



Ririro

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The Fountain Of Giant Land

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Long ago there lived a king who was blind. He had employed all the wise physicians in the kingdom, but all to no avail. Not one of them did a single thing to restore his lost eyesight.

One day a little old woman came to the door of the palace begging alms. She said to the servant at the door, "I wish to say a word to the king who is blind. I know a sure cure for his blindness."

The servant led the little old woman into the king's presence. He was sitting upon the royal throne with his royal crown upon his head, but his blind eyes were bandaged and his royal face was sad because he could no longer see the bright sunlight shining upon the deep blue sea from the window of the palace, nor the lords and ladies of the court before him in their gorgeous garments of purple and cloth of silver and cloth of gold, nor of the face of the queen.

"O royal majesty," said the little old woman as she bowed low before him, "there is only one thing in the whole world which will restore your lost eyesight. It is the water of the fountain of Giantland. Bathe your eyes in that water and your lost eyesight will be restored at once."

"How can I obtain this wonderful water?" asked the king. "Giantland is a long distance from my kingdom and I do not know the way there." The king, the queen, and all the courtiers held their breaths to listen to the reply of the little old woman.

"Your Majesty will need to build a strong fleet to sail up the great river which leads to Giantland," she said. "The expedition will need as its leader a prince with a brave heart, for there will be many perils on the way to test his mettle. The fountain of Giantland is at the summit of a long steep rocky mountain, and it can be reached only by a prince who ascends the mountain looking neither to the right nor to the left. All along the way stand huge giants ready to enslave one the moment he stops looking straight ahead. If one should succeed in climbing the mountain the fountain is there at the summit, but it is guarded by a dragon. One can approach it only when the dragon is asleep. Many princes have tried this quest and all have failed. If you should be able to send a prince brave enough and wise enough to succeed, there at the top of the mountain he will find a little old woman who will tell him whether or not the dragon is asleep."

With these words the little old woman withdrew from the royal presence. The king pondered over her advice. Then he sent for the three princes and told them the story.

"O my father, I am brave and wise," said the eldest prince as soon as he had heard his father's words. "I will go upon this quest. I will bring you a bottle of the water of the fountain of Giantland that your sight may be restored."

The king ordered a great fleet to be prepared to sail up the river to Giantland. He collected an enormous sum of money to provide for the prince. The whole kingdom buzzed with preparation for the journey.

The prince planted an orange tree in the palace garden and said to his younger brother, "Keep close watch of this tree. If its leaves begin to wither you will know that some evil has befallen me. Come to my aid."

The eldest prince set out with a great fleet and his pockets lined with gold. He anchored in many harbors along the way. The prince was very fond of gaming and there were many opportunities to play. Before he had reached Giantland he had lost the golden linings from his pockets.

After the prince had sailed up the great river which leads to Giantland he saw the steep rocky mountain towering before him. He set a bottle for the water of the fountain of Giantland carefully upon his head and slowly ascended the steep path. He kept his eyes fixed straight ahead.

Soon, however, he heard giant voices shouting at him. From the corners of his eyes he could see giant forms along the pathway. He forgot that he must look neither to the right nor to the left.

The moment the prince turned his eyes a giant immediately seized him and made him his slave. "You shall be my slave for ever and a day," said the giant, "unless you have gold enough in your pockets to pay your ransom." The prince had no gold.

At home in the palace garden the leaves of the orange tree which the eldest prince had planted began to wither. His younger brother noticed it at once and went to the king. "O my father," said he, "I know that my brother has fallen into trouble. I must go to his aid."

The king at once prepared another great fleet. He provided the prince with even more gold than his brother had taken with him. Every one in the whole kingdom did his best to hasten the preparations.

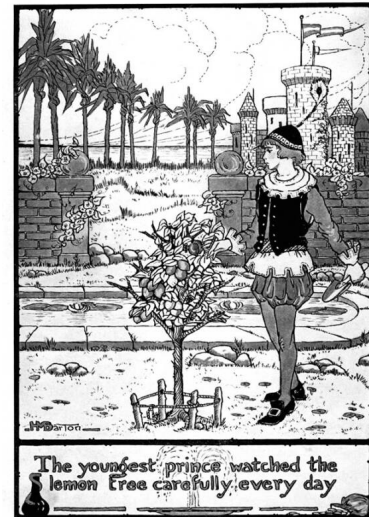
In the palace garden the prince planted a lemon tree and called the youngest prince into the garden. The youngest prince was playing with his dogs. He was a mere boy. "Keep close watch of this lemon tree while I am away," said the

prince. "If its leaves begin to wither you will know that I am in trouble. Come to my aid."

The prince sailed up the great river which leads to Giantland. He anchored at many harbors and took part in many festas. By the time he had reached Giantland he had spent all his gold.

At home in the palace garden the youngest prince watched the lemon tree carefully every day. He watered it and pruned it. He took splendid care of it.

When at last the prince set out to climb the mountain which leads to the fountain of Giantland he felt very brave and very wise. He climbed steadily on and on, looking neither to the right nor to the left, even though he heard the voices of the giants shouting at him, and from the corners of his eyes could see the giant forms along the pathway.



Suddenly he heard the voice of his own brother, the eldest prince, weeping as the giant gave him blows. At that sound he forgot all about looking straight ahead.

The moment the prince turned his eyes from the pathway straight ahead of him a giant seized him and made him his slave. "You shall be my slave for ever and a day," said the giant, "unless you have gold enough to pay your ransom."

At home in the palace garden his little brother was watching the lemon tree. The very moment its leaves began to wither he noticed it and ran at once to the king. "O my father," he cried as soon as he was in the king's presence. "My brother is in trouble. I must go to his aid."

"You, my son, are only a lad," said the king. "How can you succeed when your two older brothers have failed? I cannot bear to let you go. You are all I have left. I prefer to remain blind the rest of my days. O, why did I ever listen to the story the little old woman told me about the water of the fountain of Giantland?"

The youngest prince begged so hard to go that at length his father granted his request and prepared a fleet for him. He gave him all the gold he could collect in the kingdom.

The prince set out with brave heart. He sailed on his way steadily although at every harbour there were voices which bade him linger. There were games and feasting and fair maidens.

Soon the youngest prince had reached Giantland. Above him rose the rough steep rocky mountain. Before he started to make the ascent he first stuffed cotton in his ears. Then he carefully placed upon his head a bottle to fill with the water of the fountain of Giantland.

He climbed up the steep mountain looking neither to the right nor to the left. Through the cotton in his ears he could faintly hear the giant voices calling him. From the corners of his eyes he could see the giant forms along the pathway. He resolutely kept his eyes fixed straight ahead and steadily climbed upward though the path was very rough and full of stones. The cotton in his ears prevented him from hearing the voices of his two brothers crying out when the giants beat them.

At length the lad was in sight of the fountain at the summit of the mountain. The little old woman was standing in the path, watching his ascent. As soon as he came near to her he took the cotton out of his ears so that he might hear what she had to say to him.

"You have arrived at a safe moment," the little old woman told him. "The dragon is asleep."

The little old woman helped the prince fill the bottle with water from the fountain. Then she said, "The dragon which guards the fountain is an enchanted princess. No prince has ever before been brave enough and wise enough to reach this spot. In a year and a day from this moment her enchantment will be broken. Come again and claim her as your bride."

The little old woman gave the prince a ring, and the prince drew a ring from his own finger and gave it to the little old woman. "When the enchantment is broken put my ring upon the finger of the princess," he said. "Expect me back in a year and a day. I'll be sure to come."

The prince made his way back down the steep slope of the mountain, guarding his bottle full of the water of the fountain of Giantland with the utmost care. When he was half way down the mountain he saw his two brothers standing in his path.

"Viva," cried they. "You have been successful. You have a bottle full of the water from the fountain. Now if you also have your pockets full of gold you can pay our ransom and we will return with you to our father's kingdom."

"My pockets are still lined with gold which my father gave me," said the youngest prince. "Help yourselves. It is yours if it can serve you." There was more than enough money to pay the ransom of his two older brothers.

When they were sailing down the great river towards home the two older brothers plotted against the youngest prince. "Come," said one to the other.

“How can we let our father know that it was our little brother who succeeded in this quest? Let us cast our brother ashore. Then we will go together to our father with the water from the fountain of Giantland. When his sight is restored we will share his blessing and the honors of the kingdom. We will claim no knowledge of our youngest brother.”

This is what the two eldest princes did. The youngest prince was cast ashore when he was asleep. After many long weary wanderings he found refuge in the hut of a poor fisherman and hired out to work for him.

The king's eyesight was restored immediately when he had bathed his eyes in the water from the fountain of Giantland. The two princes were given all the honors of the kingdom. The whole kingdom, however, mourned the loss of the little prince. The king and queen never gave up hoping that he would come back to them. The queen carefully laid away all the clothes which had belonged to the youngest prince so that they would be ready for him if he should return to the palace. Every day she shook them out with loving care, so that the baratas and white ants would not eat holes in them.

A year and a day flew swiftly by. The huge dragon which had guarded the fountain of Giantland escaped from her enchantment and was restored to the form of a beautiful princess.

The little old woman and the princess watched and waited for the return of the prince according to his promise. “Some evil must surely have befallen the lad,” said the little old woman. “Let us go in search of him. I know he was a lad who would not break his word.”

The little old woman and the beautiful princess who wore the prince's own ring upon her finger came to the palace of the king. When the king had listened to the story they told, the guilty princes were called before him. They were forced to confess their evil deed. They were immediately thrown into prison. The anger of the whole kingdom was kindled against them.

Then the king and the queen and all the court sailed in their swiftest ships to the place where the little prince had been cast ashore. The little old woman and the beautiful princess who wore the prince's own ring upon her finger went with them. At length after much searching they found the fisherman's hut and the prince working for the fisherman.

The king and the queen and all the court wept tears of joy when they beheld the youngest prince alive and well. The queen wept again when she noticed the poor rough clothing which the prince was wearing. She had brought with her the prince's favourite suit of cloth of gold which she had laid away carefully. When the prince put it on it was a trifle tight and a little bit too short for him, as he had grown so much in the year. Nevertheless he looked very handsome in it when he

stood before the beautiful princess and claimed her as his bride.

The fisherman was greatly astonished at all the proceedings, for he had never dreamed that it was the king's son who had been working for him all the year and sleeping on a mat at his side on the floor of his rude hut.

"He may be a prince, but he is the most faithful lad who ever worked for me," said the fisherman.

"He is indeed a prince," cried the courtiers, "and the bravest, most faithful prince which any land in all the world ever boasted of."

"His princely deeds have proven to all the world that he is fit to reign as king over our fair land when I no longer live," said the king as he gave the prince and the beautiful princess his royal blessing.

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