

CHAPTER FOUR

Turkish Delight

BUT what *are* you?" said the Queen again. "Are you a great overgrown dwarf that has cut off its beard?"

"No, your Majesty," said Edmund, "I never had a beard, I'm a boy."

"A boy!" said she. "Do you mean you are a Son of Adam?"

Edmund stood still, saying nothing. He was too confused by this time to understand what the question meant.

"I see you are an idiot, whatever else you may be," said the Queen. "Answer me, once and for all, or I shall lose my patience. Are you human?"

"Yes, your Majesty," said Edmund.

"And how, pray, did you come to enter my dominions?"

"Please, your Majesty, I came in through a wardrobe."

"A wardrobe? What do you mean?"

"I — I opened a door and just found myself here, your Majesty," said Edmund.

"Ha!" said the Queen, speaking more to herself than to him. "A door. A door from the world of men! I have heard of such things. This may wreck all. But he is only one, and he is easily dealt with." As she spoke these words she rose from her seat and looked Edmund full in the face, her eyes flaming; at the same moment she raised her wand. Edmund felt sure that she was going to do something dreadful but he seemed unable to move. Then, just as he gave himself up for lost, she appeared to change her mind.

"My poor child," she said in quite a different voice, "how cold you look! Come and sit with me here on the sledge and I will put my

mantle round you and we will talk.”

Edmund did not like this arrangement at all but he dared not disobey; he stepped on to the sledge and sat at her feet, and she put a fold of her fur mantle round him and tucked it well in.

“Perhaps something hot to drink?” said the Queen. “Should you like that?”

“Yes please, your Majesty,” said Edmund, whose teeth were chattering.

The Queen took from somewhere among her wrappings a very small bottle which looked as if it were made of copper. Then, holding out her arm, she let one drop fall from it on the snow beside the sledge. Edmund saw the drop for a second in mid-air, shining like a diamond. But the moment it touched the snow there was a hissing sound and there stood a jewelled cup full of something that steamed. The dwarf immediately took this and handed it to Edmund with a bow and a smile; not a very nice smile. Edmund felt much better as he began to sip the hot drink. It was something he had never tasted before, very sweet and foamy and creamy, and it warmed him right down to his toes.

“It is dull, Son of Adam, to drink without eating,” said the Queen presently. “What would you like best to eat?”

“Turkish Delight, please, your Majesty,” said Edmund.

The Queen let another drop fall from her bottle on to the snow, and instantly there appeared a round box, tied with green silk ribbon, which, when opened, turned out to contain several pounds of the best Turkish Delight. Each piece was sweet and light to the very centre and Edmund had never tasted anything more delicious. He was quite warm now, and very comfortable.

While he was eating the Queen kept asking him questions. At first Edmund tried to remember that it is rude to speak with one’s mouth full, but soon he forgot about this and thought only of trying to shovel down as much Turkish Delight as he could, and the more he ate the more he wanted to eat, and he never asked himself why the Queen should be so inquisitive. She got him to tell her that he had one brother and two sisters, and that one of his sisters had already been in Narnia and had met a Faun there, and that no one except himself and his brother and his sisters knew anything about Narnia. She seemed especially interested in the fact that there were four of them, and kept

on coming back to it. "You are sure there are just four of you?" she asked. "Two Sons of Adam and two Daughters of Eve, neither more nor less?" and Edmund, with his mouth full of Turkish Delight, kept on saying, "Yes, I told you that before," and forgetting to call her "Your Majesty", but she didn't seem to mind now.

At last the Turkish Delight was all finished and Edmund was looking very hard at the empty box and wishing that she would ask him whether he would like some more. Probably the Queen knew quite well what he was thinking; for she knew, though Edmund did not, that this was enchanted Turkish Delight and that anyone who had once tasted it would want more and more of it, and would even, if they were allowed, go on eating it till they killed themselves. But she did not offer him any more. Instead, she said to him,

"Son of Adam, I should so much like to see your brother and your two sisters. Will you bring them to see me?"

"I'll try," said Edmund, still looking at the empty box.

"Because, if you did come again — bringing them with you of course — I'd be able to give you some more Turkish Delight. I can't do it now, the magic will only work once. In my own house it would be another matter."

"Why can't we go to your house now?" said Edmund. When he had first got on to the sledge he had been afraid that she might drive away with him to some unknown place from which he would not be able to get back; but he had forgotten about that fear now.

"It is a lovely place, my house," said the Queen. "I am sure you would like it. There are whole rooms full of Turkish Delight, and what's more, I have no children of my own. I want a nice boy whom I could bring up as a Prince and who would be King of Narnia when I am gone. While he was Prince he would wear a gold crown and eat Turkish Delight all day long; and you are much the cleverest and handsomest young man I've ever met. I think I would like to make you the Prince — some day, when you bring the others to visit me."

"Why not now?" said Edmund. His face had become very red and his mouth and fingers were sticky. He did not look either clever or handsome, whatever the Queen might say.

"Oh, but if I took you there now," said she, "I shouldn't see your brother and your sisters. I very much want to know your charming relations. You are to be the Prince and — later on — the King; that is

understood. But you must have courtiers and nobles. I will make your brother a Duke and your sisters Duchesses.”

“There’s nothing special about them,” said Edmund, “and, anyway, I could always bring them some other time.”

“Ah, but once you were in my house,” said the Queen, “you might forget all about them. You would be enjoying yourself so much that you wouldn’t want the bother of going to fetch them. No. You must go back to your own country now and come to me another day, with them, you understand. It is no good coming without them.”

“But I don’t even know the way back to my own country,” pleaded Edmund. “That’s easy,” answered the Queen. “Do you see that lamp?” She pointed with her wand and Edmund turned and saw the same lamp-post under which Lucy had met the Faun. “Straight on, beyond that, is the way to the World of Men. And now look the other way” — here she pointed in the opposite direction — “and tell me if you can see two little hills rising above the trees.”

“I think I can,” said Edmund.

“Well, my house is between those two hills. So next time you come you have only to find the lamp-post and look for those two hills and walk through the wood till you reach my house. But remember — you must bring the others with you. I might have to be very angry with you if you came alone.”

“I’ll do my best,” said Edmund.

“And, by the way,” said the Queen, “you needn’t tell them about me. It would be fun to keep it a secret between us two, wouldn’t it? Make it a surprise for them. Just bring them along to the two hills — a clever boy like you will easily think of some excuse for doing that — and when you come to my house you could just say “Let’s see who lives here” or something like that. I am sure that would be best. If your sister has met one of the Fauns, she may have heard strange stories about me — nasty stories that might make her afraid to come to me. Fauns will say anything, you know, and now -”

“Please, please,” said Edmund suddenly, “please couldn’t I have just one piece of Turkish Delight to eat on the way home?”

“No, no,” said the Queen with a laugh, “you must wait till next time.” While she spoke, she signalled to the dwarf to drive on, but as the sledge swept away out of sight, the Queen waved to Edmund, calling out, “Next time! Next time! Don’t forget. Come soon.”

Edmund was still staring after the sledge when he heard someone calling his own name, and looking round he saw Lucy coming towards him from another part of the wood.

“Oh, Edmund!” she cried. “So you’ve got in too! Isn’t it wonderful, and now-”

“All right,” said Edmund, “I see you were right and it is a magic wardrobe after all. I’ll say I’m sorry if you like. But where on earth have you been all this time? I’ve been looking for you everywhere.”

“If I’d known you had got in I’d have waited for you,” said Lucy, who was too happy and excited to notice how snappishly Edmund spoke or how flushed and strange his face was. “I’ve been having lunch with dear Mr Tumnus, the Faun, and he’s very well and the White Witch has done nothing to him for letting me go, so he thinks she can’t have found out and perhaps everything is going to be all right after all.”

“The White Witch?” said Edmund; “who’s she?”

“She is a perfectly terrible person,” said Lucy. “She calls herself the Queen of Narnia though she has no right to be queen at all, and all the Fauns and Dryads and Naiads and Dwarfs and Animals — at least all the good ones — simply hate her. And she can turn people into stone and do all kinds of horrible things. And she has made a magic so that it is always winter in Narnia — always winter, but it never gets to Christmas. And she drives about on a sledge, drawn by reindeer, with her wand in her hand and a crown on her head.”

Edmund was already feeling uncomfortable from having eaten too many sweets, and when he heard that the Lady he had made friends with was a dangerous witch he felt even more uncomfortable. But he still wanted to taste that Turkish Delight again more than he wanted anything else.

“Who told you all that stuff about the White Witch?” he asked.

“Mr Tumnus, the Faun,” said Lucy.

“You can’t always believe what Fauns say,” said Edmund, trying to sound as if he knew far more about them than Lucy.

“Who said so?” asked Lucy.

“Everyone knows it,” said Edmund; “ask anybody you like. But it’s pretty poor sport standing here in the snow. Let’s go home.”

“Yes, let’s,” said Lucy. “Oh, Edmund, I am glad you’ve got in too. The others will have to believe in Narnia now that both of us have been there. What fun it will be!”

But Edmund secretly thought that it would not be as good fun for him as for her. He would have to admit that Lucy had been right, before all the others, and he felt sure the others would all be on the side of the Fauns and the animals; but he was already more than half on the side of the Witch. He did not know what he would say, or how he would keep his secret once they were all talking about Narnia.

By this time they had walked a good way. Then suddenly they felt coats around them instead of branches and next moment they were both standing outside the wardrobe in the empty room.

“I say,” said Lucy, “you do look awful, Edmund. Don’t you feel well?”

“I’m all right,” said Edmund, but this was not true. He was feeling very sick.

“Come on then,” said Lucy, “let’s find the others. What a lot we shall have to tell them! And what wonderful adventures we shall have now that we’re all in it together.”