

When his highness the Giant Squid had taken the throne, the people wept with joy — they were ready to see their country prosper again. In living history, they'd had monarchs that ranged from a Great White, who had been remembered for her ferocity and diligence dealing with the French invasion to a blue whale who had been largely sedentary during his rule, an inept politician and a frightened leader.

Peasants and common folk alike lined up in dregs for a meeting with their new king. They'd heard the stories of his rise to power. Some wished for nothing more than mere observance, to perceive his strength and perhaps return home with a newfound strength of their own. Whispers trailed up and down the line.

"I hear he's a 100ft big! Crimson as the morning sun & handsome beyond all measure."

Jerald very much doubted that. He'd seen the throne once before, as a child during the Great White's reign, and though it seemed at the time as though the throne itself could eclipse the sun, his adulthood had learned him how impossible that feat would be. A 100 foot squid would never fit on so small a throne.

As he neared the entrance to the keep, he felt his excitement take hold of him. His village had selected him as their representative — he'd be making the case that a small portion the kingdom's funds be diverted to provide a cloning device for his village's animals. As they hardly had the natural resources to feed and nurture their livestock, it had been Jerald's suggestion that they build a cloning device to provide for their families.

The gates before him were huge, far bigger than he remembered. Big enough for a 100ft squid to fit through, big enough for a 200ft squid to fit through! He pushed that out of his mind. His moment was nearly upon him. What would he say? He could've sworn he had a speech prepared, but nothing came to him. He reached for his hat and wrung it dry between his hands. The gates creaked and a small door in the lower-right corner opened.

"Enter," a voice bellowed.

Jerald froze. His fear welled up deeply inside and stuck him to his place. A knight protruded his head from the small door and looked around. His helm was adorned in a whirlwind of steel tentacles.

“Enter,” he offered again, to Jerald.

This time, Jerald listened.

He stepped into the keep, with grand determination to leave his fear at the door. The moment before him would be retold to his children & his children’s children and, with any luck, to the generations that followed. *Remember everything*, he told himself. *Let not the smallest detail escape you*. He stepped inside to the one memory that would never fade.

At the end of the hall, positioned high above the crowd, a sickly pink & flimsy creature paid attendance to the woes of the common folk. His tentacles splayed outward in curly cues revealing an impossibly transparent whiteness on his underbody. Indeed he was large, if not 100ft, certainly close, but only with his tentacles counted. Was that fair? Jerald stood at 5’7”, but if he threw his arms above his head he’d stand nearly at 7ft. Still, nobody acknowledged him as so tall. If everything had been as he imagined, his highness the Giant Squid would still have been betrayed by his own eyes. For they appeared as pasted upon his head. No reverence behind his eyes, much less any focus. They stared off lazily in whichever direction his body slumped.

As Jerald stood before his king his disappointment melted away in the face of a destitute ruler. At last, he thought, *this’ll be easy*.

“Your Highness, Your Reverence. Please it be you, for I am your humble servant in these most trying times.”

He paused, awaiting some acknowledgement from his ruler. His gigantiness the Giant Squid uncurled one tentacle ever so slightly. Jerald took that as his cue to continue.

“Your Glassiness, please forgive this one as he come to you with woes below your measure and deservedly worthy of your neglecting,” Jerald continued, at his own risk.

“The village from which I hail has been besot by a terrible epidemic. The cows, I fear, have taken on a filmy white underbelly and I worry for their health.”

“Cows are white, peasant! Be not so foolish as to trouble your king with such trivial issues,” a knight beside him yelled out.

“Ah yes! You are right, ser. I mention this not for my village’s sake, nay not even for mine, but because it appears as though my liege, of whom I stand in the shadow of his greatness, may be riddled with the very same affliction.”

Gasps echoed across the hall of the keep. The knights raised their weapons and a call was shouted from somewhere beyond him.

“Seize him!”

The knights grabbed Jerald and ushered the other common folk away. The room went quiet in a moment, the only sound the occasional creak of a knight’s armor. A heavy breath rested above Jerald’s head when, finally, the king Giant Squid spoke, slowly and wispy.

“Leave us.”

Jerald, with a grin his village learned to fear, smiled.