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Ririro

IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

King Kojata

Once upon a time there was a king, his name was King Kojata. He was much loved in the kingdom. The king and his queen desperately wanted a baby, but it went on and on and the queen couldn't get pregnant.

One day the king went on a journey. It was a very long journey and the king had not been in his kingdom for a long time. Now he was on his way to return home. On the way he saw a well. Because the king was very thirsty, he got off his horse to drink some water from the well. There he bent down into the well, but his beard caught him. No matter what the king tried, his beard was incessantly drawn into the pit. Then the king suddenly saw that two green eyes were looking at him. It gave him goosebumps. The face behind the eyes was of a monstrous shape.

In a terrible voice the monster spoke to the king. "You can't get away, King Kojata, so don't let me pull your beard too hard. There is something in your palace that you know nothing about. Promise to give it to me and I will set you free."

The king had no idea what he might own that he himself knew nothing about.... and what would be of great value to the monster in the well. So he promised the monster that he would get it and he got his freedom back in return.

A great surprise awaited the king in the palace. The queen had given birth to a beautiful son during his travels. The king, of course, was overjoyed, but at the same time understood that he had promised his son to the monster in the pit. He panicked and feared losing his child. But days and months passed and the little prince grew bigger and bigger and so the king finally forgot what he was so afraid of.

Years passed and the prince grew into a beautiful boy. One day the prince went hunting in the forest. His servants lost him, and when the prince went to look for them, he heard a horrible voice coming from the hollow trunk of a linden tree. A horrible man with big green eyes appeared.

"I have waited a long time for you, Prince Milan," said the man.

"Who are you? I don't know you at all," replied the prince.

"Just ask your father. He will tell you who I am. Give him my regards and tell him I am ready to claim the debt he owes me." Then the green-eyed man disappeared into the trunk of the hollow tree from which he had emerged.

When the prince came home, he related his experience to his father. The king turned completely white and shouted: "The time has come at last. This is the end of my happiness, for you, my son, will be taken from me." The prince told the king that he would leave the palace, but that his father should not despair. He would definitely return to him. His father gave him a horse and the queen gave him a necklace with a cross. The

prince said goodbye to his grieving parents and rode his horse for two days without stopping.

On the third day he came to a lake. Thirty ducks swam. Thirty white dresses were scattered on the grass. The prince dismounted from his horse and picked up one of the dresses. He took it behind a bush and waited to see what would happen. The ducks dived under the water and played with each other. After a while they came ashore and put on the white dresses. At that moment they turned into beautiful girls and disappeared. But there was a little duck, who stayed on the lake and swam about quite absent-mindedly. The prince came out from behind the bush and the little duck begged him to return her white dress. He did so and suddenly there stood before him the most beautiful girl he had ever seen.

"Thank you for returning my garment," the girl said.

"My name is Hyacinthia. I am one of the thirty daughters of the king of the underworld. I will take you to him, for he has waited a long time for you. Don't be afraid of him, because I will be there to help you no matter what."

She tapped the floor with her foot, which opened. They were immediately taken to her father's palace in the underworld. The prince immediately recognized the king by his big green eyes. The prince had remembered the girl's words well, so he pretended not to be afraid of him. The king laughed at his courage and said, "You are very brave, Prince Milan. But you have to pay the fine for keeping me waiting for you for so long. Build me a

castle of gold and marble tonight, or I shall have to kill you tomorrow."

The prince went to his room and thought that life had come to an end for him. But Hyacinthia came to his room and asked him why he was so sad. The prince told her father's impossible task. "Don't worry," she said, "and trust me."



The next morning the prince looked out of the window and saw there a beautiful marble palace, with a roof of gold. When the king of the underworld saw it, he exclaimed, "You have performed a great miracle, but I cannot let you go so

easily. Tomorrow I will list my thirty daughters, and if you cannot tell me which is the youngest, I will still kill you."

The prince thought this test would be a piece of cake, but Hyacinthia warned him and told him that the sisters all looked exactly the same. "But you will recognize me by a fly you will see on my cheek," she said.

The next day the king of the underworld summoned the prince and showed him the thirty daughters in a row. Twice the prince passed them by, not daring to choose until he saw the fly on the rosy cheek of one of the girls.

"This is Hyacinthia!" he cried. The king of the underworld was very surprised and still not satisfied. So he demanded another task from the prince: "If, before this candle burns out, you make me a pair of boots that reach to my knees, then I will let you go. If you fail, I will kill you."

"We will have to flee," said Hyacinthia when the prince told her of this new task. "I love you too much. She breathed on the window pane and immediately it was covered with frost. Then she led Prince Milan out of the room and locked the door behind her. Then they took the same passage through which they had entered the underworld. The horse was still waiting beside the lake and together they quickly took off.

When the king summoned the prince, the frozen breath answered the subjects and so the discovery was delayed for a while. The king finally lost his temper and he ordered the door to be broken down. There they saw that the prince had left.

The prince and Hyacinthia were pursued and soon it seemed that they would be overtaken. Hyacinthia turned herself into a river and the prince became a bridge and the horse a bird. In this way, their pursuers could no longer follow their footprints and returned to the castle of the king of the underworld. He immediately sent new subjects after them.

Again Hyacinthia heard that the pursuers were getting very close. She turned herself, the prince and the horse into a dense forest with a tangle of paths so that the followers had no idea which path they had taken.

The pursuers quickly gave up and returned to the king of the underworld.

For the third time, Hyacinthia heard that they were being pursued at close range. This time it was the king of the underworld himself. Hyacinthia took the cross from the prince's chain and turned herself into a church, the prince into a priest, and the horse into a tall tower. The king of the underworld lost all trace and had no choice but to return to the underworld.

When the danger was all but over, the prince and Hyacinthia and the horse continued on their way until they came to a beautiful city.

"We can't go in," said Hyacinthia, "because we might not get out." But the prince would not take her advice and insisted on exploring the city.

"Then," said the girl sadly, "when the king and queen of the city greet you, do not kiss the little child they have with them, or you will forget me and never come back to me."

And everything happened exactly as Hyacinthia said. The King and Queen came out to greet the Prince. With them they had a child who ran to hug him. The prince kissed the pretty face and forgot about Hyacinthia. Hyacinthia waited and waited, but the prince did not return to her. On the third day, she turned herself into a small blue flower that grew along the road. An old man came by and dug up the flower and took it home and planted it in his garden. He watered it and cared for it carefully, and one day the little flower became a beautiful girl.

"Why didn't you let me die along the way?" she asked, telling the old man her story.

"Tomorrow is Prince Milan's wedding day," said the old man.

Hyacinthia immediately dried her tears and went to the palace dressed as a peasant woman. She went to the cook and asked if she could make the wedding cake.

The cook was so impressed by her beauty that he could not refuse the request. When the guests were all seated at the table, Prince Milan was called to cut the cake. As soon as he had done that, two beautiful doves flew out and circled around his head.

"My dear," cried one dove to the other, "don't abandon me as Prince Milan did Hyacinthia."

The prince, now suddenly remembering all that he had forgotten, ran out of the room and found Hyacinthia and his horse waiting for him at the door. They took off and quickly rode away to King Kojata's kingdom. There they were received by the king and queen with tears of joy and they lived there very happily ever after.