



# Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

## The Beast Slayer

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Once upon a time there was a man and his wife who were very poor. The man earned his living making wooden bowls and platters to sell and worked early and late, but wooden bowls and platters were so very cheap that he could barely support his family no matter how hard he worked. The man and his wife were the parents of three lovely daughters. They were all exceedingly beautiful, and the man and his wife often lamented the fact that they did not have money enough to educate them and clothe them fittingly.

One day there came to the door of the poor man's house a handsome young man mounted on a beautiful horse. He asked to buy one of the poor man's daughters. The father was very much shocked at this request. "I may be poor," said he, "but I am not so poor that I have to sell my children."

The young man, however, threatened to kill him if he refused to do his bidding; so finally, after a short struggle, the father consented to part with his eldest daughter. He received a great sum of money in return.

The father was now a rich man and did not wish to make bowls and platters any longer. His wife, however, urged him to keep on with his former occupation. Accordingly he went on with his work. The very next day there came to his door another young man, even handsomer than the other, mounted upon even a finer horse. This young man made the same request that the other had done. He wanted to buy one of the daughters.

The father burst into tears and told all the dreadful happenings of the day before. The young man, however, showed no pity and continued to demand one of the daughters. He made fearful threats if the man would not yield to his request, and the father became so frightened that he at length parted with his second daughter. The first young man had paid a great sum of money, but this one paid even more.

Though he was now very rich the father still went on making bowls and platters to please his wife. The next day when he was at work the handsomest young man he had ever seen appeared riding upon a most beautiful steed. This young man demanded the third daughter. The poor father had to yield just as before, though it nearly broke his heart to part with his only remaining child. The price which the young man paid was so very great that the family was now as rich as

it had once been poor.

Their home was not childless very long, for soon a baby son came to them. They brought up the boy in great luxury. One day when the child was at school he quarrelled with one of his playmates. This taunt was thrown in his face: "Ah, ha! You think your father was always rich, do you? He is a rich man now, it is true, but it is because he sold your three sisters." The words made the boy sad, but he said nothing about the matter at home. He hid it away in his mind until he had become a man. Then he went to his father and mother and demanded that they should tell him all about it.

His parents told the young man the whole story of the strange experiences through which they had obtained their wealth. "I am now a man," said the son. "I feel that it is right that I should go out into the world in search of my sisters. Perhaps I might be able to find them and aid them in some way. Give me your blessing and allow me to go."

His father and mother gave him their blessing, and the young man started out to make a search through all the world. Soon he came to a house where there were three brothers quarrelling over a boot, a cap, and a key. "What is the matter?" asked the young man. "Why are these things so valuable that you should quarrel over them?"

The brothers replied that if one said to the boot, "O Boot, put me somewhere," the boot would immediately put him anywhere he wished to go. If one said to the cap, "O Cap, hide me," immediately the cap would hide him so he could not be seen. The key could unlock any door in the whole world. The young man at once wanted to own these things himself, and he offered so much money for them that at last the three brothers decided to end their quarrel by selling the boot, the cap, and the key and dividing the money.

The young man put the three treasures in his saddle bag and went on his way. As soon as he was out of sight of the house he said to the boot, "O Boot, put me in the house of my eldest sister."

Immediately the young man found himself in the most magnificent palace he had ever seen in his life. He asked to speak with his sister, but the queen of the palace replied that she had no brother and did not wish to be bothered with the stranger. It took much urging for the young man to gain permission from her to relate his story; but, when she had once heard it, everything sounded so logical that she decided to receive him as her brother. She asked how he had ever found her home, and how he had come through the thicket which surrounded her palace. The young man told her about his magic boot.

In the afternoon the queen suddenly burst into tears. Her brother asked what the trouble was. "O dear! O dear! What shall we do! What shall we do!" sobbed the

queen. "My husband is King of the Fishes. When he comes home to dinner tonight he will be very angry to find a human in his palace." The young man told her about his magic cap and comforted her fears.

Soon the King of Fishes arrived, accompanied by all his retinue. He came into the palace in a very bad temper, giving kicks and blows to everything which came in his way, and saying in a fierce, savage voice, "Lee, low, lee, leer, I smell the blood of a human, here. I smell the blood of a human, here."

It took much persuasion on the part of the queen to get him to take a bath. After his bath he appeared in the form of a handsome man. He then ate his dinner, and when he had nearly finished the meal his wife said to him, "If you should see my brother here what would you do to him?"

"I would be kind to him, of course, just as I am to you," responded the King of the Fishes. "If he is here let him appear."

The young man then took off the magic cap by which he had hidden himself. The king treated him most kindly and courteously. He invited him to live for the rest of his life in the palace. The young man declined the invitation, saying that he had two other sisters to visit. He took his departure soon, and when he went away his brother-in-law gave him a scale with these words: "If you are ever in any danger in which I can help you, take this scale and say, 'Help me, O King of the Fishes.'"

The young man put the scale in his saddle bag. Then he took out his magic boot and said, "O Boot, put me in the home of my second sister." He found his second sister queen of even a more wonderful palace than his eldest sister. Her husband was King of Rams and treated the newly found brother of his queen with great consideration. When the young man had finished his visit there the King of Rams gave him a piece of wool saying, "If you are ever in any peril in which I can help you pull this wool and ask help of the King of Rams."

With the aid of his magic boot the young man went to visit the home of his youngest sister. He found her in the most magnificent palace of them all. Her husband was King of Pigeons. When the young man departed he gave him a feather telling him if he was ever in any danger that all he had to do was to pull the feather and say, "Help me, O King of the Pigeons."

All three of the young man's brothers-in-law had admired the power of his magic boot and they had all advised him to visit the land of the King of Giants by means of it. After having left each of his three sisters full of happiness in her costly palace he felt free to act upon this advice, so by means of his magic boot he again found himself in a new country.

He soon heard on the street that the King of the land of Giants had a beautiful

giantess daughter whom he wished to give in marriage if she could be persuaded to choose a husband. She was such a famous beauty that no one could pass before her palace without eagerly gazing up in hopes of seeing her lovely face at the window. The giant princess had grown weary of being the object of so much attention, and she had made a vow that she would marry no one except a man who could pass before her without lifting his eyes.

The young man became interested when he heard this and at once rode past the palace with his eyes fixed steadily on the ground. He did not give a single glance upward in the direction of the window where the beautiful giant princess was watching him. The princess was overcome with joy at the sight of the handsome stranger who appeared as if in response to her vow. The king summoned him to the palace at once and ordered that the wedding should be celebrated immediately.

After the wedding the giant princess soon found out that her husband carried his choicest treasures in his saddle bags. She inquired their significance and her husband told her all about them. She was especially interested in the key. She said that there was a room in the palace which was never opened. In this room there was a fierce beast which always came to life again whenever it was killed. The giant princess had always been anxious to see the beast with her own eyes, and she suggested that they should use the key to unlock the door of the forbidden room and take a peep at the beast.

Her husband, however, gave her no encouragement to do this. He decided that it was too risky a bit of amusement; but one day when he had gone hunting with the king and court the princess was overjoyed to find that the magic key had been left behind. She at once picked it up and opened the forbidden door. The beast gave a great leap, roaring out at her, "You are the very one I have sought," as he seized her with his sharp claws.

When her husband and father returned from their hunting trip they were very much worried to find that the princess had disappeared. No one knew where she was. After searching through the palace and garden all in vain they went to the place where the beast was always kept. The prince recognized his magic key in the door, but the room was empty. The beast had fled with the giant princess.

Once more the young man made use of his magic boot and soon was by the side of the princess. The beast had hidden her in a cave by the sea and had gone away in search of food. The giant princess was delighted to find her husband whom she had never expected to see again and wanted to hasten away from the cave with him at once.

"You have got yourself into this affair," said her husband. "I can get you out again, I think, but I believe that it is your duty to at least make an effort to take

the beast's life. Perhaps when he comes back to the cave you can extract from him the secret of his charmed life."

The princess awaited the return of the beast. Then she asked him to tell her the secret of his charmed life. The beast was very much flattered to have the giant princess so interested in him, and he told it to her at once. He never thought of a plot. This is what he said: "My life is in the sea. In the sea there is a chest. In the chest there is a stone. In the stone there is a pigeon. In the pigeon there is an egg. In the egg there is a candle. At the moment when that candle is extinguished I die."

All this time the prince had remained there, hiding under his magic cap. He heard every word the beast said. As soon as the beast had gone to sleep the prince stood on the seashore and said: "Help me, O King of the Fishes," as he took out the scale which his brother-in-law had given him. Immediately there appeared a great multitude of fishes asking what he wished them to do. He asked them to get the chest from the depths of the sea. They replied that they had never seen such a chest, but that probably the sword-fish would know about it.

They hastened to call the sword-fish and he came at once. He said that he had seen the chest only a moment before. All the fishes went with him to get it, and they soon brought the chest out of the sea. The prince opened the chest easily with the aid of his magic key, and inside he found a stone.

Then the prince pulled the piece of wool which his second brother-in-law had given him and said, "Help me, O King of the Rams." Immediately there appeared a great drove of rams, running to the seashore from all directions. They attacked the stone, giving it mighty blows with their hard heads and horns. Soon they broke open the stone, and from out of it there flew a pigeon.

The beast now awoke from his sleep and knew that he was very ill. He remembered all that he had told the princess and accused her of having made a plot against his life. He seized his great ax to kill the princess.

In the meantime the prince had pulled the feather which his third brother-in-law had given him and cried, "Help me, O King of the Pigeons." Immediately a great flock of pigeons appeared attacking the pigeon and tearing it to pieces.

Just as the beast had caught the princess and was about to slay her, the prince took the egg from within the slain pigeon. He at once broke the egg and blew out the candle. At that moment the beast fell dead, and the princess escaped unharmed.



The prince carried the giant princess home to her father's kingdom and the king made a great festa which lasted many days. There was rejoicing throughout the whole kingdom because of the death of the beast and because of the safety of the lovely princess. The prince was praised throughout the kingdom and there is talk of him even unto this very day.

The prince had cut off the head of the great beast and the tip of its tail. The head he had given to the king, but the tip of the tail he kept for himself. The beast was so enormous that just the tip of its tail made a great ring large enough to encircle the prince's body. One day, just in fun, he twined the tip of the beast's tail around his waist. He immediately grew and grew until he became a giant himself, almost as tall as the king of the land of giants, and several leagues taller than the princess. It is not strange that a man who became a giant among giants should be famous even until now.

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