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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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The frost king and the power of love

The Queen sat on her throne and held a council with all the nymphs of the four kingdoms. A very important question had to be decided, and the bravest, wisest nymphs were therefore consulted as to what should be done.

King Frost had declared war on the flowers, and it was a great sorrow to Queen Blossom and her subjects to see her darlings wither year after year, instead of enjoying an everlasting summer, as they otherwise might have done. She had sent beautiful gifts to the King, and begged him to cease the war, which made the autumn so gloomy, and the gardens and fields full of dead flowers. But he returned the gifts, refused to hear her plea, and continued his work of destruction.

"My dear subjects," said the Queen, "I will try once more if any of you know of a plan to soften his hard heart, and make him more favorable to the poor flowers."

Then came a great flapping of wings and a humming of voices; for all the magic nymphs were very excited, and every one wanted to propose something. The Queen listened attentively; but none of the plans were good enough. She was at her wit's end until her lady-in-waiting, Star, stepped forward and said, "Queen, allow

me to go alone to King Frost and show him love. We have not yet tried to show him how beautiful his country could be, if we patiently changed his realm and taught his servants to plant flowers, instead of destroying them I am not afraid, for love is mighty and I know he has a heart, if we just managed to find it."

"Try, dear Star," replied the Queen, "But if he hurts you, we will come with all our army until he is vanquished."
At those brave words a loud cheer went up from all the nymphs.
Star wanted to go immediately; she put on a warm cloak of swan's down, took a sack of seeds of all her most fragrant flowers, and she was escorted with kisses and tears to the gate of the Nymphal realm.
With a brave smile she flew away to the North where the Frost gnomes live. Soon the wind turned harsh, the sunshine vanished and it began to snow. She saw King Frost's palace. Everything was cold and dark, not a green leaf in sight, not a bird singing, just snow, snow and more snow as far as the eye could see.
On a throne sat the King; a crystal crown adorned his white hair and his cloak was studded with silver

ironwork. His eyes were cold, his countenance stern, and never a smile moved his stiff lips. He frowned at the sight of the nymph, and drew his cloak tighter about him, as if he feared lest the glow of her radiant face should melt his heart.

Then Star told her message and, in her sweet little voice, begged him to be kind. She described the desperation of nymphs and children, when his freezing breath killed all the flowers; she painted a sunny picture of a world where it would always be summer, and begged him to show him how lovely flowers decorate a place, by planting some flowers in his garden.

He just grumbled and sent her away. "I will act as I please; and if your Queen does not leave me alone, I will continue to make war and freeze all the nymphs to death."

Star tried to say more, but he was so furious that he called his soldiers and ordered them to lock her up. The Frost-servants led her away to a dark little cell and left her there alone.

She was cold and tired and very sad that the King would not listen to her; but she had a brave heart, and instead of weeping she began to sing. Her starry eyes lit up in the dark, and she saw that the floor of her prison was earth; and she heard drops of water dripping from the snow above. Then she smiled, and that smile was like a ray of sunshine.

Here we have earth and water, and the sunshine I will make, and then, by my own magic, I shall have a garden

even here in the Frostland. She took out her seeds and went to work.
First she collected the drops in her warm hands and moistened the earth with them; then she loosened the earth and planted her seeds in it, along the walls; and then she sat down in the middle of the little cell, waved her magic wand and sang a magic song.
As she sang, the light grew stronger, the air warmer, and the drops fell, until rows of green plants emerged and sprang up like magic trees along the walls and all over the room. Moss covered the rest of the ground like a blanket, and a silver-white mushroom sprang up where Star stood, as if to show that she was the queen of the fair spot.
The Frost Spirits heard the music and came to watch. How surprised they were when they saw her beautiful little garden in the cell.

They quickly went to the King and told him to come and have a look. He came, and when he saw the sweet little garden, he did not want to destroy it, but wanted to see how Star worked and tried to learn the power by which she worked such wonders. For the dark walls were hung with flowering vines of variegated colors, the ground was covered with velvet moss, the

water drops tickled with soft music, and flowers nodded to each other and talked together in language unintelligible to humans. Star sat on her throne, still singing and smiling.

"I am strong, but I could not do such a thing", said the King. "Power attracts me, and perhaps, if I take good care of her, I shall be able to exercise the same miraculous power in my own way. I shall keep her alive, but keep her captive, and destroy other flowers to my heart's content."

So he left her there, and often came to see her, and marveled at her gaiety and her courage; for she never lamented, though she longed for home, and it took her great pains to remain brave and patient.

Meanwhile the Queen waited impatiently for Star's return, and when it took too long for her to return, she sent a messenger to inquire where she was. He brought the sad message that she was imprisoned and that the King would not let her go. Then there was great sorrow in Nymphland, for all loved dear Star dearly. They feared that the good creature would freeze to death if they allowed her to remain in the King's power, and resolved to declare war on him if he would not set Star free.

General Zon summoned the army. The Earth Gnomes were on foot, dressed in green, with acorn caps for helmets, and blades of grass for swords. The Water Spirits were in blue and they had shells full of water bubbles, which were shot like bullets. The Fire Gnomes were red and carried torches to burn and small guns with which they shot sulfur bullets, which killed by

their stench. The Air Gnomes were the most beautiful, for they were in golden armor and carried arrows of light, which they shot with little rainbows. These went in front and it was a beautiful sight.
The Queen came in the back with her carriage, with her ladies-in-waiting and her bodyguards, made up of the biggest gnomes in Nymphland. They lived in the fir trees and were strong boys with pine needles for swords and the scales of fir cones for armor.
The army passed by, like a walking rainbow, slowly approaching the land of snow and ice. The King had been warned that they were approaching, and had prepared for their arrival by building a fortress of ice, in which he had heaps of snowballs ready, and all his subjects armed with sharp icicles. The cold winds blew and howled like bagpipes, the hailstones drummed on the frozen ground.
General Mist, in silver uniform, stood ready to meet the army, with an army of Snowmen behind him.
There came the troops from the Nymphal Land and made the ice world so dazzling with their light that the King himself was half blinded and covered his eyes. The nymphs shuddered as they felt the chill wind; but courage kept them warm, and the Queen rose in her carriage and boldly claimed Star.
"I will not set her free," he answered, and his voice sounded like a clap of thunder, though in his heart he grew more and more astonished that the brave nymph had been able to endure so long.

"Then I declare war on your country; and if Star is dead, we shall have no mercy. Blow the trumpets and charge!" cried the Queen.
General Sun ordered the Air Gnomes to advance first, knowing that nothing could long withstand the attacks of the resplendent troop. General Mist did his best, but was driven back, for his Snowmen melted away when the arrows of sunlight struck them.
They were forced to retire to the fortress, from where the King gave orders to bombard the enemy nymph troops with a mass of snowballs.
Many were wounded and carried from the battlefield to the tent where the Queen and her ladies-in-waiting nursed them.
It was a tough battle and the Nymphs were forced to rest, after having killed General Mist, destroying the fortress and forcing the King to retire to his palace.
Among the prisoners was one who told them where Star was and all that she had accomplished in her little cell. Then they rejoiced, and the Queen said: "Let us follow her example, for these captives say that since she came the King has been quite changed. He comes to look at her little garden, and does not spoil it, but speaks kindly to her, and it seems why, as if his hard heart is apt to melt. We don't want to fight no more."
The Frost Sovereigns were astonished to see the whole army busily at work the next day, to build a great garden around the palace, instead of destroying it. The nymphs worked hard and their magic helped them to do in one day what mere mortals could only do in years.

First the moles turned up the ground, then the Queen's bodyguards came to sow seeds of spruce apples, and in an hour there was a green hedge all around the garden, into which the Earth nymphs brought seeds of all the flowers. The Fire Nymphs warmed the air and drove away the cold winds.

The Water Nymphs collected drops from the melting ice palace and moistened the flowers, after the Fire Nymphs took the cold from the water, while the Sky Spirits made sunshine from above.

The Queen and her ladies-in-waiting helped; for they conjured up birds and insects and bade them to sing and flutter in that new world.

Gradually the ice palace melted; for among the new pines warm winds blew, and the walls grew as thin as glass, the towers vanished like frost in the sun, and all the ice blocks flowed one after the other like little streams.

The King knew he was defeated; for the ice in his heart also began to melt and his heart began to beat, his face loosened, as if he would have smiled if he knew how.

The King resisted as long as he could, for he was very proud, but his power was over, his palace melted around him, his people longed to defect to the enemy, and he was left with nothing but to lay down his crown.

Star sat in her little cell all the while, oblivious to everything, but still hoping and waiting for help to show up. She thought of the King who had come to visit her more and more often. He was more and more friendly, and he loved to listen to her songs and stories. So she

knew that the seeds she had sown in his heart began to grow.
One day her most beautiful lilies were in bloom when the King came down to her in haste and begged her to save his life.
She didn't understand what he meant, and then he told her about the battle and the beautiful, blooming garden outside.
Then Star felt her task was done and said, "Fear not my people; they will welcome you and give you a home, if you promise not to destroy any more flowers, but always to be as gentle as now. Come with me, and let us teach you how happy you too may be through sunshine, love, and merry activity."
The King promised to do that. And they left the cell together. A loud cry went up when the nymphs saw Star.
"I want to be your friend," said the King, bowing before Queen Blossom.
That day they celebrated a great feast, and afterwards the nymph army returned home, very pleased with the battle they had fought, though every one said that it was really Star who had vanquished the Frost King.