

---

# ELF AND SPLOT

## THE LAST MIDDLE

*“Wake up!” called Splot. Elf continued to sleep, oblivious to Splot’s enthusiasm for the day. The days were often like this for Splot, waiting for Elf to wake from his slumber. Splot would wait noticing the sounds of the animals going about their business, the smells of the morning air that carried news of faraway places and the warmth of the sunshine as it danced through the leaves. Sometimes Splot would be absorbed in the world around and sometimes Splot would dream big dreams and make intricate plans. Splot liked to be ready for when Elf awoke. Elf of course, was unaware of all of this. Elf slept soundly when it was needed and woke when Elf was ready to move on. The routine when Elf awoke was always the same. Elf would jump up and spring to life with bounce and energy. First there was chattering as Elf described vivid pictures of how Elf thought the day should go and then there was action as Elf began to act this out. Splot would usually be caught unawares by Elf’s sudden waking and it would take Splot a short while to join Elf in a great passion for the day. Elf and Splot were used to tidying their camp away at a hurried pace and then setting out in a chosen direction. The course of things usually went like this. Elf would be busy starting things here and starting things there and Splot would hurry along behind completing them as fast as Splot could manage. Elf and Splot were happy in their work and there would be a merry banter between them about what they were doing and the state of the weather as they worked. By the time Splot had completed all the tasks Elf had begun, Elf had set out for the day. This was a problem. Not the sort of problem that Elf and Splot knew about, but the sort of problem that all the forest could see. The trees held great wisdom from years of providing structure for the forest, the saplings were full of energy as they all competed in their race to the sun, the insects buzzed with excitement as they moved between ground and the canopy and the birds filled the whole forest with sweet songs. To the forest the problem was obvious but how to achieve the solution required some consideration.*

*Elf and Splot journeyed towards the mountain. The mountain had been in their vision for a long while and they had sometimes been able to look at it for days as they journeyed. On other occasions its majesty has been hidden from view and though they felt its presence, they knew not whether they were heading towards or away from it. On this day, they knew they were heading towards the mountain and could see the colours shine and hear the peace radiating from its summit. As they journeyed along the trail, the forest provided the two travellers with a choice. The path split into two clear ways. Elf was about to begin singing the children's rhyme "eenie meenie miny moe" in order to choose which way when Splot arrived and firmly and authoritatively said "Stop."*

*At that moment a small white animal with a friendly face and warm voice appeared. "I am Chooser" the animal said, "and I am here to help you choose." Splot and Elf welcomed Chooser and they spent a pleasant few moments making introductions to each other and sharing tales of where they had been and what they had learned on their great adventure so far. Chooser was very much impressed by what Elf and Splot had to say and knew in an instant the problem the forest had recognised. Chooser began work. "I am here to help you choose which path to take from here. Do you know where you are going?" "Yes" Splot and Elf said in unison, "we are journeying to enjoy the sunlight on the mountain." Chooser nodded and then asked in a quizzical way "and do you truly know what enjoying the sunlight on the mountain will give you?" Elf and Splot thought for a while then each spoke an answer full of passion and depth. Chooser listened to each with sincerity and gently replied, "thank you, and also remember you can learn and discover even more if you wish it."*

*"It is time." said Chooser. "To the left is a path that is as smooth as you can imagine with hills that climb steeply, fall away even steeper and bring fantastic views, wonderful riches and great challenges as you journey. To the right is a path full of sensory pleasures where each twist and turn brings a new scent, a sound or a taste or texture that may reveal comfort and joy or cold and momentary hardship. Both paths will take you to the mountain you seek." Splot and Elf listened intently and began asking questions of Chooser. They*

*demanded to know which was the longest path, which the easier to travel, where the best campsites were, who they would meet on each path and which path Chooser would recommend. To all questions Chooser remained resolute, "between you both, you have the ability to choose your route from here. You do not need any further assistance from me." As Elf and Splot continued to ask with more urgency, Chooser continued to reply with more stillness, "between you both, you have the ability to choose your route from here. You do not need any further assistance from me."*

*After a period of time, Elf and Splot began to stop directing questions at Chooser and began to discuss the situation between each other. Initially they blamed Chooser for not helping them as they wanted. After another period of time, Elf and Splot began to see the benefits and drawbacks in each of the two paths the Chooser had offered. They saw Chooser had indeed been trying to help them and began to wonder if they could please Chooser by doing something in return. Even more periods of time passed, and Splot and Elf began looking out at the forest themselves. They noticed the two paths the Chooser had described, and also began to notice the faint look of other paths radiating from where they stood. Splot and Elf began to discuss their options and each expressed their preference clearly and listened to what the other had to say. Finally it was done. Splot and Elf said goodbye to the Chooser and set out in a direction where there was not yet a path. The Chooser wished them well and smiled as they left, pleased with another choice well made.*

*A clearing approached and Splot and Elf entered it as if at the same time. The forest was alive with the sweet songs from the birds, a buzz of excitement as insects moved between the ground and the canopy and a burst of energy from the saplings on the edge of the clearing as they competed in their race to the sun. All the while the trees provided the structure for the forest and made this clearing possible. Splot and Elf discussed their current situation and decided to camp with beauty around them. They stayed for a number of moons and when they left, it was Splot who led the way. Elf and Splot had agreed their next destination around the campfire the previous evening.*