



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Princess Marzell

Abbie Phillips Walker

Once there lived in a far-off foreign land a King and Queen who had a daughter, the Princess Marzell. Of course, she was very much spoiled, as she was their only child, and when Princess Marzell was old enough to marry, she decided she would not marry any of the princes her father and mother had selected for her to choose from.

So the King and Queen decided they would let her choose anyone she liked if only she would marry, for they wanted her to have a king to help her rule when they should be gone.

In a cave in the forest, a long way from the castle, lived a witch, and her magic power was very wonderful. But only for those who would give her gold would the old witch work her magic arts.

One of the King's servants had long wanted to be a king himself, but he knew no way of becoming a king until he heard the King and Queen talking about Princess Marzell and how they intended to let her select her husband. Then the servant, whose name was Michio, went to the old witch in the forest and asked for help.

"I will give you more gold than you have ever seen when I become king," he told the old witch.

But she would do nothing for him until she saw the gold, so one night he robbed one of the chests of the King's vault and went to the old witch again.

How her greedy old eyes glistened when she saw all the yellow gold Michio poured at her feet. "Ask what you like, my pretty," cackled the old witch, "and it shall be as you ask."

"Make me so handsome that Princess Marzell will not be able to live without me. Make her fall in love with me for her husband," said the crafty fellow.

"Be it so," said the old witch, waving her crooked cane over his head as she mumbled words that had no meaning for Michio, but which changed him from a very common-looking fellow into a handsome youth.

"She will never be able to resist you now, my pretty," crooned the old witch as she counted the gold Michio had brought. Michio did not stop to thank her but

ran at full speed to his home to look at himself in a mirror.

He was indeed a handsome man, and all he needed were clothes to set off his beauty. So that night when the castle was dark and silent, Michio went to the vaults of the King and helped himself to the gold, for the King had trusted him with the keys, which made it very easy.

The next day, Michio disappeared and no one could find him, and then the King discovered he had been robbed, and, of course, he knew it must have been Michio who did the dishonest deed.

That day when the King and his servants were out riding and looking everywhere for Michio, there rode up to the castle a very handsome youth who asked to be allowed to rest for a while in the castle park.

Of course, it was Michio, and he knew at that very hour Princess Marzell would walk in the park with her servants.

It was not long before she came, and seeing so handsome a youth in her father's park, she asked who he was.

"I asked leave of the porter to rest," said Michio, bowing low before the Princess. "I am on my way to my castle, and it is a long way from here."



"And are you a prince?" asked the Princess, her heart beating fast, for if he were, she felt she had at last found the only man she would wish to marry, and at the same time, she would please her father and mother by marrying a prince.

"That I am," said Michio, "but a poor prince. I have a castle but little money."

Princess Marzell hurried to her mother and told her of the strange prince, begging her to ask him to remain overnight, as he had a long journey and was tired.

So the Queen, who could refuse her daughter nothing, invited Michio to remain at the castle overnight, and when the King returned, the Princess told him she had found the only man she would marry.

The King was so pleased that he did not delay the wedding, but the very next night, he gave a great feast, and Michio and Princess Marzell were married, and the next day they rode away in a beautiful gold and black coach, drawn by four black horses which the King gave them as a wedding present.

Besides this, you may be sure they had bags and bags of gold, for the Princess told her father the Prince was poor, but for that, she did not care, as the King

had so much wealth he could easily provide for them both.

On and on they rode, for, of course, Michio did not have any castle, nor was he sure of what he should do when night overtook them. Michio stopped at a country inn and told the coachman to drive back to the King and tell him they were sailing to the island where his castle was the next morning and should not need the coach or the horses.

He did this to be rid of the servant, and the next morning, when the Princess came down for breakfast, her husband told her they would go for a walk before they started on their journey.

Princess Marzell was so much in love with her handsome husband that she did not question anything he did or said, so she went with him as he requested.

Michio did not know where he should take her, but he wanted to put her where her father could not find her and pretend she was dead, and then return to the castle, where he intended to soon get rid of the King and Queen.

After a long walk, Michio saw a house in the woods away from the road, and to this, he led the Princess. No sooner were they inside than he locked the door and told her she was to remain there until he returned.

Poor frightened Princess Marzell! She waited and waited, but her husband did not return, and when it was dark, she was too frightened to leave the house, so she lay on the floor all night, weeping with fright and hunger.

When the morning came, she climbed out of the window and ate the berries she found growing nearby, but she did not dare go away from where her husband had left her, for fear he might return, for she did not suspect even then that he had deserted her and was sure he would come back.

The next day and the next, she waited, and still he did not return, and when she did try to go out of the woods, she found she could not remember the way.

For weeks, she roamed the woods, eating what she could find until she was so thin no one would have known the pretty Princess if they had seen her.

But one day, she heard the horn of hunters and followed the sound until she came upon the party, which she recognized as her father's servants.

Quickly, she called to them, but they did not know her, and when she told them her story, they could not believe it.

One of the servants said, "We will take her back to the castle with us; the Queen will be sure to know her, but I do not understand how it can be the Princess when the Prince says she is dead and is so unhappy over her death."

When the servants brought Princess Marzell to the Queen and King, Michio

happened to be near the door, and when he saw what had happened, he fled from the castle.

The Queen, of course, knew her child, and when they had heard her story, the King sent for Michio, but, of course, he could not be found.

Michio knew all was lost now unless the old witch helped him again, so he went to her with all his pockets filled with gold, for this he always carried with him because he was so fond of wealth.

"Help me get her again and this time get rid of her for good," he said to the old witch, "for if she disappears, I am sure the King and Queen will believe she is dead and was not their daughter, after all."

"Take this bag, my pretty," said the old witch. "It is a magic bag, and once anyone is inside it, the bag will go where the owner tells it to go."

"Take this magic wafer also, for on this depends the working of the bag for the one who owns it. Hold it in your mouth when you give the command to the bag and be careful not to swallow it. And here is a powder that will put those who are in your way to sleep when you go for the Princess."

"If you wish to be rid of the Princess, I should advise you to get her in the bag and tell it to jump into the ocean."

Michio folded the bag and put it under his arm and put the wafer in his pocket.

That night when all were asleep, Michio crawled in a window of the castle and scattered his powder as he went past all the rooms where the people were sleeping, so they would not awake.

Into the Princess's room, he went and scattered the powder over the servants, who were sleeping on the floor by her bed, but he did not bother to scatter it over the Princess, feeling sure that once she was inside the bag, she would be out of his way soon enough. The wafer he placed in his mouth, and then with the bag open, he leaned over the sleeping Princess to put it over her head.

"Jump into the river with her and sink," he said to the bag.

As he bent over her, a stray lock of the Princess's curling hair tickled Michio's nose, and before he could prevent it, he had sneezed, and out of his mouth flew the magic wafer, and over his head jumped the bag, and out of the window, it flew to the river and down it sank, just as he had commanded.

Of course, that was the very last of Michio, and when the Princess and all the household awoke the next morning, they knew nothing about what had happened in the night, for the wafer had disappeared also, and no trace of Michio's visit was seen.

The old witch knew nothing about what had happened, for she never heard of the happenings of the outside world and cared for nothing but the gold she received for her magic arts.

Princess Marzell lived to a good old age without marrying again and ruled after her father and mother had gone just as well as if she had had a King to help her.

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