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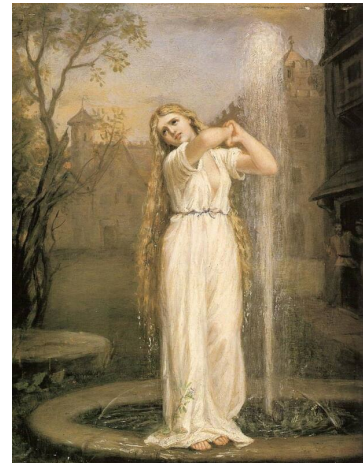
READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Marianna

Unknown writer

Once upon a time, there was a wicked nobleman who rebelled against the king and killed him. The queen managed to flee into the forest with her baby princess, leaving her in the care of an old dwarf. The same day, the queen died. The dwarf raised the girl as his own, naming her Marianna because of the golden heart-shaped locket with a crown and the letter M that she wore when she was found.

Seventeen years passed, and Marianna grew into the most beautiful girl in the whole world. One spring morning, a yellow bird flew to the dwarf's house and gave him a letter that he held in his beak. The dwarf read the letter and said, "Little Marianna, the Emperor of the Elves has asked me to come to the Golden Mountain. I cannot take you with me because it is forbidden for ordinary people to go there. But I cannot leave you in this deserted forest either."



Marianna replied, "Do not worry, father. Give me your crystal bottle of healing water. I will go out into the world until it is time to return. I would like to find out who I am. Perhaps someone will recognize my locket and tell me."

They went their separate ways. The dwarf chose the path to the Golden Mountain, and Marianna went in a random direction out of the forest. Along the way, she healed the sick with her water of healing. She passed through many villages and towns, but no one could tell her anything about the locket she wore.

One day, she was stopped on the road by a poor woman who said, "Please help us, my daughter is very ill." Marianna followed the woman and arrived at a poor hut where a beautiful young peasant girl lay on a rickety bed with a fever. Marianna touched the girl with the water, and she immediately became healthy and strong again. "Dear lady," said the peasant girl, "I am eternally grateful!"

On the ground sat a small yellow bird. He looked very sad. "I found him on the path yesterday. Someone injured him. His wing is broken," said the mother. Marianna picked up the bird and touched the injured wing with the water of healing. Barely had she done so when the yellow bird began to sing a cheerful

song. Marianna then said goodbye to the peasant girl and, with the yellow bird, walked back to the main road in the valley.

She reached a land that was the most beautiful she had ever seen. She did not know that the land belonged to her father, the rightful king. Much had happened there in the meantime. The nobleman had since died. He had asked his brother Garabin to help his son Desire with the kingdom.

But Garabin was a wicked man. He had made Desire so sick that he could enjoy the royal wealth without interference. Garabin would have preferred to kill Desire, but that would have been noticed by the people. It was a clever move to make him so sick that it was not strange that Garabin was in charge. Desire was now twenty years old. But he was so sick that he would probably not live much longer.

The captain of the castle guard knocked on Garabin's door and told him that Marianna had arrived in the kingdom. Garabin saw the yellow bird on her shoulder and immediately noticed the locket around Marianna's neck. He knew that the small golden heart, studded with diamonds, had been one of the crown jewels. This had to be the missing princess and rightful queen of the kingdom!

Garabin sought advice from the cruel wizard who had also enchanted Desire. The wizard said, "Do not be afraid, I will destroy both the prince and the queen at the same time. I will steal the water of healing and replace it with an identical looking water. The water of destruction. Allow Marianna to help the prince. She will give him the water of destruction. The people will see her as the murderer and give her the death penalty."

Garabin was thrilled with this horrible plan. That evening, the wizard filled a bottle with the water of destruction and replaced it with the bottle of healing water. Now, the wizard thought no one had noticed. But he was wrong! The yellow bird had seen everything. He had followed the wizard and knew exactly where he hid the bottle of healing water.

The next morning, Marianna was brought to Desire's room. The prince lay in a large, old-fashioned bed. He was so sick that he could hardly lift his head to look at his visitors. He did see Marianna and he immediately fell in love with her.

When Marianna wanted to drop a drop of healing water on the prince's forehead, the yellow bird started screaming like crazy. Marianna looked at the bottle but noticed nothing unusual. The drop fell on the head and Desire turned chalk-white and collapsed.

The spectators began to murmur and become restless. Marianna was terrified of what had happened and dropped the bottle, causing it to shatter into a thousand sparkling pieces. Suddenly, Garabin shouted loudly, "Seize the witch, she has

murdered the prince!" Marianna was seized and taken away. When the doctors declared the prince dying, Marianna was sentenced to be thrown into the sea from a high rock.

The bird was taken to the kitchen. "Here, break his neck," the cook said to one of her helpers, "while I call the cat." Fortunately, the cook's helper was the peasant girl who had saved Marianna. She recognized the bird and let it fly out the window.

The yellow bird flew to the wizard's window and took the bottle of healing water in his beak. With the bottle, he flew to Prince Desire's room.



An hour later, Marianna was taken to the highest point of the rock. There were heavy chains around her. She was to be thrown into the sea from the rock. Desire rushed to the rock. He had received a drop of healing water from the bird and felt as strong as a lion. When he arrived at the rock, he drew his sword and ordered Marianna to be released.

Garabin, seeing his plot fail, shouted, "Seize them. Throw them both into the abyss!" The soldiers were completely confused. What should they do now? Follow the orders of their master? Or those of the prince? As they walked towards the prince and Marianna, a flame appeared. The little dwarf, Marianna's foster father, suddenly stood next to the lovers.

"Cruel king," cried the dwarf sternly, "and you, wicked and faithless wizard. You will not escape punishment!" The sky turned black, lightning struck, and a terrible gust of wind arose. The wizard and Garabin had disappeared. "Marianna," said the dwarf, "the emperor of the elves has told me your entire story. It is thanks to him that I returned in time. You, Marianna, are the rightful queen of this land."

Desire knelt before her and said, "Dear queen, let me be the first of your subjects to greet you." "No, prince," replied the young queen. "Your father has conquered the kingdom. If I were you, I would try to win the heart of the queen." Of course, that was a joke, because it had already happened. Marianna was also deeply in love with Desire.

They got married and lived happily ever after. After the wedding, the yellow bird said goodbye and happily continued to live in the land of the Elves.

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