“Stop talking, and listen!” bellowed Maclock, shaking his bony fist at the assembled group of creatures. Then there was silence. Even the wind seemed to have ceased to whisper its darkest secrets. “It’s no use arguing amongst yourselves. We must find the scarlet ruby somehow. Without its power, we will disappear into the abyss.”

“I’ll go! Let me find the scarlet ruby!”

A laugh filled the cave, lit by a thousand winking fireflies. “What! Ellister! He couldn’t find a magic herb in a herb garden!” The elfin servant’s face burned with shame, but he felt anger welling up inside him. She’d show them - and leaping to her feet she jumped forward and snatched the map to the enchanted forest out of a startled Maclock’s hands.

That had been yesterday. Now sweating under the heat of the relentless sun, her feet already sore and her shoulders aching from her rucksack. Ellister began to regret her desire to be a heroine.

“At least you came with me,” she whispered to her pet poggle, Dor, loping blissfully by her side. “We can find the scarlet ruby together!”