, either. Nothing seemed to move at all. The rain had stopped. Jane began to feel like she was in the dark bedroom of a sleeping giant, for she felt that something was nearby, perhaps watching her.

Then she heard a murmuring, and she thought it was a small waterfall or stream gurgling over some rocks nearby. She looked around, and followed the sound into a tiny clump of rocks that sat across the path up ahead. As she got closer, she began to run. She ran because she recognized the sounds coming from the rocks. They were voices - the voices of her parents!

When she came in among the rocks, she saw in the face of one rock another one of those smoky mirrors, just like the one she had come through what seemed like such a long time ago. In this one, though, she could see her mother and father, sitting in their kitchen. She saw that they looked very worried, and although she could not make out the words, she knew that they were talking about her and Peter being lost. She called out to them as loud as she could, but they didn't hear her. She put her hand on the surface of the mirror, but it was smooth and hard. The words "YLNO KOOL" appeared under the mirror.

From her point of view, she must be looking into the kitchen from rather high up on the wall above the kitchen table. Trying to remember what was on that wall, she could picture the clock there - a clock which had a small round mirror in the top of it - a mirror that was just about the size of this mirror. Could it be that all of the mirrors in her house were windows into this place? But most important, which ones led out of this place? So far, she had encountered one which led into this world. The thought that there might not be any exit mirrors frightened her.

She looked at her parents for a long time, and then walked on. She knew she must find Peter first and then find the way out. So on she went.

As she went along, the path started to get less and less clear, being overgrown with weeds and covered with mucky looking puddles in spots. After a while, she heard a small voice

from up ahead. It sounded like that horrible Tooky thing, but it also sounded like something in pain. Jane couldn't help but feel sorry for it, whatever it was, and she felt that she had to go and try to help it somehow. The sound was coming off the side of the trail, and she had to push through a great deal of weeds and bramble bushes before she saw the thing in trouble. It looked like Tooky, except this one had dark rings around its eyes, like a raccoon. It was caught in a large bush, and what a strange bush it was! Instead of leaves, it had either a tiny hand, or a tiny eye, or a tiny mouth on the end of every branch. The Bingo-Bingo was trying desperately to escape, but it was firmly in the grasp of dozens of the little hands.

Jane came out of the brush and carefully walked up close to the Bingo-Bingo. When it saw her, it began crying, "Oh help me, help me, or I'm done for!"

"But, how can I get you free?", asked Jane.

"You must boobooboodillyoop me free.", it gasped, as the little hands dug themselves even deeper into the poor creature's body.

"But, what is boo...boo...boo...dillyoop? I've never heard of it!". Unfortunately, the Bingo-Bingo passed out just at that moment. As she stood there, she did not notice a particularly long branch moving along the ground behind her on its little fingers. Sort of tip-toeing. The Bingo-Bingo opened its eyes for a moment, and saw what was about to happen.

"LOOK OUT!", it cried.

But too late. The branch had wrapped itself around her leg. Then it pulled her down and began to drag her into the main part of the bush! Jane struggled mightily, but it did no good at all. And soon she was firmly stuck in the bush, just like the Bingo-Bingo she had tried to save. She was held by hundreds of the nasty little hands, while the branches with the eyes looked her over in a hungry sort of way.

"It is trying to decide whether you are worth eating.", the Bingo-Bingo said. Just then, a number of the tiny hands began to wriggle themselves between her ribs and in her armpits. They pulled off her shoes and began tickling her feet also.

"Oh stop it! Ha ha ha, ho ho ho, Oh it tickles! Please stop it!", she cried.

"You foolish thing," said the Bingo-Bingo, "don't you know about tickle trees? After a while you won't be laughing any more. You won't be able to get your breath, and then you'll die! Then the thing will eat you up. Evidently it decided you are worth eating."

At first she began to giggle a little, then chuckle, and soon she was laughing as hard as she had ever laughed in her life. But, as you know, you can't laugh like that for long. Before long her stomach was hurting and her sides were burning up. At this rate she wasn't going to last long. She thought of being devoured by all of those little mouths really upset her. She began to cry as she laughed, and when she did, a strange thing happened. Wherever the teardrops fell on the vines that entwined her, they immediately pulled away and began to smoke where the drops hit them. This allowed her to breathe a little easier, and collect her head together. Soon she was aware that the captive Bingo-Bingo was nearly dead - he was turning a gray color, and his tail hung limp as a rag. She struggled now, as hard as she could, because even though she felt no affection for the creature, she thought that might be her only guide out of this place. What was more, she really didn't like to watch anything killed and eaten in such a brutal way. But her tears were all gone. In desperation, she bit at the vines which she could reach with her mouth. This, too, caused the vines to curl up and smoke. Being a quick girl, Jane soon came to the conclusion that there was something about the moisture in her tears and spit which harmed the vines. With this interesting fact in mind she soon freed herself completely by licking the vines which bound her. Then she quickly ran over to the captive Bingo-Bingo, and freed him in the same way. She picked him up (he really wasn't very heavy) and gently laid him down on some soft moss nearby. He really looked bad, but to her surprise soon began to breathe more smoothly again.

Then he opened his strange yellow eyes. "I am alive!". Then it saw Jane. "You! You saved my life! You must be able to booboooodillyoop. Who are you?"

"Well, if you mean I know how to cry and bite, then yes, I guess I do know how to booboooodillyoop, or whatever. My name is Jane. What is yours?"

"Snooky is my name, and I am eternally in your debt. Tell me how I may repay you".

Well, these were very welcome words to Jane, as you can imagine. For now she had someone in this world that she could count on to help her. She quickly explained her story, and told the Bingo-Bingo how she wished to get her brother and go home. When she told him about Tooky, and his claim that she was his TOY, Snooky snorted and remarked on what a greedy Bingo-Bingo Tooky was, a habit he had picked up from the Purple Witch's example. Snooky told her that Bingo-Bingos, and Pomboos for that matter, were normally very peaceful and friendly folk, and lived together. But since the coming of the Purple Witch, all that had changed. The first thing she had done was to drive the Pomboos out of the lands of the Bingo-Bingos into their own.

"You see, we all used to live together. It worked out quite well, actually, because Pomboos are good for a lot of things that Bingo-Bingos cannot do. And the reverse is also true. For example, Pomboos can carry a lot of ktel fruit in their middle pair of arms, while Bingo-Bingos can loosen the fruit from up high in the trees well enough. Well, anyway, all that changed after the Pomboos were forced out of our lands. That is when the Crazies began, if you ask me".

"And what are the Crazies?", asked Jane.

"Oh, well, that is what I call the frame of mind that everyone picked up, Pomboos and Bingo-Bingos, after the Pomboos were forced out across the Fog river. You see, once that happened, everyone started thinking about what is mine and what is yours and how I can get what is yours to be mine. The Bingo-Bingos then had a LAND of their OWN to worry about, and so did the Pomboos. So there were a lot of hard feelings and fights over

that alone. What's more, life isn't nearly as good for either of us now, since we don't cooperate anymore".

"From what you are saying, it sounds like the Crazies is something that I would call greed.", said Jane.

"Whatever you call it, it hasn't made life easier.", said Snooky. "But that wasn't all that the Purple Witch did when she got control".

"Excuse me", said Jane, "but I still don't understand how the Purple Witch got control and became your Queen". Jane thought how VERY different this Snooky was than that horrible Tooky. Maybe the Bingo-Bingos weren't all the same?

"Oh, ah, yes, well that is sort of an embarrassing story.", said Snooky sheepishly, "It really does make us look like fools. But I guess that it happened because we really didn't expect it to happen at all. We were just living free and easy and having a sleepy sort of life, and then one day, the Purple Witch comes out of the Paper Swamp with a HUGE bunch of papers with all sorts of marks on them. She called them decrees, writs, and executive orders, and she says that these things allow her to be Queen by law. Well, we all just sort of looked at each other. No one knew what a law was, you see. So we said OK, sure, if you want to be Queen, go ahead and be one. As far as we were concerned, if she wanted to be a frog, we would have said the same thing."

"Then what happened?", asked Jane.

"She was a clever one, that Witchy. She got a few of the strongest of the Bingo-Bingos and convinced them to be her special guard. Tooky was one of them. Her special guard were allowed to carry out her orders in return for special privileges. This amounted to ganging up on the rest of us to bring her and them food and flowers and such things. Do you want to know how the Pomboos came to be thrown out of the city? A small Pomboo pup accidentally ate the Purple Witch's hat, mistaking it for what it thought was a large ice cream cone. The Witch went absolutely mad, and ordered all of the Pomboos out.

But these things weren't enough. Oh no, she had to have more, which is when she decided to raid the mirror world."

"Raid the mirror world!?" Jane's mind raced. "You must mean MY world! But if you raided it, then that must mean that there is a way out of here and back home!"

"Whoa, whoa, slow down there. There is only one way into the mirror world, and the Purple Witch sits right in front of that in her throne room almost all of the time. What is more, the places in the mirror world that are reached from the throne room mirror change from time to time, so that by the time we get there, you may not be able to get to your home."

"But surely she must be willing to let me and my brother go home! We are terribly missed!"

You see, for Jane, all of the evil Witch stuff was a new experience. For Jane could not picture a person who would refuse another person a simple, reasonable favor which they really did not have to go out of their way at all to give. But she soon learned differently in this strange world. Snooky looked at her in a sad sort of way before he spoke, as though he was about to break a fine and precious glass with great regret.

"I guess that brings me back to what I was about to say about the raid. The Purple Witch wants TOYS, and that is why she sent some of our people into the mirror world, to get and bring back TOYS. Now, when she sees you, and your brother, she is going to see two very pretty TOYS. It doesn't matter that you are as alive as she is, or even more so I should say. She is going to want you and your brother as her most special TOYS."

And Jane knew then that Snooky was telling the truth, since that is exactly what Tooky was talking about back on the bridge.

As Snooky and Jane talked, they began to walk along the path. Every once in a while he would fly up above the trees a bit to see where they were. He was still too weak to fly for any distance. He told her that he was a teacher of the young, both Bingo-Bingos and

Pomboos - teaching them the various things they needed to know in order to live well - such as, how to fly, how to find food, how to speak, how to get along with others, etc. After the Purple Witch made herself Queen, however, it was shortly announced that teachers were no longer needed, which was quite a shock to Snooky, since teachers were looked upon with respect among all the people. When Snooky complained, he was driven out of the city by the Queen's guard. He lived alone in the wilderness for quite a while, but all the time getting very angry about the whole thing. He had tried to sneak back into the city once to see some of his old students and had barely escaped with his life.

After being rescued from the tickle tree by Jane, (which he had carelessly blundered into while daydreaming about the good old days), he was resolved to help her get home, regardless of the cost. He then explained a plan to Jane, as they traveled the long distance to Friendship City, which was the name of the city where the Bingo-Bingos and the Purple Witch lived. The Pomboos used to live there also before they were driven out. At one point, as they walked through a beautiful little meadow, Jane asked why the Pomboos were out on a raid of the Bingo-Bingos.

"As I said before, it is a matter of possession, that darned thing.", said Snooky. "You see, although there are many windows where you can LOOK out of this world into yours, there is only one that can be used to go from here to there, and another one that can be used to go from there to here."

"And the first is the one in the Queen's throne room, and the second is the one that Peter and I came through!", exclaimed Jane.

"You guessed it. What's more, the one going out of here is in the kingdom of the Bingo-Bingos, and the one coming into here is in the land that the Pomboo's were banished to. Now, in order to get the TOYS which the Witch desires, the Bingo-Bingos only have to leave through their own window. But, to get back, they have to come through the window which belongs to the Pomboos. When the Pomboos found out about the TOYS

that were brought back, they naturally felt that half of what was taken should belong to them as a sort of toll for using their window. Well, you can imagine what the Purple Witch told them. She absolutely refused to give the Pomboos anything. And that is why the Pomboos are on their raid, to get what they see is their fair share of the loot. But so far, they haven't gotten a thing. The Purple Witch always manages to have a trick up her sleeve for the poor devils".

And, as he spoke, up the path ahead came a whole group of Pomboos, straight at them! Snooky shrieked and made as if to fly off, but then they saw that the leader of the group was waving for them not to be afraid. And indeed as they came closer Jane could see that they were in very bad shape, covered with cuts and bruises, and one or two could not even walk by themselves. And most of them had very big tears in their big blue eyes.

"No need to fear, we will not harm you.", spoke a particularly wise-looking Pomboo with a nasty cut over his eye. "We know when we are beaten. That cursed Witch has seen the last of us".

"Please, have you come from the city of the Bingo-Bingos?", asked Jane, hoping to discover information about Peter.

"Aye, we have that.", spoke the Pomboo. "We entered the city, expecting a big fight, but found it empty as the sky in high summer. We just strolled into the castle, wondering what had happened to everyone. But, after we got in, the fiends locked the door behind us. And then a door in the floor opened and a huge bone-headed paper monster crawled out at us. We were tricked and trapped for sure. It was only by the greatest luck that we escaped with our lives. Puck there managed to spill some oil on the floor and we lit it to make a wall of fire between us and the beast long enough for us to break the door and get out of the castle. But once we were on the outside, the Bingo-Bingos set on us with a fury. And as the few of us that you see here now ran out of the front gate, there up on the castle roof we could see and hear the Purple Witch, cackling away for all she was worth. I will never forget that sound!".

"It sounds absolutely terrible", said Jane, who never in her life had come face-to-face with a real fight to the death. This made her even more concerned for Peter. "Can you tell if you saw a creature that looked like me there?", she asked.

"Yes, as a matter of fact, we did. It was standing near the Witch, and she seemed to be leading him around in some way. A relative of yours? He looked to be all right".

Jane felt relieved, and a sudden boldness came over her. "I am a Queen in my own land, Queen Jane, and if you help me to return, I will repay you by overthrowing the Purple Witch and giving you more TOYS than you could ever imagine". Now, Jane was stretching the truth, because of course she really had no idea of how to overthrow the Purple Witch, who seemed a most deadly enemy. But she knew she would probably need more help than just Snooky to get Peter free and get back home. The part about giving the TOYS she really could manage, remembering the closet full of old toys in her room. She noticed Snooky looking at her oddly as she spoke, but he said nothing, and after awhile seemed to catch on to her game.

The Pomboos went off for a while to talk this over. Then they came back. The leader, Smurfsnoot, spoke: "Yes, we will go with you, Queen Jane. It seems to us that the Purple Witch would never suspect an attack so soon from us. We just may be able to beat her ourselves, ha, ha!".

Then the Pomboos began to bark and howl in a special sort of way, and soon other Pomboos began streaming out of the woods. When about thirty Pomboos were gathered, Smurfsnoot explained things, and the whole party set forth down the path to the city with shouts of "Hail Queen Jane! The Purple Witch will get it now!" and "All the TOYS for us!" Jane had to explain that Snooky was on her side now.

After a time they came to the top of a hill. In a valley below lay the Friendship City. It was so beautiful, like a fairy castle at a museum that Jane had once seen, that it took her breath away. It was circled by a big wall. The road ran right up to the front gate. They

could see the Witch's castle in the center of the city, and many Bingo-Bingos were dancing around the big square in the front of it. All the while they were walking, Jane and Snooky had been talking and thinking about how to go about the battle. Jane was quite nervous, as she felt that she had really stuck her neck out, even though it was for a good cause. The light was failing now, even though there was no sun, for the stars became dim, and they could see that the Bingo-Bingos had built themselves a big fire to dance around. The sight of this brought some bitter words from the Pomboos: "Humph! Celebrating their victory! Well, they won't be celebrating it for long". Jane then called the Pomboos around and told them the plan that she and Snooky had thought of.

The plan was based on the fact that the city wall was built next to the Fog river, which ran right below it. Jane would be the one to go into the river, swim up to the wall (which should not be watched since she found out Pomboos were unable to swim), climb the wall, and get inside the castle to somehow open the small side gate for the Pomboos to enter. Jane did not expect to meet many guards on the way, as it seemed that they all were busy celebrating in the square. The main danger was that she would have to sneak through the Witch's castle to get to the gate, and it was rumored that the Witch never slept, and never took part in celebrations.

Shortly, after a green moon had risen, the Pomboos left to take up their positions in the forest beyond the side gate. Then Jane and Snooky made their way down to the shallow river. The water was warm, and Jane floated along the current. As she saw the wall of the castle approaching, she was glad to notice that there were no guards. She caught hold of a rusty bar that was bent down over the water as she floated by. But it broke off in her hand, nearly bopping her on the head before she let it go. She paddled very hard toward the wall hoping to catch hold of something solid before the current could take her away. Her hands slid along the mossy stones before they suddenly caught on a crack. Pulling hard, Jane boosted herself out of the water, and finding more hand-holds above, she climbed the low wall. As she peered dripping over the top of the wall, she could see a

sort of balcony overgrown with vines and no one in sight. So she threw her legs over, and came down outside the Witch's castle. She crouched briefly, resting herself. Then she followed the stone pathway into a doorway which led inside.

Inside, the air smelled a little smoky, and the passageway was dark except for a glow up far ahead. Jane wondered how she could get out of the castle except for the way she had come. But if she was to do her job, she had to go on. As she walked down the passageway, a number of dark doorways appeared beside her. She walked quickly past these, as they were very scary looking. Some were covered with spider webs, and out of one came a low gurgling growl. She went up a stairs, and found herself behind a big red curtain. Peeking around it, Jane saw a huge hall lighted with torches on the walls. At the far end, she saw a great pile of toys. Jane looked around, and saw no one, so she crept out into the room. As she neared the pile, she saw a tiny foot sticking out from under it. Her heart jumped, for she recognized that foot as belonging to her lost doll! She ran over and pulled it out and hugged it to herself.

"Put that back, thief! You are under arrest!", someone yelled.

Jane almost wet her pants, the voice was so sharp. She quickly lifted her head toward the sound and saw a small figure sitting on the very top of the toy pile. It was dressed like a clown, and yet it looked very familiar. Then it stood up, and Jane's mouth fell open, for the clown was none other than Peter, her brother!

"Peter!", she cried, tears filling her eyes, "Are you all right?". "I am not Peter.", said the clown, even though Jane knew differently. "I am Garth, King of the TOYS! And you are my prisoner. Seize her!". Immediately, several shadowy shapes began to come out into the hall from behind the curtains. They looked a little like monkeys, but had very large yellow teeth and red eyes. They moved toward Jane, who was too surprised to move. She was looking at Peter's eyes, and what she saw scared her, for they were completely white, with no pupils at all!

"Oh no, what has that Witch done to you, Peter?", she screamed. "Don't you recognize me, Jane, your sister?" But Peter only pointed at her, and the shadow creatures moved closer.

Then Jane became afraid and began to run, holding her doll as she went down the long hall to the end, where there was luckily a small doorway in the wall, the shadow creatures shuffling along quickly behind her. This door led into a dark passageway, much like the one she had come through before. Down she ran, on and on into the darkness.

She ran her best, but she could never get any farther ahead of her chasers. Her lungs and legs began to hurt, even though she was a good runner, and she began to think that she would have to do something tricky to escape. So as she ran, she kept her eyes open for a way to trick the shadow creatures.

One thing she noticed was that when she passed through a section of corridor which was lit up by the smoky torches, she usually heard bumping noises and groans behind her, and when the corridor got darkest, they seemed to catch up much faster. So she put two and two together, and guessed that the creatures did not like light very much. If she could just get some bright light, like her father's big camping flashlight! She did not have her father's flashlight, but maybe she could use something just as good. So she tucked her doll into her belt, and began to grab a few of the torches off of the wall. Most of them would not come loose, but she managed to get three. Then she began to look out for something to light with them. Finally, she saw what she wanted. It was another large tattered red curtain draped along a stretch of the hall. Now came the tricky part. She first let the creatures catch up to her until they were right on her heels and she could almost feel their hot breath on the back of her neck. A little ways down from the curtain, she suddenly threw herself to the floor, and a great pack of yellow gnashing teeth and bad-smelling black furry things flew over her. Then up she jumped and before they could untangle, Jane had pulled the old curtain down on the floor and had set the torches into it. The dry old curtain blazed up quickly, and the pack of creatures drew back in fear,

barking with anger. Jane turned and ran, knowing that they would be blocked by the fire for at least a little time. She felt sure the stone floor, walls and ceiling would not let the fire spread.

The main job now was to save Peter, and so back down the corridor she trotted, though her legs were so sore, back toward the great hall.

Some time later, she again was peering out from behind the big red curtain at the end of the hall. She had sneaked down the length of the hall without being noticed. At the far end, at the bottom of the big toy pile, the small figure of her brother was sitting and singing a little song about smashing mice and grinding up birds, and stuff like that, while playing with a toy train set. Jane sneaked up until she was standing right behind him. It was then that she noticed with surprise that sticking out from beneath his clown cap was a big green hairy leg. It looked like a spider's leg! Feeling that she wanted to get it off of him as soon as possible, and forgetting for the moment where she was, she pulled off the clown cap, only to see the biggest, meanest looking green and yellow spider squatting on her brother's head! Jane screamed and looked for something to knock it off with. But her brother jumped up and turned around and pulled a tiny silver knife out of his belt, and stood there looking at her with his white eyes.

"Aha, so you have escaped my servants," he croaked, "but you shall not get away from me this time. Try to sneak up on me and my spider Grabble, eh? Ha, ha, ha!"

Jane, deciding to try and trick Peter, said "Oh, but your majesty, I did not escape from your servants. They captured me and took me to the Purple Witch, who convinced me that she and you are the best and the strongest people in the world. Then she told me to come and get you because she had a special treat for you."

Peter didn't know what to think, and that awful spider Grabble looked like he did not believe a word of it, but she could see that Peter was afraid of disagreeing with anything that the Witch wanted. By this time Jane had decided that the spider might be behind her

brother's strange behavior.

"Well, OK, I believe you for now.", said Peter, "So let's go. The Purple Witch does not like to be kept waiting, as you will soon find out. But you go first and don't try anything funny. Now hand me my cap".

"I think", said Jane, "that as king of the TOYS, you should go to her as a king should look. Let me find a king's crown for you, instead of that clown's cap".

"What a good idea!", cried Peter, sounding for a moment like the Peter that Jane knew, "Get one for me at once!"

Jane rummaged through the pile until she uncovered an old pot. Then she brought it to Peter. "Kneel down, and I will crown you Garth the Great, king of the TOYS". Peter knelt before her, and Jane brought the pot up high over her head. Grabble squeaked and squirmed because he knew what Jane was going to do. Down came the pot, and Grabble tumbled off of Peter's head in a daze. He was not dead, though, she could see. Jane just stood there then, not saying a word, and finally Peter raised up his head, and she found herself looking into those familiar big brown eyes that she loved so much.

"Jane!", Peter cried, and tears began to fall from his eyes, and they hugged each other for a long time. Then while Peter explained to Jane how he had come to be here in the castle, Jane found a big glass jar and popped Grabble into it before he could wake up. She gave the jar to Peter.

Jane then explained her adventure, and told him about how she must hurry and get the gate open, and about how the shadow creatures would soon return for her. Peter gave Jane directions and they agreed that he would stay behind for a while and stop the creatures from following her. Then they would meet at the throne room, where the mirror to get back home was.

Without any trouble at all, Jane found the gate at the side of the castle where her friends were waiting. When she opened it, they looked as if they couldn't believe their eyes that

she had really made it. "Come on", she said, and in the Pomboo army went.

The Pomboos looked afraid to enter the castle, where they had been beaten so badly such a short time ago. But they had a lot of courage, and so they marched quietly through the halls with only the echos of their footsteps to hear. Pretty soon they entered a huge hall, much bigger even than the one which held the TOYS. At the end of the hall was a great throne made of purple stone.

"This is the Purple Witch's throne", said Smurfsnoot. "She had it made out of some stones that she had brought from her homeland - some say that the rays from that throne keep the Witch from growing old".

Jane craned her neck for a sign of the mirror which would take her back home, but she saw only a curtain hung behind the throne. Maybe it was behind the curtain, she thought.

Smurfsnoot said, "Well, you have fulfilled your part of the bargain, Queen Jane, and now we will see to it that you and your brother return through the mirror to your home world, as soon as he gets here." And now that was the main question, where was Peter? Jane still did not like the great silence of the castle, and it seemed much too easy to get into it.

Then, suddenly, her worst fears were confirmed, as with a large puff of purple smoke the Purple Witch appeared in front of the throne, laughing and cackling with glee. Jane had never seen someone so nasty and mean looking. She was dressed in a long purple dress, and had purple eyes, purple hair, and long sharp purple teeth. As soon as she appeared, the Pomboos fell back in confusion, with cries of fear and despair coming out of their mouths. The Witch glared down on them hungrily, especially Jane, and Jane felt what true greed must be, for she saw it in the Witch's eyes.

In the Witch's hand was a short rod, and Snooky blurted out that she could do all kinds of horrible things with that rod, including releasing the awful paper monster.

"Well, well well, my little Pomboo friends have found the courage to come back. Did you really expect to surprise me? And look who is also here, the TOY Jane to complete

my collection, ha , ha, ha!".

Jane wondered why the Pomboos did not run for it, as they had before, but then she noticed that the doorways were filled with Bingo-Bingos, all with sharp claws. Among them, Jane saw Tooky looking out at her with a horrible gloating look. There would be no escape this time.

"Now you come right up here, my pet", croaked the Witch to Jane, "so you don't get damaged in the fight". And as she looked into Jane's eyes, Jane found herself moving toward the Witch, even though she didn't mean to. She tried not to, but she couldn't help herself.

As soon as Jane was up next to her, the Purple Witch raised up her hand with the rod in it. Slowly a big trapdoor began to open in the floor, and a cloud of stinking gas came out from the opening. It was the lair of the paper monster, and the Witch was about to release it!

Suddenly, a dark form pounced from above and snap!, a set of sharp yellow teeth bit into the Witch's hand which held the rod. The Witch screamed and the rod flew to the floor with a clatter. Then Peter appeared from behind the curtain and grabbed the rod before the Witch could get free from the shadow creature which had bitten her. Peter of course had directed the attack, and the poor creature paid dearly for it, as the Witch flung it into the air and set it into a ball of fire before it hit the ground.

Then with some words which he must have heard from the Witch, Peter held up the rod and the big trapdoor in the floor began to close. The awful thing inside must have been very eager to get out, for it almost got its big yellow paw scrunched in the door before it shut. Meanwhile, other shadow creatures were keeping the Witch busy, but she was destroying them quickly by zapping them with purple balls of fire which came from her fingertips and made the creatures explode into puffs of smoke when they hit. Jane felt very sorry for the creatures, even though they were the very ones who just a short time

ago had given her such a chase. The Witch just got rid of the last one as the door shut.

Then the Purple Witch turned on Peter and Jane with fire in her eyes. "You little fool! You traitor! You could have had a fine life here. But now, you will burn just like the darklings did!". She raised her hands, and two dark balls of fire grew in them.

But the Pomboos and Snooky were now swarming up the steps to the rescue. They knocked the Witch over on her face. They knew that they could not hold her long, and that her soldiers would soon drag them off to their deaths, but they were going to do their best to help Jane and Peter now.

"Peter, quick, the spider!", shouted Jane. Peter's eyes immediately lit up with the understanding of what Jane was thinking about. He pulled the jar that held the green spider out of his pocket. "Hold her down for just a moment more!", he cried to the Pomboos, and quick as a flash he opened the jar and held the opening against the top of the Purple Witch's head! If spiders could smile, thought Peter, he knew that this one would be smiling now. As the Witch squirmed mightily (for she now knew what was happening), the spider jumped lightly onto the Witch's head and sunk its fangs deep into her. Instantly, the Witch went limp. And then slowly her head came up, smiling, with only white showing!.

"Tell your soldiers to stop.", Peter whispered to the Witch, and he motioned for the Pomboos to let her go. She stood up and raised her hand as a stop signal. And her soldiers stopped in their tracks! Jane, Peter, and all the Pomboos gave a sigh of relief. The fight was over, and they had won!

Well, to make a not so long story short, Jane and Peter, who of course now were in control of the Purple Witch, stayed around long enough to help set things right between the Pomboos and the Bingo-Bingos. The paper monster would be sent back to the marshes, and they finally ordered the Purple Witch to turn herself into a statue! Everyone was forgiven, even Tooky, and peace again ruled the land.

Then Jane and Peter stood with Snooky and a whole hall full of their friends, said goodbye and stepped into the great mirror in back of the throne.

And out they came from the great big mirror over their fireplace in their own home! They stood for a moment on the top of the mantle, and then quickly scrambled down and ran to find their mother and father, who hugged them and kissed them with joy. When their parents asked them where in the world they had been, they simply said they had fallen asleep in the attic, for all of their adventures had lasted only a day. And it wasn't really a lie, for in a way it did seem like a dream now, and maybe they really did dream it. And they neither did wish to try to explain the mirror business to their parents, as that is the sort of thing which sometimes troubles grown-ups.

Well, Jane and Peter were scolded for not letting their parents know where they were, but the scolding was full of love, and they promised never to do it again.

But that was not the last time that Jane and Peter visited the mirror land, or the last time that their friends from the mirror land had secret parties in the attic with them.

THE END