



# Ririro

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## Kynon's Adventure At The Fountain

*Lady Charlotte Guest*

King Arthur was at Caerleon upon Usk; and one day he sat in his chamber, and with him were Owain, the son of Urien, and Kynon the son of Clydno, and Kay the son of Kyner, and Guenevere and her handmaidens at needlework by the window. In the centre of the chamber King Arthur sat, upon a seat of green rushes, over which was spread a covering of flame-covered satin, and a cushion of red satin was under his elbow.

Then Arthur spoke. "If I thought you would not disparage me," said he, "I would sleep while I wait for my repast; and you can entertain one another with relating tales, and can obtain a flagon of mead and some meat from Kay." And the king went to sleep. And Kynon the son of Clydno asked Kay for that which Arthur had promised them. "I too will have the good tale which he promised me," said Kay. "Nay," answered Kynon; "fairer will it be for thee to fulfil Arthur's behest in the first place, and then we will tell thee the best tale that we know." So Kay went to the kitchen and to the mead-cellar, and returned, bearing a flagon of mead, and a golden goblet, and a handful of skewers, upon which were broiled slices of meat. They ate the collops, and began to drink the mead. "Now," said Kay, "it is time for you to give me my story." "Kynon," said Owain, "do thou pay to Kay the tale that is his due." "I will do so," answered Kynon.

"I was the only son of my mother and father, and I was exceedingly aspiring, and my daring was very great. I thought there was no enterprise in the world too mighty for me: and after I had achieved all the adventures that were in my own country I equipped myself, and set forth to journey through deserts and distant regions. And at length it chanced that I came to the fairest valley in the world, wherein were trees all of equal growth; and a river ran through the valley, and a path was by the side of the river. I followed the path until midday, and continued my journey along the remainder of the valley until the evening; and at the extremity of the plain I came to a large and lustrous castle, at the foot of which was a torrent. I approached the castle, and there I beheld two youths with yellow curling hair, each with a frontlet of gold upon his head, and clad in a garment of yellow satin; and they had gold clasps upon their insteps. In the hand of each of them was an ivory bow, strung with the sinews of the stag, and their arrows and their shafts were of the bone of the whale, and were winged with peacock's feathers. The shafts also had golden heads. They had daggers with blades of gold, with hilts of the bone of the whale, and they were shooting at a mark.

"A little away from them I saw a man in the prime of life, with his beard newly shorn, clad in a robe and mantle of yellow satin, and round the top of his mantle was a band of gold lace. On his feet were shoes of variegated leather, fastened by two bosses of gold. When I saw him I went towards him and saluted him; and such was his courtesy, that he no sooner received my greeting than he returned it. And he went with me towards the castle. Now there were no dwellers in the castle, except those who were in one hall. There I saw four and twenty damsels, embroidering satin at a window. And this I tell thee, Kay, that the least fair of them was fairer than the fairest maid thou didst ever behold in the island of Britain; and the least lovely of them was more lovely than Guenevere, the wife of Arthur, when she appeared loveliest, at the feast of Easter. They rose up at my coming, and six of them took my horse, and divested me of my armor, and six others took my arms and washed them in a vessel till they were perfectly bright. And the third six spread cloths upon the tables, and prepared meat. And the fourth six took off my soiled garments, and placed others upon me, namely, an under vest and a doublet of fine linen, and a robe and a surcoat, and a mantle of yellow satin, with a broad gold band upon the mantle. And they placed cushions both beneath and around me, with coverings of red linen. And I sat down. Now the six maidens who had taken my horse unharnessed him as well as if they had been the best squires in the island of Britain.

"Then behold they brought bowls of silver, wherein was water to wash, and towels of linen, some green and some white; and I washed. And in a little while the man sat down at the table. I sat next to him, and below me sat all the maidens, except those who waited on us. The table was of silver, and the cloths upon the table were of linen. No vessel was served upon the table that was not either of gold or of silver or of buffalo horn, and our meat was brought to us. And verily, Kay, I saw there every sort of meat and every sort of liquor that I ever saw elsewhere; but the meat and the liquor were better served there than I ever saw them in any other place.

"Until the repast was half over, neither the man nor any one of the damsels spoke a single word to me; but when the man perceived that it would be more agreeable for me to converse than to eat any more, he began to inquire of me who I was. I told the man who I was, and what was the cause of my journey, and said that I was seeking whether any one was superior to me, or whether I could gain mastery over all. The man looked upon me, and smiled and said, 'If I did not fear to do thee a mischief, I would show thee that which thou seekest.' Then I desired him to speak freely. And he said: 'Sleep here to-night, and in the morning arise early, take the road upwards through the valley, until thou reachest the wood. A little way within the wood thou wilt come to a large sheltered glade, with a mound in the centre, and thou wilt see a man of great stature on the top of the mound. He has but one foot, and one eye in the middle

of his forehead. He is the wood-ward of that wood. Thou wilt see a thousand wild animals grazing around him. Inquire of him the way out of the glade, and he will reply to thee briefly, and will point out the road by which thou shalt find that which thou art in quest of.'

"Long seemed that night to me. The next morning I arose and equipped myself, mounted my horse, and proceeded straight through the valley to the wood, and at length I arrived at the glade. The man was there, sitting upon the top of the mound; and I was three times more astonished at the number of wild animals that I beheld than the man had said I should be. I inquired of him the way, and he asked me roughly whither I would go. When I had told him who I was and what I sought, 'Take,' said he, 'that path that leads toward the head of the glade, and there thou wilt find an open space like to a large valley, and in the midst of it a tall tree. Under this tree is a fountain, and by the side of the fountain a marble slab, and on the marble slab a silver bowl, attached by a chain of silver, that it may not be carried away. Take the bowl and throw a bowlful of water on the slab. If thou dost not find trouble in that adventure, thou needest not seek it during the rest of thy life'



"So I journeyed on until I reached the summit of the steep. And there I found everything as the man had described it to me. I went up to the tree, and beneath it I saw the fountain, and by its side the marble slab, and the silver bowl fastened by the chain. Then I took the bowl, and cast a bowlful of water upon the slab. Immediately I heard a mighty peal of thunder, so that heaven and earth seemed to tremble with its fury. And after the thunder came a shower; and of a truth I tell thee, Kay, that it was such a shower as neither man nor beast could endure and live. I turned my horse's flank toward the shower, and placed the point of my shield over his head and neck, while I held the upper part of it over my own neck. And thus I withstood the shower. Presently the sky became clear, and with that, behold, the birds lighted upon the tree, and sang. Truly, Kay, I

never heard any melody equal to that, either before or since. And when I was most charmed with listening to the birds, lo! a chiding voice was heard of one approaching me, and saying: 'O knight, what has brought thee hither? What evil have I done to thee, that thou shouldst act toward me and my possessions as thou hast this day? Dost thou not know that the shower to-day has left in my dominions neither man nor beast alive that was exposed to it?' And thereupon, behold, a knight on a black horse appeared, clothed in jet-black velvet, and with a tabard of black linen about him. We charged each other, and as the onset was furious, it was not long before I was overthrown. Then the knight passed the shaft of his lance through the bridle-rein of my horse, and rode off with the two horses, leaving me where I was. He did not even bestow so much notice upon me as to imprison me, nor did he despoil me of my arms. So I returned along the road by which I had come. And when I reached the glade where the man was, I confess to thee, Kay, it is a marvel that I did not melt down into a liquid pool, through the shame that I felt at the man's derision. That night I came to the same castle where I had spent the night preceding, and I was more agreeably entertained that night than I had been the night before. I conversed freely with the inmates of the castle, and none of them alluded to my expedition to the fountain, neither did I mention it to any. And I remained there that night. When I arose on the morrow I found ready saddled a dark bay palfrey, with nostrils as red as scarlet. After putting on my armor, and leaving there my blessing, I returned to my own court. That horse I still possess, and he is in the stable yonder. And I declare that I would not part with him for the best palfrey in the island of Britain.

"Now, of a truth, Kay, no man ever before confessed to an adventure so much to his own discredit; and verily it seems strange to me that neither before nor since have I heard of any person who knew of this adventure, and that the subject of it should exist within King Arthur's dominions without any other person lighting upon it."

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