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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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The One Hundredth Princess

Once upon a time, there was a king who spent his days hunting animals. The rabbits in his kingdom were so afraid of him that they were born with their hearts in their mouths.

In the forest, there lived the Green Enchantress. Every day, she watched the Royal hunting party with great sadness. It made her very unhappy that the animals were being killed for the king's amusement. It was, therefore, not so strange that she decided to enchant the king. One beautiful summer evening, she met the king in the woods. He was pacing around, all by himself, worrying about the fact that he had not found anything to kill that day. Suddenly, he heard a voice that said, "Good evening, king! How are you?"

The king looked around, and there he saw a beautiful girl. She was wearing a green gown, and she was sitting on the foot of an old lime tree. She had gorgeous dark red hair that fell around her on the ground. He didn't know what to say, as he knew little about girls and had spent his entire life only killing animals.

"It wasn't such a good day," the king replied. "There wasn't a single animal in the woods today."

"Perhaps they have all left," said the Green Enchantress, "you would do the same if people were coming to hunt you to kill you." Then she laughed, and the king had no idea that she was laughing at him.

"Why are you laughing?" the king asked the girl.

"Because I probably know more about this forest than you do about your entire kingdom," replied the Green Enchantress.

"Maybe," said the king, "I have no doubt about it. Will you tell me

everything you know about the forest?"

"I don't feel like telling you now," said the Green Enchantress.

The king left it at that and left. He asked his subjects if there was a witch living in the forest. "The Green Enchantress lives in the forest," replied the chief hunter. "I've never seen her, but they say she's the most beautiful woman in the world."

"Indeed!" said the king. The next day, he hurried to the old lime tree. There was the beautiful girl.

"Why have you come back?" she asked.

"I was told that you were the most beautiful woman in the world, so I came to see if it's true," said the king.

"And now that you're here, do you think it's true?" asked the girl.

"I suppose so," said the king hesitantly. "But I don't know much about girls. If you were a wild boar, yes then..."



"But I am not a wild boar!" cried the Green Enchantress. And she became so angry at being compared to a wild boar that she cast a spell on the king without thinking, intending to turn him into a wild boar. But nothing happened. The king had no idea that she wanted to enchant him.

Startled, the girl ran away between the trees. The king wondered what he had done to offend her. He really had no idea, because as he had said himself, he knew nothing about women. And that was true. The Green Enchantress hurried to her godfather, the wise wizard Smilax.

"What's going on?" asked Smilax.

"I don't understand it. How is it that I can't enchant the king?" grumbled the Green Enchantress.

"Some kings are easier to enchant than others," the wizard wisely remarked. "Well, what do you want me to do for you?"

"I want you to make me a princess," she replied. "Then I can go to the court and dance with the king."

"But I do want to be a real princess!" exclaimed the girl. Smilax shook his head. "I can't help you with that," he said. "No one can make a real princess, not even the Fairy Queen herself. Real princesses make themselves, and that is something entirely different."

"Will I never be able to go to the palace then?" asked the witch sadly.

"Of course you can," said Smilax. "You can also go to the castle without being a princess. But you must give up all your witchcraft the moment you set foot in the

palace. It is not possible to be both a normal person and a witch at the same time."

"I don't mind," said the witch. "If I can't enchant the king, I don't want to be a witch anymore."

So she went to the palace and became the new kitchen maid. One day she met the king among the vegetables. She had tied a bright green cloth around her hair. The king could not possibly recognize her. But the bright green cloth and the dark red hair sticking out a bit made the king think of something. So he stopped and looked at her.

"What are you doing?" he asked her.

"I am picking beans for the king's dinner," replied the kitchen maid.

"Well, how kind of you!" exclaimed the king, who always thought that the beans for his dinner picked themselves. "Can I take a look?"

She showed him her basket and the king saw beautiful red flowers in it.

"Are those beans?" asked the king, thinking he had never seen anything so charming.

"I hope so," said the girl, for she didn't know much more than the king.

Everyone noticed how absent-minded the king was that day. When the food was served, the king called the prime minister over. "I thought I was going to eat beans?" he said disappointedly.

"You just ate your beans, Your Majesty," said the prime minister.

"What?" exclaimed the king as he looked at his plate. "Are these the beautiful scarlet beans growing in my garden? Impossible!"

"They turn green when they are cooked, Your Majesty," said the prime minister, who had never seen a bean growing in his life.

"Give me my beans before they are cooked from now on," said the king, and the prime minister made a note of it.

There was a party at the palace that evening and the king danced with ninety-nine beautiful princesses. But none of them had dark red hair and when he finished dancing with the ninety-ninth princess, he asked the prime minister, "Where is the hundredth princess?"

The prime minister knew as little about the hundredth princess as he did about the beans, so he said, "I have never heard of the hundredth princess, Your Majesty." Then he quickly left the party to avoid any more difficult questions from the king.

The next morning, the king took a walk through his garden again. The kitchen maid was wandering among the gooseberry bushes. As the king approached her, she said, "I am looking for sage to stuff the king's ducks with, but I don't know what sage looks like or what it is."

"Don't look so sad," said the king, for her eyes were full of tears. "I am the king and I don't care if my ducks are stuffed or not."

"But my chef cares," replied the girl. "He won't be happy if I don't fill this basket with sage. He was

already so angry with me yesterday when I brought him the wrong beans. He could fire me."

"Come with me," said the king, "and I will help you find sage. Then the king's ducks will be stuffed, and the chef won't fire you."

So the king and the kitchen maid went in search of sage. But of course, the king had no idea what sage was either. They found a bush of rosemary instead.

"Doesn't it smell sweet?" said the kitchen maid as she picked a handful and gave it to the king.

"Indeed!" exclaimed the king. "This must be exactly what we're looking for!"

The head chef considered himself too important to personally stuff the ducks, so it was left to the kitchen maid. That day, there were only two people who enjoyed the dinner: the king and the kitchen maid, who ate the leftovers in the kitchen.

And so it continued for days. Fewer and fewer people were able to enjoy the food because it contained miraculous ingredients from the garden that tasted terrible. The king went daily with the kitchen maid in search of something new, and no one dared to complain to the king because everyone saw how much he seemed to enjoy the food.

It wasn't long before people began to wonder what was wrong with the king. He never went near the Royal forest anymore. And when he wasn't in the vegetable garden, he could be found in the library searching for books that would tell him the difference between a banana and a cauliflower. The chief hunter and all the other hunters were bored as never before. But the wild

boars and other animals were happier than ever. Even the rabbits dared to show themselves in public again. "The Green Enchantress must have put a spell on the king," they said to each other. And perhaps they were right.

One morning, the king asked the kitchen maid if she wanted to come to the palace party. "Ninety-nine princesses are coming, but you're not. I would like you to be there too."

The kitchen maid shook her head and said, "I won't be there. I'm just a kitchen maid and no one, not even the Fairy Queen, can make a real princess out of me."

"You're the hundredth princess," said the king, "and no one, not even the Fairy Queen, can make a kitchen maid out of you."

"The other ninety-nine princesses," sighed the kitchen maid, "have never worn such an old dress as mine."

"They've never looked half as beautiful or as charming," said the king.

That evening at the party, the hundredth princess appeared. There she was, in her old dress, with her hair tied up under a bright green scarf. The head chef followed her, with a ladle in his hand. Behind him walked the prime minister, followed by the chief hunter.

"Who are you?" asked the ninety-nine princesses.

"She's nothing but a kitchen maid," shouted the head chef, waving his ladle.

"She's the Green Enchantress," gasped the chief hunter. It was the king who brought the commotion to an end.

"She's, of course, the queen," he said kindly, walking over to her and taking her by the hand. And no one

thought to contradict him, because although real princesses must make themselves, it's pretty certain that any king can make a queen. When the ninety-nine princesses saw how charming the little queen was, they embraced her and gave her ninety-nine kisses. "Tell us," they asked her afterward, "are you really the Green Enchantress?"



"Oh no," she replied, "I gave up being an enchantress when I discovered that I couldn't enchant the king."

"Why did you want to enchant me, my love?" asked the king, surprised.

"Because you were so fond of killing animals," she said.

"Then I will never kill anything as long as I live!" swore the king.

And that is the end of the story, because when the little rabbits heard that the king had given up hunting, they took a big gulp and swallowed their hearts. And after that, there was no one in the kingdom who was not happy, because everyone's heart was in the right place.