



Lady Esme and the Stolen Fire Gems



- 1 The sun was just rising when the palace blared with a chorus of yells. King Errol, sovereign of the Kingdom of Malgovia, was fuming. Those brave enough to translate his roars shuddered in horror. The King's jewels had been stolen! Of all the precious treasures in Malgovia, no one but the King was allowed to set eyes, let alone hands, upon his priceless Fire Gems.
- 2 Mudluck, the oldest of King Errol's servants, knew what to do. He asked everyone within earshot to seek out the Lady Esme, the wisest person in the land. Thankfully, the King's fury had brought the entire palace within earshot, so it wasn't too long before her Ladyship bowed before the throne.
- 3 "Gracious Lady Esme, the most horrible fate has befallen Malgovia this morning. A fiend has

stolen our beloved Fire Gems. Please, find the gems and the villain who stole them, and I shall give you one as your reward," King Errol said.

- 4 Lady Esme bowed and set about her mission. She knew that every night the royal guards locked the gates of the palace, so no enemies could break in while everyone slept. This meant that whoever had stolen the gems lived somewhere inside.
- 5 While her Ladyship carried out the important mission, Mudluck did his best to look after his master. The poor King spent the entire day pacing around the throne room. As each hour passed, a heavy bell tolled from the highest tower in the palace. Each shuddering chime caused his Majesty to grow more desperate. Soon night was advancing across Malgovia. The owls in the royal gardens started to hoot in the cold, dark air. Even they seemed interested in finding the thief, constantly asking: "Who? Who? Who?"
- 6 Finally the owls stopped hooting and the tower bell called out the first hour of sunrise. Moments

later everyone rushed to the throne room. It seemed that Lady Esme had solved the mystery of the stolen Fire Gems.

- 7 The throne room had never been so crowded. Chimneysweeps were pressed against ladies-in-waiting, covering their silk dresses in soot, while nervous kitchen staff tried their best not to be skewered on the spiked armour of noble knights. A hush washed over the crowd as Lady Esme calmly walked up to King Errol's throne.

"People of Malgovia, after much investigating and deliberating, I have found the one who stole the King's precious jewels."

- 8 Lady Esme clapped her hands and the royal guards ushered four people into the room. Everyone gasped. Standing in front of the crowd was the head cook, the gardener, the bellringer and, most surprising of all, Mudluck, the King's oldest servant. All four suspects looked down at their feet in fear.

- 9 "These four are the only people in the palace who do not have a confirmed alibi," Lady Esme told the audience. "However, I believe only one person here was actually involved." She walked along the line of suspects, eyeing each with a shrewd glare. "Now, one at a time, each will say where they were on the night of the jewel theft."

- 10 The cook walked forward. "I was busy making the bread for everyone to eat in the morning. I had no time to leave the kitchen to steal the Fire Gems."

The gardener was next. "I'm sorry but I was asleep in my bed in the aviary, so only the royal owls would have seen me that night."

The bellringer shook his head. "For generations my family has proudly rung the bells for the royal family. I was asleep in the belltower, waiting for

sunrise so I could wake the castle with my tolling."

Finally Mudluck turned to the King. "My Lord, you must believe me, I would never steal anything from you. I was doing my duty, sweeping the corridors so no dust would disturb you when you awoke. We all know how you dislike sneezing."

- 11 Lady Esme thanked each of the suspects before turning to the King. "I'm afraid that two of these men are lying. Despite the chaos yesterday, there was indeed bread baked for breakfast, therefore the cook is telling the truth. He may go free. Also, the gardener is telling the truth, because the owls would have been disturbed by his sneaking about and no one heard anything besides their normal hooting."

- 12 This left only the bellringer and Mudluck standing before the King.

Lady Esme continued, "I'm sorry dear Mudluck, but we all know that you haven't swept the corridors for years. You've grown too old and it hurts your hands."

King Errol roared in anger, leaping up from his throne. "How dare you betray me like this Mudluck, after all I've given you and your family!"

- 13 "Patience my Lord," Lady Esme raised her hand and smiled at the King, "Mudluck is innocent. He tells the truth when he says he'd never steal anything from you. Everyone knows that Mudluck is the most dedicated servant in the entire kingdom."

As one, all the eyes in the throne room locked onto the bellringer. He began to quiver in terror. Lady Esme pointed at him and frowned.

14 "Every morning the tower bell rings with the sunrise. *Except for yesterday morning.* No bells rang because the bellringer was asleep. After all these years, the only reason why he'd be asleep was because he'd been up all night stealing the jewels!"

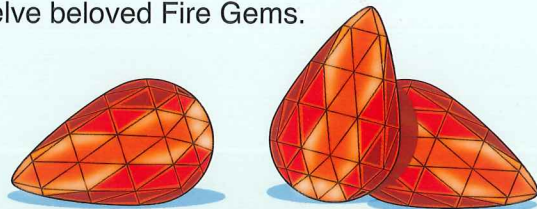
With a cry, the bellringer leapt into the crowd, trying his best to run from the guards. He almost escaped, but the sudden appearance of a chimney brush tripped him over. Two guards hoisted him up and locked chains around his wrists.

15 Once the bellringer was arrested, Lady Esme led the King, Mudluck and the rest of the palace up into the bell tower. There, hidden beneath a blanket, was the golden chest that contained the twelve sparkling Fire Gems. His Majesty whooped with delight, hugging the chest as if it was a long-lost child.

16 "Thank you so much Lady Esme, your wisdom has saved the kingdom yet again. As a reward you may take one of these Fire Gems to keep and cherish forever."

Lady Esme smiled sweetly at the King. "My Lord, seeing you happy again is reward enough. The collection should remain intact."

17 The next day no bell rang at dawn, or the day after that. But no one seemed to mind, for the King had proclaimed a week of public holidays in honour of Lady Esme and the recovery of his twelve beloved Fire Gems.



Rewritten from original "Wards" story by courtesy of the Department of Education and Training Western Australia.

Questions

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| <p>1 Mudluck was</p> <p>a the oldest of King Errol's servants.</p> <p>b the person who stole the Fire Gems.</p> <p>c asleep in the aviary.</p> | <p>4 How many Fire Gems were stolen?</p> <p>a seven</p> <p>b eleven</p> <p>c twelve</p> |
| <p>2 Who stood next to the ladies-in-waiting in the throne room?</p> <p>a knights in spiky armour</p> <p>b Mudluck</p> <p>c chimneysweeps</p> | <p>5 What could be heard in the palace at night?</p> <p>a people snoring</p> <p>b owls hooting</p> <p>c bells tolling</p> |
| <p>3 Why do you think the bellringer stole the Fire Gems?</p> <p>a He hated ringing the palace bells.</p> <p>b They were worth a lot of money.</p> <p>c He wanted to play a trick on King Errol.</p> | <p>6 What was the most important thing that helped Lady Esme solve the mystery?</p> <p>a Knowing who most admired the gems.</p> <p>b The events that occurred regularly every day and night.</p> <p>c The statements of the four suspects.</p> |

Vocabulary

Find words in the text that match the meanings below. The word is in the section shown in brackets.

- 7 To transform into another language (1)
- 8 Treasured and highly valued (1)
- 9 Thinking about something (7)
- 10 A group of people gathered to listen (9)
- 11 To be disloyal to someone (12)

Grammar

Find a **verb** (an action word) in these sentences from the text.

- 12 Lady Esme solved the mystery.
- 13 All four suspects looked down at their feet.
- 14 The cook walked forward.
- 15 He quivered in terror.

Back To The Text...

- 16 Prediction: What is likely to happen in the future?
- a The bell ringer was never replaced.
- b The bell ringer was replaced a week later.
- 17 Another word for *alibi* (9) would be
- a excuse.
- b explanation.

- 18 Who or what asked "Who? Who? Who?" (5)?
- a Lady Esme
- b the owls.

Sequencing

Look back through the card to find what happened first. Choose **a** or **b**.

- 19 a Lady Esme was asked to find the gems.
b The king paced around the throne room.
- 20 a The owls hooted in the dark.
b The bellringer tripped on a broom.
- 21 a Mudluck explained himself.
b The gardener explained himself.

Think About This

- 22 How do we know that Lady Esme really believed the gems were very important to the king?
- a The king was fuming when they disappeared.
- b The king whooped with delight when they were found.
- c She refused the reward so the collection would remain intact.
- 23 The Fire Gems are most likely to be
- a emeralds.
- b pearls.
- c rubies.

Challenge Option

Drawing: Imagine what a chimneysweep in the story would look like. Draw one.

