

# THE TOME OF FORBIDDEN WORDS

The knight slowly crept down the cave, his torch licking the wet walls around him. He stepped forward into the darkness and heard a tremendous crack under his feet. Whatever it was, it had pierced right through the leather part of his greaves and stabbed him right in the bottom of the foot. He wanted so desperately to scream some sort of word that could express his anger and pain, but he could say nothing but, "Hum!" This, of course, did not satisfactorily express either his anger or his pain, let alone the both of them combined.

"Hum, sir?" asked the knight's servant.

"Yes!" replied the knight angrily. "I seem to have stepped on a sharp rock of some sort. I'm finding it difficult to express my anger with mere words."

"Perhaps saying 'hum' as loud as you can would be adequate."

"HUM!" yelled the knight, taking his servant's advice. "I'm afraid that didn't really do it."

"Perhaps I could shout it with you?"

"No, no. It's not the way I say it. It's the word itself. It just doesn't have the punch to it. I need to utter a word that can let out my dissatisfaction with what has just happened."

"Humfuddery, perhaps, sir? It's much like 'hum,' but there's a whole other additional aspect to it."

"Well, it's certainly got a few extra syllables," replied the knight,

contemplating using the word. "Humfuddery."

"I think you have to yell it, though," said the servant. "Humfuddery!" The servant cleared his throat. "A bit like that, no?"

"What did I step on, anyhow?" asked the knight. He brought his torch low to the ground to discover the remains of a skeleton. The two men leaped back in terror. "Hum!" yelled the knight. "Humfuddery!"

"Are you trying to express your fear, sir?" asked the servant.

"Yes, did that come across?"

"Not quite, sir. Perhaps you could take the Lord's name in vein instead?"

"Never!"

"No, go ahead, sir. This is a perfectly normal situation to take the Lord's name in vein."

"Just say, 'Jesus'?"

"Yes, yes, but shout it."

"Jesus!" yelled the knight awkwardly.

"How about 'Jesus Christ'... or no, 'Jesus H. Christ!'"

"Jesus H. Christ?"

"Extra syllables, sir. Always helps."

"Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!"

"Ah, good one, sir! Delightful," said the servant, clapping his hands together with glee.

"No! Look!"

The knight held his torch out ahead of him. In front of them was the artifact they had been searching for.

"It's the *Tome of Forbidden Words!*" shouted the knight, and rushed over to the large, dusty book that sat atop a stone pedestal. The knight flipped through page after page of words that no ear of man had heard for thousands of years.

"Sir," the servant said quietly. "Sir, I was... Well, I'm a bit concerned, you see, by the... There's these skeletons everywhere around the book. If you would consider a deduction I've made..."

"Quiet!" shouted the knight.

"Alright, get us all killed then."

"Just listen to these words!" said the knight, completely ignoring his servant. "I feel exhilarated just saying them in my head."

"Maybe there's a reason they're forbidden. I mean..."

"Fuck!" yelled the knight.

The servant immediately shut up. That was by far the most offensive word he had heard ever in his life. Not even 'humfuddery' could come close.

"Beats the *shit* out of humfuddery!" continued the knight. "Listen to this one: *holy* shit. Yeah! And this is just the first page."

"Sir," said the servant, grabbing his stomach. "I feel a little nauseous. These words, sir... They're..."

"Go get some fresh air or something. These words are amazing!"

"Right, sir. Good idea."

The servant stumbled back through the cave until he could see a spot of light ahead of him.

The knight's voice bounced off the walls of the cave, saying, "*Son of a bitch!*"

The servant ran out into the open and vomited over the nearest rock. Such words were just too much for him to handle. For several moments afterward, he could hear unintelligible profanities being issued from down inside the cave to no one in particular.

It was sometime after that when the knight decided he would flip beyond the first page of the book and look at the very last pages. Merely skimming over the page made the knight weak in the knees. The knight looked more closely, bringing his torch nearer the book. He was reading the most vile, most disgusting, most terrible combinations of letters ever conceived. It was then when the knight began to cough up blood. The words, unspoken, were running through his head again and again, and he was unable to stop thinking of them. All at once, his insides tried to become his outsides and his outsides decided to shrivel up and trade places with his insides. The last the servant ever heard of his master was a horrible, soul-rattling scream.

Feeling it wisest to let his master rest in peace, the servant promptly decided to get as far away from the cave as possible.

He returned to the dreary, muddy village in which his mud-drenched wife and children lived. (In those days it was necessary of peasants to roll in the mud daily to make those who belonged to the upper caste feel even better about being in the upper caste.) Just as the servant was about to open the door to his filthy mud-drenched hut, a carriage full of manure snapped free of the horses carting it and careened down the road. The front of the

carriage hit a rock at high speeds, flipping the carriage, and consequently sending a wall of thick manure right into the servant.

An old man, the owner of the horses and the manure that was now all over the servant, came running up. "Oh, dear!" said the man. "So sorry, sir!"

The servant stood up, the manure still stuck to him. He was furious. The word "humfuddery" crossed his mind a few times, but that gave him no satisfaction. With no more hesitation, he shouted at the top of his lungs, "SHIT!"

The old man was taken aback. His jaw dropped and his eyes widened. He grabbed his heart.

The servant realized what he had said. He had spoken a word from the *Tome of Forbidden Words*! He was introducing words into the vernacular that should have never been uttered by mortal man. This made him even angrier. "Ah, fuck!"

The old man shook in terror. "Those words!" he said and collapsed to his knees. "What have they done to me?! I can't breathe!"

"At least you're not covered in *shit*," replied the servant. He couldn't help himself. The word "manure" couldn't even come close to describing the vileness of the substance that covered his body. At the second mention of the word "shit," the old man couldn't bear it any longer. The old man shook violently and collapsed in the middle of muddy road.

The servant brushed himself off and entered his hut, where his ugly, nagging wife greeted him with, "Where have you been? Humfuddery! I was worried to death about you."

Without the briefest of pauses, he said, "*Bitch*, don't *fucking* start with me."

It was irreversible. His new words spread like a grass fire across the village and across the countryside. Whenever the servant was hurt, or startled, or angry at someone, he would utter some of those words he heard his master read from the *Tome of Forbidden Words* on that day so long ago. Since then, those vulgar words have been branded into the human psyche, and never again will anyone say "humfuddery" to express their anger, because that word is just fucked up.

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