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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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The Jogi's Punishment

Once upon a time there came to the ancient city of Rahmatabad a jogi of holy appearance, who took up his abode under a tree outside the city, where he would sit for days at a time fasting from food and drink, motionless except for the fingers that turned restlessly his string of beads. The fame of such holiness as this soon spread, and daily the citizens would flock to see him, eager to get his blessing, to watch his devotions, or to hear his teaching, if he were in the mood to speak. Very soon the rajah himself heard of the jogi, and began regularly to visit him to seek his counsel and to ask his prayers that a son might be vouchsafed to him. Days passed by, and at last the rajah became so possessed with the thought of the holy man that he determined if possible to get him all to himself. So he built in the neighbourhood a little shrine, with a room or two added to it, and a small courtyard closely walled up; and, when all was ready, besought the jogi to occupy it, and to receive no other visitors except himself and his queen and such pupils as the jogi might choose, who would hand down his teaching. To this the jogi consented; and thus he lived for some time upon the king's bounty, whilst the fame of his godliness grew day by day.

Now, although the rajah of Rahmatabad had no son, he possessed a daughter, who as she grew up became the most beautiful creature that eye ever rested upon. Her father had long before betrothed her to the son of the neighbouring rajah of Dilaram, but as yet she had not been married to him, and lived the quiet life proper to a maiden of her beauty and position. The princess had of course heard of the holy man and of his miracles and his fastings, and she was filled with curiosity to see and to speak to him; but this was difficult, since she was not allowed to go out except into the palace grounds, and then was always closely guarded. However, at length she found an opportunity, and made her way one evening alone to the hermit's shrine.

Unhappily, the hermit was not really as holy as he seemed; for no sooner did he see the princess than he fell in love with her wonderful beauty, and began to plot in his heart how he could win her for his wife. But the maiden was not only beautiful, she was also shrewd; and as soon as she read in the glance of the jogi the love that filled his soul, she sprang to her feet, and, gathering her veil about her, ran from the place as fast as she could. The jogi tried to follow, but he was no match for her; so, beside himself with rage at finding that he could not overtake her, he flung at her a lance, which wounded her in the leg. The brave princess stooped for a second to pluck the lance out of the wound, and then ran on until she found herself safe at home again. There she bathed and bound up the wound

secretly, and told no one how naughty she had been, for she knew that her father would punish her severely. Next day, when the king went to visit the jogi, the holy man would neither speak to nor look at him.

'What is the matter?' asked the king. 'Won't you speak to me to-day?'

'I have nothing to say that you would care to hear,' answered the jogi.

'Why?' said the king. 'Surely you know that I value all that you say, whatever it may be.'

But still the jogi sat with his face turned away, and the more the king pressed him the more silent and mysterious he became. At last, after much persuasion, he said: 'Let me tell you, then, that there is in this city a creature which, if you do not put an end to it, will kill every single person in the place.'

The king, who was easily frightened, grew pale.

'What,' he gasped—'what is this dreadful thing? How am I to know it and to catch it? Only counsel me and help me, and I will do all that you advise.'

'Ah!' replied the jogi, 'it is indeed dreadful. It is in the shape of a beautiful girl, but it is really an evil spirit. Last evening it came to visit me, and when I looked upon it its beauty faded into hideousness, its teeth became horrible fangs, its eyes glared like coals of fire,



great claws sprang from its slender fingers, and were I not what I am it might have consumed me.'

The king could hardly speak from alarm, but at last he said:

'How am I to distinguish this awful thing when I see it?'

'Search,' said the jogi, 'for a lovely girl with a lance wound in her leg, and when she is found secure her safely and come and tell me, and I will advise you what to do next.'

Away hurried the king, and soon set all his soldiers scouring the country for a girl with a lance wound in her leg. For two days the search went on, and then it was somehow discovered that the only person with a lance wound in the leg was the princess herself. The king, greatly agitated, went off to tell the jogi, and to assure him that there must be some mistake. But of course the jogi was prepared for this, and had his answer ready.

'She is not really your daughter, who was stolen away at her birth, but an evil spirit that has taken her form,' said he solemnly. 'You can do what you like, but if you don't take my advice she will kill you all.' And so solemn he appeared, and so unshaken in his confidence, that the king's wisdom was blinded, and he declared that he would do whatever the jogi advised, and believe whatever he said. So the jogi directed him to send him secretly two carpenters; and when they arrived he set them to make a great chest, so cunningly jointed and put together that neither air nor water could penetrate it. There and then the chest was made, and, when it

was ready, the jogi bade the king to bring the princess by night; and they two thrust the poor little maiden into the chest and fastened it down with long nails, and between them carried it to the river and pushed it out into the stream.

As soon as the jogi got back from this deed he called two of his pupils, and pretended that it had been revealed to him that there should be found floating on the river a chest with something of great price within it; and he bade them go and watch for it at such a place far down the stream, and when the chest came slowly along, bobbing and turning in the tide, they were to seize it and secretly and swiftly bring it to him, for

he was now determined to put the princess to death himself. The pupils set off at once, wondering at the strangeness of their errand, and still more at the holiness of the jogi to whom such secrets were revealed.



The Princess released from the box

It happened that, as the next morning was dawning, the gallant young prince of Dilaram was hunting by the banks of the river, with a great following of wazirs, attendants, and huntsmen, and as he rode he saw floating on the river a large chest, which came

slowly along, bobbing and turning in the tide. Raising himself in his saddle, he gave an order, and half a dozen men plunged into the water and drew the chest out on to the river bank, where every one crowded around to see what it could contain. The prince was certainly not the least curious among them; but he was a cautious young man, and, as he prepared to open the chest himself, he bade all but a few stand back, and these few to draw their swords, so as to be prepared in case the chest should hold some evil beast, or djinn, or giant. When all were ready and expectant, the prince with his dagger forced open the lid and flung it back, and there lay, living and breathing, the most lovely maiden he had ever seen in his life.

Although she was half stifled from her confinement in the chest, the princess speedily revived, and, when she was able to sit up, the prince began to question her as to who she was and how she came to be shut up in the chest and set afloat upon the water; and she, blushing and trembling to find herself in the presence of so many strangers, told him that she was the princess of Rahmatabad, and that she had been put into the chest by her own father. When he on his part told her that he was the prince of Dilaram, the astonishment of the young people was unbounded to find that they, who had been betrothed without ever having seen one another, should have actually met for the first time under such strange circumstances. In fact, the prince was so moved by her beauty and modest ways that he called up his wazirs and demanded to be married at once to this

lovely lady who had so completely won his heart. And married they were then and there upon the river bank, and went home to the prince's palace, where, when the story was told, they were welcomed by the old rajah, the prince's father, and the remainder of the day was given over to feasting and rejoicing. But when the banquet was over, the bride told her husband that now, on the threshold of their married life, she had more to relate of her adventures than he had given her the opportunity to tell as yet; and then, without hiding anything, she informed him of all that happened to her from the time she had stolen out to visit the wicked jogi.

In the morning the prince called his chief wazir and ordered him to shut up in the chest in which the princess had been found a great monkey that lived chained up in the palace, and to take the chest back to the river and set it afloat once more and watch what became of it. So the

monkey was caught and put into the chest, and some of the prince's servants took it down to the river and pushed it off into the water. Then they followed secretly a long way off to see what became of it.



Meanwhile the jogi's two pupils watched and watched for the chest until they were nearly tired of watching, and were beginning to wonder whether the jogi was right after all, when on the second day they spied the great chest coming floating on the river, slowly bobbing and turning on the tide; and instantly a great joy and exultation seized them, for they thought that here indeed was further proof of the wonderful wisdom of their master. With some difficulty they secured the chest, and carried it back as swiftly and secretly as possible to the jogi's house. As soon as they brought in the chest, the jogi, who had been getting very cross and impatient, told them to put it down, and to go outside whilst he opened the magic chest.

'And even if you hear cries and sounds, however alarming, you must on no account enter,' said the jogi, walking over to a closet where lay the silken cord that was to strangle the princess.

And the two pupils did as they were told, and went outside and shut close all the doors. Presently they heard a great outcry within, and the jogi's voice crying aloud for help; but they dared not enter, for had they not been told that whatever the noise, they must not come in? So they sat outside, waiting and wondering; and at last all grew still and quiet, and remained so for such a long time that they determined to enter and see if all was well. No sooner had they opened the door leading into the courtyard than they were nearly upset by a huge monkey that came leaping straight to the doorway and escaped past them into the open fields.

Then they stepped into the room, and there they saw the jogi's body lying torn to pieces on the threshold of his dwelling!

Very soon the story spread, as stories will, and reached the ears of the princess and her husband, and when she knew that her enemy was dead she made her peace with her father.