



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Prince Autumn

Carl Ewald

At the top of the hills in the west stood Prince Autumn, looking out over the land with a serious expression. Stripes of grey ran through his hair and beard, and there were wrinkles on his forehead. But he looked good: calm, upright, and strong. His beautiful cloak shone with red, green, brown, and yellow colors, and it fluttered in the wind. In his hand, he held a horn. He smiled sadly and stood for a while, listening to the sounds of the valley and the forest. Then he raised his head, put the horn to his mouth, and blew:

"The summer slowly and quietly fades away, The horn of autumn calls, Heather colors the brown hills purple, Winds whip waves over the bay, Leaves fall in the forest."

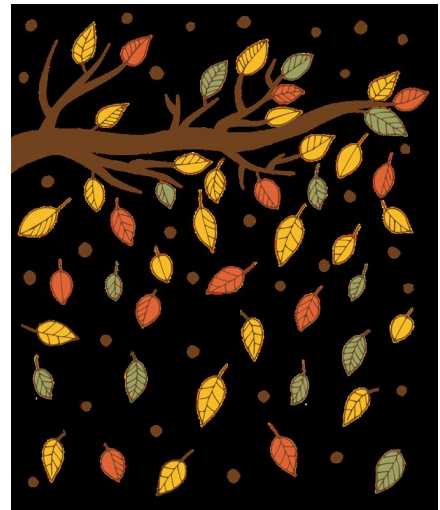
As soon as they heard the horn, all the trees in the forest trembled from root to top, not even knowing why. All the birds fell silent and shivered. The deer, in the open space, raised its antlers in surprise and listened. The scarlet petals of the poppy hung in the wind. But high on the mountains and on the barren hills, and low on the sandy soils, the heather burst into bloom and "burned" purple and glorious in the sun. The bees flew away from the withered flowers of the meadow and hid in the heather fields.

Prince Autumn put his horn to his mouth again and blew: "Autumn rules with clear nights, Flamboyant leaves swirling in beautiful colors. Fighting each year to win against the summer, Welcoming the winter, which is white and cold, For which the happy little birds flee to the south."

Prince Summer stood in the valley and looked up at the hills in the west. Prince Autumn took the horn out of his mouth and bowed deeply to him.

"Welcome!" said Prince Summer. He took a step in his direction and then stopped, but Prince Autumn rushed to him.

Then they walked hand in hand through the valley. Summer was so radiant that wherever they went, no one was aware of the presence of autumn. The notes of his horn died in the air, and all plants and animals recovered from the shiver that had passed over them. The trees, birds, and flowers came back to themselves and whispered, frolicked, and sang cheerfully again. The river flowed again and lapped against the shore, and the bees continued their party in the blooming heather.



But wherever the princes stopped on their journey through the valley, the leaves turned yellow. A small leaf fell from its stem, fluttered away, and fell at their feet. The nightingale stopped singing, even though it was evening. The cuckoo was silent and fluttered restlessly through the forest. The stork stretched out in its nest and looked south. But the princes paid no attention.

"Welcome," said Prince Summer again. "Do you remember your promise?"

"I remember it," replied Prince Autumn.

Then Prince Summer stopped and looked out over the kingdom where the noise gradually subsided.

"Do you hear my summer children?" he asked. "Take them under your care with a gentle hand now."

"I will take everyone under my care," said Prince Autumn. "I will watch over those who dream carefully and I will lovingly cover those who are cold. I will warn them three times of the coming of winter."

"Then it is good," said Prince Summer.

They walked silently next to each other as night fell.

"The petals of the honeysuckle fell to the ground when you blew your horn," said Prince Summer. "Some of my children will die when I leave the valley. But I will take the nightingale, the cuckoo, and the stork with me."

Once again, the two princes walked in silence. It was deathly quiet, only the call of the owls echoing in the old oak tree.

"You must send my birds after me," said Prince Summer.

"I won't forget," replied Prince Autumn.

Then Prince Summer raised his hand in farewell and Prince Autumn took the

kingdom.

"I'm leaving tonight," he said. "And no one will know except for you. My splendor will remain in the valley for a while. Then I will be remembered on pleasant sunny days."

And with that, he strode away into the night. But from high in the treetops, the stork flew in with its long wings, the cuckoo flapped out of the tall woods, and the nightingale flew out of the bushes with her grown offspring. The air was filled with the soft rustling of wings. Autumn had begun on the night that summer left, with a yellow leaf here and a brown leaf there, but no one had noticed. Now it went faster and as time passed, even more colors appeared.



The lime trees turned yellow, the beech became bronze, but the elderberry became even blacker than it had been. The harebell rang with white bells, where it used to ring with blue. The chestnut tree blessed the whole world with its leaves with five yellow fingers and dropped its chestnuts. The rowan dropped its leaves so that everyone could admire its beautiful berries. The wild rose nodded in the wind, and the wild vine twisted wildly over the hedge.

Then Prince Autumn put his horn back to his mouth and blew: "The best part of the autumn package, Is its colorful treasure chest with Red mountain berries, Sweet rose hips as cherries, Blackthorns blue and black, Every branch heavy laden."

A blackbird and a thrush chattered happily in the undergrowth, which glowed with berries, and a thousand sparrows kept them company. The wind raced from one to the other, blowing and panting to make the pleasure even greater. High in the sky, the sun looked down gently on the autumn feast. Prince Autumn nodded in satisfaction and let his cloak of colorful hues flutter in the wind.

"I may be the least important of the four seasons, and I have little to say," he said. "And I serve two jealous masters, Summer and Winter, and must please them both. But my power reaches so far that I can give everyone a few particularly happy and beautiful days."

Then he put his horn to his mouth and blew: "The valley's revelers, They are now dressed in autumn costumes, They are tired and have green faded locks, Summer is gone, winter is near, Hey hey, autumn prevails."

But a night later, there was a huge disturbance on the mountaintops, where the eternal snow had lain in both spring and summer. It sounded like a storm

approaching. The trees were frightened, the crows were silent, and the wind held its breath. Prince Autumn leaned forward and listened.

"Is that the worst you can do?" suddenly a hoarse voice cried out through the darkness.

Prince Autumn lifted his head and looked straight into the large, cold eyes of Prince Winter.

"Have you forgotten the agreement?" Prince Winter asked.

"No," replied Prince Autumn. "I haven't forgotten."

"Then be careful," Prince Winter warned.

All night long, there was a rumble in the mountains. It became so bitterly cold that the starling seriously thought about packing up and leaving, and even the red climber turned pale. The distant peaks sparkled under the new snow. And Prince Autumn no longer laughed. He looked out over the land, and the wrinkles in his forehead grew deeper. "Then so be it," he said at last.

He blew his horn again and played a beautiful tune: "For the second time, for the second time! Listen well to this call and obey, Harvest the seeds from the earth. Fill your bags to the brim! Toads, hide! Birds, keep your wings ready to fly!"

Then the whole land was in turmoil, and everyone got to work because they all understood now. "Quick, quick," said Prince Autumn.

The poppy, the bluebell, and the pink rose stood thin and dry like sticks with their heads full of seeds. The dandelion had given each of its seeds a small parachute.

"Come, dear Wind, and shake us!" said the poppy.

"Fly away with my seeds, Wind," said the dandelion.

And the wind hastened to do what they asked. But the beech slyly dropped its rough fruit on the hare's fur, and the fox also got one on his red coat.

"Quickly now," said Prince Autumn. "There's no time to lose here."

The little brown mice filled their burrows from floor to ceiling with nuts, beech nuts, and acorns. The hedgehog had eaten himself so plump he could hardly let his spines down. The hare, the fox, and the deer put on their warm coats. The starling, the thrush, and the blackbird put on their downy clothes and practiced their wings for the long journey. The sun hid behind the clouds and did not appear for many days. It began to rain. The wind quickened its pace and blew the rain over the meadow, churned the river into foam, and whistled through the trunks in the forest.

"Now the song is done," said Prince Autumn. Then he put his horn to his mouth and blew: "The autumn horn blew its song, for the last time, for the last time! Do what you must before it's too late, Land birds, fly away! Frogs, dive into the water! Bee, close up your hive! Hide away, bear! Let the last leaf fall in the forest, Autumn is at an end."

And then it was over. The birds flew in flocks over the land. The starling, the lapwing, the thrush, and the blackbird all headed south. Every morning before the sun rose, the wind howled through the forest and pulled the last leaves from the trees. Every day the wind blew harder, broke large branches, and swept the withered leaves into piles, scattered them again, and finally laid them as a soft, thick carpet over the entire floor of the forest.

The hedgehog crawled so far into a hole under the stones that he got stuck between two of them and couldn't move forward or backward. The sparrow took refuge in an abandoned swallow's nest. The frogs went permanently to the bottom of the pond, nestled in the mud, with the tips of their noses in the water and prepared for what was to come.

Prince Autumn stared over the land to see if it was bare and desolate so that the winter storms could come and beat as they pleased, and the snow could lie wherever it wanted. Then he stopped in front of the old oak and looked at the ivy climbing all the way to the top and spreading its green leaves as if winter did not exist. And as he looked at it, the ivy flowers bloomed! They were sitting right at the top of the branches and swaying in the wind!

"Now I'm coming," roared Prince Winter from the mountains. "My clouds are bursting with snow, and my storms are breaking loose. I can't hold them back any longer."

Prince Autumn bowed his head and listened. He heard the storm come roaring over the mountains. A snowflake fell on his colorful cloak... and another one... and another one...

For the very last time, he put his horn to his mouth and blew: "You slow-growing green plant, You most beautiful, rarest, most hardy plant, Beautiful in infinity, During summer, winter, autumn, and spring, Your powerful green strands cling everywhere, Look, look! The flowers of autumn!"

Then he went away in the storm.

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