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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Prince Darling

Once upon a time there was a king who was so kind hearted that he was called "the Good King". One day during a hunt a little bunny jumped into his arms, scared to be killed by the dogs. The king petted the animal and said: 'I will make sure no one will hurt you.' That evening a fairy appeared in the room of the king. She spoke to the king: 'I am fairy Candide. I wanted to see if you are as kind as everybody says you are. That's why I changed myself into a rabbit and ran to you in need. I want to thank you for what you have done. You can make one wish.'

The king answered: 'Dear fairy, I only have one son. His name is Cheri. Can I make a wish for him?' 'Of course,' said the fairy. 'Shall I make your son the most handsome prince? Or the richest? Or the most powerful?'

'No,' said the king, 'none of that. What good will beauty, riches or power be to him if he is a bad person? It is kindness that gives life meaning. I would be very grateful if you made him a good person.'

'I understand,' said the fairy, 'but I can't. Cheri has to strive to be a good person himself. I can give him good advice and I can punish him for his mistakes, if he doesn't correct himself.' 'Alright,' said the king and said goodbye to the fairy.

Not long after the Good King passed away and Cheri got a visit from the fairy. 'I have made your father a promise,' she said. 'Here is a special ring. Take good care of it, it's worth more than you know. Every time you do something wrong it will sting you.'

The first period Cheri behaved so well, that the ring didn't sting at all. But when he returned from a hunt one day and hadn't caught anything, he was so annoyed that he kicked his loyal dog. At that moment the ring pricked in his finger like a needle.

'What is this?!' he yelled. 'That fairy has tricked me! What good is it to be the ruler of such a big kingdom if I can't treat my dog the way I want to?' 'I am not mocking you,' a voice sounded in his head. 'You are cranky and you have misbehaved. A great ruler rules with kindness and doesn't let a bad mood waiver him.' Cheri's behaviour didn't get any better. The ring often pricked him until he bled. One day he threw the ring away in anger.

Cheri started behaving so badly that nobody liked him anymore. One day he met a beautiful girl named Zelig. Head over heels in love he asked her to marry him. But Zelig said: 'Even though I'm poor as dirt, I cannot marry someone who behaves so badly.' The prince was distraught and gave his officers the order to bring Zelig to his palace.

One day he decided to go to her room where she was locked up. But she had disappeared. One of the king's councilmen was named Suliman. He was a wise man and the only one who dared to tell Cheri about his mistakes.

The other councilmen only wanted to please the prince with sweet talk. They said that it was Suliman who helped Zelic escape. The prince was enraged and ordered his soldiers to capture Suliman.

Cheri withdrew to his room and with a big thunderclap the fairy Candide appeared. 'You have become a monster,'

she said sternly. 'I will transform you into animals that will show you who you are. A lion for your anger. A wolf for your greed. A snake for your lack of respect and a bull for your cruelty.'

And just like that Cheri changed into a remarkable beast and found himself in a pit dug by hunters. He was captured and brought to the capital of his kingdom.

When he arrived he heard a big applause. Supposedly prince Cheri was fatally struck by lightning. The people had chosen a new ruler, the wise Suliman. Cheri was panting with anger. There was Suliman on his throne encouraged by the people who were hugging him.

'I accept the throne temporarily,' said Suliman, 'because it is meant for prince Cheri. A fairy told me that he hasn't died, but shall return kindhearted. He was surrounded by bad people who had a bad influence on



him. Deep inside he is a good person.' These words made Cheri sad and he felt much sorrow for his behaviour. That's why he obeyed the one who was in charge over him and was beating him constantly. One day this man was attacked by a tiger. Cheri fought against the beast and saved the life of the man. 'A good deed shall be rewarded!' Said a voice. And to Cheri's joy he transformed into a dog. His new owner was happy with him, but he barely had money for food. Cheri almost died of hunger.

One day he wanted to eat his daily piece of bread when he saw a skinny, young girl. He gave her the bread and suddenly heard loud screams. It was Zelig who was taken by four men. Cheri longed to help her and barked hard, even though he was kicked mercilessly. At that moment a voice said: 'A good deed will be rewarded.' And Cheri changed into a white dove. For days he flew around hoping to see Zelig. He found her bent over next to a beggar and flew down on her shoulder. She stroked his feathers and whispered that she would always love him. At that moment Cheri returned to his normal self. The beggar turned into fairy Candide. 'Come,' she said. 'I will bring you to the palace where Cheri can claim his crown of which he is worthy now.' Cheri and Zelig ruled long and happily. The ring, that from that moment on he wore again, hardly ever pricked him again.