



Ririro

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The Adventures of Florian

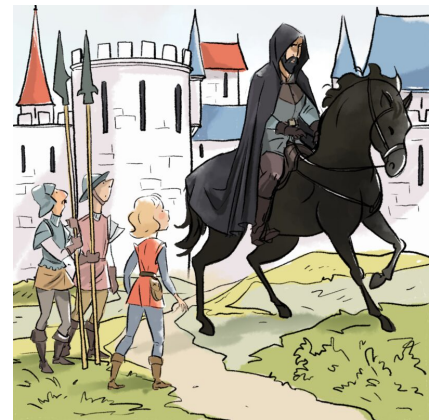
Henry Beston

Once upon a time there was a widow who had one daughter, named Isabella. They were of noble birth but lived in poverty.

The father taught his daughter everything a father would teach his son. He taught her horseback riding, swimming and fencing. He taught her so much that she was more like a boy than a girl. One fall evening the father passed away. Isabella was left with only the old house, there was no money. Isabella decided to go to the city and look for work. She would have more chances as a boy, so she cut her hair and put on men's clothing.



In the city she saw a couple of esquires and introduced herself as Florian. Suddenly a black knight on a black horse came galloping towards them. He called the esquires to him, but they all ignored him. Florian got curious and asked: 'Why do you act as if you don't hear this knight?' 'He is the wizard of the Black Rock. Nobody wants to work for him because his castle is inhabited by demons,' they answered.



Florian knew that he had little choice. So he walked up to the wizard and offered to come along. After a long journey they arrived at the castle. Before they entered the castle the wizard said: 'Boy, don't let anything you hear or see scare you. Be confident that no spirit or power can hurt you. Be loyal and you shall never have a reason to regret coming here.' Florian, who had always been brave, decided to never let his courage be shaken, and it didn't. And so it happened, that Florian worked in loyal service of the wizard for several years.

One day Florian decided that he wanted to see more of the world and told the wizard that he had to leave. 'Alright,' said the wizard, who had grown to respect Florian. 'I shall give you three parting gifts. The first is a necklace with a golden charm in the shape of a bird. This will keep you safe from magic and will sing when you come close to danger. The second gift is a key with which you can open any door in the world. The third gift is a sphere. Put it on the ground and it will help you when you lose your way. Above all you can call me when you are in deadly danger. I shall come help you.'



Florian had to look for a new job and he found it at the royal couple of the Twelve Towers. They had a gorgeous and brave son, prince Florizel. The parents send their son Florizel to a king in hopes that he would fall in love with his daughter, princess Rosamond. Florizel asked Florian to join him and his company. In the meantime, Florian had fallen head over heels in love with Florizel.

One morning, when the prince wanted to pick a beautiful flower, the little gold bird started to sing. Florian grabbed the flower and threw it away. 'How rude!', the company said. Shortly after the prince found a dagger on the road. Again the bird started singing. Before the prince could pick up the dagger, Florian snatched it from the ground and threw it in a ditch. Florian tried to explain that the flower and dagger were enchanted, but the prince was distracted by a beautiful garden with birds, butterflies and flowers. At that moment the golden bird started singing louder than it ever had.



'Please, don't go there,' Florian begged. But the prince and his company were already near the garden. At that moment everybody turned into stone, except for Florian and Florizel. It was the wicked witch who was behind this. She wanted to kidnap the prince and couple him with her ugly daughter. The witch immediately saw that it was Florian's little gold bird that was protecting them from her magic. So she decided to get rid of Florian by conjuring her castle and garden to the other side of the world. She spoke a spell and everything disappeared.

Florian used the sphere to find his way to the castle. But it took one year before he reached the gate of the witches' garden.

During that year the witch had done everything she could to make prince Florizel marry her ugly daughter. But the prince persistently refused. That evening Florian was standing in front of the garden. Florizel was locked in the top of the highest tower under lock and key of twenty different doors. Florian took the key the wizard had given him and opened all the doors until he found Florizel. The prince was so relieved to see Florian! He had already managed to free himself from the chains he was bound with.



It didn't take long before the witch discovered the escape. She found the boys quickly. She was about to change them both into hares, but Florian quickly put the necklace with the bird around Florizel's neck. He was protected from the spell, but Florian transformed into a hare. The witch then sent hound dogs after him. The prince did what he could to protect the hare. Isabella called for the wizard to help her.

The wizard came and defeated the witch. Isabella was changed back into her human form. The company came to live too. The witch had already decorated the castle for the wedding. 'Too bad that princess Rosamond isn't here,' said the company, 'then there would maybe be a wedding.'

'A wedding? No,' said Florizel, 'not until I find a woman who is as loyal as Florian.' 'There already is,' said the wizard and he touched Florian with his wand. There was Isabella in a beautiful dress. She was so beautiful that Florizel didn't hesitate one second to ask her to marry him. Florizel's parents were quickly fetched and so it happened that a wedding took place. Florian and Isabella lived happily ever after.

