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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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# Princess Miranda and Prince Hero

Far away, in the great ocean, there once lay a green island where the most beautiful princess in the world lived. Her name was Miranda. She had lived there since birth and had become the queen of the island. No one knew who her parents were or how she had come to be there. She did not live alone, but with twelve beautiful young ladies who had grown up on the island with her. They were her ladies-in-waiting.

Visitors to the island were all impressed by the great beauty of the princess. This caused more and more people to come to the island. A beautiful city was built, and a magnificent palace of white marble was built for the queen to live in.

Many young princes wanted to marry the princess, but the princess did not want to. If someone tried to force her to marry him, she could turn him to ice by just looking at him with her eyes.

One day, the evil king of the Underground Kingdom, named Kosciey, saw the princess sleeping on a luxurious bank. She was dreaming of a young knight. He wore a golden helmet and sat on a brave horse. In his hand, he held an invisible battle mace... and she loved him more than life.

Kosciey looked at her. He was very pleased with her beauty. He struck the ground three times and appeared on the green island.

Princess Miranda called her brave army together to fight against the evil Kosciey. But he blew his poisonous breath on them, causing them all to fall into a deep sleep. He wanted to capture the princess, but when she threw him a contemptuous look, he turned to ice. The princess fled to the capital.

Kosciey did not remain ice for long. As soon as the princess was gone, he freed himself from the power of her gaze and followed her to her city. There, he blew everyone on the island to sleep, including the princess's loyal ladies-in-waiting.

Princess Miranda was the only one he could not harm. But because he was afraid of her gaze, he surrounded the castle with an iron wall.

He had it guarded by a dragon with twelve heads. He hoped that the princess would surrender of her own accord.

Days, weeks, and months passed. The kingdom turned into a desert. All her people were asleep. Even her loyal soldiers lay asleep in the open fields. Wild plants grew over them.

The princess was all alone. Every now and then, Kosciey knocked on the door and asked her to surrender,



promising to make her the queen of his Underground Kingdom. But it was all in vain. The princess remained silent and threatened him only with her gaze. However sad she was, she could not forget the lover of whom she had dreamt. She saw him exactly as he had appeared in her dream.

She looked dreamily at the clouds and asked: "Oh cloud. Tell me, where can I find my beloved?"

And the cloud said: "I have no idea. Ask the wind."

And she looked out over the vast plain and when she saw how the wind blew, she asked: "Oh, wind, where can I find my beloved? Is he thinking of me now?"

"Ask the stars," said the wind. "They know more than I."

So she called out to the stars: "Oh, stars! Look at me and have pity on me. Where is my beloved? Is he thinking of me now?"

"We don't know. Ask the moon," said the stars.

So she said to the moon: "Oh moon, while you watch over this land where everyone sleeps, look down and have pity on me. Where is my beloved? Is he thinking of me now?"

"I know nothing about your beloved, princess," answered the moon, "but here comes the sun, she will surely be able to tell you."

And the sun rose at dawn, and at noon she stood just above the tower of the princess, and she said, "Oh sun, have mercy on me. Where is my beloved? Is he thinking of me now?"

"Princess Miranda," said the sun, "dry your tears. Your beloved is hurrying to you. He has found an enchanting

ring. When he puts it on his finger, his army will expand with thousands of soldiers. They will want to free you from Kosciy. But he does not know that Kosciy cannot be killed by a mortal. I will teach him a safer way. There is good hope that he will be able to rid you of Kosciy and save your land. I will now hurry to your prince."

The sun stood over a vast land, behind high mountains, where Prince Hero with a golden helmet was assembling his army and preparing to march against Kosciy. He had seen the princess three times in a dream and had heard much about her.

"Send your army away," said the sun. "No army can defeat Kosciy, no bullet can reach him. You can only free Princess Miranda by killing him. You will learn how to do that from the old woman Jandza. Your brave horse will carry you to her. Go to the east. You will come to a green meadow where three oak trees stand. Between them, hidden in the ground, you will find an iron door with a copper lock. Behind this door, you will find a battle club that can fight on its own and also become invisible. Go quickly now!"

Prince Hero took off his enchanted ring and threw it into the sea. With that, the great army disappeared into the mist without leaving a trace. He set off on his horse to the east. After three days, he reached the green meadow, where he found the three oaks and the iron door. He climbed down a narrow, crooked staircase. There he found another iron door. It was secured by a heavy iron lock. Behind it, he heard a horse neighing so loudly that the door fell to the ground. At the same

time, eleven other doors flew open and a wonderfully beautiful and powerful horse came out that had been imprisoned there by a wizard for centuries.

The prince whistled to the horse. The horse tugged at his fastenings and broke twelve chains with which he was bound. He had eyes like stars, flaring nostrils, and a mane like a thundercloud.

"Prince Hero!" said the horse, "I have long awaited a rider like you. I am willing to serve you forever. Sit on my back and take the battle club in your hand, which you see hanging from the saddle. You do not have to fight, for it will strike wherever you command it and defeat an entire army. I know the way everywhere. Tell me where you want to go, and you will be there in no time."

The prince told him everything and took the battle club in his hand and jumped on his back.

The horse reared up, and they flew over mountains and forests, higher than the clouds, over great rivers and deep seas. Before sunset, Prince Hero reached the primeval forest where the old woman Jandza lived.

He was amazed at the size and age of the mighty oaks, pines, and firs. There was absolute silence: not a leaf or blade of grass stirred. The prince stopped at a cottage and went inside. It was the cottage of the old woman Jandza. She gave the prince food and drink, and she made a soft bed for him to rest on after his journey, and left him for the night.

The next morning, he told her everything and why he had come.

"You have taken on a heroic task, prince. I will tell you how to kill Kosciy. On the Island of Eternal Life, there is an old oak tree. Under the oak, you will find an iron chest. In this chest is a hare. Under the hare is a gray duck. This duck carries an egg inside. In this egg is the life of Kosciy. If you break the egg, he will die immediately. I wish you luck, prince. Your horse will guide you."

The prince then left the old woman's house on his horse. The horse knew the way. To reach the island, they had to cross the ocean. On the beach was a fishing net and in it was a large fish caught.

The fish asked Prince Hero to take him out of the net and throw him back into the sea. The prince did so. In the distance, he saw the Island of Eternal Life. The horse took him there. There, the prince let the horse graze in the meadow and walked to a high hill where the old oak tree grew. He pulled the tree out of the ground, and there, where the tree had stood strong for hundreds of years, was a deep hole. In the hole was an iron chest. The prince picked it up and broke the lock with a stone. As he opened the lid and lifted the hare by its ears, the duck that had been under the hare ran off and flew straight to the sea. The prince managed to shoot the duck, but when the bullet hit the duck, the egg fell right off her and sank to the bottom of the sea.

The prince let out a cry of despair, but just then the big fish swam up and dived into the depths of the sea and swam back to the shore with the egg in its jaws. He gave it to the prince. He climbed back on his horse

and they left directly for the island of Princess Miranda. There they saw a great iron wall that stretched around her white marble palace.

There was only one entrance through this iron wall to the palace, and in front of it lay a monstrous dragon with twelve heads, of which six alternately kept watch. When one half slept, the other six remained awake. If someone approached the gate, he could not escape the horrible jaws.

The prince stood on the hill before that gate and commanded his self-fighting war club to clear his way to the palace.

The invisible, self-fighting war club fell on the dragon and began to strike with enormous force on all its heads... and the club succeeded in taking out the dragon to clear the way for the prince and his horse.

Via a spiral staircase, the prince climbed up to the tower where Princess Miranda spoke to him: "Welcome, Prince Hero! I saw how you defeated the dragon. But be careful, because my enemy, Kosciey, is in this palace. He is very powerful and possesses much power through his sorcery. If he kills you, I will no longer be able to live!"

The prince said, "Do not worry about me. I have the life of Kosciey in this egg." Then he commanded the invisible war club to attack Kosciey.

The battle mace moved quickly, slamming against the iron doors and charging at Kosciey who had no idea what was happening. If the attacker had been an ordinary mortal, it would have been over for him in an instant. But now he didn't know where the blows were



coming from. He jumped around like a wild animal. Then he saw Prince Hero standing by the window.

"Is this all you can do?" he exclaimed and rushed onto the courtyard, heading straight towards him. But the prince held the egg in one hand and squeezed it so hard that the shell cracked... and Kosciety fell dead to the ground.

And with the death of the wizard, all his enchantments were suddenly undone. All the people on the island who were asleep woke up. The soldiers woke up from their slumber and began beating their drums.

There was great joy in the palace, as Princess Miranda came to the prince and thanked him warmly. They went to the throne room together, followed by her twelve ladies-in-waiting with twelve young officers from the army by their side.

And then a priest entered through the open door and married the prince and princess. At the same time, the ladies-in-waiting were also married to their beloved officers. After the wedding, there was a great celebration with lots of dancing and music. And everyone was happy and content!