**The Unexpected Visitor**

My name is Lizzie, and I live in a little town by the name of Heathshire nestled in the Isle of Scots. Cocooned in a landscape of wooded hills and lush meadows, the town overlooks a picturesque coast to the south. Looking at the terrain, one would get a magical sense of the place. And of magical places belong many a magical stories.

Our hamlet is not very populous. The road meanders through a handful of stone cottages, farms, occasional barns and gardens, stables and sheds for the livestock, and a cobbled marketplace. At the far end of the hamlet, the path leads down to the woods. There is a large clearing bang in the middle of the forest, surrounded by oak trees, which is a favourite spot for children to play, womenfolk to huddle around for their everyday gossip, and men to gather for a puff. Lovely wild flowers jut out from cracks between rocks, their sweet fragrance wading through the air thick with intoxicating fragrance. Marshes and bushes teem with remarkable birds whose feathers, it is said, can heal even the most incurable diseases. Occasionally, you would notice squirrels, rabbits, and small foxes dart across the ground, looking for food.

One of the favourite pastimes for the old folks of our village is to recount timeless fables and legends of lore to children. On a sweet, idle afternoon, you would spot gaping faces of kids listening intently to dramatic recitals of folklore by elders of the village—their renditions peppered with tales of otherworldly beings, morbid ghosts and ghouls, mythical creatures like giants and fairies, shape-shifting witches, legendary lake monsters, magical castles, and one-horned unicorn. On some evenings, village women and farmers would, on their way back from a hard day’s toil, gather around a storyteller to enjoy the recitals. While some stories are greeted with laughter from the crowds, other intriguing tales invoke gasps of fascination from the awed listeners. I have often stopped by such gatherings and inadvertently lost myself in the stories of the long-forgotten times. Has magic always existed in our lives but evaded our mortal senses for our lack of faith in it? Or the beliefs of ancient seers in the power of magic and spells have only been but cock and bull stories spun from the fabric of one’s desires? Smiling to myself, I would get on with my usual chores, little knowing that an incredible adventure awaited me—a journey of strange encounters, startling discoveries, and things so extraordinary that no man would ever believe.