

A scenic view of a coastline. In the foreground, there are green, bushy hills. A wide, sandy beach curves along the coast. The ocean is a mix of light blue and green, with white waves breaking onto the shore. The sky is overcast with grey clouds. In the distance, a small white building and a car are visible on a road near the beach.

GARTH

Malobi S Sinha

"A short yet well written and
nuanced story" [Amazon.com.au](https://www.amazon.com.au)

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PRELUDE

Garth is beset by dreams every night. Trips to the State Library yield very unexpected results, including Princesses and a new and improved identity, and visits to other planets!

REVIEWS

"Something for readers of all genres... science fiction certainly, yet peppered with some of the realities of life and friendship... also a little mystery, some suspense, some adventure, humour... and a happy ever after.

A short yet well written and nuanced story, with moments that made me smile. The quality of writing is sure to inspire young readers and extend their vocabularies.

If anything, I wished that the story had been longer.

Highly recommended."

.....Malindi Mishra, Amazon.com.au

"Malobi has a knack for bridging our outer and inner worlds in simple language that nevertheless grapples with deep thoughts and ideas. Her stories inspire adults and children alike. Beautifully written and good for the soul."

.....Shourov B., Lead Singer, The Bombay Royale

"Thank you Malobi, for your candor and honesty. I think you have a gift that you share in your writing which is both beautifully constructed and is rich in imagery and feeling of nature and spirit..."

.....Frank Esposito, Author, Editor – PoetryPasta

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The Story Begins

The world was a cold and dark place to Garth – he was beset by dreams every night.

He dreamt that he was being tortured in a prison – or falling off a cliff. The other dream he had was that he was being chased by monsters and just barely avoiding them.

You can see that this was not a good place to be for a person who has just started University. Garth was enrolled in a Bachelor of Science degree at his local University – he was about to complete first year, and had been getting excellent grades, until recently, when the dreams had begun.

Garth was sure that something was trying to tell him something. He had never had such vivid dreams before, until recently. And it was only recently that something else had happened...

Garth and his best friend, Pietre, had stumbled across something very ancient – in the State library. They had come across some scrolls, which were supposedly from ancient days – they were supposedly magical. The scrolls talked about magical beings, and unicorns and princesses...but also about darkness and dread.

Garth shook his head and turned over on his bed, where he had been day-dreaming. He needed to get his world in order – and needed to improve his grades! Oh, those nightmares, he hoped they'd go away – especially the one of being chased by demons – it gave him goose-bumps to think that they tried to catch him, but he had escaped – then.

Pietre was supposed to come over to Garth's house for a study session. And sure enough, soon the doorbell rang – Garth's Mum opened the door.

"Garth, it's Pietre" she called out, and Garth went and met Pietre at the door. "Come in, man!" he said as he smiled at Pietre, and they shuffled off to the library to study for the exams, which were to be held soon.

Garth and Pietre studied for about an hour, then decided to take a break.

"I think it's time for another visit to the State library", said Garth, looking a bit bored. "We should take another look at those old manuscripts that we found last time."

Pietre looked up interestedly. "Sure," he said with a grin, "Why not? But this time we have to make more sense of them – and do something about it!"

"Yes, we should", said Garth sheepishly. He was fascinated by those manuscripts – they called to him, like voices of long lost friends.

Garth and Pietre discussed when to meet up again, then decided they would meet at the State library next time – they would be able to study, and then check out the manuscripts at their leisure.

They called it a day, and Pietre said his goodbyes and left.

The next day dawned bright and sunny, a break from the greyness of the sky in the Winter. Garth was headed for the State library – he wanted another look at those yellowed scrolls.

Soon enough, he was there – he went up to the third floor where the scrolls were, taking the stairs as usual. He went up to the aisle and pulled them out, yellowed with time.

"And there was a palace called 'The Crown of Julius', behold its beauty, and the beauty of the fair grounds surrounding it..."

He kept reading..."And there the Princess lived, with her father and mother the King and Queen..."...and then "One day, evil beset the kingdom...The Ocres swarmed down on them like

macabre bees from a hive, they destroyed the palace and the kingdom, and took the King and Queen, and their daughter Riini, the Princess, prisoner..."

And then "And they are still held in the dungeons of the Ocres, unless this scroll has been superseded herewith."

Garth looked around – it was the last scroll that he was reading. The library was deserted, and it was almost dark outside. Time to head for home, he thought. But, just as he was about to close the scroll, there was a faint burning smell...and a yellow smoke started to wisp from the crinkled pages of the ancient book.

A faint image began to form from the smoke. Garth watched in awe, as a girl's form in a cloak materialised in front of him.

'Whoever it is that reads this scroll, know that this is a desperate plea', the form whispered, as a faint shadow of a silver dress and beautiful black hair materialised.

'Who are you?' asked Garth softly.

'I am the Princess Riini,' she whispered back. 'I am being held prisoner by the Ocres, in a place called Kalkundii...please, I can't hold out much longer...' The form began to fade.

'Wait!' said Garth, in concern. 'Where is this place?'

'It's where the world ends and the realm of night...takes...over...' and then the form began to disappear, as Garth desperately tried to make sense of what was happening.

He couldn't wait to tell Pietre of the happenings of the evening. The next day at University, they had a common class together, and Garth caught up with Pietre after it.

"Guess what happened yesterday evening! You'll never guess!" he puffed as he ran up to Pietre, who was pottering with his back-pack, trying to get his lunch-bag out. Pietre gave a grin and said, "No, what? Did you meet a Princess?"

"Well, yes!" said Garth, excitedly. Pietre looked at him in disbelief.

"You are joking, right!?" he exclaimed.

"No", said Garth with a grin. "It's true!"

"You'll have to tell me all about it!" Pietre said, interestedly, and pretended to box Garth's ears, as they headed off to the canteen for lunch.

The Way Forward

Garth and Pietre soon made a habit of going to browse the Scrolls in the Library. However, the Princess Riini hadn't made an appearance since the first time.

Garth was beginning to wonder if it had really happened – and then she must be still in trouble. He pondered this now and then, and finally came to a decision.

"Pietre!" he exclaimed when he next met Pietre at the canteen, "I'll have to find and rescue her, or I can't live with myself!" He looked miserably out the window. Hopefully it wasn't too late...

Pietre had a plan.

"Let's go to the library this evening!" he exclaimed. "And we'll look at the last Scroll when the Princess had made an appearance. Maybe she'll appear again!"

Garth looked despondent. "She said, 'It's where the world ends and the realm of night...takes...over...'" ...he said with a sigh. "What is that supposed to mean?"

“Well”, said Pietre, “The world ends where the atmosphere finishes some way above in the sky...and when night falls, is that when she means?”

They pondered over it for a while but could not decipher the meaning behind her words.

That night, Garth had a vivid dream. He dreamt that there was a smallish Moon in the sky, and he was on it...and it was night time. There were owls sitting on a tree on the Moon, and he could make out the Earth a little way away.

Then he heard her voice...“Garth, I am here...please rescue me...” and he woke up with a start.

He immediately ran to the window and drew the curtains open. He could see the Moon...but there, nearer, he could see another smaller object, much like the Moon, but smaller, and closer. The object was moving...it was moving towards him! It drifted slowly through the sky, closer and closer, and then it landed on a tree in the garden!

Garth quickly changed and crept into the garden. There it was, the small Moon! Up on the jacaranda tree! He went up the tree and started climbing...nearer and nearer, until he reached it.

He put out a hand, and a door opened into the Moon. He walked through, and there was a passageway the opened up in front...he cautiously followed, until suddenly, the door closed behind him! He couldn't get back! He ran back to the door and tried to prise it open, but it was locked shut...oh no!

The only way now was forward. He crept slowly down the passageway, carefully looking this way and that, until another door appeared. Softly, he touched to door and it opened!

He looked around and had walked into a small room.

“Oh it's you, Garth!” there was a soft voice, and there she was, the Princess Riini, with her hands and feet tied up with rope, as she struggled to get free. “Please free me!”

Garth was transfixed by her, but then ran to where she was and drew out the pocket knife he always carried. He cut off and removed the rope and then said, “We have to get out of here!”

“Not so fast!” snarled a voice, and an ugly vision appeared in front of them. “I've been expecting you! The trash from Earth of course! Come to rescue the Princess, have you? Ha ha ha ha ha...” It was what looked like the ugliest Troll he had ever seen. It had warts and a gruesome nose and jagged teeth in an evil-looking face.

“I am Nevda, the Great!” it snarled. “The leader of the Ocres...and I will tear you into shreds!” He looked at Garth slyly. “There is a story...” it whispered evilly...“That a Human scum will try to out-manoeuvre the Ocres...but I can't let than happen, now, can I? The New Age, huh? I think NOT, slimy scum!” and with that he pulled out a club and the next thing Garth knew a great jolt hit him on the head and he was out cold.

Fisticuffs

When he woke up, his wrists and feet were tightly tied. He could see the Princess, she was bound and gagged on a chair nearby. His wrists felt chaffed by the rope, and he was feeling like he could eat a cow!

Nevda made an entrance.

“Now, my pretties...” he laughed evilly. “The fun begins...”

Garth was hoping that the fool would remove the ropes on his hand. He was a Black Belt in Karate and would let these buffoons have it!

Sure enough, his hands were untied by Nevda's evil cronies who had entered the room. The Princess was still bound and looked listless as though she had lost all hope...He knew that the time was now!

He punched Nevda and pulled out his pocket knife and waved it in his face...suddenly it had become a sword! And it was glowing!

Nevda looked scared for the first time. Garth lunged at him with the sword and Nevda started shaking. His cronies attacked Garth, and he lunged at them with the sword. He plunged the sword into one of their arms, and it started bleeding profusely.

"No, no, the prophecy is coming true!" Nevda croaked in fear. Garth felt a power in his soul. "I command you to untie the Princess! Now!" he ordered Nevda, "Or I will banish you to the depths of the Underworld forever!" He felt a bit surprised. What had come over him?

Nevda sniffled and ran to untie Riini. He waved his goons away as they surged forward as to attack Garth.

"I am the all-Powerful Shiin!" Garth exclaimed, his sword above his head, "And I have come to save the Universe! The lot of you be bound!" And ties appeared magically on the wrists and feet of the evil Ogres, as they fell to the ground, bound and gagged.

He went up to the Princess Riini, shame-facedly. "I am sorry, I was a bit late" he apologised to her. She was in tears and looked at him through them.

"It is a miracle that you have come to me at all," she whispered softly, looking up with him with a small smile.

"I am so sorry for all you endured," Garth said.

They looked into each other's eyes and the Princess looked down shyly, and Garth punched the air with his fist in happiness.

The Path Home

Garth tele-ported himself and the Princess to the Palace of The Crown of Julius, where they found the King and Queen, Riini's parents, prisoner. They rescued them and then Garth looked around at the gardens.

"This must be a different planet, than Earth, isn't it?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Garth" said the King. "It's a planet called Aneva, and we have a Blue Moon" he smiled. The Queen was looking at Garth and Riini.

"You are the incarnation of the great Shiin," she said softly. "It was written in our Holy Books that You would come to rescue the Universe..."

Garth looked at Riini. "Will you come back to Earth with me?" he asked her.

"Well," said the Queen. "There needs some sort of..."

Garth nodded in realization. "Princess," he said softly, "Will you, er, will you accept my hand in marriage..."

The Princess looked shyly at him. "Yes..." and he softly kissed her.

They went back to Earth, and what a story he had to tell Pietre! Pietre's eyes almost fell out of their sockets when he met the Princess Riini...and he gasped in awe at the story of her rescue.

"But you're Shiin the Great?" he laughed at Garth. "You'll always be just old Garth to me!" And they all laughed in happiness.

Author Biography



Malobi S Sinha was born in India, and then spent the early years of her childhood in the freedom and vastness of Kenya, in East Africa; her family then migrated to Australia when she was in Primary School. Her collections of poetry, and literary work (articles and poetry) have been published in various magazines and e-zines such as AEHS (Blog), Our Day of Passing (Anthology), The Writer's Drawer, Liphar Magazine, Poetry Pasta, 10 Day Book Club, Melaleuca, Words With JAM, Beyond India Monthly, The Compulsive Reader, Le Nouveau Monde Vert, The Australian Reader, Kaj-Mahkah, Sankalan, Bangla Sahitya Sansad and Thylazine. She was interviewed on Geetanjali Radio 3ZZZ for the 2022 Melbourne Writers' Festival (also available as a podcast on Melbourne Conversations with Rajeev Arora). Her first collection of YA Sci-Fi/Fantasy short stories, *The Castle and Other Stories*, was published by Cresco Books in October 2014. Her book of Poetry, *Savannah*, was published by Poseidon Books in 2010. Malobi is also a Social Media Consultant. She completed a Bachelors of Engineering from Monash University and a Graduate Certificate in Accounting from Deakin University, as well as a Certificate in Technical Writing from the UWA. Malobi's website can be found at: www.malobisinha.com. She lives in Victoria with her husband.

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AEHS (Blog) (2020-2022, Australia)

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The Writer's Drawer (2014, Israel)

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Bangla Sahitya Sansad (2008-2018, Aus)

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