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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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## The Bird Boy

Once upon a time, there was a queen who loved birds very much. She liked to look out the window to admire the winged creatures.

One day, she saw a flock of birds passing by. "Oh beautiful, happy birds, how I would love to have a son with wings," she said.

The following year, the queen gave birth to a baby boy with wings on his shoulders. However, the king was not happy about it. He found it strange because he had never seen anything like it before.

The king received advice from a bad advisor named Malefico. He told the king that the queen was a witch. Therefore, at the king's command, the queen and her baby were locked up in an old tower that overlooked the northern sea.

After two days, a prison guard came to take the child and kill him. When the queen heard this, she grabbed her son from his crib to protect him with all her might. However, she couldn't win against the prison guard and tumbled backward out the window, into the deep sea.

She would have surely been swallowed by the sea if a good spirit of the ocean had not taken pity on her.

Before she plunged into the water, the spirit transformed the queen into a large gray bird. The bird circled the old tower three times sadly and then disappeared.

Now, the prison guard was not a bad man, and he could not bring himself to do the cruel task he had been given by the king. He certainly couldn't kill an innocent child. So, he took the young bird boy to his family. They were charcoal burners who lived many miles away in the dark forest. The bird boy lived with this family until he was five years old. Every year on the boy's birthday, a large gray bird would fly over the forest. The bird circled the family's hut three times and then disappeared.

One day, a king and his young queen came to hunt in the forest. The bird boy ran outside with his two foster brothers to see the royal couple.

"Look," said the queen, "that little boy has wings! I would like to take him to our castle. He would be a fun playmate for our Rosabella."

The king paid the charcoal burner fifty gold coins and took the bird boy to his castle.

The bird boy became Rosabella's most beloved playmate, the only child of the queen. Just as the bird boy was the most beautiful boy in the world, Rosabella was the most beautiful girl. She was also a kind and good-hearted girl.

Twelve years passed. Every year on the boy's birthday, a large gray bird would circle the castle three times.

When the bird boy and



Rosabella were seventeen years old, the king had to go to war to defend his kingdom. They were attacked by the evil Malefico, who had taken over the kingdom after his king's death.

A month went by without any news from the king. Until a rainy day came when a messenger brought bad news. The king had been defeated, and Malefico's soldiers were on their way to claim the castle.

The soldiers arrived so quickly that the queen had not been able to escape. Ten soldiers surrounded the queen, Rosabella, and the bird boy and brought them to Malefico.

Malefico recognized the bird boy and was very surprised. Wasn't the boy supposed to be dead? This would also mean that the bird boy was the rightful successor to his king. So Malefico came up with a cruel plan.

"He let the people know that the bird boy was not a human boy, but a witch's child. He had the good king accused of protecting a witch. This would mean the death penalty for both of them. Then he had the king and queen, Rosabella, and the bird boy locked up in an old dungeon tower awaiting their punishment.

On the square, Malefico took his place to witness the execution.

"They will come for us soon," said the king to the bird boy.

And indeed, they heard the jingling of the keys of the prison guard at the bottom of the stairs.

Suddenly, the sunlight in the room quickly faded into a strange gray darkness. The bird boy ran to the window

to see if a storm was coming. It was not a storm, but a swarm of hundreds of thousands of large gray birds. In front of the swarm flew a lone bird. The birds each dropped a large beach stone. This rained hundreds of thousands of stones from the sky for a long minute. When the storm was over, Malefico and his cruel henchmen were buried under a hill of stones.

The king and queen, Rosabella, and the bird boy ran down the stairs toward the square. There, the gray bird that had led the cloud landed at their feet.

Immediately after landing, the bird changed back into the form of the bird boy's mother. She told him what had happened in the past. She also told him how she had watched over him year after year and how she had gathered the birds to save him.

The soldiers heard the story of their former queen. They decided to accept the bird boy as their rightful king and brought him back to his own land.

There, the bird boy became king and married Rosabella, and they lived happily ever after!