



Chapter One:

A Royal Audience

On that day, as usual, the king's personal physician Doctor Janus arrived at the castle early in the morning. The doctor, whose beard was as long and thin as he was himself, did that every day, except for Sundays when he had his day off. He asked King Ignaz how he was, and then, every time, he was presented with a royal chocolate candy. King Ignaz may have been short and immensely heavy but he was also always healthy. The chocolate candy always tasted different: one time of pineapple, the other of oranges, or coconut or peppermint. Sometimes even of ginger and the doctor didn't like that at all. It was always a surprise and a little bit like a game of chance.

After the doctor had been given his piece of chocolate, he would be allowed to leave again, but only if the two of them didn't chat about the weather or about the upcoming harvest

season, or about the things the river that surrounded Ignatia – because that was the name of the island King Ignaz reigned over – washed up.

That morning, however, Doctor Janus looked very worried. “Your Majesty,” he said to the king when he just wanted to give him the usual piece of chocolate. “Your Majesty, I have bad news for you.”

“Bad news? Oh...,” the king groaned and put the chocolate immediately away again.

Bad news made him terribly nervous. “And, my dear doctor, what is it about? Is it a royal message? Do I really have to know? There’s no way around it?”

“Unfortunately, Your Majesty,” the doctor said. “I’m afraid it concerns the security of our entire country!”

“Oh, oh, oh,” King Ignaz groaned again. “Our country’s security? Then it really is a royal message. I will hear it while I’m sitting on my throne. It seems that’s what’s expected of me.”

The royal personal physician walked to the throne room following the king who sighed the entire time and murmured “oh oh oh” over and over again. There, King Ignaz sat down on his throne and held fast to its armrests. “Well then, my dear Doctor Janus, what do you have to say?”

“I’m sorry I have to tell you that our esteemed Constable Ravensnest has fallen ill, Your Majesty,” the Doctor said.

“Fallen ill? Ha! That is not my responsibility but yours, dear doctor. Heal him and the crisis is over.”

Relieved, King Ignaz wanted to climb down from the throne.

“Your Majesty, I cannot heal the constable. Only you can,” Doctor Janus worriedly said.

“Me? But I really don’t understand anything about your art of healing! I’m king and not a doctor! Consult another doctor if you can’t figure out what’s wrong with our dear constable. So, that was a very royal piece of advice. I’m completely exhausted.” King Ignaz let himself fall heavily back on his throne.

“But I know what’s wrong with him, Your Majesty,” the doctor said. “And only you can make sure that he’ll get well again.”

The king sighed with grief.

“Then tell me what I can do for our constable to make him well again and to restore security for us all.”

“Well, Your Majesty... it’s not that easy at all.” The doctor scratched his head. “But to make a long story short, it’s about the fact that he’s missing something important.”

“Isn’t that often the reason when one is ill?” King Ignaz asked confusedly.

“Sure, Your Majesty. But, in this case, something particularly special is missing – a robber.”

“A robber?” the king asked with surprise. “It’s getting more and more mysterious! How can a constable be missing a robber? Has one escaped? I didn’t even know there was a robber in our prison.” “Of course there is no robber in our prison,” Doctor Janus said patiently. “There has never been a robber on our island, if you will remember, Your Majesty.”

“Yes, but... how can something be missing if it has never been there in the first place?” King Ignaz called out desperately. “Especially a robber – what do we need a robber for?”

“The thing is,” the doctor cautiously said, “our Constable Ravensnest may have been fulfilling his duty faithfully for many years but the truth is, as we have to admit, that he doesn’t have a lot to do. Or to be completely honest: nothing at all. Nothing has ever happened that forced him to intervene.”

It’s important to know that King Ignaz’s kingdom consisted of one single island which was located in the middle of a broad river. On that island, there were only as many people as children in a school class. And it’s true, nothing had ever happened to make it necessary for a policeman to show up. Constable Ravensnest took a walk around the island in the morning and in the evening – which never took too long – and apart from that sat on the bench in front of his police station or went fishing at the riverbank.

“But then everything is perfectly alright!” King Ignaz called out and wanted to get up in relief. “The good man should be happy that everything is so peaceful and he doesn’t have anything to do! I really don’t begrudge him that.”

“He is very happy about that, without a doubt,” Doctor Janus said. “But you may also understand that he feels a bit superfluous.”

“A royal constable who feels superfluous?” the king wondered.

“Well, yes. Imagine, Your Majesty, it’s nearly the same as if you were king and had no kingdom.”

“What?” King Ignaz called out indignantly. “That’s unthinkable! Intolerable! Unroyal! Only the thought of it makes one sick.”

“True. That’s the reason why we need a robber for our constable to hunt and catch, Your Majesty.”

“Oh, oh, oh,” King Ignaz groaned. “A robber? On our island? But then nothing would be safe anymore!”

“That’s what the police are for, Your Majesty.”

“Yes, right. I had forgotten that for one moment.”

“You see, Your Majesty? Actually, you’re hardly thinking of Constable Ravensnest. It’s not surprising at all that he feels superfluous and falls ill.”

“You seem to be right, dear doctor,” the king brooded. If he had had a beard, he could have twirled it thoughtfully. But as he didn’t have one, he simply took the doctor’s.

“But what are we to do?” he asked after a while of twirling. “Where do we get a robber? We can’t simply put up posters saying *Wanted: Robber!*. That would lead to misunderstandings. And I don’t know anyone in my kingdom who would be apt to be a robber.”

“Then, Your Majesty, we have to invite a robber to come here. The position is vacant, so to speak, because there is no robber here yet.”

“Invite? This means, I would have to order one of my subjects to find a robber and bring him here! Good grief! Have you ever heard of anything like that? A king who needs a robber to make his constable well again? What a national crisis! No, it’s much more than that. It’s the crisis of all crises! I really and truthfully can’t imagine a bigger crisis. And who should I send on the search for a robber? There is not a single subject in my kingdom I could or would do without. What a poor king I am!”

King Ignaz had grown so pale that the Doctor got seriously worried for his health. It really was a lot to ask of him. For, in fact, the king hadn’t had much more to do than his Constable so far. Now he was, on a moment’s notice and without preparation, expected to make a difficult decision. But then it showed that King Ignaz was king for a reason. Suddenly, he sat up on his throne and said decidedly: “I have to pull myself together. This is a serious crisis and I am king. It is the king’s most important duty to stay calm!”

“I’m sure you are right about that, Your Majesty,” Doctor Janus said expectantly.

“I am absolutely right about that,” the king majestically replied. “That’s the reason why I will go have a nap first and sleep on this entire matter.”

He had climbed down the throne and disappeared in his bed-chamber already when Doctor Janus still heard him mutter: “Oh, oh, oh.”